

By working together, members of the New York State Association of Regional Councils are helping communities prepare coordinated comprehensive plans and community development initiatives to enhance economic opportunities, provide human services, share resources, develop infrastructure, protect the environment and improve the overall quality of life in New York state.



NEW YORK STATE ASSOCIATION OF REGIONAL COUNCILS

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Results for Today Vision for Tomorrow



NEW YORK STATE ASSOCIATION OF REGIONAL COUNCILS

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EDA and NYSARC Together: An Unqualified Success Story

In the past 15 years, the concept behind regional planning has proven itself again and again in the accomplishments of the members of the New York State Association of Regional Councils (NYSARC).

MEASURABLE RESULTS

In the past 15 years, the concept behind the regional councils has proven itself again and again in the accomplishments of NYSARC's member councils. While many benefits to citizens and the agencies and organizations NYSARC supports are immeasurable, the numbers nevertheless speak for themselves.

- **Regional councils have facilitated over \$850 million in grant funds statewide.**

New York's regional councils have worked closely with local governments and agencies to help develop projects, prepare grant applications, act as advocates, provide liaison with funding agencies and administer project funds after grants are awarded. Grant funds have been used to fuel economic growth throughout the state by improving infrastructure, revitalizing communities, building and rehabilitating houses, enhancing public safety, providing social services and protecting the environment.

- **Regional councils have leveraged more than \$115 million in private funds.**

Regional councils often serve as the conduit to accept and monitor federal investments, couple them with private resources and work within our regions to develop programs that not only react to existing conditions but also proactively position local communities for enduring and vibrant community development. These funds are used to recruit new businesses, help existing ones expand, train the local work force and provide vital public infrastructure.

- **Regional councils have helped place approximately 15,000 workers in jobs throughout the state.**

Many regional councils in the state administer comprehensive programs designed to increase employment, retain jobs, develop occupational skills for unemployed and underemployed workers, youth, persons with disabilities and veterans. Through these programs, some 15,000 workers have been placed in jobs throughout the state, reducing welfare dependency and enhancing the productivity and competitiveness of our state's industries.

- **Regional councils have administered more than 550 small business loans totaling over \$25 million.**

Small businesses are thriving in New York State thanks, in part, to loan programs that have helped entrepreneurs jump start their ideas and turn them into jobs. Revolving loan funds are locally controlled sources of capital that, in some cases, provide low cost, short term financing to businesses that are unable to obtain conventional bank financing. In other instances, the loan fund is part of a financial package that includes commercial financing.

- **Regional councils have brought nearly 200 water/wastewater systems to New York counties.**

Improving water quality has been a top priority. Regional councils have partnered with the New York Department of Environmental Conservation over a 30-year period to develop plans and policies and facilitate start-up implementation grants for non-point source management practices. Working together, we have also developed a template and pilot for watershed planning, and connected, at the local level, water quality management with land use management.

Following is a description of three key state and federal partnerships that have helped make possible this impressive record of accomplishment.



By Paul Raetsch
Economic Development Administration Regional Director

HIGH LEVEL OF COOPERATION

I consider our several decades of working closely with NYSARC and its member regional planning boards to be an unqualified success. Our relationship began in the 1960's. Since that time, we have undertaken numerous planning and implementation projects, both with the individual regional planning boards – also called Economic Development Districts (EDDs) – and with NYSARC. EDA and NYSARC have cooperated at a high level and benefits have accordingly accrued to both organizations.

For instance, the EDA provides small planning grants, generally in the range of \$50-60,000, to the EDDs on an annual basis. Generally, the EDDs use these to hire a planner, who is our direct link to the local organization. Also as part of the grant, the EDD prepares an annual Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) for the region it represents.

LOCAL STRATEGIES

The genius of the CEDS planning process is that it relies on the local residents of the region to determine its own strategy for economic development, to maintain its own priorities for strategic investments, and to make its own choices about its goals and methods for working toward economic prosperity. But at the same time, it ensures that they have the resources and accountability to bring the process to completion.

While our grants and support provide an obvious benefit to the EDDs, they provide a reciprocal benefit to us as they act as the “arms and legs” serving our organization's goals and projects. We are able to leverage significant financial and human resources by utilizing the EDDs own networks, relationships and assets, making our own organization much more effective than it would be operating without these strategic partnerships.

Two examples of recent ventures that EDA and NYSARC have embarked on together include a population estimation project and an ongoing cluster-based industry-competitiveness survey.

The EDDs are a hard working, dedicated group of organizations, all different but all having a commonality of purpose and resolve that makes them an appropriate strategic partner

A LABORATORY FOR INNOVATION

We have developed a level of trust with the EDDs, and we have been able to use them to undertake experiments in public policy and to test and evaluate new theories of economic development. As such, the EDDs become our laboratory. As we synthesize their experiences, we become stronger as a region and as a nation.

I've found that the EDDs are a hard working, dedicated group of organizations, all different but all having a commonality of purpose and resolve that makes them an appropriate strategic partner in our mutual enterprise.

All of New York State—from urbanized Manhattan to the rural corners of the state—has benefited economically from rational comprehensive economic development strategic planning and from a planned federal economic development investment policy. The commonality of our shared goal of economic development – the networking and communication, the sharing of knowledge and resources, the replication of successful solutions to problems experienced by other regions – have been crucial to improving the quality of life in New York State.



The concept of collaboration underpins the entire framework of the regional council system.

Partnering for Success in Water Quality Management

NYSARC and the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation

PROTECTING OUR WATER RESOURCES

For close to 30 years, the New York State Association of Regional Councils (NYSARC) and the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) have worked together to enhance, restore, preserve and protect the water resources of New York State. Our partnership exemplifies the synergy born of a shared vision and consistent collaboration as we strive for the betterment of our communities and our environment.

Our journey together began with the mid-1970s Clean Water Act Section 208 program for wastewater treatment management planning. Our partnership was initiated when the program shifted from a geographic to a statewide focus and the regional councils began assisting the DEC with administrative and public involvement activities for the statewide program.

Establishment of the Section 604(b) pass-through funding program stimulated and strengthened our working relationship. The resulting partnership has been a continuous source of energy and expertise for water quality management planning. Together, we have focused largely on programs such as groundwater



NYSARC offers a regional perspective and a connection to local governments that are critical components in water quality management.

protection, basin-specific Water Resources Management Strategies, the Nonpoint Source Management Program, Watershed Restoration and Protection Strategies and the Stormwater Phase II Program.

Accomplishments include the development of plans and policies, start-up implementation grants for nonpoint source management practices, a template and pilot for watershed planning and connecting at the local level water quality management with land use management.

COACHING LOCAL GOVERNMENTS

Through this partnership, we gain the expertise to address technically and socially complex issues that require actions by local governments, such as changes in local laws and the commitment of community resources. NYSARC offers a regional perspective and a connection to local governments that are critical components in water quality management.

Drawing on knowledge and skills in land use planning, GIS mapping, local laws, watershed management planning and public outreach, NYSARC successfully supports and coaches local governments towards sounder environmental management. The successful launch of the Stormwater Phase II program offers a recent reminder of how much we have achieved by working together.

Over the years, grants to NYSARC members of federal pass-through funds, as well as other federal and state funding, have averaged half to three-quarters of a million dollars per year for assisting the state in carrying out water quality planning. This steady flow of resources has enhanced the capacity and continuity of staff working on water quality issues at the member councils.

At each regional planning council, one or more staff understand and oversee the management of our partnership activities. We are fortunate to have been able to invest in these positive working relationships and to have secured commitments from individual councils to maintain staff that understands the state's evolving water resource management needs. We have all benefited from better problem-solving and planning dialogue, both among the councils and between NYSARC members and the DEC.

BRIDGE TO THE FUTURE

While we have made great progress in water resource management, many challenges remain. We face new requirements at a time of shrinking resources and numerous problems linger on our agenda. The partnership between NYSARC and the DEC creates a bridge from the past to the future, ensuring that we will leave a better legacy for succeeding generations.

Working with New York's Regional Councils

Empire State Development, State Data Center



By Robert Scardamalia
Chief Demographer

A GROWING PARTNERSHIP

The New York State Data Center has had a long standing cooperative relationship with the State's regional councils dating back to before 1980 when New York officially entered the Census Bureau's Data Center program. All of the State's regional councils became Affiliates and began a partnership that has grown in service and respect for more than 25 years.

Initially, the Data Center program focused on the dissemination of federal Census economic and demographic data. The transformation from paper to electronic dissemination of data has changed the role and focus of the Data Centers going well beyond data access and use.

The regional councils form the backbone of the State's Data Center program by providing local data services for counties and communities throughout New York. This service is as much about education as it is data access. Data consumers are more sophisticated in their use and desire for data.

UNDERSTANDING DATA

Local governments, businesses, education and the media all seek support in order for them to better understand the mountains of information available. Our Data Center Affiliates do just that in helping reporters understand the nuances of data collection methods and the limitations of data sources. Understanding these qualities helps insure accurate reporting and appropriate decision making.

An excellent example lies in the Census Bureau's new American Community Survey. This data collection instrument began pilot testing in the mid-1990s. Today it's a large scale, national survey that will replace the long form data from the 2010 Decennial Census.

This new tool requires that we have a better understanding of data collection, statistical error, new concepts, measures and products. New York's regional council affiliates have provided input to the

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Census Bureau on methods and products and have helped form training programs by asking very detailed and difficult questions.

While the State Data Center program in Empire State Development interacts with the regional councils almost daily, we have also partnered with them on several large projects with immediate benefit to New York State. Prior to the 2000 Census, Empire State Development contracted with the councils to expand our outreach and education regarding the importance of the Census count to New York.

Along with the councils, we blanketed the State with promotional literature, worked successfully with local governments to create Complete Count Committees and activated community organizations to spread the word.

THE 2010 CENSUS

In preparation for the 2010 Census, we are again contracting with the councils to conduct a data needs assessment that will help us work more effectively with the Census Bureau in providing accurate and complete address information. Complete address files are critical to an accurate Census count and the work of the councils will help us understand deficiencies and better prepare local government officials for upcoming Census partnership programs. Closer to when the Census is taken in 2010, we will again look to the councils for assistance in promoting its importance.

Throughout New York State, and on a daily basis, the regional councils are providing quiet, yet effective, service to local governments and data users. These councils are advocates for improved data, work constantly to provide technical assistance to their clients and assist their communities and data users in understanding how to use, and not use, state and federal data sources.

The nature and role of the Data Center program has changed over the last 25 years, but our relationship with New York's regional councils has grown stronger in a common commitment to service, quality data and improved decision making.

Results for Today

The roles of regional councils are varied and far-reaching, tailored to meet the specific needs of the regions we serve. We provide partnerships and resources to meet the region's needs, including participation in the following programs.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

- Develop and maintain a Business Permit and Application Information website for businesses and agencies.
- Coordinate New York State Small Cities grants for rural and micro-economy development opportunities.
- Administer Welfare to Work programs that serve thousands of clients.
- Develop Comprehensive Economic Development Strategies (CEDS) to describe economic trends, strategies and opportunities.
- Administer revolving loan funds for small business.
- Administer regional marketing, business loan and capital improvement programs.

LAND USE

- Provide technical assistance and support on land use regulation to municipalities, the public and developers.
- Facilitate consolidation of Agricultural Districts to streamline renewal process and preserve farmland.
- Provide technical assistance and resources for zoning/subdivision reviews.
- Oversee neighborhood development projects such as HOPE VI.
- Conduct training for local municipal boards on planning and zoning issues.

ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERNS

- Provide on-going community assistance in water resource management, floodplain and stormwater management and watershed planning.

- Develop Long Term Control Plans to address issues associated with Combined Sewer Overflows.
- Provide leadership and resources for the New York Energy Smart Communities Program—a partnership of individuals, organizations and agencies.
- Conduct flood and hazard mitigation planning for local government.
- Review and monitor environmental problems involving hazardous waste sites and brownfield redevelopment.
- Conduct workshops and facilitate permitting for the Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System (MS4) Program.

GEOGRAPHIC AND DATA SERVICES

- Utilize Geographical Information Systems (GIS) technology to provide valuable data to a variety of users.
- Provide aerial photography support.
- Provide statistical data services including population and employment projections.
- Maintain an extensive resource library for use by local governments, planners, developers and others.
- Serve as NY State Affiliate Data Centers providing local data to communities throughout New York.
- Provide inventory and mapping services for public water and sanitary sewer facilities.

TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURE

- Assisted in obtaining in excess of \$1.5 million in federal funding, combined with additional local funding, for improvements to Union Station and the Adirondack Scenic Railroad.
- Printed and distributed 10,000 two-county Bicycle Route Maps.
- Worked with the I-86 Coalition to facilitate conversion of the Southern Tier Expressway (NYS Route 17) into Interstate 86, improving transportation routes and economic development opportunities.

- Assisted in the development of a railroad authority responsible for owning and managing 180 miles of tracks in southwestern New York.
- Provide support for developing new airfields and upgrading existing ones.

YOUTH SERVICES

- Sponsor special Youth Summits, including one designed specifically to address the needs of foster children.
- Conduct peer mentoring programs in several Utica schools.
- Facilitated financing and construction of a Regional Youth Detention Facility.
- Prepare school district enrollment projections.
- Develop and support gang prevention programs for at-risk youth in Binghamton

SOCIAL SERVICES

- Provide Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) and Community Solutions for Transportation (CST).
- Leveraged a \$270,000 grant from the Governor's Office for Small Cities to establish a Senior Assistance for Emergencies Housing Rehabilitation Program for residents following flooding in Oneida County.
- Conduct assessments, surveys, data collection and similar programs.

GOVERNMENT ASSISTANCE

- Host annual leadership training conference.
- Conduct local government training workshops.
- Sponsor regional roundtables for information exchange on issues.
- Develop Internet-based access for local governments.



IMPROVING THE LIVES OF CITIZENS

Without question, cooperation and collaboration have proven their value in New York State. By working together, we have enhanced economic opportunities, leveraged technology for job creation, improved employment opportunities for the workforce, served the population of all ages, expanded critical infrastructure, strengthened transportation and added immeasurably to our quality of life.



New York's regional planning councils remain committed to improving the lives of citizens and supporting prosperity across the state.



As we look to the future, New York's regional planning councils remain committed to improving the lives of citizens and supporting prosperity across the state. As our communities become even more interdependent and our lifestyle brings us in closer contact with larger regions, the councils will continue to address the common challenges that affect the future of our state. In keeping with this philosophy, the following is the mission statement of NYSARC:

It is the mission of the New York State Association of Regional Councils to promote regional planning and development boards as the mechanism for collective public action and as a structure for the delivery of state and federal services.

Two statues outside the National Archives in Washington connect yesterday with tomorrow. One says "Study the Past." The other tells us why: "What is Past is Prologue." When it comes to New York's regional councils, the contributions of the past can be seen as harbingers of the future. We will continue to:

- Partner and collaborate with economic development officials to develop program initiatives that enhance the economic competitiveness of the regions.
- Enhance the quality of life of the state's residents by partnering with federal, state and local officials to implement programs for a cleaner and healthier environment.
- Be the premier agencies responsible for the distribution, analysis and communication of data sets for use by the public and private sectors.
- Advance initiatives incorporating smart growth principles to promote the efficient use of land and other resources.
- Work with state and local leaders to identify opportunities for shared services to eliminate duplication and reduce the costs of government services.
- Identify opportunities to improve energy and telecommunication and broadband networks statewide.

The future of NYSARC lies in continued cooperation and collaboration in response to dynamic changes, working together to assure an ever improving quality of life.

The activities and services of each regional planning council range wide and cover many common concerns and opportunities. But each project and activity impacts the region in specific and measurable ways. The following vignettes offer a more focused look at an individual project administered by each of the nine councils.

Capital District Regional Commission Serving Youth

When young people run into trouble with the law, the last thing they and their families need is for them to be sent to a distant facility and then transported back and forth for court appearances. But in many parts of the country, as in the Capital area of New York until 1997, that is exactly what happens.

In 1992, the Capital District Regional Commission decided it was time to make a change. In response to the expressed wishes of the member counties, they commissioned a feasibility study and began the arduous and complicated process of bringing their troubled youth back home.

Despite challenges that had short-circuited similar projects in other parts of the state, the Commission coordinated support and consensus among the elected officials and agencies of its four counties, developed a fair-share formula, identified a host community and a suitable site for a regional juvenile detention center and obtained financial backing.

SERVICE AND CARE

The resulting state-of-the-art facility provides a high level of service and care for juvenile detainees, including a creative design and floor plan, allowing convenient access for family members, guardians, legal counsel and social workers. The 30,000 square foot, 24-bed center sits on 4.16 acres in Albany County and maintains a 90% occupancy rate.

As the first multi-county facility in New York State, the Capital District Juvenile Secure Detention Facility provides benefits to the Commission's member counties. It saves taxpayer dollars by providing the lowest net cost to the four counties compared to their use of other state facilities. In addition, convenient access for family members, guardians, legal counsel and social workers improves the level of service and care to juvenile detainees.

Among other things, the overwhelming success of this project was facilitated by enthusiastic support from county leaders and family court judges, mutual trust among county representatives, early support by legislators and the provision of no-cost county land by Albany County.

Central New York Regional Planning and Development Board More Than a Plan

Regional councils have assisted communities across Upstate New York for many years in their efforts to develop plans to address a range of public policy concerns. These include housing, community revitalization, economic development, health care, transportation, land use, environmental management, open space preservation and recreation.

However, these plans simply serve as a starting point for communities looking to improve the quality of life in their areas. Without financial resources, many of these plans cannot be implemented.

Recognizing this challenge, regional councils have worked long and hard over the past 30 years to assist communities in their quest to secure the financial resources to help make dreams a reality. These efforts have led to new and revitalized community parks, construction of new health care facilities, provision of expanded education resources at community colleges and the development of new municipal offices to improve the manner in which government services are delivered to our citizens.

PUTTING PLANS INTO ACTION

Along with such initiatives, the Central New York Regional Planning and Development Board worked diligently with its member counties and local communities to develop public improvement plans and to secure the funds to implement these plans throughout a five county area.

Examples include securing federal and state funds to construct senior citizen rental housing and affordable single family homes. Proposals and grant applications were also prepared to finance a range of public sewer and water improvements for many of our smaller towns and villages.

Detailed site plans have been completed and funds obtained for the development of a network of publicly sponsored business parks in urban, suburban, and rural communities in Central New York. Most recently, the board was successful in helping to obtain the resources to construct a high-tech incubator facility to support entrepreneurial growth in the region. Funds were also secured to reconstruct a major arterial road that will serve a major urban redevelopment in the region.

These efforts to help put plans into action led to the investment of millions of dollars in our local communities. In most cases, these funds were discretionary dollars that could have gone to other parts of the country. Perhaps most importantly, these funds were directed to key projects that will play a critical part in ensuring the future health and prosperity of communities for years to come.

Genesee/Finger Lakes Regional Planning Council Local Government Services



Local governments work tirelessly to improve their municipalities, but sometimes they can use a boost. The Genesee/Finger Lakes Regional Planning Council applies its broader resources to assist local governments with planning, main street revitalization, flood and hazard mitigation, survey development and analysis and grant writing. And to help local officials make the best use of resources, the council has partnered with many sponsors since 1996 to bring the Regional Local Government Workshop series to the area.

Municipal planning services include comprehensive planning and land use controls, Open Space and Agricultural Plans, build-out and fiscal impact analyses, and cultural resource surveys. The council's staff brings knowledge and experience in a wide range of planning issues and collaborates with municipal officials, staff and citizens as needed.

COMMUNITY REVITALIZATION

The council also helps localities plan their revitalization of current, former, or potential community centers, identified as Main Streets. The interrelated roles of land use, environmental resources, economic development and the condition of main streets all affect the quality of life in an area. The council brings perspective and expertise to assist communities in all these areas.

Finally, the council provides support and expertise with flood and hazard mitigation planning, including risk assessment, establishing goals and objectives, developing mitigation strategies and accomplishing adoption and approval through a stakeholder and public outreach process.

Thanks to the council's broader reach and perspective, it is able to provide local governments and agencies with cost-effective assistance in serving their citizens.

Herkimer-Oneida Counties Comprehensive Planning Program Delivering Clean Water

Water: The basis for all life.

Almost nothing is so essential to our existence, and few things cross borders and boundaries quite so thoroughly and relentlessly. And with every border crossing, water carries both promise and risk.

The same substance that provides refreshing and critical drinking supplies, recreation opportunities and irrigation can also carry with it toxic run-off, pollution of all sorts and flood hazards.

A CORNERSTONE MISSION

For this reason, water resource management forms a cornerstone of the mission of many regional councils. Herkimer-Oneida Counties Comprehensive Planning Program is no exception, and their efforts have succeeded in improving water supply protection, stormwater management, flood hazard mitigation, watershed protection and wellhead protection for the entire region.

For instance, in 2004-2006 the council assisted the Town of Kirkland and Village of Clinton through a grant from the US Environmental Protection Agency to modify land use controls to better protect their drinking water supply. The council's staff used GIS technology to map various alternatives for delineating a wellhead protection area.

Then, based on surrounding land uses and the potential threats to groundwater associated with those uses, they identified which uses should be permitted in each district, and presented those recommendations to the respective municipal boards. The municipalities were then able to modify zoning maps to provide better water supply protection.



Public awareness helps protect the state's water resources.

Similarly, the council has overseen the use of various technologies such as Geographic Information Systems, digital topography, and aerial imagery to create multiple data layers used in designing and implementing flood hazard mitigation systems, storm water management, and watershed protection.

Clean, safe water. Yet another benefit brought to citizens by regional councils.

Hudson Valley Regional Council Fueling Growth in Clusters

Four thousand new jobs and two million square feet of previously vacant floor space that is now in use: that's what a cluster-based economic development strategy has done for the Hudson Valley already.

In 1992, the Hudson Valley Regional Council forged a partnership between regional economic developers and county leadership to create a cohesive "cluster-based" economic development strategy for the region. In another four years, they expect the strategy to yield an additional 10,000 new jobs. The cluster-based strategy seeks to create a unique and powerful synergy for business by attracting and retaining in the area groups of complementary and interdependent organizations that do business with each other and/or have common needs for talent, technology and infrastructure.

The council's activities have included identifying six target industries, developing and executing an aggressive strategic marketing initiative focused on those industries, workforce development, transportation system improvements and key infrastructure improvements across the region.

The six business clusters in focus are microelectronics, semiconductors, biotechnology/pharmaceuticals, financial-insurance, information technology and tourism.

Lake Champlain - Lake George Regional Planning & Development Board Funding Small Business

Difficulty in obtaining short term funding can cause even established companies to stall out in their growth. When the 50-year-old Eagle Bridge Machine and Tool Company needed new equipment to service several major new contracts, local banks were reluctant to extend the financing.

Fortunately, Eagle Bridge and other small businesses have the Lake Champlain/Lake George Regional Planning Board and Development Corporation to turn to. The Board operates a regionally



based revolving loan fund program that provides financing to support the growth of small businesses through the five-county area.

The loan fund provides low cost, short term financing to businesses that are unable to obtain conventional bank financing. Since its inception, over \$9 million in loans have been made to 140 entrepreneurial enterprises. The largest percentage of loans assists in business expansions, with another large percentage for new business start-ups.

All types of business ventures are eligible to receive assistance but high priority is given to those firms in the industrial sector. There is a limitation of \$150,000 per project and loan applicants are encouraged to contribute at least 30% toward total project costs. The average loan amount is \$75,000. Equipment and working capital loans have a maximum term of 7 years, real estate loans 15 years. The interest rate is usually fixed at a rate below market, with a low closing fee of up to 2%. Applications are accepted on a continuous basis and processing takes roughly four weeks.

In cases where a company needs more than \$150,000, the board sometimes partners with local economic development agencies or private lenders to provide the balance of capital needed.

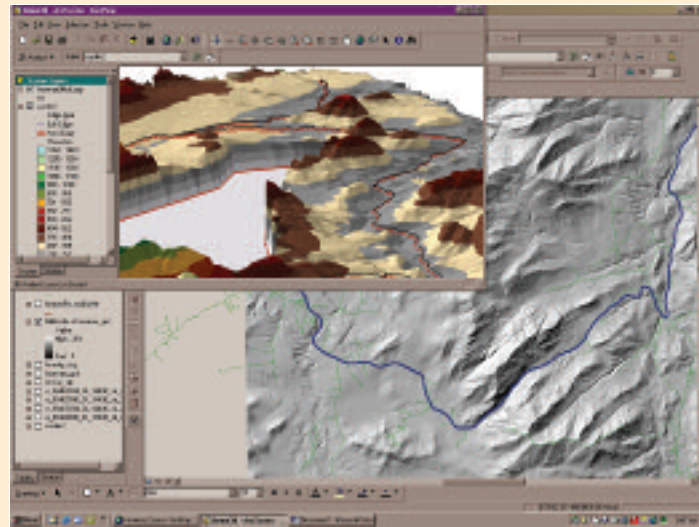
To ensure loan funds are used wisely, applicants are asked to demonstrate how their project meets the economic development needs of the region. Proposals are then evaluated based on community need, local capacity, expected economic impact and readiness to proceed. Timing is also important, and projects are processed on a first come, first served basis.

SELF SUSTAINING RESOURCES

Capitalized in 1985, funding for the program has been provided by the US Department of Commerce, US Department of Agriculture and local economic development agencies. But thanks to its revolving nature, money is continually being returned to the fund as businesses pay off their loans, so not only is the program self-sustaining, it also continues to add to its own capitalization, allowing more businesses to benefit.

Southern Tier Central Regional Planning and Development Board

Utilizing Technology for Planning and Development



Advancing computer technology assists economic growth through the creation of new and interactive formats for the processing and display of data.

Choosing industrial sites, planning transportation improvements, responding to emergencies or redrawing county boundaries can all be facilitated with Geographic Information System (GIS).

GIS transforms static maps into dynamic mapping tools with multiple layers of data, giving a better understanding of how the information works together.

The uses for this data are wide and significant, but smaller, rural communities often cannot afford the significant investment required. Recognizing this, the Southern Tier Central Regional Planning and Development Board (STC) designed a regional program whereby all municipalities within the region's member counties can have access to this powerful technology.

Providing both the technology and the trained staff, STC has leveraged the GIS technology to provide local economic development agencies with valuable data about telecommunications service including the locations of telephone fiber, television fiber, communications towers, telephone central offices and central office boundaries.

Using the same resources, STC assisted the Municipal Separate Storm Sewers (MS4) program with mapping and coordination, which involved the compilation of GIS layers for all storm water facilities.

Other projects include the digitization of paper maps and the provision of Internet mapping services, which brings GIS capability to a wide range of users. With the ease of logging onto an ordinary web

page, users can browse their community via air photo; they can toggle on and off layers, including but not limited to tax parcel lines, roads, floodplains, wetlands, zoning, water lines and sewer lines.

Internet mapping allows the user to have complete viewing control as well as access to the interactive data behind the map. The service is provided at low cost to real property assessors, road managers, municipal employees, town supervisors and many others.

With the coordination of several communities, a regional agency can establish programs that benefit all involved and provide data in an innovative and efficient format. Thanks to the coordination and investment of STC, every Southern Tier Central member county now has access to these powerful features.

Southern Tier East Regional Planning Development Board

Supporting Intelligent Land Use

Open spaces, vibrant business districts, carefully positioned infrastructure and well-placed public facilities mean a better quality of life for a region's inhabitants. And those goals can be accomplished only when supported by adequate information. That's why the Southern Tier East Regional Planning Development Board invests in data gathering and inventory-building to support intelligent land use.

Southern Tier East provides directed funding assistance to community and economic development projects under programs of the Appalachian Regional Commission, Rural Development and the Economic Development Administration. As part of its role as one of the nine EDDs and three Appalachian Local Development Districts in New York, the Board has for several years assisted in collecting infrastructure data for its region, such as the locations and uses of cell towers, telephone and cable optic fiber, public water and sewer lines and broadcast and emergency service facilities.

Once gathered, the information is inventoried and entered into a GIS for use in planning new facilities, determining appropriate land use and identifying future needs and opportunities.

BUILDING ON ARC PROGRAMS

Because of the extensive investment in telecommunications—especially distance learning—under Appalachian Regional Commission programs, the region has already compiled an inventory of telecommunications facilities within its counties and entered this information into its GIS. Currently, the region is in the process of building similar inventories for each of its public water and sanitary sewer systems.

The preliminary research identified over 60 publicly operated water supply systems and at least 30 publicly operated sanitary

sewer systems in the region. As part of our involvement in funding community and economic development infrastructure projects, information is being collected regarding water and sewer mains, water supply sources, pumping and treatment facilities and waste treatment and discharge characteristics. In addition, the GIS files include facility location, main size and facility capabilities and operator data.

This cooperative venture has involved county Information Technology offices and planning agencies, as well as various municipal system operators. As part of their cooperative effort, the region is helping to underwrite the collection of data by its counties and is sharing its files with those counties with their own GIS capabilities.

With the support of its inventory efforts, the board has been involved in planning and implementing new and expanded water and sewer systems to address environmental problems and promote economic expansion, and in developing telecommunications capabilities in schools, libraries, and medical facilities to connect regional facilities with one another and the world at large.

Between 1965 and 2004 the regional board has participated in the financing of over 40 water or sewer projects, typically through assistance from USDA Rural Development, the Economic Development Administration, or the Appalachian Regional Commission.

Southern Tier West Regional Planning and Development Board

Traveling To Prosperity

Southern Tier West's Regional Planning and Development Board recognizes that well-planned transportation corridors are essential to a region's economic development, community enhancement, environmental health and the population's safety. The board also knows that, although rural New York is often thought of as a highly populated, suburban region with direct links to urban areas, the reality is much more complicated.

That's why the board has become very active in rural transportation programs, where part-time officials rely heavily on outside help to meet their region's transportation needs.

For instance, Southern Tier West has assisted with numerous regional gateway projects through the I-86 PRIDE program. The program engenders a team atmosphere between community organizations, local and national businesses and local government, and provides guidance in obtaining work permits, developing designs, soliciting volunteers and acquiring materials and equipment at discounted rates.

In addition, the Board provides services such as land use planning, GIS mapping, demographic analysis, large project coordination, and much more that would otherwise be virtually impossible for its many part-time, small-budget rural municipalities.

REVITALIZING RAIL LINES

The partnership between municipalities and the Board has resulted in many accomplishments, including the revitalization of several underutilized and abandoned rail lines, the upgrading of a major highway to Interstate status and many large-scale projects coordinated and completed in association with outside land developers.

In particular, the Southern Tier Extension Rail Authority identified and purchased 145 miles of virtually abandoned railroad line that traversed the entire region. Despite its previous role as an economic mainstay of the region, the line had been allowed to deteriorate. The Rail Authority, in conjunction with the Board, revitalized the line and has since increased the number of freight car shipments by a factor of 471; it has become a catalyst for job creation and new business opportunity.

The planning board also provides municipalities with assistance in environmental planning such as wetlands protection, storm water management, air quality impacts and traffic impact. Additionally, they provide regional coordination of emergency services and in assist in applying for grants to address safety and security issues important to each locality.

While recognizing that good transportation is the backbone of a community's overall health, STW Regional Planning and Development Board also continues to invest in expanding its technical assistance, land use planning assistance and economic development assistance to rural communities.

