

THE ST. LAWRENCE COUNTY PLANNING OFFICE

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Office Overview -- 2024

The mission of the St. Lawrence County Planning Office is to encourage the appropriate use of the County's natural, human, and fiscal resources; to plan for constructive change in St. Lawrence County; to encourage and deliver community development initiatives; to improve governmental service provision; and to be an objective and accurate source of information and technical assistance.

What we do:

Research and Analysis – The principal and most valuable resource the Planning Office provides is its staff members, trained in research and analysis techniques, capable of assessing both the short- and long-term implications of many issues, policies or decisions. The office provides services to:

- County Administrator
- Board of Legislators
- Other County Departments
- Local Governments
- State Officials
- The General Public

Community Development – The Planning Office has written many Community Development Block Grants, focusing on communities that don't have internal capacity to write grants on their own, or for the County as a whole. Recent CDBG grant programs have focused on housing rehabilitation, homeownership assistance, public facilities and economic development. Highlights include:

- \$31.3 million secured in CDBG funds (63 individual awards)
- 57 awards for housing rehabilitation or homeownership assistance have assisted over 1,300 households
- Planning Office has partnered with the former Economic Development Office to secure \$2,476,000
- Currently administering a countywide housing rehabilitation program (\$615,000)
- Currently administering a \$975,000 award for a Septic Replacement Program
- Administered a \$1million award from HUD for lead-based paint hazard mitigation

The office's Grants Manager provides capacity to County departments in the development of grant applications, identifies potential funding sources for the County, other local jurisdictions, agencies and organizations, and compiles a listing of grant opportunities for electronic distribution. More than 400 individuals receive the electronic grants notice. In addition to CDBG funds, over \$46 million has been secured by the Grants Manger, with over \$37 million directly for County Departments or initiatives. In addition to direct funds, grant-seeking efforts have also identified technical assistance programs through the U.S. EPA that have benefitted County efforts toward the redevelopment of brownfield sites.

Funds secured for County departments include: **Highway - \$25.4 million; Community Services - \$3.4 million; Emergency Services - \$3.3 million; Indigent Services - \$1.1 million.** Outside organizations assisted and other projects include J&L Steel Site; Cornell Cooperative Extension of St. Lawrence County, the County Chamber of Commerce, numerous Towns and Villages, and local law enforcement agencies.

Community Planning Assistance – The Office often serves as “staff” to local governments engaged in a variety of planning efforts. Most major projects involve a fee. Some recent projects include:

- Comprehensive Plans for the Town and Village of Hammond, Town of Hermon, Town of Macomb and Town of Morristown
- Zoning code revisions for the Towns of Colton, Hammond, Madrid and Rossie and Villages of Gouverneur, Hammond and Rensselaer Falls
- Solar regulation revisions for the Towns of Brasher, Canton, Dekalb and Parishville
- St. Lawrence River Shoreline Resiliency Plan
- Strategic Plan for Morristown Gateway Museum

Public Transit – The Office manages the St. Lawrence County Public Transit System, which is comprised of three services: Bus Service; First Mile Last Mile; and Mobility Management. Public Transit currently operates 16 bus routes that extend between the county’s five population centers. First Mile Last Mile complements bus operations by transporting riders who are not within walking distance of a designated bus stop. Volunteer Transportation Center, Inc. (VTC) coordinates this service and schedules rides 48 hours in advance of a trip. VTC also serves as the County’s Mobility Manager and works with the bus operator and the County to improve public transit services, and works with passengers, major employers and stakeholder agencies to help address transportation barriers. Public Transit has an annual budget of over \$2.7 million. In 2023, the system provided more than 134,000 trips and traveled more than 985,000 miles. 2023’s trip count was 37% higher than the year before, and represented the highest trip count in the history of the system.

Assistance to Advisory Boards – By direction of the Board of Legislators, the Office provides support to and/or participates on a number of advisory boards, including:

- County Planning Board
- Environmental Management Council
- Agricultural and Farmland Protection Board
- Fair Housing Task Force
- Raquette and St. Regis Rivers Advisory Councils
- North Country Home Consortium

GIS Mapping Services – The Planning Office uses Geographic Information Systems (GIS) software to carry out spatial analysis and generate maps. GIS mapping assistance supports a number of diverse projects throughout the County. Some examples include:

- Legislative Redistricting
- Zoning District Boundaries
- Solar Development Mapping Tool
- Recreational Trail Mapping
- Oblique and Orthographic Aerial Photo Overlays
- Soil Type, Wetland and Parcel Boundary Display
- County Web Mapping Portal Maintenance
- Route Planning and Analysis

Special Projects – Numerous special projects are undertaken by the Planning Office because these projects require the direct attention of County Staff. Some of these projects are:

- Agricultural District Reviews
- Local Government Training
- 2024 Eclipse Preparedness Committee
- Broadband Committee
- ARPA water/sewer projects
- Census Data Repository
- OCF Reuse Committee
- Fort Drum Compatibility Committee
- County Snowmobile Grant Administration
- Emergency Response Assistance