

# LONG TERM COMMUNITY RECOVERY STRATEGY

Date: September, 2013

Village of Owego, New York



Sponsored by the NYS  
Department of State,  
Office of Communities  
and Waterfronts





This document is intended to be printed double-sided on letter size paper.





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## Project Overview



The State of New York Department of State (DOS) has provided funding to the Village of Owego to create the Long Term Community Recovery Strategy (LTCRS). The Village is working in conjunction with the Tioga County Department of Economic Development and Planning, and the Department of State to complete this study.

### Regional Setting

The Village of Owego is located in the southeast corner of Tioga County. The County, which measures 523 square miles, is located approximately 30 miles west of the City of Binghamton and is within a three- to four-hour drive to major metropolitan centers such as Philadelphia, New York, and Buffalo.

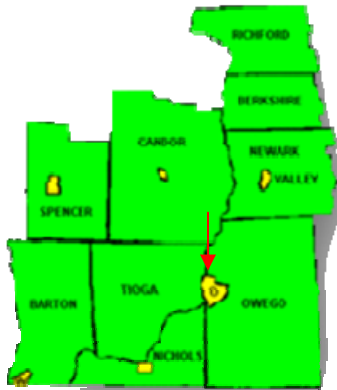
Tioga County is comprised of nine towns and six villages, and according to the 2010 US Census, includes 51,125 residents. The County is well served by a network of interstate, state, and local highways including Interstate 86 and State Routes 17C (the Southern Tier Expressway), 34, 38, 79, 96, and 434. Tioga County's strategic location and proximity to major transportation routes helps drive the local economy, which is dependent on a wide variety of industries including tourism, agriculture, manufacturing, and education. The majority of the County's residents live within the Town of Owego.



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## Community Profile

The Village of Owego is a charming community located in the Southern Tier Region of New York State. The Village, which has served as the Tioga County Seat since 1822, encompasses approximately 2.5 square miles within the Town of Owego. Owego is bound by the Town of Tioga to the west, the Town of Newark Valley to the north, Broome County to the east, and Bradford County, Pennsylvania to the south.



The Village is characterized by tree-lined streets, historic 19<sup>th</sup> century architecture, breathtaking views of the Susquehanna River, and a quaint downtown filled with shops, restaurants and art galleries. With all of its cultural amenities, festivals, and scenic waterfront parks and walkway, it's no surprise that the Village of Owego was named the "Coolest Small Town in America" by Budget Travel Magazine readers in 2009.

The major employers in the Village are the Tioga County Government and the Owego/ Apalachin School system. Other key employment sectors include tourism, manufacturing and retail trade.

In 2010, the U.S. Census reported that the Village of Owego's population was 3,896 residents. This represents a 15 person decrease from the 3,911 person population reported in 2000. The median age of community residents was 39.6 years, which is slightly less than the 42.5 years of age

reported for the County. The 2010 Census also reported that the Village population was predominately white (97%), the median household income was \$53,093 (similar to the County figure of \$53,789 and the \$56,951 reported for New York State), and that approximately 50% of the Village's housing units are owner occupied and the remaining 50% are rentals.

The Village has an adopted Comprehensive Plan, Zoning Ordinance, Site Plan Review and Subdivision Review in place.

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## Impact of Tropical Storm Lee

On September 7, 2011 Tropical Storm Lee stalled over the Southern Tier and dropped over 11" of rain on Tioga County during a 24-hour period. The torrential rains, coupled with a swollen Susquehanna River and saturated grounds leftover from Hurricane Irene, led to record high water levels. The Susquehanna River crested at a record high 39.62 feet on September 8, 2011 in Owego. The previous record was 35.90 feet in June of 2006.

The rising waters caused severe flash flooding, destroying homes, businesses and infrastructure. Reports estimate that 90% of the buildings in the Village of Owego were flooded as a result of the storm. On September 10, 2011 the Tioga County Emergency Management Office requested the assistance of the Disaster Assistance Response Team (DART) to inspect 3,750 homes in Tioga County, 3,000 of which were located in the Village of Owego.

Residents living in the low-lying Turtle Town

and the Flats neighborhoods were hit hardest by the storm.

During and immediately after the storm, travel along NYS Route 17 to the triple cities was difficult, if not impossible. The Village became an island, with no way to get water pumped out. The Downtown and the Flats were separated into two areas, and vehicular traffic and emergency response vehicles could not maneuver between the two. Major road closures included: Dutchtown Road, Gary Hunt, 17C, Main Street Taylor, Bodle, RT 86, Marshland, Hilton Road, Long Creek Road, Pennsylvania Ave; Long Creek Road, Sulpher Springs and Valley Road.

Today, the Village of Owego is still recovering from the devastation experienced as a result of Tropical Storm Lee. In 2012, it was recommended that the buyout or acquisition of 34 severely damaged homes begin. Additional structures may be added to the list through 2015.



## Extreme Weather Events

According to the recent report, *ClimAID: the Integrated Assessment for Effective Climate Change Adaptation Strategies in New York State*, the need to plan for the mitigation and recovery from future flood events in the Village of Owego, and the entire Southern Tier, is a growing concern as we enter into the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

In 2008, the New York State Energy Research and Development Authority (NYSERDA) initiated “ClimAID” as part of its Environmental Monitoring, Evaluation, and Protection Program (EMEP). As part of the project, a three-year study was conducted by more than 50 scientists from Cornell University, Columbia University, and the City University of New York to identify and assess climate change impacts and adaptation options for New York

State.

The results of the study were compiled in the 600-page report that warns that New Yorkers should begin to prepare for an increased number of heat waves and snowier winters, severe floods, and a range of other effects on the environment, communities and human health. Average annual temperatures in New York State are projected to rise by 4 to 9 degrees by the year 2080, and the amount of precipitation that falls in the State is projected to increase by 5 to 15 percent.

A summary of extreme weather events predicted for the Southern Tier in the 21<sup>st</sup> century is provided below:

ClimAID Region 3 (Southern Tier): Projected Extreme Events					
	Extreme Event	Baseline	2020s	2050s	2080s
<b>Heat Waves</b>	Number of days/ year with maximum temperature exceeding 90° F	10	11 - 25	15 - 45	19 - 70
	Number of days/ year with maximum temperature exceeding 95° F	1	2 - 7	2 - 18	4 - 38
	Number of heave waves/year	1	1 – 3	2 – 6	2 - 9
	Average duration of heat wave	4	4 – 5	4 – 5	4 - 7
<b>Cold Events</b>	Number of days/year with minimum temperature at or below 32° F	152	116 - 145	86 - 168	68 - 124
<b>Intense Pre- cipitation</b>	Number of days/year with rainfall exceeding 1 inch	6	5-8	5 - 8	5 - 10
	Number of days per year with rainfall exceeding 2 inches	0.6	0.5 - 1	0.5 - 1	0.4 - 2