

Inside This Issue...

Westchester County Farm.....1

Thoughts From the
Chair2

GALIP Member Profile:
Ed Buroughs4

National Conference Photos.....6

GALIP Annual Meeting Minutes.....12

2010-2011 GALIP Adopted
Budget14

Call for Session Proposals.....15

Upcoming Events15

The Gays and Lesbians in Planning (GALIP) Division addresses planning topics and issues that relate to the gay and lesbian community by providing a forum for exchanging ideas and information. GALIP provides a professional network for planners who are division members and a mechanism that allows friends of the division and the gay and lesbian community to support GALIP's mission.

Westchester County Operates Farm and Environmental Center



Farm shed featuring a green roof
Photo credit: Westchester County

By Tracey Corbitt, AICP

Westchester County (New York) purchased Hilltop Hanover Farm in 2003 to preserve open space, protect the New York City drinking water supply watershed and provide opportunities for the people of Westchester to become educated in sustainable agricultural and environmentally sensitive practices. Currently, 180 acres is preserved, covering 50 acres of agricultural land and 130 acres of forest along Hanover Street in Yorktown Heights, Town of Yorktown. The acquisition of the Hilltop Hanover Farm enabled Westchester County to establish its first "Conservation and Natural Resource Center" devoted entirely to the protection of the natural environment through the practice and promotion of best management practices for sustainable development in a watershed.

The acquisition was part of the County's implementation of the Agriculture and Farmland Protection Plan, which provides the County with a blueprint for action to improve awareness of the needs of agriculture as an industry and of farmland itself as a valuable component of the County's quality of life. The Plan examines both the land use policies associated with agriculture in Westchester as well as the state of the industry. It analyzes the appropriateness of existing techniques to protect land and support commercial activity. Finally it makes recommendations for action by the local municipalities, the County, and various local agencies. Westchester County's Goals for Hilltop Hanover Farm and Environmental Center are:

- ▶ Provide an educational farm model focused on sustainability.
- ▶ Serve as an information clearing house on environmental and conservation practices for local residents, farmers, and schools.

Continued on page 3

Hilltop Hanover Farm...continued from page 1



Farm visitors picking their own vegetables in the field.

Photo credit: Westchester County

- ▶ Increase public awareness of environmental impacts through demonstrations and educational events.
- ▶ Provide information and establish demonstration projects related to alternative energy solutions, such as solar, wind and geo-thermal applications as well as rainwater collection systems and composting.
- ▶ Offer educational opportunities to the public about how food is grown, with a focus on the appreciation for seasonality and the rhythms of nature.

The American Planning Association selected Hilltop Hanover Farm to receive the 2010 National Planning Excellence Award for Innovation in Best Practices for Sustainability. “Hilltop Hanover Farm stands as a wonderful example of what can be achieved when citizens, businesses, and a planning department work together on environmental issues,” noted Marie York, FAICP, AICP, 2010 National Planning Awards Jury Chair. “The project, located in a densely populated suburban area just north of New York City, not only educates but also contributes to the broader community through food bank donations and by providing opportunities for developmentally challenged adults to develop work skills at the site.”

Westchester County's Hilltop Hanover Farm provides a regional education center that offers programs on healthy and sustainable food production, researches and teaches skills for small scale suburban and urban farming techniques, and illustrates sustainable living practices such as alternative energy sources for the residents of Westchester County.

Seventy percent of the produce (7,000 pounds this year) harvested at Hilltop Hanover is given to the Food Bank for Westchester for distribution to local food pantries. The remainder of the produce is sold at Hilltop Hanover's farm stand

Westchester County Department of Planning staff managed and operated Hilltop Hannover Farm until 2010. The department assembled a number of partner organizations and business entrepreneurs to complement the County's programs, including the Watershed Agricultural Council, Something Good in the World's Children's Environmental Education Center and the Cornell Cooperative Extension.

For more information, visit the farm's website at www.hilltophanoverfarm.org

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