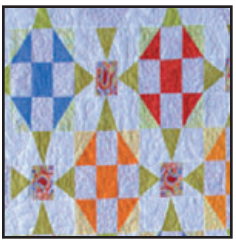


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Pine Tree Project Moves Ahead

By Nick Babel

The Southern Tier Regional Economic Development Council (STREDC) recently announced that Tompkins County will receive \$512,000 from the Community Revitalization Program to assist with improvements to Pine Tree Road. The funding will support the cost of road and bridge repairs between Route 366 and Maple Avenue in the Town of Ithaca, as a part of a larger effort to expand pedestrian and bicycle connections among the East Hill area, Cornell and a proposed bikeway extending to Varna and Dryden.

"The Regional Council initiative has been successful in finding great local business to support in order to grow our economy, however community revitalization projects like the Pine Tree Road improvements are just as important to a strong economy," said David Skorton, Regional Council co-chair and President of Cornell, in a statement. "This project will provide residents with more options to walk, bike, run and enjoy the outdoors while encouraging visitors, and even some locals, to take advantage of what this area has to offer."

The Pine Tree Road project advances the vision of creating safe, viable, year-

round commuting options incorporated in the transportation plans of the Town of Ithaca and the university. It builds on an extensive system of pedestrian and bicycle trails that has been developed and maintained by the Town of Ithaca.

"This project will be a long-needed improvement in a critical high-traffic area. I expect that once the project is completed we will see many more people on foot and on bikes in this neighborhood," Tompkins

Beautiful Boxes



Photo by Jay Wrostad

Ann Krajewski of Caroline puts the finishing touches on her "Wizard of Oz"-themed electrical box at the corner of Cayuga and State streets in downtown Ithaca as part of the 21 Boxes project. Sponsored by the Ithaca Public Arts Commission, the project sent 21 artists around town to give the utilitarian boxes a makeover as part of a city-wide beautification program. A ribbon-cutting and opening tour will be held Sunday, Oct. 21, at 1 p.m. at the corner of State/MLK and Geneva streets.

County Legislature Chairwoman Martha Robertson says.

Town of Ithaca Supervisor Herb Engman stated, "This funding will help create safe off-road bicycle and pedestrian routes from a projected high-growth area of the town to the Cornell campus. Not incidentally it will also allow the construction of the walkway at a width and slope that will enable the town to maintain it in a safe and more cost-effective manner."

The full plan calls for widening and improving Pine Tree Road under the former railroad bridge, replacing or improving that bridge, building a pedestrian and bike trail on land adjacent to Pine Tree Road, and improving access to the trail near Maple Avenue.

The project is a priority within the Town of Ithaca's Transportation Plan and Cornell University's Master Plan.

"We've spent a lot of time listening to nearby neighbors from the southern end of Pine Tree Road, and we'll soon begin a planning effort to explore ways we can mitigate the traffic on that part of the road. The residents are rightly concerned about the speed and volume of traffic, and we take those concerns very seriously," Robertson says.

The state's Smart Growth Infrastructure Policy and the County's Greenhouse Gas Emissions Policy are advanced by several elements of the project, including the use of resources in an area already served by existing infrastructure in order to stabilize existing development and facilitate future in-fill development, and the substantive measures to reduce reliance on vehicular transportation.

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Campaign Finances Show Disparity

By Lori Sonken

If campaign contributions are an indicator of the likely winner in a Congressional race, Tompkins County Legislator Nate Shinagawa (D-Ithaca) has a long way to go to unseat incumbent Tom Reed (R-Corning) in the race to represent the newly drawn 23rd District, an area that includes Tompkins County and most of New York's Southern Tier.

Reed raised \$1.4 million from Dec. 31 through June 29, compared to \$319,640 collected by Shinagawa during the same time period, according to the Federal Election Commission.

A freshman congressman and former mayor of Corning, Reed sits on the House Ways and Means Committee. Charged with writing the nation's tax laws, the committee impacts nearly every industry in the country, sets the country's borrowing authority, oversees Social Security and Medicare and establishes tariff and trade laws, among other responsibilities.

Of the campaign contributions received, Reed garnered \$779,194 from 577 political action committees representing the energy, financial, transportation, health, pharmaceutical and telecommunications industries, among other sectors that have issues

before the Ways and Means Committee.

In contrast, Shinagawa received \$27,616 in contributions from 13 political action committees, including People for the American Way Voters Alliance, American Federation of Teachers, AFL-CIO Committee on Political Education and the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers Political Action Committee.

"Money doesn't determine everything, but it certainly helps" to pay for television advertisements, get-out-the-vote efforts, mailings and flyers, says Thomas Shevory, professor in the Politics Department at Ithaca College. Shevory expects that Democrats will pick up a few seats but won't take control of the House of Representatives even if President Obama wins re-election.

"With wide name recognition, and usually an insurmountable advantage in campaign cash, House incumbents typically have little trouble holding onto their seats," according to the website opensecrets.org.

In the last election cycle, 85 percent of incumbents were re-elected. In 2008, the incumbent re-election rate was 94 percent.

As a result of the 2010 Supreme Court case Citizens United v. Federal

Election Commission, corporations and unions, through their Super PACs, may make direct payments to candidates and through their organizations. The decision allows such activity to take place without complete or immediate disclosure of who funds such communications, preventing voters from understanding who is truly behind many political messages, opensecrets.org reports.

Shevory does not expect Super PACs to play a large role in congressional races. He believes they are concentrating on the presidential election and, to a smaller extent, U.S. Senate campaigns.

Reed and Shinagawa were required to file financial disclosure forms with the House of Representatives. Aside from Reed's annual congressional salary of \$174,000, he also earned a \$175,000 salary in 2011 from the law office of Thomas W. Reed II PLLC, based in Corning. This year, he did not report income from the law firm but instead listed an undisclosed salary from the same law firm for his wife.

In addition, Reed's assets reported this year include member distributions from R and R Resource Recovery LLC, R and R properties LLC and the Law Office of Thomas W. Reed, II PLLC,
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Forging a Permaculture Partnership

By Eric Banford

During Oct. 12-17, various local groups are hosting Ronaldo “Rony” Lec Ajcot, co-founder of the Meso-american Permaculture Institute (IMAP) in Guatemala. Lec has been instrumental in reintroducing traditional systems of sustainable production and living to the Lake Atitlan region of Guatemala. He brings that knowledge to lectures and workshops in Ithaca, Elmira and Dryden.

His trip is sponsored by Cornell University’s Latin American Studies Program, the Committee on U.S. Latin American Relations (CUSLAR), the Ithaca College Latin American Studies and Environmental Studies departments, and the Finger Lakes Permaculture Institute.

Lec began his visit last Friday at Tompkins Cortland Community College in Dryden. On Monday, Oct. 15, at 12:15 p.m. he will be in 153 Uris Hall at Cornell. On Tuesday at 7 p.m. he will visit Ithaca College for a lecture in 225 Williams Hall. And finally, on Wednesday at 4:30 p.m. he will be at Patterson Chapel, Cowles Hall, at Elmira College. All presentations are free and open to the public.

The philosophy behind permaculture was developed in the late 1970s in Australia by Bill Mollison and David Holmgren. The term combines the words permanent and culture, or permanent and agriculture; its teaching integrates the design of living systems based on nature. Within permaculture, nothing is wasted, everything is a resource and it’s sustainable over



Karryn Olson-Ramanujan, right, and students plant a pear tree as part of the Ithaca College permaculture garden.

long periods of time. Michael Burns, co-founder and current education director of the Finger Lakes Permaculture Institute (FLPI), started studying permaculture with Lec. “Rony was my original permaculture teacher back in 1998,” says Burns. “And that’s sort of the origin of his visit to the Finger Lakes.

“Rony was really able to demonstrate the promise of permaculture in his hometown of San Lucas Tolimán, in a coffee-growing region of Guatemala,” says Burns. “There are a fair number of plot holders with a hectare or less who are producing coffee. When he started his

first permaculture project, it was with coffee growers, demonstrating how much more they could produce on marginal land. Essentially, they were able to convert their coffee fields into coffee food forests.”

Coffee has traditionally been grown in the shade among forest trees. Some varieties, notably arabica coffee, have been shown to have the highest yields under 35 to 65 percent shade. Growing coffee under shade discourages weed growth, protects the crop from frost, and helps to increase the number of pollinators, resulting in better fruit set. Shade coffee takes longer to ripen, which contributes to complex flavors.

“Eventually, as farmers learned about how they could grow other useful edibles in the different layers of a coffee food forest,” notes Burns, “they were able to develop into a coffee growers cooperative that became organic and fair-trade certified. This all started because he wanted to demonstrate how permaculture design methods and strategies would help people enrich themselves and their land simultaneously.”

Burns points out that some of the same lessons demonstrated in Guatemala are useful in the Finger Lakes region. “Permaculture design and strategies are useful producing edibles on what we might consider marginal land. This area is full of small landholders who can grow a fair amount of food. This can benefit people who are trying to improve their nutrition and, in some cases, their food security. Our woods and our hedgerows, as well as our backyards and our porches, can grow

food. Permaculture offers a lot of strategies to do that.”

Karryn Olson-Ramanujan, a lecturer in environmental studies and science at Ithaca College, has taught permaculture and sustainability courses. A recent project has been working on a permaculture garden on campus. “I was looking at this underutilized organic garden in the center of campus and thinking ‘Wow, I know how dedicated these students are, so if this place is looking dilapidated, it must not fit the pattern of student life,” she says.

“In permaculture we train people to look at patterns in life and in nature,” she continues, “so we decide to move to a more perennial model that would be coming into ripening and harvesting when students would be around.” The new garden was designed by various students over the past few years and was implemented in the spring of this year. This fall was their first harvest party.

“Let’s not let gardens be just another pretty face,” says Olson-Ramanujan. “We have to acknowledge that landscaping and industrial agriculture has a serious impact on the environment. Instead, let’s use our ecological design skills to sequester carbon rather than have emissions from machinery, herbicides, pesticides, etc. Let’s create gardens that harvest and conserve water, that give a big yield in a small place. I see it as more than food security. Part of learning to be a good global citizen is learning how to design things in a way that creates so many wins for everybody

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