

## Low-Interest Energy Upgrades Now Available For Tompkins Businesses

By SOLVEJG WASTVEDT · JAN 7, 2016



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Tompkins County commercial property owners can learn tonight about a low-cost way to improve their energy efficiency. The Energize New York program has an information session at 5:30 p.m. in The Space at Ithaca's GreenStar Market.

Energize New York has been operational since 2014, but upstate counties are just now getting on board. The program offers low-interest loans to building owners who want to make efficiency upgrades or install renewable energy technology. Executive Director Mark Thielking says the funding is comparable to a public utility, but the benefits it provides come over a longer timeframe.

“Water and sewer have been around for 100 years. This is now a new public benefit akin to that, where the public benefits are cleaner air, lower operating costs, more economic activity and overall lower pollution,” Thielking says.

Property owners pay the loans back on their annual property tax bills. Rates are low, and Thielking says the repayment burden transfers to a new owner if the property is sold. He says that's a big advantage over traditional loans for owners who aren't planning to stay long in their buildings.

“That's where a lot of our communities are missing opportunities because the property owner may have a 5-year time horizon, but the improvement lasts 20 years, like solar,” he says.

Thielking says Energize New York already has several applications from Tompkins County property owners, and that Broome County is planning to start offering financing once a local law authorizing it is passed. Tompkins is the first county outside the mid-Hudson region to participate in the program.

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