Representatives from the Town of Ithaca, Tompkins County and City of Ithaca on Thursday announced a joint effort to address climate change.

While specific efforts by the separate municipalities were highlighted at a Town Hall press conference, Ithaca Town Supervisor Herb Engman stressed the importance of aligning forces. The municipalities have shared resources, partnered to secure funding and shared ideas about reducing energy consumption, plan sustainability and support the development of green jobs, Engman said.

An example is the towns of Ithaca and Dryden and the City of Ithaca planning a performance contract to create about $8 million worth of energy-saving improvements that will pay for themselves over time at the joint sewage treatment plant.

The Ithaca Town Board announced a goal of a 30 percent reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2020 and of 80 percent by 2050, Engman said. The town recently completed a greenhouse gas emission inventory and is looking at making building codes require more green aspects, education and outreach programs and working with businesses that will support a green economy.

Tompkins County Legislature Chairwoman Martha Robertson, D-Dryden, said efforts started in 2000 when solar panels were installed on the roof of the county library. Last year, solar water heating was added to the solid waste facility, the new health department building and the mental health building, and 2 tons of organic waste was composted at the public works and solid waste buildings. The county plans to extend that effort to the human services building and then the jail, Robertson said.

"We established a goal of 80 percent reduction by 2050 and we have interim goals so that we don't get to 2045 and say, 'Now what do we do,'" she said.

In the City of Ithaca, the goal is to reduce emissions 20 percent by 2016, said Alderwoman Jennifer Dotson, D-1st. At the wastewater treatment plant, methane recovery is taking place to get energy from what is going down the drain, she said.

In addition, the city has adopted a green fleet policy promoting walking and biking among city staff members throughout the work day.