



By the people, for the future.

Commission on Local Government Modernization
Options Report and Preliminary Committee Recommendations
January 2016

www.consensuscomment.com

We Can Do Better



Onondaga County and
its cities, towns and villages is at a
crossroads.

The World is Changing



We must adapt. Our competitive position has been under stress for generations:

- **Declining Population**
 - Onondaga County: no net population growth since 1970
- **Increasing Poverty**
 - Syracuse: #23 in overall poverty; highest concentration of minority poverty
- **Lagging Economic Performance**
 - Lagging NYS and US in jobs and investment for more than a generation
- **Difficult Tax Climate**
 - Among the top-ten US counties in property tax rate

Meanwhile, global competitors are getting stronger.

Our Mission: Economic Growth

The road we're on is unsustainable...

- **20 out of 35** of our towns & villages will be in a deficit in the next decade
- **More than \$100 Million** of our taxes are spent on redundant services
- There is an opportunity **to save \$40 million** in government spending
- Taxpayers could save as much as **\$200 a year per household by consolidating** services
- We continue to lose **economic power and influence**



Our Mission: Economic Growth



The size of government
and the cost to taxpayers keeps
growing



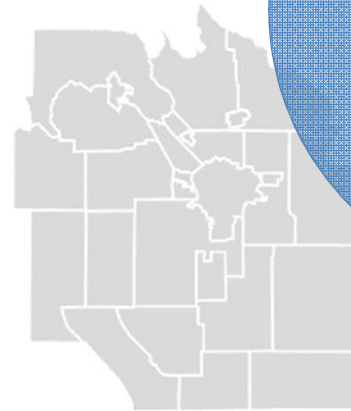
While the tax base falls and the
business climate inhibits new
development.

We Can Do Better



Consensus goal is to shape a vision for **more effective and efficient governance** across Onondaga County.

- Our local government structures were created more than 200 years ago
- Many communities have taken intentional, locally-driven steps to develop more modern systems
- Our community has the chance to take the lead in New York



“The Commission’s goal is to shape a vision for more effective and efficient governance across Onondaga County.”

About Consensus

Commission Members

- Co-Chairs: Neil Murphy, Cathy Richardson, Jim Walsh
- Aminy I. Audi, L. & J.G. Stickley, Inc.
- Laurence G. Bousquet, Bousquet Holstein PLLC
- William M. Byrne, Byrne Dairy
- Dr. Donna DeSiato, East Syracuse-Minoa Central School District
- Bethaida Gonzalez, Syracuse University - University College
- Darlene Kerr, Retired President, Niagara Mohawk
- Hon. Patrick Kilmartin, Onondaga County Legislature
- Melanie W. Littlejohn, National Grid
- Andrew Maxwell, Syracuse-Onondaga County Planning Agency
- Stephen Meyer, Welch Allyn, Inc.
- Dr. Dennis Nave, Greater Syracuse Labor Council/CNY Physician Teamster Alliance
- Hon. Mark Nicotra, Town Supervisors Association/Town of Salina
- Hon. Mark Olson, Village Mayors Association/Village of Fayetteville
- Sharon F. Owens, Syracuse Model Neighborhood Facility
- Ann Rooney, Onondaga County
- Chad Ryan, Syracuse Common Council

Partners

			
	 		 NYS Senator David J. Valesky
 NYS Senator John A. DeFrancisco	Onondaga County Village Mayors Association	Onondaga County Town Supervisors Association	

Progress



Charting the Process



Phase One: Baseline Review



Who Does What and What it Costs



1 COUNTY



1 CITY



19 TOWNS



15 VILLAGES



HUNDREDS OF SPECIAL SERVICE DISTRICTS, ZONING ORDINANCES, & SUBDIVISION REGULATIONS



POLICE DEPTS.



FIRE DEPTS.

\$1.7 billion

Collectively spent by local government from local, state and federal sources in 2013

Phase Two: Options Report



Infrastructure

- Street & Highway Maintenance
- Water Infrastructure
- Wastewater
- Solid Waste Collection



Public Safety

- Fire Department
- Emergency Medical Services
- Police Departments
- Correctional Departments



Municipal Operations

- Tax Assessment
- Financial Administration
- Court Administration
- Code Enforcement
- Clerks
- Social Services
- Public health



Economic Development

- Fiscal relationships among the County's governments
- Economic relationships among the County's governments
- Land use planning
- Policy impacts of local government actions.



Governance

- Overarching structure of local and regional governance
- The extent to which the County's key policy issues are adequately aligned with its policy making capacity.

Public Engagement

- Inclusive and Robust Public Outreach and Input Process

Options and Opportunities



Options Report and Preliminary Recommendations

Opportunities Include:



Shared purchasing
and training agreements

Options and Opportunities



Options Report and Preliminary Recommendations

Opportunities Include:



Shared purchasing
and training agreements



Shared maintenance and planning
of infrastructure and assets

Options and Opportunities



Options Report and Preliminary Recommendations

Opportunities Include:



Shared purchasing and training agreements



Creation of coordinated “metro” authorities, agencies, departments, and service areas



Shared maintenance and planning of infrastructure and assets

Options and Opportunities



Options Report and Preliminary Recommendations

Opportunities Include:



Shared purchasing and training agreements



Creation of coordinated "metro" authorities, agencies, departments, and service areas



Shared maintenance and planning of infrastructure and assets



Adoption of common software and digital recordkeeping systems

Options and Opportunities



Increased State Assumption of
Responsibility for Public Benefit
Programs

Options and Opportunities



Increased State Assumption of
Responsibility for Public Benefit
Programs



Relief from statutes and mandates that
drive up cost and limit government
efficiency

Options and Opportunities



Increased State Assumption of Responsibility for Public Benefit Programs



Increased attention on the needs and voices of our diverse communities and underrepresented constituencies



Relief from statutes and mandates that drive up cost and limit government efficiency

Options and Opportunities



Increased State Assumption of Responsibility for Public Benefit Programs



Increased attention on the needs and voices of our diverse communities and underrepresented constituencies



Relief from statutes and mandates that drive up cost and limit government efficiency



Enhanced city-county structure with opt-in provisions for towns and villages

This Has Been Done Before



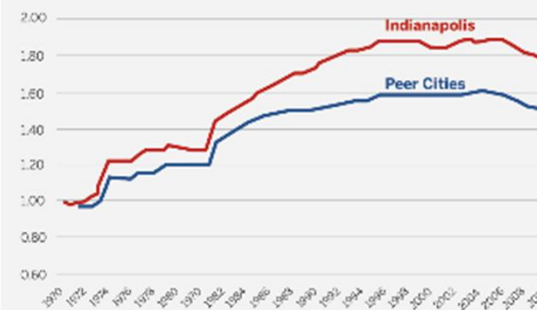
Case Study: Indianapolis

- 1970 - Indianapolis and Marion County form “Unigov”
- Indianapolis grew from #26 to #12 in US by 2000, even as other cities in the region lost population
- Indianapolis has seen significantly greater job growth and new business creation than peer cities since changing its structure
- Indianapolis has introduced new government services and increased spending at a greater rate than peer cities, with revenues driven by business growth

AVERAGE GROWTH OF LARGE CITIES BY DECADE

	1970-1980	1980-1990	1990-2000	2000-2010
Northeast	-7.63%	-0.34%	-0.43%	1.03%
Midwest	-4.65%	-1.27%	2.76%	0.27%
South	11.98%	8.49%	9.61%	7.06%
West	18.03%	20.88%	15.30%	6.69%
Indianapolis	-5.884%	4.355%	6.911%	4.934%
Average Peer City	-10.10%	-3.44%	-0.69%	-2.22%

NUMBER OF ESTABLISHMENTS
INDIANAPOLIS VS. PEER CITIES, NORMALIZED



This Has Been Done Before



Case Study: Louisville

- 2003: Louisville and Jefferson County, KY, formed new metro government
- City grew from #65 to #18 in US
- Stabilized rapidly growing expenditures, provided base for new economic growth
- Maintained service levels for residents and businesses
- 2011 survey of residents: 77% report “satisfaction” or “high satisfaction” with local government

**TOTAL GOVERNMENT EXPENDITURES
IN 2010 DOLLARS**



We Can Do Better

The Upstate Revitalization Initiative

- Governor Cuomo recognized our commitment toward using government modernization as a focal point of transforming the regional economy
- We look forward to an active and engaged community conversation



We've Done it Before

- 911 Center
- OCRRA
- Rosamond Gifford Zoo
- Public Libraries
- E. Syracuse/DeWitt Police
- ...and we can do it again



Public Comment: Make Your Voice Heard



The **Public Engagement** committee is conducting an inclusive and robust public outreach and input process



We need to hear from you...



Upcoming Public Meetings

- Feb. 9 Salina Town Hall
- Feb. 10 Camillus Town Hall
- Feb. 11 City Hall Commons, Downtown
- Feb. 29 Southwest Community Center

*Partial list: additional meetings being added
Complete schedule at ConsensusComment.com*

Consensus Commission on Local Government Committees



Infrastructure

- Street & Highway Maintenance
- Water Infrastructure
- Wastewater
- Solid Waste Collection



Public Safety

- Fire Department
- Emergency Medical Services
- Police Departments
- Correctional Departments



Municipal Operations

- Tax Assessment
- Financial Administration
- Court Administration
- Code Enforcement
- Clerks
- Social Services
- Public health



Economic Development

- Fiscal relationships among the County's governments
- Economic relationships among the County's governments
- Land use planning
- Policy impacts of local government actions.



Governance

- Overarching structure of local and regional governance
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Committee Reports



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Infrastructure



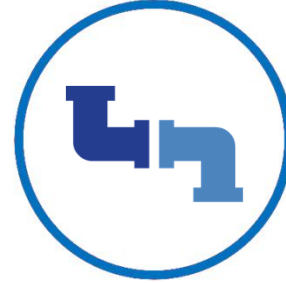
Service Areas Reviewed



Street and Highway
Maintenance



Water
Infrastructure



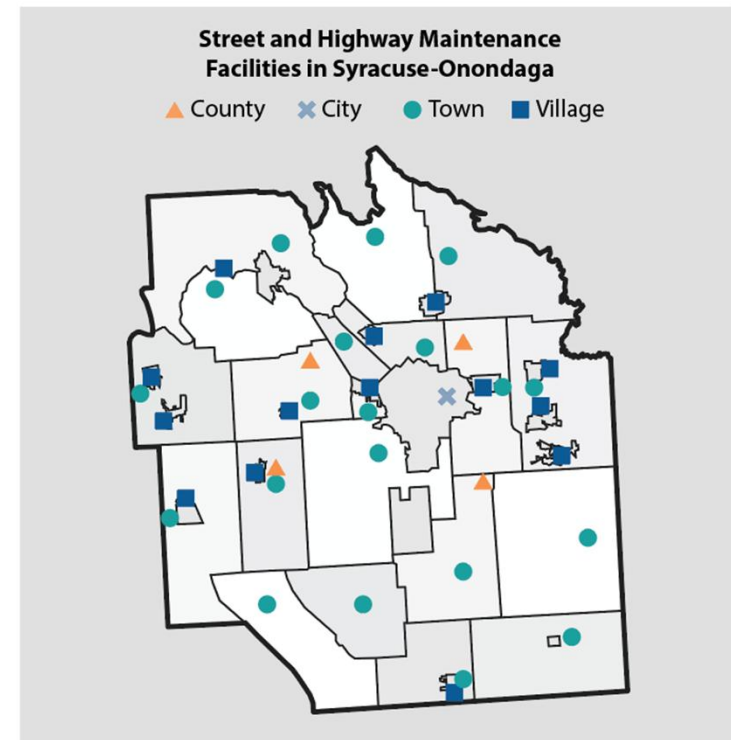
Wastewater
Infrastructure



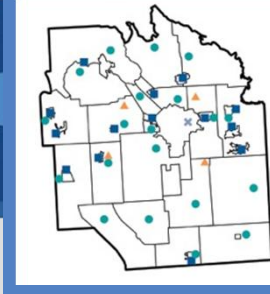
Solid Waste
Collection

Street and Highway Maintenance

- **36 separate service providers** including the County, City, 19 towns and 15 villages
- 2013: municipalities spent **\$141 million** on street and highway maintenance
- **Third-highest cost function** in the community



Street and Highway Maintenance



Challenges & Opportunities

- Independent workforces, fleets, staff experts and planning processes
- Municipal borders and legal boundaries dictate service areas more than considerations of efficiency and responsiveness
- There is only informal and inconsistent cooperation between municipalities

Preliminary Recommendations

- Create a coordinated "Core Highway Services Area" (CHSA)
- Integrates the City of Syracuse and the suburban communities
- Create a countywide oversight board from a newly appointed Highway Advisory Service Committee
- Leverage shared services, standardize contracts, coordinate capital planning and revise operational plans to address inefficiencies created by municipal border areas

Water Infrastructure

Three main providers of water services

- **The Metropolitan Water Board**
(and the Onondaga County Water District)
- **The Onondaga County Water Authority**
- City of Syracuse Water Department.
- They supply approximately 90% of residents in Onondaga County



Water Infrastructure



Challenges & Opportunities

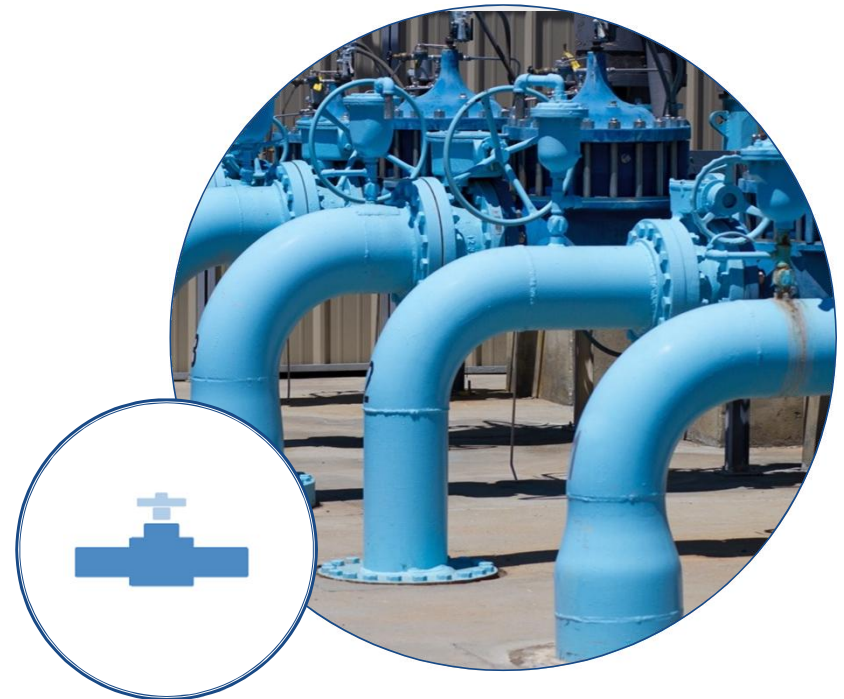
- The current water infrastructure network faces growing needs and deferred maintenance has compromised the system's integrity
- The fragmentation of the ratepayer base among suppliers and districts makes major investments cost prohibitive and exacerbates the deferred maintenance problem
- There is opportunity to consolidate duplicate functions

Preliminary Recommendations

- Continue the mergers of OCWA and the smaller water districts including the City Water Department
- Modernize, digitize, and upgrade the entire countywide system

Wastewater Infrastructure

- County Department of Water Environment Protection: **six treatment plants and more than 150 pumping stations**
- County sewer service is confined to all or portions of **21 of the County's 35 municipalities**
- 2013: Wastewater **costs totaled \$147 million** in 2013, making it the second-highest cost of all government functions



Wastewater Infrastructure



Challenges & Opportunities

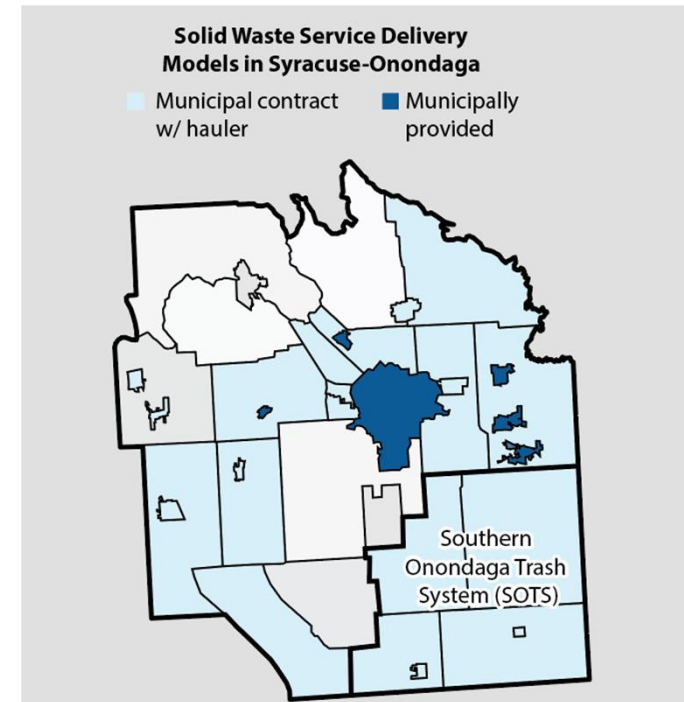
- Doesn't meet the Environmental Protection Agency's **"Ten Attributes for an Effective Wastewater Utility"**
- **Creates issues not only for sustainability of our infrastructure** - both in capital and financial terms - but our regulatory compliance
- **There is broad scale in the size of sanitary districts**, the smallest covering 19 homes and a pump station
- **Aging collection infrastructure** in the County has more extraneous infiltration and inflow, increasing the cost of treatment and general operating costs

Preliminary Recommendations

- **Audit the entire system** and develop a countywide asset management plan
- **Create a single countywide entity** responsible for oversight of treatment and collection systems and billing

Solid Waste Collection

- No uniform standard
- Six municipalities deliver the service themselves
- Twenty municipalities contract with an outside vendor to provide service to residents
- The remaining local governments have no involvement in sanitation services



Solid Waste Collection



Challenges & Opportunities

- There is **little inter-municipal coordination regarding solid waste services** aside from the Southern Onondaga Trash System (SOTS), which is a multi-town consortium in the southeast quadrant of the County that jointly contracts for service
- The diversity of approaches used across the County and the absent of coordination **compromises economies of scale that could otherwise yield lower costs**

Preliminary Recommendations

- **Expand the Southern Onondaga Trash System (SOTS)** into neighboring towns
- Help municipalities **join forces when bidding to lower prices**
- **Create service districts** in municipalities that have no involvement in sanitation

Public Safety



Service Areas



Fire
Protection



Emergency
Medical
Services



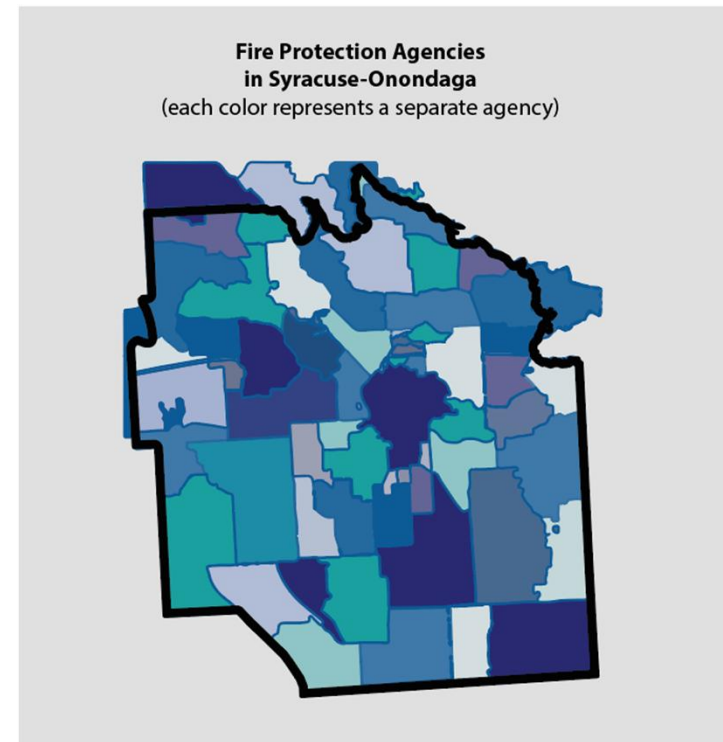
Law Enforcement



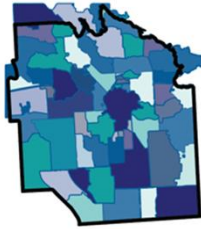
Corrections

Fire Protection

- 57 agencies provide fire protection to the county
- 2013: **55,286 requests for service**
- 50% of those were answered by the City of Syracuse
- No uniform system to fund equipment and personnel



Fire Protection



Challenges & Opportunities

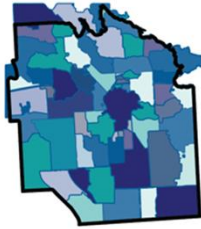
- Large number of fire departments
- Lack of coordination in the purchasing of equipment and planning capital facility projects resulting in higher costs and inefficient distribution of assets
- The ongoing challenge of recruiting and retaining volunteers is getting harder especially for daytime coverage

Preliminary Recommendations

- While broad changes to the current fire service model are not suggested at this time, we believe there is opportunity for incremental changes to the County's fire departments that will make them more efficient and more cost effective



Fire Protection



1 Initial Steps

•Over the next three years, **fire service providers should consider a series of steps** that will not require a substantial change in their operations

2 Immediate:

- Purchase in bulk to save money
- Share resources, i.e., training facilities
- Share specially trained units
- Lobby for mandatory sprinklers in new one and two family homes

3 Intermediate:

- Create a Metropolitan Fire Authority
- The members would include government officials, volunteer firefighters and career firefighters
- Its creation would take at least five to seven years
- The goal: Administrative support, planning help, capital budget coordination, firefighter training as well as looking into the possibility of reducing the number of separate districts

4 Long-Range:

- The Metropolitan Fire Authority should also review the continued viability of all-volunteer fire departments, with a goal of transitioning to a predominantly career, centrally managed department. A long-term option should include an “opt-in” system, whereby fire departments would choose to join based on their ability to sustain operations.

Emergency Medical Services

- **17 different** EMS providers countywide
- **72,000 calls in 2013** - a rate of 200/day
- Rural/Metro Medical Services responded to **60%** of the calls, and another **20%** were served by three large non-profit ambulance companies



Emergency Medical Services



Challenges & Opportunities

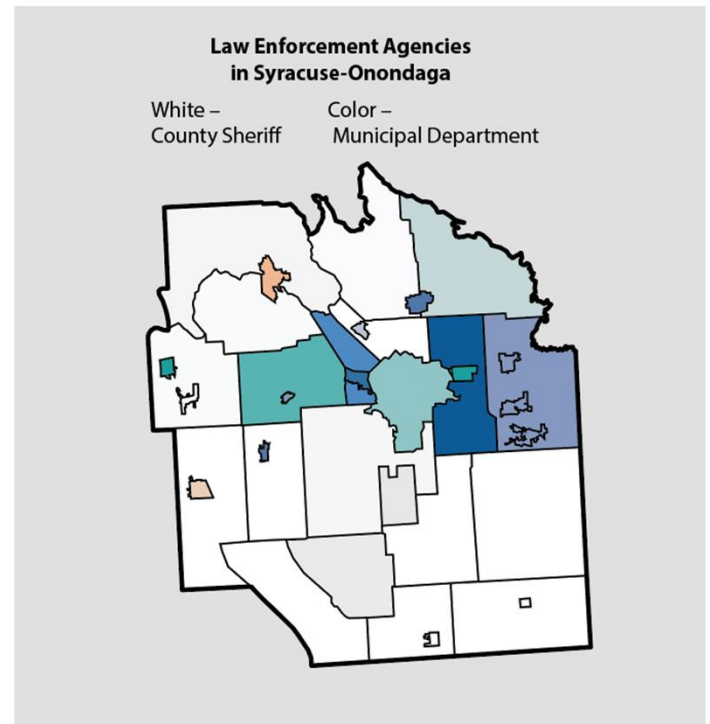
- While the community receives relatively rapid response from qualified providers, additional coordination of resources could lead to improved services
- Service levels in the City and pockets of the suburban areas meet expectations, however; coverage challenges exist in rural areas, where limited call volume make high service levels less economically viable
- Territorial boundaries lower the efficiencies of the overall delivery system

Preliminary Recommendations

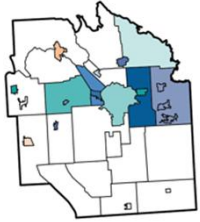
- Develop a countywide system with few providers serving a larger area
- Develop service quadrants to be serviced by a single contractor
- Create a central coordination agency that would provide support
- Consolidate group purchasing

Law Enforcement

- **15** local law enforcement agencies
- The County, through the Onondaga County Sheriff's Office
- Some municipalities maintain and fund their **own police departments**
- Among the municipal agencies, **the City of Syracuse Police Department** is the largest in force size, budget and call volume



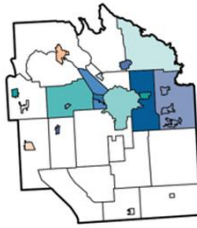
Law Enforcement



Challenges & Opportunities

- The total number of sworn officers in the community has **decreased by 10%**, or 102 officers since 2007, yet the number of law enforcement calls during that time has remained the same
- As a result of declining staff and steady demand, **officers across all agencies spend more time on calls and less time on proactive police work and community outreach**
- The cost of providing law enforcement across the **community continues to climb** at a rate higher than inflation

Law Enforcement



Preliminary Recommendations

• **A consolidation** of the Sheriff's Police Department and the City of Syracuse Police Department is a logical next step, as it would create a larger pool of resources, especially in personnel, that could be deployed more effectively

• Efficiencies gained through this consolidation could result in **more officers on the streets and better access to technology to solve crimes**

- The move toward a consolidated Metropolitan Police Department will face substantial challenges, and it will likely take several years to plan and execute. Political leaders, local government officials and different labor unions will need to **work together to create a model that best serves the interest of the community**
- Interim actions can deliver more immediate results such as increased **community policing, targeted patrolling of high crime areas and expanding the use of technology**

Corrections

- **Two facilities**
- **The Onondaga County Justice Center** employs a staff of 280 and has an average daily population of 614 inmates, 92% of whom are un-sentenced
- **The Jamesville Correctional Facility** has a staff of 184 and an average daily population of 476 inmates, 70% of whom are sentenced



Corrections



Challenges & Opportunities

- Onondaga County is the only county in New York that has **not unified its prison operations**
- There is cooperation with some shared administrative tasks, but **not across all operations**
- Separate union agreements** for the Department of Corrections staff and Sheriff Deputies creates wage and training disparities and prevents cross-facility staff utilization

Preliminary Recommendations

- Create **one unified operating structure** to manage both facilities
- Share staff, training resources and administrative tasks**

Municipal Operations

Service Areas



Tax
Assessment



Code
Enforcement



Clerk



Courts



Financial
Administration



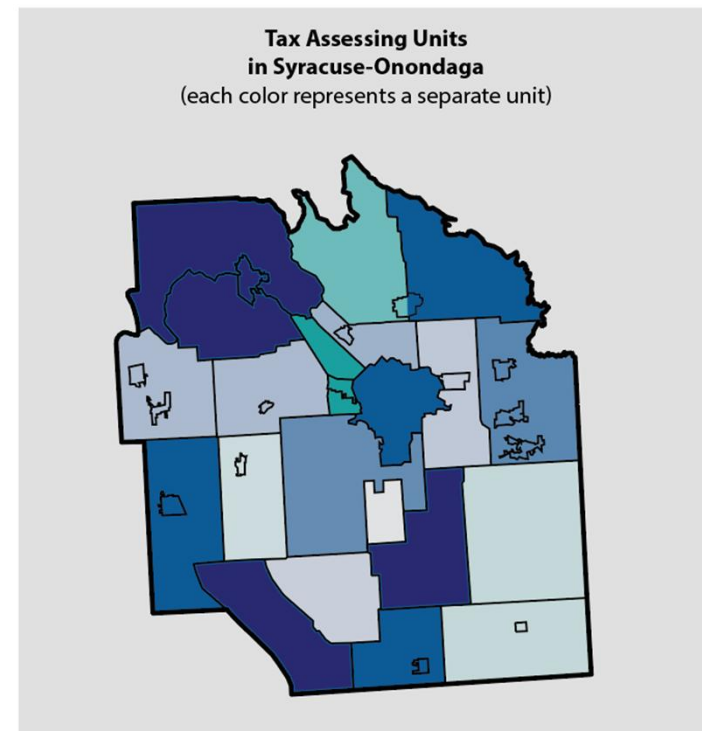
Social Services
and Health



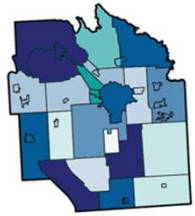
Libraries

Tax Assessment

- **17 separate tax assessment units** in the Syracuse-Onondaga community, including the City and 16 town-based providers
- The City is the largest, maintaining assessments for more than 42,000 parcels, while the smallest unit administers just 1,539 parcels



Tax Assessment



Challenges & Opportunities

- Significant functional and administrative duplication exists across assessment units, particularly in “back office” capacity required by each office
- There is vast disparity in the level of assessment across the community, with equalization rates ranging from as low as 2% to as high as 100%. Large scale differences are also apparent across assessment units as well

Preliminary Recommendations

- Create new Coordinated Assessment Programs (CAPS) serving multiple towns and/or expand CAPS to include neighboring towns
- Reduce the number of units would yield higher standardization, enable sharing of resources and expertise, mitigate succession challenges and optimize “back office” capacity

Financial Administration

- **Highly disaggregated** across the community
- Every local government has its own **treasurer, budget officer and/or finance department** to administer its financial management responsibilities



Financial Administration



Challenges & Opportunities

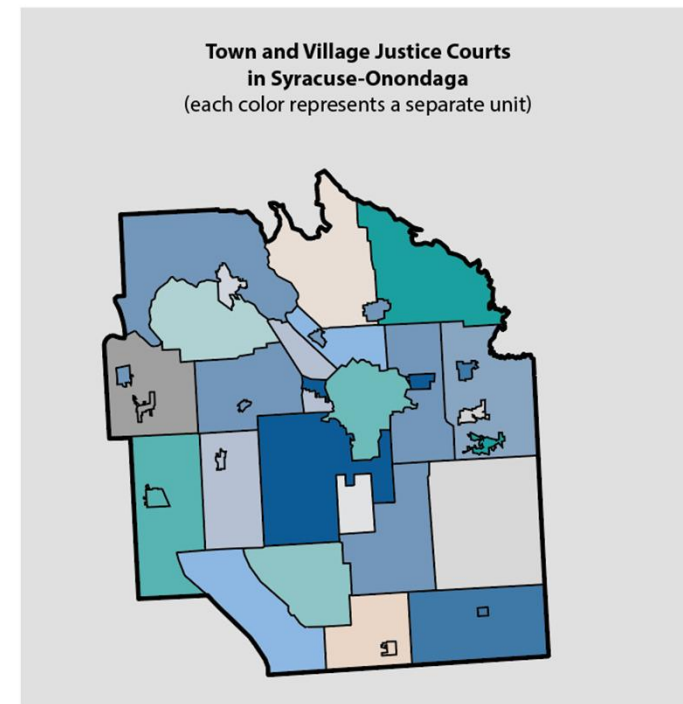
- There is no standard financial software system in use across local governments
- With the exception of the County and City School District's joint procurement framework, local government procurement processes are largely handled individually
- Information technology deployment is cost-prohibitive for smaller municipalities

Preliminary Recommendations

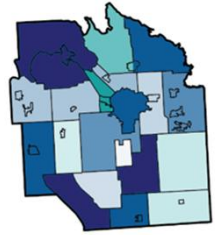
- Migrate local governments into a common accounting software with the goal of consolidating finance administration across all local agencies
- Centralize information technology to ensure baseline services are available to all local governments

Courts

- Every town government operates its **own court**
- **19 town courts and 9 village courts**
- All of which are locally-funded and **cost taxpayers over \$18 million**
- Separate City and County courts are **state-funded**



Courts



Challenges & Opportunities

- There is **little sharing of administrative capacity**, justices, or facilities at the present time
- **Most town and village courts run on a deficit**, despite generating revenue from fines and fees
- The average deficit across the community in 2013 was **\$54,000**, with a **cumulative total of \$1.4 million**

Preliminary Recommendations

- Pursue shared services to **reduce the number of separate justice courts**
- Promote **the convergence** of village and town courts
- Explore the possibility of a **regional court system**

Code Enforcement

- Nearly every municipality runs its **own code enforcement**
- Some **collaboration** between towns and their villages exists



Code Enforcement



Challenges & Opportunities

- Code enforcement expertise and staffing is limited, particularly in smaller municipalities where the function is less than full-time
- There is significant technical expertise required to implement effective code enforcement, making recruitment of qualified personnel difficult

Preliminary Recommendations

- Leverage opportunities to share “back office” functions across code offices, while pursuing shared code enforcement services between and among neighboring municipalities
- Create and promote a centralized educational program for code enforcement officers to ensure adequate succession pool

Clerk

- **36 separate municipal clerks**
-one for each general purpose local government, each of whom is supported by a deputy clerk and/or clerical personnel



Clerk



Challenges & Opportunities

- The adoption of **online/electronic opportunities** for filing and permitting is not being optimized across the community
- Overall information technology deployment across clerk offices is inconsistent

Preliminary Recommendations

- Enhance the level of **information technology sophistication** across all municipalities to deliver more services (e.g., licenses and permits) via the Internet

Social Services and Health

- Social Services is the **largest functional cost center** among local governments
- **\$267.6 million** in spending in 2013
- Public health is the fifth largest cost among local governments
- **\$66.5 million** in spending in 2013



Social Services and Health



Challenges & Opportunities

- Caseloads have stabilized, but at very high levels **causing continued stress on staff and resources**
- New York State's takeover of Medicaid administration is **not progressing as quickly as planned**

Preliminary Recommendations

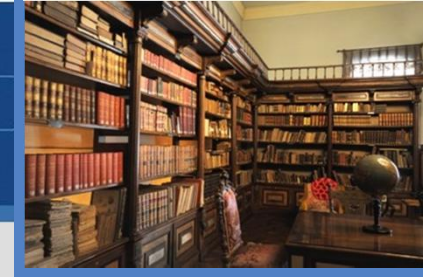
- Continue to work with the state on the **adoption of the Medicaid technology platform**

Libraries

- Library services are largely consolidated under **the Onondaga County Public Library (OCPL)**
- **Central downtown library**
- **Eight branches** within the City
- **Two satellite** locations
- **21 independent** suburban member libraries



Libraries



Challenges & Opportunities

•While sharing of resources and purchasing efficiencies are evident within the county system, **collaborations with regional libraries, including higher education institutions, present additional opportunities**

Preliminary Recommendations

•**Pursue opportunities for regional purchasing and material sharing** within a broadened framework that includes libraries at higher education institutions in the area

Economic Development



The Economic Development Committee focused on the region's local government services/policies and how issues such as fiscal growth capacity and land use impact its ability to grow and thrive.

Challenges & Opportunities

- **Economic performance** in the Syracuse-Onondaga Community continues to lag behind the state and nation
- **Fiscal growth capacity** across region is varied from community to community
- **Interregional competitiveness** creates zero-sum fiscal growth
- **Land use and land planning functions** are spread across all of the County's municipalities

Preliminary Recommendations

- Create a countywide **shared tax base framework** modeled after Minnesota's Fiscal Disparities Program
- **Establish a regional land use plan** that creates consistent, enforceable planning on a countywide basis
- **Combine the City and County Industrial Development Agencies and economic development offices**

Governance



Smaller labor force, higher levels of poverty and stagnant population growth have increased the management challenge for local government officials and concentrated the cost burden on those residents and businesses who remain.



Fragmented and redundant service delivery, administrative responsibility and policy making authority exists across the region.



The fiscal and service sustainability in the City of Syracuse must be improved, as the City is the region's economic engine and population hub.



Local government boundaries are, in many cases, too local to deal with issues that are truly regional in nature.

Governance



The Governance Committee focused on the overall structure of local government in the Syracuse-Onondaga community in order to assess the degree to which the current structure impacts efficiency and effectiveness, including the community's ability to make policy and manage investments.

Challenges & Opportunities

- Smaller labor force, higher levels of poverty and stagnant population
- Fragmented and redundant service delivery**, administrative responsibility and policy making authority exists across the region
- The fiscal and service sustainability in the City of Syracuse must be improved**, as the City is the region's economic engine and population hub
- Local government boundaries are too local** to deal with issues that are truly regional in nature
- The long-term fiscal stability of the region is tenuous** - Absent any changes, 20 of the 35 municipalities (excluding the County) will find themselves in deficit situations over the next decade

Preliminary Recommendations

- Establish a process toward **creating a new city-county government and service delivery structure**
- Create a formal mechanism** and process whereby towns and villages can join the new city-county framework over time
- The **new city-county government** will administer the regional land use plan, overseeing infrastructure planning and economic development planning using a countywide model
- Local government leaders must work together** to seek local relief from statutes and mandates that drive up cost and limit government efficiency

We Want to Hear From You!



ConsensusComment.com



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Public
Meetings



eMail/Mail



Phone

Comments accepted until Wednesday, March 16th
Include your Name and City, Town or Village