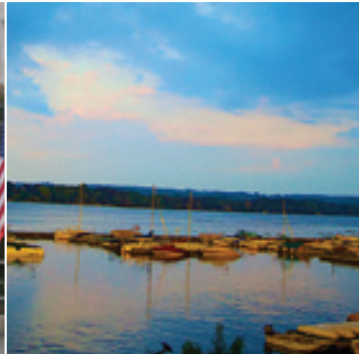


SUMMARY

CONSENSUS OPTIONS REPORT AND PRELIMINARY COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS

JANUARY 2016



Consensus**US**

By the people, for the future.

OVERVIEW—WE CAN DO BETTER

ONONDAGA COUNTY AND ITS
CITIES, TOWNS AND VILLAGES
ARE AT A CROSSROADS.

“Syracuse and Onondaga
County should be attractive to
investment and development...
Yet, economic progress is slow
at best—backwards at worst.”

The size of government and the cost to taxpayers keep growing while the tax base falls and the business climate inhibits new development.

One thing is clear: the current path is unsustainable.

The question: What needs to be done, and when should we do it?

For the past 18 months, community, business and political leaders have discussed the best way to answer these questions—to start finding the options that could change our trajectory.

Leaders at all levels of government—federal, state, county, city, town, and village—have pledged their involvement and cooperation. However, this is only the start. Together, we need to examine our strengths and weaknesses to find the answers. We need to move ahead and continue the discussion about how to create a better future for Onondaga County.

Local government across New York State is laden with overlap. Decade upon decade of well-intended investment in local government has resulted in an infrastructure that effectively delivers services, but does so in ways that are inconsistent and sometimes duplicative.

Syracuse and Onondaga County should be attractive to investment and development. We have a strong, intelligent, and productive workforce; we are well-situated in the heart of the Northeast; our real estate is affordable and our natural resources are abundant. Yet, economic progress is slow at best—backwards at worst. In the meantime, the needs of diverse and low-income citizens have gone unmet, resulting in high rates of poverty and suffering. Things need to change.

Our public servants have an opportunity to lead us in the direction of a bold new vision for the Syracuse-Onondaga community. One that will make our community even better and more reflective of what we desire and deserve. We can do better. The next step in that journey is here.

CONTENT

- 2: Overview—We Can Do Better
- 3: History and Process
- 5: Options and Opportunities
- 6: Public Comment—Make Your Voice Heard
- 7: Next Steps
- 7: Summary of Committee Reports
- 7: Infrastructure
- 11: Public Safety
- 15: Municipal Operations
- 18: Economic Development
- 19: Governance

- Local governments spend more than \$100 million on redundant services.
- There is an opportunity to reduce government spending by as much as \$20 million right now.
- Taxpayers could each save as much as \$200/year per household by consolidating services.
- 20 out of 35 of our towns and villages could be in a deficit in the next decade.

HISTORY AND PROCESS

Consensus—the Commission on Local Government Modernization—was launched in 2014 as a partnership of SYRACUSE 20/20, CenterState CEO, the County of Onondaga, the City of Syracuse, FOCUS Greater Syracuse, the League of Women Voters of the Syracuse Metropolitan Area, the Onondaga Citizens League, and the Home Builders and Remodelers of Central New York. The commission’s goal is to shape a vision for more effective and efficient governance across Onondaga County.

The commission has worked in two phases. The first phase consisted of a data-based benchmark study of the current condition of local government in the region, called **Who Does What and What It Costs**.

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

The second phase consists of an “options review” comprised of an honest assessment of local government services along with a “best practices” review from peer communities across the country. With these facts as a guide, the commission wants to educate the residents of Onondaga County so that together we can improve the efficiency, effectiveness, and responsiveness of local government. The commission established volunteer-driven committees in these areas:

INFRASTRUCTURE:

- Street and highway maintenance
- Water infrastructure
- Wastewater infrastructure
- Solid waste collection
- Parks

Report begins on page 7.

PUBLIC SAFETY:

- Fire protection
- Emergency medical services
- Law enforcement
- Corrections

Report begins on page 11.

MUNICIPAL OPERATIONS:

- Tax assessment
- Financial administration
- Courts
- Code enforcement
- Clerks
- Social services and health
- Libraries

Report begins on page 15.

HISTORY AND PROCESS

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

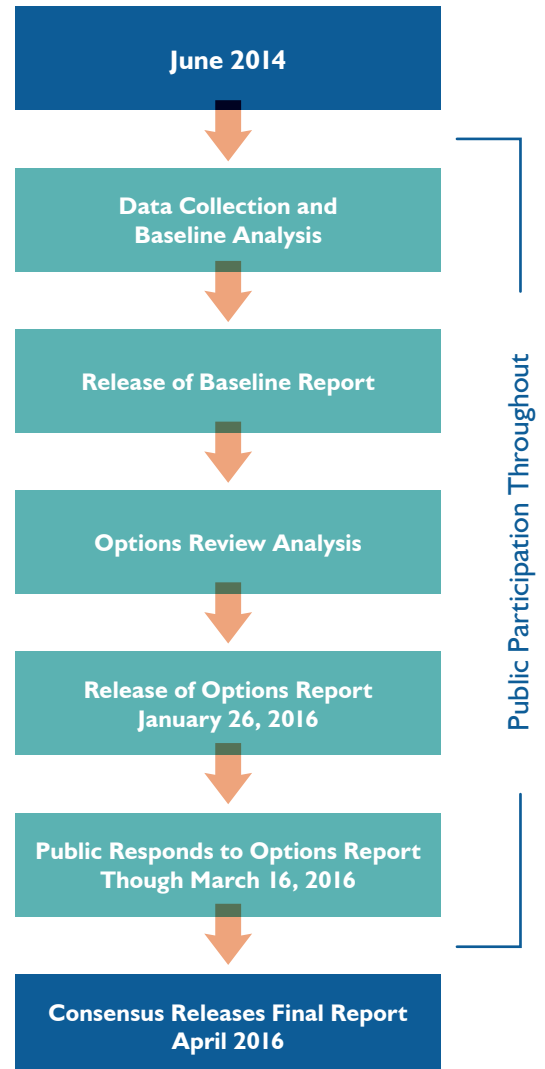
Report begins on page 18.

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

Report begins on page 19.

A sixth committee, **PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT**, is conducting an inclusive and robust public outreach and input process. Details are on page 6.



OPTIONS AND OPPORTUNITIES

Thousands of hours of discussion, careful consideration, and review have resulted in this **Options Report and Preliminary Committee Recommendations**. The report looks at successful examples of collaboration and innovation that improved efficiency at all levels of government. The report also looks at what opportunities exist to improve service delivery through proven approaches and best practices that could include:

- Shared purchasing and training agreements
- Shared maintenance and planning of infrastructure and assets
- Creation of centrally managed “metro” authorities, agencies, departments, and service areas
- Adoption of common software and digital recordkeeping systems
- Increased state assumption of responsibility for public benefit programs
- Consolidated city-county governance with opt-in provisions for towns and villages
- 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

None of these approaches are without precedent. In fact, virtually all have already been executed at varying levels in Syracuse and Onondaga County.

It is important to note that the categories above represent only examples of the more than 50 recommendations in the Options report. The full commission has not voted on any recommendations, no final report has been drafted, and no final decisions have been made.

Now, it is your turn. We need to hear from you. What do you like? What don't you like? How would the proposed changes affect you or your community? What opportunities do you see?

What matters is not whether you support or oppose the recommendations, rather that you engage and help us determine the next steps.

“We need to hear from you. What do you like? What don't you like? How would the proposed changes affect you or your community? What opportunities do you see?”

PUBLIC COMMENT—MAKE YOUR VOICE HEARD



The Options Report was released on Tuesday, January 26. *Public input will be accepted until Wednesday, March 16.* To be eligible for consideration by the commission, all comments, with the exception of Facebook posts, must be submitted with the name; city, town or village of residence; and email (if available) of the person making the submission.

All residents of Syracuse and Onondaga County are encouraged to make their voices heard via any of the forums below:

PUBLIC MEETINGS

A schedule of public meetings is at **ConsensusComment.com**

HOST A MEETING

If you have a group of 20 or more people who would like to discuss the Options Report, please call (315) 470-1980, or email info@consensuscny.com to request a meeting.

PUBLIC LIBRARIES

Copies of the Options Report are available at all Onondaga County Public Library branches.

WEBSITE

Comments are being accepted at **ConsensusComment.com**. All website comments must include the submitter's name; city, town or village of residence; and email address. Comments posted on the website meeting these criteria will be public. We seek input that is civil, constructive, and respectful. Comments that include personal attacks, vulgar language or are determined to be inappropriate by the commission will not be posted or considered.

SOCIAL MEDIA

Comments are being accepted at **www.facebook.com/consensuscny**. Comments posted on Facebook will be public. We seek input that is civil, constructive, and respectful. Comments that include personal attacks, vulgar language or are determined to be inappropriate by the commission will not be posted or considered.

MAIL

Send written comments to:

Consensus
c/o SYRACUSE 20/20
120 Madison Street, 15th Floor
Syracuse, NY 13202

TELEPHONE AND FAX

Voice: (315) 470-1980
Fax: (315) 476-1681

EMAIL

Send comments by email to: **info@consensuscny.com**. Include name and city, town or village of residence of the person making the submission.

SPANISH LANGUAGE

A Spanish language version of the report is available at **ConsensusComment.com**.

NEXT STEPS

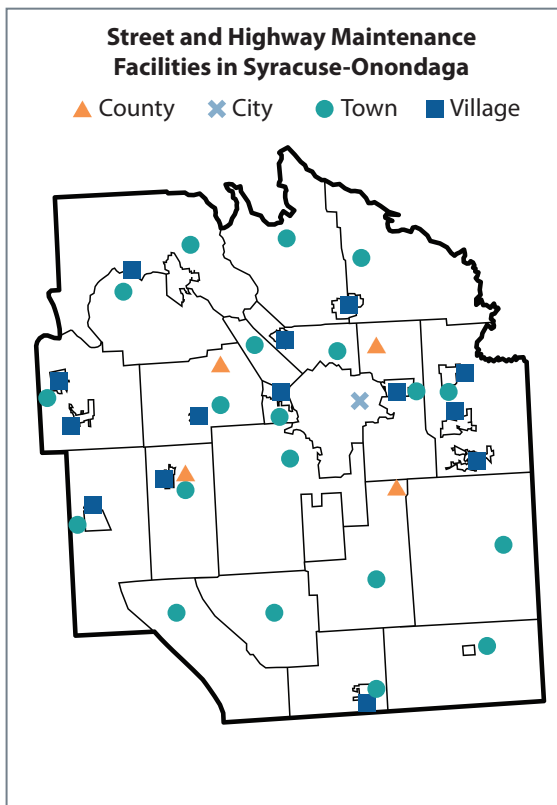
The commission will review and consider all public comments and will issue its final recommendations in spring 2016. Recommendations will then be subject to review, approval, and action by the people of Syracuse and Onondaga County and local government leaders.

SUMMARY OF COMMITTEE REPORTS

The Consensus Commission has established six volunteer-driven committees in order to enable more effective data collection as well as facilitate effective and strong discussion on these important issues. The committees are chaired by voting members of the commission and include outside experts to help facilitate more detailed discussions.

INFRASTRUCTURE

The Infrastructure Committee focused on four critical service areas: Street and Highway Maintenance, Water Infrastructure, Wastewater Infrastructure, and Solid Waste Collection.



STREET AND HIGHWAY MAINTENANCE

Currently there are 36 separate service providers including the county, city, 19 towns, and 15 villages. Collectively, municipalities spent \$141 million in 2013 on street and highway maintenance, making it the third-highest cost function in the community.

Challenges and Opportunities

- The 36 service providers have independent workforces, fleets, staff experts, and planning processes. There is great potential for shared services and cost savings.
- 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) that 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

There are three main entities (two major retail providers) with primary responsibility for providing water services—the Metropolitan Water Board (and the Onondaga County Water District), the Onondaga County Water Authority (OCWA), and the City of Syracuse Water Department.

Collectively, they supply approximately 90% of residents in Onondaga County. The Metropolitan Water Board supplies two-thirds of the water volume and has 32 major industrial users.

Challenges and Opportunities

- The current water infrastructure network in the Syracuse-Onondaga community 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 across the two major retail providers in terms of administration, meter reading, billing, and treatment plant operations.

Preliminary Recommendations

- Continue merging the various municipal water authorities, including the City of Syracuse Water Department, with OCWA.
- Modernize, digitize, and upgrade the entire countywide system.

WASTEWATER INFRASTRUCTURE

An efficient and safe wastewater infrastructure is essential for economic viability as well as for the environment. Wastewater treatment for most municipalities in the area is provided by the county Department of Water Environment Protection, which operates six treatment plants and more than 150 pumping stations in the Consolidated Sanitary District. County sewer service is confined to this district and includes all, or portions of, 21 of the county's 35 municipalities. Wastewater costs in this community totaled \$147 million in 2013, making it the second-highest cost of all government functions.

Challenges and Opportunities

- We are not currently structured to meet the Environmental Protection Agency's "Ten Attributes of Effectively Managed Water Sector Utilities." This creates issues not only for sustainability of our infrastructure—both in capital and financial terms—but our regulatory compliance.
- There is a broad range in the size of sanitary districts—the smallest covers 19 homes and a pump station.
- The aging collection infrastructure (e.g., sewer pipes, pumping stations) in the county allows excessive groundwater infiltration and inflow, increasing the cost of treatment and general operating costs.

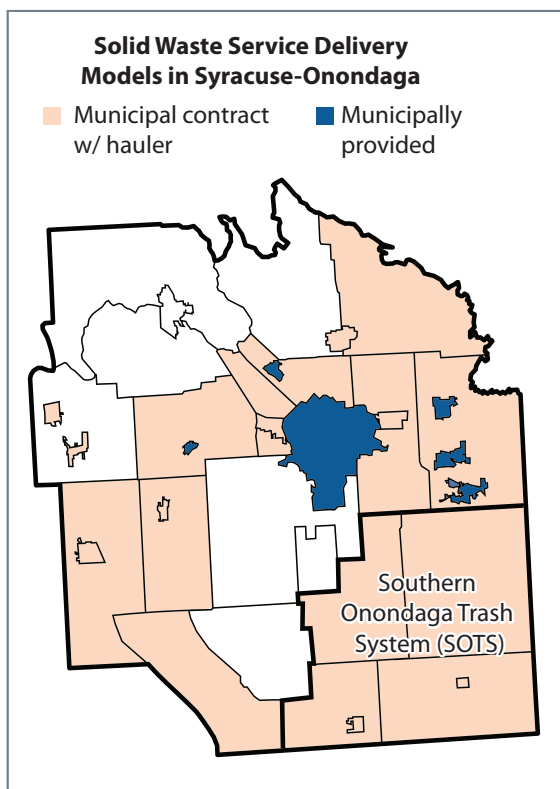
Preliminary Recommendations

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

SOLID WASTE COLLECTION

Sanitation services are handled in a variety of ways across the area. Six municipalities, including the city and five villages, deliver the service themselves. Twenty municipalities—13 towns and seven villages—contract with an outside vendor to provide service to residents. The remaining seven local governments have no involvement in sanitation services—either as a provider or broker.

Local governments responsible for solid waste collection spent \$22.2 million in 2013 on sanitation and recycling services. The true overall costs for solid waste collection for the area are much higher, however, as this figure does not include costs of contracts between property owners and private haulers.



Challenges and Opportunities

- There is little intermunicipal 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 absence of coordination compromise 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.
- In towns not currently involved in collection, develop service districts and bid collection services to help drive down local service costs.

ADDITIONAL INFRASTRUCTURE RECOMMENDATIONS

Parks Maintenance—Merge all agencies in the Syracuse-Onondaga community into a single entity that retains individual community/park identities while maximizing economies of scale.

Broadband Access—Pursue available funding from New York State to provide affordable high-speed Internet access to underserved areas.

Mass Transit—There should be a regional discussion on a sustainable long-term plan to support CENTRO.

PUBLIC SAFETY

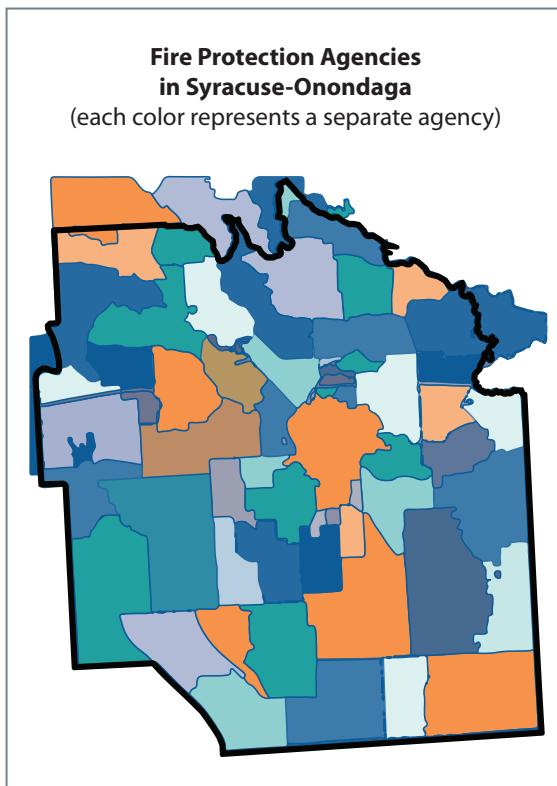
The Public Safety Committee focused on four critical areas: Fire Protection, Emergency Medical Services (EMS), Law Enforcement, and Corrections.

FIRE PROTECTION

This community is served by nearly five dozen separate agencies. Excluding the Onondaga Nation Fire Department, 57 agencies provide fire protection to portions of the county. In 2013, these agencies responded to 55,286 requests for service—50% of those were answered by the City of Syracuse.

There are a variety of delivery models used across the county. They include:

- **Municipal Departments**—The city and some villages directly provide the service themselves, and fund fire services through property taxes.
- **Fire Districts**—Separate units of local government with their own elected board of commissioners—some of which have their own associated fire departments. They collect a district tax, but have no input on the district budget.
- **Fire Protection Districts**—Geographic areas created by towns to receive service pursuant to a formal contract between the town and one or more fire service providers. Town governments levy property taxes in the areas served.



Challenges and Opportunities

- The community is served by a large number of fire departments responsible for an area ranging from less than one square mile to 38 square miles, each of which is facing rising costs.
- There is a lack of coordination in the purchasing of equipment and planning capital facility projects, resulting in higher costs and inefficient distribution of assets.
- 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 are opportunities for incremental changes to the county's fire departments that will make them more efficient and more cost effective.

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.

Immediate

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

Intermediate

- Create a Metropolitan Fire Authority.

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, and firefighter training as well as looking into the possibility of reducing the number of separate districts.
- 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 (EMS)

Seventeen different EMS providers responded to more than 72,000 calls in 2013—a rate of 200 per day. Rural/Metro Medical Services responded to 60% of the calls, and another 20% were served by three large nonprofit ambulance companies. Overall, more than 90% of all EMS calls were answered by entities that bill for service and pay at least a portion of their staff.

Challenges and 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 volumes make high service levels less economically viable.
- Territorial boundaries lower the efficiencies of the overall delivery system.

Preliminary Recommendations

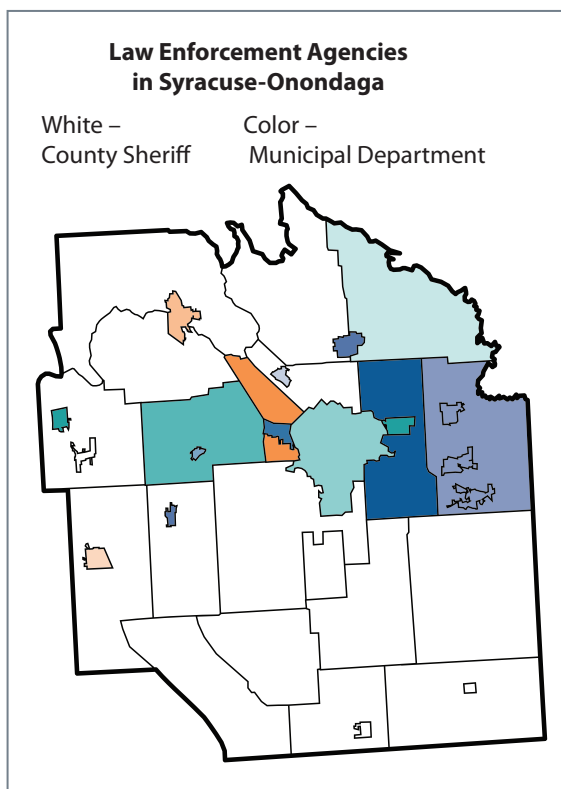
- Develop a countywide system with few providers serving a larger area.
- Develop service quadrants to be serviced by a single contractor.
- Create a central coordination agency that would provide support.
- Consolidate group purchasing.

LAW ENFORCEMENT

The Syracuse-Onondaga community is currently served by 15 local law enforcement agencies that span two levels of government: the county, through the Onondaga County Sheriff's Office, and those municipalities that 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.

Challenges and 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.



Preliminary Recommendations

The law enforcement community has a history of collaboration and cooperation; examples include the 911 center, various joint task forces, and sharing of specialty teams.

- 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 interests 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

The county is exclusively responsible for providing and administering corrections and incarcerations at 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 unsentenced. The Jamesville Correctional Facility has a staff of 184 and an average daily population of 476 inmates, 70% of whom are sentenced.

Challenges and Opportunities

- Onondaga County is the only county in New York that has not unified its jail 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 create wage and training disparities and prevent cross-facility staff utilization.

Preliminary Recommendations

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

MUNICIPAL OPERATIONS

The Municipal Operations Committee focused on those services that were neither infrastructure nor public safety–related, including Tax Assessment, Financial Administration, Courts, Code Enforcement, Clerks, Social Services and Health, and Libraries.

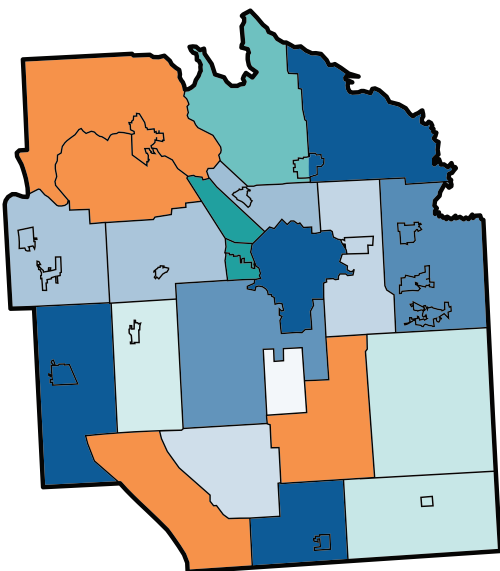
TAX ASSESSMENT

Currently there are 17 separate tax assessment units in the Syracuse-Onondaga community, including the city and 16 town-based providers. There are broad scale differences in the jurisdiction of these agencies; the city is the largest, maintaining assessments for more than 42,000 parcels. The smallest unit administers just 1,539 parcels.

Challenges and Opportunities

- Significant functional and administrative duplication exists across assessment units, particularly in back-office capacity required by each office.

**Tax Assessing Units
in Syracuse-Onondaga**
(each color represents a separate unit)



- 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.
- Reducing the number of units would yield higher standardization, enable sharing of resources and expertise, mitigate succession challenges, and optimize back-office capacity.
- Create a centralized approach to tax certiorari lawsuit defense, since these proceedings often require specialized and costly legal counsel.

FINANCIAL ADMINISTRATION

Financial Administration is highly disaggregated across the community, as every local government has its own treasurer, budget officer, and/or finance department to administer its financial management responsibilities.

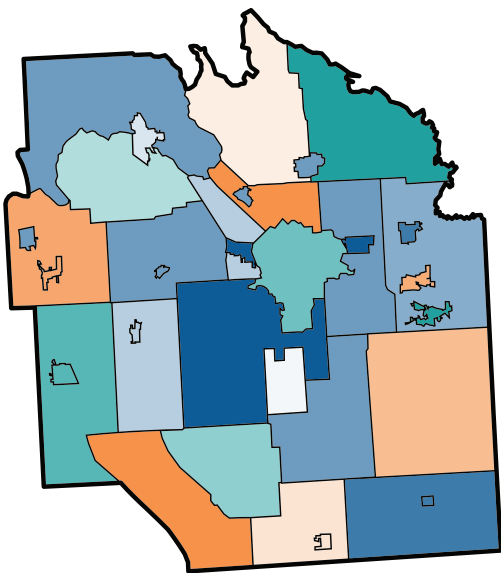
Challenges and Opportunities

- There is no standard financial software system in use across local governments.
- With the exception of the county, city 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. This would enable shared services, including training, create cross-office efficiencies, and improve overall effectiveness.
- Centralize information technology to ensure baseline services are available to all local governments.

**Town and Village Justice Courts
in Syracuse-Onondaga**
(each color represents a separate unit)



COURTS

Every town government in the Syracuse-Onondaga community operates its own court. There are 19 town courts and nine village courts, all of which are locally funded and cost taxpayers \$18.3 million in 2013. Separate city and county courts are state funded.

Challenges and 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 in the Syracuse-Onondaga community runs its own code enforcement, though some collaboration between towns and their villages exists.

Challenges and 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 an adequate succession pool.

CLERKS

There are 36 separate municipal clerks in the Syracuse-Onondaga community—one for each general-purpose local government—each of whom is supported by a deputy clerk and/or clerical personnel.

Challenges and 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 represents the single largest functional cost center among local governments, with \$267.6 million in spending in 2013. Public health is the fifth largest cost—\$66.5 million in 2013. Though much of the programming is determined by the state, the county is primarily responsible for administering and delivering these services.

Challenges and 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. While behind schedule, it has resulted in some reduction in staffing.

LIBRARIES

Library services are largely consolidated under the Onondaga County Public Library (OCPL). The OCPL operates the central downtown library, eight branches within the city, two satellite locations, and 12 independent suburban member libraries.

Challenges and Opportunities

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

Preliminary Recommendation

- 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 and Opportunities

- Economic performance in the Syracuse-Onondaga community continues to lag behind the state and nation.
- Fiscal growth capacity across the region varies from community to community, creating pockets of relative wealth and need—some communities are capable of investing in services and offset the cost of growth, while others cannot.
- Interregional competitiveness creates zero-sum fiscal growth, with economic investment migrating from one community to another as opposed to attracting new investment to the region.
- Land use and land planning functions are spread across all of the county's municipalities. The disaggregation of these functions across local governments creates inconsistent, and redundant, practices and makes regional land use strategies unenforceable.

Preliminary Recommendations

- Create a countywide shared tax base framework modeled after Minnesota's Fiscal Disparities Program, designed to reinforce regional economic benefits and mitigate the fiscal imperatives facing municipalities.
- Establish a regional land use plan that creates consistent, enforceable planning on a countywide basis. Provide countywide coordination of municipalities' individual land use plans to optimize infrastructure, while allowing municipalities to retain zoning and planning functions.
- Combine the city and county industrial development agencies and economic development offices.

GOVERNANCE

The Governance Committee focused on the overall structure of local government in the Syracuse-Onondaga community 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 and Opportunities

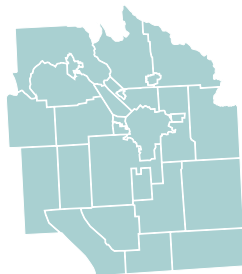
- Smaller labor force, higher levels of poverty and stagnant population growth have increased the management challenge for local government officials and concentrated the cost burden on those residents and businesses that remain.
- Fragmented and redundant service delivery, administrative responsibility, and policy-making authority exist 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. The bigger challenges facing our region require that policy decisions be made with broader geographic interests in mind.
- 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

The committee has developed a series of process recommendations that offer the community an opportunity to take immediate steps to strengthen our urban core, while creating a pathway to evolve to a model whereby we govern, deliver services, make policy, and compete as one community. The preliminary recommendations, which have not been formally accepted by the full commission, include:

- Establish a process toward creating a new city-county government and service delivery structure that leverages functional and scale similarities of the City of Syracuse and Onondaga County.
- Create a formal mechanism and process whereby towns and villages can join the new city-county framework over time. This will likely take the form of an opt-in process which allows municipalities to engage their constituents in the decision whether, and when, to join the “one-community” model of governance.
- Vest the new city-county government with responsibility for specific regional matters, including administering 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.



For more information on how to comment, see page 6.