

The Shifting Resources and Responsibilities of Governments in Onondaga County

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Summary

There is continuing concern that Onondaga County has too many governments. The existence of these local governments - a county, the City of Syracuse, towns, villages, special districts - creates several issues. Some argue there is duplication of services from governments with overlapping jurisdictions and too little inter-governmental cooperation. With many relatively autonomous local governments in existence and the population continually redistributing itself, there is concern about inequities in tax bases and the match of responsibilities and tax bases. With the size of the overall county population stagnant, there is also concern that fragmentation of local government authority makes it difficult to formulate a coherent economic development plan and create proposals to attract business to the community.

This study assesses changes in government responsibilities and inter-governmental cooperation within Onondaga County during recent decades. It examines: how much change has occurred over time within the county and how change came about.

The conclusions are that considerable reallocation of tax bases and responsibilities has occurred, with change occurring for specific functions and not for complete governments. The county is steadily assuming responsibility for functions once handled in very decentralized ways. Change invariably comes slowly, however. Solutions develop in unique ways in each policy area. Change is driven by altered perceptions about the existence of "problems" and whether for some a county-wide solution is appropriate. State government pressures also play a major role in prompting change.

Acknowledgments and Notes

The prior study and this one could not have been possible without a tremendous amount of cooperation from local officials. Many, many individuals shared their time, knowledge, and files with me. I appreciate their cooperation greatly. They are not mentioned to assure that their candid comments do not become an issue for them in their jobs. For the initial study John Mulroy, the former county executive, in particular, was generous with his time, for which I am grateful. Stephanie Miner, an undergraduate at Syracuse University at the time, provided excellent research assistance for the first report. For the update of the initial report, the assistance of Tommy LaClair and Mary MacCallum was invaluable. In updating this Steve Fountain of the Local Governments Division of the State Comptroller's Office was consistently very helpful in providing information and patient in explain data. The update could not been done without his assistance.

Throughout this study, footnotes are used to explain some of the technical issues of how fiscal matters are handled within the county. Despite being presented as footnotes, they should be read carefully. They involve very important issues within the county.

Contents

1. Continuing Concerns	1
2. Shifts in Population and Tax Bases	4
3. The Resulting Issues: Inequities, Fragmentation and the Need for Metropolitan Approaches	7
4. Response: Changes in The Number of Governments	9
5. Response: Shifts in Fiscal Responsibilities and Burdens	12
6. Response: Shifts in the Resources	16
7. Response: The Redistribution of Government Responsibilities	30
8. Response: Chronologies of Change	39
Development of Onondaga County Government	
Arrangement of Government Responsibilities	
Formation of Onondaga County Public Library	
Sewage disposal	
Water delivery	
Burnet Park Zoo	
911 system	
Solid waste disposal	
Crime Lab	
City-County Courthouse	
Board of Elections	
Sources and Bibliography	70

I. Continuing Concerns

The number of local governments and their impact on the local area has been a persistent concern in Onondaga County. Questions have been raised about the number of local governments, the fairness of the distribution of burdens and resources, and about the autonomy of local governments and their willingness to work together. In 1945 The Report of the Syracuse - Onondaga Post - War Planning Council expressed concerns about the number of governments making plans (p. 105), inequities in services across local governments (p. 24), the need for "single city-county" departments (p. 25), and the need for coordinating plans (pp. 31, 59, 106).¹ In 1971 the Syracuse - Onondaga Planning Agency concluded " .. a disparities problem does exist in Central New York." They also suggested " ... steps are needed in order for more intergovernmental cooperation than now exists."²

These concerns emerged again in a 1990 study by the Syracuse Chamber of Commerce, which argued that "Governments have grown beyond their means during the 1980s. Consolidation of services has become a viable, a necessary mechanism for reducing spending during the 1990s." They also argued that many of their members "are experiencing substantial time and cost burdens due to overlapping government requirements."³ In 2005, the Onondaga Citizen's League citing "escalating government expenses, stagnant local tax revenues, and a dwindling population base ..." indicated that "Governmental consolidation was being promoted as a way to increase efficiency and lower costs."⁴ They argued that "The multitude of local governments in Onondaga County results in fragmented, piecemeal, parochial, and incomplete

¹ Syracuse - Onondaga Post - War Planning Council, The Report of the Syracuse - Onondaga Post - War Planning Council. Syracuse, New York. December 15, 1945.

² Syracuse-Onondaga County Planning Agency, Intergovernmental Disparities in Central New York. November, 1971. cover page, 2-48, 2-49, and p. 6-1.

³ Syracuse Chamber of Commerce, 1991 Issues Agenda, p.3, issued November 21, 1990.

⁴ Preface, Onondaga Citizens League, Strategic Government Consolidation, 2005 Study Report, Report No. 26.

decision making on matters that affect the entire county. Economic growth can only happen if we in Onondaga County think, and more importantly, act, more regionally.⁵ During the 2007 County Executive campaign all the candidates have noted the need to streamline the ability of the county and other local governments to respond to economic development opportunities. It would be easy to conclude that the situation has not changed over time.

At the same time there has been tremendous change within Onondaga County. The City of Syracuse has declined in population and that within the towns has grown. Existing businesses have relocated, and new businesses have developed outside Syracuse. A higher proportion of business activity now takes place outside the City of Syracuse.

As these changes have evolved, many argue that local government arrangements have failed to adapt to these changes. Problems have become more complex and metropolitan wide in nature and require metropolitan solutions, yet we still have the same number of local governments that we had decades ago. Consolidation does not occur, local governments fight to maintain their existence and cooperation remains at a lower level than many desire.

That conclusion, however, may be a function of the way we seek to assess change. Perspective is fundamental on this issue. From one perspective there has not been change. The number of local governments with taxing authority has remained largely the same over recent decades. On the other hand, there has been tremendous change in recent decades. Onondaga County, as a government, did not exist in 1960. It now has a budget much larger than that of the city. Local governments are much more dependent upon state aid, and are affected much more by state mandates. Responsibilities for direct delivery of services have shifted. New

⁵ Onondaga Citizens League, Strategic Government Consolidation, p.2.

intergovernmental agencies have been created. Change has occurred. The extent of change that is recognized depends on what we look for as an indication of change.

The concerns of this study are how much change has occurred, what form has change taken, why has change developed as it has, and where might change be possible in the future. The goals are to provide a relatively concise portrait of how change has evolved in this community so we can understand how change develops. The intent is, in part, to educate ourselves as to the history of the county.⁶ Not every dispute or unresolved effort at co-operation is detailed here, but the major changes. How have things changed? Why have we ended up where we are, and can we learn from past changes to guide us in future ones?

⁶ Prior studies of change in Onondaga County, while dated, provide valuable background. Two of particular interest for the topic of inter-governmental relations in Onondaga County are: Roscoe Martin and Frank J. Munger, eds., Decisions in Syracuse, 1961; and Thomas P. Lauth, Transfer of Functions in Selected New York Charter Counties, unpublished dissertation, Syracuse University, 1976.

2. Shifts in Population and Tax Bases in the County

The location of population in Onondaga County has changed tremendously in the last 55 years. Table 1 presents the distribution of the population within the county by decade for 1950 - 2005. The population within the City of Syracuse has declined, and it has grown tremendously in the suburbs. Like many counties, there has been a change from a county dominated by a central city to a central city dominated by its surrounding suburbs and towns. In 1950, 64.6 percent of the population was within the City of Syracuse. In 2005, 70.2 percent of the total county population was living outside the City of Syracuse.

**Table 1: Shifts in Onondaga
County Population, 1950 - 2005**

Year	Population			Percentage distribution	
	Total County	City of Syracuse	Outside Syracuse	Percent in Syracuse	Remainder
1950	341,719	220,583	121,136	64.6	35.4
1960	423,028	216,038	206,990	51.1	48.9
1970	472,835	197,297	275,538	41.7	58.3
1980	463,920	170,105	293,815	36.7	63.3
1990	468,973	163,860	305,113	34.9	65.1
2000	458,336	147,306	311,030	32.1	67.9
2005	444,328	132,495	311,833	29.8	70.2

There has also been a significant shift in the property tax base within the county. The property tax base is not the only revenue resource relevant for local governments. It is, however, very important in understanding the changes local governments face. It is the only tax base that each local government can directly and independently levy a tax against to raise money. As shall be seen later, local sales tax distributions and state aid have grown as sources of local revenue,

but the changes in the distribution of property tax bases reveal the changes occurring for local governments.

Table 2 presents the full value of property within Syracuse and the remainder of the county for recent decades.⁷ The values are presented in current full or market values.⁸ Below that is the total real full value per area and the per capita real (adjusted for inflation) full value per area of county.⁹

The table summarizes several important changes. The total real value of property in Onondaga County has increased considerably since 1950. That increase has not occurred uniformly across the county, however. The real value of all property has increased slightly in Syracuse from \$3.2 billion (in current dollar values) in 1950 to \$3.6 billion in 2005, while it has increased dramatically outside Syracuse from \$1.1 billion in 1950 to \$16.6 billion in 2005. As the population shifted, the property tax bases also shifted. In 1950, 65 percent of the population and 74 percent of the property tax base were in Syracuse. In 2005, 70 percent of the population and 81 percent of the property tax base were outside Syracuse.

⁷ The data for this table were taken from the Comptroller's Special Report on Municipal Affairs for various years. An analysis of year by year change using that data set revealed fairly smooth change patterns for most fiscal categories. Given those patterns, only 5 and 10 year intervals are presented here to reduce the volume of data in the tables. The full value of assessed property was taken from the Comptroller's Report or it was estimated by using the equalization rate. The real property values were determined by using the Consumer Price Index, setting it to 2007 = 100.

⁸ Almost all property within the county is now assessed at actual market value, or what has been called full value. For much of the last 50 years many local governments did not keep assessed values equal to market values. A \$100,000 home might be assessed at \$50,000. Since some state formulas distributed aid on the basis of the property wealth of communities, the state developed equalization indexes to make non-market assessments equal to market values. The equalization index measures to what extent a property is at market value. In the above example, the equalization rate would be .50 or 50 % of market value. The full value of property is determined by adjusting the assessed value of property by the state equalization rate. If \$50,000 is divided by .50, the resulting full or market value is \$100,000. That adjustment is made for all years prior to the year 2005. This gives the full value of property in the value of dollars at that time.

⁹ Throughout this study, fiscal data are usually expressed in real dollars. That is, the current dollar amounts for any year are converted to real or constant value dollars. The reason for this adjustment is inflation, or general increases in the price of goods, real estate, wages, etc, make it difficult to compare fiscal data across time. If prices double in ten years, and government revenues also double, then there has been no *real* change in the dollars that government takes in. The solution to this problem is to eliminate the effects of inflation and present dollar amounts to real or constant dollar amounts across time. A real dollar amount means that it can buy the same amount of goods and services over time. It is worth the same. The formal correct for inflation is to divide current dollars by (CPI * .01). This total real full value figure is then divided by the population per area to derive a per capita value.

The relative property tax base per person available to governments has also shifted. While the real per capita property tax base increased in Syracuse from \$14,421 in 1950 to \$27,514 in 2005, it has not increased in value since 1960. In contrast, per capita property values outside Syracuse have increased from \$9,279 in 1950 to \$50,365 in 2005.

**Table 2: Changes in Property Tax Bases
in Onondaga County, 1950 – 2005**

Property Values (full value in millions of 2007 dollar values)

Year	County	Syracuse	Outside Syracuse	Percent of total in:		Per Capita in:	
				Syracuse	Remainder	Syracuse	Remainder
1950	4,514,724	3,180,964	1,124,026	74	26	14,421	9,279
1960	11,953,433	5,950,642	4,476,985	57	43	27,544	21,629
1970	13,871,632	5,208,289	6,872,993	43	57	26,398	24,944
1980	13,909,960	4,223,921	9,686,039	31	69	24,831	32,434
1990	18,659,068	4,890,749	13,768,319	23	77	29,847	52,490
2000	19,338,342	4,180,320	15,158,022	23	77	28,378	45,502
2005	20,279,562	3,645,488	16,634,074	19	81	27,514	50,365

3. The Resulting Issues: Inequities, Fragmentation and the Need for Metropolitan Approaches

These changes have created problems of equity and of coordination of government efforts. As people moved out of Syracuse, city officials have continually argued that the change has created a situation of inequity of government resources. Low income and elderly residents are more likely to remain in the city. They require more services and they create less growth in the tax base. At the same time, Syracuse remains a location for many of the jobs of the county's workforce. "Commuters" work in Syracuse and create the need for downtown services. Yet the total property tax base has not grown, and the proportion of the county sales tax dedicated to Syracuse has declined over time. Finally, amidst these changes, the proportion of Syracuse's tax base exempt from the property tax has increased from 19 in 1955 to approximately 43 in 2007.

These changes have prompted two sets of concerns. First, the population shift out of Syracuse has also prompted concern that the city should receive more assistance from either the state or the county. From this perspective, Syracuse is still vital to the health of the county, and every effort should be made to see that it is in good condition. The city needs money for maintaining its infrastructure. It needs money to provide services for its own residents and for commuters.

Second, others worry about the number of local governments in the county and how this affects how we address problems as a community. Their concern is that the diffusion of population has created a metropolitan community and the need for a metropolitan solution to problems. Population shifts have created a more scattered population, and only a metropolitan government is capable of responding to this situation. Those with this view argue that the county, as the only inclusive government in the community, must play a greater role. The multitude of towns, villages, and school districts, which populate the county, should play less of a role. The problems of duplication of services and the difficulties of coordinating government policies, make it imperative that some different arrangement be created. Some have even urged that there

be some consolidation of local governments. If there were fewer local governments, there might be less duplication and more clarity for citizens of who is responsible for services.

The topic has become of such general concern that governors have periodically sought to focus attention on the issue. Governor Cuomo appointed a special commission to study local governments in New York with a concern for finding ways to reduce their number, eliminate duplication of services, and increase cooperation among them.¹⁰ Eliot Spitzer has indicated that it is of concern to him. Various state level task forces have formed to study the issue.¹¹ Locally, the Greater Syracuse Chamber of Commerce made this general area one of their study topics for 1991. The Onondaga Citizen's League made the issue of multiple local governments their study topic in 1991-92 and again in 2005-06.

The important matter is how the changing distribution of the population has interacted with the distribution of service responsibilities within the county. Has there been a corresponding response in reassigning responsibilities? To assess that issue, the next concern of this study is the response of the system of local governments to shifts in population and tax bases. The questions addressed are: has the formal structure of local governments changed and has the distribution of responsibilities among local governments changed.

¹⁰ The commission was called The Governor's Blue Ribbon Commission on Consolidation of Local Governments.

¹¹ The Local Government Restructuring Project was initiated in 1990 and is based at The Nelson A. Rockefeller Institute of Government in Albany.

4. Response: Changes in The Number of Governments

One way to respond to shifts in the location of the population and tax bases would be to consolidate local governments. This might involve reducing the number of local governments in the county and moving toward a more simplified government system. Table 3 presents the number of local governments in Onondaga County from 1964 to 2005. The table presents the number of local government entities within Onondaga County, along with a breakdown by type. There are essentially three types of local governments within the county. The first is comprised of general purpose local governments. They have responsibilities for diverse activities and services.¹² The number of these governments has remained essentially the same over time.

The second type of entity consists of special purpose units. They engage in one type of activity (housing, health, libraries, etc.). There has not been any increase in these over time.

The third type of government entity consists of town special districts. These are geographical jurisdictions within towns. They are created when new developments occur and a district is created to impose taxes to pay for the costs of specific aspects of development. When a development occurs, there is a need for sewers, water, lighting, etc, within the new development. A district is drawn around the new development and taxes are imposed on those living within the district. The alternative is to impose a general tax within the town and have the entire existing population pay the costs of new developments. Because of the resistance the latter approach creates, the general solution has been to rely on special districts and concentrate the costs of new development on the residents of new developments. The consequence has been a proliferation of these special districts. Their number increased from 555 in 1964 to 815 in 2005.¹³

¹² School districts are usually included in this grouping because they cover fairly large areas, they engage in more than just teaching, and they levy substantial taxes within the community.

¹³ A good overview of the types and nature of special districts in Onondaga County is contained in Syracuse - Onondaga County Planning Agency, Intergovernmental Disparities in Central New York, 1971, pp. 4 - 1 to 4 - 26.

Table 3: Changes in Governmental Units Within Onondaga County, 1964 - 2005

	Year					
	1964	1970	1980	1990	2000	2005
Total Governments	627	755	873	988	940	869
Municipal Corporations						
County	1	1	1	1	1	1
City (Syracuse)	1	1	1	1	1	1
Towns	19	19	19	19	19	19
Villages	15	15	15	15	15	15
Special Purpose Units						
School Districts	19	18	18	18	18	18
County Districts	12	17	25	25	7	7
Public Authorities*	3	4	7	7	5	5
Urban Renewal. Agencies	2	4	5	5	0	1
Industrial Dev. Agencies			2	2	2	2
Soil and Water Cons.				1	1	1
Municipal Libraries				2	1	1
Other				7	6	6
Town Special Districts						
Fire	20	20	20	20	20	20
Fire Protection	41	41	40	37	35	35
Street Lighting	130	167	173	179	212	188
Sewer	155	212	232	237	210	220
Drainage	39	82	135	192	164	179
Water	155	138	164	201	134	143
Refuse and Garbage	6	6	6	6	7	20
Park	5	7	8	10	10	10
Consolidated Health	2	2				
Other	2	1	2	2	70	

Source: State of New York, Special Report on Municipal Affairs, by the State Comptroller, various years. Earlier years are not included since earlier reports do not present a comprehensive summary. * In 1990 and 2000 the report lists housing and parking authorities, but not public authorities. The two specific ones are added together. The reason why "other" varies is not clear.

The dispersion of the population and tax bases across the metropolitan area has not produced a consolidation and reduction in local governments. Indeed, the response has been to use the creation of new special districts to respond to this dispersion. Change has been accommodated by having new developments pay "their costs" through special districts. That is likely to continue, since there does not appear to be any sentiment for spreading the costs of change across the entire community.

Regardless of the justification, it is clear that the dispersion of the population and the creation of a metropolitan population has not resulted in a consolidation of local government entities as a response to change. If there is change, it must be occurring in other ways. It is to those other ways that we now turn.

5. Response: Shifts in Fiscal Responsibilities and Burdens

The number of local governments in Onondaga County has not declined, but that does not mean change has not occurred. While the formal structure of governments may remain, change can occur through shifts in responsibilities for specific government services. As some students of local governments have noted, change does not take the form of formal consolidation of governments, but through the transfer of specific functions among local governments. There are several ways to try and assess how much such shifting has gone on in Onondaga County.

The first is to track the fiscal role of the county relative to other local governments over time. The county is a general purpose local government. The important comparison is the role of the county relative to the other general purpose local governments within the county. School and fire districts are not considered here because they are not general purpose local governments. To assess the role of the county, it is compared to Syracuse and the towns and villages in several ways.

Expenditure and Debt Shifts:

First, local governments are compared in terms of real per capita total expenditure and per capita total debt outstanding. Second, local governments are compared in terms of what proportion of all expenditure and debt responsibilities are handled by the county. Expenditure and debt figures are used here as broad indicators of the fiscal activities of government. It is, of course, possible to focus on more specific areas such as transportation, police, fire, welfare, etc. The concern here, however, is overall fiscal responsibility within the county. An analysis of specific areas would reveal varying levels of responsibility, but would miss the larger picture. Governments take care of their responsibilities in two ways: spend current dollars, or borrow

funds for capital investments with long - term benefits. Total expenditure captures current responsibilities. Total debt outstanding captures cumulative obligations assumed by government as of a given year.

The question is how have the roles of local governments within the county (the county, Syracuse, towns and villages) have changed. Has the county become a more dominant actor in providing government services and taking responsibility for programs and facilities? As population has grown in the towns and villages, has the role of town and village governments increased?

Tables 4 and 5 provide information on these questions. Table 4 presents information on per capita expenditure and the percentage distribution of all expenditure for the three general purpose governments. The county has changed from spending less per capita than the city to having spending levels equal to the city. If it was not for the recent rise in per capita city expenditure (perhaps due to its population decline), the county would have surpassed the city. While the county and city now spend more, other local governments are also important. Towns and villages now spend almost three times what they spent 40 years ago.

This shift in relative roles also shows up in the percentages of all general purpose government expenditure by different governments. Syracuse, as expected with a decline in population, has slipped in relative importance. The towns and villages, while experiencing population growth, have retained their relative importance. The major change has been in the relative role of county government. Its percentage of total expenditure has increased from 51.9 percent to 63.8 percent in 40 years.

**Table 4: Real Government Expenditures
by Local Governments Within Onondaga County**

Government	Per Capita Expenditure by Year								
	1965	1970	1975	1980	1985	1990	1995	2000	2005
County	531	997	1,305	1,257	1,262	1,564	1,676	1,556	1,677
Syracuse	738	744	1,031	1,140	1,069	1,238	1,272	1,350	1,773
Towns-Villages	280	997	1,305	364	408	454	491	486	602

Government	Percentage of General Purpose Government Expenditures								
	1965	1970	1975	1980	1985	1990	1995	2000	2005
County	51.9	66.7	67.4	65.9	66.2	68.2	69.0	67.1	63.8
Syracuse	33.3	20.8	20.9	21.9	20.1	18.9	17.6	18.7	20.1
Towns-Villages	14.7	12.5	11.7	12.1	13.7	12.9	13.4	14.2	16.1

Source: State of New York, Special Report on Municipal Affairs, by the State Comptroller, various years.

While the county has become a significant deliverer of services, as measured by expenditure, it has not evolved as the government carrying the greatest debt. It appeared, when this study was initially done in 1991, that the county was headed toward having higher debt levels than the city or the towns and villages. Since then, however, debt levels for the county and towns and villages are declining, while city debt levels have increased significantly.

The cumulative fiscal picture of local governments is one of an increasingly difficult situation for the city and relative fiscal health for other local governments. Syracuse has a stagnant tax base and increasing debt levels. The county has access to a tax base increasing in real value, and it has been able to steadily lower its debt level over the last 30 years. The towns and villages also have lowered their per capita debt levels over time.

**Table 5: Real Government Debt Outstanding
by Local Governments Within Onondaga County**

Government	Real Per Capita Debt Outstanding								
	1965	1970	1975	1980	1985	1990	1995	2000	2005
County	829	1,111	1,540	1,337	1,273	1,039	796	658	589
Syracuse	1,046	840	934	674	886	992	1,402	1,326	1,621
Towns-Villages	-	1,251	927	657	456	325	279	222	254
	Percentage of General Purpose Government Outstanding Debt								
County		50.7	62.3	66.8	67.6	65.0	54.8	53.3	47.1
Syracuse		16.0	14.8	12.4	16.8	21.7	32.4	34.5	38.6
Towns-Villages		33.3	22.8	20.8	15.6	13.2	12.8	12.2	14.3

Source: State of New York, Special Report on Municipal Affairs, by the State Comptroller, various years. The towns and villages debt data not available for 1965.

6. Response: Shifts in Other Resources

Local governments acquire revenue from numerous sources. The four major sources are: federal and state aid, the distribution of the county sales tax, and the local property tax. The next concern of this study is how the distribution of these resources has shifted over time. If the county has come to play a larger role within the county, has the distribution of these revenue sources also shifted? The sources are considered in the order of federal aid, state aid, and the sales tax distribution, followed by the property tax. The first three sources are generally beyond the control of local governments within any year. Once these three are set, then the local government has to decide how much of a property tax they wish to levy. For that reason, the property tax is viewed here as heavily dependent on the first three, and is therefore considered last.

Federal Aid Shifts:

Federal aid to local governments increased across the country from the 1960s until approximately 1978. It then began to decline and has only gradually increased since the early 1980s. It is still a substantial source of local revenue, however. Table 6 presents real per capita federal aid by local government from 1965 to 2005. After considerable change during the 1970s, both the county and Syracuse receive more in real dollars than they did 40 years ago. Syracuse in particular receives much more federal aid. Towns and villages currently receive almost no federal aid.

Table 6: Real Federal Aid to Local Governments Within Onondaga County

Government	Real Per Capita Federal Aid								
	1965	1970	1975	1980	1985	1990	1995	2000	2005
County	96	235	484	475	197	245	250	236	267
Syracuse	1	4	163	210	117	128	97	104	235
Towns-Villages	0	6	32	45	20	6	5	10	4

Government	Percentage of Federal Aid Received								
	1965	1970	1975	1980	1985	1990	1995	2000	2005
County	100	98	85	82	78	84	87	86	79
Syracuse	0	1	11	13	17	15	12	12	21
Towns-Villages	0	1	3	5	5	1	1	2	0

Source: State of New York, Special Report on Municipal Affairs, by the State Comptroller, various years.

Shifts in State Aid:

State aid is of considerable importance to local governments, and particularly the City of Syracuse. Table 7 presents real per capita state aid to local governments and the distribution of state aid among local governments over time. Real state aid per capita for the county has increased from \$140 in 1965 to \$289 in 2005. The City of Syracuse has experienced an even greater increase, from \$93 to \$583. There has been no net increase in the amount allocated to towns and villages. The result of the recent increase in aid to Syracuse is that now the city receives a greater percentage of all state aid to local governments than it did 40 years ago.

Over time, county government and Syracuse have remained the primary recipients of federal and state aid. Towns and villages received some federal aid during the 1970s, but that has largely ended. Real increases in per capita state aid have been largely directed at the county and Syracuse, and not at the towns and villages.

Table 7: Real State Aid to Local Governments Within Onondaga County

Government	Real Per Capita State Aid								
	1965	1970	1975	1980	1985	1990	1995	2000	2005
County	140	285	319	288	245	294	277	274	289
Syracuse	93	158	223	258	322	254	236	403	583
Towns-Villages	55	62	64	51	61	66	38	52	55
Government	Percentage of State Aid Received								
	1965	1970	1975	1980	1985	1990	1995	2000	2005
County	66	74	72	70	61	69	73	63	58
Syracuse	20	17	20	23	29	21	21	30	35
Towns-Villages	14	9	9	8	10	10	7	8	8

Source: State of New York, Special Report on Municipal Affairs, by the State Comptroller, various years.

Local Taxes: Sales and Property:

While fiscal aid to local governments has increased to the county and Syracuse, the increases have not been equivalent to the increases in local expenditures. County expenditures, for example, have increased from \$531 per capita in 1965 to \$1,677 in 2005 (see Table 4), while the total of real federal and state aid increased from \$236 to \$556 (see Tables 6 and 7), an increase of \$320. The funds necessary to support this increased local spending have come primarily from the local taxes imposed on sales and property.

The county has emerged as a major raiser and dispenser of revenue to other local governments through its distribution of the local sales tax. The state has a 4 % state-wide sales tax, and allows local communities to impose additional percentage points on that tax. These funds then come back to county government for distribution. Onondaga county adopted an additional 2 % local sales tax in 1967. It raised the local sales tax to 3 % in 1968 and 4 % in 2004. The amount of revenue available for distribution to local governments has increased over

time, and the formula for distributing the revenue has also changed. In 2005 the county received a total of \$216,676,801 for distribution to local governments (including the county) within the county. The allocation of this fund of money has changed over time. The pattern of how this money has been allocated in the past is important to review prior to analyzing property tax changes because sales tax revenue affects tax levies.

After the sales tax was adopted in 1967, the funds were initially divided among only the county, Syracuse, and the towns and villages. In 1980, the county began distributing any amounts in excess of a 1979 base figure to school districts. By 2005 that amount equaled \$6,869,453. Table 8 presents the real per capita and the percentage distribution of the sales tax funds since 1980 for the three major governments focused on thus far. Prior years are not used because 1980 is the first year that Comptroller data are available.¹⁴

Table 8 presents the real per capita sales tax distribution for local governments since 1970. Since this program began, Syracuse has received more per capita than other local governments. The large share given to the city was in part a response to the needs of the city, but it was also a result of negotiations over the imposition of the sales tax. The sales tax was imposed at a time when 50 % of representation on the Board of Supervisors was from Syracuse. The adoption of the county-wide sales tax corresponded with Syracuse dropping its 1% sales tax. To gain acceptance of the tax the county agreed to "hold harmless" the city, which meant that the county agreed to make sure the city received at least as much from the new distribution as it had received from the imposition of the city sales tax. That resulted in an initial percentage for the city of 39 %. The consequence of that initial agreement, coupled with a declining population, meant that for many years Syracuse received more per capita than other governments within the county.

¹⁴ The earlier study (1991) used data from the County Executive's office. Those earlier results indicate a distribution of the county sales tax very similar to that which existed for 1980. More revenue was allocated to Syracuse than to the county.

In 1990 a new formula was established that reduced the city's percentage of revenue by .85 of a percent each year. Of that .85 % reduction per year, .55 % went to the county, .15 % to towns and villages, and .15 % to school districts. The intent was to produce a 2000 distribution of 37.8 % for the county, 25.9 % for Syracuse, 28.9 % for towns and villages, and 7.8 % for schools. In 2000 the formula was redone. The county agreed that there would be no decline in revenues for Syracuse, the towns and villages, and school districts. Any growth in revenues from 0 – 2 % would be shared and any amount over 2 % would go entirely to the county. In 2004, when the local sales tax was raised to 4 %, the formula was again redone. That reallocation is complicated, but it essentially allocates most of the additional revenue to the county to help it cover increasing Medicaid costs. The county agreed to provide Syracuse with \$3 million a year to support infrastructure from 2005 through 2010.

Table 8: Real Sales Tax for Local Governments Within Onondaga County

Government	Real Per Capita Sales Tax Received								
	1965	1970	1975	1980	1985	1990	1995	2000	2005
County				123	138	154	158	185	303
Syracuse				378	408	453	412	385	517
Towns-Villages				20	61	72	48	34	37
	Percentage of Sales Tax Revenue Received								
County				45	41	40	44	51	58
Syracuse				51	43	41	39	34	30
Towns-Villages				5	12	12	9	6	5
Schools				0	4	6	8	9	7

Source: State of New York, Special Report on Municipal Affairs, by the State Comptroller, various years.

These revisions of the formula for allocating sales tax revenue have gradually directed more of the revenue to the county. Syracuse now receives more per capita in real dollars than it did in the past, but the county now receives considerably more than it did. As of 2005, 58 % of the county sales tax now goes to the county.

Imposing Property Tax Levies:

Once the distribution of the sales tax is settled and federal and state aid is determined, local governments face the decision of what local property tax rate to impose.¹⁵ The property taxes imposed by local governments are presented here in the same way as with other fiscal data. Real per capita figures are used. They are calculated by taking the total real dollar property tax levy for each government and dividing it by the population within that governmental jurisdiction.¹⁶ Table 9 presents the real per capita property taxes imposed for local governments

¹⁵ Syracuse and the towns and villages have different options available to them for using the sales tax money to restrain property tax levies. Each of these governments can take the sales tax revenue as cash, or they can take it as a credit against county taxes. In each government jurisdiction, separate taxes are imposed for the county, the general purpose local government, and schools. If the local government takes the money as cash, it can continue to impose its own levy, or it can reduce its own levy. If the sales tax revenue exceeds the local (town or village) levy, then the amount can be kept as surplus or it can be given back to the county. Villages and the City of Syracuse take their money as cash. Villages started electing this option as early as 1968, and most of them were signed up for the option by 1973. This has allowed some villages to completely eliminate their village levy. A few towns also take cash.

The other option is for a local government to take its sales tax levy as a credit. Local governments are responsible for collecting the county levy imposed within their jurisdiction. They then transfer the property tax levy imposed to the county. If the town takes their sales tax distribution as a credit, the town receives a cancellation of the corresponding amount that the town must impose and collect as a county tax. If the county levy was to be \$50 / \$1000, and the sales tax levy amounts to the equivalent of \$15 / \$1000, then the county levy is cut to \$35 / \$1000.

Both ways have the effect of holding down the property tax rate that residents pay. How much is unknown. The crucial difference is the way the local tax bill is presented to property tax owners within the local jurisdiction. With the first way, the town government tax levy is reduced, and may even disappear. The county levy then looks relatively large. With the second approach, county government tax levies are smaller than they otherwise would be. The taxes imposed by towns and villages and by the county become products of this arrangement plus the taxes that local governments decide to impose.

¹⁶ While this seems like a simple calculation, there are some complications regarding what the property tax levies of specific local governments represent. Some taxes levied by local governments are to generate revenues to pay for the obligations of other governments. For example, some of the county tax levy imposed within the City of Syracuse

from 1965 to 2005. Over this time period, major changes have occurred in the property taxes imposed by the different governments within the county. Real per capita property taxes imposed by the county rose steadily until 1995 and they have declined since then. Taxes in the towns and villages have increased fairly steadily and are now higher than those imposed by the county or Syracuse. The property taxes imposed by the City of Syracuse declined through the 1970s and 1980s but are now rising.

is to pay the city's obligation for joint ventures with the county. This practice has existed since the mid 1960s for several joint ventures. Examples of current such agency "billings" (with the year that the city obligation first appeared on the city abstract as a county tax) are: operation costs associated with the Public Safety Building (1964), costs for the Syracuse share of costs for the Syracuse City Jail - Public Safety Building (1965), the Human Rights Commission (1966), the City-County Youth Bureau (1969), the Syracuse - Onondaga Planning Agency (1969), the Metropolitan Commission on Aging (1973), and costs for the operation of branch libraries (of the OCPL) in Syracuse (1975). Billings for various drainage, sewer, and water districts have been handled this way over the years. Other agency bills have appeared and been removed from the city abstract over the years.

The practice works as follows. The county decides what reimbursement the county needs from the city for the city portion of costs. That amount is then "billed to the city" by putting it on the city abstract, or the list of county tax obligations the city must collect and present to the county. As far as citizens are concerned, it shows up as a county tax. The city accepts the practice because it eliminates the need for the city to impose the tax as a city tax. It also does not count against the tax limit the state imposes on municipalities. The negative aspect for the city is that the city has little say in the amount billed to the city.

The county likes the practice because it acquires the funds, but they are not counted as a part of the "county-wide" tax imposed by public officials for the annual county budget. Citizens see them as taxes on their county line on their tax bills, but public discussions and accountings focus on the county wide levy (and not these "special" levies on the abstracts of individual local governments). The county property tax increases reported in the newspapers each year, for example, focus only on the county-wide levy. For 2007 the city abstract contains approximately \$15,000,000 such city obligations which were billed as county taxes, out of a total city abstract of \$45,500,000. The remaining \$30,000,000 is the county tax imposed on city residents.

The continuation of this practice makes accounting messy, and it also seems to have contributed considerably to the ongoing tension between the city and county. The division of financial obligations which are part of these arrangements (50% for the city and 50% for the county) emerged out of an era (1960s, and early 1970s) when the population was more evenly divided between the city and county. The population distribution has shifted, but the 50-50 split of financial responsibilities has not shifted. The persistence of this division of charges irritates city officials because city government and city residents are seen as paying a higher percentage of costs than they should be. In addition, city residents then pay again through the county wide levy imposed on them for their county tax obligations. It appears that the division of fiscal (and billing) responsibilities continues because the agreements from prior eras have become "frozen" in place by the present arrangement of billing the costs on the city abstract. City officials are irritated, but the current arrangement allows them to avoid some direct taxes that the city might otherwise struggle to pay. The county benefits by getting its money, by placing it in a separate category of tax increases, and by being able to bill as they see fit.

**Table 9: Real Government Property Taxation
by Local Governments Within Onondaga County**

Government	Real Per Capita Property Taxation									
	1965	1970	1975	1980	1985	1990	1995	2000	2005	
County	298	367	368	301	458	523	559	342	315	
Syracuse	394	342	162	137	192	206	265	255	304	
Towns-Villages	127	250	258	243	226	257	316	310	364	

Percentage of General Purpose Government Property Tax Revenue										
County	30	30	30	29	35	35	33	23	18	
Syracuse	19	12	5	5	5	5	5	6	5	
Towns-Villages	7	12	13	15	11	11	12	14	15	
School Districts	44	46	51	52	48	48	50	57	61	

Source: State of New York Special Report on Municipal Affairs, by the State Comptroller, various years.

The Sum of Locally Imposed General Purpose Taxes

One of the continuing complaints about government in New York is that it costs too much. Critics of the number of governments argue that they cost too much and that costs are increasing. While judging how much is too much is a subjective matter, it is possible to assess whether the locally imposed tax burden is increasing. In recent years there have been significant increases in federal and state aid. Has that additional aid resulted in lower local taxes? To assess that Table 10 presents the sum of property taxes imposed by local governments and the sales tax revenue they receive. As noted earlier, it is not possible to determine where sales tax revenues are raised, so the approach here is to allocate them to the government receiving them. This could justifiably be regarded as an inaccurate portrait of taxes “imposed” by the specific local governments, but it does provide us with some notion of the totals of taxes residents pay for local governments. The issue of local education taxes will be taken up next.

While federal and state aid have been increasing, those increases have not resulted in lower locally imposed taxes. Over the last twenty-five years the local taxes received by each local government have increased by substantial percentages. Syracuse now receives more per capita in total tax revenues than the county or the towns and villages. Syracuse has a slightly lower per capita property tax than other local governments, but receives more in per capita sales tax revenue. The effect of rising stated aid to Syracuse plus the distribution of a substantial portion of sales tax revenue to Syracuse has allowed it to impose somewhat lower general purpose property taxes. It has probably also allowed the city to remain somewhat more attractive as a place to live than it would be if had to impose the property taxes necessary to support City of Syracuse functions.

Table 10: Property and Sales Tax Revenue Received Per Capita by General Purpose Local Governments, Within Onondaga County In Real Dollars

Government	Real Per Capita Taxes: Property Plus Sales							
	1969	1975	1980	1985	1990	1995	2000	2005
County			424	596	677	717	527	618
Syracuse			515	600	659	677	640	821
Towns-Villages			263	287	329	364	344	401

Source: State of New York, Special Report on Municipal Affairs, by the State Comptroller, various years

The Impact of School Taxes

The focus in this report is on general purpose local governments because those who wish a more consolidated local government arrangement focus on those governments. The idea of

proposing consolidating school districts is generally avoided. When taxation issues are raised, however, it is difficult to ignore the role of education. As the bottom portion of Table 9 indicates, local school taxes have become a much bigger portion of all the taxes imposed in the county. In 1965 they were 44 % of all property taxes imposed and as of 2005 they were 61 % of all local property taxes imposed.

The issue of school tax levels is important. Public officials in the towns cannot affect school taxes, but they often comment that they are blamed for overall tax levels, even though school taxes are presented separately on resident tax bills. Syracuse city officials often object to excluding school property taxes, arguing that it understates the demands the city faces.¹⁷ They note that the city faces education obligations that other local governments do not face and sometimes suggest that the city, with a stagnant property tax base and significant demands in the area of education, face unusual obligations. Syracuse is one of the few cities within the state which is responsible for contributing to the budget of the school district within its jurisdiction. The city is the legal entity which must actually impose the property tax for the schools. This creates additional obligations for the city and its residents, and makes interpreting taxes complicated within the city. Past city decisions about how to distribute tax revenues make matters even more complicated.

¹⁷ City officials have argued that the per capita approach is inappropriate because the city problems are not adequately represented by population shifts. The city has the same infrastructure to maintain even as the population varies. It has a considerable amount of commuter traffic on that infrastructure. This argument was made in 1990 by then Councilor Joseph Nicoletti before the Sales Tax Advisory Commission in 1990 (see Bibliography). City population figures are completely inadequate as indicators of this situation. City officials Tom Young, then Mayor, and Kenneth Mokrzycki, Budget Director, City of Syracuse, also made those arguments in testifying before the Sales Tax Advisory Commission (see Bibliography).

The question of how the demands on government jurisdictions should best be measured is not one which can be settled here. Officials in the towns and villages are also likely to argue that per capita assessments also do not capture their problems. Rural areas with miles of road to maintain may argue that the number of people living in their jurisdiction does not capture the demands placed on them. While this measure may have its problems, the justification for using per capita expenditure and tax figures in this study is that they are the most widely understood indicator of the effort and burden, respectively, that government makes or imposes relative to its citizens.

In 1972, Syracuse officials made a decision which has very important implications for trying to engage in current comparisons of taxes across local governments within the county. The city decided in 1972 to reallocate the beneficiary of the city property tax levy. The Mayor, Lee Alexander, decided that it would be easier to justify property taxes for education than for city government purposes. He then reallocated the bulk of the city property tax to the school district, and allocated all of the sales tax revenue to the city. The consequence was a substantial drop in property tax revenue for the city. That decision has not been altered over the years, with the consequence that city government property taxes have stayed relatively low since then.

This raises the question of whether calculating the "net" (general government and school district) property tax for local governments would change the conclusion that city property taxes have not grown as much. To assess this, the total real per capita property taxes in Syracuse and in the towns and villages over time are presented in Table 11.¹⁸ County taxes are excluded because they are applied evenly across the county. Table 11 presents per capita property taxes for schools and for towns and villages and then the total within the two areas. Then the per

¹⁸ There is one very serious complication in assessing these property tax burdens. The property tax reported here is the total tax imposed by local governments. After the tax is imposed, some of this expected payment is "forgiven" and then replaced by STAR money from the state. That is, the local tax is imposed, but the state exempts part of the property value from taxation and replaces the lost tax revenue in STAR funds. These amounts can be substantial. For example, for the City of Syracuse the 2007-2008 budget (p. iii) reports the following: "The Combined Tax Levy in this presentation includes the portion of the levy funded by STAR state aid, anticipated not to exceed \$3,334,240 for general City purposes and \$8,175,994 for School purposes for 2007/08." They report that expected property tax revenues will be \$89 million and approximately \$12.5 million of that revenue will really come from the state. They report this reimbursement separately from state aid. Their original approach of STAR, as a reimbursement for locally imposed property taxes that are then exempted or waived or paid by the state has created an odd pattern where this reimbursement does not show up as state aid. The important point is that someone could justifiably argue that the local tax burden is really less than that indicated by using apparent property tax revenues. State legislators and the governor in particular might argue that not counting STAR somehow does not give them credit for the property tax relief they have provided. That is a valid point. The difficulty is that the Comptroller reports, which are used for this report, do not separate out the STAR flows of funds and allow for some "adjustment" of the actual local tax burden. For that reason the local property tax used here is that reported in Comptroller reports. The counter to that is that local residents pay the 4 % sales tax and the state income tax, both of which provide the funds to pay for STAR. Tracing the ultimate tax burden of local residents would be a challenge.

capita taxes are divided by the per capita assessed values in each area. This provides an indication of the taxes imposed per available tax base.

Table 11: Real Per Capita Property Taxation for Schools, Total and Relative to Assessed Values, Syracuse and Remainder of Onondaga County

Year	School Taxes Only		Total Property Taxes		Taxes / Property Values	
	Syracuse	Outside	Syracuse	Outside	Syracuse	Outside
1965	356	803	338	127	.023	.036
1970	418	944	694	1,194	.025	.048
1975	505	1,018	610	1,276	.024	.041
1980	465	865	517	1,107	.021	.034
1985	511	957	584	1,180	.025	.034
1990	483	1,083	558	1,335	.019	.025
1995	464	1,257	550	1,565	.019	.024
2000	374	1,077	458	1,378	.016	.030
2005	477	1,185	557	1,540	.020	.031

Including education taxes leads to several conclusions about the burdens that citizens within the county and the city face. First, the property tax burden, at least when expressed as a percentage of assessed value of property has not increased within the last forty years. This stability is largely because sales tax revenue has increased significantly over time and restrained the need to get revenue from the property tax. It is also because the increase in federal and state aid to Syracuse and other areas. State aid to education in particular has increased significantly and reduced the need to impose taxes.¹⁹

¹⁹ A study done in the late-1990s indicated that there had been a significant increase in state education aid to the city of Syracuse, allowing it to systematically lower the property tax burden imposed on the city. See: Jeffrey M. Stonecash, *School Finance Trends in Syracuse, 1978 – 1998*, Maxwell School. That study is available at: http://www.maxwell.syr.edu/benchmarks/newsite/reports/school_down.html.

Total property taxes within Syracuse have not increased in real terms or relative to per capita assessed property values. Total property taxes have increased for areas outside Syracuse, but that largely reflects the increase in per capita assessed values in those areas. As a percentage of taxable value, the school tax levy for Syracuse changes very little. The conclusion is that total real per capita property taxes have not gone up within Syracuse while they have outside the city. It is still the case that the greater sales tax revenue per capita received by the city has allowed lower property taxes within the city. The table shows one other important matter. School property taxes are on average higher outside the city, so the city is not at a disadvantage in terms of higher school taxes.

Conclusions

The relative position of county government has changed remarkably in recent decades. It is now the major source of general purpose local expenditures. It has access to a much richer tax base than the City of Syracuse. It has steadily allocated a greater percentage of sales tax revenue to itself, though Syracuse receives more per capita than the county. It now has less debt than other local governments. It has taken on more responsibilities and is well positioned fiscally to take on more.

While the county has taken on more responsibilities, there has been no change in the number of local governments. To return to the themes discussed at the beginning of this report, there is concern that we have moved to being a metropolitan community, but the arrangement of governments has not changed accordingly. We have the same governments, even while the county has grown as the major government actor within the county.

It would be easy to conclude from this that change has not occurred. The population and the tax base shift, but there is very little adjustment within the community. The sense that there

has not been any change in governmental arrangements is not accurate however. The roles of local governments within the county have changed in ways not reflected by fiscal data. There has been change, and those changes are reviewed in the next section.

7. Response: The Redistribution of Government Responsibilities

Fiscal data are one way of trying to capture the relative role of local governments within the county. They have their limits, however. Relying on fiscal data means that governments which have responsibility for expensive service areas appear to be dominant. Medicaid is an expensive program, and its assignment to the county increases the appearance of the fiscal dominance of the county. Fiscal data are not good for capturing the extent to which different governments take the initiative for activities which have limited fiscal impact. This is particularly important in the area of intergovernmental cooperation. A government may play a significant role in responding to a problem facing all local governments, but the response may involve relatively limited funds. The next concern of this report is to examine how the relative roles of local governments in responding to local problems has changed.

This section focuses on specific community responsibilities and problems surrounding them to see how they have been dealt with over time. The intent is not to cover all the metropolitan problems which have emerged, but to review areas in which change has occurred. There are areas where cooperation has not developed, such as with purchasing. Detailing all the areas in which cooperation has been proposed and discussed would be lengthy and would not document how much change has occurred. The focus here is on the latter.

The following section provides chronological reviews of the development of change in several areas. The changes examined are: the emergence of county government since the 1920s; general changes since the 1920s that resulted in consolidations, transfers, or cooperation in the delivery of services; the development since 1931 of the Onondaga County Public Library; the emergence of the Onondaga County Sewage Disposal system since the early 1900s; the development of solutions to water problems since the late 1800s; the resolution of the problem

with the Burnet Park Zoo; the struggle over the 911 system since 1970, the evolution of the solid waste issue in Onondaga County; and, the creation of the county crime lab.

These reviews are brief. Each policy area could have a book devoted to its history. These summaries are attempts to capture the major events during change, the conditions present when changes occurred, and the reasons for change.²⁰ These summaries are an attempt to determine how change is occurring in this community. Critics of governmental arrangements argue that change is difficult, if not impossible. To assess that charge, it is necessary to know something of history. It was once said, "The disadvantage of men not knowing the past is that they do not know the present."²¹ It is clear talking with numerous local officials that awareness of the history of institutional change in the county is not widespread. The extent of change in the community over the decades is insufficiently documented and often unappreciated. The information which follows is intended to provide an overview of some of that history.

Conclusions from Reviews:

Several conclusions emerge from these reviews. Each conclusion is important for understanding the current situation of local governments and for understanding the likelihood of change in other areas in the future.

Change Proceeds Slowly: It is clear from these summaries of policy area changes that rapid change is rare. A relatively rapid change is illustrated by the transfer of MacArthur Stadium from Syracuse to the County. The transition appears to have taken only several years of

²⁰ Countless people helped explain particular changes to me when I approached them. I greatly appreciate their time and genuine concern in explaining situations. I could not have compiled these summaries without this assistance. I have tried to make sure that each of these summaries is accurate. Some errors may remain, but I hope they are limited. I would appreciate it if anyone would inform me of errors or aspects of change neglected.

²¹ G. K. Chesterton, 1933, quoted in Elliot S. Valenstein, Great and Desperate Cures, (New York, Basic Books, Inc, 1986), p. 291.

negotiations. The more typical case is that of the formation of the Onondaga County Public Library. The state first passed legislation to encourage local cooperative efforts in 1958. Onondaga County finally established a contract to establish the cooperative arrangement known as the Onondaga County Public Library in 1976. The time period is even longer if the establishment of the main branch in the Galleries is considered as part of resolving the library problem. Other issues took longer to reach our current arrangements. Those who commence efforts to change things are persistent and accept incremental steps to get the outcome they desire.

It is also the case that problems are resolved on an ongoing basis because "problems" often experience continual change. The zoo was transferred from Syracuse to the county, which at the time was considered somewhat of a solution because the county had more resources to maintain the zoo. Shortly after taking over the zoo, however, the county was informed that the zoo did not meet federal standards. That created a new problem, and required further local action. The water problem has evolved across time, as has the solid waste problem. The disposal of sewage has been an ongoing problem because other levels of government have increased expectations of how sewage must be handled. The crime lab situation evolved because technology changed the ability to extract information from evidence which changed the expectations of what local labs had to be able to do. In retrospect, it appears that local governments create evolving solutions. As the authors of Decisions in Syracuse stated 60 years ago: "In a larger sense, metropolitan problems are seldom settled finally; hence the problems dispatched were not solved at all, but only alleviated." (p. 77). This is frustrating to many within the community.

Local Concerns Dominate the Change Process: The prime reason it takes so long to resolve problems is that democracy is at work, and the democratic process works slowly. It is intended to do so. Local officials are elected to represent the interests of their districts. Thinking about what is good for the county is often distinctly secondary. This preoccupation with "parochialism" is essential to the representation process. Those who think that it is clear what is in the best interest of the county may not like to see this representation process work, but any review of the evolution of how local problems have been handled indicates that representatives continue to argue passionately for what they think is good for their constituents. They can be counted on to continue to do that, and to expect otherwise is to misunderstand the nature of the democratic process.

To the extent that they do so, they balk when they encounter a proposal for change which they do not think will be good for their local government. The consequence is that local officials - town and village officials, Common Councilors, and County Legislators - hold out for a better deal for their districts. The County Legislature, in particular, as the body which had to approve many of the changes reviewed below, has continually played this role. It serves as an arena where local interests are represented, compromises are forged which accommodate conflicting interests, ideas, and areas within the county. Each one of these policy areas experienced prolonged delays as negotiations continued, often for decades. During those delays, compromises were achieved, or a majority was persuaded to override some local interests.

The process of change is also slow because it takes time to build create trust that local interests will be served. An apparent effort at cooperation may really be just a first step in building that trust. When the county crime was created to serve Syracuse, county, and other needs each jurisdiction had separate staffs and budgets within the same building because none

trusted that the concerns of their organization would receive the necessary attention. After several years of working together sufficient trust was created and the facility became a county unit with professional staff serving the larger community. The initial solution created the opportunity to assess how well the new unit might respond. It took time for the transition to what exists today.

The focus on parochial concerns and the drawn out process of change are frustrating to many critics of government within the community. Some believe that government should work faster. But prolonged debate has its benefits. Debate and negotiation produce more acceptable policies in the long run. Democracy creates delay, but democracy is not a mechanism designed to produce speed and efficiency.

Federal and State Laws and Regulations Play A Significant Role: One clear conclusion should emerge from these summaries. Change is pushed along by or facilitated by federal and state laws and regulations, and particularly by those which offer incentives or create deadlines. Local actors may wish to change government arrangements, but there is clear reluctance on the part of town and village officials to surrender autonomy. There is also reluctance on the part of county officials to take on additional burdens.

Overcoming these obstacles is possible when the state offers an inducement to change or federal and state standards prompt a need for change. The formation of county government with an executive was made possible by changes in state laws. State court rulings lead to abandoning wards and towns as the basis of representation within the County Legislature. The inclination to change the library system, to form the county mental health agency, to create a county health department, to have the county deal with solid waste and sewage, was prompted in part by state

actions which prodded local officials or made it possible for them to enact changes. This is likely to remain true in the future.

Pressure (even Crisis) is Important: While those outside government often presume it is clear that it is "logical" for a change to be adopted, many changes occur only when sufficient pressure builds to create a sense of crisis. The county took over the zoo and renovated it when the city had let it deteriorate to such a degree that it would have been closed. MacArthur Stadium was taken over by the county only after it had declined dramatically as a facility. The county takeover of the main library and the creation of the "county" library were clearly pushed along by Lee Alexander's threats to close down the Syracuse library. Towns and villages signed contracts giving the county control over their garbage only when impending deadlines made some action necessary. The crime lab was created when there was a threat that existing labs would not meet new accreditation standards. The examples could continue.

This illustrates the importance of federal and state pressures. It is also clear that this same sense of pressure can come from actors such as the newspapers, the Syracuse Chamber of Commerce, Syracuse 20/20, and the Onondaga Citizens League. If these groups create an image of public officials failing to respond to problems, the pressure *sometimes* is sufficient to overcome the reluctance of town and village officials to surrender autonomy and the reluctance of county officials to take on additional responsibilities. Arguments may be put forth as to why a change is desirable, but it often takes the creation of a sense that a problem must be taken care of for change to occur.

Governmental Solutions Are Unique to the Problem; Cooperative Arrangements Dominate Rather Than Outright Consolidation: As community problems emerge and are considered, there is often a desire for an orderly resolution to the problem. Orderly to many

means the consolidation of governments, or the complete transfer of responsibility to a new county agency which will clearly be under the control of the county. Such an orderly resolution only occasionally prevails. It did with the creation of the county health department and the transfer of MacArthur Stadium to the county.

The more typical solution is the creation of a new authority with appointees from diverse constituencies or a negotiated solution which leaves incomplete consolidation of the service.²²

The Metropolitan Commission on Aging has a twenty member board with 10 appointed by Syracuse and 10 by the county. The Onondaga County Resource Recovery Agency has appointees from Syracuse, the county, and the two towns which will contain the proposed incinerator and the proposed landfill. The library, which appears to most residents of the county as a county library, is a complicated negotiated arrangement in which authority and financing is divided among local member libraries.

The point is that solutions are not carved out to conform to some notion of orderly government. Solutions are driven by the unique nature of the problems. Problems are resolved by an arrangement which responds to the needs of particular problems. Again, to refer to an insightful (and critical) observation made 60 years ago by the authors of Decisions in Syracuse:

"Each problem has been approached on an ad hoc basis, as though no similar issue had been addressed before or would be again. .. the failure to recognize the metropolitan character of the actions taken has militated against the emergence of a body of procedures or principles to

²² This experience is very similar to what other communities have experienced. Numerous academic studies have been done of complete consolidation efforts. Most such efforts fail. The academic studies listed at the end of this report document these failures. What the academic studies do show is that incremental service by service change does occur. The general pattern in communities across the country has been transfer of functions to larger units of government or the creation of unique cooperative efforts much like Syracuse has experienced.

guide the decision-makers, and has minimized the advantages that we might have expected them to draw from experience." (79)

That pattern is likely to continue. Politicians are not worried about creating textbook models of orderly administration. They are trying to placate diverse interests and work out solutions to specific problems. They are responding to their constituents and their own beliefs about how change should proceed. Efforts to create change should recognize this pattern. Attempts to create change through formal consolidation of local governments are very unlikely to be successful.

The County Has Emerged as a Major Actor: Throughout the lurching history of the last sixty years, it is clear that the major change is the decline of Syracuse as the major actor in the community, and the emergence of the county.²³ It is not that Syracuse or the towns and villages are unimportant. They remain as very important institutions for delivering services, as indicated by how much they tax and spend. They are also crucial actors in any change, and the positions public officials from these jurisdictions take on issues have a significant impact on how local issues are resolved. But over time numerous responsibilities have been transferred to the county from Syracuse and the towns and villages. The arena in which community issues are debated and resolved is increasingly the county. It is to the county level that more and more issues gravitate when a solution to a problem is sought. To call upon Decisions in Syracuse one last time, the observation still holds that:

"... notwithstanding the ab initio approach employed, Onondaga County repeatedly has come to the fore as the only unit capable of assuming major new extra-city responsibilities in the Syracuse metropolitan area." "... the county finds itself moving

²³ For those interested in just how the legal role of county government has changed, see Gerald Benjamin, "The Evolution of New York State's Local Government System," prepared for the Local Government Restructuring Project, Rockefeller Institute of Government, October, 1990, pp. 11 - 26.

inexorably to the center of the metropolitan stage, because it offers the most practical solution to the puzzle of matching governmental resources to metropolitan needs."
(79)

This is also likely to persist. The pace of emergence of the county is slow, and county officials often do not appear at all eager to play this greater role. But the pressures are strong for that trend to continue. The federal government and the state create pressures for that trend. Officials from these governments want to deal with the county rather than a multitude of local officials. State legislators are responsive to town and village officials, but they consistently pass mandates which encourage the county to play a larger role. The county has the resources to be the major actor in the community and the City of Syracuse no longer has the resources to do so.

Conclusions: If efforts at change are going to be successful, they can best proceed by incorporating these lessons about what brings about change. It is not enough to create study committees and simply argue that change is obviously rational and efficient. Studies abound which reach such conclusions. It is necessary to have some combination of the above conditions present if change is going to occur.

Events Affecting the Development of Onondaga County Government

Year	Conditions and Changes
1920s	County operates with a Board of Supervisors arrangement. One supervisor elected from each ward in the City of Syracuse (total of 19 wards) and one from each town in the county (total of 19 towns) for a total of 38 supervisors.
1920–1903s	State legislature has commissions study local governments to consider optional forms of county governments.
1934	<p>State legislature passes law allowing counties to create charter commission to draft and adopt own local charter. Charter commission can be created upon initiative of board of supervisors or by popular petition.</p> <p>Study on county government sponsored by Onondaga County Bar Association. Recommends consolidation of local governments. Study ignored.</p>
1935	State legislature enacts provision allowing adoption of county governments through voters by referendum. Other forms of county governments allowed for by state legislature in 1935, 1936 and 1937.
1939	<p>League of Women Voters release study of county government critical of existing situation.</p> <p>Onondaga County Democrats initiate effort to create new county government. Through petition drive they get public referendum. Republicans and newspapers oppose new county government on grounds that "proportional representation" plan too complicated and towns not given enough significance. Plan goes to public referendum. Voted down in City of Syracuse and in surrounding towns.</p>
1940	<p>Mayor of Syracuse presents new county government proposal to Board of Supervisors. Plan created county manager position, and requests that state legislature enact it as a special local law. No public referendum planned. Supervisors pass plan. Legislature passes bill, Governor Lehman vetoed bill on grounds existing laws provided other means for changing local government arrangements and those other means should be used.</p> <p>Board of Supervisors sets up commission to study county government. In July commission proposes county manager appointed by Board of</p>

- Supervisors. In public referendum in November, proposal defeated, with majority in the towns and in the City of Syracuse voting against it. Proposal receives more support in Syracuse than in towns.
- 1943 At request of League of Women Voters, Board of Supervisors study issue again, but vote down study report which advocates change.
- 1948 At request of League of Women Voters, Board of Supervisors study issue again. No action taken.
- 1950 Governmental Research Bureau of Chamber of Commerce releases proposal for county manager form of government. Proposal submitted to Board of Supervisors, who set up committee to develop new plan.
- 1952 State legislature passes law allowing for four options of county government. One option was for a County Director form of government. New law a product of New York state Uniform County Laws Commission.
- 1953 Groups in Onondaga County lobby for amendment to state bills allowing for restricting a referendum on an alternative form to odd-year elections. Law enacted.
- Governmental Research Bureau takes initiative on issue: sets up organization to campaign for County Director, and prepares to gather signatures for referendum. After reviewing proposal, Board of Supervisors decides issue is not a "party" issue, and frees supervisors to vote as they wish. By vote of 29 to 7 Board supports referendum.
- Local newspapers and business support proposal along with both Democratic and Republican candidates for Mayor of Syracuse. Group called "Voters for Democracy, not Dictatorship" forms to oppose proposal. Voters turn proposal down. Syracuse votes for it by 2,000 votes, remainder of county against it by 10,000.
- 1959 State constitutional amendment passes allowing counties to devise their own form of government.
- 1960 Charter commission set up to draft new proposal for Onondaga county government. Public referendum planned for November, 1961.
- 1961 Charter commission presents county charter proposal, which retains Board of Supervisors and creates County Executive with responsibility for budget and administration. County boards, commissions, and committees would be replaced with administrative units reporting to the County Executive. Supervisors adopted it in September. Charter passes 25,626 to 12,598 in Syracuse and 23,383 to 19,464 in towns outside the City of Syracuse. John

- Mulroy is elected by Board of Supervisors in 26 to 8 party - line vote to serve as first County Executive until general election of 1962.
- 1962 First elected Onondaga County Executive.
- 1965 Democrats file suit seeking to have Board of Supervisors based on population. State Supreme Court rules that representation based on towns and wards of the city cannot continue. Weighted voting suggested as an alternative.
- 1965 Last election of Board of Supervisors takes place.
- 1966 Weighted voting for Board of Supervisors adopted. Board of Supervisors votes to replace Board with Onondaga County Legislature after next election. Size of Board reduced from 38 to 24 as part of change. Weighted voting to be dropped. New County Legislature has 12 representatives in city and 12 in towns and villages to preserve historical balance between two areas. Proposal submitted to voters as local proposition. Passes in city 23,859 to 15,107, and in towns and villages 33,131 to 28,734 for overall result of 56,990 to 43,841.
- 1967 First County Legislative elections held. New districts drawn and practice of one representative per ward and town dropped. Elimination of towns as unit of representation severs formal role of towns as organizing unit for representation in county legislature. Elimination of town supervisors as formal representatives also reduces explicit focus on towns. Charter still allows town officials to serve simultaneously as county legislators. Some supervisors run and win in 1967 election.
- 1968 Board of Supervisors formally replaced by Onondaga County Legislature.
- 1973 Mulroy proposes 22 member County Legislature; proposal fails.
- 1974 John Mulroy first County Executive to sign "Mayor's Book," maintained by Onondaga Historical Association. Book kept since 1851, with only Mayors, as most significant local official signing it. Indicates rise in the significance of county government within the community.
- 1981 Onondaga Citizens League recommends reducing size of county legislature to 15 members so members will take a larger perspective on county issues. Mulroy agrees on grounds that leadership dominance has declined and with so many legislators, it is hard to reach agreement on proposals. Not adopted.
- 1985 Onondaga Citizens League again recommends reducing size of county legislature to 15 members so members will take a larger perspective on county issues. Not adopted.

1991

County legislature adopts new sales tax formula.

The new formula shifts .85% per year revenue from Syracuse and gives .55% per year to Onondaga County, .15% per year to the towns, and .15% per year to school districts.

The new formula is created to reflect changes in population patterns and to acknowledge increase of state mandates funded by County.

1996

Members of the Onondaga County Legislature's Republican majority propose shrinking the number of lawmakers.

Onondaga County residents vote overwhelmingly to shrink the size of the county legislature from 24 to 19. Reduction will take place in 2001.

2001

A commission appointed to redraw districts for the Onondaga County Legislature endorses a plan that leaves seven legislators in the city and 12 in the suburbs.

County Legislature adopts new sales tax formula. The formula guarantees sales tax revenues will not decline for the city, towns, and school districts from one year to the next. Formula provides shared growth from 0 to 2% each year. If growth exceeds 2%, the county retains 100% of the excess.

Some Major Changes in The Arrangement of Government Responsibilities Within Onondaga County, 1928 to 2005

Year	Conditions and Changes
1928-1960	<p>Small school districts consolidated into larger ones:</p> <p>Examples: Elbridge (1928), Fabius, Onondaga, Tully (1930), Marcellus (1935), Lafayette (1937), Cicero - North Syracuse (1949). By 1960 Liverpool, Baldwinsville, Camillus, Westhill, and East Syracuse Minoa have consolidated. Changes follow state law which provides state aid for transportation and construction costs associated with large districts. Changes adopted by local referenda.</p>
1933	<p>State legislature, after local request, creates Onondaga County Sanitary Sewer and Public Works Commission to deal with pollution problems in county.</p>
1935	<p>Sanitation, Treatment, and Drainage Districts formed.</p>
1936	<p>County Children's Court created, replacing City of Syracuse court and part-time county arrangement. State law of 1922 allowed county court. Change led by League of Women Voters campaign beginning in 1934. Adopted by Board of Supervisors.</p>
1938	<p>Onondaga County Welfare Department created. Assumed responsibility for all home relief programs conducted by county's local governments. 1929 state law specified city and town responsibilities for welfare but allowed county takeover. County assumption followed studies documenting inequities in benefits among towns and continuing efforts of local officials to shift recipients among jurisdictions and avoid town responsibility by changing their classification. Syracuse Republicans favored move as a way to reduce and shift welfare costs to county during Depression.</p>
1952	<p>Onondaga County Water Authority established.</p>
1954	<p>City, county agree to build Metropolitan Sewage Treatment plant as solution to growing sewage problem.</p>
1955	<p>County Mental Health Board formed with participation of Syracuse. Pushed along by 1955 state law providing 50 percent reimbursement to county or city-county agencies.</p>
1961	<p>Public Safety Building and North Parking Garage open. One of "first concrete</p>

indicators of city-county cooperation."

- 1962 Metropolitan Water Board created.
- 1963 Civil Service Personnel office created in county. Assumes responsibility within county for handling all civil service responsibilities issues (classifying positions, processing tests, and handling papers) for all local governments within the county.
- 1964 City-County Office for Economic Improvement created.
- County assumes responsibility for physically handicapped children. Initiative pushed along by state law providing 50 percent reimbursement for administrative costs if run by county. Previous handling of administrative concerns was done by Syracuse and an official outside city.
- 1965 County agrees to pick up much of City of Syracuse costs of contribution to Syracuse Symphony, Onondaga Historical Association and Council of Cultural Agencies.
- 1966 City-County Human Rights Commission created. Began as Syracuse Human Rights Commission in 1963. In 1966 a joint commission with the county was started. In 1966 the county assumes responsibility for imposing the taxes necessary for the city to pay its obligation as a county tax. City appoints 18 commissioners and county appoints 8 commissioners. In 1974 the Commission moves to the Civic Center.
- 1967 County Health Department formed from merger of health departments of Syracuse, towns, and villages. Each jurisdiction had own health department since at least 1930s. Efforts made to form county agency in several years, and specifically in 1938, 1948-50, 1954, and 1967. Formation helped by state law (in effect since 1930s) giving 50 percent state reimbursement to county health departments if services consolidated, but not for other local health departments. Opposition reduced by continuing for several years salaries of some local MDs serving as town or village health officers.
- County wide plumbing code adopted after county health department creation. Replaced Syracuse code, and situation in which many towns had no codes. Some plumbers were directing water into sewage lines which created sewage overflow problems. Change allowed county to take active role in inspecting and regulating plumbing within county.
- County assumes responsibility for city hospital, which had deteriorated. Renovates facility, which is eventually sold to the state.
- First meeting of City-County Public Employees Relations Board. In response to

state law.

2% county sales tax adopted. Gives county additional revenues and puts county in position of being source of revenue for other local governments within the county. City of Syracuse drops its sales tax as part of deal to obtain approval of sales tax; condition is that Syracuse will be "held harmless," or receive as much as they were getting from the city sales tax. Initial agreement is 15% to county, rest to Syracuse, and towns and villages. Towns and villages get share of distribution as a way to get votes among suburban legislators.

Mayor of Syracuse and County Executive form committee to study creating a performing arts facility. City eventually pulls out. Local arts groups push for such a facility. Committee considers creating building providing this facility plus office space for county government.

1968 Syracuse-Onondaga County Planning Agency created. Involves cooperative effort between Syracuse and County. Study of proposal conducted in 1967. City had experienced considerable turnover in Directors in prior years, county proposed joint commission with 50-50 split of costs. City accepted. (Cooperation declines in subsequent years. Last joint meeting of planning commissions in 1976. Syracuse planning staff move to separate building in March, 1991.)

County Youth Board expanded to City - County Youth Board. Move allowed Syracuse, towns, and villages to be certified as having a youth board and thereby qualify for state aid, without each town having to set up own youth board. Each local government could have City - County Youth Board handle administrative matters of applications for state aid, but have state aid come to local towns for their programs. Reduced overhead of each local government and resulted in shared overhead and reduced separate costs.

Mulroy asks for study of cultural center

County sales tax increased to 3%. County gives itself a larger proportion. City receives 39%, County 34%, and 27% goes to towns and villages.

1969 Onondaga County Solid Waste Disposal Authority created.

1969 Syracuse Police and Onondaga County Sheriff's Department begin to share police records.

1970 Syracuse Police and Onondaga County Sheriff's Department begin to share Crime Laboratory.

Onondaga County Office of Real Property Tax Services created as a result of state law. Activities are to coordinate assessment administration. Assessment of parcels to continue to be done by towns and villages, but county uses its computer

facilities to process town assessment rolls, prepare and print tax bills, and advise local assessors on preparation of assessment rolls. Services initially provided to towns and villages free and to school districts for \$.10 per parcel. Syracuse does all its own work. State law on charging subsequently changed, and towns charged for services provided.

1971

City-County Drug Abuse Commission created. Eventually went out of existence until it was reformed in 1988 in response to a state law requiring each county to have a board or commission on substance abuse. New board began with 30 appointees (15 from county and 15 from city), and then expanded to 46 with an even division of appointees from the two jurisdictions. County provided space and funding in 1988, while city also provided funding. Program received federal funding in 1990, and local funding ceased.

Metropolitan Commission on the Aging created. City of Syracuse had started a senior citizens commission earlier by getting federal grants through Older Americans Act of 1965. Reauthorization in early 1970s resulted in funneling money through states, which would probably prefer to work through counties. Mulroy and Alexander persuaded to form cooperative venture to avoid competing. Funded by grants from federal, state, and local governments. Over time commission has evolved into dependence on federal and state funds, with matching from county. Syracuse participates selectively in subsequent years. Board has 10 appointees from Syracuse and 10 from county.

County legislature authorizes appointment of county examining board to create county electrical code and examination and licensing of electricians. Applies only to county. Syracuse retains own code. First presented as suggested code. Within several years it becomes a government required code with the county having the authority to enforce it.

1972

Onondaga County Environmental Management Council started. Members appointed from Syracuse, county, towns, and villages. Council is eligible for state aid.

Centro assumes responsibility for operation of Syracuse Transit, which was private firm. County in prior years served as purchasing agent for buses, with 75 percent of money coming from state aid. CNY Centro operates the bus system in the local area. A 10 member board oversees Centro. Syracuse appoints 3 members, the county appoints 5, and 2 are appointed from other counties. Syracuse originally provided operating support, but state legislation specified that county had to provide support matching state aid, and the county has been sole local source of support since then.

Civic Center funds approved. City of Syracuse leaves responsibility with county for the building of a metropolitan wide cultural facility.

Voters approve county committee to have authority to eliminate duplicate street names within the county. Committee originally proposed in 1968 to study issue. Over 2000 duplicate names exist, creating problems in deliveries and responding to emergencies. In 1969 county legislature passed resolution requiring new developments to file street names with the county clerk and obtain advance clearance from the Syracuse - Onondaga Planning Agency. County legislature put the issue on the ballot.

County sales tax distributions: Syracuse: 39 percent, county: 34 percent, towns and villages: 27 percent.

1973 Joint data processing by City and County begins. First proposed in 1962 study by Syracuse Governmental Research Bureau. In 1971 county legislature hearings were held on proposal and joint processing of housing code violations was initiated. Agreement involved using the same data processing hardware. County originally did not charge city for service. In 1982 county began to charge for service, and imposed the fee on the city abstract for 1982, 1983, and 1984. Increases in 1983 and 1984 led city to buy its own equipment. Now done separately.

Law Enforcement Information System begun with grant from Law Enforcement Assistance Administration (federal agency). City of Syracuse joins in effort. Some towns and villages also participate. Allows central checking of records of numerous agencies in reviewing criminal records.

Jail Booking at one site in Public Safety Building initiated.

1974 MacArthur Stadium sold to county by City of Syracuse for \$1.00. County agrees to assume responsibility for all aspects of facility in 1975, including renovation. Stadium had deteriorated in prior years and fire had eliminated middle section in 1969. City of Syracuse argues most attendees are from outside city.

County legislature considers including school districts in distribution of sales tax. Not adopted.

1976 Onondaga County Public Library formed.

Civic Center opens; county provides a metropolitan performing arts facility.

1977 State agrees to assume responsibility for all salary costs for county courts (county, family, and surrogate). Change phased in over several years. State had agreed to pay 50 percent of judges salaries starting in the early 1970s. All salary costs of state supreme court personnel had been paid by state for some time.

1978 20 local sewer districts consolidated into one sewer district.

	County legislature amends sales tax distribution law, and gives city and county school districts 10% of any excess over the 1979 total.
1980	School districts begin to receive portion of county sales tax distribution.
1982	Major shift in role of county relative to City of Syracuse as supporter of local organizations occurs. Symphony, in financial trouble, seeks funds of \$500,000 from county. In 1981 county gave \$160,000, while Syracuse gave \$10,000. In 1982 Syracuse increases contribution to \$25,000, while county agrees to contribute \$400,000. County continues as major donor in future years. County role becomes more important as corporate sponsorship declines.
	County legislature amends sales tax distribution formula. Portion going to Syracuse to drop 1/4% each year from 1983 to 1988. This portion to be redistributed to towns and villages. County portion stays at 34.625%.
1983	State agrees to pick up a larger portion of Medicaid costs for nursing homes starting in 1984. Local contribution will go from 25 to 10%. Change to be phased in over three years. County continues to pay 25% for general Medicaid cases.
1986	Burnet Park Zoo is reopened after \$13 million in construction by county.
1987	As a result of "State Facilities" bill, state begins reimbursement of county for some costs associated with local fulfillment of responsibilities in operating courts. Counties reimbursed up to 25% of maintenance and operating expenses associated with court activities. County also reimbursed up to 33 1/3 % of costs for interest for bonds issued to borrow money to improve court facilities.
1988	Syracuse and county agree on trash plant. Syracuse contracts to give county control over its trash.
1990	County wide 911 system agreed on.
	Onondaga County Resource Recovery Agency created.
	County legislature amends sales tax distribution formula. Syracuse to be cut .85% per year from 1991 to 2000. That amount to be distributed in annual increments of .55% to county, .15% to towns and villages, and .15% to school districts. By 2000, distribution to be: county, 37.83%, Syracuse, 25.89%, towns and villages, 28.92%, and school districts, 7.78%.
1993	Onondaga County builds the Oncenter, a place for for conventions, exhibits, etc.
1999	City-County Crime Lab opens.

Changes in Formation of Onondaga County Public Library

Year	Conditions and Changes
1931	Autonomous libraries financed and run by each local government in county (City of Syracuse, each town and village), serving only those in own jurisdiction. No "county" library and no cooperative activity.
1958	Albany uses financial inducements to urge localities to form cooperative library systems so the state can funnel money libraries through one central system. State agrees to provide state aid to a "main library" for distribution to members of library system. Libraries do not have to completely merge to meet requirements.
1961	<p>18 county libraries form Onondaga Library System, where county residents can use all county libraries. Onondaga County is the last county in New York to form such a system.</p> <p>The libraries are still financed by separate local governments.</p> <p>Syracuse Public Library, financed by the city, as the largest library, is designated as the central library of the system.</p>
1971	Mayor Lee Alexander requests 1/3 of library budget from county, but county declines to provide it.
1972	<p>Alexander threatens to shut-down Syracuse Public Library. Alexander argues that the city taxpayers are paying for the central library which is used heavily by non-city residents.</p> <p>County Executive John Mulroy first opposes county bail-out of city libraries then commissions a citizens committee to investigate issue. County sets up "emergency fund" for all members of Onondaga Library System. Funds to be drawn on only if closure of libraries imminent.</p>
1973	Citizens committee recommends that Onondaga County take over main facility (Carnegie building) of Syracuse Public Library with other facilities to be designated as branches or members. Proposal is for the county to pay for operation of the central library facility, and for local governments to support their own facilities. Essential principle is cooperation, not merger. Democrats on County Legislature support proposal.
1975	County agrees to pick up responsibility for imposing tax necessary for city to pay its obligations for public libraries within Syracuse.

- 1976 Onondaga County Public Library formed with 20 member libraries (towns and villages) and 8 Syracuse city branch libraries. Onondaga County responsible for operation of the central library, while other county libraries are financially independent of the county. Proposal made in 1973 forms basis for agreement.
- Syracuse reimburses the county for running all branch libraries within the City of Syracuse. Reimbursement is placed on city abstract (bill to city of county taxes to collect) as a county tax. City gets credit for contributing to libraries, but residents see tax as a county tax.
- A contract between member libraries and O.C.P.L spells out the services that O.C.P.L will provide in return for libraries joining the system.
- 1986 County legislature approves contract for main library to be located in Galleries.
- 1988 Main Branch of library opens in Galleries
- 1991 System agreed upon on 1976 continues in place. Residents of Onondaga County may borrow books at any facility, request loan of materials from any facility, or return books to any facility. Central branch provides "consultant support" to help branch and member libraries in purchasing and operating decisions.
- Onondaga County provides approximately \$6,000,000 a year to support O.C.P.L. City of Syracuse transfers to the county close to \$4,000,000 million to run "city" branch libraries, pay designated "city" personnel and provide funds for upkeep of central library headquarters. Local towns, villages and school districts each support (buy books, pay personnel, upkeep of building, utilities) for their own member libraries at level of around \$3,000,000.
- State of New York provides O.C.P.L (Galleries) \$1,000,000 for distribution by a state set formula to central, branch and member libraries.

Changes in Onondaga County Sewage Disposal

Year	Conditions and Changes
Early 1900s	Apparently raw sewage from city of Syracuse is sent to various creeks in the area. Those creeks then dump into Onondaga Lake creating a problem of raw sewage being put into the lake. Since most of the population in the county was within the city of Syracuse there was not yet a need for a county-wide sewage system.
1907	New York State Legislature creates Syracuse Sewer System, also known as the Syracuse Intercepting Board.
1920s	Syracuse Intercepting Board recognizes Ley Creek Sanitary District and Treatment Plant, which empties into Onondaga Lake, as a pollution problem.
1924	Syracuse Intercepting Board builds primary treatment plant on Hiawatha Boulevard.
1933	New York State Legislature creates the Onondaga County Sanitary Sewer and Public Works Commission. The Commission is created in response to an increase in population outside the city of Syracuse and the need for inter-local cooperation.
Early 1940s	Onondaga County Public Works Commission recommends metropolitan course of action for sewage problem. They noted that growing population west of Syracuse would soon need sewage collection and treatment facilities. They also suggested Syracuse not enlarge its treatment facilities independent of the county since pollution problem extended beyond city.
1948	<p data-bbox="375 1314 1448 1461">City Engineer Nelson Pitts submits report to Mayor Costello. He claims Syracuse needs to rehabilitate its trunk sewers and needs new treatment facilities. He suggests that the city of Syracuse build its own treatment facility and contract with surrounding neighborhoods for its use.</p> <p data-bbox="375 1503 1448 1650">John A. Wilson, executive of the Niagara Mohawk Power Corporation favors consolidation of pollution control under direction of Public Works Commission. He believed nothing less than an integrated sewer plan for all of Onondaga County would be effective.</p>
1950	Employees at Solvay Process Company go on strike. City of Syracuse now has no place to dispose of its sludge, and the city's trunks overflow into Onondaga Lake.

- 1951 Onondaga Lake Purification Commission is created. Commission analyzes two options :
1. Build one large plant for city and west side district
 2. Build two plants, one for city and one for suburbs
- Commission recommends that County Public Works Commission be authorized to build joint facility for city of Syracuse and west side.
- 1952 Reports from the firms of O'Brien and Gere and Greely and Hanson are submitted to the Onondaga County Public Works Commission. Their reports suggest building one primary treatment plant and converting the Ley Creek Treatment Plant into a primary treatment facility. The Onondaga County Public Works Commission would be responsible.
- Republican members of the Common Council meet in caucus with the County Chairman and Chairman of the County Board of Supervisors. The decision is made to place sewage disposal in hands of the Onondaga County Public Works Commission. It is also decided that the Onondaga County Public Works Commission would have to receive approval from the Syracuse Common Council before initiating any projects that involved the city.
- 1954 Plan 3 adopted -- County Republicans successfully fought city Democrats for sewage treatment to fall under county jurisdiction. While the majority of the population lived in the city, the county would be responsible for the operation of the treatment plants. Change appears to be motivated by desire for county Republicans to control operation which will be largely paid for by city residents. Approved by Common Council Mayor, and Board of Supervisors. Results in creation of Metropolitan Syracuse Treatment Plant District created by county. County assumes major role and responsibility for sewage.
- 1962 County purchases Meadowbrook Treatment Plant from City of Syracuse.
- 1969 Syracuse Sanitary district formed and county assumes responsibility for city's interceptor system.
- 1970 New Wetzel Road and Meadowbrook treatment plants are built with funds coming from the Federal Environmental Protection Agency (75%), New York State (12.5%) and the County (12.5%). This funding remains the same throughout the construction of Onondaga County's 6 treatment plants
- Consolidated sewer districts proposed to reduce inequities in rates and solve coordination problems.
- County legislature repeatedly votes down Metropolitan Sewage Treatment Plant. State threatens and eventually cuts off aid. Finally approved.
- 1974 Brewerton Treatment Plant built.

- 1977 Federal agency Environmental Protection Agency informs county that a sewage disposal system must have a uniform user-charge system in order to receive government grants.
- 1978 Onondaga County consolidates 20 sewer districts into one sewer district.
- County residents hooked up to sewage disposal system a uniform fee charged by housing units at each site. Industry charged by gallons of water used.
- 1979 New Metro-Syracuse plant opens. Upgraded and expanded with federal funds. Fifteen years and \$127 million to bring into operation.
- 1981 Oak Orchard Treatment Plant built.
- 1982 Baldwinsville-Seneca Knolls Plant built.
- 1992 Onondaga County Executive Nicholas Pirro proposes idea to build a pipeline that would divert half of Syracuse's sewage to a treatment plant in Baldwinsville.
- 2000 Onondaga County receives permission from United States Environmental Protection Agency to build a sewage treatment plant on Midland Avenue.
- Nicholas Pirro announces that Onondaga County may sue the city of Syracuse so that county can build Midland Avenue Sewage plant.
- Syracuse Common Council votes unanimously against giving Onondaga County permission to build Midland Avenue sewage plant.
- Onondaga County legislatures approved spending of \$70 million for Midland Avenue sewage plant by a vote of 16-8.
- 2001 Onondaga County launches campaign to gain support for Midland Avenue sewage treatment plant. County offers to spend \$3 million to improve neighborhood where sewage plant would be built.
- Onondaga County legislature warns that a more expensive alternative to Midland Avenue sewage treatment plant could end up costing property owners \$200 more per household.
- Nicholas Pirro announces that he plans to sue the city of Syracuse. Pirro aims to make Syracuse partly responsible for the clean-up of Onondaga Lake and also to sue the city for violating federal laws by dumping storm water into the county's sewage pipes.
- New York State Department of Environmental Conservation extends deadline for

- Onondaga County to obtain land for Midland Avenue sewage treatment plant. New deadline is set for January, 17 2002.
- 2002 Syracuse Mayor Matt Driscoll offers a \$2.4 million incentive to Onondaga County if they pursue an alternative to the Midland Avenue sewage treatment plant.
- Consultants come up with alternative plan to Onondaga County's Midland Avenue sewage treatment plant. Plan would require building six underground sewage storage tanks in the Midland Avenue neighborhood. Nicholas Pirro rejects alternative plan claiming that it would be too expensive.
- Onondaga County and Syracuse officials' three day negotiations fail to produce alternative plan for Midland Avenue sewage treatment plant.
- Onondaga County legislature postpones spending \$55 million to design a sewage treatment plant in Armory Square. County is reluctant to spend money on design when necessary property has not yet been purchased.
- Federal judge rules that Onondaga County has right to take city-owned property it needs for Midland Avenue sewage treatment plant.
- City of Syracuse announces they plan to challenge federal judge's ruling that allows Onondaga County to build Midland Avenue sewage treatment plant. City worries that ruling will permanently affect their sovereignty.
- Onondaga County drops \$3 million offer to improve neighborhoods around Midland Avenue sewage treatment plant.
- 2003 Onondaga County and Syracuse officials plan to form a committee to resolve arguments for Midland Avenue sewage treatment plant.
- 2004 Onondaga County and Syracuse agree to a \$378,000 purchase of city land for Onondaga County to build Midland Avenue sewage treatment plant.
- Syracuse residents hold large demonstration against plan to build a sewage treatment plant in Armory Square parking lot.
- 2005 Onondaga County decides to build a sewage treatment plant in Armory Square parking lot. Plan is estimated to cost \$74 million.
- Onondaga County proposes building two small sewage treatment plants on west side of Syracuse. Plan is estimated to cost \$55 million.
- 2006 Onondaga County propose plan to build a two story, 280 space parking garage on top on Armory Square sewage treatment plant.

2007

Syracuse city leaders speak out against Onondaga County's sewage treatment plant in Armory Square.

Onondaga County legislature committee approves spending \$2.4 million to buy needed property from city of Syracuse to begin building Armory Square sewage treatment plant.

Onondaga County and city of Syracuse agree to turn Armory Square parking lot into a sewage treatment plant.

Onondaga County Department of Water Environment Protection estimates Midland Avenue sewage treatment plant will cost \$50 million more than originally expected.

Midland Avenue sewage treatment plant is scheduled to open in early 2008.

Onondaga County and city of Syracuse ratify a sewage treatment agreement. Agreement allows for the immanent completion of the Midland Avenue sewage treatment plant. Agreement marks the settlement of years of lawsuits between Onondaga County and the city of Syracuse.

Changes in Water Delivery Arrangements

Year	Conditions and Changes
1800s	Separate and private water companies supply most residential and commercial needs, along with individual wells.
1888	New State Legislature authorizes and Mayor of Syracuse appoints Board of Water Commissioners to create public water system for Syracuse.
1894	After initial failure, referendum passes to fund pipe system from Skaneateles Lake. First pipe opens in 1894.
1907	Onondaga County Suburban Water Co. formed to develop Otisco lake to provide water to east and north of Syracuse. Taken over in 1929 by New York Water Service Corp.
1910	Second pipe to Skaneateles Lake opens in response to population growth.
1920s	Syracuse provides water for new industries and for some - 50 new developments. No coherent plan for development of water resources. Private companies have difficult time providing adequate water volume and pressure, making further development difficult, and making it hard for companies to get favorable fire insurance rates.
1927	Third pipe to Skaneateles Lake opens as population continues to grow.
1931	State Water Power and Control Commission grants Syracuse authority to withdraw maximum of 58 million gallons per day from Skaneateles Lake.
1950	County Board of Supervisors form committee to study county water problem.
1951	Onondaga County Water Authority created by act of state legislature with boundaries overlapping with that of private company. Authority has difficult time beginning. Wishes to issue bonds to develop capacity, but has no steady source of revenue to provide future income to pay off bonds. Begins effort to condemn and takeover private company in 1953.
1955	Onondaga County Water Authority acquires New York Water Service Corp. Public sector action replaces private sector action because of performance problems. Second line to Otisco Lake developed.
1957	Complaints about water shortages surface again.

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| 1959 | State denies Syracuse authority to provide water to towns of Dewitt and Onondaga. Need for alternative sources becomes more pronounced. Mayor of Syracuse and Board of Supervisors appoint Joint City-County Water Committee to study water problem and make recommendations. |
| 1960 | Drawing on 1953 state law giving local governments opportunity to cooperate, the "Joint City-County Committee" changed into Onondaga County Water Agency by resolution of Board of Supervisors. Covers all of county while previous one covered suburbs. |
| 1962 | Onondaga County Water Agency issues report urging use of Lake Ontario as source of water, and creation of a water district with authority to raise funds to handle capital construction. Voters presented with proposal to give Onondaga County Water Authority power to issue bonds to build a pipeline to Lake Ontario. Special referendum is held July 10, 1962. Mulroy pushes issue as part of his campaign for County Executive. OCWA to serve as seller of water to two water systems within Onondaga County, the City of Syracuse and the Onondaga County Water Authority. Triple majority required (majority in Syracuse, in area outside city, and in villages considered as one unit). Passes. |
| 1964 | Construction on Lake Ontario project begins. |
| 1967 | Onondaga County Water District opens for business. |
| 1978 | Several branch pipelines completed along with Western Reservoir. |
| 1991 | System continues in place, with towns of Skaneateles and Spafford, and village of Skaneateles outside system. Baldwinsville, Tully, and Marcellus are in District and pay its taxes, but have independent systems (from John Wesche, OCPL p. 21, 1981 – check for current accuracy) |
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Changes in the Burnet Park Zoo

Year	Conditions and Changes
1914	Large Red Barn opened on a 4-acre site of Burnet Park which housed native northeastern species
1915	William W. Wiard, president of Syracuse Chilled Plow Co., purchases traveling menagerie to be housed permanently at the zoo. All of the first animals were donated because the city budget provided no money for no animal acquisition.
1930	A new \$50,000 zoo building is built.
1932	Records show that 250,000 people flocked to see the zoo's 300 animals. However, the zoo begins having financial problems related to the Great Depression. Upkeep of the zoo was minimal and no new animals were obtained.
1956	Vandals broke into the zoo and hung two swans; first instance of vandalism within zoo.
1963	Vandals again broke into the zoo and released 11 animals. One of the elks had to be shot to death on the city's West Side.
1965	Mayor William Walsh proposes that the county take-over operation of the zoo. County declines.
1967	An outbreak of feline distemper kills eight animals including two African lions, two pumas, a black panther, a clouded leopard, a Bengal Tiger and an ocelot. County Executive John Mulroy proposes constructing a new zoo on the southwest shoreline of Onondaga Lake. The legislature refuses because of the plan's cost.
1971	Mayor Lee Alexander fires Zoo Director Charles Clift after a scathing report on zoo conditions by the Humane Association of Central New York. The report called the zoo "an unsanitary crackerbox environment."
1975	Siri the elephant arrives and lives in a cage that is half as wide as she is long forcing her to constantly bump her head. She soon outgrows the door and is forced to stay in the cage for two years until a bigger door is built. In June, two youths break into the zoo and slaughter 27 animals by either kicking or stabbing them to death. Public debate about zoo conditions increases.
1977	Mayor Lee Alexander and County Executive John Mulroy agree that only the county can afford to make the radical changes the zoo needs. City of Syracuse and county begin to share cost of supporting zoo. County agrees to takeover zoo.

	Transfer delayed because Syracuse eligible for federal funds for work on zoo.
1978	Federal funds assist in renovation and expansion of zoo from 9 to 32 acres.
1979	Onondaga County assumes full ownership and funding of the zoo. County Parks and Recreation Commissioner James Joust is directed to improve the zoo.
1981	<p>In March, Joust presents county legislators with a master plan for the zoo with a price tag of \$10,000,000. Legislators balk and instruct Joust to trim the costs and come back in a month with a plan to be implemented over several years.</p> <p>The U.S. Department of Agriculture, which oversees animal welfare in the nation's zoos, tours the zoo and orders the county to make major improvements or shut the zoo down after seeing urine and feces leak from cages into the kitchen where employees prepared animal meals.</p> <p>Legislators negotiate with USDA representatives and agree to spend \$20,000 to move the zoo kitchen to a trailer. USDA agrees to give county more time to upgrade the zoo.</p>
1981	Joust wins approval for his zoo plan labeled, "A New Breed of Zoo." Plan for \$10,000,000 renovation approved, contingent on ability of Friends of Burnet Park Zoo to raise one-fourth of the money through a community fund-drive. Community fund-raising drive nets \$2,500,000 in two months.
1982	Parks and Recreation Department obtains final approval to renovate zoo.
1986	Burnet Park Zoo is reopened after \$13 million in construction.

Changes in the 911 System

Year	Conditions and Changes
1970	County wide 911 System first proposed. No action taken because legislators felt cost not worth the services provided.
1972	Local police chiefs continue to criticize 911 proposals Onondaga Association of Chiefs opposes 911. Mulroy claims that lack of coordination sometimes results in four responses to one emergency call. Joint City – County Coordinating Committee passes resolution Supporting 911 "in principle."
1973	<p>Mobile Radio District established through a federal grant. This system allowed county and local police to share one radio frequency. This was the first step toward overcoming "turf war" battles between local and county police.</p> <p>State Public Service Commission rules that each telephone company must install equipment for 911 system by 1978. Mulroy appoints committee to study plan.</p>
1974	<p>11 county legislators release "poll" indicating opposition to 911 in their districts. New commission to study 911 appointed.</p> <p>Onondaga County Fire Chiefs oppose 911 as too costly, producing no gain in services, and for creating an extra layer of "civilians" between public and fire personnel.</p> <p>Skaneateles opposes 911 saying it already has an integrated system.</p>
1982	The advent of an enhanced 911 system makes a county - wide 911 system more justifiable. The original 911 system replaced a seven digit emergency code with just three digits, where the enhanced 911 added services like an immediate computer printout of the location of the distress call and high-speed transmission lines.
1986	Mulroy asks New York Telephone for enhanced 911 system.
1987	County legislature begins debating the idea of an enhanced 911 system for Onondaga County.
1988	County forms task force headed by Corrections Commissioner William Ciuros to study the feasibility of an enhanced 911 system for Onondaga County.
1990	County Executive Nick Pirro unveils \$3,900,000 proposal which consolidates emergency dispatch centers to two enhanced 911 command centers. New York State passes enabling legislation to let Onondaga County tax each phone line

- \$.35 to pay for costs of equipment within centers. County Legislature agrees to pay for the construction costs of both the city of Syracuse and Onondaga County's command centers. The command centers will be on Onondaga Hill in the same building with a back-up center to be placed in the basement of the Civic Center.
- 1991 Ground broken on Onondaga Hill for the enhanced 911 building. Construction and planning for 911 is on budget and on schedule to be in operation by July 1992. Plan will unite police and fire dispatch systems and will also unite County and town and village dispatch systems. Local identities will be retained, but dispatching will become county-wide, and the responsibility of a county agency. It remains to be settled how local agencies will be billed for their share of operating costs. Proposed county budget for 1992 indicates proposes that Syracuse transfer all fire and police dispatch personnel to county and have city pay its portion by putting bill on city abstract as a county tax to be paid.
- Groundbreaking for Onondaga County's new 911 center takes place. Center is estimated to cost \$3.3 million.
- Onondaga County builds a control center for its new 911 emergency phone system.
- 1992 Skaneateles refuses to join Onondaga County's emergency dispatch center. Deadline is set for April 1 if Skaneateles decides to join.
- Skaneateles decides to join Onondaga County's emergency dispatch center. Skaneateles was the last community in Onondaga County to join.
- New 911 center's communication system breaks down. Breakdown was caused by the failure of a microwave transmitter on the top of the Public Safety Building.
- Second communications breakdown takes place at the new 911 center. Breakdown was caused by a power failure in basement.
- 1993 Onondaga County's 911 emergency center begins to use new dispatching system that transfers information faster.
- Onondaga County decides that the new emergency phone system will collect all calls from around the county at the county's new public safety building in Oswego.
- 1996 Syracuse officials take Onondaga County to court. City tries to get back approximately \$12 million they claim the city was over-charged by county's emergency 911 center.

	<p>Syracuse Mayor Roy Bernardi drop his lawsuit that claimed Onondaga County was double billing city taxpayers for operating the 911 emergency center. Bernardi would rather cooperate with the Onondaga County than fight it.</p> <p>Syracuse councilors criticize Onondaga County's emergency 911 center for costing the city too much and providing poor service.</p>
1997	<p>Onondaga County's 911 center is accredited by the National Commission of Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies.</p>
2001	<p>Onondaga County legislature unanimously approves a \$2.3 million agreement with Verizon for computer and telephone services at the county's 911 center.</p>
2002	<p>Onondaga County's 911 center receives accreditation from the Commission of Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies.</p> <p>Onondaga County's 911 center becomes able to directly answer cell phone calls, rather than having them sent from a dispatch center.</p>
2003	<p>Onondaga County's 911 center claims they need to replace their computer system. The project is estimated to cost \$3.5 million.</p>
2004	<p>Onondaga County legislature names Jack Shea the new commissioner of the county's 911 center.</p> <p>Onondaga County plans to upgrade and move its 911 back-up center to the county's emergency operations center. The upgrade is paid for by a \$2.1 million grant from New York State.</p>
2005	<p>Onondaga County's 911 center asks the county legislature for permission to consolidate its three separate recording systems into one system-wide operation. The consolidation is estimated to cost \$128,000.</p> <p>Onondaga County's 911 center receives \$3,465,000. The money is spent upgrading the county's 911 system to track cellular calls.</p> <p>Onondaga County Executive Nicholas Pirro announces he plans to ask the county legislature for \$4.5 million to upgrade Onondaga County's emergency microwave transmission center.</p>
2006	<p>Onondaga County unveils its new Emergency Operations Center. The center is located in the subbasement of the Civic Center. The center is expanded physically as well as technologically.</p>
2007	<p>John Paddock, chairman of the new Citizen's Advisory Board announces he plans to study the need to maintain the Skaneateles dispatch center.</p>

Nicholas Pirro proposes the Onondaga County's 911 center receive \$1.4 million for improvements. Such improvements would include shortening response time for emergencies.

Committee studies Skaneateles dispatch center and Onondaga County's Emergency 911 center to analyze how the two work together.

Dispatch Citizen's Advisory Committee suggests Skaneateles dispatch center should remain the only full time local dispatch center.

Changes in Solid Waste Disposal

Year	Conditions and Changes
1966	<p>Existing garbage system within the county: Each municipality (Syracuse, towns and villages), makes own arrangements for disposal. Syracuse runs municipal garbage pick-up service as part of City services, and distributes to various landfills in community. Some towns and villages arrange for a private hauler to serve their residents; in other towns and villages the local government handles garbage. All local governments make own arrangements as to disposal in local landfills. Local arrangements often do not result in garbage disposal costs showing up as local taxes because private haulers bill residents. Syracuse and some towns and villages include costs of garbage in tax bills.</p> <p>First meeting of county solid waste study group. Put together out of sense that towns and villages were not going to be able to deal with garbage disposal problems in the future and county was probably going to have to play a role. Done at local initiative. No state or federal mandates involved.</p>
1967	<p>O'Brien and Gere present study commission by county suggesting using three swamps in area as landfills for garbage from Syracuse and towns. Incinerator possibility reviewed, but not recommended because too expensive.</p> <p>County legislature passes resolution declaring disposal of solid waste to be a county problem.</p>
1968	<p>Citizens Committee for Solid Waste, headed by Stephen Rogers, recommends sealing and burying solid waste in plastic wrapped blocks. This committee later recommends the creation of an authority similar to Onondaga County Water Authority for handling garbage.</p>
1969	<p>Mulroy says he does not want county involved in garbage disposal issue. Urges Syracuse, towns and villages to solve problem.</p> <p>Onondaga County legislature approves creation of Onondaga County Solid Waste Authority with power to: receive, transport, process, and dispose of solid waste materials; construct and develop disposal sites; and, collect charges for the use of facilities.</p>
1970	<p>County presents proposal on handling solid waste to Syracuse for consideration. City not agreeable.</p>
1972	<p>Head of Solid Waste Authority urges implementation of approach relying on</p>

- shredding and landfills for handling garbage. Indicates incinerator approach difficult because pollution control standards are rising.
- Clean air committee opposes Salina incinerator proposal on grounds pollution effects unknown. Salina later approves plant by 3 - 2 vote.
- County announces intent to build shredder in Salina on county property. Creates conflict with Salina.
- County legislature approves \$1.5 million for solid waste treatment plant in Clay. Mulroy says inaction by towns and municipalities has created situation where county is only possible actor at this point.
- 1973 Salina cancels incinerator bid contract after long delays in bid process.
- 1974 Maryland firm awarded contract for Salina shredder. First shredder begins operation at Rock cut Road. Another planned for Rock Cut Road.
- Solid Waste Disposal Authority reviews various sites in county as landfill sites.
- City of Syracuse complains that it is major customer at Rock Cut Road, but has no role in decision-making.
- Steam plant concept proposed; would burn garbage, convert it to steam and sell to local facilities such as Syracuse University. First county proposal to burn garbage. McBride Street site in Syracuse propose for connection to existing steam pipes.
- 1975 County legislature approves funds for steam plant site. Clay to be developed as landfill site. Visits made to other cities to examine incinerators. Carrier Corporation awarded contract to design incinerator.
- 1976 County considers creating county-wide garbage district; encounters opposition from legislators from towns. Report on steam plant says key to plant is having high volume of garbage to burn. Committee to study steam plant established. SWDA requests \$500,000 subsidy for continued operation. County legislature approves \$16.4 million for steam plant.
- 1977 Hearings on garbage indicate SWDA losing money because shredding fees greater than disposal costs. 8 of 17 municipal sanitary landfills now in violation of state DEC standards. DEC not enforcing law due to lack of options. DEC warns all 17 may soon be in violation.
- Common Council of Syracuse fails to approve any City sites for steam plant. Plan dies.

- County Mayor's Association passes resolution urging county to takeover solid waste disposal from municipalities.
- 1978 Battle over steam plant at McBride Street continues. City opposed to site. County legislature urges SWDA to review Mulroy proposals.
- 1979 Common Council considers McBride Street site. Many local groups speak out against site. Council votes 8 - 1 against McBride site.
- Mulroy selects Rock Cut Road site for incinerator. Studies continue.
- 1981 Mayor Alexander says City has 1/2 of garbage, should have more than 2/11 appointees on board. City and town face deadlines for signing commitments to sell garbage to authority. Continued disagreement among towns and City about participating. DEC says it will toughen enforcement on substandard landfills operated by those refusing to participate. 3 of 15 landfills in county meet DEC standards.
- 1982 Clay first town to commit its garbage to county. Onondaga and Cicero later commit. Syracuse seeks deadline extension.
- 1983 Alexander rejects steam plant, suggests Jamesville quarry as landfill. Says City will go it alone. County left without assurance of adequate volume of trash for new plant. Alexander files suit versus county plant plan.
- 1984 Newspapers, Mayor, and Republicans in county legislature declare garbage plant dead. County legislature kills proposals.
- 1985 Major local landfill closes. During the 1970s and 1980s many local landfills were being closed by the New York State Department of Energy Conservation because of concerns about leakage from landfills and the pollution of water supplies.
- 1986 New Mayor Young and Mulroy agree to meet to talk about trash plant. Agree on trash plant at Rock Cut Road site.
- 1987 Young and Mulroy sign agreement on plant at Rock Cut Road. County legislature and Common Council agree. DEC warns that getting approval of landfill disposal of ash will not be easy. DEC says any plan must include recycling.
- 1988 Syracuse signs contract November 2 giving county control over its garbage. Marcellus and Baldwinsville are first of villages or towns to sign contracts giving county control over their garbage.
- 1990 Dewitt is last town to sign contract giving county control of its garbage.

Skaneateles declines to join, making it only local government not part of county trash plan.

This change represents a substantial assertion of county control and was met with local resistance. Local haulers and towns were worried about giving the county the right to control their solid waste and set fees for depositing solid waste at the county facility. The towns in particular worried about the loss of autonomy.

Onondaga County Resource Recovery Authority starts and absorbs SWDA. County Recycling program begins. Change involves fundamental shift in role of county in garbage disposal. Prior situation allowed each municipality to make own arrangements for disposal of garbage. New county authority makes county controller of flow of all garbage and makes county authority responsible for setting standards for handling garbage during disposal process. Despite greater county role, new authority activity is not reflected as greater county taxes. Authority charges haulers (whether private or public) the cost of disposal and as an authority, costs are contained within the authority's budget.

1992 OCRRA issues decision that it will commence building of a trash burning plant at Rock Cut Road in the Town of Onondaga. Decision generates concern and opposition from Jamesville-Dewitt area. Residents worry that ash from incinerator will be carried by wind into their area.

1994 U.S. Supreme Court issues ruling saying local communities cannot tell local governments where to bring trash. Decision creates anxiety that some towns in Onondaga County will try to void contracts and not provide their trash to trash burning plant being built.

In November the trash plant burns first trash.

1995 First ash from incinerator is shown to pass safety tests

Plant passes all tests and begins full functioning.

2007 Issue persists of where to dump ash by-product from burning. OCRRA continues to truck ash to Seneca Meadows Landfill near Waterloo, N.Y. OCRRA has secured permits to build landfill in Town of Van Buren but has not started project.

Changes for City-County Crime Lab

Year	Conditions and Changes
1980s – early 1990s	<p>Technology changes make it possible to obtain much more information from evidence in crime situations. Some of these methods allow DNA testing of evidence available for previously convicted defendants and indicate that some convicted were innocent. This creates pressure for local crime labs to update their capabilities to assess evidence. Existing crime labs do not have sufficient capacity to do DNA tests and acquiring technology is expensive.</p> <p>There are multiple labs in the county handling diverse activities: sheriff’s department, county health department, City of Syracuse Police, Medical Examiner, and a Red Cross facility. Availability of current technology is limited or uneven and staff are largely uniformed officers, not technical medical personnel.</p>
1994	<p>District Attorney William J. Fitzpatrick announces his support for a city-county crime lab.</p> <p>Sheriff of Onondaga County John C. Dillon announces his support for a city-county crime lab.</p>
1997	<p>Syracuse and Onondaga County officials decide to work together to get state money for a joint crime lab.</p> <p>Onondaga County officials sign agreement to consolidate their crime lab with the city of Syracuse's.</p> <p>Syracuse and Onondaga County officials are offered \$291,000 in state money if they consolidate their crime labs.</p> <p>Region's first DNA lab is to open under plan to build a city-county forensic center in Syracuse.</p> <p>Syracuse officials state they will not support a city-county crime lab unless the city has more input and less financial risk.</p> <p>Syracuse Common Council unanimously agrees to participate in the combined city-county crime lab.</p>

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| 1998 | <p>Groundbreaking for city-county crime lab is scheduled to take place.</p> <p>State Assemblyman Majority Leader Michael Bragman refuses to move a bill that would authorize building the city-county crime lab on state land.</p> <p>Bragman reintroduces a bill to improve a city-county crime lab</p> <p>New York State officials pass a bill approving the lease agreement for the city-county crime lab.</p> |
| 1999 | <p>Dr. Kathleen Corrado is named director of Onondaga County's new DNA lab.</p> <p>Law enforcement officials from both Syracuse and Onondaga County move into new \$12 million crime lab.</p> |
| 2000 | <p>Onondaga County legislature unanimously agrees to name the new city-county crime lab after deceased police investigator Wallie Howard.</p> |
| 2002 | <p>Committee of Onondaga County legislators recommend several changes to be made at the city-county crime lab. Some of these changes include better maintenance and improved staff relations.</p> <p>Onondaga County legislature wants the county to take over Syracuse's \$1.6 million annual share of the cost to run the Center for Forensic Sciences.</p> |
| 2003 | <p>Syracuse Common Council approves a deal that shifts all city crime lab workers to Onondaga County's payroll. The deal also shifts the cost of the crime lab from residents' city tax bills to their county tax bills.</p> <p>Democratic Onondaga County lawmakers try to persuade fellow lawmakers to spend an extra \$1.6 million to cover Syracuse's yearly payment for the Center of Forensic Sciences.</p> |
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Changes For City-County Courthouse

Year	Conditions and Changes
1990s	<p data-bbox="407 516 1438 659">Court administration officers of New York indicate that court facilities in Onondaga County need improvement. Technological capacity of existing courtrooms is limited, making it difficult to tape proceedings or use computer materials.</p> <p data-bbox="407 701 1438 806">County District Attorney personnel are scattered across three floors in the Civic Center, leading to some inefficiencies in cooperation and communication.</p>
1998	<p data-bbox="407 856 1438 926">Syracuse Common Council's Public Safety Committee hears update of plans for new city-county court building.</p>
2000	<p data-bbox="407 982 1438 1052">New York State Supreme Court Justice James Tormey III proposes a complete review of plans for new criminal courthouse.</p>
2003	<p data-bbox="407 1167 1438 1236">Onondaga County and Syracuse share cost of \$3.5 million to clean up site of new courthouse.</p> <p data-bbox="407 1251 1438 1356">Syracuse Mayor Matt Driscoll and Onondaga County Executive Nicholas Pirro sign a 30-year lease agreement for new courthouse. City sells courthouse land to county for \$1.</p> <p data-bbox="407 1472 1438 1541">New city-county courthouse has its official opening ceremony. Courthouse is named the Onondaga County/City of Syracuse Criminal Courthouse.</p>

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