

Consolidated Report of the Transition Team  
Task Forces on:

- Economic Development
- Government Modernization
- Community Revitalization
- Social Services/Education
- Workforce Relations
- Intergovernmental Relations

Presented to the Onondaga County Executive-Elect  
Joanne M. Mahoney on December 20<sup>th</sup> & 21<sup>st</sup>, 2007.



Joanne M. Mahoney  
*County Executive*

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Edward Kochian  
*Deputy County Executive*

January 25, 2008

My Fellow Onondaga County Residents:

The transition into the Office of the County Executive has been extraordinary. The people I have spoken with have offered support and ideas and I am very intent on implementing an agenda that provides opportunity for all our residents.

In preparation for starting my term as County Executive, we formed six task forces comprised of a diverse group of citizens who care deeply about our future. The six groups were: Economic Development, Government Modernization, Community Revitalization, Social Services/Education, Workforce Relations, and Intergovernmental Relations. Each group was tasked with developing specific ideas for implementing and strengthening the Opportunity Agenda that was introduced during the campaign.

The results of their efforts are compiled in this report. You will be impressed with the level of work accomplished in a six-week timeframe. The task force members dedicated themselves to the process and succeeded in achieving their goals. There are numerous ideas - some big, some small - that can be integral in improving Onondaga County.

There are many issues facing our County. As we move forward with implementing the Opportunity Agenda, ideas put forth by each task force group will be a key part of determining what path we take.

Thank you for taking the time to review these reports and thank you to the task force group members who created them. It is dedicated people like you who will make our County what we all know it can become.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Joanne".

Joanne M. Mahoney  
Onondaga County Executive

## Economic Development Task Force

### Charge:

The Onondaga County Transition Team Task Force on Economic Development has the overall charge of reviewing current economic development efforts and offering tangible recommendations that have a competitive, regional focus and will enable Central New York to become “bold, flexible and fast.”

### Chair and Members:

Randy Wolken, Chair	President, MACNY
Steven Coker	President, Minority Contractors' Association of CNY
Heather Erickson	President, MedTech Association
Tim Frateschi	Attorney, Harris Beach
Rebecca Meinking	President, Associated Builders and Contractors
Judy Mower	President, J.C. Mower Consultants
Harvey Skeelee	President, Onondaga County Farm Bureau
Bill Towsley	Business Manager, IBEW Local 43
Jack Webb	President, Alliance Bank NA
Dick Catanise	President, Catanise Consulting

### Methodology:

The Economic Development Task Force took several steps to complete its review and report our findings and recommendations. The primary process was inductive, gathering information from people in the community with useful perspectives on economic development and reviewing their input for themes. The Task Force members conducted numerous interviews with community members, including representatives from education, business, organized labor, and economic development.

At its first meeting, the group reviewed its charge and approved an overall plan for completing its report. Interviewing one another to gather each participant's insights about economic development, the group identified interview subjects and other potential resources, such as various reports on economic development, relevant to the Task Force's work.

At its second meeting, Task Force members reviewed the information from interviews completed in the preceding week. The group also interviewed Donald Western, Director of Onondaga County Department of Economic Development, and Executive Director of the Onondaga County Industrial Development Agency.

At its third meeting, Task Force members reviewed the sum of all interviews performed to date. The group then prioritized the ideas and recommendations from the various

interviews, generating a list of ideas the Task Force members considered most urgent for consideration. Task Force members also revisited the County Executive-Elect's Opportunity Agenda for Economic Development and similarly prioritized the suggestions contained therein, taking into consideration the data gathering efforts of the group to date.

The Task Force received additional input from community members and business leaders via e-mail from the County Executive's website. The Task Force also developed a short online survey for MACNY business members.

The Task Force also reviewed the reports of recommendations for the revitalization of America's older, industrial, northeastern cities published by the Brookings Institution, American Assembly, Policy Link, and Smart Growth America. The Task Force also reviewed the 2007 Annual Report of the Onondaga County Industrial Development Agency and several reports from the Metropolitan Development Association, including The Essential New York Initiative and the Central Upstate New York's Green Industry Sector report.

At its fourth meeting, Task Force members reviewed the additional themes collected from interviews since the group's third meeting. The group then reviewed a draft report prepared by the Chairman, Randy Wolken, with MACNY staff. Feedback from Task Force members was incorporated after the meeting and additional review; the report was then finalized.

### **Identifying and Defining the Regional Economic Development Challenges**

Central New York's economy faces significant challenges: constricting regulations and high business costs from state government; increasing global competition from emerging market economies; talent retention; and local government structures that could hinder job growth. Additionally, throughout the majority of our interviews, comments were made regarding the fragmented efforts of numerous economic development groups and agencies in our region (for the purposes of this report, the "region" refers to the Metropolitan Statistical Area, or MSA and adjacent counties). County government does not control many of these issues, but the County Executive-Elect has a unique opportunity to bring the multitude of organizations that play a role in economic development together through the high profile of her office. By identifying the issues within her control and offering ideas that can improve the overall economic development process, the entire Central New York community can take significant steps toward creating a strong and vibrant region.

After consulting community members and business leaders across Central New York, the Task Force generated a list of recommendations falling under three broad areas of focus:

1. Develop a Coherent, Integrated and Regional Economic Development Process
2. Effectively Market Our Region as "The Place for Doing Business"
3. Strengthen the Region's Workforce

## Essential Strategies for Economic Growth

### 1. Develop a Coherent, Integrated and Regional Economic Development Process

Central New York contains a wealth of economic development advisors and professionals. As such, there is redundancy and overlap of various economic development efforts throughout the region. Additionally, the need to navigate through different offices and organizations to approve a project or advance development provides for a complex and confusing system. To effectively move Central New York toward growth and prosperity, it is necessary to create a comprehensive strategy and consistent process with all arms of economic development, both public and private entities. To do so, the Task Force recommends the following to the County Executive-Elect:

**Create a coherent regional vision for economic development.** All organizations should follow this vision and collaborate to effectively leverage the region's strengths.

**Create a coalition representing the interests of all stakeholders in economic development.**

This coalition should, and must, include government officials, private sector partners, civic leaders, educators and community leaders.

**Reorganize the Region's economic development business processes to create a single unified business process.**

This will likely require an alignment of the roles of several economic development organizations to include public sector development groups, planning organizations, and private sector organizations such as the Metropolitan Development Association and the Greater Syracuse Chamber of Commerce. The County Executive-Elect should facilitate the process of transitioning to a unified approach and process to economic development efforts. The first step should be to work with Mayor Driscoll and his Economic Development Team to consolidate the City and County Economic Development Departments; similar to the way the County and City merged planning departments to create the Syracuse-Onondaga County Planning Agency.

**Develop a public-private partnership bringing all entities in economic development under one authority.**

The idea of consolidated entities is nothing new to New York State: Counties such as Chemung, Cortland and Saratoga are among the dozens of regions who have already consolidated public private partnerships into one-stop authorities. Working with the leadership of these counties would allow the County Executive-Elect to follow suit for Onondaga County.

Facilitate the integration of economic development activities at all levels of government, including county, city, town and village offices. For example, under the direction of the County Executive-Elect, the Syracuse-Onondaga County Planning Agency needs to become more involved with coordinating with towns and villages.

**Create a central clearing house for retrieving and filing permits for development projects in Central New York.**

This can be done by consolidating the various offices currently involved in the permit retrieving process.

**Support the completion of critical projects in the community.** These projects include, but are not limited to: the OnCenter Hotel; Hotel Syracuse renovation; Mizpah Tower renovation; Landmark Theater restoration; Onondaga Creekwalk; redevelopment of the Inner Harbor; DestiNY USA, Onondaga Lake cleanup; and revitalization of the 300 block of South Salina Street.

Collaborate with the County Legislature to leverage the County's bonding capacity to provide expanded financial resources to development projects.

**2. Effectively Market our Region as “The Place for Doing Business”**

Central New York has much to offer, and the region's strongest assets are qualities many parties seriously consider when looking to relocate. By retaining the services of local marketing professionals familiar with Central New York, the County Executive-Elect can lead an effective marketing strategy promoting what our region has to offer. Additionally, the Task Force respectfully submits the following recommendations for the County Executive-Elect:

**Focus marketing investments into strategic industries, populations and geographies.**

Organize marketing efforts to focus on growing industry sectors and populations and target early and mid-career professionals. Central New York needs a marketing strategy targeting specific businesses and leveraging the area as one specializing in certain market sectors, such as biotechnology, medical device manufacturing, signal processing, green technology, medical research and development, education, health care industries, and advanced manufacturing. This will retain new talent who can bring skills to the region and invest in the community, creating new jobs with above average salaries and wages. Work closely with higher education to retain recent college graduates in our region and workforce.

Develop and execute a nationwide communications and marketing strategy, using local and professional marketing firms, to promote the

region as a great place to create jobs. This will help enable Central New York to compete in business and workforce recruitment.

**Leverage the region's valued resources in this comprehensive marketing strategy.**

These include Central New York's low cost of living, first rate universities, plentiful fresh water, access to nature, recreational activities, quality environmental practices and increasingly vibrant Downtown.

Act as the ambassador for the community, meeting with and attracting business from around the region, state and nation.

Facilitate the expansion of research partnerships between academic institutions and innovative, high-tech companies. This will allow Central New York to collaborate and compete in the global innovation market.

### **3. Strengthen the Region's Workforce**

Onondaga County is facing a workforce crisis. Combined with the en masse retirement of the baby boomer population and the net loss of young, skilled workers, many employers cannot find the skilled workers they need to grow, both in the manufacturing and white-collar industries. In order to make the region more attractive to outside businesses, officials need to effectively identify and address key challenges in developing and retaining a skilled workforce. These challenges include, but are not limited to: the lack of a job ready workforce, the inability to locate available, skilled workers, and failure to recognize the current and future needs of employers. To address these pressing needs, the Task Force respectfully recommends the following to the County Executive-Elect:

**Utilize an "employer driven" model in workforce development initiatives.**

This requires government entities to support specific skill training developed in conjunction with existing and potential employers.

**Focus on workforce development using the Journey to Jobs (J2J) strategy.**

The J2J effort facilitates collaboration and promotes progress in each of the plan's identified areas of effort. The County-Executive-Elect should collaborate with the community and encourage employer input in workforce development efforts to strengthen the region's workforce.

Create partnerships among colleges, innovative companies, and local school districts to create training, apprenticeships, and education programs. Current practices include utilizing taxpayer dollars for "in-house training" programs facilitated by the government. In the interest of encouraging partnership and practicing fiscal responsibility, the County Executive-Elect should delegate the majority of these training programs to

the capable hands of the professionals within the higher education community.

### **Additional Recommendations to be Considered**

While the Task Force believes it is necessary to address the three themes found throughout the interview process, promoting economic development is a long and complicated process, where a number of issues must be addressed to effectively foster economic growth. While it is necessary to immediately address the issues mentioned above, there are a number of additional and equally important items in need of attention to prepare the region for economic growth.

- Examine the opportunity to eliminate elevated portions of I-81 through the City of Syracuse. The elevated portions of I-81 in the City of Syracuse act as a barrier to economic development. This highway cuts Syracuse University off from other parts of the City and limits land development in downtown Syracuse. Because a strong region relies on a strong core city, the County Executive-Elect should examine this opportunity.
- Focus on collaboration between educational institutions throughout the region and various economic development efforts, such as with the Connective Corridor.
- Encourage smart growth initiatives by preparing shovel-ready sites with clear titles, encouraging community collaboration, restoring brownfields, and providing incentives for development of current infrastructures.
- Maintain a transparent and open-objective process for developers in the region to create a level playing field with the same ground rules for everyone. Build a culture of awareness and accountability, holding all accountable through implemented standards and criteria.
- Consider the benefits of a development incentive program, such as T.I.F., Tax Incremental Financing.
- Support regionalizing assets, such as Hancock International Airport, transportation infrastructure, and parking garages.
- Preserve and revitalize existing City of Syracuse neighborhoods, such as Downtown, Eastwood, Sedgwick and Strathmore. Support a dynamic urban living environment. Focus on safe schools and good neighborhoods.
- Maximize the potential of the Center of Excellence in Environmental and Energy Systems, and the Central New York Biotechnology Research Center.
- Encourage developers who benefit from public monies to use local hiring strategies that reserve a percentage of jobs for local residents. This will ensure that unemployed or under-employed residents in economically isolated communities benefit from economic



development and reinvestment occurring in their respective communities.

- Establish Upstate Coalition with the newly elected County Executives in Monroe and Erie to advocate for an economic development agenda that will be mutually beneficial to the entire Upstate region. In creating a partnership with neighboring counties, the newly elected officials can together advocate for policies that will help shape our region's growth. Work with relevant New York State economic development officials responsible for the Upstate region.

### **Acknowledgements**

The Economic Development Task Force would like to acknowledge and thank the following participants to our research and interview process, who provided us with the necessary feedback that allowed us to define the recommendations made in the following report:

\*\*The report does not necessarily reflect the ideas of the interview subjects. The subjects were not given an opportunity to review the work of the Task Force, or correct any ideas or theme presented to the Task Force by the interviewer. The views contained in the report are the views of the Task Force members in whole or part only. No attempt has been made to ensure unanimity in the process of preparing this report.

## Government Modernization Task Force

### Chair and Members:

Vito Sciscioli, Chair	Executive Director, Syracuse 20/20
Mark Bitz	Local Businessman and Founder of FreeNYS.org
Larry Bousquet	Attorney, Green & Seifter
Steve Cambareri	Attorney, Cambareri and Cambareri
Ginny Carmody	District Representative, Congressman James Walsh, District Rep.
Jim Carrick	Senior Vice President, Sirius Computer Solutions
Joe Mareane	Chief Fiscal Officer, Onondaga County
Eric Persons	Director of the Office of Engagement Initiatives, Syracuse University
Melanie Vilardi	Supervisor, Town of Fabius
David Van Slyke	Associate Professor of Public Administration, The Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs, Syracuse University

### Executive Summary:

The multitude of local governments in Onondaga County results in fragmented and incomplete decision making on matters that impact the entire County. Economic growth in Onondaga County can only happen if we think and act regionally. The current structure of government is an impediment to the economic development of the region and leadership by the County Executive is needed to bring about reforms. An Onondaga County government that can think and act regionally to address issues will contribute to the development of greater pride in our region; a pride that extends beyond the municipality in which we live, and engenders a greater interconnectedness among the citizens of our region. This interconnectedness can focus attention and resources on the opportunities that exist in our community, as well as the inequities of facilities and services.

As Bruce Katz of the Brookings Institution notes, “you can create competitive cities and suburbs that nurture strong, resilient, adaptive economies and develop sustainable cities and suburbs that promote accessible transport, residential and employment density, and energy efficiency.” However, to achieve those goals and “build inclusive cities and suburbs that grow, attract, and retain the middle class and give all individuals-irrespective of race, ethnicity, or class- access to quality jobs and good schools [requires] vision.” We recommend that County Executive-Elect Mahoney use her position of leadership and the vision she has articulated and continues to refine to create, in the words of Katz, “a new network of political, corporate, and civic leaders who are more engaged and receptive to risk-taking [and] an intense focus on coalition building-both within and across the region!” This is the platform on which County Executive-Elect Mahoney can move Onondaga County government from a well-managed enterprise to a County that thinks and acts strategically to improve the quality of life and opportunities both in the County and in the region.

## **TASK FORCE CHARGE:**

The charge of the Government Modernization Task Force is to review current local government structures and to offer tangible recommendations that will modernize our system, lower the tax burden, and create opportunities for the County to be competitive in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. From our perspective two opportunity agendas exist for County Executive-Elect Mahoney. The first is a leadership agenda, which consists of a prioritized list of initiatives that is uniquely suited to only the Executive, elected on a county wide basis and the achievement of which is dependent more on the power to persuade than executive fiat. The second is a management agenda, which consists of the more traditional powers of the Executive. We have suggested priorities among the recommendations as a road map to where we think County Executive-Elect Mahoney should begin, recognizing the need to have early successes that build trust and confidence.

It is critical to recognize that modernizing government requires management and leadership skills. Management applies to the County government as a corporate organization. Leadership is necessary for new governance forms, the creation of strategic partnerships, the sharing of resources, and mobilizing assets that the County does not directly control. The latter is especially important particularly because of the fragmented way in which public activity is exercised in the region. In short, there is a difference between how one manages and how one leads. County Executive-Elect Mahoney will need to do both well.

Modernizing local government, both operationally and structurally, should be strategically focused on the core issues of our region – economic development, land use planning, and revitalization of the City. To be effective, initiatives and activities to modernize existing government operations must be meaningful, measurable, easily monitored, transparent, and promote pride and ownership. At the same time, you should aggressively pursue structural changes to government that will allow your government to be bold, flexible and fast. These are not mutually exclusive but rather are interdependent of one another.

One of the key ingredients for modernizing local government is having strong executive leadership. County Executive-Elect Mahoney will need to be able to convey a vision for where she would like to lead the community and the role government plays in that vision. There is an immediate opportunity for County Executive-Elect Mahoney to develop this platform and begin this dialogue. One of County Executive-Elect Mahoney's greatest strengths is her ability to give voice and legitimacy to the issues associated with economic competitiveness and government modernization and to create the capacity using public involvement to engage a broad and diverse range of stakeholders.

The recommendations identified below are prioritized by the time frame in which we believe initial action should commence. These points and initiatives are action oriented and align directly with the County Executive-Elects' priorities.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS:**

### **Three to Six Months**

#### **Fine Tune the Vision**

Clearly articulate a vision for economic competitiveness and modern government, and communicate to staff and citizens. Build partnerships to support the development and implementation of these goals.

#### **Strategic Assessment of County Services**

With the assistance of an outside facilitator, map out current government operations, determine what these should look like, and develop a plan of improved service delivery.

#### **This strategic assessment process should**

- Develop goals for County services
- Select measures for the goals and link to people and budgets
- Identify benchmarks for those goals and measures
- Identify and purchase the technology to implement this initiative
- Report to the public at large the measures that have been selected.

#### **Intermunicipal Consortium**

Establish a regional forum for addressing the provision of regional services, the proper examination of regional assets, the coordination of infrastructure construction, maintenance and repair, and the alignment of administrative functions to the appropriate level of government. Reinvalidate the previously created Intermunicipal Consortium (including special districts, authorities, certain economic development, and non-governmental agencies) to provide for a unified forum for developing the regional agenda and finding ways to operate more efficiently and strategically.

#### **Government Modernization Commission**

Support efforts to pursue State legislation to create a local Commission to study the possible structural changes to local government, and explore the legal, financial and other implications for these changes. The local Commission on Government Modernization will be charged with developing a recommendation for modernizing local government structures that would be voted upon by the citizens of the county. You will need to play an active role in helping to advance the proposal(s) as they develop. Prior to the development of this Commission, we recommend that you work to engage and organize a diverse group of

stakeholders representative of government, business, nonprofit, and citizens.

Use this informal and non-statutory opportunity both as education and to listen. You will need to create political champions for this recommendation to be successful. Initiating this type of forum prior to the Commission can create a ‘safe space’ for honest discussion and the genuine consideration of trade offs. We put forth this part of the recommendation as an effort to avoid the failed outcomes of the Buffalo government modernization initiative, which was widely perceived to be created entirely in a safe space without other interests having a voice.

### **Community Engagement**

Partner with existing organizations and groups interested in engaging the community in a conversation about redesigning our government structures for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. Use the office of County Executive to educate and engage the community in this discussion.

### **County Economic Development Office**

Reorient the County’s Economic Development Office to provide guidance to businesses and citizens of various regulations in towns, villages, the County and City. Move toward the creation of one-stop shopping for economic development and business assistance. Evaluate redesigning the “rules and tools” for economic development in Onondaga County with various government entities including the State of New York.

### **County Settlement Plan**

Gain official endorsement of the County Settlement Plan to guide resource allocation decisions. Reach out to other local government elected officials, public authorities, special districts, and planning organizations to encourage their understanding and endorsement of the plan. The question of how we grow is directly related to the degree of growth and critical protection of assets.

### **Albany Agenda**

Counties and other local governments are creatures of the State. Albany plays an important role in modernizing local government. Work with County Executives throughout the State to develop an agenda in Albany that will advance the work that is underway locally. The County Executive-Elect should find common agenda items with other Upstate communities, find common ground with organizations such as Unshackle Upstate, and collectively advance issues to Albany. Mandates and their impact on local taxes are a central issue.

### **Opportunity Agenda Report Card**

At the end of the first six months, report on the progress that is being made with regard to the entire Opportunity Agenda. The forums should be bi-annual and focus on the results being achieved, and compare them to widely recognized benchmarks of success.

### **Community Forums**

Hold community forums to educate the citizens on the short term agenda the County Executive is pursuing and continue to receive public comment on the longer-term goals for the County.

### **Cross-Boundary Involvement with Education Systems**

The Westside Community School Strategy is a unique public/private collaboration between the City of Syracuse, Onondaga County, Syracuse City School District, and local not-for-profits that could yield extraordinary results by focusing City, County, and not-for-profit resources on children in disadvantaged schools. The County has actively participated in the planning and development of the West Side Strategy and should now invest its general funds in support of the core operations.

## **More Than Six Months**

### **Performance Based Management System**

Based on a comprehensive strategic analysis of the County, develop and implement a performance based management system. Driven by goals, strategies should be aligned with the goals and measures and linked to people and budgets for purposes of accountability. Report quarterly. Make systems available to other local governments and entities.

### **Shared Municipal Services Incentive (SMSI)**

Aggressively pursue New York State Shared Municipal Services Incentive grants and other funding opportunities to assist in local efforts to collaborate and/or consolidate. Begin with tax collection and assessment functions. Showcase success and learn from the experience.

### **Functional Analysis of Services**

Submit a joint application to the Shared Municipal Services Incentive (SMSI) program with the City, towns and villages, to conduct a comprehensive functional value analysis of local government services to assess the best delivery agent for services regardless of current jurisdictional boundaries.

### **One-stop Shop for Economic Development**

Develop a one-stop Economic Development Office that houses all the key stakeholders involved in economic development in the community. Co-

locate economic development entities with the potential for developing a new governance model that harnesses resources and synergies.

#### **Additional Funding Opportunities**

Monitor additional funding opportunities such as within the Empire State Development Corporation or the Office of Real Property Tax Services<sup>1</sup>, that would assist in advancing shared services in Onondaga.

#### **Best practice research**

Use the Maxwell School and other educational institutions to review “best practices” from other communities. Reach out to those communities about their experiences. Share innovative ideas for improving services and/or reducing taxes with local towns and villages. Start with County operations and then expand to include other local governments. For example, research the success of the one-stop venue for Social Services implemented by Tom Suozzi in Nassau County.

#### **Common Economic Development Plan for Onondaga County**

The County Executive should endorse one plan with other partners involved in economic development (i.e. City, Towns, Villages, MDA, Chamber, MACNY) in the County to guide the economic development activities. A revised Essential New York Initiative that articulates a more comprehensive role for local government in economic development could serve as a unifying plan. This is a key component to increasing the economic competitiveness of the County and region.

#### **Regional Leadership Forum**

Organize a regular gathering of business, educational, and governmental leaders to discuss issues of regional consequence and to develop regional approaches to those issues.

#### **Regional Transportation Assets**

Work with key stakeholders in Onondaga County and in the region to identify and remove the barriers that have prevented the creation of a regional airport authority. Recognize the importance of parking to the central business district and to the tenets of smart growth, and develop ways to make financial and operational investments in these facilities. Use the County’s favorable debt position to invest in these key regional assets.

#### **Renewable Energy and Natural Resource Management**

Set a goal for the County to move toward using 15% renewable energy by 2012. Provide information, lessons learned, and incentives for other governments to participate. A component of the County Executive-Elect’s vision is to become economically competitive in part as a leader in the utilization of renewable energies. Resources such as local universities and the region’s natural environment should be leveraged. In addition, the

County Executive-Elect should continue the existing efforts to capitalize on the community's abundant natural resources such as water. As the third largest employer in Onondaga County, our county government can lead on this issue and market its progressive economic orientation.

### **Changing Workforce Opportunities**

Look for opportunities to share services, introduce new technologies, and minimize the impact of personnel dislocation caused by an aging workforce. Strongly consider governance changes and alternative models for service delivery.

### **Focus on the Best and Brightest**

Work to reform the Civil Service system to create the flexibility to add mid-level personnel with credentials tied to experience and education. Reconsider salary structure of non-civil service employees to create more salary flexibility. Expand the County's eighteen-month administrative intern program. Amplify pre-hire training and development through the continued involvement with educational institutions such as OCC to promote diversity and to ensure equal opportunity. Promote unified training programs that would benefit all local governments. This issue can be jointly considered in alignment with the Intermunicipal Consortium. Review using public/private partnerships with Syracuse University, Le Moyne, OCC, the MDA, the Chamber of Commerce to supplement the talent pool of the County and other local governments.

County Executive-Elect Mahoney and Onondaga County have many challenges ahead. These challenges are both short, and long-term in nature, and will require both her leadership in terms of reaching out to traditional and non-traditional stakeholders, and using her voice and legitimacy to create a forum for progressive dialogue on many critical issues such as the county's economic competitiveness and the modernization of government. In addition to her leadership, she will need to quickly exercise her formal authority over the management of the County. Here, there is a clear history of prudent stewardship and this is an asset that she can both rely and build upon. The continued effective management of the County can serve County Executive-Elect Mahoney as she seeks to create partnerships both in the County and the region around the key goals of her vision. The recommendations identified in this summary are critical and challenging. The prioritization of the recommendations by time period is designed both as a roadmap forward and to help secure early successes that are both tangible and easily publicized. Longer term, the recommendations can potentially serve as key goals across task force areas where the County Executive-Elects leadership will be critical to growth and competitiveness; two important components to a high quality of life in Onondaga County and the region.



The County Executive-Elect is well poised to use her office to engage both strategic and tactical initiatives. The future is bright with opportunities.

### **Introduction:**

#### **Methodology:**

The Government Modernization Team met six times starting on November 27<sup>th</sup>. The initial meeting involved introductions, a review of the charge given to the Task Force provided by the transition team, a review of the Mahoney Opportunity Agenda, a review of sources where additional information regarding government modernization might be easily reviewed, and finally asking the individuals to provide their “brainstorming” ideas to be presented at the next meeting. Given the complexity of the issue and the time frame under which the group operated, Task Force members worked diligently to develop a comprehensive set of recommendations. We hope that it is useful to the County Executive-Elect. From our discussions, brainstorming and additional review the following report was prepared. An executive summary is a separate document and is incorporated in this package. In addition, we have prepared an Appendix with information that we thought was particularly relevant to help frame and deepen the understanding of many of the issues discussed and to serve as a source for additional work. The

Task Force members want to thank Joanie Mahoney for the opportunity to serve the people of Onondaga County in this small way.

#### **What is Government Modernization?**

During our discussions, we felt that it would be useful to define what is meant by government modernization. We share this with you below:

Modernizing Government is the process of examining and implementing new tools in local governance in order to:

- Improve how resources are best determined and distributed
- Improve how best to produce needed public services and objectives
- Determine which level of local government is best suited to administer these core functions; assuming that the level where resources can best be managed is not necessarily the level where services should be produced.
- Address the core issues of our community

#### **The Tools in Government Modernization Include:**

- Labor management to enhance performance outcomes, foster innovation, and reduce fiscal pressures on government (generally impacts production, but might impact how resources are provided).
- Incorporating advances in technology (this generally addresses production).

- Consolidation to take advantage of various economies of scale (impacts both provision and production).
- Inter-municipal cooperation and agreements; impacts provision [resource sharing] and production [economies of scale without wholesale restructuring].

### **Overarching Theme—Management and Leadership**

Throughout our discussions the theme of management skills and leadership skills emerged. Both are necessary to move this agenda. From our perspective two opportunity agendas exist for County Executive-Elect Mahoney. The first is a management agenda, which consists of the more traditional powers of the Executive. Management applies to the County government as a corporate organization. The second is a leadership agenda, which consist of a prioritized list of initiatives that is uniquely suited to only the executive, elected on a countywide basis and the achievement of which is dependent more on the power to persuade than executive fiat. Leadership is necessary for new governance forms, the creation of strategic partnerships, the sharing of resources, and mobilizing assets that the County does not directly control. The latter is especially important particularly because of the fragmented way in which public activity is exercised in the region. In short, there is a difference between how one manages and how one leads.

Modernizing local government, both operationally and structurally, should be strategically focused on the core issues of our region – economic development, land use planning, and revitalization of the City. To be effective, initiatives and activities to modernize existing government operations must be meaningful, measurable, easily monitored, transparent, and promote pride and ownership. At the same time, you should aggressively pursue structural changes to government that will allow your government to be bold, flexible and fast. These are not mutually exclusive but rather are interdependent of one another. With respect to leadership, we recommend the book The Intentional Leader by Kenneth (Buzz) Shaw, a readable, concise discussion on “doing” leadership.

We have suggested priorities among the recommendations as a road map to where we think County Executive-Elect Mahoney should begin, recognizing the need to have early successes that build trust and confidence.

### **Task Force Recommendations:**

The Opportunity Agenda developed by County Executive-Elect Mahoney contains a comprehensive listing of innovative ideas for modernizing local government. The Task Force is supportive of each of the broadly stated goals and agrees that each is necessary for moving our local government structures forward into the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. Rather than “reinventing” these recommendations, the Task Force turned its attention to the question of how the County Executive can bring about the changes necessary to successfully implement the Opportunity Agenda. The format that follows is a restatement of the recommendations included in the Opportunity

Agenda followed by our comments with regard to how to strategically advance the recommendation(s).

- Reduce operating costs and improve efficiency through the adoption of advanced technology systems and innovative service delivery models.
- Integrate cutting-edge computer systems that allow for more efficient service delivery and data management.
- Adopting a performance management system, similar to the computerized SyraStat model implemented by the City of Syracuse or Mayor Bloomberg's Citywide Accountability Program, to evaluate the effectiveness of every dollar expended and identify opportunities for cost savings.
- Conduct a 'Re-inventing Government Analysis.' In the 1990s, the Federal Government conducted hundreds of efficiency audits and initiatives that contributed to balancing the Federal budget. These best practices approaches can be adopted on the local level to improve service delivery while reducing costs.
- Partner with experts at the Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs, and local business leaders, to review local government budgets and service models to find new ideas to improve services and reduce taxes.
- Build upon innovative shared service delivery models, like Operation Impact, that improve the quality of service through unprecedented intermunicipal cooperation without increasing the cost of government to residents.
- Support anti-fraud and abuse efforts.

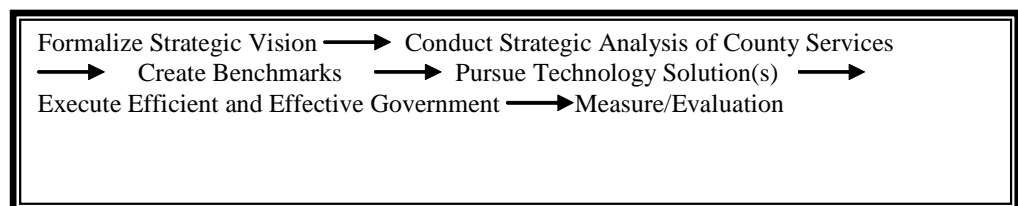
### **Task Force Recommendation:**

#### **Strategic Analysis of County Government Operations**

The Task Force agrees that County government can be streamlined in ways that lead to improved efficiency and effectiveness. We believe Onondaga County must be a government that measures, monitors and reports on performance in transparent ways that highlight successes and failures. We believe that a review of present management "systems" and measurements, for example those that may have resulted from efforts to bring "total quality management" to County government should be reviewed. Having said that, overall we concur with each of the recommendations; however, before tackling these items, we believe the County Executive-Elect should begin with a comprehensive strategic analysis of Onondaga County government services. The analysis should begin by documenting the current state of county operations (what services and functions county government currently offers), articulating a clear vision for where the County Executive-Elect would like to see government services and developing a road map for how to get there. This

process should answer the questions, what is county government currently doing and is it meeting the needs of its various constituencies? Those things that are done well should be kept or enhanced and those things that are not meeting a need or are ineffective should be eliminated or revised. This assessment of services should be done without regard to existing artificial government boundaries, but rather should utilize a “blank slate” approach and look at what makes the most sense with regard to delivering services regardless of how things have traditionally be done in the past. Incorporated into this process should be an assessment of best practices in government operations and, as appropriate, findings should be incorporated into the strategic vision.

To complete the strategic analysis, we recommend that the County Executive-Elect, with the assistance of an outside facilitator, map current government operations, determine what these should look like, and develop a plan of improved service delivery. We envision a three to six month process where clear priorities for county government are developed and benchmarks/measures are established. This review should look at current benchmarks, measures and metrics and review them for validity; especially those that identify appropriate outcomes. Furthermore, developing agreed upon benchmarks will allow for accountability both at the operations level as well as with the citizens. Technology will flow from this strategic process and will be an enabler of a coherent vision for an innovative service delivery structure. Furthermore, there needs to be a commitment to providing County staff with the training to successfully bring about these changes. As a result of this strategic assessment process, the County Executive-Elect and her Department Heads should have a clear vision of action steps for moving toward a more efficient, effective, and measurable government structure. The vision developed through this process should be the cornerstone of how County government moves forward and executes the County Executive-Elect’s vision for improving County efficiency and effectiveness<sup>2</sup>.



Steps for moving forward with an innovative service delivery model:

- Formalize vision for Onondaga County with Department Heads.
- Conduct a functional analysis for how to achieve the vision – what does County government currently do – what do we think we should be doing.

- Create goals and benchmarks for achieving vision
- Pursue technology solutions that will help you achieve goals and measure benchmarks.
- Execute a streamlined and effective government structure – with continuous evaluation based upon feedback from measures/benchmarks

Once this process is completed for the County, towns and villages should be brought in to have an understanding of the process and participate in the goal setting. Offering to provide access to the methodology may be of common interest to various governmental entities that do not have the resources to undertake these themselves. The Intergovernmental Consortium referenced in a later recommendation can discuss these types of opportunities.

### **Performance Management System**

There is consensus that a Performance Management System needs to be implemented in the county to assist in evaluation of efficiency and effectiveness. We believe that a successful Performance Management System must be goal-based – what are we trying to achieve through the system? We recommend that in pursuing a Performance Management System, start with developing specific goals for the system, develop the strategies to achieve those goals, identify the measures for those strategies, and finally the measures must be linked to people. Goals must be realistic, understandable, measurable, behavioral, and agreed upon. Further, all employees need to be engaged in the process of developing the system. For example, we would recommend that Department Heads work with their employees in developing a list of recommended outcomes. Otherwise, this could be interpreted as a top-down approach. The County Executive-Elect should communicate expected outcomes of the system to all levels of employees.

It is clear that a Performance Management System is only as good as the leadership's commitment to using such a system. The County Executive's leadership in this area is necessary in order to successfully implement and maintain ongoing commitment throughout County government. One major pitfall learned from past experience with these systems, is that one should move forward with such a system only when the goals for a Performance Management System are clearly articulated, and the vision for its utilization is clear among all levels of staff. Leading with technology before this step will not yield satisfactory results.

In addition to the leadership's commitment to the system, successful Performance Management Systems include an incentive system for utilization and an enforcement mechanism for non-compliance. People need to be "caught doing things right" not just "caught doing things

wrong.” The implementation of the system should be incremental, starting with areas of government that are easily measurable. The specifics for what goals and measures will be utilized by the system should flow from the strategic analysis and the work being done, with Department Heads included in our first recommendation. However, at a minimum, the County Executive should be conducting quarterly reviews with Department Heads and reporting to the community. To begin, the reviews should be much more frequent. We encourage the County to also consider how it can make selected technology available to other levels of government (city, towns, villages and school districts) to allow them to take advantage of these important management and productivity enhancing tools. This act of good faith will hopefully engender a greater level of cooperation and trust between local governments that will be beneficial, as additional efforts to collaborate and/or consolidate are pursued by the County Executive in the future. The County Executive must demonstrate the value in collaboration as quickly as possible.

#### **Additional Recommendations:**

We concur that the best practice approaches of reinventing government should be implemented at the local level and we urge the County Executive to include this discussion with Department heads during the initial strategic assessment period. Several of the principles in “Reinventing Government” should be applied particularly one of “steering the boat” versus “rowing the boat.” We certainly advise the County Executive to seek support from experts at the Maxwell School and other sources throughout the community. Specifically, the Task Force discussed the possibility of pursuing one-stop shopping for Social Services. Research should be conducted on the success of this in Nassau County by Tom Suozzi<sup>3</sup>. (Our understanding is that similar efforts may be underway already in the Department of Social Services. We also agree that the County should partner with interested towns and villages and the Maxwell School to assist in finding new ideas to improve services and reduce taxes. While each of these recommendations is important, we would recommend that the first steps should be the strategic assessment of county government, followed by the development of a Performance Measurement System. The demonstration of successes of a top to bottom review of its existing operations will bolster these additional recommendations.

#### **Build a Shared Regional Vision of Local Government:**

Use the resources and influence of the County Executive’s office and form strong partnerships with Syracuse 20/20, the Onondaga County Citizen’s League, the Greater Syracuse Chamber of Commerce, and the Maxwell School to lead a community-wide dialogue about government

modernization to educate residents about the opportunities, build consensus around a common vision, and, most importantly, take action.

### **Task Force Recommendation:**

It is hard to stress enough the role that the County Executive can play in leading this community forward with regard to fully comprehending our intertwined fates and our shared destiny, regardless of where we live within the County. Her vision for what she would like to see happen with this effort to engage the community in a conversation needs to be clearly articulated. Obviously, this is something that the County Executive can begin doing on day one. Specifically, we agree that the County Executive-Elect should provide the full weight of her office to join forces with, and help support, the existing groups that are trying to engage and educate (as well as be educated by) the community with regard to the potential that exists in modernizing local government structures and in advancing a regional vision. She can cultivate community understanding of the real challenges and constraints to local governance - in particular sprawl- and the solutions that are needed to address them. She is central to the effort to develop the vision for modernizing government from the bottom up and communicating that vision throughout the community. It is recommended that the County Executive designate someone in her administration to be the point person to help promote the community education component of building a regional vision; in addition to using her office for the purpose of sharing a regional vision. The Task Force had very specific ideas to complement this effort.

### **Reinvigorate the Intermunicipal Consortium**

There is clearly a need to have a regional forum for addressing the provision of regional services, the proper examination of regional assets, the coordinating of infrastructure construction, maintenance and repair, and the alignment of administrative functions to the appropriate level of government. The fact is the County Executive does not “control” many functions in our region and yet is the only elected official of general purpose government. To address regional issues, the County Executive should reinvigorate the previously created Intermunicipal Consortium (including special districts, authorities, certain economic development non governmental agencies,) to provide for a unified forum for developing the regional agenda and for finding ways to operate more efficiently and strategically. Through this forum new ideas for land use planning and the voluntary compliance with the County Settlement Plan can be advanced. The one caveat is that the Consortium requires leadership and a meaningful agenda to guide its work over the long term. One suggestion is to include a representative from each stakeholder group in developing the agenda for the Consortium to ensure that stakeholders remain vested in the agenda.

### **Creation of a Commission**

Support the effort being led by Syracuse 20/20 to work with the State delegation to create a local commission comprised of key individuals from diverse backgrounds (including but not limited to business, civic, educational, not-for-profits and community based organizations), that would be charged with examining all the possibilities with regard to structural and tactical changes to our local government structures. Prior to the development of the commission, we recommend that you work to engage and organize a diverse group as mentioned above. Use this informal and non-statutory opportunity both to educate and listen. You will need to create political champions for this recommendation to be successful. By initiating this type of forum prior to the Commission can create a “safe space” for honest discussion and genuine consideration of trade offs. We put forth this part of the recommendation as an effort to avoid the failed outcomes of the Buffalo Government Modernization Initiative, which was widely perceived to be created entirely in a safe place without other interests having a voice.

Once formed, the commission would take testimony and hold public hearings, research the legal and financial implications of possible changes, and make a final recommendation that would be put forth to the public in a local referendum. The commission could also address sensitive issues, such as whether or not the distribution of the sales tax as a general revenue sharing formula advances or detracts from efforts to fully capture the costs of government and efforts to modernizing local governments – could the sales tax be utilized in a way that positively provides incentives to advance the regional vision of the County Executive.

The commission would also be charged with exploring the possibility of focusing on possible consolidations of unelected special purpose districts, boards and authorities. Funding would need to be identified to support the work of this commission. We believe the State of New York has provided incentives in various programs to reward consolidations<sup>4</sup>. In the past, consolidations of school districts have taken advantage of these provisions. In short, the commission could deal with many of the very sensitive issues that need to be worked through, prior to advancing any proposal for structural changes in government structure.

Prior to the development of this commission, we recommend that you work to engage and organize a diverse group of stakeholders representative of government, business, nonprofit, and citizens. Use this informal and non-statutory opportunity both to educate and listen. You will need to create political champions for this recommendation to be successful. Initiating this type of forum prior to the commission can create a ‘safe space’ for honest discussion and the genuine consideration



of trade offs. We put forth this part of the recommendation as an effort to avoid the failed outcomes of the Buffalo Government Modernization Initiative, which was widely perceived to be created entirely in a ‘safe space’ without other interests having a voice.

### **Adopt and Advance Settlement Plan**

Embrace the County’s Settlement Plan and pledge to have the Plan guide County decision making. Educate the larger community on the Settlement Plan (elected officials and residents) and the importance of having a regional growth plan, and use this opportunity to gain greater willingness to have the Plan guide future development in our region. Inherent in this communication effort needs to be the understanding of the cost of sprawl to the community and the need to revitalize the core of Syracuse. The County Executive can lead the way by setting the example and work to bring all local governments (towns, villages, special purpose, boards and authorities) into alignment with the Plan. Through these conversations the County Executive will need to address the significant issue of sprawl and how the Settlement Plan responsibly deals with growth. There has been some success in this regard as was noted in Karen Kitney’s testimony to the State Commission on Local Government Efficiency and Competitiveness.

### **Advance an Albany Agenda**

Work with other County Executives from around the State to set an agenda that reverses the longstanding trend in Albany of passing unfunded mandates on to local governments, and thereby negatively impacting our competitiveness. This agenda should be clearly communicated to the public for their support. In addition, the County Executives should also work with the Spitzer Administration to bring cost accountability back to Albany. Finally, the County Executive should find common ground with organizations such as Unshackle Upstate and collectively advance issues to Albany.

### **Share Results With the Community**

Issue an Opportunity Agenda Report Card at the end of the first six months. Highlight progress being made with regard to the entire Opportunity Agenda. These forums should be bi-annual and focus on results matched to widely recognized benchmarks of success.

### **Provide Opportunity for Ongoing Feedback From Citizens**

Open the process up for continuous input from the citizens by having regular forums or community summits, where the regional vision is articulated and new ideas and constant feedback is obtained. Educate the citizens on the short-term agenda the County Executive is pursuing and continue to receive public comment on the longer-term goals for the County.

### **Continue Support for Innovative Cross-Boundary Involvement of the County With Education Systems**

The Westside Community School Strategy is a unique public/private collaboration with the City, Onondaga County, Syracuse City School District and local not-for-profits that could yield extraordinary results. The focusing of County operations on children in schools in a holistic fashion has great potential for eliminating the barriers to learning. The County has actively participated in the planning, development and procurement of state and local funding for the Strategy, and should now invest its general funds in support of core operations.

As with so many other initiatives, demanding measurable outcomes should be a given with respect to any funding. With education financing such a large component of the local tax bill, the County Executive should work with other County Executives to pressure Albany to address education generally, and to encourage State leadership with regard to modernizing educational systems (including possible enhanced State incentives for consolidation of school districts). The Indiana Commission report on consolidation, states that Indiana has the right number of schools but too many districts. The State of New York should similarly look at the larger issue of consolidation of school districts and provide enhanced incentives to advance the issue. At Present, incentives do exist under the State Shared Municipal Services Incentives (SMSI) program.

### **Partner with the New York State Commission on Government Efficiency and Competitiveness**

Seek a Central New York representative on the Commission to learn from government experts about best practices.

### **Task Force Recommendation:**

We concur that the County Executive should partner with the Commission and seek Central New York representation on the Commission. If it is too late to gain representation, the Commission should be aware that Onondaga County has a new County Executive that is keenly interested in pursuing initiatives aimed at Government Efficiency and is open to innovative approaches. The work and materials being produced by the Commission can also help to further the education process locally and deepen the understanding of why we need to modernize government. Any technical expertise the Commission can provide or recommend with regard to the priorities established by the County Executive will be helpful to moving the local agenda forward.

### **Aggressively Pursue Shared Municipal Services Initiative Grants**

Ensure that modernization efforts do not increase the cost of government for residents.

### **Task Force Recommendation:**

#### **SMSI Grants for Shared Services**

The County Executive should be very aggressive with regard to pursuing funding under the Shared Municipal Services Incentive (SMSI) grant program, as well as other funding opportunities for promoting shared services. She should begin by reviewing the list of prior applications and then look for ways to maximize the State's offer to provide assistance. Specifically, we recommend that the County pursue grants for targeted pilot programs that will enable consolidation/sharing of services, such as tax collection (some progress has been made here already) and assessment.

Tompkins County has received a grant for over \$260,000 to look at providing health services for general-purpose governments. With health costs a significant part of the administrative overhead of the County as part of personnel expenses, this deserves watching. We believe that there is growing awareness and support for these areas, and moving them forward can be seen as early victories with regard to consolidation or cooperation by the County Executive.

#### **Functional Analysis of Local Government Services**

The Greater Syracuse Chamber of Commerce has proposed that the County, City and interested towns and villages, apply to SMSI for the maximum amount of funding (\$350,000) for a comprehensive functional analysis of all government services and programs to ascertain the most appropriate level of government for delivering the service. A comprehensive functional analysis of government services in many ways can provide the County Executive with a road map of what areas to prioritize after achieving successes with tax collection and assessment. We recommend that the County Executive endorse the Chamber's proposal and enlist the support of the City and towns and villages for applying for this funding.

#### **Additional Funding Opportunities**

The County Executive should continue to monitor additional funding opportunities such as:

- Empire State Development Corporation or the Office of Real Property Tax Services <sup>5</sup>, that would assist in advancing shared services in Onondaga County.
- The State of New York, as shown in detail in the document Major State Funding Streams, provides a 25% consolidation

bonus in their AIM (Aid and Incentives for Municipalities) paid through the SMSI program up to \$1,000,000.

- Consolidated Local Street and Highway Improvement Program (CHIPS) funding is held harmless at present, and the LGEC is likely to recommend incentives for consolidation.
- Aid to Public Schools (Reorganization/Consolidation Incentive Aid) has long been provided to encourage consolidation, and BOCES is a collaborative arrangement that also provides incentives.
- Aid to Public Libraries and the State Education Department has some recommendations on governance improvements.
- Social Services Administration Reimbursement should be viewed as a possible agenda for discussion regarding provision of multi-county (regional) provision of this service and could be a tangible starting point to regional talks.
- Environmental Protection Fund (municipal parks) grants could become a recommendation of the LGEC and this should be tracked for a possible incentive for talks such as an enhanced Burnet Park Zoo facility.
- Environmental Protection Fund (Smart Growth Grants) is going to be available shortly through the DEC and Possible value and resources for collaborative efforts should be explored.
- Restore NY Communities Initiative could be the subject of the recommendation of the LGEC to reward intermunicipal cooperation and planning<sup>6</sup>. This could serve to leverage against the Quality Community Investment Trust that is found in the Opportunity Agenda.

### **Renewable Energy Sources**

The County should model being a good steward of natural resources by making county government a place that encourages the utilization of renewable energy. We recommend setting a goal of 15% renewable energy sources by 2012. The County can also join forces with other governments in the region to enhance the buying power for these renewable sources of energy. A component of the County Executive-Elect's vision is to become economically competitive in part as a leader in the utilization of renewable energies. Continued active participation in the Clean Cities Initiative is recommended. Resources such as local universities and the region's natural environment should be leveraged. In addition, the County Executive-Elect should continue the existing efforts to capitalize on the community's abundant natural resources such as water. As the third largest employer in Onondaga County, government can lead on this issue and market its progressive economic orientation.

### **Reach out to Government and Community Leaders From Communities**

Such as Louisville, Indianapolis, Portland, Miami-Dade and Nashville, to learn from their experiences and discuss strategies for progress in our community.

### **Task Force Recommendation:**

We concur that there is much to learn from other communities that have already been through the process of modernizing their government structures<sup>7</sup>. The County Executive can certainly use networking and outreach opportunities to connect with these communities and distill from her discussions best practices that can be implemented locally. Groups like Onondaga Citizens League and Syracuse 20/20 have already done some of this work locally and there is no need to reinvent those efforts. Enlisting the Maxwell School to help synthesize this information in a format that can be easily understood and distributed to the larger community will be helpful to the overall effort to convey a vision for our own community. The public information materials could be enhanced working with the Advertising Council to develop a more sophisticated marketing tool. Furthermore, the Maxwell School could potentially be used to engage the public and build broader stakeholder support for new and innovative efforts the County Executive is pursuing. The research can help shape the early agendas of the reconvened Intermunicipal Consortium recommended above within the specific task of branding Central New York.

### **Focus on Segments That Will Create Economic Growth and Reduce Taxes; Areas for Initial Consideration Should Include:**

- Providing regional services at the regional level by combining economic development efforts. This will increase our region's ability to attract new businesses and young people, by increasing our visibility and maximizing the impact of regional resources in the global competition for jobs and talent.
- Examination of regional assets that support our regional economy, such as Hancock International Airport, transportation infrastructure and systems, and parking garages. These assets should be administered regionally to remove the burden from any single local government.
- Coordinating infrastructure maintenance and repair. By coordinating infrastructure services regionally, government can reduce costs by taking advantage of economies of scale in capital investment and services, and return the savings in the form of property tax relief.

- Aligning administrative functions to the appropriate level of government. Regional coordination of these types of administrative functions, through either intergovernmental agreement or formal consolidation, will increase efficiency and reduce costs for taxpayers.

### **Task Force Recommendation:**

#### **One-Stop Shop for Economic Development**

The Task Force members unanimously support the concept of a one-stop shop for economic development. However, we do not go so far as to recommend wholesale consolidation of economic development departments at this time. Rather we recommend the approach of working towards co-locating City, County, Town, Metropolitan Development Association, Greater Syracuse Chamber of Commerce, Manufacturing Association, and other economic development personnel in one location. The County/City crime lab can be used as a model for how co-location can lead to greater collaboration and potential consolidation.

#### **County Economic Development Office**

We recommend the reorganization of the mission of the County Economic Development Office to create a culture that is focused on the mission of assisting in the coordination between zoning, planning and permits in the city, towns, and villages. The office would have an ombudsman function. Working with its economic development partners, the County's staff can take the lead in identifying common platforms and help to develop consistent "tools and rules" across jurisdictional borders. For example, developing a standardized building application form to be used by permitting departments throughout Onondaga County. This would allow for building some consistency across governments while still maintaining local government autonomy to make individual permitting decisions. Absent the ability to create unified building codes (an issue that needs to be addressed by the State and could be included as part of an Albany agenda) the county helping to guide through the multiple systems can be extremely beneficial to overcoming the existing barriers to development. The Task Force's underlying premise for this recommendation is that co-location will drive greater communication between economic development staff and will lead to increased trust which in the end is the necessary ingredient for any attempts to consolidate government structures.

#### **Unified Economic Development Strategy**

The Task Force also recommends that the County Executive lead a concerted effort to get all economic development organization, to adopt and work from one economic development plan. One plan should be endorsed by the County Executive and other partners involved in economic development (i.e. City, Towns, Villages, MDA, Chamber,

MACNY) in the County to guide the economic development activities. The Essential New York Initiative would be a good place to start; however, the current plan has a very limited definition of the role of local government with a specific reference to competitive airfares. The Essential New York plan would need to be modified to clearly articulate the role of local government as a critical partner in advancing economic development in the community. Of particular importance is the role government has in creating a sustainable, quality community to position itself to attract talent and capital.

### **Regional Leadership Forum**

Organize a regular gathering of business, educational, and governmental leaders to discuss issues of regional consequence and to develop regional approaches to those issues.

### **Regional Transportation Assets**

The Task Force agrees with the recommendation that the County should explore the option of creating a regional airport authority. Working with Congressman Walsh, the Chamber of Commerce, and County Executives in adjacent counties, and the Town of Dewitt, the County Executive can help to identify and then remove the barriers that have previously prevented a regional airport authority from coming to fruition. This is an issue that requires leadership. Furthermore, in recognition of the regional nature of the parking garages operated within the City of Syracuse, the County should explore how it may be able to bring much needed financial assistance to enhance the operation of these critical facilities. The strength of the County's debt position and sales tax distribution should be used in order to make investments in critical regional assets.

### **Address the Challenges Created by a changing Government**

**Workforce:** More than 30% of all County workers and other local government employees are expected to retire in the next five years. An unprecedented opportunity will be created to reform government without massive layoffs. The turnover will also provide an opportunity for the adoption of new technologies and automations of services that are oftentimes provided inefficiently by archaic methods.

### **Task Force Recommendation:**

While we defer to the Task Force on Workforce Relations to develop a comprehensive set of recommendations with regard to the workforce, we do want to emphasize the importance of analyzing the demographic forces of the existing governmental workforce. We recommend the County Executive and her administration look for opportunities to share services, introduce technology, and minimize the impact of personnel dislocation.

With personnel cost the greatest percentage of government cost, the ability to perform while reducing numbers is a way of reducing overhead expenditures. Furthermore, the efforts to share services and consolidate services with other jurisdictions can assist with the overall personnel shortage that will confront these governmental entities. This analysis should be part of the agenda of the Inter-municipal Council.

**Focus on Attracting the Best and Brightest to Serve in Government:**

Local government has typically been a “silo structure” where each division or department has little interaction with others. Given the broad challenges our community faces, we need to adopt a much more interdepartmental and collaborative approach to problem solving. New employees need to be able to think across disciplines and across jurisdictions, provide solutions to challenging problems, and constantly evaluate whether programs are achieving intended objectives, not just mindlessly administering ineffectual programs. Fortunately, 150 of the best public policy minds in the country graduate every year from the Maxwell School and our local community is filled with talented, innovative people. If we can modernize our civil service processes, we should be able to hire the ideal workforce for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. Just as companies compete for talent, we must ensure that County government competes for and employs the best and the brightest

**Task Force Recommendation:**

The key words here are flexibility and talent. The Civil Service System needs to be reformed to allow more flexibility to inject talent not just as a new hire or at the very top, but allow for mid level entry tied to rigorous discipline that respects qualifications and experience. The County Executive should expand the County’s eighteen-month administrative intern program. The County should reconsider and review non-civil service employee salary schedules and determine whether the current structure is competitive. This needs to be combined with pre-hire training and development, using our educational institutions, such as OCC, to promote goals of diversity and to ensure equal opportunity. In addition, in service training needs to be enhanced and OCC, our other educational institutions, and our government managers could help craft unified training programs that would benefit all governments. This should also be an agenda for the Intermunicipal Consortium. In addition, utilization of public/private partnerships with Syracuse University, Le Moyne, OCC, SUNY ESF, SUNY Upstate Medical, the MDA, and the Chamber of Commerce should be explored in concert with other local governments. Witness the talent and energy currently being shown by Syracuse University and others, and the great value this could add to County efforts.

**Conclusion:**



County Executive-Elect Mahoney and Onondaga County have many challenges ahead. These challenges are both short and long-term in nature, and will require both her leadership in terms of reaching out to traditional and non-traditional stakeholders. Her voice and legitimacy should be used to create a forum for progressive dialogue on many critical issues such as the County's economic competitiveness, the vitality of its City, the protection of the abundant natural resources, the protection of our farmland and scenic beauty, the investment in our cultural and historic assets, and in the modernization of our government to accomplish her vision. She will need to quickly exercise her formal authority over the management of the County. Here, there is a clear history of prudent stewardship and this is an asset that she can both rely and build upon. The continued effective management of the County can serve County Executive-Elect Mahoney as she seeks to create partnerships both in the County and the region around the key goals of her vision. The recommendations identified in this report are critical and challenging. The prioritization of the recommendation by the time period is designed both as a roadmap forward and to help secure early successes that are both tangible and easily publicized. Longer term, the recommendations can potentially serve key goals across task force areas where the County Executive's leadership will be critical to growth and competitiveness; two important components to a high quality of life in Onondaga County and the region. The County Executive is well poised to use her office to engage both strategic and tactical initiatives. The future is bright with opportunities.

**Recommendations Chart:**

Recommendation	Leadership or Management Issue	Time frame
<b><i>Fine Tune the Vision</i></b> – Clearly articulate a vision for economic competitiveness and modern government and communicate to the staff and the citizens. Build partnerships to support the development and implementation of these goals.	Leadership	Immediately
<b><i>Strategic Assessment of County Services</i></b> – With the assistance of an outside facilitator, map current government operations, determine what these should look like and develop a plan of improved service delivery. This strategic assessment process should: Develop goals for County services Identify benchmarks for those goals Select measures for the benchmarks Develop the technology that will help measure Report on the measures/results	Management	First 3-6 months
<b><i>Intermunicipal Consortium</i></b> – Reinvigorate the previously created Intermunicipal Consortium (including special districts, authorities, certain economic development non-governmental agencies) to provide for a unified forum for developing the regional agenda and for finding ways to operate more efficiently and strategically. Establish a regional forum for addressing the provision of regional services, the proper examination of regional assets, the coordinating of infrastructure construction, maintenance, and repair, and the alignment of administrative functions to the appropriate level of government.	Leadership	First 3-6 months
<b><i>Government Modernization Commission</i></b> - Support efforts to pursue State legislation to create a local Commission to study the possible structural changes to local government and explore the legal, financial and other implications for these changes. The local Government Modernization Commission will be charged with developing a recommendation for modernizing local government structures that would be voted upon by the citizens of the County. You will need to play an active role in helping to advance the proposal(s) as they develop. Prior to the development of this Commission, we recommend that you work to engage and organize a diverse group of stakeholders representative of government, business, non-profit, and citizens. Create a ‘safe space’ for honest discussion and the genuine consideration of tradeoffs.	Leadership	First 3-6 months legislation is advanced

Recommendation	Leadership or Management Issue	Time frame
<b>Community Engagement</b> - Partner with existing organizations and groups interested in engaging the community in a conversation about redesigning our government structures for the 21 <sup>st</sup> Century. Use the office of County Executive to educate and engage the community in this discussion.	Leadership	Immediately and ongoing
<b>County Economic Development Office</b> - Reorient the County's Economic Development Office to provide guidance to businesses and citizens to various regulations in various towns, villages, the County and City. Move toward the creation of one-stop shopping for economic development and business assistance. Review redesigning the "rules and tools" for economic development in Onondaga County with various government entities including the State of New York.	Management	First 3 – 6 months
<b>County Settlement Plan</b> - Gain official endorsement of the County Settlement Plan to guide resource allocation decisions. Reach out to other local government elected officials, public authorities, special districts, and planning organizations, to encourage their endorsement of the plan. The question of how we grow is directly related to the degree of growth and critical protection of assets.	Leadership	First 3 – 6 months
<b>Albany Agenda</b> – Counties and other local governments are creatures of the State. Albany plays an important role in modernizing local government. Work with County Executives throughout the State to develop an agenda in Albany that will advance the work that is under way locally. The County Executive should find common agenda items with other Upstate communities, find common ground with organizations such as Unshackle Upstate, and collectively advance issues to Albany. Mandates and their impact on local taxes are a central issue.	Leadership	First 3-6 months and yearly
<b>Opportunity Agenda Report Card</b> – Report progress on Opportunity Agenda every six months. Forums should be bi-annual and focus on the results being achieved, and compare them to widely recognized benchmarks of success.	Management	First 3-6 months and ongoing

Recommendation	Leadership or Management Issue	Time frame
<b>Community Forums</b> - Hold community forums to educate the citizens on the short-term agenda the County Executive-Elect is pursuing and continue to receive public comment on the longer-term goals for the County.	Leadership	First 3-6 months and ongoing
<b>Innovative Cross-Boundary Involvement with Education Systems</b> - The Westside Community School Strategy is a unique collaborative with the City, Onondaga County, Syracuse City School District and local not-for-profits that could yield extraordinary results by focusing City, County, and not-for-profit resources on children in needy schools. The County has actively participated in the planning and development of the Strategy and should now invest its general funds in support of the core operations.	Leadership	First 3-6 months and ongoing
<b>Performance Based Management System</b> – Develop and implement a performance based management system based on a comprehensive strategic analysis of the County. Driven by goals, strategies should be aligned with the goals and measures and linked to people and budgets for purposes of accountability. Report quarterly. Make systems available to other local governments and entities.	Management	Within one year
<b>Shared Municipal Services Incentive (SMSI)</b> – Aggressively pursue SMSI grants and other funding opportunities to assist in local efforts to collaborate and/or consolidate. Begin with tax collection and assessment functions. Showcase and learn from the experience.	Management	First year and ongoing
<b>Functional Analysis of Services</b> - Submit a joint application to the SMSI program with the City, towns and villages to do a comprehensive functional value analysis of local government services to assess the best delivery agent for services, regardless of current jurisdictional boundaries.	Management	First year and ongoing
<b>One-stop Shop for Economic Development</b> - Develop a one-stop Economic Development Office that houses all the key stakeholders involved in economic development in the community. Co-locate economic development entities with the potential for developing a new governance model that harnesses resources and synergies.	Management/Leadership	With two years

Recommendation	Leadership or Management Issue	Time frame
<b><i>Additional Funding Opportunities</i></b> - Monitor additional funding opportunities such as within the Empire State Development Corporation or the Office of Real Property Tax Services that would assist in advancing shared services in Onondaga County.	Management	First year and ongoing
<b><i>Best Practice Research</i></b> – Use the Maxwell School and other educational institutions to review “best practices” from other communities. Reach out to those communities. Share innovative ideas for improving services and/or reducing taxes to local towns and villages. Start with County operations and then expand to include other local governments. For example, research the success of the one-stop venue for Social Services implemented by Tom Suozzi in Nassau County.	Management	First year and ongoing
<b><i>Common Economic Development Plan for Onondaga County</i></b> – One plan should be endorsed by the County Executive and other partners involved in economic development (i.e. City, Towns, Villages, MDA, Chamber, MACNY) in the County to guide the economic development activities. A revised Essential New York Initiative that articulates a more comprehensive role for local government in economic development could serve as a unifying plan. This is a key component to increasing the economic competitiveness of the County and region.	Leadership	First year and ongoing
<b><i>Regional Leadership Forum</i></b> – Organize a regular gathering of business, educational, and governmental leaders to discuss issues of regional consequence and to develop regional approaches to those issues.		
<b><i>Regional Transportation Assets</i></b> - Work with key stakeholders in Onondaga County and in the region to identify and remove the barriers that have prevented the creation of a Regional Airport Authority. Recognize the importance of parking to the central business district and to the tenets of smart growth, and develop ways to make financial and operational investments in these facilities. Use the County’s favorable debt position to invest in these key regional assets.	Leadership	Within 2 years

Recommendation	Leadership or Management Issue	Time frame
<p><b><i>Renewable Energy and Natural Resource Management-</i></b> Set a goal for the County to use 15% renewable energy by 2012. Provide information, lessons learned, and incentives for other governments to participate. A component of the County Executive-Elect's vision is to become economically competitive in part as a leader in the utilization of renewable energies. Resources such as local universities and the region's natural environment should be leveraged. In addition, the County Executive should continue the existing efforts to capitalize on the community's abundant natural resources such as water. As the third largest employer in Onondaga County, government can lead on this issue and market its progressive economic orientation.</p>	Management	Within first year and ongoing
<p><b><i>Changing Workforce Opportunities</i></b> - Look for opportunities to share services, introduce new technology, and minimize the impact of personnel dislocation caused by an aging workforce or governance changes. Strongly consider governance changes and alternative models for service delivery.</p>	Management	Within first year and ongoing
<p><b><i>Focus on the Best and Brightest</i></b> - Work to reform the Civil Service System to create the flexibility to add mid level personnel with credentials tied to experience and education. Reconsider salary structure of non-civil service employees to create more salary flexibility. Expand the County's eighteen-month Administrative Intern Program. Amplify pre-hire training and development through the continued involvement with educational institutions such as OCC to promote diversity and to ensure equal opportunity. Promote unified training programs that would benefit all local governments. This issue can be jointly considered in alignment with the Intermunicipal Consortium. Review using public/private partnerships with Syracuse University, Le Moyne, OCC, the MDA, and the Chamber of Commerce to supplement the talent pool of the County and other local governments.</p>	Management	Within first year and ongoing

## Community Revitalization Task Force

### Chair and Members:

Chuckie Holstein, Chair	Executive Director, F.O.C.U.S. Greater Syracuse
Magda Bayoumi	Islamic Society of Central New York
Frank Fowler	Deputy Chief of Police, City of Syracuse
Neil Murphy	President, SUNY Environmental Science and Forestry
Kate Clark	Public Art Coordinator, City of Syracuse
Bea Gonzalez	Dean-Syracuse Common Council, President, University College of Syracuse
Kerry Quaglia	Executive Director, Home Headquarters
Teresa Doherty	Teacher, Corcoran High School
Larry Luttinger	Executive Director, CNY Jazz Foundation
David Rufus	Executive Director, Eastside Gateway Community Development
Oren Lyons	Chief, Onondaga Nation

### Methodology:

Three Meetings were held:

1. **Kick Off Meeting:** Wednesday, November 28, 2007

Introductions – getting to know each other, taking assignments, and discussion to clarify that the county is an integrally linked metropolitan area with the City of Syracuse at the center. We reviewed the assigned tasks and topic areas for the “Community Revitalization” Task Group as outlined by Ms. Mahoney. We approved a suggested grid for final report and brainstormed ideas.

#### **Assignments**

**Public Safety** - Bea Gonzalez, Frank Fowler

**Downtown/ Arts and Culture** - Kate Clark, Larry Luttinger

**Infrastructure** - Neil Murphy

**Quality Parks and Recreation** – David Rufus, Teresa Doherty, Neil Murphy

**Youth Recreation** - David Rufus, Teresa Doherty

**Transportation** - Bea Gonzalez, Chuckie Holstein (and James D’Agostino, SMTC)

**Increase Home Ownership** - Kerry Quaglia

**Eliminate Neighborhood Blight** - Magda Bayoumi, Kerry Quaglia

**Environmental Sustainability** - Teresa Doherty, Neil Murphy

2. **Second Meeting:** December 6, 2007

Each Team member submitted their information – all team members offered additional ideas and suggestions

3. **Third Meeting:** December 13, 2007

Final reports submitted. Each team member presented priority action/opportunities relative to their topic assignment. Discussion by the whole team followed. The following Action/Opportunities report represents the team consensus.

**PUBLIC SAFETY/CRIME RECOMMENDATIONS:**

**LEAD INVESTIGATORS - BEA GONZALEZ, FRANK FOWLER**

**Consolidate City/ County/ Town and Village Police Firing Range:**

A thoroughly trained police force deters crime. An adequate firing range is a necessary tool in training police officers. At present, there is no firing range in Onondaga County. Currently, the City Police use a facility in Fulton and the County uses a site in Elbridge or at Department of Corrections. The residue from lead bullets pollutes the ground and ground water. Travel to both of these sites is expensive in time, vehicle wear and tear and gasoline and sites lack long term sustainability. A permanent, environmentally correct, shared site is essential.

**Consolidate Emergency Vehicle Training Site for City/ County/ Towns and Villages:**

There are required vehicle practice hours for public safety vehicle operation certification and recertification. Consolidation into a single site is cost effective and efficient.

**Sustain Operation Impact:**

This is a successful and effective program enhancing public safety. It is now N.Y. State funded. It is recommended that long term funding be established to sustain this effort in the event of changes or diminished N.Y. State funding.

**Consolidate Metropolitan Police Building Location:**

The Public Safety and City Police Administration buildings are both in need of extensive restoration or replacement. A combined Metropolitan Police facility would: be cost effective, increase cooperation among City and County law enforcement officers, offer both departments innovative uses of technology, and co-training opportunities, reduce overhead, reduce maintenance and administrative tasks, and reduce tax payer costs. *See Rochester, NY*

**Improve Recruitment/Coordination of the Civil Service Test Results and List:**



By N.Y. State law, Onondaga County administers the Civil Service Test for all public safety titles including advertisement, receipt of applications, administering the examinations, and management of the resulting candidate “lists.” Coordination of the Civil Service acceptances to the list would benefit City and County hiring. Problems arise when each hiring agency has different qualifications and specifications. A person who signs off the list for a County public safety position, signs off for six months. This precludes the candidate from being hired by another agency, i.e., City police department, for six months. It is a deterrent to recruiting and hiring.

**Combine Training:**

Combine training opportunities for City and County Public Safety professionals. Provide training where none exists. Teach the forces about intervention and prevention strategies. Increase racial and ethnic representation on the forces to represent the composition of the metropolitan region. Increase cultural competence of the forces to support all people and improve recruiting of underrepresented people. The Brooklyn District Attorney’s office has a social worker aimed at prevention of recidivism.

**DOWNTOWN/ ARTS AND CULTURE RECOMMENDATIONS:**

**LEAD INVESTIGATORS - KATE CLARK, LARRY LUTTINGER**

**Create Arts Administration:**

Consolidate Cultural Resources Council (CRC), Arts Council Leadership Alliance (ACLA), and Partners for Arts Education (PAE). The new Arts and Cultural Council should be charged with the creation of an Onondaga Cultural Plan and commission an annual economic/cultural impact study for the region.

**Create a Dedicated Funding Stream for Arts and Culture:**

The County currently funds many arts and cultural organizations. The City does not. Past studies recommend a dedicated tax for the arts. A new study is needed to review past recommendations and develop and execute a plan that creates a dedicated funding stream for arts and culture, and includes the regional economic impact provided by cultural tourism and local visitors.

**Way Finding Signage – Marketing:**

The City and County must partner for a comprehensive, artistic way finding system that is coordinated throughout the County and City. The improved way finding signage would identify cultural institutions and historic sites, and include the Connective Corridor and Civic (government) corridor.

**Establish the Position of Metropolitan Chief Experience Officer:**

This position is charged with promoting cultural tourism for the City of Syracuse and metropolitan area. Cultural tourism is the 2<sup>nd</sup> most popular reason for travel in the U.S. The information on Chief Experience Officer was submitted earlier.

**Increase Density Initiative:**

Increase downtown density and vitality by increasing number of residences, encouraging colleges and universities to have downtown campuses, and promoting street level businesses. City and County should enthusiastically support downtown location plans for Syracuse University, Le Moyne College, SUNY Oswego and Onondaga Community College. Improve, enhance, and promote the Civic Corridor that includes government institutions along Montgomery Street. Support development of Salina St. and work with Below 40 group restoring buildings downtown.

**Activate the Trust for Cultural Resources of the County of Onondaga:**

This trust has been available since 1991 and never activated. The process begins with the County Executive appointing a five member Board of Trustees. Recommend investigation of 1991 Article 22 of NYS Law Arts and Cultural Affairs enabling cultural institutions to develop properties, receive PILOTS, and issue bonds.

**INFRASTRUCTURE RECOMMENDATIONS:****LEAD INVESTIGATOR - NEIL MURPHY****Combine City/ County Departments of Transportation:**

Combining City and County Departments of Transportation will improve coordination of services and fleet, costs of maintenance and administration with the aim of improved service and reduced taxpayer costs.

**Establish Hancock International Airport as an Authority:**

Currently the airport is a City Department. Becoming an Authority will reduce costs and improve access to additional revenues and increase opportunities for additional airlines serving the region.

**Attend to City/County Water Supply Systems:** The City distribution system is in need of repair/ replacement. The County water line from Lake Ontario is 30 years old and will soon fail. Coordinated improvements would reduce energy consumption and adverse environmental impacts. Coordinate the required Homeland Security reservoir cover projects for increased construction efficiency, improved construction oversight, and leverage costs for one combined project/ purchasing effort vs. both entities efforts. Combine the various water “Boards” / departments (City, OCWA,

County (WEP) to increase collaboration, increase efficiencies and reduce costs.

**Investigate a City/ County Electricity Cooperative re: Hydroelectric Power:** Convene appropriate department heads from the City and County to explore hydroelectric power potential for our community to identify cost savings and efficient use of power.

## **QUALITY PARKS AND RECREATION RECOMMENDATIONS:**

**LEAD INVESTIGATORS - TERESA DOHERTY, NEIL MURPHY, DAVID RUFUS**

### **Coordinated City/ County Parks and Recreation Planning and programming:**

Finding out about Parks' activities is difficult although much information can be obtained in the public libraries. A coordinated system of planning and programming would enhance all programs, especially if they are publicized in a collaborative manner and communicated to the citizens. Employ a multicultural affairs staff person who would assure welcoming and representation of all people in all of our metropolitan activities.

### **Support Onondaga Creek as a Park:**

The Onondaga Creek report that includes the visions of hundreds of citizens will be ready for distribution in January, 2008. Encourage specific and quick implementation of the recommendations so that citizens are not disappointed after their intense involvement. Assure implementation of the Creek Walk and the pocket parks.

### **Create/Utilize Existing Organizations for a Not-for-Profit Foundation for Adopt a Park:**

Park stewardship by citizens enables parks to have sufficient attention and financial stability to execute program demands. The creation of a non-profit parks organization (i.e., Friends of the Zoo) allows private contributions and fund-raising.

### **Create Burnet Park As One Destination:**

Combine Onondaga County Rosamond Gifford Zoo at Burnet Park with City of Syracuse Burnet Park. Combine administration, purchasing and maintenance. Coordinate programming and advertisement for the entire property- Zoo, golf, pool, walking, and softball and baseball fields.

### **Have One, City/ County Urban Forester Position:**

A combined Urban Forestry function is recommended.

## **YOUTH RECREATION RECOMMENDATIONS;**

**LEAD INVESTIGATORS - DAVID RUFUS, TERESA DOHERTY**

### **Create a Formalized City/ County Partnership for Youth Recreation Programs:**

Create a position with specific accountabilities to develop comprehensive youth recreation opportunities, with attention to both City and County-wide locations. Consider better use of available spaces and places (libraries, schools, faith communities). Program schedules should include evenings, after school and weekends. Improve communications (via clearing house, kiosks), improve access to public transportation and improve development of positive, age appropriate and culturally relevant programming.

### **Funding:**

Charge specific City and County individuals and departments to aggressively utilize TANF, COPS, Mental Health, Probation, Aging and Youth and all possible funding to develop, coordinate and program for intervention, prevention, entrepreneurial opportunities for youth, social skills development, community service, work shadowing and paid work experiences year long.

### **Mentoring:**

Mentoring youth is a positive, successful, researched and cost effective intervention. County Executive-Elect Mahoney and Mayor Driscoll should convene community leaders to educate and recruit them. Increase funding for the current efforts. Establish a target/challenge of a number of youth to be mentored in 2008. January is National Mentoring Month. Work with County Aging and Youth and the existing large Mentoring Coalition that has met since 2004 and has developed the current local status, local needs and agency needs and interests.

### **Jobs:**

Document and increase existing youth job opportunity efforts. Strongly recommend a community-wide priority for summer jobs for youth with targets, evaluations and consideration that they become quality year round jobs, especially for older youth (up to age 25). A job for youth contribute to an increase in the economy, deters violence, encourages home ownership, and improves the quality of life.

## **TRANSPORTATION RECOMMENDATIONS:**

**LEAD INVESTIGATORS - BEA GONZALES, CHUCKIE HOLSTEIN**

### **Comprehensive Examination of the I-81 Corridor Including the Elevated Portions:**

Syracuse Metropolitan Transportation Council (SMTC) and NYS Department of Transportation (NYSDOT) are conducting a study on the issues relating to I-81, as well as examining alternatives and potential community impact. Collecting diverse ideas and viewpoints from the public and key stakeholders, as well as government officials and agencies, is essential. County Executive-Elect Mahoney, Mayor Driscoll, NY State and Federal elected representatives, along with other local leaders and experts, need to get in front of this as soon as possible with local, NY State and Federal departments.

### **CENTRO:**

Assist/Direct CENTRO leadership to attend to and be especially responsive to transportation for workforce, school and recreation. This would include careful, purposeful examination of routes, schedules, connections, location of stops, and creation of special smaller natural gas buses for shuttles to some locations, and involve citizens in the resolutions. Anecdotal evidence indicates the local mass transportation network does not adequately address the flexible shift schedules of many firms, particularly those located outside the city limits or at off-route locations within the City. Residents, particularly those living within the City, report that public transportation is a primary barrier to obtaining work.

### **Green Transportation:**

Revive OnTrack. Explore alternative modes of transportation, i.e., Park & Ride, bicycling, and walking. Increase number of roads with bicycle lanes. Implement City of Syracuse study to coordinate traffic lights downtown to reduce vehicle idling, pollution and greenhouse gas emissions. Provide preferred parking for hybrid vehicles.

### **University Hill:**

Continuation of the SMTC University Hill Study, which examines land use, mobility, economic impact, expansion needs, parking, transit, and interstate access needs. Collaborative problem solving between institutions and agencies on the S.U. hill are critical to realizing the completed study's recommendations.

## **INCREASING HOME OWNERSHIP RECOMMENDATIONS:**

### **LEAD INVESTIGATOR - KERRY QUAGLIA**

#### **Down Payment and Closing Cost Relief:**

Create mechanisms for City and County home purchase down payment and closing cost support to incentivize home ownership. In a recent study, 30,000 people cited down payment and closing costs as the major impediment to home ownership. These are cited from people who can make their mortgage payments. Use tax incentives for new buyers, mortgage protection, use City/County Community Development funds.

#### **Initiate More Employer-Assisted Housing Programs:**

Share the existing models used by Syracuse University and St. Joseph's Hospital. Make it easier for employers. Examine tax incentives to private businesses. Target the employers moving to downtown, i.e., O'Brien and Gere, King and King Architects.

#### **Increase Capital for Home Improvements:**

Provide existing homeowners in the metropolitan area with 1% interest rates for needed structural improvements. Banks are on board. Need a funding source for the approximately \$1800 per home remodeling costs vs. having the home vacant or abandoned. Use available funds from green 'credits', green grants.

#### **Reduce Property Taxes:**

One source is to model Providence Rhode Island Historic Preservation Tax Credit. N.Y State is considering similar legislation.

## **ELIMINATE NEIGHBORHOOD BLIGHT RECOMMENDATIONS:**

### **LEAD INVESTIGATOR - MAGDA BAYOUMI**

#### **Beautify by Planting Trees and Flowers:**

Establish specific accountability. Plant appropriate trees to soil type – another need for Urban Forester. Plant the trees that remain green year round. Position hanging plants on and near overpasses. Revive the collaborative City/County/N.Y State *Cleaner and Greener* program established and formerly funded by County Executive Pirro. Assign coordination accountability to the County Office of the Environment. Use Cornell Cooperative Extension youth urban reforestation program, preserve existing trees, and consider sidewalk maintenance. Fund with mortgage record fees.

#### **Coordinate/ Consolidate:**

City/ County street maintenance, cleaning, roadway improvements, snow plowing can use/expand use of existing County DOT technology to develop planned routes to include every neighborhood, town, and village.

**Create Community Investment Trust:**

The trust will operate like the Syracuse Neighborhood Initiative model and be locally sustainable. The neighborhood engagement model is essential. A Trust could take the funding from reliance on an elected official to local sustainability. Funding could come from increased sales tax or a piece of sales tax; mortgage record fees or other sources. Attached is a synopsis of the Quality Community Investment Trust Fund.

**ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY RECOMMENDATIONS:**

**LEAD INVESTIGATORS - NEIL MURPHY, TERESA DOHERTY**

**Embrace and Execute Smart Growth and the Green Creative Core:**

Smart growth is development that serves the economy, the community, and the environment. It changes the terms of the development debate away from the traditional growth/no growth question to "how and where should new development be accommodated. It incorporates the concept of sustainability. Smart Growth America is a coalition of advocacy organizations that have a stake in how metropolitan expansion affects the environment, quality of life and economic sustainability. Partners include national, state and local groups, working on behalf of the environment, historic preservation, social equity, land conservation, neighborhood redevelopment, farmland protection, and labor. Consider connecting with Smart Growth America. Support the Creative Green Core that includes 14 Central/Upstate NY counties. It is a coalition of organizations, businesses, and governments to promote energy alternatives.

**Plan and Execute a City/County Biomass Co-Generation Project.**

City/County cooperation would be important and symbolic and has the potential to save money for government. It is a visible green priority.

**Designate One Office/Person(s) for Combined Sustainability Initiative:**

City and County should establish a joint metropolitan focus for sustainability efforts. Ideas include:

- Reduce costs with geo thermal, develop, execute, track and communicate progress.
- Guide homeowners, developers and construction contractors
- Train codes and building staff.

- Review all existing codes for green.
- Implement Greening USA's 12 Standards.
- Attend to the Onondaga Creek Plan and the clean-up of Onondaga Lake.
- Work with colleges and universities that have offices and institutes for sustainability.
- Pay attention to the integration of economic vitality, social equity, and environmental stewardship.



## Social Services/Education Task Force

### Chair and Members:

Donna J. DeSiato, Chair	Superintendent , East Syracuse-Minoa School District
Jamie Alicea	Deputy Superintendent, Syracuse City School District
Agnes McCray	Board Member, ARISE
Rev. Nebraska Carter	Pastor, Living Water Church of God in Christ
Stanford Perry	Executive Director, ARC of Onondaga
Melissa Glisson	Director and Adoptive Parent, Families By God
Tom Slater	Executive Director, Food Bank of Central New York
Sharon Jack-Williams	Executive Director, The Dunbar Association
John Smarrelli, Jr.	President, Le Moyne College

### Focus Group Charge

To offer tangible recommendations for: a) modernizing the delivery of critical social services and b) expanding educational opportunities for the County's youth.

### Executive Summary

The realm of social services and education has a direct, profound and lasting impact on Onondaga County families in a way that few other services can match. The County is a major provider of social services and it plays a significant supportive role in the delivery of educational programs and services. Clearly, the County's long-term health and its ability to compete in the new economy are inextricably tied to the success of the systems that provide education to County residents at the Pre-K-16 level. Thus the County has considerable latitude in modernizing the delivery of social services while playing an influential but equally critical role in strengthening the delivery of educational services, particularly at the Pre-K level.

In order to maximize the County's finite human as well as financial resources, we recommend that the County focus its energy, creativity and funding on the "critical points of impact" where individuals make key transitions in their lives and where the County can effect the most dramatic, positive and lasting impacts through modernization, reallocation of resources and garnering community support. Modernization of the social services delivery system should clearly address the following:

- Integration of services (through a one-stop service model and the use of off-site outreach workers) with an emphasis on relational and person-centered services rather than a "silo" mentality.
- Empowerment of families and parents through the removal of barriers to participation to allow for family-centered service delivery.

- Expansion of training opportunities for cultural and diversity awareness among County departments combined with a better understanding of the causes of poverty.
- Greater capacity for collaboration across all sectors of the community (government, educational institutions, the private sector, and non-profit organizations) in the design and delivery of services.
- Access to services for all children, families, and senior citizens.

The responsibility for providing education in this community historically has been supported by the resources of County government and its success is critically important to the future of our County. The County can play a vital role in the success of all school districts through:

- A more strategic alignment of County services to support the academic progress and youth development of all students, especially the most vulnerable.
- Coordination of New York State lobbying efforts for the expansion of pre-K services to better prepare children for success in learning and in life (see “Early to Rise” article <sup>8</sup>).
- Support for implementation and monitoring of the Community Literacy Plan.
- The development of incentives to recruit and retain highly qualified individuals to teach in Onondaga County, including the Syracuse City School District, with an emphasis on minority recruitment.
- Capitalizing upon the resources and value added of area colleges and universities for implementation of the Opportunity Agenda.

Implementation of the proposed recommendations will encounter certain barriers. Specifically, the twin phenomena of racism and racial disparities have created deep divisions within the community and affect virtually every aspect in the provision of educational, human and juvenile/criminal justice services with profound negative consequences. While responsibility for addressing these barriers is beyond the exclusive province of County government and indeed rests with the entire community, Onondaga County can play a leadership role in improving community conditions (unintentional or otherwise) that perpetuate discriminatory practices. It must also remain cognizant of these phenomena and how they might impede implementation of proposed recommendations. Broader implementation of models such as the Bridges Out of Poverty framework will help build a more cohesive community, while also facilitating implementation of many of the recommendations contained in this report.

In summary, the County enjoys a remarkably strong foundation (the result of prior significant planning initiatives) from which to embark upon implementation of the Opportunity Agenda. Engagement of the community in the implementation process appears to be readily forthcoming as evidenced by the fruitful engagement of individuals, agencies, and institutions that helped shape this report with ideas, information, perspectives, and concerns. The emphasis in our community, however, should be on moving from planning to action—with action focused on “critical points of impact.” We understand these critical points to include: a) early child care and Pre-K programs; b)

transitioning from high school to college/career; c) transitioning from college to career; d) transition from poverty to self-sufficiency; e) reentry into the community from incarceration; and f) accessibility to services for all children, families and senior citizens. We strongly recommend that the action steps proposed to address any of the identified critical points of impact include an “adaptive model” of service delivery (Leadership Without Easy Answers, Ronald A. Heifetz), defined outcomes and benchmarks for accountability as well as public reporting of results.

We recognize that our recommendations cannot be implemented without ongoing leadership development in all aspects of County government in order to expand and deepen our community’s capacity to lead change—in the delivery of social services and education and in other arenas as well. As noted by Ron Heifetz (Harvard School of Business):

*“Adaptive challenges are ones that go beyond our current capacity. Such challenges involve new, complex learning; they generate anxiety and avoidance because of the uncertainties; and they require involvement of all—the people with the problem are the problem, and they are the solution.”*

#### **Committee Methodology:**

The Focus Group used three methods of data collection to obtain information and insights on which to base its recommendations to County Executive-Elect Joanie Mahoney. These methods included: 1) focus group committee meetings, 2) community-based consumer forums, and 3) outreach to a wide cross-section of informed stakeholders for feedback, perspectives and comments.

The Focus Group met four consecutive times at East-Syracuse Minoa High School under the direction of Donna DeSiato, committee chair (please see addendum for meeting agendas). The purpose of these meetings was to support County Executive-Elect Mahoney’s Opportunity Agenda by concentrating the committee’s focus on the “critical points of impact” where, under the County’s leadership, our community can help produce the most dramatic results through reorganization of services, prioritizing the use of resources, and garnering community support. Thus, the committee focused on moving from planning to action with defined and measurable outcomes and benchmarks.

The first community consumer forum was hosted by the East Syracuse-Minoa School District with student participants from the Jamesville-Dewitt, Fayetteville-Manlius, Syracuse City and East Syracuse-Minoa School Districts. A total of 20 students participated in facilitated roundtable discussions with each table responding to each of five questions posed by the facilitator. Student responses were coded according to themes.

The second community consumer forum was hosted by Nottingham High School and afforded an opportunity for parents to share perspectives and input. Facilitated by Sharon Jack-Williams (Dunbar Center) and Jaime Alicea (SCSD), ten parents participated in this forum that used a question and answer format. The closing session of the forum provided an opportunity for open discussion and comments.

The committee sought input from more than 75 community stakeholders that included representation from the educational, criminal justice, disability rights, youth development, faith-based, human rights, higher education, and employment services communities. Stakeholders provided input via telephone, email or through their participation in scheduled committee meetings and discussions.

**Current Role of Onondaga County in Relation to Education/Social Services:**

Through its Social Services, Health, Mental Health and Library systems, Onondaga County is responsible for an extensive public social service delivery system, which complements an even larger corps of nonprofit agencies and religiously affiliated organizations. The County expends hundreds of millions of dollars annually in this effort.

Although Onondaga County does not directly operate any schools at the K-12 level, it does invest some \$50 million annually in the operations of Onondaga Community College, while also providing area school districts with nearly \$16 million in sales tax revenue. The County has had a long history in providing Early Intervention programs for our youngest children. In recent years the cap on funding in this area has diminished the delivery of these extremely important services. While the County does not necessarily have a direct role in every aspect of education and the delivery of Social Services, its economic future and long-term viability are tied directly to the success of those entities providing such functions, particularly in the educational arena.

**Key Findings:**

Through a number of significant planning initiatives, the County has built a strong foundation that positions it well to implement the Opportunity Agenda. Equally important, is the realization that our community remains eager to participate in the process of implementing solutions and has demonstrated that commitment through its participation in the transition process by sharing information, ideas, data, and concerns. Finally, the committee found that our community needs to move from the planning stage to the implementation stage and that in making this transition, the proposed actions should not only focus on critical points of impact but also include defined, measurable outcomes with benchmarks for accountability.

**Vision Areas**

<b>A.     <i>Develop Incentives to Attract/Retain Talented Teachers</i></b>
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**Background:**

The current teacher shortage will only grow worse with the onset of the Baby Boomer retirements that will claim more than one out of every five teachers in our community over the next five years. Moreover, many school districts continue to experience frequent turnover of their faculty. Continuous improvement in the academic performance of our youth depends upon our ability to attract and retain talented young teachers, yet many

teachers find it difficult to manage the transition into the classroom, particularly in urban schools. Without support to help navigate that transition, many new teachers are especially vulnerable to leaving the profession during their first few years of teaching.

Other communities have developed a wide range of incentives (such as graduate school scholarships, loan forgiveness alternatives, housing/home purchase incentives, leadership opportunities and pay incentives) or supports (such as peer mentors) to attract and retain talented teachers..

### **Recommendations:**

- In collaboration with area school districts, identify ways to provide support to teachers entering the profession, particularly during their first three years when they are most vulnerable to leaving the profession because of the demands of the job
- Institutions of higher education located within Onondaga County already prepare hundreds of teachers for the classroom each year, and the County should explore new ways in which to partner with these higher education institutions to capitalize upon their educational programs, expand the professional development relationships serving area school districts, and attract as many of their graduates as possible to work in one of the County's 18 school districts
- Evaluate the feasibility and effectiveness of specific incentives to attract more teachers to school districts in Onondaga County or retain those already in the teaching profession. Initiatives which appear to hold potential in this area include loan forgiveness programs, scholarship assistance leading to advanced degrees, employer-assisted housing programs, and relief exemption from real property taxes at the local level
- Support summer internships for high school and college students who are planning to be teachers by hiring them to work in summer enrichment programs for urban youth
- Support early hiring (January and February) by school districts of students during their senior year or during their masters program in area colleges and universities (It is important to enlist students early so that they will stay in the Syracuse community)
- Create recruitment incentives for minority candidates and candidates in high need subject areas (math, science, foreign languages, bilingual/ESL)
- Support opportunities for young college students in the fields of science, math, special education, languages other than English, and literacy to volunteer in countywide schools to experience the richness of teaching, and thus to be drawn into careers in teaching

**Barriers to Implementation:**

- Those school districts most in need of help in either recruiting and retaining teachers are often the ones least able to afford the cost of special incentives or retention initiatives
- The lowest performing schools and districts—and thus the schools most in need of both excellence and stability in their teaching faculty—often present the most challenging teaching environments due to the myriad challenges that the students themselves face as a result of unmet social, health, physical or mental health needs, or because of unstable family situations

<b><i>B. Ensure Tax dollars are Making it Into the Classroom</i></b>
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**Background:**

Onondaga County invests some \$50 million annually in the operations of Onondaga Community College while also providing area school districts with nearly \$16 million in sales tax revenue. The County seeks to maximize the classroom applications of those resources while also working to minimize expenditures for non-instructional purposes. Enhanced efficiency, as well as the coordination/consolidation of non-academic functions, can facilitate the realization of this goal.

Currently, suburban school districts realize savings through shared purchases coordinated through OCM BOCES. Many of these districts, as well as OCM BOCES, participate in a Health Insurance Consortium, energy purchasing consortium, and a Fuel Purchasing Group. These effective efficiency strategies have, over the years, resulted in significant savings for our residents and taxpayers. However, much more can be accomplished by expanding these services to include the Syracuse City School District, Onondaga Community College, and other public entities.

**Recommendations:**

- Explore the feasibility of cost-effective measures to broaden the scope of the consortiums that are presently in place to include non-traditional functions such as trash removal, recycling, snow plowing among school districts and towns, villages and the city to maximize the proportion of local tax dollars available to support teaching and other classroom functions
- Facilitate the process of collaboration in seeking funding to support these initiatives through a central consortium of school districts and municipalities which provides benefits for the entire community, such as shared municipal services grants
- Publicize the effectiveness of school districts in managing their costs in order to increase taxpayer awareness, heighten accountability and provide a tool for cross-district, town, and village comparisons; recognize effective, efficient cost-saving initiatives annually through a series of awards and incentives

**Barriers to Implementation:**

- There is a long standing practice of separateness and autonomy over operations by school districts, city, towns and villages and therefore there will be a reluctance to relinquish control as well as shared-accountability

***C. Initiate a Countywide Dialogue on the Future of Education and Ensure that Students have the Non-Educational Resources That They Need to Succeed*****Background:**

Education stands as a key underpinning in building tomorrow's economy, whether in Onondaga County, throughout New York State or the nation. According to the U. S. Department of Education, ninety percent (90%) of the fastest-growing jobs in the new knowledge-driven economy will require some postsecondary education. The traditional engines of economic growth—manufacturing and the finance, insurance and real estate (FIRE) sectors—have shifted markedly toward the intellectual, cultural and education (ICE) sectors. Throughout New York State, for instance, manufacturing jobs declined 40% from 1990 to 2005 while the FIRE sectors shrunk by 9%. In contrast, the ICE sectors registered growth of 17% over the same period of time.

New York State is already the number one destination in the country for first-time, degree-seeking, undergraduate students. Onondaga County can play a significant role in maintaining that distinction by further developing and supporting the concentration and quality of the “higher education industry cluster” found in Central New York. The success of higher education, however, is linked closely to the quality of the elementary and secondary educational systems that feed it and those systems cannot expect students to remain in school and graduate to college or career unless there are adequate resources to meet all of their critical needs from an academic, social, emotional, health and financial perspective.

Strengthening and improving all of the educational systems (Pre-K-16) in Onondaga County will help improve the region's competitive advantage while enhancing Central New York's reputation as a knowledge-rich region. Cornell research has concluded that childcare programs in New York State produced a statewide benefit of \$4.7 billion. Moreover, Michigan researchers reported that for every dollar spent in their state on early childhood education, the return on investment was at least \$17. With a child's brain reaching 85% of its development by the age of 3 or 4, the emphasis on early education cannot be overstated in terms of impact that it has on a child's ability to succeed in school. Thus, while educational expenses comprise a rather modest percentage of Onondaga County's annual budget, the success and effectiveness of Pre-K-16 education within the County has much to do with the County's ability to compete in the 21<sup>st</sup> century global economy.

### **Recommendations:**

- Provide resources to engage regional high school students as well as parents in a community-wide dialogue on the future of education and, with the cooperation and collaboration of school districts, establish an ongoing forum to foster the development of leadership skills among youth (possibly by reactivating the Youth Leadership Greater Syracuse program or creating a new program based upon the United Nations model).
- Identify an appropriate vehicle (i.e., an annual conference, roundtable discussion or “State of Education in Onondaga County” address) to maintain an ongoing dialogue on this topic in response to progress and evolving conditions.
- Identify key partners (such as the Onondaga Citizens League and F.O.C.U.S. Greater Syracuse) capable of fostering continued discussion so as not to lose the focus on education.
- Undertake a comprehensive analysis of current delivery methods/venues for County Health, Mental Health, Library and Social Services to determine the specific reconfiguration(s) of service delivery needed to support expanded use of the community school model such as the Dr. King School, Westside Community School Strategy, and school-based health clinics. Develop a plan (including identification of baseline data and measurable, defined outcomes and benchmarks) to re-align the delivery of the County’s social services in concert with the holistic approach embodied in the “Westside Strategy 9.”
- Provide support for the Community Wide Dialogue Program of Interfaith Works to work with urban, suburban and rural school districts.
- Advocate on a state level for the transfer of Pre-K funding from the Mental Health to the Education budget, to allow for more flexible spending and explore best practices and models to implement more Pre-K programs throughout the County.

### **Barriers to Implementation:**

- Widespread, meaningful participation by key constituencies in a county wide dialogue on education may be difficult to achieve without an identified means to adopt, follow-through or implement the consensus points of such a dialogue.

<b><i>D. Create pathways to higher education for high school graduates</i></b>
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### **Background:**

High school graduation and, increasingly, a college degree are prerequisites for success in the expanding knowledge-based economy that continues to displace the manufacturing sector, which had fueled the growth of the upstate economy for much of the last century.



Technology and global competition today place a premium on knowledge, innovation and entrepreneurship. Onondaga County residents will require expanded opportunities to acquire, develop and update the knowledge and skills needed to compete successfully in the global economy. Excellent resources exist at the college, university and community college levels but greater participation in higher education is predicated largely upon better high school graduation rates. Moreover, greater access to local career and technical education training opportunities will also help prepare for success those students not pursuing a college education.

The transition point between high school and college often looms as an insurmountable gulf for many students, particularly students with disabilities and those from economically disadvantaged families. This transition becomes a particular challenge for those who are not familiar with the options and resources available to them. The committee noted a lack of awareness among high school students relative to the colleges and universities located within Onondaga County and the programs they offer.

Despite this lack of awareness, Onondaga County does enjoy a wealth of resources to foster better high school graduation rates, improved access to career and technical education training opportunities and improved access to a college education, such as the AVID Program.

On Point for College is a community-based college access and support program that has won national acclaim in enrolling more than 1,300 inner-city first generation college students, Syracuse youth in 155 colleges nationwide. Likewise, the Upward Bound Program at Le Moyne College stands as another model college access program with an unusually high rate of success in providing support to students at risk of dropping out of high school or middle school. Similarly, the Liberty Partnerships Program (Le Moyne College, Onondaga Community College and Syracuse University) provides an excellent example of local higher education institutions partnering with area middle and high schools to serve at-risk students through the provision of mentoring, tutoring, counseling and enrichment activities. The recent expansion of Onondaga Community College's academic programs and the opening of residence halls on campus offer still more incentives for students to explore the possibility of college. Strategic partnerships with educational institutions and non-profit agencies, combined with expansion of programs with proven records of effectiveness, can create or expand pathways to higher education.

### **Recommendations:**

- Sustain and strengthen public investment in nationally-recognized Onondaga Community College (the county's only open-admission public institution of higher education) to ensure access, particularly for low-income and first-generation students
- Explore opportunities for both enhancing the county's investment in, and expansion of or replication of, successful college access programs (such as On Point for College and Upward Bound) and workforce development training which meets the needs of today's employers

- Encourage the participation and support of institutions of higher education in the development and expansion of college access programs such as the “Say Yes to Education” initiative <sup>10</sup>.
- Advocate with state elected officials for increased financial resources for successful college preparation and access programs operating with state funding
- Develop new opportunities and partnerships linking student learning with area businesses to prepare students to participate more effectively in the global economy, in collaboration with business organizations such as the Greater Syracuse Chamber of Commerce, the Manufacturers Association, and the Metropolitan Development Association.

#### **Barriers to Implementation:**

- Finite financial resources may limit the extent to which the county can support new or expanded pathways to college
- Inadequate levels of literacy among consumers

<h4><b><i>E. Break the Cycle of Poverty by Modernizing Social Services</i></b></h4>
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#### **Background:**

The extent of poverty in Onondaga County, particularly in specific neighborhoods, has risen despite overall (albeit uneven) economic growth in our nation and even throughout the region. Moreover, poverty is increasingly concentrated in certain segments of the community. Regardless of its location, poverty exerts a devastating impact on the individuals and families that it touches but also generates negative indirect consequences for employers, institutions and others not necessarily affected so directly or visibly by poverty. In addition to placing higher demands upon limited public (and private non-profit) resources, poverty can also indirectly undermine employers and the business sector by blunting, obscuring or rendering inaccessible the possibility for higher education or advanced education for those in poverty.

“Bridges Out of Poverty” is one model which provides a respectful framework for working with individuals in poverty by building skill sets for individuals and management, upgrading training for front-line staff, redesigning programs to better serve their intended constituents, and by improving treatment outcomes. Moreover, educational resources already exist within the County through several non-profit agencies whose staff have extensive training over the past three years. Indeed, the national Bridges organization has commented favorably on the response of our community to the Bridges training model in that it has been more comprehensive and extensive than what they have seen anywhere else in the country.

#### **Recommendations:**

- Reevaluate and reconfigure silo-oriented systems of service delivery to develop approaches oriented more closely to consumer needs in terms of access, convenience and comprehensiveness. Examine, in particular, the feasibility of adopting the concepts of “one stop” service centers or the deployment of mobile service workers in existing community organizations and underserved geographic locations.
- Increase the number of outreach workers who have the ability to communicate information about Social Services programs (and eligibility for same) and enroll individuals in programs at off-site locations. (Refer to the Food Bank Model <sup>11</sup>).
- Promote more healthy relationships between those providing and those receiving services by emphasizing the need for cultural competency among County workers, and developing greater understanding of the causes of poverty through widespread use of models such as the Bridges Out of Poverty framework for working with individuals in poverty.
- Encourage and support continuation of the HSLC as well as the Continuum of Care Committee, and efforts to fully implement the High Fidelity Wraparound model and an integrated system of care across multiple systems in Onondaga County <sup>12</sup>.
- Engage the expertise of experts associated with the institutions of higher education in developing new research-based benchmarks to support the modernization of service delivery through a commitment to effectiveness and accountability.
- Continue to support and monitor the outcomes in the newly created Onondaga County Health Department Nurse Family Partnership. This is a home visiting program with an emphasis on first-time mothers that has demonstrated success in other communities.
- Advocate for passage of S. 661 and HR. 2188 calling for subsidies and support for grandparents and other kin caring for at-risk youth within the Child Welfare system, in light of the dramatic need for relative-placed foster children in our community and its inherent relationship to poverty.
- Assess the need for and accessibility of services for the aging population.

#### **Barriers to Implementation:**

- Services are typically viewed as “silos,” thus diminishing the prospects for collaboration, innovation and integration.
- County funding frequently comes with “strings” that too often preclude the flexibility and innovation that would better serve the consumer.
- The lack of transportation to access services at sites where they are currently offered.
- The gap in cultural understanding between service providers and recipients.

<b><i>F. Move Families from Welfare to Work Through Increased Workforce Training and Job Placement Opportunities</i></b>
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**Background:**

Few families seeking to move from welfare to work can make the journey either unassisted or without adequate preparation for that transition. The tools needed to successfully navigate that transition often involve educational services, skills training, literacy development or, sometimes, all three. The success in moving from public assistance to work can be illusory or fleeting unless the family's prospects for remaining employed are strong. Without better support for families at this critical point in their journey, a revolving door syndrome could easily develop whereby families continually cycle back and forth between welfare and work. Moreover, these needs may not be particularly well understood as they pertain to groups of emerging prominence in the county such as immigrant and refugee populations.

The need for support as families move from welfare to work is underscored by the lack of uniform access to economic opportunities across the full spectrum of our community. Not only do large segments of our community lack access to the economic opportunities in which many others share, but just as frequently they are overlooked or even excluded from the dialogue that seeks to identify appropriate programs and solutions.

**Recommendations:**

- Support development of the Community Literacy Plan currently being developed by the Literacy Coalition.
- Improve the availability and geographic distribution of affordable day care and early childhood education resources to families moving to self-sufficiency. See Winning Beginning<sup>13</sup>.
- Encourage the human services and the higher education communities to adopt and implement innovative programs that address the core abilities of families to move from dependence to self-sufficiency, such as the Cristo Rey School model, for working with economically disadvantaged students and programs that embody the tenets of the Christian Community Development Model.
- Close the gap in understanding between those in poverty and those either in wealth or middle class by providing County workers with training in models such as the Bridges Out of Poverty, Ohio Family, and Children First frameworks for working with individuals in poverty
- Support families who have made the transition to work by expanding the support available to them through the "Circles" support model or another comparable model which is person-centered as opposed to system-centered.
- Support access to high-quality child care for welfare-to-work and low-income families and their children by providing market rate

reimbursements to programs that serve high percentages of low-income families.

- Support implementation of a Quality Rating and Improvement System in Onondaga County.
- Support Universal Pre-K expansion and flexibility for districts
- Include child care and early childhood education planning in economic development projects to ensure that growing workforce needs are met.
- Foster a partnership between current Jail Ministry efforts and the “Circles” model of support, and at the same time advocate for more effective community reentry of individuals leaving incarceration.
- Develop a collaborative system or process such as the Open Space Technology model described in the Gifford proposal that brings to the table all community groups in an effort to identify ways to address specific problems.
- Designate a person in County government to coordinate service efforts among faith-based groups.

**Barriers to Implementation:**

- Some County services create financial disincentives for individuals moving out of poverty.
- Lack of reliable and affordable transportation can limit access to services and to opportunities for work.
- Racial disparities so prevalent in other aspects of the community also exist in this arena and thus can hinder progress, as can a lack of understanding of the causes of poverty and recurring racism.
- An increasing shortage of childcare/daycare options makes it difficult for parents to return to work.

## Workforce Relations Task Force

### Chair and Members:

Cydney Johnson, Chair	Senior Vice President, Spark Group Limited
John Barsanti	President, The Barsanti Group
Billy Harper	Director, SUNY Educational Opportunity Center
Anne Kassel	Vice President, Human Resource Services, MACNY
Christina Merchant	Professor of Practice, The Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs, Syracuse University
Gary Robb	Business Manager, Iron Workers, Local 60
Laura Spring	Attorney, Sonneborn, Spring and O'Sullivan

### Focus Group Charge:

- Provide an overview of all County bargaining unit agreements.
- Give current status of all bargaining agreements.
- Offer tangible recommendations on current workforce issues.
- Provide best practices to establish a framework for continued motivation and accountability of the workforce.

### Specific Charge for Group:

- Recommendations for improving communications between management and labor.
- Identify areas of previous conflict.
- Recommend potential solutions.
- Identify Best Practices for motivating and partnering with County employees to achieve the vision.

### Methodology:

#### **County Employees Interviewed:**

Elaine Walter – Commissioner of Personnel

Peter Troiano – Director, Employee Relations

Maureen Craner - Director, Civil Service Administration

#### **Interview with Union President/Head by Team Members:**

CSEA (interview by Cydney Johnson)

NYS Nurses Association (John Barsanti)

MCEA (Billy Harper)

Basic Building Trades Council (Anne Kassel)

OSCA (Christina Merchant)

OSCA, International Union of Operating Engineers (Gary Robb)  
OCSA (Laura Spring)

**Interview/Information Exchange:**

Christina Merchant, Professor of Practice, Syracuse University, Maxwell School of Citizenship. (*Concentration in HR Management, Collective Bargaining, and Organizational Development*)

**Research on Best Practices in Labor Negotiations and Team Building:**

State Employment Relations Board – SERB Academy, Spring 2007

Case Study – City of Newark IBB Experience, by Tony Naess, Ed Turner and Craig Mayton

Case Study – Collaborative Bargaining in Ohio Public Schools: An Analysis of Its Use and Performance

Interest Based Bargaining, A New Mediator Tool at FCMS, Barrett pages, Law Conference 2007, Book 1

**Research on Health and Welfare Benefits in the Workplace and Training:**

State and National Survey, 2007-8 Survey of Health and Welfare Benefits in the Private Sector – MACNY Report

Onondaga County Employee Training and Management Development Initiatives, Prepared by Kathleen Howard, MBA, M.Ed, Training Unit, Onondaga County Dept of Personnel.

**Current Role and Issues - Onondaga County**

**Focus Areas:**

- Bargaining Unit Agreements
- Workforce Issues
- Best Practices For Employee motivation and growth

**Current Status of County Bargaining Agreements**

Eight Collective Bargaining Unit Agreements:

- Civil Service Employees Association
- Deputy Sheriffs Benevolent Association
- Onondaga Sheriffs Captains Association\*(in Interest Arbitration)
- New York State Nurses Association
- International Union of Operating Engineers
- Greater Syracuse Area NY Basic Building Trades Council
- Onondaga County Sheriffs Association
- CSEA (Licensed Practical Nurses Unit)

**Collective Bargaining Unit Agreements - Findings**

- All agreements expire 12-31-07
- Status

- Discussions with bargaining units have been taking place
- Closed table approach rejected by Onondaga County when suggested by CSEA team due to differences over pay increase proposal. CSEA sees situation differently, offer was made to extend contract with a 3% pay increase. No agreement was reached.
- County negotiating team eager to get direction from County Executive-Elect
- Top issues
  - Pay
  - Health care cost sharing
- County negotiator reported that leadership change at CSEA has changed this team's approach to negotiations on the current contract.
- CSEA leadership feels that the county did not show good faith in trying to negotiate a fair wage increase earlier in the year in order to extend current contract.
- Significant level of concern with union groups about the agenda of the County Executive-Elect and how it will influence their agreements. They are looking for positive forward action as new administration takes office.
- Clear message from most groups about the success of the Health Coalition and the positive teamwork of that group.
- The Labor Management Committee is not seen as effective tool, but most units believe that it can be a positive tool. They want to see and communicate with the County Executive!
- Suggestion to change schedule for contract renewal dates, do smaller units on different schedule/year than CSEA contract. More attention could be given to smaller bargaining units.

### **Current Onondaga County Workforce Issues**

- Aging workforce and lack of replacements
- 783 potential retirees in next 5 years
- Average age of County Employee is 45, with 14 years of service
- Concern on replacement and maintaining service level with the exit of experienced employees
- Continued increases in Health care costs. County has 26% cost of Health insurance out of the 45% total benefits cost structure. This percentage is higher than private sector
- Discrepancy on health care costs for some employees: OCSPA retirees' cost of health benefits
- Department Managers have significant influence in their department's organizational strategies, but strategy not always in line with long-term County strategies.
- Concern on attracting and keeping younger employees and giving them career path
- Mentoring opportunities limited due to guidelines of Civil Service positions.



- Preparing the workforce for the changing diversity of their customer base; the residents of Onondaga County. Services will need to change and additional training will be needed.
- Centralization vs. decentralization in replacement process
- Health care costs is a big issue; Who pays and how much?
- Physical Plant issues for some employees and union leaders, lack of investment in their workplace environment.
- Training programs are needed to continue to support and reinforce the workforce aligned with the County's long term strategy.
- There is no formal performance appraisal system
- No incentive to improve performance
- Pay increases tied to contract
- No bonus or workforce incentive program
- Job description updates needed
- No formal actions follow-up system
- Some functions of the HR system need review and updating
- Opportunity for discussion on the potential to look at county work/services structure – consolidation can be topic for discussion with workforce as long as they are involved in discussions.

### **Best Practices for Employee Motivation and Growth**

#### **Findings:**

- Unions commented that they are interested in making the negotiation process more collaborative. They are uncomfortable with the charge/directive of the current negotiating team. They would like to understand the County Executive-Elect's agenda.
- Access/exposure to the County Executive-Elect; want more flow of information and to hear her message.
- Interest to have workforce survey done and concrete action taken based on information/review. The union teams would like to be involved in the process. The purpose of the survey is to find out employee satisfaction.
- Lack of consistent and regular communication with the workforce. Need vehicle to establish regular communication for the County Executive-Elect to share her vision/message/update with the workforce. They want to know their boss.

#### **Labor Relations and Collective Bargaining – Recommendations:**

- Reestablish and revitalize the Labor Management Committee. Significant opportunity to quickly establish a positive relationship with the bargaining units and send a clear message from the County Executive-Elect. Action must be taken within first 30-60 days of taking office.
- Request the Healthcare Coalition team explore and report on the opportunity for Interest Based Bargaining for Onondaga County (see

City of Newark IBB Experience case). This coalition is recognized as a very successful team. Provide a facilitator or trainer to support this initiative.

- Based on team project to explore IBB, move towards a partnership instead of a positional/adversarial relationship in future County/bargaining unit negotiations.

### **Engaging Workforce Effectively – Recommendations:**

- Establish a communications plan to provide regularly scheduled meeting/town hall session for the County Executive-Elect and the workforce.
- Must have a regular and ongoing schedule to meet. Significant opportunity to improve morale in the workforce by having a vehicle to talk to the employees and let them have exposure to the County Executive-Elect.
- Should establish this plan and communicate it within the first 30 days in office. Strong, positive message will be sent to the workforce with the establishment of this communications plan.
- Initiate, and complete an employee survey for entire Onondaga County workforce.
  - Consider using outside agency to conduct and report the results back to the County Executive-Elect.
  - Must have definite follow-up plan on key issues excluding pay and benefits in the survey.
  - Must ensure effective communication of report results to the workforce.
  - Include key members of the workforce and union groups in the planning and review of the survey project.
- Formalize a cost effective plan to bring in new talent as the workforce retires:
  - Look at present County structure and consolidation opportunities
  - Cost analysis must be done on current costs vs. shared services cost savings.
  - Look for opportunity to push job responsibilities and decision making closer to the employee to increase accountability and empowerment of the workforce.
- Establish new and support ongoing programs that would provide training and support for the workforce, as they require skills in key areas such as diversity and leadership.
- Look to the for profit and non profit organizations and the learning institutes to build learning centers and provide facilitators to train/support the workforce on key issues.

- Engage local and state government representatives to start movement to build collective support for change in Civil Service guidelines to bring positive change to the workplace.
  - Opportunity to partner with other counties to gain support for the changes as they work to lobby the state.
- Review potential for introduction of an Employee Wellness program, a growing trend in the private sector. Wellness programs can be beneficial in lowering health care costs due to improving the health and morale of the workforce (interest in this idea expressed by one union leader as they are observing its implementation in private sector units).

### **Best Practices – Recommendation:**

- Collective Bargaining practices – use of Interest Based Bargaining to establish a positive partnership based relationship with the eight bargaining units. Results will support a more strategic approach to negotiations and opportunity for long range strategic plan support.
- Establish relationship with Syracuse University/Maxwell School of Citizenship to work on collective bargaining practices and strategic policy change.
- The initiation of a Workforce Survey to gain better understanding of workforce concerns will help determine a best practice project for Onondaga County.

### **Appendices**

State employment Relations Board – SERB Academy, Spring 2007  
 City of Newark IBB Experience by Tony, Naess, Ed Turner and Craig Mayton  
 Collaborative Bargaining in Ohio Public Schools: An Analysis of Its Use and Performance, P. Andrew Jewell, Fritz Fekete, Betsey Cinadr McCafferty  
 Interest Based Bargaining: A New Mediator Tool at FMCS 1, Jerome T. Barrett, and EdD. (Barrett pages from Law Conference 2007, Book 1)  
 Health and Welfare Benefits (State and National) Survey for 2007/8, MACNY  
 Onondaga County Employee Training and Management Development Initiatives, Kathleen Howard, MBA, M.Ed., Training Unit, Onondaga County Department of Personnel  
 Work Force Composition Listing for Onondaga County, 2006 Annual Report, Department of Personnel, and Onondaga County  
 Sample Survey, Workforce Survey, MACNY 2007

## Intergovernmental Relations Task Force

### Chair and Members:

Ryan McMahon, Chair	3 <sup>rd</sup> District Councilor, Syracuse Common Council
Van Robinson	Councilor at Large, Syracuse Common Council
Robert Warner	13 <sup>th</sup> District County Legislator, Onondaga County Legislature
Mark Olsen	Mayor, Village of Fayetteville
Beth Rougeux	Executive Director, Syracuse University Government Relations
Tim Carroll	Director of Operations, City of Syracuse
Mark Wladis	Attorney, Wladis Law Firm
Jill Harvey	Syracuse Regional Representative, Senator Charles Schumer

### Committee Charge:

The Intergovernmental Relations task force has the overall charge of providing assistance to the County Executive-Elect as to the critical mechanisms and relationships that will foster partnership and cooperation among various levels of government

### Committee Methodology:

The Intergovernmental Relations Transition team task force was comprised of elected officials from various spectrums of local government, representatives from City and federal government, and members of key private sector partners. The group initiated meetings on a weekly then bi-weekly basis to take on the Committee charge, study and focus on County Executive-Elect Mahoney's Opportunity Agenda, and make recommendations on how County government can better serve its constituency, and work better with other local, state, and federal governments.

The Committee interviewed Cicero Town Supervisor Chet Dudzinski, and Village of North Syracuse Mayor John Heindorf for further perspective on the current relationship with County government. These conversations focused on what works, what needs improvement, and what recommendations they have to bridge any gaps between their perspective governments and County government.

The Committee also met with Jim Stelter, a current County Department of Transportation employee. Our focus with Jim was on the permitting process that goes on between the Towns and County in perspective to Economic Development projects.

### Current Role of Onondaga County as it Relates to Focus Area

Onondaga County currently has numerous dealings with all local municipalities, state, and federal governments. The County also plays a critical role with our institutions, and private sector partners in the County and Region.

## **Key Findings**

- There is no one point of contact for local, state, federal municipalities when it comes to intergovernmental cooperation. In speaking with local, town, village, city representatives it seems each municipality goes about handling county affairs differently. One municipality may speak to a department head even though that department head is not necessarily the administrator in the field of subject. One municipality may deal directly with the County Executive, and another may go directly to their County Legislator. This creates confusion and often there may be too many individuals working on a resolution to the issue and lack of communication is a possible outcome.
- There have been recent efforts by County Executive Pirro to help break down barriers between local government, institutions, and the private sector. County Executive Pirro created “Leadership Council” comprised of individuals from the Mayor of the City of Syracuse, Chairman of the County Legislature, President of the Common Council, Chancellor of Syracuse University, President of MACNY, Chamber of Commerce, MDA and other community leaders. This group focuses on current issues of Economic development, cooperation, and other important issues affecting our community.
- Current lobbying efforts at the state and federal level need to be ramped up. Currently Onondaga County is in a strong fiscal position and has never really had to rely on State or Federal Aid to subsidize their budget. In recent years we have seen the negative effect of unfunded state mandates, legislation that has a negative effect on all local municipalities, and a tax burden that is unsustainable. These issues could have a profound impact on the future of our County and region. We need to be a strong voice in Albany, and Washington, DC showing our legislative and executive partners the huge impact their decisions have on County, and other local governments.
- There are incredible opportunities in the next few years for local government cooperation. There are many issues that all local governments are facing in regards to infrastructure, public safety, insurance costs. It makes perfect and complete sense for our local governments to work together in joint-ventures to make these projects happen at the least expensive and most efficient costs to the taxpayers of the entire County and potentially region.
- Current permitting and planning efforts are duplicative, and difficult for development between the towns and County government. This often creates more work for the Towns and County governments, and frustrates developers.

## **Focus Group Recommendations:**

- We recommend the creation of an intergovernmental liaison that reports directly to the County Executive. This position would be a point of contact for all municipalities’ town, village, city, state, and federal. This person would also help coordinate ongoing intergovernmental efforts between department heads within County government. This position could be a new position or you can take a

current position and narrow the scope of their job duties. If this is a new position, it is the Committee's understanding that you will need County Legislature approval for the position.

- We recommend the continuance of the "Leadership Council" started by County Executive Pirro. These meetings have been extremely valuable in bringing community leaders together to discuss current and future initiatives that will move our County and Region forward. We do feel County Executive-Elect Mahoney should consider having each member of this body bring a staff member as a support role, not an alternate to the member. It is also a recommendation that these meetings occur monthly, not bi-monthly, so ongoing dialogue happens more frequently. This may be difficult due to scheduling.
- The Committee recommends the formation of a Central New York Legislative Action Committee. The focus of this Committee is to lobby state and federal officials as one voice for funding, but also policy changes that will have a positive impact on our County and Region. This group should be formed similar to this Committee with representatives from villages, towns, institutions, City, and County government. This group should meet with the goal of finding common ground on issues and then going to Albany and Washington DC as one voice. This Committee has the full potential to include representatives from surrounding counties as well. This Committee should receive input from business and community leaders as well. One recommendation: the current Transition Team on Intergovernmental Affairs can transition into this CNY Legislative Action Committee. The intergovernmental liaison position should actively be involved with this Committee.
- The Committee recommends the County should strongly consider hiring a state and federal lobbyist. The lobbyist would advocate at the state and federal level for issues affecting the County and Region. The lobbyist would work in conjunction with the intergovernmental liaison, CNY Legislative Action Committee, to push The County Executive-Elect's agenda for funding and policy changes. The lobbyist should be aware of and help coordinate grant writing efforts being completed by individual Department heads. This practice has seemed to be successful for the Syracuse Industrial Development Agency, Syracuse City School District, Erie, and Monroe Counties. It is the Committee's understanding that such a move would require County Legislature approval.
- The Committee recommends the County work with the towns to create a "One Stop Shop System" when it comes to planning and permitting. The idea here is for potential developers to receive an outline of all necessary steps from the town and county. This will help cut bureaucratic red tape and make development easier. We also feel there should be pre-development meetings on necessary projects where all parties involved would sit down and communicate the challenges

facing the potential development project. The City of Syracuse has recently implemented such a process and feedback from the business community has been positive. These efforts will take great communication between the village, town, and county governments. The intergovernmental liaison should help foster these communications with the economic development team.

- The Committee encourages the County Executive-Elect to grasp the opportunities at hand in regards to intergovernmental cooperation. There is a real opportunity for progress on issues such as: Airport Authority, energy related issues, health insurance costs, Interstate Route 81, water restoration projects, funding opportunities, and a police firing range. All of these issues will need to be addressed in the near future by many different governments and these projects offer us the opportunity to work together for the betterment of the region.

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