



Opportunity Agenda Action Plan

January 31, 2008

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My Fellow Onondaga County Residents:

During the campaign for Onondaga County Executive, a detailed vision (Opportunity Agenda) covering a wide range of topics from Economic Development and Education to Government Modernization and Quality of Life Improvements was part of my pledge to bring a fresh start to Onondaga County.

Upon election, we organized six transition task forces comprised of over fifty community leaders (see Reference 1). These committees were lead by bi-partisan Co-Chairs Nicholas J. Pirro, outgoing County Executive and Thomas G. Young, former Mayor of the City of Syracuse. Specific content area was assigned to each task force as follows: Economic Development, Government Modernization, Community Revitalization, Social Services/Education, Workforce Development and Intergovernmental Relations. These six committees were tasked with developing specific ideas for implementing and strengthening the vision contained in the Opportunity Agenda.

This diverse group of professionals created an extraordinary work product in a very limited amount of time. The "Consolidated Report of the Transition Team Task Forces" serves as a companion piece to this document and demonstrates the breadth and scope of the task force work. Input and information was sought from hundreds of additional members of our community as evidenced by the detailed addenda from their report. The dedicated contribution of each of these volunteer task force members has been invaluable to me as I begin my term.

Citizen input is essential to ensure that every voice is heard and every idea considered. As the transition team was assembled, we quickly saw the vacuum that could be created if an avenue was not established to solicit individual input. To that end, a link on my campaign website was created for this very purpose. Onondaga County residents were encouraged to offer ideas and input to each of the task forces as they completed their work. Their submitted comments and recommendations brought fresh ideas to the task force reports.

My team and I have carefully reviewed the task force reports and have developed an action plan, contained herein, of the top priorities of the Administration. A “scorecard” will be publicly available to measure progress and ensure transparency and accountability to the residents of Onondaga County. The report card will allow the community dialogue to continue and will emphasize results over rhetoric.

We are embarking on a “fresh start.” We developed a vision with the Opportunity Agenda, solicited input from the task forces and community, and have now developed an Action Plan based on all of the available information. As you will see upon reading this strategic Action Plan, some of the goals are more easily accomplished than others but taken as a whole, a stable foundation for community progress and renewed vitality has been established.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Joanne". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Joanne M. Mahoney
Onondaga County Executive

Economic Development

- Develop a one-stop Economic Development office that houses all the key stakeholders involved in economic development and business assistance in the community. Co-locate economic development entities with the potential for developing a new governance model that harnesses resources and synergies. Develop and provide common forms electronically to encourage a more conducive filing and planning system.
- Effectively Market our “Region” as “The Easiest Place for Doing Business” by:
 - Focusing marketing investments into strategic growing industries, populations and geographies and executing a nationwide communications and marketing strategy to promote the region as a great place to create jobs.
 - Working closely with higher education institutions to retain recent college graduates in our region and workforce, and facilitating the expansion of research partnerships between academic institutions and innovative, high-tech companies thus allowing Central New York to compete in the global innovation market.
 - Leveraging the region’s valued resources in a comprehensive marketing strategy. These resources include Central New York’s low cost of living, first rate universities, plentiful fresh water, access to nature, recreational activities, and quality environmental practices.
 - The County Executive will act as the ambassador for the community, meeting with and attracting business from around the region, state and nation.
- Promote smart growth initiatives by preparing shovel-ready sites with clear titles, encouraging community collaboration, restoring brownfields and providing incentives for redevelopment of existing property.
- Encourage developers who benefit from public monies to use **local** hiring strategies that reserve a percentage of jobs for local residents.
- Explore options for managing escalating property taxes for senior citizens including advocating for State legislation that would freeze assessments of primary residences for senior citizens.
- Strengthen the Region’s Workforce by:
 - Focusing on workforce development using an employer driven model such as the Journey to Jobs strategy.
 - Promoting the creation of partnerships among colleges, innovative companies and local school districts to create training, apprenticeships and education programs.

- Support and encourage development efforts such as the 300 block of South Salina St., the OnCenter Hotel, and the Landmark Theatre, among others.
- Advocate for the expansion of the New York State Rehabilitation Tax Credit Program.
- Initiate a discussion with CENTRO leadership to ensure maximization of transportation routes for work, school and recreation. Actively engage in efforts to relocate the Downtown Central Bus Station.

Regional

- 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.
- Promote government modernization by engaging and organizing a diverse group of stake-holders representative of government, business, nonprofit, and citizenry for honest discussion and the genuine consideration of redesigning our government structures for the 21st Century.
- Identify and remove the barriers that have prevented the creation of a regional airport authority.
- Amplify 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.
- Promote Greening USA’s “12 Traits of Sustainability” and incorporate these tenets to the operations of Onondaga County.
- Consider engaging the services of a lobbyist who would advocate for issues affecting the Central New York region at the State level.

Collaboration

- Continue to champion the implementation and monitoring of the Community Literacy Plan, and consider options such as the Bookmobile and increased collaboration between Onondaga County libraries and schools for library card registration to encourage expanded usage.
- Explore the feasibility of cost-effective measures to broaden the scope of educational service provision consortiums that are presently in place to include

functions such as trash removal, recycling, snow plowing and purchasing among schools, towns, villages and the City to maximize the proportion of local tax dollars going to the classroom. Facilitate the funding of these initiatives through application for NYS Shared Municipal Service grants.

- Examine opportunities for County investment in successful college access programs such as On Point for College and Upward Bound.
- Designate an Intergovernmental Liaison as a point of contact for all town, village, city, state, and federal representatives to the County Executive.
- Engage the Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs, Syracuse University and other educational institutions to review and recommend “best practices” from other communities.
- Collect diverse ideas and viewpoints from the public and key stakeholders to ensure that decisions concerning the elevated portion of I-81 in the City are in our community’s best interest.
- Sustain efforts to clean and restore Onondaga Lake, considering all stakeholder interests and available technology, while maximizing available resources.
- Formation of a joint collaboration with the City of Syracuse and other municipalities for the police firing range and vehicle training facility.
- Explore a co-location for the Onondaga County Sheriff’s and City of Syracuse Police and Fire departments as the current Public Safety building is in need of extensive restoration or replacement.
- Establish long-term funding and expansion of Operation Impact, a successful and effective public safety collaboration between the City Police, Sheriff’s department, NYS and Federal law enforcement agencies.
- Coordinate the construction of water reservoir covers with the City of Syracuse as required by the EPA and Homeland Security to maximize efficiency and oversight.
- Coordinate City and County Parks recreational planning and programming and enhance communication efforts to maximize citizen awareness.
- Explore opportunities to create Burnet Park as a day-trip destination site by aligning assets such as the Rosamond Gifford Zoo, the City’s golf course, swimming pool, athletic fields, and former ice skating rink.
- Resolve the Alliance Bank Stadium contract with the Syracuse Chiefs.

- Coordinate efforts to repair the Central Library roof in the Galleries, thus protecting the historical archives collection as well as other irreplaceable items.
- Resolution of sewer issues along Floradale Road in the Town of Salina.
- Revive the collaborative “Cleaner and Greener” effort of Onondaga County, the City of Syracuse, and New York State established by former County Executive Pirro in order to beautify and maintain public roadways and thoroughfares.
- Coordination of street maintenance efforts among all municipalities in Onondaga County.
- Continuation of support for the Westside Community School Strategy and the possibility of expansion into other City neighborhoods.
- Continue the “Leadership Council” envisioned by former County Executive Pirro.
- Focus on collaboration between educational institutions throughout the region and their key role in the enhancement of various economic development efforts, such as with the Connective Corridor.

Service Delivery

- Reconfigure Onondaga County service delivery systems to an approach that is more closely oriented towards consumer needs in terms of access, convenience and comprehensiveness. Examine 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.
- Promote empowerment of families and parents through the removal of barriers to participation to allow for family-centered social service delivery. Explore the implementation of initiatives such as High Fidelity Wrap Around and the Circles model.
- Encourage greater collaboration across all sectors of the community including: government, educational institutions, the private sector and non-profit organizations in the designing and delivering of services. This will include:
 - Designating a member of the Executive staff to coordinate service efforts among faith-based groups.
 - Foster a partnership with current Jail Ministry efforts for a more successful re-entry of individuals leaving incarceration into the community.
 - Sustain and strengthen public investment to ensure and increase access to Onondaga Community College.

- Continued support for the Community-wide Dialogue Program of Interfaith Works in their work with urban, suburban and rural school districts.
 - Support and monitor the outcomes in the newly created Nurse Family Partnership, 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 that provide subsidies and support for grandparents and other relatives caring for at-risk youth within the Child Welfare system.
- Expansion of opportunities for cultural and diversity awareness for County departments through “Bridges Out of Poverty” training.
- Support New York State Association of Counties lobbying efforts for the expansion of pre-K services to better prepare children for success in learning.
- Conduct a Strategic Assessment of County Services with the assistance of an outside facilitator who will map current government operations and assist in planning for improved service delivery. This strategic assessment process should lead to the implementation of a Performance Based Management System for County provided services.
- In conjunction with ongoing efforts, ensure universal health insurance for all children in Onondaga County.
- Creation of a service directory on all floors of the Civic Center.
- Support the planned creation of the Onondaga Hill Corporation that will combine specific resources and planning of specific assets of the Van Duyn Home and Hospital and Community General Hospital.
- Release an “Opportunity Agenda Report Card” at the end of the first six months reporting the progress that is being made with regard to the entire Opportunity Agenda. This reporting will be on-going.
- Explore the creation of a Community Investment Trust, which will operate like the Syracuse Neighborhood Initiative model and be locally sustainable.
- Establish goal of using 15% renewable energy in all Onondaga County facilities by 2015.

Arts/Culture

- Support the Creation of an Arts Administration through the collaboration of the Cultural Resources Council (CRC), Arts Council Leadership Alliance (ACLA) and Partners for Arts Education (PAE). Charge the new arts and cultural council with the creation of an Onondaga Cultural Plan and commission an economic/cultural impact study for the region.
- Partner with the City of Syracuse for a comprehensive, artistic way finding system. The improved way finding signage would identify cultural institutions and historic sites and include the Connective Corridor and Civic (government) corridor.
- Encourage efforts to improve the vitality of Downtown Syracuse through completion of the Civic Corridor lighting project, increasing the number of residences, partnering with colleges and universities to have downtown campuses, and promoting street level businesses.
- Activate the Trust for Cultural Resources of the County of Onondaga formed in 1991 that allows cultural institutions to develop properties, receive PILOTs and issue bonds.

Workforce

- Emphasize the recruitment, training, and retention of the most qualified individuals in Onondaga County government.
- Analyze and manage the impact of retirement of “baby boomers” on Onondaga County operations.
- Resolve all outstanding Onondaga County union contracts.
- Utilize the platform of the County Executive’s office to initiate a call to public service.
- Revitalize the Onondaga County Labor Management Committee.
- Utilize an outside expert to conduct and analyze an employee survey of the Onondaga County workforce.
- Enhance the current Onondaga County Employee Wellness program.
- Establish an effective plan for communication between the County Executive and the County workforce.

- Advocate reform to the Civil Service system to create the flexibility to allow for recruitment and hiring of mid-level personnel tied to experience and education qualifications.
- Expand the County's eighteen-month Masters' Administrative Intern program.
- Support employee 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.

References

1. Task Force Members

Economic Development:

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 Skeeel	President, Onondaga County Farm Bureau
Bill Towsley	Business Manager, IBEW Local 43
Jack Webb	President, Alliance Bank NA
Dick Catanise	President, Catanise Consulting

Government Modernization:

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

Community Revitalization:

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

Social Services/Education:

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
Stanfort 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

Workforce Relation:

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

Intergovernmental Relations:

Ryan McMahon, Chair	3 rd District Councilor, Syracuse Common Council
Van Robinson	Councilor at Large, Syracuse Common Council
Robert Warner	13 th 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
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Jill Harvey	Syracuse Regional Representative, Senator Charles Schumer