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# Patterns of government in Onondaga County : structure and services of county, city, town and village governments

Syracuse University. Maxwell School. Community Benchmarks Program

League of Women Voters of the Syracuse Metropolitan Area

F.O.C.U.S. Greater Syracuse

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# **PATTERNS OF GOVERNMENT IN ONONDAGA COUNTY**

**Structure and Services of County, City, Town,  
and Village Governments**



**A Study by the League of Women Voters of the Syracuse Metropolitan  
Area, F.O.C.U.S. Greater Syracuse, and the Community Benchmarks  
Program of the Maxwell School of Syracuse University**



# FOREWORD

The 2006 revised “Patterns of Government” is an important resource for elected and public officials, citizens, students, businesses, nonprofit organizations, educational institutions, and the general public. This document contains vital information that ordinarily can be found only when one researches multiple sources.

This material will help you to understand how local governments are organized, the services they provide, and sources of funding. You will understand how tax dollars work, programs operate and interact with each other, and “who to call” for service and information. If the information in this document motivates civic trusteeship and mutual responsibility with governments, it has achieved its purpose.

Conscientious care was given to updating the information by Bradley Warren, a Policy Studies student at the Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs. His diligence and meticulous efforts were supervised and guided by Carol Dwyer, Director of the Community Benchmarks Program (CBP), also at the Maxwell School. To both of them we express a hearty thank you.

A special thank you is extended to all of the Departments who supplied updated information for the 2006 revised “Patterns of Government” including: Onondaga County Office of the Board of Elections, District Attorney’s Office, Health Department, Sheriff’s Office, Supreme Court, Department of Transportation, Department of Water Environment Protection, and Syracuse-Onondaga County Planning Agency.

The original “Patterns of Government” was published by the League of Women Voters of the Syracuse Metropolitan Area in 1970 and revised in 1981 and 1996.

The 2006 edition of “Patterns of Government” is sponsored by the League of Women Voters of the Syracuse Metropolitan Area, F.O.C.U.S. Greater Syracuse, and the CBP of the Maxwell School of Syracuse University.

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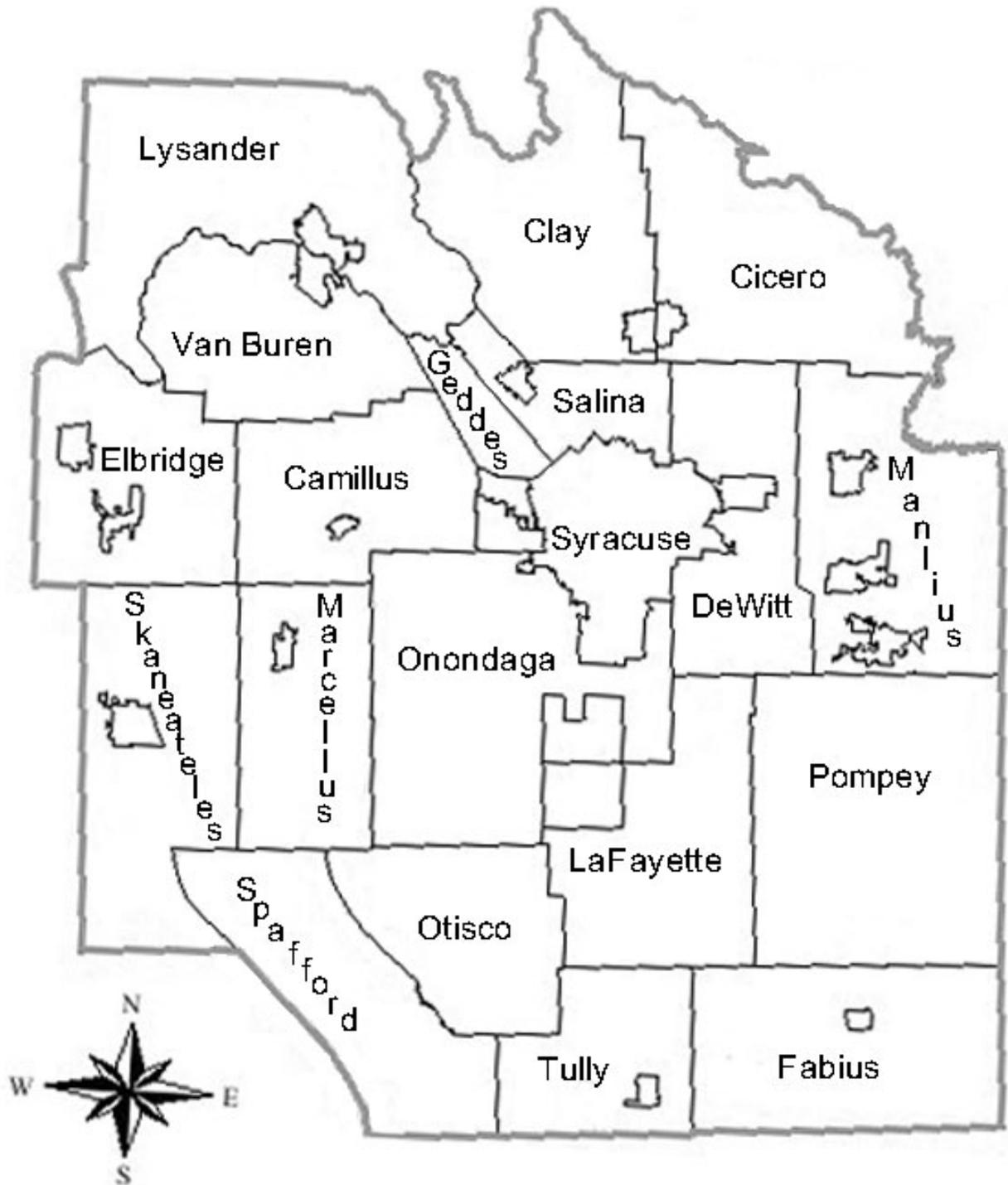
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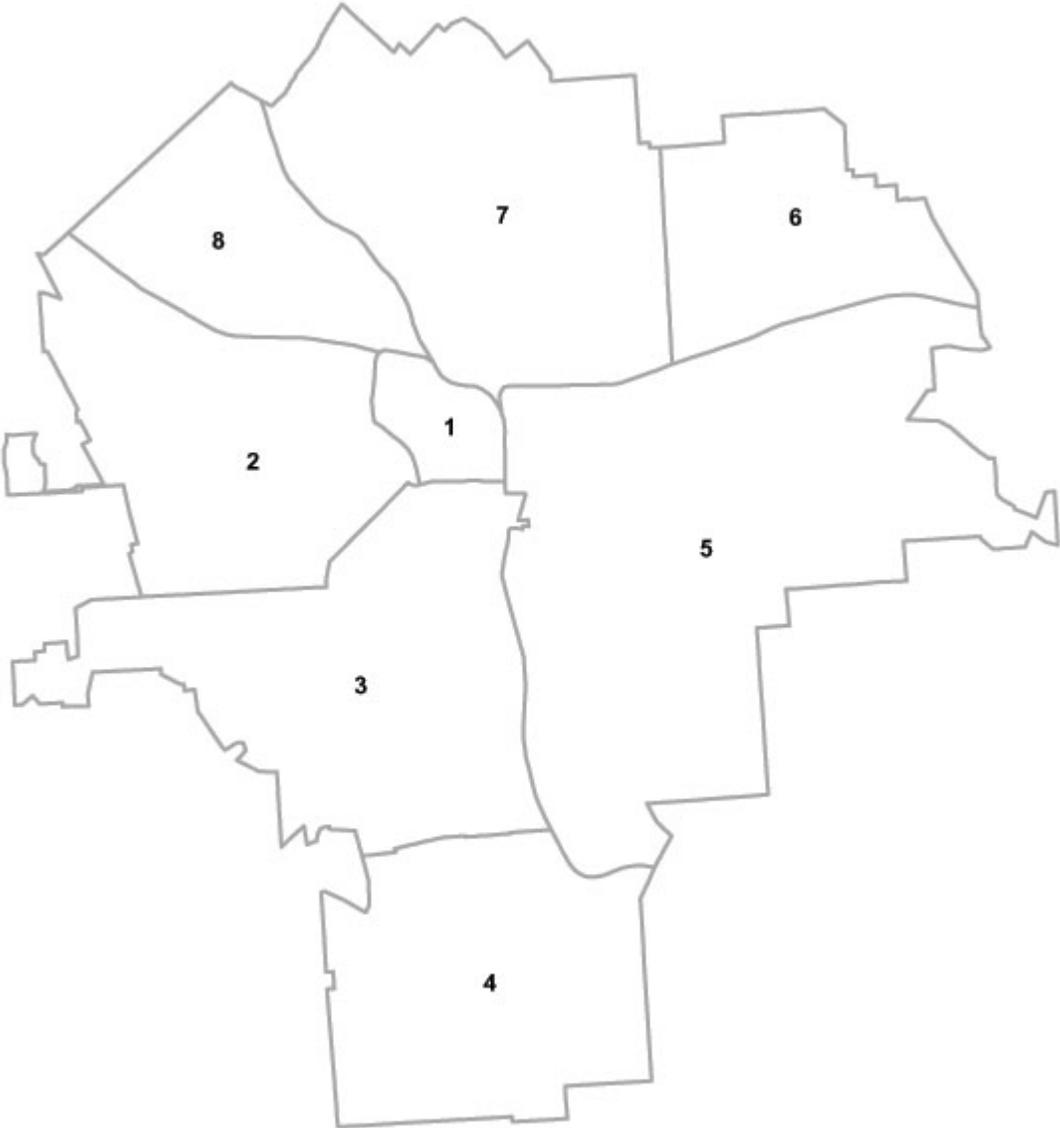
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Onondaga County



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Tomorrow's Neighborhoods Today (TNT)  
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City of Syracuse



Prepared by Home HeadQuarters, Inc. - February 2007

# PART I- STRUCTURE

## INTRODUCTION

Fifty years after Columbus arrived in the New World and 50 years before the European settlements in Jamestown and Plymouth Rock, the Confederacy of the Iroquois was formed in Central New York. It was a league of five tribes; Mohawk, Seneca, Oneida, Cayuga, and Onondaga. This Native American form of government lasted for over 200 years from the beginning of the European conquest of North America through and after the American Revolution. The English form of colonial government was introduced to Central New York when the first European settlers arrived, enticed by the area's strategic location at the crossroads of pioneer trade routes.

The first Caucasian settlers traveled by way of the Hudson and Mohawk River valleys. That historic route still provides important canal, railroad, and highway transportation in the state. Salt deposits had made the Central New York area a trade center for Native Americans, and this natural resource furnished material for the early industries of the new settlers. Fertile soil and a plentiful supply of water supported an agricultural economy, while commerce and industry developed along the canals and railroads. Today, Interstate Highways 90 and 81 intersect the metropolitan area that extends to the five counties of the central New York region.

The city of Syracuse and the towns and villages surrounding it make up Onondaga County at the heart of the Central New York region. In the northern part of the county where the land is low and level, agriculture in the last 45 years has given way to industrial and residential development. In the southern area the hilly countryside is still predominantly agricultural but is slowly becoming more developed as people move out of the city of Syracuse and into suburban areas.

Although residential and commercial development seems to spread without regard to political boundaries, much of the Syracuse metropolitan area lies within Onondaga County. Metropolitan area is defined as the city and the communities around it which draw much of their livelihood from the city and use many city services. This handbook attempts to describe not only the traditional institutions of government in Onondaga County with its city, towns, and villages, but also the extent of metropolitan growth and its effect upon these institutions. The Syracuse metropolitan area has unique features and many advantages as this book will detail. However, the area suffers from problems common to most urban areas in the United States: an aging center city, declining population in the city, a property tax base inadequate to pay for the services needed by the citizens, and expanding suburbs with their threat of urban sprawl, wasted land, and deteriorating natural resources.

In response to these problems the various local governments are adding new departments and services to the original structures inherited from colonial times. At the same time they are transferring some of their traditional responsibilities among the various levels of government. Added to this mix is an influx of federal monies in the form of general revenue sharing and grants for specific projects. The money helps alleviate some of the problems, but new ones arise. Many of these new problems are beyond the scope of one agency at one level of government. This book attempts to identify the responsibilities of each of the levels of local government - county, city, town, and village - and to provide a framework for understanding how each is interrelated with the other.

# Historical Development

## Chapter One

Counties and towns are often described as involuntary forms of government; that is, they were established originally by New York State to administer basic state functions within geographical divisions. These divisions are similar to the townships and parishes found in some other states. Cities and villages, in contrast, are described as voluntary; that is, they were created by the state at the request of their residents.

### Formation of the County

The first permanent European settlements in what is now Onondaga County were founded in the mid-1780s. Under frontier conditions distances were great, population was sparse, and transportation and communication were difficult and slow. Of first priority to both state and settler was the prompt and orderly administration of justice. Following the English colonial example, New York State divided its territory into counties for the purpose of providing units through which courts functioned. Each county had a seat where circuit court sessions were held.

The first Onondaga County officers were mainly those who served the Circuit Court. The first sessions of the court met in local taverns. By 1810 the county seat was officially established in Onondaga Hill and a courthouse was constructed there. It was not long, however, before the Villages of Syracuse and Salina were competing to be named the county seat. As a result, the seat was relocated between the Villages of Syracuse and Salina, and Onondaga Hill's influence waned.

The area of Onondaga County was originally about four times larger than it is today. The difficulties that settlers faced in getting to the county seat were a major factor in the steady reduction of the geographical area. From the original county territory established in 1794, the state created Cayuga County in 1799, Cortland County in 1808, and Oswego County in 1816.

### Formation of the Towns

New York State also followed the colonial example in establishing towns as taxing units. Onondaga County at first was divided into 11 towns. The towns as they exist today are subdivisions of five of the original

towns. The smaller geographic unit of the town was more convenient for serving a number of functions.

One of a town's chief functions was to provide the tax revenues to support county courts. The supervision of the taxing process was assigned to a supervisor who, because of the nature of the duties, was also the town's chief officer. The supervisors of all the towns in the county were required to meet annually and, when authorized by the state, to undertake public projects whose costs then were shared by the towns. Among the first activities of Onondaga County's Board of Supervisors was the construction of the courthouse in Onondaga Hill.

The towns also supervised much of the early road building. At first the Town of Manlius, for instance, has seven road districts, which became 30 by 1807 and 70 by mid-century. The great bulk of the roads during this period were local or town roads, although at the same time state roads were being built east and west. Funds for state highways appropriated by the State Legislature were paid to those towns commissioned to build and maintain them. By the middle of the 19th century, however, the main responsibility for road construction and maintenance passed to private turnpike companies and builders of plank roads. Also at this time most of the traffic was carried by canals and railroads. The Erie Canal was opened formally in 1825; railroads were in place in the 1830s. It was not until the early 20th century that the roads again became an important function of local government. In 1910 counties began to organize county highway departments to share the road building responsibility with the state and towns. Today, towns maintain roads, but usually do not build them.

Towns were required to see to the needs of the poor through the office of Overseer of the Poor. The determination of the need was left to the locality. Welfare was sometimes taken care of by a public auction at which the town contracted with the bidder who offered to support the poor at the lowest cost to the town. Later the state authorized counties to build poor houses. The Onondaga County Poor House was approved in 1827. A century later, in 1938, the responsibility for public welfare was assigned to the

county, and the Department of Social Services was formed.

Public education was closely linked to towns at first. It was the policy of the state that, as land was divided for settlement, lots should be set aside for school sites. In 1812 state law required that each town divide its territory into school districts and provide a school for each district. Elected commissioners were responsible for the schools. Early school districts were numerous and small. For example, in 1842 the Town of Manlius had 22 districts; Clay, 20; Skaneateles, 18; and Camillus, 14. During the early 20th century the state urged school districts to consolidate. This consolidation was accomplished (not without agonizing controversy) so that in 2006 there are 18 school districts in Onondaga County. Today, all districts, except in the City of Syracuse, operate independently of the governments whose residents they serve.

#### **Formation of City and Villages**

Whereas counties and towns were designed to assist the state in providing basic government services throughout its territory, cities and villages were designed to enable people in areas of dense population to provide for their special "urban" needs. These needs included fire protection, water supply, streets and sidewalks, and toward the end of the century, electric street lighting.

Nine villages in Onondaga County were incorporated by special state action between 1830 and 1852. Since 1874 villages have been incorporated by procedures outlined by general law instead of by an act of the State Legislature. Six of the present villages in Onondaga County were incorporated by general law after 1874. Unlike villages, cities have always been incorporated by special action of the New York State Legislature. Until recently, although a city charter was more difficult to obtain, the city gained more local control than a village. For this reason, some settlements preferred to seek charters as cities. Syracuse, the only city in the county, received its charter in 1848.

Not all communities chose to incorporate. Those that did not are called hamlets, a term which has no legal or political significance. There are several rather large communities in the county which are unincorporated hamlets, Jamesville and Brewerton, for example. Many other hamlets have disappeared as vital communities,

leaving only their names on county road maps. Oswego Bitter and Rose Hill are two examples.

#### **Growth of Villages**

Because population centers grew to serve an agricultural economy, villages were located near the sources of power needed to run the saw and grist mills: Manlius and Fayetteville on Limestone Creek; Marcellus and Camillus on Nine Mile Creek; Skaneateles, Elbridge, and Jordan on Skaneateles Creek.

Their vitality as centers fluctuated with the growth and development of transportation in the state. In the days of stagecoaches, the great turnpikes that crossed the state brought prosperity to villages like Fabius, Tully, Manlius, Marcellus, Camillus, and Elbridge. The Erie Canal and the Oswego Canal, while exerting a beneficial effect generally in the county, tended to strengthen the settlements they touched at the expense of the others. For instance, Manlius, an early trade center, was hurt when the Erie Canal shifted the flow of commercial traffic to the north. Likewise, Jordan's fortune rose while Elbridge's declined. The era of the railroads, which began in the first third of the 19th century, caused further fluctuations. Recent settlement has been affected by the two major highway systems, Interstate 81 north and south and the New York State Thruway east and west.

#### **Growth of Syracuse**

From the completion of the Erie Canal in 1825 until the Second World War, growth of Onondaga County was measured by the growth of Syracuse, first as a village and then as a city.

Several factors contributed to the rise of Syracuse. The rich deposit of salt which underlies much of Central New York provided the source of the earliest industry, supporting the villages of Liverpool, Salina, and Syracuse. By the mid 19th century the salt industry was joined by other industries such as pottery and candle making. The Erie Canal was crucial to the development of Syracuse as a major commercial center. Railroads further sustained its growth.

Between 1850 and 1920 the county population outside the city grew from 57,000 to 64,000. During that same time the city's population grew from 22,000 to 172,000. The growth of the city was accomplished in large measure by a series of annexations. As the population

increased and spilled over the city line forming "suburban" communities, the city responded by enlarging its jurisdiction to include these communities, many of which were incorporated villages.

The annexed communities lost independence but gained services which they could not easily supply themselves. For example, the city had established the Skaneateles water supply and distribution system and installed some sewers before 1900. The policy of annexation helped to insure the political jurisdiction responsible for providing services to the community also had full access to the community's taxable wealth.

**Today's Trends**

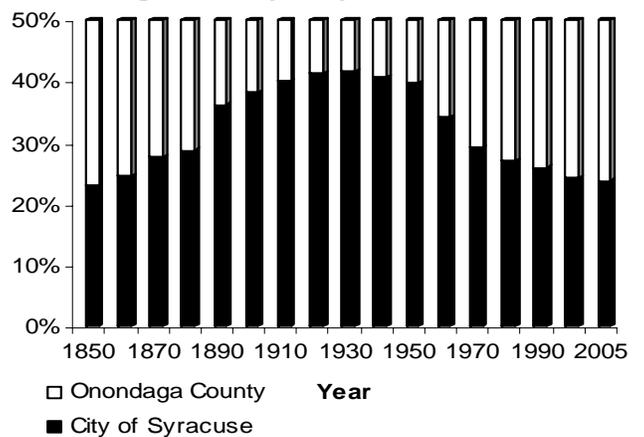
Data from the U.S. Census Bureau show that Onondaga County's population declined over the 1990's from 468,973 in 1990 to 458,336 in 2000. The U.S. Census Bureau's latest estimate from 2005 reported a less significant decrease of only 283 people since 2000. The county is experiencing a small drop in population with residents moving outside the state and in some cases, to other parts of the state. It is the city that is undergoing significant decreases because of the migration of people out of the city and into more suburban regions. This has been a consistent trend across the country since World War II. Onondaga County is the 11<sup>th</sup> largest county by population of the 62 counties in the state of New York.

While the population in the county has decreased by about 2.2 percent during the 1990's the city's population has decreased by over 10 percent over the

same time period. The population decreased from 163,860 in 1990 to 147,306 in 2000. The population has continued to fall by over 1,000 people a year from 2000 to 2004.

The geographic shape of today's urban community bears little resemblance to the boundaries of any local government. It is the decline of annexation and the growth of special benefit districts that have influenced this kind of population distribution. Special benefit districts provide the services cities and villages usually provide to housing developments that are outside city and village limits. Current population growth in areas of the county continues without any correlation to city, town, or village boundaries.

**Percent of the Population in Onondaga County Living in the City of Syracuse, 1850-2005**



Source: US Census Bureau

# Onondaga County Today

## Chapter Two

Onondaga County government operates under a home rule charter adopted in 1961 by general referendum. The charter provides for separate legislative and executive branches. The executive branch is headed by an elected County Executive who serves a four-year term. The County Executive is the chief budget officer, responsible for developing both an annual budget and a six-year capital budget. In this fiscal capacity the County Executive also fixes the equalization rate among taxing districts in the county.

The Onondaga County Legislature is the law-making body of county government. The legislature meets monthly. It appropriates funds, passes legislation, confirms appointments of the County Executive and may override the County Executive's vetoes. The Legislature has 19 members, elected from districts of nearly equal population. The district lines are adjusted as necessary following U.S. Census data. Legislators serve two-year terms. Legislators elect their own chairperson, who in turn appoints committee chairs and members. There are eight standing committees of the Legislature: County Facilities, Education & Libraries, Environmental Protection, Health, Planning and Economic Development, Public Safety, Social Services, and Ways & Means. The Legislature employs

staff and a part-time attorney to assist in the evaluation of legislation and the budget.

### Onondaga County Government

In New York State county government serves regional needs - those issues between the local concerns of cities, towns and villages and the more encompassing issues of the state. County government is the administrative arm of the state in the delivery of health care, mental health care, social services, the electoral process, and law enforcement. Onondaga County government provides regional infrastructure as well, including 808 miles of county road and highway network, collection and treatment of waste water, a water system to bring Lake Ontario water to the suburbs, and the maintenance of its parks and two cemeteries.

Onondaga County government also provides such programs and services as are necessary, desirable, and within the resources of its residents. These services include long-term health care, economic development, Onondaga Community College (OCC), the central library system, a 911 emergency communications system, county-wide planning, and the following agencies or divisions: Community Development, Aging & Youth, Veterans Services and Human Rights.

### Onondaga County Legislature Legislative Process

Proposal	Consideration	Enactment
From a legislator or legislative body: idea resolution program	1. Assigned to a committee or subcommittee  2. Draft of resolution	1. Public notice  2. Regular/special session of Legislature
From the Executive Branch/Dept: program resolution request for funding	3. Review by law Department / Legislative Counsel  4. Information from Legislative Staff	3. Approval, tabling, or defeat of resolution. 13 vote majority required except for bonding when 16 votes are necessary for passage
External Request	5. Consideration by	4. Approval or veto of County Executive  5. If vetoed, may be overridden by 2/3 vote on Legislature  6. Certification, distribution and filing of Statute
	6. Sometimes - a public hearing  7. Approval, tabling, or defeat of  8. Sometimes consideration by another committee	

The OnCenter, the convention center complex, and Alliance Bank Stadium are economic development projects aimed at enhancing tourism in the county. Currently these facilities are being updated, and expanded as economic development initiatives to revitalize downtown.

Expansion to the Carousel Center is being planned and is working its way through the bureaucratic process, promising to bring thousands of jobs and millions of dollars a year of sales tax revenue into the area.

The goals of Onondaga County's 2010 Development Guide, adopted in 1991, include a well maintained community which can attract economic growth while operating within the resources of local taxpayers. The enhancement of the urban and suburban core, protection of natural resources and agricultural land, and the extension of utilities when new urban land is required for job creation are central tenants of the county's long range plan. The plan seeks inter-municipal cooperation in its implementation.

Recently the 2006-2011 Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) was adopted in accordance with the goals of the Onondaga County's 2010 Development Guide. The CIP sets out a plan to

improve the infrastructure of the county, attract business, maintain a clean environment, and continue providing a high quality of living to the residents, while minimizing the burden on the taxpayers.

Onondaga County government has downsized and restructured itself in response to changes in its fiscal environment - a declining population, loss of federal and state aid, and increased mandates. The county government work force has decreased by almost 6% over the past 10 years to 4,241 employees.

Improvement of the water quality in Onondaga Lake is a continuous environmental and fiscal challenge facing the County over the next decade. Water quality standards contained in the Clean Water Act continually require improvements to the combined sewer overflow system and to the Metropolitan Syracuse Sewage Treatment Plant's processes and effluent pipe location. The magnitude of this mandated expenditure places the county in the position of balancing local needs and federal policy, social needs and environmental goals, and fiscal strength and infrastructure maintenance, while protecting an economic climate which can retain and attract jobs and economic growth.

### Employment by Industry in Onondaga County, 2003

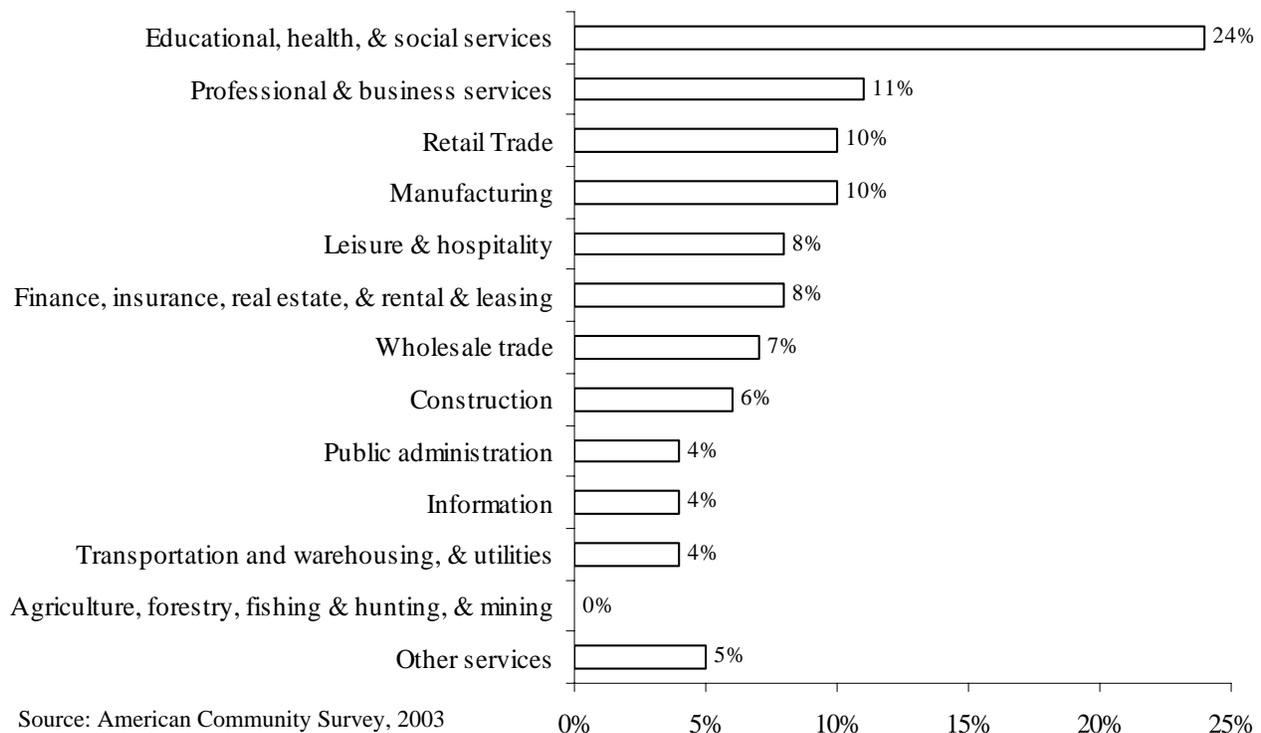
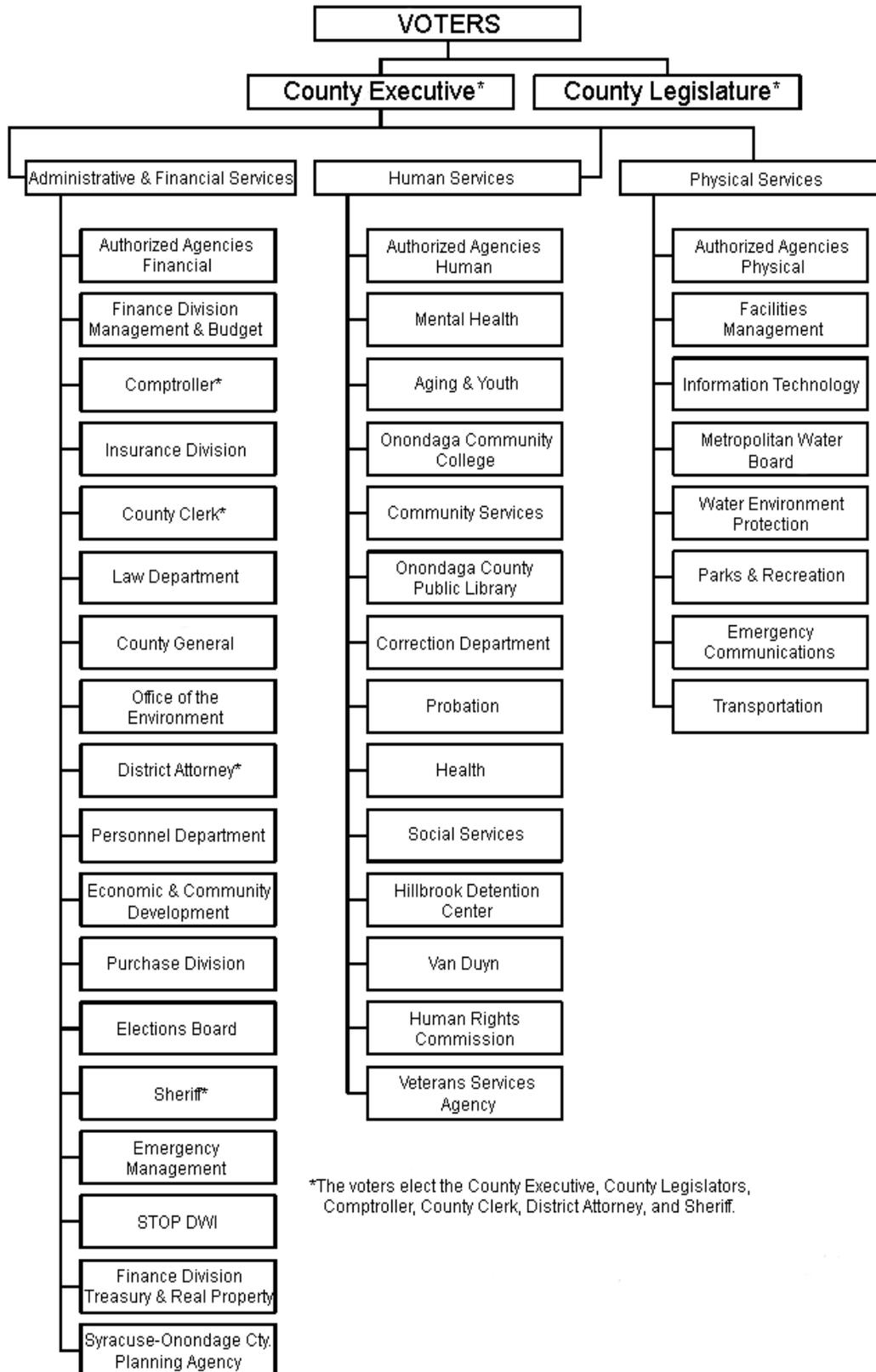


Chart 2

## Onondaga County Table of Organization



\*The voters elect the County Executive, County Legislators, Comptroller, County Clerk, District Attorney, and Sheriff.

Source: County of Onondaga, 2006 Tentative Annual Budget

# Town Government Today

## Chapter Three

### Structure

The structure and scope of the governmental powers of towns are defined in the Town Law enacted by the New York State Legislature and in the New York State Constitution. In Onondaga County there are 10 first-class towns (population over 10,000) and nine second-class towns (population under 10,000). Because of the pattern of metropolitan growth, the first-class towns are located in a ring around Syracuse and in the northern part of the county.

Town government is served by several elected officials. Town voters elect a supervisor who is chief executive officer and four to six representatives who, with the supervisor, constitute the town board. Most towns have sole assessors who are appointed, although there are still a few towns that have three assessors who are elected by the voters. The town clerk, superintendent of highways, town justices, and the tax receiver or collector are typically elected. The exception is in the Town of Salina where the town clerk and superintendent of highways are appointed.

### Services

Population density and the value of taxable real estate influence the activities of town government, the services it provides, and the taxes it needs to pay for them. As towns grew in population from 1950-2005, there was an increasing tendency for towns to provide the services traditionally the responsibility of city and village governments. These services have been provided mainly through special benefit districts and part-town districts. (Chapter 6 provides more information about the financing of these districts).

Special benefit districts are simple taxing units (not usually governing units) set up and administered by a county or town to provide many essential services (water supply, sewers, street lights, etc.). The basic principle of the special district is the same one implicit in city and village incorporation: everyone with in the

defined taxing unit will benefit equally from the service and share equally in the cost.

The special benefit district has been a significant factor in the decline of annexation and incorporation. It has provided towns and counties with the means for supplying many essential services to heavily populated but unincorporated areas and, so far, has relieved many of the pressures which otherwise might have led to more dramatic political reorganization.

The nature of suburban growth has resulted in a great upsurge in the number of special districts. Each new housing tract may require the formation of a sewer, water, drainage, hydrant, and lighting district. The fragmenting effect of numerous special districts can impose costly administrative burdens on both town and county as well as significant inequalities for the taxpayer. Since initial capital investments vary, it is commonplace for a suburban homeowner to discover his neighbor in another sewer district is paying a higher or lower tax for the same service.

Although the special district has proved an invaluable tool in helping towns and counties make the transition from rural to urban, it may actually work against the orderly and planned development of a community. It can even prevent the extension of improvements into less densely populated areas where terrain or distance make total cost unusually high. Town boards are empowered to consolidate special improvement districts subject to the approval of taxpayers in the affected districts, but taxpayers are often unwilling to give this approval.

Part-town districts are commonly used by towns which contain villages that already provide broad municipal services. Very simply, a part-town district includes all the territory of a town which is outside a village. The precedent for such a district was established years ago as a part of the highway system. While the whole

town is assessed for certain highway costs (snow removal, weed control, bridges, and machinery costs), only that part of the town outside the village pays for the maintenance of town roads. Police, zoning and planning, refuse disposal, and parks and recreation are examples of the new uses of a part-town district. Its popularity as a solution to a growing problem caused the state in 1965 to create a new category of state aid which provided payments to towns for their "outside village areas."

The Suburban Town Law allows another method for financing and administering services on the town level. Under a 1963 state law, densely populated towns and fast growing towns may adopt the status of suburban town. This law permits a town to separate administrative operation from policy-making operations and to establish departments in town government. It also empowers a town board to abandon the special district in extending services and instead to use special assessment areas. The significant differences between the two is that the capital investment costs can be distributed over the much larger tax base of the whole town, with the benefited area paying a charge for the service

itself. A suburban town may also dissolve existing special districts and arrange for their debt payments on a part-town basis. If town and village governments wish to cooperate, they may consolidate the financing and providing of services throughout the whole town. The law also permits town boards to regulate traffic and share in traffic-fine receipts as cities and villages do. The towns of Camillus, Onondaga, Clay, and Geddes have adopted the Suburban Town Law. However, these towns have not used the full powers under the law.

### Changing Functions

The density of suburban communities and a growing need for services have caused changes in the nature of some traditional town functions. Some towns have organized full-fledged police departments and prepared master plans to give coherence to their zoning ordinance. As the scope of their activities increases, however, the traditional structure of town government begins to strain. In addition, isolated decisions by town boards affecting metropolitan problems may create conflicts between governmental policy at the town level and policy at the county and/or city level.

**Table 1**  
**US Census Population Estimates, 2005**

<b>Municipality</b>	<b>2005 Population Estimate</b>
Camillus	23,268
Cicero	29,958
Clay	58,949
DeWitt	20,507
Elbridge	6,123
Fabius	2,014
Geddes	17,325
LaFayette	4,951
Lysander	20,549
Manlius	32,431
Marcellus	6,316
Onondaga	21,402
Otisco	2,579
Pompey	6,566
Salina	33,155
Skaneateles	7,382
Spafford	1,684
Tully	2,724
Van Buren	12,528

# Village Government Today

## Chapter Four

### Structure

The Village Law and the New York State Constitution sets forth the structure and powers of village government. Village governments are responsible for providing such services as police and fire protection, sewer, water supply, highway services and a court system. Villages are governed by an elected mayor and a board of trustees. The mayor and board meet once or twice each month in general sessions open to the public. The office of village justice is also an elected position but it is not required under law. In many villages the clerk and treasurer positions are often combined into one position.

Other officials and department heads required to carry on the functions of a village are appointed by the mayor subject to the approval of the board of trustees. Prior to the 1972 recodification of Village Law, villages were classed according to population. All villages are now governed by one law. The size (population, land area) of villages incorporated before 1973 varies greatly; there are now criteria established in the Village Law that determines standards for incorporation.

### Growth

Most of the villages in Onondaga County have remained outside the main trend of population growth. Only one village, Baldwinsville, has shown consistent population growth since 1960. In 11 of the 15 villages the US Census population projection for 2005 was less than it was in 1990.

Most villages have limited space for development while others have made deliberate attempts to avoid being engulfed by suburbia. Through their zoning powers they have tried not only to preserve

their identity but also to conserve their historical character. Most villages have planning and zoning boards which are appointed by the mayor. The current trend is for most villages to develop planning programs to structure future development of village land.

Planning programs are geared to suit different purposes. The village of Fabius limits the size and type of buildings that may be constructed; the villages of Fayetteville and Skaneateles have historical preservation laws. Villages which once served as commercial centers for a rural population are now often centers for large suburban communities. This change has meant increased use of village streets, commercial establishments and indirectly public safety facilities, which in turn may increase village costs. At the same time suburban growth often has meant a larger market for village-owned utilities.

Village governments are responsible for providing many of the same services as those required of larger, metropolitan governments.

Because villages are surrounded by the jurisdiction of the town of which they are a part, village taxpayers, who also pay town taxes, may be in a position of paying twice for the same service. Municipal contracts (provision of service by one government to another under the terms of a contract) are often used to avoid a situation where village taxpayers must pay twice for the same service. The part-town districting device is also employed for this purpose in some instances. (See Chapter 3 for further discussion of the part-town district).

# City Government Today

## Chapter Five

### Structure

A mayor-council form of government with a strong executive was first established in Syracuse in 1938. In 1960 a new city charter was adopted which added new departments and reorganized the administration of finances. During the 1970's, the charter was amended to update the functions of many departments. In 1985 the charter was again amended to restrict a person serving as mayor to no more than two consecutive four-year terms. Throughout these changes the mayor-council form of government has remained intact.

The mayor, elected every four years, serves as chief executive of the city of Syracuse and is responsible for the day-to-day operations of city government. The mayor appoints all department heads, except the commissioners of education and the city auditor, as well as members of various commissions and boards needed to administer the operations of the city. In addition to the commissioners of education and the city auditor, the voters elect city court judges who preside over criminal, civil, traffic, and small claims matters. All of the normal municipal services are carried out by the various departments of city government under the direction of the mayor.

The common council is the elected legislative branch of government. The common council consists of a president and four councilors-at-large who serve four-year terms. The remaining five district councilors, representing specific geographic areas of the city, serve two-year terms. The common council passes the city budget, and common council committees review all legislation before it goes to the full council for a vote. Legislation that is approved by the common council must also be affirmed by the mayor.

The Syracuse Board of Education, composed of seven elected commissioners, is a self-governing body that appoints the superintendent of schools. The school system, however, is fiscally dependent on city government; that is, its budget is considered and approved by the city council as part of the annual city budget. (Chapter 6 further

discusses the city budget and financing of city services.)

The city auditor, elected by the voters every four years in a general election, provides the audit function for all departments. This function includes economy and efficiency audits as well as financial audits. The Department of Audit is also responsible for rendering an opinion on the city's financial statements as a whole. All recommendations are communicated to the mayor, city council and appropriate department heads as well as put on file with the city clerk.

The city clerk's office publishes the proceedings of the city council, processes all requests for common council legislation from city department heads and councilors, and prepares agendas for council meetings. The clerk records and certifies all city ordinances, resolutions and local laws enacted by the council. The city clerk presides over public auctions of city property and is responsible for issuing and recording marriage licenses and fishing, hunting and dog licenses.

City court, located in the Public Safety Building, is comprised of three main divisions. The criminal division is responsible for all misdemeanors and violations of a criminal nature occurring in the city of Syracuse. The civil division handles all tenant/landlord disputes, all civil lawsuits (up to \$15,000 limit), housing code violations, and small claims and commercial claims (up to a \$3,000 limit). The traffic division processes all traffic violations and misdemeanors, and all canine violations issued within the city of Syracuse, most of which are handled via mail. City court judges are elected by the voters to preside over all cases brought before city court.

### City-County Relationships

Cooperation between city and county government is firmly established in many areas within the framework of both levels of government. In 1938 and 1967, respectively, social welfare and health became departments of county government, with the pre-existing departments serving as the nuclei

for the new organizations. In 1968 as a result of a merger, the Syracuse-Onondaga County Planning Agency was formed. The Onondaga County Department of Aging and Youth and the Human Rights Commission of Syracuse and Onondaga County were established as joint city-county agencies. The central library of the Onondaga Public Library System and the city branches are administered by the county with the branches funded by the city.

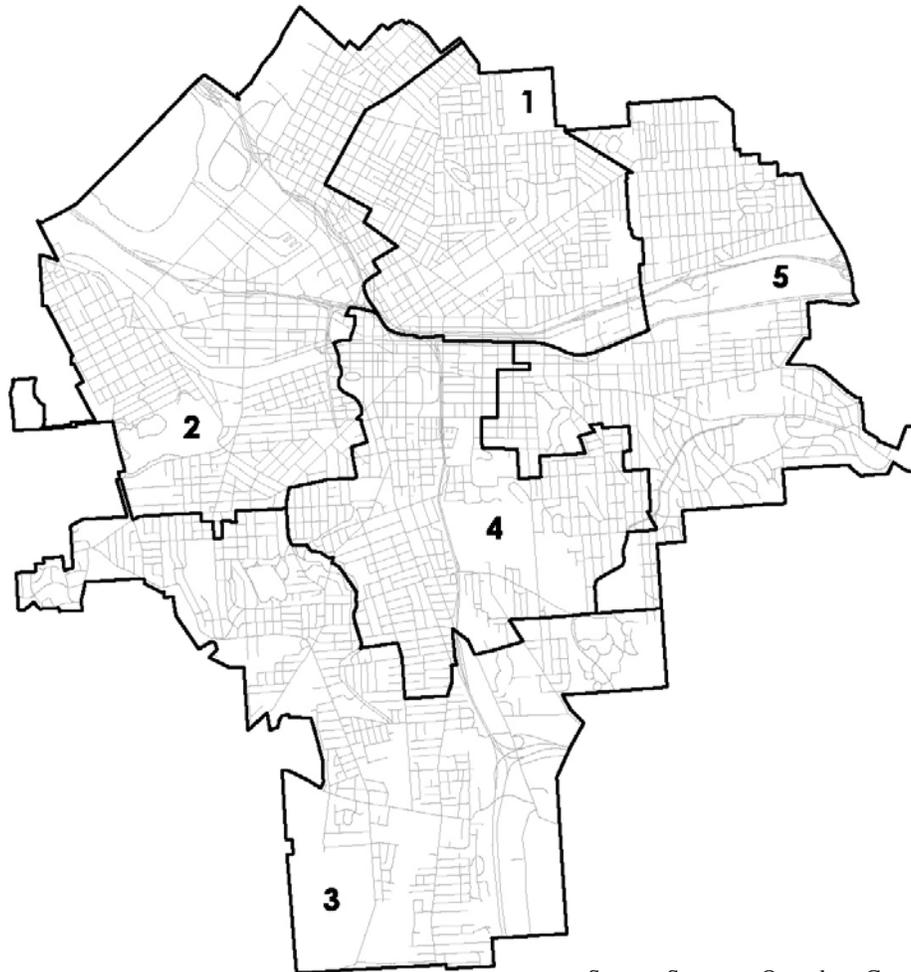
### Population and Economic Trends

The 2000 Census showed the population of the city of Syracuse as 147,306, a decrease from the 1990 Census figure of 163,860. The projection for 2005 is down again to 141,683. The population in the city of Syracuse has continually decreased since

the 1960's, with younger and older age groups increasing in population and the number of wage earners in the middle decreasing because of migration to Onondaga County suburbs and elsewhere. The city of Syracuse has become increasingly diverse over the years, a trend that is expected to continue through the next decade. As the core of a metropolitan center, Syracuse provides educational and medical services to the surrounding areas. In 1970 a revitalization effort began which redefined the city's focus toward new economic services and away from the declining manufacturing industry. In 1980 the city of Syracuse began to emerge as an economic service center. New facilities have been built in the fields of aviation, insurance, sports, conventions, and cultural activities.

Map 3

### CITY OF SYRACUSE COMMON COUNCIL DISTRICTS



Source: Syracuse-Onondaga County Planning Agency

# Financing Local Governments

## Chapter Six

### Budgets

The process of collecting money and paying for government begins with preparing the annual budget. A budget is a plan of action for the coming year expressed in dollars and cents. Each year the chief officer of the local government must submit a budget to the elected representatives of the citizens, outlining appropriations (estimated expenses), for the coming year, and indicating from where he or she expects the money will come. A public hearing must be held so that citizens may ask questions and give their opinions about the budget. Town Board members and village trustees can recommend changes. They adopt the budget when they are satisfied. State law and the city and county charters set deadlines for submission and adoption of the budget. Once the responsible body has adopted a budget, the administrative officials must follow it, or seek a revision from the town or village board if changes become necessary.

### City/County Budgets

In Onondaga County, the county executive submits the budget to the county legislature for review and adoption. The county executive may veto changes, which in turn may be overturned by a two-thirds vote of the legislature. The fiscal year corresponds with the calendar year.

In Syracuse, the mayor drafts a budget and submits it to the city council, which ultimately adopts the budget. The fiscal year runs from July 1 to June 30. The mayor must submit the preliminary budget to the city council by April 8. The council must accept, amend, or change the budget by May 8. The mayor then has until May 19 to veto any changes. The council has until June 1 to override the veto. A two-thirds vote is necessary to override. If the council fails to adopt a budget by May 8, the mayor's budget automatically becomes the city budget.

Because the mayor and county executive do not sit on any legislative body, a clear separation of powers exists during the budget process. In

towns and villages, town supervisors and mayors prepare the draft budget. Supervisors and mayors also serve as members of the bodies which ultimately adopt the budget, namely the town and village boards.

### Town Budgets

Town budgets are primarily broken down into four categories: townwide general fund, part-town general fund, highway fund, and part-town highway fund.

The general fund covers expenses which are provided for and charged to residents of the entire town. The part-town general fund covers expenses charged to only those residents outside of incorporated villages located within the town. Highway funds are those expenses charged to all town residents, and part-town highway funds are those expenses billed to residents outside any incorporated villages.

For example, if a village and a town both had a police force, residents of the village would be responsible for paying the costs of the village police force. The village residents would not be taxed for the town police services. Instead, these expenses would fall into the part-town fund, and be paid by the residents living outside the village.

In addition, many expenses are coordinated by the town, but are essentially special district charges, such as: fire protection districts, lighting districts, and water districts. The districts are established by the town on behalf of residents, but must only be billed to those specific individuals living within the boundaries of the districts.

### Village Budgets

Unlike town budgets which have four separate funds, all village expenses are included within one general fund and billed equally to all village property owners based on the value of their property. There are no separate funds or

property tax levies for highway expenses or special district expenses.

However, if the village maintains a water district or a sewer district, the changes would appear as a separate tax line on the tax bill for those services. The fiscal year corresponds with the calendar year.

### **Sources of Revenue**

Besides appropriations, the budget contains estimated revenues (income) for the coming year. Most revenues available for local governments in New York State come from property taxes, sales taxes, and aid from state and federal governments.

### **Property Taxes**

The property tax, or real property tax, is paid by individuals and organizations who own real estate within a municipality. The property tax is the last item entered into the budget each year. When a budget is prepared, all the appropriations are added to get the estimated total expenditures. The amount of property taxes to be collected is determined by subtracting all other revenue sources from the estimated expenditures. The remainder is the amount to be raised through property taxes.

### **Constitutional Tax Limit**

The New York State Constitution sets an upper limit of 2% of full value of taxable property averaged over the last five years on the amount of property tax which may be raised by counties, cities, and villages for operating expenses. Towns have no constitutional limit.

### **Sales Tax**

New York State imposes a 4% sales tax on certain purchases. Counties and cities may impose up to a combined total of an additional 3% sales tax. The State Legislature can authorize the counties to exceed the additional 3% limit. In Onondaga County there is a 4% sales tax. The revenue from this tax is distributed to the county, city, towns, villages and school districts. In 2005, an estimated \$128.2 million was collected in sales tax in Onondaga County.

Every ten years, a County sales tax commission is established to make recommendations for the

distribution of the sales tax for the following decade. Towns and villages have the option of taking the sales tax as revenue for their own budget, or using it as a credit towards the county property taxes of property owners. Most towns take their sales tax revenue as a credit. The city, most villages, and school districts take the revenue for their respective budgets.

### **State and Federal Aid**

State and federal aid remain important sources of revenue for local governments. The largest sources of state aid for localities include revenue sharing, Consolidated Highway Program (CHIPs) funding for roads, and mortgage tax receipts. In 2003, the federal government provided Onondaga County with nearly four million dollars through the federal Department of Housing and Urban Development for community development and housing funds. These funds aid low income and elderly residents and must be spent within low income areas of the county as defined by the Census Bureau.

Half of mortgage tax funds go to municipalities, one quarter goes to CENTRO, and the other quarter goes to SONYMA. The amount of these funds, like those for sales tax, may fluctuate significantly due to changes in the economy or interest rates.

### **Other Revenue**

Other revenues available to municipalities include fines, license and permit fees, and fees for services provided to other municipal governments, as well as funds from the sale or rental of public property and equipment.

In addition, local governments can receive franchise fees and gross receipts taxes on public utilities, such as Niagara Mohawk and cable companies. Some municipalities, with the approval of the State Legislature, have adopted off-track betting revenues, higher utility taxes, and additional sales taxes.

### **Special Benefit Districts and Special Assessments**

Residential developments, shopping centers, and industries outside of cities and villages are provided with many services by the town government. The special benefit district is the

device which allows property owners of an area to finance fire protection, sewers, water supply, and other services without taxing all of the residents of the town. If a majority of owners representing a majority of the assessed property within an area petition the town board, it will create a special benefit district. Property owners within the district then pay for the services through a tax called special assessments. This tax may be levied by assessed value, by the frontage length of the property, or as a flat rate.

The finances of each special benefit district must be reported separately from other government income and expenses. There are more than 1,000 special benefit districts in the towns of Onondaga County.

### **Assessment**

After the budget has been approved, the tax bills are sent to the taxpayers. Property tax is based on the value (ad valorem) of real estate. The process of determining property value for tax purposes is called assessment. The property inventory is available for inspection by appointment before the tentative assessment roll is filled. Property owners who disagree with the value assigned during the tentative roll may file a grievance. The grievance is heard by the Board of Assessment Review (BAR) for each municipality.

During the BAR hearing, the BAR meets with the property owner while the assessor is present. The owner and the assessor present evidence to support their position on the value of the property. The BAR then meets in private without the assessor or the property owner present. The BAR may lower the assessment, keep the assessment the same, or raise the assessment. Property owners who disagree with the decision by the BAR may file a small claims suit in court.

Before assessing any parcel of property, the assessor estimates its market value. Market value is how much a property would sell for in an open market under normal conditions. To estimate market values, the assessor must be familiar with all aspects of the local real estate market.

A property's value can be calculated in three ways. First, property is compared to others similar to it which have sold recently, using only sales where the buyer and seller both acted without determining property value for tax purposes. This method is called assessment.

Each municipality has three elected or one appointed assessor who is responsible for estimating the value of property within a city, town, or village. Assessors must obtain basic certification by New York State within three years of taking office. This requires the successful completion of two assessment administration courses, two appraisal courses and an elective course. The courses are prescribed by the New York State Office of Real Property Services.

The assessor maintains the assessment roll. This document contains the physical description, or inventory, and value estimate of every parcel of real undue pressure. This method is called the market approach and is normally used to value residential, vacant, and farm properties.

The second method is to calculate what it would cost to replace the structure with a similar one using today's labor and materials. If the structure is not new, the assessor determines how much it has depreciated since it was built. The resulting value is then added to an estimate of the market value of the land. This method is used to value special purpose and utility properties and is called the cost approach.

The third method is to analyze how much income a property (apartment building, store, factory) will produce if rented. Operating expenses, insurance, maintenance costs, financing terms, and how much money owners expect to make on this type of property are considered. This method of analysis called the income approach.

Once the assessor estimates the market value of a property, its assessment is calculated. New York State law requires that all property within a municipality be assessed at a uniform percentage of market value. The percentage can range from 1% up to and exceeding 100%. Every taxpayer pays his or her fair share as long as every property within the municipality is assessed at

the same percentage of value. To calculate the full value of property assessed at 20% of value, the assessment by is multiplied by five. For example, a home assessed at \$15,900 in a community assessed at 20% would have a full value of  $\$15,900 \times 5 = \$79,500$ .

It is unlikely that any house which sells, when compared to its assessment, will be exactly equal to its assessment converted to full value. What is important is that it be as close to accurate as possible and that there not be wide variations in the difference between the full value and the sale price. Each year the Board of Real Property Services conducts a market survey of home sales in every municipality. This survey is used to determine how accurately the assessment is being carried out in each municipality. In addition, this survey is used to calculate the equalization rate.

The equalization rate is used in conjunction with the assessment to set the tax rate for taxing jurisdictions that cross over assessment jurisdictions. For example, school districts often cross town and village boundaries, and therefore have homes and properties assessed at different percentages of market value. Changes in the equalization rate may cause tax bills to go up or down, even when the tax levy (the total amount of revenue raised through the property tax) remains the same.

### **Tax Exempt Property**

Under state law, property owned by a government or by certain not-for-profit organizations such as hospitals, religious bodies, and educational institutions is not subject to property taxes. In addition, property owned by war veterans and certain senior citizens may have a partial exemption from taxation.

Veterans' exemptions on real property are of two types. The "eligible funds" real property tax exemption provides a partial exemption when property owned by a veteran has been purchased with pension, bonus, or insurance monies. This exemption generally has a \$5,000 maximum, but state law has provided a "pro-rata inclusion when a municipality opts for full-value reassessment. The "alternative" veteran's exemption provides a property tax exemption of 15% of assessed value to veterans who served

during wartime and an additional 10% to those who served in a combat zone. An additional exemption is provided for disabled veterans.

Senior citizens, defined as persons 65 years of age or older, who meet certain income limitations and other requirements may qualify for a reduction of assessed value of residential property. This reduction can range from 5% to 50% of assessed value, depending on income. The State Legislature establishes the maximum exemption levels for senior citizens each year, and municipalities have the option of adopting assessment levels lower than those set by the Legislature. Senior citizens must apply for their exemption at the town level between January 1 and March 1 each year. In the city of Syracuse, seniors must file for an exemption annually between October and December 31. Senior citizens must reapply for the exemption each year because it is based on income levels.

A few tax exempt organizations, such as certain public and senior citizen housing developments, as well as some properties under the ownership of the Industrial Development Agency, are subject to Payments in Lieu of Taxes, or PILOTs. Tax exempt properties do make certain other payments, such as sewer unit and water district charges, to municipalities.

### **Tax Procedures**

During the preparation of budgets for municipalities, governing bodies set the expenditure levels for each department of government and calculate the revenue from the various sources outlined earlier in this chapter. All revenue sources other than property taxes are subtracted from the expenses set by the governing body. The remainder is the amount which will have to be raised by property taxes.

The tax rate is determined by taking the amount to be raised by property taxes and dividing it by the assessed value of property within the taxing jurisdiction, exclusive of exempt property. For example, if a municipality needed to raise \$1,000,000 in property tax and had \$148,000 in assessed value, the tax rate would be calculated as follows:

$$\text{tax rate} = \frac{1,000,000}{148,000} = 6.757 \text{ per thousand}$$

In this simplified example, a home assessed at \$10,000 would pay  $\$6.757 * 10 = \$67.57$  in property taxes.

Depending on where you live, your property tax bill may look quite different. Many individuals do not see their property tax bill. Individuals with a mortgage on their property generally have their tax bill sent directly to the mortgage holder, who makes the tax payments directly to the municipality. Property owners with mortgages pay a portion of their mortgage into a property tax escrow account every month so that the mortgage holder will have the funds available to pay the tax when it is due.

#### **City of Syracuse Taxes**

City residents receive their bill for county taxes, county sewer, and county water charges in December. In July, city residents receive their city tax bill which lists separate lines for city and school taxes.

#### **Town Taxes**

For properties in a town outside a village, the tax bill may contain a number of items. The bill will include the county tax, county sanitation district charge, the town tax, the highway tax, the fire protection tax, and special benefit

district taxes. The town tax is used for general expenses of town government and may be large, small, or zero, depending on whether or not the town uses its portion of the sales tax for its own purposes, or as a rebate against the county property tax. The highway tax pays for maintenance of town roads, including the highway equipment and salaries.

Special benefit districts include items such as lighting districts, fire districts, water districts, or any other activity which benefits only a portion of town residents.

#### **Village Taxes**

Village taxpayers receive a town and county tax bill in December. In addition, they receive a tax bill in May for their village services. Their town tax bill would not include any special benefit district taxes. These residents pay for those services directly through their village taxes. Street lighting, for example, is accounted for within the general expenses of the village budget and is paid for by all residents equally.

#### **School Taxes**

Residents outside the city of Syracuse receive their school tax bill in early September. In some towns, the school tax bill also contains a line item for a library tax.

# Local Political Parties and Elections

## Chapter Seven

### Political Parties

Individuals may influence government at all levels by activity participating in political parties. Through the party organization candidates are chosen, campaigns are organized, and successful candidates find staff for their administrations.

In 2006, recognized political parties in New York State are the Democratic, Republican, Conservative, Independence, and Working Families parties. A recognized party is one whose candidate for governor received at least 50,000 votes in the most recent gubernatorial election. Other independent groups or new parties may organize to run one or more candidates in a single election.

Each of the recognized parties may hold primary elections, although a primary is required only when there is a contest within the party for nomination to party position or public office. The recognized parties are required by state law to maintain county organizations. Republican, Democratic, Conservative and Independence parties are recognized committees in Onondaga County. Each county organization has great freedom in making party rules to govern its operations.

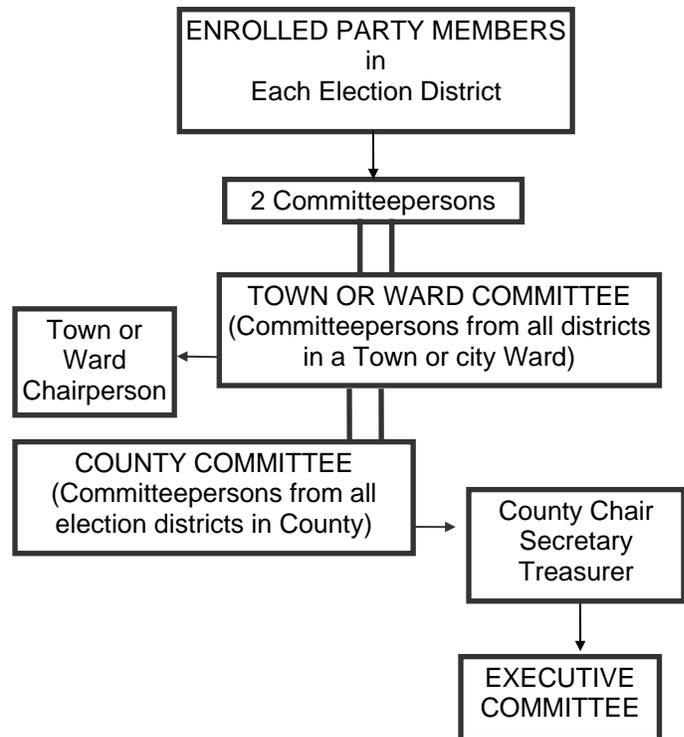
### Party Organization

The basic geographic unit through which the political party functions is the election district. In 1995, there were 485 such districts in Onondaga County, established by the City Council in the City of Syracuse and by the town boards of the 19 towns in the county. Districts must be divided when they reach 1,000 voters. Each official political party may designate two committeepersons per election district. In the Conservative Party, three or four committee people may serve in some election districts.

Appointments to the political party's committee may be made at its annual full-county membership meeting. Usually, however, the person seeking a committee post obtains a

petition, has it signed by registered members of his/her party, and returns it to the county Board of Elections. If unopposed, the petitioner's election to the committee is automatic. Where opposition occurs, the final decision is made by voters in the party primary. This process is repeated biennially in even years.

**CHART 3**  
**Typical County Political Party Organization**



Town and ward committees are made up of the election district committeepersons. There are 19 town committees in Onondaga County and 19 ward committees in the city of Syracuse. Salina and Camillus have established wards as units for electing town councilors, but these wards are not used extensively by the political parties for organizational purposes.

Political clubs assist the town or ward committee by providing workers for the campaign, contributing funds to the committee, and

keeping members informed on issues. Ethnic groups and/or geographical location may be influential factors in organizing clubs. Political clubs formed within the Democratic Party must have written approval of the party's executive committee. Clubs function more loosely within the Republican Party as adjuncts of the town or ward committees.

The committee people who compose the party's County Committee elect a chair and other officers to carry on the year-round business of politics. A smaller body, the Executive Committee, may handle housekeeping functions, grievance matters, nomination of candidates for party and public office, and the authorization of candidates not enrolled in the party.

### **Nomination of Candidates**

Party rules and state election law outline the manner in which candidates for all public offices are selected and nominated. Parties choose candidates by a petition, caucus, or convention process. All three processes are used by the major political parties. The respective town committees of each party can decide on their method of candidate selection.

Candidates for Congress, the State Legislature, and for countywide and citywide offices are most often designated by petitions. Petitions bearing the name of the candidate and the office sought are circulated among members of the candidate's party. Depending on the level of office, petitions are filed with either the county or state Board of Elections and must be signed by enrolled members of the candidate's party. The exact number of signatures required varies with the level of office sought and the political party of the candidate. Generally candidates are required to collect signatures of at least five percent of the voters enrolled in their party. There are also petition format requirements and filing deadlines. This information can be obtained from the county Board of Elections.

State Supreme Court candidates are chosen by delegates to a judicial convention held in each of the state's twelve judicial districts. Onondaga County is in the fifth judicial district.

Registered voters who are not enrolled in a political party may also run for office. They

may circulate independent nominating petitions or be authorized by the executive committee of a political party. A person does not need to be registered to vote in order to be a candidate.

## **Elections**

### **The Board of Elections**

The Onondaga County Board of Elections is a county office administered by two commissioners, one Democratic and one Republican, appointed by the County Legislature on the recommendation of the county committees of each party. Commissioners serve for two-year terms and may not hold elective public office (with the exception of certain town and village positions) during their terms. The Board of Elections is responsible for the registration of all voters within the county, for maintaining extensive voter registration records, and for the conduct of all national, state, county, city, and town elections. The Onondaga County Board of Elections does not have jurisdiction over village, school district, water district, or fire district elections.

The election commissioners train and appoint four election inspectors, two Democrats and two Republicans, to be present at each polling place in the 19 towns and the 19 wards for primary and general election days. All election inspectors are recommended for appointment for a one-year term by their respective political party chairpersons, and are certified by the Board of Elections after successfully completing a written test.

Political parties and candidates may have poll watchers present at each polling place. The watchers must be registered voters in the county and appointed by written certification from the party committees or from the individual candidate's committees.

### **Voter Qualifications**

To vote in New York State, one must be a registered voter. To register to vote, a person is required to:

- Be a U.S. citizen (by birth or by naturalization)
- Be 18 years old by December 31 of the year in which his/her voter registration form is filed (Note: One must be 18 years old by the date of

the general, primary or other election in which he/she wishes to vote)

- Live in the county at least 30 days before an election
- Not be in jail or on parole for a felony conviction
- Not claim the right to vote elsewhere

Enrollment in a political party is optional; however, to vote in a political party's primary election, one must be enrolled in that party.

A person may enroll in one of the five recognized parties in the state. Voters may also change their party affiliation, but enrollment in a different party will not go into effect until after the general election in the year the enrollment change is requested.

The date for primary elections is set by the State Legislature during the spring legislative session. The primary is usually conducted within the first two weeks in September. General Election Day is always the first Tuesday after the first Monday in November.

An individual may register by mail by simply calling the county Board of Elections and requesting a registration form. Forms are also available at many public agencies and at most post offices. Citizens can also apply to register to vote when they apply for their driver's license, renew their driver's license, or when they apply for other state services.

### **School and Village Elections**

The county Board of Elections does not supervise voting in school districts outside of Syracuse, or in fire districts, water districts, and villages. To vote or run for office in one of those jurisdictions, a person must be 18 years of age by Election Day, a citizen of the United States, and a resident of the state and district or village for thirty days prior to the election.

While the Syracuse school district is unique in being wholly enclosed in the city of Syracuse, the remaining 17 districts in the county cut across local government boundaries in a quilt pattern. The county Board of Elections oversees voting for Syracuse but not for other school district offices, which come under the jurisdiction of local school boards. School board candidates in districts outside of Syracuse must submit nominating petitions to the school district clerk. District voters determine whether candidates for the board will run at large, with all the candidates competing for all available seats, or if a candidate must seek a specific seat on the board. Depending on district size, school boards consist of five, seven or nine members who hold terms of three to five years.

Under the State Election Law, the Village Clerk is the "election officer" of the village and has responsibility for the general conduct of all village elections, usually held in March or June. Many candidates for village offices do not run under popular political party labels but under the banner of independent groups such as Citizens' or People's Parties.

# ART II- SERVICES

## EDUCATION

### Chapter Eight

#### State Supervision

In New York State, the Board of Regents determines general policy for all public education. The State Legislature elects 15 Regents who serve without pay. The Commissioner of Education is the chief executive officer of the Board of Regents and oversees all education in the state as head of the New York State Education Department.

The department distributes state and federal aid to fund education. New York State provides financial assistance to public school districts using a formula that depends on a combined wealth ratio for each school district.

#### Local School Organization

Within Onondaga County there are three types of school districts: the Syracuse City School District, 16 centralized districts, and one union-free district, Lyncourt. The centralized districts were formed by combining existing small districts, often from neighboring towns, to provide better facilities and larger areas for taxation and administration. A union-free district is a small district that did not choose to centralize when the state urged small districts to consolidate after World War II.

The Syracuse City School District is administered by a Superintendent of Schools who is appointed by an elected seven-member Board of Education. The Board members, since 1980, have received a small stipend for their services. Because the school budget of the City of Syracuse is not submitted to voters for approval, the city school district is dependent on the city administration for its funds. The amount that the city can raise in taxes for all services, including education, (as discussed in Chapter 6) is limited by the New York State Constitution.

Outside the city, voters of the school districts elect boards of education, which vary in size from five to

nine members. The budgets are prepared by school officials and must be adopted each year at a meeting of school district voters, or by a special election. Unlike the city school district, these districts are independent of all municipal governments for funds; their physical boundaries do not coincide with town or village lines. All 17 of the districts in Onondaga County and the union-free district, Lyncourt, are administered by their own superintendent appointed by the district board of education.

#### BOCES

Most school districts in Onondaga County are members of the Onondaga-Cortland-Madison Board of Cooperative Educational Services (OCM BOCES) district, which also includes parts of Madison and Cortland counties. The Elbridge and Skaneateles school districts are members of the Cayuga-Onondaga BOCES. State Law provides for BOCES throughout the state as a way for school districts to cooperate in providing services they would not be able to cost effectively offer otherwise. That same law excludes cities from BOCES, which is the reason the city of Syracuse is not a member. The local BOCES district has 23 participating member schools. The state government partially funds BOCES and enables individual districts to share expensive services cooperatively. Among the services BOCES provides are the following: itinerant teacher; administrative and management; pupil personnel, such as guidance counselors and psychological screening and counseling; vocational education; special educational programs for persons who are mentally, emotionally, and/or physically handicapped, and for gifted children; adult education programs; staff development; technology planning and support; cooperative purchasing; shared curriculum; school improvement training.

#### School District Characteristics

The 18 school districts within Onondaga County vary widely in size and character. They reflect the

diversity of a county comprised of a large urban center surrounded by suburban and rural areas on the outer perimeter. The Syracuse school district is the largest and most complex in the county. In the suburban areas, the districts tend to be compact with relatively high pupil density, while in the rural areas districts are geographically larger with lower pupil density.

Increasingly, local school districts are given mandates by federal and state legislation to provide specific services such as participation in unemployment insurance and the social security system. Another mandate is the education of physically and mentally handicapped students, regardless of the severity of their handicapping condition, in the least restrictive environment within its own facilities or contracted from other agencies. The ultimate goal is for the local school district to provide appropriate educational services for all children. Although funding for these programs sometimes comes from both federal and state sources, local districts are often left to fund these without assistance.

#### **City School District**

During the past decade, the Syracuse City School District has been forced to face two major problems that have affected its school-age population. One has been to achieve racial balance in the schools. The Board of Education has responded to this by allowing students to voluntarily transfer to schools outside their neighborhood. The other problem which has confronted the school district has been a continuous fluctuation in school populations. During the 1980s the district was faced with a declining school population and throughout the 1990's the shift changed and populations began increasing. The most recent enrollment numbers show another decreasing trend. For the 2004-2005 school year, enrollment in Syracuse City School District public schools in grades K-12 was 20,918. Since the 2002-2003 school year, the enrollment in Syracuse City School District has decreased by 3.7%.

Magnet programs were developed at Dr. Martin Luther King, Danforth, McKinley-Brighton, Porter, and Seymour elementary schools, Hughes (which includes elementary and middle school grades), and Clary Middle School and they have been successful in attracting racially-mixed groups of students. Special federal and state funds have provided the

means to develop programs, such as specialized vocational programs, pre-kindergarten for three- and four-year olds, partially funded by the state, and English as a second language for recently arrived foreign students.

#### **Suburban School Districts**

The emphasis on developing technology skills through the purchase of computer hardware and software, as well as the requirements to make school buildings handicapped accessible, has resulted in annual increases in school budgets. The necessary increase in local property taxes has led to a mounting number of defeated school budgets and a taxpayer mood that is increasingly fiscally cautious.

#### **Private Schools**

The Roman Catholic Diocese of Syracuse operates a parochial school system in the county. All of Onondaga County is included in the western region of the Diocese of Syracuse. The Western region contains seventeen schools and also encompasses parts of Oswego, Oneida, Madison, Chenango, and Cortland counties. The number of schools has fallen tremendously over the past decade due to budgetary and other problems. In 1994-95, the diocese administered 52 schools, elementary and secondary, enrolling over 13,000 students in Pre-K thru 12 in Onondaga County. A number of other private schools, both non-denominational and religiously-based are available in the county.

#### **Higher Education**

Many opportunities for higher education exist in Onondaga County. The public institutions, all part of the State University of New York, are SUNY Health Science Center at Syracuse, SUNY College of Environmental Science and Forestry, Empire State College, and Onondaga Community College. The first two are located near the Syracuse University campus. The last is an agency of local government and is funded in part by the Onondaga County Legislature. The college offers a two-year program and its campus is in the Town of Onondaga.

Syracuse University is the largest private institution in the area. Other institutions of higher learning include Cazenovia College and LeMoyne College. In addition there are numerous business and vocational schools which offer specialized training in a variety of fields.

# THE COURTS

## Chapter Nine

### STATE ADMINISTRATION AND FINANCING

The statewide court system is administered by, the Office of Court Administration its policy-making body. Its Administrative Board consists of the Chief Judge of the Court of Appeals, acting as chairperson, and the four presiding judges of the Appellate Divisions of the Supreme Court. The state's geographic area is divided into four judicial departments and twelve judicial districts. Each of the four Departments is under the direction of one of the four presiding judges of the Appellate Divisions of the Supreme Court.

The state assumes the costs of operating the courts in New York State, as well as the costs of the Office of Court Administration, which executes the policies of the Administrative Board. Additionally, the Office of Management Support monitors all expenditures of the courts and oversees an internal audit procedure. The costs of some of the lower courts are, however, still the responsibility of the towns or villages they serve. State law mandates that the county reimburse justices who perform services outside the towns and villages of their own jurisdiction.

The Chief Judge, the state's chief judicial officer, is appointed by the Governor from a list of seven candidates. Judges of the Court of Appeals are appointed from a list of three to five candidates recommended by the Commission on Judicial Nomination and they must be approved by the State Senate. The Governor also appoints members of the Appellate Division from among justices of the Supreme Court. Judges in the lower courts in Onondaga County are elected.

### APPELLATE COURTS

The Court of Appeals, the state's highest court, hears cases on appeal from the other appellate courts. Its review is limited primarily to questions of law.

Appellate Divisions of the Supreme Court are established in each of the state's four judicial departments to hear appeals concerning civil and criminal cases. The First and Second Departments hear appeals originating from the Civil and Criminal Courts in New York City. In the Second Department, civil and criminal cases originating in District, City, Town and Village Courts are also heard. The Third and Fourth Departments initially hear appeals from City, Town, and Village Courts in the appropriate County Court.

### TRIAL COURTS

#### State Supreme Court

Onondaga County is in the fifth judicial district, fourth department of the State Supreme Court. The fifth district also includes Oswego, Jefferson, Lewis, Oneida, and Herkimer counties. The Supreme Court in New York State is the trial court of original, unlimited jurisdiction and hears cases, including civil matters, involving amounts of money beyond the jurisdiction of lower courts. It also hears all divorce, separation, and annulment proceedings. Its judges are elected for 14-year terms by voters of the judicial district. There are 18 Supreme Court justices in the six county districts.

#### Court of Claims

Judges of the Court of Claims are appointed by the Governor with the consent of the New York State Senate. They hear all claims against the State of New York. There are no juries in these proceedings.

#### County Level Courts

There are three county level courts: County Court, Family Court, and Surrogate's Court. County Court has jurisdiction over criminal cases and civil cases up to \$25,000. Family Court handles neglect and abuse cases, support proceedings for spouses and children, adoptions, paternity suits, family offenses, custody and visitation, and matters relating to PINS (persons-

in-need-of-supervision) and juvenile delinquents. PINS are defined as children aged 7 through 15 who are ungovernable at home or are habitual truants. A juvenile delinquent is a child under 16 who commits an act that would be a crime if committed by an adult. Surrogate's Court admits wills to probate, administers estates, and appoints guardianships.

Judges on each of the county courts are elected by county voters for a 10-year term to a specific court: County, Family, or Surrogate's. Sessions in the courts are public, except in Family Court where, to protect young people, spectators may not attend without the judge's consent. Each court has a clerk of court and a court stenographer who take verbatim minutes of testimony in all court sessions in Onondaga County. However, only a small fraction of the testimony is actually transcribed.

#### **City Court**

Syracuse's City Court has three divisions: Civil, Criminal, and Traffic. The Civil Division handles civil proceedings up to \$15,000 and oversees Small Claims Court and Commercial Small Claims Court up to \$3,000. Criminal proceedings (including most misdemeanors and below) are handled by the Criminal Division. Traffic Court handles traffic violations and infractions. Judges are elected by city voters to serve a 10-year term and are required to be lawyers.

#### **Town and Village Courts**

Justice Courts for towns and villages (formerly known as Justice of the Peace Courts) may hear civil cases up to \$3,000 and minor offenses. There are mandated uniform jurisdiction, practices, and procedures for these courts established by the 1967 Uniform Justice Court Act. Judges of these courts are elected by town and village voters and need not meet any special qualifications other than residence within the town or village. Those who are not lawyers are, however, required to complete a special training course. There are one or more justices in each town and village in the county.

#### **Juries**

There are two types of juries that function in Onondaga County. The grand jury serves on a countywide basis and is composed of between

16 and 23 members. Its term is fixed by the appellate division. It determines whether an indictment shall be returned in cases of serious offenses and may initiate an investigation into matters of public concern. All felonies must proceed by indictment; all other crimes may proceed by either indictment or information.

The trial or petit jury is usually composed of 12 members in criminal cases and six members in civil cases, although the number of petit jurors may vary in Supreme Court.

Both grand and petit jurors are paid for their service on a per diem rate and receive expenses for transportation. Both types of jurors in Onondaga County are selected to serve in all of the county's courts.

A juror must be a United States Citizen; a county resident at least 18 years old; free of any past felony conviction; able to understand and communicate in English; and not have served on a jury within the past four years or within the past two years in counties where the four-year period has been certified as impractical. Persons may volunteer for jury duty at the office of the Commissioner of Jurors.

In 1995, a new law passed that greatly limited juror exemptions. The only people disqualified outright from jury service are state and federal judges. The law also allows a potential juror to be excused or have his or her service postponed for good reason, as determined by the court. Under the previous law, practicing attorneys, dentists, physicians, nurses, pharmacists, optometrists, psychologists, embalmers, police officers, firefighters, sole proprietors, people age 70 and older, and parents or guardians of children under the age of 16 whose principal responsibility was the daily care of that child were exempt from jury service.

#### **District Attorneys Office**

The District Attorney in Onondaga County is elected for a four-year term. To hold this office he/she must be an attorney, a resident of Onondaga County, and a qualified voter. The District Attorney is the chief law enforcement officer in the county and is charged with the responsibility for prosecution of all crimes within the county and with the supervision of the

presentation of cases to the grand juries. The major portion of the District Attorney's salary is paid by the county with a fourth being paid by the state.

### **Client Protection**

The New York Lawyers' Fund for Client Protection provides safety for clients who undergo losses due to negligence or malpractice. If an attorney misuses money or property the client must also report the loss to an Attorney Disciplinary Committee and to the local District Attorneys Office. Complaints must be filed within two years of the client discovering their loss, and are eligible for up to a maximum of \$300,000 for each loss. Additional information regarding a client's rights and responsibilities can be obtained from The New York Lawyers' Fund for Client Protection.

### **Related Services**

The Probation Department of county government is responsible for supervising both juveniles and adults on probation. The detention of juvenile delinquents and PINS is under the jurisdiction of the Human Services branch of county government. Juvenile delinquents may be housed in secure detention at Hillbrook Detention Home pending the disposition of their cases or they may be placed in non-secure group homes or foster homes. The Family Court may order detention and decides whether the detention is to be secure or non-secure. PINS may not be held in secure detention.

Legal Services of Central New York, Inc., a not-for-profit antipoverty program, provides free legal services to poor, elderly, and disabled

people in Onondaga County. It assists with civil matters such as landlord-tenant problems, public housing eligibility, discrimination in housing, welfare eligibility, family law, and disability.

Courts in this state have the power to assign defense counsel to adults unable to afford the services of private attorneys. Those unable to obtain counsel are entitled to have legal representation in every stage of the criminal process, every stage of a criminal proceeding and also in certain Family Court proceedings (e.g. custody, neglect/abuse, paternity). To meet this requirement, Onondaga County contracts with the Onondaga County Bar Association Assigned Counsel Program, a not-for-profit corporation to administer a system under which private attorneys are assigned to represent indigents. In addition, Hiscock Legal Aid Society (HLAS) represents indigent defendants in Syracuse City Court and in appeals from other courts to the Appellate Division, 4th Dept. Under state law, assigned lawyers are paid from county funds.

Family Court also assigns lawyers ("Law Guardians") to represent children in abuse or neglect, PINS and delinquency cases. Both Family and Supreme Courts may assign Law Guardians to children who are subjects of custody and visitation matters. These lawyers are paid from State funds. The fee schedule for all assigned lawyers is set by the state.

# Health and Mental Health Services

## Chapter Ten

### Health

State law regulates health services in New York State. The New York State Department of Health sets standards and procedures through the Sanitary Code and the Hospital Code. It also provides local health departments with consultation services and state and federal moneys. In Onondaga County, the Health Department is an agency of the county government and operates in accordance with the Onondaga County Sanitary Code, the County Charter, the Code of Procedure, and local law.

The Onondaga County Health Department was created in 1967. The County Executive appoints the Commissioner of Health for a four-year term. The local policies of the department are determined by the County Legislature and by the Health Advisory Board. The mission of the Health Department is to promote health and to prevent disease, injury, disability and premature mortality in the community by providing community health assessment and surveillance, leadership and policy development, and to assure that all public health services are adequate and effective. The Health Department will show special concern for underserved people in the community and for the social aspects of health.

In 2005, the Onondaga County Health Department had 335 full-time and 27 part-time employees and a \$69,518,657 budget. State aid contributes \$25,048,108 of this amount.

The Onondaga County Health Department offers numerous health care programs and services for the residents of Onondaga County. The Health Department is committed to protecting and promoting the health of the public in the face of ever-changing needs through the offering of both traditional public health programs such as Communicable Disease Control, as well as more recent programs such as Public Health Preparedness. Other programs and services include:

- Center for Forensic Sciences including Forensic Laboratory and Medical Examiner's Office
- Correctional Health Services
- Environmental Health Services which include disease prevention, food protection, residential sanitation, land development, water quality control, air monitoring, rodent control, mosquito control, weights and measures
- Facilitated Enrollment Program that provides health insurance enrollment assistance
- Family Planning Services including clinics for males and teens
- Health Promotion and Disease Prevention which includes programs for cancer screening and education, childhood obesity prevention, dental health, health education, hypertension screening and education, injury prevention, immunization clinics and registry, lead poisoning control, tobacco control, women's health, and the Women, Infants and Children (WIC) program.
- Public Health Home Visiting Teams including nutrition and prenatal support services
- Special Children Services such as Early Intervention, Physically Handicapped Children and Preschool Special Education Programs
- Surveillance and Statistics including birth and death records
- Syracuse Health Start, a program to support healthy pregnancy and birth outcomes
- Volunteer Services

### Planning of Health Services

The Central New York Health Systems Agency, Inc. (CNYHSA), a private, not-for-profit corporation, is responsible for making collective decisions regarding the allocation of health care resources and the maintenance and enhancement of the health care system in the Central New York Region.

The primary tasks of the agency are to assess current health care services and programs in the region, to identify present and future need for health care, and to promote community

participation in allocating scarce health care resources. These tasks are accomplished by developing plans which recommend action promoting changes in the health care system and by reviewing proposals to alter current programs or to add new ones.

CNYHSA also provides planning and consulting services to public and private entities through grants and service contracts.

Through its extensive data bases and research capabilities, CNYHSA offers planning and consulting services which include:

- Strategic Planning
- Needs Analysis
- Program Design, Implementation, and Evaluation
- Forecasting
- Grant-writing
- Utilization and Market Research
- Small Area Analysis
- Benefit Design
- Survey Design

CNYHSA is able to tailor its services to meet the unique needs of its clientele. CNYHSA's staff includes people with backgrounds in such areas as planning, health care administration, health systems research, and public health.

### **Mental Health**

The Onondaga County Department of Mental Health (OCDMH) was formed in 1961 under the then newly adopted County Charter and is regulated by the New York State Department of Mental Hygiene. The Commissioner is appointed by the County Executive, who also appoints up to a 15 member Department of Mental Health/Community Services Advisory Board.

The mission of the OCDMH is to enable those citizens of Onondaga County that have a mental illness, cognitive impairments, or chemical dependency, as well as their families, to achieve their maximum potential.

The department is divided into separate programs, including the following: Service Planning and Coordination, Contract Management, Oversight and Quality Management, Assisted Outpatient Treatment, Student Assistance Program, Forensic Mental Health, Case Management, Day Treatment for Children, Outpatient Treatment for Children.

# Social Welfare and Social Services

## Chapter Eleven

Social Services in Onondaga County are provided by the Department of Social Services. The Department of Social Services was established by the consolidation of city and town social welfare programs in 1938. Functions and policies of the Department are set by the New York State Legislature and the New York State Department of Social Services. Adherence to state and federal standards insures financial support from state and federal sources.

In addition to establishing uniform rules for all local departments, the New York State Department of Social Services supervises local departments and distributes all federal and state funds.

Each local social services department is required by state law to establish an advisory council of at least 20 members. The members are appointed by the local Commissioner of Social Services according to the following criteria: providers of social services, medical services, and domiciliary care; members of the general public; and recipients of public assistance, who must comprise at least 25% of the council membership. Council members volunteer their time and advise the commissioner on policy development, program planning, and program evaluation.

### Administration

The Commissioner of Social Services, who is appointed by the County Executive, heads the department. The Commissioner's office is responsible for the overall administration of the department and includes administration, staff development, personnel, and the Access Center. In 2006, the department employed 883 people.

The major divisions within the department are: (1) Temporary Assistance; (2) Medicaid; (3) Adult & Family Services; (4) Children's Services; (5) Child Support/Enforcement; (6) Systems; (7) Administration Services; (8) Legal/Resources; (9) Personnel & Staff Development; (10) Food Stamps; and

Community Services & the ACCESS Center. A director, who reports to the Commissioner, heads each division.

### Temporary Assistance

Temporary Assistance administers temporary assistance, food stamps, Home Energy Assistance Program (HEAP), and day care. Its mission is to effectively provide services and financial benefits needed to assist and allow families and individuals to achieve the greatest degree of self-sufficiency while maintaining fiscal and program integrity.

HEAP administers financial assistance to low-income households to defray cost of home energy. Beneficiaries of the program include public assistance households, food stamp households, and low-income non-public assistance households. Community agencies participating with the Department of Social Services in the HEAP program are the Metropolitan Commission on the Aging (MCOA) and the Volunteer Center at the United Way of Central NY.

The day care program is designed to provide low-income individuals with childcare.

### Medicaid

The Medicaid program pays for the medical, hospital, nursing care expenses of the poor. Eligibility standards are established New York State and are the same in Onondaga County in every county in New York State.

### Adult & Family Services

Provides individuals and families access to safe, affordable housing, emergency assistance to recipients of Supplemental Security Income (SSI), and protects impaired adults from neglect, abuse, or arrange services for adults who have difficulty caring for themselves.

### Children's Services

Provides, investigates, and prevents child maltreatment, and protect children while

supporting a safe, nurturing, permanent home environment. Children's Services performs the following activities: preventative services, foster care/adoption, and investigations.

Preventative services provide services to children and their families for the purpose of preventing a disruption of a family, which will or could result in a placement in foster care. It also enables children who have been placed in foster care to have a safe, expeditious return to their family. Foster care/adoption provides services to children who are in need of protection due to being at risk of maltreatment by a caretaker, or having no viable living arrangements. For investigations Children's Services investigates, determines, and make referrals for reports of children who are alleged to have been maltreated by caretakers.

#### **Child Support/Enforcement**

Child Support Enforcement is a federal and state mandated program enacted to ensure that children are supported by their parents. The mission is to provide children with the financial support necessary to maintain self-sufficiency thus eliminating their need for public assistance programs.

#### **Systems**

The Systems Division integrates departmental information systems with the State Welfare Management Systems (WMS); operates and maintains centralized information systems such as WMS, Benefits Insurance Control Systems (BICS) and local area networks; designs and manages all new automated systems; provides systems-related staff training; manages the department statistical library; manages the program records and case files of the department; and coordinates a variety of publications requiring centralized information gathering and analysis.

#### **Administrative Services**

The Administrative Services Division is charged with the financial management of department expenditures and revenues and assisting with fiscal policy development. Activities include: budget and forecast preparation, accounting, mail and stock services, customer identification, contract development, claiming, revenue collection, and program and administrative payments.

#### **Legal/Resources**

The Legal Division is responsible for legal advice and representation for the Department of Social Services in all areas except Family Court. The department's missions are to provide prompt, accurate, and beneficial legal counsel and representation, and to established and implement effective fraud control and recover programs, all with the central goal of insuring that the department incurs no unnecessary or improper costs, expenses or responsibilities in the provision of legally required program services to its clients.

#### **Personnel & Staff Development**

The Personnel Department is responsible for supporting employees and management in the interpretation and appropriate application of employment policy, guidelines and work rules. Staff Development is responsible for planning, coordinating, and implementing training programs.

#### **Food Stamps**

The mission of the Food Stamp Program is to reduce hunger and malnutrition among the members of low-income households. Food stamps were and are intended as a supplement to other sources of income such as Public Assistance benefits, Social Security benefits, Unemployment Benefits, and wages.

#### **Community Services**

Provides assessment for enrollment into and case management for Medicaid funded home care and residential long-term care programs. It arranges for and has oversight responsibility for the delivery and quality of service and authorizes Medicaid payments and enters the authorizations for provider billing. Community Services provides information and referral non-Medicaid eligible individuals to direct them to appropriate services with the goal of developing the best care plan for them at the least cost to the payer. The division must evaluate all Onondaga County residents prior to enrollment into one of the programs.

The ACCESS Center facilitates outreach and case management of five outreach programs by maintaining automated case files on at-risk pregnant women and infants, and monitoring their attendance at scheduled medical and service appointments.

# Planning and Development

## Chapter Twelve

Planning and development are concerned with the use of land and natural resources to best meet the needs of people. These needs include houses, factories, communities, highways, airports, water, open space, parks, and natural beauty. Other planned land uses may include the more agricultural needs of cropland, pasture and range, as well as woodlands, wetlands, and wildlife areas.

Many agencies at all levels of government are involved in planning and development: municipal planning agencies, highway departments, parks and recreation departments, as well as many private groups. This section deals with planning agencies at the state, regional, county, city, town, and village government levels. The plans of these agencies are only advisory; they are translated into law by zoning ordinances or regulations. Only city, town, or village governments may pass zoning ordinances.

### **Planning**

The function of governmental planning is to provide guidelines for the physical, social, and economic development of the community. Planning should be a continuous process, although in practice the time and expense involved in drawing up complete plans results in a time lag behind growth and change that take place in a community. To be effective, planning should come first followed by zoning and development according to the accepted plan. Historically, zoning ordinances have often occurred first, based on existing land uses.

New York State authorizes a local government to set up a planning board or commission of local citizens. NYS requires that planning and zoning board of appeals members (description to follow) participate in annual training. The board's primary duty is to advise the local legislative body on community development. A professional planning staff may be employed by the board.

Planning boards are authorized by state law to prepare a comprehensive master plan, which is an official statement of policy on future growth and development. It includes population growth, housing, transportation, commercial and industrial development, education, recreation, municipal services, and methods of financing.

Most towns and villages in Onondaga County have adopted a master plan to be used as a guideline in planning and zoning decisions. The county also has a 2010 Development Guide adopted by the County Legislature. Although a master plan is not binding, the actions of a planning board, in theory, should fit into the frame work of the master plan.

### **Town and Village Planning**

Most towns and villages in Onondaga County have planning boards, although this function may be performed by Town Board members in a small town. Others such as municipal engineers, building inspectors and other staff sometimes contribute to the planning process or perform planning duties. Planning boards have either five or seven members who are appointed by the town board or mayor of a village. Planning boards usually meet once or twice a month or as needed. Planning board members may be paid a small fee by their municipalities, but many are unpaid.

A Town Board may, but does not have to, authorize the planning board to approve or disapprove subdivision plats (plans for subdividing a piece of property). The county or city may have review over certain subdivisions.

Most towns and villages have comprehensive master plans or are working on such plans. Only the Towns of Geddes, Fabius, Spafford, and Otisco and the Villages of Fabius, Solway, and Jordan have no plan.

### **City Planning**

The Syracuse Planning Commission consists of five members appointed by the Mayor for five-

year terms. The commission must approve or disapprove all subdivisions and re-subdivisions in both the city and within a three-mile radius outside city boundaries.

The Syracuse Planning Commission drafts and approves zoning ordinance amendments for approval by the City Common Council. Positive decisions of the Planning Commission may be overruled by a majority vote of the City Common Council, except for decisions concerning the changing of streets, which require a two-thirds vote by the Council.

The City of Syracuse's CDBG entitlement funding is administered by the City of Syracuse's Community Development Department. This Department not only administers federal CDBG funding but also federal Emergency Shelter Grant (ESG) and HOME Partnership funding. The Department also provides technical and reporting assistance for these programs, cooperates with the Syracuse-Onondaga County Planning Agency and other entities in coordinating City planning efforts, directs the City of Syracuse's Tomorrow Neighborhood's Today (TNT) citizen participation and planning structure, coordinates the Syracuse Landmark Preservation Board, and applies for and manages grants pertaining to City planning and housing programs.

### **County Planning**

The Onondaga County Planning Board consists of five people appointed by the County Executive for three-year terms and two voting ex-officio members, the County Comptroller, and the County Commissioner of Transportation. The Planning Board assists all municipalities in the county in planning and zoning matters and reviews certain planning and zoning actions taken by them. The Onondaga County Planning Board has no power to pass zoning ordinances, but it can review all city, town, and village zoning actions which affect real property lying within 500 feet of the boundary of the city, a village, or a town; the boundary of a county or state park; the right-of-way of county or state roads; and certain other county or state uses of land. County planning boards are also empowered to enter into agreements and limitations on the types of zoning actions referred to them by municipalities. The Onondaga County Planning Board has enacted such limitations.

Under state law, a county planning board may have jurisdiction over subdivisions lying within

500 feet of the above noted physical features, if authorized by the county legislative body. The County Planning Board reviews highway access of roadways within subdivisions and overall relationship to county or state highways, as well as drainage and topographical patterns. Subdivision plans must also be reviewed by the County Department of Transportation and the County Health Department.

### **City-County Planning Agency**

The Syracuse-Onondaga County Planning Agency (SOCPA) is the combined City Planning Commission and County Planning Board. It was established in 1968 by a change in the City Charter and a change in the County Charter and Administrative Code. An annual municipal cooperation agreement is negotiated between the city and county to determine the scope of services SOCPA will provide and the payment it will receive. While the board members of SOCPA may or may not have professional planning experience, the SOCPA staff is composed of 17 professional, technical, and administrative personnel. The Planning Director is jointly appointed by the Mayor and the County Executive. SOCPA provides a variety of planning and development services to the city, county, municipalities, industries, businesses, private agencies, and the general public. In addition to planning and development services, SOCPA maintains and distributes information for use in planning, implementing, and evaluating programs and services in the county. SOCPA is an affiliate of the New York State Department of Economic Development, which is a cooperative program with the U.S. Census Bureau.

### **Zoning Regulations**

While planning occurs in all levels of government, the adoption and enforcement of zoning regulations are within the jurisdiction of city, town, and village governments. The purposes of zoning, as stated in the state enabling legislation, include promotion of public health, safety, morals, and general welfare of the community.

By law, zoning regulations must be made in accordance with a comprehensive plan or, in the case of a city, with "a well considered plan." However, new developments often have been zoned piecemeal as they grew on the outskirts of cities and villages. Towns are not empowered to zone for villages within their boundaries. Zoning

regulations vary widely from one municipality to another and can even conflict with each other.

Town and village planning boards must submit certain proposed zoning actions to the County Planning Board which then has 30 days to study the proposed actions and make recommendations. If it does not act within 30 days and does not respond to the municipality before the referring board is ready to vote on the proposal, the referring board may act without the agency's response. If the County Planning Board disapproves a proposed zoning action, or recommends modification, the municipal body can overrule the county's recommendations by a vote of a majority plus one. It must also adopt a resolution setting forth the reasons for the contrary action and must file a report of its final action with the County Planning Board.

#### **Zoning Commissions**

The town or village legislative body appoints a zoning commission to draw up zoning regulations. The commission is a temporary board but may become the planning commission once the zoning ordinance is accepted. If a planning commission already exists, it is often appointed to act as the zoning commission. Towns and villages must hold public hearings before passing zoning ordinances. Enforcement of the zoning ordinances is the responsibility of a local building inspector or enforcement officer.

#### **Zoning Board of Appeals**

Towns, villages and cities must establish a Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA). The board may grant variances to the zoning law. It also interprets the intent of the zoning ordinances in special cases, since all contingencies cannot be written into the zoning ordinances. The board may also grant permits for special uses, such as gravel excavation, trailers, and golf courses. The City of Syracuse as well as most towns and villages have zoning boards, with the number of members ranging from three to five (seven in cities under certain circumstances). Members are appointed by the Mayor in the city and by the Town Board or the Village Board of Trustees, sometimes with recommendations from the Chief Executive Officer. ZBA members usually meet only as required to hold a hearing. Their meetings must be advertised and open to the public. Their decisions are subject to review by the courts. The authority of zoning boards is established by state law. The town board appoints the members of the zoning board for three- or five-year terms and may

remove a member for cause only after public hearings. Other than appointive powers, city, town, and village governments have no direct control over the ZBA.

#### **Building Codes**

The state has a model building code which has been adopted in local ordinances by the city and many towns and villages. Several municipalities have developed their own building codes. These codes give detailed technical specifications for materials and methods of building and provide for fire and sanitary safety. Zoning ordinances, on the other hand, are concerned with site control and land use. Zoning ordinances and building codes may occasionally overlap or conflict.

Enforcement of the building code depends on periodic inspection of construction in progress as well as approval of initial plans. The Department of Community Development enforces the building code in the city. In towns and villages, enforcement of building codes is the responsibility of the local building inspector or code enforcement officer. All towns and villages in Onondaga County employ a building inspector or code enforcement officer, but most are not full time. Adequate review and inspection may not be achieved unless there is strong citizen interest and support for enforcement.

#### **Other Agencies Involved in Planning**

##### **New York State Department of State**

The Legal Division of NYS Department of State provides assistance in interpretation of state planning laws in training local planning officials and in revising state planning laws. The NYS Department of State also receives copies of all new zoning and subdivision ordinances passed in the state and is a resource for municipalities seeking help in writing new local planning legislation.

##### **Legislative Commission on Rural Resources**

The Commission on Rural Resources proposes legislation to revise state land use statutes. The Commission is assisted in this effort by the State Land Advisory Committee and staff who hold regional workshops and submit draft bills for consideration by the Commission and the state legislature.

## **The Central New York Regional Planning and Development Board**

The Central New York Regional Planning and Development Board is made up of four participating counties; Cayuga, Madison, Onondaga and Oswego. The board's membership is composed of local elected officials. The board employs a staff of professional planners and other administrative personnel that is funded by the four counties and state and federal grants.

### **Development**

The Community Development Block Grant Program (CDBG) was established by the Housing and Community Development Act of 1974 and is funded through the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). Under the guidelines of the program, Onondaga County is an entitlement community (urban county). The level of funding received by the county is determined by a nationally applied formula rather than on a competitive basis.

The county's participation in the CDBG program makes it eligible for other grant programs whose principal purpose is housing construction and rehabilitation or programs to assist the homeless.

All thirty-four towns and villages in the county participate in the CDBG program; however, the town of Clay's situation is unique. Clay exceeded the minimum population threshold of 50,000 for participation in the CDBG program, thereby qualifying to receive its own annual grant.

### **Infrastructure Improvements**

Approximately 50% of the Community Development Block Grant is spent on capital projects in towns and villages. Eligible activities include public works projects such as construction of water lines, drainage, and sanitary sewers; central business district improvements such as sidewalks, curbing, landscaping, benches, and lighting; reconstruction of roads; improvements to neighborhood facilities such as community centers, senior centers, and libraries; park improvements, sewer studies, handicapped accessibility improvements, clearance, and demolition for low income housing; and provision of enriched housing opportunities for the elderly who can no longer care for themselves in their own homes.

Projects must be located in areas of low income with high concentrations of substandard housing. Typical target areas have been Mattydale, East Syracuse, Solvay, Baldwinsville, Bridgeport, Jordan, Memphis, and Warners.

Onondaga County allocates about 20% of the CDBG for housing activities and the funding is used to match other housing rehabilitation and construction funding programs. About \$3 million per year is allocated to the following programs:

### **Onondaga County Homeownership Program**

This activity consists of the construction of new or the rehabilitation of existing houses for sale to first time, low income homebuyers throughout the county. The program is operated through the Onondaga County Housing Development Fund Company, Inc., a non-profit corporation. The Homeownership Program provides assistance to buyers in the form of a \$30,000 second mortgage whose payment is deferred for 30 years, at which time it is forgiven.

### **Housing Rehabilitation**

Housing rehabilitation assistance is provided by Onondaga County to approximately 150 low and moderate income home owners each year through the following programs:

1. Safe Housing Assistance Project for the Elderly (SHAPE-UP), offered county wide to elderly home owners with incomes under \$14,400
2. Neighborhood Rehabilitation Program (NRP), offered in target areas throughout the county to families whose income is below \$33,100 for a four person family
3. Clay Emergency Repair Program
4. RAMP Program for handicapped accessibility
5. Sewer Hookups
6. Rental Rehabilitation Program

Onondaga County also provides relief to victims of natural disasters in the form of housing rehabilitation or relocation.

### **Commercial Rehabilitation Program**

A relatively small portion of the grant (approximately \$100,000 per year), is spent on the Commercial Rehabilitation Program. The program is structured on a matching basis with CDBG matching the owner's contribution dollar for dollar. The maximum grant from CDBG is \$10,000 and is for exterior improvements only.

CDBG's program to revitalize low-income business areas is highly visible and has resulted in the retention of shops and small businesses which in turn provide a consistent tax base and job opportunities. Central business districts in East Syracuse, Mattydale, Jordan, Camillus, North Syracuse, Tully, and Manlius among others have participated in the program.

# Parks and Recreation

## Chapter Thirteen

### Parks and Recreation

Local governments in Onondaga County have varying responsibilities for providing parks, recreational facilities, and programs. All levels of government and volunteer agencies are involved to some degree.

### State and Federal Governments

New York State provides both state park lands and funds to local communities to develop their own parks and recreation programs. In Onondaga County, two major parks are administered by the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation - Central Region: Green Lakes State Park and Clark Reservation State Park. Also, a 36-mile linear park along the Old Erie Canal has its beginnings in DeWitt and runs along the canal towpath to Rome, New York. The Central region of New York State Parks offers a full range of recreational opportunities year-around including boat launches, beaches, camping, and a variety of winter sports. Also included is the operation of six historic sites.

Federal and state funds for recreation and conservation come to state and local governments, non-governmental agencies, organizations, and individuals in the form of grants-in-aid, technical assistance and loans.

### Onondaga County

The Onondaga County Department of Parks and Recreation administers a diverse system of 6,322 acres of parks and historic sites. The Department of Parks and Recreation is headed by a professionally certified Commissioner, the department's organizational structure focuses upon the domains of recreation and public programs; planning and development; natural resources; and operations and maintenance. Policy and budgetary issues are decided on in liaison with the County Legislature's Environmental Conservation and Parks Committee.

Onondaga Lake Park, the Rosamond Gifford Zoo, and Beaver Lake Nature Center are the

cornerstones of a year-round operation which also features Carpenter's Brook Fish Hatchery, three forest parks, Alliance Bank Stadium, two beaches, Sainte Marie among the Iroquois, the Salt Museum, a softball complex, two cemeteries, and several historic sites and memorials.

Scores of major special events and programs, highlighted by the Golden Harvest Festival, Lights on the Lake, and a hot air balloon festival are produced to enhance the quality of life for the county's residents and to creatively promote awareness of the parks for year-round adventure.

The "Special Places for Year-Round Adventure" venues of Onondaga County Parks are programmed as secondary level facilities to complement daily services offered by local municipalities. Casual recreational services for youth; structured environmental, historical, and scientific educational programs for children aged pre-K through college; regional and national caliber sports and athletic competitions, including the senior games; and family based outdoor recreation experiences are the priority program agendas.

Features of the park system include the East shore Recreation Trail at Onondaga Lake Park, with tram service and in-line skate rentals; boat launches and a marina; 50 miles of cross-country ski trails; youth camping at Highland Forest Park; 18 reserved picnic shelters highlighted by the Skyline Lodge; and horse-back and sleigh ride opportunities.

Nearly a dozen organized Friends groups support the Parks operations and help cover over 1/3 of the agency's overall budget. Onondaga County Parks hosts nearly 3 million residents and tourists on an annual basis.

### City of Syracuse

The City of Syracuse, Department of Parks, Recreation and Youth Programs offers city

residents year-round active and passive recreational opportunities. The parks system is comprised of over 170 parks and includes three indoor swimming pools (two year round) and 9 outdoor swimming pools, 58 athletic fields, 98 courts, 40 playgrounds, 3 rinks, and 2 golf courses. Other programs are available, in numerous neighborhood parks, in schools, and at recreation centers.

A Commissioner, appointed by the Mayor, administers the Department, and is advised by the City Council Committee for Parks and Recreation.

In addition to athletic and aquatic programs, the department offers arts and crafts for all ages from preschoolers to senior citizens. Band concerts, holiday programs and Dancing Under the Stars are annual events. The Ida Benderson Senior Center is the focal point for senior activities, while neighborhood facilities make recreational activities available in all areas of the city.

The responsibilities of the department cover such diverse areas as dog control, an Adopt-A-Lot Program and entertainment series. The Department also assists many neighborhood and community recreation organizations.

### **Towns and Villages**

The towns and villages vary widely in the recreational opportunities they support for their residents. Some provide financial support or park land but rely on volunteer community recreation councils to organize any recreation programs. A few have made recreation a town or village responsibility and have a recreation commission and paid professional director. In many towns and villages, community recreation councils plan and organize such activities as summer swimming and playground programs, Little League baseball, ice skating, and basketball. Membership for these councils is drawn from other community organizations. Often, village and town government, school district, community council, and other voluntary agencies cooperate to provide recreational activities and facilities.

**Table 2**  
**2005 Onondaga County Park Attendance**

	<b>Volunteer Hours</b>	<b>Park Attendance</b>
Alliance Bank Stadium	400	400,135
Beaver Lake Nature Center	12,177	206,880
Carpenter's Brook Fish Hatchery	2,599	39,294
Highland Forest	5,415	64,604
Hopkins Road Park	250	135,000
Jamesville Beach	545	126,795
Oneida Shores Park	855	133,043
Onondaga Lake Park	5,139	1,328,586
Otisco Lake Park		5,000
Pratt's Falls Park		28,478
Rosamond Gifford Zoo	32,268	333,292
Ste. Marie among the Iroquois	13,402	9,479
Salt Museum		13,830
Veterans Cemetery		25,000
<b>Totals</b>	<b>73,050</b>	<b>2,849,416</b>

Source: Onondaga County Parks website (<http://onondagacountyparks.com>)

# Public Safety

## Chapter Fourteen

### Fire Protection

Fire protection is provided in the City of Syracuse by the city fire department (staffed by career firefighters) and in the towns and villages by volunteer fire departments comprised of both career and volunteer firefighters. New York State and Onondaga County provide training at local fire stations as well as at Onondaga Community College (OCC), Public Safety Institute, a component of the college's Division of Continuing Education. In addition to providing training, the county government, through the Office of the Fire Coordinator, maintains a hazardous materials response team, a fire investigation unit, and a juvenile fire setter intervention program. The Office of Fire Coordinator also enforces and administers the New York State Uniform Fire Prevention and Building Code in county-owned or operated facilities.

### Onondaga County

The County Fire Coordinator heads the Department of Fire Mutual Aid and Training. Mutual Aid coordinates reciprocal agreements for the use of personnel and equipment among the fire departments of Onondaga County. This function is facilitated by central dispatching through the Emergency center.

Mutual Aid also provides staff services that would normally be found within the framework of a large municipal fire department to smaller departments outside the city.

Training includes administration of the New York State Office of Fire Prevention and Control, field fire training program, and funding National Fire Protection Association compliant training at OCC. Public Safety Institute and instruction at individual fire departments by members of the fire coordinator's staff.

Onondaga County has a staff of New York State certified fire investigators, available upon request to any fire department. Approximately 200 fire investigations are conducted each year.

Those determined to be incendiary are pursued by a police agency and the district attorney's office. In the case of juvenile fire setters, a joint city/county program is funded through the fire coordinator's office to provide intervention services. Access to the program is through the Volunteer Center Helpline.

The county's Hazardous Materials Response Team is a cooperative effort among six fire departments, the Health Department and the Office of Emergency Management. It is directed by two deputy fire coordinators and provides technicians to remove hazardous materials or otherwise protect against them. The team is available upon request of the local fire department.

Fire prevention for all county facilities (more than 250 buildings) is the responsibility of the fire coordinator. A code enforcement officer inspects all areas of public assembly, ensures compliance with the code for all new construction and renovations and makes other fire inspections as deemed necessary.

All Emergency Medical Service (EMS) training and coordination is done through the county EMS Bureau, a unit of the Health Department. Specialists in advanced life support (ALS) can provide emergency care in the field under direct physician supervision through the county's radio network. Eastern Paramedics provide primary ALS in the city and immediate suburbs. Through cooperative agreements among all ambulances and fire departments, ALS is available throughout the county and is dispatched immediately when dictated by initial information received at the 911 center.

### City of Syracuse

Currently 390 employees handle the job of fire protection for the city. The Mayor appoints the Fire Chief. Under the City Charter the Fire Department has the following responsibilities: to fight fires, investigate the causes of fires, and enforce the Fire Prevention Code. Daily in-service training is provided for firefighters.

Syracuse's Fire Department was reorganized between 1972 and 1977. In 2005 there were 11 fire stations within the city, compared to 18 in 1969. The department maintains a rescue squad and hazardous materials response unit. The city also has an automatic mutual aid arrangement for fire calls to the Van Duyn Home, Community General Hospital, Bristol-Myers Squibb, and Crouse-Hinds.

An elaborate fire prevention program is also sponsored by the Syracuse Fire Department. This includes code enforcement; in-service inspections of residences and businesses; fire awareness programs in homes, schools, and on request; fire prevention activities; and dissemination of information, i.e. at the New York State Fair.

With the exception of mechanics, Fire Department personnel are selected and promoted by civil service examination. Retirement plans are provided through the city by the New York State Police and Fire Retirement System.

In 2005 the Syracuse Fire Department answered over 20,000 alarms with 100 of them being major fires.

#### **Towns and Villages**

Outside the City of Syracuse, fire protection is provided through special fire districts and fire protection districts. The former is governed by an elected board of commissioners and can levy taxes and incur debt. In the latter case, the town board contracts for services with a city, village, fire district or incorporated fire company. Like school districts, these districts may cross county lines, town, and/or village borders. All of the 19 towns receive fire protection through one or both means.

There are three types of fire districts. The first is a municipal corporation that has the legal power to borrow money and collect taxes. These districts obtain funding from real estate taxes and fund-raising activities. The second type of fire district is a private corporation, a nonprofit entity that contracts with a town to provide fire protection. It has no independent authority to contract debt. Such a department elects its own officers and draws up its own budget. However, the town provides revenue for the department by adding a fire tax to all real estate tax bills. The third type of district is a village department, where the fire department is an arm of the village government.

Fire districts provide fire protection through 44 fire departments. Some districts sponsor more than one fire department. Some towns and villages are protected by part-volunteer and part-paid departments. Anywhere from one to eight fire departments can provide protection in each town with the average being three. Not all villages in the county support village fire departments. Some village fire departments may serve areas outside the village through arrangements with the town government. Each town contracts for protection individually with its fire district(s), resulting in significant variation in tax rates.

Many fire districts have fire prevention programs, including speakers, and tours of fire stations. Enforcement of state and municipal fire codes as well as the New York State Uniform Fire Prevention and Building Code is a responsibility of municipal government, cities, towns, and villages

Fire protection in the towns and villages of the county also depends on several paid fire agencies. Hancock Field has a crash rescue/fire service which is not part of the Syracuse Fire Department. The Air National Guard also has a paid fire service composed entirely of its own members.

Most large industrial organizations and plants, such as Carrier Corporation, have their own fire brigades. Brigade members usually function in other capacities, but are trained as fire fighters. Some large companies also have their own fire equipment.

#### **Police Protection**

Traditionally, the job of law enforcement has been the responsibility of local police forces. In Onondaga County, police protection is provided by 20 governments, including the state, county, city, some towns, and most villages.

#### **New York State's Role**

State government's role in criminal justice concentrates on the State Prison System, the Parole Board, and the State Police. Two troops of the New York State Police operate within the boundaries of Onondaga County. One troop patrols the Thruway while the other polices other state highways and county areas where few local police services exist. State Police not patrolling the Thruway serve Onondaga County residents from stations in Elbridge, Liverpool, Lafayette,

and Radisson. State Police work within the city only at the order of the Governor or the request of the Mayor. The State Police operate a scientific laboratory, a pistol permit bureau, and a communications bureau in Albany.

State law sets regulations governing the local police. It requires that local police personnel of town, village, and city governments come under state civil service. It also stipulates that all new peace officers and supervisory personnel attend training at the special regional Police Academy at Onondaga Community College.

### **County**

The Sheriff's Office is the chief law enforcement agency of the county government. The department is responsible for a Civil Department, a Custody Department, a Police Department, and the administration of the County Jail in the Justice Center. Its 2006 budget was \$64,920,144.

As of 2006, the number of filled positions within the Sheriff's Department stood at 672 men and women. This number included personnel in the Police, Civil, and Custody Divisions. All are appointed by the sheriff, who is an elected official. All appointees are chosen from Civil Service examination lists, and all new appointees must attend the police, custody, civil, or courts training academy.

The Onondaga County Sheriff's Office primarily patrols areas of the county outside the City of Syracuse. It has two Community Police Stations, one in the North and one in the South of Syracuse, and several micro stations at various locations. In 2005 deputies responded to more than 100,000 calls for service and drove over three million miles of patrol throughout the county.

The Police Department of the Sheriff's Office is made up of the following components: the Patrol Division, Criminal Investigations Divisions, Abused Persons Unit, Records Section, Special Enforcement Section (includes helicopter pilots and observers, divers and boat patrols, snowmobile patrols), Canine Unit, Traffic Unit, Community Response Unit, and the Community Relations Section (includes D.A.R.E. [Drug Abuse Resistance Education] officers, Crime Prevention deputies, and School Resource Officers, SWAT, and Explosive Disposal Unit.)

The Sheriff's Office, City Police Department, State Police, and town and village police agencies use the Department of Emergency Communications (911) as the centralized communication center. The 911 Center is responsible for receiving and dispatching all emergency calls and communications. This county department has an oversight board consisting of representatives from all participating police, fire, and EMS agencies and has been a model for public safety communication centers around the United States.

The Sheriff's Office staffs the Justice Center, the county's maximum security holding facility, which is used by all the law enforcement agencies in the county as well as State and Federal agencies. The facility utilizes the podular direct supervision design, which has a Custody Division deputy directly responsible for 60 inmates within a given pod. Research on direct supervision shows that this model provides a safer environment for both staff and inmates. Men and women are kept in separate pods, youths under age 16 are referred to the Youth Aid Section (which has a temporary holding facility at Hillbrook Detention Center), and patients with mental illnesses are confined in a Behavioral Health Unit supervised by both Custody Department deputies and staff from the County Department of Mental Health. An infirmary with staff from the Department of Health is also provided for inmates convalescing, limiting the need for hospital details by Custody Department staff. Persons are held in the Justice Center only until trial, and if found guilty, are then transferred to the New York State Department of Corrections, or to the Onondaga County Correctional Facility at Jamesville, New York or to a Federal Prison.

The Sheriff's Police Department is participating in Operation Impact in which deputies patrol the city of Syracuse alongside State Police and Syracuse Police Department Officers. They also participate in numerous State and Federal Task Forces.

### **City of Syracuse**

The Syracuse Police Department, a New York State accredited police agency, is under the command of a Chief of Police, appointed by the Mayor, a First Deputy Chief of Police and three Deputy Chiefs, who are appointed by the Chief of Police. The department employed 486 police officers and 88 civilians (includes part-time school crossing guards) in 2006.

The mission of the Syracuse Police Department is to protect the lives and property of all who live, visit, and work within the City of Syracuse, to prevent crime, to detect and arrest offenders, to facilitate the movement of people and vehicles, to preserve the public peace, to identify problems that have the potential for being more serious problems for the individual citizen, to create and maintain a feeling of security in the community, and to enforce all federal, state, and local laws over which the Department has jurisdiction.

Police employees must meet physical requirements, pass a Civil Service examination, and have a high school diploma for appointment to this department. Promotion through the ranks for police officers is determined by civil service examinations, length of employment, and review by the Chief of Police. The Training Division is responsible for basic police recruit training as well as administering in-service training to all sworn personnel.

The Uniformed Bureau is the largest bureau within the Department; over half of all City police officers are currently assigned here. There are several specialized Divisions recently created within the Uniform Bureau that respond to the needs of specific city neighborhoods. The Directed Patrol Division and the Community Policing Division work closely with community leaders and neighborhood residents to coordinate and provide community oriented police services to blighted areas. These efforts have been so successful that the New York State Bureau of Municipal Police Training has incorporated the community policing strategies developed by this Department in a state-wide community police training program.

The Investigations Bureau is responsible for the continuation of felony investigations initiated by the Uniform Bureau as well as confidential narcotics and vice investigations. This bureau also contains the Crime Laboratory, which is one of only six full service crime laboratories in New York State. It is staffed exclusively by city police officers and civilian personnel. The Special Investigations Division conducts undercover narcotics and vice operations and participates in several county-wide and regional drug trafficking enforcement efforts.

The Department is involved in many youth programs such as traffic and bicycle safety, D.A.R.E., Officer Friendly, Scout Explorer Post #70, Internships, Job Shadowing, and Career Day. Other programs include, but are not limited to, Neighborhood Watch, Operation Safeguard, involvement with senior citizens with staff from the MCOA, and the STOP DWI Program.

### **Towns and Villages**

The towns and villages of the county vary widely in the amount of police protection they provide. Most towns do not have police departments (only Cicero, Clay, Camillus, DeWitt, and Geddes do), while most villages do (Tully, Fabius, and Camillus do not). The five towns that do have departments have large public safety budgets. When a town does not have a police department, it may contract with a village for police protection. For example, the Town of Manlius contracts with the Villages of Minoa, Fayetteville, and Manlius for police protection. In one instance, a village, Camillus, has no department while the Town of Camillus does.

Most towns and villages require Civil Service examinations for the position of Chief of Police, but some require only a certain level of education and/or experience. For example, the Villages of Baldwinsville and Marcellus require a college degree. Most of the larger towns and villages require Civil Service examinations for police officers and may require experience and/or special training. Most have medical requirements. Many have investigators and youth officers. Salaries vary widely.

### **Metropolitan Progress**

For the past decade there has been a definite move toward centralization of certain police functions within the county in order to reduce overlapping of services that increase costs and decrease efficiency. The 911 Center is a prime example of this cooperation. Syracuse no longer has a helicopter and shares this service with the county. In the future, other possible ways of dealing with these problems of duplication include more centralization of purchasing in the equipment and supplies.

Town and village police departments have also been upgraded and modernized during the past ten years. Further growth in these areas is probable.

# Water Supply

## Chapter Fifteen

### Role of the State

Water quality standards are set by the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC). The DEC classifies the water of New York State according to its suitability for various uses from N (all uses) to D (fish survival) for surface water, and from GA (potable) to GSB (waste disposal) for groundwater. The classification given to a particular lake, portion of a river or stream, or groundwater depends on whether the water meets certain quality standards which, with the exception of those for drinking water, are determined by the DEC. Safe water levels for, and the amount of water that can be withdrawn from, surface waters are also regulated by the DEC. The DEC grants permits to public water suppliers who must develop a water conservation program in order to obtain a permit. Drinking water standards are set by the New York State Department of Health (DOH). These standards can be more, but not less stringent than standards set by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). Water suppliers must test their water according to schedules and guidelines set by the DOH. The DOH also approves watershed rules and regulations, which public water suppliers may use to protect their supplies.

### Water Suppliers

The City of Syracuse, Onondaga County Water Authority (OCWA), and the Metropolitan Water Board (MWB) supply approximately 90% of the residents of Onondaga County with water. The other 10% get their water from local municipal wells in the villages of Baldwinsville, East Syracuse, Marcellus, Tully and Pompey, private community systems, or their own individual residential wells.

The Metropolitan Water Board, which administers the Onondaga County Water District, acts as a utility wholesaler providing source water, treatment, and major distribution facilities. It does not sell directly to any retail

customers. The MWB supplies water from Lake Ontario. Currently OCWA and Syracuse are its wholesale customers in Onondaga County and all Lake Ontario water that is distributed by OCWA and Syracuse is treated and supplied by the MWB.

There are also smaller municipal and private suppliers of water, whose sources of water are primarily wells and springs. Rural residents generally rely on their own wells or springs. Residents of more heavily populated town areas may be part of, or may petition for, formation of a town water district for the purpose of purchasing water from the suppliers. The cost to the consumer of water from other than personal sources is usually based on metered sales.

The Onondaga County Water District was established by the county legislature as a means of financing major water supply, distribution and treatment projects that are proposed by the MWB and determined by the legislature to be of importance to the county as a whole. It is administered by its own board, the Metropolitan Water Board. The creation of the district provides access to the county tax base as a means of financing these projects. The district comprises the entire area of the county with the exception of the towns of Skaneateles and Spafford, which were excluded based on their claim that they would not benefit from the improvement. The OCWA, a public benefit corporation created by the state legislature, does not have the ability to tax and can only raise revenues for its projects through the sale of its services to customers.

The district was established after a public referendum in 1962 authorizing a \$45 million bond issue to construct a supply and distribution system from Lake Ontario at Oswego. The system became operational in June 1967. Completed and operational by the end of 1968 were three pumping stations, the Oswego Water Treatment Plant, two 30-million gallon

reservoirs (Terminal Reservoir in Clay and Eastern Reservoir in Manlius), the Alexander F. Jones Administration Center, and about 55 miles of large diameter pipelines in Onondaga and Oswego counties.

In subsequent years, a 100 million gallon reservoir in the Town of Van Buren was constructed, as well as a pumping station on Seventh North Street, pumping and small storage facilities south of Syracuse, and pumping and small storage facilities in the Manlius-Pompey area. Additional pipeline was also extended to various areas of Onondaga County. An additional \$10 million authorization was approved for the expansion of the water system in 1976.

The district is financed in two ways: by benefit assessment on all real estate within the district and by water sales. For purposes of equitable benefit assessments, the district is divided into three zones with different rates set for each. The total amount that must be raised by assessments is determined by District expenses and revenues generated by water sales. Currently water sales support all operational costs and therefore, the debt service for the construction of the system is paid by benefit assessments.

In 1980, the supply capacity of the distribution system was increased from 36 million gallons per day to approximately 54 million gallons per day so that future increased demand can be met.

As a result of an act of the City Council, Lake Ontario and Otisco Lake water has been fluoridated since 1969. Syracuse's supply of water has been treated with sodium fluoride since 1965. All communities now have fluoridated water supplies.

OCWA, a public benefit corporation, was created in 1951 by the New York State Legislature. The Authority acquired the water rights to Otisco Lake through condemnation of a water company in 1955. The system had been developed early in the century by private enterprise to provide water to Solvay Process and the New York Central Railroad.

After acquiring the system, OCWA expanded and modernized the facilities and now can

deliver 20 million gallons of water a day from Otisco Lake by gravity. Over half of the water distributed by OCWA comes from Lake Ontario, is purchased wholesale from the Metropolitan Water Board, and is transmitted through the OCWA's mains. A filtration plant for the Lake Ontario water supply was built in 1967.

In 1986, OCWA built a filtration plant for the Otisco Lake water supply. As of 2006, the Environmental Protection Agency required all surface water supplies to be filtered. At one time, the New York State Department of Health gave the City of Syracuse an exemption to avoid the filtration requirements on their water supply from Skaneateles Lake due to water quality and watershed protection measurements. In recent years, the city required the water be fluoridated.

The Onondaga County Water Authority is the principal customer of the Metropolitan Water Board purchasing approximately 9.2 billion gallons per day from the MWB in 2005 (Lake Ontario). In addition, it purchases approximately 20 million gallons of water per day from Otisco Lake as well as water from the City of Syracuse to supply areas south and west of the city. In general, the OCWA water lines distribute water from Otisco Lake to the towns of Camillus, Geddes, Marcellus, Onondaga, and parts of Salina, Dewitt, and the village of North Syracuse. It also distributes Lake Ontario water to the towns of Cicero, Clay, Lysander, Manlius, Pompey, Van Buren, and parts of Salina, Dewitt, and North Syracuse.

The Onondaga County Water Authority sells water to village and town water districts for resale. In 1980, Onondaga County Water Authority delivered over 40 million gallons of water per day through more than 700 miles of pipelines to more than 30 points of delivery. The Authority sold to more than 40,000 customers and provided safe drinking water for 200,000 people. Today it has grown to 42.31 million gallons per day for approximately 340,000 customers in retail and wholesale.

The City of Syracuse Water Department oversees the distribution of water from Skaneateles Lake to supply the needs of the city. City water lines distribute water from Skaneateles Lake to the village of Skaneateles

and several water districts in the town of Skaneateles, a few customers in the villages of Elbridge and Jordan, the city of Syracuse, parts of Dewitt, and two districts in the town of Onondaga. The water supplied to these last two districts is made up of water supplied by the MWB from Lake Ontario.

The City of Syracuse draws approximately 54 million gallons per day from Skaneateles Lake. The amount purchased from the MWB may increase in times of drought if Skaneateles Lake water levels decline. This occurred in 2005 where increased summer demand raised the average daily withdrawal from Lake Ontario to 26.82 million gallons per day. This amount is well within the WMB's New York State Department of Environmental Conservation permitted withdrawal limit of 62.5 million gallons per day and existing production capacity. Water flows through three conduits that run from Skaneateles Lake to Syracuse (the first was laid in 1894, the third in 1927). These conduits are capable of carrying over 50 million gallons per day. Under minimal circumstances, this supply is adequate for the city's needs. The amount which may be withdrawn from this lake is limited by law. If the needs of the city should exceed the maximum amount allowed, the city

has arrangements whereby it can purchase additional water from the Metropolitan Water Board.

#### **Supply, Treatment & Quality Assurance**

Trained water treatment plant staff continue to achieve the highest quality water that is possible. The most important contributor to attaining this objective is having a high quality source. The MWB has been collecting water quality data that exceeds the scope of regulated parameters for 30 years. They stay ahead of developing regulations by analyzing the water for contaminants as soon as they are identified as potentially harmful. The water that supplies Onondaga County has been confirmed to be of excellent quality. The treatment processes further improve the quality through coagulation, filtration, fluoridation, and disinfection. In 2004 a granular activated carbon filtration system was implemented and continues to operate. It proves to be an effective technique in removing naturally occurring organic compounds that can cause undesirable tastes and odors in drinking water.



# Waste Control

## Chapter Sixteen

### **Sewage Disposal**

#### **State and Federal Role**

Standards regulating the discharge of pollutants into state surface and ground waters are determined by the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation. The standards for water quality were set forth in amendments to the Federal Water Pollution Control Act of 1972, the Clean Water Act of 1977, and Article 17 of the New York State Environmental Conservation Law. Based on these laws, municipal treatment facilities have been required to achieve secondary treatment since 1977. Most of the treatment plants in the county have consistently achieved secondary or advanced levels of treatment.

PL 92-500 included provisions to provide 75% Federal Aid to municipalities for the construction of wastewater facilities. The 1970 Environmental Bond Act provided funds for New York State to award 12.5% grants to municipalities. Therefore, the total Federal and State aid previously available to municipalities was 87.5% of eligible project costs.

The Federal Water Quality Act of 1987 phased out the Federal grants program and replaced it with a "State Revolving Fund" (SRF) loan program. The New York State Revolving Fund program is currently administered by the NY State Environmental Facilities Corporation (EFC), a public benefit corporation. Interest-free short term loans, as well as low interest rate long-term loans to municipalities are available to finance planning, design, and construction of water pollution control facilities. As the loans are repaid by the municipalities, the money is re-distributed by the State to other municipalities. In addition to the SRF, various grant and loan programs for wastewater pollution control projects are available from the US Dept. of H.U.D., R.D.A., and FmHA (Housing and Urban Development, Rural Development Agency and Farmers Home Administration).

In Onondaga County, most of the major treatment plants and other wastewater treatment appurtenances were constructed during the 1970's and 1980's under the Federal and State grants programs that provided a total of 87.5% of funding.

The majority of recent wastewater projects have been constructed with local funds. Some select grant monies have been received as related to the Department's Amended Consent Judgment projects. Since the cessation of the Federal Construction Grants Program, the county has financed dozens of projects under the State Revolving Fund program.

#### **Local Government's Role**

The responsibility for the collection, treatment, and disposal of sewage in most of the county's urbanized area is shared by several different levels of local government. The county provides and maintains all major trunk sewer lines and treatment plants, while the towns and villages provide lateral connecting sewers. Individual building or subdivision contractors provide sewer lines from homes and buildings to the lateral lines. The city's sewage, collected in the city's system, is treated and disposed of at facilities operated by the county. Onondaga County's services are provided through the Onondaga County Sanitary District and are the responsibility of the Department of Water Environment Protection. The district was consolidated in 1979 and replaced 24 sanitary districts and two sewage treatment plant districts.

The Commissioner of the Department of Water Environment Protection can propose an expansion of the county sanitary district. After a public hearing for the affected property owners, the recommendation is sent to the County Legislature where it is considered by the Public

Works Committee and full legislature. If approved, the County Legislature expands the district after another public hearing.

Within the county district, small districts provide lateral sewers between homes and the county trunk lines. These districts are organized and administered by town boards and are called town sewer districts. They may be proposed by the Town Board or more commonly by a petition of property owners. Unlike the county sanitary district, the formation of town sewer districts may be blocked by a majority vote of the property owners within the proposed district.

Outside the area presently served by the county sanitary district, sewage facilities may or may not be available. Most villages maintain their own sewers, but few of them maintain and operate sewage treatment facilities. Villages that have treatment facilities must achieve the standards of at least secondary treatment levels. There are currently four village sewage collection and treatment systems in Onondaga County: Minoa, Marcellus, Skaneateles, and Tully. Other communities outside the county sanitary district are currently serviced by individual residence on-site wastewater treatment systems.

The majority of villages requested inclusion in regional treatment plant service areas within the county sanitary district. Among the villages connected to regional facilities are Baldwinsville, Fayetteville, Manlius, and North Syracuse.

### **Refuse Collection and Disposal Solid Waste Collection**

Historically, New York State gave the responsibility for the disposal of trash to local government. In the mid-1970's, 15 local landfills were operated by municipalities in Onondaga County; gradually, these landfills were closed by the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC) because of the advent of stringent rules and regulations governing the construction and operation of landfills.

When the city of Syracuse closed its last landfill some thirty years ago, the city and county governments began exploring other options for

the disposal of trash. This led to the creation of the Onondaga County Solid Waste Disposal Authority (SWDA), a public benefit corporation, which built shredders and later provided transfer stations for the acceptance of trash which was trucked to various landfills.

### **Onondaga County Resource Recovery Agency**

SWDA was dissolved in 1990 when the Onondaga County Resource Recovery Agency (OCRRA) began functioning. It is also a public benefit corporation and was created at the request of the Onondaga County Legislature by the New York State Legislature to handle the responsibility for municipal solid waste in Onondaga County. There are currently four village sewage collection and treatment systems in Onondaga County including Minoa, Marcellus, Skaneateles, and Tully. The villages of Minoa and Marcellus have sought state revolving loans to upgrade and expand their treatment plants. Other communities outside the county sanitary district are currently serviced by individual residence on-site wastewater treatment systems.

The majority of villages have asked to be included in regional treatment plant service areas within the county sanitary district. Among the villages connected to regional facilities are Baldwinsville, Camillus, Fayetteville, Manlius, and North Syracuse.

Through Solid Waste Agreements signed with 33 of the County's 35 municipalities, Onondaga County assumed the responsibility for providing for a range of solid waste services and facilities to meet the solid waste management needs of these communities. In turn, the municipalities pledged, to have all municipal solid waste delivered to the OCRRA facilities for processing and handling through what is called contractual flow control. In 1990, County government assigned these contracts to OCRRA for implementation.

A 15-member Board of Directors oversees the operation of the trash agency. The volunteer directors are appointed by the County Executive (four appointees), the Mayor of Syracuse (six), the Chair of the Onondaga County Legislature (three) and the Towns of Van Buren and

Onondaga (one appointee each). Members' terms run three years; they are eligible to serve no more than two consecutive terms.

### **Solid Waste Disposal**

OCRRA's management of trash follows the NYSDEC's hierarchy as described in the State's Solid Waste Management Plan of 1988. The agency has waste reduction and recycling programs to decrease the amount of trash thrown away, a waste-to-energy plant to reduce the volume of trash by 90% through burning, and burial of the ash in a NYSDEC permitted landfill. The agency administers the County's July 1, 1990, Source Separation Law (Operation Separation) which mandates recycling for homes and businesses.

Onondaga County has a 95% participation rate and reduces the amount of trash it creates by more than 64%. Over eight million tons of mandatory and voluntary items have been recycled by Onondaga County residents and businesses since 1990. The Onondaga County Legislature also banned yard waste from the trash April 1, 1992. Each year, over 30,000 thousand of Onondaga County's residents utilize OCRRA's two yard waste compost sites, located in Jamesville and Amboy (in the Town of Camillus). For a one-time seasonal fee of ten dollars, homeowners in OCRRA's Service Area can drop off grass clippings, leaves, and brush up to 10" in diameter. Residents can also pick up mulch and compost for their gardens.

The 990 ton/day waste-to-energy facility on Rock Cut Road in the Town of Onondaga, which is operated by Ogden Martin Systems of Onondaga through a contract with OCRRA, began in 1994. The plant's NYSDEC permit allows the burning of 295,000 tons of solid waste annually.

Other programs operated by OCRRA include a construction debris processing operation at the

Ley Creek Transfer Station, a delivery point for trash from households and small users at the Rock Cut Road Transfer Station, two household hazardous waste collection days, and a household battery collection.

### **Delivery of Trash**

In 2006, transportation of trash to the OCRRA system is through two dozen private trash haulers and eight public haulers. The public haulers are the City of Syracuse and a number of villages, both units of government which have tended in the past to provide a wider level of services to their residents than towns. Besides Syracuse, the Villages of Camillus, East Syracuse, Manlius, Minoa, Fayetteville, Liverpool and Solvay operate trash pick-up services through their highway or public works departments. Some town and villages contract with private haulers to provide collections. Among these are the Towns of Geddes, Camillus and Salina as well as the Villages of Elbridge, Jordan, North Syracuse, and Marcellus. Southern Onondaga County Trash System, the result of an inter-municipal agreement between the towns of Fabius, LaFayette, Pompey and Tully in recent years, established a contractual agreement with a private hauler for pickup of residential trash within the four towns.

In the remaining towns and villages of the county, residents individually arrange for trash removal by private haulers or transport their refuse to OCRRA. The only exception is the Town of Spafford where residents can deliver trash to the town highway garage; where trash is delivered into the disposal system operated by OCRRA. Towns that allow private haulers to collect trash require the haulers to have local permits to operate. One condition of these permits requires any hauler who collects trash within its area to deliver all trash into the OCRRA system and to provide a recycling collection to its customers.

**Table 3  
WEP Plant Descriptions**

	Areas served	Treatment
Metropolitan Syracuse Wastewater Treatment Plant (Metro)	Metro provides high quality treatment for 270,000 people and many industrial and commercial customers in the City of Syracuse and some areas outside the city in Onondaga County.	Metro treats an average of 84 million gallons per day. Full secondary and tertiary treatment can be provided for up to 126 million gallons per day. Metro has a total hydraulic capacity of 240 million gallons per day during wet-weather events such as rainstorms.
Baldwinsville-Seneca Knolls	Baldwinsville, Radisson, Seneca Knolls, Interstate Island industrial area, and River Mall.	Flexible design allows for activated sludge operation in either single- or two-stage mode. Current mode is single stage with the second stage used for polishing.  Pure oxygen is generated onsite and used in the first-stage aeration basins and aerobic digester. Total phosphorus is removed on a year-round basis, while disinfection and nitrification are employed seasonally according to permit.
Brewerton	Brewerton and Town of Cicero (Lakeshore from Brewerton to Bridgeport).	Secondary treatment using contact stabilization modification of the of activated sludge process. Design volume = 3.0 MGD (peak = 7.5 MGD). Fine bubble diffusers are used for the aeration system. Total phosphorus is removed year-round.
Meadowbrook-Limestone	Portions of Syracuse, Village of Manlius, Village of Fayetteville, and towns of Manlius and Dewitt.	Conventional activated sludge with phosphorus removal and nitrification. Anoxic zones added at head end of each aeration tank in 1994 for filament control to improve settling in final clarifiers.
Oak Orchard	Cicero, Clay, and North Syracuse.	Pure oxygen activated sludge plant. Pure oxygen aeration generated on-site by pressure swing adsorption. Plant capacity: design = 10 MGD (peak = 24 MGD).

Source: Onondaga County website (www.ongov.net)

# Transportation

## Chapter Seventeen

### Streets, Roads, and Highways

All levels of government are involved in providing for streets and roads in Onondaga County. The federal government (through the US Department of Transportation and its Bureau of Public Roads) assists all states with money for highway planning, design, and construction, including safety projects. Roads are built and maintained by state, county, and town governments. Streets are built and maintained by the city and the villages. The towns, while maintaining the town roads within their borders, require private developers to build new roads to specification before turning them over to the town. The units of government involved with road maintenance contract with each other to provide snow removal and ice control in parts of their respective road systems.

### State and Interstate Highways

The design, construction, and maintenance of state highways in Onondaga County is the responsibility of the New York State Dept. of Transportation, Region 3, which has its headquarters in Syracuse.

There are 330 miles of state highways in Onondaga County and 62 miles of interstate highways, designated Routes 81, 90, 481, and 690. Interstate 90, known as the New York State (Thomas E. Dewey) Thruway, is a toll road operated and maintained by the New York State Thruway Authority. State highway crews service and maintain the other interstate highways and most of the state highways, except for certain areas where the work is done by various local governments under contract with the state. For example, snow and ice control on the state highways in Onondaga County may be done by the county Department of Transportation (DOT) under contract with the state. The county, in turn, may choose to subcontract part of the work on certain county highways to town and village highway departments.

Since 1969, the federal government, reinforced by state policy, has required public hearings at the planning and design stages of state and interstate highway construction. The hearings give local governments and other interested parties an opportunity to participate in decisions involving use of land for highways. The federal highway program provides 90% of the land and construction costs of interstate highways. The remaining 10% is paid by state government, which also bears the entire cost of maintaining interstate routes.

### County Roads

Onondaga County's Department of Transportation, headed by a commissioner, has the responsibility for maintaining 808 miles of the county road system. The County Legislature provides guidance to the department. The DOT has four shops located in Jamesville, East Syracuse, Camillus, and Marcellus.

The functions of the Department of Transportation include:

1. Reconstruction and widening of roads
2. Resurfacing (including pavement on county roads within villages)
3. Maintaining shoulders and drainage ditches
4. Providing guide rails and traffic control devices
5. Removing snow and controlling ice on portions of state roads (except interstate highways) and on approximately three quarters of the county roads. Town highway departments clear the rest of the county road system under contract.

The traffic control program is responsible for providing traffic signals, traffic signs, and pavement striping. The Department's paint shop at Jamesville prepares and erects signs and designs the layout of the road striping program. Preparation of an official road map, approved by the County Legislature, is the responsibility of the Commissioner of Transportation. A road

map of Onondaga County is available at the office of the Department of Transportation.

The DOT does all the engineering, surveying, planning and design, land acquisition, supervising construction, and traffic engineering required for the maintenance, construction, and reconstruction of county roads. The department also does engineering for other branches of county government.

Much reconstruction is subcontracted to private road builders. No public hearing is required for construction and improvements of county roads unless federal aid is expected.

The Consolidated Highway Improvement Program (CHIPS) is the mechanism by which funds come from the state to local municipalities for highway work.

The amount of aid received is formula-driven, based on center line and lane miles of locally maintained highways, vehicle registrations, and vehicle miles of travel. The aid is determined on a yearly basis by the state legislature.

The federal government grants secondary road funds, which are distributed to state approved county projects through the Syracuse Metropolitan Transportation Council and the State Department of Transportation.

Many road projects in the 1980s were financed by the county itself through sales of municipal bonds which are repaid by county taxpayers.

### **Town Roads**

In Onondaga County there are 972 miles of town roads. In each of the 19 towns, elected Highway Superintendents have a responsibility of maintaining and improving these roads. Taxes to support highway costs are collected through four separate highway funds that cover general maintenance, bridges, machinery, snow removal, and miscellaneous. Village residents are exempt from paying the general maintenance tax and, in some instances, some of the other funds. Road costs are often a major expense of town governments.

Towns usually have very limited power to control traffic within their borders. They may erect stop signs at the intersections of town

roads, subject to a public hearing. Where town and county road (or town and state roads) intersect, the higher level of government has the authority for placing stop signs or traffic signals. Speed limits and parking restrictions must be approved by the New York State Department of Transportation, although requests for these limitations must be initiated by local officials. Suburban towns (as described in Chapter Three) have greater traffic control power and may share in traffic fine receipts as do cities and villages.

### **City Streets**

In Syracuse, the Department of Public Works is responsible for over 400 miles of city streets. Responsibilities are divided between several divisions in the Department of Public Works.

The maintenance and repair of streets and sidewalks is the responsibility of the Division of Design and Construction. Snow and ice control is a separate division within the Department of Public Works. The Division of Mapping & Surveying is responsible for surveying, designing, and constructing city streets and sidewalks. It also keeps the official city maps. Planning for new streets and rerouting or closing existing streets are functions of the Syracuse-Onondaga County Planning Agency and the Syracuse Department of Community Development with the concurrence of the city Department of Public Works.

In October 1980, Syracuse became the first municipality in the county to have its own asphalt-recycling plant. This plant uses old street material (asphalt) combined with small amounts of virgin asphalt and chemicals to produce enough material to meet all street repair and reconstruction needs.

The Division of Transportation is concerned with the movement of people and vehicles within and through the city. The responsibilities of this division include traffic control, parking (lots, garages, and meters), advisement on bus routes and schedules, street lights and signs, and the parking program for the handicapped. The Commissioner of Public Works with the cooperation of the Planning Agency, the Community Development Department, and the Police to improve the safety and efficiency of traffic flow.

### **Village Streets**

In Onondaga County, there are 154 miles of village streets. Each village Board of Trustees appoints a Superintendent of Public Works and a Street Commissioner who is responsible for building and maintaining the village streets. These costs as well as such related ones as street lights, sidewalks, street cleaning, and traffic control are included in the general fund of each village. Towns and villages may supply curbs and sidewalks along county and state roads that pass through their territory. The state and county governments are responsible for paving such roads in villages and for paving and maintaining shoulders and drainage in town areas outside villages.

### **Other Transportation Services**

Although streets and highways account for the greatest part of government activity in transportation, there are also other areas where government money and control are important in Onondaga County. The New York State Thruway Authority administers the Barge Canal System and maintains and operates the locks and navigable portions of the rivers and lakes that are connected with it. Federal and state agencies regulate and at times give financial assistance to the private carriers of passengers and freight. The City of Syracuse built, operates, and maintains Hancock Airport through its Department of Aviation.

### **Transportation Authority**

In 1970 the Central New York Regional Transportation Authority (CNYRTA) was established by the New York State Legislature with responsibilities to develop, improve, and

operate mass transportation facilities. The transportation district of CNYRTA consists of Onondaga, Cayuga, and Oswego Counties. Four other counties, Cortland, Jefferson, Madison, and Oneida may join the authority by a vote of the respective county legislature.

CNYRTA is comprised of six subsidiary corporations: CNY Centro, Inc., Centro of Cayuga, Centro of Oswego, Call-A-Bus Paratransit Service, Centro Parking, and the Intermodal Transportation Center, Inc. About forty percent of the Authority's operating costs are supported by revenues received from passengers; federal, state and local funding comprise the difference.

Since its inception, the Authority has instituted projects to encourage people to try bus transportation. Such services include shuttle buses to community events, holiday and seasonal promotions, shopping and school service, transportation for disabled and senior citizens, and parking convenience services.

CNYRTA opened an Intermodal Transportation Center in Syracuse, the William F. Walsh Regional Transportation Center, during the 1990's. In addition to CNY Centro Inc., tenants at the center include, Amtrak, Greyhound, Trailways, and Central. The intermodal transportation center provides seamless service for any form of transportation in and out of the Syracuse area, making travel throughout the area more convenient and efficient.

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