

F · O · C · U · S

GREATER SYRACUSE

COMMUNITY REPORT **October 2007**

PROJECTS TO STREAMLINE GOVERNMENT, NYS: Several years ago F.O.C.U.S. conducted dialogue sessions with elected and appointed government officials from the city, county, towns and villages to explore possibilities for modernizing government. The sessions were facilitated and hosted by five college Presidents. We met at LeMoyne College and explored shared services, consolidation (F.O.C.U.S. goal), and regionalization. The final concensus was to create a “Regional Council of Governments” that would continue the dialogue and involve both government and key business leaders. This did not materialize. Follow-up to the F.O.C.U.S. initiative are the significant efforts of Syracuse 20/20. Multiple community conversations are continuing to inform citizens of the various possibilities for government modernization. One of the leaders in this effort is Judy Mower, a founder and board member of F.O.C.U.S. and trustee for 20/20. In April, 2007 Governor Spitzer established the Commission on Local Government Efficiency and Competitiveness (LGEC). They held two informational sessions in Syracuse (though it is noticeable that there is no Onondaga County representation on the Commission) and are looking at similar issues that our community is already discussing. For more information: www.nyslocalgov.org and www.syracuse2020.org

COMMUNITY CAPACITY BUILDING: Over five years ago F.O.C.U.S. hosted Lindiwe Ndlela, a professional urban planner and researcher from South Africa, who brought the concept of “building capacity” to our attention. At the time, we did not realize that the F.O.C.U.S. visioning, citizen research for strategic action plans (Downtown Cultural District, Water and Waterways, and Sustainability) along with Core Group monthly sessions and Citizens Academy are in fact, both institutional and individual capacity builders. At a recent seminar convened by the Gifford Foundation and the CNY Community Foundation featuring Susan Kenny Stevens, author of “Nonprofit Lifecycles”, the discussion on “capacity” brought the realization that F.O.C.U.S. started building capacity ten years ago and continues in that same direction now.

Capacity building occurs on many levels – community, institutional, and individual. Here is my definition (still in the development stage) for “capacity building”:

Institutional capacity: An opportunistic organization that offers opportunities for everyone who seeks them to open their minds to new and different ideas through public education, community awareness, communication, collaboration and networking.

Individual: Building capacity occurs when one expands one’s own range of knowledge, imagination, vision, and skills to facilitate making intelligent, inclusive, sustainable decisions about one’s own future and their community.

NEXT CORE GROUP: Friday, November 9, 2007 @ 7:30 a.m. – 8:45 a.m. on the 7th floor of City Hall Commons, 201 E. Washington St.

**“F.O.C.U.S. on BUILDING A SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY:
THE SOUTHEAST GATEWAY NEIGHBORHOOD PLAN”**

**Presenters: Robert Haley, AIA, LEED and David Rufus, Executive Director
EVERYONE IS WELCOME**