

Patterns of Government in Onondaga County

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



A Report by F.O.C.U.S. Greater Syracuse and the Community Benchmarks Program of the Maxwell School of Syracuse University



F · O · C · U · S
G R E A T E R S Y R A C U S E



PREFACE

The 2015 revised Patterns of Government is an important resource for elected and public officials, citizens, students, businesses, nonprofit organizations, educational institutions, and the general public. Patterns of Government also serves as the textbook for Citizens Academy, co - sponsored by F.O.C.U.S. Greater Syracuse and University College of Syracuse University. Local government courses at the Maxwell School of Syracuse University and the Newhouse School of Public Communications also use Patterns of Government as an educational tool. This book contains vital information that ordinarily can be found only when one researches multiple sources.

This informational book will help you understand how local governments are organized, the services they provide, and sources of funding. You will become aware of how tax dollars are used, the function and interaction of programs, and “who to call” for service and information. If the material in this book motivates civic trusteeship and mutual responsibility with governments, it has achieved its purpose.

Conscientious care was given to updating the information by Mathew Mazer, a Policy Studies student at the Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs. His efforts were supervised and guided by Carol Dwyer, director of the Community Benchmarks Program (CBP), also at the Maxwell School and Charlotte (Chuckie) Holstein, executive director of F.O.C.U.S. Greater Syracuse, Inc. In this edition the graphic design was created by Yu Ling, graduate student in public relations, Newhouse School of Public Communications. We express a hearty thank you to Mat and Yu for the excellence with which they completed their task.

A warm and hearty thank you to all the government officials who provided the most current information. Their valuable contributions make this edition an important source of information.

The original Patterns of Government was published by the League of Women Voters of the Syracuse Metropolitan Area in 1970 and revised in 1981, 1996, 2006, 2012 and 2015. Since 2012, subsequent updates have been made by the CBP and corrected on the website version: www.focussyracuse.org.

The 2015 edition of Patterns of Government is sponsored by F.O.C.U.S. Greater Syracuse, Inc. and the CBP of the Maxwell School of Syracuse University.

Charlotte (Chuckie) Holstein

Carol Dwyer

Table of Contents



PART I- STRUCTURE

Introduction	3
Chapter One: Historical Development	4
Chapter Two: The Onondaga Nation	10
Chapter Three: Onondaga County Today	12
Chapter Four: Town Government Today	16
Chapter Five: Village Government Today	19
Chapter Six: City Government Today	20
Chapter Seven: Financing Local Governments	23
Chapter Eight: Local Political Parties and Elections	29

PART II- SERVICES

Chapter Nine: Education	33
Chapter Ten: The Courts	37
Chapter Eleven: Health and Mental Health Services	41
Chapter Twelve: Social Welfare and Social Services	43
Chapter Thirteen: Planning and Development	46
Chapter Fourteen: Parks and Recreation	53
Chapter Fifteen: Public Safety	55
Chapter Sixteen: Water Supply	61
Chapter Seventeen: Waste Control	65
Chapter Eighteen: Transportation	70
Endnotes	73
Index	75

1 Map 1
Onondaga County 2000 Census Tracts



Syracuse Police Department Division of Neighborhoods in Syracuse



PARTI-STRUCTURE

INTRODUCTION

Decades before the European settlements in Jamestown and Plymouth, the Haudenosaunee Confederacy (also known as the Iroquois Confederacy) was formed in Central New York. It was a league of five tribes: Mohawk, Seneca, Oneida, Cayuga, and Onondaga. This traditional Native American form of government believed by some to be the first fundamental democracy in the Western Hemisphere, has survived for centuries and still exists inside the borders of Onondaga County on the sovereign Onondaga Nation Territory. The English form of colonial government was introduced to Central New York when the first settlers of European heritage arrived, enticed by the area's good farmland, strategic location at the crossroads of pioneer trade routes, and especially by the presence of the local salt springs.

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 made the Central New York area a center for early commerce, and this natural resource furnished the financial resources 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 50 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.

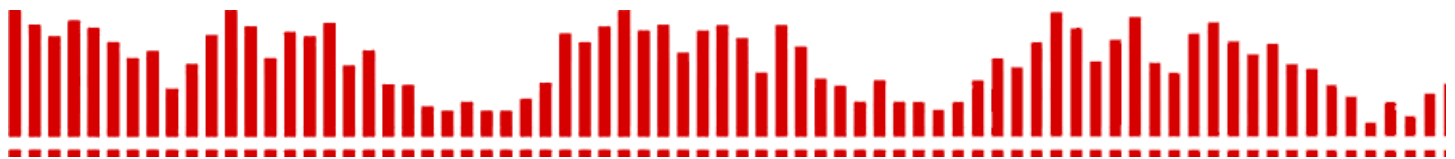
Although residential and commercial development seems to spread without regard to political boundaries, the metropolitan area is defined as the city and the communities around it, which draw much of their livelihood from the city and use many city services. This publication attempts to describe not only the traditional institutions of governments in Onondaga County with its towns, villages, and the City of Syracuse, but also the extent of metropolitan growth and its effect upon these institutions. The Syracuse area has unique features and many advantages, as this book will detail. Like many north-eastern urban areas in the United States, Syracuse suffers from an aging and poor center city, declining population, and a property tax base inadequate to pay for the services needed by its citizenry. This is compounded by the sprawl of the expanding suburbs which can accelerate the deterioration of natural resources and add to the financial burdens of all governments with increased infrastructure needs in the suburbs and a loss of tax base in the city.

In response to these problems the various local governments are adding new departments and services to the structures inherited from colonial times. At the same time they are exploring opportunities for shared services along with 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 the more recent problems can exceed the capacity of a single agency at any level of government. This book attempts to identify the responsibilities at each of the levels of local government—county, city, town, and village—and to provide a framework for understanding how each relates to 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.² Under frontier conditions, distances were great, population was sparse, and transportation and communication were difficult and slow. An initial priority to both state and settler was the prompt and orderly administration of justice and property rights. Following the English colonial example, New York State divided its territory into counties in order to provide units of court jurisdiction. Each county had a seat where circuit court sessions were held.

The first Onondaga County officers were mainly those who served the Circuit Court and jail. The first sessions of the court met in local taverns. By 1810 the county seat was officially established in Onondaga Hill and a courthouse constructed. It was not long before the villages of Syracuse and Salina were competing for the designation as the county seat. It was decided to relocate the county seat 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 travelling 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.

New York State also followed the colonial example of establishing towns as taxing units. The original boundaries of Onondaga County were initially divided into 11 towns. As the county's smaller boundaries exist today, all of its towns are mainly subdivisions of four of the original towns. The smaller geographic unit of the town was determined to be more convenient for serving a number of functions.

Formation of the Towns

One of the primary functions of a town was to provide tax revenues to support county courts. Administration of the taxing process was assigned to the supervisor who, because of the nature of the duties, was also the town's chief executive officer.

Supervisors of all the towns in the county were required to meet annually and, when authorized by the state, to undertake public projects with the costs shared by the towns. Among the first activities of Onondaga County's Board of Supervisors was construction of the courthouse in Onondaga Hill.

The towns also supervised much of the early road construction. For example, the town of Manlius had seven road districts in the early years 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 the main responsibility for road construction and maintenance passed to private turnpike companies and builders of plank roads. Also at this time, canals and railroads carried most of the traffic. The [Erie Canal](#) was completed in 1825, and railroads were in place in the 1830s. It was not until the early 20th century that the roads again



The Fourth County Courthouse (c.2009)

became an important function of local government. In 1910 counties began to organize county highway departments to share 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 first building for the [Onondaga County Poorhouse](#) was erected in 1827. A century later, in 1938, the responsibility for public welfare was assigned to the county, and the [Department of Social Services](#) was established. Responsibilities for county government slowly increased. For example, a series of public works projects in the early 1930s, that created facilities such as Highland Forest and Onondaga Lake Park, helped establish a major county parks system. Post World War II growth accelerated the work of County Government, which was still administered by the County Board of Supervisors, a system established in the late 18th century. The need for a strong executive branch was recognized and a major reorganization of county government was approved by voters in 1961. Public education was closely linked to towns at first.

State policy mandated that as land was divided for settlement, lots should be set aside for schools. 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 resulted in 18 school districts that currently exist 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

Counties and towns were designed to assist the state in providing basic government services throughout its territory; the purpose of cities and villages is to enable people in areas of dense population to provide for their special 'urban' needs, such as fire protection, water supply, street and sidewalk maintenance – 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 the New York State Legislature. Six of the current 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.

Although a city charter is more difficult to obtain, a city has more local control than a village. For this reason, some settlements preferred to seek city charters. [Syracuse](#), the only city in the county, received its charter in 1848, following a public referendum in the villages of Syracuse and Salina to merge.

Growth of Villages

Because population centers grew to serve an agricultural economy, early 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 Camillus, Elbridge, Fabius, Manlius, Marcellus, and Tully. The Erie and Oswego canals, while generally having a beneficial effect in the county, tended to strengthen the settlements they touched at the expense of the others. 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. A major impact on the region occurred in the 1950s with construction of 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 middle of the 19th century, the salt trade 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. 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 that 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. Annexation also brought bordering communities into the city school system and gained for them the services of professional fire departments. 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 Trend

Data from the [US Census Bureau](#) show that Onondaga County's population declined during the 1990s from 468,973 in 1990 to 458,336 in 2000. However, Onondaga County's population has since recovered to 467,026 in 2010.

While the population of Onondaga County in the 1990s decreased by about 2.2 percent, the Syracuse's population dropped by over 10 percent over the same time period. Syracuse's population decline slowed over the next decade to a 1.5 percent drop between 2000 and 2010.

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 offer to housing developments that are outside city and village limits. Recent economic forces have forced local communities to consolidate services and governments to

Figure 1.1
Military tract 1792

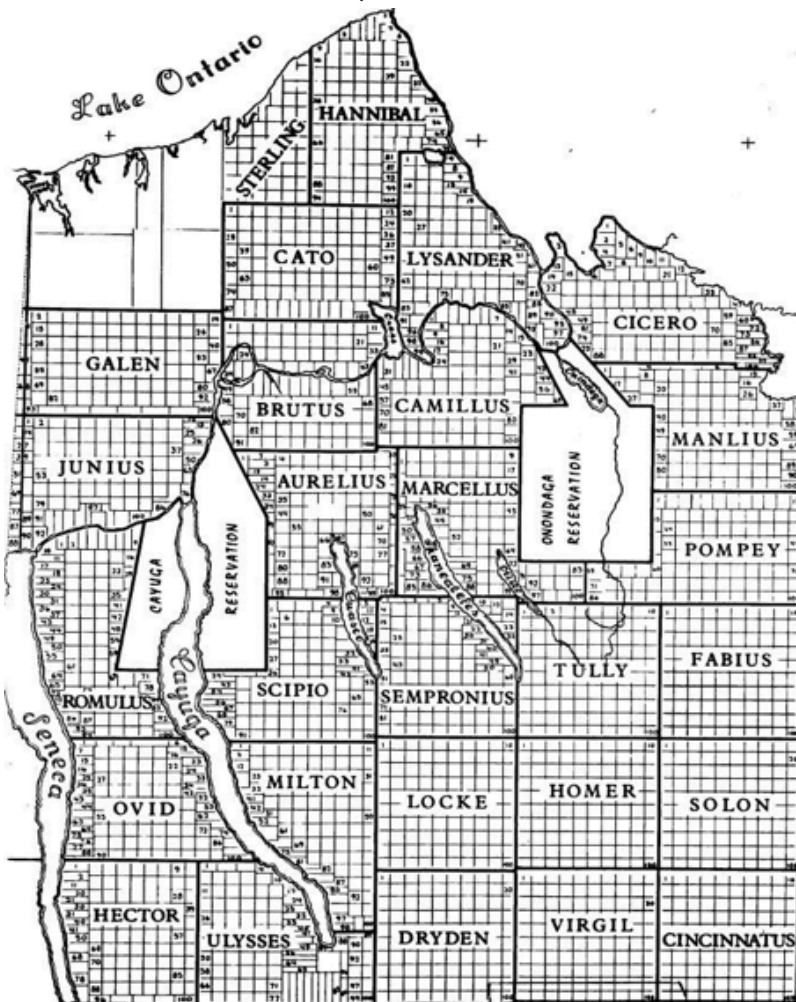


Figure 1.1: Military tract, 1792
by Simeon Dewitt,
Surveyor General of the State of New York
Source: All maps courtesy of the Onondaga
Historical Association

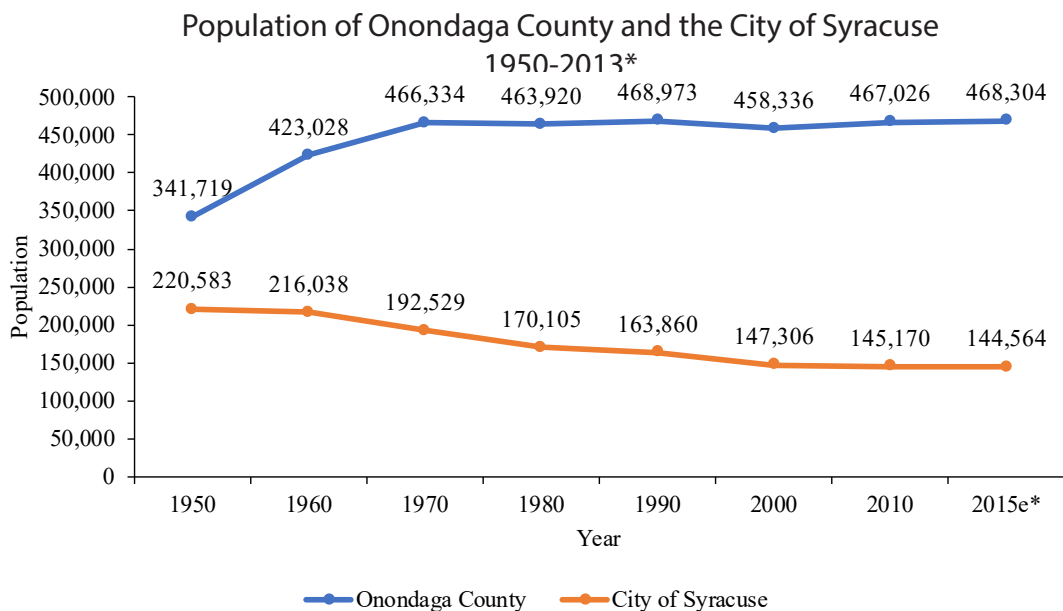
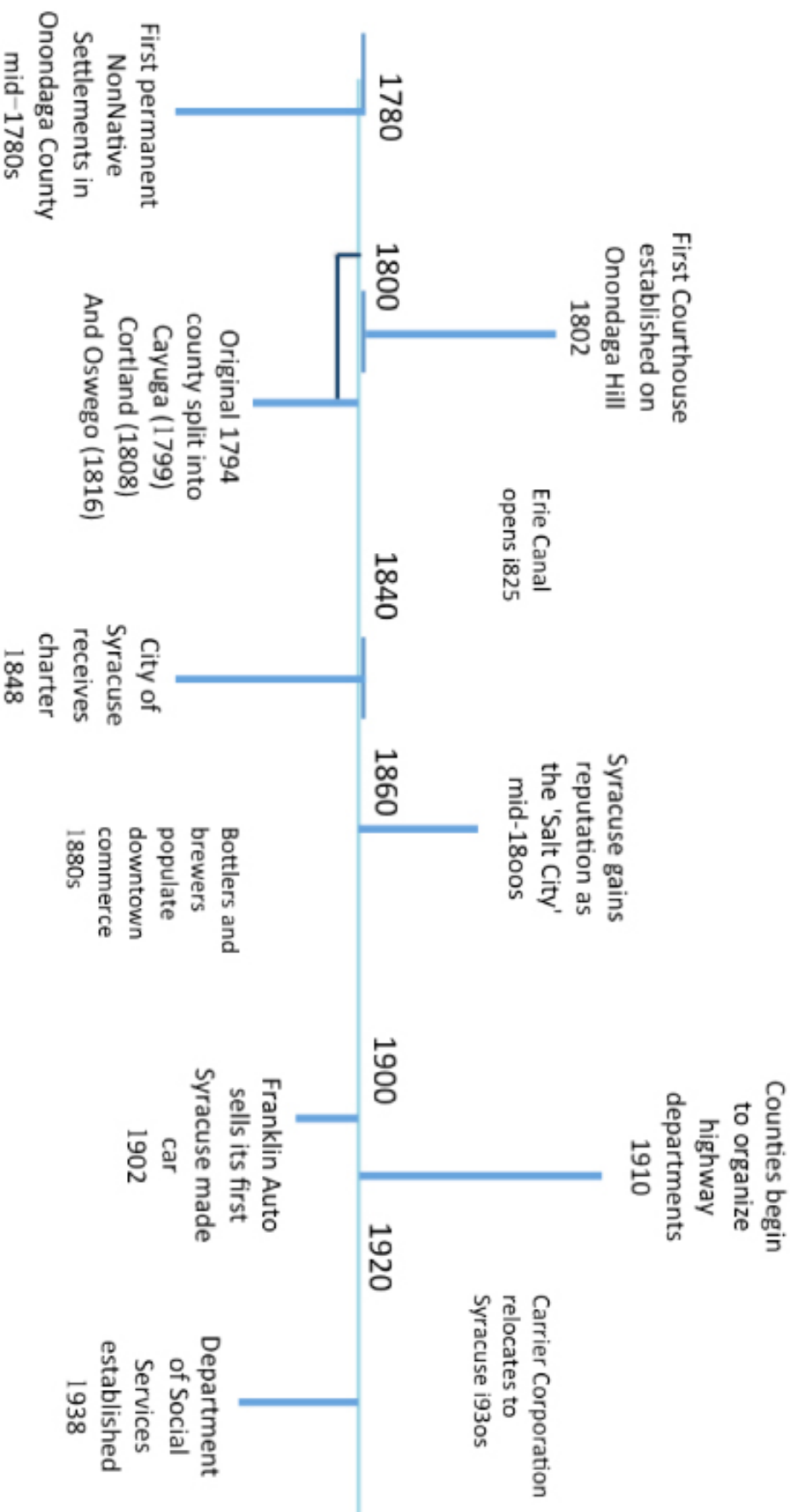


Figure 1.2
Population of
Onondaga County and
the City of Syracuse
1950-2015*

*2015 is an estimate
Source: US Census Bureau

The Early History of Onondaga County 1780 - 1940



THE ONONDAGA NATION

CHAPTER TWO

10

Information in this chapter was taken from "Neighbor to Neighbor Nation to Nation: Readings about the Relationship of the Onondaga Nation with Central New York, USA. The booklet was published by Neighbors of the Onondaga Nation (NOON) and revised and expanded in 2014.

Government

The Onondaga nation is a member nation of the alliance of the six Nations (Seneca, Cayuga, Onondaga, Oneida, Mohawk, and, later, Tuscarora) called the Haudenosaunee Confederacy. Founded circa 909 by a man known in the native history as the Peacemaker, the alliance and law was the first United Nations and is still the oldest, continuously operating form of traditional government in North America. The government, created by the Peacemaker, is comprised of fifty Chief titles, representing the five original Haudenosaunee nations. Each Chief represents a Clan family and is a lifelong title. Alongside each Chief sits a Clan Mother who works with the Chief for the good of the people. In addition, Faithkeepers sit as assistants to the Chief and Clan Mother and see that proper procedures continue to be followed. The first Grand Council was held on the shores of Onondaga Lake, at the center of the confederacy, in Onondaga territory. The council continues to meet at the Onondaga Nation Longhouse today.

The Onondaga Nation is completely separate from any of Onondaga County's municipal operations. The Nation's volunteer fire department was created in 1955 and has a sovereignty agreement with the Onondaga County Sheriff's Department where the department will not enter the territory without permission, with the exception of life threatening situations.

Treaties and Land History

The first treaty between the Haudenosaunee and the Dutch was reached circa 1613. This is signified by the Two Row Wampum, or Guswentá. For the Haudenosaunee, this formed the basis for all future relations with European settlers and established the idea of two separate but equal nations that would respect one another's sovereignty. The Tuscarora nation was adopted into the confederacy in 1722 after being defeated by Colonists in North Carolina. In 1754, Benjamin Franklin visited the council to discuss the structure of the Haudenosaunee government, part of which he borrowed for his Albany Plan of Union.

In 1784, the Treaty of Fort Stanwix ceded land north of the Ohio River to the Haudenosaunee. In 1790, President Washington, concerned with New York's illegal taking of land from the confederacy, urged congress to pass the Trade and Non-Intercourse Act of 1790 which provides that any taking of lands that do not involve the Federal government is "null and void." However, New York continued to purchase land from the nation, and by 1822, the Onondaga territory was reduced to its current size of 7,300 acres.

In 1890, a school house was built in the Onondaga nation. The native language was prohibited and children were taught in English-only classes often being sent to boarding schools in western New York state and Pennsylvania. In another effort to increase socialization, The United States enacted the 1924 Citizens Act making all Natives into American Citizens. The Onondaga Nation refused to acknowledge this Act stating a violation of the Two Row Wampum agreement.

In 1972, Onondaga Nation School banned language and culture classes. In 1989, the New York Museum returned 12 wampum belts to the Onondaga nation. 200 ceremonial masks were returned 12 years later.

On March 11, 2005 the Onondaga Nation filed the Land rights Action seeking recognition of its aboriginal title over some 4,000 square miles of land and sought cleanup of the territory. This Action was dismissed in court and the appeal to review the ruling was refused in October of 2013.

Lacrosse

The game of Lacrosse is sacred to the Haudenosaunee and is known to the Onondaga Nation as Dehhontjihgwaes, translated “they bump hips.” It is said the original game was given as a gift from the Creator, exclusively to the male population, for healing and the proper applications of the mind, body, and spirit. When cultivated within the spirituality of the game, with dignity, respect, honor, and social recognition, the seed grows into recognizable leadership qualities, and the man emerges as a possible protector of his Clan and Nation.

The game is used to teach men the proper way to adulthood. From the moment a boy is able to hold the stick and comprehend the game, he is taught respect. According to natives, each man is given an equal amount of potential, and when he plays the game, his character emerges. A man’s true nature is revealed in how he handles his own errors, and when he is given the ball, or opportunity, he is conditioned to trust his teammates to convert the opportunity into a benefit for the whole team.

In 1980, the Grand Council approved the initiation of the Iroquois Nationals, a field lacrosse team that competes with other lacrosse nations of the world. In July of 2010, the Nationals were prevented from competing in the World Lacrosse Championships, held in Manchester, England, because they were denied British visas when using their Haudenosaunee passports.

Onondaga County Today

Chapter Three

[Onondaga County](#) government operates under a home rule charter adopted in 1961 by general referendum.³ 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 sets 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, votes to confirm appointments of the [county executive](#) and may override the county executive's legislative vetoes. The legislature has 17 members, elected from districts of nearly equal population. The district lines are adjusted as necessary following the release of the decennial US Census data. Legislators serve two-year terms. Legislators elect a chairperson, who 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

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, including 829 miles of county roads and highways, collection and treatment of waste water, a water system to bring Lake Ontario water to the suburbs, and maintenance of its parks and two cemeteries.

Onondaga County government also provides programs and services as are necessary, desirable, and within the resource of its residents. These services include [budget management](#), [county-wide planning](#), [economic development](#), [health care](#), [Onondaga Community College](#), [Onondaga County Public Library](#), [911 emergency communications system](#), public safety, social services, and the following agencies or divisions: [Community Development](#), [Aging & Youth](#), [Veterans Services](#) and [Environmental Protection](#).

The [Oncenter](#), the convention center complex, and [Alliance Bank Stadium](#) are economic development projects aimed at enhancing tourism in the county. Expansion to the Carousel Center is planned, with hopes of realizing more jobs and millions of dollars a year in sales tax revenues for the area.

In September of 2010, Onondaga County released its [2011–2016 Capital Improvement Plan](#) in compliance with the [2010 Development Guide for Onondaga County](#).⁴ This plan seeks to meet the needs of the county including safe and adequate infrastructure and a clean environment that will attract and retain businesses and provide a high quality of life for Onondaga County citizens. The plan takes into consideration financial impacts as part of an effort by the county to minimize the financial burden of county services and capital spending on taxpayers.

In June 2012, the [County Sustainability Development Plan](#) was announced. It is to focus on the benefits of good land use planning, including preserving open spaces and farmland, improving air and water quality, reducing energy usage, supporting transit, and prioritizing infrastructure investments.⁵

Onondaga County government has downsized and restructured in response to changes in its fiscal environment - a declining population, loss of federal and state aid, and increased mandates. In 2011, the county government workforce had 3,862 full-time equivalent positions, a decrease of 460 positions from 2008.⁵

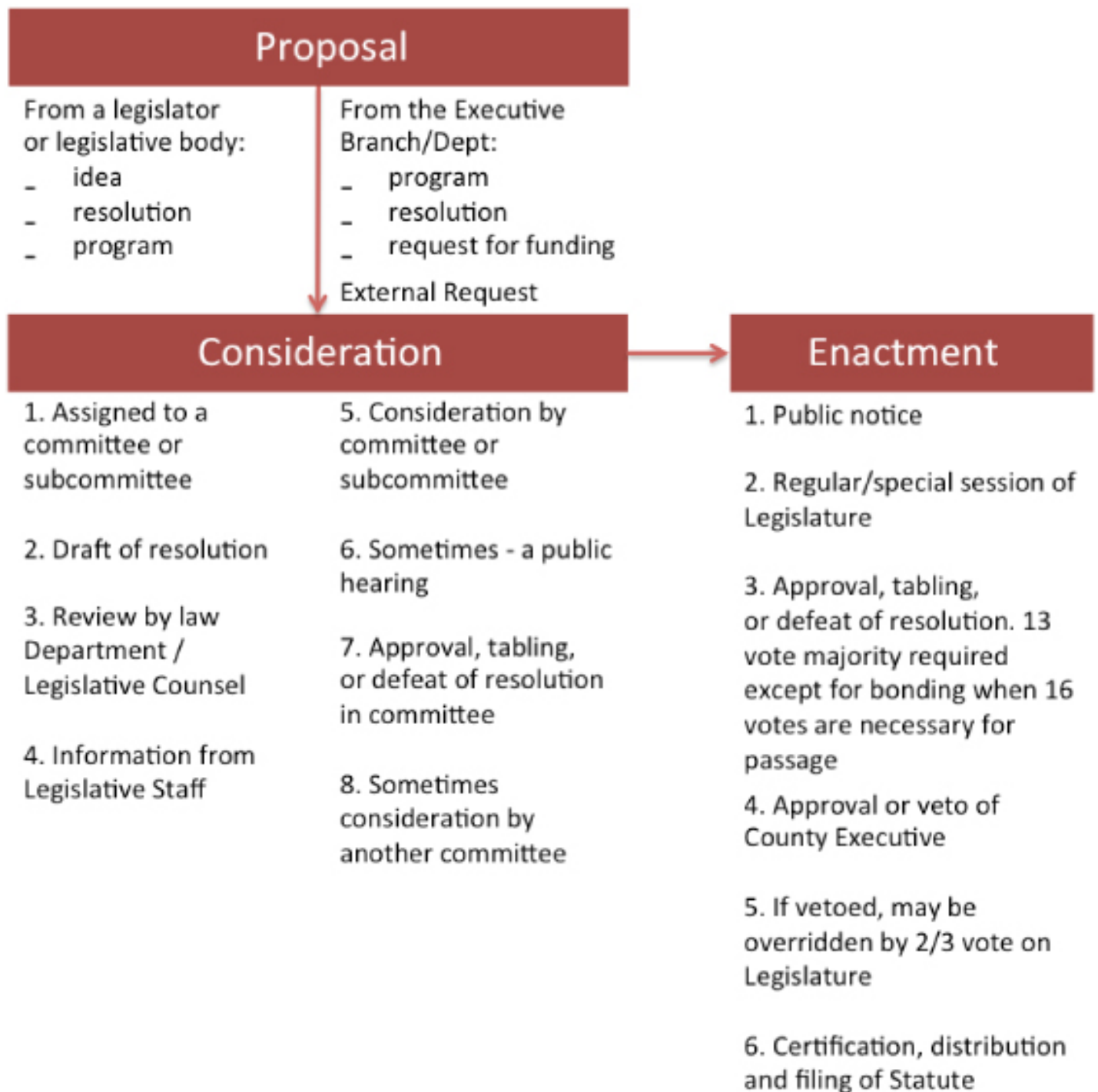
Improvement of water quality in Onondaga Lake is a continuous environmental and fiscal challenge that will continue in the future. County Executive Joanie Mahoney launched a program in 2009 called “Save the Rain.”⁶ This comprehensive program has as its goal, cleaning up and restoring Onondaga Lake. The program includes construction efforts to reduce the effects of storm water pollution on the lake and its tributaries. These construction efforts include traditional gray and green infrastructure plans. Additionally, Onondaga County announced the “Connect the Drops” campaign in 2016, a community anti-littering effort to clean up and prevent litter contamination in Onondaga Lake.

The magnitude of this mandated expenditure places the county in the position of balancing local needs with federal policy and environmental requirements, along with infrastructure maintenance, while protecting an economic climate that can retain and attract jobs and economic growth.

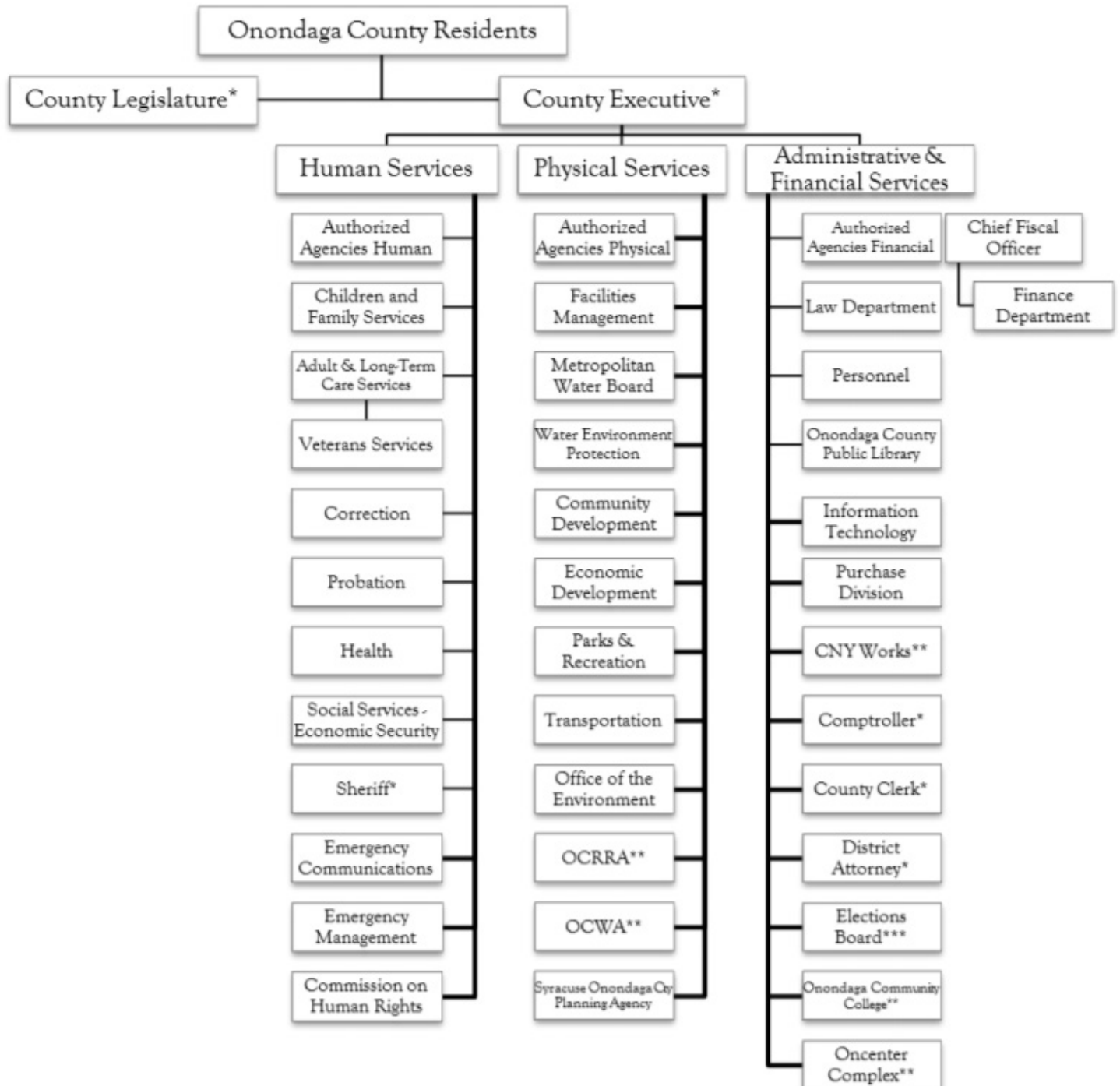
In 2012, the county legislature awarded a one- year contract to F.O.C.U.S. to collate all citizen visions from 1950 to present about restoring the shoreline

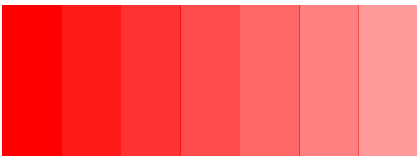


Source: USDA/FDA – Aerial Photography Field Office, 2011



Onondaga County Table of Organization





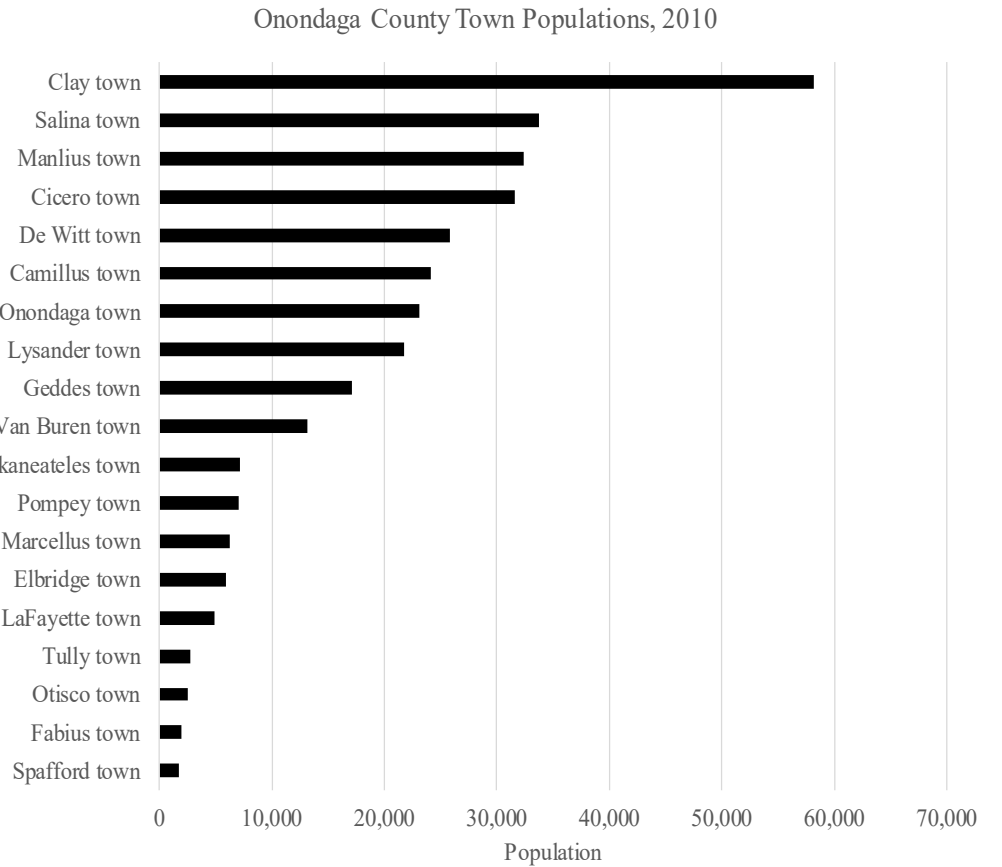
Town Government Today

Chapter Four

Structure

The structure and scope of the governmental powers of towns are defined in 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).⁷ 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(See Figure 3.1).

Town voters elect a supervisor who is the chief executive officer, as well as four to six representatives who, with the supervisor, constitute the town board. The town clerk, superintendent of highways, town justices and the tax receiver or collector are also elected. Exceptions are in the town of Salina, which has an appointed town clerk and highway superintendent, and the town of Clay which has an appointed highway superintendent.



Services

Both population density and the value of taxable real estate influence the activities of town government, the services it provides, and the taxes necessary to pay for the services. As towns began to grow in population, there was an increasing tendency by some towns to provide the services traditionally considered to be the responsibility of city and village governments. These services have been made

available 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 within the defined taxing unit will benefit equally from the service and share equally in the cost.⁸

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 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 (See Figure 3.2). Each new housing tract may require the formation of a sewer, water drainage, hydrant, and lighting district. The fragment 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 higher or lower taxes 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 work against the orderly and planned development of a community. It can also prevent the extension of improvements into less densely populated areas where terrain or distance makes 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 due to the potential of increased costs.

Part-town districts are commonly used by towns that contain villages which already provide broad municipal services. Very simply, a part-town district includes all the territory of a town that is outside a village. The precedent for such a district was established originally 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 with accelerated growth may adopt the status of a 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 difference 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 financing and provide services throughout the entire 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, Clay, Geddes, and Onondaga have adopted the suburban town law. However, these towns have not used the full powers under the law.

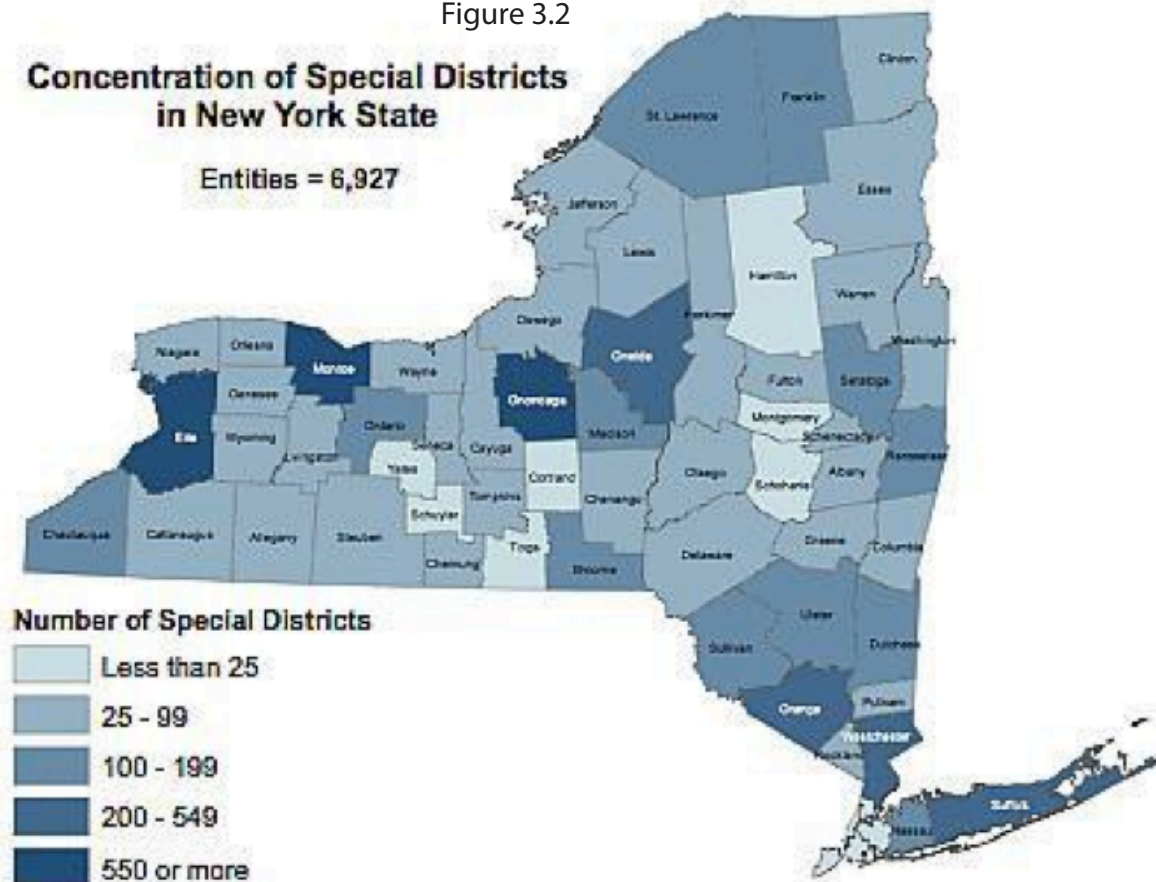
Local Government Consolidation

During tight fiscal times, the conversation regarding local government consolidation and shared services has become more widely accepted. Rather than large-scale consolidations of towns or villages across the county, many local governments have explored shared services and department consolidations. Citizen group Consensus proposed recommendations on consolidating local government services in 2016, which lead to a county-wide discussion of consolidation policy. In June 2017, Onondaga County County Executive Joanie Mahoney constructed a council dedicated to saving taxpayer money through shared services.

Town supervisors and village mayors have looked at ways to eliminate a service or share the cost of a service or equipment with a neighboring municipality. In recent years towns across Onondaga County have proposed a variety of shared services: property assessment, tax collection, animal control officers and comptrollers among other services. Specific examples of successful shared services recently adopted or currently underway include:

- In February 2011, residents of Geddes voted 530 to 55 to eliminate the position of town receiver of taxes. Previously the towns of Dewitt and Van Buren had eliminated this position.⁹
- In 2010, Skaneateles residents voted to close its 9-1-1 center.¹⁰
- In 2008, the town of Clay merged its police department with the [Onondaga County Sheriff's Department](#).¹¹

Figure 3.2



Village Government Today

Chapter Five

Structure

Village law and the New York State Constitution set forth the structure and powers of village government. Village governments are responsible for providing such services as police and fire protection, sewer, water, 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 village justice is an elected position but it is not required under law. In many villages the clerk and treasurer positions are sometimes 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 re-codification of village law, villages were classed according to population. 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. One law now governs all villages.¹²

Growth

Village growth has mostly remained stagnant. Only one village, Baldwinsville, has shown consistent population growth since 1960, according to the US Census. In 12 of the 15 villages the 2010 US Census population estimate was less than in 1990.¹³

Some 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, with members 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 constructed¹⁴; the villages of Fayetteville and Skaneateles have historical preservation laws.^{15 16} 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 has often 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.

Villages are surrounded by the jurisdiction of the town of which they are a part. For this reason, 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 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). Due to financial constraints across the county many towns and villages have begun sharing services with each other and other municipalities and consolidating governments. This trend is expected to continue as local leaders face budget constraints.

City Government Today 20

Chapter Six

Structure

In 1938, Syracuse first established the current mayor-council form of government, with an emphasis on a strong executive. In 1960 a new city charter was adopted which added new departments and reorganized the administration of finances. During the 1970s, the charter was amended to update the functions of many departments. In 1985 the charter was again amended to restrict a person from serving as mayor for 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 and 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. The mayor must also affirm legislation that is approved by the common council.

The Syracuse City School District has seven elected commissioners and 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 approved by the city council as part of the annual city budget (Chapter 6 further discusses the city budget and financing of city services).¹⁷

The city auditor is elected by voters every four years in a general election. The Department of Audit conducts, at least annually, an audit (commonly known as a post-audit) of the affairs of every officer, department and board of the city, including the board of education and the Syracuse Housing Authority.¹⁸ 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, 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 misdemeanors and violations of a criminal nature occurring within the city limits. The [civil division](#) handles tenant/landlord disputes, 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 traffic violations and misdemeanors, and 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 established in many areas within the framework of both levels of government. In 1938 and 1967, social welfare and health (respectively) became departments of county government, with the pre-existing departments serving as the nuclei for the new organizations. A 1968 merger resulted in:

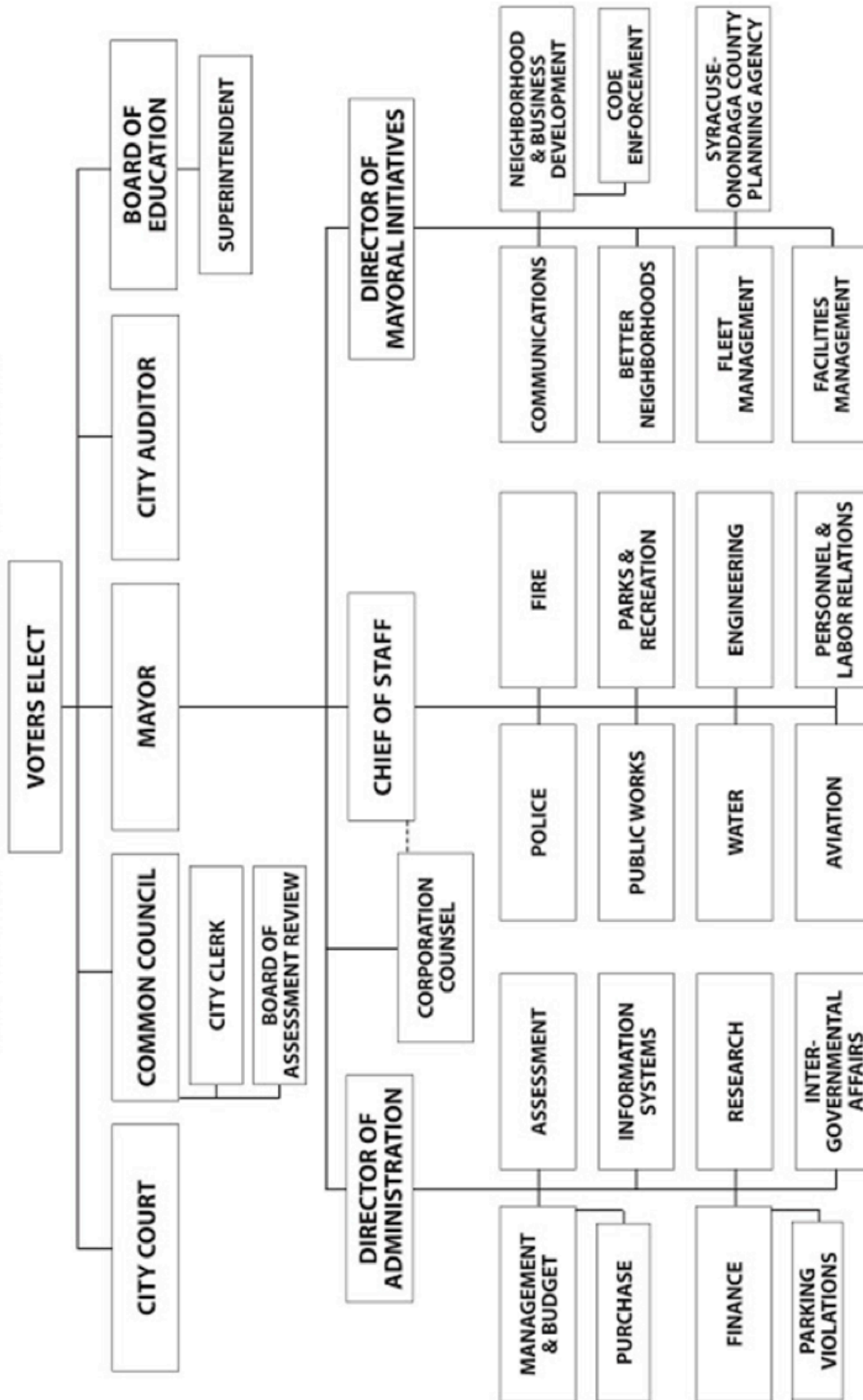
- The formation of the Syracuse - Onondaga County Planning Agency.
- The establishment of the Onondaga County Department of Aging and Youth and the [Human Rights Commission](#) as joint city-county agencies.
- The county's administration of the downtown central library branch of the Onondaga Public Library system. City branches are funded by the city.
- The City of Syracuse and Onondaga County agreed to consolidate economic development departments in 2011.
- The City of Syracuse merged its Purchasing Office into the County's in 2011
- In 2013 the City and County consolidated the City's planning services into the Syracuse – Onondaga County Planning agency.
- In 2014, Onondaga County opened discussions with Syracuse for merging their park and sewer systems, but have not yet consolidated
- In 2017, Onondaga County constructed a council dedicated to discussing shared services to comply with Gov. Andrew Cuomo's proposal to develop county consolidation plans across New York state.

Population and Economic Trends

The 2000 Census showed the population of the city of Syracuse as 146,435, a decrease from the 1990 Census figure of 163,860. The 2010 Census reveals a small but continuing decline with a population estimate of 145,170.¹⁹ The population in the city of Syracuse has continually decreased since the 1950s, 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, as immigrants and refugees from Eastern Europe, Asia, and Africa have settled. This trend 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. Syracuse is known for its educational and medical institutions.

ORGANIZATION OF THE CITY OF SYRACUSE



Financing Local Governments

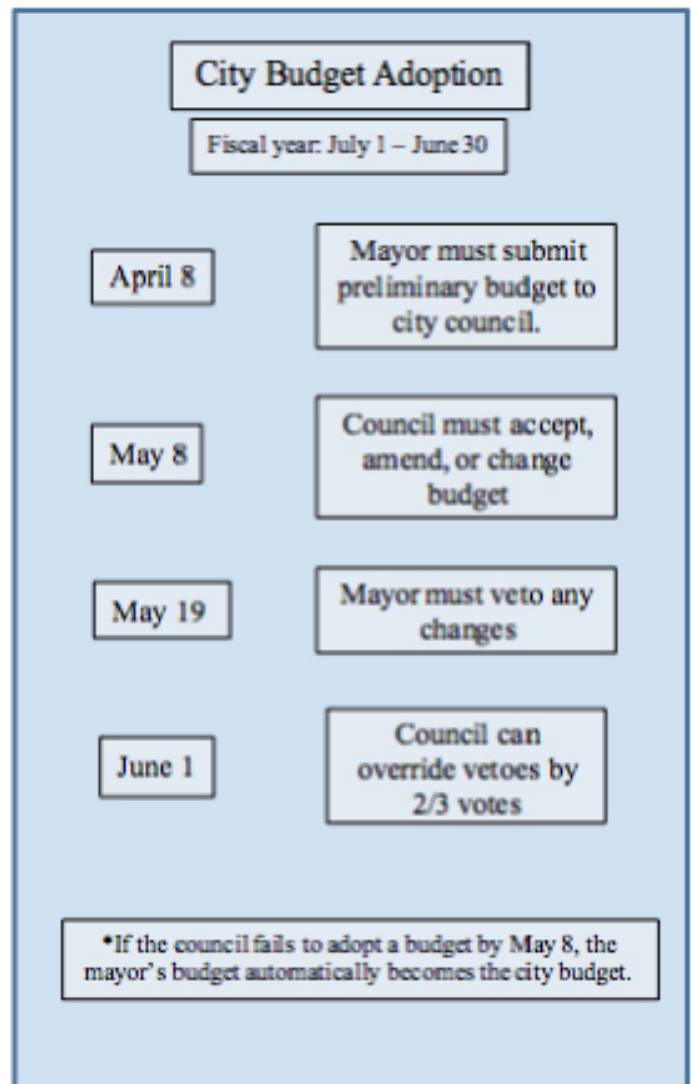
Chapter Seven

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 increases or decreases made to the budget by the legislative body, 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 proposes a budget and submits it to the city common council for review and adoption.

Figure 6.1



Town/Village 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 supervisor of each town and village must submit a budget to their boards. The document outlines appropriations (estimated expenses) for the coming year along with anticipated revenues and their sources. A public hearing is held to enable citizens to ask questions and offer their opinions. Town board members and village trustees can recommend changes. Once agreement is reached, the municipality adopts the budget.³

State law and the city and county charters set deadlines for the submission and adoption of the budget. Once the responsible body has adopted a budget, the administrative officials must follow it through the fiscal year, or seek a revision from the town or village board if change becomes necessary.

Revenue Sources

Town Budgets

Town Budgets

Town budgets are primarily divided into four categories:

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

Many expenses are coordinated by the town, but are essentially special district charges, such as fire protection, lighting, and water districts. The districts are established by the town on behalf of all residents living within the boundaries of the districts that receive the services and billed to those residents.

Village Budgets

Unlike town budgets, which have four separate funds, 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.

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

Property Taxes

The property tax is paid by individuals and business that own real estate within a municipality. When a budget is prepared, all 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. Revenue from property taxes is the last item entered into the budget each year.

Constitutional Tax Limit

The New York State Constitution sets an upper limit on the amount of property tax that can be raised by counties, cities, and villages: two percent of the full value of taxable property, averaged over the last five years. Towns have no constitutional limit.²⁰

Sales Tax

New York State imposes a four percent sales tax on certain purchases. Counties and cities may impose up to a combined total of an additional three percent sales tax.²¹ The state legislature can authorize counties to exceed the additional three percent limit.

In Onondaga County there is a four percent sales tax. The revenue from this tax is distributed to the county, city, towns, villages and school districts via a sharing agreement. In 2010, approximately \$293 million was collected from the four percent sales tax in Onondaga County. The county legislature determines the sales tax sharing agreement. In 2010 a 10-year agreement was made. Prior to this new agreement, Onondaga County utilized approximately 72% of sales tax revenues that it collected. The new agreement reduces the county's share to roughly 50%.

State and Federal Aid

The largest uses of state aid in localities include revenue sharing, the [Consolidated Highway Program](#) (CHIPs) funding for roads, and mortgage tax receipts. In 2009, the federal government provided Onondaga County with approximately \$4 million 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 U.S. Census Bureau. In 2013 and 2015, Syracuse city received \$300,000 from the Project Safe Neighborhoods federal grant. In 2016, the Onondaga Trails were granted \$5 million in federal funding for transportation projects. Many other government projects within Onondaga County receive federal aid.

Half of state mortgage tax funds go to municipalities, one quarter goes to the Central [New York](#)

Other Revenues

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

equipment also provide income.

In addition, local governments receive franchise fees and gross receipts taxes on public utilities, such as [National Grid](#) and cable companies. Some municipalities, with the approval of the state legislature, have adopted off-track betting revenues for which they receive 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 mechanism that allows property owners of an area to finance fire protection, sewers, water supply, and other services without taxing all residents of the town (see Chapter 3 for more information on special districts).

If a majority of owners representing the assessed property within an area petition the town board, local governments can create a special benefit district. Property owners within the district then pay for the services through a tax known as special assessments. This tax may be levied by assessed value, by the frontage length of the property, or as a flat rate called a unit charge.

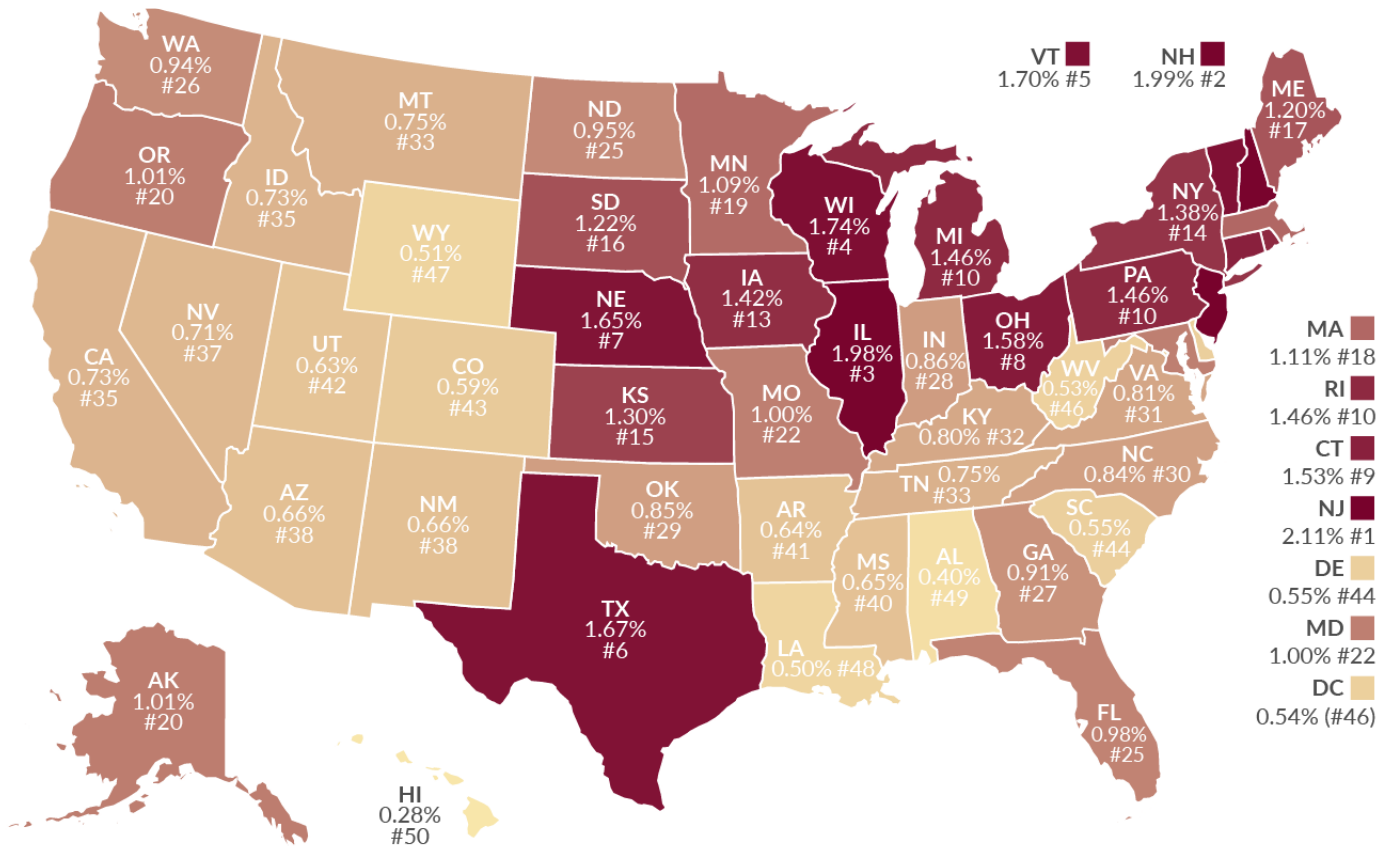
The finances of each special benefit district must be reported separately from other government income and expenses. There are more than 1,000 special benefit districts in the towns of Onondaga County.⁸

Assessment

After the budget has been approved, tax bills are sent to 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 filed. Property is valued as of Taxable Status Date (March 1 for the county, January 1 for the city). Property owners who disagree with the value assigned during the tentative roll may file a grievance. A Board of Assessment Review (BAR) hears grievances 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 without the assessor or the property owner present. The BAR may maintain or lower the assessment to a specific degree, but may not raise the assessment. Property owners who disagree with the decision by the BAR may file for Small Claims Assessment Review.

Figure 6.2
Mean Effective Property Tax Rates on Owner-Occupied Housing, 2014



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.

Each municipality has an elected or appointed assessor who is responsible for estimating the value of property within a city, town, or village. Assessors must obtain basic certification from New York State within three years of taking office. This requires the successful completion of seven basic certification courses that must be completed within the first three years. Continuing education is required to maintain certification – 24 credits annually, which is proposed to be reduced to 12. The [New York State Board of Real Property Services](#) oversees the courses.

Once the assessor estimates the market value of a property, the assessment is calculated. New York State law requires that all property within a municipality be assessed at a uniform percentage of market value. This percentage can range from one percent of market value up to 100%. This is referred to by municipalities as the equalization rate. The equalization rate is the percentage of the fair

market value of which a property is assessed for property tax. Most municipalities in Onondaga County have an equalization rate of 100%, but some municipalities have equalization rates ranging from two percent to 99%.

To calculate the full value of the property using the equalization rate, the home's value is divided by the equalization rate. A home assessed at \$15,900 in a community assessed at 20% would have a full value of $\$15,900 / 0.20 = \$79,500$.

It is unlikely that any house that 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 exist wide variations in the difference between the full value and the sale price. Each year the Office of Real Property Services (a division of the Department of Taxation and Finance) conducts a market survey of home sales in every municipality. This survey is used to identify the accuracy of the assessment in each municipality. This survey is also used to calculate the equalization rate.

The equalization rate accounts for the disconnect between the possibly outdated assessed value of a property and its market value. The equalization rate is tied to 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, which means properties are assessed at different percentages

Tax Exempt Property

Under state law, most properties owned by a government or by certain nonprofit organizations such as hospitals, religious bodies, human service organizations, and educational institutions, are not subject to property taxes. In addition, property owned by war veterans (see Table 6.1) and senior citizens may have a partial exemption from taxation.

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

Table 6.1

Alternative Veteran's Exemption Rates		
Requirements for Eligible Veterans	Percentage Assessed Value Reduction *	Maximum Exemption Rate Reduction (equalized)
Wartime Non-Combat	15%	\$12,000
Wartime Combat	25%	\$20,000
Disabled Combat	25% plus 50% of the disability rate multiplied by the assessed value	\$40,000

*Based on 2017 rates.

Source: New York State Department of Taxation and Finance; Onondaga County Finance Department

Tax Procedure



value of residential property. This reduction can range from five 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 public and senior citizen housing developments, as well as some properties under the ownership of [Industrial Development Agency](#), are subject to Payments in Lieu of Taxes (PILOTs).

During municipal budget preparation, governing bodies set the expenditure levels for each government department 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.

Property tax rates are calculated based on the amount of money needed from property taxes (the levy) and the taxable assessed value of all property within a municipality.

$$\text{Property tax rate} = \frac{\text{levy}}{\text{taxable assessed value}} \times 1000 \text{ mills}$$

For example, if a municipality needed to raise \$5 million in property taxes and had \$200 million in assessed value, the tax rate would be calculated as follows:

$$\text{Tax Rate} = \frac{5,000,000}{200,000,000 / 1,000} = 25.00 \text{ per thousand}$$

In this simplified example, a home assessed at \$80,000 would pay \$25.00 x (80,000 / 1,000) = \$2,000 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, which 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 due. In Onondaga County property tax bills are available to be viewed online, along with other information about each parcel including size, building style, location, owner, sales information, and more.

Local Political Parties and Elections

Chapter Eight

Political Parties

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

Recognized political parties in New York State are the [Democratic](#), [Republican](#), [Conservative](#), [Green](#), [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.²² New York State allows fusion candidates, which allows one candidate to be run by multiple parties. Other independent groups or new parties may organize to run one or more candidates in a single election as unrecognized parties.

Each of the recognized parties may hold primary elections, although a primary is required only when there is a contest within the party for the nomination to party position or public office. The recognized parties are required by state law to maintain county organizations. Only Republican, Democratic, and Conservative Parties have recognized county 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 2017, there were 433 such districts in Onondaga County, established by the Syracuse city council and by the town boards of the 19 towns in the county. Five of those districts are non-working districts. The average number of registered voters in each district is 603.²³ Each official political party may designate two committee persons 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. In cases where there is an opposition candidate, voters in the party make the final decision during the primary election. This process is repeated biennially in even years.

Town and ward committees are made up of the election district committeepersons. Each town had a committee, whereas ward committees are formed within the city of Syracuse. There are 17 town committees in Onondaga County, reduced from 19 in 2010, and 19 ward committees in Syracuse. Salina and Camillus have established wards as units for electing town councilors, but the political parties do not use these wards extensively 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 out the year-round political business. 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.



Source: Wikimedia Commons

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. The major political parties use all three processes. The respective town committees of each party can decide on their method of candidate selection.

Candidates for Congress, the State Legislature, and 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 12 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.

The Board of Elections

The Onondaga County Board of Elections is a county office administered by two commissioners, one Democrat 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 elected 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, maintaining extensive voter registration records, and 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 in Syracuse 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 must meet the following requirements:

- U.S. citizen (by birth or by naturalization)
- 18 years old by the date of the primary, general, or other election
- Reside at your present address for at least 30 days before an election
- Not be incarcerated or on parole of 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 six 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 state legislature sets the date for primary elections during the spring legislative session. The primary is usually conducted within the first two weeks in September; however, the New York State Board of Elections is currently considering moving primary elections to earlier in the year to make it easier for voters to use absentee ballots.²⁴ [General Election Day](#) is always the first Tuesday after the first Monday in November.

An individual may register to vote 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 when they apply for their driver's license, renew their driver's license, or 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 City School District is unique in being wholly within the city boundaries, 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 their respective 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 [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.

Part II – Services Education

Chapter Nine

State Supervision

Although not well known, the [University of the State of New York \(USNY\)](#) [Not to be confused with State University of New York (SUNY)] is the state's governmental umbrella for many aspects of education in the state, including K-12 schools, public and private colleges, museums and libraries. The Board of Regents heads USNY and determines education policy for New York state.

The state legislature elects 17 regents who serve five-year terms. The regents choose a commissioner of education who heads the [State Education Department](#) and also serves as the president of the University of the State of New York. Generally, the regents set policy while the commissioner has responsibility for carrying out those policies.

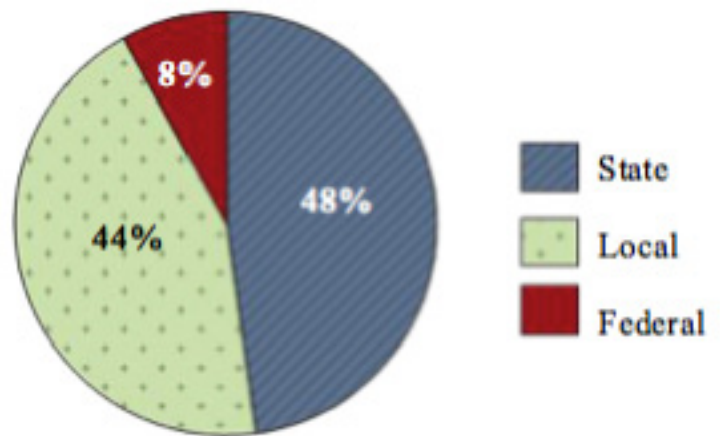
The department distributes state and federal aid to fund education. New York State provides financial assistance to public school districts using a formula that depends on a combined wealth ratio for each school district.

Local School Organization

There are 18 school districts in Onondaga County, with the Syracuse City School District (SCSD) at its center. There are approximately 70,000 K-12 students in the county, of which approximately 20,000 attend the city school district.

The SCSD is administered by the superintendent of schools, appointed by an elected seven-member Board of Education. Since 1980, the board members have

Figure 8.1
National average percentage of revenues for public elementary and secondary education by level of government, 2007-08²⁵



received a small stipend for their services. Because the SCSD budget is not submitted to voters for approval, it is dependent on the city administration for its funds. The amount 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, there are 17 other school districts in Onondaga County. Voters in these school districts elect people to serve on their board of education, which vary in size from five to nine members. Budgets are prepared by school officials and adopted at an annual 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. Each of these districts is administered by their own superintendent, appointed by the district's board of education.

BOCES

All school districts within Onondaga County, with the exception of SCSD, are members of a Board of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES); 15 districts are members of the [Onondaga-Cortland-Madison Board of Cooperative Educational Services \(OCM BOCES\)](#) district, which also includes Cortland County and part of Madison County. The remaining two districts, Jordan–Elbridge and Skaneateles, are members of the [Cayuga-Onondaga BOCES](#).

State law intended that each BOCES district serve as a way for districts to cooperate in providing services that they would not, individually, be able to in a cost-effective manner. That same law excludes the state's largest cities from being part of a BOCES. The OCM BOCES district, with 23 component school districts, is led by a district superintendent who works both for the BOCES and the State Education Department, supervised by the commissioner of education.

The state government provides aid to school districts that use certain BOCES services and enables individual districts to share expensive services cooperatively. OCM BOCES provides direct educational programming to about 2,200 students in career and technical education, alternative education, and special education. Through its instructional support programs, OCM BOCES provides staff development services, leadership support and technical assistance. BOCES also provides shared services to help districts save money, including cooperative purchasing, central business office services, food service management, energy management, and technology services.

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 areas and some underdeveloped rural areas on the outer perimeter. With over 19,000 students in K-12 and an additional 1,300 in pre-kindergarten,

the SCSD is the largest and most complex in the county.²⁶ 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.

Figure 8.2
SCSD Student Ethnicity
2012-13
American Indian
or Alaska Native

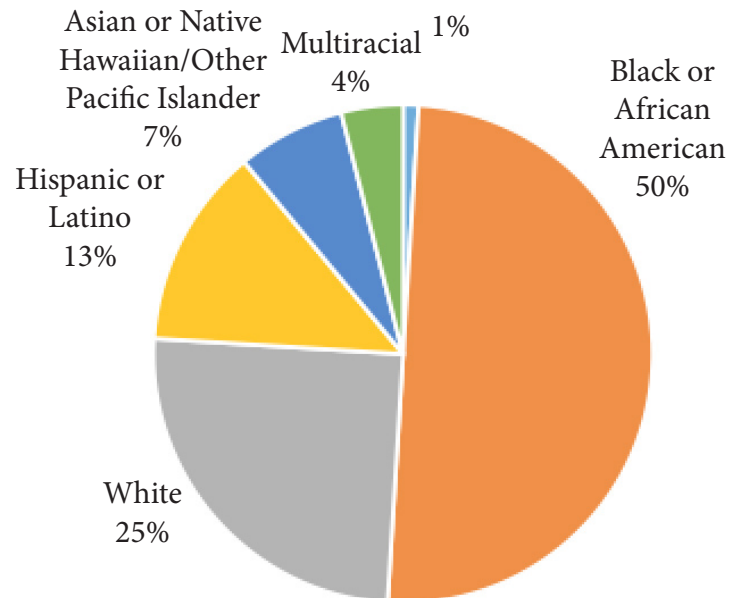
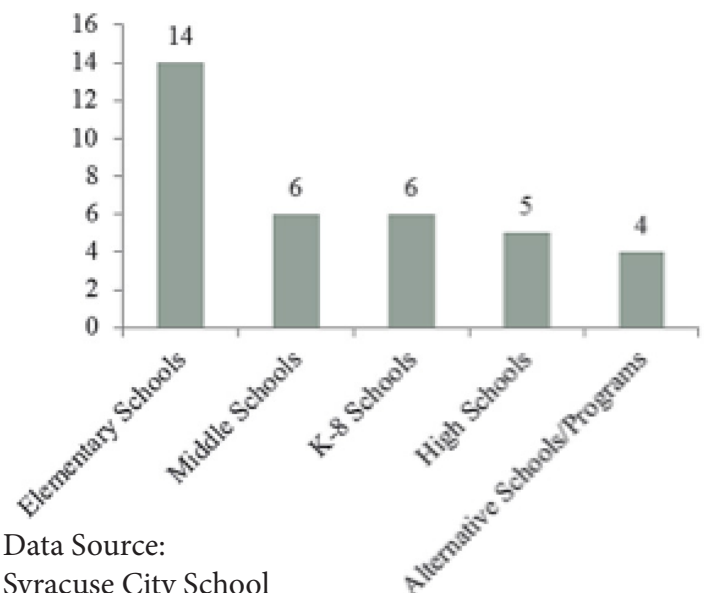
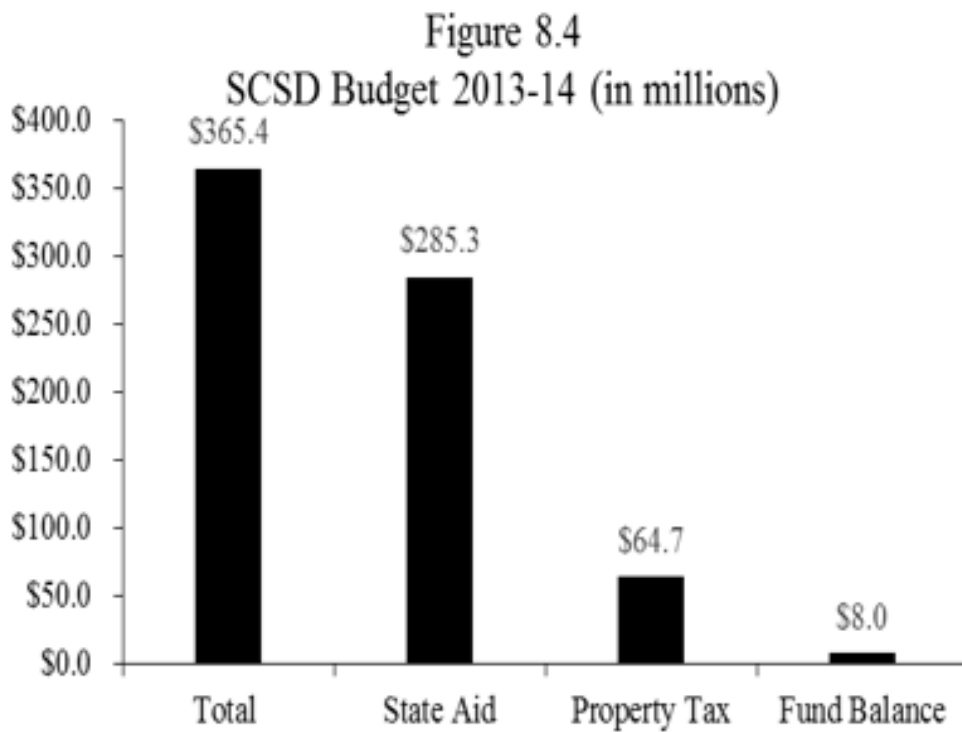


Figure 8.3
SCSD breakdown of schools, 2012



Data Source:
Syracuse City School



Data Source: [Syracuse City School District](#)

The SCSD is facing many of the same challenges that urban districts face everywhere: poverty and a diversity of heritage languages. More than 70 different languages are spoken in SCSD schools. The percentage of students of color has grown from 47 to 72 percent and the percentage of low-income children has increased from 50 to 84 percent. The district's [strategic plan, Great Expectations](#), outlines ambitious goals for improvements in student achievement and increased opportunities for success.

[Say Yes to Education, Inc.](#) is a nonprofit education foundation that aims to dramatically increase high school and college graduation rates for urban youth in the United States. Say Yes provides comprehensive support, including the promise of free college tuition to one of nearly 100 colleges and universities for those who meet residency, graduation and admission requirements. Although there are Say Yes chapters located in major cities along the east coast, the Syracuse chapter is the first Say Yes chapter to embrace an entire city school district, making it the largest school improvement program of its kind in the nation.²⁷

Suburban and Rural School Districts

Recognizing that the world has changed, a regional vision for college, career and citizenship readiness among the OCM BOCES districts has emerged. The regional vision is founded on an uncompromising and relentless commitment to preparing students for college, career and citizenship – in other words, preparing students for their future. At the heart of the regional vision are three commitments: providing instruction that engages, a culture that empowers, and technology that enables. Students can meet (and exceed) the New York State Learning Standards in ways that are meaningful and relevant, thus increasing the likelihood for future success.

The regional vision includes, but is not limited to, the creation of “New Tech High Schools” in the OCM BOCES. These schools will be places where the instruction is engaging, the culture is empowering and the technology is enabling. Surrounding these schools will be adult learning, where educators come to learn about creating schools where these qualities exist. Partnerships with higher education, business, and teacher preparation programs are integrated in the regional vision.

Non-Public Schools

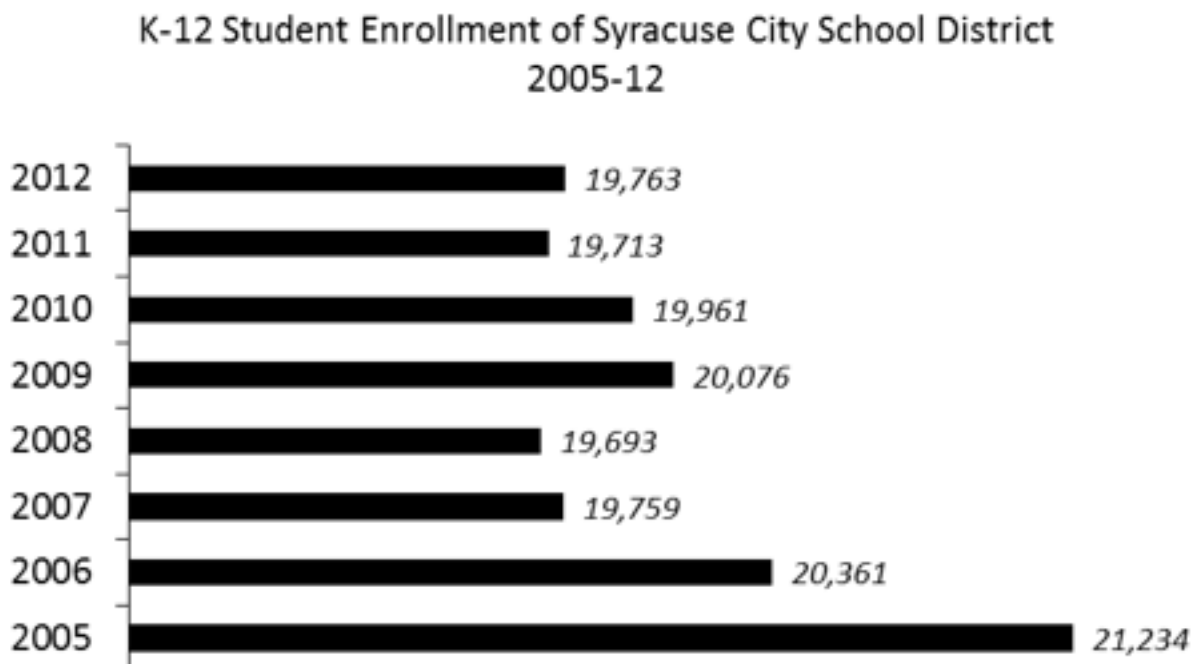
There are a variety of non-public schools serving students in the area. The Roman Catholic [Diocese of Syracuse](#) operates a parochial school system in the county, with 22 schools in seven counties across Central New York. Due to decreasing enrollment and tightening financial situations, a number of Catholic schools in the area have closed. The Diocese remains committed to providing rigorous, relevant and faith-based education opportunities in the community. Other private schools, both religion-based and secular, are available in the county including [Christian Brothers Academy](#), [Manlius-Pebble-Hill School](#) and [The New School](#). Several charter schools are now operating within the city, including the [Academy of Science](#) and [Southside Academy](#).

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](#). Onondaga Community College 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. [LeMoyne College](#) is also located in Onondaga County. In addition there are numerous business and vocational schools, which offer specialized training in a variety of fields.

Figure 8.5



The Courts

Chapter Ten

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](#), who acts 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 12 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 still the responsibility of the towns and villages they serve. State law mandates that the county reimburse justices who perform services outside the towns and villages of their own jurisdiction.²⁸

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

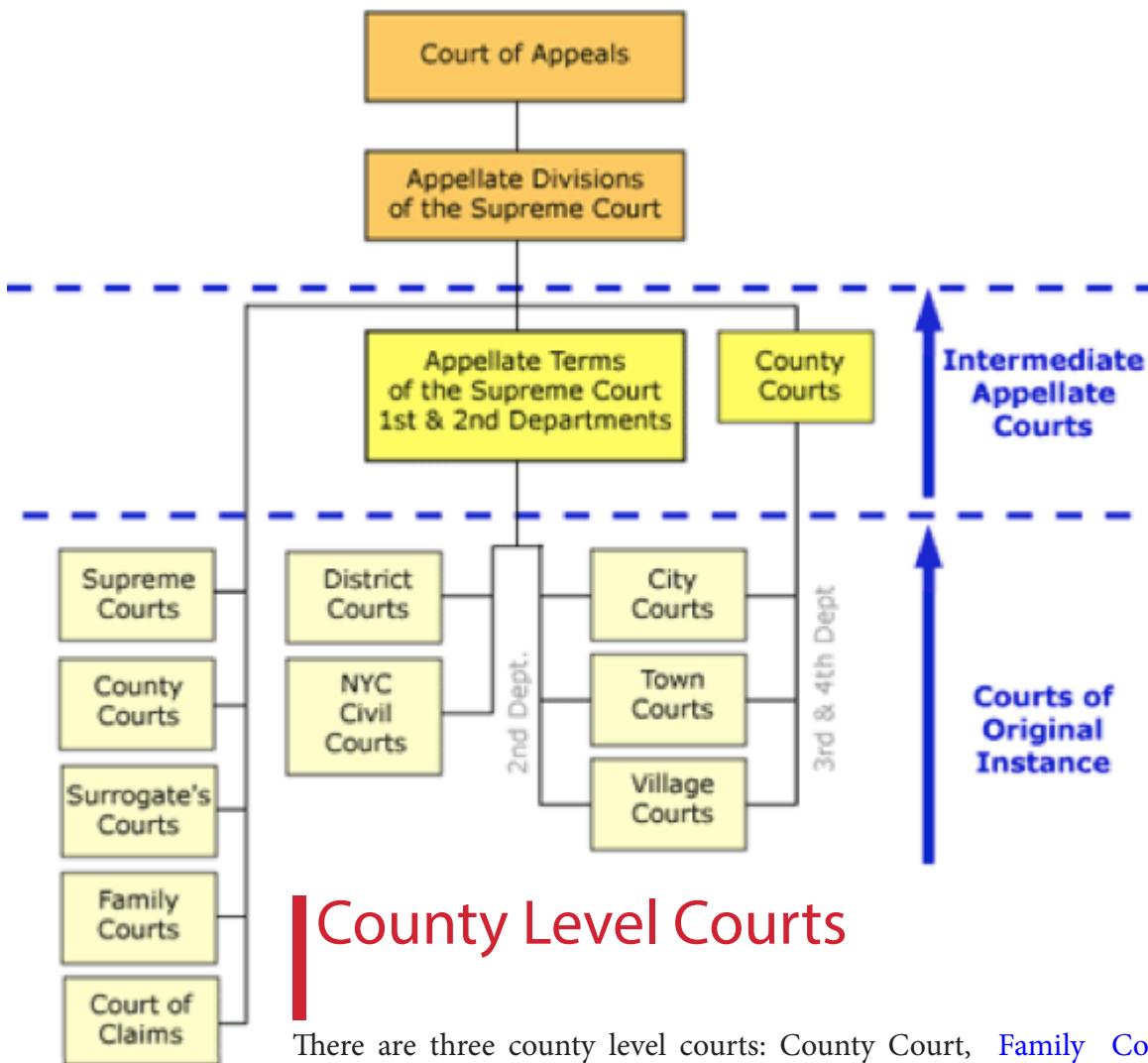
State Supreme Court

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 the lower courts. It also hears all divorce, separation, and annulment proceedings. Voters in the judicial district elect judges for 14-year terms. 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.

CIVIL COURT STRUCTURE



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 for each of the county courts are elected by county voters for a 10-year term to a specific court: county, family, or surrogate. 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 the court and a court stenographer who records verbatim minutes of testimony in all court sessions in Onondaga County. Only a small fraction of the testimony is actually transcribed.

City Court

Syracuse 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. There are also three separate city courts including [community treatment](#), and [domestic violence courts](#) for handling those specialized issues.

Town and Village Courts

[Justice courts](#) (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 required to complete a special training course. There is one or more justice 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. The appellate division fixes its term. 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;
- be a county resident at

least 18 years old;

- be free of any past felony conviction;
- be able to understand and communicate in English;
- 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 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 Attorney's Office

The [District Attorney](#) 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 attorney. 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.

The John H. Mulroy
Civic Center



Related Services

The [Probation Department](#) 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 the secure detention facility 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](#), 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 at every stage of the criminal process 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, and the Assigned Counsel Program, a non-profit corporation that administers a system under which private attorneys are assigned to represent indigent clients. In addition, [Hiscock Legal Aid Society](#) 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.

The Citizen Review Board (CRB) was established to ensure an open citizen-controlled process for reviewing grievances involving members of the Syracuse Police Department.

The CRB works to provide:

- public accountability over the powers exercised by members of the Syracuse Police Department;
- preservation of the integrity of the Syracuse Police Department;
- and a forum for citizen complaints regarding members of the Syracuse Police Department to be heard and reviewed fairly and impartially.

41 Health and Mental Health Services

Chapter Eleven

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, as well as state and federal funding.

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 (OCHD) 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 county health department is to protect and improve the health of all residents of Onondaga County through health promotion, disease prevention, public health preparedness, and assurance of a safe and healthy environment.

In 2010, the OCHD had a \$78 million budget with over \$42 million supporting Special Children's Services.²⁹ As of January 2011, the OCHD no longer provides health care services at the correctional facilities in Onondaga County. With this change in services, the OCHD had approximately 280 full-time and 20 part-time employees.³⁰ OCHD offers numerous health care programs and services for county residents. 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 the Forensic Laboratory and [Medical Examiner's Office](#)
- [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 assistance for families applying for public health insurance programs
- [Family Planning Services](#) including clinics for males and teens
- Health Promotion and Disease Prevention, which include programs for [cancer screening](#) and education, healthy living to reduce the impact of obesity, health education, injury prevention, [lead poisoning control](#), and [tobacco control](#)
- Healthy Families including programs for home visiting services to support healthy pregnancies and birth outcomes, Special Children Services such as Early Intervention, [Physically Handicapped](#)
- Children, and Preschool Special Education Programs, [immunization clinics](#), and [WIC clinics](#).
- [Surveillance and Statistics](#) including birth and death records
- Volunteer Services

Planning of Health Services

The [Central New York Health Systems Agency \(CNYHSA\)](#), 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 needs 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 databases and research capabilities, CNYHSA offers planning and consulting services that 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.



Syracuse Community Health Center - East

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.

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 contracted and direct services. Contracted services include [mental health](#), [developmental disability](#), and chemical dependency. There are 24 providers that the OCDMH contracted with in 2010 including, [ARC of Onondaga](#), [ENABLE](#), and [Syracuse Behavioral Healthcare, Inc.](#) The direct services of the OCDMH include correctional and behavioral health services, children's clinic, children's day treatment, student assistance program, and assisted outpatient treatment.

Social Welfare and Social Services

Chapter Twelve

The Onondaga County Department of Social Services was established by the consolidation of city and town social welfare programs in 1938. Effective January 1, 2014 the County created the [Department of Social Services - Economic Security \(DSS-ES\)](#) as part of its health and human services reorganization. The New York State Office of Temporary Assistance and Disability, Department of Children and Family Services, and Department of Health, set functions and policies for the department. Adherence to state and federal standards ensures financial support from state and federal sources.

In addition to establishing uniform rules for all local departments, these state departments supervise local departments and distribute all federal and state funds.

- Administration -

The [Commissioner of Department of Social Services - Economic Security](#), who is appointed by the County Executive, heads the department. The commissioner's office is responsible for the overall administration of the department. In 2014, the department employed 420 people.

The major divisions within the department are:

- Temporary Assistance
- SNAP
- HEAP
- Day Care
- Medicaid
- Child Support/Enforcement
- Fraud Investigations
- Fair Hearings
- Systems

- Temporary Assistance -

Temporary Assistance provides cash assistance. 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.

- SNAP -

The mission of SNAP is to reduce hunger and malnutrition among the members of low-income households. SNAP is intended as a supplement to other sources of income such as Temporary Assistance, Social Security, Unemployment benefits, and wages.

- HEAP -

HEAP administers financial assistance to low-income households to defray the cost of home energy. Beneficiaries of the program include: Temporary Assistance, SNAP, and low-income non-temporary assistance households.

- Day Care -

This program area provides day care subsidies for households on Temporary Assistance and low income working parents.

- Medicaid -

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

- 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.

- Fair Hearings -

Any individual questioning an eligibility decision in any of the public benefits programs listed above has the right to ask for a fair hearing. NYS administrative judges preside over the process.

- Fraud Investigations -

The Fraud Investigation Unit at Social Services-Economic Security investigates all reported allegations of fraud in the Temporary Assistance (Welfare), SNAP (Food Stamps), Medicaid, HEAP and Day Care programs. The Fraud Investigation Unit does not investigate Social Security, Disability, Workmans Comp, Unemployment or Section 8 as they are administered by other agencies.

- 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.

The Onondaga County Department of Children and Family Services is responsible for providing social and mental health services to children living in Onondaga County, in accordance with existing federal and state laws. Operationally, services are provided through the five divisions of the department:

- Child Welfare
- Juvenile Justice
- Children's Mental Health
- School-Based Initiatives
- Youth Bureau

- Child Welfare -

Child Welfare is responsible for investigating allegations of child abuse and neglect, and for taking the necessary action to ensure that children are safe in their homes. Services can range from in-home preventive social services to foster care and adoptions.

- Juvenile Justice -

The Juvenile Justice Unit works with youth ages 7-15 who are truant or engaged in runaway, ungovernable, or delinquent behaviors. The unit operates both community based diversion services, as well as the Hillbrook Detention Center and Non-Secure Detention Services.

- Children's Mental Health -

Children's Mental Health services are intended to provide high-quality, community based mental health services and support to children (and their families) with emotional and behavioral challenges. The ACCESS Team, operated by this division, links families with available community resources. The Mental Health Clinic and Day Treatment Program provide direct mental health services.

- School-Based Initiatives

Children's Mental Health services are intended to provide high-quality, community based mental health services and support to children (and their families) with emotional and behavioral challenges. The ACCESS Team, operated by this division, links families with available community resources. The Mental Health Clinic and Day Treatment Program provide direct mental health services.

Planning and Development

Chapter Thirteen

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 the changes that take place in a community. To be effective, planning should come first followed by zoning and development according to an accepted plan. Historically, however, 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 (who need not be technically trained) to advise the local legislative body on community development. The board may employ a professional planning staff.

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 Onondaga county legislature. Although a master plan is not binding, the actions of a planning board, in theory, should fit the framework of the master plan.

Town and Village Planning

Most towns and villages in Onondaga County have planning boards, although town board members in a small town may perform this function. Typically, expertise is provided by municipal engineers and building inspectors, and other staff and consultants may be hired to provide expertise. Planning boards have either five or seven members appointed by the town board or village mayor. Planning boards usually meet once or twice a month or as needed. 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 – see Figure 12.1). The county or city may have review over certain subdivisions.

Most towns and villages have a comprehensive master plan or are working on such plans. Only the towns of Geddes, Fabius, Spafford, and Otisco and the villages of Fabius, Solvay, and Jordan have no plan. NYS mandates classes for planning and zoning boards.

Figure 12.1

Example of subdivision plats, Memphis, NY



Source: Sweet's 1874 Atlas of Onondaga County, N.Y.

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.

Established in 2010, [the Syracuse Bureau of Planning and Sustainability](#) is responsible for major planning and urban design projects, and for planning and executing sustainability initiatives of the mayor. In 2014, City Planning staff successfully pursued adoption of the [City's Comprehensive Plan 2040](#), which creates long-

City Planning

Syracuse Commission members are appointed by the mayor for five-year terms. The commission must approve or deny all applications for subdivisions and re-subdivisions in both the city and within a three-mile radius outside city boundaries. The Syracuse Commission drafts zoning ordinance amendments for approval by the Syracuse Common Council. Affirmative decisions of the planning commission may be overruled by a majority vote of the common council, except for decisions concerning the changing of streets, which require a two-thirds vote by the council.



Source: Syracuse - City Planning Division

term, comprehensive goals to guide future operating budgets and Capital Improvement Programs in addition to departmental operations, City regulations, and other regional plans and funding decisions.

In 2013, the Syracuse Bureau of Planning and Sustainability was consolidated into the Syracuse Onondaga County Planning Agency (SOCPA) to better share services with the Onondaga County Government.

City-County Planning Agency

The [Syracuse-Onondaga County Planning Agency \(SOCPA\)](#), established in 1968, is the combined city planning commission and county planning board. 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 SOCPA board members may or may not have professional planning experience, the 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.

SOCPA has worked since 2009 on the [Onondaga County Sustainable Development Plan](#). This plan promotes responsible planning and growth countywide. The focus is on the importance of good land use planning as a critical component of sustainability.

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.

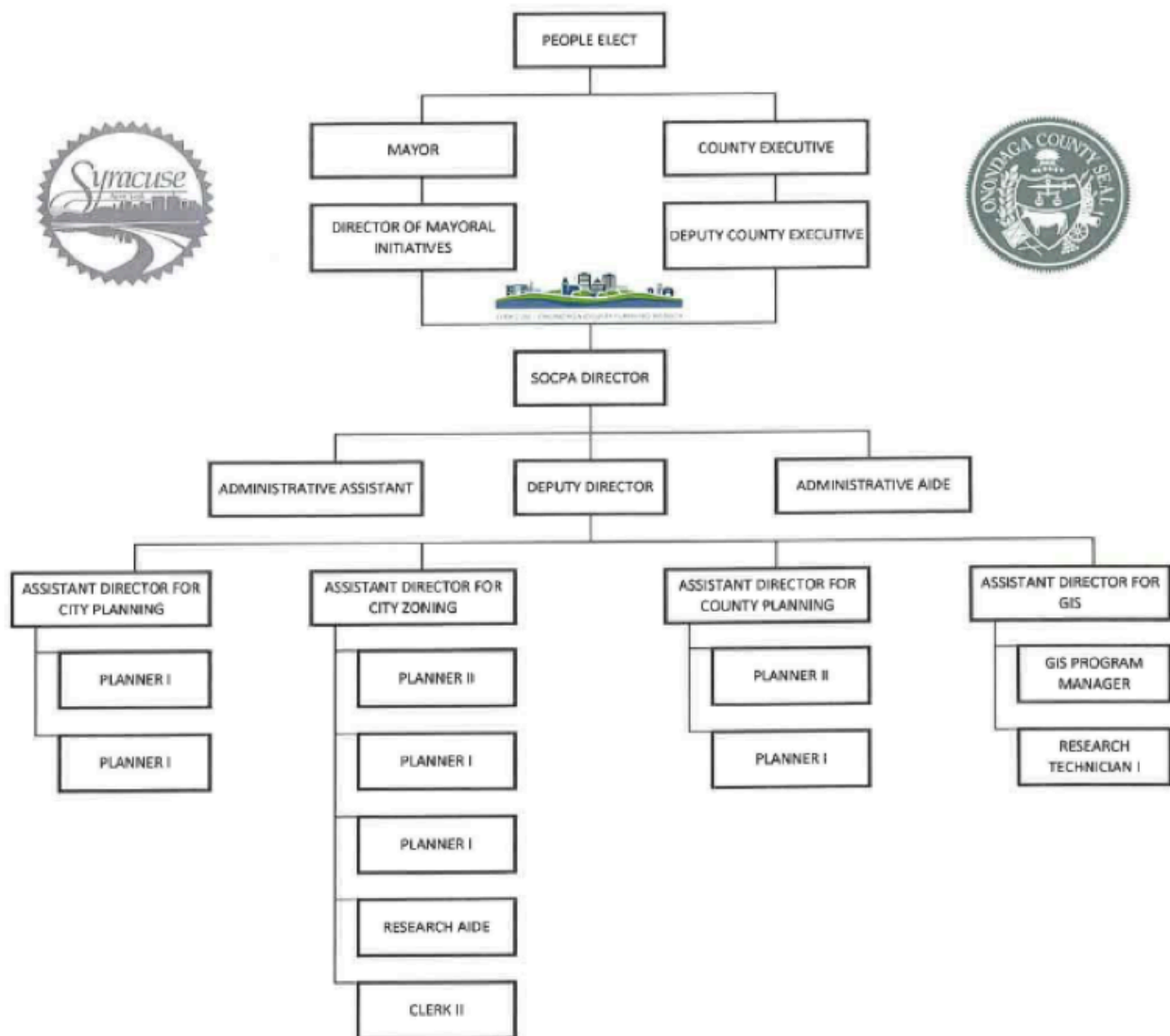
By law, zoning regulations must be made in accordance with a comprehensive plan or, in the case of a city, with "a well-considered plan."³¹ New developments often have been zoned piecemeal as they grew on the outskirts of cities and villages. Towns are not empowered to zone for villages within their boundaries. Zoning regulations vary widely from one municipality to another and can 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 the county planning board 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 zoning ordinances is the responsibility of a local building inspector or enforcement officer.



Source: Syracuse - Onondaga County Planning Agency

Zoning Board of Appeals

Towns, villages and cities must establish a Zoning Board of Appeals. 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 and 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 city mayor and by the town or village boards sometimes with recommendations from the chief executive officer. Members of the zoning board of appeals are usually unpaid, and 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.

State law establishes the authority of zoning boards. A 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 zoning board of appeals.

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 Syracuse 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

The legal division of the NYS Department of State provides assistance in the 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.

The [Legislative Commission on Rural Resources](#) proposes legislation to revise state land use statutes. The commission is assisted in this effort by the NYS 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](#) is made up of five participating counties; Cayuga, Cortland, Madison, Onondaga and Oswego. A board of directors is appointed by the five member counties. The board employs a staff of professional planners and other administrative personnel funded by contributions from member counties, state and federal grants, and contract service revenue.

Development

The Community Development Grant Block Program (CDBG) was established by 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.

The city of Syracuse and the 34 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, much like the city of Syracuse.³²

In 2009 the CDBG was funded by the [American Reinvestment and Recovery Act \(ARRA\)](#), which was created to provide affordable housing, stimulate economic growth and create jobs. In 2009 the city of Syracuse received \$1,650,797, Onondaga County, \$586,066, and the Town of Clay, \$77,553 in funding.³³

Infrastructure Improvements

Approximately 50 percent of the CDBG 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 percent of the CDBG for housing activities and the funding is used to match other housing rehabilitation and construction funding programs. Onondaga County allocates about 20 percent 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:

The [Onondaga County Homeownership Program](#) provides new construction or the rehabilitation of existing houses for sale to first time, low-income homebuyers in the county. Prospective buyers who qualify are selected through a lottery system and can purchase the new or rehabilitated homes with a subsidy of up to \$40,000.

Housing Rehabilitation

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

1. [Safe Housing Assistance Project for the Elderly](#) offers eligible homeowners a maximum grant of \$10,000 to cover the costs of various home repairs.
2. [Neighborhood Rehabilitation Program](#) offers grants to repair privately owned residential structures in targeted low and moderate-income neighborhoods.
3. RAMP Program for handicapped accessibility
4. Sewer Hookups

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 is spent on the [Commercial Rehabilitation Program](#), which is structured on a matching basis; CDBG matches the owner's contribution dollar-for-dollar. The maximum grant from CDBG is \$15,000 and is used for exterior improvements only, within designated low-income target areas.

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 Fourteen

Parks and Recreation

Local governments in Onondaga County have varying responsibilities for providing parks and 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](#). The state also oversees 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-round 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

A diverse system of over 6,000 acres of parks and historic sites are administered by the Onondaga County Department of Parks and Recreation. Led by a professionally certified commissioner; the department's organizational structure focuses on recreation and public programs, planning and development, natural resources, and operations and maintenance. Policy and budgetary issues are decided in liaison

© F.O.C.U.S. Greater Syracuse, Inc. 2015

with the Environmental Conservation and Parks Committee of the county legislature.

[Onondaga Lake](#), [Rosamond Gifford Zoo](#), and [Beaver Lake Nature Center](#) are the cornerstones of a year-round operation. Also featured are [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.

Hundreds of special events and programs, including Golden Harvest Festival, Lights on the Lake and Jamesville Balloon Fest, take place throughout the year enhancing the quality of life for residents and attracting visitors from throughout the Northeast and beyond. In addition, Onondaga County Parks hosts various regional sporting



City of Syracuse

The City of Syracuse offers city residents year-round active and passive recreational opportunities. The city of Syracuse has approximately 172 municipally-owned and maintained parks, fields, inactive cemeteries, medians/traffic islands (most of which are landscaped and contribute to neighborhood green space), and natural areas. The city also operates two golf courses and three winter ice-rinks, including one in the center of downtown in [Clinton Square](#).

A parks commissioner, appointed by the mayor, administers the department, and is advised by a parks and recreation committee of the Syracuse Common Council. 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 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 an entertainment series. The department also assists many neighborhood and community recreation organizations.

events such as Ironman 70.3, Irongirl Triathlon and the Empire State Marathon annually.

Features of the park system include the East Shore Recreation Trail at Onondaga Lake Park with bike and skate rentals; boat launch and marina and the scenic West Shore Trail. Cross-country ski trails, youth group camping, horseback riding and sleigh rides at Highland Forest. Nearly 400 outdoor programs, nature walks and wellness activities, including cross-country skiing and snowshoeing happen at Beaver Lake. While dozens of reserved picnic areas and several banquet facilities can be found throughout the system.

Organized “Friends” groups support the parks operations and help cover a portion of the costs associated with running sites like Rosamond Gifford Zoo and Beaver Lake Nature Center. Onondaga County Parks attracts nearly three million visitors per year.

Towns and Villages

The towns and villages vary widely in the recreational opportunities they support for their residents. Some provide financial support or parkland 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.

Public Safety

Chapter Fifteen

Fire Protection

Professional firefighters staff city of Syracuse fire departments. Towns and villages have either all-volunteer or a combination of volunteer and paid firefighters. New York State and Onondaga County provide training at local fire stations as well as at the Public Safety Training Center at Onondaga Community College (OCC), a component of the college's Division of Continuing Education. In addition to providing training, the county government, through the [Onondaga County Department of Emergency Management Fire Bureau](#), maintains a hazardous materials response team, fire investigation unit, and juvenile fire setter intervention program. The director of the fire bureau enforces and administers the [New York State Uniform Fire Prevention and Building Code](#) in county-owned or operated facilities.



Source: Syracuse Firefighters Association

Onondaga County

The director of the Onondaga County Department of Emergency Management Fire Bureau oversees mutual aid and training in Onondaga County. Mutual aid reciprocal agreements are established for personnel and equipment between county fire departments. Central dispatching through the county's emergency center facilitates this function.

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 the funding of the [National Fire Protection Association](#) compliant-training at OCC, the 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 Group](#) is a cooperative effort among six fire departments, the county health department and the office of emergency management. It is directed by two deputy fire coordinators and provides technicians trained 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, now a unit of the Department of Emergency Management.

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 firefighters are responsible for the job of fire protection in the city. The mayor appoints fire chief. Under the city charter the fire department has the following responsibilities: fight fires, investigate the causes of fires, and enforce the fire prevention code. Daily in-service training is provided for firefighters.

The [Syracuse Fire Department](#) was reorganized between 1972 and 1977. In 2011 there were 12 fire stations in the city, compared to 18 in 1969.³⁴ 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.

Table 14.1
City of Syracuse
Fire/EMS Dispatch Data

YEAR	TOTAL
2007	18,888
2008	19,114
2009	20,512
2010	24,682

Source: 2010 Department of Emergency Communications Annual Report

An elaborate fire prevention program is also sponsored by the fire department. This includes code enforcement; in-service inspections of residences and businesses; fire awareness programs in homes, schools, and by 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 based on the results of their civil service exam scores. Retirement plans are provided through the city by the New York State Police and Fire Retirement System.

In 2011 the city fire department answered over 25,000 alarms, of which over 100 were major fires.³⁵

Towns and Villages

Outside the city of Syracuse, fire protection is provided through special fire protection districts. Like school districts, these districts may cross county lines, town, and/or village borders. All of the 19 towns receive fire protection through these districts.

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 assume debt. The department elects officers and is responsible for the budget. The town provides revenue for the department by adding a fire tax to all property tax bills. The third type of district is a village department, with the fire department serving as an arm of the village government.

As of July 2011 there are 56 fire departments serving throughout Onondaga County. That number could decrease as some departments have discussed mergers with some nearby 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.

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.

Table 14.2
2010 Call Volumes

	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUNE	JULY	AUG	SEPT.	OCT.	NOV.	DEC.	TOTAL	%	9-1-1
9-1-1 Wireline Calls	9,105	9,189	9,218	9,088	9,634	10,885	7,946	10,278	10,193	11,434	8,773	8,786	114,529	21.0%	30.9%
9-1-1 VOIP Calls	2,625	2,108	2,617	2,845	3,484	3,434	3,623	3,453	2,922	2,705	2,675	3,014	35,505	6.5%	9.5%
9-1-1 Wireless Calls	16,396	13,541	16,789	17,638	20,192	19,487	21,277	21,598	18,615	17,762	17,645	20,209	221,149	40.6%	59.6%
9-1-1 Total Calls	28,126	24,838	28,624	29,571	33,310	33,806	32,846	35,329	31,730	31,901	29,093	32,009	371,183	68.1%	100.0%
7 Digit by Agency	4,747	4,229	5,513	5,529	6,254	6,055	5,924	6,237	5,896	5,709	5,249	5,407	66,749	12.3%	
Syracuse Police	3,221	3,027	3,323	3,628	4,180	4,109	4,323	4,386	3,987	4,047	3,648	3,940	45,819	8.4%	
Town/Village Police	3,270	2,811	3,307	3,427	3,663	3,902	4,001	4,103	3,726	3,525	3,399	3,179	42,313	7.8%	
County Sheriff	348	319	388	391	463	505	502	491	476	424	441	422	5,170	0.9%	
State Police	330	300	318	345	368	375	404	342	471	479	361	326	4,419	0.8%	
Syracuse Fire/EMS	578	572	572	621	662	764	641	740	856	761	700	681	8,148	1.5%	
County Fire/EMS															
Operator Assisted*	71	63	99	108	100	121	113	129	102	93	92	94	1,185	0.2%	
TOTAL CALLS	40,691	36,159	42,144	43,620	49,000	49,637	48,754	51,757	47,244	46,939	42,983	46,058	544,986	100.0%	

*-Citizens dial "O" and are relayed to the 9-1-1 Center

Source: 2010 DoEC annual report

New York State's Role

State government's role in criminal justice concentrates on the New York 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, Cicero, 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 police officers and supervisory personnel attend training at the special regional Police Academy at Onondaga Community College.

County

The Onondaga County Sheriff's Office is the chief law enforcement agency of county government. The office consists of three departments; Civil/Administrative, Custody (county jail), and Police. The budget in 2011 was an estimated \$76 million.⁵

The department has 573 personnel.⁵ The sheriff, who is an elected official, appoints employees to all positions from Civil Service examination lists, and all new appointees must attend the police, custody, civil, or courts training academy. The only exceptions to Civil Service rules are the Undersheriff, three Department Chief's, and the sheriff's executive secretary.

The Onondaga County Sheriff's Office primarily patrols areas of the county outside the city of Syracuse. It has three community police stations in the towns of Onondaga, Salina and Clay, and several micro stations at various locations. In 2010 deputies responded to more than 95,803 calls for service and drove over three million miles on patrol.³⁵

The sheriff's police department is comprised of the following components: Patrol and Criminal Investigations divisions, [Abused Persons Unit](#), Records and Special Enforcement sections (includes helicopter pilots and observers, divers and boat patrols, snowmobile patrols), Canine, Traffic and Community Response units, Community Relations Section officers, Crime Prevention deputies, School Resource Officers, [SWAT](#), and the [Explosive Disposal Unit](#).)

The sheriff's office, city police, State Police, and town and village police agencies use the Onondaga County [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 law enforcement agencies in the county as well as state and federal agencies. In 2010, there were 10,949 inmates received at the Justice Center.³⁵ The facility utilizes the 'podular' direct supervision design, which has a custody division deputy directly responsible for 60 inmates within a given pod. The population is separated by four categories; male, female, adult, and minor. Youth under 16 years of age are incarcerated at the [Hillbrook Juvenile Detention Center](#) operated by the county Probation Department. Patients with mental illnesses are confined in a Behavioral Health Unit supervised by both custody division deputies and [Correctional Medical Care, Inc. \(CMC\)](#) by contract. An infirmary with staff from CMC also provides for inmates convalescing, limiting the need for hospital details by custody division 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](#), the [Onondaga County Correctional Facility at Jamesville](#), or to a federal prison.

The Sheriff's police division participates in Operation Impact with deputies patrolling 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 and three deputy chiefs, who are appointed by the police chief. The department employs 481 police officers and 118 civilian personnel.⁵

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. Promotion through the ranks for police officers is determined by civil service examinations, length of employment, and review by the police Chief. The training division is responsible for basic police recruit training as well as coordinating 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 the Syracuse Police Department in a statewide 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 countywide and regional drug trafficking enforcement efforts.

The department is involved in youth programs such as traffic and bicycle safety, DARE, 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 Metropolitan Commission on Aging, 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. Five of the 19 towns have police departments: Cicero, Camillus, DeWitt, Geddes and Manlius.

Eight of the 15 villages have departments. The villages without departments are Elbridge, Tully, Fabius, Camillus, Minoa, Fayetteville, and Manlius. In 2008 the town of Clay merged its police force with the Onondaga County Sheriff's Office in an effort to control expenses.³⁶ This merger reflects a growing trend of government service consolidation in the county and the state.

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

Metropolitan Progress

For the past several decades 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, plus the regional crime lab, [Criminal History Arrest / Incident Reporting Services \(CHAIRS\)](#) shared computer information system, and the city/county Abused Persons Unit. Syracuse no longer has a helicopter and shares this service with the county. Town and village police departments have also been upgraded and modernized during the past 10 years.

Water Supply

Chapter Sixteen

Role of the State

Water quality standards are set by the [New York State Department of Environmental Conservation \(DEC\)](#). The agency 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.³⁷ 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 percent of the residents of Onondaga County with water.³⁸ The remaining 10 percent get their water from local municipal wells in the villages of Baldwinsville, East Syracuse, Marcellus, Tully and Pompey, private community systems, or their individual wells.

Metropolitan Water Board

The [Metropolitan Water Board \(MWB\)](#), 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 is

the administrative body of the Onondaga County Water District, which is administered by the Metropolitan Water Board and serves municipal corporations and public authorities. 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 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.³⁹ The system became operational in June 1967. Completed and operational by the end of 1968 were three pumping stations, the [Lake 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 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 amount that must be raised by assessment 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 demand can be met.

As a result of an act of the Syracuse Common 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.

Onondaga County Water Authority

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, purchased wholesale from the MWB, and 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 EPA required all surface water supplies to be filtered. However, the state DOH has given 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.

OCWA supplies water to 340,000 residential customers. OCWA purchases approximately 17 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.

OCWA sells water to village and town water districts for resale. In 1980 OCWA 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. In 2007 OCWA supplied over 40 million gallons daily to its 340,000 residential customers.

The City of Syracuse

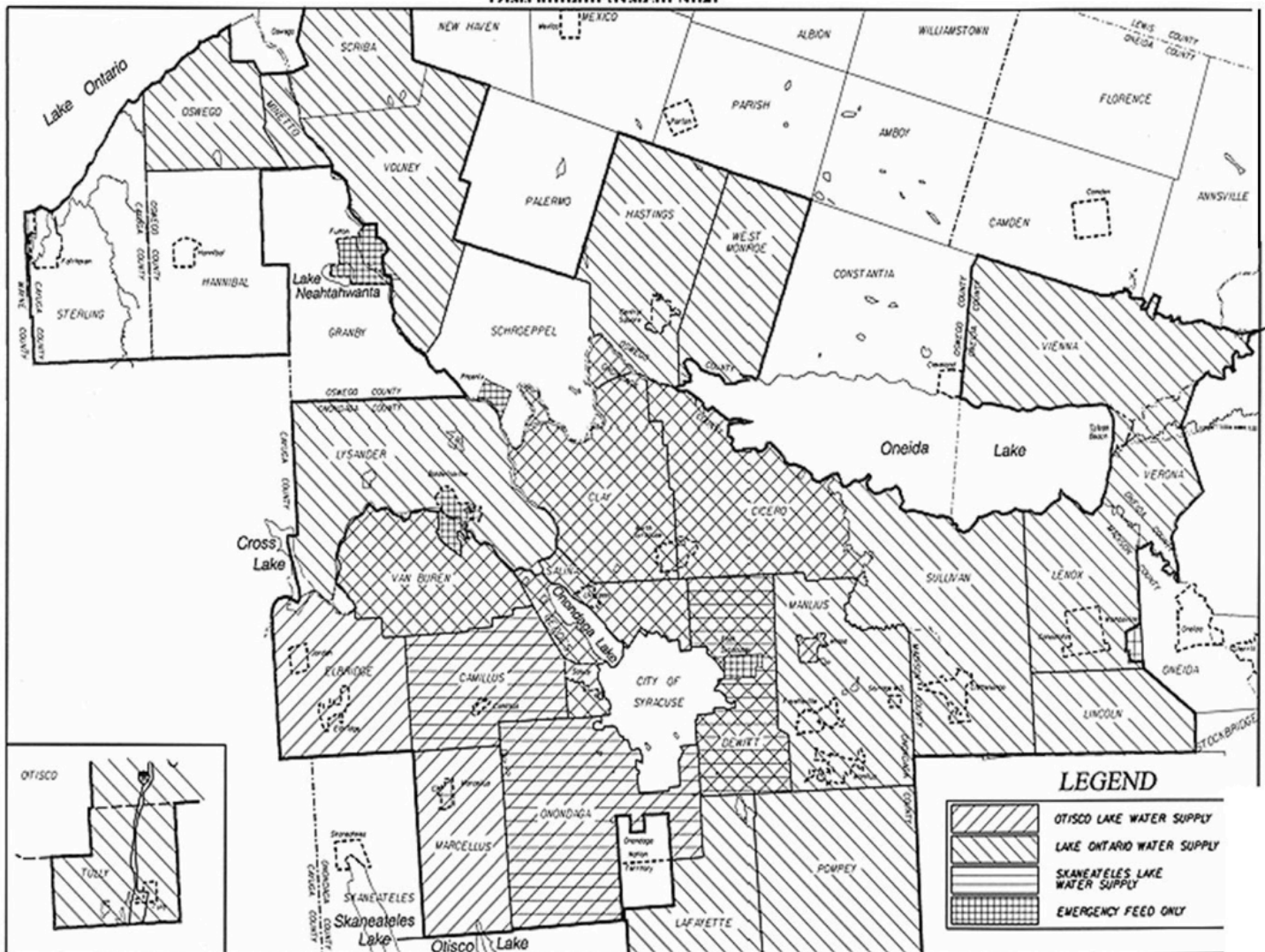
The City of Syracuse oversees the distribution of water from Skaneateles Lake to supply the needs of the city. City water lines distribute water from Skaneateles Lake to the village of Skaneateles and several water districts in the town of Skaneateles, a few customers in the villages of Elbridge and 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 water supplied by the MWB from Lake Ontario.

During 2009, the total amount of water entering the city of Syracuse water system was 12,578 million gallons, all 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 more than 26 million gallons a day. This amount is well within the WMB's state DEC permit, which limits withdrawal to 62.5 million gallons per day. Water flows through three conduits that run from Skaneateles Lake to Syracuse (the first was laid in 1894, the third in 1927). Law limits the amount that may be withdrawn from this lake. If the needs of the city should exceed the maximum amount allowed, the city has arrangements to purchase additional water from the MWB.

Supply, Treatment & Quality Assurance

Trained water treatment plant staff continues 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.

Map 4
Distribution System Map



Waste Control

Chapter Seventeen

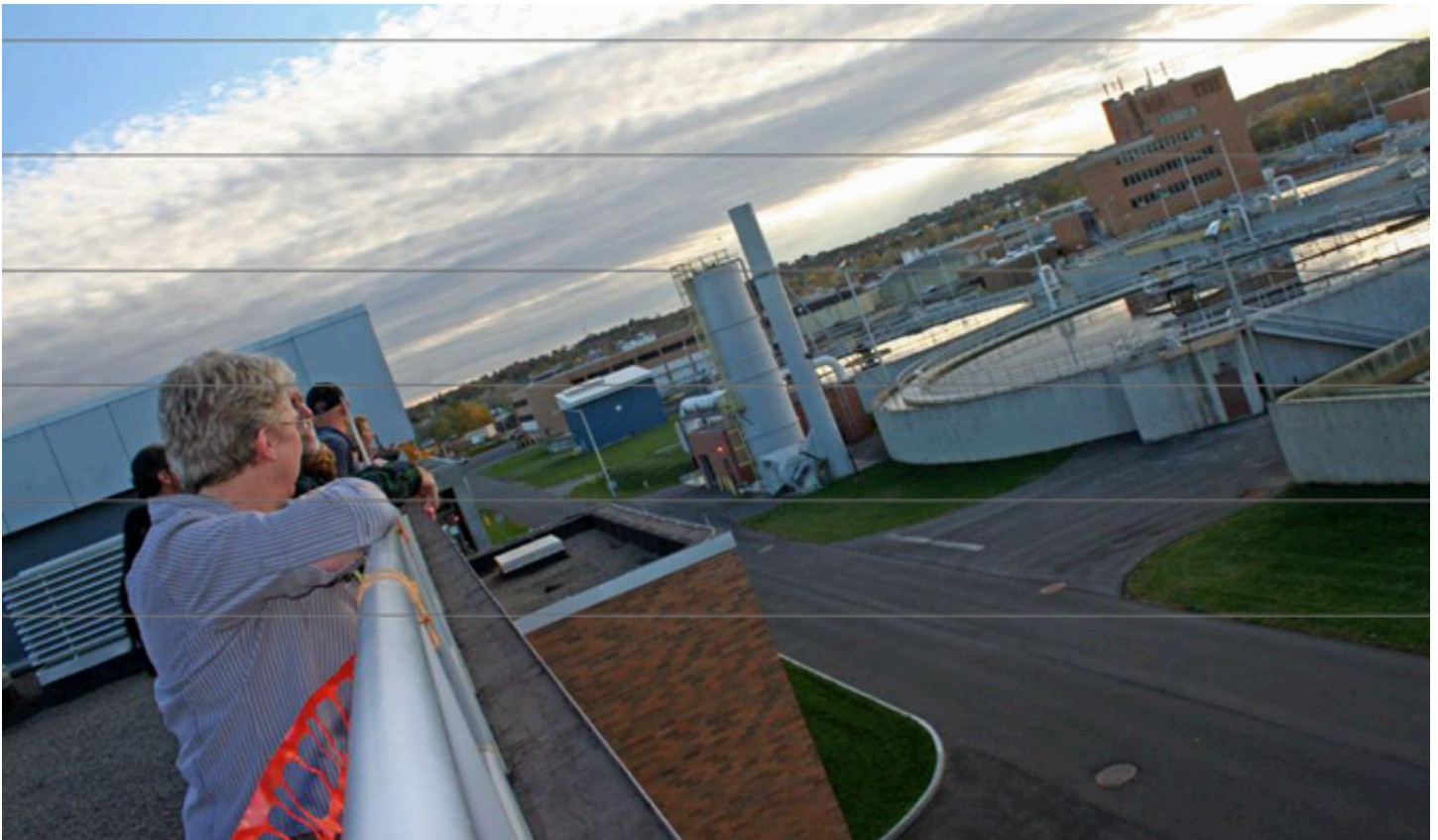
Sewage Disposal State and Federal Role

Standards regulating the discharge of pollutants into state surface and ground waters are determined by the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC). The standards for water quality are set forth in amendments to the Federal Water Pollution Control Act of 1972 the [Clean Water Act](#) of 1977, as well as 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 percent

federal aid to municipalities for the construction of wastewater facilities. The 1972 Environmental Quality Bond Act provided funds for New York State to award 12.5 percent grants to municipalities.⁴⁰ The total federal and state.

The Federal Water Quality Act of 1987 phased out the federal grants program and replaced it with a "[State Revolving Fund](#)" (SRF) loan program.⁴¹ The New York State Revolving Fund program is currently administered by the [New York 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



Metropolitan Waste Water Treatment Facility

projects are available from the US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), Rural Development Agency (RDA) and the Farmers Home Administration (FMHA).

In Onondaga County, most of the major treatment plants and other wastewater treatment appurtenances were constructed during the 1970's and 1980's.

The majority of recent wastewater projects have been constructed with local funds. Some select grant monies have been received from the [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 Role

Several different levels of local government share the responsibility for the collection, treatment, and disposal of sewage in most of the county's urbanized areas. 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 [Onondaga County Department of Water Environment Protection \(WEP\)](#). The district was consolidated in 1979 and replaced 24 sanitary districts and two sewage treatment plant districts.



The WEP commissioner 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 a 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 the 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 state DEC 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 30 years ago, the city and county governments began exploring other options for trash disposal. 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 \(OCRRA\)](#) was established. Also a public benefit corporation, OCRRA 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.

Through Solid Waste Agreements signed with 33 of the County's 35 municipalities, Onondaga County assumed 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 are 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 non-recyclable trash by 90 percent through combustion into energy, 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 percent participation rate and reduces the amount of trash generated by more than 64 percent. Onondaga County residents and businesses have recycled over eight million tons of mandatory and voluntary items since 1990. The Onondaga County Legislature also banned yard waste from the trash April 1, 1992. Each year, over 30,000 of county residents use OCRRA's two yard waste compost sites, located in Jamesville and Amboy

(in the town of Camillus). For a one-time seasonal fee of \$10, homeowners in OCRRA's service area can drop off grass clippings, leaves, and brush up to 10 inches 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 is operated by Covanta Energy through a contract with OCRRA, opened in 1994. The plant's NYSDEC permit allows the burning of 361,350 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, household hazardous waste events, and a household battery collection.

Delivery of Trash

Delivery of trash to the OCRRA system occurs 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 that 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, Clay, Dewitt, Manlius, Cicero Camillus and Salina as well as the villages of Elbridge, Jordan, North Syracuse, and Marcellus.

In the remaining towns and villages of the county, residents arrange for trash removal by private haulers. The only exception is the town of Spafford where residents can deliver trash to the town transfer station; from there the trash is delivered into the disposal system operated by OCRRA. Towns that allow private haulers to complete trash pick-up 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 16.1
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 Department of Water Environment Protection

Transportation

Chapter Eighteen

70

Streets, Roads, and Highways

All levels of government are involved in providing for streets and roads in Onondaga County. The federal government (through the U.S. Department of Transportation and its Federal Highway Administration) 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. Street 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 Department of Transportation, Region 3, which has its headquarters in Syracuse.

There are 480 miles of state highway in Onondaga County. Designated Routes 81, 90, 481, and 690 all run through Onondaga County. 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 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 state highways in Onondaga County may be cleared by the [Onondaga County Department of Transportation](#) 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 percent of the land and construction costs of interstate highways. The remaining 10 percent is paid by state government, which also bears the entire cost of maintaining interstate routes.

Portions of I-81 are nearing the end of their lifespan. The elevated sections over downtown Syracuse that will need repairs or reconstruction are of increased interest. Over the next decade, portions of the road will need to be replaced, reconstructed, removed, or otherwise changed at a significant cost. The New York State Department of Transportation is progressing the I-81 Viaduct Study to determine the future of the highway.

County Roads

Onondaga County's Department of Transportation (DOT), led by a commissioner, has the responsibility of maintaining 808 miles of the county roads and 210 bridge structures. The county legislature provides guidance to the department. The county DOT has four shops located in Jamesville, North Syracuse, Camillus, and Marcellus.

The functions of the county DOT 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 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.

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

The [Consolidated Highway Improvement Program](#) 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 and the State Department of Transportation.

Many road projects in the 1980s were financed by the county through

sales of municipal bonds, which are repaid by county taxpayers.

Town Roads

In Onondaga County there are over 1,900 miles of town and village roads. In each of the 19 towns, highway superintendents have a responsibility for 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 roads (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 local officials must initiate requests for these limitations. 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

The [Syracuse Department of Public Works \(DPW\)](#) is responsible for over 400 miles of city streets. Responsibilities are divided between several DPW divisions.

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 DPW. The Division of Mapping & Surveying is responsible for surveying, designing, and constructing city streets and sidewalks. This division also has responsibility for the official city maps. Planning for new streets and rerouting or closing existing streets are functions of the Syracuse-Onondaga County Planning Agency (SOCPA) and the Syracuse Department of Neighborhood and Business Development with the concurrence of the city DPW.

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 collaborates with SOCPA, the Syracuse Community Development Department, and city police department, to improve the safety and efficiency of traffic flow.

Village Streets

In Onondaga County, there are over 150 miles of village streets. Most village boards of trustees appoints a superintendent of public works who is responsible for building and maintaining the village streets. In some villages the titles and responsibilities may be different. These costs along with other costs including street-lights, sidewalks, street cleaning, and traffic control are included in the general fund of each village. Towns and villages may supply curbing and sidewalks along county and state roads that pass through their jurisdiction. State and county governments are responsible for paving these village roads 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 New York State 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 Syracuse Regional Airport Authority (SRAA) maintains and operates the Syracuse Hancock International Airport. The SRAA is a public benefit corporation recognized under the Public Authorities Law of the State of New York which allows the state to charter public corporations to perform a public benefit such as the maintenance of public infrastructure.

Transportation Authority

In 1970 the Central New York Regional Transportation Authority (CNYRTA) was established by the New York State Legislature with responsibility to develop, improve, and operate mass transit facilities. The transportation district of CNYRTA includes Oneida, Onondaga, Cayuga, and Oswego counties. Three other counties, Cortland, Jefferson, and Madison, may join the authority by a vote of the respective county legislature.

CNYRTA is comprised of seven 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 40 percent of the authority's operating costs are supported by revenues received from passengers; federal, state and local funding comprise the difference.

In 2012, CNY Centro opened a new Centro Transit Hub with a 22-bay terminal and covered shelter to protect riders from the weather while they wait for the bus. The Hub is the main transfer location for Centro Syracuse buses and also serves as a connecting point to Centro Auburn and Centro Oswego bus services.

Since its inception, the authority has instituted projects to encourage people to use bus transportation. 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, 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.

Endnotes

- 2 Beauchamp, R. W. (n.d.). Past and present of Syracuse and Onondaga County, New York : from prehistoric times to the beginning of 1908. Internet Archive: Digital Library of Free Books, Movies, Music & Wayback Machine. Retrieved May 7, 2012, from <http://archive.org/stream/pastpresentofsyr01beau#page/n7/mode/2up>
- 3 Onondaga County Charter. (n.d.). Ongov.net. Retrieved May 7, 2012, from www.ongov.net/forms/images/charter.pdf
- 4 County Executive. 2011-2016 Capital Improvement Plan. Syracuse: Onondaga County, 2010. Print.
- 5 Mahoney, Joanie. "2010 Budget Message." Onondaga County Executive's 2011 Budget Presentation. Syracuse. 15 Sept. 2010. Speech.
- 6 "About." Save the Rain. Onondaga County. Web. <<http://savetherain.us/>>.
- 7 New York State Department of State. Local Government Handbook. 6th ed. Albany: New York State Department of State, 2011. Print.
- 8 Office of the New York State Comptroller. Division of Local Government Services and Economic Development. Town Special Districts in New York: Background, Trends and Issues. 1st ed. Vol. 3. Albany: Office of the New York State Comptroller, 2007. Print. Local Government Issues in Focus.
- 9 "Geddes Voters Drop Tax Receiver Position." The Post-Standard. Syracuse.com, 22 Feb. 2011. Web. <http://www.syracuse.com/news/index.ssf/2011/02/geddes_voters_drop_tax_receiver_position.html>.
- 10 Mariani, John. "Onondaga County E-911 Now Fielding Skaneateles Emergency Calls." The Post-Standard. Syracuse.com, 26 Aug. 2010. Web. <http://www.syracuse.com/news/index.ssf/2010/08/onondaga_county_e-911_now_fiel.html>.
- 11 Leo, Tom. "Clay Votes to Abolish Its Police Department." The Post-Standard. Syracuse.com, 23 June 2008. Web. <http://www.syracuse.com/news/index.ssf/2008/06/clay_votes_to_abolish_its_poli_1.html>.
- 12 New York State Legislature. Village Law. New York State Legislature. Web. <<http://public.leginfo.state.ny.us/menugetf.cgi?COMMONQUERY=LAWS>>.
- 13 US Census
- 14 "Zoning and Building Permit Instructions." Town of Fabius, NY. Web. <<http://www.fabius-ny.gov/php-files/town-offices.php>>.
- 15 Village of Skaneateles. Historical Landmarks Preservation Commission. Application for a Certificate of Approval. Villiage of Skaneateles, 2011. Print.
- 16 Historical Preservation Commission. Village of Fayetteville. Web. <<http://www.fayettevilleny.gov/HistoricPreservationCommission.aspx>>.
- 17 Syracuse City School District. Departments of Budget and Finance. Syracuse City School District Adopted General Fund Budget 2011-2012. Web. <<http://www.syracusecityschools.com/?q=department/fiscal/budget/2011-12>>.
- 18 City of Syracuse Charter. (n.d.). City of Syracuse . Retrieved May 7, 2012, from <http://syracusedigital.org/>
- 19 1990 Census of Population. (n.d.). New York Section 2 of 2. Retrieved May 7, 2012, from www.census.gov/prod/cen1990/cp1/cp-1-34-2.pdf
- 20 State of New York Local Government Handbook. (n.d.). Cityofnewburgh-ny.gov. Retrieved May 7, 2012, from www.cityofnewburgh-ny.gov/gov/docs/LocalGovGuide.pdf
- 21 Rubado, M. (2010, May 19). Syracuse Common Council approves sales tax distribution plan. Syracuse.com. Retrieved May 7, 2012, from www.syracuse.com/news/index.ssf/2010

- 22 League of Women Voters of the City of New York - - Voter Registration Information. (n.d.). The League of Women Voters of the City of New York. Retrieved May 7, 2012, from <http://www.lwvnyc.org/register.html>
- 23 Onondaga County Board of Elections. (n.d.). Onondaga County, New York. Retrieved May 7, 2012, from <http://www.ongov.net/elections/about>.
- 24 McAndrew, M. (2012, February 12). Assembly bill would set June 26 as primary election day in 2012. Syracuse.com. Retrieved May 7, 2012, from www.syracuse.com/news/index.ssf/2012
- 25 New York State Report Cards. (n.d.). NYSED.gov. Retrieved May 7, 2012, from <https://reportcards.nysed.gov/>
- 27 Say Yes to Education: Say YES to Success! | Say Yes to Education - Syracuse. (n.d.). Say Yes to Education - Syracuse. Retrieved May 7, 2012, from <http://www.sayyessyracuse.org/about-us>
- 28 FJA Law | New York Court System. (n.d.). Law office Boston, MA - attorney at law, lawyer in Greater Boston Mass. Retrieved May 7, 2012, from http://fjalaw.com/new_york_court_system
- 29 Mahoney, J. M. (n.d.). Onondaga County New York 2011 Budget. Ongov.net/finance. Retrieved May 7, 2012, from www.ongov.net/finance/documents/2011
- 30 Divison of Community Services/CSBG. (n.d.). New York State Department of State. Retrieved May 7, 2012, from <http://www.dos.ny.gov/dcs/about.htm>
- 31 Zoning and the Comprehensive Plan. (n.d.). James A. Coon Local Government Technical Series. Retrieved May 7, 2012, from www.dos.ny.gov/lg/publications/Zoning
- 32 Mahoney, J. M. (n.d.). Onondaga County New York Tentative 2010 Budget. Ongov.net/finance. Retrieved May 7, 2012, from blog.syracuse.com/news/2009/09/2010%20Tentative%20Annual%20Budget%20Book.pdf
- 33 Mahoney, J. M. (n.d.). Onondaga County New York 2009 Budget. Ongov.net/finance. Retrieved May 7, 2012, from www.ongov.net/finance/documents/2009FinalAdoptedBudgetBook
- 34 Syracuse Uniformed Firefighters Association Local 280. (n.d.). Syracuse Uniformed Firefighters Association Local 280. Retrieved May 7, 2012, from <http://www.syracusefire.com>
- 35 Bleyle, W. R. (2011, April 15). 2010 Annual Report for the Onondaga County Department of Emergency Communications. Ongov.net/911. Retrieved May 7, 2012, from www.ongov.net/911/documents/2010AnnualReport
- 36 Leo, T. (2008, June 23). Clay votes to abolish its police department. Syracuse.com. Retrieved May 7, 2012, from www.syracuse.com/news/index.ssf/2008/06
- 37 Protection of Waters Program - NYS Dept. of Environmental Conservation. (n.d.). New York State Department of Environmental Conservation. Retrieved May 7, 2012, from <http://www.dec.ny.gov/permits/6042.html>
- 38 City of Syracuse v. Onondaga County. (n.d.). Open Jurist. Retrieved May 7, 2012, from openjurist.org/464/f3d/297/city-of-syracuse-v-onondaga-county-c-ny-04-0718%2090/10
- 39 Metropolitan Water Board - Onondaga County Water District. (n.d.). Onondaga County, New York. Retrieved May 7, 2012, from <http://www.ongov.net/mwb/index.html>
- 40 NY Code - Article 51: IMPLEMENTATION OF ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY BOND ACT OF 1972. (n.d.). FindLaw. Retrieved May 7, 2012, from <http://codes.lp.findlaw.com/nycode/ENV>
- 41 Federal Water Pollution Control Act (Clean Water Act). (n.d.). U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Home. Retrieved May 7, 2012, from <http://www.fws.gov/laws/lawsdigest/fwatrpo>

Index

- 2010 Development Guide, 46
- Aid to Dependent Children, 41
- Assessment
 - calendar
 - equalization
 - rate methods, 25
- B.O.C.E.S., 34
- Barge Canal System, 72
- Board of Assessment Review, 25
- Board of Education, 33, 34
- Board of Elections, 29, 30
- Board of Real Property Services, 26
- Board of Regents, 37
- Board of Trustees, 19
- Building Codes, 48
- Central New York
 - Region, 3
- CENTRO, 28, 72
- City Auditor, 20
- City Charter, 5, 20, 53
- City of Syracuse
- City Clerk, 20
- City Court, 20, 21, 38, 38
- Clerk
 - city, 20
 - town, 16
 - village, 31
- Commercial Rehabilitation Program, 49
- Commission on Rural Resources, 48
- Commissioner of Education, 29
- Commissioner of Social Services, 43
- Commissioner of Transportation, 47, 71
- Commissioners of Education, 20
- Common Council, 20, 47, 52, 62
- Consolidated Highway Improvement Program, 24, 71
- Constitutional Tax Limit, 24
- Councilors at large, 20
- County Department of Aging and Youth, 21
- County Executive, 12, 23, 42, 43, 47, 66
- County Legislature, 12, 23, 24, 30, 36, 42, 46, 47, 50, 62, 66, 67, 70, 71
- Court of Claims, 37
- Courts
 - Appellate, 37, 39, 40
 - Circuit, 4
 - City, 20, 21, 39, 40,
 - County, 4, 37, 38
- Department of Audit, 20
- Department of Aviation, 72
- Department of Community Development, 48, 71
- Department of Environmental Conservation, 61, 65
- Department of Health, 42, 61
- Department of Housing and Urban Development, 24, 48, 65
- Department of Mental Health, 42
- Department of Public Works, 71
- Department of Social Services, 5, 43
- Department of Transportation, 47, 48, 71
- Department of Water Environment Protection, 66, 69
- District Attorney, 39, 53
- Division of Transportation, 71
- Education
 - U.S. Department of, 35
- Elections
 - General, 20, 31
 - primary, 29, 31
- Erie Canal, 5, 6, 50
- Federal Water Quality Act, 65
- Fire Coordinator, 53
- Fire protection, 5, 19, 24, 26, 53, 54, 55
- Food stamps, 43, 44
- Hancock Airport, 55, 72
- Hazardous Materials Response Team, 53, 54, 68
- Health Department, 42, 47, 53
- Highway fund, 24, 71
- Highways
 - county
 - map
 - state
 - Superintendents taxes, 3, 61
- Hiscock Legal Aid Society, 34
- Homeownership Program, 42

- Housing
 - rehabilitation, 42
- Human Rights Commission, 19
- Intermodal Transportation Center, 63
- Judges
 - Chief Judge City Court
 - County Court Court of
 - Appeals Supreme Court
 - town/village, 18, 31, 33
- Juries
 - exemptions
 - grand
 - trial
 - Justice Center
 - Justices
 - town, 33
- Lake Ontario, 12, 52, 53
- Legal Services of Central New York, 34
 - master plan, 40
- Mayor
 - City of Syracuse
 - town
 - village, 17, 18, 20, 40, 41, 42, 46, 47, 48, 56
- Mental Health
 - budget
 - Department of, 36, 37
 - metropolitan area, 3
- Metropolitan Water Board, 50, 53, 53
- Municipal contracts, 17
- Neighborhood Rehabilitation Program, 39
- Nomination of candidates, 26
- Office of Court Administration, 31
- OnCenter, 12
- Onondaga Community College
 - Public Safety Institute, 12, 29, 48
- Onondaga County Resource Recovery Agency, 56
- Onondaga County Water Authority, 50, 52
- Onondaga County Water District, 50
- Onondaga Lake, 45, 46
- Organization, 25
- Otisco Lake, 46, 52
- Parks and Recreation
 - city county Dept. of state parks
 - support groups
 - towns and villages, 45
- Parttown districts, 15
- Planning boards
 - city
 - county
 - town/village, 12, 17, 36, 37, 40, 41, 42, 62
- Police
 - 911 Center
 - Academy
 - chief
 - city
 - county
 - state, 2, 16, 47, 48, 49, 63
- Political parties
 - organization
 - recognized, 26
- Poor House, 5
- Population
 - city
 - county
 - growth
 - trends
 - villages, 15, 16, 19
- Probation Department, 34
- Public Assistance, 38, 39
- Public Safety Institute, 47
- RAMP Program, 42
- Roads
 - county
 - town, 61, 62
- Safe Housing Assistance Project for the Elderly, 42
 - sales tax
 - distribution, 12, 21
- School Districts
 - consolidation early
 - history
 - elections
 - organization
 - state aid, 29
- Schools
 - B.O.C.E.S.
 - budget
 - colleges
 - enrollment
 - magnet programs
 - private, 29
- Skaneateles Lake, 52, 53

- Solid Waste Disposal Authority, 56
- SONYMA, 22
- Special benefit districts, 6, 15, 23
- State Land Advisory Committee, 42
- Streets
 - city
 - state/interstate town
 - village, 61, 62, 63
- Suburban Town Law, 16
- Superintendent of Highways, 15
- Superintendent of Public Works, 60
- Superintendent of Schools, 18, 28
- Supervisor
 - town, 15
- Syracuse, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 15, 18, 19, 21, 23, 24, 25, 27, 28, 29, 33, 34, 40, 41, 42, 43, 47, 48, 49, 50, 52, 53, 56, 57, 58, 61, 62, 63
- Syracuse Planning Commission, 41
- Syracuse University, i, 29
- SyracuseOnondaga County Planning Agency, 19
- Taxes
 - Aggregate Real Property
 - city
 - equalization rates
 - exemptions
 - mortgage
 - PILOTS, 21, 23, 24, 62
- Thruway Authority, 61, 63
- Towns
 - changing functions
 - formation of officials
 - services
 - sewer districts
 - special benefit districts, 5, 21, 40, 41, 42, 46, 47, 49, 56, 53, 62, 63
- Transportation Department
 - Division of, 59, 61
- Treasurer
 - village, 17
- Villages
 - elections
 - formation of government
 - growth
 - incorporation
 - map, 4, 5, 17, 40, 46, 47, 49, 56, 57
- Volunteer Center, 47
- Water Department, 52
- Water Supply
 - classification
 - financing
 - fluoridation
 - suppliers
 - villages, 51
- Welfare, 5, 40, 44, 45, 48
- Zoning, 17, 19, 46, 47, 48

