



SYRACUSE-ONONDAGA FOOD SYSTEMS ALLIANCE 2025 CANDIDATE FOOD POLICY POSITIONS



CANDIDATE FOOD POLICY POSITIONS

Policymakers play a key role in improving our local food system so it works for all people in Syracuse, Onondaga County, and Onondaga Nation. Since 2021, SOFSA has circulated a nonpartisan questionnaire to candidates for elected office in Syracuse & Onondaga County. We ask prospective lawmakers questions about key food policy issues that have been elevated in SOFSA network conversations and our community listening sessions.

This guide captures the responses to our 2025 questionnaire. Answers have been summarized for brevity.

Candidates not captured in this guide did not respond to the questionnaire. They are listed in the index for each race.



Are you ready to vote?

Check your voter registration status →
<https://voterlookup.elections.ny.gov/>

October 25th is the last day to register to vote in the 2024 General Election.

Register online (with a valid ID) at
<https://elections.ny.gov/voter-registration-process>

Early voting runs from Saturday, October 25th to Sunday, November 2nd

More info → <https://onondaga.gov/elections/early-voting/>

Election Day is Tuesday, November 4th

Find your polling place here →
<https://onondaga.gov/elections/polling/>

Want to help shape next year's questionnaire?

Join SOFSA's Policy & Planning Committee.

Visit <https://syrfoodalliance.org/get-involved/> to join the committee.
Meetings are posted on our public calendar.

LOCAL RACES

SYRACUSE CITY MAYOR

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Sharon Owens (D)
Timothy Rudd (I)

Did not respond to questionnaire:

Tom Babilon (R) | Alfonso Davis (I)

CITY OF SYRACUSE COMMON COUNCIL

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Hannah Ehrenreich, *Councillor-at-large* (D,WF),
Marty Nave,* *1st District* (D)

Did not respond to questionnaire:

Rita Paniagua, *President* | Rasheada Caldwell, *Councilor-at-large*
Donna Moore, *2nd District* | Corey Williams* *3rd District*
Patrona Jones-Rowser,* *4th District* | Jimmy Monto*, *5th District*

ONONDAGA COUNTY LEGISLATURE

Colleen Gunnip*, *4th District*
Jeremiah Thompson, *4th District*

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Julie Abbott*, *6th District*
Gregory Eriksen, *6th District*

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Chad Ryan, *8th District*

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Nicole Watts, *9th District*
Kenyata Calloway, *9th District*

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Mark Olson*, *10th District*
Elaine Denton, *10th District*

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David Knapp*, *12th District*

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Cody Kelly*, *14th District*

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Nodesia Hernandez*, *17th District*

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Did not respond to questionnaire:

Brian May*, *1st District* | Kevin Meaker*, *2nd District* | Timothy Burtis*, *3rd District*
Ellen Block, *5th District* | David Carnie, *5th District* | Dan Romeo, *7th District*
Shawn Fiato*, *8th District* | Bonnke Sekarore, *9th District*
Richard McCarron, Jr.*, *11th District* | Kenneth Bush, Jr.*, *13th District*
Maurice Mo Brown*, *15th District* | Charles Garland*, *16th District*

LOCAL RACES

OTHER MUNICIPALITIES / TOWN BOARDS

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Deborah Magaro-Dolan*, *Councilor, Town of Clay*
Page Steinhardt, *3rd Ward Councilor, Town of Salina*

Did not respond to questionnaire:

Town of Van Buren

Wendy Van Der Water*, *Supervisor* | Robert Grover*, *Councilor*
Michael Burke*, *Councilor* | Christopher Sherwood, *Councilor*
Arie "Piels" Schotten, *Councilor* | Charity Gustke, *Councilor*

Town of Lysander

Edward Schmitt, *Councilor* | Robert Geraci*, *Councilor*
Vincent Mangan, *Councilor*

Town of Clay

Damian Ulatowski*, *Supervisor* | Ryan Russell, *Councilor*
David Capria*, *Councilor* | Courtney Gauthier, *Councilor*
Deborah Magaro-Dolan*, *Councilor* | Matthew Malinowski, *Councilor*
Ryan Pleskach*, *Councilor* | Edward Wisnowski*, *Councilor*

Town of Salina

Raul Huerta, *Supervisor* | Nicholas Paro*, *Supervisor*
Hayley Downs*, *1st Ward* | Christina Fadden, *1st Ward*
Lessa Paul*, *2nd Ward* | Aaron Henry, *2nd Ward*
Page Steinhardt, *3rd Ward* | Evan Buschbascher, *3rd Ward*
Eliza Hewitt Driscoll, *4th Ward* | Michael Brigandi, *4th Ward*

RACES EXPLAINED

Mayor: Chief Executive of the city. The Mayor appoints people to different departments, commissions, and committees to carry out the City's work. Responsible for implementing and enforcing laws.

Common Council: The Common Council is the legislative branch of Syracuse city government. They establish laws and create the city budget.

County Legislature: The County Legislature is the legislative branch of county government. They work in committees to review policy issues and review the County Executive's proposed budget.

Town Boards: Town boards include a Supervisor and Councilors, with each ward having its own board member. The Board make and enacts laws and ordinances, oversees the budget, and appoints officials and committee members.

SYRACUSE CITY MAYOR

Sharon Owens
Democrat, Working Families



City of Syracuse
www.owensforsyracuse.com



SPECIFIC POLICY POSITIONS:

- Reinvest in CNY Regional Market
- Prioritize food in transportation plans
- Promote grocery stores in low-access areas
- Create anti-poverty solutions
- Expand purchasing of NY-grown food
- Protect and expand SNAP, WIC, Double Up
- Protect food and farm workers
- Eliminate lead in soil and water
- Support land access for BIPOC farmers
- Enhance urban agriculture

PRIORITIES

1. **Access** - provide Syracuse neighborhoods the access to fresh foods
2. **Urban Agriculture** - lead strategies to increase urban farming opportunities
3. **Local** - prioritize small, locally owned businesses to offset national brand grocers saturating the market

HOW WOULD YOU INVEST IN COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE FOR FOOD ACCESS

As Mayor, I will work to develop a comprehensive strategy that gets better use out of our vacant and underutilized land. Particularly when it comes to the potential for urban agriculture and sustainable, resilient energy sources. We need to look at whether all Syracuse communities have access to fresh, healthy food and knowledge of how to prepare it. That means ensuring people have access to transportation to places like the Regional Market or creating spaces for additional markets. It also means ensuring that businesses are as incentivized to carry locally grown produce as they are nationally sourced products.

Timothy Rudd
Transparency and Accountability



City of Syracuse
www.timothymrudd.com



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PRIORITIES

None provided by candidate.

HOW WOULD YOU INVEST IN COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE FOR FOOD ACCESS

I am a gardener. I would talk about and encourage gardening especially on underutilized city lots. I would also work with stores to prosecute thieves who cause urban stores to close. The losses from theft undermine local businesses.

CITY OF SYRACUSE COMMON COUNCIL

Hanah Ehrenreich
Democrat, Working Families



City of Syracuse

Councilor-at-large

www.facebook.com/ColleenForLegislature/



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PRIORITIES

1. **Local** - advocate for buying local, CNY foods
2. **Urban Agriculture** - expand urban agriculture access through ordinance updates

HOW WOULD YOU INVEST IN COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE FOR FOOD ACCESS

My role in Syracuse Common Council will mostly be able to support community food access through ordinance development and revision. Partnership in projects that grow and sustain food knowledge, access to commercial kitchen facilities for food entrepreneurs, and transportation access that connects markets and consumers.

Marty Nave*
Democrat



City of Syracuse - District 1

www.facebook.com/p/Elect-Northsider-Marty-Nave-1st-District-Councilor



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PRIORITIES

1. **Sustainability** - eliminate food waste
2. **Access** - expand food access through community farmers markets and stands
3. **Education** - support food growing education for youths

HOW WOULD YOU INVEST IN COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE FOR FOOD ACCESS

I have advocated for farmers to bring their produce to neighborhood parks.

Color key

- Key priority
- Support

● Oppose

● Request more info

* Incumbent

ONONDAGA COUNTY LEGISLATURE 4TH DISTRICT

Colleen Gunnip*
Republican, Conservative

 **Town of Salina
Town of Geddes**

www.facebook.com/ColleenForLegislature/



SPECIFIC POLICY POSITIONS:

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- Protect agricultural land from development
- Enhance urban agriculture

PRIORITIES

None provided by candidate.

HOW WOULD YOU INVEST IN COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE FOR FOOD ACCESS

Continue the same investment that is currently being made by the county.

Jeremiah Thompson
Democrat, Working Families

 **Town of Salina
Town of Geddes**

www.votejeremiahthompson.com



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PRIORITIES

1. **Transportation**- helping get people to where they can purchase food
2. **Education**- focusing on healthy eating and locally grown food
3. **Unity**- connecting urban and rural areas through food and civic engagement.

HOW WOULD YOU INVEST IN COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE FOR FOOD ACCESS

Advocate for initiatives to make the Regional Market more accessible to the public through investments in public transportation. Also explore if there are ways for the county to support smaller satellite markets throughout the area.

Color key ● Key priority ● Support
● Oppose ● Request more info

* Incumbent

ONONDAGA COUNTY LEGISLATURE 6TH DISTRICT

Julie Abbott*
Republican

Town of Camillus Town of Marcellus
Town of Skaneateles Town of Spafford
www.facebook.com/VoteJulieAbbott



SPECIFIC POLICY POSITIONS:

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PRIORITIES

1. **Sustainability** - encourage the use of sustainable farm practices
2. **Education** - providing nutrition resources to senior citizens
3. **Awareness** - support community connections to local farms

HOW WOULD YOU INVEST IN COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE FOR FOOD ACCESS

It's critical we preserve our natural resources and ensure fresh, healthy food supplies for our families. I'm very proud to have garnered monies to bring Peace, Inc's Senior Citizen Nutrition program back to the Skaneateles/Spafford area. Additionally, I'm involved with a liaison supporting our migrant farm families and their children in my area. We need to support this workforce and I believe there needs to be real policy changes at the Federal level to encourage their safe path to citizenship. Several times a year I connect these families with donated housing supplies/ mattresses/clothing, etc through volunteerism & my real estate business.

Gregory Eriksen
Democrat

Town of Camillus Town of Marcellus
Town of Skaneateles Town of Spafford
www.gregg4leg.com



SPECIFIC POLICY POSITIONS:

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PRIORITIES

1. **Affordability** - support reducing the cost of living
2. **Funding** - increase capacity of county-led health and agriculture programs
3. **Access** - increase food access to those living in food deserts

HOW WOULD YOU INVEST IN COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE FOR FOOD ACCESS

Increased access to locally grown food can be achieved through a variety of investments in the community. This includes better funding and promotion for the Onondaga Grown program, which alerts shoppers to locally grown foods . . . Any funding that the County can provide for the regional market will be helpful. The County can also do more to identify food deserts and find incentives for grocery stores and other markets to open in them. The County can be a source of grant money for municipalities that are willing to amend their zoning laws to permit urban farming and other local forms of agriculture. Finally, the County can and should work with its school districts to increase access to school breakfasts and lunch.

ONONDAGA COUNTY LEGISLATURE

8TH DISTRICT

Chad Ryan

Democrat, Working Families



City of Syracuse
Town of Geddes

www.facebook.com/chad.m.ryan.3/



SPECIFIC POLICY POSITIONS:

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PRIORITIES

1. **Local** - support local farms and encourage local food purchasing
2. **Affordability** - support programs providing healthy, affordable food
3. **Sustainability** - encourage the use of sustainable farm practices

HOW WOULD YOU INVEST IN COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE FOR FOOD ACCESS

As an elected official, I would focus on advocating for funding and creating incentives to support programs that increase food access across our communities. That means pushing for state and federal dollars to improve things like food pantries, mobile markets, and community gardens—and making sure those resources reach the neighborhoods that need them most.

ONONDAGA COUNTY LEGISLATURE 9TH DISTRICT

Nicole Watts

Democrat, Working Families



City of Syracuse

www.nicolewatts.us



SPECIFIC POLICY POSITIONS:

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PRIORITIES

1. **Access** - provide food access centered on proximity, affordability, and cultural relevance
2. **Urban Farming** - increase urban farming opportunities in Syracuse
3. **Opportunity** - removing zoning barriers for urban agriculture and food-related entrepreneurship

HOW WOULD YOU INVEST IN COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE FOR FOOD ACCESS

The County has a significant role to play in agriculture, agritourism, the Regional Market and other elements of our community related to food access. I will seek to truly understand the existing systems, their benefits and pitfalls, and matching those together with the needs of our communities, seek to build a more meaningful-impact, efficient, affordable, human-centered infrastructure related to all of the elements in the food access ecosystem.

Kenyata Calloway

Democrat



City of Syracuse

<https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=61575101593057#>



SPECIFIC POLICY POSITIONS:

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PRIORITIES

1. **Local** - strengthen partnerships to increase access to local foods
2. **Education** - support youth food education programs
3. **Access** - provide support to food desert communities

HOW WOULD YOU INVEST IN COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE FOR FOOD ACCESS

I would invest in strengthening neighborhood food hubs, mobile markets, and farmers market access points so residents can reach fresh, affordable food without major transportation barriers. I also believe in partnering with local nonprofits and schools to create community-based kitchens and food programs that not only provide meals but also job training and small business opportunities.

ONONDAGA COUNTY LEGISLATURE 10TH DISTRICT

Mark Olson*

Republican, Conservative, Veterans



Town of Manlius

www.facebook.com/LegislatorMarkOlson



SPECIFIC POLICY POSITIONS:

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PRIORITIES

1. **Procurement** - support farm-to-school initiatives
2. **Education** - providing education on urban agriculture & gardening
3. **Sustainability** - support composting programs

HOW WOULD YOU INVEST IN COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE FOR FOOD ACCESS

My support of the regional market comprehensive plan, working with regional market management team to create an incubator system that can help and promote our food system, continue to work with agencies like Samaritan Center to help with those who need help.

Elaine Denton

Democrat, Working Families



Town of Manlius

www.electelainedenton.com



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PRIORITIES

1. **Environment** - center land, air, and water in policy decisions
2. **Economy** - partner with and invest in local businesses
3. **Sustainability** - Support a closed-loop system to keep resources within the community

HOW WOULD YOU INVEST IN COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE FOR FOOD ACCESS

I am running to increase transparency in Onondaga County because we can't solve a problem if we don't have the information on what is working and what is not. As an elected official, I would utilize data to learn what the issues are and explore multiple ways of how to improve food access. It's time to get more creative and find new solutions.

ONONDAGA COUNTY LEGISLATURE 12TH DISTRICT

David Knapp*
Republican, Conservative



Town of Dewitt
Town of Fabius
Town of LaFayette
www.facebook.com/DaveKnappLegislator

Town of Pompey
Town of Tully
Onondaga Nation



SPECIFIC POLICY POSITIONS:

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PRIORITIES

1. **Urban Agriculture** - continue funding urban agriculture initiatives
2. **Procurement** - support the use of locally-grown foods in schools and universities
3. **Infrastructure** - expand and modernize the CNY Regional Market

HOW WOULD YOU INVEST IN COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE FOR FOOD ACCESS

As Co-Chairman of the Agriculture Council, I have been able to secure state and local dollars to encourage urban agriculture and improvements to the CNY Regional Market. During the COVID-19 pandemic, I coordinated and personally administered sixteen free food giveaways in various parts of my Legislative district and the City of Syracuse.

Color key



Key priority



Oppose



Support



Request more info

* Incumbent

ONONDAGA COUNTY LEGISLATURE 14TH DISTRICT

Cody Kelly*
Republican



Town of Clay

www.facebook.com/LegislatorCodyKelly



SPECIFIC POLICY POSITIONS:

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PRIORITIES

1. **Environment** - advocate for soil and water protection
2. **Economy** - support investments to create markets and opportunities for growers
3. **Access** - encourage private investment to combat food deserts

HOW WOULD YOU INVEST IN COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE FOR FOOD ACCESS

We have made investments at the Regional Market as well as investments in things like the #OnondagaGrown initiative to improve access and supply of fresh local produce.

ONONDAGA COUNTY LEGISLATURE 17TH DISTRICT

Nodesia Hernandez*
Democrat



City of Syracuse
Town of Dewit

www.facebook.com/NodesiaforCountyLegislator



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PRIORITIES

1. **Access** - increase food access and security
2. **Economy** - support the regional agricultural economy
3. **Infrastructure** - improve food system infrastructure

HOW WOULD YOU INVEST IN COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE FOR FOOD ACCESS

As an elected official, I would invest in community infrastructure to increase food access by focusing on three key areas: expanding food distribution networks, supporting community-led food projects, and improving the food retail landscape. This approach would create a more resilient and equitable food system, ensuring that all residents, regardless of their location or income, can get healthy, affordable food.

Color key



Key priority



Oppose



Support



Request more info

* Incumbent

CANDIDATES FROM OTHER MUNICIPALITIES

Deborah Magaro-Dolan*
Republican

Town of Clay

www.townofclaygop.com/about/gop-representatives/deborah-magaro-dolan-2/



SPECIFIC POLICY POSITIONS:

- Combat hunger and food insecurity
- Protect land use from development
- Expand purchasing of NY-grown food
- Support Universal School Meals
- Eliminate lead in soil and water

PRIORITIES

1. **Local** - support local and regional food infrastructure
2. **Access** - promote access to nutritious, affordable foods
3. **Acquisition** - preserve farm land for current and future farming operations

HOW WOULD YOU INVEST IN COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE FOR FOOD ACCESS

I would support producers, storage operators, and food processors to locate in the Town of Clay.

Page Steinhardt
Democrat

Town of Salina

www.salinadems.com/candidates/page-steinhardt



SPECIFIC POLICY POSITIONS:

- Combat hunger and food insecurity
- Protect land use from development
- Expand purchasing of NY-grown food
- Support Universal School Meals
- Eliminate lead in soil and water

PRIORITIES

None provided by candidate

HOW WOULD YOU INVEST IN COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE FOR FOOD ACCESS

I believe we need . . . better access at the neighborhood level to fresh wholesome food. . . one thing I think would make food distribution programs more effective is better community education about how to work with and store fresh ingredients. I think we need to have grant funded community center based cooking and storage education programs, and make sure that the offerings are inclusive of the many ethnic and regional groups that have recently made Onondaga county their home. I strongly believe our new community center should have a food service certified kitchen that can be used for cooking classes, allowing "microentrepreneur startups" like people trying to market their own jellies, mustards, condiments, sauces etc. to produce small batches legally for sale, and charity food kitchen/distribution.



Syracuse-Onondaga Food Systems Alliance

We are a network of changemakers dedicating to reshaping our region's food system.

Promoting civic engagement and policy development is one of the key practices in how we carry out our mission. Resources like this voter guide, listening sessions with our elected officials, forums, and more help ensure that everyone in our community has more information with which to exercise their civic responsibilities.

Food touches every aspect of our lives. It's powerful. Let's consider it in our own decisions, and hold our representatives accountable for helping create a more just and sustainable food future in Syracuse, Onondaga County, and Onondaga Nation.

Join the Network!

To get involved with this work, visit: www.syrfoodalliance.org/get-involved and follow us on social media @syrfoodalliance.

Support SOFSA!



Your support ensures we can keep doing our civic engagement work, including producing resources like this one and creating opportunities for the public to engage their representatives.

To support our work with a donation big or small, scan the QR code or visit: <https://bit.ly/support-sofsa>.