

CITY OF SYRACUSE  
COMPREHENSIVE PLAN 2040

*Syracuse*

*New York*



VISION FOR A SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY  
2012 Plan Update



## ***SYRACUSE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN 2040***

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**2012, City of Syracuse**

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

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Letter from the Mayor	4
Letter from the Director of Planning & Sustainability Advisory Committee	5 7
<b>Introduction</b>	<b>9</b>
<i>Chapter 1</i>	
<b>Vision for the Future</b>	<b>14</b>
<i>Chapter 2</i>	
<b>Policies, Goals &amp; Recommended Actions</b>	<b>17</b>
<i>A. Capital Facilities</i>	
<i>B. Cultural Assets</i>	
<i>C. Economic Development</i>	
<i>D. Education</i>	
<i>E. Government Modernization</i>	
<i>F. Housing</i>	
<i>G. Land Use &amp; Development</i>	
<i>H. Public Safety</i>	
<i>I. Sustainability</i>	
<i>J. Transportation</i>	
<i>K. Utilities</i>	
<i>Chapter 3</i>	
<b>Implementation Plan Amendment inserted</b>	<b>37</b>
<b>Components — attached</b>	
<i>Bicycle Infrastructure</i>	
<i>Historic Preservation</i>	
<i>Land Use &amp; Development</i>	
<i>Public Art</i>	
<i>Sustainability</i>	
<i>Appendices</i>	
Current Conditions and Trends	38
Public Participation Process	45

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# LETTER FROM THE MAYOR

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A comprehensive plan contains a community's vision for itself and, just as importantly, a roadmap for getting there. Syracuse's *Comprehensive Plan* adopted in 2005 was based on an extensive, inclusive visioning process including Syracuse residents from all neighborhoods. This update extends the horizon of the *Comprehensive Plan* to 2040, integrates a strong concern for long-term sustainability, and includes an extensive list of specific actions under the City's control or influence that are necessary to achieve this vision.

As we undertake the hard work ahead of implementing policy changes, making strategic budgetary decisions, and adapting our local regulations to achieve this vision, *Comprehensive Plan 2040* will ensure that City government remains true to our community's shared objectives and will provide predictability and transparency to the public, property owners, developers, and other regional and State agencies.

I can confidently say that this updated *Comprehensive Plan* does the best job to-date of outlining "how to get there," by identifying those ways that the City can best shape the character and quality of our neighborhoods and those public spaces we share with the whole region—such as Downtown Syracuse, the Inner Harbor, and the Onondaga Creekwalk—and bring us closer to that shared vision for Syracuse's future. Among other things, it calls for making City operations more sustainable, preserving our most treasured historic landmarks, expanding public access to nature, streamlining development regulations, enhancing bicycle and pedestrian safety and comfort, and using art and high-quality urban design to create vibrant and successful public spaces. And most importantly, it provides the action plan for "how to get there."



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Stephanie A. Miner". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Stephanie A. Miner  
Mayor of Syracuse  
October, 2012

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# LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR OF PLANNING & SUSTAINABILITY

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Syracuse's *Comprehensive Plan*, adopted in 2005, brought our community together to identify broad goals and a shared vision for the future. This vision reflects Syracuse's role as the employment and cultural core of the region, the diversity of Syracuse's many types of neighborhoods, a celebration of the urban qualities that make Syracuse unique within the region, and the high quality of services and quality of place that the City seeks to offer its residents and visitors.

This update to the *Comprehensive Plan*, more than two years in the making, includes a substantial amount of new material. Components, or chapters, outlining policy and detailed objectives and actions related to *Bicycle Infrastructure*, *Historic Preservation*, *Land Use & Development*, *Public Art*, and *Sustainability* will guide City operations, policy, and budget decisions toward achieving our community's vision for its future. In addition, revisions to the *Comprehensive Plan* itself bring this vision closer to reality by ensuring that action items provide clear guidance for implementation by City departments, both in their content and in the organization of the *Plan*.

The development of these five components was carried out over the past two years by the Bureau of Planning & Sustainability. Their content is the result of analysis of Syracuse's existing policies, regulations and budget, comparison to nationally recognized best practices, extensive consultation with community residents, review by volunteer advisory committees, and much generous advice from local subject-matter experts. This Bureau was newly created in 2010 and charged with the stewardship, advancement, and implementation of the *Comprehensive Plan*. The Bureau's day-to-day work consists of coordination between various departments' operations, data analysis, the study and proposal of needed regulatory changes, and development of consistent, transparent policies that bring us closer to achieving the vision for Syracuse's future. Following the adoption of this plan, the Bureau will annually identify and execute specific projects to incrementally advance goals of the *Comprehensive Plan* via interdepartmental working groups and ensure the *Comprehensive Plan* is updated as needed. A feasible blueprint for this critical piece of the planning process—implementation—is a significant development since the *Comprehensive Plan* was last adopted in 2005.

Most importantly, this plan embraces the importance of sustainability throughout all of its components. While this concept has become engrained in many circles, it bears repeating that sustainability refers to environmental, social, and economic sustainability. In writing the plan we asked: Do the decisions we make today take future costs into consideration? Will our actions save future Syracuse residents high energy costs, better connect them to nature and healthy recreation opportunities, and prevent the kinds of brownfield contamination that we seek to clean up today? How will our policies and budgets affect, and expand, economic opportunity for all Syracuse residents? How will our regulations make the city a better place in which to live and do business? The answers will continue to unfold in this plan's implementation, but we are pleased to say that this *Comprehensive Plan* outlines the City's and the community's objectives in the most comprehensive manner to date, providing the basis for transparency and predictability and a worthy vision for which to strive.



Andrew M. Maxwell, MPA  
Director of Planning & Sustainability  
City of Syracuse  
October, 2012



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# ADVISORY COMMITTEE

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## **Advisory Committee**

Joseph Bryant, Southside Coalition  
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Barbara Krause, Court-Woodlawn Task Force, Northside TNT  
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Lisa Romeo, Downtown Committee  
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Katelyn Wright, Land Use Planner, Planning & Sustainability

*Left: Onondaga Creekwalk near Armory Square (top)  
North Salina Street, Little Italy (bottom)*





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# INTRODUCTION

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## PURPOSE OF THE PLAN

Comprehensive plans are meant to consider the broad range of forces that impact a community and plan for the strategic use of resources to respond to these forces. Until Comprehensive Plan 2025 was adopted the City largely relied on area-specific master plans to guide change, but lacked a city-wide comprehensive plan that dealt with interrelated policy and budget issues. The plan contains a vision for the future—pertaining to physical assets, government services, local business and institutions, and cultural resources—and identifies policies, actions, regulations and investments that the City will pursue to achieve this vision.

## PLAN UPDATE: COMPREHENSIVE PLAN 2040

*Comprehensive Plan 2040* is an update to *Comprehensive Plan 2025*, adopted by Syracuse Common Council in 2005. While the *Comprehensive Plan 2025* called for an update every five years, upon the creation of the Bureau of Planning & Sustainability in 2010, it was apparent that much work was needed to develop additional components of the plan and update it with a level of detail adequate to guide implementation.

*Downtown Syracuse*

Putting these goals and action items in writing will also let the public know what the City intends to accomplish in coming years, providing predictability to developers and property owners, area institutions and employers, and other government agencies. These goals and policies are interdisciplinary and their implementation will require the coordination of all City departments. In doing so, the *Comprehensive Plan* should guide the preparation of future operating budgets and Capital Improvement Programs, in addition to departmental operations, City regulations, and other regional plans and funding decisions.

With the addition of the component plans described below, much of the content of *Comprehensive Plan 2025* became redundant and has been removed. Since that plan was adopted in 2005, TNT areas had developed five-year plans which helped to identify many common goals at the neighborhood level; and the 2010 U.S. Census was released, indicating that the City's population has begun to stabilize, while some neighborhoods have grown and others have continued to shrink over the past decade. All of this new information was incorporated into the *Comprehensive Plan 2040*.

Furthermore, the Bureau of Planning & Sustainability was created in 2010, accomplishing the goal of hiring more qualified planning staff as the *Comprehensive Plan 2025* called for under several objectives. The Bureau of Planning & Sustainability (P&S) functions as a steward for the *Comprehensive Plan's* maintenance and implementation.

*"Painted Ladies," Howard Street  
Hawley-Green Neighborhood*

In this capacity, P&S led an interdepartmental team in updating the contents of the Plan—ensuring that the action items included address the broad priorities identified through the robust public participation process that contributed to *Comprehensive Plan 2025*, but also

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limiting recommended actions to those that are financially feasible and that fall under the purview of City government responsibility and influence.

The *Comprehensive Plan* itself was updated by staff from Planning & Sustainability, Neighborhood & Business Development, and the Department of Public Works, and then reviewed by a steering committee whose members were appointed by Common Council and the Mayor.

### **ADDITIONAL COMPONENTS**

This update to the Comprehensive Plan included the addition of several subject-specific components:

- *Bicycle Infrastructure,*
- *Historic Preservation,*
- *Land Use & Development,*
- *Public Art, and*
- *Sustainability.*

Other subject areas also warrant this level of detail and future components will likely include Pedestrian Infrastructure and a Parks Recovery Action Plan (RAP). Each of these new components was drafted with the assistance of, and thoroughly reviewed by, a steering committee over an approximately two-year period.

The *Bicycle Infrastructure* component is a blueprint for the future growth of Syracuse's bicycle network. This component includes a rigorous data-driven analysis to determine the best routes for future bicycle infrastructure, identifies likely users, and proposes possible designs to act as a starting point for community discussions as the bicycle network expands. The component also includes a "Making the Case" section comprised of white papers outlining the need for a more rigorous bicycle network in Syracuse.

The *Historic Preservation* component is largely a distilled version of the preservation plan created by a 2003 graduate-level SUNY Environmental Science and Forestry urban design studio class. Bureau of Planning & Sustainability Staff revised this document to condense it to its most essential, and achievable, policy recommendations and to better guide the implementation of preservation ordinance amendments.

The *Land Use & Development* component was largely based on a previous draft not adopted by Council. This draft entailed extensive public participation during which time an emphasis on design and preference for form-based zoning was identified. Bureau of Planning & Sustainability staff worked with an internal, interdepartmental team of planners to revise this draft so that it might better guide implementation and revision of the City's zoning ordinance. This was followed up by a round of public meetings throughout the summer of 2011 and a six month period during which the draft was available online for public comment. A steering committee of planning experts then guided further revisions to this component.

The *Public Art* component was developed by the Syracuse Public Art Commission. The Commission completed a draft vision statement, goals and objectives in 2007-2008. The final Public Art Plan is based on this original effort, which was both revised and expanded by the Public Art Commission in 2012. The plan was vetted by an advisory

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committee made up of representatives from the Everson Museum, CNY Arts, the Downtown Committee of Syracuse, the Rosamond Gifford Foundation, Community Foundation of Central New York, and Syracuse University's Connective Corridor. In addition, the plan was presented and discussed at a public meeting to which members of the 40 Below Public Art Taskforce and the TNT Neighborhood Planning Council's were specifically invited.

The *Sustainability* component was developed using a collaborative process to define its goals, objectives, and recommended actions. Topic-specific advisory groups made up of local experts and City staff met throughout 2011-2012 to develop each chapter of the plan. Bureau of Planning & Sustainability staff then refined the plan with consideration for the feasibility of each recommended goal, objective and action. At this stage, the City released the draft plan for public comment via the City website. Planning & Sustainability staff presented an overview of the plan for comment at all of Syracuse's "Tomorrow's Neighborhoods Today" meetings, a city-wide public meeting, and a public, Neighborhood Preservation Committee Meeting in the Common Council Chambers. Following the public comment period, the City's Sustainability Coordinator reviewed all feedback and evaluated it collaboratively with other interdepartmental staff for inclusion in the plan. The Bureau of Planning & Sustainability produced a revised draft and convened the advisory groups once more to review it before releasing the final version of this component for adoption by Common Council.

## THE PLANNING CONTEXT

The *Comprehensive Plan* itself addresses a broad variety of subject areas related to physical and economic development, quality of life in Syracuse neighborhoods, and the future of the City. Those subject areas that include detailed policy, extensive actions agendas, and that have a long-term horizon are included as components or chapters of the *Comprehensive Plan*. As components of the *Comprehensive Plan* they are also formally adopted by the Planning Commission and Common Council. Additionally, the *Comprehensive Plan* refers to actions under the City's direct control or under its influence; other planning documents should support the vision in the *Comprehensive Plan*, but are not formally adopted as components if:

- The plan has a relatively short-term horizon,
- The plan guides the actions of a neighborhood association or grassroots organization, or if
- It is intended to guide regional planning efforts.

The diagram on the next page illustrates relationship between planning documents that either are part of, or that are related to, the City's *Comprehensive Plan*. The *Comprehensive Plan* provides the broad vision for Syracuse's future and action items related to all City departments and operations. The components on the right include long-range goals and detailed action agendas and are formally adopted as part of the Plan. The two below—*Pedestrian Infrastructure* and *Parks*—will be formal components prepared at a future date.

The plans on the left should complement the *Comprehensive Plan*.

- Tomorrow's Neighborhoods Today (TNT) Plans should guide the coordinated action of neighborhood groups toward neighborhood-level objectives and include more detailed vision for their neighborhoods' development that

supplements the vision for Syracuse's future contained in the *Comprehensive Plan*.

- The City's Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) is prepared annually and should be guided by the objectives outlined in the *Comprehensive Plan*.
- Neighborhood & Business Development periodically prepares an operating plan, outlining near-term policy and regulatory objectives, policies to guide allocation of CDBG, HOME, and other funding, and economic development strategies. This plan responds to immediate challenges and provides transparency to ongoing initiatives.
- Transportation planning is carried out both regionally and locally. Local policy related to transportation infrastructure is implemented through the CIP. Development regulations influence transportation patterns by controlling private access to the right-of-way, requiring safe and accessible sidewalks, setting standards for on-site parking, and encouraging density within mixed-use nodes served by transit. Regionally, the Long-Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) developed by the Syracuse Metropolitan Transportation Council (SMTC) outlines regional goals for transportation and provides a benchmark for evaluating which local projects are eligible for federal and state assistance. Specific funding for capital projects is outlined regionally by the SMTC's Transportation Improvement Program.





*Pops in the Park, Summer 2012; Upper Onondaga Park  
flickr photo credit: Benjamin Cleeton*



*Funky Flea outdoor market; Summer 2011*

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# VISION FOR THE FUTURE

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A comprehensive plan shapes how a city functions as a community and reveals its collective aspirations, values, and vision for the future. Syracuse's vision sets the standard for the city's high quality of life through the consistent enhancement of its economic, social, and physical environment.

The City of Syracuse will continue to maintain and enhance an environment where its residents enjoy an exceptional quality of life born from its rich cultural and social heritage. Syracuse's urban fabric will exhibit beautiful architectural structures and public spaces encompassed within an urban park network and set within dynamic neighborhoods, interconnected by an efficient and sustainable transportation system. The city will foster and support a vibrant economy and a culturally diverse community with a variety of housing and neighborhood types; high-quality educational and cultural institutions; a diverse array of employment and entrepreneurial opportunities and recreational amenities; and a sensitive integration of development and nature within the city.

The City of Syracuse is comprised of many neighborhoods of different types. Some are more suburban and park-like in nature with large lots and dense tree-cover. Others include denser housing stock and a broad variety of activities, closely grouped around commercial and industrial employment centers. Many center around neighborhood commercial districts that support local businesses and cultural venues.

Syracuse's many distinct neighborhoods consist of architecturally eclectic homes that are encompassed by a lush urban forest. In the future, the city will realize an increase in homeownership while students that attend local colleges will remain as part of the community. Well-lit sidewalks lined with street trees will connect to public parks and neighborhood schools. Residents will enjoy leisurely strolls to the local park or neighborhood business district and, along the way, often stop to converse with their neighbors engaged with the goings-on of the neighborhood from their front porches or yards. Vacant lots may be utilized by surrounding neighbors for community gardens or recreation space, making an amenity out of these open spaces. Infrastructure will be installed with a thoughtful eye toward its aesthetic and functional impact on the surrounding neighborhood.

Neighborhoods throughout the city will be child-friendly as children safely play within their community. In addition, the city's neighborhoods should be safe places for senior citizens to meet their day-to-day needs and safely travel throughout the city. Homeowners will take pride in their property and are often found improving their home as they tend their gardens and take care to highlight the craftsmanship of their property.

The Downtown will continue to transition toward a broader mix of uses and development that includes a variety of ground floor retail, restaurant and shopping opportunities

that are supported by a close supply of customers living above the shops in high-quality apartments, lofts, and condominiums. It will be the professional employment, civic, and cultural core of the region. Streets will be tree-lined, well lit, and provide a safe atmosphere for social interaction and shopping. Downtown will continue to be a gathering place for the whole city and the region to gather and celebrate many festivals and events in its many popular public spaces. Thriving performing arts venues, museums, galleries, and arts institutions located here form the cultural core of the region.

Newly developed neighborhoods and areas of wide-scale redevelopment should emphasize pedestrian-friendly design and include sidewalks, streetlights, bike rack facilities, and connect with public parks, schools, and neighborhood retail districts where applicable. Examples of such areas include, but are not limited to, the Lakefront/Inner Harbor, Stadium/Market area, and the Near Eastside/Center of Excellence area. Developers should look to the Land Use & Development component of this plan for guidance on densities, building forms, and uses appropriate for these areas. Parking facilities should be located behind buildings, wherever possible, to preserve urban aesthetics and permit safe pedestrian activity.

Neighborhood centers will be similar in function to neighborhoods located in the downtown area, including a mix of uses and supporting mass transit and connectivity to downtown. Residential units and offices will exist above retail, restaurants, and businesses. Residential neighborhoods immediately adjacent to neighborhood centers will consist of higher density residential units that have ample pedestrian access to the retail shops. Investment in infill new construction and rehab of existing buildings should build off of these centers of economic and social activity and reinforce the urban densities found in and around neighborhood centers. Commercial storefronts here support a mix of local entrepreneurial businesses and larger retailers. A broad diversity of housing opportunities should exist within walking distance of these activity centers, including a variety of housing types and opportunities for quality housing for all income levels.

Transportation infrastructure should be planned to support future population growth, provide sustainable mass transit throughout Syracuse and the surrounding towns and villages, and connect to high-speed rail. To support this, regional growth should build on the increased demand for urban living and development within the City should be focused around Downtown and University Hill, neighborhood centers, and major transportation corridors.





# POLICIES, GOALS, & RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

## GUIDING POLICIES

The following overall policy statements, adopted by Common Council in 2005, drive the goals and action items included in the Comprehensive Plan and its components:

- **As the heart of the regional economy, it is the policy of the City of Syracuse to encourage, promote, and support a business-friendly environment that provides for sustainable urban economic growth and economic opportunities for Syracuse residents.**

Job creation and economic growth are among the most critical factors required to accomplish the City's future vision contained in this plan. The policies, goals, and recommended actions in this plan are aimed toward creating a business-friendly work environment necessary to foster increased job creation and economic development. A business-friendly environment attracts large and small businesses and industries where the needs of the City's residents, employers and employees are met.

*Onondaga Creekwalk near Franklin Square.*

The City of Syracuse's labor force is adapting as the local and regional economy has changed from mostly manufacturing-based to predominately service-based. The majority of those working in the City are employed within the growing Education, Health Care, and Social Service employment sector. As with most northeastern cities, there is an out migration of City residents largely because of a lack of employment opportunities.

The growth of these "Eds and Meds," while critical to Syracuse's economy, is often bemoaned as causing of a growing share of Syracuse's property tax base to shift toward tax-exempt status. According to the New York State Department of Taxation and Finance, 55 percent of the total assessed value of property in Syracuse is exempt.<sup>1</sup> 28,940 properties in the city take advantage of a partial exemption; however, most of these are STAR exemptions for owner-occupants, for which the City is reimbursed by the State. Only 1,786 properties (4.25 percent of the properties in the city) are entirely exempt. These relatively few fully exempt properties account for the vast majority of the exempt value in the city. Or stated another way, 4.25 percent of the properties in the city being totally exempt account for the exemption of 44.83% of the total value of real estate in the city from property taxes.

This is common among cities like Syracuse that contain large numbers of government buildings, parks, and exempt entities like universities and hospitals. However, these major employers and institutions can thrive alongside growth of the taxable base. The City encourages the overall growth of the tax base and positive real estate development that improves the community.

*Ice Skaters in Clinton Square*

An additional challenge is the City's tax collection rate. The City collects 94% of property taxes due in any given fiscal year, and an additional 4% are eventually paid late. That leaves 2% never collected. The recent creation of a city-county land bank—the Greater Syracuse Property

1 <http://orpts.tax.ny.gov/MuniPro/>

Development Corporation—will enable the City to increase its tax collection rate by foreclosing on properties that don't pay, but will also help to grow the tax base by assembling sites for development, stabilizing strategic properties, and making it easier for investors to purchase tax-foreclosed property.

The policy, goals and actions recommended below are geared specifically towards improving the City's economy through an improved interaction of the City economy with the regional economy, the creation of jobs, as well as the growth of the City's economic base. Enhancing the local and regional economy provides many long-range and immediate benefits for the City of Syracuse. As the largest metropolitan center in Central New York, the City of Syracuse is in a unique position to capitalize on regional economic opportunities by offering an environment that provides the critical resources necessary to develop and refine regional growth industries.

- **It is the policy of the City of Syracuse to offer an exceptional quality-of-life for its residents and visitors, by providing programs and services that enhance all types of neighborhoods.**

In 2010, the U.S. Census counted Syracuse's population at 145,170 persons—a slightly less than 1.5% decline since 2000. This was the first Decennial Census in which Syracuse's ongoing population loss—significant since its 1950s peak at approximately 220,000 persons—began to level off. The City lost much of its population as a result of suburban growth within the surrounding towns. Onondaga County's population has remained stable since the 1970s, reflecting this shift fueled by sprawling development patterns within the County. The County's Sustainable Development Plan and accompanying policy changes are now aiming to stem this sprawl in order to conserve resources and farmland and more efficiently provide infrastructure and public services. The City and inner-ring suburbs are in a position to accept any regional growth and should plan for sensitive infill development in advance of this potential growth.

To position itself to attract this growth, Syracuse must make itself the kind of community where people want to live—focusing on maintaining existing amenities such as its magnificent parks system, investing in quality public spaces, improving schools and public safety, and encouraging real estate development that stimulates pedestrian activity and creates vibrant neighborhood centers with a mix of residential, commercial, and other uses that ensure activities go on throughout the day and evening.

In addition, approximately 20,000 students are enrolled in the City's school system, where the average age of the school buildings is 70 years old. Since the Comprehensive Plan was adopted in 2005, the City and the Syracuse City School District have begun Phase I of the Joint Schools Construction Board (JSCB) major renovations of educational facilities. Extensive renovations have begun on Fowler, Dr. Weeks, HW Smith, and Central Tech in Phase I of this endeavor.

Syracuse is also home to the majority of the County's minority population and a diversity of ethnic restaurants and shops. While this is a critical asset and Syracuse is fortunate to receive a steady influx of recent immigrants, the community must ensure that adequate social services are provided and that housing quality standards are being

met by landlords. The City contains some of the County's oldest neighborhoods where 48% of the housing was built before 1939. While this presents a challenge for property maintenance and building code enforcement, with effective, proactive enforcement these historic, architecturally unique neighborhoods can be an asset and set Syracuse apart compared to the rest of the region.

Syracuse is the center of entertainment activity for the region. The 172 parks located within the City cover more than 800 acres. These parks have been identified as being a great community asset that must be preserved for future generations. Resources are limited to maintain these parks and many are suffering from overuse and deterioration. The Erie Canal, Onondaga Creek, and Onondaga Lake, as well as the City's historic architecture, have been recognized as key resources to be utilized and protected for recreation and economic growth. In particular, the City has focused its attention recently on Onondaga Creek as it extends through the City. Phase I of the Creekwalk, from Onondaga Lake to Armory Square, provides public access to this waterway. Future phases and additional installations along Onondaga Creek will extend the trail to the southern end of the City, provide access to environment and recreation opportunities and spur additional economic development along the Creek.

The needs of Syracuse's residents are constantly evolving as the City's population becomes more diverse, particularly as recent immigrants continue to locate in the city. As population densities and the age of Syracuse's population continue to shift, it is important that the City anticipate these changes and plans accordingly.

- **It is the policy of the City of Syracuse to cultivate and capitalize on the area's unique character defined by its history while supporting well-designed real estate developments that enhance neighborhoods, lively public spaces, well-maintained infrastructure, and dynamic neighborhoods that are linked by well-planned transportation, all within an exciting, safe, clean environment.**

This will be accomplished through strategic choices in the City's operating budget, land use and design regulations, as well as capital improvements that implement the vision established by the City's Comprehensive Plan. The City's physical environment helps to define the community's character through its land use patterns and urban design, as well as natural, cultural, and historic resources. Developing the City and improving its physical environment through the enhancement of its civic and public facilities has been identified as a major objective of the Comprehensive Plan. Implementing procedures to ensure that the City's operating budget and Capital Improvement Program further the goals included in this plan is critical to implementing this policy and the one that follows.

The City of Syracuse is located at the crossroads of Interstates Route 690 and 81. It serves as a transportation hub for the entire Central New York region. While the City is served by a mix of transportation options, reliance on automobile travel is prevalent, putting a strain on existing roads. The influx of vehicles into Downtown Syracuse has made parking a major land use issue within the City's core business district. Large open lots dominate the urban landscape creating negative visual appeal and failing to maximize the potential (and the taxable value) of prime Downtown real estate. The pursuit of more sustainable transportation infrastructure is supported by this plan.

As Syracuse's economy has evolved from heavy industry to a more service-based economy, many neighborhoods are prime for reinvention. Most of these are identified as "Industrial Legacy" in the Land Use & Development component of this plan. As these areas evolve into mixed-use neighborhoods, upgrades in sidewalks, street trees, and lighting will be needed. Mechanisms to fund these improvements and encourage private investment should be identified.

The City of Syracuse provides a variety of environments that foster civic pride, economic growth, community building, and citizenship. Many challenges currently confront the City such as increased economic competition with the surrounding suburbs and increasing numbers of vacant property due to decades of population loss. However, many large employers are choosing to move Downtown to attract young professional employees with a vibrant workplace, and Downtown market-rate residential development is booming.

Syracuse benefits from waterways such as Onondaga Lake, Onondaga Creek, and Harbor Brook. Many of these waterways are receiving needed water quality improvements due to Onondaga County's Amended Consent Judgment (ACJ) to reduce the amount of combined sewer overflow events. The County's Save the Rain projects across the City are making dramatic aesthetic upgrades as they reduce the strain on our combined storm water/sewer system. These should establish the model for future capital projects, and if properly maintained, should save the City and County long-term infrastructure maintenance costs while keeping our creeks and waterways clean and available for recreation.

While the City possesses an outstanding inventory of public parks, maintenance has been deferred in many instances due to budget constraints. This plan advocates a long-range maintenance plan be developed for parks specifically, in addition to an evaluation of all capital facilities to prioritize maintenance within the CIP and to identify potential shared uses and efficiencies.

The City is responsible for 429 miles of combined, sanitary collector and dedicated storm sewers. Many sewer lines date back to the late nineteenth century. Significant work is needed to modernize and repair the City's sewer system. Investments fueled by the County's Save the Rain program are helping to reduce the strain on this system. In addition, the City owns more than 500 miles of water pipeline, much of which is seriously deteriorated and requires frequent emergency repairs.

## **GOALS AND RECOMMENDED ACTIONS**

### **A. CAPITAL FACILITIES**

#### **1. Strategically plan for the maintenance and efficient use of city-owned capital facilities.**

Syracuse's City-owned capital facilities include:

- schools,
- libraries,
- community centers,

- community policing centers,
- fire stations,
- parks,
- and facilities used for government operations, such as City Hall and facilities used by the Department of Public Works and the Water Department.

Given the City's growing fiscal constraints the following priorities emerge as critical to cost-savings and efficient provision of services:

**a. Prioritize regular maintenance that will save future costs**

**b. Evaluate the service area of each and identify opportunities for shared space**

This will ensure more efficient use of capital facilities and may bring services closer to a larger number of residents. Many Syracuseans have observed that the school buildings may serve as community centers in the evening hours. Other opportunities for shared space should be identified and implemented where they might bring efficiencies to City operations.

**2. Complete a Recovery Action Plan (RAP) for Syracuse Parks.**

**a. Inventory park assets and identify issues. Compare the inventory to the results of a recreation needs assessment and set priorities for maintenance and renovation of each park.**

**b. The Citywide park master plan should place emphasis in preservation and restoration of historic park attributes including but not limited to statues and monuments, stonework (staircases, walls, etc.), and mature trees.**

- Utilize the park master plan to leverage public and private financing sources

**c. Ensure safe, clean, and beautiful public parks.**

- Assist neighborhoods in establishing park associations whose purpose is to help maintain and enhance park facilities and services.
- Maintain park facilities, park trails, stairways, and entranceways, monuments, and vegetation to improve site distance, lighting, aesthetics, accessibility, and use.

**d. Ensure that the current park and recreation system meets the needs of all existing and future City residents.**

- Conduct a needs assessment to determine changing recreation needs of City residents.
- Review City parks based on the needs assessment to identify changes to the park system to reflect the current population's recreational use patterns.

**B. CULTURAL ASSETS**

**1. Encourage and promote the development of a vibrant municipal Public Art Program.**

**a. Implement the *Public Art* component of this plan.**

The Public Art plan's overall goals include:

- Ensure and Celebrate the diversity of public art in the city
- Make public art a community priority in Syracuse

- Capitalize upon economic opportunities associated with public art
  - Establish Downtown Syracuse as the public art showcase of the region
2. **Celebrate the City’s position as the region’s arts and cultural center.**
    - a. **Promote the use of City-owned venues, parks and open spaces for arts, heritage and culture-related festivals and events.**
    - b. **Develop and promote events and activities that focus on the unique aspects of the City’s character and culture through the Department of Parks, Recreation and Youth Programs.**
    - c. **Encourage the TNT Neighborhood Planning Councils and other neighborhood organizations to develop ways to celebrate the heritage and cultural resources of their immediate community**
  3. **Publicize and promote the wide variety of arts and cultural activities and offerings available throughout the community.**
    - a. **Use City website and community calendar to promote upcoming cultural and arts related events.**
    - b. **Develop City-employee voluntary list service to encourage and promote participation in events and activities throughout the city.**

## **C. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

### **1. Create a business-friendly environment in City government.**

The City of Syracuse strives to create a “business-friendly environment” that provides resources and assistance for sustainable urban economic growth.

- a. **Facilitate business locations and re-locations within the City.**
  - Provide businesses wishing to open or relocate with customized site recommendations based on their needs and the City’s Land Use Plan.
  - Use a comprehensive pre-development process to provide developers and businesses with access to regulatory feedback from City personnel at the outset of their project, prior to permitting and the start of construction.
  - Emphasize customer service in all departmental interactions with businesses.
  - Provide informational assistance and referrals for financing, business plan creation, and regulatory guidance to new and existing businesses through the Division of Business Development.
2. **Use local and regional development plans as a guide for economic development.**

2011-2012 saw the release of several comprehensive, publicly-vetted local and regional development plans, each based on the principles of sustainability. In the economic development arena, these plans are most effective when their policy prescriptions are put into action through targeted support for strategic projects.

  - a. **Align public financial support for businesses with comprehensive local and regional planning efforts.**
    - Use the City’s economic development incentives strategically to attract

businesses whose plans, locations, and operations are consistent with the City's vision for future development, as articulated in the Land Use and Sustainability Plans.

- Work closely with Onondaga County's Economic Development office to direct suitable development projects into the City, in order to reduce sprawl and foster development consistent with the County's Sustainable Development Plan.
- Advance development projects which are consistent with the long-term strategic plan of Central New York's Regional Economic Development Council.

### **3. Facilitate revitalization of Syracuse's neighborhood business corridors.**

Strong business corridors make for strong neighborhoods. A strategy of facilitated business corridor revitalization will allow the Division of Business Development, in coordination with the Division of Neighborhood Development, to effectively eliminate blight, to create stronger neighborhood economies, and to address the unique concerns of the businesses within these corridors. It will help the established corridors to flourish and will also help less established corridors to stabilize and grow. Healthy, populated neighborhood business corridors are an important part of neighborhood walkability, livability, and identity.

#### **a. Identify Syracuse's neighborhood business corridors.**

Work with neighborhood-based development partners, district councilors, residents and business owners to identify and delineate each neighborhood corridor.

#### **b. Assess the condition and needs of each local business corridor.**

Assess the condition, strengths and needs of each corridor and its immediate neighborhood through direct assessment and interaction with neighborhood groups, residents, business owners and police.

#### **c. Address the needs and issues that are identified.**

- Work with Code Enforcement to rectify problem properties that blight the corridors.
- Keep a regularly updated list of vacant business corridor properties for recommendation to suitable potential businesses.
- When feasible, use the surrounding community's own needs assessment to engage in outreach and recruitment efforts to developers and business owners.

#### **d. Facilitate higher residential density along the neighborhood business corridors.**

- Support and encourage high-density residential projects on upper floors of corridor buildings, and on properties adjacent to the commercial corridors to promote more foot traffic, interaction and vitality, as recommended by the Land Use Plan. (This may call for Zoning changes as well as selectively incentivizing residential projects when market conditions do not.)

### **4. Reinforce University Hill and Downtown as the core of regional employment and business**

University Hill and Downtown Syracuse are the City's major employment centers. University Hill is the location of Syracuse University, SUNY-ESF, SUNY Upstate Medical University, University Hospital, Crouse Hospital, the VA Medical Center, Hutchings Psychiatric Center, and Rosewood Heights Medical Center. The total number of people working on University Hill is estimated to be over 20,000.

Downtown contains a variety of professional offices, government offices, assorted businesses, and non-profits, which cumulatively employ about 27,000 people. The City has formed a Business Improvement District (BID) for the Downtown area, where additional beautification, special lighting, streetscaping, security and cleanup services are provided by the City and the Downtown Committee, funded by a special assessment. It will be important to continue these services to preserve and enhance downtown as an attractive place to work and do business.

Another BID exists on University Hill, the Crouse Marshall Business Improvement District, which is served by the City and by University Hill Corporation. On University Hill, multi-modal transportation and streetscape improvements are in progress. Known as the Connective Corridor, this project is a joint effort by Syracuse University and the City of Syracuse. When complete, the project will enhance the University Hill area and connect it to Downtown with a functional and distinctive streetscape design.

- a. Preserve and enhance the urban aesthetics of Downtown and University Hill.**
  - Both areas are characterized by a lively mix of business, non-profit and residential uses, with active street life both day and night. Ensure that new development and major renovations front the sidewalk and contribute to the pedestrian experience.
  - Facilitate the re-development of vacant parcels and surface parking lots into new, mixed use, urban-type buildings which fill holes in the urban fabric.
- b. Attend to the regular maintenance and cleaning of streets and public space**
  - With a business orientation and fewer residents than other Syracuse neighborhoods, these two areas need special attention from the City for removal of litter and debris from the public right-of-way.
  - New bike lanes in the Connective Corridor will need regular street sweeping to remain safe for cycling commuters and keep them free of glass, gravel and debris.
- c. Work jointly with Downtown and University Hill partners to enhance connectivity, public amenities, and attractiveness of these areas.**
  - Continue collaborations with University Hill and the Downtown Committee to enhance the public realm of their respective neighborhoods.
  - Communicate regularly with the IDEAS Collaborative, an alliance of local arts and cultural institutions and groups, to identify and facilitate new downtown public improvement projects that will contribute to the development of a Downtown Arts & Cultural District.
- d. Keep a strong Police presence downtown to address crime and public safety**
  - Continue regular patrols and enhanced presence during events.



- Continue bicycle and walking beat police presence.
- e. **Facilitate the smooth flow of commuter traffic to, from, and within both areas.**
  - Upgrade traffic signal coordination and periodically assess effectiveness.
  - Plan for increased bicycle and pedestrian traffic and provide suitable amenities.
  - Keep streets maintained and free of potholes and other hazards.

#### **D. EDUCATION**

1. **Be supportive of the City School District's stated goal of becoming "the most improved urban school district in America."**
  - a. **Provide infrastructural support to City schools and surrounding neighborhoods to ensure healthy school environments and safe routes to school.**
    - Ensure that school facilities are healthy environments for children and staff
    - Prioritize City infrastructure improvements such as sidewalk repairs, green infrastructure and traffic safety upgrades around schools.
  - b. **Work with housing partners and private investors to rehabilitate housing around schools.**
  - c. **Treat school and their surroundings as targeted neighborhood investment zones.**
2. **Continue to support Say Yes to Education, the landmark collaborative program to increase local graduation rates by providing essential educational, financial and other supports for students in the City School District and their families.**

#### **E. GOVERNMENT MODERNIZATION**

1. **Identify opportunities for the consolidation of services that may save taxpayers money.**
2. **Identify technological advancements that might facilitate more efficient, cost-effective, and transparent provision of government services.**
  - a. **Increase the use of Geographical Information System (GIS) technology and other computer-based data-management programs to catalog, analyze, and process and provide public access to information.**
3. **Continue to professionalize comprehensive and strategic planning in the City of Syracuse.**
  - a. **Give permanence to the role of the Bureau of Planning & Sustainability.**

The Bureau of Planning & Sustainability is the principal steward of the Comprehensive Plan and the primary entity responsible for the coordination of interdisciplinary and interdepartmental city planning initiatives. The Bureau of Planning & Sustainability is responsible for:

    - Managing major planning and urban design projects and both intradepartmental and administrative and planning efforts to ensure consistency with and progression of the Comprehensive Plan.

- Promoting and supporting plans, policies, and operations that ensure the social, environmental, and economic sustainability of our city.
- The creation of plans and other administrative tools related to land use, zoning, historic preservation, public art, brownfield management, and urban architectural and landscape design.
- The creation and updating of TNT, neighborhood, and area-specific development plans.
- Updating and advancing the Comprehensive Plan and its components related to City regulations, operations, and capital investment. This Office will work collaboratively with all relevant City Departments to assist in the creation of plans that will help guide operations in the most effective and efficient manner.
- Providing data and policy analysis, as requested, to other City Departments and public agencies.
- Advancing sustainability initiatives including but not limited to those pertaining to energy, clean air, clean water, storm water management, smart growth, green building, natural resource protection, environmental advocacy and education, as well as interaction with local, state and federal agencies and non-governmental agencies germane to these areas.

**b. Implement formal procedures for developing the Capital Improvement Program that ensures coordination with the goals included in this plan. Particularly those goals under Capital Facilities, Transportation, and Utilities.**

**c. Provide planning support to Tomorrow's Neighborhoods Today (TNT) planning councils as they pursue the completion and update of their five-year plans.**

- Continue to enhance coordination between City government and Tomorrow's Neighborhoods Today (TNT) neighborhood planning councils.
- Ensure that TNT plans that are in accordance with the Comprehensive Plan. The TNT plans should complement the Comprehensive Plan, but provide a greater level of neighborhood-specific detail in their visioning sections. Their action items should focus on grass-roots capacity building within the TNT or other neighborhood organizations and advocacy groups.
- Provide planning and technical assistance to each TNT area to build the capacity to update and carry out their plans.

**d. Support other neighborhood planning efforts.**

- Provide a liaison from City Planning and coordinate neighborhood goals with City programs.
- Ensure consistency with the Comprehensive Plan.

## **F. HOUSING**

**1. Continue the process of periodically revising the Neighborhood & Business Development Plan as new policies are implemented.**

The NBD Plan will include the complex policy and funding strategies necessary to accomplish the goals that follow, with a short-term horizon and flexibility to respond to immediate funding opportunities and address immediate challenges

as they arise.

**2. Encourage Homeownership.**

Homeownership builds wealth in a community and is correlated with a higher quality of property maintenance and fewer code violations. It enables households to build equity over time, expands economic opportunities for families, and improves the image of the entire neighborhood. The City should support homeownership by promoting use of the STAR tax-exemption and financial incentives.

**3. Prioritize rehabilitation over demolition and deconstruction over demolition, whenever feasible.**

Syracuse's historic neighborhoods possess a unique character and are one of its strongest assets for encouraging revitalization. The City should make every effort to maintain and rehabilitate this existing housing stock, with construction of new housing reserved for appropriate infill locations. When a structure is beyond rehabilitation and must come down, it should be deconstructed whenever possible, rather than demolished, with its materials being sold and/or repurposed for other uses.

**4. Focus new housing development within and around existing anchors such as community centers, neighborhood business districts, and schools.**

Considering decreasing funding for new housing and the City's focus on maintenance and rehabilitation, construction of new housing should be strategically targeted to areas where it can make the most difference in a neighborhood and where density can be retained. By locating it around existing anchors and assets, new housing can recreate lost density and support neighborhood centers by providing the density of residents needed to support efficient transit service and patronize local businesses.

**5. Encourage the development of a variety of housing types throughout the City.**

The City should work with developers and local real estate agencies to market the positive attributes of city living. A diverse range of housing options should include market rate and affordable housing, detached single-family residences, apartment buildings, condos, etc.

**6. Facilitate the development of mixed-income housing and neighborhoods in order to create real "Neighborhoods of Choice."**

In order to create real "Neighborhoods of Choice" Syracuse must focus on encouraging mixed-income neighborhoods and housing developments. Syracuse should strive to make all neighborhoods the type of place where families with options choose to live—Neighborhoods of Choice.

**7. Support grassroots neighborhood beautification efforts.**

Examples include communal maintenance of public planter beds, bulb give-aways, and neighborhood clean-up days organized by neighborhood residents.

**8. Encourage the maintenance and improvement of existing housing stock.**

- a. **Enforce existing building and property maintenance codes.**
- b. **Identify additional mechanisms to hold responsible parties—landlords and/or tenants—accountable for building code violations.**  
As all properties have an impact on the quality of life and property values in

their immediate surroundings, proactively enforce the building and property maintenance codes as they apply to both vacant and occupied properties, owner-occupied and rentals. Ensuring that vacants are not allowed to deteriorate may save the City future court-ordered demolition costs and prevent the slow deterioration of many Syracuse neighborhoods. Furthermore, all property owners have a responsibility to maintain their property in such a way that it does not negatively affect their neighbors.

## **G. LAND USE & DEVELOPMENT**

### **1. Ensure that Syracuse’s zoning ordinance and development regulations are consistent with the character desired of future development.**

#### **a. Overhaul the City’s zoning ordinance in order to implement the *Land Use & Development* component of this plan.**

The five major goals of this plan and the subject areas to which they relate are as follows:

#### *Overall Land Use Pattern*

**Preserve and enhance Syracuse’s existing land use patterns.**

#### *Character of Existing Neighborhoods*

**Protect and enhance the character and “sense of place” of Syracuse’s neighborhoods.**

#### *Design & Form of Infill Development & Major Alterations*

**Ensure high-quality, attractive design throughout the city.**

#### *Energy & the Environment*

**Promote environmentally sustainable land use patterns, transportation options, and site plans.**

#### *Regulatory Process*

**Ensure that development regulations and review processes are efficient, predictable, and transparent.**

### **2. Protect historic buildings and designed landscapes for the enjoyment of future generations and as an economic development opportunity.**

#### **a. Revise the City’s Landmark Preservation Ordinance**

#### **b. Implement the Historic Preservation component of this plan**

The major goals of this component are as follows:

- Celebrate Syracuse’s History and Heritage as Embodied by Historic Resources.
- Promote the Economic Opportunities and Benefits of Historic Preservation.
- Prioritize Preservation in Syracuse’s Land Use Regulations and City Operations.

### **3. Maintain and enhance a citywide Brownfield reclamation program.**

#### **a. Inventory all existing brownfields and prioritize their cleanup.**

The City of Syracuse has worked closely with Onondaga County, the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation and the U.S Environmental

Protection Agency to evaluate, inventory, plan for, and redevelop brownfield properties in the City and will continue to seek opportunities and partnerships to further this initiative.

- b. Apply to include additional corridors in the Brownfields Opportunity Area program and for other brownfield-cleanup grants.**
- c. Encourage private property owners to utilize the Brownfield Cleanup Program tax-credit.**
- d. Identify and address barriers to facilitating redevelopment of brownfields via municipal acquisition.**

**4. Support energy efficient designs and “green” building technology projects.**

**H. PUBLIC SAFETY**

**1. Improve public safety within City neighborhoods.**

- a. Create a more visible, more geographically-deployed police presence to stabilize chronically high-crime areas of the City.**

Having a force that is deployed in a more geographically targeted way in regards to force levels and in regards to the individual officers deployed with an emphasis on community relations will foster stronger relationships between the police and grassroots community members including residents, faith-based organizations and neighborhood watch groups which will improve the “eyes on the street,” and the Police Department’s ability to gather actionable intelligence.

- b. Involve residents in improving public safety in the community.**

In addition to neighborhood TNT groups working with neighborhood residents, businesses, and organizations in planning for their neighborhoods, TNT must continue to include the Police Department in these regular discussions of neighborhood crime issues.

- c. Identify key areas within the City where street lighting should be added.**

- d. Mitigate the adverse effects of vacant property and vacant housing on public safety within City neighborhoods.**

Utilize existing tools and explore the creation of new methods to accomplish this goal. For example:

- Use the Greater Syracuse Property Development Corporation (Syracuse-Onondaga County Land Bank) to take ownership of vacant buildings, facilitate their return to productive use, and stabilize and maintain those that remain vacant to a higher standard.
- Continue to work collaboratively with Code Enforcement and the Syracuse Fire Department to identify the most hazardous vacant buildings for demolition or deconstruction.
- Utilize a Vacant Property Registry to track the condition of vacant buildings in real time, encourage their rehabilitation and return to productive use, and to efficiently and intelligently plan for their treatment—whether rehab or demolition/deconstruction.

**I. SUSTAINABILITY****1. Protect natural resources for future generations and to enhance the quality of life of Syracuse residents.****a. Implement the *Sustainability* component of this plan.**

This component includes specific goals and recommended actions related to Energy & Green Building, Education & Training, Food Systems, the Natural Environment, and Waste & Recycling.

The plan was developed with extensive public involvement, and its recommendations focus on the following goals:

- Reduce the volume and impact of energy consumption in the City of Syracuse.
  - Incorporate energy efficiency measures into repair, replacement and upgrade projects on City facilities.
  - Reduce Syracuse's carbon footprint through municipal and community conservation measures.
- Reduce negative impacts on the Onondaga Creek watershed.
  - Utilize green infrastructure for stormwater management.
  - Increase street tree stocking throughout the City.
- Improve the City of Syracuse's local water, food and energy independence.
  - Increase opportunities for community gardening and urban agriculture through policy and zoning changes.
  - Increase the City's renewable energy capacity.
- Reduce waste and increase recycling.
  - Work with OCRRA on education campaigns and expansion of the recycling program.
  - Optimize the City's waste collection routes for travel efficiency.
  - Re-assess and upgrade the waste collection procedures and equipment for greater efficiency, cleanliness, and better working conditions for laborers.
- Improve quality of life for Syracuse residents.
  - Develop a network of neighborhood greenways with shade trees, green medians, and bicycle and pedestrian improvements.
  - Work to extend the Creekwalk southward, facilitate development of the Erie Canal trail through Syracuse, and collaborate on completion of the Loop the Lake trail.
  - Facilitate greater access to fresh produce and healthy food throughout the City, especially in food-desert areas.

**J. TRANSPORTATION****1. Develop and publicize access management standards.**

In order to reduce congestion, allow for maximum utilization of on-street parking, and reduce opportunities for conflicts between motorists, pedestrians, and bicyclists, the Department of Public works shall develop access management

standards limiting unnecessary curb cuts onto higher volume through-streets and commercial corridors. These will aim to limit unnecessary access points between the right-of-way and private property, which will in turn improve the automotive capacity of the main streets by channelizing turn movements to controlled intersections. Reducing unnecessary driveways will also enhance the walkability of such streets by eliminating conflict zones between pedestrians and cars. These will be published on the City's website so that developers might comply in advance and speed the development approvals process. The access management standards will guide DPW's comments on interdepartmental reviews of development proposals.

**2. Plan for Complete Streets, enabling all users and modes of transportation to safely and efficiently move about the City, when developing the City's Capital Improvement Program.**

Complete Streets are defined by Smart Growth America as "... streets for everyone. They are designed and operated to enable safe access for all users. Pedestrians, bicyclists, motorists, and public transportation users of all ages and abilities are able to safely move along and across a complete street. Complete Streets make it easy to cross the street, walk to shops, and bicycle to work. They allow buses to run on time and make it safe for people to walk to and from train stations."

The City of Syracuse shall provide complete streets that meet the needs of all people regardless of age, income or ability. As such, the City of Syracuse will aim to optimize the right-of-way for the movement of people, ensuring that the right-of-way can safely and efficiently accommodate this movement by a range of transit modes. The City of Syracuse shall accommodate all users equally, with equal right to access and use of the transportation network. Social, economic and environmental impacts shall also be considered when balancing various modes' impact on and use of the public right-of-way.

The City recognizes bicycles, pedestrian, mass transit, non-motorized vehicle, and motorized vehicle modes as integral elements of the transportation network. To this end, the public right-of-way shall accommodate and encourage travel by all modes of transit equally. Though not every street can be optimized for every mode, Syracuse's streets network will adequately meet the needs and provide safe travel for all modes of transit. Syracuse streets will also ensure safe, easy transfer between modes of transit that is integrated with sustainable land use development. In short, the Syracuse right-of-way will contain a fully-connected transportation infrastructure network accommodating all modes of transit.

The City shall view any modification to the right-of-way as an opportunity to improve safety, access and mobility for all travelers within the city. As such, all projects—including planning, programming, design, construction, reconstruction, rehabilitation, retrofit, operations and maintenance—undertaken by the City of Syracuse shall be designed and executed in a balanced, responsible and equitable way to accomplish the policy objectives set forth in this ordinance.

This policy shall apply to all public right-of-way under the jurisdiction of the City of Syracuse, as well as the roadways of private developments within the City. When at all possible, the City shall work with other jurisdictions and utilities to apply the

goals of this policy to right-of-way not under the jurisdiction of the City. Where access by non-motorized users is prohibited by local or superseding legislation, roadways should, in lieu of adhering to complete streets standards, incorporate context-sensitive solutions in their planning, programming, design, construction, reconstruction, rehabilitation, retrofit, operations and maintenance.

**a. Bicycle Infrastructure**

- Implement the *Bicycle Infrastructure* component of this plan as funds allow.
- Include the prioritized installation Bicycle Infrastructure projects in the CIP annually.
- Encourage private developers to accommodate bicycle parking on-site.

**3. In furtherance of a Complete Streets policy, outline standards for private developers' treatment of the right-of-way and private property that:**

- Encourage and facilitate safe, multi-modal transportation and
- Enhance the streetscapes of all major roadways.

**a. Develop and adopt a Pedestrian Infrastructure component of the plan that illustrates appropriate treatments of the sidewalk zone to guide capital improvements by the City and/or private property owners—including sidewalks, street furniture, street trees, and other utilities.**

This component should:

- Define what installations are the responsibility of the private owner and/or the City,
- Describe streetscape elements required in various zoning districts, and
- Guide revisions to the sidewalk ordinance.

**b. Following adoption of the Pedestrian Infrastructure Component, revise the sidewalk ordinance:**

- Determine the best way to maintain year-around accessible sidewalks free of snow, ice, and plant overgrowth.
- Ensure sidewalks are adequately maintained and safe and accessible to all users.
- Require different sidewalk designs based on zoning district.
- Ensure that sidewalk specs support storm water capture efforts and prevent overflow into the storm sewer system.

**c. Ensure that infrastructure for automobiles does not act as a barrier to other modes of travel.**

**d. Maintain and upgrade streetscape infrastructure such as sidewalks, lighting, and street trees.**

**4. Ensure that Syracuse's transportation networks are fast, efficient, and reliable.**

**a. Ensure that street signals are coordinated.**

**b. Develop loading and unloading policies that:**

- facilitate efficient transfer of goods,
- minimize impact on traffic,



- minimize impact on pedestrians and bicyclists,
  - direct these activities toward side streets and alleys, when possible, and
  - encourage these activities to be accommodated internal to development, when possible.
- c. Reintroduce access through existing super-blocks to:
- allow for more flexible route options and
  - to provide service and loading areas where none exist.
5. **Right-Size and Maintain Transportation Infrastructure.**
- a. **Identify areas where infrastructure can be reduced to serve current and/or projected capacity.**  
This could include road diets, which may reduce the amount of paved surface, in addition to accommodating additional modes (furthering the Complete Streets policy outlined above), and discouraging drivers from speeding (traffic calming). It may also include restricting motor vehicle traffic on low capacity bridges and/or redundant streets.
- b. **Develop strategic priorities for actively refurbishing the street network that inform the CIP.**
- c. **Proactively repair streets, especially during and after the winter to prevent major deterioration of the road.**
6. **Explore the feasibility of alternative, sustainable modes of mass transit.**
- a. **In furtherance of a Complete Streets policy, the City of Syracuse supports the investigation of more efficient mass transit modes such as light-rail and BRT.**  
As the City plans to accept future growth with the growing demand for urban living, these options—which have both been shown to increase transit ridership and to induce economic development—should be pursued.
- The Land Use & Development component of this plan calls for revision of the zoning ordinance to allow for TOD once stations locations are identified.
- b. **Support regional efforts to improve passenger rail service.**
7. **Encourage coordinated approach to parking among private property owners and business improvement districts.**
- a. **Utilize the Syracuse Parking Authority to assist with this coordination in the Downtown and University Hill area.**
- b. **Encourage shared parking facilities in business corridors and mixed-use areas.**
8. **Enhance gateways and way-finding for visitors to the city.**
- a. **Provide attractive, well-placed signs that enhance aesthetics and effectively communicate directions.** Create a standardized sign system to direct visitors to public parking lots.

- b. Reduce the amount of unnecessary signs throughout the City.
  - c. Use appropriately designed and placed banners, consistent design, signs, and so on to identify distinct areas within the City.
  - d. Identify and aesthetically improve the major points of entrance to the City.
9. Support the Syracuse Airport Authority in its mission ensure to provide competitive and efficient air service to the City and the region.
10. Promote the development of trails and corridors that reflect local, regional, state, and national history.
- a. Promote the development of trails and corridors that reflect local, regional, state, and national history.
  - b. Support the Loop the Lake initiative around Onondaga Lake.
  - c. Continue with efforts to develop the Onondaga Creekwalk.
  - d. Support the Erie Canalway Trail and the National Heritage Corridor.

**K. UTILITIES**

- 1. Collaborate with Onondaga County to upgrade the City's trunk sewers and pump stations.
  - a. Jointly seek state and federal funding sources to identify, prioritize, and complete improvements.
- 2. Modernize all City-owned water and sewer lines, including reservoirs.
  - a. Inventory and prioritize improvements to be made on annual basis.
  - b. Seek federal and state funding sources.
- 3. Encourage developers to bury utilities where deemed appropriate.

*Right: "Five Sisters;" Park Avenue Neighborhood (top)  
Walton Street in Armory Square (bottom)*





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# IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

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This plan was adopted by the Syracuse Planning Commission on January 7, 2013 and the Syracuse Common Council on March 17, 2014.

## **IMPLEMENTATION**

Each of the policies and recommended actions above should inform the operations of City Departments, the annual operating budget, and the Capital Improvement Program (CIP). Some of the recommended actions will require local and/or state legislation.

The Bureau of Planning & Sustainability, working in coordination with other City Departments and elected officials, should identify gaps between the Plan and City Policies/Regulations annually and work to help other departments integrate these policies into their operations and into the City's budgets. The departments relevant to each objective are indicated within the Policies, Goals, and Action Items chapter. Specific tasks – whether developing an operating plan, internal policy, applying for grant funding, conducting studies, or drafting local legislation – should be identified as Bureau tasks each year. This annual work plan will drive Comprehensive Plan implementation. Gradually, these projects will bring the City closer to implementation of the objectives and policies included in this plan.

## **PLAN UPDATES**

In addition, specific components of the plan, such as current conditions and trends, and the vision itself should be updated on an as needed basis. A process by which TNT Groups, members of the public, elected officials, and other City staff and departments can suggest revisions to the plan should be established. Bureau staff will also analyze the Plan itself and identify any necessary updates such as neighborhood scale revisions to the land use plan based on development trends or the need for new policies or regulations as new technologies emerge. These plan updates will also be included in the Bureau's annual work plan.

This process will ensure ongoing maintenance, relevance, and usefulness of the Plan, and ensure that several projects are undertaken to make City operations and policies more efficient and more consistent with the vision contained in this Plan each year. Past years' progress should be reported annually along with the upcoming year's work plan.

*Ribbon Cutting for Prospect Hill Homes, 2010*  
*Co-Developed by Housing Visions and Home HeadQuarters*

## AMENDMENT

*Comprehensive Plan 2040* was approved by the Syracuse City Planning Commission on January 7, 2013. Syracuse Common Council requested several amendments to the Plan in correspondence dated June 3, 2013. The following additions were approved by the City Planning Commission on August 5, 2013:

1. **Pedestrian Infrastructure.** The City's Transportation Plan must include pedestrian concerns. Sidewalk maintenance, access and the overall "walkability" of our City should be studied. Further development of the Creekwalk as a pedestrian corridor and the connectivity of other walking trails across the City must also be included in any plan updates.
2. **Parks and Open Space.** Outdoor recreational activities and facilities are an integral component of a vibrant community. The City of Syracuse must identify these important resources and ensure that they are appropriately located and maintained so as to serve the entire community. Plans should be developed to acquire additional open space where appropriate. Wildlife maintenance and management strategies must also be developed to address growing wildlife populations in urban habitats.
3. **Green Infrastructure.** Opportunities for sustainable municipal infrastructure will be included in any Plan update in policies, goals, and recommendations. Cutting edge technologies will be explored to lessen the environmental impacts of the City's roads, sidewalks, sewer and utilities.

The following additions were approved by the City Planning Commission on February 10, 2014:

4. **The Impact of the Greater Syracuse Property Development Corporation (GSPDC).** As the GSPDC develops its operating capacity to carry out its mission to become a regional land bank, long range planning should consider the roll of the GSPDC in revitalizing the City's neighborhoods through the control and rehabilitation of vacant, tax delinquent and/or abandoned properties.
5. **Water and Sewer Infrastructure.** The aging water and sewer infrastructure of the City should be acknowledged and strategies for the systematic upgrading and replacement of that infrastructure, both proactively and in emergencies should be pursued.
6. **Transportation Plan.** Good public transportation is critical to a pedestrian-friendly city and should provide access to workplaces and residential neighborhoods. Impending changes to Interstate 81 will impact future traffic patterns and traffic volumes as well as routes, designs, signage and infrastructure improvements.
7. **Climate Change.** The City should anticipate the potential consequences of climate change. Weather, temperature and other environmental changes may impact everything from municipal services to land use planning.
8. **Technology.** The City should consider the role of technology, setting an agenda for exploring and access to and use a variety of information technologies. This may include city-wide wireless networks, telecommunications and other technology infrastructures.
9. **The State Environmental Quality Review Act (SEQR).** Specific actions and updates taken under the *Comprehensive Plan 2040* are subject to SEQR, where applicable.

# Current Conditions

## COMMUNITY PROFILE

The City of Syracuse is located in the geographic center of New York State within Onondaga County. Syracuse has been appropriately called the “Crossroads of New York State” due to its central location as well as its proximity to the New York State Thruway/Route 81 intersection. Approximately 145,000 people live and more than 95,000 people work within the City of Syracuse. Based on population, the City of Syracuse is the fifth largest city in the State of New York.

Renowned institutions of higher learning such as Syracuse University, the State University of New York (SUNY) Upstate Medical Facility and the College of Environmental Science and Forestry, and LeMoyne College, and local hospitals such as St. Joseph’s, Crouse, and the Veterans Administration, are major employers and distinguish the City as the regional center of healthcare and education sectors. Other large employers include Niagara Mohawk, Time Warner Cable, POMCO, and Loretto, making Syracuse the primary employment center within Onondaga County.

Downtown Syracuse serves as the cultural entertainment center of the City and the region with its numerous civic spaces, museums, entertainment venues, and convention and cultural centers. The City contains more than thirty distinct neighborhoods, each with its own cultural identity and history. An extensive network of historic public parks also spans the city.

Community participation and civic activism are strong in Syracuse. An extensive network of neighborhood associations, neighborhood watch groups, and other advocacy organizations are active throughout the city. The Tomorrow’s Neighborhoods Today (TNT) program, supported by the City, provides a venue for neighborhood groups and concerned residents to come together and plan for their neighborhood’s future. The City administration is advised by the Citizen’s Cabinet, which meets with the Mayor quarterly to provide feedback on upcoming initiatives and City operations.

## NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

Located along Onondaga Lake’s southeastern shore, the City encompasses 26 square miles of varied terrain that includes an abundance of rolling hills, flat plains, streams, and lakes. Onondaga Lake and Onondaga Creek meet at Syracuse’s Inner Harbor, a former barge canal industrial site that consisted of salt manufacturing sheds, petroleum terminals and industrial uses that have been reclaimed and are now being transformed and redeveloped. Onondaga Lake, Syracuse’s Inner Harbor and the many other regional water resources, both natural and manmade, provide the City of Syracuse with unique recreational and economic development opportunities (further discussed below).

Skaneateles Lake provides for the City of Syracuse one of the cleanest sources of drinking water in the entire Country. Its pristine water does not need to be filtered prior to consumption. This is directly attributable to the environmental conservation efforts occurring within the Skaneateles Lake Watershed. However, Onondaga Lake and its many tributaries, have suffered from poor water quality due to pollution that has occurred for more than a century. Currently, the Army Corps of Engineers, the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation, and the Environmental Protection Agency are undertaking a major reclamation effort focused on the restoration of Onondaga Lake and its environs. Honeywell is actively completing the cleanup of the Onondaga Lakeshore just across the City’s border in Geddes, restoring wetlands and installing public access trails.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> [http://www.syracuse.com/news/index.ssf/2011/10/honeywell\\_plans\\_to\\_transform\\_c.html](http://www.syracuse.com/news/index.ssf/2011/10/honeywell_plans_to_transform_c.html)

As water quality continues to improve within Onondaga Lake and its watershed, water-related recreational opportunities are being developed. Syracuse has already made great strides in restoring the City's Inner Harbor and has recently completed Phase I of the Onondaga Creekwalk between the Lake and Armory Square. Future phases of the Creekwalk will provide public access to this natural amenity all the way to the southern boundary of the City and beyond.

In addition, the County is under an Amended Consent Judgment (ACJ) to reduce the amount of pollution that enters Onondaga Lake and its tributaries as a result of combined sewer overflows (CSO) during storm events. Seeing green infrastructure as a more cost effective option than citywide sewer separation, Onondaga County is investing in greening projects under the Save the Rain program, most of which are located within the City, that are beautifying neighborhoods as they reduce storm water runoff into the combined sewer system and clean Onondaga Lake and Onondaga Creek. This water quality improvement will enable recreational access to Onondaga Creek as the Creekwalk is expanded and facilities to access the water are installed.

### **CIVIC INFRASTRUCTURE**

The City of Syracuse has an extensive park and recreation network that has been identified as being one of the community's greatest assets. Syracuse is home to 896 acres of public parkland and open space. The Syracuse Department of Parks, Recreation and Youth Programs supports many facilities such as ball fields, playgrounds, skating rinks, golf courses, swimming pools, trails, and several community and senior centers. Encompassed within a citywide urban forest containing more than 890,000 trees, the City park network also has many historic attributes that need to be protected such as many of the City's oldest trees, statues, and monuments.

Phase I of the Creekwalk was a significant accomplishment, decades in the making. The City owns approximately significant acreage along Onondaga Creek that will be incorporated into future phases of the Creekwalk, extending a waterside promenade and catalyst for future economic development, throughout the city. Improvements to Phase I will continue to improve access to the water and amenities for pedestrians and bicyclists using the Creekwalk. The Onondaga County Parks Department also has plans to "Loop-the-Lake" which would involve connecting a continuous trail around Onondaga Lake, to which the Onondaga Creekwalk will connect. Emphasis on connectivity is also fueling expansion of bike lanes throughout the City and efforts to connect existing open space (see the Bicycle Infrastructure and Sustainability components of this plan).

The Syracuse City School District has an enrollment of approximately 22,000 students. The City's school buildings are, on average, 70 years old. Since 2005, the City and the Syracuse City School District have begun Phase I of the Joint Schools Construction Board (JSCB) major renovations of educational facilities. Extensive renovations have begun on Fowler, Dr. Weeks, HW Smith, and Central Tech in Phase I of this endeavor. Syracuse is also home to ten libraries, including the Central Library, which are all part of the Onondaga County Public Library system.

The City maintains an extensive public safety network that consists of police, fire, and emergency medical services. The fully staffed 17-company 11-station fire department is the only Department in New York State with the highest Insurance Service Office (ISO) rating, Class 1, which allows for reduced insurance costs for property owners.

### **LINEAR INFRASTRUCTURE**

Syracuse is at the transportation crossroads of New York State, a key location for the movement of goods and people throughout the Northeastern United States. The area's multi-modal transportation network serves Syracuse with an International Airport, the New York State Thruway and Barge Canal System, major interstates, rail terminals, and a national and regional bus system. The City maintains a traditional street grid network that contains 430 miles of local roadways (many of which have pavement ratings of fair or poor). Routes 81 and 690 contain high-volume through traffic and serve as a major land use within the City. Both Routes bisect Syracuse dividing it into four quadrants. Many of the deficient bridge ratings are attributed to the elevated highways (Route 81/690) that exist within the City. More than 25% of land downtown is utilized for parking and there is continued discussion about the need for well-



planned parking facilities within/around the business district. Approximately 11.6% of Syracuse residents either walk or bike to work on a daily basis. Sidewalk conditions throughout the City vary greatly, especially within neighborhood districts as residents are completely responsible for maintaining and repairing sidewalks. Access to safe bike lanes is being aggressively expanded. Seven percent of commuters utilize public transportation. Centro, the local and regional bus service, experience below average ridership levels. This all speaks to over-reliance on private automobiles. As gas prices continue to rise and the high-cost of sprawl is borne by Onondaga County tax-payers, strategies to entice mass transit ridership must be implemented.

The William F. Walsh Regional Transportation Center, located on the City's north side, provides a centralized regional location for inter-city and intra-City bus and rail service. In terms of air travel, approximately 150 passenger flights arrive to and depart from the Syracuse Hancock International Airport.

The City's water system is made up by more than 500 miles of pipelines, many of which contain lead and are between 60 and 70 years old, much even older. The City of Syracuse owns and operates 429 miles of sanitary, storm water, and combined sewer collection systems, 86% of which was built between 1875 and 1950. Onondaga County owns and operates approximately 60 miles of interceptor and trunk sewers within the City as well as the Metropolitan Syracuse Wastewater Treatment Plant that is located within the City on Onondaga Lake's southern shore and the Midland Treatment Plant in the City's Southwest neighborhood.

## ECONOMY

The City of Syracuse is a major regional job center, home to just fewer than 100,000 employees. In recent years, local, regional, and national economies have suffered a slowdown partly due to national and global events. Manufacturing jobs both locally and across the state continue to decline while service-based jobs have increased. Presently, Syracuse's strongest employment growth is in the Education, Health Care, and Social Service sectors, ranking 75th out of 317 metropolitan areas across the country. The State University of New York (SUNY) Upstate Medical University is currently the 22nd largest employer in New York State. Across the state, the service sector is growing along with high-tech manufacturing, finance, insurance, and real estate, hospitality and leisure, and wholesale and retail trade. New York State Department of Labor Statistics projects further increases in education and healthcare, professional and business services, trade, transportation and utilities.

The Inner Harbor will soon be surrounded by nearly 28 acres of dense, mixed-use development—the result of the City of Syracuse acquiring the property from New York State and issuing an RFP for its development. The dense development will become a new neighborhood center, spurring additional investment in the surrounding lakefront neighborhood, and preserve and enhance public access to the waterfront, which is also accessed by the Creekwalk.

In addition to the reinvention of the Inner Harbor area, Downtown's revitalization continues to be fueled by market-rate residential development. Mixed-uses stimulating pedestrian traffic and vibrant street life are expanding out from Armory and Hanover Squares into adjacent blocks. Several formerly suburban professional employers have moved their offices Downtown in recent years in an effort to attract young educated employees that desire this kind of walkable, urban living.

## POPULATION

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, the City of Syracuse's population is approximately 145,000 people.<sup>2</sup> Syracuse has lost 34.2 percent of its population since its peak in 1950, yet the population of Onondaga County as a whole has declined only slightly since 1970). According to the 2010 U.S. Census, the city's population has only slightly declined since 2000, more or less stabilizing at 145,170. Onondaga County's population declined from 472,835 to 467,026 between 1970 and 2010.<sup>3</sup>

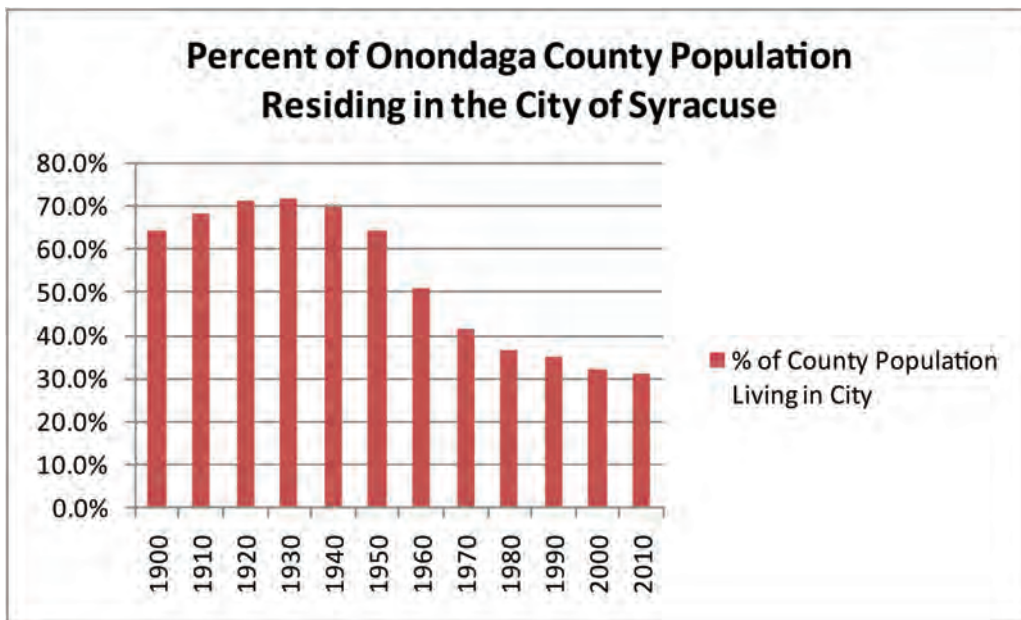
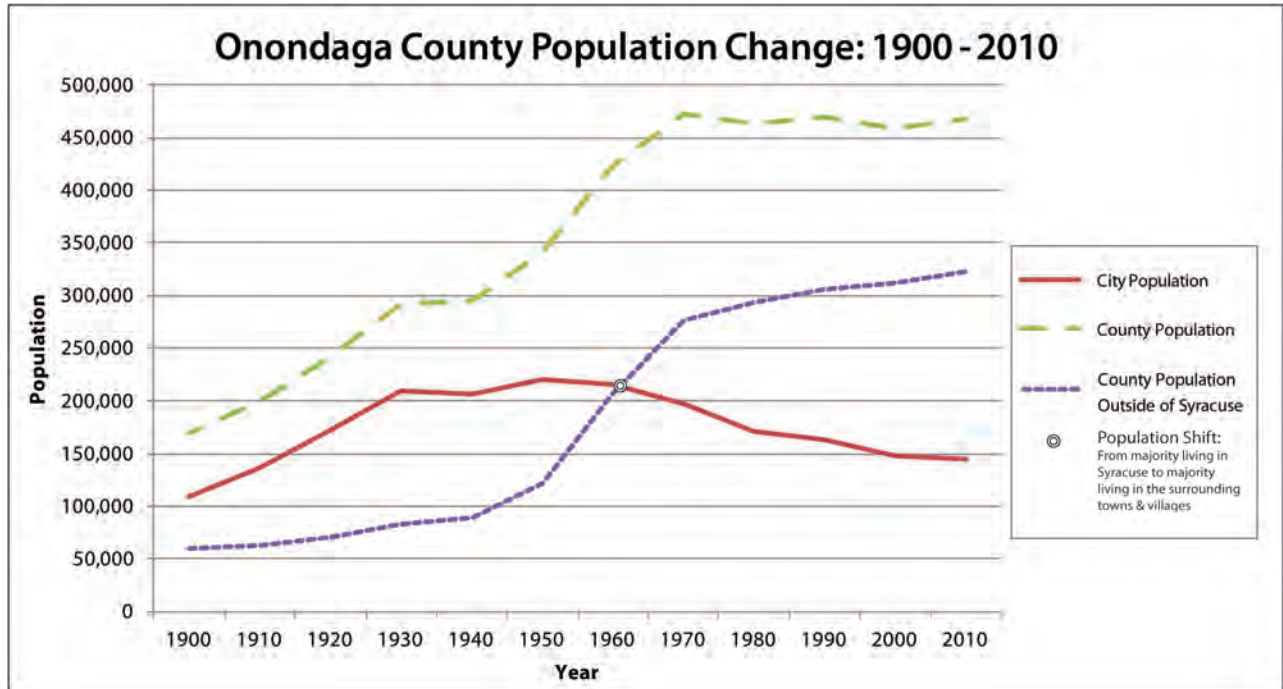
This shift from a dense urban core of population toward low-density, suburban sprawl has harmed the quality of life, environmental health, and economic health of the region in many ways. Urbanized land in Onondaga County has increased

<sup>2</sup> 2010 U.S. Census

<sup>3</sup> U.S. Census

92 percent since 1970. This dispersal of residents has resulted in increased costs of municipal services (including schools, police, emergency response, and transportation) and infrastructure across the region and increased greenhouse gasses produced as residents commute further to work, shopping, and recreational activities.<sup>4</sup>

The population of Onondaga County as a whole has remained relatively stable since 1970. As of the 1960 U.S. Census the countywide population made a major shift, transitioning from the majority of county residents living in the City of Syracuse to the majority of county residents living in the surrounding towns and villages (see where these two lines cross in the graph below). This trend in county population shift toward the suburban towns continued at a rapid pace over the following decades.



4 Syracuse-Onondaga County Planning Agency. "Understanding Our Region" PowerPoint Presentation, n.d. [http://www.ongov.net/planning/documents/plan\\_presentation.pdf](http://www.ongov.net/planning/documents/plan_presentation.pdf); accessed July 14, 2011.

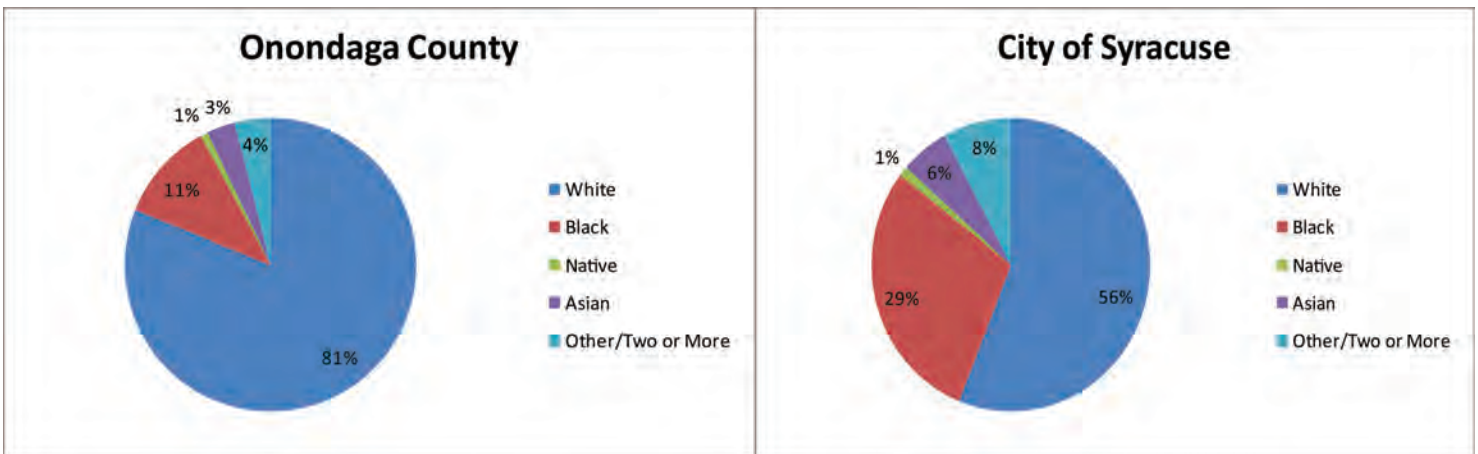
Between 1950 and 1970 the population of suburban towns (towns within metropolitan areas) throughout New York State grew by 110 percent. In nearly every metropolitan area in New York, the majority of share of the population shifted from city to suburbs.<sup>5</sup>

Bruce Katz, Director of the Brookings Institution’s Metropolitan Policy Program, speaking in Syracuse in 2005 identified sprawl and its accompanying increased service costs and concentrated poverty as some of the region’s biggest challenges. <sup>6</sup>Katz also attributed disinvestment in the urban core, largely a result of suburban sprawl and expansion, as the region’s primary obstacle to retaining highly educated workers and expanding the Upstate economy, which has lagged behind the rest of the country in terms of hourly wages, average salaries, and rates of expansion for decades.<sup>7</sup>

The following table shows how population in each TNT area has changed over the past decade, and the resulting population densities. Note that despite a dramatic population loss, the Southside remains the second most densely populated TNT area. The population growth on the Northside can largely be attributed to the influx of Southeast Asian and North African immigrants.

TNT Area	2010 Population	'00-'10 Pop Change	2010 Persons/ Sq. Mile	2010 Persons/ Acre
Northside	38,928	2,302	10,073	15.7
Eastwood	10,724	-277	5,792	9.1
Eastside	27,618	-2,718	4,120	6.4
Valley	8,422	-312	2,442	3.8
Southside	34,321	-9,396	9,085	14.2
Lakefront	579	186	247	0.4
Downtown	1,879	-18	3,863	6.0
Westside	22,697	27	7,364	11.5

The factors described above collectively influenced disinvestment in building stock, but also created a lasting legacy of residential segregation and concentrated poverty in a few neighborhoods. (See the City’s 2011 Neighborhood Revitalization Strategy Area plan.) As population has shifted within the region and Syracuse experiences increased immigration, it



5 New York State Comptroller. Division of Local Government Services & Economic Development. Hevesi, Alan G. “Population Trends in New York State’s Cities.” Local Government Issues in Focus. December, 2004.; p. 5.

6 Katz, Bruce. Director, Metropolitan Policy Program, Brookings Institution. “Confronting the Realities of Core Cities in Weak Markets.” Rebuilding Upstate New York: What Works II Symposium. Syracuse, NY. May 2, 2005.

7 Pendall, Rolf, Matthew P. Drennan and Susan Christopherson. “Transition and Renewal: The Emergence of a Diverse Upstate Economy.” The Brookings Institution Metropolitan Policy Program. January, 2004.

continues to become increasingly racially diverse relative to the region as a whole.

Age groups with the largest decrease in population between 1990 and 2000 were the 20-34 year bracket, the 60-79 year bracket and children under five years old. However, Syracuse's population in their 20s and between 50 and 65 grew between 2000 and 2010. This confirms some anecdotal evidence that young professionals and empty nesters are moving back into the city and choosing to live in walkable, urban areas. The decrease in population between 30 and 49 and among minors indicates a need to focus on retaining young families with school-aged children. The Syracuse City School District continues to face challenges in coming years related to declining student enrollment. See table below.<sup>8</sup>

Age Group	2000-2010 Population Change
Under 5 years	-226
5 to 9 years	-1614
10 to 14 years	-1026
15 to 19 years	2292
20 to 24 years	99
25 to 29 years	1030
30 to 34 years	-1334
35 to 39 years	-2244
40 to 44 years	-1054
45 to 49 years	-183
50 to 54 years	1085
55 to 59 years	2352
60 and 64 years	1876
65 and 69 years	-197
70 to 74 years	-1365
75 to 79 years	-1275
80 to 84 years	-739
85 years and over	-49

As of 2010, the U.S. Census estimates that approximately 31.1% of persons living in Syracuse are living below poverty level; this is an increase from 27% in 2005.<sup>9</sup>

## FISCAL TRENDS

The City of Syracuse is governed by a strong Mayor-City Council structure with the Mayor overseeing all City Departments. The legislative powers vested in the elected Common Council include approval of the City's annual Operating Budget and Capital Plan for public infrastructure projects. The City also has zoning and subdivision power to control land use.

Syracuse's Office of Management and Budget prepares and administers the annual budget and six-year capital improvement program, which faces the continuing challenge of a stagnant revenue base while costs of maintaining aging infrastructure and funding pension benefits continue to escalate. In recent years, financial challenges have come in the areas of employee health insurance, retirement contributions, workers compensation costs, and capital spending on facility maintenance, as well as declining and uncertain financial aid from New York State and the federal government. Syracuse's Mayor has reached out to former Lieutenant Governor Richard Ravitch, to lead a Syracuse Municipal Financial Advisory Board that will recommend a path forward and advise City officials in this precarious fiscal climate, as nation-wide, many cities in similar circumstances face the specter of bankruptcy or fiscal control boards.<sup>10</sup>

8 2000 U.S. Census and 2005-2010 American Community Survey 5-year estimates

9 2010 American Community Survey five-year summary estimate.

10 [http://www.syracuse.com/news/index.ssf/2012/01/former\\_lt\\_gov\\_richard\\_ravitch.html](http://www.syracuse.com/news/index.ssf/2012/01/former_lt_gov_richard_ravitch.html)

The City of Syracuse has seen a modest increase in sales tax revenues over the past few years, and will continue to improve due to a historic Sales Tax Agreement reached in 2010 allocating a larger share of sales tax collected in Onondaga County to the City.<sup>11</sup> This is reflective of a growing sentiment that the County and the region cannot thrive without a successful urban core and supporting reinvestment within the City of Syracuse.

The City has seen a decline in real property tax revenues as a share of operating expenses, as the City has lost population. Resulting vacant properties have a stagnating or negative impact on surrounding property values and the tax base and a negative impact on tax collection rates. The recent creation of a City-County land bank, the Greater Syracuse Property Development Corporation, will facilitate the redevelopment of abandoned property, having a positive impact on property values and the tax base, and enable the City to enforce tax collection, thereby increasing collection rates.

Real property tax revenue is also significantly impacted by the unbalanced concentration of tax-exempt properties (nearly 50%) located within the City, leaving other non-exempt properties to carry the burden of the entire levy. Serving as the central location for many service related activities, Syracuse does not recoup taxes from public housing, schools, universities, parks, religious, cultural and community facilities, government buildings, and non-profit social service agencies to support the infrastructure and municipal service needs. In addition, with an aging population, many properties qualify for partial property tax exemptions for seniors and veterans.

15.5 percent of City revenues are generated by property tax. 11.5 percent are anticipated to be generated by sales tax in 2012-13 fiscal year. Sales tax revenue is anticipated to increase in future years. Nearly 60 percent of revenue that funds City and Syracuse City School District operating expenses comes from State aid.

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11 [http://www.syracuse.com/news/index.ssf/2010/05/onondaga\\_county\\_legislature\\_pa\\_1.html](http://www.syracuse.com/news/index.ssf/2010/05/onondaga_county_legislature_pa_1.html)

# PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

## COMPREHENSIVE PLAN 2040 — 2012 UPDATE UPDATE

*Comprehensive Plan 2025*, adopted in 2005, involved an extensive advisory committee and, like this recent update effort, was drafted over a two-year period with extensive public participation effort. *Syracuse Comprehensive Plan 2040's Vision and Guiding Policies* date from this effort.

### *Comprehensive Plan 2025* Advisory Committee members:

Biancavilla, Dean - President - American Institute of Architects  
 Birnkrant, Sharon - Principal H.W. Smith Elementary School  
 Black, Patricia - Resident  
 Braveman, Dan - Syracuse University - College of Law  
 Connors, Dennis - Curator of History, Onondaga Historical Association  
 D'Agostino, James - Syracuse Metropolitan Transportation Council  
 Delmonico, Joel - Clear Channel Communications  
 Downey, Claire - Resident  
 Dunham, Clarence - Resident  
 Ettinger, Terry - Resident  
 Everett, Charles R., Jr. - Director of City Operations  
 Flynn, Chris - County Department of Aging & Youth  
 Frantz, John Jr. - Chairman/CEO of Sutton Companies  
 George, Reverend - Resident  
 Goodman, Chuck - Resident  
 Haley, Robert - AIA/UDC - Ashley McGraw Architect  
 Hawks, Richard S. - Chairman of Landscape Architecture - SUNY ESF  
 Hill, Carol - Syracuse Chamber of Commerce  
 Holstein, Charlotte - FOCUS Greater Syracuse  
 Hourigan, Megan - Planner - Syracuse-Onondaga County Planning Agency  
 Kitney, Karen - Director - Syracuse-Onondaga County Planning Agency  
 Koolakian, Edward - Koolakian's Men's Shop  
 Oberst, Bob - Resident  
 Pflang, Paul - Onondaga Historic Association  
 Radke, Donald - FM Realty & Landmark Preservation Board  
 Robinson, Honorable Van - Councilor-At-Large, Syracuse Common Council  
 Rowlands, Mary - Director - Syracuse Metropolitan Transportation Council  
 Russell, Mark - President - Mark Russell & Assoc.  
 Spano, Mary Jo - Resident  
 Stanley, Pauline - Resident  
 Stanton, Michael - Board Member, Preservation Association of CNY  
 Weber, Eric - Executive Director- Lakefront Development Corp.

The goals and recommended actions included in the existing *Comprehensive Plan* were reviewed by a team of City planners and revised to:

- Provide more detail to guide implementation by City departments
- Remove subject areas now addressed by the addition of detailed components addressing:
  - Bicycle Infrastructure
  - Historic Preservation
  - Land Use & Development
  - Public Art, and

- Sustainability
- Remove recommended actions not under the purview of local government
- Update to reflect current City policies and initiatives meant to further the vision contained within the plan

These revised recommendations were reviewed by an advisory committee whose members were appointed by Common Council and the Mayor.

*Comprehensive Plan 2040* (2012 update) Advisory Committee members:

Joseph Bryant, Southside Coalition  
Debra Douthit, Rosary-Strathmore Neighbors  
Barbara Krause, Court-Woodlawn Task Force, Northside TNT  
John Miranda, CNY Renewable Energy Associates  
Duane L. Reese, Syracuse Model Neighborhood Facility  
Lisa Romeo, Downtown Committee  
Norman Roth, University Hill Realty  
Jim Simonis, Eastside TNT

In addition, the development of the components added to the *Comprehensive Plan* during this 2012 update were all developed with extensive public input and review over a two-year period. A description of each component's public input process follows.

### **BICYCLE INFRASTRUCTURE COMPONENT**

The development of the *Bicycle Infrastructure Component* (Syracuse Bike Plan) included numerous opportunities for public input over a two-year period. The early concepts that provide the basis for the plan were vetted through a number of public meetings in 2010. In the summer of 2011, work began in earnest on drafting the Syracuse Bike Plan and evaluating corridors appropriate for various types of bicycle infrastructure. As they were drafted, all documents were published to the City of Syracuse's website with contact information provided for comment. Materials from public presentations were posted to the website, as well. As the plan was revised, additional feedback was sought throughout 2012. In January of 2012 the Bike Plan was presented at every TNT meeting, where additional input was solicited. In all, the Bike Plan was presented at sixteen public meetings.

In addition, the Bike Plan was covered in more than twenty local media stories between the summer of 2011 and fall of 2012, after which members of the public routinely provided additional input to the plan's author, City Transportation Planner, Paul Mercurio.

### **HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMPONENT**

The *Historic Preservation* component is largely a distilled version of the preservation plan created by a 2003 graduate-level SUNY Environmental Science and Forestry urban design studio class. This document was revised and added to by Bureau of Planning & Sustainability Staff, and reviewed by the Syracuse Landmark Preservation Board, Chris Capella-Peters, George Curry, and the board of the Preservation Association of Central New York.

### **LAND USE & DEVELOPMENT COMPONENT**

The land use plan was informed by the City's Comprehensive Plan, TNT-area 5-year plans, and extensive public involvement that contributed to the 2009 (unadopted) draft Land Use Plan for the City of Syracuse. This draft plan was developed throughout 2010-2011 by an interdepartmental panel of City staff to better reflect Smart Growth principles and set the stage for a transition to a form-based zoning ordinance. Additional public feedback was gathered at TNT meetings in summer and fall of 2010 to inform the first draft and identify neighborhood-level priorities for future development.

Public feedback specific to this draft was gathered at TNT meetings during September and October of 2011. Several neighborhood-specific meetings were held as requested during the fall of 2011 and a city-wide public meeting was held in October. In addition, a focus group of local developers was held in October and was hosted by CenterState CEO.

A steering committee of planning staff and professionals, elected officials, and members of the City Planning Commission and Board of Zoning Appeals reviewed the plan between September and December 2011. The draft was available for public review on the City's website (<http://www.syracuse.ny.us/LandUsePlan.aspx>) from August 2011 through August 2012 and comments were accepted during this time.

Between January and August 2012 the plan was revised to incorporate extensive feedback from TNT groups and the steering committee and a revised draft was presented to the Neighborhood Preservation Common Council in August 2012. The final draft incorporated feedback on the revised version from the Neighborhood Preservation Committee meeting and the plan steering committee.

### **PUBLIC ART COMPONENT**

The *Public Art* component was developed by the Syracuse Public Art Commission. The plan was vetted by an advisory committee made up of representatives from the Everson Museum, CNY Arts, the Downtown Committee of Syracuse, the Rosamond Gifford Foundation, Community Foundation of Central New York, and Syracuse University's Connective Corridor. In addition, the plan was presented and discussed at a public meeting to which members of the 40 Below Public Art Taskforce and the TNT Neighborhood Planning Council's were invited.

### **SUSTAINABILITY COMPONENT**

The Bureau of Planning & Sustainability (P&S) used a collaborative process to develop the goals, objectives, and actions in the Sustainability Plan. As mentioned, dedicated advisory groups made up of local experts and City personnel met several times in 2011-2012 to develop each chapter of the plan. P&S staff then further refined the Plan with consideration for the feasibility of each recommended goal, objective and action. Next, the City released the Plan for public comment via the City website. P&S staff presented an overview of the plan for comment at all eight neighborhoods' "Tomorrow's Neighborhoods Today" meetings, one city-wide meeting, a public hearing in the Common Council Chambers, and as invited speakers at meetings of community groups. At these sessions, the City staff invited comments, further review, and on-going feedback.

Following the public comment period, the City's Sustainability Coordinator reviewed all feedback and evaluated it collaboratively with other appropriate staff for inclusion in the plan. The Bureau produced a revised draft, and invited the advisory groups to review it once more. The final revised Plan becomes an official part of the Comprehensive Plan upon approval of the Common Council.

Back Cover:

Downtown Farmers Market, Clinton Square (top)  
 One of a series of murals on the railroad trestles  
 between the Near Westside and Armory Square  
 by Stephen Powers, *Love Letter to Syracuse* (bottom)



