



Sustainability Task Force Report

June 2013

## Oneonta 2030: Overview

At its meeting of February 15<sup>th</sup> (2011) the Common Council approved the following resolution:

**RESOLVED**, that the work of a group established by Mayor Nader to develop a long term community strategy supporting sustainability, in the form of a report entitled "Oneonta 2030," be endorsed by the Common Council. This report offers a blueprint for advancing community thinking on various strategies related to sustainability. The Common Council endorses the report and efforts of the Task Force and encourages them to strengthen themselves in members and expand the report by defining specific projects that can be considered by the Council in its planning and budgeting process.

The Oneonta 2030 Sustainability Taskforce met monthly through the spring of 2013 and discussed many sustainability issues facing the City of Oneonta and the surrounding communities. The following report details a few of the issues discussed and recommendations that have been brought forward by the Taskforce, however, the work of the Taskforce is in no way complete and further effort must be made in order to develop a comprehensive sustainable plan for the City of Oneonta, its citizens and the surrounding area.

This report addresses four central areas related to community sustainability and makes recommendations as to the appropriate official or group to carry out the recommendations.

Any questions about the report should be addressed to:

Mark Davies, [daviesm@hartwick.edu](mailto:daviesm@hartwick.edu), 431-9393

## **Oneonta 2030: Descriptive Statement**

Long before our establishment as a city now over 200 years ago, Oneonta, The City of the Hills, was characterized by the beautiful hills and valleys of the Northern Catskills. The Susquehanna River and the numerous streams and creeks that flow through our community, define the character of our parks, and provide value as ecological services to the City. The City of Oneonta values these natural resources and recognizes the value that these resources can provide for the future of Oneonta and its citizens. At the same time, the actions of humans have seriously impacted these resources, and others. We must find a balance between our needs as a community and the impact these needs have on our natural resources without sacrificing the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

*Oneonta 2030* is a plan to preserve the community's environmental health and vitality by examining, studying and improving Oneonta's air, water and the overall environmental quality of the community, reducing the proportional carbon footprint of our community, improving our transportation system in order to reduce CO<sub>2</sub> emissions and gasoline consumption, and working to build a vibrant and healthy food infrastructure and network, all by the year 2030. As a community we now take pride in the environmental quality of our region, however, the focus of *Oneonta 2030* is to set our sights on our environment 20 years hence; to promote greater stewardship of the land, streams and rivers, air, drinking water, and other natural resources of the region today for long-term, sustainable enjoyment. *Oneonta 2030* recognizes that the maintenance of high environmental quality, the health and well-being of all community members and the future vitality of the community all depend on the policies that we enact today.

Therefore *Oneonta 2030* targets several areas that are crucial to the future vitality of our community and seeks to find a balance between our needs and the needs of future community members. Four key areas were identified by a committee of citizens; these included (but are not limited to): 1) Food, 2) Community Environment and Stewardship, 3) Energy, and 4) Transportation.

## Food

Food is essential to us all and in many ways defines our community and our place and is linked to the culture of our region. Our region has a historical legacy rich in agricultural output and it is our dependence on regional foods that connects us to our region and is an essential link that ties us to our place. The City of Oneonta plays an important role with regards to food as one of its functions of a city is to draw local foods to the city so that its citizens can benefit from the purchase and consumption of these goods. The connection to locally produced foods also supports healthy food choices.

Food also plays a role in shaping our community and determining our future. We celebrate who we are by the agriculture in our region and we can take justifiable pride in the produce, meat, and other goods that are produced here. Sustainable communities promote deeper and richer relationships with local growers and can enhance relationships with and the development of CSAs, grow-your-own production, community gardens, and other measures that enhance the ability of community members to produce food or have access to food networks.

Oneonta 2030 Taskforce Recommendations:

- Explore creating relationship with Chobani to put an outlet store in the city to attract other businesses. Coordinate education courses for community gardening and develop community garden sites. Partner with local flower group or Cornell Cooperative Extension.
- Promote Oneonta as the Food Capital or Food Hub for the region highlighting local restaurants, farms, CSAs, and other food-related businesses and expanding Oneonta's Farmers' Market.
- Work with the Chamber to promote local restaurants through website and other media and distribute to tourists, "baseball families" and seasonal landlords.
- Work with Chamber to promote "Cash Mob" for local restaurants each month.
- Improve web presence of local food-related businesses.
- Study and revise city laws prohibiting raising hens and rabbits.
- Adopt tax incentive plan for food production or distribution businesses within City (excluding restaurants).
- Promote a city-wide composting program.
- Planting of fruit trees in parks (apple and pear).

## **Community Environment and Stewardship**

Every city functions by funneling in goods and services from its surrounding region and generating new products and waste. A sustainable city strives to connect this loop by stewardship of vital inputs, and accepts its role in closing the loop of resource use by minimizing waste and pollution. For example, consider one of Oneonta's most vital resources: our water. The abundance and high quality of our water resources depend on our ability to protect our watershed, maintain our water infrastructure, and adequately treat our wastewater and storm run-off. Other ecological services that should be counted as part of our city's natural capital include the air purification and biodiversity provided by urban tree plantings, and the community value of parks, greenways and open space.

If we embrace the goal of preserving Oneonta's environment and fostering stewardship of these ecological services, we will need to establish a monitoring protocol for the baseline quality of our air, water, and habitat over the next 20 years. Related concerns that can be addressed include healthy living spaces, pollinator gardens, early detection of invasive species, hazardous waste reduction and environmental education. The best way to preserve intact regional open space and natural systems is to make our cities inviting and create vibrant communities.

### Oneonta 2030 Taskforce Community Environment and Stewardship Recommendations:

- Support the hiring of part time community environment and sustainability intern with Hartwick and SUNY Oneonta.
- Create watershed stewardship program for Susquehanna Watershed and our drinking water watershed
- Utilize city programs (such as the summer program) to educate kids about stewardship in Neahawa Park.
- Sponsor a watershed education panel.
- Develop and implement a climate action plan -(ICLEI).
- Engage in a complete GIS mapping for the watersheds.
- Create baseline measurements for air, water and habitat.
- Collaborate with Hartwick and SUNY Oneonta faculty to collect and analyze stream water quality.
- Build kiosks along mill race and creeks to educate citizens about local ecosystems.

- Work with court officers to put youth offenders to work improving parks.
- Build planters on top of parking garage to improve visual appeal.
- Plant native trees and plants alongside Oneonta's creeks.
- Plant native trees in city's watershed and develop a plan for sustained renewal of the forested areas.
- Rebuild stream channels of Oneonta Creek.
- Develop and implement a city-wide recycling and waste-reduction plan
- Adopt recycling and waste-reduction goals in all city buildings.
- Adopt an Oneonta city-wide recycling and waste-reduction plan for residents and implement.
- Explore rail yard development for sustainable economic development, explore making rail yards part of the food hub and linking development to local food production or a site for recycling recyclable materials.

## Energy

Americans use vast amounts of energy for transportation, electricity, and daily living; the City of Oneonta and its citizens are no different. The use of fossil fuels to meet our energy needs requires continual investment in a finite energy supply. Because of this, an energy policy that pursues non-renewable energy sources is flawed and subverts money, resources, and labor from developing renewable energy resources.

The extraction of fossil fuels places a heavy burden on a community through the loss of farmable land, poisoned streams, rivers, aquifers and drinking water, and the destruction of healthy topsoil. The community needs to strongly advocate for renewable energy programs and become a model for other communities. To accomplish this, the community needs to develop a plan to transition to that model by decreasing its support for and dependence on the most obvious non-renewable resources. (See transportation below.)

The Taskforce would like to commend Mayor Miller and Council for contracting Johnson Controls to conduct a comprehensive energy audit of all City property and buildings. After reviewing Johnson Controls' audit findings and report, the Taskforce is confident many of the recommended actions, if implemented, will significantly reduce energy usage and costs and are excellent steps towards achieving a more sustainable City energy plan. However, the Taskforce has examined several other areas for energy savings and has several other energy-related recommendations.

Oneonta 2030 Taskforce Recommendations:

- Join International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives (ICLEI) at a cost of \$600
- Hire a Hartwick/SUNY Oneonta intern to oversee ICLEI software to monitor emissions and clean air goals.
- Complete energy audit of energy usage within all City buildings, vehicles, etc.
- Review City energy practices and create policies with the goal of reducing energy use and emissions (e.g. city vehicles idling policies).
- Conduct a comprehensive assessment on City emissions; adopt a carbon emissions reduction goal for City practices; develop a plan to meet goals.
- Encourage local businesses to take the ICLEI Green Business Challenge

- Investigate small-scale wind energy projects for area
- Continue to develop methane capture at sewage plant.
- Review housing codes for new homes and renovation projects to ensure best practices for green building.
- Adopt a year round temperature policy for City buildings.
- Adopt a City purchasing policy for vehicles and other energy-related equipment.
- Create City sponsored and supported incentive program for City employees to submit energy and emissions reduction ideas.
- Explore a Power Purchase Agreement with Monolith Solar from Troy or NY Light and Energy from Latham and purchase solar or wind systems for City buildings.
- Adopt a mayoral order for a local reduction of energy consumption and carbon emissions by 2020 and 2030.
- Create a taskforce to explore grants for and building of CNG station at Silas Lane for City vehicles, and OCSD buses begin to phase out older vehicles and purchase natural gas-powered vehicles.
- Create a taskforce to create grant proposal for NYSERDA's Cleaner, Greener Communities funding opportunity.
- Develop incentives to attract green business to the City (ex. former roundhouse site).

## Transportation

Since World War II, the focus of transportation policy at the national, state, and local levels has been the car. This has provided great convenience for many, but it has also left out the part of the population (as much as 50%) that can't drive due to youth, advanced age, infirmity, or low income. Even people who can drive but would rather not are often forced to use their cars in places that were built with no other transportation in mind. We need safe, attractive routes within center city, between downtown and Southside, and connecting the various shopping areas within Southside. Such paths obviously don't solve everybody's mobility problems, but if they existed now, they would be well used. As gasoline prices escalate in the future, walking paths and alternate routes will be a crucial way for people to get around economically.

Oneonta 2030 Taskforce Recommendations:

- Create a CNG station at Silas Lane for City vehicles, and OCSB buses begin to phase out older vehicles and purchase natural gas-powered vehicles.
- Explore bio-diesel fuel for City vehicles.
- Encourage a reduced fare on all bus lines for all City, colleges, and hospital employees to stimulate an increase in OPT riders.
- Adopt a City purchasing policy for vehicles and other energy-related equipment that gradually transitions the fleet from gas and diesel to CNG, electric and hybrid vehicles.
- Create an incentive program for City employees to take public transport to work.
- Create a policy requiring all City employees to turn off vehicles during extended stops (ex. No Idling Policy).
- Commission a task force to encourage passenger rail line to link Albany and Binghamton with stops in Cobleskill and Oneonta (get Senator Seward on board).
- Adopt a CO2 reduction ordinance for city taxi services requiring a gradual phasing out of all large gas vehicles and an adoption of hybrid, or electric cars for entire fleet by 2020.
- Adopt a CO2 reduction ordinance that prohibits the idling of commercial vehicles within the City

## **Oneonta 2030: Sustainability Taskforce Recommendations**

### **General Statement**

The Taskforce recognizes in order for the suggested recommendations to be enacted they must have a champion to help push the idea forward, and a plan of action for implementing the recommendation. We have made several recommendations as to the appropriate people or groups who can coordinate the project or implement the idea.

Many of the ideas can be addressed by City Manager Mike Long, Mayor Miller, the City of Oneonta Common Council or the Environmental Commission. However, many of the recommendations were smaller projects which appeared to fall outside the scope or responsibility of the individuals or groups described above. The Oneonta 2030 Task Force recommends that the City of Oneonta partner with faculty from Hartwick College and SUNY Oneonta to identify and recruit several capable interns who can advance several smaller projects which would greatly benefit the Oneonta community. Many of the recommendations that could be addressed by interns center on the City of Oneonta joining ICLEI: Local Governments for Sustainability (\$600 fee). By joining ICLEI Oneonta would follow many communities across Upstate New York (Cortland, Cooperstown, Ithaca, Binghamton) and would gain access to ICLEI's CO2 emissions monitoring, energy reduction, and sustainable planning software. The City interns would also help coordinate natural resource and water inventories, monitoring, and education programs with local college faculty.

The Oneonta 2030 Taskforce proposes to work with each individual or group to help create the plan and timeline for implementation of the recommended items.

### **New Initiative Recommendation**

The Oneonta 2030 Task Force recognizes that sustainable action should not be limited to the City Of Oneonta as this would be a failure to recognize out interdependence on other communities within the region. Therefore, the Oneonta 2030 Task Force recommends that the taskforce be expanded to include members from the Town of Oneonta and other local communities. This expansion of members from wider community would be a first step towards beginning to envision the region in the future and taking steps towards realizing that vision today.

## City Of Oneonta Sustainability Intern Program

### Food

- Promote composting program for City residents.

### Community Environment and Stewardship

- Create a watershed stewardship program for Susquehanna Watershed and our drinking water watershed
- Utilize city programs (such as the summer program) to educate kids about stewardship in Neahawa Park.
- Sponsor watershed education panel.
- Develop and implement a climate action plan (ICLEI).
- Engage in a complete GIS mapping for the watersheds.
- Create baseline measurements for air, water and habitat.
- Collaborate with Hartwick and SUNY Oneonta faculty to collect and analyze stream water quality.
- Facilitate the building of kiosks along mill race and creeks to educate citizens about local ecosystems and watershed. Collaborate with Hartwick/SUNY Oneonta faculty for development of educational material.

### Energy

- Join ICLEI (\$600)
- Utilize ICLEI software to monitor emissions and clean air goals within the City.
- Complete energy audit of energy usage within all City buildings, vehicles, etc.
- Review City energy practices and create policies with the goal of reducing energy use and emissions (e.g. city vehicles idling policies).
- Conduct a comprehensive assessment on City emissions; adopt a carbon emissions reduction goal for City practices; develop a plan to meet goals (ICLEI).
- Encourage local businesses to take the ICLEI Green Business Challenge (ICLEI).

## City Of Oneonta Manager

### Food

- Improve web presence of local food groups and restaurants on City website

### Community Environment and Stewardship

- Develop and implement a recycling and waste-reduction plan and procedures for all city buildings.
- Adopt recycling and waste-reduction goals in all city buildings.
- Adopt a city-wide recycling and waste-reduction plan and implement.
- Explore grants or Army Corp of Engineer funding to rebuild stream channels of Oneonta Creek.

### Energy

- Continue to implement methane capture at sewage plant.
- Review housing codes for new homes and renovation projects to ensure best practices for green building.
- Adopt a year round temperature policy for City buildings.
- Adopt a City purchasing policy for vehicles and other energy-related equipment .
- Create City sponsored and supported incentive program for City employees to submit energy reduction and emissions reduction ideas.
- Explore a Power Purchase Agreement with Monolith Solar from Troy or NY Light and Energy from Latham and purchase solar or wind systems for City buildings.

### Transportation

- Adopt a City purchasing policy for vehicles and other energy-related equipment.
- Create an incentive program for City employees to take public transport to work.
- Create a policy requiring all City employees to turn off vehicles during extended stops.

**City Of Oneonta Mayor**

**Energy**

- Adopt a mayoral order for local reduction of energy consumption and carbon emissions by 2020 and 2030.
- Create a taskforce to explore grants for and building of CNG station at Silas Lane for City vehicles, and OCSD busses begin to phase out older vehicles and purchase natural gas-powered vehicles.
- Create taskforce to create grant proposal for NYSERDA's Cleaner, Greener Communities.

**Transportation**

- Create a task force to encourage passenger rail line to link Albany and Binghamton with stops in Cobleskill and Oneonta (get Senator Seward on board).

**General**

- Expand the Task Force to include members form the Town of Oneonta and other communities.

**City Of Oneonta Environmental Commission**

**Food**

- Planting of fruit trees in parks (apple and pear).

**Community Environment and Stewardship**

- Build planters on top of parking garage to improve visual appeal.
- Plant native trees and plants alongside Oneonta's creeks.
- Plant native trees in city's watershed.

**City Of Oneonta Common Council**

**Food**

- Study and revise city laws prohibiting raising hens and rabbits.
- Adopt tax incentive plan for food production or distribution businesses within City (excluding restaurants).
- Adopt a CO2 reduction ordinance that prohibits the idling of commercial vehicles within the City.

**Transportation**

- Adopt a CO2 reduction ordinance for city taxi services requiring gradual phasing out of all large gas vehicles and adoption of hybrids, electric vehicle or natural gas vehicles.
- Adopt a CO2 reduction ordinance that prohibits the idling of commercial vehicles within the City.

**Otsego County Chamber of Commerce**

**Food**

- Explore creating relationship with Chobani to put an outlet in the city to attract other businesses. Education courses for community gardening. Partner with local flower group or Cornell Cooperative Extension.
- Promote Oneonta as the Food Capital or Food Hub for the region highlighting local restaurants, farms, CSAs, and other food-related businesses.
- Work with County Tourism Office to promote local restaurants through website and other media and distribute to tourists, “baseball families” and seasonal landlords.
- Promote “Cash Mob” for local restaurants each month.
- Improve web presence of local food-related businesses.

**Community Environment and Stewardship**

- Explore rail yard development for sustainable economic development, explore making rail yards part of the food hub and linking development to local food production.

**Energy**

- Encourage local businesses to take ICLEI Green Business Challenge.

**Transportation**

- Identify business leaders for membership on a task force to bring a passenger rail line to link Albany and Binghamton with stops in Cobleskill and Oneonta .

## **Oneonta 2030 Sustainability Task Force**

The following individuals attended at least one meeting of the 2030 Task Force:

Hannah Morgan

George Palladino

Sara Rinfret

Karl Seeley

Mark Davies (Oneonta 2030 Task Force Chair)

Oneonta 2030 logo created and designed by Kaytee Lipari