



# VISION<sup>20</sup><sub>20</sub>

ONEIDA COUNTY

***Bold Change. Real Impact.***

*Oneida County Executive Anthony J. Picente Jr.*

Progress Report/Summer 2018



# Moving ONEIDA COUNTY Forward



Over the last five years, the accomplishments we've made toward educating and nurturing a skilled workforce, revitalizing our housing stock and supporting underserved populations through our collaborative partnership is apparent and unprecedented.

Those accomplishments were the result of Vision 2020, a game-changing initiative that thrives off the cooperation of community leaders. United in a manner rarely seen before, these volunteers work collaboratively to identify new economic opportunities and propel the community into the future.

To date, their accomplishments and collective impact have been nothing short of astounding.

The number of internships for area students have skyrocketed as numerous colleges and business partners develop outreach programs and create opportunities for students of all levels. They've been exposed to various career paths, creating a pipeline of skilled workers ready to enter the workforce.

In order to handle housing needs for our current, growing workforce and new arrivals to our diverse community, we have examined our evolving housing market. Vision 2020 activities are encouraging development of housing opportunities that will meet the demands of a changing population and workforce demographics.

We are also examining transportation alternatives and connectivity to make it easier to travel in the county, be it for work or play. The work of our Vision 2020 transportation committee was instrumental in obtaining a New York State Energy Research Development Authority grant to complete a "smart technologies" study to connect all roadways in Oneida County.

Moving forward we will continue to amplify the results of our efforts. Students will continue to be exposed to a variety of opportunities in high-tech fields and expanded career pathways. We will continue to share trend data and resources with employment development agencies to inform them of emerging economic development opportunities in our county. We will work to ensure that newcomers to our diverse community have access to current and future opportunities.

That's the heart of it: **Bold Change. Real Impact.**

Following is a report that outlines the continued progress of the Vision 2020 Initiative, made possible by this group's continued hard work and diligence, and looks ahead into the future. We are a community of hard-working people, joined together in a mission to grow and realize our potential.



A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read "Anthony J. Picente Jr." The signature is fluid and cursive.

-Anthony J. Picente Jr., Oneida County Executive



Randy VanWagoner, President,  
Mohawk Valley Community College

## Message from the Co-Chairs



In launching the Vision 2020 Initiative, Oneida County Executive Anthony Picente Jr. brought together community leaders, workforce liaisons and key stakeholders to tackle a pressing question: How to best foster new growth opportunities and develop a skilled workforce in Oneida County?

With that “big” question came many little ones, such as: How do we prepare our students for high-tech emerging fields? How do we ensure that recent arrivals to our diverse community have access to education, adequate housing, and job opportunities? Once our skilled workers have jobs, how do we make sure that all of their transportation needs are met?

The partnership and collaborative spirit behind Vision 2020 has identified – and acted on – numerous opportunities to improve the lives of Oneida County residents. **Our multi-faceted focus has resulted in initiatives and services aimed at bold, impactful change.**

Volunteers have built on public/private partnerships to ensure the sustainability of Vision 2020 goals and initiatives within the community in focus areas, including education and training, access and opportunity, housing, and transportation.

We’ve seen the number of student internships rise and an increased number of degree programs in emerging fields, as well as studies dedicated to optimizing education opportunities for English language learners. Efforts to revitalize the housing stock and connect transportation pathways with cutting-edge technology are also being realized.

As co-chairs of this initiative, we are proud to share with you the many collaborative achievements made to date, as well as the path forward.



Dave Mathis, Director of Workforce  
Development, Oneida County

### Mission:

*Oneida County’s Vision 2020 Initiative will cultivate, attract and empower skilled workers, and will foster an entrepreneurial spirit and the renewal of our communities.*

### Vision 2020 Guiding Principles

- Each recommendation will be supported by research and data.
- All strategies and tactics will be designed to support the needs of a new economy, including job creation, education, housing, and diversity needs of future employers.
- Established milestones will be immediately actionable and built to support long-term needs.

As a result, the following is an action plan that:

- Is guided and resourced by Oneida County government.
- Maximizes available resources.
- Achieves optimum efficiency and effectiveness.
- Provides a set of recommended strategies and tactics to optimally position the county for economic growth in the very near future.

# EDUCATION & TRAINING

**To cultivate, attract and empower skilled workers, and foster an entrepreneurial spirit and the renewal of our communities.**

New and emerging economic opportunities in Oneida County require a workforce pipeline of skilled and curious minds ready to take on new challenges. In a momentous start, the Workforce and Education committee **brought together a group of key stakeholders made up of public and private educational institutions, private industry, community agencies, and government.** Their efforts not only included identifying emerging career fields, but also worked collaboratively to ensure the education and attraction of a skilled workforce. **Today, our students are participating in more internships than ever, colleges have developed programs to focus on new and emerging job markets, and a coordinated model for supporting community youth K-12 has been adopted in many districts throughout Oneida County.**

## Accomplishments

With this focus, the committee targeted several key areas and accomplished the following:

- Increased internships 190 percent from 2013
- Advanced existing and established new public/private partnerships to prepare students to enter the workforce:
  - MVCC, OHM BOCES, Utica City Schools and Mohawk Valley EDGE – A high school program that offers students the opportunity to receive both their Regents Diploma and an A.A.S. Degree from MVCC in Semiconductor Manufacturing Technology
  - Utica College, Presbyterian Home, Excellus BlueCross BlueShield, Empire Orthopedic Labs, Faxton/St. Luke's Bedside and Beyond, Sitrin Advocacy Program for Skilled Nursing Residents, and Sports Performance Institute – Healthcare internships and observations
  - MVCC and Utica College cybersecurity programs were both designated as a Center of Academic Excellence by National Security Agency, and as 1 of 6 regional cyber resource centers nationwide
- Created the Greater Mohawk Valley STEM Hub, which advances STEM education through innovative teaching and collaboration to prepare students to meet global, national, and regional economic development needs
- Developed mechatronics and unmanned aerial systems programs at MVCC to focus on new and emerging job markets
- Offered expanded engineering programs through SUNY Polytechnic Institute, including a new partnership with Madison-Oneida BOCES to offer high school students undergraduate programs in technology on the SUNY PI campus

▼ A student learns about drones at the BOCES Career & Technical Center.



## Action Items

- Continue to build public/private partnerships to ensure sustainability of Vision 2020 goals and initiatives
- Address immediate workforce needs through outreach to currently unemployed and qualified, working-age individuals
- Address the need to bring hard-to-place individuals, assistance recipients, and others back into the workforce pipeline

▼ An emerging tech student fixes a computer.



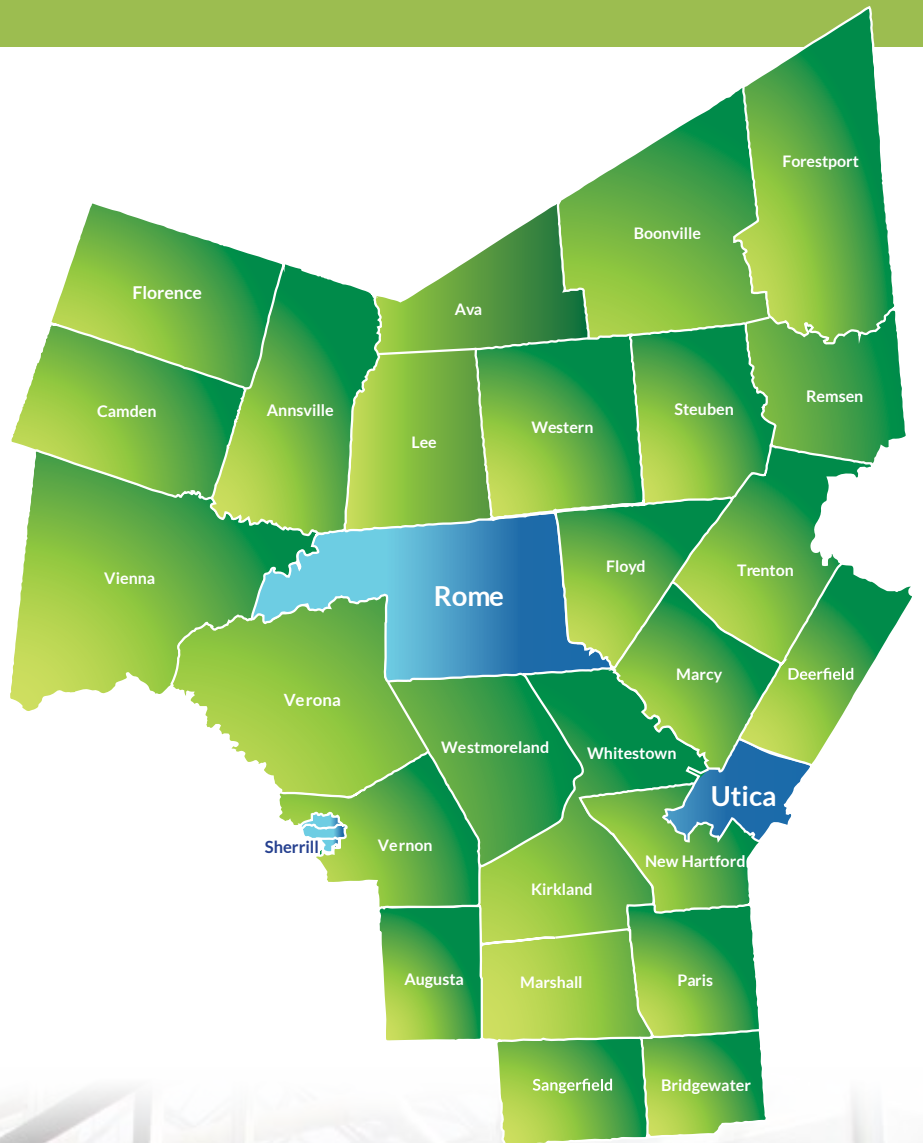


▲ An electrical trades student learns his craft in the classroom.



▲ An auto body student works in the lab.

▼ A new vision engineering student works at an internship.



◀ A conservation student works in the greenhouse.

# HOUSING

**To meet the demands of a changing demographic associated with those employed by emerging industries.**

The Housing Committee **has worked together to identify premier opportunities to significantly change the face of area housing stock** and promote housing that meets the demands of our changing population and workforce demographics. **This critical work ensures that our housing stock will meet the evolving needs of the new economy and emerging workforce opportunities.**

## Accomplishments

The Housing Committee's efforts have helped promote change and resulted in the following accomplishments:

- Creation and adoption of a Uniform Tax Exemption and Agency Benefits Policy to encourage development of specific types of market-rate housing by the Oneida County Industrial Development Agency
- Increased public awareness of planned and in-progress development projects



## Action Items

This committee continues to focus on ways to encourage development of varied housing options in Oneida County that are tailored to meet the needs of our evolving market. Moving forward, their goals include:

- Create common zoning terminology guidelines and implement a pilot between Utica, Rome and Marcy
- Create and implement a plan for digitizing maps
- Update Uniform Tax Exemption and Agency Benefits Policy

- ◀ Pheasant Run project, a 179-unit luxury rental project that will be
- ▼ completed in late summer/early fall 2018.



# ACCESS AND OPPORTUNITY

**To support the needs of a diverse community in relation to new job opportunities that are being created through Oneida County's economic development efforts.**

Oneida County is proud to be home to a diverse population made up of a wide array of ethnic backgrounds, education levels, and skill sets. The Access to Opportunity Committee has partnered with key stakeholders to identify language and employment opportunities that have **resulted in new initiatives and long-term solutions designed to assist targeted populations in impactful, life-changing efforts.**

## Accomplishments

The Access to Opportunity committee is organized into three task forces to tackle its many initiatives.

The goal of the **Business and Economic Development** task force is to promote and support entrepreneurship, business development, and job creation in immigrant, refugee, and other underserved populations. To date, this task force has:

- Examined current foreign-born unemployment data by year of arrival, finding that unemployment decreases as time living in Oneida County increases
- Examined educational levels needed to attain projected occupational titles in order to determine needed training and education, and identify how English language learners can become gainfully employed by learning the language of a particular industry

The goal of the **English Language Learner Pathways** task force is for all residents of Oneida County to have access to gainful employment regardless of their origin or language. This task force has:

- Created a matrix of English language providers in the Utica area and found that providers are working collectively, but that services can be further streamlined
- Conducted a survey of English language learners to guide ESL program enhancements and offerings that has resulted in:
  - Mainstreamed ESL programs K-12 in local schools
  - Enhanced current ESL offerings with language tutorial programs, graduation completion initiatives, and initiatives focused on improving employment probabilities in local colleges

The goal of the **Community Cultural Development** task force is to showcase the area's cultural offerings and resources by attracting and retaining residents and businesses within our community. This task force has:

- Collaborated with Leadership Mohawk Valley to create a website strategy and framework highlighting area diversity and cultural offerings
- Collaborated with the Mohawk Valley Resource Center for Refugees on the establishment of a Welcome Center to address our current and new workforce needs

## Action Items

This committee will continue to develop strategies and implement actions that support our underserved populations. Their goals include:

- Develop a strategy to bring skilled and professional refugee and immigrant populations back into the workforce pipeline
- Create and implement a plan to leverage the benefits of cultural diversity and connect individuals, cultural groups, businesses, and government to maximize growth opportunities



▲ 2017 Citizenship ceremony at WRD with Oneida County Executive Anthony J. Picente Jr., Assemblyman Anthony Brindisi, D-Utica, and Senator Joe Griffo, R-Rome.



▲ Performers sing during the Karen New Year celebration.



▲ Former Soviet Union refugees with OSHA certificates.

# TRANSPORTATION

***With a growing workforce, diverse community and dynamic quality of life, our transportation infrastructure has never been more critical.***

Convened in 2015, the Transportation Committee was created to review the current state of Oneida County transportation systems. This work included a thorough examination of stakeholder needs in urban and rural areas and the **development of strategies and action plans that would address unmet needs by enhancing current infrastructure and identifying potential new investments.**

With three areas of focus identified – Connectivity, Alternatives to Automobiles, and Accessibility – the committee has already **made significant headway in garnering feedback from a variety of stakeholders** on how to improve regular travel in Oneida County and how to promote greater connectivity in and outside of the county. Their efforts will also inform the development of a data-driven Long-Range Transportation Plan for Herkimer and Oneida Counties.

## Connectivity

As our communities grow, the way our residents and visitors to the area travel through the county will change in order to foster economic development and support our desired quality of life. To achieve this, **the committee has helped implement several initiatives to maximize resources and effectively create a sustainable plan to create a transportation infrastructure that meets the needs of our residents and visitors.**

### Accomplishments

This committee has:

- Helped secure an award from the New York State Energy Research and Development Authority to develop a plan for incorporating transportation technology linking corridors to support transportation needs
- Facilitated a Shared Service Agreement between the City of Utica and Herkimer-Oneida Counties Comprehensive Planning Program for a pavement condition analysis
- Formalized a working relationship with SUNY Poly/ MVCC Capstone Projects in which students will engage in concept level planning and information gathering related to transportation projects that align with the Herkimer-Oneida Counties Long-Range Transportation Plan
- Formalized the need for a study addressing thruway Exit 31 and regional connectivity



▲ Camera footage used by the Mohawk Valley Transportation Management Center to monitor and manage traffic.

## Action Items

- Facilitate coordination among the NYSDOT, Metropolitan Planning Organization, counties, and municipalities to create criteria for complete street planning
- Develop recommendations related to the identification and prioritization of road projects that align with current and future transportation needs
- Identify strategies and processes that will maximize resources and support the development and successful implementation of a data-driven Long-Range Transportation Plan for Herkimer and Oneida Counties

## Accessibility

Oneida County is host to a diverse population of citizens with diverse needs and expectations. The Accessibility Committee examined current transportation uses and needs to enact positive change across travel experiences for drivers and non-drivers, including people with disabilities, high school students or limited English speakers. **This committee has gathered data from targeted populations to inform transportation planning activities and projects, and support workforce needs.**

### Accomplishments

- Deployed the Employer Transportation Survey among the 25 top employers in Oneida County regarding transportation use and needs
- Collected data related to transportation opportunities at local colleges to identify opportunities for collaboration and expansion
- Collected data related to CENTRO's Americans with Disabilities Act-compliant vehicles and services to inform infrastructure planning
- Collected data about ride share opportunities through volunteer or low-cost programs in the community to identify additional needs and gaps, and address challenges related to recruiting and sustaining drivers and funding



## Action Items

- Design and implement an individual employee survey to:
  - Gain feedback and insight into the challenges workers face in getting to work
  - Identify the need for alternate forms of transportation, such as biking, walking, and bus
  - Identify language barriers in using alternate forms of transportation
- Support the Transportation Coordination Committee in the development of a coordinated non-emergency transportation plan for seniors and persons with limited mobility

## Alternative to Automobiles

Getting to and from work means more than hopping in the car. For some, getting to work means riding a bike or walking. The Alternative to Automobiles committee set out to identify multi-faceted transportation opportunities to address the needs of the community. **Their efforts have already resulted in enhanced connectivity across our communities through the identification of collaborative opportunities to maximize smart growth.**

## Accomplishments

- Reviewed regional, state, and national resources related to developing and encouraging use of alternative transportation in smaller urban areas and rural areas
- Identified strategies to provide WiFi in transportation centers that include maximizing existing infrastructure and new solutions
- Collaborated with Fort Stanwix on their Alternative Transportation study to address trail connections, wayfinding, pedestrian accessibility, interchange enhancements, and improvements and alternative modes of transportation within the City of Rome and the county as a whole
- Identified potential opportunities to maximize existing Path Through History grant funding to expand/complete bike trails within the county

## Action Items

- Recommend prioritized alternative modes based on current infrastructure, needs and usage, and overall impact to support smart size alternative modes of transportation growth
- Develop a pedestrian study to inform transportation planning related to workforce and quality-of-life needs
- Provide cutting-edge updates to propel the Oneida County transportation system into the high-tech, connected future

▼ Centro Bus in Utica's Fourth of July parade.

► Cyclists on a pedestrian bridge.



**SCHOOLS**

Adirondack Central School  
Camden Central School  
Charter Schools  
Clinton Central School  
Faith Christian School  
Greater Mohawk Valley STEM Hub  
Holland Patent Central School  
Jefferson-Lewis-Hamilton-Herkimer-Oneida BOCES  
Madison-Oneida BOCES  
New Hartford Central School  
New York Mills Central School  
New York State School for the Deaf  
Notre Dame Elementary & Junior/Senior High  
Oneida-Herkimer-Madison BOCES  
Oriskany Central School  
Parochial and Private Schools  
Remsen Central School  
Rome Catholic School  
Rome City Schools  
Sauquoit Valley Central School  
Utica Academy of Science Charter School  
Utica City Schools  
Vernon-Verona-Sherrill Central School  
Waterville Central School  
Westmoreland Central School  
Whitesboro Central School

**HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS**

Hamilton College  
Mohawk Valley Community College  
PrattMWP  
St. Elizabeth College of Nursing  
SUNYPolytechnic/CNSE  
Utica College

**BUSINESS AND INDUSTRY**

Air Force Research Lab  
Aviation/Military  
Biosciences  
Construction  
Cyber Security  
Data/Information Technology  
Distribution Logistics  
Education  
Finance  
Food Processing  
Healthcare  
Human Services  
Insurance  
Law Enforcement  
Manufacturing  
Nanotechnology  
Not-for-profit  
Real Estate  
Retail  
The Arts and Entertainment  
Travel, Tourism, and Hospitality

**GOVERNMENT**

Oneida County Government  
Cities of Utica, Rome, and Sherrill  
26 Towns and 19 Villages

**WORKFORCE SYSTEM PARTNERS**

ACCES-VR (Adult Career and Continuing Education Services-  
Vocational Rehabilitation)  
ARC of Oneida County  
BOCES Consortium of Continuing Education  
Colleges and Universities, Career Services, and Corporate  
Training Department of Labor  
Mohawk Valley Resource Center for Refugees  
Mohawk Valley Community College  
Oneida County Workforce Development  
Resource Center for Independent Living  
SUNY Polytechnic Small Business Development Center  
Trade Apprenticeships  
Women's Employment and Resource Center  
Workforce Development Institute  
Workforce Investment Board  
Working Solutions

**ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PARTNERS**

County IDAs (Industrial Development Agencies)  
County IDCs (Industrial Development Corporations)  
County LDCs (Local Development Corporations)  
Empire State Development Corporation (ESDC)  
Griffiss Institute  
Mohawk Valley Economic Development  
Mohawk Valley Economic Development Growth  
Enterprises Corp. (EDGE)  
Mohawk Valley Regional Economic Development Council  
(MVREDC)

**COMMUNITY GROUPS**

Business Associations  
Charitable Organizations  
Faith-Based Organizations  
Philanthropic Organizations  
Senior Citizen Organizations  
Service Organizations



The following is a sample of the studies, databases, and other resources that Vision 2020 Committee members researched and considered in development of their Phase One Vision 2020: Workforce Ready reports.

## **Regional Planning Reference Materials**

(available at: <http://www.oneida-boces.org/collectiveimpacts>)

Alignment Nashville Overview - [www.alignmentnashville.org](http://www.alignmentnashville.org)  
Center State Corporation for Economic Opportunity  
Draft Goals  
Educational Readiness for Crucial Transitions  
Greater Mohawk Valley STEM Hub  
Marcy Nanocenter at SUNY Polytechnic Institute/Business Development Update - [www.marcynanocenter.com](http://www.marcynanocenter.com)  
Maternal Care & Reducing Obesity Across the Lifespan  
Mohawk Valley EDGE - [www.mvedge.org](http://www.mvedge.org)  
Mohawk Valley Regional Economic Development - <http://regionalcouncils.ny.gov/mohawk-valley>  
New NY Education Reform Commission Preliminary Recommendations  
OHM BOCES Community of Resources and Expertise (CORE) - [www.oneida-boces.org/page/292](http://www.oneida-boces.org/page/292)  
Putting Students First, Education Action Plan - [www.NYPuttingStudentsFirst.com](http://www.NYPuttingStudentsFirst.com)  
SEMI HTU  
State of the Council  
Strive Together – Theory of Action Overview  
Strive Together – Theory of Action Frequently Asked Question  
The Community Foundation of Herkimer & Oneida Counties, Inc. - [www.hocindicators.org](http://www.hocindicators.org)  
The Community Foundation of Herkimer & Oneida Counties, Inc. & The Power of COLLABORATION, Annual Report 2012  
The Pulse, A Community Indicators Project for Herkimer and Oneida Counties  
Transitional Career and Life Skill Development for Young Adults  
United Way of the Valley and Greater Utica Area - [www.unitedwaygv.org](http://www.unitedwaygv.org)

## **Greater Utica & Rome Board of Realtors**

## **Herkimer and Oneida Counties Census**

## **Literacy Coalition**

## **Literacy Pipeline**

## **Local area real estate companies**

## **Oneida County Youth Services Council**

## **Profile of the NT Labor Force (National NT Infrastructure Network)**

## **Saratoga County IDA**

## **The Saratogian special report on Nanotechnology**

## **U.S. and Oneida County census data**



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