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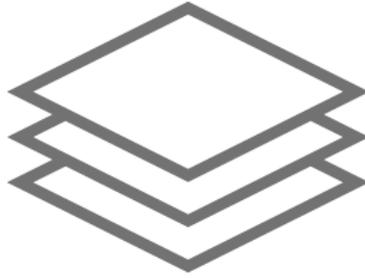
**The Albany County-Wide
Shared Services Property Tax
Savings Plan**

July 2017

The Rockefeller Institute of Government
The Benjamin Center

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The Albany County-Wide Shared Services Property Tax Savings Plan

Draft

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The Albany County Shared Services Panel

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Mayor, City of Watervliet

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Supervisor, Town of Berne

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Honorable Paula A. Mahan
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Honorable Peter G. Barber
Supervisor, Town of Guilderland

Honorable Vasilios Lefkaditis
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Honorable Valerie Lounsbury
Supervisor, Town of Rensselaerville

Honorable Richard H. Rapp
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Honorable Megan Grenier
Mayor, Village of Menands

Honorable Frank A. Leak
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Mayor, Village of Altamont

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Introduction

The following report constitutes the initial draft plan required by [Part BBB of Chapter 59 of the State Laws of 2017](#), known as the “County-wide Shared Services Initiative.” Under the law, every county must convene a Shared Services Panel (hereinafter Panel) to develop a Shared Services and Taxpayer Savings Plan (For a full summary of the law’s requirements under the law, see Appendix C).

Over the past two and a half months, the team assembled by Albany County has been working tirelessly to gather and analyze ideas from all the county’s local government chief executives to include in this draft County-Wide Shared Services Property Tax Savings Plan. The state’s process provided an extremely tight timeframe within which to conduct a comprehensive audit and review of potential avenues for shared services and taxpayer savings. Two factors, however, made the task easier: the cooperation of all the stakeholders that participated in the process; and earlier collaborative efforts undertaken by the municipalities within Albany County over the past several years. These two factors eased the constraints of time allotted under this process.

Albany County Executive Daniel P. McCoy headed this effort. As required by state law, he convened the Panel, made up of the chief executives of the county’s cities, towns, villages, and school districts. The County Executive brought in the Rockefeller Institute of Government to help facilitate the process. The Rockefeller Institute has decades of experience and expertise in this area. For assistance the Rockefeller Institute called upon another expert group in this area, the Benjamin Center at SUNY New Paltz. Together we immediately began our work.

We would be remiss if we did not mention the extraordinary effort and assistance provided by County Executive Dan McCoy’s staff under the leadership of Deputy County Executive Philip Calderone, including Michael McLaughlin, George Penn, Matthew Cannon, and Mary Rozak.

The County Executive’s Office specified that our approach to this task had to build from the bottom-up, and that every community had to be heard. We believe that an inclusive, bottom-up process is reflected in the draft plan below.

The Rockefeller Institute of Government/Benjamin Center team began the process in mid-May, prior to formally coming on board. In all, the team members spoke individually¹ to each chief executive (and also staff members, in many cases) from every town, village, city, and school district in the county, conducted in-depth research of the county and local municipality finances, and held special forums to discuss cost savings and efficiency topics. We consulted with subject matter experts in local finance, health care, insurance, and other local government issues. In addition, as required by law, we sent every collective bargaining unit in the county, local municipality, and school a summary of activities and ideas.

Past Shared Services Successes

Albany County has within it an array of local governments diverse in size, character, and demography—ranging from the City of Albany to the Hill towns. Likewise, there are various types and sizes of school districts. Previous collaborative efforts between and among these jurisdictions provided a foundation for our work. Over the past several

years, the county and local municipalities have worked closely together to share services and improve service delivery for residents. Three studies evidencing these efforts are: the 2017 [*PFM report on Financial Options for the City of Albany*](#); the 2015 [*Albany Countywide Government Efficiency Plan \(GEP\)*](#), and the 2014 [*Albany County Countywide Shared Highway Study*](#).

The 2017 state law that is the basis for this study does not allow inclusion of previous shared services and efficiencies efforts. The numerous examples of shared services and resulting efficiencies currently underway in Albany County municipalities, however, evidence a consistent commitment to intergovernmental collaboration. The 2015 GEP plan identified more than \$15 million in savings through efficiencies and shared services that would be fully implemented by 2019 in Albany County.

Specific examples of collaboration and shared services among cities, towns, villages, and school districts in the county include:

- Bethlehem combined highway and parks maintenance, restructured tax collections and consolidated ambulance districts — reducing town expenditures by more than \$2 million annually.
- Since 2015, a major savings and service improvement is being realized through shared acquisition by Albany County and the Towns of Bethlehem and Colonie of an emergency services system, including Computer-Assisted Dispatch, field reporting, and records management (CAD/RMS). This shared acquisition saves Bethlehem taxpayers \$150,000 annually and Colonie taxpayers \$200,000 annually. This is in addition to the \$900,000 annual savings realized through the consolidated dispatch by Albany County and Coeymans, Cohoes, Green Island and Watervliet.
- There is a mutual aid agreement among Troy, Watervliet, Green Island, the City of Albany, and Cohoes for fire calls and for mutual aid for EMS calls during major fires among Colonie, Guilderland, and Albany County Sheriff's EMS.
- The City of Albany combined training of new firefighter recruit class with the cities of Troy, Watervliet, Saratoga, Amsterdam, Rensselaer, Gloversville, and the Albany International Airport.
- All of Albany County's municipalities share crews and equipment with their neighboring municipalities through MOUs or informal agreements. For example, the Towns of Knox, Berne, Rensselaerville, Westerlo, and Guilderland regularly share equipment and personnel.
- In another example, the Town of Colonie performs fire inspections for the Village of Menands.
- Seven school districts—Bethlehem, Cohoes, Green Island, Guilderland, Ravena-Coeymans-Selkirk, South Colonie, and Voorheesville—purchase health insurance collectively through the Capital Area Schools Health Insurance Consortium (CASHIC). The consortium recently negotiated a revised prescription drug contract resulting in significantly lower average wholesale prices.
- The Voorheesville, Guilderland, and Berne-Knox-Westerlo school districts collaborate on transportation.

- The Capital Region BOCES operates a Pharmacy Purchasing Coalition serving school districts in Albany County which has reduced their members' prescription drug costs between 10 and 25 percent.
- The County shares fueling stations at their main shop in Voorheesville. The County Department of Public Works (DPW), Soil and Water Department, Voorheesville School District, Cornell Co-op, Weatherization Department, and City of Albany Water Department all share the County fueling stations at the County's main shop in Voorheesville.
- The County has a shared service agreement with State Department of Transportation (DOT) pertaining to snow removal/ winter road maintenance.

Additional efforts can be found throughout this report. It is a testament to the collegiality and ongoing cooperation among the governments within the County.

What's more, and often overlooked, is that shared services among local governments is not entirely contained within counties. In fact, we received a number of examples where municipalities in Albany County were in shared services arrangements with towns in other counties, and some with towns in other states.

This is the Beginning of the Process

Any proposals included in the plan must include overall tax savings estimates, which will eventually be certified by the state. In accord with the bottom-up approach, the plan is constructed as an opt-in model: where municipalities are able to voluntarily adopt, but are not required to participate in, specific recommendations.

Based on conservative estimates, the plan contains a potential savings of at least \$6.8 million annually if fully adopted. As municipalities opt in, savings will likely grow.

Consequently, many of the estimates of the financial impact are a work in progress. Data are not yet in hand from all the county's local government. As jurisdictions opt-in over time, greater savings will result. This draft plan deliberately uses extremely conservative estimates to create a baseline. **The very conservative savings estimate in this draft plan based on the agreed to proposals amount to \$2.5 million annually.** We reiterate that over time, with more complete data, additional opting in, and with the potential addition of proposals not yet formally adopted by the panel, we expect the savings to grow considerably.

It was not possible to fully vet all of the ideas generated for this draft report to meet the initial deadline of August 1, 2017. We've included those that need further consideration in the *Future Avenues of Additional Shared Services* section. **At least another \$3.3-4.3 million in annual savings are possible** if additional proposals that have considerable support are adopted by the panel. Whether those will be more fully developed by the September 15, 2017 deadline for the final report remains to be seen. We included them now so that the public and other county stakeholders have a chance to opine on whether the panel should give them additional consideration.

We hope this plan marks a step in a continuing process, not an end point. One product of this effort is an organizational infrastructure to continue collaborative efforts, after the statutory obligation has been fulfilled. If history is our guide, the municipalities and school districts within the county will continue to work together to provide more efficient and affordable services to its residents.

The Albany County Shared Services and Taxpayer Savings Action Plan

There follows a list of recommended proposals that the Panel has included for consideration in the Albany County Shared Services and Tax Savings Plan (hereinafter the Plan). With an eye towards consensus and success (made more difficult by the single municipality/unit of government veto under the law), the proposals below have the support of many of the municipalities. Those that wish to do so may opt-in; no municipality is required to participate in any single proposal, now or in the future. We've modeled initial savings based upon those municipalities that expressed support for particular proposals.

Part A

Shared Specialty Equipment and Personnel Services

Proposal A1. Creation of a County-Wide Centralized Shared Specialty Equipment Program²

Virtually every municipality and school district was supportive of sharing specialty equipment with one another either with the County, or among local governments and school districts.

In many cases, there are informal agreements in place between municipalities to share equipment. For instance, the Towns of Westerlo, Rensselaerville, and Knox share equipment. Westerlo also shares equipment with the Town of Durham in Greene County. There are also examples of shared equipment and services between school districts and municipalities. The Village of Menands assists the Menands School District with snow removal.

The County will create a formal shared equipment program MOU as a way for municipalities to more easily share specialty equipment with one another within the county, including school districts. Over the course of our outreach there were specific requests to share various equipment. Some are listed in the table below.

While the County would maintain the list of equipment, this does not mean the County would purchase all the equipment. Rather, the County will act as the clearinghouse.

Table 1. Some Examples of Equipment Need and Availability

Municipality	Need	Available
Green Island	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pavers • Vacuum trucks • Asphalt milling machines • Street sweepers • Camera machine (for inventorying things like sewer pipes) 	
Town of Knox		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Paver • Excavator • Guardrail equipment • Backhoe • Roller • Trailer <p>(willing to share with neighboring municipalities subject to board approval and discussion with highway superintendent)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CAT Wheeled Excavator • CAT Roller • Over the Rail Mower
Voorheesville School District	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Snow removal during heavy snow • Lifts 	
Town of Westerlo	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shoulder machine 	
Altamont	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Loaders • Generators • Backhoes • Brush Chipper • Dump Truck with Plows • Mowers 	
North Colonie School District	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cherry picker 	
Village of Voorheesville	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trench box for shoring during water breaks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mini excavator • Small backhoe • Skid steer • Garbage packer • Trailers • Road miller • Speed sign

Table 1. Some Examples of Equipment Need and Availability

Town of Bethlehem	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Portable Pipeline Video Camera 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Paver, Roller, and Gradall • Fusion Machine (for water pipe infrastructure).
City of Albany		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dura-Patcher (pothole machine) • Backhoes • Loaders • Dump Trucks • Foam Trailer (fire)
Guilderland Central School District	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Loader w/snow pusher (large) • Loader w/snow pusher (medium) 	
Watervliet City School District	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lift 	
City of Watervliet	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cherry picker truck or lift 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brush hog cutter • Street sweeper • Bucket loader • Backhoe
Town of Colonie		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Various DPW (highway, water, sewer) equipment <i>Emergency situations</i>
County of Albany		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Graders • Gradalls • Road Wideners • Skid-Steers • Bulldozers • Excavators (both tracked and wheeled) • Wheel loaders • Tree truck • Low-boy • Dump trailer • Paver • Rollers • Backhoes • Hydro-seeder • Wood chippers • Water pump.

Preliminary estimates show that municipalities could save at least \$300,000 annually on a centralized shared specialty equipment database.

Proposal A2. Shared Personnel through a Centralized Process Organized by the County³

The 2017 PFM report recommended that the City of Albany work with other local governments to determine whether a countywide approach could provide equal or better services and more competitive rates on contracted services. Generalizing from this, there was considerable interest among municipalities in sharing specialty personnel, especially in cases where there wasn't in-house staff or expertise. Therefore, the County will create a central database to allow municipalities to facilitate personnel sharing--e.g., construction crews, lawyers, animal control officers, and engineers. In addition, the County will create a list of pre-approved contracts for engineering, attorneys, land remediation, roofing, plumbing, HVAC, and the like, modeled on BOCES practice.

There were many examples, where a centralized process of available shared staff and/or a centralized list of private sector specialty contractors (HVAC, electricians, and asbestos abatement) would be valuable. The Guilderland School District has only two grounds maintenance workers to cover seven schools. The City of Albany has planned to increase the use of Department of General Services (DGS) employees, especially the landfill crew, to complete smaller construction projects for other municipalities and departments. In addition, Menands wanted to enter into a cooperative agreement with a nearby locality to share DPW manpower to complete mid-sized special projects that cannot be completed due to limited year-round staff size, and currently therefore must be contracted out to a private company. Many municipalities have shared personnel arrangements already. The Town of Bethlehem Highway Department has informal arrangements with Albany County DPW, which includes equipment relocation, paving and maintenance of equipment, and with Bethlehem Central School District for shared road salt storage. Watervliet City School District specifically called for sharing people to do construction, roofing, plumbing, and electrical work.

There was interest by several municipalities for a shared animal control program. In many cases, there were already shared arrangements among municipalities, like the Village of Altamont using the Town of Guilderland's officer, the Village of Menands using the Town of Colonie's, and the Town of Rensselaerville sharing an officer with the Town of Berne. The Albany Police Department planned to share animal control services with other municipalities in the county. The County will create a central shared animal control program where municipalities will share this function, if needed.

Several municipalities use private engineering firms, like BS Arch and the Laberge Group. Many were happy with the service and arrangement. However, there was great interest in having the county create a shared engineering services program; for many this shared service was a high priority. Therefore, the County will allow municipalities to opt-in to use Albany County's engineering services, specifically a list of pre-approved

outside private firms. Moreover, the County will centralize a list of engineers from other local municipalities that could be available for projects.

In addition to the centralized database and contractor list, there were some potential individual shared service arrangements identified, like the Cohoes City School District sharing staff with the City of Cohoes.

Response time was a concern raised by many municipalities and school districts, so the County would work to ensure timely responses to meet service needs.

Preliminary estimates show that municipalities could save at least \$175,000 annually on shared personnel.

Part B. Joint Purchasing of Services and Materials

Proposal B1. Create Additional Joint Purchasing Agreements for Equipment, Materials, Services, and Supplies⁴

Albany County will create a centralized purchasing system for all municipalities, including piggybacking on existing state, county or local contracts with the best price for such items and services as: medical supplies, software, computer hardware, equipment, telecommunication systems, gasoline, diesel fuel, waste removal, recycling, electrical, plumbing, HVAC, and asbestos removal. The County will convene a working group to develop a process for local municipalities and school districts to help lower costs for services, supplies, and equipment as they see prices change and opportunities arise, including piggybacking on existing county contracts if the terms and pricing are better. For example, the County will allow local municipalities to use their wireless contract.

There were many examples of these activities already. For instance, various County municipalities piggyback on the state fuel contract. Virtually every municipality in the county expressed an interest in pursuing this option.

Preliminary estimates show that municipalities could save at least \$500,000 annually on additional joint purchasing, centralized purchasing, and piggybacking off of best-priced contracts.

Part C.

Consolidation of Duplicative Functions

Proposal C1. Consolidate vehicle maintenance and repair services within the county⁵

The County will offer maintenance repair services and body work to municipalities and school districts (in certain instances). Several smaller districts and municipalities have expressed an interest in this. Specifically, municipalities would have access to the County DPW stations for servicing of their vehicle fleets through a MOU or other formal arrangement. The County would assess a fee for the service. However, capacity issues and implementation still need to be worked out. The County will also explore with interested municipalities and school districts developing a centralized contract for vehicle maintenance and repair as well as a centralized contract to purchase vehicles and vehicle parts. It is possible a centralized contract for vehicle service and maintenance could supplement a county service.

In addition, the Voorheesville School District is talking to the County about moving the storage and maintenance of their buses and equipment to the County's New Scotland facility in 2018. The School District's current facility is obsolete and needs to be replaced. It would cost \$5 million to build a new school facility, of which \$3 million would have to be provided locally—after state aid. The school district is unsure how much it would cost to rent and rehabilitate the needed space from the county, but it would almost certainly be significantly less expensive than building a new facility.⁶ The Berne-Know-Westerlo school district's maintenance facility also needs to be replaced and they are interested in a similar arrangement with the county at the county's East Berne facility.

Preliminary estimates show that municipalities could save at least \$206,000 annually through shared maintenance.

Proposal C2. Consolidate the Albany County and Berne departments of public works⁷

The Town of Berne and the County of Albany have agreed to move forward with a proposal to consolidate the Town of Berne's Department of Public Works into the County. Labor and other issues still must be worked out, but there is an agreement in principle. There have been many concerns raised about the respective workforces, which both the County and Town must be mindful of. This proposal has a long history. The Berne Town Board recently passed a resolution directing the County to perform another feasibility study of this proposal; one was completed in the early 2000's but no action was taken at that time. Giving the willingness of both partners, it was included in the plan.

Preliminary estimates show that municipalities could save at least \$151,000 annually.

Proposal C3. Consolidate interpretation/translation services within Albany County government⁸

There are many new federal and state requirements to translate materials into languages other than English. As population diversity grows, translation needs will continue to grow. Budget lines for this service are often exhausted (or not included), nor is there in-house expertise to complete this new task. Therefore, the County will offer a centralized translation service to all municipalities within the county, by either performing it or connecting to providers or other government entities to do so. The County may charge a fee for service, but by aggregating the function, there would be better service and savings.

Preliminary estimates show that municipalities could save at least \$50,000 annually.

Proposal C4. Consolidate civil service functions within the county

Albany County Civil Service is currently responsible for handling civil service responsibilities for some special districts, the Capital Region BOCES being the largest example. The County will take over this responsibility for other interested local government entities, specifically the City of Albany. This is a high priority for the City of Albany and City of Cohoes, and Watervliet and the South Colonie school district have expressed interest.

Preliminary estimates to be determined.

Proposal C5. Merge the City of Albany records clerk positions within the Hall of Records into the county workforce.

The City of Albany originally proposed merging these positions into the County workforce for the 2017 County Budget. The City continues to believe these employees should be County employees. The City and County have agreed to move this function to the County which will generate over \$170,000 in annual savings to the City. It is unclear what the cost to the County is to assume these positions and responsibilities and there are potential state grant issues that need to be worked out.

Preliminary estimates show at least \$100,000 in annual savings.

Part D.

Enact a Robust Energy Efficiency Program

There was interest in reducing a significant cost for local governments — the cost of energy consumption. The Panel recommends several shared service and cost saving efforts that have the added benefit of making the county, as a whole, greener. Many municipalities have already begun to move to energy efficient LED lighting and more renewable sources of power.

For example:

- The Town of Bethlehem converted lights to more energy efficient models and saved 35 percent at their Town Hall, highway, and DPW sites. The town also replaced pedestrian area lighting fixtures, and 32 decorative light fixtures which will reduce energy use by 27,630 KWh/year and save the Town an estimated \$2,700 on energy bills. The Town will reduce its maintenance costs for the lights, as well.
- The City of Albany has a 27-point energy plan to reduced carbon emissions by 20 percent, including a City-wide LED lighting retrofit program that is estimated to save \$110,000 annually.
- The Village of Voorheesville installed solar panels at their garage and fire house.
- The Town of New Scotland and the Village of Voorheesville have developed a comprehensive plan for LED lighting for streetlights that will save \$65,000 annually.
- Currently the City of Albany is in very early stages of purchasing 10,300 streetlights from National Grid, with plans to convert all of them to LEDs. A GIS inventory and audit of streetlights is expected to be completed by early August 2017; this information will provide detailed data regarding fixture type and wattage.
- The Town of Knox converted 25 street lights to LED with an anticipated savings of up to \$600 annually.
- The County converted to LED lighting in the social services building, the Times Union Center garage, the Mental Health building, and County office buildings with a projected annual savings of \$91,861.

This year the County will work with state energy offices (e.g. New York State Energy Research and Development Authority, New York Power Authority, and the Public Service Commission) to facilitate a state energy audit for any municipality or school district wishing to lower its overall energy costs, and use additional renewable sources of energy. Although many have had recent audits done, given the numerous state programs, there may be additional programs — and funding — available for municipalities.

Proposal D1. Create the Albany County Community Choice Aggregation Energy Program

In 2016, the New York State Public Service Commission (PSC) issued an order authorizing the establishment of Community Choice Aggregation (CCA) programs by

municipalities (see [PSC Case 14-M-0224](#)). A CCA allows municipalities to use their collective purchasing power to enter into an energy contract to lower prices and/or increase usage of renewable energy supply. Under the program, each municipality must pass a local law to participate; and once they do, the government and local residents, are entered into the program. Residents and businesses may opt out of the program.

Westchester County created a CCA program that attracted the participation of 17 of its 20 municipalities with 90,000 residential and small business customers.

A multi-county CCA has been created by the Municipal Electric and Gas Alliance (MEGA) program to serve some 500,000 residents in 11 counties from the Finger Lakes to the Hudson Valley. The City of Albany participates in the MEGA program.

Reports have projected up to 20 percent annual savings in energy costs by entering into a CCA.

Proposal D2. Retrofitting Lights to High Efficiency LED Lighting

Another area which had considerable support was the conversion of lighting to LEDs. These high efficiency lights save significant money in the long run. As a result of interactions with utility companies, municipalities and school districts have developed concerns about whether it is better to lease or sell the equipment, the specialized maintenance of the lights, and overall capital costs. The County will run a centralized process to work with municipalities and schools to install additional LED lights in addition to the projects currently underway, including serving as the point on negotiating with the utilities.

Using a conservative estimate, we project to save at least an estimated \$1.03 million annually under both proposals.⁹

Preliminary estimates show that municipalities could make at least \$1.03 million annually in energy savings when implemented, not including direct ratepayer savings to residents and businesses.

Future Avenues of Additional Shared Services

As noted, some ideas raised by local municipal leaders could not be fully analyzed in the very brief planning time granted under the law. We list below some of the areas in which there was considerably support by members of the Panel to try to reduce the overall costs to local taxpayers, for health insurance, liability insurance, workers' compensation, and debt refinancing. We will continue to work on these issues with the Panel and county stakeholders to see if we can arrive at agreement on a proposal by the September 15, 2017 deadline.

Municipal Debt Refinancing Program

Given the current low-interest rate environment, the County could offer municipalities an option to consolidate and pool debt. Recent data from the Office of the State Comptroller shows that municipalities within Albany County have nearly \$1 billion of

existing debt. Many municipalities have refinanced and consolidated their debt, lowering interest rates, and therefore overall annual costs. For instance: The Town of Knox has approximately \$487,000 in debt and recently refinanced the debt with a low interest rate of 0.88 percent. Many municipalities have much higher interest rates.

- The Village of Voorheesville refinanced two bonds (a sewer and water), saving \$253,883.
- The Town of Bethlehem saved nearly \$2.3 million as a result of debt refinancing.

A more general approach is to pursue a county-wide refinancing option. The County would work with other interested municipalities and school districts to lower their overall debt service costs.

We are still analyzing potential savings from any refinancing plan. However, the results of previous refinancing demonstrate that even if only a few municipalities/school districts participate it could result in at least between \$1 and 2 million in annual debt service savings.

Create a county health consortium

Municipalities had interest in developing a county health consortium, like some school districts have done with the Capital Area Schools Health Insurance Consortium. Most municipalities and school districts want to maintain their current health benefits; few had interest in having a standard countywide set of benefits. A 2012 study, done before the complete implementation of the Affordable Care Act, offered three different options under current law that the County could use to form a health insurance consortium (See [ALBANY COUNTY HEALTH CARE FEASIBILITY STUDY by the Segal Group](#)—November, 2011 (Revised March 2012)). The 2012 study recommended three different options under current law the county could use to form a health insurance consortium:

- **Article 47 – Municipal Cooperative Health Benefits Plans.** This article of the Insurance Law allows a municipality, school district, BOCES, or fire district to share in the costs of self-funding employee health benefit plans. This is an alternative approach to: stabilize health claim costs; lower per unit administration costs; and enhance negotiating power with health providers by spreading such costs among a larger pool of risks.
- **Article 44 Welfare Funds.** This article of the Insurance Law allows medical benefits to be provided through an “employee welfare fund.” This is a trust fund maintained by one of more governmental employers with one or more labor unions, directly or indirectly through trustees. The benefits can be provided through the purchase of insurance or otherwise.

- **Establishing a County Trust Fund.** This would allow municipalities, school districts, fire districts, and BOCES to obtain desired health care coverage, care management, risk and administrative arrangements through that trust. This is the approach used by area school districts to form the Capital Area Schools Health Insurance Consortium (CASHIC).

The Capital District BOCES created the NYS Benefit Corporation, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit brokerage entity to purchase and manage health insurance through a pooled arrangement but could only get six school districts to join, which was not enough buying power. However, the entity still exists and could be a vehicle to purchase health insurance for Albany County municipalities and school districts with over 50 employees. Under current law and/or regulation only pooled arrangements created under Article 44 of the insurance law can cover employers with under 50 employees without subjecting them to community rating, which increases the cost of insurance.

Finally, municipalities were interested in reducing prescription drug costs. One option is encouraging all municipalities and school districts that self-insure for their prescription drug benefits to join the Capital District BOCES Pharmacy Purchasing Coalition which has reduced their members' prescription drug costs between 10 percent and 25 percent.

We are still finalizing the potential savings from developing a joint health consortium. Based on the 2012 study, there was at least \$1.3 million in savings from the creation of a potential trust for which the municipalities with more than 50 employees were eligible. This total will likely grow when adjusting for inflationary costs and prescription drug cost savings.

Workers' compensation and liability insurance consortia

These were two areas of considerable cost to municipalities and school districts, where millions are spent annually. Some of the school districts participate in existing workers' compensation and liability consortia. For example, the Guilderland Central School District participates in the Schoharie Area Workers' Compensation Consortium. We are exploring the County creating consortia to reduce the overall costs.

This program would need to be more fully developed; there are no savings estimates at this time.

Consolidated dispatch operations

Albany County now handles dispatch for the County as well as Coeymans, Cohoes, Green Island, and Watervliet, saving \$900,000 annually. The City of Albany's highest priority is to consolidate its dispatch operation with the County's current consolidated operation. This would require a new centralized dispatch center, currently planned to be located on the grounds of the Albany County Nursing Home. The *PFM Report* estimated

that the City of Albany would save \$515,000 annually through such a consolidation. The 2015 GEP discussed the possibility of consolidating the Bethlehem and Guilderland dispatch operations, but there is more work to be done to get consensus to move this proposal forward. The 2011 feasibility study on consolidated dispatch in the County also recommended that the Village of Menands consolidate its dispatch operation with the Town of Colonie's dispatch operation. However, the Village has no interest in pursuing this consolidation. The 2011 study estimated it would only save the Village \$2,700 annually.

Significant savings can also be realized through the joint purchase of a countywide CAD/RMS platform which Bethlehem and Colonie have already begun to implement and the City of Albany and Guilderland will pursue as part of the consolidation of the City's and County's dispatch operations (Guilderland currently uses the City's dispatch platform at no cost, which will end when the consolidation takes place). Menands has indicated an interest in participating in the joint purchase of the new CAD/RMS platform. The Albany County Sheriff estimates that Colonie will save \$250,000, Bethlehem will save \$150,000, and the City of Albany will save \$200,000 in avoided annual maintenance charges that would have been incurred had they purchased the platform on their own. In addition, significant savings have been or will be realized by the municipalities due to the joint purchase of the CAD/RMS platform. For example, the Town of Bethlehem estimates that it would have cost \$775,000 to purchase a CAD/RMS platform on their own similar to the one they were able to purchase through the County for \$265,000. Guilderland's savings should be similar.

Using estimates from previous reports, the Albany County Sheriff and the impacted municipalities the county will save a minimum of \$1 million annually by further consolidation of dispatch services and joint purchasing of a common CAD/RMS platform.

Consolidate municipal payroll operations within Albany County government

This idea was raised by City of Albany which has a very limited staff currently handling these duties. There was interest from other municipalities including Altamont, Cohoes, Green Island, Menands, and Watervliet. Many municipalities use outside vendors. A shared service opportunity could arise through leveraging the joint purchasing power with an outside vendor or a more centralized in-house county-wide option. It appears that an in-house option would require an upgrade to Albany County's process; the City mentioned that their process is more electronic/automated. This service could be offered to other interested municipalities. However, there isn't enough information at the time of the draft report to offer a formal finding.

We still are working through the potential cost savings for this proposal.

Creation of a Joint Enterprise Resource Planning system

The County could create a joint Enterprise Resource Planning System (ERP)—software that seamlessly integrates business processes and functions across all departments within government. This capability provides significant advantages over current legacy financial and administrative systems, which are comprised of a variety of separate systems and databases that perform the various accounting, payroll, and maintenance operations tasks. Adoption of a shared ERP system would also allow the local governments of the county to better identify best practices across municipalities and possible shared personnel opportunities that will be initially established in the county workforce database project.

There is limited enthusiasm for this proposal, but in addition to the City of Albany, which has received a grant for their own ERP system, there was interest from the Cities of Cohoes and Watervliet, and the Towns of Bethlehem and Colonie.

We still are working through the potential cost savings for this proposal.

Common countywide workforce database

A recommendation from the 2015 GEP, this would facilitate collaborative workforce management and improved succession planning among local governments and across the range of local government functions. This project is under way with financial support from the County but has been hampered by the lack of workforce data provided from some municipalities. If we could get better workforce data from the City of Albany and get data from Guilderland, the database could begin to be used to achieve its initial goals. It would be even better if all Albany County municipalities shared their current workforce data. This tool could generate savings of over a million dollars a year depending on how widely the database is used to identify employees willing to retire and work at other part-time jobs in Albany County government and its municipalities.

We still are working through the potential cost savings for this proposal.

Construct anaerobic digesters to turn waste into fuel

Currently, Albany County owns and operates two wastewater treatment facilities, designated North and South, which provide secondary treatment to the wastewater of eight communities in Albany County.

The North Plant, which treats waste originating from a portion of the cities of Albany, Cohoes, and Watervliet, parts of the towns of Colonie and Guilderland, and the villages of Colonie, Menands and Green Island, is located in Menands and is designed to treat an average daily flow of 35 Million Gallons Daily (MGD.)

The South Plant, which treats wastes for the City of Albany as well as the entire Port of Albany, is located in the Port of Albany and is designed to treat an average daily flow of 19 MGD, while it is permitted and effectively treats 29 MGD.

Presently, Albany County incinerates its sludge and disposes the waste in the City of Albany Landfill. Saratoga County incinerated bio-solids until 2016 when it was determined that its incinerators would require improvements to meet new emission guidelines. Saratoga County currently hauls its leftover waste to a landfill. A regional Anaerobic Digestion facility could generate cost savings, practically eliminate the incineration process, and save space at the landfills used by both counties. Anaerobic digesters turn waste into fuel, such as electricity.

Albany County officials evaluated installing an anaerobic digester facility at both water treatment plants last year, but determined the project would only provide an acceptable return if it was co-developed at the North Plant. They then discussed with Saratoga County the possibility of doing a joint project.

Both counties have approved a contract with Arcadis of Clifton Park to produce a feasibility study for the shared facility. The study is funded by a \$50,000 grant from the New York State Energy Research and Development Authority and \$25,000 from each county. The study will assess the existing infrastructure, evaluate data at the three plants, identify design criteria and funding sources, and help prepare a master plan and project schedule.

The facility itself could cost nearly \$26 million, but is expected to reduce sewer and water rates for residents of both counties because it would nearly eliminate the incineration process and lower transportation and dumping costs.

The Sherriff has also indicated support for use of an anaerobic digester for waste from the county jail.

We still are working through the potential cost savings for this proposal.

Create a regional SWAT team

There are [131 special weapons and tactics officers](#) in Albany and surrounding counties. There was support to further explore the creation of county-wide or regional Special Weapons and Tactics (SWAT) teams to improve coordination among the various law enforcement. SWAT teams respond to some of the most challenging and dangerous situations, and greater cooperation among law enforcement could improve response. We will work with the County, Sheriff, and other law enforcement agencies over the next several weeks to flesh out the proposal.

We still are working through the potential cost savings for this proposal.

State Legal and Regulatory Barriers to Shared Services

In our discussions with municipal leaders and school superintendents, a number of barriers to sharing services between municipalities and school districts were identified. These include:

- School districts cannot obtain power from solar facilities located outside school district boundaries. This makes it difficult for school districts in urban areas to take advantage of solar power. It also makes it impossible for solar collaborations between neighboring school districts and municipalities when economy of scale can result in greater energy cost savings.
- Under current state law and/or regulation only pooled health insurance arrangements created under Article 44 of the Insurance Law can cover municipal employers with under 50 employees without subjecting them to community rating, which increases their cost of insurance. This effectively denies small municipalities, who need the most help in keeping their health care costs down, the advantage of entering into health care consortiums which try to pool risk so that the pool can be experience rated rather than community rated.
- Under current state law and regulations a public sector health insurance brokerage like the New York Municipal Benefits Corporation cannot refund commissions to the municipalities and school districts that are part of their consortium. This has the effect of increasing the cost of health insurance to municipalities and school districts in a consortium Insurance Law §4224(c) should be amended to exempt public entities and entities wholly owned or controlled by public entities from the anti-rebating law. In addition, Education Law §1950 should be amended to expressly authorize a BOCES to create a subsidiary public benefits corporation.
- The property tax cap's adjustment for transfers of function (General Municipal Law Section 3-c (3)(d)), as currently interpreted by the State Comptroller's Office, has created a disincentive to shared service or functional consolidations. Any budget cut made by a local government counts towards meeting the property tax reduction target, unless that expense reduction is based on a transfer of function – in which case the amount saved by a partnering local government is subtracted from its tax cap levy limit. The local government gets no credit for having implemented such a change for the purposes of the tax cap. Layoffs, spending down reserves, or deferring maintenance all count for the purposes of the cap, but transfers of functions which truly reduce recurring expenditures do not.

This interpretation in implementation is a flaw, because the tax cap and the property tax freeze credit laws were intended to encourage transfers and/or consolidations of functions. In his policy document published in 2010, [THE NEW NY AGENDA: A PLAN FOR ACTION](#), Governor Andrew Cuomo made this intention clear when he wrote: "Exceptions or adjustments [to the property tax cap] would apply to consolidations of services (so that the cap would not

discourage a county or town from taking on consolidated services from other localities or special districts). In fact, the cap may well encourage cost saving consolidations, where existing arrangements prove to be too expensive for the new discipline” (p. 44).

Appendices

Appendix A. The Project Team

Jim Malatras, President of the Rockefeller Institute, led the project. Dr. Malatras held several high-ranking positions in New York State Government and is an expert in local governmental policy. Most recently, he served as Director of State Operations to Governor Andrew M. Cuomo, where he managed the day-to-day operation of state government and served as the Administration's point person on policy. In addition, he previously served as Deputy Secretary for Policy Management to Governor Cuomo and as Deputy Director of Policy on Governor Cuomo's successful campaign for Governor. Dr. Malatras also previously served as Executive Directive of Legislative Affairs and State Policy to Attorney General Cuomo and Legislative Director to former Assemblyman and current RIG Board member, Richard L. Brodsky, who chaired the Environmental Conservation and Corporations, Authorities and Commissions Committees in the New York State Assembly.

Thomas Cetrino, of the Benjamin Center, advised on the project. Mr. Cetrino graduated from SUNY New Paltz in 1973 with a BA in Political Science and continued his education at SUNY Albany where he earned a MA in Criminal Justice. He has worked in several different leadership positions in the NY State Division of Criminal Justice Services, the Office of New York State Senate Minority Leader and the New York State Public Employees Federation. His work has led to the enactment of several laws including the establishment of the Community Dispute Resolution program within the Office of Court Administration and the Contract Disclosure Law of 2001.

Mr. Cetrino is currently a member of SUNY New Paltz's Benjamin Center Advisory Board and serves as a research consultant on many of the Center's local government projects. He recently was the chief staff researcher and writer in assisting Albany County in the development of its 2015 Government Efficiency Plan.

Gerald Benjamin, Director of the Benjamin Center, advised on the project. Dr. Benjamin is one of the foremost experts on local government policy. He previously served as Director of the Center for the New York State and Local Government Studies at SUNY's Rockefeller Institute of Government in Albany. While in that post, between May of 1993 and March of 1995, Dr. Benjamin served as Research Director of the Temporary State Commission on Constitutional Revision appointed by Governor Mario Cuomo. Earlier he was Principal Research Advisor to a New York City Charter Revision Commission that achieved the most extensive structural changes in the government of that city in recent history. Between 2004 and 2006, by unanimous bipartisan action of the county legislature, Benjamin was appointed to chair the Ulster County Charter Commission. The work of this commission resulted in approval at the polls of the county's first charter. That charter went into effect in January of 2009. In 2007 Associate Vice President Benjamin was appointed by Governor Spitzer to the State Commission on Local Government Efficiency and Competitiveness that in 2008 proposed wide-reaching reforms in local government in New York State.

Between 1981 and 1993 Gerald Benjamin was an elected member of the Ulster County legislature. He served in legislative leadership as both Majority Leader (1985-91) and Chairman (1991-93). Ulster County during this time has no elected executive; the legislative chairman was therefore the County's Chief Elected Officer. Under his leadership the Benjamin Center has provided studies on government restructuring, redistricting and intergovernmental collaboration for counties, cities, towns and villages in the Hudson Valley and elsewhere in New York State.

Urška Klančnik is a Research Scholar at the Rockefeller Institute of Government. She holds a M.A. in Intercultural Communication and European Studies from Hochschule Fulda – University of Applied Sciences, Germany, and a B.A. in English and American Studies from University of Salzburg, Austria. In the course of her bachelor studies, she spent a year at the Bowling Green State University, Ohio as an exchange student.

Michael Quintman is a Research Assistant at the Benjamin Center. Michael graduated with a BA in Political Science and History from New Paltz in May.

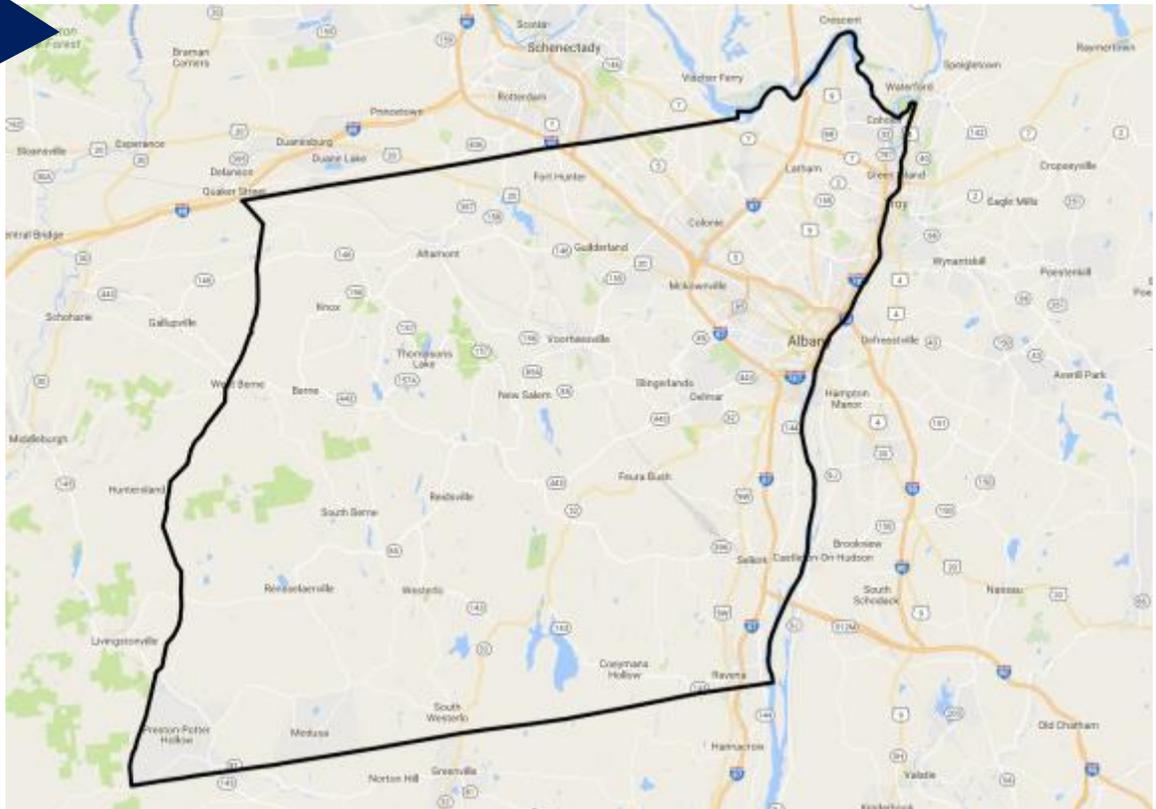
Michael Hattery, Director of Local Government Studies for the Rockefeller Institute, worked with Dr. Malatras on the overall management and completion of the final plan. Dr. Hattery has a range of experience as a student of state and local government in New York. He has conducted applied research, community-based technical assistance and developed educational programs for state and local officials. His research interests are centered in the areas of public finance, local government organization and service delivery. Dr. Hattery has also worked in the areas of management capacity building and the analysis of intergovernmental service delivery options — particularly among smaller governments in New York's nonmetropolitan regions. He has served as an elected governing board member for village, town and county government.

Appendix B.

Albany County Municipal Boundaries

Albany County has 3 cities, 10 towns, 6 villages, 12 school districts, 20 fire districts and 53 special town-run districts (lighting, sewer, etc.). The map shows the geographic overviews of the various municipalities and schools districts. The total population of Albany County is 309,381 with 147,116 full-year resident taxpayers.

**Figure 1.
County
Boundary**



**Figure 2.
County, Town, City,
and Village
Boundaries**

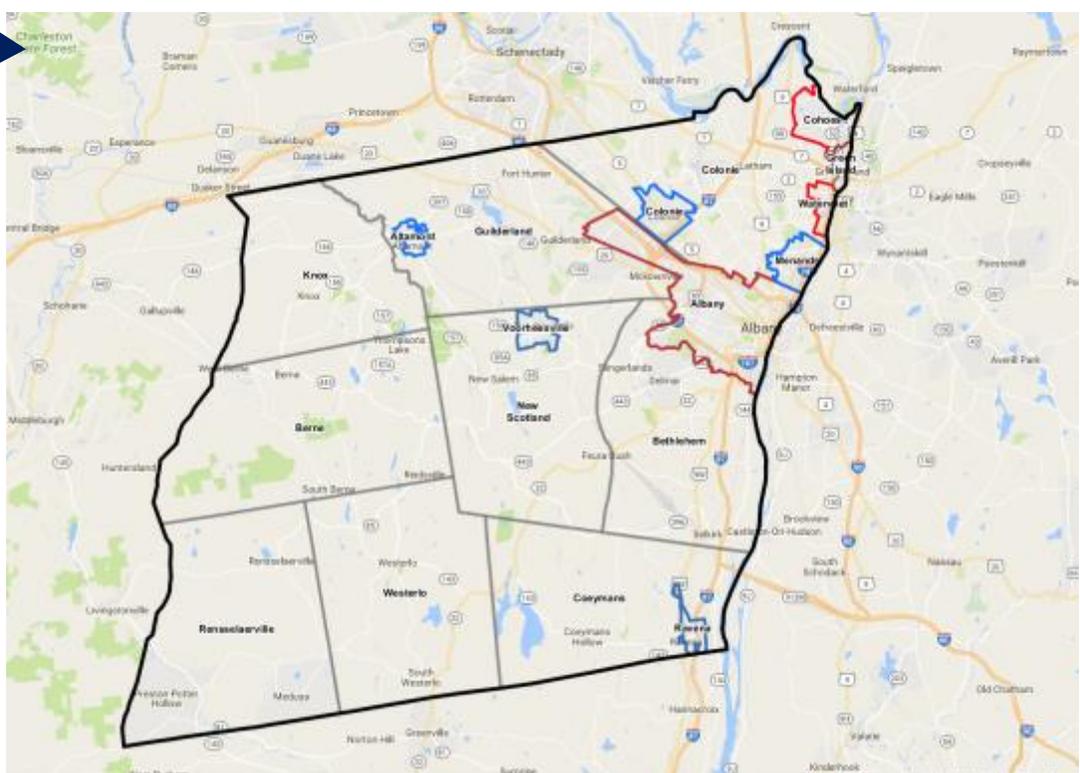


Figure 3.
County,
Town, City,
and Village
Boundaries

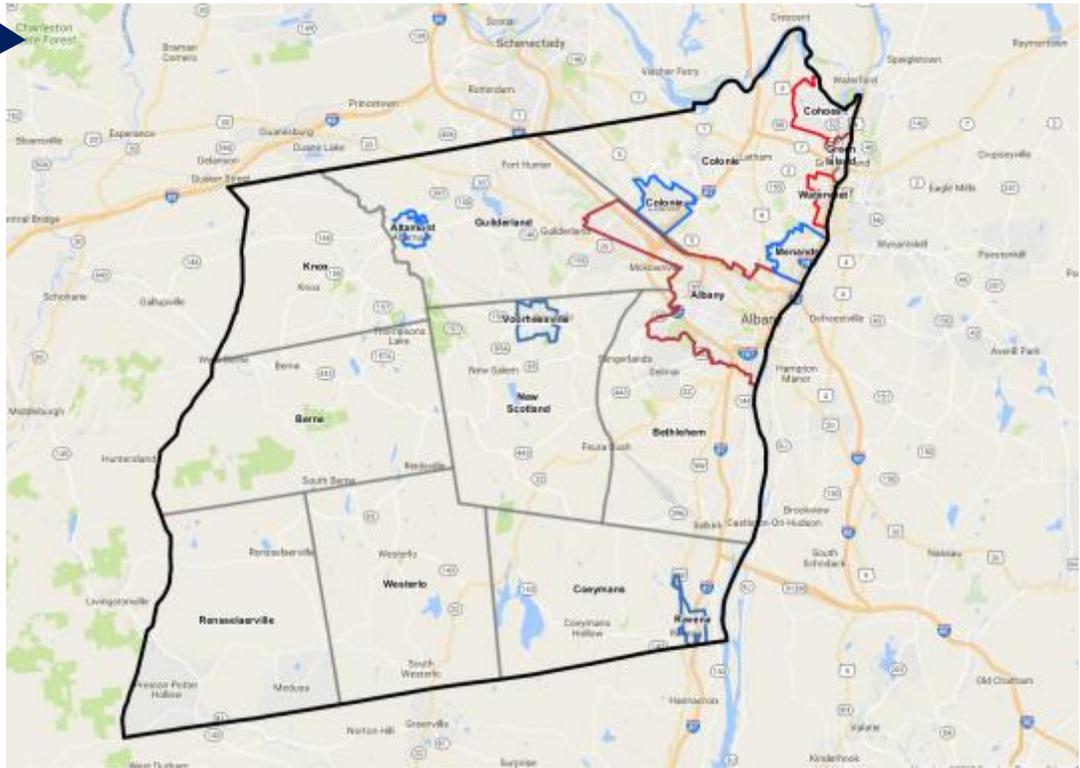
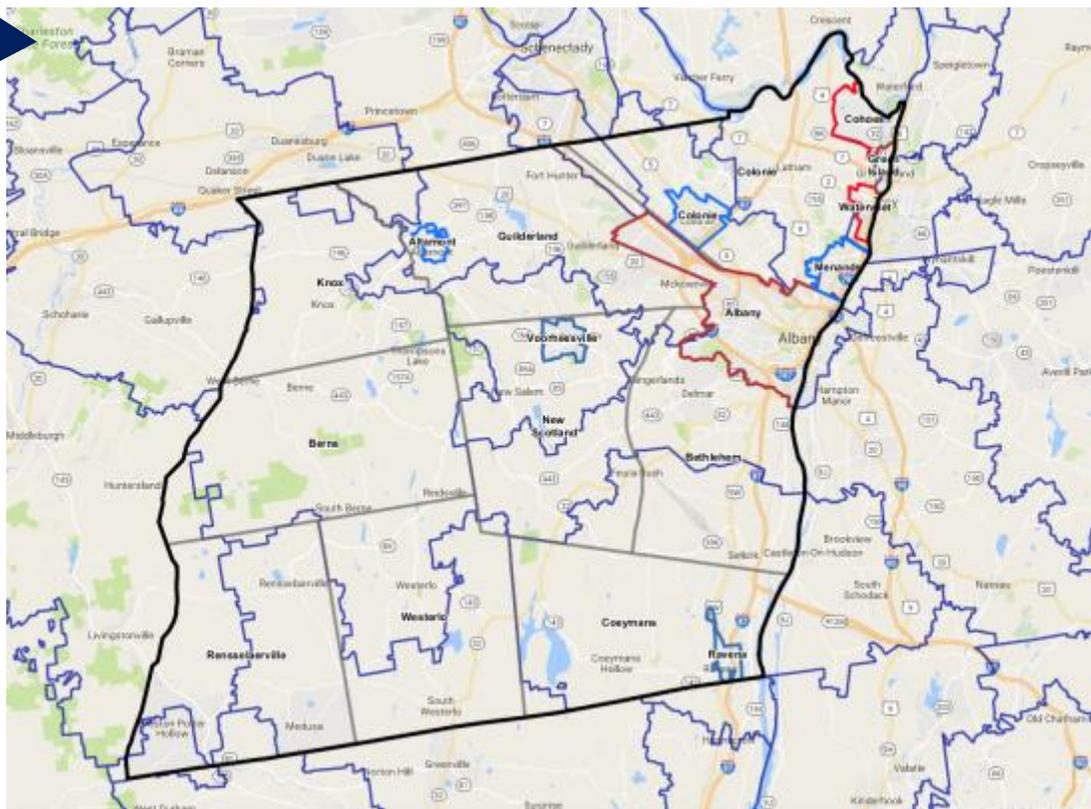


Figure 4.
County,
Town, City,
Village,
and School
District
Boundaries



Appendix C. Total Budgets

The team reviewed latest available budget documents and received latest budget information from some of the municipalities within the county. To provide the reader a general snapshot of the report, below is the latest budget information found on the New York State Office of the Comptroller website (reporting is on a lag). There will be an update in the final report.

Fiscal Year 2015				DEBT	REVENUES		EXPENDITURES BY OBJECT	
Municipal Name	Population	Land Area (Sq. Mi.)	Full Value	Total Debt Outstanding	Local Revenues Subtotal	Total Revenues	Subtotal	Total Expenditures
Albany County Total	304,204	522.8	\$23,355,554,809	\$994,126,600	\$1,381,796,031	\$1,859,829,663	\$1,679,002,039	\$1,914,534,828
County of Albany	304,204	522.8	\$23,355,554,809	\$258,476,824	\$462,237,365	\$598,724,931	\$560,190,144	\$601,447,260
Albany Cities	124,278	26.6	\$5,465,832,723	\$143,196,512	\$173,970,080	\$211,267,639	\$185,848,227	\$233,685,897
Albany Towns	179,926	496.3	\$17,939,030,603	\$147,793,558	\$181,703,697	\$199,177,832	\$173,497,675	\$210,210,000
Albany Villages	22,180	11.9	\$1,838,455,776	\$11,818,210	\$24,360,656	\$25,837,925	\$24,202,688	\$26,493,554
Albany School Districts	--	--	\$23,480,262,614	\$408,805,425	\$524,318,529	\$809,614,133	\$727,165,519	\$823,893,453
Albany Fire Districts	--	--	--	\$24,036,071	\$15,205,704	\$15,207,204	\$8,097,786	\$18,804,664

Fiscal Year 2015					REVENUES			EXPENDITURES	
Municipal Name	Population	Land Area (Sq. Mi.)	Full Value	Total Debt Outstanding at End of FY	Local Revenues	Total Revenues	Total Revenues and Other Sources	Total Expenditures	Total Expenditures and Other Uses
City of Albany	97,856	21.4	\$4,343,508,878	\$121,690,299	\$141,428,858	\$172,932,421	\$185,154,784	\$191,940,331	\$191,975,694
City of Cohoes	16,168	3.8	\$739,883,406	\$12,871,351	\$18,971,474	\$22,854,316	\$24,945,356	\$25,153,321	\$25,519,361
City of Watervliet	10,254	1.4	\$382,440,439	\$8,634,862	\$13,569,747	\$15,480,901	\$17,735,807	\$16,592,245	\$18,847,151

Fiscal Year 2015					REVENUES			EXPENDITURES	
Municipal Name	Population	Land Area (Sq. Mi.)	Full Value	Total Debt at End of FY	Local Revenues	Total Revenues	Total Revenues and Other Sources	Total Expenditures	Total Expenditures and Other Uses
Town of Berne	2,794	64.0	\$258,321,352	\$1,097,103	\$2,058,108	\$2,529,253	\$2,810,788	\$2,802,153	\$2,810,753
Town of Bethlehem	33,656	49.0	\$3,605,084,892	\$21,180,233	\$38,236,376	\$43,098,250	\$50,842,515	\$46,503,995	\$47,855,065
Town of Coeymans	7,418	50.1	\$494,277,201	\$1,753,756	\$4,810,807	\$5,690,906	\$7,940,808	\$5,583,836	\$7,037,762
Town of Colonie	81,591	55.9	\$8,379,348,822	\$98,797,078	\$94,693,338	\$101,629,892	\$105,588,950	\$108,199,780	\$111,299,780
Town of Green Island	2,620	0.8	\$159,799,707	\$0	\$301,187	\$356,341	\$356,341	\$244,516	\$244,516
Town of Guilderland	35,303	57.9	\$3,389,128,553	\$17,772,966	\$30,108,753	\$32,783,795	\$33,926,770	\$31,672,693	\$32,753,938
Town of Knox	2,692	41.8	\$217,444,882	\$559,981	\$1,511,299	\$1,711,174	\$1,794,829	\$1,459,718	\$1,463,374
Town of New Scotland	8,648	57.5	\$931,237,946	\$4,890,498	\$5,449,989	\$6,304,675	\$7,923,238	\$8,960,259	\$10,439,880
Town of Rensselaerville	1,843	61.5	\$226,551,942	\$792,243	\$2,073,767	\$2,323,820	\$2,373,820	\$2,328,369	\$2,328,369
Town of Westerlo	3,361	57.8	\$277,835,306	\$949,700	\$2,585,074	\$2,749,726	\$2,838,037	\$2,454,681	\$2,542,992

Fiscal Year End 5/31/2016					REVENUES			EXPENDITURES	
Municipal Name	Population	Land Area (Sq. Mi.)	Full Value	Total Debt Outstanding at End of FY	Local Revenues	Total Revenues	Total Revenues and Other Sources	Total Expenditures	Total Expenditures and Other Uses
Village of Altamont	1,720	1.2	\$111,780,376	\$4,180,000	\$1,955,568	\$1,998,102	\$1,998,102	\$1,837,158	\$1,837,158
Village of Colonie	7,793	3.2	\$788,341,178	\$0	\$7,023,650	\$7,447,031	\$7,447,036	\$7,531,135	\$7,531,140
Village of Green Island	2,620	0.8	\$165,828,318	\$975,000	\$4,609,223	\$5,147,887	\$5,287,939	\$5,388,913	\$5,528,965
Village of Menands	3,990	3.1	\$440,783,318	\$3,870,000	\$5,717,109	\$5,881,799	\$7,181,799	\$7,098,610	\$7,098,611
Village of Ravena	3,268	1.5	\$164,905,440	\$1,326,280	\$2,893,874	\$3,040,367	\$3,744,079	\$3,038,880	\$3,092,592
Village of Voorheesville	2,789	2.1	\$232,157,751	\$2,765,000	\$2,084,550	\$2,208,288	\$2,208,288	\$1,881,674	\$1,881,674

Fiscal Year End 6/30/2016					REVENUES			EXPENDITURES	
Municipal Name	District Type	Enrollment	Full Value	Total Debt Outstanding at End of FY	Local Revenues	Total Revenues	Total Revenues and Other Sources	Total Expenditures	Total Expenditures and Other Uses
Albany City School District	City Public School	11,577	\$4,582,236,153	\$125,837,244	\$140,319,592	\$252,501,864	\$322,742,145	\$243,624,198	\$258,414,479
Berne-Knox-Westerlo Central School District	Central	785	\$552,663,627	\$11,588,503	\$11,755,012	\$21,847,857	\$22,316,291	\$21,999,377	\$22,200,811
Bethlehem Central School District	Independent Superintendent	4,607	\$3,043,692,934	\$73,791,208	\$75,522,969	\$104,516,847	\$129,540,340	\$104,261,697	\$105,144,982
Cohoes City School District	City Public School	1,861	\$751,442,955	\$26,645,002	\$17,587,199	\$41,813,805	\$42,362,977	\$41,788,668	\$42,337,840
Green Island Union Free School District	Independent Superintendent	319	\$166,662,442	\$10,575,000	\$3,711,671	\$7,133,874	\$12,494,160	\$7,134,344	\$7,398,737
Guiderland Central School District	Independent Superintendent	4,860	\$3,507,680,208	\$42,494,740	\$72,617,646	\$99,304,772	\$111,867,510	\$105,964,411	\$106,235,089
Menands Union Free School District	Union Free	254	\$362,005,681	\$1,120,000	\$6,530,275	\$7,808,082	\$7,844,750	\$7,776,992	\$7,813,660
North Colonie Central School District	Independent Superintendent	5,511	\$4,632,169,301	\$18,909,995	\$83,748,667	\$106,936,679	\$111,180,752	\$105,441,613	\$108,825,691
Ravena-Coeymans-Selkirk Central School District	Independent Superintendent	1,787	\$1,265,598,641	\$8,168,112	\$27,171,385	\$45,029,873	\$45,874,185	\$46,547,889	\$47,198,054
South Colonie Central School District	Independent Superintendent	4,734	\$3,809,618,738	\$23,037,598	\$74,318,369	\$101,621,403	\$102,644,683	\$98,685,088	\$99,200,088
Voorheesville Central School District	Independent Superintendent	1,160	\$865,687,523	\$8,163,274	\$17,465,928	\$23,821,771	\$24,233,577	\$23,362,001	\$23,546,086
Watervliet City School District	City Public School	1,260	\$456,330,262	\$36,945,000	\$7,757,755	\$28,097,960	\$28,852,552	\$27,915,652	\$28,670,245

Fiscal Year 2015		REVENUES			EXPENDITURES	
Municipal Name	Total Debt Outstanding at End of FY	Local Revenues	Total Revenues	Total Revenues and Other Sources	Total Expenditures	Total Expenditures and Other Uses
Berne Fire District	\$128,971	\$362,128	\$363,628	\$363,628	\$299,849	\$299,849
Boght Community Fire District	\$5,030,000	\$1,195,956	\$1,195,956	\$1,195,956	\$1,015,095	\$1,015,095
Coeymans Fire District	\$1,488,120	\$413,618	\$413,618	\$1,708,618	\$660,864	\$660,864
Coeymans Hollow Fire District	\$2,809,825	\$922,595	\$922,595	\$3,802,595	\$3,429,838	\$3,459,838
Delmar Fire District	\$400,000	\$941,126	\$941,126	\$1,411,126	\$1,484,474	\$1,484,474
Elmwood Park Fire District	\$670,000	\$611,456	\$611,456	\$611,456	\$451,810	\$451,810
Elsmere Fire District	\$465,000	\$1,078,698	\$1,078,698	\$1,078,698	\$1,175,807	\$1,175,807
Fort Hunter Fire District	\$1,040,000	\$874,253	\$874,253	\$874,253	\$801,171	\$801,171
Guilderland Center Fire District	\$0	\$587,665	\$587,665	\$587,665	\$271,285	\$271,285
Guilderland Fire District	\$3,820,000	\$825,630	\$825,630	\$867,938	\$2,086,072	\$2,128,380
Knox Fire District	\$0	\$273,573	\$273,573	\$369,573	\$391,807	\$487,807
Mckownville Fire District	\$295,000	\$333,097	\$333,097	\$543,097	\$816,621	\$1,026,621
Midway Fire District	\$0	\$969,913	\$969,913	\$969,913	\$1,236,622	\$1,236,622
Schuyler Heights Fire District	\$506,800	\$555,413	\$555,413	\$555,413	\$585,604	\$585,604
Selkirk Fire District	\$0	\$1,093,628	\$1,093,628	\$1,093,628	\$873,194	\$873,194
Slingerlands Fire District	\$1,600,000	\$574,183	\$574,183	\$574,183	\$502,529	\$502,529
Stanford Heights Fire District	\$0	\$864,919	\$864,919	\$864,919	\$574,691	\$574,691
Verdoy Fire District	\$504,880	\$1,003,765	\$1,003,765	\$1,003,765	\$924,071	\$924,071
West Albany Fire District	\$352,475	\$614,433	\$614,433	\$614,433	\$362,226	\$362,226
Westmere Fire District	\$4,925,000	\$1,109,656	\$1,109,656	\$6,157,846	\$861,034	\$864,224

Appendix D. The Process

- **Draft Savings Plan Submission to County Legislature.** On August 1, 2017, we are required to present the County Legislature with a draft Savings Plan.
- **Public Hearings.** The law requires three public hearings prior to September 15, 2017.
 - On July 31, 2017, the County Executive held the first public hearing in the Cahill Room of the Albany County Office Building at 2PM in order to gather input from the public in preparation of the draft plan.
 - A second public hearing will be held on August 7 at 5:30PM at the Crossings in Colonie to review the draft plan.
 - A third public hearing will be held on August 8 at 5:30PM in the Bethlehem Town hall to review the draft plan.

The law does not require the public hearings to be held before the panel. However, the Department of State Guidance document strongly encourages all panel members to participate in each public hearing.

- **County Legislature Review of Draft Plan.** After the County Executive submits a draft plan on behalf of the panel, the County Legislature shall “review and consider the county-wide Shared Services Plan.” There is no other mandatory requirement of the County Legislature though they *may* by majority vote issue an “advisory report” making recommendations as deemed necessary. If the County Legislature does submit a report, there is no legal requirement that the County Executive or panel incorporate those findings.
- **Modification of Draft Plan by the County Executive.** The law does authorize the County Executive to modify the Plan based upon such recommendations prior to the submission of the Final Plan to the Shared Services Panel for a final vote.
- **Adoption of Final Plan.** The vote on the Final Plan must be held before September 15, 2017 and the plan must be concurrently submitted to the New York State Division of Budget by the County Executive.
- **Public Notification of Final Adopted Plan.** If the Plan is approved by September 15, 2017, then the County Executive shall publicly disseminate it and hold a public presentation on it by October 15, 2017.

Roles of Municipal Elected Officials

- **Local Opt Out.** Before the final vote by the Shared Services panel (Panel), members may opt out of any action in the draft Shared Services Plan that would impact their county, city, town, village, school district, BOCES, or special improvement district. Written notice of opting out of a shared services option must be provided to the County Executive. However, if such action includes multiple other units of local government, the action can still go forward for other members of the Panel who have not opted out.

- **Role of Municipal Legislative Boards.** The Shared Services Property Tax Savings law does not provide for a specific role for Town and Village Boards or City Councils in the development of the Shared Services Plan. The chief executive of a city, town, village, or school district is empowered and authorized by state law to determine if their community should opt out of a plan option and to vote for or against a plan.

There may be circumstances where local officials are bound by their governing documents, like a local government charter, to follow certain protocols before they can take an action on behalf of the local government. In such circumstances, it is the duty and power of a municipal official who is serving on the Shared Services Panel to determine such application based upon the governing documents that are applicable to such municipality or school district.

It should be noted, however, that implementation of the Panel-approved shared services contained in the Plan are NOT binding on municipalities and their elected boards. All applicable legal prerequisites to the implementation of any action or component of an action contained within a final, approved Plan must be satisfied in order for that action or component of an action to properly take effect in any municipality or school district.

Endnotes

- 1 A handful of municipalities chose not to participate at this time.
- 2 Most municipalities expressed interest in a centralized shared equipment plan, with the exception of a few, like Village of Colonie. This methodology used to get the initial estimate was based upon a percentage of the total purchase price of several of the pieces of equipment need by municipalities (e.g. paver approximately \$28,000) cross-walked to the same equipment made available by another municipality. We only factored what was provided, and given there are outstanding information requests pending, the savings could be more significant.
Moreover, over time there may be costs associated with shared equipment savings that would have to be analyzed (e.g. maintenance, usage fees).
- 3 Although many municipalities and schools expressed interest, we note there were a handful that were not, including Village of Colonie, Menands School District, Bethlehem School District, Green Island, Voorheesville School District, City of Cohoes, Town of Colonie, and Village of Altamont.
The savings methodology used was a rough estimate of services that municipalities said they would be open to sharing. For example, the Town of Bethlehem will likely have an issue with animal control soon and if that was shared that is potentially a \$50,000 savings to the Town (subject to an established fee and/or arrangement with another municipality).
- 4 We arrived at the savings estimate by taking the total cost of services like IT, fuel, and the like provided by municipalities and school districts (less than half) and projected an additional 10 percent savings through greater centralization of contracts. The cost would likely be greater when each municipality and school district submits their data to the team.
- 5 We arrived at the savings estimate by taking the total maintenance costs provided by municipalities and school districts that provided information (less than half) and estimated a very conservative 4 percent reduction in their overall costs.
- 6 The savings estimate does not include the savings from the Voorheesville School District will realize by renting the County's New Scotland facility.
- 7 The Supervisor said this would reduce 18 percent of their overall spending. This is how this savings was calculated.
- 8 This is a rough estimate based upon contractual service prices. This still needs to be developed further.
- 9 We estimated a 10 percent overall reduction in energy costs for those interested municipalities. Some municipalities did not provide their electric costs to us in time for the draft report. In those cases, we estimated their total cost of electricity based upon existing budget documents or costs from similar municipalities. The CCA proposal alone could save up to 20 percent on electricity costs. See Matt Coyne, "Westchester communities join to seek lower energy bills" (May 16, 2015) at <http://www.lohud.com/story/news/local/westchester/2015/05/16/community-choice-aggregation-energy-savings/27443009/>. LED lighting conversion alone could result in

even greater savings so we believe a 10 percent overall cost reduction is a conservative and reasonable estimate. More savings is likely.