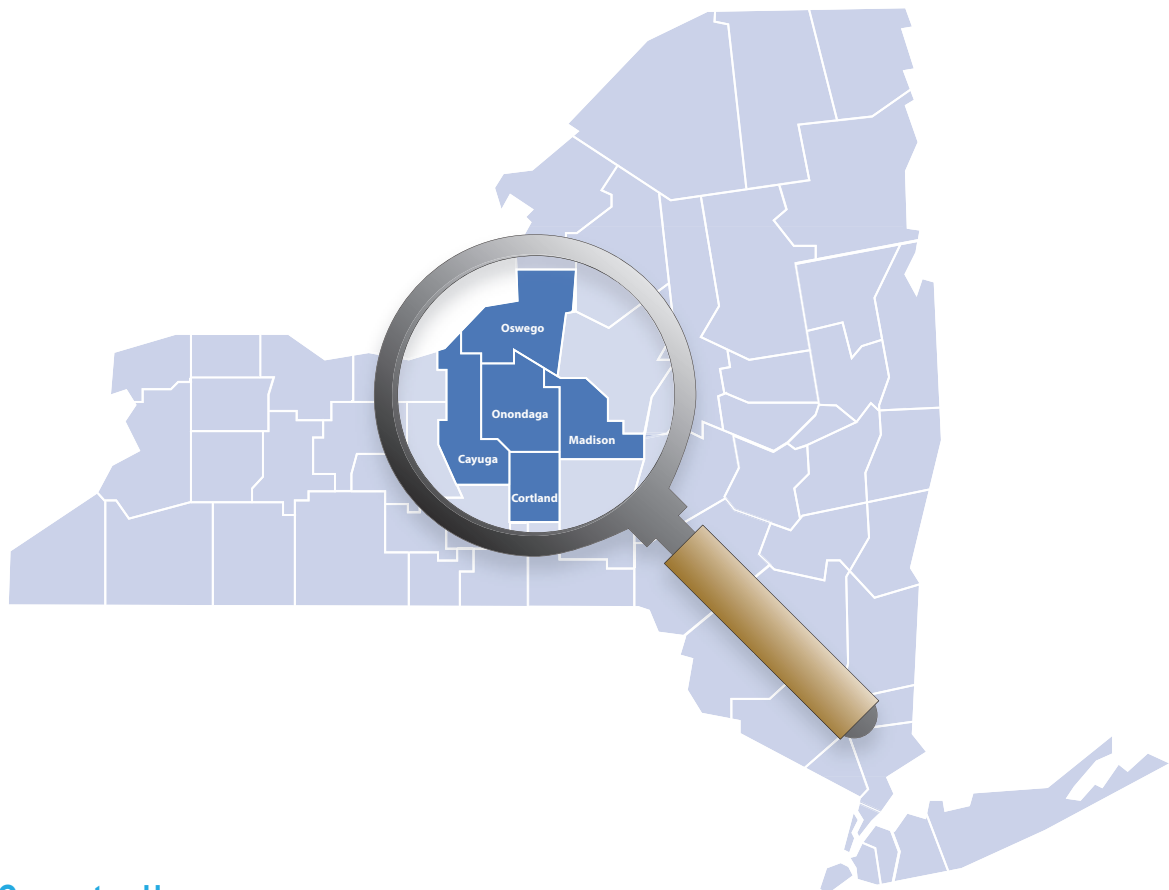


Office of the NEW YORK STATE

**COMPTROLLER**

# Special Report: Central New York Region Economic Profile

---



NYS Comptroller

**THOMAS P. DiNAPOLI**

NOVEMBER 2016

# Overview

The Central New York region includes Cayuga, Cortland, Madison, Onondaga and Oswego counties. Urban development is centered in and near the City of Syracuse – primarily in Onondaga County – with five small cities in the other counties, which are otherwise mostly rural.

Starting in the early 19th century, the region’s economy grew up around the Erie Canal, a major route from the Atlantic coast to the American interior. Central New York has a long history as an industrial and agricultural powerhouse and is home to several nationally regarded institutions of higher education and health care.

Unemployment rates have dropped from the levels of the recent recession, and there is growth in certain sectors of the economy. However, the region also faces challenges, including the downsizing or loss of some industrial anchors and – like developed areas across the State and nation – an aging infrastructure. Various economic development efforts are underway to promote growth. Updating the extensive infrastructure, which served this economy well for many decades, is part of the revitalization plan. The area also has a wealth of locally educated young adults, a technically experienced workforce and a relatively low cost of living.

## Highlights

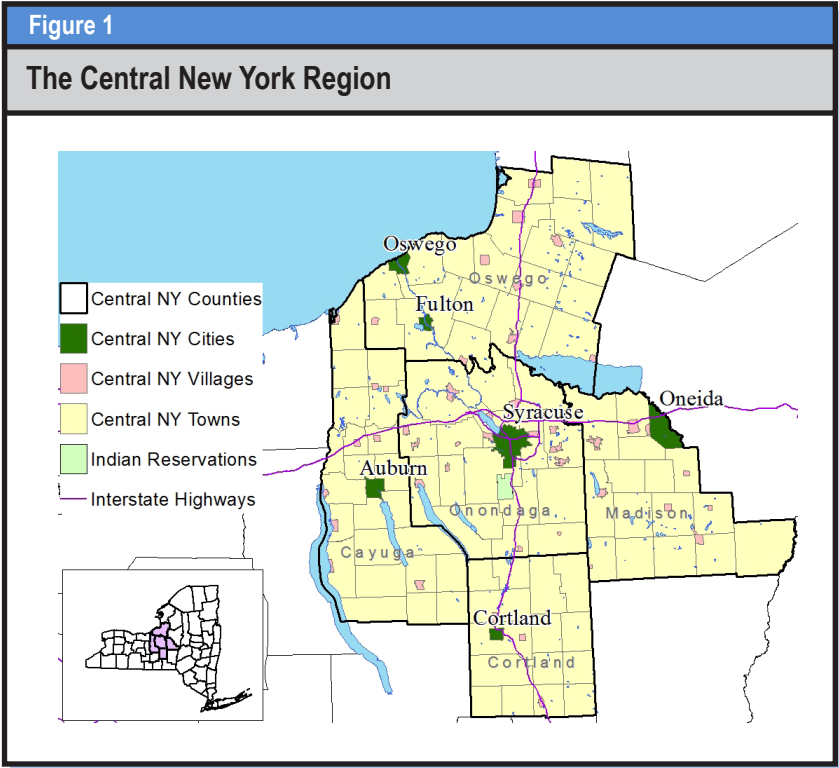
- **Central New York’s population was nearly 790,000 in 2015 and has been stable for several decades.**
- **The region has a low cost of living and especially low housing costs.**
- **Major employers include several universities and hospitals.**
- **Expanding employment in a few specific industries — electrical equipment, appliance and component manufacturing, up over 46 percent from 2009 to 2014, and in food manufacturing — has partially offset the decline in other manufacturing industries.**
- **Local leaders are focusing their economic development strategies to maximize education, transportation and natural resource advantages.**
- **Upgrading highways and water systems is another major undertaking for local and state leaders.**
- **The local economy has been recovering from the recent recession. The unemployment rate in most of the region remains above the State rate and pockets of poverty remain in both cities and rural areas.**
- **Only 12 of the 199 local governments are in some level of fiscal stress.**

# Geography

Central New York covers the geographical center of the State – near the crossroads of Pratts Hollow in Madison County.<sup>1</sup> The New York State Thruway (Interstate 90) runs through the middle, closely tracking the Erie Canal, with Interstate 81, the main north-south route, crossing the Thruway near Syracuse.

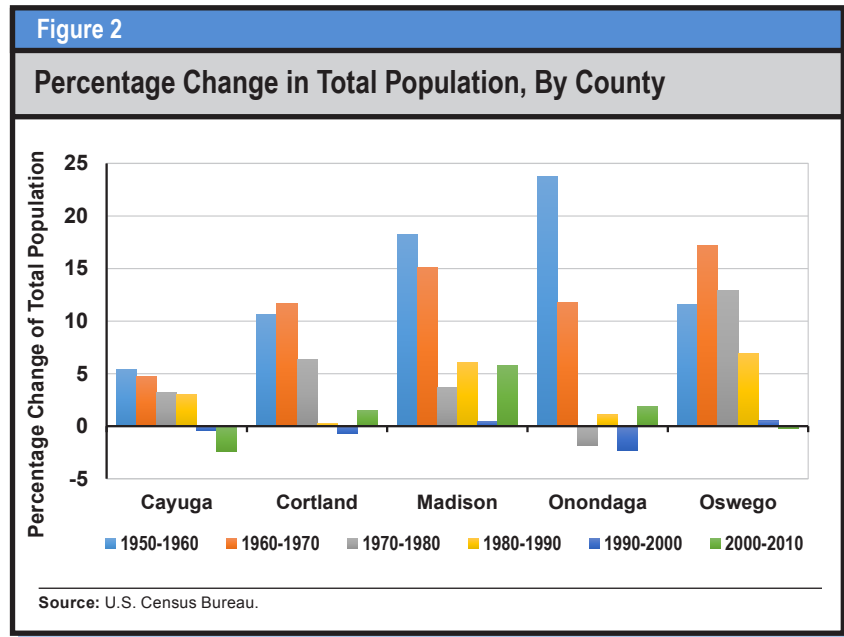
The City of Syracuse and its suburbs occupy much of Onondaga County, with some suburbs reaching into southern Oswego County. Aside from developed areas in and around small cities and villages, most of the rest of the region is rural and largely agricultural.

The region is bounded by Lake Ontario to the northwest and contains many other lakes, including part of Oneida Lake in Oswego County, Cazenovia Lake in Madison County, Onondaga Lake in Onondaga County, and the four eastern-most Finger Lakes spanning southern Onondaga and Cayuga counties. There are also many rivers as well as smaller lakes and ponds. The abundance of water was key in the establishment of the Erie Canal, as well as the region’s growth in the 19th and 20th centuries. Water resources continue to be an economic asset today.<sup>2</sup>

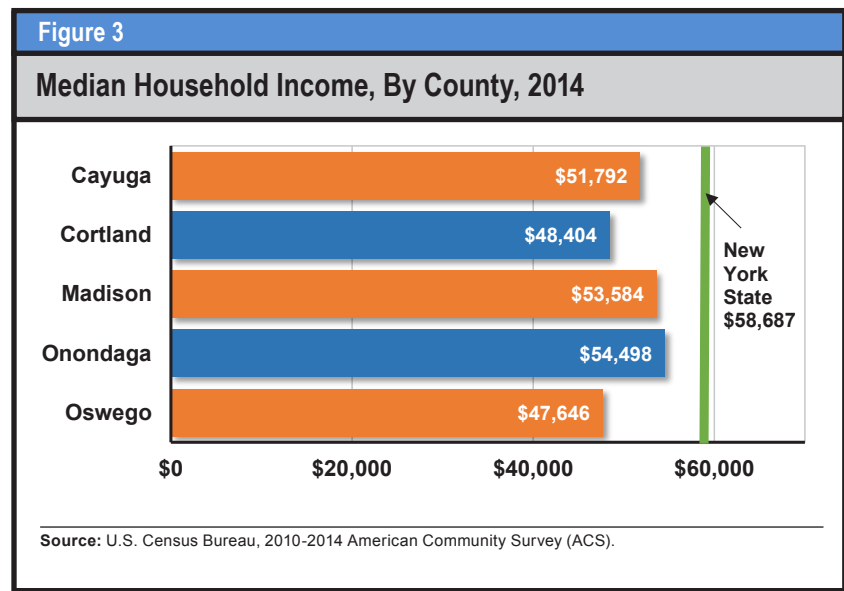


# Demographics

Central New York’s estimated population was 787,240 in 2015, concentrated in Onondaga County (468,463). Following rapid growth after World War II through 1970, the population has been largely unchanged for over a generation, growing by 4.2 percent over the four decades between 1970 and 2010. While Onondaga County lost population during that time, the other four counties grew, though the gains in Cayuga and Cortland Counties were small. Based on 2015 estimates, total population has declined 0.6 percent in the past five years.<sup>3</sup>



Median household income in each of the five counties is below the State median, consistent with the generally lower median incomes in upstate New York compared to downstate.<sup>4</sup> Onondaga County households rank the highest at \$54,498, but the medians are relatively close for the five counties. The lower income levels are somewhat offset by the relatively low cost of living, including lower-than-average housing costs, making Central New York among the more affordable places to live.<sup>5</sup>



Only 25 to 29 percent of homeowners spend more than 30 percent of their income on housing, compared with 39 percent statewide.<sup>6</sup>

The percentage of people with bachelor's degrees or higher is relatively low, despite the presence of several large universities and colleges. Only Onondaga County approaches the statewide rate of about one-third of residents with bachelor's degrees, while the other counties range from 17.7 percent to 27.2 percent, and some cities and towns are lower still. The region is educating a large number of students, with Syracuse University and the State University of New York campuses in Cortland and Oswego awarding almost 10,000 degrees annually, and the many other colleges and universities adding to this number.<sup>7</sup> Central New York leaders are trying to find ways to retain more of these graduates.

With the exception of Syracuse, the area's population is much less diverse than the State as a whole. Indeed, the white non-Hispanic population exceeds 90 percent in every county except Onondaga.

**Figure 4**

**Demographic Indicators, Central NY Region Counties**

	New York State	Cayuga	Cortland	Madison	Onondaga	Oswego
Population (2015)*	19,795,791	78,288	48,494	71,849	468,463	120,146
Population growth 2000-2010**	2.1%	-2.4%	1.5%	5.8%	1.9%	-0.2%
Population growth 2010-2015*	2.2%	-2.2%	-1.7%	-2.2%	0.3%	-1.6%
Area (square miles of land area)	47,126	692	499	655	778	952
Persons per square mile*	420	113	97	110	602	126
Median age	38.1	42.3	36.0	40.1	38.7	38.9
White persons	65.0%	92.4%	93.9%	94.9%	80.7%	95.7%
Black persons	15.6%	4.2%	1.9%	2.1%	11.0%	0.9%
Asian persons	7.8%	0.6%	0.7%	0.8%	3.5%	0.6%
Persons reporting two or more races	2.8%	1.9%	2.3%	1.4%	3.0%	1.7%
Persons of Hispanic or Latino origin	18.2%	2.6%	2.5%	1.9%	4.3%	2.2%
White persons not Hispanic	57.3%	91.0%	92.9%	93.7%	78.4%	94.7%
Foreign-born persons	22.3%	2.3%	1.9%	2.1%	7.2%	1.9%
Languages other than English spoken at home	30.2%	4.6%	3.9%	3.7%	10.3%	4.0%
Median household income	\$58,687	\$51,792	\$48,404	\$53,584	\$54,498	\$47,646
Bachelor's degree or higher	33.7%	20.2%	22.7%	27.2%	33.5%	17.7%
Owner-occupied housing units	53.8%	72.0%	66.1%	75.6%	65.2%	72.2%
Housing units in multi-unit structures	50.7%	19.7%	28.4%	17.3%	32.2%	16.6%
Persons per household, average	2.62	2.44	2.53	2.55	2.43	2.57
Median value of owner-occupied housing units	\$283,700	\$109,000	\$105,200	\$122,400	\$134,200	\$92,900
Owner costs exceeding 30% of income	39.3%	27.2%	25.4%	28.8%	25.1%	27.5%
Renters costs exceeding 30% of income	53.9%	46.0%	44.6%	42.7%	50.3%	55.0%
Child poverty rate	22.1%	18.2%	13.9%	16.2%	22.0%	27.5%

**Source:** U.S. Census Bureau; all data is from the 2010-2014 American Community Survey, except as indicated.  
 \* 2015 Population Estimates  
 \*\* 2000 and 2010 Censuses

## Central New York Cities and Towns

There are six cities in Central New York. Syracuse, with a population of over 140,000, is by far the largest. Auburn, at less than 27,000, is a distant second, and the remaining four are smaller than eight suburban towns surrounding Syracuse that have populations of over 20,000.

Child poverty rates in Syracuse (50.0 percent) and Fulton (44.4 percent) are notably higher than the State rate of 22.1 percent, but rates outside of these cities are not unusually high. Rates in some of the smaller cities are lower than the statewide rate – for example, in the City of Cortland, it is 18.1 percent. As is typical across the State, median household incomes were lower in the cities than at the county level.

Syracuse is more diverse than any other city or town in the region, with relatively large African American, Hispanic and foreign-born populations. Two resettlement agencies in Syracuse assist refugees from many parts of the world, and in 2014, Onondaga County took in 1,112 of the 4,050 refugees resettled in New York State.<sup>8</sup>

Figure 5						
Demographic Indicators, Central NY Region Cities						
	Auburn	Cortland	Fulton	Oneida	Oswego	Syracuse
Population*	26,985	18,907	11,552	11,134	17,787	144,142
Population growth 2000-2010**	-3.1%	2.5%	0.3%	3.7%	1.0%	-1.5%
Population growth 2010-2015*	-2.5%	-1.5%	-2.9%	-2.3%	-2.0%	-0.7%
Persons per square mile*	3,236	4,860	3,081	505	2,337	5,756
Median age	40.1	26.7	35.0	40.7	36.3	29.7
White persons	85.4%	91.4%	94.1%	94.7%	92.3%	55.3%
Black persons	9.2%	3.9%	0.4%	1.3%	2.2%	29.5%
Asian persons	0.9%	0.6%	0.7%	1.0%	1.0%	6.4%
Persons reporting two or more races	3.1%	2.2%	1.6%	0.7%	2.5%	5.2%
Persons of Hispanic or Latino origin	3.7%	3.7%	5.7%	3.1%	4.2%	8.0%
White persons not Hispanic	83.3%	90.0%	92.5%	92.9%	89.9%	51.8%
Foreign-born persons	3.1%	2.0%	2.7%	3.0%	2.6%	11.8%
Languages other than English spoken at home	7.4%	4.8%	5.8%	4.9%	5.8%	18.2%
Median household income	\$38,399	\$40,229	\$34,856	\$46,958	\$39,466	\$31,566
Bachelor's degree or higher	17.7%	23.9%	15.5%	23.1%	25.4%	26.0%
Owner-occupied housing units	47.8%	46.3%	53.1%	59.1%	51.3%	38.5%
Housing units in multi-unit structures	47.3%	53.4%	41.4%	37.7%	35.5%	58.4%
Persons per household, average	2.25	2.38	2.57	2.52	2.25	2.36
Median value of owner-occupied housing units	\$95,900	\$91,400	\$74,400	\$108,300	\$84,600	\$87,800
Owner costs exceeding 30% of income	25.4%	21.4%	31.1%	23.7%	22.0%	27.0%
Renters costs exceeding 30% of income	47.6%	47.0%	59.5%	45.4%	54.2%	57.8%
Child poverty rate	24.0%	18.1%	44.4%	22.3%	34.6%	50.0%

**Source:** U.S. Census Bureau; all data is from the 2010-2014 American Community Survey, except as indicated.  
 \* 2015 Population Estimates  
 \*\* 2000 and 2010 Censuses

The large suburban towns tend to be more affluent, less diverse and better educated than the cities, as tends to be true statewide. There are, however, variations among the suburbs. Median age of residents in these towns ranges from 39 to 45 years; the populations in Cortland and Syracuse tend to be much younger (due to the concentration of higher education institutions there). The Town of DeWitt is somewhat distinct from the other suburban towns, with a relatively large foreign-born population (10.0 percent). The Town of Salina, on the north side of Syracuse, is less affluent: its median household income of \$52,402 is well below that of its neighbors, and its child poverty rate of 18.9 percent is much higher. With a population density of 2,449 persons per square mile, it is also denser than its suburban neighbors and even a couple of the region's cities.

Figure 6					
Demographic Indicators, Selected Central NY Towns					
	Suburban Onondaga County towns over 25,000 population				
	Cicero	Clay	De Witt	Manlius	Salina
Population*	31,672	58,945	25,786	32,391	33,673
Population growth 2000-2010**	13.0%	-1.0%	7.3%	1.6%	1.3%
Population growth 2010-2014*	0.1%	1.3%	-0.2%	0.1%	-0.1%
Persons per square mile*	656	1,229	763	658	2,449
Median age	40.4	39.3	40.9	45.1	42.6
White persons	94.3%	91.8%	83.7%	91.5%	89.0%
Black persons	1.7%	3.5%	7.6%	3.0%	4.6%
Asian persons	1.5%	2.1%	4.9%	3.7%	2.2%
Persons reporting two or more races	1.8%	1.9%	2.7%	1.4%	3.2%
Persons of Hispanic or Latino origin	1.7%	2.8%	3.0%	1.3%	3.3%
White persons not Hispanic	92.9%	89.5%	81.9%	90.3%	87.0%
Foreign-born persons	3.6%	5.2%	10.0%	6.2%	5.4%
Languages other than English spoken at home	4.9%	7.5%	11.3%	7.3%	7.2%
Median household income	\$67,821	\$65,956	\$63,175	\$75,609	\$52,402
Bachelor's degree or higher	29.7%	31.6%	44.4%	52.1%	24.6%
Owner-occupied housing units	78.7%	74.8%	71.1%	79.2%	67.7%
Housing units in multi-unit structures	13.8%	22.9%	26.1%	18.1%	25.1%
Persons per household, average	2.57	2.50	2.39	2.43	2.25
Median value of owner-occupied housing units	\$145,900	\$138,400	\$149,400	\$173,200	\$108,500
Owner costs exceeding 30% of income	24.5%	25.4%	28.4%	21.8%	28.6%
Renters costs exceeding 30% of income	42.8%	44.3%	42.7%	43.1%	41.8%
Child poverty rate	7.1%	11.1%	7.6%	5.8%	18.9%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau; all data is from the 2010-2014 American Community Survey, except as indicated.  
\* 2014 Estimates  
\*\* 2000 and 2010 Censuses



# Local Government

Central New York is divided into 94 towns, 6 cities, 49 school districts and 61 fire districts. It also contains 45 villages and over 1,200 other types of special districts.

Recently, several local governments and organizations in Onondaga County created the Commission on Local Government Modernization, also called “Consensus,” which has published a report outlining ways to streamline local government in the County. These include options for sharing or consolidating services in such areas as infrastructure, public safety, municipal operations, economic development and governance.<sup>9</sup>

**Figure 7**

<b>Local Governments and Districts in Central New York Region</b>	
<b>General Purpose Local Governments (Municipalities)</b>	
Counties	5
Cities	6
Towns	94
Villages	45
<b>Special Purpose Local Governments</b>	
School Districts	49
Fire Districts	61
<b>Districts</b>	
Town Special Districts	1,212
County Special Districts	12
Independent Special Districts	1
Soil and Water Conservation Districts	5

Source: Office of the New York State Comptroller (OSC), December 2015. For notes and definitions, see [www.osc.state.ny.us/localgov/datanstat/entitytable.htm](http://www.osc.state.ny.us/localgov/datanstat/entitytable.htm)

## Fiscal Stress

The Office of the State Comptroller’s Fiscal Stress Monitoring System covers 199 counties, cities, towns, villages and school districts in Central New York, and currently identifies 12 local governments as being in one of three levels of fiscal stress. The System measures levels of fiscal stress (difficulty in maintaining budgetary solvency) in local communities by applying each entity’s reported annual financial information to a set of standard financial indicators. The list includes one city, one town, one village and nine school districts. Of these, only one – the Town of Parish in Oswego County – was considered to have the highest designation of “significant” fiscal stress.<sup>10</sup>

The System also examines other factors that influence local revenue-raising capability. Generally, these factors are outside the direct control of local officials, although they provide valuable context as to some of the additional challenges facing certain communities. These “environmental” indicators include changes in property values, population trends and unemployment, graduation and poverty rates. Of the 12 fiscally-stressed entities in Central New York, only one, the City of Fulton, also shows signs of notable environmental stress.



## Taxes

Property values in Central New York tend to be generally lower than the State as a whole, contributing to the overall affordability of the area. The inverse is true of tax rates. In order to generate the revenue to provide local services, property tax rates (per \$1,000 of full value) tend to be relatively high.

In some municipalities there are large amounts of tax exempt property, which contributes to a higher tax rate for taxable property. In the City of Syracuse, over one-half of the property value is exempt from taxation – this includes the property of Syracuse University, the State University of New York’s Upstate Medical University and a number of other colleges and hospitals. Over one-third of the property in the City of Auburn is tax exempt, similarly owned by hospitals and colleges as well as a State correctional facility.

However, even though the property tax rates are high, the dollar amount that the average homeowner pays in property taxes is significantly lower than for the State as a whole. For example, in Cortland County the average effective property tax rate was \$42 per \$1,000 of full value, higher than the statewide rate of \$29 per \$1,000. However, the estimated property tax bill on the median home was \$4,380, much lower than the estimated bill on the median home statewide (\$8,181).

The sales tax rate throughout Central New York is 8 percent. This is a combination of the State’s 4 percent rate and the local rate of 4 percent imposed by all of the counties and the cities of Auburn, Oneida and Oswego.<sup>11</sup> This is somewhat lower than the 8.45 percent average sales tax rate for the State as a whole, which includes higher tax areas in downstate New York.

**Figure 8**

**Sales Tax Rates, 2016 and Effective Property Tax Rates and Median Bills, 2015**

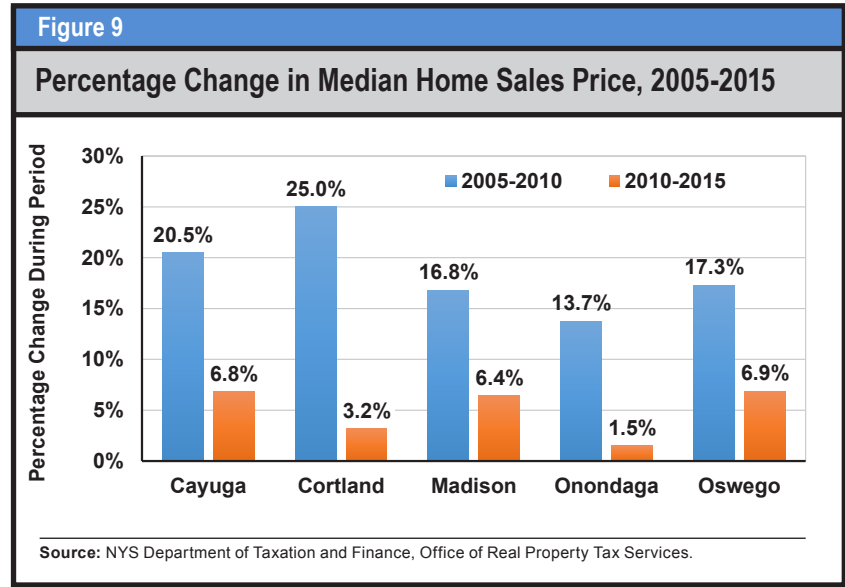
County	Sales Tax Rate	Effective Property Tax	
		Rate per \$1,000 Full Value	Median Bill
Cayuga	8.00%	\$32.89	\$3,585
Cortland	8.00%	\$41.63	\$4,380
Madison	8.00%	\$35.26	\$4,315
Onondaga	8.00%	\$36.92	\$4,955
Oswego	8.00%	\$37.99	\$3,529
<b>Statewide</b>	<b>8.45%</b>	<b>\$28.84</b>	<b>\$8,181</b>

**Source:** OSC; New York State Department of Taxation and Finance; U.S. Census Bureau, ACS; The Sales Tax Clearinghouse.  
Statewide sales tax rate is the weighted average of all counties and cities.  
Includes New York City.

# Economy and Labor Market

## Home Values and Foreclosures

Although still below the statewide average, regional home prices increased fairly quickly from 2005 to 2010. This was not nearly as fast as increases in some parts of the State – especially areas surrounding New York City – for the same period, but home prices also did not fall as quickly after the onset of the 2008 recession here as they did in downstate markets. However, from 2010 to 2015, the rate of increase slowed considerably.



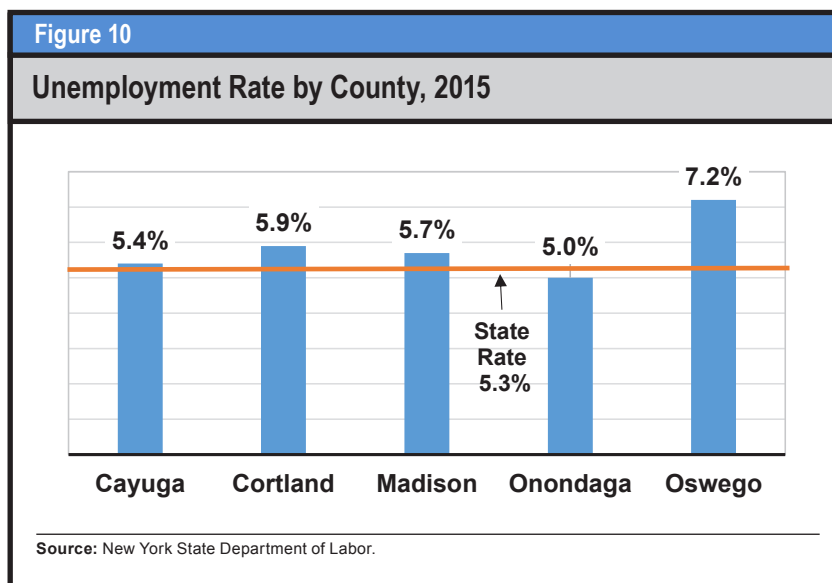
The low median home values reflect, in part, an aging housing stock: 44 percent of Syracuse's houses were built before 1939 and this is also true of over half of the houses in Auburn, Cortland and Oswego.<sup>12</sup> Vacancy rates in the area are also relatively high in many communities, including Syracuse (14.9 percent), Oswego (12.5 percent) and Oneida (11.5 percent). Cortland County has a vacancy rate of 12.2 percent and some rural towns exceed 40 percent.<sup>13</sup>

The region's rate of bank foreclosures is less than the statewide rate: only 0.8 percent of the housing units were in foreclosure in 2015 compared to 1.1 percent for the State. However, the number of foreclosures increased rapidly between 2014 and 2015 (15.8 percent).<sup>14</sup>

The City of Syracuse, facing a significant number of vacant and tax-delinquent properties for many years, has been trying to find ways to effectively address this problem. The City moved quickly after the State's Land Bank Act was enacted in 2011 to help local governments return vacant, abandoned or tax delinquent properties to productive use. The Greater Syracuse Property Development Corporation, covering Onondaga County and the City of Syracuse, was one of the first land banks created in the State. Since then, it has acquired 1,086 properties, sold 305 and demolished 111 structures.<sup>15</sup> Oswego County now also has a land bank, which became active in 2016.

## Employment and Unemployment

Annual regional unemployment rates have been improving in recent years, decreasing from 8.5 percent in 2012 to 5.5 percent in 2015. Preliminary data shows a continuing decline to 5.1 percent in September 2016. As Figure 10 shows, the highest unemployment in 2015 was in Oswego County – 7.2 percent. Onondaga County had the lowest rate – 5.0 percent. The City of Syracuse had an unemployment rate of 6.6 percent. These compare to a statewide unemployment rate of 5.3 percent.



Even though unemployment in Central New York has improved since the end of the last recession, the overall labor force has declined over the last 25 years. In 1990, there were over 400,000 people in the labor force (including those employed and unemployed). By 2015, this had declined to under 375,000 people, paralleling a stable and aging population.<sup>16</sup>

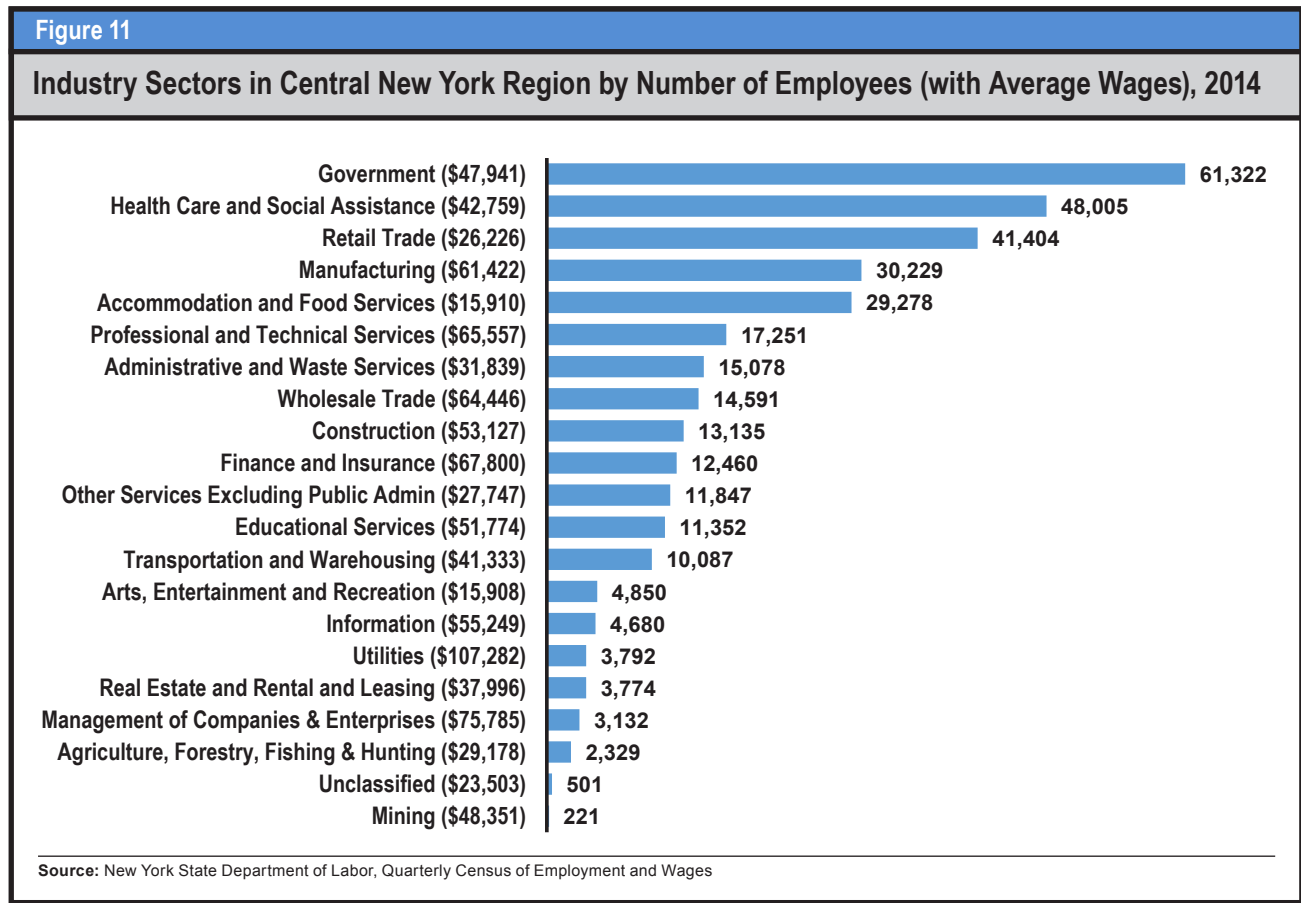
## Major Industries

The largest employers are all located in Onondaga County: Upstate University Health System, Syracuse University, St. Joseph's Hospital Health Center, the Roman Catholic Diocese of Syracuse, Wegmans Food Markets, Crouse Hospital, Loretto Adult Care Facilities, National Grid, Time Warner Cable and Lockheed Martin MS2.<sup>17</sup> Syracuse University functions as both a major employer and – with its student body of over 21,000 – a major consumer of good and services.

The region's other counties have large employers as well. The New York State Department of Corrections and Community Supervision operates two correctional facilities in Auburn and Moravia, which are major employers in Cayuga County. The State University of New York at Cortland has over 1,000 employees in Cortland County and Colgate University is the largest employer in Madison County. Two nuclear power plants are major employers in Oswego County. These counties also have their own health care facilities and several smaller colleges that provide employment in the area.<sup>18</sup>

Figure 11 shows 2014 employment numbers and average wages in Central New York by industrial sector.<sup>19</sup> Total average employment for that year was 339,317 jobs, with an average annual wage of \$44,330, and preliminary 2015 employment estimates show continued growth (340,440 jobs, with an average salary of \$46,073). The New York State Department of Labor (DOL) expects employment to continue to grow moderately in the next decade. All projections in the following discussion are also based on DOL estimates.<sup>20</sup>

The largest sector is government, with over 61,000 employees or 18 percent of total employment. This includes public school teachers and administrators, firefighters, police and corrections officers, and the employees of the State University of New York at the Upstate Medical University, the College of Environmental Science and Forestry, the four-year SUNY colleges in Cortland and Oswego, and two community colleges.<sup>21</sup> Education services tend to follow demographic trends, so DOL anticipates only modest growth in this sector.<sup>22</sup>



The health care and social assistance sector is the second largest industry group, employing 48,000 people in 2014. The average wage in this sector is below the overall average, with highly paid professionals outnumbered by low-wage positions such as personal care aides. DOL projects that the area's aging population will drive strong demand for health and social assistance services over the next decades.<sup>23</sup>

The manufacturing sector has been shrinking for decades, with employment falling from 58,000 to 30,000 between 1990 and 2015.<sup>24</sup> However, certain segments of the sector are doing much better and have either recently grown or are poised to do so in the next few years. Electrical equipment, appliance and component manufacturing grew by over 46 percent between 2009 and 2014, and these jobs tend to be well paid. Food manufacturing operations (milk, yogurt, cheese, fruit and vegetable products) have also been locating or expanding in the region, and employment is projected to grow in this sector.<sup>25</sup>

The professional, scientific and technical services sector has been growing and is expected to continue to expand. This sector includes law and accounting firms and software developers, which tend to sell their services to other businesses. Since this is one of the more highly paid sectors, on average, DOL sees its growth as another positive sign.<sup>26</sup>

The construction sector, which tends to fluctuate with the economy, declined in the aftermath of the recession. Recovery has been slow, but employment in the sector is back to prerecession levels, and more sustained growth is projected for the near future. The more highly skilled construction trades pay well, and the retirement of many baby boomers in the near future is projected to result in good job opportunities for people starting their careers.<sup>27</sup>

The position of Syracuse in the center of New York State, at the intersection of the New York State Thruway and Interstate 81, makes it a potential location for truck transportation, warehousing facilities and distribution centers, according to DOL. These industry sectors are projected to continue to grow in the next few years.<sup>28</sup>

Retail trade and accommodations and food services also account for many of the local jobs. Together with the arts, entertainment and recreation sector, these workers serve the tourism and vacation industry. While jobs in these sectors tend to be less well-paid than average, these industries are important, adding to the overall appeal of the area. Central New York is between two of the major tourist destination areas in the State – the Finger Lakes to the west and the Leatherstocking Region to the east. Its many lakes are also vacation destinations, as are its 13 State parks and historic sites. The Old Erie Canal State Historic Park is a 36-mile linear park and a National Recreational Trail. Fair Haven Beach on Lake Ontario has over 20,000 campers each year. The State Fairgrounds, a major tourist attraction near Syracuse, just completed the first phase of a \$50 million renovation. Green Lakes State Park near Syracuse, which includes an 18-hole golf course, attracts almost 900,000 visitors a year. Destiny USA, a large shopping and entertainment complex in Syracuse, is also a major attraction for shoppers coming from around the area and beyond.<sup>29</sup>

# Looking Ahead

---

Central New York shows real potential for future growth as it takes on a number of significant challenges. The region's economy has been growing more slowly than the national economy since 2000, and its productivity, though rising, is well below the national average. Its traditional manufacturing base has struggled, leaving many working people in need of better-paying jobs. On the other hand, local government and business institutions are committed to redefining the economy for the future. The well-educated people graduating from the many higher educational institutions are seen as a crucial asset. Local leaders are focused on harnessing this human capital, along with existing industry concentrations, to encourage innovation and entrepreneurship in the area.<sup>30</sup>

## Economic Development

---

Industrial Development Agencies (IDAs) help local officials pursue some of these economic development goals. They offer tax incentives and low-cost financing to encourage businesses to locate and expand in a specific county or city. Seven IDAs currently operate in Central New York, one in each of the five counties as well as one each in the Cities of Auburn and Syracuse. In 2014, Central New York IDAs reported supporting 257 projects.<sup>31</sup> A new law, proposed by the Comptroller and enacted in 2015, will facilitate more objective evaluation of IDA projects by requiring each IDA to develop a standard application form, uniform criteria for both selection and evaluation of projects, and uniform project agreements, each meeting minimum statutory requirements. It also requires that all project agreements include provisions for the recapture of financial benefits in accordance with policies developed by the IDA.

In addition to IDAs, there are entities pursuing a broader and more strategic approach to economic development, including the Central New York Regional Economic Development Council. The Council was one of ten established throughout the State in 2011 to develop strategic plans for economic growth and is made up of local experts and stakeholders from business, academia, local governments and nongovernment organizations. The Council's most recent strategic plan includes 45 projects with a proposed \$30 million State investment and \$467 million in private and other funding, to create 1,027 new jobs. The projects include \$66 million for an indoor farm at the White Pine Industrial Park in Onondaga County and \$115 million for a major expansion of St. Joseph's Hospital Health Center.<sup>32</sup>

In 2015, the Council tapped into the State's Upstate Revitalization Initiative, winning up to \$500 million to further the economic revival of the region.<sup>33</sup> It has proposed investments in industries in the manufacturing, agriculture, transportation and services sectors, as well as promoting local government efficiency and economic opportunity.<sup>34</sup>



## Infrastructure Planning

---

Central New York developed around its transportation and water infrastructure. The Erie Canal was completed in the early 19th century, providing access to the Atlantic coast and the country's developing western interior. Commerce and industry then developed along the path of the canal. Later, railroads also crossed the region and confirmed its position along one of the main east-west corridors in North America, as well as allowing north-south connections from Canada into the American industrial heartland. The New York State Thruway (Interstate 90) and Interstate 81 follow this same pattern.

This transportation infrastructure is now aging and has become a major challenge for Central New York. The elevated highway (also known as the “viaduct”) that brings Interstate 81 through Syracuse is an ongoing concern. When it was built in the 1950s and 1960s, the viaduct effectively cut the City in half, and many residents want to reintegrate the affected neighborhoods. Now that the viaduct is nearing the end of its useful life, many advocate removing the elevated highway in favor of some other solution, although some fear that doing so would make it even more difficult for businesses in the city center to access transportation. The New York State Department of Transportation is studying proposals to either rebuild the elevated highway at a cost of \$1.7 billion or replace it with a ground-level boulevard at a cost of \$1.3 billion.<sup>35</sup>

As noted earlier, water resources are extensive, as is the related infrastructure. Water quality, drinking water and wastewater management have benefited from extensive investment and centralized service available in much of the area. Federal, state, and local resources contribute to the ongoing improvements in Onondaga Lake to expand public access and recreation as the Lake reclaims its status as a public asset. However, many drinking water and water pollution control systems need repair and replacement. According to Mayor Stephanie Miner, the City of Syracuse's 100-year old water system – which has problems with water main breaks and potential contamination – would cost about \$750 million to replace.<sup>36</sup> This is a common issue for older cities. In recent years, the City has spent \$47.5 million on ultraviolet disinfection, replacing water meters and other water system repairs and improvements.<sup>37</sup> Smaller municipalities are working to update older water systems as well. The City of Cortland is receiving \$4 million in State grants and loans for its water system and the Village of Phoenix in Oswego County is receiving \$6 million.<sup>38</sup>

Two nuclear power plants in Oswego account for about 82 percent of the nearly 25.4 million megawatt hours of electricity generated annually in the region, along with many well-paying jobs.<sup>39</sup> The James A. FitzPatrick plant was slated to shut down recently, as natural gas-fueled alternative energy sources made it unprofitable. New State subsidies and a new owner will keep the plant operating. Although not uncontroversial, the arrangement saved about 600 jobs locally, and State officials claim that preventing its closure will help New York meet goals for reducing greenhouse gas emissions.<sup>40</sup>

While Central New York faces many challenges, it has some very valuable untapped advantages that can promote growth. The region's geographic location, physical and institutional assets, energy resources and labor pool are all attributes that have long supported its economy and should serve as a strong foundation for the future.



# Notes

---

- <sup>1</sup> Netstate.com, “The Geography of New York,” Updated February 25, 2016, [www.netstate.com/states/geography/ny\\_geography.htm](http://www.netstate.com/states/geography/ny_geography.htm); Madison County, “Overview,” [www.ny.gov/counties/Madison](http://www.ny.gov/counties/Madison).
- <sup>2</sup> Central New York Regional Planning & Development Board, *VisionCNY: Central New York Regional Sustainability Plan*, June 12, 2013, [www.nyserda.ny.gov](http://www.nyserda.ny.gov).
- <sup>3</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, Population Division, *Annual Estimates of the Resident Population: April 1, 2010 to July 1, 2015 and 1950 through 2010 Censuses*.
- <sup>4</sup> Downstate New York is New York City and Dutchess, Nassau, Orange, Putnam, Rockland, Suffolk, Sullivan, Ulster and Westchester Counties.
- <sup>5</sup> Geoff Herbert, “Syracuse named one of the 21 most affordable cities to live in America,” *Syracuse.com*, March 12, 2104. [www.syracuse.com/news/index.ssf/2014/03/syracuse\\_most\\_affordable\\_cities\\_america\\_list.html](http://www.syracuse.com/news/index.ssf/2014/03/syracuse_most_affordable_cities_america_list.html).
- <sup>6</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey five-year estimates, 2010-2014.
- <sup>7</sup> Syracuse University, *2015-16 Facts*; SUNY Cortland, *Common Data Set, 2014-15*; SUNY Oswego, *Common Data Set 2014-15*, February 2015.
- <sup>8</sup> Chris Baker, “Refugees in Syracuse: Benefit or burden? Here’s what the numbers say,” *Syracuse.com*, March 14, 2016, [www.syracuse.com/poverty/2016/03/refugees\\_in\\_syracuse\\_benefit\\_burden.html](http://www.syracuse.com/poverty/2016/03/refugees_in_syracuse_benefit_burden.html).
- <sup>9</sup> Commission on Local Government Modernization, *Options Report & Preliminary Committee Recommendations*, 2016, [www.cgr.org/consensuscny/docs/1.26.16\\_Consensus\\_PRELIM\\_REC\\_CS\\_REPORT.pdf](http://www.cgr.org/consensuscny/docs/1.26.16_Consensus_PRELIM_REC_CS_REPORT.pdf); Mike McAndrew, “Poll: Onondaga County voters split over city-county merger, want more info,” *Syracuse.com*, [http://www.syracuse.com/news/index.ssf/2016/06/poll\\_onondaga\\_county\\_voters\\_divided\\_on\\_city-county\\_merger.html](http://www.syracuse.com/news/index.ssf/2016/06/poll_onondaga_county_voters_divided_on_city-county_merger.html).
- <sup>10</sup> For more on the Fiscal Stress Monitoring System and latest scores for local governments, please see [www.osc.state.ny.us/localgov/fiscalmonitoring/index.htm](http://www.osc.state.ny.us/localgov/fiscalmonitoring/index.htm).
- <sup>11</sup> As a rule, if a city and the county it is in both impose a local sales tax, and the combined city and county sales tax rate exceeds the maximum rate permitted by New York State Tax Law (generally 3%), then the proceeds from up to half of the maximum rate imposed in the city goes to the city and the balance to the county. For example, in most cases, if the county has a sales tax rate of 3%, and the city also imposes a rate of 3%, then the city gets 1.5% and the county gets 1.5% on purchases in the city. This is called pre-emption.
- <sup>12</sup> Central New York Regional Economic Development Council, Upstate Revitalization Initiative, *CNY Rising: From the Ground Up*, 2015, p.19. [www.centerstateceo.com/news-events/cny-rising](http://www.centerstateceo.com/news-events/cny-rising).
- <sup>13</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2010-2014
- <sup>14</sup> Office of the New York State Comptroller, *The Foreclosure Predicament Persists*, August 2015. [www.osc.state.ny.us/localgov/pubs/research/snapshot/foreclosure0815.pdf](http://www.osc.state.ny.us/localgov/pubs/research/snapshot/foreclosure0815.pdf).
- <sup>15</sup> Greater Syracuse Land Bank, Land Bank Stats, as of July 1, 2016, <http://syracuselandbank.org/>.
- <sup>16</sup> New York State Department of Labor, Local Area Unemployment Statistics Program, <http://labor.ny.gov/stats/LSLAUS.shtm>.
- <sup>17</sup> County of Onondaga, New York, \$11,370,000 General Obligation Refunding (Serial) Bond Official Statement, 2015, p. 13.
- <sup>18</sup> County of Cayuga, New York, \$3,539,000 *Public Improvement Serial Bonds, 2015*, p. 8; County of Cortland, New York, \$8,280,000 *Public Improvement Refunding Serial Bonds, 2015*, p. 11; County of Madison, New York, \$9,450,000 *Bond Anticipation Notes, 2016*, p. 5; Operation Oswego County, Inc., *Oswego County Industrial Directory, 2011*, pg. 5-20.
- <sup>19</sup> New York State Department of Labor, Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages. Data are arranged by the North American Industry Classification System (NAICS), with the averages and median by region calculated by the Department of Labor. The Department of Labor shows government employment as a separate industry classification. The 2014 data is the latest final data available. <https://labor.ny.gov/stats/lscqew.shtm>.

# Notes

---

- <sup>20</sup> New York State Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Market Information, Division of Research and Statistics, *Significant Industries: A Report to the Workforce Development System, Central New York, 2015*, September 2015, p. 4, <https://labor.ny.gov/stats/PDFs/Significant-Industries-Central-NY.pdf>.
- <sup>21</sup> Cayuga Community College and Onondaga Community College.
- <sup>22</sup> *Significant Industries*, pp.2-3.
- <sup>23</sup> *Significant Industries*, p.3.
- <sup>24</sup> New York State Department of Labor, "Historical Employment and Wages, 1975 – 2000," [http://labor.ny.gov/stats/employ/historical\\_qcew.shtm](http://labor.ny.gov/stats/employ/historical_qcew.shtm).
- <sup>25</sup> *Significant Industries*, p.2.
- <sup>26</sup> *Significant Industries*, p.2.
- <sup>27</sup> *Significant Industries*, p.2.
- <sup>28</sup> *Significant Industries*, p.2.
- <sup>29</sup> Regional attractions information is drawn from several sources: New York State Department of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation, [nysparks.com/regions/central/default.aspx](http://nysparks.com/regions/central/default.aspx) and "Central New York State Parks and Historic Sites" (undated document); Glenn Coin, "New York State Fair 2016: You Won't Believe How Different it Looks," *NYUp.com*, August 9, 2016, [www.newyorkupstate.com/nys-fair/2016/08/new\\_york\\_state\\_fair\\_2016\\_you\\_wont\\_believe\\_how\\_different\\_it\\_looks.html](http://www.newyorkupstate.com/nys-fair/2016/08/new_york_state_fair_2016_you_wont_believe_how_different_it_looks.html).
- <sup>30</sup> *CNY Rising*, p. 20. Productivity is defined a real output (sales of goods and services) per job.
- <sup>31</sup> Office of the New York State Comptroller, *Annual Performance Report on New York State's Industrial Development Agencies, Fiscal Years Ending 2014*, June 2016, [www.osc.state.ny.us/localgov/pubs/research/ida\\_reports/2016/idaperformance.pdf](http://www.osc.state.ny.us/localgov/pubs/research/ida_reports/2016/idaperformance.pdf).
- <sup>32</sup> Central New York Regional Economic Development Council, 2015-2016 Strategic Plan Update, 2015, p.4, <http://regionalcouncils.ny.gov/sites/default/files/regions/centralny/CNYREDC-2015-Progress-Report.pdf>.
- <sup>33</sup> Governor Andrew M. Cuomo, Governor's Press Office, *Governor Cuomo Announces More Than \$2 Billion in Economic Development Resources Awarded Through Upstate Revitalization Initiative and Regional Economic Development Council Competition* [Press Release], December 10, 2015, [www.governor.ny.gov/news/governor-cuomo-announces-more-2-billion-economic-development-resources-awarded-through-upstate](http://www.governor.ny.gov/news/governor-cuomo-announces-more-2-billion-economic-development-resources-awarded-through-upstate); Empire State Development, Regional Economic Councils, *Building on our Assets 2016*, [www.ny.gov/sites/ny.gov/files/atoms/files/REDCGuidebookFINALV3.pdf](http://www.ny.gov/sites/ny.gov/files/atoms/files/REDCGuidebookFINALV3.pdf).
- <sup>34</sup> *CNY Rising*, pp. 54-79.
- <sup>35</sup> *I-81 Viaduct*, New York State Department of Transportation, [www.dot.ny.gov/i81opportunities](http://www.dot.ny.gov/i81opportunities); Charley Hannagan "7 Things We Learned at the DOT Open House on Replacing I-81 in Syracuse," *Syracuse.com*, October 6, 2016.
- <sup>36</sup> Tom Magnarelli, "Could State Grants and Loans Improve Water Infrastructure in Syracuse and Oswego?" *WRVO*, February 16, 2016, <http://wrvo.org/post/could-state-grants-and-loans-improve-water-infrastructure-syracuse-and-oswego>.
- <sup>37</sup> City of Syracuse, *Capital Improvement Program, 2010/11-2015/16*, 2010, [www.syr.gov.net/uploadedFiles/Departments/Budget/Content/Budget\\_Documents/2011-2016%20CIP.pdf](http://www.syr.gov.net/uploadedFiles/Departments/Budget/Content/Budget_Documents/2011-2016%20CIP.pdf)
- <sup>38</sup> Magnarelli, *WRVO*.
- <sup>39</sup> *VisionCNY*, pp.23-24.
- <sup>40</sup> State of New York Public Service Commission, "Order Adopting A Clean Energy Standard," File #352, August 1, 2016; A lawsuit has been filed, challenging the subsidies, Coalition for Competitive Energy, et. al. v. Zibelman et. al., Southern District New York, filed on October 19, 2016 (Case No. 1: 16-cv-08164).

## Division of Local Government and School Accountability

# Central Office

# Directory

**Andrew A. SanFilippo**, Executive Deputy Comptroller

(Area code for the following is 518 unless otherwise specified)

**Executive** .....474-4037

Gabriel F. Deyo, Deputy Comptroller  
Tracey Hitchen Boyd, Assistant Comptroller

**Audits, Local Government Services and Professional Standards**..... 474-5404

(Audits, Technical Assistance, Accounting and Audit Standards)

**Local Government and School Accountability Help Line** .....(866) 321-8503 or 408-4934

(Electronic Filing, Financial Reporting, Justice Courts, Training)

### New York State & Local Retirement System

#### Retirement Information Services

Inquiries on Employee Benefits and Programs.....474-7736

**Bureau of Member and Employer Services**..... (866) 805-0990 or 474-1101

Monthly Reporting Inquiries ..... 474-1080

Audits and Plan Changes.....474-0167

All Other Employer Inquiries.....474-6535

### Division of Legal Services

**Municipal Law Section** .....474-5586

### Other OSC Offices

**Bureau of State Expenditures** .....486-3017

**Bureau of State Contracts**..... 474-4622

**Mailing Address  
for all of the above:**

**Office of the New York State Comptroller,  
110 State Street, Albany, New York 12236  
email: [localgov@osc.state.ny.us](mailto:localgov@osc.state.ny.us)**

## Division of Local Government and School Accountability

# Regional Office

# Directory

**Andrew A. SanFilippo**, Executive Deputy Comptroller

**Gabriel F. Deyo**, Deputy Comptroller (518) 474-4037

**Tracey Hitchen Boyd**, Assistant Comptroller

**Cole H. Hickland**, Director • **Jack Dougherty**, Director  
Direct Services (518) 474-5480

---

**BINGHAMTON REGIONAL OFFICE** - H. Todd Eames, Chief Examiner  
State Office Building, Suite 1702 • 44 Hawley Street • Binghamton, New York 13901-4417  
Tel (607) 721-8306 • Fax (607) 721-8313 • Email: [Muni-Binghamton@osc.state.ny.us](mailto:Muni-Binghamton@osc.state.ny.us)  
Serving: Broome, Chenango, Cortland, Delaware, Otsego, Schoharie, Sullivan, Tioga, Tompkins counties

**BUFFALO REGIONAL OFFICE** – Jeffrey D. Mazula, Chief Examiner  
295 Main Street, Suite 1032 • Buffalo, New York 14203-2510  
Tel (716) 847-3647 • Fax (716) 847-3643 • Email: [Muni-Buffalo@osc.state.ny.us](mailto:Muni-Buffalo@osc.state.ny.us)  
Serving: Allegany, Cattaraugus, Chautauqua, Erie, Genesee, Niagara, Orleans, Wyoming counties

**GLENS FALLS REGIONAL OFFICE** - Jeffrey P. Leonard, Chief Examiner  
One Broad Street Plaza • Glens Falls, New York 12801-4396  
Tel (518) 793-0057 • Fax (518) 793-5797 • Email: [Muni-GlensFalls@osc.state.ny.us](mailto:Muni-GlensFalls@osc.state.ny.us)  
Serving: Albany, Clinton, Essex, Franklin, Fulton, Hamilton, Montgomery, Rensselaer, Saratoga, Schenectady, Warren, Washington counties

**HAUPPAUGE REGIONAL OFFICE** – Ira McCracken, Chief Examiner  
NYS Office Building, Room 3A10 • 250 Veterans Memorial Highway • Hauppauge, New York 11788-5533  
Tel (631) 952-6534 • Fax (631) 952-6530 • Email: [Muni-Hauppauge@osc.state.ny.us](mailto:Muni-Hauppauge@osc.state.ny.us)  
Serving: Nassau, Suffolk counties

**NEWBURGH REGIONAL OFFICE** – Tenneh Blamah, Chief Examiner  
33 Airport Center Drive, Suite 103 • New Windsor, New York 12553-4725  
Tel (845) 567-0858 • Fax (845) 567-0080 • Email: [Muni-Newburgh@osc.state.ny.us](mailto:Muni-Newburgh@osc.state.ny.us)  
Serving: Columbia, Dutchess, Greene, Orange, Putnam, Rockland, Ulster, Westchester counties

**ROCHESTER REGIONAL OFFICE** – Edward V. Grant Jr., Chief Examiner  
The Powers Building • 16 West Main Street – Suite 522 • Rochester, New York 14614-1608  
Tel (585) 454-2460 • Fax (585) 454-3545 • Email: [Muni-Rochester@osc.state.ny.us](mailto:Muni-Rochester@osc.state.ny.us)  
Serving: Cayuga, Chemung, Livingston, Monroe, Ontario, Schuyler, Seneca, Steuben, Wayne, Yates counties

**SYRACUSE REGIONAL OFFICE** – Rebecca Wilcox, Chief Examiner  
State Office Building, Room 409 • 333 E. Washington Street • Syracuse, New York 13202-1428  
Tel (315) 428-4192 • Fax (315) 426-2119 • Email: [Muni-Syracuse@osc.state.ny.us](mailto:Muni-Syracuse@osc.state.ny.us)  
Serving: Herkimer, Jefferson, Lewis, Madison, Oneida, Onondaga, Oswego, St. Lawrence counties

**STATEWIDE AUDIT** - Ann C. Singer, Chief Examiner  
State Office Building, Suite 1702 • 44 Hawley Street • Binghamton, New York 13901-4417  
Tel (607) 721-8306 • Fax (607) 721-8313

---

## Contact

Office of the New York State Comptroller  
Division of Local Government and School Accountability

110 State Street, 12th floor  
Albany, NY 12236

Tel: (518) 474-4037

Fax: (518) 486-6479

or email us: [localgov@osc.state.ny.us](mailto:localgov@osc.state.ny.us)

[www.osc.state.ny.us/localgov/index.htm](http://www.osc.state.ny.us/localgov/index.htm)



Like us on Facebook at [facebook.com/nyscomptroller](https://facebook.com/nyscomptroller)

Follow us on Twitter @[@nyscomptroller](https://twitter.com/nyscomptroller)

