

NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

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Four Cities Kick off Effort to Combat Urban Blight with New York Department of State Local Government Efficiency Grant

The cities of Schenectady, Troy, Amsterdam and Gloversville and the University of Albany's Center for Technology in Government (CTG) today kicked off a pilot program to allow critical information sharing of code enforcement-related data so that communities can take proactive steps to combat urban blight. The pilot program is funded by a \$558,000 grant from the New York Department of State.

Throughout New York State, local leaders are working together to address the increasingly persistent and costly problem of urban blight. Sharing information among cities has been recognized as a powerful tool in combating urban blight and in reducing the impact of distressed and vacant problems on critical public services such as public safety and on economic development efforts.

"This pilot project is an investment in an early warning system to help our municipalities intervene in distressed properties before they fall into a cycle a blight," said New York Secretary of State Cesar A. Peralas. "A regional approach is critical and these cities from the Capital Region and Mohawk Valley, with the leadership of the City of Schenectady, have committed to working together to identify strategies to combat urban blight in a truly groundbreaking effort."

On average, a single depressed property can cost a municipality tens of thousands per year in direct and indirect costs. Direct costs include code enforcement, administration, engineering and property maintenance. Indirect costs include uncollected taxes on distressed properties, devaluation of adjacent properties and impact on city services such as police and fire calls. This project will develop a shared code enforcement information resource providing unprecedented consistency in code enforcement, improved government efficiencies, new opportunities for inter-governmental cooperation, and more informed public and private decision-making.

This pilot project allows for critical information sharing of code enforcement related data so that communities can make more informed decisions and take proactive steps to combat blight. This pilot project provides the foundation for a long-term, State-wide strategy to share data and develop best practices in combating urban blight. In the process, each of these participating communities will be working toward streamlining their respective code enforcement operations.

The cities of Schenectady, Troy, Amsterdam and Gloversville and the University of Albany's Center for Technology in Government (CTG) kicked off a pilot program that will allow for critical information sharing of code enforcement related data so that communities can make more informed decisions and take proactive steps to combat blight. The pilot program is funded by a \$558,000 grant from the New York Department of State. From L-R: Mayor Dayton King (City of Gloversville), Mayor Lou Rosamilia (City of Troy), President Robert Jones (University at Albany), Secretary Cesar Peralas (Department of State), Theresa Pardo (Center for Technology in Government), Mayor Gary McCarthy (City of Schenectady), Mayor Ann Thane (City of Amsterdam), Peter Baynes (New York State Conference of Mayors), Mark Pattison (Department of State), Carl Ublacker (Department of State).

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"Combating blight and long term property vacancy is a challenge which all communities across New York State face, unfortunately the current way cities are asked to solve this problem is on a jurisdiction by jurisdiction basis," said Schenectady Mayor Gary McCarthy. "By approaching this problem as a region, we can better meet this

challenge and prevent its negative impacts on quality of life. We are thankful for the investment being made by the New York Department of State and look forward to the partnership with the Center for Technology in Government.”

“The City of Gloversville greatly appreciates the opportunity to collaborate with the other cities and we know that we will benefit from working together,” said Mayor Dayton King, City of Gloversville. “I thank Mayor McCarthy for his leadership and ability to bring others to the table. We look forward to working as partners to define common information and processes so we can solve common problems.”

“It’s wonderful that the State recognizes the great benefit this initiative will have at the local level and how useful this will be to inform budgetary and legislative actions at the statewide level,” said Mayor Ann M. Thane, City of Amsterdam. “It is our hope that this shared data system will serve as a model for the entire state to encourage strategic planning and a coordinated response to property issues. This funding will allow for healthier, safer communities. Some of us have been working for well over two years to advance this project and we are very grateful for this support.”

“The City of Troy is very excited to start this effort with the cities of Schenectady, Amsterdam and Gloversville,” said Mayor Lou Rosamilia, City of Troy. “We think that this proactive initiative will allow each municipality to identify what code enforcement information they would like to have from other municipalities and provide a mechanism to start sharing. We are looking forward to working together to address some of our common urban blight issues like access to information on prolific code violators that have an effect not only on our individual cities but on our region as a whole.”

This regional effort exemplifies the Capital and Mohawk Valley Region’s dedication to working collaboratively to develop a deep understanding of regional trends, challenges, and workable solutions.

Dr. Theresa Pardo, Director of CTG states “CTG is excited to partner with Schenectady, Amsterdam, Troy, and Gloversville on this important initiative. We commend the Mayors of these four cities and the Secretary of State for their commitment to creating a new shared resource to combat urban blight and in extending the model statewide as a tool to strengthen New York State cities.”

CTG, an applied research center at the University at Albany/SUNY, is a world leader in working with governments to create new knowledge about public sector information and technology innovation and translating new knowledge into practice.

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