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PRESS RELEASE

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

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***Amsterdam, Gloversville, Schenectady, and Troy join with
University at Albany's Center for Technology in Government
in a Collaborative Effort to Combat Blight***

Schenectady, NY-Schenectady Mayor Gary McCarthy, Gloversville Mayor Dayton King, Troy Mayor Lou Rosamilia, and Amsterdam Mayor Ann Thane celebrated the award of a \$558,002 New York Department of State Local Government Efficiency Grant. The funds will be used to develop a pilot program in these four cities to combat urban blight through an innovative information sharing initiative, in partnership with the Center for Technology in Government (CTG), at the University at Albany.

“Combating blight and long term property vacancy is a challenge which communities across New York State face, but unfortunately the current way cities are asked to solve this problem is on a jurisdiction by jurisdiction basis,” said Schenectady Mayor Gary McCarthy. “By using technology to create improved information sharing, we can better meet this challenge and prevent its negative impacts on quality of life. We are thankful for the investment being made through this REDC Award and the partnership with the Center for Technology in Government in moving this project forward.”

This pilot project 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. This program could provide the long-term basis for a state-wide strategy to better share data and develop best practices for this major issue. In the process, each of these participating communities will be able to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of their own code enforcement operations.

Dr. Theresa Pardo, Director of the University at Albany's Center for Technology in Government (CTG) stated "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 Governor for their vision for innovative regional information sharing which will provide a powerful platform for combating urban blight and serve as a model for the rest of the state. Helping governments enhance their capabilities and generate greater public value, through innovative collaborations such as this, is at the heart of CTG's mission."

"The City of Gloversville will greatly benefit from this REDC Award. I appreciate the collaboration of the other municipalities involved and thank my own common council for agreeing to be a part of this group at the 11th hour. I thank Mayor McCarthy for his leadership and reaching out to me to be the last municipality involved in this venture. I look forward to working on other projects regionally going forward," said Mayor Dayton King.

"The City of Troy is very excited to begin sharing information with Schenectady, Amsterdam and Gloversville on code enforcement issues. This proactive initiative will allow each municipality to identify repeat offenders as they attempt to purchase property in the various cities and help to ensure the quality of life that all tenants expect and deserve. The grant will also help to eliminate absentee landlords whose only concern is to collect rents and add blight within neighborhoods," said Mayor Lou Rosamilia.

"It's wonderful that the State recognizes the great benefit this initiative will have at the local municipal level and how useful this may be to inform budgetary and legislative actions in Albany. 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," said Mayor Ann M. Thane.

Over the past year, Schenectady has worked with CTG to develop a strategy to more effectively and efficiently capture, manage, share and use code enforcement and property related data. Through this research, the City learned that a single property slated for demolition can, on average, generate expenses for a municipality in excess of \$65,000 in direct and indirect costs. This amount multiplied by the number of blighted and vacant properties is a major financial stressor on many municipalities in New York and is what prompted the City of Schenectady to lead a combined effort with other local municipalities in joint application submitted through the New York State Consolidated Funding Application to address this important problem. Work with CTG and the 4 cities is slated to begin in 2015 and continue for two years.

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About CTG - The Center for Technology in Government (CTG) at the University at Albany is an applied research center and global thought leader in the area of public sector innovation. CTG works with government to develop well informed information strategies that foster innovation and enhance the quality and coordination of public services and they carry out this mission through applied research and partnership projects that address the policy, management, and technology dimensions of information use in the public sector. Since its inception in 1993, CTG has conducted applied research projects in active partnership with dozens of state and local government organizations in New York and other states, in the US Federal Government, and in other countries. Today, CTG is a world leader in digital government research and a globally acknowledged expert in connecting research and practice. www.ctg.albany.edu