

# CAPITAL DISTRICT DATA

MARCH/APRIL 2015

VOLUME 38, NUMBER 2

## Capital District Data Needs to Hear From You!

Capital District Data has acted as a portal to available data for the region's municipal and local officials for much of the last 40 years. The publication has attempted to provide readers with a sense of the variety of data sets available. The concept of providing data to the region's municipalities in a bi-monthly newsletter was born in the pre-internet age, when data dissemination was extremely limited. Today, more data is collected, with greater availability, than ever before. Data sets are routinely updated and re-disseminated so that users have the most updated data available. Capital District Data was never envisioned to compete with the technological advances that have transpired in the 21st century. With this in mind, the time has come to re-envision Capital District Data; to do this we need your help.

Please fill out the short survey included in this issue of Capital District Data. This survey will provide CDRPC with a critical understanding of how Capital District Data is being used by its readers. It is CDRPC's desire to match the needs of the readers to the production of Capital District Data. At this time, no decisions have been made

on what Capital District Data will, or will not, be; all options are on the table and your opinions will carry great weight in future decisions.

This represents an initial step in our outreach effort to identify what our readers need and how that can be incorporated into a bi-monthly newsletter. These conversations will be based, in part, on the results of the survey. Please, fill out the attached survey and return it to CDRPC as soon as possible. The survey is also available online at <https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/XQ2G3CK>. The attached survey can be returned via fax or email to CDRPC. We can be reached by fax at (518) 453-0856 or by email to [cdrpc@cdrpc.org](mailto:cdrpc@cdrpc.org), please address all faxes to Dan Harp.

In the meantime, readers can expect further updates on the future of Capital District Data. We are excited to seek your input and look forward to your feedback in the redesign of Capital District Data. It is our hope that future issues of Capital District Data will provide you with useful data and information.

## Region's Land Banks Look to have an Active Summer

The region's war on blighted properties received a major boost late last year with the establishment of three local land banks. These three land banks are composed of the Capital Region Land Bank serving the cities of Schenectady and Amsterdam, as well as all of Schenectady County; the Albany County Land Bank serving Albany County; and the Troy Community Land Bank, serving the City of Troy. These land banks look to invest in neglected and abandoned properties so that they no longer have a negative impact on communities and can be brought back onto the local tax roll.

Land banks are a relatively new tool for municipalities in their battle against blight. In the most basic sense, land banks acquire properties

that are often in distressed communities where normal market forces are not strong enough to drive outside investment. Vacant properties in these neighborhoods have often been vacant and neglected for many years, requiring investment that would greatly outweigh any return on the open market. As a result, these properties continue to sit vacant, further depressing the neighborhood around them. A successful land bank can help to even the playing field by clearing obstacles and promoting investment in these properties.

According to Steve Strichman, Executive Director of the Capital Region Land Bank, the land bank is in the process of acquiring 17 buildings throughout Schenectady and Montgomery Counties.

*cont'd on p. 5*



**Capital District Regional Planning Commission**  
48 YEARS SERVICE TO ALBANY, RENSSELAER, SARATOGA, & SCHENECTADY COUNTIES

## Fiscal Year 2013 Municipal Revenues and Expenditures

The New York State Comptroller's Office annually releases a report detailing the revenues and expenditures of municipalities' state wide. This data is compiled into the Comptroller Office's Annual Report on Local Governments, previously known as the Special Report on Municipal Affairs. The Annual Report on Local Governments is published in the first quarter of the calendar year and provides a broad overview of economic indicators for municipalities. This overview is available for all levels of government, including counties, cities, towns, and villages. However, detailed data for the State's counties, cities, and towns, is unavailable until late in the calendar year, resulting in a lag time of almost a year between the end of the calendar year and the release of that year's data. Presently, the most up to date data available for counties, cities, and towns, is for Fiscal Year 2013. Data for 2014 will not be available until sometime in late 2015.

The graphs on pages three and four compare the revenues and expenditures for the four county region by County, City, Town, and Village. Detailed tables for revenues and expenditures which are assembled from data taken directly from the Comptroller's Report. The detailed tables showing the individual revenues and expenditures line items by category by municipality are available on our web site at [www.cdrpc.org](http://www.cdrpc.org). These tables are then used to create the graphs in this Data News. Revenues represent the total revenue from a municipality from a variety of sources. These sources are labeled as Property Taxes, Sales Tax, State Aid, Federal Aid, and Other on CDRPC's tables on the web site. These sources are actually the aggregate values compiled from the Comptroller's Report. Property Taxes are derived from data classified as Real Property Taxes and Assessments, as well as Other Real Property Tax Items in the Comptroller's Report. Sales Tax, State Aid, and Federal Aid, were all compiled strictly from categories of the same name from the Comptroller's Report. Other revenues were amassed from seven sources, Other Non-Property Taxes; Charges for Services; Charges to Other Governments; Use and Sale of Property; Other Local Revenues; Proceeds of Debt; and Other Sources.

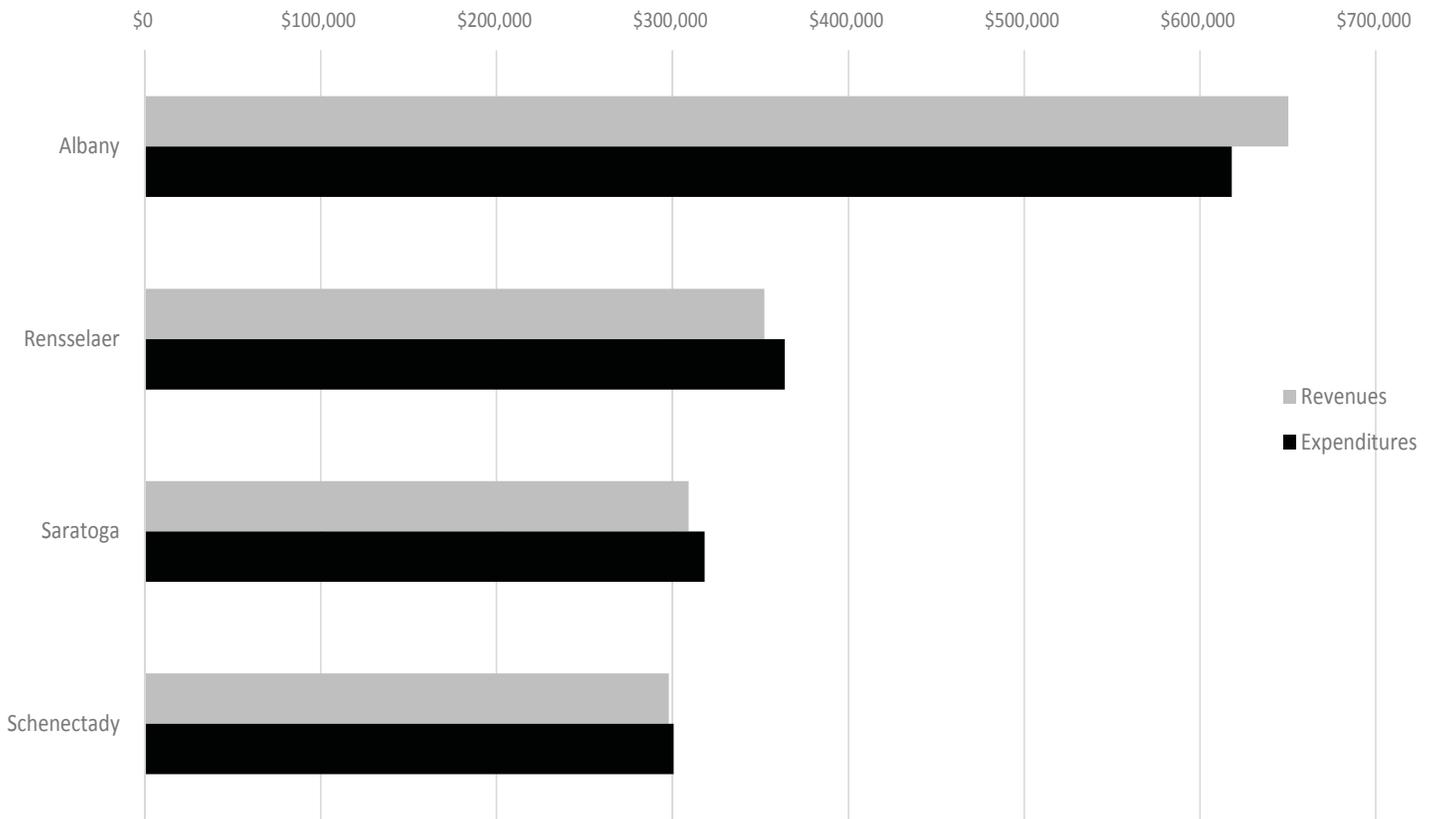
Expenditures are compiled in a similar manner and represent the total expenditures for a municipality. Composed of General Government; Health & Public Safety; Transportation & Utilities; Economic

Development; and Other, these classifications are generated from data provided by the Comptroller's Report. General Government expenditures were taken directly from the expenses labeled identically in the Comptroller's Report. Health & Public Safety expenditures were compiled from expenditures identified as either Public Safety, or as Health. Transportation & Utilities expenditures were amassed from expenses for Transportation; Utilities; and Sanitation. Other refers to expenditures identified for Education; Social Services; Culture and Recreation; Community Services; Employee Benefits, Debt Service, and Other Uses.

The data is presented here as a statistical overview, and is not intended to provide detailed accounting of legal information concerning the finances or financial conditions of local governments. For example, the fact that a local government has expenditures in excess of revenues does not necessarily indicate an operating deficit for two primary reasons. Municipal expense items include both operations and capital costs while financing sources, such as borrowings or the appropriation of fund balances, are not classified as revenues and may account for apparent shortfalls. Any discussion on surpluses or deficits should not be confused with actual municipal budgets.

Based on the report's findings, among the four counties, only Albany County saw revenue outpace expenditures in 2013; this resulted in a \$32 million "surplus." By contrast Rensselaer County saw a "deficit" of almost \$12 million. Of the region's cities, the City of Albany had the largest gap between revenues and expenditures, recording \$6.9 million more in expenditures than revenues. The largest expenditure was in Other of which \$51 million was attributed to Employee Benefits. The most significant contributor to the shortfall, however, was the decline in Other Revenues. An examination of the 2012 and 2013 reports shows that the Comptroller's Office identified \$42.9 million from "Proceeds of Debt" in 2012, in 2013 this revenue was reported at only \$10.2 million, a 77% decline from the previous year. The City of Schenectady, in contrast, enjoyed over \$1.3 million in extra revenue. In large part this "surplus" was generated by a \$5.2 million decline in "Other" expenses.

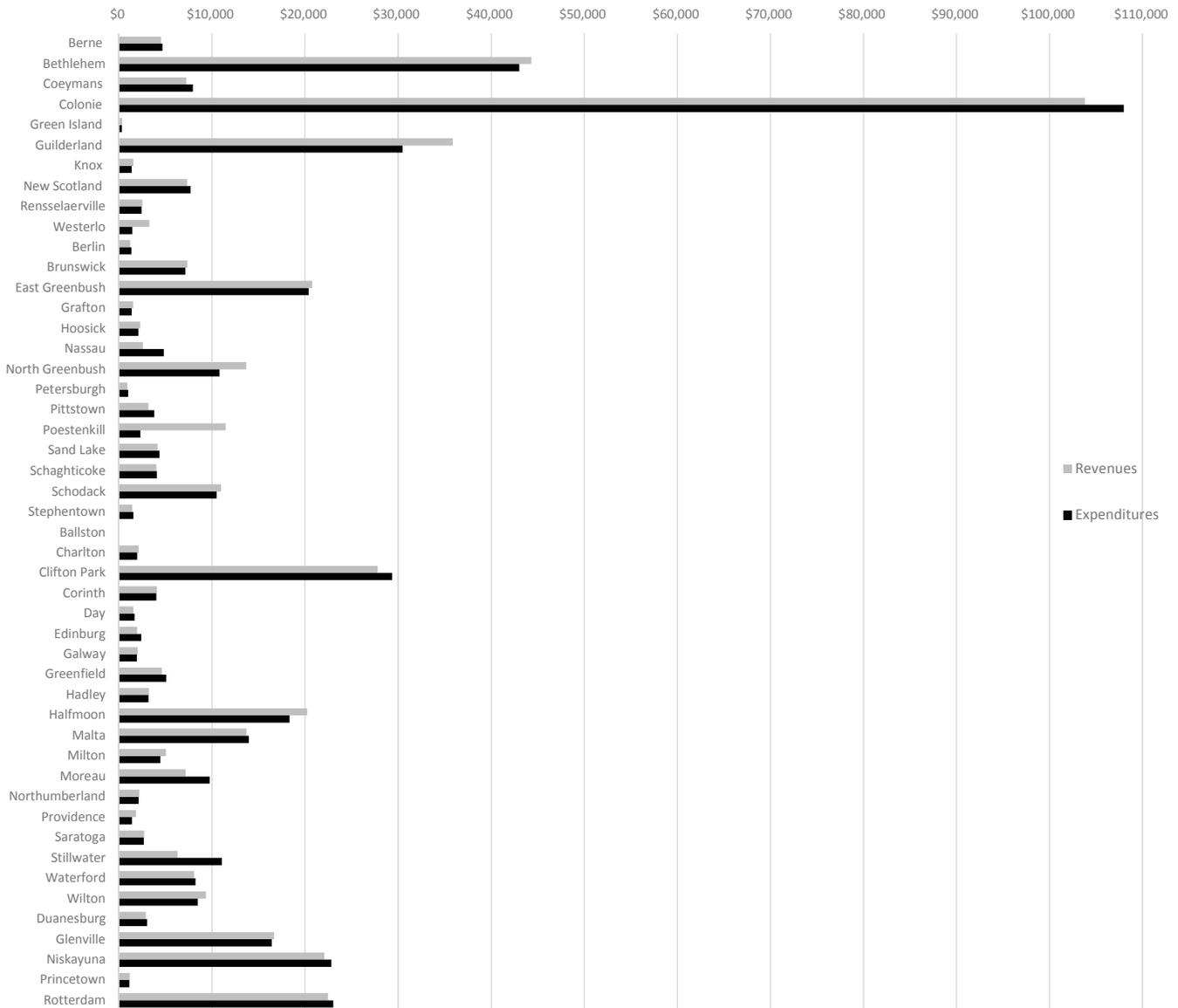
### County Revenues & Expenditures (\$1,000)



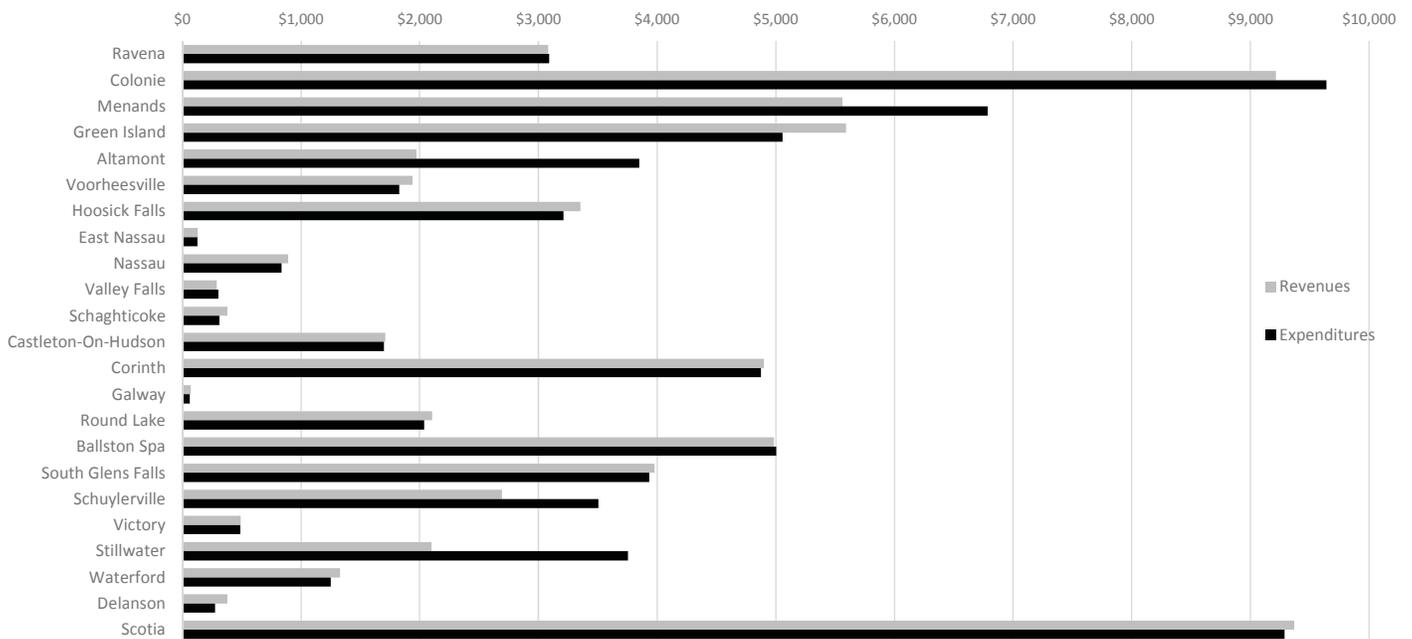
### City Revenues & Expenditures (\$1,000)



### Town Revenues & Expenditures (\$1,000)



### Village Revenues & Expenditures (\$1,000)



## Fiscal Year 2013 Municipal Revenues and Expenditures

*cont'd from page 2*

The region's 48 towns were fairly evenly split between towns that saw a "surplus" and towns that saw a "deficit"; 25 saw greater revenue than expenditures while 22 saw greater expenditures than revenue (Note—the Town of Ballston did not report any financial data for the 2013 report to the Comptroller's Office, and as such is left off of this list). The Town of Poestenkill's revenue was \$9.1 million more than expenditures, while the Town of Stillwater had \$4.7 million more in expenditures than revenue. The Town of Colonie saw revenue fall \$4.1 million short of expenditures, but it is the largest economy of any of the towns in the region. The Town's revenue of \$103.7 million in 2013 was the only one to surpass \$50 million. So large is the Town of Colonie's economy that its revenue accounts for 96% of the combined revenue of the next three largest economies (Bethlehem, Guilderland, and Clifton Park). Lastly, 15 of the 23 villages within the region saw revenue surpass expenditures in 2013. These "surpluses" were modest, with the largest equaling \$536,000. The largest "deficit" was in the Village of Altamont, recording \$1.8 million more in expenditures than revenue.

Again, these data are only to provide a general overview of the economic situation within any municipality. Each municipality is responsible for its own budget, and budgets may reflect unknowable variables to the Comptroller's Office. Future issues of Capital District Data may explore the relationship between the Comptroller's annual report and actual municipal budgets to determine how closely the perceived surpluses or deficits correspond to actual budget surpluses and deficits.

A complete set of spreadsheets from the 2013 Fiscal Year Annual Report on Local Governments, including fire districts, special purpose units, joint activities, industrial development agencies, and a summary of all local government finances, are available on the Comptroller's website at: [https://www.osc.state.ny.us/localgov/datanstat/findata/index\\_choice.htm](https://www.osc.state.ny.us/localgov/datanstat/findata/index_choice.htm)

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## Region's Land Banks Look to have an Active Summer

*cont'd from p. 1*

Nine of these buildings are slated for demolition due to unsafe conditions. Four of the demolitions will be in the City of Schenectady's Eastern Avenue neighborhood, and are part of a broader effort to revitalize the area. Three of the demolitions are taking place in conjunction with an effort by Habitat for Humanity to build new affordable housing for local residents.

The remaining eight buildings will be rehabilitated and brought up to modern code. This requires the removal of asbestos, as well as other environmental improvements, before the property can be sold to a private owner. Five of these properties will be in Schenectady's Eastern Avenue neighborhood as well, illustrating the land bank's commitment to the neighborhood.

The Albany County Land Bank, with Executive Director Katie Bronson, is also gearing up for a busy summer. In February, the land bank acquired 123 properties, most in the City of Albany. These properties are concentrated in the Arbor Hill, West Hill, and South End neighborhoods. That land bank has identified these neighborhoods as focus areas because of the high concentration of blighted properties causing a negative impact on the community.

Much like the Capital Region Land Bank, the Albany County Land Bank is approaching their properties with a variety of strategies. Six properties are slated for demolition due to hazardous conditions. These properties are too neglected to be salvaged and are in immediate threat of collapse. Six other properties will be stabilized. Stabilization is an important strategy when multiple buildings share a common wall, such as a row house. Without stabilization, the building will continue to deteriorate. This impacts the value of the vacant property as well as the neighboring properties. Finally, three buildings are in the process of being rehabilitated so that they may be habitable.

Lastly, the Troy Community Land Bank is the newest of the region's land banks. Formed in late 2014, the Troy Community Land Bank is still in the early stages of organizing itself under Acting Director Monica Kurzejeski. The land bank has acquired its first set of properties and is looking to expand to meet the needs of the community.

For further information on the land banks please visit, <http://capitalregionlandbank.org/>; <http://www.albanycounty.com/landbank>; and <http://www.troycommunitylandbank.org/home.html>

## Employment, Unemployment, & Unemployment Rates

Employment	Mar 14	Apr 14	May 14	Jun 14	Jul 14	Aug 14	Sep 14	Oct 14	Nov 14	Dec 14	Jan 15	Feb 15	Mar 15
Albany County	149.5	149.8	150.2	151.5	150.3	149.4	148.5	150.6	149.5	148.6	148.0	148.2	149.5
Rensselaer County	77.1	77.3	77.5	78.2	77.6	77.1	76.6	77.7	77.1	76.7	76.3	76.4	77.1
Saratoga County	110.0	110.4	110.6	111.7	110.9	110.2	109.4	111.0	110.1	109.4	108.9	109.1	110.1
Schenectady County	72.1	72.2	72.4	73.1	72.5	72.0	71.6	72.6	72.1	71.7	71.4	71.5	72.1
Capital District Region	408.7	409.7	410.7	414.5	411.3	408.7	406.1	411.9	408.8	406.4	404.6	405.2	408.8
Unemployment	Mar 14	Apr 14	May 14	Jun 14	Jul 14	Aug 14	Sep 14	Oct 14	Nov 14	Dec 14	Jan 15	Feb 15	Mar 15
Albany County	8.3	7.1	7.5	7.9	8.2	7.7	7.3	6.9	6.9	6.6	8.0	7.5	6.7
Rensselaer County	4.9	4.1	4.2	4.3	4.5	4.2	4.0	3.8	3.8	3.8	4.7	4.4	4.0
Saratoga County	6.2	5.2	5.1	5.2	5.3	5.0	4.9	4.7	4.7	4.7	5.7	5.6	5.1
Schenectady County	4.5	3.9	4.0	4.0	4.3	4.1	3.9	3.6	3.6	3.5	4.2	4.0	3.7
Capital District Region	23.9	20.3	20.8	21.4	22.3	21.0	20.1	19.0	19.0	18.6	22.6	21.5	19.5
Unemployment Rates	Mar 14	Apr 14	May 14	Jun 14	Jul 14	Aug 14	Sep 14	Oct 14	Nov 14	Dec 14	Jan 15	Feb 15	Mar 15
Albany County	5.3%	4.5%	4.8%	4.9%	5.2%	4.9%	4.7%	4.4%	4.4%	4.2%	5.2%	4.8%	4.3%
Rensselaer County	6.0%	5.0%	5.1%	5.2%	5.5%	5.2%	4.9%	4.7%	4.7%	4.7%	5.8%	5.5%	4.9%
Saratoga County	5.3%	4.5%	4.4%	4.4%	4.6%	4.4%	4.3%	4.1%	4.1%	4.2%	5.0%	4.9%	4.4%
Schenectady County	5.9%	5.1%	5.2%	5.2%	5.6%	5.3%	5.1%	4.8%	4.8%	4.7%	5.6%	5.3%	4.8%
Capital District Region	5.6%	4.8%	4.9%	4.9%	5.2%	5.0%	4.8%	4.5%	4.5%	4.5%	5.4%	5.1%	4.6%
New York State	7.1%	6.1%	6.2%	6.2%	6.5%	6.1%	5.8%	5.7%	5.7%	5.6%	6.5%	6.4%	5.8%
United States	6.8%	5.9%	6.1%	6.3%	6.5%	6.3%	5.7%	5.5%	5.5%	5.4%	6.1%	5.8%	5.6%

Source: New York State Department of Labor, and the U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics. Note: Data are NOT seasonally adjusted  
 Figures in 1,000s



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Daniel M. Harp Jr., Editor

### Registration for the 2015 APA Region 1 Conference is Now Open!

The conference will be held in Saratoga Springs from June 24th through the 26th. This will be an excellent opportunity for local planners to interact with colleagues from across the North East and learn about where the profession is heading.

The Conference will host a wide variety of sessions, ranging from planning for the blind to patterns and trends in demographics. The conference will provide sessions to fit all interests and expertise.

To attend the conference please register at <http://aparegion1.org/registration/>. If you are an APA Member you will receive a discounted rate if you register early. Student registration for the three day conference is just \$75.

Regional conferences are not a regular occurrence, especially in the Capital Region. Take this opportunity to network and learn about some exciting new trends taking place in the planning world. For more information please go to <http://aparegion1.org/>. See you in June!

### Consumer Price Index

2013-14 Percent Change in CPI: 1.6223%

Unadjusted CPI	Mar-14	Apr-14	May-14	Jun-14	Jul-14	Aug-14	Sep-14	Oct-14	Nov-14	Dec-14	Jan-15	Feb-15	Mar-15
U.S. City Average	236.3	237.1	237.9	238.3	238.3	237.9	238.0	237.4	236.2	234.8	233.7	234.7	236.1
Northeast Urban Average	252.4	252.5	253.6	253.6	253.8	253.2	253.2	252.7	251.8	250.5	250.0	250.6	251.5
% Change From Same Month in Previous Year	Mar 13- Mar 14	Apr 13- Apr 14	May 13- May 14	Jun 13- Jun 14	Jul 13- Jul 14	Aug 13- Aug 14	Sep 13- Sep 14	Oct 13- Oct 14	Nov 13- Nov 14	Dec 13- Dec 14	Jan 14- Jan 15	Feb 14- Feb 15	Mar 14- Mar 15
U.S. City Average	1.5%	2.0%	2.1%	2.1%	2.0%	1.7%	1.7%	1.7%	1.3%	0.8%	-0.1%	0.0%	-0.1%
Northeast Urban Average	1.5%	1.6%	2.0%	1.9%	1.8%	1.3%	1.2%	1.4%	0.9%	0.4%	-0.4%	-0.3%	-0.4%

Source: U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics

1982-84 = 100

Note: Data are NOT Seasonally Adjusted

# 2015 Capital District Data Reader Survey

## Question 1

How often does an issue of Capital District Data provide you with new data related to your projects or programs?

- Rarely (1 issue or less annually)       Occasionally (2 to 3 issues annually)       Often (4 to 5 issues annually)       Regularly (6 issues annually)

## Question 2

Does Capital District Data present data in a meaningful way that is easily understood?

- No- data is not presented effectively       Occasionally- data is presented satisfactorily       Yes- data is communicated effectively

If you answer "No" please specify why you feel that data is not currently presented in a meaningful way in the space below.

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## Question 3

Historically, Capital District Data has concentrated on data dissemination as opposed to data analysis. Would an emphasis on data analysis be helpful?

- Yes       No

Question 4

Implementing data analysis on select data sets may result in fewer detailed tabular data sets being included in issues of Capital District Data. Would you prefer the report maintain a focus on data dissemination, or a greater emphasis on analysis?

- A strong preference for data dissemination only
- A preference for a focus on data dissemination, with analysis on limited data sets only
- A preference for a focus on data analysis, dissemination of select data sets limited
- A strong preference for a focus on data analysis only
- No preference

Question 5

Would the addition of news items related to important planning issues be desirable?

- Yes
- No

Question 6

Do you prefer an electronic or hard-copy of Capital District Data?

- Electronic
- Hard-copy

Question 7

Which topics would you like to see covered in future issues of Capital District Data?

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Question 8

If you have a particular issue or comment regarding how Capital District Data can better serve your needs, please provide a brief description below.

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**Thank you for your time!**

If you are returning this by email, please scan the survey and email it to [CDRPC@CDRPC.org](mailto:CDRPC@CDRPC.org)

If you wish to fax us your survey, our fax number is 518-453-0856

All survey can be addressed to Dan Harp, Assistant Planner. Capital District Regional Planning Commission