

## “Local Capital Planning in Non-Metropolitan Communities: Practices and Prospects from New York State for a Revitalized Future”

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Mike Hattery is director of local government studies and a senior fellow at the Rockefeller Institute of Government in Albany, New York. He has a range of experience as a student of state and local government in New York. He has conducted applied research and community-based technical assistance and developed educational programs for state and local officials. His work and interests are centered in the areas of public finance, organization, and service delivery. 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 nonmetro regions. He has served as an elected governing board member for village, town, and county government.

**Summary and Findings:** Public infrastructure is a key element for community health and development. For many rural community centers, the hope for economic and community revitalization is dependent upon an improved and well-maintained public infrastructure that includes streets and highways, safe and ample public water and waste water, and desirable downtowns. In this paper we outline the magnitude of the infrastructure investment problem in New York State and present the results of a recent survey of local government capital planning practices in the state. These results demonstrate that, despite decades of manuals, training initiatives, and good intentions, local capital planning practices remain in disrepair. In response, we review what kinds of strategies have worked and the capacity needs that exist to begin helping rural local government organizations move down the road to substantive capital planning and community investment.

**Implications for Policy and Practice:** Our survey results indicate that there is substantial room for improvement to increase the number of governments planning for capital investment; lengthen the horizon of planning; and enhance the process of prioritizing capital projects in the plan. While our current environment makes it difficult for local governments to change course fiscally and increase capital investment, it may be a prime time to change institutional practices in preparation for the future. A broad strategy to facilitate and improve multiyear capital planning and investment for rural governments in New York State is outlined, which requires addressing important capacity needs among local governments.