

Dear Governor Eliot Spitzer and Members of the State's Budget Office:

I congratulate you for setting up a process, especially hearings, to allow citizens to make comments in advance of next year's budget.

Our organization, Syracuse United Neighbors, supports the call for a "Housing Investment Fund" a strategy that would allow for other public and private funds to address affordable housing needs of low income residents in New York. Several other aggressive cities and states have housing trust funds that has dedicated funding, serves diverse housing markets, encourages local investment, and creates mixed income and accessible communities. This should be on Elliott's "DAY TWO" calendar. SUN is a member of Empire State Housing Alliance. The need is great and the current level of funding barely scratches the surface.

Our organization is funded under the DHCR's Neighborhood Preservation Program (NPP). As the Director I understand that the Budget Department believes this is MEMBER ITEM monies from our legislature. I have to object to this and encourage your staff to find out what Neighborhood and Rural Preservation Companies do around this state. AND unfortunately I understand that our annual required reports never make it in the hands of the legislature because DHCR (especially under the last governor) has not issued an annual report as required. I think that the last report was issued sometime in the early 1990's. Shame, Shame and Shame. Taxpayers deserve to know what we do with their money.

Syracuse United Neighbors is a 30 year old organization that counsels people and completes housing loan and grant housing rehabilitation applications and property tax exemptions, makes housing code complaints, educates people about homeownership, works with people to prevent foreclosures, advocate for more local funding for housing, demolition and vacant house rehabilitation.

We are proud of our anti-crime/anti-drug initiatives. We are a 2006 3rd place recipient of a \$10,000 national award from Metlife. We organize neighborhood associations to fight for neighborhood improvements from street paving, new park equipment, city ordinances, trash clean-ups, public safety, and educate our residents.

Thank you,

Richard Puchalski
Executive Director