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Authorities Budget Office Issues Follow-up Report on Syracuse Urban Renewal Agency

The New York State Authorities Budget Office (ABO) today issued its report of the Syracuse Urban Renewal Agency (SURA). The report concludes that the SURA Board of Directors allows the City to use the SURA to hire individuals for city positions rather than work exclusively as SURA staff. This practice is inconsistent with provisions of General Municipal Law and contrary to opinions issued by the State Comptroller's Office. This longstanding practice enables the City to circumvent civil service rules, under report its city workforce and may allow for the misuse of grant funds to offset the cost of city operations. It also represents a clear violation of the fiduciary duty that the SURA board has to act in the best interests of the agency. A number of these findings were first identified in an ABO review of SURA that was conducted in September 2009, but have gone unaddressed by SURA and the City of Syracuse.

The report also determined that SURA's continued existence no longer serves a necessary public purpose and recommends that it be dissolved. The report concludes that the Greater Syracuse Property Development Corporation (GSPDC), a land bank corporation recently formed by Onondaga County and the City of Syracuse, serves much the same purpose as SURA, making SURA's functions duplicative. The City also would retain general powers over urban renewal programs under General Municipal Law. The ABO argues that terminating SURA would also address the hiring abuses described in its report.

A copy of the report can be found at: www.abo.ny.gov.