11/17/26

OC3 Remarks: Downtown Flower Project

Good evening. I'm Sarah Marshall and John Costello, speaking on behalf of OC3, the Oneida City Center Committee.

OC3 was formed in 2016, and for ten years we've helped fund the flowers in the large pots downtown. At first, OC3 paid alone. Then the city joined us, and we worked with city planners Cassie Rose and later Barb Henderson. Historically, OC3 has paid about 60 percent and the city about 40. In 2025, fifty large pots cost $14,800, watering included. OC3 paid $8,480 and the city paid $6,320. It was a true partnership.

2026 was different. OC3 was not included in planning decisions, even though our president and treasurer both have offices on Main Street. We met virtually once with Kyle Lovell, who agreed to find out whether Jake's Greenhouse would also water the flower pots. We never heard back. According to the February 17 Council minutes, the city contracted with Jake's Greenhouse for 72 hanging baskets at $11,279.28, of which $8,400 was watering. Without an answer, OC3 paid DeBrucque's $8,480 for 30 pots, watering included, to keep the program going.

Combined, 2026 cost $19,759.28, nearly $5,000 more than 2025. Baskets cost less each, but they are much smaller than our 30-inch pots and, as Gary DeBrucque told us, dry out faster and need watering every other day. Which approach gives downtown the best value is a fair question, and one partners should answer together, before money is committed.

We've spoken with Ward 4 Councilor Janet Jones, who assured us OC3 will be part of flower planning next year. We're grateful. But on November

10, Scott Babcock, the City Maintenance Supervisor, asked Tracy DeBrucque for a quote on hanging baskets. We heard about it from DeBrucque's the next day. Planning for 2027 appears to be underway, and we still have not met with anyone from the city about it.

We're not here to look backward. We'd welcome Mr. Babcock's input, and we'd ask that OC3, which has helped fund this project for ten years, be part of the conversation too.

Here's what we're asking:

First, include OC3 in 2027 planning starting now, with a first meeting before the end of [December].

Second, name one city point of contact, and we'll name ours.

Third, confirm this in writing so it carries across staff changes.

Fourth, compare pots, baskets, and a combination of both on total cost, size, and visual impact.

Fifth, confirm the funding split going forward.

After ten years, OC3 isn't asking for control. We're asking for a seat at the table. Thank you.

Downtown Oneida Flowers: 2025 vs. 2026

Prepared by OC3 (Oneida City Center Committee, Inc.), founded 2016

The Numbers

	2025	2026
Format	50 large 30" pots (watering included)	72 hanging 14" baskets (city) + 30 large 30" pots (OC3)
City paid	$6,320	$11,279.28 (of which $8,400 was watering)
OC3 paid	$8,480	$8,480 (30 pots, after a $400 vendor discount)
Total	$14,800	$19,759.28
OC3 share	about 57%	about 43%
City share	about 43%	about 57%

Change in combined cost: +$4,959.28. OC3's payment was flat, so the entire increase fell on the city.

Source for the city's 2026 amount: February 17, 2026 Common Council minutes.