

## **Topical Lunch Summary**

**May 14, 2018**

### **Building Equitable, Sustainable and Vibrant Local Communities in Erie County**

**Hosts: Dhyana Gonzalez, Basil Safi**

#### Summary:

As part of Engaged Cornell's strategy to build collaborative relationships between faculty and partners, the Office of Engagement Initiatives and the Atkinson Center co-organized the May 14th event, titled, "Building Equitable, Sustainable and Vibrant Local Communities in Erie County", to reflect a unique opportunity for Cornell to learn about specific initiatives in Erie County that could benefit from faculty and student involvement.

ILR's office in Buffalo was vital to the planning of the event, as was the participation of Cornell Cooperative Extension of Erie County. The Atkinson Center's topical lunch format provided a causal setting for a presentation and conversation with Erie County Executive Mark Poloncarz and Deputy County Executive Maria Whyte. The approach of the Poloncarz administration involves effective utilization of capital and physical assets, human and community concerns, and environmental considerations.

Mark, Maria, and their team see the key to his administration's success is to create strong partnerships with other levels of government, the private and non-profit sectors, educational institutions and community groups. They gave a 30-minute presentation about what actions were taken to meet the Paris Climate Accord in Erie County, demonstrating that meeting the Paris goals is not as difficult as federal executive officials contend. Following the discussion on actions taken by Erie County government to address Climate Change, attendees were invited to stay for two roundtable discussions, one about the county's initiatives around Land Use and Redevelopment, and the other on the administration's approaches to building equitable, sustainable, and vibrant local communities.