



NEWS FROM
ULSTER COUNTY
County Executive Jen Metzger

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Ulster County Executive Jen Metzger Delivers 2025 State of the County Address, Highlighting Progress on Housing, Mental Health & Investments in Local Economy, Climate and Community Resilience

KINGSTON, NY - Ulster County Executive Jen Metzger delivered her 2025 State of the County address on Thursday evening at SUNY Ulster in Stone Ridge, highlighting progress on key initiatives, including affordable housing, mental health services, climate resilience, transportation infrastructure, and support for agriculture, local businesses, the arts, and recreational opportunities for residents.

"We're investing in meeting our residents' immediate needs while strengthening the foundations for a sustainable, resilient, and thriving Ulster County for generations to come," **said Ulster County Executive Jen Metzger**. "We're creating housing that people can afford, tackling mental health and addiction challenges, investing in climate adaptation and a clean energy economy, bolstering transportation infrastructure and service, and supporting our families, seniors, farmers, workers, and local businesses."

Among the initiatives highlighted in the address:

- **Housing** - The 2025 State of the County address shared updates on current efforts to create affordable housing, including:
 - **The Golden Hill project**, a partnership of the County, Pennrose, and Family of Woodstock on the former site of the County jail in Kingston, will include 164 units of high-quality housing for seniors and families with incomes as low as

- 30% of median income. The project is under construction and ahead of schedule, with a move-in date for the first apartments as early as November.
- **The Quality Inn** redevelopment by RUPCO, with County support, is under construction and will create 83 units of permanent supportive housing for vulnerable and homeless individuals and families in the Town of Ulster, with a move-in date of Summer 2026.
 - **Silver Gardens** in Highland, a project of Marlborough Associates and RUPCO that also benefited from County support, is under construction and ahead of schedule. The project will create 57 units of low-income senior housing, with a move-in date of November 1.
 - The **County Housing Action Fund**, established by County Executive Metzger and the Legislature in 2023, is supporting affordable housing projects in New Paltz, Hurley, Saugerties, and Kingston, with both home ownership and rental opportunities. These projects — most of which are under construction — will add 119 affordable homes, with move-in dates this year and in early 2026.
 - The **Plus One Home program** has awarded 54 homeowners with grants to build an Accessory Dwelling Unit on their property and keep the rent affordable for at least 10 years.
 - The **Ulster County Housing Development Corporation (HDC)** will be leveraged to build housing in Ellenville on County-owned property, across the street from the Trudy Farber Building. Through the HDC, the County will also redevelop the **Elizabeth Manor** property in Kingston to create permanent affordable housing for families.
 - In total, County-supported housing will **add nearly 500 affordable homes** to Ulster County.
- **Strengthening Care for Mental Health and Substance Use** - County Executive Metzger shared updates on this priority of her administration, including progress in providing more youth with direct mental health care through the establishment of a new clinic for children and families, which is in development for the Ulster County Center for Well-Being. Additionally:
 - This spring, a **new crisis support center** will open at the Ulster County Center for Well-Being in Kingston to support community members in crisis no matter the time of day or night.
 - A **new state-funded street outreach team** is operational in Ulster County and is helping homeless individuals with severe mental health challenges and connecting them with shelter.

- \$250,000 in opioid settlement funds has been set aside to create a **shared drug- and alcohol-free supportive residence**.
 - County Executive Metzger also highlighted the nationally-recognized work of Sheriff Juan Figueroa and his ORACLE program team on harm reduction, crisis intervention, and treatment.
 - Through the collective work of the County Mental Health Department, the ORACLE program, and community partners, there has been a **major reduction in the numbers of overdoses and related fatalities** in the past year — by 33% and 45%, respectively.
- **Transportation** - County Executive Metzger reported that UCAT broke a new record in ridership, with half a million riders last year, and said that she intends to keep service free. The **UCAT Route Optimization Plan** will be released this year, phasing in improvements in routes and scheduling over the next three years, beginning with more frequent service between New Paltz and Kingston later this year.
 - **Climate** - The County Executive detailed initiatives to address climate change and protect our communities from impacts already occurring. These include:
 - The County continues to **electrify the bus fleet**, and recently installed 480 solar panels on UCAT's roof to power electric buses.
 - The County is expanding **EV infrastructure**, adding charging that is faster, reaches more remote areas of the County, and can provide power under any conditions. New high-speed charging hubs will be installed in the Village of Ellenville and Town of Ulster, thanks to state and federal funding; a bank of chargers will be added at the Ashokan Trail parking lot in Boiceville, in collaboration with NYC Department of Environmental Protection; and the region's first off-the-grid charging station has been installed in Shokan on Route 28, powered by solar and battery storage.
 - This summer, the County will open a second round of EV charging grants for towns and villages, funded by an ARPA program created by the County Legislature.
 - County buildings continue to be upgraded using the **\$18M Decarbonization Reserve**, improving efficiency, installing heat pumps and geothermal, and adding solar and battery storage. Improvements to building energy controls, alone, will **save taxpayers nearly \$500,000 on energy costs**.
 - This summer, construction will begin on a new **County Emergency Communications Center** in New Paltz, that will be climate-smart, resilient, and capable of withstanding a disaster, with help from a \$2 million NYSERDA grant.

- The **Climate Corps** program will continue this summer — a paid, project-based summer internship program, now in its third year, to give students hands-on experience working on climate-related projects in County government. In the two years since the program began, 30 interns have successfully completed 23 climate-related projects with 11 different County departments.
- **Agriculture** - With close to 500 farms in Ulster County, together generating more than \$105 million in annual sales, agriculture is critical to the local economy and long-term food security. To address challenges and support the long-term success of farms and agricultural businesses:
 - The County completed the **2024 Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan**, the first update in nearly three decades that provides a comprehensive blueprint for actions to support farm viability, sustainability, and value-added production.
 - The County Executive announced her proposal to create a new **Revolving Loan Fund** for agricultural projects, capitalized at \$500,000.
 - The County is assisting farmers in improving soil health, upgrading farm equipment to be more energy efficient, and strengthening the resilience of farms to the impacts of climate change through the **Agricultural Crisis Relief Program**, created by the Legislature with ARPA funding. The Ulster County Soil and Water Conservation District received funding to purchase equipment to rent at low cost to farms to improve soil health and reduce water needs. The County is also launching a **grant program** for farms in the coming months in partnership with the Hudson Valley Agri-business Development Corporation.
- **Investing in Our Workers** - the County Executive highlighted ongoing work to help residents facing financial and other barriers to employment and training, providing support to pursue careers in high-demand fields. In 2025, the County will:
 - Continue to support **workforce development at iPark** in the Town of Ulster, alongside a new Ulster BOCES Career and Technical Center that will serve up to 1,800 students.
 - Advance a new **Paid Family Leave Program for County employees**, proposed by the County Executive, to bond with a newborn or adoptive child while maintaining financial stability. This County program will offer a full salary for up to 12 weeks of leave, ensuring that employees can care for their new families without financial stress.

- **Small Business Support** - The County is re-energizing its revolving loan fund to support new and existing small businesses, capitalized at \$1.2 million, and will begin offering **low-interest loans** this year that can be utilized for working capital, energy efficiency upgrades, machinery and equipment, and reserve fund guarantees.

- **Redeveloping Derelict Properties** - The County's Economic Development team secured a \$10 million Restore NY grant for National Resources to transform the former IBM property in the Town of Ulster into a modern hub of education and industry; and another \$1.6 million Restore NY grant to renovate the abandoned Wellington Hotel in Pine Hill and create affordable housing, a grocery store, and cafe for the community to gather.

- **Arts & Culture** - In Ulster County, the creative economy generates \$537 million in annual revenue and \$148 million in wages, and directly supports 3,500 jobs. Recognizing the importance of this sector of the economy, the County is completing its first **Arts and Culture Master Plan**, expected to be finalized and presented to the Legislature in April. The County already took an important step in the 2025 Budget to support this sector along with open space, creating a new County position — **Director of Arts, Culture, and Open Spaces**. The office will develop and maintain a calendar of arts and cultural events around the County, support public art projects, manage a resource hub for artists, and promote our parks and open spaces.

- **Trails and Recreation** - The County completed several major rail trail projects in partnership with the Open Space Institute in 2024 that benefited from County ARPA funding, including a new section of the O&W rail trail between Accord and Kerhonkson and another section stretching from the Village of Ellenville to Port Ben. The County also helped complete the long-awaited O&W Connector Trail to Kingston, which bridges urban and rural communities and connects to the city's 27-mile Greenline system. In 2025, the County will complete the design of a **rail trail segment in Shandaken**, on the U&D corridor. Additionally:
 - The County has invested \$1.7 million to improve 17 local parks around the County, thanks to an ARPA-funded grant program created by the Legislature. The Ellenville/Wawarsing **community pool** will be fully refurbished, and the **County-owned pool in New Paltz** is being repaired and rebuilt, both thanks to state grants secured by the County that total \$3.6 million, and \$3.8 million, respectively.
 - At the County pool in New Paltz, for the first time, the County will offer **free season passes** to seniors on Medicaid and residents who receive SNAP.

- The **Nature Bus**, a free service to access local parks and outdoor destinations that runs Saturdays from mid-April through October, will be back in 2025, with updated routes — including a route from New Paltz.
- **Accessible, Responsive, and Participatory Government** - County Executive Metzger announced the upcoming summer launch of a new County website, fully redesigned to be user-friendly, accessible, easy-to-navigate, and responsive to community needs.

The evening's program included a performance by student pianist Annabelle Brutvan, along with a ceremonial Posting of the Colors by the Ulster County Sheriff's Office Honor Guard. Recordings of the event can be found on the Ulster County Executive's Facebook page and will be posted on the Ulster County Government website and Ulster County Executive YouTube channel.

The County Executive's address was offered in real-time Spanish language translation and American Sign Language interpretation, a practice that started in 2023 with County Executive Metzger's first State of the County address.

A full transcript of the County Executive's 2025 State of the County Address is attached.

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