



ALBANY COUNTY
STATE OF THE COUNTY

Daniel P. McCoy, Albany County Executive

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Quite a video. 2025 was a very busy year. I have always focused on addressing the everyday struggles of our residents. While there are those who talk of lofty goals based purely on ideology, I believe my job as your leader is to uphold your quality of life and to make your life easier through affordability, public safety, economic development, and investments in abandoned and forgotten spaces.

We are at a crossroads in this country. We live in a time of hyper-partisanship, anger, hate speech, and sadly, political violence. It's a period of division unlike nearly any other time in America. We have been fed the false narrative that it is us versus them.

This country has faced challenges before, challenges that have always seemed impossible to overcome. There was the economic recession of '08 and '09 and its aftermath, the COVID pandemic and economic shutdown, and so much more. We have found a way forward. However, how do we rise to this challenge when we see our neighbors as enemies? It was the great Martin Luther King, Jr. who said, "We must learn to live together as brothers or perish together as fools."

In his memory, I implore you all to join me in renewing our commitment to tolerance, acceptance, and respect for your fellow Americans. We may come from different races, practice different religions, been born in different parts of the world...we may be from different political parties, but we all want much of the same things in life. We all want to make a living, to put food on the table, to protect our family, and to find happiness and meaning. We all share the same hopes and dreams. And importantly, we all share the same future. There is always more that unites us than what divides us.

To be clear, unity does not mean we have to give up on policy debates and differing ideas on how government should operate. And one of the prime examples of those differences is the so-called "Big Beautiful Bill" championed by the President and Congress. I will not shy away from a fight when I know our most vulnerable are being stripped of SNAP and Medicaid benefits. Likewise, I will not hesitate to tell New York State not to pass the costs of these changes down to county taxpayers. When the gridlocked federal government refused to authorize SNAP payments during the government shutdown, I was proud that the County stepped up to partner with the Food Bank, the Food Pantries and United Way to deliver grocery store gift cards to those in need. If and when we get to the next

fiscal cliff, Albany County has set aside another \$700,000 to address food insecurity throughout our community.

As we continue to see uncertainty and dysfunction in Washington, like the recent blanket withholding of federal funding for childcare and temporary assistance for needy families, we must be prepared for the worst here at home. That is why I've made it a top priority to put Albany County in the strongest financial position possible, building our rainy-day fund to record levels. Our undesignated fund balance is a firewall for the short-sighted decisions made by the federal and state government; however, it is pennies compared to the massive amount of money we are talking about when these programs get frozen, cut, or passed down. Which is why I would have to implement a "Trump Tax" here in Albany County if these ideas actually become a reality.

But I do believe that here in Albany County, we are charting a different path. The beauty of our County is our diversity. Think about how different the City of Albany is when compared to the Towns of Westerlo or even Guilderland. How different Coeymans is from its neighboring Town of Bethlehem. Yet, I'm proud to say that between my office, Chairwoman Cunningham, Deputy Chairwoman Willingham, Majority Leader Feeney, and a breakaway group of Republicans in the Legislature, we've recently created a working partnership that chooses people over politics and ideology. We are working to make government more efficient and effective for the good of the County and disregarding what the national political parties say about each other. I want to take a moment to recognize the Legislative Leadership I just mentioned, along with County Legislators Zach Collins, Todd Drake, and Chris Smith. Thank you all for your dedication to good government.

I do believe that the State of the County is strong. It has gotten stronger over the last year, and it will continue to grow stronger as we put aside the egos and the politics and continue to do the people's business and govern with integrity.

Affordability is not just a campaign slogan. It is what we should focus on as government leaders, and it is directly tied to quality of life in a number of ways. I'm proud to say that we've worked tirelessly to keep the county in a strong financial position that has allowed us to cut the effective tax rate for the last twelve consecutive years. These efforts to invest in economic development and redevelopment ultimately increase property values across the County and grow

our tax base, allowing us to capture the growth of property valuation and overall tax revenue. We continue to look at the County's footprint to determine where we can consolidate our operations and sell off properties that don't further our mission, including our Probation Department building on South Pearl Street. That will soon be converted into workforce housing.

In partnership with both the Albany County Land Bank and the Advance Albany County Alliance, the County's Local Development Corporation, we've been aggressive in addressing blighted, abandoned, and contaminated properties and working towards putting them back to positive use. The Central Warehouse asbestos abatement has started, and it will be demolished hopefully by the end of 2026... HOPEFULLY. The former McDonald's in Downtown Albany will soon be brought back into use as a transportation hub. The AI Tech Steel site, with its existing power infrastructure, will soon be brought back to life as a future home of manufacturing. And Heritage Park near the airport will become the new HQ of the New York National Guard. These are just a few examples of projects that the County has invested in that will pay dividends by returning these troubled parcels back to the tax rolls.

The Alliance, as well as the I.D.A. and C.R.C., have made a massive impact in helping our small businesses grow and thrive through grants and loans, including through the STAGE Act that I championed, as well as the AI Tech Loan Fund.

It's no secret that far too many of our people are living paycheck to paycheck. There is no quality of life if you cannot afford the roof over your head, and Albany County lacks quality housing units. Over the last year, my office has been hard at work in partnership with Chairwoman Cunningham and Deputy Chairwoman Willingham to develop a new revolving affordable housing loan fund that will encourage the development and rehabilitation of homes and rental units that will be within reach of those with lower incomes in every corner of the County.

And 2026 marks the second year of the County's first-time homebuyer program with the Affordable Housing Partnership. This collaboration helps families navigate the complex world of real estate, banking, loans, and grants, and it's making a difference. In just the second half of 2025, this program has touched the lives of more than 1,200 individuals who have been connected with educational resources, getting them another step closer to home ownership.

It is crucial that when we prioritize affordability, that we also strive to make the County affordable for our older residents, who may have retired and often live on fixed incomes. We are prioritizing a number of property tax exemptions focused on bringing costs down.

And I'm excited to say that our Department for Aging program—Go Out, Let's Dine—will restart this year. Older residents can go to participating restaurants and get a free meal and socialize with friends and family.

I have made the redevelopment of the College of Saint Rose another important part of these affordability efforts. I'm proud to say that the former college will be the site of senior affordable housing, and that development will coincide with the opening of the City of Albany's only senior center, which is already hosting programs and events. With the relocation of our Veteran Services Bureau to the campus, we're making it easier than ever for former servicemen and women to access the benefits that they've earned.

And that is only a fraction of what we are currently doing and what we will do to activate the former college. The decision for the County to purchase a former college was a bold one, but what would have happened if we didn't? What would this neighborhood look like now if we hadn't acted? We've seen what happens when higher education facilities are abandoned. Blight, crime, falling property values, businesses losing revenue, and shutting their doors for good. Everyone has an opinion of what we should do, and we welcome those ideas because there really is unlimited potential. But time is not our friend. Opportunities have deadlines, and buildings continue to age. So, we have been acting responsibly and expeditiously to reenergize the campus.

One thing I think we can all agree on is the positive impact of the reopening of the Events and Athletics Center. It's where we're hosting a record number of free recreational programming for our seniors, our veterans, and youth of all ages. It won't be long before the kitchens are staffed and serving food. And the pool has now been open for months for learn-to-swim classes and open swim. And this is the real impact, because we know that knowing how to swim can save lives.

Parents want to be able to provide their children with the opportunity of youth sports and gainful recreational opportunities. But we've also seen youth sports explode into a \$40 billion industry nationally, with the average US family paying over \$1,000 on a single sport. Even A.A.U. can cost thousands of dollars for each season.

Here in Albany County, we're looking to create another path for families, offering free options on a range of programming that have been expanded well beyond the traditional athletics. Our Parks and Rec Department now has something for everyone.

To further expand access to free programming, I was proud to purchase the abandoned Gateway recreational facility in the heart of Cohoes, thanks in part to the State SWIMS grant that we won, and I want to thank Governor Hochul for her leadership on making this funding available. The building—named after legendary County Legislator Gil Ethier—has had to undergo extensive renovations before we could reopen. Thank you to our Department of General Services for working to get it open to the public.

Health and wellness also came in the form of a new Fitness Court in Berne, with another on the way for the Town of Westerlo, thanks in part to our Innovation Partnership with MVP Health Care.

Quality of life also includes public safety. We all experienced the spike in violent crime as we pressed on through the COVID pandemic. It's during these times especially that we are reminded of the important role law enforcement and first responders play in protecting our community. However, we were also reminded of the importance of investing in our young people.

Over the last two years, we have made youth interventions a top priority, identifying at-risk youth to prevent them from ever touching the criminal justice system while also creating innovative programs that rehabilitate youth to prevent them from committing additional crimes after they are convicted. And if someone is sent to jail, a key component of public safety is ensuring that when they re-enter society, they have the tools they need to live productive lives. Between our Department of Children, Youth, and Families and our Probation Department, we have never invested more on these efforts.

In 2025, we rolled out a range of new programs that build on dozens of outstanding legacy services.

And through a coordinated effort with the Capital Region Workforce Development Board, county funds have helped to create a jail re-entry program that helps individuals coming back into society find careers while supporting businesses who are part of the process.

We plan to do so much more. Project Growth, which teaches trades and life skills to young offenders, will be expanded for the first time since it was first started. Those who have already completed the original program will return to provide leadership and mentorship to the next generation and will receive stipends for their work.

Our Events and Athletics Center as well as The Gil in Cohoes will soon host Teen Night Programming, providing structured activities like e-sports and basketball, and most importantly—role models. And for the first time ever, our County Parks and Recreation Department will provide recreational programming specifically for at-risk youth. As part of our latest Raise the Age Plan that has been submitted to the State, we are requesting an additional \$400,000 in order to reopen the Evening Reporting Center.

And finally, when it comes to prevention services, we need to be even further ahead of the curve, and the only way to do that is by stopping truancy in its tracks. We are partnering with the City of Albany School District to restart our Truancy Abatement Program. By bringing together the school, the County, and the city, we can identify children with poor attendance and assist families in getting them back to school through home visits.

Additionally, we are working with a number of other school districts to utilize an artificial intelligence tool that helps schools communicate with parents, identify at-risk youth with unexcused absences, and connect with school intervention resources, all through a comprehensive A.I. platform that lessens the workload on school districts.

All of this represents millions of dollars in new spending in just the last year, spending dedicated to keeping children safe and on the right path.

And there is always more that can be done. However, many of these programs are funded through State Raise the Age. If we want to expand these programs and services even further, we need to change the slow, outdated Raise the Age funding model. We must move away from reimbursements and have the State give us the money up front.

As a former firefighter, I know firsthand the heavy responsibility and danger accepted by the men and women of our fire departments. I'm proud to say that Albany County has taken the lead on building the City of Albany's first and only fire training facility at the Port of Albany. We are currently engaging with an engineering firm for the design of the facility, partnering with experts from the Albany County Sheriff's Office and Albany Fire Department to ensure we build a top-notch facility. We anticipate having shovels in the ground by the end of the year.

Since COVID, we've also experienced quite an impact on mental health, addiction, and overdose deaths. Between the years of 2019 and 2022, we saw the devastating increase of overdose deaths from 62 to 128, more than doubling over that time period. They are mothers and fathers, sisters and brothers, children and friends. The great news is... last year, the number of overdose deaths dropped to 58... the lowest since before the COVID spike.

In 2018, Albany County took on the giant that is Big Pharma, suing them for their greedy business practices that put profit over human lives, causing the opioid epidemic. As a result, we have been awarded over \$8.2 million to date.

MOTOR, or Mobile Outreach, Treatment and Overdose Response, which received the National Achievement Award in July, has provided 233 services to nearly 200 individuals over the last year. This mobile clinic goes directly to those who have experienced an overdose wherever they are in the county and connects them with treatment and recovery services, peer advocates, and more. And we are getting more life-saving Narcan in the hands of residents than ever before.

It is critical for us to meet people where they are if they are living out on the street. And we cannot address the homeless crisis without fully addressing the mental health crisis.

That's why Albany County and the City of Albany invested \$1.8 million towards the Albany Navigates street homeless outreach program through our partnership with CARES. Dedicated social workers are traveling the entirety of the County and connecting people with mental health, addiction, and housing services to get them on the road to safety and recovery.

These efforts will be boosted by Albany County's newest groundbreaking street psychiatry program, which officially has boots on the ground, in which a nurse practitioner and their team of clinicians and counselors are able to prescribe desperately needed medication to people wherever they may be, those who are unable to bring themselves to a clinic, or those who have lost faith in a healthcare system that has failed them. I want to thank the City of Albany and Albany Police Chief Brendan Cox for their partnership on this, and I look forward to continuing this work with our new Mayor.... a round of applause for Dorsey, who has really hit the ground running in the first two months in office.

And while the death toll remains far too high, I remain cautiously optimistic that our efforts here at the County are turning these numbers around. I'm proud to say that the work of our Departments of Health and Mental Health through our Opioid Taskforce and our community partners is truly having a real impact. Since overdose deaths peaked in 2022 at 128, we have seen the annual death toll decline. Let's keep up this tremendous work to prevent as many tragedies as possible.

And when we invest in these types of programs that address homelessness, mental health, and substance abuse, it ultimately frees up the men and women of law enforcement to focus on their work, like solving and preventing violent crimes. The County's efforts serve to assist law enforcement in doing their jobs, and this is another way we are making our communities safer.

Another core pillar of quality of life is our parks and open spaces. I'm excited that the redevelopment of the Slingerlands trailhead and depot building of the County Rail Trail will be complete this summer. We are also investing in a new pocket park where the Rail Trail meets the Town of Bethlehem's new multi-use path that runs along Cherry Avenue.

In Berne, Albany County recently purchased Switzkill Park from the town. Hiking and biking trails will be reopened to the public, and it will serve as the home of a new outdoor art exhibit, similar to that of Storm King in Orange County and Art Omi in Columbia County. We will commission artists to create the art displays, and one of the buildings will eventually serve as an artist residence, furthering the County's commitment to the local arts and culture of the region.

And of course, I have to talk about Lawson Lake County Park... I'm thrilled to say that the Upper Camp is officially complete thanks to our partnership with MVP Health Care. It will serve as a vital tool to amplify the impact of our county's health and human service departments. These programs will officially be launched this spring. With this major renovation project now complete, we will once again set our sights on Lower Camp for further renovations and expansion of recreational opportunities.

But we cannot stop at protecting county-owned land. Part of making Albany County the greenest county in the State is going further to preserve forests and farmland.

Finally, each day we face new challenges and opportunities as technology continues to develop rapidly. In Albany County, we are embracing this and are actively looking at ways to weave Artificial Intelligence, or AI, into our work.

Affordability, public safety, economic development, and the reinvestment in forgotten public spaces—these efforts are creating a stronger, more prosperous, and more equitable Albany County. Nothing great can be done on your own. It takes everyone rowing in the same direction, singing from the same sheet of music. As President Lincoln once said, "A house divided against itself cannot stand."

Whether you're a Democrat or a Republican, a liberal or a conservative, no matter what level of government, we are stronger when we are unified as a single community. Let's continue the incredible progress we've seen over the last year and look ahead to an even brighter future. Unified as New Yorkers and as Americans. Thank you.