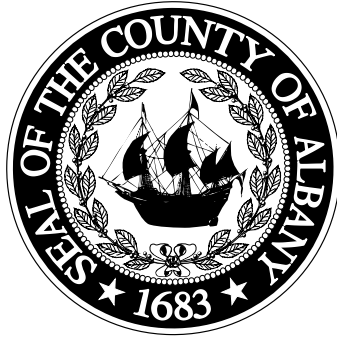




ALBANY COUNTY STATE OF THE COUNTY

Daniel P. McCoy, Albany County Executive

Tuesday, February 18, 2025

Good afternoon ladies and gentlemen. Thank you, Mike McLaughlin, for your kind words and introduction. I appreciate all of your hard work this past year as my Deputy County Executive.

As we enter into 2025, my 14th year as the County Executive, I want to share with you all we have accomplished and what my vision is for this year and beyond. The best way to do that is to actually show you.

VIDEO PLAYS

As you can see from that video, the state of our County is strong. I am hard at work addressing the issues that matter most to our residents; public safety, public health, affordability, and economic development.

Of course, to be an effective government we need to focus on our immediate challenges and also plan for the road ahead. I have taken steps this past year that will secure the future of Albany County for decades to come.

As the late President Jimmy Carter once said, “We appreciate the past. We are grateful for the present and we’re looking forward to the future with great anticipation and commitment.”

The fact that we are gathered here today on the former College of Saint Rose campus is a testament to that fact. When it was announced that this historic institution was going to close, I knew that something had to be done to

preserve this property. It couldn't be left unoccupied to become a magnet for crime, vandalism, and blight.

I refused to let that be our future. I saw an opportunity to preserve the campus, to create economic opportunities, and to provide new pathways to jobs and services. It had never been done before, but together with the help of Governor Hochul and our partners in the state legislature, we created the Albany County Pine Hills Land Authority, and successfully acquired the campus.

In the short time since winning the bid, we have already begun to make great progress in securing the future of the campus. We were here earlier this month with the Governor, in this very room, as she announced the new ON RAMP site to be located on this campus. It will create a workforce hub to prepare New Yorkers for growth in advanced manufacturing industries. It will also provide training in tech skills and then connect them to hands-on training elsewhere with our network of partners. This hub will provide opportunity for the unemployed and underemployed throughout the Capital Region.

I am also already laying the groundwork for several County Departments as well as a new Sheriff Sub Station to move in as soon as we have full ownership of the property. You will be seeing signs of life here on the campus as early as next month.

However, true transformation takes time, and we want to make sure we get this right. I am committed to a thoughtful

process to determine the long-term use of these spaces here at Saint Rose. I am working with community leaders, local businesses, and our residents to make this happen.

During bidding I ensured that the purchase of the campus balanced our fiduciary responsibility to the taxpayers of Albany County, with the benefits of owning this site. I remain committed to a government that is both efficient and effective, and 2025 will be the 11th year of tax rate decreases. However, unfunded mandates are straining our budget, forcing difficult choices, and placing an unfair burden on our taxpayers.

Instead of working with us, New York State continues to pass down responsibilities without the resources to support them. A prime example can be found in Article 730 of the Criminal Procedure Law, the section that dictates the process for restoring competency to stand trial. For decades we split this cost evenly with the state. When this cost sharing ended, Albany County was forced to cover \$1 million in extra costs in 2023 and over \$6 million in 2024.

Another example is Medicaid costs which have risen over 13% since 2022. This is clearly not sustainable, and it is imperative that something be done to change this.

I have also worked tirelessly to ensure that our economic growth is inclusive, so that prosperity reaches every corner of our community. We must focus on providing opportunities for individuals, young and old, to learn from

the past and move forward with dignity. Through collaboration with our state partners, local not-for-profit agencies, and local employers, Albany County has developed and implemented an employment readiness and retention program called Ready, Set, Work! Participants in this five-week intensive program gain marketable skills, improve interviewing techniques, overcome obstacles, apply job search tactics, keep their jobs, and correctly fill out employment applications. The ultimate objective is to secure a fulfilling and meaningful career, not just a job.

This is in addition to the recently established Albany County ReEntry Workforce Development Initiative which will provide comprehensive support and job readiness training to individuals released from the Albany County Correctional Facility. Each year in the United States, over 600,000 individuals are released from jails and prisons. Studies show 60-75% of them remain unemployed up to a year after release. This program is anticipated to significantly reduce repeat offenses and support the economic vitality of Albany County. We will empower these individuals to build a better future for themselves and their families and break the cycle of incarceration, all while supporting our local businesses in the process.

Albany County was also the first municipality in the state to implement a Probation Driver's Licensing Program that assisted probationers in obtaining their driver's license. This eliminates one of the obstacles that prevents them

from finding sustainable employment. The five-hour pre-licensing course targets individuals of all ages and ethnicities who did not previously have the opportunity to obtain a driver's license, which is often required of higher paying jobs, including those through local labor unions. And there are so many other programs that our Probation Department offers that get probationers on the right track.

As we work to strengthen the economy, we must ensure that our progress does not come at the cost of our environment. Investing in clean energy, clean infrastructure, and sustainable industries remains a priority for my administration. Albany County is hard at work to become the Greenest County in New York State, and we are making significant progress. We did a government operations and community greenhouse gas emissions inventory to assess Albany County's carbon footprint. In the past decade the emissions have decreased by 49% across all County operations, directly due to a reduction in overall energy consumption.

By purchasing land for preservation, we safeguard critical ecosystems, protect wildlife habitats, and ensure that residents can enjoy the natural beauty of the environment for generations to come. Albany County is in the final stages of acquiring Switzkill Farm in Berne, which we will remediate and restore so that it can once again be a community asset enjoyed by Albany County residents and visitors.

Looking at this issue on a larger scale, we developed a Climate Resiliency Plan for Albany County to address risks associated with climate-related hazards. We have identified the projects and strategies to build resilience, to help us adjust how we live, work, and play, and to keep us all safe from the impacts of climate change now and in the future.

The Broadway Transportation Study is nearing completion and should be finalized this spring. This study will help improve the transportation sector of Broadway from Downtown Albany to Watervliet, creating more sustainable and climate efficient roads. The implementation of green infrastructure such as improved tree canopies as well as conceptual designs for pedestrian and bike transportation that will greatly decrease our carbon footprint and increase safety for those walking and biking.

While many of the achievements I have outlined today will benefit the County as a whole, I have had a particular focus on the City of Albany. I've lived in Albany my entire life, and I have seen firsthand that it has not reached its full potential. Governor Hochul shares my sentiments which is why she announced a staggering \$400 million investment in the downtown area. It is clear that in order for Albany County as a whole to succeed, we need the City to thrive. If it falters, the ripple effects will be felt throughout the region.

I have taken a proactive approach to combat urban decay caused by vacant properties. This blight is more than an eyesore; it impacts safety, property values, and the moral of our community. We have remained focused on turning areas of neglect into centers of opportunity. That's why we created the Albany County Landbank in 2014, with the county investing over \$4 million so far.

The area surrounding State Street is important for the City. That is why we purchased the former Amo La Bella property to secure the site and will soon own not only the property on Wendell Avenue near the Albany Capital Center but another parcel adjacent to that.

With these sites around MVP Arena consolidated under one parcel, it will make it easier for us to redevelop this area in a way that serves the needs of the community and allows for new economic activity. We will soon be opening up a Request for Economic Interest seeking developers to partner with us on this initiative.

Perhaps the biggest example of the blight we are trying to address is the Central Warehouse, the biggest eyesore in upstate New York for decades. The end is near as we recently closed on the purchase of the property. In the coming months, we will see the start of asbestos removal, with demolition shortly thereafter. Thank you, Governor Hochul for your help support in this effort. Once the warehouse comes down, we will be left with a blank slate that will allow us to reimagine this area, where it's potential is no longer wasted.

Of course, to have a successful downtown you have to do more than just protect property. You have to ensure that residents and visitors feel safe and confident to explore what our city has to offer. Sheriff Apple has been a great partner, and has provided his resources and personnel to patrol the city and assist during public events. Through the Albany Navigates Street Homeless Outreach Pilot Program we are working to address homelessness in a way that uplifts those affected.

Additionally, we provide a range of services to city residents, including the transportation of children from the Boys & Girls Club for over a decade to Lawson Lake for programming as well as various other recreational activities. When it was announced that the roof of the city owned Swinburne Park ice rink was in danger of collapsing, we opened up our Learn to Skate program to everyone impacted.

The County continues to provide a wide range of essential services to the city, often at a scale that is more cost-effective than current city operations. I believe it is time to reevaluate shared services to create the most efficient use of resources. If we were to consolidate services between the City of Albany and Albany County, we could eliminate administrative costs, reduce bureaucratic overlap, and ensure taxpayer dollars are spent more effectively. Together, we could build a smarter, leaner government that puts residents first. It is not a decision to be made lightly, and in order for this transition to happen it would

need to be transparent, inclusive, and consider the needs of our residents. It has been done before in areas similar to ours, and it can be done again. Change can be challenging, but I believe this is the right path for our future.

I have laid out a vision for our County in 2025, but let me be clear: this agenda isn't just mine, it belongs to all of us. Real change does not happen because of one person or one speech. It happens when a community comes together, when we refuse to accept the status quo, and we lead by example. This is our moment. We cannot sit back and wait for success to come to us. We must take action to create opportunity and take Albany County to new heights. I will listen. I will lead. And I will never stop working for you. Because I believe in our future, and I believe in the power of this community to rise to the challenges before us. So, let's seize this moment together. Thank you, God bless you, and let's get to work!