



NEWS FROM

Ulster County
County Executive Patrick K. Ryan

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COUNTY EXECUTIVE RYAN RELEASES HOUSING ACTION PLAN

The action plan recommends the creation of an ongoing Housing Task Force, partnerships with developers to build housing within the fabric of existing neighborhoods on vacant lots, adaptive reuse of existing structures for housing, the creation of supportive and transition housing and the establishment of housing funds for housing initiatives in the County

KINGSTON, N.Y. - County Executive Ryan today released the Ulster County Housing Action Plan. Recognizing the current shortage of housing across a wide range of affordability levels and housing needs and the potential for COVID-19 to exacerbate our housing affordability challenges, County Executive Ryan announced the formation of a Housing Advisory Committee in partnership with the Ulster County Legislature earlier last year. The report, in partnership with the committee, demonstrates that the housing market was in crisis even before the pandemic and carefully examines the data and lays out the steps we need to take to address it. The Housing Action Plan recommends immediate action steps including: the creation of an ongoing Housing Task Force to advise the County Legislature and County Executive on housing policy and partnerships with developers to build housing within the fabric of existing neighborhoods on vacant lots, adaptive reuse of existing structures for housing, and the creation of supportive and transitional housing.

Additionally, the report introduces a Housing Smart Communities Initiative to support municipalities in increasing housing supply in their communities through measures such as developing a municipal Housing Action Plan, implementing zoning that supports housing development, adopting short term rental regulations, and identifying sites for housing development.

“We need to make sure that our frontline workers who have served our community during this pandemic from our teachers, our nurses and firefighters, restaurant and grocery workers— all the people who have kept us safe, fed, and well— can continue to live in the communities they serve,” **County Executive Ryan** said. “Housing is an economic development issue, a community health issue, and a moral issue. I’m calling on our whole community – elected officials, business leaders, our healthcare, education and environmental communities – to come together to address the housing crisis. We need to examine how we decide what to build and where and get beyond piecemeal, not-in-my-backyard conversations to proactive, community-driven solutions to building the housing we need.”

“Families and individuals need an affordable place to live,” **Chair of the Ulster County Legislature Dave Donaldson** said. “We will not overcome inequality, advance education, or build a stronger economy until we prioritize and invest in affordable housing and increase the supply of desperately needed supportive and transitional housing. We must establish dedicated housing funds with specific allocation targets that support housing development in Ulster County or this crisis will get worse.”

“I am a strong supporter of Ulster County’s Housing Action Plan, especially in light of the increasing inequalities in the Ulster County housing market,” **Town of New Paltz Supervisor Neil Bettez** said “I look forward to working with the County to create an environment where people from all socio-economic groups can live affordably.”

“The lack of affordable housing is not a Woodstock issue or a Plattekill issue, it is a regional problem,” **Town of Woodstock Supervisor Bill McKenna** said. “We need regional solutions so that our County can continue to thrive and prosper. The Housing Action Plan is a step in the right direction, an effort to bring us all together to solve this crisis. I look forward to working with the County and my fellow supervisors and townships to make this happen.”

“As an employer, I have seen firsthand how our housing shortage is impacting our ability to attract and retain workers,” **Chief Executive Officer of the Mohonk Mountain House Thomas**

Smiley said. “It is critical that we come together to tackle this issue and create housing that works for everyone in our community.”

The study recommends the following:

- **Establish an Ulster County Housing Task Force:** Municipal policies and actions are key to achieving housing goals. A county-level housing task force would support municipal housing efforts and facilitate the development of affordable housing.
- **Establish partnerships and collaborate with developers for scattered site redevelopment:** Throughout Ulster County, there are vacant housing units and parcels/lots that offer one possible housing solution in a market where supply and rising prices are an issue. The Ulster County Housing Task Force working with County departments should identify and inventory these sites. Once identified the County should create a portfolio of scattered site development, redevelopment, and/or adaptive reuse housing opportunities to offer to developers.
- **Increase the supply of supportive and transitional housing in Ulster County:** Supportive and transitional housing is of critical importance in Ulster County. Transitional housing is housing designed to help break the cycle of homelessness and poverty by providing affordable units with onsite services. The County should help identify appropriate locations for this type of housing and consider offering incentives to communities where these are sited.
- **Create a Housing Smart Communities Initiative:** Create a certification program through which Ulster County municipalities complete a series of housing actions to achieve certification as a Housing Smart Community. Certification should offer financial incentives from the County, guidance, technical support, and peer support.
- **Establish Housing Funds for Ulster County:** Create a dedicated source of funding for housing initiatives in the County. The funds would be used to support the creation of new housing and the preservation of existing housing, rental assistance, incentives for municipal participation in the Housing Smart Communities Initiative, and capital improvements for infrastructure to support housing development. This fund could also support the technical assistance and other efforts associated with the Housing Smart Communities Initiative.

The study found that across the county, family incomes are stagnant or declining, while housing prices and rents skyrocket. In two-thirds of Ulster County municipalities, a family making a typical income could afford fewer than ten percent of the homes on the market this fall. At 2018 market rents, someone earning the average renter wage rate would have to work 67 hours a week to afford a 2-bedroom apartment. Rents have only continued to increase since then. Fourteen percent of Ulster County homeowners, and nearly thirty percent of renters, are spending more than half of their income on housing, an amount that is totally unsustainable. Families with this level of housing cost burden are extremely vulnerable to any unexpected medical, repair, or other

emergency expense, which can disrupt their schooling or work, or even cause them to lose their home.

Ulster County designating the site of the old jail on Golden Hill for housing and is beginning a development process there. The concept plan, announced in November, calls for 80 units of senior housing and 80 units of workforce housing that are affordable at a range of 30 to 130 percent of area median income. The developer will be responsible for demolishing the old jail. Construction is projected to begin in 2022, with leasing and occupancy in late 2023.

To view the report and recommendations click [here](#).