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Season of Solutions: Tackling Rising Costs and State Mandates

By Executive Director Christopher A. Koetzle



As cooler days and nights begin to settle in, for many members, your minds are locked in on your town budgets. I remember vividly the difficulties of balancing municipal budgets in the face of stagnant revenue streams, ever-increasing health insurance costs and seemingly endless state mandates that all make it harder to stay under the state-imposed property tax cap. This is why I am so proud to say that the Association is laser-focused on these issues. In particular, we have launched a new health insurance program called **Revive NY**, which is designed to bring down premiums while preserving benefits and providing town employees more choices. Additionally, we have also launched another exciting program called **EPIC Fund NY**, which is a local government investment pool that will help local governments maximize their yields and provide more flexible options for investing capital. These two programs are designed to cut costs, increase return on capital and help our towns better balance their budgets and thereby better enabling them to focus on delivering their critical, core services.

As we approach the new legislative session, our Legislative Coordinator Chris Anderson is researching the long list of mandates and their impact on town budgets, the many burdens of PILOTs, and the difficult nature of applying for state grants. We are ready to fully fight again for the enactment of **SWAP – Safe Water Action Program** – that would provide annual, formula-based funding to municipalities for investments in their water and/or sewer infrastructure.

Knowing how burdensome grants are for local governments to source, write and administer, we launched a **Grants Assistance Program (GAP)** for small and rural towns, which have a particularly hard time winning competitive grants as they often lack the resources and bandwidth it takes to even apply. I want to thank Libby Schimer for her hard work on delivering this important program. A second round of GAP workshops will be announced soon.

Autumn's arrival also means back-to-school, and we have worked hard to build educational programming that will help towns dealing with workforce development challenges. Our **microcredential programs** are available to you, your employees and students across the state to help get our workforce more prepared for the important jobs that towns need filled. Please check out the full course offerings and learn about scholarship opportunities. Speaking of scholarships, I want to thank Cassidy Rossi for all of her work making the **NYMEF** golf tournament a success. Together, we are raising money for the foundation's mission of providing scholarships for workforce development programming, protecting Home Rule and providing for an awareness campaign that celebrates our towns and the role they play in residents' lives.

As we settle into cooler weather, it's not hard to imagine that winter is around the corner, and with that, our spectacular Annual Meeting is coming back this February in New York City. Our "Early Bird Registration" is the most cost-effective option for attending our flagship event that seems to just get better each year. We are adding new features and sessions, providing more networking opportunities and working to bring you the best programming possible. You can't afford not to be there! Please go to our website to register.

Finally, with the **nation's 250th birthday** upon us in 2026, we are looking for you to share your town's story with us so that we can feature how the towns built this state and this nation. If you have a story you'd like to share and potentially have your town featured in **the documentary** our Digital Content Specialist Nick Benton is creating, send your story to submissions@nytowns.org.

Enjoy the fall and don't forget to check out our podcast on Youtube, Spotify or Apple...and as always, please "like, subscribe and share!"

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Chris Koetzle".

Member Focus

Putnam County Marks Historic Public Works Agreement

Watch the full event: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kw-T5cVuv3A>

CARMEL, NY – Putnam County Executive Kevin Byrne recently announced that all nine towns and villages across the county have signed on to a groundbreaking countywide Shared Services Agreement for highway services. Byrne stood alongside Kent Highway Superintendent Richard Othmer at the Town of Kent Highway Department and representatives from every town and village in the county.



The historic agreement formally allows all municipalities for the first time to share resources, equipment, and services in order to cut down on waste and inefficiencies while delivering meaningful savings for taxpayers. Earlier this year, Byrne also championed a first-ever sales-tax-sharing agreement earlier with all towns and villages which was signed into law by Governor Hochul on August 7, simultaneously clearing the way for the largest property tax cut in Putnam's history in next year's county budget.

"This is a tremendous win-win for local highway departments and the taxpayers of Putnam County," said County Executive Kevin Byrne. "For years, our local municipalities have shouldered the same rising costs as county and state governments without the flexibility of additional revenue streams. By working together, we are now creating a smarter, more responsible and efficient way to share services among towns and villages, keep local tax dollars closer to home, and strengthen the critical infrastructure our residents rely on."

Superintendent Othmer praised the agreement saying, "For years, Highway Superintendents across Putnam have collaborated informally, lending equipment and manpower when needed. This agreement formalizes that cooperation and ensures that all towns and villages can benefit. It's a fair plan, it's fiscally responsible, and it will help us provide better service for our residents. I'm proud to stand alongside all my fellow Highway Superintendents and County Executive Byrne to make this a reality."

The agreement has already been unanimously supported and signed by all nine municipal leaders: six town supervisors and three village mayors. In order for this agreement to be effectuated, enabling resolutions were first introduced and passed by the respective governing boards including the County Legislature.

To conclude the press conference, County Executive Byrne and all of Putnam County's Highway Superintendents formally signed the Intermunicipal Agreement together, marking the official start of this historic partnership. The ceremonial signing underscored the unity and cooperation behind the initiative, as every municipality pledged its commitment to sharing resources and working collaboratively for the benefit of all residents.

"This is the kind of collaboration that residents expect from their leaders," Byrne concluded. "Together, we are building a stronger, more resilient and more affordable future for Putnam County." □

Richard Bell Earns Prestigious 2026 Best Lawyers® Title: "Lawyer of the Year" for Litigation – Municipal

Rochester, N.Y. -- [Richard T. Bell, Jr.](#), a partner of [Adams Leclair LLP](#), has been named [Best Lawyers® 2026 "Lawyer of the Year" in Litigation - Municipal](#) for the Rochester, N.Y. region. This prestigious honor is

awarded annually to only one lawyer per practice area in each region, based on peer feedback, making it a singular and distinguished recognition.

Bell is a seasoned civil litigator in both state and federal courts, with a career that spans commercial litigation, construction law, real property taxation, and municipal law. His practice includes representing towns, villages, counties, school districts, and public authorities in matters ranging from tax certiorari, Article 78 actions, regulatory compliance, condemnation, procurement, and open meetings law. Through his extensive experience in construction law, Mr. Bell also counsels municipalities and public authorities on all aspects related to public contracting and procurement, including drafting and review of construction contracts and compliance with bidding, lien and bond requirements.

"It's a privilege to be recognized by my peers for work I find both meaningful and intellectually rewarding," said Bell. "This honor also reflects the strength of our entire team and the trust of our municipal clients."

"Rich brings a depth of experience and a steady hand to even the most complex municipal and commercial matters, and we are proud to have him leading our municipal team," said partner [Tony Adams](#). "Plus, he's the best golfer we have at the firm so we can always count on him in a scramble tournament."

Bell presents on various legal topics at regional conferences and professional seminars and is also a member of the [New York State Assessors Association \(NYSAA\)](#) and the [New York Association of Towns \(NYAOT\)](#).

For more on the methodology used to determine "Lawyer of the Year," visit: <https://www.bestlawyers.com/methodology> □

A promotional poster for the NYAOT Best of the Best 2026 Awards Program. The background is light blue with three large, 3D gold stars and falling gold confetti. The text "BEST OF THE BEST" is in large, bold, black serif font. Below it, in smaller black sans-serif font, is "NOW ACCEPTING NOMINATIONS FOR OUR 2026 AWARDS PROGRAM. NOMINATIONS DUE NOV. 15. DON'T BE SHY - NOW ACCEPTING NOMINEES FOR:". This is followed by two bullet points: "• PUBLIC SERVANT MERITORIOUS AWARD" and "• INNOVATION IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT". At the bottom, it says "TO NOMINATE YOUR DESERVING CANDIDATE EMAIL info@nytowns.org". The NYAOT logo and website "WWW.NYTOWNS.ORG" are at the bottom left.

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In late August, NYAOT Executive Director Christopher A. Koetzle visited Nassau County Executive Bruce Blakeman during his visit to Long Island.

As part of his ongoing outreach to towns across the state, Chris continues to stand up for our towns, protect Home Rule, and ensure that the 9.1 million New Yorkers who live in towns receive the critical frontline services they depend on.

We're grateful for the opportunity to strengthen relationships and build new connections on behalf of our members.

If you'd like to host Chris for a visit to your town or region, email us at info@nytowns.org.

Time to Turn the Page on Costly Print Mandates



Charles Kelly

As towns begin to layout their budgets for the coming year, the struggle to stay under the tax cap presents itself once more. Among the many fiscal challenges facing local government is the long list of state mandates – requirements that the state places on local governments that are costly with no corresponding revenue to pay for them. One such mandate is the state law that requires towns to publish their notices in printed newspapers.

In today's modern era, one would struggle to understand why this expensive and burdensome mandate is still required since it's well-known that more people are turning to technology to get their information. This outdated mandate would suggest that print was a better form to receive information than the utilization of technology like websites or tools like direct email.

Surely, at one time, print was the way to go. Before the digital age this was the best way for citizens to learn about opportunities to provide input into government decision making has been through public notices published in the local newspapers. However, according to a 2022 fact sheet included as part of its State of the News Media report, *Pew Research Center* asserts that print circulation of locally focused newspapers is at its lowest since 2015. At the same time, digital subscriptions to weekly and Sunday locally focused newspapers have increased by 21 percent for weekly and 27 percent for Sunday editions since 2015. Even for news consumption, more people are ditching the print and switching to digital.

With newsprint subscriptions down, local governments have a greater ability and capacity to reach into vastly more homes using their website and/or direct email into their resident's inbox by offering a free subscription to receive the notification.

Additionally, print subscriptions are also costly and

Commentary

NYAOT Executive Director: Requirement to Publish Notices is Yesterday's News

overly burdensome. If the resident can easily get the information they need by simply visiting the town's website, why make them pay for a subscription or buy a paper every day? Often times people go away and don't receive the paper, or it's lost, or used to wrap fish or something. The information is gone and only available if you actually physically have the paper. Whereas on the town's website, the information lives on for the taxpayer to access when he or she wants, as many times as they'd like, at whatever time and whatever place they choose.

This is a passionate topic for me because as a town supervisor for 15 years, I saw firsthand how costly and burdensome this mandate actually is for towns. In fact, taxpayers end up paying twice with print notice—once to buy the newspaper, and again with the taxpayer money used to print the notice. The New York Association of Towns estimates that towns spend between \$6.3 million and \$8 million annually on printed notices alone. During my 15 years as supervisor of the town of Glenville, the town spent between \$10,000 and \$15,000 annually on printed notices.

It was also overly burdensome due to the 30-day notice, which in many cases made it hard to meet deadlines or delayed the project to meet these requirements. For example, to notice an ad in print, the town has to send it in, wait for it to be formatted and published rather than just posting it on its website — an operational inefficiency that can delay projects. This is why I have brought this issue to the NYAOT as its executive director and have made it a legislative priority. It's about time that we fully embrace the 21st century and allow towns to use e-notification for all public notices. It will save the taxpayers a lot of money, it will make the flow of information more efficient and it will expose more residents to more information.

I get that print newspapers are struggling with revenue: readership is down, ads are fewer and

more and more people are getting their information online. That makes for a tough business model, but the taxpayer ought not to be stuck with the bill. In fact, *The Guardian* reported that print newspaper revenue has dropped by 52 percent between 2002 and 2020 with the accelerated drop of 33 percent between 2010 and 2020. Not surprisingly, much of the revenue drop was accounted for by a drop in ad revenue.

A perfect example of this is job boards. There was a time when one would plow through pages of wanted ads in the newspaper. Now that's all electronic. Nobody takes a job ad in the paper anymore because nobody looks at the paper for those ads anymore. If job hunting can move all online, then public notices certainly can too. Private industry has already moved away from this outdated way of advertising, but sadly towns are stuck by an outdated law that requires them to pay for print.

Lastly, if print media is so concerned about towns "burying" public notices, the state can, in enabling legislation, require standards and guidelines so information is presented in a universal manner across different municipalities. The state just passed legislation that requires most municipalities to move to the more secure .gov website. In that law, the state laid out that what local governments must publish on the website. One of the six required postings explicitly says that a town must post "public notices."

We are already there. It's time to codify it. Stop the taxpayer waste; the old way of doing business has passed. Allow towns to post electronically and not require print publication. It's an old axiom that "you should never go to war with someone who buys ink by the barrel." It was good advice for the time that it was said, but today ink isn't what it used to be and it's time to turn the page on outdated requirements.

End the expensive and burdensome print requirements on public notices and help make local government more open, more transparent, less expensive and more efficient. □

Comprehensive Master Planning: A Hamlet-by-Hamlet Approach

By Lisa M. Rickmers, AICP, Senior Environmental Planner, H2M architects + engineers

Comprehensive master planning is a valuable tool for identifying a municipality's long-term vision for growth, development, and quality of life and setting forth a path to achieve those goals. Comprehensive master plans (CMPs) assess the existing conditions and present a vision for the future, covering a wide range of municipal sectors such as zoning, open space preservation, and infrastructural improvements. Effective CMPs should provide a town-wide plan for the future while remaining grounded in the needs of specific communities. Overarching vision without local buy-in can be out of touch and vague, while hamlet-only plans risk losing sight of the bigger picture.

To achieve these ambitious goals, comprehensive master planning should be an intensive, collaborative

process that includes consultations with municipal officials and local stakeholders along with significant community outreach through public hearings and surveys. The goal of public outreach is both to inform the community and to gather feedback, capturing valuable insights into local strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities to create a stronger CMP rooted in the context of the community it serves. Even within a single town, the needs of residents may differ wildly depending on the characteristics of their immediate locality. While no CMP can satisfy every resident, an approach that considers the specific and diverse needs of each hamlet can better connect people to the planning process, resulting in a smoother process and a stronger final plan.

Benefits of a Hamlet-by-Hamlet Approach

The effectiveness of a hamlet-by-hamlet approach lies in its ability to break a complex process down to a human scale, improving the specificity and thoroughness of each part. This approach makes CMPs more relatable and easier for the public to understand, and therefore better facilitates community buy-in on long-term changes.

When people are asked where they are from, they're more inclined to name the hamlet on their mailing address than their administratively-defined town. Therefore, it stands to reason that residents of a given town will be more vested in how a CMP affects their immediate surroundings as opposed to the town at large. Holding public information sessions and hearings in each hamlet is an effective way to educate

residents about changes to their community and obtain feedback as it relates to their specific part of town. Though this approach necessitates a greater number of public meetings and overall outreach effort, the sessions themselves become more concise and focused due to a majority of attendees being from one specific hamlet.

Residents are often eager to ensure that the changes outlined in a CMP draft do not change or degrade the character of their community, and their shared vision of this community is highly specific and hamlet-based. For example, it may be difficult to sell



someone living in an area zoned for one-acre single-family housing on a CMP that aims to introduce multi-family housing to the town. Dividing the CMP into hamlet-specific portions allows planners to examine the uses and burdens of each hamlet; this ultimately helps the municipality better balance those uses and burdens and ensure that each hamlet is able to benefit from the CMP in a manner specific to the character of their community. This approach is not intended to stymie necessary change, but rather focus conversations and visioning at the appropriate level to help design policies that address evolving community needs while controlling and mitigating potential negative impacts.

A hamlet-by-hamlet approach also strengthens the consideration of environmental justice in CMPs. While CMPs typically address environmental justice when developing recommendations, holding hamlet-specific discussions ensures that each community has a voice in the process. This approach also helps prevent any one hamlet from being disproportionately burdened with recommendations.

CMPs are most effective when their goals are granular and specific. This approach not only helps secure buy-in from each hamlet community but also motivates residents to take greater ownership of how the plan is carried out. By providing each hamlet with an actionable list of steps, the CMP encourages participation from local organizations such as chambers of commerce, business improvement districts, and civic groups, reducing the burden on the municipality while strengthening residents' connection to their community.

Town of Smithtown's Comprehensive Master Plan

In 2019, the Town of Smithtown and H2M architects + engineers began a collaboration to update to the town's CMP. Originally ratified in 1957, the CMP no longer reflected the 60-plus years of changes to the town's population demographics, socioeconomic and development trends, or transportation infrastructure.

The Town of Smithtown (population: 116,000)



comprises six hamlets — Kings Park, Smithtown, St. James, Nesconset, Commack, and Hauppauge — each with its own unique character and community. St. James, for example, is an area marked by low-density, single-family zoning and a large historic district, whereas Hauppauge contains a mix of uses, with the smallest percentage of single-family residential housing in the town and one of the most prominent industrial hubs on Long Island.

The town engaged in a robust public outreach campaign for each hamlet, hosting both in-person and virtual public hearings and developing surveys to understand residents' preferences for land use, housing types, open space preservation, mobility, and more. The surveys yielded over 1,200 respondents and over 2,000 comments, providing the town with valuable hyper-local input. This initial engagement process resulted in an additional outreach effort for the hamlet of St. James that was driven by community demand and focused on creating a vision for Lake Avenue, a commercial center in the hamlet. The St. James study included a visual preference survey that generated enthusiastic community engagement, including 500 respondents who contributed to a revitalized vision of this essential corridor in their community.

During the initial engagement process, it became evident that certain terms had different meanings for different communities. For example, both St. James and Nesconset residents noted that they would like their communities to have more of a "downtown feel," but the surveys in both communities showcased differing perceptions of what that actually meant. For St. James residents, a downtown feel meant that they preferred buildings close to the street for a traditional walkable downtown. However, Nesconset residents wanted buildings set back further and with

more community services. Having hamlet-by-hamlet discussions allowed for further clarity in the CMP on the specific “downtown feel” that residents in each hamlet desired.

Incorporating this input, the CMP outlines various policies designed to promote sustainability, diversified housing stock, downtown revitalization, open space preservation, improved walkability, and the protection of environmental and cultural character. The CMP itself is over 250 pages, carefully indexed and broken down into smaller “community plans” for each hamlet. Each community plan includes comprehensive information on population demographics such as age, income, and education level; the diversity of housing stock; land use by percentage; transportation patterns; and more. The level of painstaking detail in these community plans is difficult to achieve when taking a broader, at-large approach to developing a CMP, but becomes much more feasible when taken hamlet by hamlet.

Additional Considerations

As with any approach to master planning, there are always additional considerations that must be accounted for. Even when developing a CMP on a

hamlet-by-hamlet basis, hamlets’ individual goals should collectively reflect broader goals for the municipality.

For example, a town may wish to preserve a certain percentage of its land for park use. Given this broader goal, while parkland preservation can be implemented to meet the specific needs of each hamlet, the final plan should still aim to preserve roughly the same total amount of land as desired by the town.

Furthermore, towns should be careful not to divide CMPs into community plans such that hamlets effectively compete for preferable outcomes. Though people identify more with their hamlet of residence than their town, these hamlets are pieces of a larger whole that must be considered.

Municipal planners who can see the forest for the trees will likely find great value in an approach that recognizes the diverse array of neighborhoods and communities in every town, each with its own vision for improvement, rather than simply viewing a town as one homogenous administrative unit. By taking into account the needs of each of these communities, a hamlet-by-hamlet CMP has the power to bring everyone together in search of a better future. □



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Rapid-Growth Communities: Micron is coming. Is Central New York Ready for It?

By Edward Flynn, AICP | Director Planning, LaBella Associates & Jonathan Derworiz, MCIP, RPP | Senior Planner, LaBella Associates

Micron Technology, Inc. is investing over \$100 billion to build a new semiconductor manufacturing facility in Clay, N.Y. over the next 20-plus years. Built in two phases between 2025 and 2044, the project is expected to bring 9,000 direct jobs at Micron, 42,000 indirect (suppliers) and induced jobs (retail, restaurants), and 54,000 new residents to the Central New York (CNY) region. Infrastructure, housing, and environment are among the many areas to be impacted now and decades to come. Not to be overlooked are the implications for education, recreation, transportation, and local government. Is the Central New York region ready for Micron-level development? This question has been on our minds since early rumblings of the development in 2022. We have participated in conversations, attended panels, and have read many perspectives on Micron's magnitude and what it means for Central New York.

While it is difficult to predict the exact effects of these new jobs, new residents, and new money, as planners, we know that we must do our best to prepare CNY for it.

Education & Recreation

With 54,000 new residents comes new families and children of all ages—a challenge for the local school districts and parks. Schools, parks, and recreational amenities may need to be built, retrofitted or expanded in order to retain and serve residents. To do so, local governments must ensure that their respective plans and strategies are proactive and contemplating enhancements for recreation. This could be in the form of recommendations for acquiring additional land or identifying tax revenue opportunities such as PILOT Increment Financing (PIF) for new development, which can provide funding for school, parks, and recreation expansion or new construction. Once development rises, so too will parcel prices.

Transportation

How will more than 50,000 new employees travel between home, work, the grocery store, and their favorite restaurant? Municipalities must consider the impacts of a significant jump in population on transportation — are updates or alternatives necessary? Like schools and parks, be proactive and plan for the land now.

Adding a layer of consideration is the I-81 Viaduct Project, a New York State Department of Transportation project to address structural deficiencies and non-standard highway features in the corridor, while improving travel through the City of Syracuse. In addition, Centro, the Central New York Regional Transportation Authority's public transportation provider, is designing to route Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) through the City of Syracuse.



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Transportation influences are far-reaching in Central New York right now, and responding requires a tremendous effort from local government. Consider hiring professional multi-modal planning consultants who can help see the big picture and recommend remedies to transportation-related growing pains.

Planning for the Future

In anticipation of Micron-related growth, municipalities should consider budgeting for additional staffing and/or consultants. Development involves site plan reviews, permitting, and zoning code compliance. Professionally trained staff, boards, or committees can meet these needs. An alternative is budgeting to hire a consultant to complete these tasks, even an embedded consultant that serves as an extension of the municipality's staff.

In the Fall of 2023, the Town of Clay hired LaBella Associates to prepare, in coordination with a project Steering Committee, a Land Use Study. Following extensive public input and research into similar rapid-growth communities, the Study articulated a vision for the community. The focus was to not only absorb the growth but also leverage it to create a sense of place and identity through the development of three new walkable mixed-use centers. The goal is to update zoning and development regulations so the Town can shape development in the next 10-15 years, as it relates to Micron-induced and future anticipated growth.

Comprehensive Solutions to a Comprehensive Problem

Cities like Austin, Nashville, and Raleigh have experienced similar rapid, business-driven growth. The "Research Triangle" in Raleigh, Durham, and Chapel Hill, N.C. was intentionally planned for growth as an innovation hub. The surrounding communities were prepared with applicable comprehensive plans, land use strategies, and zoning code updates. Not only were infrastructure and housing impacts considered, but so too were downtown areas, bicycle and pedestrian facilities, and other amenities.

The community growth anticipated from a \$25.11 billion company like Micron is immense and will be difficult, if not impossible, to distill to a single metric. Among the elements likely to feel the effects are infrastructure, housing, natural resources, and community identity as well as education, recreation, transportation, and local government—nearly every building block of a locale. Proactive community planning—comprehensive plans, land use plans, zoning codes—is a highly effective tool for managing growth because it considers all these elements.



For example, Onondaga County developed the Plan Onondaga County Comprehensive Plan. The county-wide plan, which mentions Micron, states, "This plan will help ensure a positive impact on the areas where the County currently lags behind peer counties nationally... The Plan themes focus on producing the conditions that can lead to sustained economic investment." ([Plan Onondaga, 2023](#)). The County provides the framework and funding to address growth and its impacts in the next 15-20 years. Villages, towns, and cities within the county can customize their approaches. A County-wide planning exercise like this can direct municipalities toward the same goal, supporting successful regional planning efforts.

Community Planning Consultants

Planning consultants are experts at seeing the whole picture. With help from the community, we closely examine the hard (roads, community facilities, housing) and the soft (demographics, workforce, regulatory framework) infrastructures of a municipality, and make every effort to anticipate future challenges, and develop recommendations for leveraging opportunity. We support communities of all shapes and sizes and provide an array of services—from comprehensive planning and growth management to area-specific plans to site plan application review—by gathering all efforts under one umbrella for a well-rounded approach to growth. Depending on the needs of the community, we can tailor our approach.

Consider which approach is right to help your community seize the opportunities Micron brings.

A Missed Opportunity

Locales without a growth strategy are at risk of missing out on a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to leverage growth—a chance to bring in tax revenue, boost economically disadvantaged areas, and build community identity. Get ready, because Micron is coming. □

Retiree Health Insurance Rising Cost Solutions



NYAOT Partners with SPANY to Provide Retiree Health Insurance Solutions for NY Towns

We know that for our members, retiree healthcare is no longer just a budget item; it is a growing liability that threatens financial stability and community priorities. Year after year, rising premiums force towns to make difficult choices. At its core, NYAOT exists to help towns protect budgets and their taxpayers, to support their employees and retirees, and strengthen communities. That's why we're proud to announce our new sponsor and strategic partnership with the Statewide Purchasing Alliance of New York.

Why this Partnership Matters

The Statewide Purchasing Alliance of New York (SPANY) was formed to solve one of the most pressing financial challenges facing towns today: the rising cost of retiree healthcare.

By pooling together municipalities across New York, they give towns the leverage and scale to negotiate what no single employer could achieve alone. Through innovation and cooperative purchasing, SPANY has created a model that delivers real savings, stronger benefits, and long-term stability. Their success administering the Broome County Purchasing Alliance (BCPA) has already proven that this approach works — saving municipalities tens of millions of dollars while preserving the promises made to retirees. As more towns join, the stronger the alliance gets, bringing better benefits at lower costs and longer term stability for your town's budget. Our partners at SPANY invite our members to explore their options with SPANY to envision their savings. Click the button below to learn more.

Would your Town Benefit from Retiree Insurance Savings and What's Next? Register for our Informational Webinar

Join NYAOT Executive Director Christopher A. Koetzle and our partners at SPANY as they introduce this new program and set your town up for budget stability! This free, informational webinar is being offered at two convenient times and includes a program overview and an opportunity to ask questions.

October 9 at 10 a.m.

October 9 at 2 p.m.

***To register for one of these free webinars,
visit www.nytowns.org.***

Town Supervisors & Town Boards

Why Local Leaders Need to Start Paying Attention to Quantum Now • Applications Open for Cybersecurity Grants • Over 41 Municipalities Across NY State Join Paint Recycling Program

Planning & Zoning Boards and Code Enforcement Officers

Battery Energy Storage: Making the Most of New York's Homegrown Energy • De-Escalation Techniques for Planning & Zoning Boards

Town Justices

Search Warrants with Confidential Informant under Aquilar-Spinelli Test

Highway Superintendents & Public Safety

What you need to know about Mobile Meth Labs

2026 Annual Meeting & Training School Registration Information

Join us as we kick off America's 250th year celebrating local leadership and the impact of technology on today's towns!

Why Local Leaders Need to Start Paying Attention to Quantum Now

By Deborah Novick, Director of Entrepreneurship and Innovation, Westchester County

Quantum technology sounds like something from a physics class or a science fiction film, but it is coming faster than most people realize. Quantum computing has the potential to revolutionize everything from cybersecurity to climate innovation to economic growth, and municipalities across New York State have a unique opportunity to lay the groundwork that will help them participate in this new and exciting sector.

Now is the time to understand what quantum is, why it matters, and how your community can better position itself for this revolution.

What is Quantum?

Quantum technology is based on the principles of quantum mechanics, the science that dictates how particles at the smallest level (molecules, atoms, and subatomic particles) behave. This technology is now being used to reinvent how computing works.

While traditional computers we use every day process data in binary bits—ones and zeroes—quantum computers use qubits, which can represent multiple states at once. Because of this, they can tackle complex problems that current technology simply can't handle. In simpler terms, quantum computing could allow us to do everything from simulate advanced materials for construction and energy-efficient/heat-resistant infrastructure

components, accelerate drug discovery, and optimize transportation and energy systems in ways that today's computers can't match. There will also be hybrid computing, where classical computers and quantum computers will work together to solve problems, and there will be quantum data centers and hybrid data centers as well. In addition, quantum is more than just computing; it also encompasses quantum sensing, quantum cryptography, and quantum networking and communications.

Why Does it Matter?

So what does this mean for a municipality in New York? Quantum is an economic shift, not just a technological one. Regions that invest early in quantum workforce development, infrastructure, and partnerships will be better positioned to benefit from the jobs, companies, and funding that will come from it.

According to a McKinsey & Company report, the quantum economy is projected to reach over \$100 billion globally within the next decade. This growth is not just going to happen in places like Washington D.C. or Silicon Valley; it's going to happen right here in New York and your community could be a part of it.

New York Is All In

Given its national leadership position in commerce, technology, finance, science, and culture, it is not surprising that academic institutions, governments, nonprofits, corporations, and startups are making strategic investments to cement New York's position as a leader in innovation related to quantum science

and technology (QIST).

The depth of quantum research, testing, and commercial development taking place from Long Island to western New York is inspiring. IBM, headquartered in Westchester County, is already manufacturing its first-and second-generation quantum computers and is building a quantum data center in Poughkeepsie. Recently, the company announced plans to build the world's first large-scale, fault-tolerant quantum computer by 2029, marking a significant step forward for quantum computing as a whole. From global corporations like Bluefords, Goldman Sachs, and J.P. Morgan to startups like SEEQC, Qunnect, and BQP, businesses throughout the state are driving quantum innovation forward.

In addition, New York State is ripe with the talent and educational institutions needed to support QIST. New York metro has more than 443,000 full-time workers in tech and R&D. Columbia University is one of the nation's 15 institutions to offer a master's degree in quantum technologies, and New York University launched a quantum tech undergraduate minor in 2024. Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute (RPI) in Troy, NY, is the first university in the United States to have an IBM Quantum System One on its campus, and RPI's Quantum Computing Club has grown to more than 400 student members in just two years. The City College of New York won a \$5 million grant from the National Science Foundation to establish a state-of-the-art quantum institute, which will advance quantum research and hire dedicated quantum faculty to expand the institution's quantum educational offerings.

Founded in 2024, the New York State Quantum Consortium is a collaboration led by the Westchester County Office of Economic Development and the New York City Economic Development Corporation to convene the statewide ecosystem of participants in the field of quantum information technologies. To date, more than 100 members, representing more than 50 organizations across New York State, have joined this group to help develop and implement a strategy for New York to become a national leader in this important technology sector.

New York's higher education system, skilled workforce, and history of innovation make it an ideal candidate to be a national leader in quantum. But for that leadership to be successful, it must go beyond the walls of universities and labs and extend to the people and communities who will build, support, and

benefit from it.

What Can You Do Now?

As the quantum ecosystem throughout New York State continues to expand, it is clear that our region has the industry leaders, innovators, and skilled workforce needed to capitalize on the growth potential and impact that quantum has to offer.

Here are just a few ways your community can begin to get involved:

- **Focus on Workforce Readiness:** Quantum computing's hardware and software functions completely differently from classical computing. Right now, only a small, very highly skilled workforce has the knowledge required to work in the field. Technicians, engineers, data scientists, and IT professionals will be vital to the quantum workforce. Municipal leaders can partner with local community colleges and training providers to offer relevant courses, certifications, and career pathways that will position your residents to gain the skills needed for these high-wage jobs, and can make your community attractive to quantum startups and supply chain companies. One example of this is Westchester County's partnership with Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute.
- **Develop Partnerships:** Many academic institutions, state agencies, and tech incubators leading quantum efforts are looking to work with local governments on pilot programs, grant applications, and more. Now is the time to start exploring those partnerships.
- **Promote The Next Generation of Quantum Leaders:** Continue to promote STEM education early. Quantum literacy will be needed at every stage, from K to career, and starts in the classroom. There are many ways to bring these concepts into primary and secondary schools with competitions, after-school activities, and guest lecturers. Building early awareness can lead to long-term talent development and community engagement.
- **Identify Infrastructure Needs:** Quantum computing will happen in specialized facilities, but investing in supportive infrastructure like advanced broadband, secure data centers, and workforce housing to support these facilities should be a local priority.
- **Explore State and Federal Funding Opportunities:** Millions of dollars in federal and state funding are currently being deployed to support quantum and other emerging technologies. Be proactive about

identifying grant opportunities, joining regional groups, and aligning your local plans with state-level strategies.

New York State is rich with quantum talent, and municipal leaders are on the frontlines of this exciting transformation. Being informed, proactive, and willing to take the first step will better position you to benefit from this innovation. The future of quantum is being built now. Make sure your community is a part of it. □

Deborah Novick serves as Director of Entrepreneurship and Innovation for Westchester County. For more information, visit www.westchestercatalyst.com.

Applications Open for Cybersecurity Grants

Governor Kathy Hochul recently announced the release of the combined FY2022 and FY2023 State and Local Cybersecurity Grant Program (SLCGP) Request for Applications (RFA) for eligible New York State entities to apply for Multi-Factor Authentication tokens. The RFA was developed to help reduce cyber risk and build cyber resiliency in local governments statewide.

Through the utilization of more than \$13.9 million in available funding through the federal State and Local Cybersecurity Grant Program, this grant program will expand access to cybersecurity tools so that public sector entities in New York have access to sophisticated cyber defenses.

To apply or read the RFP, please visit: https://www.dhss.ny.gov/system/files/documents/2025/09/combined-fy2022-and-fy2023-state-and-local-cybersecurity-grant-program-final.v2_0.pdf

As part of the federal Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act of 2021, Congress established the SLCGP to award funding to each state to help eligible entities address cybersecurity risks and threats to information systems owned or operated by or on behalf of State, local, tribal and territorial governments.

To ensure the maximum number of New York State entities can benefit from the limited SLCGP funds, New York will directly procure the tokens for delivery to eligible entities approved for shared services. Once delivered, the State's Office of Information Technology Services will manage distribution and associated training and support to assist the recipients with implementing the tokens.

Multi-Factor Authentication (MFA): MFA is a method to authenticate a user that requires them to provide two or more verification factors so they can gain access to a resource. New York will provide hardware tokens and professional services that eligible entities can use to implement MFA in their technology environments. □

Over 41 Municipalities Across NY State Join Paint Recycling Program

Unwanted paint. It's one of those things that nearly everyone has in their basement, garage or shed. It sits around for years, waiting to be used for occasional touch ups. Eventually, it's no longer needed and requires a proper avenue of disposal. In the past, that meant either signing up for a local Household Hazardous Waste (HHW) drop-off event or committing valuable time and effort to dry out water-based paint and toss it in the trash. So, with no other alternatives, landfilling leftover paint was best case scenario for the estimated 2.5 million gallons of leftover paint generated annually in New York State.

Fortunately, there is finally a convenient, environmentally sound solution to this problem: PaintCare! PaintCare is a nonprofit organization created by the paint manufacturing industry to manage the end of life of its product. PaintCare plans and operates paint recycling programs in states that pass paint stewardship legislation. The New York PaintCare program launched in May 2022 after the PaintCare bill was signed into law in 2019.

PaintCare offers a comprehensive range of services, making paint recycling easy for anyone with leftover paint. These services include a network of drop-off sites across the state where people can bring their unwanted leftover paint and drop it off to be recycled all year long at no charge. PaintCare partners with municipalities and retailers to establish this convenient drop-off site network.

Since the PaintCare program launched in NY State, over 375 drop-off sites have been established, including over 41 municipal drop-off locations serving local households with this convenient environmental service. The following testimonials highlight the ease of participation and success of the program for the various municipalities that provide this service:

Matt Curley, Executive Director of the Eastern

Rensselaer County Solid Waste Management Authority notes: "The PaintCare program has been accepted with great enthusiasm across all of our communities. The ease of the program and the amount of drop off days offered to residents are often complimented upon.

The program allows the residents to easily drop of paint regularly without having to wait for less frequent household hazardous waste events.

The training provided is quick yet very detailed. We have received positive feedback from our trainees. The representative's willingness to work thru individual community issues and problems is an excellent added benefit."

Bill Bryans, Town of Halfmoon Superintendent of Highways reports: "The Town of Halfmoon wanted to partner with Paint care due to the amount of resident inquires we were receiving asking how to properly dispose of paints and stains. We believe that providing services for our residents is a top priority and whenever there's a chance to do that, we jump on it.

Working with Paint care has been seamless. They provide everything we need to collect the paints and stains and when we're ready for a pick-up we just give them a call and it's gone!

Our residents love knowing that they now have a place to dispose of most paints and stains free of charge. I would recommend that if you have the ability to become a PaintCare drop off location, please do it."

It is important to note that all aspects of the PaintCare program are funded by the PaintCare fee, meaning the program is 100 percent free of charge to participating drop-off sites. PaintCare provides:

- Paint collection bins
- On-site training for employees who will be accepting paint from households and placing it in the collection bins
- Public information materials (signage, posters, pamphlets, fact sheets, etc.)
- Ongoing operational support for drop-off sites
- Advertising support, including an online Communications Toolkit, which contains a variety of digital and printable materials to educate residents on the PaintCare program

- Financial reimbursement to municipalities that invest in any paid advertising promoting the paint drop-off service

Drop-off site employees don't open paint containers to verify contents. If the paint is in a sealed, original container (five gallons or less) with an original label, it can be taken from households and placed right in the collection bins. When the bins are nearly full, sites contact their PaintCare-assigned hauler to schedule a pickup. It's as simple as that.

Drop-off sites establish days and hours for collecting paint, as well as drop-off limits (if they choose), which are posted on PaintCare's drop-off site locator (<https://www.paintcare.org/drop-off-sites/>). The collection bins are roughly the size of a pallet in footprint, and 34" high, and can be stored indoors or outdoors (additional requirements pertaining to outdoor storage apply).

Since the New York program launch in 2022, PaintCare has had great success partnering with many municipalities across the state who have chosen to implement the program at one or more of their facilities. Thanks to the collective efforts of the retail and municipal program partners, PaintCare has collected NEARLY 2.5 MILLION GALLONS of leftover paint in New York State since the program launch, with 80 percent of latex paint getting recycled into new paint, and the oil-based paint sent for fuel recovery. That number continues to climb each day as more people become aware of the program and more municipalities provide these services to their households.

PaintCare Drop-Off Sites

PaintCare encourages municipalities interested in providing paint recycling services to their community to join the growing list of municipal PaintCare drop-off sites. This is a great opportunity to provide a meaningful environmental service that is very well-received by the community.

HHW Events

Along with the network of paint drop-off sites, PaintCare covers the cost of paint collection at HHW events. PaintCare and HHW service providers enter a contract, agreeing that PaintCare will cover the cost of paint collection at the HHW events they service. HHW haulers bill PaintCare directly for costs associated with transporting and processing the collected paint, often resulting in decreased material

management costs to municipalities.

Large Volume Pickup (LVP)

PaintCare also offers a large volume pickup (LVP) service. Any individual, business, school or organization that has 100+ gallons of acceptable PaintCare products can go to www.PaintCare.org, and fill out a Large Volume Pickup Form. If approved, PaintCare will arrange to have a hauler pick up their leftover paint at no charge.

Program Background

The PaintCare program was established by the American Coatings Association (ACA) and was first implemented in the state of Oregon in 2009. It has since grown to include 12 states and the District of Columbia. New York was the 10th state to join, followed by Illinois and Maryland. The New York program legislation was passed in 2019, and the PaintCare program launched May 1, 2022, providing households and businesses with an easy and convenient avenue of disposal for their leftover paint. This system means there is no cost to drop off paint and no cost to those municipal and retail drop-off sites who provide the service to their community. It's a win-win for both parties!

There is a small fee, called the PaintCare fee, assessed on architectural paint products that are sold in the state. The fee structure is based on container size and is passed on to consumers at the point of sale. The fee serves as the funding mechanism for this statewide recycling program and is not a tax as it does not flow to the NY State government.

Any municipality with a recycling center, transfer station, landfill, DPW or other suitable facility has an open invitation to partner with PaintCare to provide this service to the residents at NO COST to them. We believe that they will find the service to be greatly appreciated by their community and comes as a great benefit to all parties involved. If you have any questions, please reach out to your region's PaintCare Program Coordinator. We are here to serve as a resource for you! □

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Planning & Zoning Boards and Code Enforcement Officers

Battery Energy Storage: Making the Most of New York's Homegrown Energy

By Alliance for Clean Energy New York

New York's electric grid is at a turning point. As demand surges — driven by the rise of electrification and energy-hungry industries — the New York Independent System Operator (NYISO) predicts an energy reliability shortfall by 2033, especially during extreme heat and other weather disruptions. We need more energy, and we can't afford to waste the power we're already producing.

That's where battery energy storage systems (BESS) come in. These safe, high-capacity systems store electricity when it's abundant, like on sunny afternoons or windy nights, and release it when demand is high, or supply is strained. Battery energy storage systems don't generate power, but they allow us to use more of the electricity produced here in New York, closer to where it's needed. This reduces reliance on expensive, aging fossil fuel plants and long-distance imports from Canada.

Battery energy storage systems are already helping New York make the most of its own energy resources by supporting upstate wind and solar production, easing transmission bottlenecks downstate, and providing fast-responding backup power to high-demand cities and towns. By capturing and dispatching locally produced electricity, battery energy storage makes New York's grid more flexible, efficient, and responsive to real-time needs.

Battery energy storage also plays a vital role in reducing energy costs. By smoothing out price spikes during peak hours — when demand increases

electricity is most expensive — battery energy storage systems help keep wholesale prices down and make better use of existing generation assets. That means fewer costly, polluting emissions from peaker plants and more affordable energy for ratepayers, especially during summer heat waves or winter storms when demand is highest.

And perhaps most critically: battery energy storage is an essential piece to meeting New York's climate goals under the Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act (CLCPA), which requires 70 percent of the state's electricity to come from renewable sources by 2030. This summer, Governor Hochul announced a new statewide RFP to accelerate the deployment of battery storage projects across the state. It's a bold step toward achieving New York's target of 6,000 megawatts of storage by 2030, and a clear recognition that BESS is essential to ensuring a reliable, resilient, and affordable grid.

While "battery" might evoke smartphones or e-bikes, battery energy storage systems technology is built on a different scale—and with far more robust safety testing and standards. These highly regulated, utility-grade facilities include advanced thermal controls, automated fire detection and suppression, and 24/7 monitoring. In the rare cases when issues arise, systems are designed to isolate and shut down affected units without endangering people or the environment.

New York is setting a new bar for battery safety. On July 25th, the state adopted updated fire safety codes for battery energy storage systems — now among the strongest and most comprehensive in the country. These new rules build upon NFPA 855, the national fire code standard for energy storage, by adding state-specific requirements that reflect New York's real-world experience and commitment to continuous improvement. Developed in coordination with fire professionals, engineers, and state agencies, the updated codes include:

- Independent engineering review and permitting, supported by direct full-scale testing
- Continuous 24/7 monitoring for early issue detection
- Rigorous testing for all final installed equipment to mitigate fire propagation
- Site-specific emergency response planning developed in coordination with local fire departments and sites are required have annual emergency

response trainings to promote community safety.

Additionally, a 2024 NYSEERDA supported safety review of recent battery energy storage incidents in New York found that all events were effectively contained, with no injuries reported and no long-term environmental impact. There were zero reported injuries, and extensive air and soil quality testing confirmed there was no harmful contamination to the surrounding areas. These outcomes speak to the strength of the built-in safety features in place and the difference between today's purpose-built systems and older or retrofitted facilities elsewhere.

This is about more than unleashing clean energy. It's about building smarter, more resilient communities. Battery energy storage systems can replace polluting peaker plants that disproportionately affect low-income neighborhoods, reducing air pollution and improving public health. These projects also generate new revenue for local governments and create jobs in construction, operations, and engineering.

Concerns about past fires such as those at California's Moss Landing are understandable, but these events involved outdated technology that would never be built today. New York's battery energy storage systems projects are built from the ground up with modular design, strict thermal controls, and round-the-clock diagnostics. They're reviewed by safety experts, fire departments, and code officials throughout the development process, and they're held to ongoing compliance long after construction is complete.

Battery energy storage is a cornerstone of a reliable, locally powered grid. It helps ensure that when we generate electricity in New York, we can actually use it in New York—especially when it matters most. In a time of rising energy demand, intensifying extreme weather events, and urgent climate goals, New York is leading with technology that's safe, scalable, and built for the long haul. □

De-Escalation Techniques for Planning & Zoning Boards

By Robert Blaisdell, Director of Loss Control, Wright Risk Insurance / Comp Alliance

Planning and zoning board meetings can be contentious and emotionally charged, with board members overseeing sensitive land use decisions. As a result, there are various safety concerns for board

members interacting with the public. This includes verbal threats, harassment, physical intimidation, property damage, social media bullying, and meeting disruptions. If these dealings become hostile, there are verbal communications or control techniques to try to bring back decorum.

De-escalation is the use of communication, or other technologies and techniques, during an encounter to stabilize, slow, or reduce the intensity of a potentially violent situation using no physical force or reduced force. Verbal de-escalation is the first line of defense in preventing situations from escalating to physical altercations.

Verbal de-escalation is the combination of tone, volume, rate of speech, and inflection in voice to constructively control stress and prevent anger or combativeness.

- **Tone:** Speak calmly to demonstrate empathy.
- **Volume:** Monitor your volume and avoid raising your voice.
- **Rate of Speech:** Slower speech can be more soothing.
- **Inflection:** Be aware of emphasizing words or syllables that can negatively affect the situation.

Verbal de-escalation attempts to reach a reasonable conclusion – preferably for both parties – that avoids a physical encounter. The cycle of assault can provide additional information on how this is possible by exploring the process of anger and how it can lead to physical assault if not controlled positively.

Use these additional techniques for de-escalation in the workplace. Such techniques are useful for handling many different situations involving the public, a coworker, a board meeting, field staff, third-party disagreements, or even First Amendment audit conflicts.

- Respect personal space
- Use a barrier, like a countertop bank-teller window, to protect employees.
- Maintain eye contact and stay at the same eye level.
- Keep your tone and body language neutral and positive, never negative.
- Avoid overreaction – stay calm and professional.
- Focus on thoughts and problems, not the person.
- Don't take it personally.

- Keep yourself safe and protect others nearby.
- Move conversation to a private area but stay near coworkers.
- Avoid being alone.
- Ignore challenging questions.
- Utilize the rule of strength in numbers.
- Consider technology such as surveillance cameras and panic buttons.

When even the best attempts at de-escalation don't address the stress and anger of others and potential combat is nearing, consider removing yourself from the scene. This could mean finding an escape location or exiting the building. Consider getting help from a coworker or turning the conversation over to them completely. Contact law enforcement if you feel it is necessary to protect yourself and others from physical harm.

Practicing positive de-escalation techniques can go a long way in providing a safer workplace when inevitable conflicts arise. Consider additional training resources like your local police department or Safety Source Online, the Comp Alliance safety training resource. Contact our Director of Loss Control, Robert Blaisdell, at rblaisdell@wrightinsurance.com for more information. □

Town Justices

Search Warrants with Confidential Informant under Aquilar-Spinelli Test

By Anthony Provenzano, former Town Justice, Town of Rye

In *People v. Berry*, 236 A.D. 3d 1405, the Appellate Division for the Fourth Dept. affirmed the lower court's ruling, inter alia, that a search warrant was supported by probable cause since it satisfied the *Aquilar-Spinelli Test*.

The defendant here was convicted after a jury trial on multiple counts of criminal possession of controlled substance in the 3rd degree, criminal possession of a weapon in the 3rd degree and criminally using drug paraphernalia in the 2nd degree.

This court concluded that the hearsay information supplied in the search warrant application satisfied the two prongs of the *Aquilar-Spinelli Test* and that the search warrant was issued upon probable cause. The court noted that in this matter the supporting

affidavit averred that the confidential informant was aware of the ongoing presence of narcotics at the subject location because the informant had been present at that location on multiple occasions, including for at least one drug transaction. This court affording great defense to the determination of the issuing Justice and reviewing the application in a common sense and realistic fashion (*People v. Humphrey*, 202 AD3d 1451) concluded that the evidence was sufficient to establish both the source of the confidential informant's knowledge and the reliability of the informant and that said state of facts continued to exist at the time the application was made.

The court went on to observe that the defendant was entitled to a *Darden* hearing with respect to the confidential informant who purchased drugs from the defendant. The defense attorney did not request said hearing nor did he challenge the search warrant on the record to make a motion or argument. The court also reasoned that counsel's failure to do so did not amount to ineffective assistance of counsel when there is little or no chance of success. *People v. Barksdale*, 191 AD3d 1370. It also concluded that a single error only arises to ineffective assistance of counsel in the rare instance when the error involves an issue so clear-cut and dispositive that no reasonable defense counsel would have failed to assert it. The court noted that because there is no indication in the record that the confidential informant was 'wholly imaginary' or that his communications to the police were 'entirely fabricated' ... defendant has failed to establish that he would have been entitled to any relief had a *Darden* hearing been conducted" (*People v. Nellons*, 187 AD3d 1574).

The dissent in this court concluded that the search warrant executed at 205 Curtis Street was not supported by probable cause. The dissent disagreed with the conclusion "that 'the hearsay information supplied in the search warrant application satisfied the two prongs of the *Aguilar-Spinelli Test* and that the search warrant [in question was] issued upon probable cause' (*People v. Jones*, 224 AD3d 1348.

The dissent explained that under the *Aguilar-Spinelli* test, "a tip from a hearsay informant ... may not be used [to establish probable cause] unless the source of [the informant's] knowledge is revealed and the informant is of known reliability" (*People v. Edwards*, 95 NY2d 486.) "The separate basis of

knowledge and veracity requirements of *Aguilar/Spinelli* are analytically independent and each must be satisfied" (*People v. DiFalco*, 80 NY2d 693.) "The 'basis-of-knowledge' prong of the test may be satisfied upon a showing that the information furnished is so detailed as to make it clear that it must have been based upon personal knowledge" (*People v. Jean-Charles*, 226 AD2d 395.) The dissent went on to explained that in other words, "[t]he basis of knowledge component ... requires that the information provided by the informant be corroborated or confirmed through details sufficient in number and suggestive of, or directly related to, the criminal activity informed about" (*Delgado v. City of New York*, 86 AD3d 502.)

The dissent discussed that the warrant application in question concerned two addresses, i.e., 205 Curtis Street and 215 Curtis Street, but contained a mere two statements based on the confidential informant's claimed knowledge regarding 205 Curtis Street. Specifically, it stated that "[t]he [confidential informant] has been inside 205 Curtis Street] on multiple occasions and is aware that narcotics are kept inside the location," and that "[t]he [confidential informant] . . . has been to 205 and 215 Curtis Street multiple times for narcotics transactions." The remaining contents of the six-page, single-spaced warrant application focused on 215 Curtis Street.

The dissent stated that for the reasons that follow, the hearsay information regarding 205 Curtis Street does not provide the requisite basis of knowledge justifying the issuance of the search warrant for that address. Additionally, the dissent noted that the application neither details any transaction that occurred at 205 Curtis Street, nor specifies the type of narcotic exchanged during such transaction. Also, that no time frame is provided for the hearsay statements concerning 205 Curtis Street, and it is therefore entirely possible that the unspecified drug transaction occurred years or decades ago. In fact, the warrant application entirely fails to set forth what was actually observed by the informant at 205 Curtis Street or when it was observed.

The dissent acknowledged that search warrant applications must be "accorded all reasonable inferences." However, given the wealth of information about 215 Curtis Street, which spanned six single-spaced pages and included granular details about what was observed, and the

comparative paucity of information regarding 205 Curtis Street, we are unable to reasonably infer that the confidential informant had the requisite basis of knowledge concerning 205 Curtis Street to establish probable cause for the issuance of the warrant at that address.

Highway Departments and Public Safety

What you need to know about Mobile Meth Labs

By Amanda Caughey, Communications Specialist,
Cornell Local Roads Program

Highway workers are no strangers to hazardous conditions. Whether dealing with extreme weather, heavy machinery, or roadside accidents, their job is inherently risky. However, one often-overlooked danger lurking in roadside ditches is the remnants of the shake-and-bake mobile meth lab. These makeshift drug labs not only pose environmental risks but also serious threats to the health and safety of those crew members tasked with roadside cleanup.

What is a Shake-and-Bake Meth Lab?

The shake-and-bake method of producing methamphetamine is a highly dangerous, mobile process that requires few ingredients and can be done in something as simple as a plastic soda bottle. Unlike traditional meth labs, which require a stationary setup, this method allows drug manufacturers to create meth on-the-go (often moved in backpacks, totes, or coolers). However, the chemical reaction is volatile, and improper handling can lead to explosions or toxic waste spills.

The Risk to Your Crew

When meth makers discard the remnants of their shake-and-bake operations, they often do so irresponsibly by tossing used bottles, chemical containers, and other hazardous waste into roadside ditches. Crews that come into contact with these discarded materials may face the following hazards:

- **Chemical Burns and Toxic Exposure:** The leftover substances in these bottles can be highly volatile, leading to chemical burns, respiratory issues, and other severe health affects upon contact.
- **Explosive Hazards:** Even after being discarded, some of these bottles may still contain active chemicals that can ignite or

explode if disturbed.

- **Environmental Contamination:** The chemicals used can seep into the soil and water, causing long-term environmental damage and posing risks to both workers and wildlife.

How to Identify Suspected Meth Waste

Highway workers should be trained to recognize the signs of discarded mobile meth lab waste (check out this issues Safety Series Poster for more information) and follow strict safety protocols. Here are a few key factors to watch for:

- Plastic soda or sports drink bottles containing a sludgy residue, particularly with a white or yellowish tint.
- Bottles with tubing attached or burn marks.
- Unusual chemical odors, similar to ammonia or cat urine.
- Unlabeled containers with unknown liquids or powders.

If a worker suspects they have encountered a mobile meth lab:

- **Do Not Touch It** – Avoid disturbing the materials.
- **Report It Immediately** – Notify a supervisor and local law enforcement.
- **Mark the Area** – If safe to do so, clearly mark the location to prevent others from approaching until professionals can properly dispose of the hazardous materials.

Awareness and Training

To ensure the safety of your crew, highway departments should provide workers with training on how to recognize and respond to meth-related hazards. Regular safety briefings, including tailgate talks on hazardous waste recognition, can help keep workers informed and prepared. In addition, collaboration with law enforcement and hazardous material disposal teams can improve response times and ensure that dangerous materials are removed safely and effectively. ▢



2026 Annual Meeting & Training
School Feb. 14 – 17th, 2026
New York Marriott Marquis, NYC

ONLINE REGISTRATION OPEN NOW AT WWW.NYTOWNS.ORG

1. **EXPENSES:** Actual and necessary expenses incurred in attending this school, including the registration fee, are proper municipal charges under Town Law, §116(12) and General Municipal Law, §77(b).

Early-bird rates

Available through Oct. 31, 2025

Member municipality, conference | \$150
Non-member municipality, conference | \$180
Non-municipality, company, conference | \$375

Rates increase Nov. 1

(registrations submitted after Jan. 24 will be processed at on-site rates)

Member municipality, conference | \$185
Non-member municipality, conference | \$215
Non-municipality, company, conference | \$425

Attorney Continuing Legal Education (CLE)

(Credit hours and rates - 9.5 CLE Credits, with a total of 11.5 credits available across Sunday-Monday. All courses provide transitional and non-transitional credit.)

Fee includes meeting registration.

Member (early bird / regular / on-site) | \$450 / \$550 / \$625
Non-member (early bird / regular / on-site) | \$560 / \$600 / \$675
Non-municipality, company, conference (early bird / regular / on-site) | \$735 / \$750 / \$825

Lock in 2025 room rates by registering before 11/16!

To reserve your room, visit <https://book.passkey.com/e/51084536>

Rooms with an asterisk (*) next to them have limited availability. Group rate cut-off date is Friday, January 23, 2026.

2025-2026 room rates are as follows:

Marquis Standard King/Double | \$303 early bird / \$322 regular rate (book between 11/17 and 1/24)
Times Square View | \$429*
Deluxe Suite | \$629*
Premier One-Bedroom Suite | \$739*

What's New

*2026 Annual Meeting & Training
School Feb. 14 – 17th, 2026
New York Marriott Marquis, NYC*

Add-on Experiences

This year, we are proud to be able offer attendees some additional networking and entertainment opportunities to take your full conference experience to the next level.

Please note that due to these changes, all attendees registering online must register themselves. If you need assistance with your member log-in credentials, please e-mail or call our offices at info@nytowns.org or (518)465-7933.

1. Monday, Feb. 16, 2026 Awards Reception and Luncheon at the New York Marriott Marquis. Purchase for meal ticket required - \$65 per person. Join the Association for a sit-down awards presentation and luncheon as we celebrate excellence within our community. This event is a wonderful opportunity to connect with fellow NYAOT members, recognize outstanding achievements, and enjoy a memorable meal together.

Meal ticket required: \$65 per person

- Pan Roasted Chicken (DF, GF)
 - Roasted Beef Tenderloin (DF, GF)
 - Winter Squash Risotto (GF,V)
2. Monday, Feb. 16 and Tuesday, Feb. 17 2025 Dine Around NY. Receive discounts and more at participating restaurants with your conference badge. No extra purchase required. Full list of participating restaurants and other details coming soon.
 3. Tuesday, Feb. 17th at 7 p.m. NYAOT lands on Broadway at The Outsiders. Limited seats available; ticket purchase required in addition to registration. Must register online to reserve a ticket. Take advantage of a 52 percent group discount. Seats available in rear mezzanine rows A, B and C for \$69 per ticket (face value \$132.50 + service charge = \$149). Bernard B. Jacobs Theatre, 245 West 45th Street, New York, NY 10036. Run time: approximately 2 hours and 25 minutes including a 15 minute intermission

Adapted from S.E. Hinton's seminal novel and Francis Ford Coppola's iconic film, this thrilling new Broadway musical features a book by Adam Rapp with Justin Levine, music and lyrics by Jamestown Revival (Jonathan Clay & Zach Chance) and Justin Levine, music supervision, orchestration, and arrangements by Justin Levine, choreography by Rick Kuperman & Jeff Kuperman, and direction by Tony Award® winner Danya Taymor. The New York Post calls it "The Best New Musical of the Season."

In Tulsa, Oklahoma, 1967, Ponyboy Curtis, his best friend Johnny Cade and their Greaser family of 'outsiders' battle with their affluent rivals, the Socs. The Outsiders navigates the complexities of self-discovery as the Greasers dream about who they want to become in a world that may never accept them. With a dynamic original score, The Outsiders is a story of friendship, family, belonging...and the realization that there is still "lots of good in the world."

BOOK your room by Nov. 16 2025 to lock in 2025 room rates. Room rates increase on Nov. 17.

- To reserve your room, visit <https://book.passkey.com/e/51084536>
- **Vouchers are not an accepted form of payment.**
- Then, MAIL or FAX completed registration form with a check for the corresponding registration fee to:

Association of Towns, 150 State St., Albany, NY 12207 | Fax: (518)465-0724

**Association of Towns Educational Series
Registration Form**

FOR INTERNAL USE ONLY

CHK # _____

ORDER # _____



TRAINING & CERTIFICATION FOR TOWN OFFICIALS

NAME _____

TITLE _____ PHONE _____

TOWN/COMPANY _____

ADDRESS _____

EMAIL ADDRESS _____

ONE REGISTRANT PER FORM

EVENT: 2026 ANNUAL MEETING & TRAINING SCHOOL

FEB. 14 - 17, 2025, NEW YORK MARRIOTT MARQUIS, 1535 Broadway, NYC, NY 10036

	Registration Type	Quantity (x)	Rate
Aug. 1 - Oct. 31	Early-bird member		\$150
	Early-bird non-member		\$180
	Early-bird non-municipality / company		\$375
	Early-bird CLE member		\$450
	Early-bird CLE Non-member		\$560
	Early-bird CLE Non-municipality / company		\$735
	Early-bird Accredited Justice Training		\$0
	Early-bird Accredited and Elective Court Clerk Training		\$0
Nov. 1 - Jan. 24	Member		\$185
	Non-member		\$215
	Non-municipality / company		\$425
	CLE member		\$550
	CLE non-member		\$600
	CLE non-municipality / company		\$750
	Accredited Justice Training		\$0
	Accredited and Elective Court Clerk Training		\$0
Meal tickets must be purchased ahead of time	OPTIONAL Meal Ticket Pan Roasted Chicken (DF,GF)		\$65
	OPTIONAL Meal Ticket Roasted Beef Tenderloin (DF,GF)		\$65
	OPTIONAL Meal Ticket Winter Squash Risotto (GF,V)		\$65
TOTAL ENCLOSED			

Request for Taxpayer Identification Number and Certification

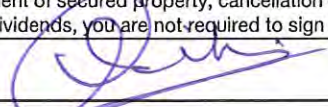
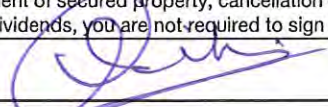
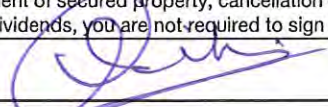
Go to www.irs.gov/FormW9 for instructions and the latest information.

Give form to the
requester. Do not
send to the IRS.

Before you begin. For guidance related to the purpose of Form W-9, see *Purpose of Form*, below.

Print or type. See Specific Instructions on page 3.	1 Name of entity/individual. An entry is required. (For a sole proprietor or disregarded entity, enter the owner's name on line 1, and enter the business/disregarded entity's name on line 2.) CCMH TIMES SQUARE LLC	
	2 Business name/disregarded entity name, if different from above. NEW YORK MARRIOTT MARQUIS	
	3a Check the appropriate box for federal tax classification of the entity/individual whose name is entered on line 1. Check only one of the following seven boxes. ☐ Individual/sole proprietor ☐ C corporation ☐ S corporation ☐ Partnership ☐ Trust/estate ☒ LLC. Enter the tax classification (C = C corporation, S = S corporation, P = Partnership) Note: Check the "LLC" box above and, in the entry space, enter the appropriate code (C, S, or P) for the tax classification of the LLC, unless it is a disregarded entity. A disregarded entity should instead check the appropriate box for the tax classification of its owner. ☐ Other (see instructions) _____	
	4 Exemptions (codes apply only to certain entities, not individuals; see instructions on page 3): Exempt payee code (if any) _____ Exemption from Foreign Account Tax Compliance Act (FATCA) reporting code (if any) _____ (Applies to accounts maintained outside the United States.)	
	3b If on line 3a you checked "Partnership" or "Trust/estate," or checked "LLC" and entered "P" as its tax classification, and you are providing this form to a partnership, trust, or estate in which you have an ownership interest, check this box if you have any foreign partners, owners, or beneficiaries. See instructions ☐	
	5 Address (number, street, and apt. or suite no.). See instructions. 1535 BROADWAY	
	6 City, state, and ZIP code NEW YORK, NY 10036	
7 List account number(s) here (optional)		

Part I Taxpayer Identification Number (TIN)																																														
Enter your TIN in the appropriate box. The TIN provided must match the name given on line 1 to avoid backup withholding. For individuals, this is generally your social security number (SSN). However, for a resident alien, sole proprietor, or disregarded entity, see the instructions for Part I, later. For other entities, it is your employer identification number (EIN). If you do not have a number, see <i>How to get a TIN</i> , later.																																														
Note: If the account is in more than one name, see the instructions for line 1. See also <i>What Name and Number To Give the Requester</i> for guidelines on whose number to enter.																																														
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Part II Certification					
Under penalties of perjury, I certify that:					
1. The number shown on this form is my correct taxpayer identification number (or I am waiting for a number to be issued to me); and					
2. I am not subject to backup withholding because (a) I am exempt from backup withholding, or (b) I have not been notified by the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) that I am subject to backup withholding as a result of a failure to report all interest or dividends, or (c) the IRS has notified me that I am no longer subject to backup withholding; and					
3. I am a U.S. citizen or other U.S. person (defined below); and					
4. The FATCA code(s) entered on this form (if any) indicating that I am exempt from FATCA reporting is correct.					
Certification instructions. You must cross out item 2 above if you have been notified by the IRS that you are currently subject to backup withholding because you have failed to report all interest and dividends on your tax return. For real estate transactions, item 2 does not apply. For mortgage interest paid, acquisition or abandonment of secured property, cancellation of debt, contributions to an individual retirement arrangement (IRA), and, generally, payments other than interest and dividends, you are not required to sign the certification, but you must provide your correct TIN. See the instructions for Part II, later.					
Sign Here	<table><tr><td>Signature of U.S. person</td><td>Date</td></tr><tr><td></td><td>03/19/2025</td></tr></table>	Signature of U.S. person	Date		03/19/2025
Signature of U.S. person	Date				
	03/19/2025				

General Instructions

Section references are to the Internal Revenue Code unless otherwise noted.

Future developments. For the latest information about developments related to Form W-9 and its instructions, such as legislation enacted after they were published, go to www.irs.gov/FormW9.

What's New

Line 3a has been modified to clarify how a disregarded entity completes this line. An LLC that is a disregarded entity should check the appropriate box for the tax classification of its owner. Otherwise, it should check the "LLC" box and enter its appropriate tax classification.

New line 3b has been added to this form. A flow-through entity is required to complete this line to indicate that it has direct or indirect foreign partners, owners, or beneficiaries when it provides the Form W-9 to another flow-through entity in which it has an ownership interest. This change is intended to provide a flow-through entity with information regarding the status of its indirect foreign partners, owners, or beneficiaries, so that it can satisfy any applicable reporting requirements. For example, a partnership that has any indirect foreign partners may be required to complete Schedules K-2 and K-3. See the Partnership Instructions for Schedules K-2 and K-3 (Form 1065).

Purpose of Form

An individual or entity (Form W-9 requester) who is required to file an information return with the IRS is giving you this form because they

New York Marriott Marquis Group Form

Name of Group: _____

Arrival Date: _____

Departure Date: _____

Please list the 3 "Gold Keys" (main service focus areas that will make your event a success):

Room Block:

Would you like the group rooms blocked together: Yes ☐ or No ☐

This is a request based on availability and not guaranteed

Would you like for the rooms to be Pre-Keyed: Yes ☐ or No ☐

Only available and recommended for groups arriving together via bus/shuttle/van. All guest keys will be released to the Tour Leader in 1 packet once all rooms are ready. Each guest will have their own envelope with their name & room number.

VIPs with group: _____

Please Note: Hotel Check In time is 4pm. Any Group Arrivals prior to 4PM are NOT guaranteed ready rooms. Special Room Requests are NOT guaranteed 4 PM check in. Hotel Check Out time is 11 AM.

Billing for Group:
(Please Select One)

Send Final Bill To:

Room, Tax & Incidentals
to Master

Room & Tax to Master
Incidentals on Own

Individual to Pay:

Phone Turned Off:

Yes ☐ or No ☐

****Guest Room Phone Disabled to Complete External Calls****

Rates Confidential:

Yes ☐ or No ☐

Breakfast Coupon Information:

(Revel & Rye Restaurant, 8th Floor, Breakfast Buffet served daily 6:30 AM - 11:30 AM)

Breakfast Coupons cost \$59.63 tax inclusive per coupon, per person, per day (unless contracted otherwise)

Number of Breakfast Coupons per day _____

Total # of Days _____

Total # of Breakfast Coupons _____

Preliminary numbers for breakfast coupons are to be provided to your Event Manager **10 Days** prior to the group check in. Final numbers for breakfast coupons are to be provided **72 hours** prior to the group check in. The final number can only be reduced 20% from the preliminary number. All breakfast coupons will be charged in advance prior to the group check in.

Bus Arrival / Departure Information:

Bus Arrival Date _____

Bus Arrival Time _____

Bus Departure Date _____

Bus Departure Time _____

Name of Bus/Van/Shuttle Company: _____

Number of Bus/Van/Shuttle? _____

Please call our Manager on Duty Cell # **347 885 6351** on your Arrival Date 15 minutes prior to arrival at the Hotel. This will ensure that our Bell Staff is prepared for the group's bus/shuttle/van arrival. Bus Pick Up & Drop Off location is on 45th Street by Starbucks. New York City does not offer overnight Bus Parking. Please plan accordingly with your bus company. **All luggage/bags need to be tagged with Guest Name Prior to Arrival at the Hotel.**

***IMPORTANT:** Please advise Event Manager/Hotel Tour Captain of any arrival/departure time changes*

Onsite Contact: _____ Cell Phone: _____

Email Address: _____

Number of People: _____ Number of Rooms: _____ Estimated Number of Bags: _____

The Porterage charge is mandatory for all groups (10 or more persons) that have a Bus, Van and/or Shuttle arrival at currently \$12.01 per bag/round trip, regardless if Bellman assistance is needed. Price will increase on July 1, 2026.

Will you require guest assistance with luggage: Yes ☐ or No ☐
Date & Time _____

Please note with bag delivery at check-in it will take up to 45 - 60 minutes for every 20 bags to be delivered to guestrooms by the bellman.

Will you require a bag pull/pick-up at checkout: Yes ☐ or No ☐

Please note that checkout is at 11 AM, and with a group bag pull/pick-up it will take 30 - 40 minutes for every 20 rooms to be assisted by the bellman. Please have bags tagged with Guest Name and set bags inside of the room by the door.

Onsite Agenda

Please fill out any times that your group may need to meet together for meals, tours, or general announcements during your stay. This is important so that we may prepare for any additional traffic flow on general public floors. Recommended locations are the outside walkway by Starbucks.

Saturday _____ Sunday _____

Monday _____ Tuesday _____

Wednesday _____ Thursday _____

Friday _____

Do you need space for your bus to pick up & drop off your attendees during your stay for activities around the city? Yes ☐ or No ☐

Thank you in advance!



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How to Effectively Leverage Broadband for Economic Development Purposes

By Michael Santorelli, Director, ACLP at New York Law School

High-speed internet access is critical to economic development. [Studies](#)¹ have found that broadband supports substantial GDP growth at the national level and fuels innovation across every sector. At the local level, robust connectivity attracts businesses, creates jobs, bolsters educational opportunities, enables telehealth, and allows individuals to participate directly in the modern digital economy. How can towns tap into the transformative potential of broadband? This article offers a five-step checklist that local officials might use when evaluating options for enhancing connectivity among residents and businesses in their town.

☑ **Step 1: Look to the Data**

As a first step, it is necessary to determine the extent to which broadband is available. Fortunately, high-speed internet is almost universally available in New York State. By the end of 2024, [data](#) collected by the Federal Communications Commission indicated that more than 97 percent of the state's population had access to a broadband connection. Since then, the number of unserved households in the state has continued to drop due to ongoing investment by ISPs. As of the summer of 2025, [less than 1 percent](#)² of New York households, about 61,000 in all, still lacked broadband. The state is on track to help connect these remaining locations as it prepares to dole out over [\\$664 million](#)³ in federal grants for this purpose.

At the same time, the number of internet access options available to New Yorkers has increased markedly. Whereas a few years ago residents in many towns

likely had a choice of either DSL or cable, today those same residents can choose from fixed wireless, mobile 5G, fiber, faster cable service, and improved satellite offerings. In addition to having more choices, the upshot of robust competition for consumers is lower prices; broadband [prices](#)⁴ have decreased over the last few years, while the cost of most other goods and services has risen. These data make clear local officials should avoid overtures from those trying to sell them on building their own broadband network. Municipal broadband projects are expensive, complex, and risky endeavors that rarely sustain themselves over the long-term. At a time when broadband is widely available, electing to build a duplicative system makes little sense and unnecessarily gambles precious taxpayer resources.

☑ **Step 2: Identify Areas of Real Need**

Broadband drives economic development only if it is widely adopted by those capable of using their connections in meaningful ways. While broadband availability in the state is incredibly robust, broadband adoption rates continue to lag in certain communities.

According to recent Census [data](#)⁵, the broadband adoption rate in New York State is 77 percent, which reflects the national rate and is on par with most other high-adopting states across the country. However, a closer look at the data reveals stubborn gaps. Indeed, broadband adoption correlates with age, income, and educational attainment, a dynamic that has been evident for decades. This means that broadband adoption continues to lag in low-income communities and among seniors. At the same time, there is significant evidence that many adopters lack the skills needed to put their

1 <https://connectednation.org/blog/data-show-that-broadband-access-equals-economic-resiliency>

2 <https://broadbandexpanded.com/posts/botblocations>

3 <https://broadband.ny.gov/connectall-deployment-program>

4 <https://broadbandexpanded.com/posts/pricegrowth>

5 <https://data.census.gov/table/ACSST1Y2023.S2801?q=Telephone,+Computer,+and+Internet+Access&g=040XX00US36&moe=false>

connections to productive uses. There is also growing recognition that some uses of technology, like social media and smartphone addiction among teens, can be harmful without proper training. Structured training programs that target specific communities with tailored curricula can help to raise awareness of the many positive attributes and uses of broadband-enabled technologies. These programs can deliver critical skills, close adoption gaps, and prepare more people to be responsible contributors to the digital economy.

☑ **Step 3: Use Public-Private Partnerships**

What's the best way to deploy these kinds of interventions? By leveraging public-private partnerships (PPPs). PPPs bring together public resources and private expertise in furtherance of a shared goal. These arrangements work best when the public partner allows the private counterpart to do what they do best without micromanagement. However, properly structured PPPs should include robust accountability provisions so that all partners are on the same page about roles, responsibilities, and the need for delivering on promises.

These partnerships can be deployed in various ways in the broadband space. To the extent a town is still struggling with broadband availability issues, a PPP with an established ISP could help to address remaining unserved or underserved households. The public partner could provide the ISP with resources to help make a network extension more economic.

PPPs are also impactful on adoption-related issues. Here, the private partner can be an expert nonprofit or anchor institution that has developed trusted relationships among those that a town wishes to help deliver training services to. These could include basic web training programs at a library or senior center, or more advanced courses on launching an online business at a community college.

☑ **Step 4: Carefully Vet Prospective Partners**

Not all prospective partners are created equal. Indeed, when a town announces that it wishes to invest resources in a new initiative aimed at bolstering broadband connectivity, it will inevitably receive proposals from a variety of known and unknown entities. It is almost always the most prudent course for a town to opt for a partnership with a known entity.

Partnering with an established ISP or nonprofit will minimize risk and increase the chances that a PPP will succeed. These entities have much to lose, both financially and from a goodwill perspective, if they let a partnership fail or act irresponsibly. Conversely, PPP risk increases greatly when a town opts for forging a partnership with an unknown entity, especially

those that lack any track-record in the broadband space.

Towns might use formal solicitation processes to announce opportunities and gather information from interested parties. These processes can play important roles in vetting potential partners. In addition to providing a ready-made vehicle for requesting and receiving detailed proposals, these processes can also be a means of talking in more detail with applicants. These conversations can help towns decide whether a potential partner is capable of following through on its promises. These information-gathering sessions should be supplemented with deep-dive research by officials into applicants' track-records, including any failed attempts at similar initiatives elsewhere.

☑ **Step 5: Deploy Proven, Targeted Solutions**

Once a town has selected its partner and forged a PPP, it is time for the real work to begin. This is when the town and its expert private partner collaborate on tailoring the best solution to the problem at hand. This could be as simple as helping to promote a low-cost broadband plan by the ISP – most major ISPs, including Charter, T-Mobile, and Verizon, offer them – or designing a training program at a community center for seniors.

This approach – and the solutions it facilitates – is not beyond the reach of any town. Regardless of a town's size, it possesses the ability to bring stakeholders together to help harness the transformative potential of broadband. Universal broadband availability, greater adoption, and more robust digital literacy skills will make every town a potential hub for business and job creation and will yield significant economic development gains. ☐



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An advertisement for Hybrid Building Solutions. It features a large white, dome-shaped salt/sand storage structure in a field. The text "Town of Galway" is overlaid on the image. To the right of the image are four circular callouts: "263+ buildings in NYS", "25 year warranty", "OSHA certified crews", and "Certified WBE".

Town of Galway

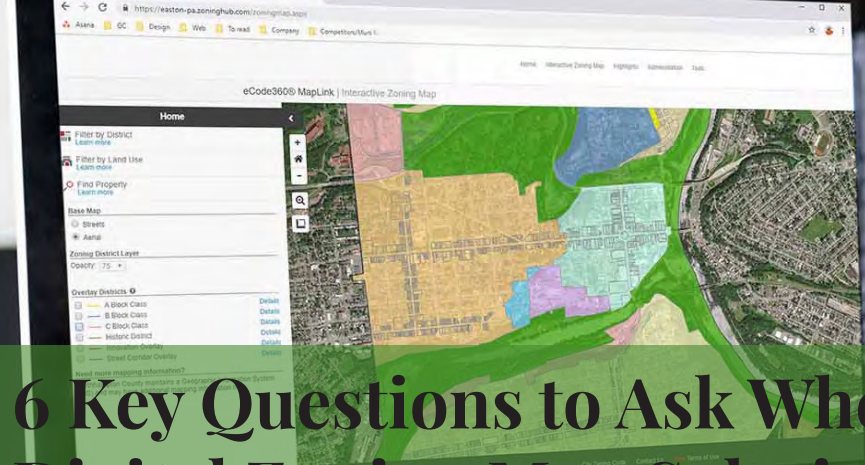
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6 Key Questions to Ask When Choosing a Digital Zoning Map Solution

Original content developed by General Code, a member of the International Code Council's Family of Solutions. 800.836.8834 | www.generalcode.com

Navigating the shift from traditional zoning maps to digital platforms offers municipalities a chance to streamline processes, increase transparency, and enhance public engagement. However, not all solutions are created equal, and finding the right fit can significantly impact operations and community relationships. Asking the right questions before making a decision will ensure you select a digital zoning solution that meets your needs now and in the future. Below are six key questions to help guide your selection process and ensure the solution you choose provides lasting value.

1. Is the Platform User-Friendly for Municipal Staff and Constituents?

A zoning solution will likely be used by various stakeholders, including city officials, developers, and residents. Many of these users may not have experience with maps, GIS systems, or planning tools. A user-friendly platform ensures that even those unfamiliar with zoning terminology can easily search for and understand the information.

Why it matters: Complicated systems discourage users, delay processes, and generate frustration among staff and residents.

What to look for: Platforms with clear interfaces, easy-to-navigate maps, and simple search functions. Features

like keyword searches, zoning overlays, and visual aids (such as legends and color-coded maps) enhance usability.

2. How Seamlessly Does It Integrate with Other Systems?

Municipal operations rely on several software platforms—GIS systems, permitting and code enforcement tools, and databases. A digital zoning solution that works in harmony with these systems will save time, reduce errors, and improve efficiency.

Why it matters: Siloed information creates bottlenecks and increases the likelihood of discrepancies between departments. Integration streamlines workflows, ensures consistency, and reduces double entry.

What to look for: Solutions that support data interoperability and offer APIs for seamless connectivity. Ask vendors if the platform can connect with existing systems such as ArcGIS, permitting software, or document management tools.

3. Can It Handle the Complexity of Local Ordinances?

Zoning codes vary widely between jurisdictions. Some municipalities may have straightforward zoning maps, while others manage complex systems with multiple overlays, districts, and special-use areas. A flexible

solution can accommodate both current ordinances and future amendments.

Why it matters: A rigid platform will require constant workarounds, creating inefficiencies. As zoning codes evolve, it's important to have a solution that adapts easily.

What to look for: Solutions that allow customization of zoning layers, overlays, and special districts. Features like configurable zoning categories and automated ordinance updates can make managing complex regulations easier.

4. Does It Offer Timely Updates?

Zoning maps and regulations are rarely static; new developments, rezoning efforts, and amendments require continuous updates. A digital zoning solution that supports timely updates ensures that users always have access to the latest information.

Why it matters: Outdated zoning information can lead to misinformed decisions, wasted time, and potential legal issues. Accurate and current data builds trust with the public and ensures smooth project planning.

What to look for: Platforms with attentiveness to an update process that ensures changes are visible immediately to both internal teams and the public.



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5. What Level of Support Does the Vendor Provide?

Even the most well-designed system requires ongoing support—whether it's initial setup, troubleshooting, or training for new staff. A responsive and reliable support team is essential to maximize the value of a digital zoning solution.

Why it matters: Without adequate vendor support, municipalities risk delays in service and frustration among staff, which can erode public confidence. Ongoing technical assistance ensures issues are resolved quickly, and software updates keep the platform running smoothly.

What to look for: Look for vendors that offer dedicated support, including onboarding, live technical assistance, and comprehensive training materials. Check if the vendor provides regular software updates and enhancements as part of their service.

6. Is It Built for Community Engagement?

Digital zoning tools should not only streamline internal processes but also empower the public by providing easy access to zoning information. A solution that promotes public engagement enhances transparency, builds trust, and encourages community involvement in local planning decisions.

Why it matters: When residents and developers have easy access to zoning information, it reduces the burden on staff to answer routine inquiries and fosters community trust. Engaged citizens are more likely to participate constructively in public hearings and planning efforts.

What to look for: Solutions with public-facing maps

that are mobile-friendly and accessible without login requirements. Interactive features, such as property look-up tools or “what’s allowed” zoning queries, make it easy for residents to explore information independently.

Making the Right Choice

Choosing the right digital zoning solution is a critical decision for

municipalities. By asking these six questions, you can ensure the platform you select aligns with your goals, integrates with existing systems, supports community engagement, and provides long-term value. A thoughtful selection process will position your municipality to manage zoning efficiently and transparently, benefiting staff, developers, and the public alike. □

The advertisement features a large background image of a city map. At the top, the 'MapLink' logo is displayed in green, with 'powered by ZoningHub™' in smaller green text below it. The main headline, 'Simplify Zoning Code Access', is written in a large, dark blue serif font. Below the headline, the website 'visualzoning.com' is shown in a blue sans-serif font. In the center, a laptop screen displays the MapLink web application interface. The interface includes a header for 'CITY OF TOWNSVILLE' and 'MapLink™ | Interactive Zoning Map'. On the left side of the screen, there is a sidebar with several filter options: 'Filter by District' (with a sub-note 'See what can be done on a property'), 'Filter by Land Use' (with a sub-note 'Find out where you can put your business'), 'Find a Property' (with a sub-note 'Search for a property'), 'Map Settings' (with a sub-note 'Control how the map looks and what is displayed'), and 'More Maps' (with a sub-note 'Access additional GIS mapping information'). The main area of the laptop screen shows a map with various colored zoning districts and a highlighted property. At the bottom of the advertisement, there is a dark blue banner. On the left side of the banner is the ICC logo, which consists of a stylized globe icon and the letters 'ICC'. To the right of the logo, the word 'INNOVATION™' is written in a large, white, bold sans-serif font. Below 'INNOVATION™', the text 'Digital Solutions to Empower Growth & Efficiency' is written in a smaller, white sans-serif font.



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Planning for Housing Success: How Municipalities Can Lead the Way

By Derik Kane, AICP, CNU-A | Senior Planner, LaBella Associates

New York State faces an unprecedented housing challenge. Across urban centers, suburban neighborhoods, and rural towns alike, municipalities are struggling with a shortage of affordable, suitable, and quality housing. New York State Governor Kathy Hochul's recent initiatives include an ambitious five-year, \$25 billion housing plan aimed at creating or preserving 100,000 affordable homes and incentivizing pro-housing policies statewide. This momentum reflects a growing recognition that housing is essential economic infrastructure, and municipalities must position themselves to capture these investments.

Local governments can respond proactively to address these challenges and take advantage of new opportunities. Communities should strategically assess housing conditions, understand future demand, and prepare projects capable of competing for state and federal support.

Why Housing Assessments Matter

Municipalities that proactively assess housing needs are better positioned to:

- **Diagnose pressing issues**, including affordability gaps, structural disrepair, and mismatched supply.
- **Strategize for long-term growth** by identifying the housing types and price points needed over the next 10 to 20 years.
- **Prioritize investment** by pinpointing where public and private dollars will yield the most benefit.
- **Access funding** from programs such as the

Pro-Housing Communities Fund, New York State Low-Income Housing Credits, and the state's revolving loan fund for mixed-income development.

Key Components of a Comprehensive Housing Assessment

1. Site Suitability Analysis

Forward-thinking municipalities across the United States are using Geographic Information Systems (GIS) and custom modeling tools to identify priority development sites. A cutting-edge example of this approach was implemented in Herkimer County, where LaBella Associates partnered with the County's Industrial Development Agency to evaluate potential sites for housing development. The study used advanced GIS modeling and a Python-based scoring tool to assess infrastructure access, zoning compatibility, and environmental constraints. The result: three viable sites were identified for new manufactured and tiny home communities, with concept plans, unit counts, and cost estimates developed to support implementation.

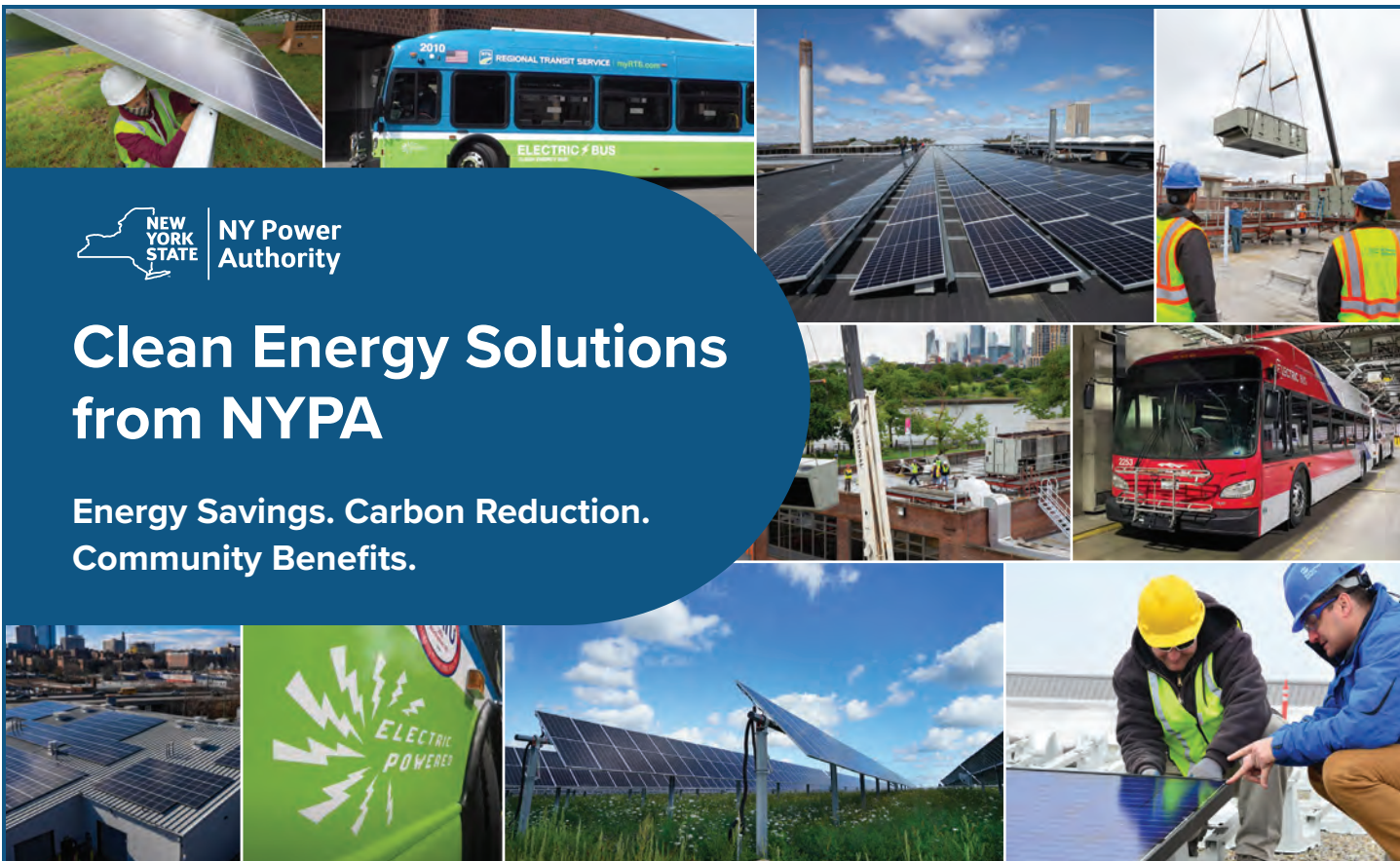
These tools help communities answer key questions: *Where can housing be built? What's feasible given our infrastructure?* Site suitability mapping allows municipalities to "pre-package" development opportunities—an invaluable advantage when responding to competitive state grants or developer interest.

2. Building Condition Surveys

Aging housing stock is a common challenge in older industrial cities. Parcel-level condition surveys that use U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development-aligned criteria help communities identify substandard and dilapidated homes, prioritize reinvestment, and bolster funding applications. These surveys have supported targeted demolition, rehabilitation, and neighborhood revitalization, while also enabling communities to secure funding—such as Community Development Block Grants—to continue these efforts.

In Niagara Falls' Mid-City neighborhood, a parcel-level condition survey assessed housing, and results were mapped in a public GIS tool, enabling public officials and community partners to quickly identify hotspots for investment, prioritize demolition or rehab efforts, and apply for funding.

Assessments can also include variables like street tree canopy coverage and sidewalk conditions—tailored to each community's priorities. Such comprehensive evaluations are vital in older neighborhoods, where aging infrastructure and housing stock can quietly drive disinvestment and decline. By capturing this data, communities gain the evidence needed to justify funding, prioritize interventions, and monitor long-term



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3. Housing Demand Forecasting

Demand forecasting is one of the most critical and forward-looking components of a comprehensive housing assessment. It goes beyond basic population projections by analyzing how demographic changes, lifestyle preferences, and consumer behavior will shape future housing needs. A key tool used in this analysis is Tapestry Segmentation, a nationally recognized psychographic model developed by Esri.

By using segmentation models, communities can better understand the types of households they currently serve—and anticipate how those household profiles may change over time. When combined with local housing data, this insight allows for more accurate projections of future needs by unit type, size, tenure (rent vs. own), and affordability level.

The result is a strategic and informed approach to planning. Municipalities are better equipped to craft housing strategies that address current conditions while also preparing for long-term shifts in population and demand. This ensures that decisions made today will continue to meet residents' needs in the future.

4. Short-Term Rentals and Market Disruption

Short-term rentals (STRs), such as Airbnb and Vrbo listings, can significantly impact housing availability, especially in tourism-heavy or rural counties. As part of Schoharie County's first housing assessment, a targeted STR analysis identified areas where investor-owned short-term units were displacing long-term rentals, tightening the market and inflating prices. Housing assessments that track investor-owned vacation properties help municipalities monitor impacts, craft regulatory responses, and protect local rental markets for residents.

5. Equity and Vulnerable Population Assessments

Equity is a cross-cutting issue in housing. Many studies now include focused assessments of the needs of seniors, people with disabilities, veterans, and cost-burdened households. Rates of cost-burdened renters are rising across many communities. By mapping these populations, municipalities can develop policies and funding applications that directly address the needs of those most at risk.

6. Foreclosure and Derelict Property Assessments

To address the adverse impacts of vacancy, abandonment, and disinvestment—conditions that erode property values, strain public resources, and impede community revitalization—many communities are turning to foreclosure and/or derelict housing assessments. Understanding the scope and nature of

these challenges is a vital first step toward reversing decline and strategically directing reinvestment.

In response to these concerns, Wayne County partnered with LaBella Associates to develop and implement a comprehensive Derelict Housing Strategy. This effort began with the creation of a countywide inventory cataloging vacant, abandoned, and tax-delinquent properties. From this database, three Strategic Areas were identified—locations where clusters of distressed properties posed significant challenges but also offered meaningful opportunities for targeted revitalization. For each area, detailed existing conditions reports and customized redevelopment plans were prepared.

At the same time, an economic and market analysis was conducted to uncover the systemic drivers of disinvestment. The final strategy delivered a robust set of policy and program recommendations aimed at addressing current dereliction and preventing future decline.

Taking Action: What Communities Should Do Next

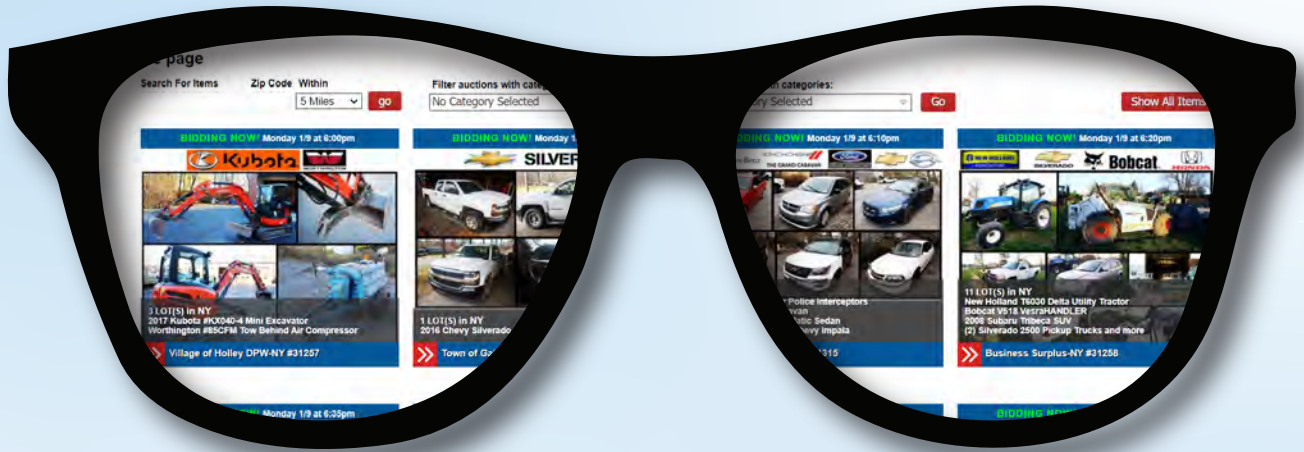
New York is at a housing crossroads—and each community has a decision to make. By investing in comprehensive housing assessments today, municipalities can prepare for the future while positioning themselves to secure millions in state and federal funding. The examples across Herkimer, Niagara Falls, Schoharie, and beyond show that thoughtful planning pays dividends—in revitalized neighborhoods, better living conditions, and inclusive economic growth.

To remain competitive and meet local needs, municipalities should:

- **Conduct or update a housing needs assessment every five to seven years**, including site suitability mapping, condition surveys, and demand modeling.
- **Integrate housing planning into zoning reform**, capital investment, and infrastructure upgrades.
- **Inventory derelict and foreclosed properties**, with prioritization criteria for redevelopment
- **Engage residents and stakeholders** through surveys, focus groups, and transparent public reporting.
- **Align assessments with funding programs**, including those identified in Governor Hochul's 2025 budget, such as the expanded Historic Tax Credit and the Homeless Housing and Assistance Program (HHAP).

Housing is a community's foundation—and with the right data and strategy, it can be the catalyst for transformation. □

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Can Dog Licensing Keep Up with the Animal Welfare Evolution?

By Libby Post, Executive Director, NYS Animal Protection Federation

Animal welfare has changed dramatically since 1894 when New York State passed a law to establish dog licensing. At that point, the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA) was the only game in town, so to speak. So, the honor of managing the licensing program went to the ASPCA, the oldest animal welfare organization in the country. At that point, the organization had been around for close to 30 years. The license cost \$2—about \$50 in today's economy.

As agriculture grew to be one of the state's largest industries, in 1917, the state established uniform provisions, which was driven by livestock indemnity needs. In other words, farmers had to be made whole in some way because of dog attacks on livestock.

Throughout the next 60 years or so, dog licensing in New York changed. We stopped going door-to-door because the enumeration mandate was eliminated. Calendar year licensing was abolished, municipalities were tasked with the responsibility to provide animal sheltering services and were required to hire a dog control officer. Eventually, the Department of Agriculture and Markets oversaw pet licensing. In 1979, officials recognized that dogs were no longer a threat to livestock. As the years progressed, changes were made to mandate proof of rabies vaccine in order to get a dog license and "dangerous dogs" laws were updated and fortified.

In 1996, the Animal Population Control Fund, which is supported by a portion of the dog licensing fees, was established. The Fund receives \$1 for each altered dog license and \$3 for unaltered dogs. This was a game-changer for the animal welfare community, which had grown over 100-plus years from just the ASPCA to countless shelters and rescues throughout New York's

62 counties. The Fund, which is managed by the ASPCA for the Department of Agriculture and Markets, helps to underwrite low-cost spay and neuter in order to provide those on public assistance access to this important veterinary care. More spay and neuter procedures means less homeless companion animals.

Unfortunately, the fund has not been able to keep pace with the increase in the homeless companion animals. Today, we're seeing an overwhelmed shelter system due to a number of factors, including the lack of licensing, the economy, evictions and the COVID puppy phenomenon (people bought puppies at highly inflated prices from pet



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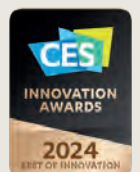
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stores and then brought them to shelters when they had to return to work).

Local municipalities became responsible for dog licensing in 2011. In addition to licensing, they must provide sheltering services as well as have a dog control officer. Those requirements didn't change.

Town and city clerk offices are usually the place where people go for their licensing. These numbers aren't great—nationally, the dog licensing rate is 23 percent. Consider the following scenario: your dog gets loose, it is not licensed, it ends up at your local shelter and you have five days to claim it before it becomes the property of the shelter. In New York, if you want to redeem your dog, you have to get a license and show proof of rabies vaccine. In many of the rural towns in upstate New York, the clerk's office isn't open 40 hours a week, and the scheduling can be tricky.

Many times, stray dogs end up becoming the shelter's and then the shelter must spend the time and money to provide vet care (immunizations, spay/neuter and any other medical issues), food, socialization/behavior, a roof over their head and a comfortable place to sleep. There are many municipalities that opt to contract with local not-for-profit shelters to provide animal sheltering services and there are some that operate their own municipal shelter. Either way, an unlicensed dog that comes into a shelter is a financial responsibility.

The one way to decrease that financial obligation is by making dog licensing a local priority. The goal is to reunite a lost dog with its owner. A dog license is the No. 1 way to get a lost dog home. It is also one of the most effective ways of clearing overcrowded shelters so that they can care for dogs and other animals who are truly homeless.

Dog licensing is also a public health issue. It's all about the rabies vaccine and making sure the public is protected. Having a rabies vaccine also means the dog will receive the veterinary care it needs to stay healthy and add to his or her family's well-being. Municipalities across the country have taken steps to enhance dog licensing by using innovative online resources and portals. It may cost some money to take advantage of these resources. But, imagine having a QR code at your local shelter that a dog owner can scan to register and pay for a dog license right then and there. Folks won't need to go to the local town clerk's office, which may or may not be open 9 a.m. - 5 p.m. five days a week, for their license and renewals would be handled automatically via email and the postal service.

If we're serious about caring for homeless companion animals, licensing is key to getting them back home and increasing the resources for low-cost spay and neuter services through the Animal Population Control Fund. More licenses will mean less homeless animals. It's just that simple. □



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SCAN FOR DETAILS

Planning for the Power Shift: Tools for Navigating Solar Growth in New York State

By Nina Zesky and Corinne Brath, Wendel

As New York State advances its climate and renewable energy goals, rural communities are seeing a marked increase in interest from solar developers. State mandates and financial incentives have significantly accelerated the pace of solar project proposals, particularly in small towns and agricultural regions. While this momentum brings promising opportunities, it also introduces challenges, especially for municipalities confronting energy infrastructure and land use decisions that may be new or unfamiliar. For local boards and planning officials, understanding the evolving landscape of solar development and being equipped with sound, forward-looking policy tools is essential to managing growth effectively.

Understanding the Surge in Solar Development

In many cases, developers approach landowners directly, offering lease agreements that can provide steady income over several decades. This activity can generate both enthusiasm and concern within a community. Some residents view it as an opportunity for economic diversification, while others raise questions about land use compatibility, environmental impacts, or

the preservation of community character. Community members frequently turn to municipal representatives to address these concerns, often even before a project is formally proposed.

When a developer identifies a viable site and secures interest from the landowner, the next step typically involves contacting the municipality to begin the permitting and approval process. These discussions can occur under tight timelines and with a sense of urgency, especially if the project aims to qualify for time-sensitive incentives. It is essential to remember



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that, despite external pressures, solar developers must comply with the municipality's established approval processes, which may include zoning, environmental review, and public input. A clear and consistent framework helps manage expectations, reduce confusion, and ensure the community's interests are represented.

Towns should seek legal counsel, engineers, and planning consultants to support project reviews. These third-party services, typically funded through escrow accounts paid for by the developer, play a crucial role in evaluating technical materials, negotiating benefit agreements, and ensuring compliance with local

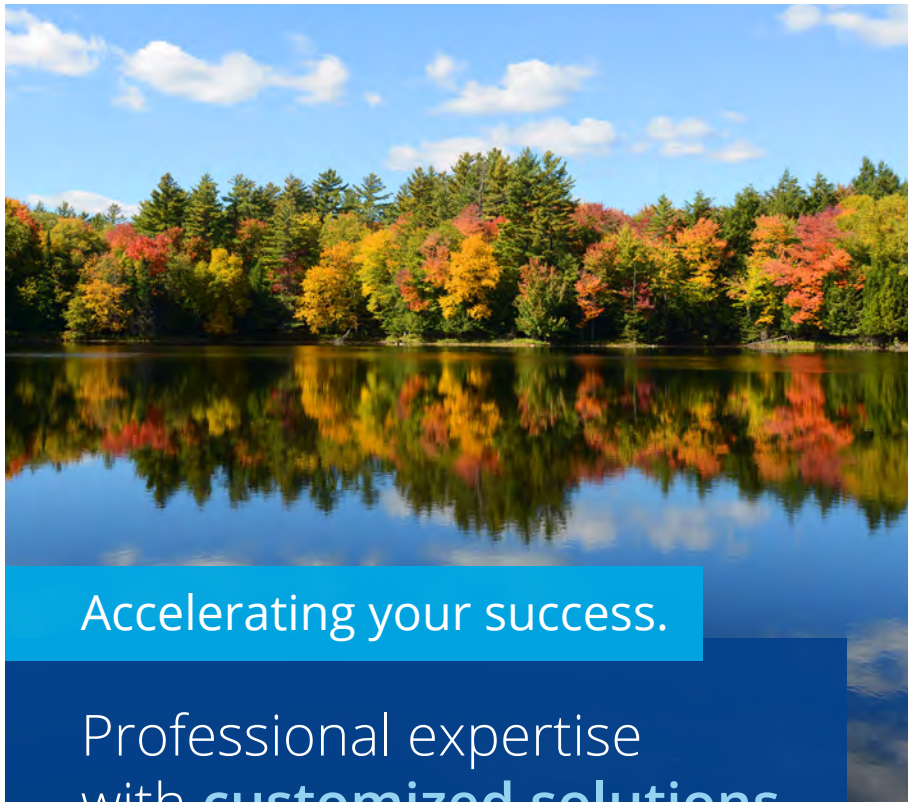
standards. This underscores the importance of having well-defined local laws and planning documents in place before applications arrive. Equipped with the right tools, municipalities are better positioned to guide development in a way that aligns with community goals and minimizes unintended impacts.

Proactive Planning

The readiness of a municipality often hinges on its local solar law, which establishes standards for the development of solar energy systems within the community. Ideally, this law should be reviewed and updated every few years to keep pace with evolving technologies, changes in state and federal policies, and local planning priorities. A comprehensive solar law typically includes clear application requirements, submission timelines, completeness thresholds, and necessary studies or technical reviews. It also outlines defined siting standards such as setbacks, screening, height limits, and stormwater controls. Additionally, land use guidance should specify the zones where solar development is permitted, prohibited, or conditionally allowed.

Importantly, the law should mandate benefit agreements—such as Host Community Agreements and Road Use Agreements—as well as require a decommissioning plan to address the removal and site restoration of the solar project at the end of its operational lifespan. For instance, a municipality might allow an initial project review when engineering plans are 30 to 40 percent complete but require final approval contingent upon near-complete plans. This approach ensures that design and safety considerations are thoroughly evaluated before construction begins.

Well-crafted solar laws also enhance transparency for both developers and residents, reducing uncertainty and promoting a predictable review process. Beyond solar laws, municipalities benefit from incorporating solar considerations into their long-term planning documents, including comprehensive plans, farmland protection plans, and smart growth strategies. These documents offer valuable context on community priorities and serve as a guide for evaluating proposed projects. For example, a comprehensive plan might identify preferred sites for solar development, such as brownfields, former industrial



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properties, or other underutilized parcels, while outlining protections for scenic views, historic resources, or prime agricultural soils. Agricultural and open space plans can help balance energy development with farmland preservation. By mapping key assets and infrastructure, these plans clarify where solar development may be most suitable and where it may conflict with other objectives.

Public engagement is a crucial aspect of this process. Meaningful community input ensures that planning documents reflect local values and that solar development is viewed not merely as a technical issue but as part of a broader land use and economic strategy.

Planning for Tomorrow

When towns are prepared, solar development can offer long-term benefits beyond clean energy, especially through negotiated agreements that align with local priorities. Host Community Agreements, for example, can generate steady, often unrestricted funding throughout the life of a project. These funds may be directed toward park improvements, emergency services, downtown revitalization, or other initiatives identified by the community. When municipalities have clear, up-to-date planning documents in place, they are better positioned to allocate these resources strategically and in ways that reflect shared goals.

Infrastructure improvements are another common outcome. Developers may invest in road upgrades, stormwater improvements, or electrical infrastructure needed to support their projects. When municipalities have already identified areas of need through a capital plan, comprehensive plan, or similar effort, those priorities can help guide negotiations and ensure that new investments serve the broader community. In some cases, projects that disturb forested areas or green space may also include conservation measures such as easements or habitat restoration. Likewise, developers may contribute to emergency services, offering equipment upgrades or specialized training in recognition of the technical demands associated with solar facilities.

To make the most of these opportunities, early engagement is critical. Municipalities that enter conversations with clearly

defined expectations and professional guidance can better shape outcomes that support the project's success and the community's long-term resilience. As New York's energy landscape continues to evolve, rural towns and small municipalities face a complex mix of challenges and possibilities. By proactively updating local laws, aligning solar policy with planning documents, and approaching development with a structured, informed mindset, communities can ensure that solar growth reflects their values, protects their resources, and contributes meaningfully to a more sustainable future. □

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