

Molinaro lays out agenda for 2015

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Dutchess County Executive Marc Molinaro gives his State of the County address on Wednesday at the Culinary Institute of America in Hyde Park.

(Photo: Darryl Bautista/Poughkeepsie Journal)

With a theme of "Moving Dutchess Forward," County Executive Marc Molinaro is proposing a series of new initiatives.

From funding for infrastructure improvements, encouraging solar power development and cuts to expenses, Molinaro touched on a wide range of topics Wednesday at the 2015 State of the County address at the Ecolab Auditorium at the Marriott Pavilion on the Culinary Institute of America campus in Hyde Park.

Molinaro said the county has already seen improvement in recent years. Unemployment in Dutchess County has fallen from 8.2 percent in 2012 to 4.6 percent in 2015.

"As a county and as a community, we are moving forward," Molinaro said.

The business climate is healthy in Dutchess County, Molinaro said, with a number of businesses, such as the Gap, and other companies adding jobs to the local area.

A deal between IBM and GlobalFoundries has helped stabilize the local economy, Molinaro noted. GlobalFoundries announced in October that it acquired IBM's global commercial semiconductor technology business, including its intellectual property.

"We have begun to reestablish our financial security," Molinaro said.

Dutchess launched a \$250,000 targeted marketing campaign to fill vacant commercial properties and industrial space. The move will help bring more jobs and investment into the county,

according to Molinaro.

Dutchess County Department of Public Works is partnering with Solar City to bring a 2 megawatt photovoltaic solar panel array to the Dutchess County Airport through a NY-Sun award from the state. The county also is implementing the Energize NY Finance program that can bring low interest rates, long repayment terms and automatic transferability to commercial property owners interested in energy improvements.

Dutchess will invest \$26 million, which includes state and federal aid dollars, on its infrastructure. Projects range from replacing old bridges to paving.

"You don't pay attention to water pipes until they break," Molinaro said.

Two projects slated for 2015 are the final design of the Harlem Valley Rail Trail connection and the reconstruction of Crum Elbow Road in Hyde Park, the announcement said.

"This is beyond terrific," said Lisa DeLeeuw, executive director, Harlem Valley Rail Trail Association. "The connection between Dutchess and Columbia counties is a really important section of that trail, plus this eight-mile stretch is probably going to be one of the most beautiful on the rail trail. It's going to be spectacular."

The county executive also discussed waterfront development plans in the City of Poughkeepsie. The mixed-use project will

bring "a world class waterfront," to the city,Molinaro said.

The strategy will focus on millennials, and include mixed-used, transit-oriented development, according to Molinaro.

Once the waterfront is developed, it "will transition not only the city, but the county,"Molinaro said.

"It was really good to hear about the targeted investments that he wants to make in economic development, specifically in the City of Poughkeepsie," said Rob Rolison, chairman of the Dutchess County Legislature. "He talked about areas of the city that are ripe for development to help build and lift the city up. He talked about Main Street and the waterfront development strategy. That is something that is good for the city."

The county also is looking to reduce costs, Molinaro said.

Next month, temporary housing pods are scheduled to open at Dutchess County Jail, according to archives. The pods will bring inmates back to Dutchess County, where they will have access to programs and services, according to Molinaro. The move will drive down costs to taxpayers, the announcement said.

The cost of housing out 250 inmates per day cost taxpayers \$8 million a year, Molinarosaid.

Dutchess County Jail has 500 inmates and 250 cells.

The county also plans to build a new jail, as additions will not solve the problem,Molinaro said. "We have more inmates than we have space," he said. He hopes the additional emphasis on

mental health resources will help keep folks with mental illnesses out of jail, and get the help they need.

One way to do that is via a restoration center, which Molinaro said will open later this year.

The county has a goal to complete its new facility, called a restoration center, this year, which will be housed on North Road in Poughkeepsie. The facility will offer behavioral health services, and serve as an urgent care center.

"I am thrilled that the county executive has admitted that the (Democratic) caucus is right and that mentally ill people should be diverted from arrest and jail," said Joel Tyner, Dutchess County legislator.

The county also is looking to expand services. Dutchess has brought mental health services into the 21st century with a Dutchess County Helpline suicide prevention mobile app. Those in the midst of a mental crisis can text "DMH" to 741-741. Both services were launched in 2014.

The Mobile Crisis Intervention Team, which launched in 2012, is expanding its services through partnerships with MidHudson Regional Hospital of Westchester Medical Center and will offer 24-7 services.

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Initiatives

- New housing pods, capable of holding 200 inmates, will open in March, potentially saving Dutchess taxpayers \$1 million in 2015.
- Final design of the Harlem Valley Rail Trail connection and the reconstruction of Crum Elbow Road in Hyde Park.
- Dutchess will invest \$26 million, which includes state and federal aid dollars, on its infrastructure. Projects range from replacing old bridges to paving.
- Launching a \$250,000 targeted marketing campaign to fill vacant commercial properties and industrial space.
- The Resource Recovery Agency will be self-sufficient this year, after 20 years of subsidies.
- Dutchess County Department of Public Works is partnering with Solar City to bring a 2 megawatt photovoltaic solar panel array to the Dutchess County Airport through a NY-Sun award from the state.
- Implementing the Energize NY Finance program that can bring low interest rates, long repayment terms and automatic transferability to commercial property owners interested in energy improvements.
- Dutchess County event programming has been expanded to connect people with opportunities and services including a

Special Needs Picnic.

- Expand the Sexual Assault Response Team to local college campuses.

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[PoughkeepsieJournal.com](http://www.poughkeepsiejournal.com)

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