



State of New York County of Broome Government Offices

Office of the Broome County Executive
Jason T. Garnar, County Executive

2026 State of the County Address Delivered by Jason Garnar, February 25, 2026 Roberson Museum, Binghamton

Good evening, everyone.

I want to start by thanking Chairman Dan Reynolds, Majority Leader Matt Pasquale, Minority Leader Kim Myers, and every member of the Broome County Legislature for their partnership and commitment to moving our county forward.

I'd like to welcome our countywide elected officials: County Clerk Aaron Martin, Sheriff Fred Akshar, and District Attorney Paul Battisti.

It's also great to see our federal, state and local partners, along with community leaders from across Broome County. Thank you for being here.

I want to say something about the folks I just recognized. Around here, we've got Democrats and Republicans, conservatives and progressives – and yes, we see the world a little differently sometimes.

But when it comes to Broome County, we tend to check the party labels at the door and get to work. We sit at the same table, we hash things out, and at the end of the day we figure out how to move forward together.

That spirit of cooperation isn't flashy, and it doesn't always make headlines – but it's the reason we've been able to get so much done. And truth be told, it's something pretty special about this community.

I also want to recognize our department heads. Your leadership keeps this county moving forward every single day, and the work you do behind the scenes is critical to everything we accomplish.

And to our Broome County workforce – thank you. Day in and day out, you are delivering services, supporting our residents, maintaining our infrastructure, protecting our communities, and stepping up wherever you're needed.

Tonight, we're here in the gallery of Roberson Museum, and I want to thank Executive Director Michael Grasso, the Roberson Board, and the entire team here for welcoming us into this beautiful space.

We're also surrounded by the work of local artist, Orazio Salati.

Orazio's journey – from immigrating to the United States as a child to building a lifelong career in the arts and shaping generations of students right here in our community – is a powerful example of the impact one person can have.

We are honored to have him with us tonight. Orazio, if you would please stand... let's give him a well-deserved round of applause.

The exhibit around us, *Uncovering the Surface*, challenges us to look beyond what we immediately see – to understand the layers, the process, and the meaning underneath.

And in many ways, that idea reflects the work we do in government.

Because building a stronger community isn't just about what's visible. It's about the investment, the planning, and the work happening behind the scenes to make things better over time.

That's exactly what Roberson is doing through its Improve. Expand. Rehabilitate. campaign – a comprehensive effort to modernize its facilities, better serve the growing demand for community connection, and preserve the history that makes this place so special.

Broome County is proud to be a financial supporter of this historic capital campaign, providing \$150,000 in funding so far, because we believe that by reimagining its spaces and strengthening its foundation, Roberson is positioning itself to educate, inspire, and welcome visitors for generations to come.

And that idea – building something stronger for the future while honoring what's already here – is guiding our work across Broome County.

Because the story of our county isn't just told through reports or numbers.

It's told through people. Through progress. Through the moments – big and small – that show who we are and where we're going.

So tonight, instead of just telling you about the State of Broome County... I'm going to show you.

If you walked in expecting a long policy lecture, you're in luck — you're only getting half of one. The rest is a series of images that I'm going to show you right now that tell Broome County's story better than I ever could. Think of this as my own art exhibit – it's not exactly worthy of the Metropolitan Museum of Art... but it is a pretty good look at who we are and where we're headed.

First, I'll show you how we're building a community where working parents can put down roots, build their careers, and raise their families here.

Just a few weeks ago, we welcomed Governor Kathy Hochul to Broome County to announce a proposed \$20 million investment to expand child care access right here in our community.

At Oakdale Commons, we're preparing to break ground on a brand-new, 200-slot child care center – a major expansion of capacity that will serve families across Broome County.

For the first time in 15 years, the Youth Bureau will once again stand on its own as a dedicated department – ensuring that programs, partnerships, and opportunities for our youth receive the focus they deserve.

Because investing in families and youth also means investing in our future.

And that investment in our future continues by building strong educational pathways and a workforce that is ready for the opportunities ahead.

At SUNY Broome Community College, under the leadership of President Dr. Tony Hawkins, enrollment is surging. This fall, the college experienced more than a 15% increase in total enrollment – adding more than 500 new students and reaching its highest levels since 2020.

That growth is being fueled by first-time students and adult learners taking advantage of Governor Hochul's SUNY Reconnect initiative – opening doors for individuals who are ready to gain new skills, earn credentials, and re-enter the workforce stronger than ever.

At Binghamton University, we are also entering an exciting new chapter with the arrival of President Anne D'Alleva. Her strong leadership at our flagship university strengthens not only the campus, but the entire regional economy.

Just a few weeks ago, Binghamton University and SUNY Broome signed a new engineering transfer agreement creating a seamless pathway for students to continue their education right here in the Southern Tier and step directly into in-demand careers.

And at Broome-Tioga BOCES, students are gaining hands-on skills through Career and Technical Education programs that directly connect to our local workforce needs. Through our partnership, students are even helping construct tiny homes – real projects that build both skills and housing solutions for our community. Once they're finished these tiny homes will later be sold under the Broome County Land Bank's affordable home program.

We also broke ground last summer at the former NYPenn building in the heart of Johnson City, where a newly expanded LPN school will be run by BOCES. With support and funding from Broome County, this project is expanding access to nursing education and strengthening our healthcare workforce pipeline, expected to open this fall.

Through Broome Workforce, we're aligning training programs with the needs of local employers and helping residents connect directly to good-paying careers.

Under the leadership of our new Director of Workforce Development, David Goguen, we're strengthening those connections and ensuring our workforce strategy is proactive, responsive, and focused on results.

When we invest in education and workforce development, the goal is clear – to create opportunity right here at home.

And across Broome County, we're seeing that opportunity take shape in real, visible ways.

Nowhere is that more evident than at Oakdale Commons.

Just a few years ago, the parking lots were nearly empty, storefronts were dark, and the future of that site was uncertain.

Today, thanks to Broome County's leadership and the vision of JC Spark, Oakdale Commons has been completely reimagined – transformed into a place where you now have to search for a parking spot.

We've welcomed the largest Dick's House of Sport,
BJ's Wholesale Club,
Farm by Beer Tree,
Chipotle,
Panera Bread,
Guthrie Lourdes Health & Fitness,
Dave & Buster's,
Five Below and we're not slowing down.

This year, we expect the first of our incoming Chick-fil-A locations to open at the Commons, at the site of the former KeyBank building.

Economic development comes in many forms — sometimes it's high-tech manufacturing, sometimes it's small business growth, and sometimes... it's a chicken sandwich that requires traffic control on opening day.

And tomorrow, we will cut the ribbon on the Guthrie Lourdes expansion – a multi-million dollar state-of-the-art orthopedic and spine surgery center.

Oakdale Commons is no longer just a place to shop – it's becoming a destination for services, health, community, and soon, housing.

That kind of transformational thinking is happening all across Broome County. Not just in our spaces, but in our economy with companies investing, expanding, and creating new opportunities for our residents.

Right here in BAE Systems' hometown of Endicott, we saw a powerful vote of confidence in our community this year. Their \$65 million expansion will soon be complete – bringing new battery

production, lab space, and more than 130 good-paying jobs – proves that the skills, work ethic, and innovation born in Broome County are still leading the way.

Endicott has always been a place that builds things that matter, and this investment shows the world we're just getting started.

We're also seeing other long-standing companies double down on their commitment to Broome County.

CMP Advanced Mechanical Solutions announced a major expansion of its Binghamton facility that will modernize operations and bring more than 60 new good-paying jobs to our community. It's another clear sign that Binghamton isn't just a place on a map – it's a place where manufacturers choose to grow, invest, and build the future right here at home.

This year marked a milestone for Broome County as The Raymond Corporation completed its first large-scale development right here in Kirkwood – a major new advanced manufacturing and energy solutions facility.

What began with the acquisition of two Corporate Drive sites has now culminated in a fully operational manufacturing center of excellence that brings cutting-edge technology, new jobs, and expanded opportunity to our community.

This isn't just another business investment – it's the first time a company of this scale has chosen Broome County as a home for growth, and it sends a powerful message that our region is where manufacturing innovation thrives.

And I'm proud to report the work is paying off. In the last 5 years, our community has added over 10,000 jobs!

So where will all of these people live?

Housing is a priority – and it has to be.

Across Broome County, more than 1,500 units of housing have recently been completed, are under construction, or are preparing to break ground this year alone. That's real progress – and it's happening at every stage.

Just last week, we cut the ribbon on Helio Health's 111-unit development – Confluence Court at 200 Court Street in Binghamton. 30 of these units will be set aside specifically to support veterans.

75 units on Hooper Road in Endwell and 72 units at 333 Grand Ave in Johnson City are set to open in the coming months.

Construction is actively moving forward on major housing developments across the county including

19 units at 41 Clinton Street in Binghamton, part of a larger 30-unit scattered housing project.

197 units at The Marshall, the former Vestal Quality Inn site.

161 units on Bunn Hill Road in Vestal.

67 units at Riverside Gardens, at the former Davis College campus in Johnson City.

The revitalization of 252 units at Town and Country Apartments on Binghamton's Northside.

Renovation of 100 units at Saratoga Heights Apartments in Binghamton.

And we're preparing to break ground on several major projects...

Construction on 69 townhomes on Columbia Drive in Johnson City.

Construction of over 30 townhomes near Traditions in the Town of Union.

125 units of workforce housing at Oakdale Commons.

And the YWCA of Binghamton was just awarded the state funding needed for their Intergenerational Campus Project of 68 units of affordable housing.

Growth in Broome County isn't just about building up – it's also about clearing the way forward.

With the help of the Broome County Land Bank, we are addressing long-neglected, unsafe, and deteriorated properties – both residential and commercial.

Through their Affordable Homes Program, the Land Bank is also helping turn once-vacant properties into quality housing opportunities for families.

Most recently, the Land Bank helped facilitate the acquisition and demolition of the former Red Carpet Inn and the former Food Fusion restaurant across from En-Joie Golf Course.

I want to thank former Land Bank Director Jessica Haas for her leadership and the impact she's had in this role, and welcome Rob O'Donnell as he steps in to continue that important work.

When people come to Broome County, we want them to see a community that is moving forward – not one held back by neglected properties.

Whether it's projects that are being redeveloped – like Victory Lofts and the AnSCO Factory – or clearing the way for future investment through the demolition of sites like 1 North Page and the former Endicott Inn on Washington Avenue, we're taking action to transform long-neglected spaces into opportunities.

I want to recognize our Commissioner of Planning and Economic Development, Anthony Fiala, who in just one year has helped secure more than \$7 million in grant funding to support projects like these across Broome County.

We continue to take on some of the county's most challenging vacant and underutilized properties – some more complex than others – but all critical to our future growth, including:

At 1 North Depot in the City of Binghamton we are working with city and state leaders to redevelop this vacant building into affordable housing.

The former Kmart Plaza in Endicott has been rotting away for too long. We have been working with local developers along with local and state officials to revitalize this space.

The Brandywine Corridor, a strategic property right next to the intersection of route 81 and 86 in Binghamton, is working with our tipping fee waiver program to demolish old buildings on the site and clear the way for new development.

And recently, we have been talking to state officials about redeveloping the entire state hospital site on Binghamton's East Side.

Then there is 600 Main Street in Johnson City, home of the old BAE site. The Agency secured a \$11 million state grant to flood proof this property and make other infrastructure improvements to help get it ready for new development. I want to recognize Stacey Duncan for her work on this site and on so many other industrial sites across Broome County. In order to attract the jobs of tomorrow we need to upgrade and build new industrial sites today, and her work on this has been incredibly important.

First impressions matter. That's why we're making strategic investments in infrastructure and transportation – improving how residents live day-to-day, and how visitors experience our community.

Last summer, we cut the ribbon on major renovations at the Greater Binghamton Airport — a project that makes travel easier, more comfortable, and creates a welcoming first impression that reflects the beauty of Broome County in every season.

In October, we introduced six fully electric buses to the BC Transit fleet. Now, I realize when you hear “electric,” some of you immediately start thinking about extension cords and winter weather. But I promise — they're built for Broome County. They're cleaner, quieter, and part of our effort to modernize public transit while saving on long-term operating costs.

I want to recognize our Commissioner of Public Transportation, Greg Kilmer, and Michele Craig, for their leadership in securing critical grant funding and continuing to move our transit system forward.

And the State has announced the approval of final design for the Route 363 Gateway Corridor and work is already underway – improving key entry points into downtown Binghamton and creating safer, more welcoming connections into the heart of our county.

But those major gateway investments don't stop at the entrance to our community – they carry through every mile of road people travel here.

In 2025, we set our fifth consecutive record for roadwork – improving 85 miles of roadway across Broome County.

To put that into perspective, before I took office, annual improvements were nearly half that. Today, we're not just keeping up – we're setting a new standard.

Getting people here is important, but what truly makes a community strong is what they experience once they're here.

That's why we continue to invest in our parks, public spaces, and the experiences that bring people together.

Grippen Community Park, which opened last summer, has quickly become a destination once again for families across Broome County. We're hosting everything from our Fall Festival to Winter Fest, highlighting our pickleball courts in the warmer months, and ice rink in the winter, with a dog park addition coming soon.

This spring, in partnership with the Crime Victims Assistance Center, we will open the Crime Victims Memorial at Roundtop Park – a meaningful space for reflection and remembrance, honoring the lives we've lost to acts of crime and supporting those impacted by it.

Otsiningo Park serves as the backdrop of some of our community's biggest traditions. Events like the Spiedie Fest and the Festival of Lights bring thousands of visitors to Broome County each year – supported by Broome County funding and the hard work of multiple county departments behind the scenes.

At Greenlight Grand Slam Park, we're bringing in visitors from across New York State as we host the Girls Softball Championships through next year.

And inside the Visions Veterans Memorial Arena, we're proud to host the New York State Boys Basketball Championships through 2027 as well – continuing to draw people, energy, and economic activity into our community.

Each year, the Dick's Sporting Good Open brings thousands of visitors into Broome County. The impact is felt across our community – from hotels and restaurants, to the small businesses that benefit from increased foot traffic.

And through charitable donations, significant funding is directed back into local nonprofits and organizations, supporting causes that make a real difference in the lives of our residents.

The LUMA Projection Arts Festival transforms downtown Binghamton into something truly extraordinary – drawing crowds from across the country and highlighting the creativity and energy that exists right here at home.

And from pond hockey at the state park, to the return of the Crappie Derby after more than five years, to supporting Special Olympics and the Broome Includes Special Hockey tournament, these are the moments that create connection, pride, and a true sense of community.

That same commitment extends to the organizations that work every day to enhance the quality of life for Broome County residents.

Through county funding, we support agencies like The Discovery Center, Cornell Cooperative Extension, Visit Binghamton, and GiGi's Playhouse – organizations that expand opportunity, provide critical services, and help strengthen our community from the ground up.

At GiGi's Playhouse, that support is helping expand programming focus on workforce development, creating new opportunities for individuals with down syndrome to build skills, gain confidence, and thrive.

And just as we invest in the experiences that bring people together, we invest in the systems that keep them safe.

Because quality of life means nothing without public safety.

It means knowing that when you call for help, someone answers.
It means having professionals trained, equipped, and ready to respond.
It means prevention, partnership, and accountability.

Sheriff Fred Akshar and his team continue to adapt and innovate – strengthening patrol operations, supporting community policing efforts, and ensuring our correctional facility is operating safely and efficiently.

In 2025 alone, the Broome County Sheriff's Office responded to more than 33,000 calls for service. With increased patrols and the addition of the Strategic Response Group, their team is reaching more people, responding faster, and maintaining a strong presence in communities across the county.

District Attorney Paul Battisti and his office remain committed to pursuing justice, supporting victims, and keeping dangerous offenders off our streets.

Through the creation of the Youth Diversion Program, young people ages 17 to 24 are given a second chance – connected with mentors, counselors, and support systems that help redirect their path toward success.

And through initiatives like STRIVE, the District Attorney's Office is working alongside law enforcement and victim service agencies to better protect victims, hold offenders accountable, and strengthen coordinated response efforts across Broome County.

Their work is critical to maintaining the safety and stability our residents expect.

Our office of Emergency Services plays a critical role in that effort – overseeing everything from 911 dispatch operations and emergency communications to EMS coordination, fire response support, and disaster preparedness across Broome County.

In September, we launched the Advanced Life Support First Response program. This puts a paramedic in a first response vehicle on the road – able to reach patients faster, begin advanced care immediately, and support EMS crews already on scene.

It means shorter wait times in emergencies, better coordination between agencies, and ultimately, better outcomes for the people who need help most.

We're seeing the impact of a coordinated approach to one of the most serious challenges we face – the opioid epidemic.

By making strategic investments of opioid settlement funds into prevention, treatment, recovery services, and bringing together public health, mental health, law enforcement, service providers, and community partners, all working toward the same goal of saving lives, we're seeing real results.

In 2025, suspected fatal overdoses in Broome County decreased by 43%, and non-fatal overdoses dropped by nearly 30% compared to 2024.

It's proof that when public safety and public health work together, lives are saved.

And while we remain focused on protecting our community today and responding in moments of crisis, it's also about how we support those who have already served and sacrificed for our country.

In October, we opened the Timothy M. Grippen Veterans Resource Center – a place where veterans can access the services they need all under one roof.

For too long, navigating support meant going from office to office, agency to agency. Now, that coordination is built in, making it easier for veterans to get the help they've earned.

Alongside the center, we opened 10 tiny homes providing stable housing for veterans who were previously homeless or facing housing insecurity.

Through the Impact Project, we're helping improve veterans' homes – making critical repairs like roofs and accessibility upgrades.

We support the Honor Flight, giving local veterans the opportunity to visit the memorials built in their honor.

And assist in the Hometown Heroes banners in the City of Binghamton – honoring those who have served and keeping their stories visible in our community.

We support veterans cooking classes through Cornell Cooperative Extension, creating opportunities for connection and skill-building.

And we ensure veterans can take part in community traditions, like providing free access to the Festival of Lights.

Supporting our veterans is an ongoing commitment that Broome County will always be proud of.

All of this work we put towards our infrastructure, public safety, our veterans – it all reflects the overall strength and direction of Broome County.

When you step back and look at the full picture, the state of Broome County is strong.

We've delivered budgets that reduce the tax burden on our residents while continuing to invest in the services and infrastructure that matter most.

In this year's budget, we included a property tax rate cut – made possible by the growth we're seeing across our community. Property values increased by more than 10 % over the past year alone, driven by new housing, business expansion, and the investments we've made to strengthen our local economy.

At the same time, we've taken a responsible approach to managing county finances – reducing debt, growing our fund balance, and lowering our fiscal stress scores, putting Broome County in a stronger position for the future.

At the same time, sales tax revenue continues to grow – a clear sign of increased economic activity across our community.

Our unemployment rate remains low, as more people are working and more opportunities are being created right here in Broome County.

These are results of strong leadership, a dedicated team, and people who truly care about this community and work to keep Broome County moving forward.

There are a few more people I want to thank today.

One of them is Christine Segrue, who became our Personnel Director right in the middle of COVID. Great timing Christine! Christine has worked incredibly hard day in and day out

supporting our employees, working with our unions, and just about anything else we ask of her. We would not be where we are today without her hard work and leadership. Thank you so much.

Another person I would like to mention is Terra Adams from our Office of Management and Budget. Terra has been working around the clock as the leader of our new County Connect project, and at the same time she is running the entire Office of Management and Budget department. Thank you, Terra!

There are so many more department heads and employees who deserve recognition – far too many to name tonight – but I ask you all to join me in giving them a well-deserved round of applause.

This is what progress looks like. And none of it happens by accident.

It happens because of strong partnerships – between government, community organizations, educators, and residents.

It happens because of dedicated county employees who show up every day committed to serving others. And it happens because we are willing to think differently, take action, and move forward together.

Each project, each investment, each success is part of a much larger picture. Much like the artwork around us.

Every detail, every contribution comes together to tell a story. And that story is one of resilience, progress, and pride in the place we call home.

That is the story of Broome County.

And because of the people in this room – and across our entire community – it's a story that is still being written, still being built, and still getting stronger every single day.

Thank you and God Bless.