

INSIDE INSIGHTS

THE NEWSLETTER OF
THE SULLIVAN COUNTY MANAGER



THE LOWER, THE BETTER

BY JOSHUA POTOSEK, COUNTY MANAGER

The NYS Comptroller's Office just released its annual fiscal stress rankings, and once again, Sullivan County is shown to be in a strong financial position.

Part of that is due to significantly increased sales tax revenues and the Federal funds we received in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. But plenty of it is due to a staff and Legislature that works diligently to ensure proper procedures, safeguard taxpayers' assets, and judiciously use what we've been given. In the case of this report, the lower the score, the better, and Sullivan County scored extremely well.

In addition to earning the best rank of "No Designation" (meaning there are no indications of the County being susceptible to fiscal stress at this time), we scored better than we ever did before: 13.3 (for fiscal year 2021). By way of example, in FY 2019, Sullivan earned a Fiscal Stress score of 42.1 points. That improved to 35.8 in 2020.

How are we accomplishing this? A major factor is the reduction of our debt - more than \$18 million, thanks to our staff and the Legislature. The State (and our auditors) want to see that we're holding the line on creating new debt that burdens taxpayers, and that we're maintaining good cash flow all year long. Meanwhile, the same report notes that our Environmental Stress score dropped from 30 in 2019 to 23.3 points in 2020, and now stands at 20 for 2021. Unlike Fiscal Stress, the data used to create the Environmental Stress score - population changes, poverty levels, tax base, unemployment rates,

state/federal aid and other items - represents issues that are not fully within the County's control. So we're headed in the right direction on all counts.

What does this mean for you?

It means we can keep a lid on out-of-control taxes, we can give you more services without hiking fees, and we can gain more favorable interest rates when we do need to finance, among other positives. In short, it means we're doing the job you hired us to do.

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HOUSING: IT'S BECOME A SIGNIFICANT ISSUE

Anyone who's tried to buy a house in Sullivan County lately knows it's a hot market - so hot, in fact, that prices have continued to climb even as our Hudson Valley neighbors see (modest) price decreases.

On the one hand, that's great news. People are flocking to our County because of its natural beauty, homey communities and incredible attractions, plus the fact that real estate here is still a better deal than elsewhere.

And these new homeowners' presence has boosted our sales and room tax revenues to unprecedented levels, easing the burden on taxpayers and providing our businesses with steady income.

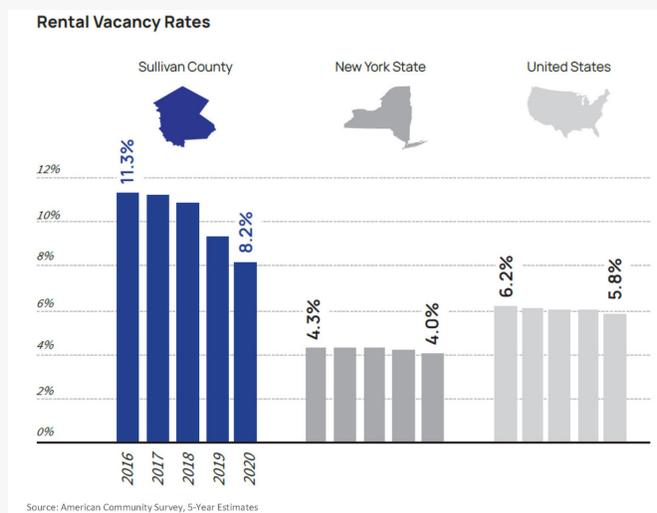
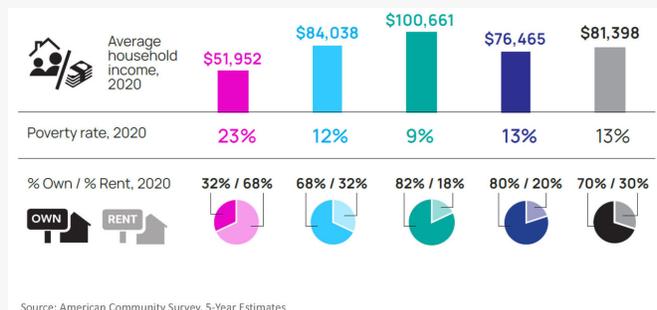
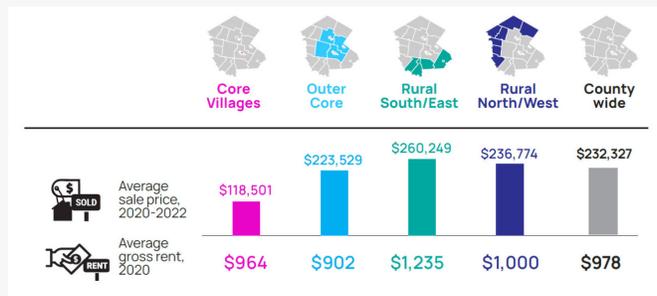
However, there is a down side. Houses have been snapped up so quickly that inventory is lagging, and prices have become out of reach for some.

What about renting instead of buying? Prices there, too, have skyrocketed, and the growing market for short-term rentals has put much more pressure on those seeking longer terms. It's also made it hard for us to place folks in need of emergency housing.

The short of it is that people are having a very tough time finding affordable housing. Those who make less than \$35,000 a year are being hit the hardest, and they comprise about a third of local households. So our Housing Task Force is taking a deep look at the situation, in order to find workable solutions. They've created a Comprehensive Housing Strategy that recommends pursuing the following:

- Partnering with landlords, villages and towns to improve existing rental units and preserve affordability
- Spurring the creation of new rental units priced for households making less than \$50,000 a year
- Extending the life of low-income housing properties via gap financing capital
- Updating land use regulations to support affordable housing
- Creating long-term emergency housing solutions
- Generating a pipeline of affordable homeownership options

This is just the beginning of a lot of work. To find out more and to read the study, I encourage you to visit www.sullivanhousingstudy.org.



A FOCUS ON YOUTH

As both articles on this page show, Sullivan County is not about to forget its young people. In fact, we continue to invest time and money in both our Youth Bureau and the groups it funds. Led by a new manager, Kristen Kitson, the Bureau is committed to getting the word out about the many organizations and individuals focused on keeping our kids engaged in worthwhile and fun activities.

And we put our money where our mouth is. Take a look at what we're funding in 2022:

- Teens trained in dispute resolution, acting as peer mediators
- Enrichment programs
- Crime and drug prevention, bike safety and stranger danger workshops
- A youth-run community newspaper
- Teen dating violence prevention
- Chorus and dance
- 4-H
- Advocates for abused or neglected children in Family Court
- Health & wellness education
- Afterschool programs
- Swimming
- Summer camp
- Skiing, ice-skating and hockey
- Football, basketball, soccer and baseball
- Cheerleading

In many cases, the taxpayer funds we provide (\$100,000) ensure programs and activities exist where they otherwise would not. And that makes for healthier toddlers, children and teens - not to mention their families.

This is important work, often organized by volunteers who aren't seeking funds for themselves but for the materials and supplies necessary to give kids a meaningful, memorable experience. I'm proud we can be a part of that. To find out more about these programs and County services, visit our informative webpage at sullivanva.us/Departments/Youthbureau.

CULTIVATING THE NEXT GENERATION

"There's a story behind every person." That's the uplifting mantra adopted by our inaugural team of interns in our new Youth Bureau program: Sullivan IN - Invested in the Next Generation.

As we speak, this group of eight 17-21-year-olds are learning basic work readiness skills so that they can have a successful 8-week internship with members of the Sullivan County Chamber of Commerce.

Youth Internship Coordinator Alexandra Julson has been hired to design and oversee this innovative program, which Community Resources Commissioner Laura Quigley and I initiated to give local teens the skills necessary for success in college and the workforce. And we plan to expand to include young people from across Sullivan County, pairing them with partner organizations in every field available.

Learn more about what's going on at sullivanva.us/Departments/Youthbureau/Interns



Our Monticello team have dubbed themselves the "Internship Gang" and gather weekly at the St. John Street Education Center to work with our team and partners.

Calendar of Events

< > today		October 2022					month list
Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	
25	26	27	28	29	30	1	
		10:00 am Sullivan County Mobile DMV		10:00 am Sullivan County Mobile DMV			
2	3	4	5	6	7	8	
	9:00 am Bridge Back To Life Mobile Unit	9:00 am Bridge Back To Life Mobile Unit	9:00 am Public Safety & Law Enforcement Committee	3:00 pm Covid -19 Vaccine Booster Clinic	10:00 am Covid -19 Vaccine Booster Clinic		
	10:00 am Sullivan County Mobile DMV		9:30 am Government Services Committee			6:00 pm Haunted History Lantern Tour	
			10:00 am Sullivan County Mobile DMV				
			+2 more				
9	10	11	12	13	14	15	
2:00 pm Return To the Mountains by Rail	10:00 am Sullivan County Mobile DMV	6:00 pm FREE Rabies Clinic	9:00 am Management & Budget, Capital Planning & Budgeting Committee			6:30 pm 4-H Poultry Program	
			9:30 am Human Resources Committee				
			10:00 am Sullivan County Mobile DMV				
			+3 more				
16	17	18	19	20	21	22	
	10:00 am Sullivan County Mobile DMV		9:00 am Executive Committee	6:00 pm Town of Mamakating Annual Halloween Event	4:00 pm Town of Tusten Annual Halloween Festival		
			10:00 am Sullivan County Mobile DMV				
			11:00 am County				

ONE STOP FOR EVERYTHING WE HAVE GOING ON

Imagine: a single calendar that lists every public event that County government offers. That's something we've spent a lot of time imagining, and slowly but surely, we're putting that together. It's already online and available at

www.sullivanyny.us/calendar, and as it grows, we hope to make it the definitive source of information for what we offer to the public. That will take time and coordination, but we didn't want to wait until every event is listed. There's plenty already on there!

IT'S NEVER BEEN THIS CONVENIENT TO VOTE!

The general election is almost here, and you have plenty of choices - not just for whom to vote, but HOW you'll vote.

Here's the simplest explanation of your options:

- **Vote by absentee ballot**
 - Applications due to Board of Elections (BOE) by October 14 (by mail) or Nov. 7 (in person)
 - Applications available at sullivanyny.us/Departments/Elections
 - The ballot itself must either be personally delivered to the BOE no later than the close of polls on November 8, or postmarked not

later than Nov. 8 and received no later than Nov. 15

- **Vote in person early**
 - Choose any day from October 29 to November 6, all at the Government Center, 100 North Street, Monticello
 - Times vary by day: sullivanyny.us/Departments/Elections/EarlyVoting.
- **Vote in person on Election Day, November 8**
 - Polls are open from 6 a.m.-9 p.m.
 - Find your voting location at sullivanyny.us/Departments/Elections/VotingTimes