



# 2026 EXECUTIVE BUDGET SUMMARY

We face challenging and uncertain times ahead as a result of federal budget cuts, but Ulster County remains steadfast in our commitment to the health, safety, and well-being of our residents.

The 2026 Executive Budget reflects this commitment with targeted and fiscally prudent responses that address food and housing insecurity, strengthen emergency medical response, improve public transit and infrastructure, and protect the environment.

At the same time, as the federal government shifts more costs to states and counties over the next three years, we are keeping a watchful eye on recurring costs and have excluded from the Executive Budget the majority of new positions requested by departments. We are carefully balancing current needs with future costs.

### HOLDING PROPERTY TAXES FLAT

The 2026 Executive Budget does not raise property taxes.

### 2026 EXECUTIVE BUDGET TOTAL

**\$491.5M**

*Representing a 3.5% increase from 2025.*

### Good Fiscal Health

Ulster County has again received a fiscal stress score of 'zero' from the Office of the New York State Comptroller, signifying careful stewardship of taxpayer dollars, and the financial capacity to generate enough revenues within the current fiscal period to meet expenditures.

Ulster County currently has an unrestricted fund balance of \$98.8 million as of December 31, 2024.

### Budget Overview

<b>Expenses</b>	\$491.5 million
<b>Anticipated Revenue</b>	\$417.5 million
<b>Total Levy</b>	\$74 million

## Non-Discretionary Costs Rising in 2026



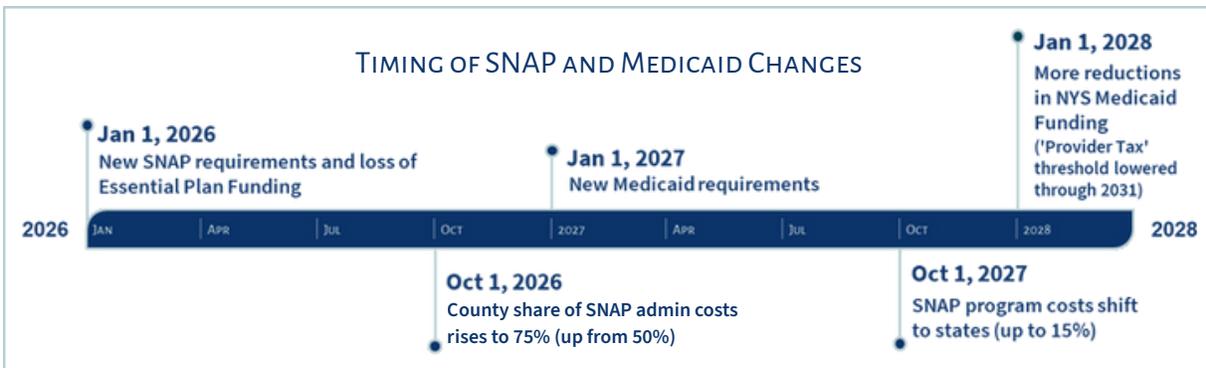
We are unfortunately seeing significant increases in a number of non-discretionary costs in 2026, including:

- NYS Retirement System (6.4% increase)
- Employee healthcare (8.75% increase)
- Mandated Social Services costs (2.25% increase)

Together with an increase in long-term debt service, these costs account for half of the 2026 budget increase.

### SNAP and Medicaid

The costs of administering Medicaid and SNAP are expected to increase during the 2026 budget cycle as a result of major program cuts and changes in the recently enacted federal budget.



### Fair and Competitive Employee Compensation

This year, the County Executive successfully negotiated new four-year contracts with the Police Benevolent Association and the Ulster County Sheriff's Employee Association, and is working closely with the County's largest union, CSEA, on a successor agreement.



Together the three unions represent 1,139 employees, or 95% of our unionized workforce. Negotiations are ongoing with the Ulster County Staff Association and the Superior Officer's Unit, representing the remaining 5%. The 2026 Executive Budget reflects negotiated increases in compensation as well as the first year of a new salary plan for non-represented employees, based on a salary study commissioned by the Legislature in 2022 and completed this year. The plan addresses long-standing wage compression and recruitment and retention challenges and ensures fair compensation for non-represented employees.

# Programmatic Highlights

## Strengthening Emergency Medical Services (\$4.7M)

In 2025, the Legislature approved a plan by the Ulster County Department of Emergency Services to fortify the Emergency Medical (EMS) System and help close gaps in service around the County. Ulster County's EMS plan has been recognized by the NYS Department of Health Division of State Emergency Medical Services as a model for other counties to follow.

The 2026 Executive Budget reflects this new investment, including:

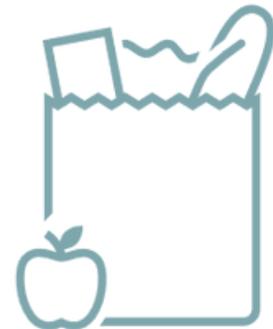
- Direct financial support to local EMS agencies through performance-based incentives, targeted funding, and strengthened oversight. County support is designed to supplement — not replace — existing municipal EMS funding.
- A new EMT certification program to address staffing shortages in local agencies across the County.



## Bolstering Food Security (\$500,000)

With federal cuts to SNAP and the elimination of over a billion dollars in funding for food banks and other food security programs, the Executive Budget includes funding to mitigate increasing food insecurity in the County, including:

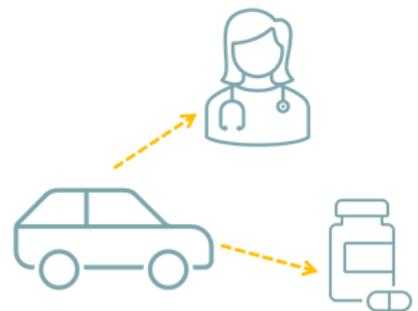
- A third round of **food security grants (\$350,000)** will support local pantries and community-based programs.
- **\$150,000** in new funding is proposed for **Meals on Wheels** to expand home-delivered meals for seniors.



## Expanding Senior Transportation (\$30,000)

The Ulster County Office of the Aging's Neighbor2Neighbor program will be expanded to increase rides for seniors to medical appointments and pharmacies.

This investment will enhance volunteer driver coordination and scheduling, helping seniors without reliable transportation access medical care and prescriptions — reducing missed visits, improving health outcomes, and lowering long-term costs.



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## Housing Insecurity and Homelessness

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**This fall more than 270 seniors and families are moving into new affordable housing developments supported by the County.**

We continue to grow the affordable housing options around the County through the Housing Action Fund and Ulster County Housing Development Corporation.



**Building new housing takes time, and the Executive Budget proposes immediate actions to address housing instability and homelessness, including:**



### **Eviction Prevention Program (\$640,000)**

Renewing and expanding the eviction prevention program to provide legal counsel to all qualifying tenants, helping to keep residents in their homes and reduce emergency housing placements. This is an upstream investment to address housing instability that pays for itself.



### **Family Emergency Housing Shelter**

**\$2 million** proposed from the Housing Action Fund to create a nonprofit-run shelter for families with meals and caseworker support.

Funding would come from the existing Housing Action Fund.

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## Transit & Infrastructure

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The Executive Budget includes investments to improve public transit, road safety, and our transportation infrastructure, including:

### UCAT Improvements

- Sunday bus service will be added in the City of Kingston.
- New transfer points will be developed in partnership with the City of Kingston.
- UCAT's website and schedules will be modernized for better rider access and usability.



### Roads & Bridges

**(Capital & Operating expenditures: \$14.5M, of which \$8.7M is federal/state funding)**

The Executive Budget includes funding to pave 30 miles of County roads and partially or fully replace seven bridges in 2026.



### School Bus Safety (\$0)

An estimated 50,000 vehicles illegally pass school buses daily in New York, endangering children's lives as they cross the street to get on and off the bus.

- A new **stop-arm camera program** will reduce illegal passing of school buses
- Administered by a vendor with no upfront cost; revenue from fines covers program costs and is reinvested in other road safety initiatives.

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## Climate & Environment

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Ulster County remains committed to protecting the planet and our children’s future, and leading by example.

Construction is underway on an **all-electric, net-zero Emergency Communications Center** on Paradies Lane in New Paltz, with geothermal heating and cooling and rooftop solar, supported by a \$1 million NYSERDA grant. A ground-mounted system will be added in 2026-2027 to meet 100% of the ECC's energy needs with locally generated renewable power, lowering utility costs and protecting against future energy price increases.



The County government is not only leading by example but also supporting climate and environmental initiatives in local communities. The 2026 Executive Budget includes:

### Municipal Climate Solutions

A partnership with the Hudson Valley Regional Council to provide technical assistance to Ulster County municipalities in making climate and clean energy investments.



### Green the Scene

A small grant program to support composting and recycling at fairs and festivals, administered through a partnership between Tourism, Environment, and Resource Recovery Agency to reduce waste and model sustainability.

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## Supporting SUNY Ulster

(\$7.1M, operating; \$32.6M, existing capital projects)

The Executive Budget includes a **\$7.1M** contribution to operating costs for the 2026 SUNY Ulster academic year. The budget also includes another **\$4.3M in state-mandated chargeback costs** for Ulster County residents attending community colleges in other counties.



A majority of SUNY Ulster's **\$115 million capital request** has not been included in the County capital plan at this time.

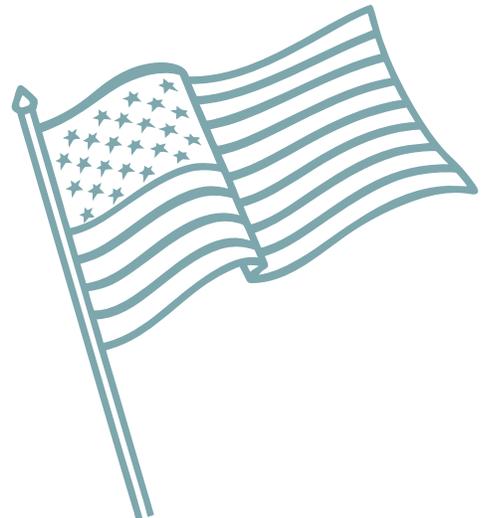
The County Executive announced that she will create a **Reimagining SUNY Ulster Committee**, composed of college and County representatives, to review the soon-to-be-released Facilities Master Plan to chart a course for County capital investments in the campus, taking into account changes over time in demographics, student needs, and the local economy.

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## Honoring History & Community

### Revolutionary War 250 (\$80,000)

The year 2026 is an important year for our County and country as we commemorate the 250th anniversary of the American Revolution and Ulster County's important historic role. The County Clerk's Office, County Historian, and Tourism Department will take the lead in coordinating and supporting events and programs around the County, in partnership with schools, local museums, and cultural organizations.



### Hometown Heroes Banner Program (\$30,000)

A small grant program administered through the Veterans Services Agency to support local governments in honoring local veterans and community heroes.