



NEWS FROM **ULSTER COUNTY** County Executive Jen Metzger

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Ulster County Announces Leadership Transition in Economic Development Department

KINGSTON, NY - Ulster County Executive Jen Metzger today announced a leadership transition in the Department of Economic Development with the appointment of Leslie Wellington to serve as Interim Director. Wellington, an Olivebridge resident and current Board Chair of the Ulster County Economic Development Alliance (UCEDA), brings nearly two decades of experience in place-based community and economic development to the Department.

"Leslie has already made a tremendous impact in Ulster County through her leadership at UCEDA and her work shaping the Economic Futures Summit planned for the fall," **said County Executive Metzger**. "She brings a wealth of national and regional experience and a deep commitment to collaboration and community. We are thrilled that she has agreed to step into this role and lead the Department of Economic Development team, and I look forward to working with her to support our key industries, bolster economic development, and strengthen workforce pathways in Ulster County."

During this interim period, Vice Chair Brian Cahill will serve as Chair of UCEDA, while Wellington will remain a member of the board.

"I want to thank Joshua Stratton-Rayner for his service as Director and prior service as Deputy Director, and wish him the best as he pursues other opportunities," **said County Executive Metzger**.

As UCEDA Chair, Wellington has provided strategic leadership to position the Alliance as a catalyst for collaborative economic development and responsible stewardship of public investment. Under her guidance, UCEDA has advanced complex redevelopment projects,

played a key role in shaping lending policies for the soon-to-be-launched Revolving Loan Fund, and advocated for and supported local businesses. She is also playing a lead role in planning for the 2026 Ulster County Economic Futures Summit, scheduled for October, which will bring together employers, educators, workforce organizations, government leaders, and community partners to strengthen workforce pathways and support the County's key industries.

Wellington brings an ethos to the County's economic development work of building a strong local economy through partnerships of government, businesses, educational institutions, workforce organizations, and community partners. Her collaborative approach has been central to her leadership on UCEDA and will be a key asset in guiding the Economic Development Department as Interim Director.

"I'm deeply honored by the opportunity to serve Ulster County in this role and grateful to County Executive Jen Metzger for her confidence in me," **said Leslie Wellington.** "Throughout my career, I've been inspired by communities that come together to solve problems and imagine what's possible. I've already seen that same spirit here in Ulster County, and I look forward to working alongside the talented team in the Department of Economic Development, businesses, lenders, workforce organizations, and government and community partners to build on the great work already underway. Together, we can strengthen our economy by investing in the people, industries, and partnerships that make Ulster County such a special place to live, work, and build a future."

Prior to her work in Ulster County, Wellington was the Founding Executive Director of the Urban Manufacturing Alliance, a national nonprofit that became a leading voice for manufacturing as a strategy for equitable economic development, quality jobs, and resilient communities. Under her leadership, the organization grew into a nationally recognized network connecting practitioners across North America to share ideas, develop solutions, and strengthen local manufacturing ecosystems.

Earlier in her career, she served as Chief of Staff within the New York City Council, advancing initiatives related to neighborhood revitalization, immigrant inclusion, workforce development, and small business growth. She also worked in the New York City Mayor's Office of Industrial and Manufacturing Businesses, helping to launch the Industrial Business Zones Program and supporting business retention and expansion efforts. Her background includes legal advocacy for immigrant entrepreneurs, neighborhood planning with the Pratt Center for Community Development, and nonprofit leadership in waterfront and cultural initiatives.

Throughout her career, Wellington has remained committed to building stronger places by connecting people, institutions, and ideas. Whether working nationally, regionally, or locally, she has consistently demonstrated that lasting economic prosperity comes from collaboration, shared purpose, and investing in the people and industries that define a community.

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