

Chairman Cooper, Members of the Legislature, Guests:

We have recently been highlighting many ways citizens of Dutchess County show how they care for each other. Dutchess County government expresses this caring attitude in its delivery of services.

Caring by county government is evident daily – a smile, a helping hand, a nurse giving a flu shot, counseling a veteran, or a road plowed for the journey to work. But caring also shows up in how we prepare for the future. That preparation must address multiple common concerns and interests from the county government perspective as well as the overall community perspective, including our 290,000 residents who increasingly think and care about where and how they live in this interdependent and mutually supporting society.

On behalf of these residents and as the very fortunate County Executive of this beautiful space called Dutchess County, New York, I have always considered my primary responsibility as the fiduciary steward of county government as a means to achieve our larger visionary goals as a community. Our community vision simply can not be achieved without a strong financial foundation.

So, today in my 16th annual State of the County address, I have chosen to focus our primary program initiatives in one category – ***how we can think and care more for the environment that sustains us.***

Dutchess Goes Greener: Maintaining and *Renewing* our Commons

I will begin, however, by addressing county government finances. This will include the common challenges faced by all county governments in New York and include relevant fiscal strengths in Dutchess County which have positioned us to continue to successfully move our community vision and priorities forward.

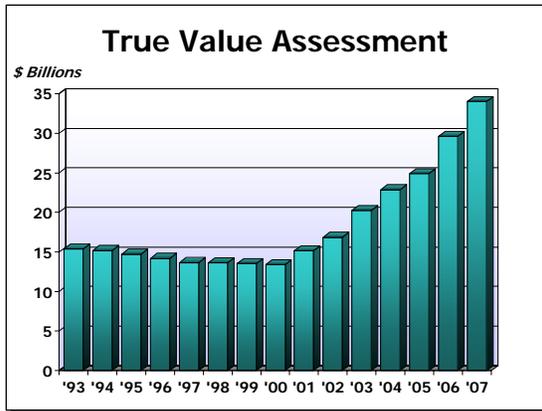
County Finances and Fiscal Stewardship

Solid budget work can be undone quickly and external factors often impact us. Albany brings fiscal uncertainty including a reduction in state spending growth as a goal. How that can be achieved without shifting more of Albany's bills to local property taxpayers should be a worry.

State imposed mandates remain a burden, including local costs for the state's bloated Medicaid program - this year requiring more than \$37 million directly from the pockets of local taxpayers. Costs for the mandated preschool children's services are projected to cost nearly \$21 million, a startling 13% increase.

One way we have been able to control costs locally is through restructuring, use of technology, and working smarter. County Government employs fewer people today than it did in 1992 when I took office.

We have a new four-year agreement with the Sheriff's Deputies and an historic five year agreement with the CSEA. My goal is always to acknowledge and reward our employees for the outstanding service they provide while recognizing taxpayer realities.



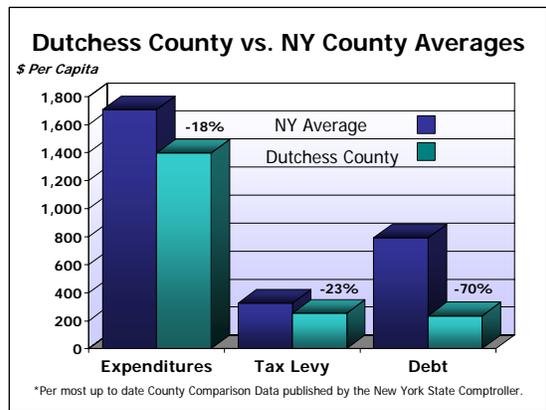
The 2007 budget of \$385 million reflects a mere 1.3% increase in spending year over year, a fraction of the rate of inflation. A healthy local economy driven by our multi-dimensional economic development policies, coupled with new construction and a healthy housing market, produced a \$4.4 billion growth in our tax base reaching almost \$34 billion. This seventh year of significant growth is proof of our successful agenda which

has created hundreds of new businesses and thousands of new jobs.

The county property tax rate remains flat at \$2.57 per \$1,000, the lowest property tax rate on record back to 1973. The county government share of the property taxes levied is only slightly more than 14% of total property taxes county-wide.

Dutchess County government taxes its residents **23% less** per capita and **spends 18% less** per capita than the statewide county average. Only two counties statewide are higher than our Aa2 bond rating.

Our indebtedness per capita is an impressive **70% below** the statewide county average which positions us for several of my major project priorities.



The *Comprehensive Parks Plan* puts the county in perfect strategic position for our quality of life priorities for the next decade and beyond – upgrades to *Dutchess Stadium* ballpark – bringing more fans to enjoy the *Renegades* in

addition to the previous two million fans; the spectacular new 12 mile *Dutchess Rail Trail Park* we are currently designing, which will be a magnet for families and others who want to walk, bike, get healthy, or just socialize; and the extension to the already popular *Harlem Valley Rail Trail Park*, which will create an incredible 23 mile trail into Columbia County. Improvements to *Bowdoin* and *Wilcox Parks* are coming, in addition to the completion of the master plan and improvements to beautiful *Quiet Cove Park* on the Hudson River.



View South from Quiet Cove Park

Our financial positioning also allows us to continue our commitment to one of county government's most valuable jewels - *Dutchess Community College* which is celebrating its 50th anniversary. DCC has grown from 252 students in 1958, now hitting an all time record of 8,000 students. This is an increase of 27% in the past decade. Just think. Almost 40% of Dutchess high school graduates attend DCC, confirming the wisdom of our investment in our future. Facility upgrades for the education of our workforce will continue including a major expansion of the Southern Dutchess campus; in all, \$50 million has been spent for DCC facilities in the past decade, and we now offer 65 academic programs.

And because I have a relentless commitment to our public safety responsibilities, we are moving forward with the very essential \$10 million upgrade to our *911 Emergency Operations Center*. 2007 will bring us to a new level of readiness as we continue our outreach to the public to encourage home and business preparedness.



Emergency Response

Next on the 2007 agenda must be identifying a site location for our much needed *Forensic Center* which next month the staff will revisit in earnest. Also on our priority work schedule is completion of the design of the *Eastern Dutchess Government Center* with construction targeted to begin later this year. Of great importance is our effort to maintain our road system. That is why we are proceeding with the master plan for the overdue modernization of the Operations Center for the Highway and Engineering Divisions in Arlington.

Our financial position has been structured to maintain and in some cases expand our service delivery system. Additionally, our Health and Human Services

Cabinet formed in 2005 provides the on-going common forum for the leadership of our county departments of Aging, Health, Mental Hygiene, Probation, Social Services, Veteran Services, Youth Bureau to advance our human services agenda for the betterment of all county residents. We are recognized throughout the state for our quality human services provided through collaboration across departments and with community partnerships.

Our efforts to improve children's health continue as one of my most important focus areas. That is why we have directed almost \$3 million to our *Children's Health Initiative*, an effort I launched in 2000 to teach young people the dangers of smoking, which has been expanded to teach children and adults the causes and consequences of childhood obesity, a national epidemic.

We have distinguished ourselves as one of the first county governments in the nation to use county monies to tackle the daunting challenge of a coordinated effort for a community wide embrace of dealing with cancer. With local health leaders, I helped kickoff our *Comprehensive Cancer Control* effort. We will accelerate our efforts this year to make further progress.

This year we will work to identify solutions to a growing problem – senior citizen transportation. Our 60+ age population is expected to grow by 38% between 2000 and 2015. It is a reality that will seriously stress many community and government service systems.

So, as we work to meet these diverse challenges, I want to commend and thank our terrific county staff, department heads and elected officials as we continue to make strides in providing new, enhanced services and the quality of life our residents expect and deserve.

Respecting and Preserving Our Future and Our Environment



Fishkill Bay from Denning's Point Park

Today I am going to ask that all of us consider how our current behaviors influence the future. Nothing is more important than how we care for the environment that sustains us. Everyday decisions trigger environmental consequences. Dutchess is already a GREEN county and this is not the first time I've made the environment a central theme in my annual address. Ten years ago in 1997 I said, "Protecting our character of breathtaking beauty,

incredible rolling hills, spectacular farmland, and the majesty of the Hudson River must be a number one priority for every resident and business". And as long term

goals in 1997 I said “among our priorities for consideration should be regionalization of our local water systems, projects for our waterfronts, brownfield clean up and preservation of open space.” Over this past decade, much of my 1997 GREEN agenda has been successfully put in place.

But Dutchess has more work to do. We all need to shoulder new responsibilities in protecting our environment, our ecology and saving energy. Now is the time to think green, and behave green.

We know nature keeps on giving. We drink her water, breathe her air, and cool under the shade of the trees out front. Yet we need to think smarter about how our human designs intersect with nature’s design. Our culture must be one of environmental and ecological permanence.

Did you know if everyone in Dutchess purchased an energy-saver refrigerator, we’d save up to an estimated 10 million kilowatt hours a year? A new fluorescent light bulb draws less electricity. We may have upgraded our insulation, or purchased a hybrid vehicle to save gas. All these measures save barrels of oil and help protect our air and environment.

Everything we do adds up. Part of my challenge to become *greener* is our need to rethink our extravagant cycle of consumption and its damaging consequences. As your County Executive, I am using this occasion to say -- business as usual is no longer acceptable. We need to change as individuals and families; we need to change as businesses and governments. We all need to think “green.” Today my challenge and invitation to all, is to join the Dutchess County ‘**Green Team**’.

Community and land use decisions impact our environment including our county’s successful adaptive reuse projects: In Beacon, *Hudson Glass* emerged from a retired fire station; the *Rivers and Estuaries Center* sits on an old brickyard; an old, abandoned carton factory brownfields site became *Dia* – the world class museum. In Poughkeepsie, the Luckey Platt Building went from department store to housing and shops, and J.D. Johnson from plumbing supply warehouse to offices, restaurants, and stores. The old psychiatric center in the Harlem Valley will be a mass transit oriented mixed-use center of residences, retail and commercial. The possibilities for conservation and becoming more sustainable are limitless.

We get inspired by what is slowly becoming a *greener* movement across the country. It’s not that we have to invent solutions to our energy and environmental challenges; we need to change our behavior and **apply** them.

I want to briefly introduce a bedrock concept for our challenge ahead - the concept of *The Commons*.

The Commons – the things in nature and society which we inherit jointly and freely and we pass on to future generations.

The Commons includes our parks, waterways, topsoil and the air we breathe. It is our base of knowledge, ideas shared over generations, plants and animals inhabiting our locale, even our ability to sometimes seek a place for solitude in our surroundings. The idea of *The Commons* flows through our history.

Our collective vision has never been clearer. Local communities show they care and are committed to becoming *greener* by joining and implementing the *Greenway Compact* program we launched in 2000. This association is producing permanent trails, farmland easements, new parkland, boulevards, trees in parking lots, better pedestrian opportunities and improved infrastructure. *Greenway* is beginning to protect the biodiversity of our natural heritage. Local governments have followed the county's lead and are responding.

Let's think about a few examples of *greener* partnerships since my 1997 environmental vision. The county took ownership of a major Hyde Park water system - and it is growing to be regional - adding 600 new customers - thus using river water rather than stressing our limited and vulnerable ground water. From Poughkeepsie to Hopewell, in partnership with the state and IBM, we built the largest regional water system in county history along a 12 mile corridor in the most densely developed region of the county – again saving and protecting precious water aquifers.



We are working closely with Hyde Park and private developers to build St. Andrews Village, a sustainable, pedestrian-oriented village on County-owned property across from the *Culinary Institute of America*. This visionary plan is much *greener* than a plan that would have been acceptable just a decade ago - it is compact, saves nearly 50 percent of the area as open space, encourages walking and hiking, and is center-oriented. That's what I mean about changing our policy attitudes and behaviors.

Importantly, in collaboration with the town and county, there will be a long-term regional sewer solution saving Hyde Park from significant environmental vulnerability. I offer this as a *greener* model, one showing a positive, enlightened proposal for growth. I want the best development proposals to convince all of us if we show we care about being *greener*, developers will respond and will be *greener*.

Another model is the proposed green hotel in Beacon, a collaborative effort by the Foss Group, Scenic Hudson, and in partnership with the *Doral Corporation*, which will set a new standard in green hotel design branding Dutchess nationally.

I have a report-card way of thinking. I see much we've accomplished in the way of energy and environmental conservation:

- We joined Red Hook in reclaiming a polluted brownfield industrial site, transforming it into a spectacular mixed-use site, with 96 affordable apartments for senior citizens.
- We funded acquisition of additional acres of permanently protected open space in Rhinebeck for a beautiful public park.
- I've directed project designers to achieve national LEED certified building energy standards for the *Eastern Dutchess County Governmental Center* in Millbrook. Today, I am announcing I will request added funding to provide geo-thermal heating at the site to reduce heating expenses 20 percent.
- We purchased highway salt spreaders that can be calibrated to prevent salt overuse. In a typical year, we'll save up to 1,500 tons. Just picture in your mind the equivalent of a convoy of 40 tractor trailer loads of road salt each year – that's what this new policy attitude currently saves and the savings will grow in the future.
- We had county LOOP buses converted to exclusive use of ultra low-sulfur fuel and we retrofitted engines to reduce emissions. In 10 years we'll see reductions in various emissions of over 20 tons.
- We initiated a lighting fixture study on three large county government buildings, exploring more energy efficient lighting.
- We are beginning to replace HVAC units with more energy-efficient ones. A 10 percent increase in investment will yield as much as 30 percent in energy savings.
- We have contracted with NYSERDA for a bio-fuels analysis.
- I have asked our Public Works Department to review how we can maximize investment to achieve a 10 to 20% reduction in overall electrical use over five years.

And we do provide the opportunity to safely dispose of electronics equipment during our regional recycling days. Residents can easily learn of the disposal schedule on the county website.

This county government is doing its part to be *greener*.

This is a beginning. The energy problem doesn't get solved immediately, and it won't go away in our lifetime. But everything adds up.

For the future, I propose a seven-step sustainability *greener* strategy.

- *Agricultural and Open Space Protection*

I am directing staff assistance for any town requesting it in preparing their own *Open Space and Centers Plan*. I again urge towns to follow the lead of other towns to help purchase development rights on strategically-located land. The county will continue to match the funding of worthy local efforts with monies from the open space program I announced in this address 8 years ago.

- *Smart Growth Centers*

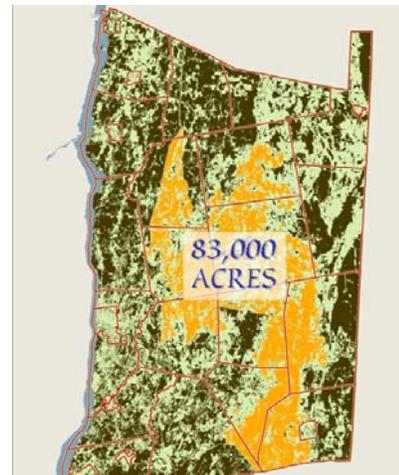
We will be sending model subdivision guidelines to local governments for consideration. Use of these *greener* standards will protect the most valuable natural and cultural assets.

We should promote the value of transit-oriented development, practice in-fill, keep environmentally-sensitive areas open, and provide utilities in more compact settlement areas.

Our cities, villages and denser hamlets possess our most sustainable land use patterns. Better than buying open space development rights, compact development can be our **best** open space strategy.

- *Limit Forest Fragmentation*

Look at this map. It shows the amount of woods and tree habitats over residential properties and forested land. It's still about 50 percent of Dutchess land area – impressive! But this second depiction is even more impressive. It shows contiguous forest of 83,000 acres, right in the center of our county. Each is interrupted only occasionally. The *Greenway Program* calls for us to minimize forest fragmentation, to share our landscape with wildlife and Mother Nature's habitat. The county, with its municipal partners, is working to achieve this *greener* goal.

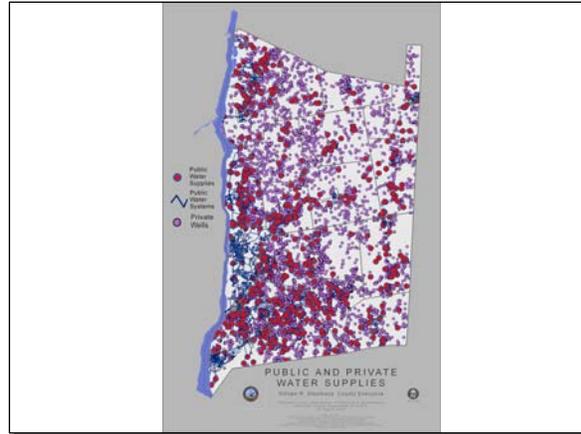


Biodiversity mapping is a key way to identify and protect our environment. As localities complete biodiversity inventory work, the County will work with local levels of government to build these constraints into the decision-making process.

Limiting forest fragmentation and biodiversity mapping are examples of how Dutchess can meet its environmental ideals.

- *Groundwater Protection*

Here's another map. It shows the ongoing water quality monitoring of more than 700 public water systems. And look at this one. It shows 11,000 private well log locations, in addition to the public supplies. We are programming the well log information so we gain a clearer idea of our groundwater resources and vulnerability.



I want to emphasize: groundwater protection is a key component of my seven-point sustainability strategy. At my direction, the Health and Planning Departments, County Attorney and Water Authority are developing a protection strategy tailored to the county's needs. It is comprehensive as you can see, but flexible so suspected hot spots can be examined.

- *County Best Practices*

I will appoint a task force to follow up on environmental and energy initiatives and recommend best practices to include:

- Recycling and solid waste practices
- Use of LEED building standards
- Road maintenance standards
- Continued energy upgrades of buildings
- Bus fleet specifications
- Lighting
- Heating and cooling systems
- Energy audits
- Energy-saving partnerships with local governments

- *Public Involvement*

Caring people want to participate in making our environment better. Many volunteer on local and county decision-making boards. Sustainability must be bottom-up. For this reason, I propose three things:

First, to credit the good work of individuals and corporations, I will issue annual County Executive's *Green Achievement Awards* modeled after our Arts Awards. This will catapult good examples from being the exception to becoming the normal way of doing business - thinking and behaving "Green."

Second, I will ask OCIS to develop a *Sustainable Operations Strategy* e-hotline to allow residents to contact the county with specific ideas, either generalized or locally applied.

Finally, I am asking staff to establish an electronic clearing house where organizations with green expertise can connect and share information.

With these three initiatives, we will build our own Dutchess County “*Green Team*.” This takes the energy of citizens and businesses and combines it with the efforts of non-profit agencies and government officials.

- ***Green LEEDership Partners***

LEED is the acronym for **Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design**. Today I ask all 30 local governments to join Dutchess as green **LEEDership** partners and to officially express their commitment to become part of the Dutchess County **Green Team**. Similar to the way I asked localities to adopt the values, principles, and ideals as part of the original Greenway Compact I launched in 2000. Jointly, we should set standards for municipal stewardship of energy and environmental resources. For example, we could have **LEED** compliance as a routine expectation in our SEQRA reviews.

Dutchess County should better use the presence of many excellent local environmental capabilities. Local colleges have outstanding environmental curriculum infrastructure, Scenic Hudson, the Soil & Water Conservation District, the Cooperative Extension Service, Dutchess Land Conservancy, Winnakee Land Trust, Institute for Ecosystems Studies – just to name a few.

In our effort to make Dutchess *greener* we must ask ourselves: How do we work better together and merge efforts to achieve a united purpose, a set of behavior values, and a broad program of action? How much stronger can we be if we achieve consensus on major strategies to protect our environment, the ecology of Dutchess and limit our own local use of fossil fuels? How do we create new institutional relationships that will be the vessel to hold our vision for a *greener* future?

I will ask the county’s new Environmental Coordinator to address these questions and to propose a means of communication and involvement. That person will also create and chair another new initiative - the **County Committee on Best Environmental Practices**, with initial recommendations due by September 30.



Additionally, I have asked our County Historian to submit a federal request for

Dutchess to become a “*Preserve America*” community. This would recognize the good work already accomplished to preserve our great heritage and open opportunities for additional resources to strengthen our efforts.

Now, I want to speak briefly about housing. There remains a structural imbalance in our housing stock. New units are large and expensive. Part of the growth is caused because Dutchess is an affordable alternative to areas south. Understandably, this is not acceptable to residents or our young people who’d like to live here. Like other families with baby boomer parents, the Steinhaus’ two twenty-something adult children struggle to find housing that fits their budgets.

The good news is our local governments are beginning to accept we have a problem and have begun to follow the call I’ve made often over the years that their land use policies must change before more of the youth of this county are driven elsewhere to live. Fortunately, more and more communities are looking for ways to make themselves more **inclusive** by following the suggestions the county has provided – 10 percent workforce housing requirements, reduced square footage, accessory apartments, units over garages, mixed-use zones, apartments as an allowable use, density bonuses for additional less expensive, compact housing in town centers and other variations.

When towns take on responsibility for providing a mix of housing, the administrative demands can become daunting. For this reason, this spring the County, with assistance from the Dyson Foundation, will secure a nonprofit to assist towns in managing workforce housing units. We will also provide support to the Neighborwork’s Homeownership Center of Dutchess County so that County residents can be financially prepared to buy units as communities create them.



Each Dutchess community has supplied workforce housing in the past and should shoulder the responsibility for providing a fair share into the future. If they don’t share in this important ideal, then the very school students, our children, whom taxpayers have paid huge sums to educate will not be able to afford to live in the town where they grew up. I hope you agree there is something wrong with that.

Our local governments ultimately and appropriately will determine their housing need based on their own assumptions and aspirations. I am directing the Commissioner of Planning and Development to estimate the attainable housing need by year's end.

So, I conclude my remarks today with a rhetorical question, "Who Does Care?" Simple answer. Dutchess County and its residents care. I hear the caring voices...about their quality of life, their environment, and their neighbors. We need to retain and build on that strength.

Our caring will supply the energy we need to attain a sustainable *greener* future. I'll wrap up with a quote from my 1997 address:

... the efforts are ongoing, and the possible rewards are endless.

God Bless our men and women in the military who volunteer to serve us and Our County.

Thank you.

William R. Steinhaus
Dutchess County Executive
January 25, 2007