

# Positively Greene

## COUNTY-WIDE UPDATE



[GreeneGovernment.com](http://GreeneGovernment.com)

[GreatNorthernCatskills.com](http://GreatNorthernCatskills.com)

[GreeneCountyEDC.com](http://GreeneCountyEDC.com)

[InvestInGreene.com](http://InvestInGreene.com)

[FilmInGreene.com](http://FilmInGreene.com)

Special Edition: 2023 A Year-In-Review

January 2024

### Legislative Actions

The Greene County Legislature continues to defend the position of local government in the wake of state and federal mandates. In 2023, significant actions included:

- [Opposing unnecessary changes to the voting schedule](#)
- [Defending local justices from state regulation](#)
- [Urging the governor not to provide controversial tax credits](#)
- [Calling for the continued pass through of federal Medicaid assistance to counties](#)
- [Responding to implications of executive orders](#)
- [Prevailing in defense of the county's state of emergency](#) in NYS Supreme court



### New Business Growth/Projects

2023 proved to be another growth year for Greene County with sales tax revenue exceeding expectations for the 11th straight year. Significant awards of economic development funding contributed to new business expansion, helping our communities thrive.

#### Local REDC Award Impact

Round 13 of the Regional Economic Development Award competition included \$34,500 to Old Factory Brewing Co. in Cairo under Empire State Development's newly added Craft Beverage Micro Grant Program. The Hudson-Athens Lighthouse Preservation Society received a Parks, Preservation and Heritage Grant of \$500,000 to assist in repair and restoration of its underwater foundation. Find a complete list of awards at [https://regionalcouncils.ny.gov/sites/default/files/2023-11/REDC\\_Round\\_13\\_Award\\_Booklet.pdf](https://regionalcouncils.ny.gov/sites/default/files/2023-11/REDC_Round_13_Award_Booklet.pdf)

#### Six MULTI Grants Awarded to Date

The Greene County Economic Development Corporation's Microenterprise Assistance Program (MULTI Grant) has been very well received by local business applicants seeking Money for Utilities, Logistics, Technology and Inventory. Phase 1 was funded by NYS to establish a \$255,000 pool for awarding grants between \$5,000 and \$25,000 to qualifying Greene County businesses.

#### Grand Opening in Greene County Attracts State-wide Attention

The grand opening of the James Newbury Hotel and The Wire event center in the Village of Coxsackie was held on October 26. The nearly \$11 million redevelopment project transforms two former factory buildings into a 47-room boutique hotel and a 15,000-square foot event space with a waterfront bar and multiple community rooms.

#### New Windham Ambulance Headquarters & Senior Center

A community ribbon-cutting ceremony was held on July 22nd at this new facility at the intersection of South Street and Route 23 on the west side of Windham. Key features of the building include a proper, interior decontamination room complete with washing and controlled disposal capabilities, as well as the new home of the Windham Senior Center.



## BOGC to Provide Up To \$5 Million to Revitalize Cairo's Business District

Bank of Greene County CEO Donald Gibson spearheaded a new low-interest loan program to stoke small business commitment to the economic renewal gaining strength in Cairo. The Greene County Economic Development Corporation supports this action to assist prospective businesses seeking small business assistance to establish or expand in our communities. As part of this support, the GCEDC is producing Build Success support collateral as part of its campaign to promote business development in individual communities. <https://www.thebankofgreenecounty.com/bank-announces-a-reminder-about-5-million-low-interest-loan-program-for-town-of-cairo-businesses/>

## Camptown Opens in Leeds

Camptown Catskills had its soft opening for guests on March 16. Formerly the Rip Van Winkle Motor Lodge, the resort is located on Route 23B, less than a mile from Thruway Exit 21. Set within wooded acreage, it has been completely renovated featuring 24 guest rooms in the motor lodge and 26 log cabins, a cozy lobby with fireplace and work area, a modern Mexican restaurant called Casa Susanna, a horseshoe-shaped bar, honor system pantry, fire pits, and much more. Other amenities include an outdoor pool, pool bar, and sundeck with loungers and cabanas. <https://www.greatnortherncatskills.com/resorts-lodging/camptown>

## Indicators/Statistics

**Key economic indicators in the areas of employment, business success, and educational enrollment continued to rank Greene County as one of the best places in New York to live, work, and raise a family.**



## Greene County Labor Outperforms State and Fed Rates

In Greene County, unemployment figures continue to outperform NYS and the national average. Greene's December 2022 unemployment rate landed at 3.0%, lower than the State's 3.7%, and the nation's 3.3%. Overall, Greene County's total unemployed figures remained unchanged since December 2021, while there was a .1% growth in total employed. <https://dol.ny.gov/system/files/documents/2023/01/nys-economy-added-22100-private-sector-jobs-in-december-2022.pdf>

## Leisure & Hospitality Sector Leads Capital Region Job Gains As New Establishments Open in Greene County

The monthly Capital Region labor market briefing, published by the NYS Department of Labor, conducts a year-over-year lookback of several factors indicating the general dynamic of the eight-county region's labor market. April's report not only showed the Greene County outpacing Statewide and National unemployment figures (by 50 and 40bps, respectively), but also revealed that 48% (4,700) of 9,700 of the nonfarm jobs added to New York's economy since April 2022 occurred in the Leisure and Hospitality sector.

## Economic Impact of Visitors

Travelers to Greene County spent an estimated \$283 million in 2022, up \$52 million from a year earlier and \$90 million more than in 2019 before the pandemic. This, from a recently released state report generated by Tourism Economics that looked at the economic impact of tourism across every region of New York. <https://greenecountyledc.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/Catskills-2022-NYS-Tourism-Economic-Impact.pdf>

## Greene County 18th out of 50 NY Counties in Small Business Success

A by RochesterFirst.com cited that "Although most of the nation's small businesses are located in major metropolitan areas, those that are located in rural areas tend to be more stable — possibly due to loyalty from local residents or the absence of competition from large corporations." Coming in at number 18, Greene County has 1,082 small businesses (24.1 per 1,000 residents) that represent 99.7% of total businesses in the county.

## C-GCC Enrollment Increasing

Unlike the SUNY system as a whole, Columbia-Greene Community College is growing, not shrinking. Enrollment was up 6.8% in 2022, and is anticipated to be up 8% in the fall of 2023 – the 3rd highest growth rate of the state's 30 community colleges. Increases came across the board, but were most significant in Health Care, Automotive Technology, and Construction Technology.

## The Economic State of the Twin Counties

On Friday, November 3rd, Columbia-Greene Workforce NY was joined by James Hannahs (Executive Director of the Greene County Economic Development Corporation) and Mike Tucker (President & CEO of Columbia Economic Development Corp.) conducting a discussion on region-wide challenges surrounding the County's labor market, workforce development, and economic initiatives. This free forum was well attended by business and community leaders.

## Messaging & Communications

Greene County continues to promote and celebrate successes and initiatives within our communities through a robust system of news releases, social media posts, and electronic newsletters to subscribers. Below are some notable examples of well received communications.

### Village of Cossackie Receives \$4,500,000 in NY Forward Funding

On March 3rd, Village Mayor Mark Evans and members of the Downtown Cossackie committee were presented with a check for \$4.5 million as a winner of first round of the NY Forward grant initiative. This funding will be applied to the ongoing restoration, renovation and re-invention of the Reed Street Historic District. <https://greenecountyedc.com/news/village-of-coxsackie-receives-4500000-in-ny-forward-funding/>

### MULTI Grant

The Greene County Legislature procured \$255,000.00 in New York State Funding in partnership with the Economic Development Corporation (GCEDC) which is administering the funds to provide grants ranging from \$5,000.00 to \$25,000.00 to businesses in Greene County with 5 or fewer employees. In February, over 50 local businesses responded to an online survey, provided valuable information about

their business, and described how they would invest a \$25,000 grant if available. Under this new MULTI Grant program, Greene County Microbusinesses can be awarded access to expansionary and working capital for non-construction-related expenses on a reimbursement basis. <https://www.greenegovernment.com/scoop/new-small-business-grant-program-for-greene-county-businesses>

### NY Forward & Downtown Revitalization Initiative (DRI)

Throughout the summer, the Greene County Economic Development InVest Greene team assisted multiple businesses, municipalities, and not-for-profit organizations in preparing and submitting funding requests to NYS under the Consolidated Funding Application (CFA) as well as the NY Forward program and DRI which have previously brought over \$20 million to the county over the past 2 years. In 2023, the Village of Catskill, Town of Cairo, Village of Athens and the Town of Lexington all submitted applications.



## Capital Facilities Projects

Significant progress is being made in facility improvement and site development investments designed to benefit the residents of Greene County.

### Justice Center Project Update

Greene County awarded contracts for the construction of a new Courthouse Annex (Justice Center) to be located on the vacant parcel behind the existing courthouse. This three story 47,000 square foot office building will be connected to the existing Courthouse via an elevated pedestrian walkway and designed to accommodate a ground floor parking garage. It will provide for expansion of courthouse operations on the second floor and county offices on the third floor, housing the Offices of both the District Attorney and the Public Defender. The complex will also include the restoration and reuse of the existing Carriage House which will be repurposed for mechanical functions and supporting maintenance and building and grounds operations. The Architect is Thaler Reilly Wilson Architecture & Preservation, Albany, NY. The Construction Manager is Freeman Project Management Services, Cairo, NY. The General Contractor is Murnane

Building Contractors, Clifton Park, NY. Construction is scheduled to begin in January of 2024

### Improvements at Cohotate Preserve

Greene County is renovating and enhancing the environmental field station originally constructed in 1990 by the Greene County Soil & Water Conservation District at the Cohotate Preserve located on NYS Route 385 in the Town of Athens. The Cohotate Preserve provides open space and recreational opportunities for the residents of Greene County. The environmental education center is used in partnership with the Columbia Greene Community College and local schools and supports the college's environmental programs.

### The Transformation of a Major Gateway to Greene County

Development is now in full-swing on the Exit 21 East/West Commercial Park, and both residents and visitors will soon witness the benefits of public/private development





efforts that will increase access to commercial services and hotel accommodations while creating jobs, increasing tax base, and enhancing sales tax revenues – not to mention improving the aesthetic and safety of the area around the interchange. <https://www.greenegovernment.com/scoop/major-gateway-transformation>

## New Offices for Greene County Tourism Staff

The Greene County Tourism Department has vacated the Exit 21 Visitor Center and relocated its offices to the 4th Floor of the Greene County Office Building in downtown Catskill. The existing Visitor Center was demolished to make way for a new Stewart's Shop. Stewart's is donating their existing building to the County and it will be renovated into a new Great Northern Catskills of Greene County Visitors Center.

## Campaigns

**Greene County continues to promote our communities, businesses, and destinations with engaging campaigns through videos, social media, and promotional materials. New additions in 2023 included:**

### Buy In Greene Launches Reels on Instagram and Facebook

In March, Buy In Greene social media platforms began posting short videos promoting businesses and communities throughout the county. These videos known as Reels are extremely popular on social media, and enable us to tag featured businesses and employ the use of hashtags that place these posts into the news feeds of interested viewers. Be sure to like and follow Buy In Greene on Instagram at [buyinggreeneconomy](#) and Facebook at Buy In Greene.

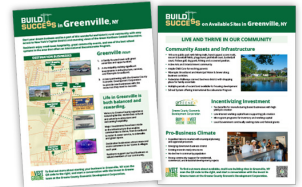
### New Video Released Promoting East Durham Destinations

This past summer Greene County Tourism teamed up with Josiah Brown, AKA New York Sherpa, to create a

feature video on East Durham. The video debuted at an event hosted by the Handle family at Blackthorne Resort on January 24. The East Durham video is the latest in the Great Northern Catskills marketing plan to highlight the towns and main streets of Greene County. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gKpDemZScPU>

### Build Success in... Community Promotion

The Greene County Economic Development Corporation is systematically promoting our communities to attract new businesses and residents. The 'Build Success' campaign features community assets, destination businesses, site opportunities, available incentives and support. The campaign kicked off this fall beginning with Cairo, added Greenville, and will continue adding communities by working with local municipalities and organizations.



## Recognition/Celebrating Success

**2023 witnessed national publications featuring Greene County businesses and communities, as well as multiple events and offerings designed to engage and benefit those who live and work here.**

### New York Times Article Touts Cocksackie Businesses

The January 18th edition of the New York Times featured an extensive article by Karen Angel citing the revitalization and businesses in the Village of Cocksackie. In her story Cocksackie, N.Y.: 'A Special Place on the Hudson' Angel states "Natives and newcomers are transforming this Greene County town, with an eye toward preservation. (And they want you to know it's pronounced 'cook-SAH-kie.')." Read the full story at <https://web.archive.org/web/20230118102049/https://www.nytimes.com/2023/01/18/realestate/coxsackie-ny-greene-county.html>

### Durham Businesses Honored

In 2023, Hull-O Farms was nominated by State Senator Michelle Hinchey to be added to the State Historic Business Registry. The designation was celebrated on Wednesday, July 16, 2023, with a ceremony at the farm attended by Senator Hinchey, Assemblyman Chris Tague, & Greene County Sheriff Peter Kusminsky. Zoom Flume Water Park made waves at the World Waterpark Association's Annual Symposium and Trade Show, held from October 23 to 27 in New Orleans. New York's number one family water park, Zoom Flume clinched the coveted Wave Review Award for Best Website during this year's symposium and trade show.



## **Thrillist Features New Catskills Boutique Hotel Lilien**

The highly popular news, travel, and food & drink website 'Thrillist' featured Hotel Lilien in an article on March 22, 2023. The article praised the hotel's design, amenities, and location. Thrillist also highlighted the hotel's commitment to sustainability. The article concluded by calling Hotel Lilien "a new Catskills boutique hotel that's worth checking out." Read the story at <https://www.thrillist.com/news/nation/hotel-lilien-catskills-boutique-hotel-opens>

## **Greene County Tourism Receives Award**

Greene County Tourism won the Excellence in Overall Tourism Marketing award from New York State Tourism Industry Association (NYSTIA) for its "Let's Go Greene" Marketing Campaign. The Greene County Tourism Office is proud to be recognized by its peers' for its work in promoting Greene County as a world-class tourism destination.

## **Over 30 Businesses Participate in Career Day at C-GCC**

Representatives from employers including Ferguson Enterprises, Ducommun, ARC Mid-Hudson, Serta Simmons Mattress, Greene County Human Resources, Community Action of Greene County, Windham Resort, Bank of Greene County, Walmart, Blackthorne Resort,

Cornell Cooperative Extension, SPIE Security and others connected with over 100 job seekers throughout the day on March 20th. Chris Nardone of C-G Workforce NY received several emails from attending businesses that attendance resulted in new hires.

## **New Firefighting Course for High School Students**

Greene County 911 Emergency Services Director John Farrell and his department worked with the Columbia County fire coordinator to establish a course on basic firefighting operations for high school juniors and seniors. The course through Questar III will also enable students to simultaneously sign up as junior firefighters with a company in their municipality, bolstering the declining number of volunteer firefighters.

## **Greene County Economic Development Contributes to Long Term Care Panel**

GCEDC Executive Director, James Hannahs, contributed to a regional panel discussion on Long Term Care options in Greene and Columbia Counties. Other panelists included transit directors, aging officials, and housing coordinators and provided valuable insight and information to help create mutual understanding of the challenges facing both counties, and about available resources to families and individuals needing easier access to long-term-care support resources.

## **Planning**

**Planning officials were hard at work in 2023, proactively establishing strategies, guidelines, and initiatives to achieve a variety of important goals.**

## **Catskill Strategic Planning Advisory Group (CAG) Submits Final Report to DEC**

Stakeholders with expertise in local government, recreation, natural resource protection, business and tourism, and other priority areas, were tasked to provide recommendations to DEC on how to address critical issues associated with increased public use of Catskill Park resources and protect these areas in the short term, as well as for future generations. The report contains recommendations to the DEC on promoting sustainable recreation while protecting natural resources.

## **NYS Agriculture and Markets Officially Approves Additions to Ag. District No. 124**

Every year, Greene County opens a month-long window for inclusion applications into the Agriculture District that encompasses the entirety of the County. This

protects farm lands as a viable segment of the State and local economies. After the latest round of inclusions, Ag District No. 124 now covers 839 Parcels with a total of 42,403.51 acres, with the most recent approvals hailing from Durham, Lexington, Cairo, and New Baltimore.

## **Training for Municipal Planning Officials**

On Monday, June 12th 2023, the NY Department of State in cooperation with Greene County Economic Development, Tourism & Planning, the Columbia County Planning Department and the Columbia County Planning Board will be hosting a one day training program for planning officials for local municipalities. Training will be held at the Greene County Emergency Services Training Center and the sessions will be covering Affordable Housing and Adaptive Reuses for 'White Elephant' properties.



## Updating the NYS Open Space Conservation Plan

The NYS DEC and Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation announced the start of the New York State Open Space Conservation Plan update process. As required by law, the Plan is updated on the recommendations of nine Regional Advisory Committees that are composed of people knowledgeable in open space conservation. These people are appointed by county governments, the DEC, and State Parks. This 2-year process will have a Public Comment Period in the summer of 2024.

## Greene County Hazard Mitigation Plan Completed

This plan provides a long-term approach to reducing the likelihood that a natural hazard will turn into a disaster and is the result of the work of the Greene County Office of Emergency Services and several other County departments along with Town and Village representatives. It uses updated data for assessing vulnerabilities and presents updated strategies for making Greene County a safer and more sustainable community. Read the 2023 plan at <https://www.greenegovernment.com/departments/emergency-services/hazard-mitigation-plan>

## Tourism

**In our tourism-driven economy, promoting Greene County as a four-season destination has never been more important or delivered higher returns. Significant events and achievements in 2023 that continue to bring visitors to our communities and support our local businesses include:**



### Concert in The Catskills: The River Sessions

This epic event featured three of Nashville's hottest country music artists: platinum-selling Michael Ray, rising star Spencer Crandall, and singer-songwriter Ian Flanigan. The concert was staged at the Historic Catskill Point, taking full advantage of this beautiful waterfront venue with stunning views of the Hudson River. Next year's concert is in the works and greatly anticipated!

### Grey Fox Bluegrass Festival a Huge Success

The 2023 festival featured a lineup of some of the biggest names in bluegrass music, including Béla Fleck, Steep Canyon Rangers, and The Del McCoury Band. The festival also featured up-and-coming artists, giving them a chance to showcase their talent to a large audience. Grey Fox is consistently ranked as one of the best bluegrass festivals in the country.

### Tour of the Catskills Attracts Over 550 Cyclists

The 16th Annual Tour of the Catskills Pro-Am Bicycle Road Race drew a record 550 riders from all over the world to the heart of the Great Northern Catskills on Saturday, August 12th. As one of America's premier cycling events, the race begins and ends its challenging course in Tannersville - winding through some of the most scenic and historic areas of the Catskills. It is renowned for the infamous Devil's Kitchen Climb of over 2.5 miles at an average 8% incline!

### 'New York By Rail' Highlights Fall in Greene County

New York By Rail praised Greene County's many outdoor attractions and charming towns. The Great Northern Catskills of Greene County Tourism team worked with the publication's writer to create a two-day itinerary, highlighting what makes the area especially attractive in the fall. The trip included taking the skyride to the top of Hunter Mountain, kayaking on the Hudson River, dinner at Che Figata, a night at the James Newbury Hotel, a tour of Foreland, and more.

### Film Production in Greene County

The Greene County Film Commission works directly with film & TV production teams to make shooting in our communities as welcoming as possible. Senior Tourism Marketing Coordinator Erin Dennin works as liaison between the film companies and local agencies, including the GC Sheriff's Office and GC Highway Department, to limit the impact on local travel and residents during production. "You [Erin Dennin] are the best, and I will continue to bring projects to you and shout from every mountain that you are the best," said Daniel April, co-producer shot in Catskill.



# Social Media Following Update

WINTER 2024 (Following as of January 3, 2024)

## FOLLOWERS

### Buy In Greene | Invest In Greene



Facebook

13,139

@BuyInGreene



Instagram

1,958

www.instagram.com/buyinggreencounty/

### Great Northern Catskills



Facebook

28,000

@GreatNorthernCatskills



Instagram

28,900

instagram.com/CatskillTourism/

### Greene County Economic Development Corp.



Facebook

1,114

@GreeneCountyEDC



Instagram

1,221

instagram.com/greeneedc

### Public Health



Facebook

6,500

@GreeneNYHealth



Instagram

269

instagram.com/greenenyhealth

### Emergency Services



Facebook

3,900

@Greene-County-Emergency-Services

### Family Planning



Facebook

292

@ MYGCFP



Instagram

230

instagram.com/greencountyfamilyplanning

### Greene County Public Health Children's Services



Facebook

158

@greencountychildrensservices

### Veterans Services



Facebook

1,233

@greencountyvets

### Civil Service



Facebook

1,300

@Greene-County-NY-Civil-Service

### Catskills Association for Tourism Services



Facebook

68,000

@VisitTheCatskills



Instagram

42,400

instagram.com/visitcatskills

### Hudson Valley Tourism



Facebook

18,000

@HudsonValleyTourism

### Sheriff's Office



Facebook

7,800

@GreeneCountySheriffNY



Instagram

72

instagram.com/greencountysheriffsoffice/

### Greene County, NY Government



Facebook

2,215  
(launched 10/10/2020)

@GreeneCountyNewYork