

Supervisor Brian Kulpa - February 2024 Message

At the beginning of the month, I delivered my 2024 State of the Town Address in coordination with the Amherst Chamber of Commerce's annual meeting. It is a great opportunity to kick-off the new year, reflecting on past accomplishments and challenges, while looking forward to a new year of growth, delivered services and community collaboration.



To best understand our administration's forecast for 2024, I looked back at where the Town was in 2018 when I first took office. The Town's credit rating had been downgraded, our outside auditors reported six years of deficits and the Town had depleted its fund balance. Maintenance of assets had been deferred and the wear and tear on infrastructure, parks, playgrounds, etc. was evident. This was not sustainable.

Since then, the Town has improved its Moody's rating, returned the fund balance to an appropriate level and received clean audits with no deficits. We invested in our sewers, water treatment plant, roads, recreation, seniors, fire departments, facilities, etc. Essential community services are critically important to a healthy town, investing in our neighborhoods through improved public spaces, playgrounds, community centers and libraries. We hired police officers with a focus on community policing and opened the doors at the Northwest Amherst Community Center, which has been extremely busy. All these components strengthen education, safety, mental health and personal investment in a community.

Public, open green space is an equally important part to any thriving community. In 2023 the Town purchased the former Westwood Country Club, preserving 171 acres of land to serve as [Amherst Central Park](#). In Phase I, we'll see the addition of an inclusive playground and Western New York's first ice ribbon in the southern end of the park, as well as Musicallyfare's new public theatre, celebrating culture assets in the center of town. The grant funding that we have received shows exceptional support for this project.

Also supporting a healthier community were two major health care projects that came online in the Amherst Medical Spine last year. The Roswell Park Scott Bieler Amherst Center and UBMD Orthopaedics & Sports Medicine's new 716 Health are world-class facilities, along with others in Town, that provide excellent health care, along with hundreds of professional and support jobs. Having these vital services right here in Town is a benefit to all who need to access them.

I also spoke about the town's response to the housing crisis, which is being battled around the country. With the University at Buffalo growing at accelerated rates, the demand for student housing reaches beyond the campus borders and impacts residential neighborhoods. Building more student housing is just one of the challenges we are addressing, in addition to providing workforce housing, senior units, affordable housing and market rate units. As we go through the process of redeveloping the declining Boulevard Mall, we have to incorporate mixed use, which includes housing, in the new town center that will replace the dying mall.

We also advanced significant infrastructure projects, [securing \\$31 million thanks to Gov. Hochul](#) and NYS to expand our sanitary sewer capacity and address drainage issues. Construction will start this spring to improve existing conditions and provide opportunity for future growth in the Boulevard Central District. Thanks to federal funding, we are also moving forward with a communications tower in northeast Amherst to improve service for our emergency services personnel. The Town also commenced its streetlight conversion project, installing LED lights to reduce energy costs and greenhouse emissions, while drastically improving visibility for pedestrians and motorists. The savings from this project will pay for the project overtime.

The State of the Town address is only a snapshot, a glimpse into the successes and challenges the Town is facing. We are seeing improvement all across town, and are providing quality services that residents and businesses can rely on. Our town workforce is among the best and I thank them all for their hard work. I

posted my entire address on the [Town's YouTube channel](#) for all to view and will be hosting community events to deliver my remarks. Dates and locations will be announced soon. I look forward to continuing to work with our partners in government and the community in 2024.