

Sullivan County Partnership for Economic Development * Sullivan County Industrial Development Agency * Sullivan County Chamber of Commerce * Sullivan Catskills Visitors Association * Sullivan County Democrat

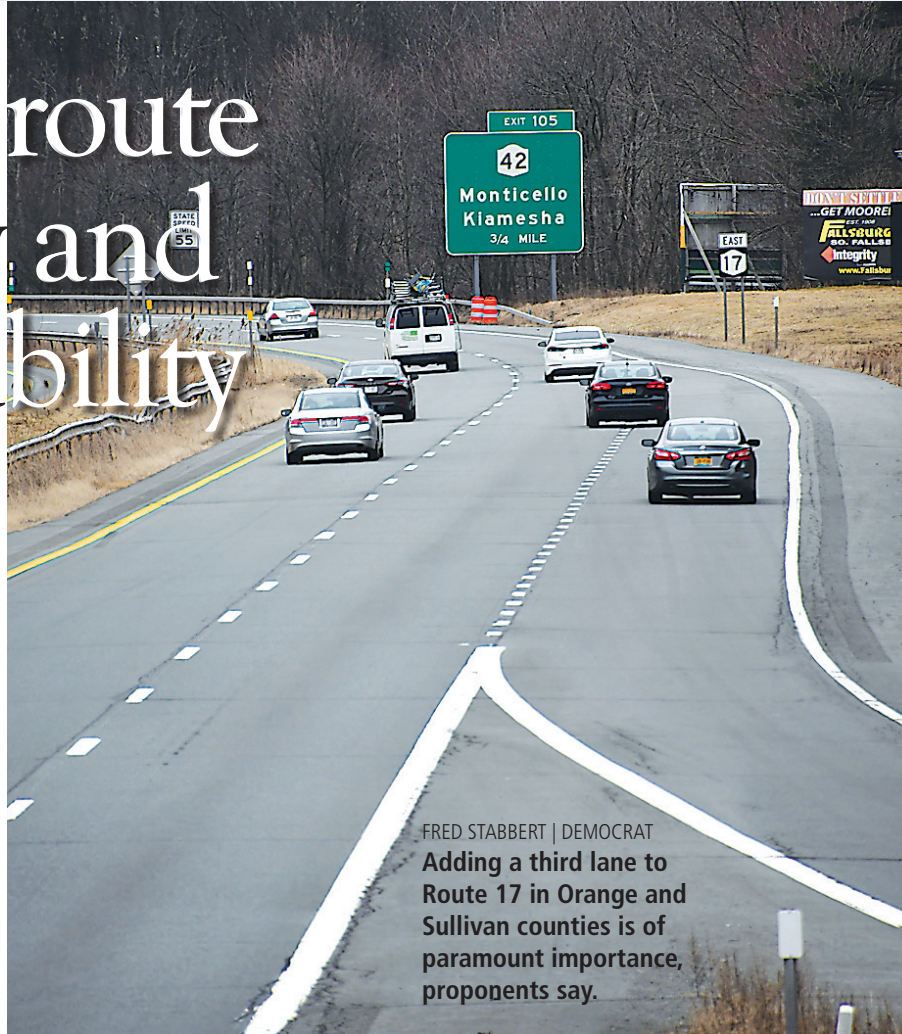
The best route to safety and sustainability in the Hudson Valley

Route 17 upgrade will enhance safety and mobility, create jobs and boost the economy

BY DANIEL ORTEGA

When faced with a challenge, leaders act, followers react, and obstructionists detract. Problems require solutions – they seldom resolve themselves – and if ignored, usually worsen over time. Case in point: Route 17, a major corridor in the Hudson Valley region.

Efforts are underway to improve mobility on Route 17 in Orange and Sullivan counties by adding a third lane east and west, and making other necessary upgrades to convert the corridor to Interstate 86. Enhancing safety on Route 17 is of paramount importance, and we cannot afford further delays to this long-overdue project. It's time to set the record straight



FRED STABBERT | DEMOCRAT
Adding a third lane to Route 17 in Orange and Sullivan counties is of paramount importance, proponents say.

and move this critical project forward.

The New York State Department of Transportation (NYSDOT) on Jan. 17, 2024 hosted two public information sessions on the Route 17 enhancement project. The NYSDOT has been very responsive to local concerns and has addressed considerations ranging from safety, the environment, quality-of-life and projected financial costs.

The need for an additional travel lane has been confirmed by two separate NYSDOT studies and has bipartisan support at all levels of government. The project has long been supported by U.S. Sen. Chuck Schumer, and Gov. Kathy Hochul last year announced the start of an environmental review of Route 17 – a key step forward to convert the corridor to

Interstate 86. The launch of the study follows the inclusion of up to \$1 billion in the state budget to accelerate the conversion – funding for which our 17-Forward-86 Coalition had been advocating.

17-Forward-86 members are vocal proponents of this project. Yes, we are stakeholders – we live here, work here and travel on Route 17. The stakes are high. Why is this project so important? First and foremost is safety. An additional lane will improve mobility and provide critical access for first responders – police, fire and ambulance services. It will make the corridor safer for all of us traveling on it each and every day, whether to the office, or medical appointments, or to take our

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

TO THE PEOPLE

Lack of market rate housing options cannot be ignored

As an economic development association, the Partnership has worked to help create opportunities for our members by facilitating projects large and small for years.

These projects not only provide opportunities for our member businesses, but also bring much needed investment, jobs, and tax rateables to our communities. Over the past decade we have seen measurable success both with large signature projects and 'mom and pop' businesses.

Though historically we have not prioritized housing due to the convergence of a variety of factors (the COVID-19 fallout as an example), we now find ourselves in a position

where there is a lack of inventory for affordable market rate housing.

I am talking housing for working people in our communities. Why? Many reasons, not the least of which are an influx of buyers from the metro area and other points south as well as our own success.

We have created new jobs through new development and organic expansion. Our population has finally increased by nearly 2,000 people when it had not for the better part of three decades.

While buying patterns, pricing, supply chain, inflation, household incomes, and other factors have made it difficult to attract housing developers for decades, we are entering a phase where this dynamic is starting to make new developments possible.

In other words, developers can see opportunity in new housing



CEO/President Marc Baez

development here like that which has happened in the lower part of the Hudson Valley for years.

A priority of this new County legislature among many others is housing, as the members can readily see this need here in Sullivan County and are creating programs to help foster new development. The Partnership too has made strides to attract investment in this sector.

After all, as we attract investment and jobs in the Industrial/Commercial sectors, workers need a place to live. This issue cannot be ignored as affordable market rate housing is critical to maintaining and growing our workforce here in Sullivan County.

Already we have met with three experienced developers that expressed serious interest and are aggressively

seeking locations to development projects. Others have had approvals for some time and are now in the process of refreshing them and taking the next steps to develop them.

While there are still hurdles to overcome, like water/sewer, taxes, and interest rates, the market and the timing is becoming much more favorable. You will see in the coming years new housing developments that will support the existing and future projects coming to our area supplying our crucial workforce with the housing options needed for communities to grow and thrive.

Sincerely,

Marc Baez
President and CEO
Sullivan County Partnership

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Legislator Matthew McPhillips talks housing

BY FRED STABBERT III

Newly-elected Sullivan County Legislator Matthew McPhillips knows first-hand the pinch that many young professionals are feeling in trying to buy a home in Sullivan County.

“Vanessa and I were renting a place we could afford,” he said. “And then the rent went up to \$5,000 [a month].”

That’s when the young couple decided to find a place of their own, buying property in the Town of Bethel and putting up their own home.

And in many ways, McPhillips said the high prices of local real state comes from several factors.

“Orange County, even with all their growth, is exponentially higher [in housing costs] than ours,” McPhillips said. “That means that some Orange County residents are taking up our real estate market [properties] that Sullivan County residents would normally have.”

McPhillips also pointed out that Sullivan County has seen an increase in remote/work from home residents,



DEREK KIRK | DEMOCRAT

Legislator Matt McPhillips, left, sat down with Sullivan County Democrat Publisher Fred Stabbert III last week to discuss the state of economic development and housing in Sullivan County.

and low inventory of homes for sale, post pandemic. This has led to fierce competition for below standard rentals, driving up costs. And the housing market has had similar fierce

competition as buyers compete for available homes.

McPhillips said many communities

Please see **HOUSING** page 15E

Partnership to host Economic Development Summit on April 10

BY ALEX KIELAR

The Sullivan County Partnership for Economic Development will be hosting a free informational breakfast event at The Kartrite Resort & Indoor Waterpark in Monticello, on Wednesday, April 10 from 7:30 a.m. until 10:30 a.m. The event is an economic development summit called Economic Development: Essential for Thriving Communities.

Breakfast will be served at 7:30 a.m. and the program will begin promptly at 8 a.m. Chief Investment Officer and CEO of Hudson Valley Investment Advisor, Gus Scacco, will begin the program with a special opening presentation on the economy. Scacco will discuss where the economy has been, where the economy is and where the economy is headed.

Pre-registration for the event is required and the deadline to RSVP is April 3. To RSVP, call the Sullivan County Partnership office at 845-794-1110 or email vanessa@scpartnership.com. People in attendance will hear from experts on why economic development is critical to the success of the community and what the community member’s role is in the process.



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County plans to inventory 'where our water comes from'

Database to be helpful in planning for future growth

**BY JOSHUA POTOSEK
SULLIVAN COUNTY MANAGER**

What if you turned your faucet, and nothing happened? What if you discovered the issue wasn't your pipes, your pumps or your provider? What if the water source on which you rely simply ran dry?

That's the disastrous outcome Sullivan County government is intent on mitigating, and it's that type of concern that has motivated us to get a clear and comprehensive understanding of water resources Countywide.

Portions of Sullivan County are facing significant potential residential and commercial development, which has equally significant implications for water sources and water providers – and not just potable water, but wastewater as well. We need to understand where fresh water is, how much of it exists, and the infrastructure that provides drinking water and handles wastewater.

Sullivan County's Division of Planning, Community Development & Environmental Management is preparing a request for proposals that will ask

qualified firms to inventory our municipal water assets, which we'll turn into a publicly available interactive map.

The company chosen by the Legislature later this year will scour State records, contact town and village officials, and collaborate with the County to identify our drinking water reservoirs, pipes and pumps, along with our wastewater facilities.

We'll also dig into 60 years' worth of data already collected about our natural water resources – our aquifers, our lakes, our springs, our rivers and streams,



Joshua Potosek

and our private and public wells.

We'll then combine that with the data we have about existing, ongoing and proposed development throughout the County, including where these developments are getting or plan on getting drinking water and wastewater resources.

The result will be a truly



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AUTUMN SCHANIL | DEMOCRAT

Fresh, clean water is a valuable natural resource that is necessary for our communities to survive – and thrive.

comprehensive, incredibly valuable dataset from which experts, local officials and the general public can retrieve information about the state of water assets Countywide.

In addition to ensuring we build homes and businesses in locations with sustainable water sources and adequate wastewater infrastructure, this information will allow us, our towns, and our villages to be far more competitive in seeking out grant monies to upgrade that infrastructure.

This is not about restricting business, closing off communities to development or otherwise limiting the growth of our economy.

Think about it: people want to live, work and play where there are natural freshwater sources, and it's not only prudent but critical that we plan appropriately for that.

By doing so, we ensure Sullivan County will continue to be attractive to those who already are here and those who want to come here.

Water is the most abundant resource on the planet, yet fresh drinking water comprises less than 3 percent of the total. We owe ourselves and our future residents the "liquid knowledge" that will continue to provide us with an abundance of this crucial resource.

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SCVA looking forward to busy spring

BY SULLIVAN CATSKILLS VISITORS ASSOCIATION

The Sullivan Catskills attracts over 4 million visitors annually and generates over \$800 million in visitor spending per year. Given the aftermath of the pandemic and current societal unrest in major tourist cities, many are left wondering if these numbers will persist into the future. The SCVA's attendance at recent travel trade and consumer shows have provided a glimpse into the evolving preferences of travelers. It seems that, like during the pandemic, there's a sustained demand for destinations offering safety, cleanliness, and natural beauty. Places that have the essence of health and wellness from farms to spas and restaurants that take pride in their culinary delights.

Tourists are increasingly seeking escapes from the hustle and bustle, yearning for quaint main streets,

warm hospitality, and the ability to explore—qualities the Sullivan Catskills offers in abundance. This growing interest is evident from the surge of inquiries and requests for information from tour operators, meeting planners, and directly from consumers. They are drawn to our destination, seeking the unique sense of tranquility and beauty it promises, a trend likely bolstered by our concerted marketing efforts. Through SCVA's strategic use of social media, websites, OTT, and TV commercials, we have worked diligently to keep the Sullivan Catskills at the forefront of potential visitors' minds.

To capitalize on this momentum, the SCVA has embarked on strategies aimed at enhancing visitor engagement and information dissemination. These efforts include a significant boost in social media



PHOTOS BY THE SULLIVAN CATSKILLS VISITORS ASSOCIATION

Last year's Catskill Cuisine at Bethel Woods featured celebrity chefs Marcus Samuelsson, left, and Scott Conant.

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presence, the launch of a revamped website and 2024 Travel Guide, and the introduction of new and expanded events. These range from the marketplace using the adaptive reuse of Liberty Mall to the second annual celebrity chef inspired Catskill Cuisine, Mother's Day weekend and a special focus on Father's Day weekend with Kansas City BBQ. Furthermore, the expansion of our Dove Trail and creation of new experiential itineraries underscores our commitment to enriching the Sullivan Catskills' tourism landscape. As we continue to adapt and innovate, the question isn't whether the interest in Sullivan Catskills will persist but how much more we can grow and enhance the visitor experience in the years to come.

In addition to our current efforts, we are also exploring new ways to attract visitors and provide unique experiences in the Sullivan Catskills. This includes collaborating with local businesses to create special packages for tourists, such as farm-to-table dining experiences and outdoor adventure packages. We are also working on developing

partnerships with neighboring regions to offer multi-destination itineraries, showcasing the diverse attractions and experiences available in the Sullivan Catskills. We are expanding our inclusion to make us a 4-season destination, developing programming to build our businesses and attract new visitors. We are positive about the growth in our destination and anticipate new investments on the horizon. The future looks promising from new businesses to increase visitation, building the bottom line for all of us for a successful and prosperous future.

With our ongoing efforts and innovations, we are committed to providing visitors with unforgettable experiences in this beautiful region while preserving its natural charm for years to come.

The SCVA held a spring marketplace inside the Liberty Mall to highlight local makers, vendors and businesses throughout the Sullivan Catskills.



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Catania, Mahon & Rider offer businesses wide array of services, experience

BY FRED STABBERT III

Michelle Rider is a strong supporter of economic development and believes the Hudson Valley is poised to continue its upward trajectory. To that end, the law firm Catania, Mahon & Rider, PLLC has been providing its legal services to businesses and municipalities for 52 years.

“Our firm generally handles business to business services in a wide variety of fields,” she said. From helping clients start a business to mergers and acquisitions, Rider said Catania, Mahon & Rider has vast experience in all areas of business law.

“We have 22 attorneys and just under 40 total employees on staff,” she said. “That includes 8 partners. The firm has a deep bench that can handle land use issues, commercial questions as well as construction law.

“We have deep experience in litigation and offer a full spectrum of civil defense,” Rider said. “Whether you are entering – or exiting – a business relationship, we can offer



CONTRIBUTED PHOTOS
Michelle Rider

the best advice.”

And in addition to its private sector clients, Catania, Mahon & Rider also represent municipalities, school districts and nonprofits on a wide variety of issues.

“We defend people,” Rider said. “We represent the defendants.”

One of Rider’s specialties centers

around business governance.

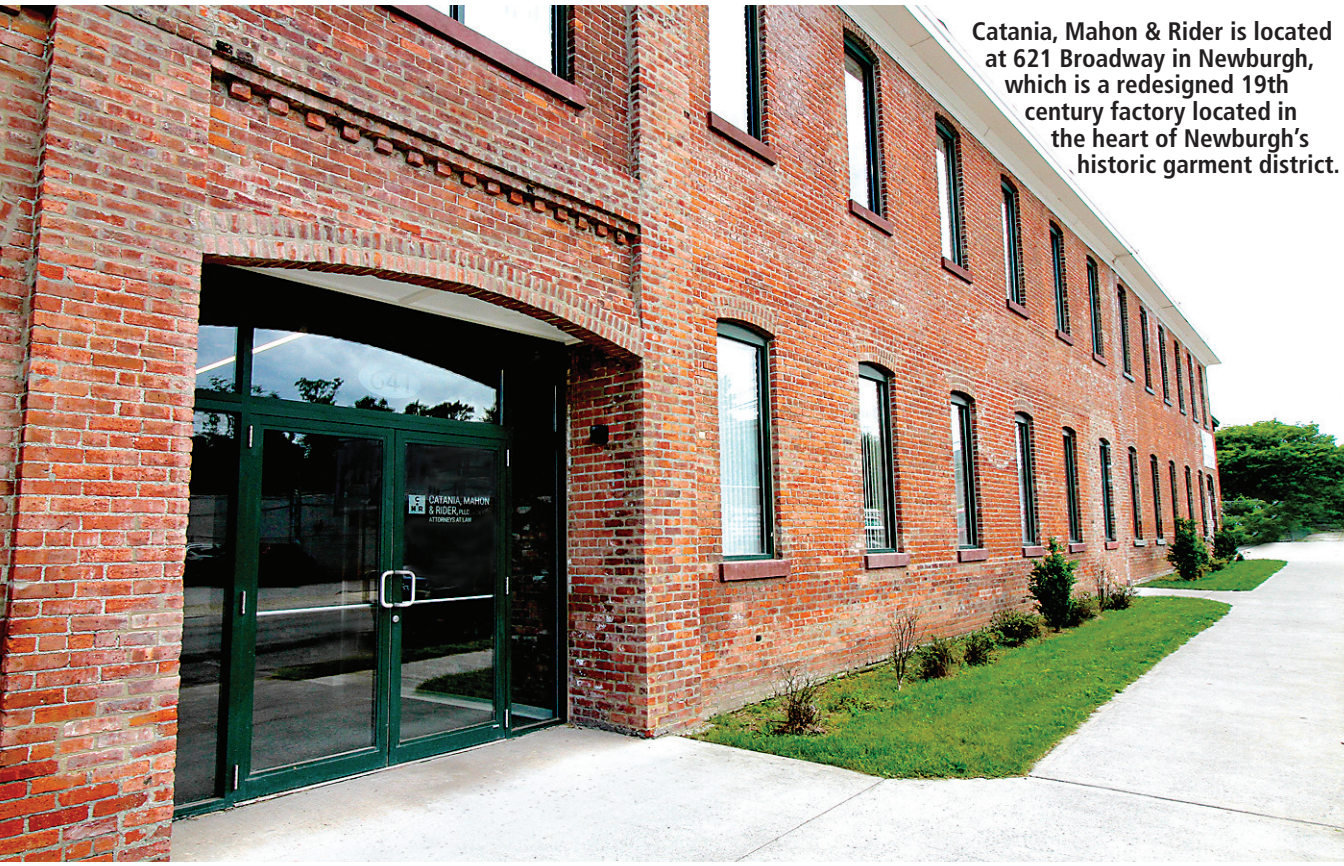
She pointed out that a well-written business agreement can help avoid litigation – which is prohibitively expensive.

“We are mediation trained and help our clients figure out the best ways of moving forward,” she said. “We like to ‘look down the road’ a lot.”

At left, the partners of Catania, Mahon & Rider are, from the left, John Furst, Seamus Weir, Richard Mahon, Ari Bauer, Joseph McKay, Michelle Rider, Michael Catania, and Paul Ernenwein.

The firm, which has been doing business in Sullivan County for decades, joined the Sullivan County Partnership for Economic Development a few years ago.

“A lot of folks in Sullivan County



Catania, Mahon & Rider is located at 621 Broadway in Newburgh, which is a redesigned 19th century factory located in the heart of Newburgh’s historic garment district.

have those kind of needs [including help in expanding their business],” Rider said. “It’s a great organization.

“Sullivan County has a collaborative group of business owners,” she added. “They believe all boats rise at high tide.”

And Rider pointed out that the beauty of the region – from the shores of the Hudson River to the deep pools of the Delaware – offer a perfect location for metropolitan business owners to relocate and help the economy.

“By attracting these business owners to our area we are getting more economic development, creating more jobs and increasing the tax base,” she said

The firm

Catania, Mahon and Rider is located at 621 Broadway, in Newburgh, a location they moved into three years ago.

The purchase and reclamation of the 19th century factory has been “a great recruiting tool.”

With exposed brick both inside and out, the office is situated in the heart of Newburgh’s historic garment district.

“I sit on the Orange County Partnership board so we are truly invested in economic development,” she said.

“Young lawyers and our clients who visit love our building,” Rider said. “We’re hiring and continuing to expand.”



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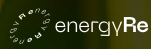
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Artificial Intelligence and business marketing

BY JAIME SCHMEISER
PRESIDENT AND CEO SULLIVAN COUNTY CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

Everyone is talking about the use of AI for your business marketing. There are numerous “how-to” seminars coming across my desk every day promising to help my business become more successful. However, SEO experts are also telling us that search engines are biased against AI-written websites (websites that have not one word written by a human). They are saying that AI-written websites are something search engines are discounting for (marking you down) because of the possibility of the sites being fake or holder sites. Whether or not there is some truth in that remains to be seen. But if you do still want to write some of your copy, here are three copywriting tips you can implement today that AI isn't using.

3 Copywriting Tips AI Isn't Using AI is masterful at sentence construction and grammar, but can it convince your audience to buy from you? Not like these three copywriting tactics can.

1. Think about how your audience speaks.

When writing copy, you want to match your language use to how

your target audience speaks and how they would search for you. For instance, are there slang references for your business or product that they would use? Incorporate that in your headings and blog posts. When reading (or skimming) the content of your site, you want them to think—they are just like me.

2. Use a conversational tone.

Building on the suggestion above, think about writing the way your audience would speak about your product or service. For instance, instead of writing

We have many delicious options in our bakery including cookies, cakes, and pies.

That's a lot of words that don't do anything. People just want to know what you have at your bakery. So, make it punchy, and don't think about your elementary school teacher reading it.

Cakes, cookies, and pies worth blowing your diet over.

This works because it places what your audience may be wondering—what do they sell?—at the beginning and ends with an endorsement.

Advanced Copywriting Technique: read aloud the three baked goods



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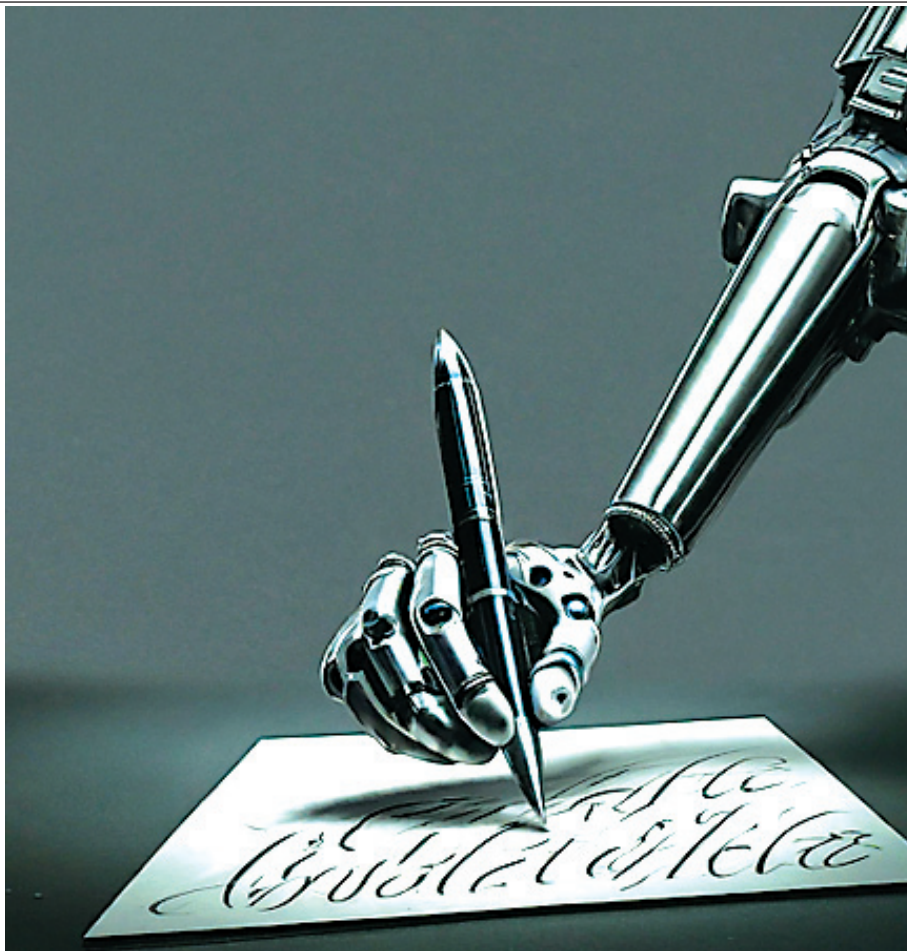


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mentioned in that sentence. Now mix up the order. See how the alliteration of the two c sounds (cakes and cookies) flows better than cakes, pies, and cookies? Also, the one, two, one syllable rhythm offers a nice variation. Rhythm is important because it allows a reader (since most of us hear the words in our head as we read them) to move effortlessly across the text. When that flow is missing, it's like hitting a road bump. It slows the reader down and they lose interest, if only subconsciously.

3. Address what's in it for them
 If you do nothing else on your website, follow this one tip. Write from the point of what's in it for your target audience—as they would perceive it, not what you think is the reason they should care.

What do you read in your reviews? What do customers tell you? When someone raves about you, what are they saying? Use that language to derive what they see as the benefit to what you're selling.



CONTRIBUTED GRAPHIC

This image was created with Google AI (Gemini).

Get creative. Don't just write what you do. That's not the true benefit. Instead, ask how does what you do make them feel better?

If you clean carpets, for instance, and your company has a sense of humor that your audience enjoys, you might write:

Carpets so clean your mother-in-law will have to find something else to complain about

It's memorable, it's identifiable, and it will resonate with your target market when they think, yeah, I'm tired of her judging me. I'm going to call this company. I need this.

AI is amazing for gathering your thoughts, outlining, and writing simple pieces. It's also a great place to start for blogs and website content. However, AI is not yet capable of understanding the subtle nuances and creative approaches that will get your audience talking about you. Until the machines take over, business needs good copywriting, and these tips will help get you there.

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Barbara A. Garigliano,
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ROUTE 17

Continued from front page

children to school or the baseball field.

An additional lane will also alleviate traffic, particularly on weekends, to our many tourist destinations. It will help local businesses that depend on deliveries and transports by allowing vehicles to move more efficiently, thus reducing traffic jams. Less traffic means less idling and fewer emissions polluting our environment.

Some obstructionists claim, among other assumptions, that widening Route 17 would exacerbate traffic conditions. A third lane will not draw more traffic – it will facilitate the existing level moving through the area more expeditiously. It's common sense. In fall 2014, the New Jersey Turnpike opened its much anticipated newly widened highway in central New Jersey. The region, similar to the Hudson Valley, had seen an increase in population and jobs amid expansions from companies in the logistics and distribution sectors. And, similar to Route 17, the roadway had reached capacity resulting in a chronically

congested 35-mile stretch. The turnpike expansion resulted in reduced traffic and idling emissions, fewer accidents and fatalities, and renewed economic development opportunities.

If we build another lane, will more people come? The fact is, they're already here. Our region has seen a dramatic rise in new residents, fueled in part by the Covid-19 pandemic. Orange County has the fourth-fastest growing population in the state, increasing at a rate of more than 9% between 2010 and 2023. Census data shows Sullivan County as one of the fastest-growing counties in the state. Many of these residents commute on Route 17. Tourism is booming as well. Some 6 million people visit Orange County alone each year – Legoland itself draws more than 1 million. The Sullivan Catskills draws upward of 4 million visitors. They travel along Route 17.

Route 17 reaches beyond Orange and Sullivan counties. It is a key transportation corridor in New York State and a primary link for commercial and noncommercial traffic between New York City, Northern New Jersey, Pennsylvania and regions within our state (Hudson

Valley, Catskills and the Southern Tier). In addition to interstate transportation, Route 17 serves as an intrastate transportation corridor for commuters and the movement of goods and services. It also is the main corridor for students traveling to institutions of higher learning, such as Cornell, Syracuse, Binghamton, Rochester Institute of Technology, and all of the larger SUNY schools in that region.

Investment in public transportation is an important part of the long-term sustainability for our region, and a one-seat ride into midtown Manhattan from Port Jervis or Middletown should be part of that plan. However, we also know vehicles – cars and trucks, electric or internal combustion – will continue to be part of our everyday lives. We cannot ignore facts.

The Route 17 enhancement project also will go a long way toward the sustainability of our communities and local economies. Infrastructure upgrades are investments in our future. It has been proved – over the course of a century of American life and economic growth – that each \$1 billion invested in infrastructure

yields thousands of direct jobs and a multiplier of that in indirect jobs. The construction phase of the Route 17 project will create upward of 500 direct jobs, employing local labor. Contractors, suppliers and related industries will also benefit from an increased demand for materials and services. Consider the \$4 billion Gov. Mario M. Cuomo Bridge, which generated more than 6,600 living-wage jobs and tens of thousands of indirect jobs in the region.

The numbers speak for themselves. Our region is growing and we must ensure our infrastructure can safely handle the current and future capacity. Enhancing mobility on Route 17 is the responsible thing to do for our residents, visitors, environment and region.

Daniel Ortega is a founding member of 17-Forward-86, a broad-based coalition of industry, trade and civic representatives who share a common vision for expanding the capacity of Route 17 to ensure the safety and economic well-being of the Hudson Valley and Sullivan Catskills. He also serves as the Community Affairs Chief for Engineers Labor-Employer Cooperative Local 825. To learn more, visit www.17Forward86.org.

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HOUSING

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throughout Sullivan County also have a very high tax burden –and coupled with higher interest rates on mortgages –make purchasing your own home even more challenging.

But McPhillips said that Sullivan County’s economic growth has caught the attention of several developers who would like to start building in Sullivan County.

“These developers came to us organically,” McPhillips said. “We heard a report at legislature and have had meetings with the developers who are interested in building middle to low-income housing.”

McPhillips said most of the interest centers around the more populated townships of Thompson, Fallsburg, and Mamakating.

“The developers saw this as an opportunity,” he said. “When there’s a need businesses will respond.”

McPhillips said he just returned from the New York State Association of Counties (NYSAC) conference in Albany recently and got a chance, first hand, to speak with New York State Governor Kathy Hochul at a reception. “We obviously discussed the opiod



epidemic –and Sullivan County’s housing needs,” McPhillips said.

Governor Hochul announced a statewide strategy to address New York’s housing crisis by building 800,000 new homes over the next decade.

“New York faces a housing crisis that requires bold actions and an all-hands-on-deck approach,” Gov. Hochul said.

The New York Housing Compact will require all cities, towns, and villages to achieve new home creation targets on a three-year cycle.

While McPhillips is optimistic of this new plan he is also realistic.

“I want to make sure our towns can afford it,” he said. “It’s all about understanding the needs of people.

“[Housing] is fundamentally an economic development issue,” he said. “And we need to have

this conversation with the entire economic development group.

“We can develop a path forward with our good leadership from the IDA, [Sullivan County] Partnership and SCVA,” he said.

And Sullivan County’s continued economic growth is dependent on finding more places for employees to live.

“It all starts with housing,” he said.



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Discussion on housing needs and development in communities

With Director of Economic Development Strategic Planning Vanessa McPhillips

BY JARREL P. GUERRERO, CHIEF LEGAL OFFICER OF THE MARKSTONE GROUP

In today's volatile real estate market with impending mortgage rate hikes, the lasting effects of the COVID pandemic and inflation, housing availability has been greatly affected. In addition to the pricing of everyday household items and necessities being increased, so too has housing and rental prices.

Insurmountable rental rates and housing prices are resultant of low housing inventory, causing many to be nomadic, in lieu of being a long-term resident in their respective town or city. Vanessa is on the front lines, so to speak, to tackle these

issues that has stricken not just her county in NY, but nationwide.

Before becoming an expert in economic data analysis, she obtained a Bachelor's and a Master's degree in economics at the prestigious Binghamton University. There, she had a concentration on Financial Analysis before interning in the finance department for a real estate developer.

Now, along with heeding one of the leadership roles at her company, she is slated to become a Certified Economic Developer after she finishes her multi-year post graduate certification program.

You are the Director of Economic Development Strategic Planning

for Sullivan County of NY. What is a typical day like in your position and what do you exactly do?

I wear a lot of hats in my job, and every day is a new adventure! There certainly is no typical day. At any given time, we may have business owners come through our doors, a tech company CEO or an owner of a small landscaping company.

I work side-by-side with Marc Baez, CEO/President, on corporate attraction and business expansion efforts. This involves attending planning board meetings, guiding projects through the approval process, and establishing connections with our clients and investors that are part of the

organization.

In addition, I manage our two revolving loan fund programs that assist existing and start-up businesses and work hand in hand with our Director of Membership and Special Events to co-produce our award-winning publication "In the Know".

My favorite aspect of what I do is the diversity of the clientele, and having the opportunity to drive growth and development in the community where I grew up.

We have no shortage of issues that need to be addressed, but no shortage of opportunity either. I see my position here as a truly unique opportunity to help the community I love.

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And I see that you are in the midst of completing a post-grad certification program, wherein you will be designated as a Certified Economic Developer -- what does that program entail and how has it helped with your current employment tenure? (You are not determined and ambitious at all, it seems! Haha!)

I'm completing my post-grad certification through The University of Oklahoma Economic Development Institute (OU EDI). In tandem with the International Economic Development Council (IEDC), OU EDI curriculum has identified three core areas considered to be the building blocks of economic development, in addition to the three elective courses that are required; totaling to 117 credit hours to graduate from OU EDI.

The Three Core Areas are:

- Business Retention and Expansion
- Real Estate Development and Reuse

• Economic Development Credit Analysis

After graduating from OU EDI, I will have all of the necessary course curriculum to sit for the Certified Economic Developer (CEcD) Exam. Completing the CEcD certification process immediately increases the credibility of a professional in the Economic Development industry.

Marc Baez and our Board of Directors have encouraged me to complete my certification, as it further strengthens our organization and will allow me to pursue new and exciting opportunities in business development here in Sullivan County.

How would you describe the need for multifamily housing in your County, and the adjacent ones in the northern region of NY? Has the need increased or decreased since COVID? How about nationally, not just NY?

The housing needs in our community are many and diverse. We are in a position in which even before the pandemic, there was an

issue finding housing for not only individuals in need of temporary, or transitional housing, but also for young professionals looking to come to the area. Such professionals range from those returning from college or entering to take advantage of some of the new opportunities we have been able to bring to the County.

The pandemic and low inventory have only exacerbated the issue. Now, we are in a situation where existing businesses searching for employees have a hard time finding them because they simply have no place for them to live.

I myself have experienced this issue, having to move three times in the last calendar year alone, in search of stable housing within my community that wouldn't break the bank.

Housing is not only a hot topic for Sullivan County, but nationally. Unfortunately, it's no longer uncommon for the average person to be paying more than 30% of their monthly income towards rent.

What type of multifamily developments have you seen of late? Which do you believe are the most

prevalent in the present and future?

During my time at the SC Partnership, I have seen town home style developments as well as higher-end apartment style multifamily developments.

I believe we will see this style of development continue and an increase of mixed-use style properties in the future. Mixed-use style developments allow for a greater amount of foot traffic in a given area creating its own economic engine.

Do you believe multifamily housing projects are economically beneficial on a county and township level? If so, what type of benefits does it offer? Is there a certain type of development that is more beneficial than others?

Multifamily housing projects can serve a wide range of household types and needs, e.g. unit type, price point, and lifestyle preferences. When done correctly I believe that

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DEVELOPMENT

Continued from page 17E

multifamily housing projects can be beneficial on a county and township level and have a positive impact on the community's economic growth, fiscal health, and environment.

Economic Growth

Multifamily housing brings new residences as well as increased economic activity to a community. More people lead to more collaboration and productivity... business and it is this exact style of positive feedback loop that is so important to maintaining and enhancing rural communities like ours.

Fiscal Health

Multifamily housing projects can help improve fiscal health by increasing the tax base and efficient use of public services. In rural Counties like Sullivan, it is vital that we maintain, and develop taxable properties to help maintain the vibrancy of our communities.

Without increasing revenues, the tax burden falls on a smaller and smaller group of payers, forcing many to leave, and an area to become unsustainable in the long term.

Environmental Sustainability

Preservation of open space and natural amenities are of vital importance, especially in Sullivan County. We are a resource-rich community with some of the cleanest water, cleanest air, and most sought-after farmland in the state. These are strengths that draw people to our communities both as tourists and residents.

We cannot lose sight of what makes our community special, and this leads to a delicate balance in the field of economic development. I believe we at the SC Partnership have done a fantastic job at threading this needle by always seeking community input, encouraging smart development, and working directly with municipalities to understand their unique needs, and challenges.

When considering whether

one type of development is more beneficial than another, I think there are many factors that need to be considered. That's why this industry is to me is like a chess game, you need to think 3 steps ahead!

Any advice that you would give a real estate developer in choosing a certain area to build in?

Learn about the community you wish to develop in!

In my experience of going through the approval process for multiple projects, it is vital that a developer understands the community they are investing in. What are the community's strengths, weaknesses, challenges, and opportunities? Are there particular environmental, demographic, or gentrification concerns that the developer may encounter?

Individual communities even within a small rural County such as Sullivan have diverse and often unconventional concerns that an unprepared, or unfamiliar developer can quickly run afoul of. It is important to find community advocates and build a team of local



Vanessa McPhillips, who conducted the interview for this story, is the Director of Economic Development & Strategic Planning for the SC Partnership. professionals to get a full picture of any potential community concerns so they can work to be addressed early, and significant community pushback does not occur.

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