



Sullivan County
Economic Development Committee
Meeting Agenda - Final

100 North Street
Monticello, NY 12701

Chair Terry Blosser-Bernardo
Vice Chair Luis Alvarez
Committee Member Brian McPhillips
Committee Member Catherine Scott
Committee Member Joe Perrello

Thursday, July 9, 2026

9:30 AM

Government Center

Call To Order and Pledge of Allegiance

Roll Call

Comments:

Reports:

1. Division of Community Resources [ID-8478](#)
Workforce Development
Monthly Report
July 2026

Attachments: [2026 Economic Dev July Report](#)

2. SCVA [ID-8499](#)

Attachments: [FINAL FINAL EDC Presentation PDF](#)

3. IDA [ID-8498](#)

Attachments: [IDA Activity Report June 2026](#)

4. Chamber of Commerce
5. Partnership for Economic Development

Discussion:

Public Comment

Resolutions: None

Adjourn



Sullivan County

Legislative Memorandum

100 North Street
Monticello, NY 12701

File #: ID-8478

Agenda Date: 7/9/2026

Agenda #: 1.

Division of Community Resources Monthly Report

Workforce Development

July 2026

Workforce Development

- The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) funding for Program 2026 (July 1, 2026 – June 30, 2027) saw NYS receiving a roughly -10% cut across all funding streams. This resulted in Sullivan County seeing a reduction of -\$48,865 or -9.53% in funding across Adult, Dislocated Worker and Youth programs.
- The Summer Youth Employment Program (SYEP) will start July 6 and will run through August 14. There are 50 slots for eligible youth aged 14 to 20 years of age. Sites include Bold Gold Media, A Single Bite, Catholic Charities, Hurleyville Performing Arts Center, Monticello High School, SUNY Sullivan, Federation for the Homeless, Town of Bethel and United Way of Sullivan County.
- The Center for Workforce Development (CWD) participated in the Career Fair held on June 24 at the Center for Discovery. The event sponsored by the Center brought CWD and SUNY Sullivan onsite to meet with staff as well as members of the public. The event was an avenue for individuals to learn about opportunities at the Center and how their skill development can be supported by CWD and the college. Several individuals are being followed up with by CWD staff.
- The CWD will hold a customized hiring/recruitment event focused on Certified Nursing Assistants (CNA's) at the Career Center on July 24 from 2pm – 4pm. Businesses that have confirmed their attendance to date include the County of Sullivan, Roscoe Rehabilitation and Nursing Center, and Achieve Rehab and Nursing Facility. SUNY Sullivan will also be in attendance to share information about their training opportunities.
- The NYS Systems Change and Inclusive Opportunities Network (NYSCION) update:
 - ✓ To date, 388 individuals have been served by the Disability Resource Coordinator (DRC) resulting in 93 individuals with disabilities gaining employment.

- ✓ In May the DRC provided services to 26 individuals with 2 gaining employment.
- ✓ The DRC and CWD have received final approval for full financial sponsorship for the 2026 Workforce Summit (Veteran Forum) scheduled for October 7, 2026.
- ✓ The round table and sustainability group quarterly meetings restarted in April. Goals for this year are:
 - Identify and collaborate with second chance employers for justice involved individuals with disabilities
 - Develop two Employer Resource Teams
 - Identify paid and unpaid work experiences for adults and youth
 - 2026 Sullivan County Workforce Summit
- There are 70 individuals enrolled in Adult and Dislocated Worker programs and 13 enrolled in the Youth program receiving different stages of services under the Workforce innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA). Services include resume development, job search assistance, career counseling, career explorations, occupational training and post-employment follow up services.

Temporary Assistance Caseload Representative Profile 2026

May 2026 Total Caseload - 319	TANF/SNM* Cases - 191	Safety Net Caseload - 128
Medical Issues	7%	3%
Disabled	17%	0
Pregnant/Newborn	3%	0
Needed in Home	6%	0
No Child Care	20%	0
Criminal Justice Involved	20%	61%
Cases Closed	9	29

*TANF – Temporary Assistance for Needy Families
SNM – Safety Net Maintenance of Effort

The month of May saw 8 entries into employment, 2 enrolled in job readiness skills training.

- **Career Center Services:**

- Business Services

- **In- House Hiring Events**

- Sullivan County Career Center
50 North ST., Monticello
11:00AM – 2:00PM

- Spring series outcomes include hosting 6 In-House Hiring events, successfully connecting local talent with employers. There were 22 local businesses in attendance and 137 jobseekers engaged.

- Regional Collaboration: The CWD continues to participate in the Regional Business Services Team quarterly meetings, with the most recent meeting attended on March 17, and the next session scheduled for Jun12.

- The CWD provided services to 14 new business customers and listed 176 jobs in May.
 - There were 571 individuals who received assistance from the partnership of CWD and DOL staff for the month of May.
 - As of May 31, 2026, the CWD reached a lifetime total of 1,378 followers on Facebook, achieving 39.6k views reflecting slight month over month increase in overall reach. While reach remains high, the slight increase in views highlights an ongoing opportunity to focus on deepening audience engagement.

Labor Market Data for May 2026

- ✓ Sullivan County's total nonfarm jobs increased 2.8% (900) and private sector jobs increased 3.1% (800) for May 2026.

Please note: The net month (April 2026 – May 2026) showed an increase in nonfarm jobs of 1.9% (600) and the private sector jobs showed an increase of 2.3% (600) jobs.

- ✓ For Sullivan County the job gains were:
 - Private Educational and Health Services at 6.5% (600)
 - Professional and Business Services at 9.1% (200)
 - Other Services at 8.3% (100)

- Trade, Transportation and Utilities at 2.3% (100)
- Government at 1.7% (100)

For Sullivan County the sectors that showed no job growth were:

- Information
- Manufacturing
- Mining, Logging and Construction

For Sullivan County the sectors that showed job losses were:

- Leisure & Hospitality at -2.6% (-100)
- Financial Activities at -10% (-100)

NYS showed an increase of 0.3% (33,600) in total nonfarm jobs and an increase of 0.4% (31,400) in private sector jobs.

NYS saw the largest jobs gains were found in:

- Private Educational and Health Services at 1.1% (27,800)
- Professional and Business Services at 1.0% (14,200)
- Mining, Logging and Construction at 1.5% (5,900)
- Financial Activities at 0.7% (5,600)
- Government at 0.1% (2,200)

NYS saw no growth in:

- Information

NYS saw job losses in:

- Manufacturing at -2.1% (-8,400)
- Trade, Transportation and Utilities at -0.4% (-6,100)
- Leisure & Hospitality at -0.6% (-6,000)
- Other Services at -0.4% (-1,500)

- ✓ Within the region, Rockland County's private employment sector grew the fastest, year-over-year, up 3.2 percent. The second fastest growth was found in Sullivan County (+3.1 percent), followed by Westchester County (+1.6 percent), and Kingston MSA* at (+0.2 percent). Job losses were centered in Kiryas Joel-Poughkeepsie-Newburgh MSA (-0.8 percent). Putnam County remained unchanged over the period.

*MSA stands for Metropolitan Statistical Area. A Metropolitan Statistical Area is defined as a region that includes a central city and surrounding communities that are linked by social and economic factors. This classification is used by the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLAS) to analyze labor market conditions within specific geographic areas.

- ✓ The Hudson Valley region showed an increase of 1.0% (10,400) in total nonfarm jobs and an increase of 1.1% (9,400) in private sector jobs.

The largest job gains were found in:

- Mining, Logging and Construction at 5.0% (3,000)
- Private Educational and Health Services at 1.2% (2,900)
- Government at 0.6% (1,000)
- Financial Activities at 1.9% (900)
- Leisure & Hospitality at 0.9% (900)
- Trade, Transportation and Utilities at 0.4% (800)
- Professional and Business Services at 0.4% (500)
- Other Services at 0.9% (400)
- Manufacturing at 0.2% (100)

The job losses were found in:

- Information at -0.9% (-100)

- ✓ Sullivan County's unemployment rate was 3.8% for May 2026, an increase from 3.0% in May 2025.

May 2026 had 38,600 people in the labor force (37,100 employed & 1,400 unemployed). Year over year the number of employed individuals increased by 2.5% (900) and the number of unemployed individuals increased by 27.3% (300). Overall, there was an increase of 3.2% (1,200) in the labor force compared to May 2025.

The total labor force increased from April 2026 to May 2026 at a rate of 1.3% (500). The number of employed workers increased by 1.1% (400) and the number of unemployed individuals remained flat.

- ✓ The Hudson Valley's unemployment rate was 3.6% for May 2026, an increase from 3.0% in May 2025.
- ✓ NYS's unemployment rate was 4.2% in May 2026, an increase from 3.8% in May 2025.
- ✓ The US unemployment rate was 4.1% in May 2026, an increase from 4.0% in May 2025.
- ✓ The May 2026 unemployment rates across the 62 NYS counties ranged from a low of 2.9% for Yates County to a high of 6.5% for Bronx County. Sullivan County with a 3.8% unemployment rate ranked 24th in the State along with Lewis, Madison, Onondaga, Orleans and Tompkins counties.

- ✓ Hudson Valley unemployment rankings for May 2026:
 - # 3 Putnam County at 3.3%
 - # 5 Rockland County at 3.4%
 - # 9 Dutchess County at 3.5%
 - #13 Westchester County at 3.6%
 - #13 Ulster County at 3.6%
 - #24 Sullivan County at 3.8%
 - #34 Orange County at 4.0%



Sullivan County
Legislative Memorandum

100 North Street
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File #: ID-8499

Agenda Date: 7/9/2026

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Economic Development Committee
9 July 2026

REPORTING



IN THE PRESS

Coverage at a Glance

May – June 2026

Owned and earned media picked up across print, broadcast, and online outlets during the reporting window.

1,815

Unique media stories

de-duplicated from ~3,193 raw items

5.42B

Impressions / audience reached

estimated impressions

\$49.27M

Publicity value

est. ad-equivalency

Bottom line: In two summer months, the Sullivan Catskills earned nearly \$50 million in estimated publicity value, reaching an audience of more than five billion.



YOY WEBSITE Q2 KPIs

AWARENESS & LOYALTY SURGING

TOTAL SESSIONS

↑ 61.1%
93,045

TOTAL USERS

↑ 69.3%
81,810

ORGANIC

↑ 94.4%
24,839

We continue to grow audiences with organic traffic surging.

REPORTING



LODGING KPIs

Key Performance Indicators

KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS (KPIs)

Airbnb - YEAR-OVER-YEAR CALENDAR FISCAL (YOY) as of 07/03/26

O: 13.3% vs 13.6%  Q1

2.2%

GN: 15,948 vs 17,268  7.6%

R\$: \$5.92M vs \$6.01M  1.5%

O: 21.0% vs 20.7%  Q2

1.4%

GN: 26,539 vs 26,528  .0%

R\$: \$10.38M vs \$9.83M  5.6%

O: 27.6% vs 25.6%  6

7.8%

GN: 11,610 vs 10,829  7.2%

R\$: \$4.88M vs \$4.20M  16.2%

O: 19.4% vs 15.6%  7-9

24.4%

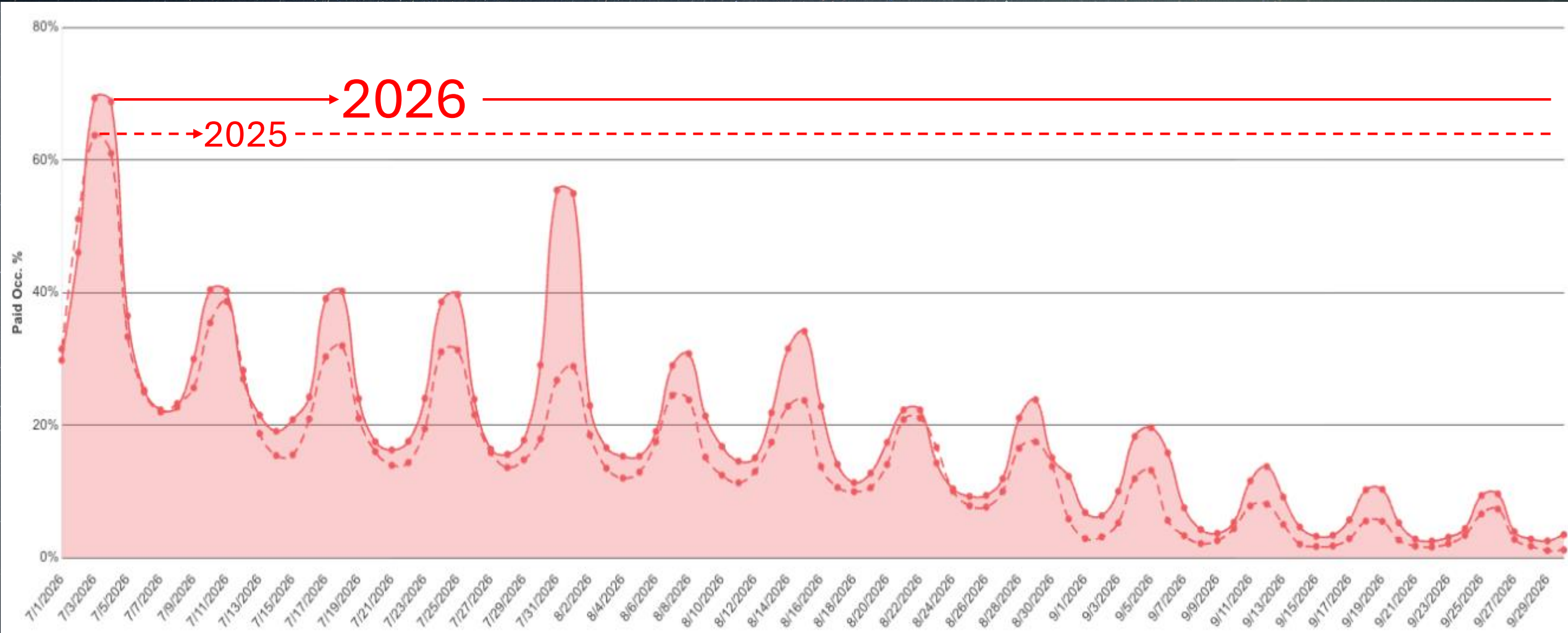
GN: 24,759 vs 20,533  20.6%

R\$: \$12.20M vs \$9.11M  34.0%

O = Occupancy + GN = Guest Nights + R\$ = Unit Revenue

DAILY PAID OCCUPANCY – JULY - SEPTEMBER

Airbnb - YEAR-OVER-YEAR CALENDAR FISCAL (YOY) as of 07/03/26



IN YOUR PACKET

- July's SCVA Presentation
- May-June "In the Press" – full report
- Q2 Website Performance
- "Mobile Visitor Center" – media release
- "Built for The Moment" - article

Thank you.



MEDIA COVERAGE BRIEFING

Sullivan Catskills in the Press

May – June 2026

Prepared for the Sullivan County Legislature



Coverage at a Glance

May – June 2026

Owned and earned media picked up across print, broadcast, and online outlets during the reporting window.

1,815

Unique media stories

de-duplicated from ~3,193 raw items

5.42B

Impressions / audience reached

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est. ad-equivalency

Bottom line: In two summer months, the Sullivan Catskills earned nearly \$50 million in estimated publicity value, reaching an audience of more than five billion.

Coverage by Pillar

May – June 2026

How our three visitor pillars showed up in the press.



PLAY

Things to do

Stories

488

Impressions / audience reached

1.77B

Publicity value

\$16.93M



TASTE

Dining

Stories

214

Impressions / audience reached

0.15B

Publicity value

\$1.24M



STAY

Lodging

Stories

180

Impressions / audience reached

0.62B

Publicity value

\$5.28M

Featured Driver: Bethel Woods

Bethel Woods is the single biggest engine within Play. It is counted inside Play, not on top of it.

280

Stories

1.63B

Est. reach

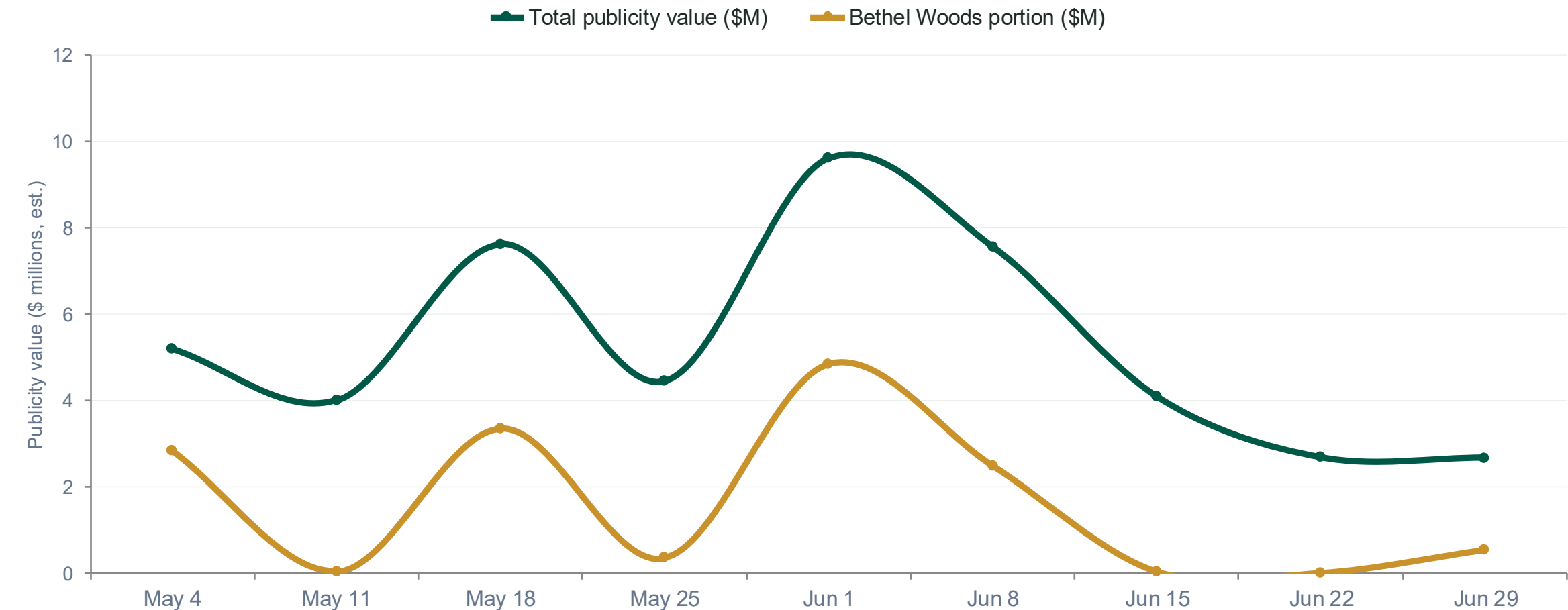
\$14.40M

Publicity value

Fewer stories, bigger reach. Bethel Woods article count fell about 32% from May to June, yet its reach and publicity value both rose roughly 26%. Coverage landed in higher-reach national outlets, so each story worked harder.

Coverage Held Steady Through the Season

Weekly publicity value, May through June. Consistent presence week over week as summer programming ramped up.



Weekly owned/earned media, duplicates removed. Partial week of Apr 27 excluded. Bethel Woods shown as a subset of the total. Estimates.

May to June: What Moved

Month-over-month change in publicity value. Overall coverage value grew as the summer season opened.

+17%

Total publicity value rose about 17% from May to June.

Coverage value grew overall even as individual pillars moved in different directions.

STAY

+290%

publicity value, May → June

A few high-reach lodging placements drove a large June jump in value.

BETHEL WOODS

+26%

publicity value, May → June

Fewer stories, but higher-reach outlets lifted reach and value.

PLAY

-3%

publicity value, May → June

Held roughly steady month over month.

TASTE

-35%

publicity value, May → June

More stories, but in smaller outlets, so value dipped.

What This Means for the County

1

Play leads the story

Attractions, led by Bethel Woods, are the county's strongest publicity engine and national draw.

2

Momentum into summer

Total publicity value rose about 17% from May to June as the season opened.

3

Lodging is breaking through

A few high-reach placements gave Stay a major June lift in reach and value.

4

Every dollar visible

Nearly \$50M in estimated publicity value, tracked and reported to the community.

Data Sources & Methods

Appendix. For reference.

Source	Media monitoring platform (Critical Mention), covering print, broadcast, and online coverage of Sullivan County and the Sullivan Catskills.
Reporting period	May 2 – June 30, 2026. The platform retains roughly a 60-day rolling window, so a full Q1 or Q2 view is not available. May–June is the reliable window.
What is counted	Owned and earned media only. Syndicated duplicates were removed: roughly 3,193 raw items were collapsed to about 1,815 unique stories.
Reach	Estimated potential audience, or impressions, for the outlets where coverage appeared. An estimate, not a verified readership count.
Publicity value	The platform's ad-equivalency estimate, in dollars. Also an estimate, useful for scale and trend rather than an exact figure.
Bethel Woods	Reported as a featured driver within Play / Attractions. It is a subset, not a separate additive category, and is not added on top of pillar totals.

Sullivan Catskills

Q2 2026 Digital Performance Wins

Q2 2026 vs. Q2 2025 — A comprehensive year-over-year analysis of digital performance, user engagement, and channel effectiveness for the Sullivan Catskills destination brand.

Big story: **organic traffic surged, owned channels drove performance, and user actions increased.**

Strong Year-Over-Year Growth Across the Site

Q2 2026 showed strong year-over-year growth across the Sullivan Catskills site. More users are discovering the destination, engaging more deeply with content, and taking meaningful next-step actions — from booking inquiries to travel guide requests.

Organic visibility is improving, search traffic is growing quickly, and owned channels are producing the conversions. The site is building a stronger foundation for future demand.

81,810

Total Users

Up **69.6%** year over year

93,045

Total Sessions

+61.1% growth quarter over quarter

330,677

Event Count

+15.8% increase in total interactions

2,315

Key Events

High-intent visitor actions taken



ORGANIC SEARCH

Organic Search Was the Standout Channel

Organic Search delivered the strongest quality signal of the quarter — more people are finding Sullivan Catskills through search, and they are engaging better once they arrive.

24,839

Organic sessions in Q2 2026

+94.4% YoY

Organic session growth year over year

19,291

Organic users reached

+117.6% YoY

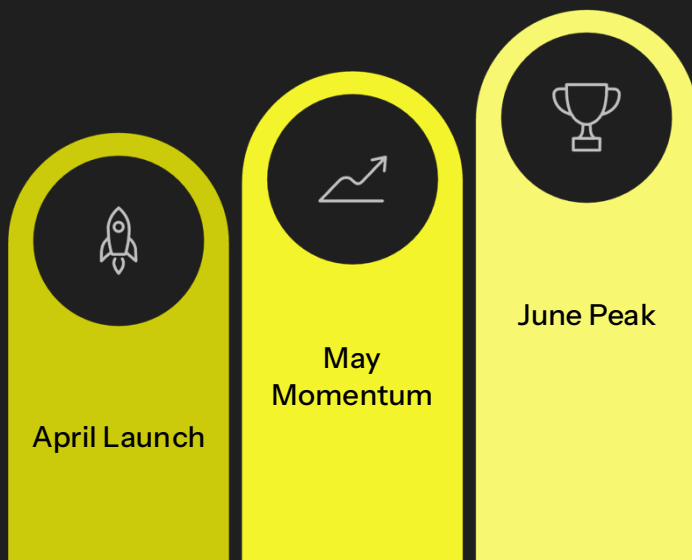
Organic user growth — the quarter's standout metric

35% Bounce Rate

Down 5.3% — visitors are staying and engaging

Organic Traffic Built Momentum Through the Quarter

Organic sessions steadily outpaced the prior year, with the strongest lift coming in June. SEO momentum is not isolated to one spike — the quarter ended with sustained improvement and a stronger baseline for future growth.



This consistent upward trend signals that organic visibility improvements are compounding — setting a stronger foundation heading into Q3 2026.



Organic Search Drove Meaningful Conversions



Organic Search was not just traffic — it produced action. With a conversion rate well above typical destination marketing benchmarks, organic is currently one of the strongest channels for both volume and visitor quality.

1,596 Conversions

Total organic search conversions recorded in Q2 2026

6.43% Conversion Rate

Strong performance reflecting high-intent search audiences

35% Bounce Rate

Organic visitors are staying — well below typical benchmarks



CHANNEL PERFORMANCE

Owned Channels Carried the Quarter

Owned channels drove nearly all performance — this is great news because growth is being built through durable, long-term channels rather than paid dependency.

98.68% of Sessions

Owned channels accounted for nearly all session volume in Q2 2026

100% of Conversions

Every tracked conversion originated from an owned channel — zero from paid

0% Paid Conversions

Paid channels contributed no conversions, validating the strength of organic and direct channels

Landing Pages Show Strong Visitor Intent



Homepage

16,759 sessions — the primary entry point and a critical driver of destination discovery and initial engagement.



Business Directory

2,674 sessions — visitors actively searching for local businesses, dining, and services in Sullivan Catskills.



Things To Do & Events

2,228 + 1,162 sessions — event and things-to-do content are clearly important discovery paths for destination visitors.

These landing pages reinforce Sullivan Catskills' positioning as a destination where visitors find inspiration, plan their trips, and explore what the region has to offer.

Key Visitor Actions Increased

Q2 produced **2,315 key events**, led by high-intent actions. Visitors are not only browsing — they are taking meaningful next-step actions.



View All Events Clicks: 1,498

The top action — visitors actively exploring the Sullivan Catskills events calendar to plan their visit.



Book Now Clicks: 605

Strong purchase-intent signal — visitors moving from discovery to direct booking action.



Travel Guide Submits: 120

Visitors requesting the travel guide — a strong indicator of serious trip planning intent.



Phone & Email Clicks: 88

Phone clicks (60) and email clicks (28) show visitors reaching out directly to plan their trip.





ENGAGEMENT

Engagement Growth Supports the Traffic Story

Total event count increased to **330,677**, up **15.8% YoY**. The site is reaching more new users and generating more interaction — a sign that content is resonating with destination-minded visitors.

122,898

Page Views

Up **27.1%** year over year

89,434

Session Starts

Up **52.4%** year over year

79,715

First Visits

Up **68.8%** — new audiences discovering
Sullivan Catskills



What This Means

The Q2 story is very positive. Sullivan Catskills enters the second half of 2026 with clear digital momentum and a growing foundation for future demand generation.



Organic Visibility Is Improving

Search traffic grew **+117.6%** in users and **+94.4%** in sessions. SEO momentum is real, sustained, and compounding.



Owned Channels Are Producing

98.68% of sessions and 100% of conversions came from owned channels— durable, long-term growth with no paid dependency.



Visitors Are Engaging With Destination Content

Events, things-to-do, and business directory pages are key discovery paths— visitors arrive with intent and act on it.



A Stronger Foundation for Future Demand

With first visits up **68.8%** and key actions up across the board, Q3 2026 starts from a position of strength.

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Jenny Sanchez, Director of Communications & Community Engagement |
Jenny.Sanchez@sullivancatskills.com | (845) 539-0049

June 30, 2026

Sullivan Catskills to Bring Mobile Visitor Centers and Free Wi-Fi to Communities Countywide

A 7-1 vote directs \$1.5 million in visitor-funded lodging tax revenue toward an innovative program that meets travelers and residents where they are.

LIBERTY, N.Y. — The Sullivan Catskills Visitors Association continues its tourism investment in connecting visitors to our destination and inviting them back to an industry icon. For two centuries, the Sullivan Catskills has drawn people looking for something they cannot find at home. Hudson River School painters and city dwellers escaping the summer heat came here in the 1820s for the same thing today's visitors do. A sense of place, a slower rhythm, and a feeling of belonging.

In a 7-1 vote, the Sullivan County Legislature approved a \$1.5 million reinvestment of lodging tax revenue into activations that aim to strengthen relationships with visitors. With two mobile visitor centers, outfitted with satellite technology Wi-Fi, the vehicles will travel to main streets, festivals, trailheads, and the towns and hamlets across the county, bringing the visitor center to the visitor instead of asking the visitor to find it.

The program is built around a simple idea at the heart of SCVA's mission. Tourism works best when it builds relationships, not just transactions. Each roadside conversation is a chance to learn what a traveler loves, point them toward a maker, farmer, or restaurant they would never have found alone, and invite them to come back. Over time, a first visit becomes a habit, and a habit becomes loyalty to the region and the businesses within it.

The value does not stop with travelers. In parts of the county where dependable internet has been out of reach, the centers will double as community connectivity hubs, supporting residents, students, and small businesses wherever the vehicles park. The goal reflects a core SCVA principle. Tourism should support local life, not strain it, and its benefits should reach every community that makes the region worth discovering.

How the work is funded is central to the story. Lodging tax revenue is paid only by overnight visitors, not by Sullivan County residents, and it is separate from the county budget that supports roads, schools, and public services. Reinvesting it puts dollars earned from outside the county back to work inside it. In approving this program, the Legislature did not redirect local resources. It channeled visitor spending toward the communities those visitors came to enjoy.

"It's always exciting when we can align on a bold, strategic approach to growing paid overnight accommodations. What makes this especially compelling is that the tax revenue we're reinvesting is paid entirely by visitors, not local taxpayers," said Michael Martelon, President & CEO of the Sullivan Catskills Visitors Association. I'm excited, I'm grateful, and I applaud the members of the legislature for recognizing the incredible opportunity we have to build a more sustainable, long-term marketing engine for Sullivan Catskills. One that gives back to the very communities that make this region worth visiting," said Martelon.

The mobile visitor centers are part of SCVA's transformation to a "next-generation" destination marketing organization, a data-native destination leadership organization. The brand evolution, anchored by the Spirit of "&" brand and its belief that nature and culture, calm and creativity, and heritage and reinvention can coexist, also includes the new *here* editorial platform and a rebuilt SullivanCatskills.com. Sullivan County's visitor economy surpassed \$1 billion in total impact in 2024, and SCVA's aim is to keep that momentum growing while ensuring its rewards are shared across the county's 15 towns and more than 100 hamlets and villages.

About the Sullivan Catskills Visitors Association

The Sullivan Catskills Visitors Association (SCVA) is the official destination management organization for Sullivan County, New York, a place of unexpected balance where nature & culture, stillness & spark, and depth & play coexist. SCVA works to promote Sullivan County as a premier tourism destination, strengthen the region's visitor economy, and serve as a connector, convener, and champion for the communities, businesses, and people who make Sullivan County worth discovering. 15 Sullivan Avenue, Suite 1 | Liberty, NY 12754 | 845.747.4449 | SullivanCatskills.com

###

Built for The Moment

By Michael Martelon, President & CEO, Sullivan Catskills Visitors Association

There is a statement that should be true of every destination marketing organization in America. Almost none of them can say it honestly: “We know why people really travel.”

Not the marketing answer, the true one. Not “to see the sights” or “to get away” or “do this or that.” The answer that holds up when you strip away every campaign tagline and look at what human beings have actually been doing for as long as there have been human beings.

People travel to connect.

To each other. To places that feel real. To versions of themselves they can't access at home. To experiences that confirm they are part of something larger and more enduring than their daily lives. If that's true, and it is, then Sullivan County, New York has a claim that most destinations can only envy. Because for nearly two hundred years, long before anyone had a word for “destination marketing” or a framework for “visitor experience,” this place has been doing exactly one thing: facilitating connection.

Where We Started

When my work here began, the Sullivan County Visitors Association was, organizationally, a 1997 institution operating in a 2024 world. That's NOT a criticism of what came before; it's a description of the industry. Websites as brochures. Marketing as broadcasting. Strategy as event calendars. Data as a word used in presentations but not in decisions.

The Catskills had already survived one complete death and improbable resurrection. The Borscht Belt era, which drew millions of visitors and launched the careers of everyone from Jerry Seinfeld to Judy Garland. It collapsed through the 1970s and left a landscape of shuttered grand hotels and crumbling infrastructure that would have broken a lesser place. But Sullivan County wasn't built on infrastructure. It was built on something older and more durable.

The Catskills were America's first great escape. Before the Borscht Belt, before the interstate, before commercial aviation made everywhere accessible and nowhere special – artists and writers and New Yorkers fleeing the heat came here in the 1820s and 1830s. The Hudson River School painters came here. The Romantics came here. They came because this place did something to people, something harder to name than “rest” and more necessary than “recreation.”

It connected them to something. That history is not nostalgia. It is the destination's gravitational pull. And we are aiming to more fully embracing it.

What We Built

The past year has been an exercise in building the infrastructure that lets a two-hundred-year-old story reach people in the moment they're ready to hear it. It started with brand. Not a logo refresh, a system. The ampersand at the center of the Sullivan Catskills identity is not decoration. It is meaning made visible. Its function, universally understood, is “and.” Its form contains, for those who look, the shapes of S and C. Its purpose is to hold together a destination that is more than 100 towns and villages, mountain and farm country, Michelin-starred accommodations in

the elegant simplicity of the Shakers and campgrounds hugging the earth, legacy and reinvention, and to say that the space between these things is not tension. It is the point. Connection is the through-line. It always was.

From that brand foundation, we built outward. *here* magazine isn't a visitor guide; it's genuine editorial product, long-form stories about real people and real places, the kind of content that doesn't sell a destination so much as reveal it. A rebuilt website designed not as a brochure but as an active, organic participant in the trip-planning decision, integrating editorial, planning tools, and booking infrastructure into a single environment. Dream, an AI planning tool built specifically for this destination, not a generic chatbot that could be any place, but a bounded, place-specific tool that reflects the brand's voice and the destination's actual depth.

And now, with the approval to move forward with the innovative concept of mobile visitor centers, we continue to celebrate our roots and look to our future. An activation approved by a 7-1 legislative vote. Two vehicles will move through the county, meeting visitors and residents, where they are. Not waiting for people to find a building or a public restroom before moving on. It's going to find them. Capturing first-party data. Building a CRM that compounds every season. Turning every handshake into a relationship.

Whose Money Is It?

There is a question that deserves a direct answer, because it shapes every conversation about what tourism investment is for, and it is almost universally misunderstood.

The lodging tax is not paid by residents. It is not drawn from the county's general fund. It does not compete with roads, schools, or the nursing homes the county operates for its most vulnerable residents. It is paid exclusively by people who travel to Sullivan County and spend the night here. Visitors. People who came from somewhere else, chose this place, and left money behind when they went home.

Every dollar reinvested through the SCVA is, by definition, new money brought into the community from outside it. The mechanism is not a transfer of local resources. It is a return on the county's most renewable asset: its desirability as a place worth visiting.

When the Legislature voted to reinvest that revenue into mobile visitor centers and other projects, they were not allocating county resources. They were directing visitor dollars back into the community those visitors came to experience. And they did it wisely, because those vehicles will do more than capture email addresses. Reliable internet access supports local students, small businesses, and everyday life across the county's 15 towns and more than 100 hamlets and villages. A visitor center that brings Wi-Fi to a community is more than a kiosk. It is a shared resource. Visitor dollars fund that. Not the local property tax bill.

This is not a coincidence of program design. It is the entire point. Sullivan County's visitor economy surpassed \$1 billion in total economic impact in 2024. And it did so with what appears to be fewer than 3 in 10 available rooms actually being occupied on an annual basis; so, you can only imagine what 5, 6, or 7 in 10 could produce for the entire county. A mature DMO's job is to grow that number, and to make sure the prosperity it generates reaches every corner of the

county that makes it worth growing in the first place. There are no competing constituencies here. There is one Sullivan County. And a stronger visitor economy makes it better for everyone who lives in it.

A Study in What Actually Works

Earlier this month, McKinsey & Company, the global management consulting firm whose research shapes how the world's largest organizations think about strategy, published findings from a months-long study of 15 companies that have moved beyond AI experimentation into genuine AI-native operations. These weren't tech giants with unlimited R&D budgets. They ranged from four-person startups to established global platforms, spanning industries and continents, and they arrived at their conclusions independently, no coordination, no shared playbook.

The convergence is what made the research remarkable. Fifteen organizations, under different competitive pressures, reached the same seven operating principles. McKinsey called that convergence "the story." When that many organizations, working in isolation, land on identical conclusions, you're not looking at a trend. You're looking at something closer to a law.

Those seven principles were written for tech companies. But read through the lens of what we've built here in Sullivan County, they describe exactly what a modern DMO looks like, and why the work of the past year is not ahead of the curve by accident.

AI is a teammate, not a tool. The highest-performing organizations aren't using AI to do the same work faster. They're using it to attempt things they wouldn't otherwise dare. Dream isn't a search function. It's a team member that works around the clock, speaks in the destination's voice, and connects visitors to the Sullivan Catskills' depth in ways no human staff could sustain at scale. The question isn't "how many hours did it save?" The question is: what is the destination now willing to attempt that it wouldn't before?

Your model isn't the bottleneck, your knowledge is. McKinsey found that the ceiling on AI performance is set by knowledge infrastructure, not model sophistication. This is exactly why the *here* editorial program, the queryable content layer, the CRM data flowing from the mobile visitor centers, all of it matters more than any particular tool choice. The Sullivan Catskills has two hundred years of story. The work is making that story findable, searchable, and actionable in the moment a traveler is ready to receive it.

Design for the swap, not the stack. The brand system was built to extend, not expire. The website was built to be a connective layer, not a destination in itself. The technology was chosen with interchangeability as a nonnegotiable, because the frontier shifts fast, and locking in is a liability.

Trust precedes autonomy. Every process ran manually until repetition demanded automation. The mobile visitor centers don't replace human connection, they extend and capture it. Dream suggests; humans decide. The agentic layer earns more freedom as it proves itself.

Centralize the platform; decentralize the work. The governance layer. The brand standards, data architecture, voice are all centralized. The storytelling, the community relationships and the local knowledge is distributed across every stakeholder, from county staff to individual business owners. That's the only architecture that works at a destination this complex.

Adoption is a flywheel. The most important thing about *here*, Dream, the mobile visitor centers, the new website is not that they exist. It's that they've changed how the organization thinks about what's possible. That culture compounds. Every win shared, every number published, every new capability unlocked raises the baseline for what comes next.

What McKinsey couldn't fully account for, because they were studying tech companies, is what happens when you apply these principles to a place that was never a tech company. A place that predates the concept of a DMO by a century and a half. A place whose fundamental product is not a feature or a service but an “experience of connection” that has been the destination's core competency since the 1820s.

The rural reality isn't a limitation. It never was. It's the point.

The Claim No Algorithm Can Replicate

here is what no SaaS platform offers and no AI generates: authentic. The Sullivan Catskills does not need to manufacture authenticity. The purpose is embedded in the soil. People have been coming here to breathe, to reconnect, to be reminded of what matters, for longer than almost any destination in North America has existed.

When a family sits on a porch in the Catskills at dusk and feels, for the first time in months, genuinely still; that is not a marketing outcome. That is the destination delivering on a two-hundred-year promise. When a couple finds, through Dream, a restaurant in a hamlet they'd never heard of, makes a reservation, and tells the story of that meal for years, that is the system working. But the reason the story is worth telling is the place itself.

No competitor can replicate that. No algorithm produces it. The technology's job is to help people find it. The DMO's job is to make sure that when they do, the infrastructure is in place to welcome them, record the moment, nurture the relationship, and invite them back.

The Foundation That Outlives Us

McKinsey noted that the gap between organizations truly running on AI and those still standing up their first chatbot is not a technology gap. It is a willingness gap. The willingness to rethink what's possible. The willingness to redesign work around what humans are actually uniquely suited. The willingness to treat the organization's accumulated knowledge as infrastructure, not overhead.

We are laying the first brick in a foundation that will outlive this leadership team, this board, this particular moment in the destination's long life.

The ampersand will carry Sullivan County into its next chapter. The data layer will compound every season. The stories published in *here* will live in the knowledge base that trains the AI

tools of the future. The relationships built through a mobile visitor center encounter in a trailhead parking lot in October will, if the follow-up is right, become a reservation in February, a return visit in July, a family tradition that persists for a generation.

This is not the work of a tourism office. This is the work of an institution that understands it is the steward of a place with a legitimate claim to be the oldest facilitated experience of connection in North American tourism. The technology changes. The models swap. The platforms evolve. The reason people come here does not. They come to connect. They always did. And, they always will.



Sullivan County

Legislative Memorandum

100 North Street
Monticello, NY 12701

File #: ID-8498

Agenda Date: 7/9/2026

Agenda #: 3.

ACTIVITY REPORT –JUNE 2026
COUNTY OF SULLIVAN INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT AGENCY (IDA),
SULLIVAN COUNTY FUNDING CORPORATION (SCFC), THE SULLIVAN
COUNTY INFRASTRUCTURE LOCAL DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION
(TSCILDC), SULLIVAN COUNTY RESORT FACILITIES LOCAL
DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION (SCRFLDC)

July 2, 2026

The IDA Board held its regular monthly meeting on June 8th. At the meeting the Board adopted the following resolutions:

- Resolution authorizing the Agency to provide funding to the **Partnership for Economic Development in Sullivan County, Inc.** for the second quarter of 2026.
- Resolution authorizing the amendment of the **Veria Lifestyle Inc.** Payment in Lieu of Tax (PILOT) Agreement. This relates to the Yo1 Wellness Center in the Town of Thompson. The contemplated amendment modifies certain language relating to Veria's obligation to furnish financial security to secure the 2027 PILOT payment.

The IDA Board also held a special meeting on July 1st. At the special meeting the Board adopted a resolution amending an April 2026 resolution authorizing the execution and delivery of one or more mortgages securing obligations of **Montreign Operating Company, LLC, Empire Resorts Real Estate I, LLC, Empire Resorts Real Estate II, LLC**, and certain of their affiliates. This resolution relates to the refinance of Resorts World Catskills in the Town of Thompson. The refinance closed on July 2.

IDA staff are currently processing two applications for benefits, and we expect to present these to the Board for consideration this summer.

The next regular monthly meeting of the IDA Board will be held on Monday, July 13th at 11:00 AM in the Legislative Committee Room.

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