



Rebuilding the North Country Quality of Life

**A Policy Framework for Community Strength, Economic Renewal, and Regional
Opportunity**

(2/26)

Overview & Summary

The North Country is defined by resilience, independence, community pride and unmatched natural beauty. Yet for too long, families across Northern New York have faced rising housing costs, stagnant wages, shrinking access to healthcare, higher utility prices, a declining workforce, and a growing sense that opportunity is slipping away. *In short, our quality of life is declining.*

Turn on the television or open social media today and you'll hear politicians of all stripes talking about affordability. While it's encouraging that the problem is finally being acknowledged, solving the affordability crisis requires more than slogans and sound bites. Rebuilding the quality of life in the North Country demands a comprehensive strategy grounded in the realities of rural life.

The following Policy Framework represents my proposed roadmap for improving the quality of life across the North Country.

My policy agenda is built on **five foundational pillars**:

1. **Building and Strengthening Communities**
2. **Affordable and Accessible Healthcare**
3. **Affordable Housing**
4. **Growing Jobs and Strengthening Local Economies**
5. **Lowering the Cost of Living and Restoring Economic Fairness**

Together, these pillars form a roadmap to ensure the North Country is not simply surviving—but thriving.

Pillar One: Building and Strengthening Our Communities

Strong communities are the foundation of a strong region. In the North Country, quality of life begins with ensuring that families can raise children, seniors can age with dignity, and residents can rely on basic services and institutions.

1. Universal Childcare

- Establish universal access to affordable childcare
- Expand childcare workforce development programs
- Support working parents through flexible service models, as not all parents work traditional 9-5 schedules.

2. Healthy, Safe and Enjoyable Eldercare Solutions

- Promote safe and enjoyable senior living facilities
- Support in-home care for seniors seeking to age in place
- Strengthen nursing home oversight and staffing support
- Create community-based senior activity and wellness centers
- Ensure adequate public and alternative transportation to ensure seniors are not left isolated.

3. Affordable Housing as a Community Necessity

- Housing is the backbone of stable towns, economies and school districts. We cannot build strong communities and workforces if we don't have affordable homes. (Expanded further in Pillar Three: **Affordable Housing**)

4. Non-Negotiable Support for Civil and Human Rights

- Everyone is welcome in the North Country. Ensure protections and equal access to services regardless of race, gender, religion, disability, or identity

5. Affordable and Accessible Healthcare

- Healthcare is not a privilege—it is essential for community stability. If residents cannot access reliable and affordable healthcare in the North Country, they will simply move to other areas. (Expanded further in Pillar Two: **Affordable and Accessible Healthcare**)

6. Youth Sports & Arts Programs

- Invest in afterschool programs, athletics, and arts education
- Expand access to community recreation facilities

- Support mentorship and leadership programs for youth

7. Improved Rural Public Transportation

- Expand county-to-county transit routes
- Support demand-responsive transportation for seniors and workers
- Increase funding for rural transit infrastructure

8. Strengthening Social Safety Nets

- Strengthening and fully funding programs such as SNAP, WIC, TANF & CHIP
- Fully funded Medicare and Medicaid (Expanded further in Pillar Two: **Affordable and Accessible Healthcare**)
- Expand school meal programs (NSLP)
- Build local food security partnerships
- Work to support community-based non-profit organizations

9. Arts, Culture, and Entertainment as Economic Engines

- Support local arts organizations, centers and festivals
- Ensure full funding for public broadcasting
- Promote community-based educational programs in the arts
- Support the growth and expansion of museums throughout the North Country, like The Wild Center in Tupper Lake and the Museum on Blue Mountain Lake.
- Promote cultural and ecological tourism and downtown revitalization throughout our communities
- Expand grants for creative community programming

10. Safety and Trusted Policing

- Invest in community policing models
- Ensure equitable and fair pay at the local and state policing levels
- Increase transparency and accountability
- Strengthen partnerships between law enforcement and residents

11. Strengthening Education

- Improve teacher pay and retention
- Attract and retain younger adults to the North Country who wish to raise families in our communities, bolstering school enrollment and ensuring robust class sizes and school systems
- Provide free community college and trade school pathways
- Align educational opportunity with workforce needs
- Support the growth of trade school programs, such as BOCES & CV-TEC

12. Supporting Emergency Responders

- Expand recruitment and retention incentives
- Increase funding for volunteer fire departments
- Improve EMS coverage across rural regions
- Provide capital improvement and equipment grants and subsidies

13. Strengthening Non-Profit Organizations

Nonprofits provide essential services where government capacity is limited.

- Expand operational grant programs
- Support regional coordination among service providers
- Assistance with grant request writing and elimination of the “hunger games” approach to grant approvals.

14. Broadband & Cellular

- Increase coverage through Northern New York. This is a critical need that will not only strengthen communities as a needed service for residents, but will also assist with telehealth, housing inventory and business growth.

Pillar Two: Affordable and Accessible Healthcare

Healthcare access is one of the greatest challenges facing the North Country. Rural hospital closures, workforce shortages, and long travel distances demand urgent action. Additionally, the rising cost of healthcare is creating an existential crisis for our residents.

1. Universal Healthcare and Fully Funded Medicaid & Medicare

- Guaranteed coverage regardless of income or employment through a multi-payer insurance system with a Medicare-like public option that provides subsidies up to 400% of the federal poverty level (FPL).
- Fully fund Medicare & Medicaid

2. Improving Access Through a Strong Primary Care Network

- Strengthen and expand Federally Qualified Health Centers as the backbone of primary care service in the North Country (FQHCs)
- Expand telehealth infrastructure, including broadband service as an underlying requirement
- Deploy mobile health clinics
- Incentivize the recruitment of registered nurse practitioners who can alleviate demand on primary care physicians
- Strengthen women's health programs, including support for Planned Parenthood
- Build robust mental health and addiction recovery systems

3. Strengthening Hospitals and Emergency Care

- Ensure emergent care through rational and economically realistic geographic coverage and coordination
- Rational approach to surgical care availability—not all hospitals need to provide advanced-planned surgical care for all health issues, allowing rural hospitals to reduce overhead and focus efforts on emergency services and community-based care.
- Expand emergency transport capacity
- Increase stabilization grants, such as the Rural Hospital Stabilization Program (RHSP)
- Ensure fair Medicare and Medicaid reimbursement to ensure that facilities remain economically viable
- Support capital improvement and equipment purchases through grants and tax incentives
- Encourage shared specialty providers and consolidated purchasing

4. Growing the Healthcare Workforce

- Tax credits for providers in shortage areas

- Support and grow volunteerism
- Expand residency programs tied to community hospitals
- Support New York Career Pathway Training (CPT) programs and partner with universities and the SUNY system. Increase loan and tuition forgiveness for service commitments.
- Incentivize employer-assisted housing for nurses and medical staff

Pillar Three: Affordable Housing and Neighborhood Stability

1. Lower Rent

- Increase housing inventory and update the aging housing supply to reduce rent pressure
- Provide landlord incentives to improve rental unit energy efficiency that will lead to lower renter utility bills
- Promote construction of lower-cost rental units, such as single-structure, multi-unit properties: duplexes, triplexes, and quads.
- Reduce zoning restrictions to allow the construction of multi-unit properties within walking distance to downtown areas to accommodate renters with limited transportation access
- Support, expand and fully fund rental assistance programs to assist renters with getting caught up on back rent to reduce eviction rates

2. Increasing Housing Inventory

- Promote single and multi-family construction
- Prioritize duplex, triplex, and quad developments in job-rich, housing-poor areas
- Expand modular and manufactured housing options as affordable solutions
- Provide gap financing for qualifying projects
- Prioritize and incentivize housing development geared toward workforce residents.

3. Expanding the Housing Footprint Through Infrastructure

- Invest in sewer, water, roads, broadband, and utilities in rural areas that will unlock buildable land in underserved areas

4. Improving Aging Housing Stock

- Expand rehabilitation grants to modernize aging housing
- Support weatherization and energy efficiency upgrades

5. Employer-Provided Housing Incentives

- Support the construction of employer-owned workforce housing to reduce inventory stress

6. Tenant Stability and Fairness

- Upgrade aging rental inventory through landlord support programs
- Provide legal assistance for renters and landlords

- Expand eviction prevention and rental obligation assistance

7. Supporting First-Time Homebuyers

- Down payment tax credits
- Lower mortgage insurance rates as equity builds
- Expand flexible credit qualification standards

Pillar Four: Growing Jobs and Strengthening Community Economies

A thriving North Country requires good-paying jobs, resilient industries, and modern infrastructure.

1. Strengthening the Business Community

- Incentivize business and manufacturing relocation to the region
- Promote innovation hubs and incubators
- Expand grant-writing assistance
- Provide subsidies for underserved industries
- Tailor state and federal incentives to rural tech innovation
- Strengthen support for our core industry sectors, including: agriculture, forestry, manufacturing, clean energy, hospitality and tourism.
- Refund and support programs that support the purchase of food for schools, hospitals, food pantries and other providers from local farms.

2. Supporting Small Businesses

- Smart tax policy that rewards local investment
- Strengthen Chambers of Commerce and business resource networks
- Streamline zoning regulations
- Strengthen and grow SBA programs to support innovation, capital improvements and investment

3. Investing in the Utility-Broadband “Quiet Multipliers”

Economic growth requires foundational infrastructure:

- Expand Broadband & Cellular Coverage
- Utility Expansion—water, sewer, electric
- Clean energy and smart grid development

4. Diversifying & Growing Tradable Industries

A key component of building strong local economies is developing industries that produce exportable (“tradable”) goods and services for markets outside Northern New York, bringing revenue into our communities.

- Agriculture/Forestry
- Manufacturing
- Hospitality/Tourism

5. Rebuilding Our Relationship with Canada

- Promote cross-border tourism
- Strengthen trade partnerships
- Restore cultural and economic relationships

6. Workforce Alignment with Universities and Trade Schools

- Align program tracks with workforce needs
- Expand tuition reimbursement for high-demand fields

7. Fixing Our Broken Immigration System

A fair, just, and smart immigration system is not only a moral imperative, but it is also a force multiplier for community economic growth.

- Pathway to legalization
- Reaffirm asylum commitments and procedures
- Increase the number of immigration courts and justices to process cases and reduce case backlogs
- Humane enforcement with due process and guaranteed rights to legal representation
- Seasonal visa programs for under-staffed industries, including agriculture and tourism
- Talent-attraction visas for innovation sectors
- Secure borders and increased resources dedicated to fighting human trafficking and drug smuggling
- Restore community trust between local governments and federal agencies

Pillar Five: Lowering the Cost of Goods and Restoring Economic Fairness

Affordability is central to improving our quality of life.

1. Repealing Harmful Tariffs

- Immediate repeal of Trump-era tariffs that raise consumer prices

2. Lowering Shipping and Supply Chain Costs

- Invest in green trucking and freight modernization
- Promote smart energy policies

3. Fighting Monopolies and Corporate Price Manipulation

- Strengthen antitrust enforcement
- Investigate price gouging

4. Protecting the Independence of the Federal Reserve

- Reassert economic stability and inflation control, free from political interference

5. Reduce Energy Costs

- Incentives to implement green solutions and make homes and buildings more energy efficient.
- Enforce oversight of utility companies to ensure they don't unfairly profit off the backs of our communities when energy costs increase.

Conclusion: A North Country Worth Staying In

The North Country deserves more than survival politics. It deserves investment, dignity, and opportunity.

This agenda is not about ideology—it is about rebuilding the foundations of daily life:

- A home you can afford
- A doctor you can reach
- A job that pays
- A community that supports you
- A future that keeps young people here

Rebuilding quality of life in the North Country is not only possible—it is necessary. If you agree with our goals and proposals, we invite you to join our movement on election day.