

AMHERST BEE | Supervisor's Column | February, 2023

Amherst leads, that was the focus of this year's State of the Town. When I look at the town and see what we have accomplished and the future projects that we have planned, I am humbled to recognize all who have played a role in Amherst leading, whether it is population growth, academic excellence, economic development, quality services, or much more. It is an honor to work alongside such talent.

AmherstLeads is a new initiative that we unveiled during my 2023 address at Jazzboline on Friday, Feb. 3, 2023. It was the first in-person State of the Town presentation since 2020. Thank you to the Amherst Chamber of Commerce President AJ Baynes and the Chamber's Board of Directors for once again collaborating with the Town for this event. It was great to look out into the packed audience and see a diverse group of partners who share the same focus of making Amherst better.

The *AmherstLeads* initiative, powered through the website www.amherstleads.com in partnership with the Amherst Development Industrial Agency, focuses on solutions, collaboration and innovation for future and existing businesses from all industries.

The Town is leading population growth. We are the largest town in Erie County and fourth largest municipality in Upstate New York, just behind the City of Syracuse. We grew 6 percent in the last census, and we are taking on the challenges that come with that growth. We have a lot of inertia, a lot of economic energy. As such, we carry a lot of responsibility in the community.

With increased population comes demand for housing. Our focus is to create and design better neighborhoods with a variety of housing choices, along with greenspace and community amenities. This will be evident in the redevelopment of the Boulevard Mall into a "city center." The Amherst Urban Renewal Agency (AURA), with support of numerous partners, is quickly moving the process forward as we look to clear all the encumbrances that has been delaying progress.

The State of the Town also recognized some tremendous milestones, including the 100th anniversary of our outstanding Police Department. We also noted major community projects that will be concluding this year: the opening of the addition at the Audubon Library later this month; the Northwest Community Center (Sweet Home Road near North French) coming online in the fall; and the purchase of Westwood Country Club to immediately be renamed Amherst Central Park in just a few weeks. Another project that we'll officially dedicate this spring is the "The Future is Amherst" mural at the Police Training Center on Bailey Avenue. Created by local artist Jalen Law, his mural celebrates the next generation of public servants, the heroes of our community. Stop by the mural and use the augmented reality element via your cell phone to bring it to life.

This column serves as a summary of just a few of the highlights from my State of the Town. To watch the address in its entirety, please visit [YouTube: 2023 Town of Amherst State of Town Address](#) and as always, we encourage you to participate in the advancement of our Town by contacting my office with questions, ideas, concerns, etc.