

NEWS FROM THE ULSTER COUNTY OFFICE OF THE COMPTROLLER

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For release: Immediately
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Ulster County Emergency Housing Needs and Costs Grow Substantially

Kingston, NY (April 9, 2025) – Ulster County Comptroller March Gallagher today released an Emergency Housing Snapshot report to provide the public with information on the state of emergency housing in Ulster County. Ulster County provides emergency shelter for individuals and families through emergency shelters operated by Family of Woodstock and a network of motels that accept emergency shelter placements from the Ulster County Department of Social Services.

Emergency shelter costs have grown from \$3.8 million in 2020 to \$13.3 million in 2024. The 2024 expenses were paid in part by funding from New York State through the Family Assistance, Safety Net Assistance, and Emergency Assistance to Adults programs, with the remainder (48.7%) borne by Ulster County taxpayers (\$6.5 million).

The number of nights spent in emergency housing has ballooned from 51,781 nights at \$73.65 per night in 2020 to 129,170 nights at \$102.86 per night in 2024. This is a 248% increase in the number of nights. The nightly cost of rentals has increased during this inflationary period.

According to the annual Point in Time count which takes a census of homeless people on a day in January each year, the number of homeless people has grown between 2014 and 2024. The number of severely mentally ill people and individuals with substance use disorder have also increased in the homeless population over the last few years.

"Emergency housing provides a critical lifeline for individuals and families facing homelessness, and it is an essential service we provide as a County to keep our residents sheltered until permanent housing can be found," said Ulster County Executive Jen Metzger. "As the Comptroller's report shows, the fiscal impact of providing emergency housing has grown over time as the need has grown, highlighting the need for permanent solutions to the housing crisis and the value of investments we are making as a County government to expand affordable housing. We have a number of County-supported housing developments under construction, and we just opened another round of funding for more projects through our Housing Action Fund. These investments not only help meet this most basic need of our community but also make good

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fiscal sense. I want to thank the Comptroller and her staff for their work to produce this concise and informative snapshot of emergency housing and changes over time."

"Ulster County is in the midst of a deepening housing crisis, and these numbers are stark," said Ulster County Comptroller March Gallagher. "The cost of emergency shelter has more than tripled in just four years, and Ulster County taxpayers bear nearly half the burden. This trajectory is not sustainable—either financially or socially. The abrupt closure of Samadhi, which served as a key emergency placement option, has forced an immediate scramble for shelter and underscores the fragile patchwork of resources we're relying on. While many efforts to expand affordable and supportive housing are underway, the pace of implementation must match the scale of the crisis. Knowing the full extent of the need is only the first step—swift, coordinated, and accountable action must follow. The Comptroller's Office will continue to provide transparency and oversight through the implementation of these housing programs and projects."

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