



# ABOUT ALBANY COUNTY

## GENERAL

Albany County was incorporated in 1683. Situated on the west bank of the Hudson River, the County is approximately 135 miles directly north of New York City and has an area of approximately 540 square miles.

The County's transportation needs are served by a network of excellent highways, including the New York State Thruway, Interstate Highways 90 and 87, and a connecting link to the Massachusetts Turnpike; major bus lines; three railroads; Albany International Airport; the Hudson River; the New York State Barge Canal; and the Port of Albany.

Albany County contains three cities, ten towns and six villages. The cities have well-equipped fire and police departments and the towns are served by many individual fire districts, volunteer fire companies and town police departments.

## POPULATION

Albany County has a population of 297,414, as reported by the United States Census Bureau's most recent (2005) estimates. Of that total, 94,301 people reside in the City of Albany, which is the County seat and State Capital. The table below presents population trends of the County, the Albany Standard Metropolitan Statistical Area (the "SMSA" consists of the counties of Albany, Montgomery, Rensselaer, Saratoga, Schoharie, and Schenectady), New York State, and the United States of America, since 1960.

Year	Albany County Population	Albany SMSA Population	New York State Population	United States Population
1960	272,900	-----	16,782,300	179,323,000
1970	286,700	-----	18,241,400	203,235,000
1980	285,909	-----	17,558,072	226,504,825
1990	292,793	-----	17,990,778	248,709,873
2000	294,565	826,687	18,976,457	281,421,906
2005	297,414	848,879	19,254,630	296,410,404

Data for 1960 through 2000 are compiled by the U.S. Department of Commerce as of April 1 of each year based on the census for that year. Source: U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of Census

## GOVERNMENT ORGANIZATION

The County is governed by the provisions of its Charter. The Charter, adopted in 1973, became effective January 1, 1976. In November of 1993, Albany County adopted a new County Charter. The current County Charter differs from the previous Charter primarily in the balance of power between the Executive and the Legislative branches. The new Charter shifted most of the administrative and day-to-day activities to the Executive branch. Further, it created a Human Resources Department and restructured the internal reporting hierarchy. Under the Charter, Albany County is a home rule municipality and functions consistently with those provisions of the State Constitution and laws uniformly applicable to all New York State municipalities.

Any discussion of County government must begin with the elected officials who direct the numerous departments, agencies and employees. There are five full-time elected officials in Albany County: the County Executive, Sheriff, District Attorney, County Clerk and County Comptroller. Each of these officials heads an independent department with varying responsibilities and staff. The Sheriff also has responsibility for the Albany County Correctional Facility, while the County Executive directs all departments not headed by a separately elected official. Albany County also elects four part-time Coroners.

The Legislature is the policy making body of the County. A chairperson, selected by the legislators every two years, is the presiding officer. Legislators are elected from each of the 39 districts within the County every four years or by special election in the event of a vacancy. The Legislature has the power to establish rules and procedures for itself, adopt local laws, levy taxes and other revenue measures, adopt budgets and approve all policies relevant to County government. Meetings of the Legislature are held on a monthly basis and are open to the public.

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## COUNTY ORGANIZATION (continued)

The County Executive is elected in the general election to a four-year term concurrent with that of the Legislature, without restriction as to the number of terms, and is charged with supervision of County government, subject to the provisions of the Charter. The Executive reports annually to the Legislature on the activities of all administrative units, recommends an annual budget, appoints, subject to legislative confirmation, the heads of departments and administrative units of government and executes contracts. The financial affairs of the County are administered by the Commissioner of Management and Budget with review by the Department of Audit and Control.

The Commissioner of Management and Budget, who is appointed by the County Executive and confirmed by the Legislature, assists the Executive in the preparation of the operating and capital budgets and in the study of administrative efficiency and economy, collects taxes and other revenues, invests County funds, and manages the County's information technology resources.

The Comptroller is elected in the general election to a four-year term concurrent with that of the Legislature, without restriction as to the number of terms. Under the Comptroller's direction, the Department of Audit and Control obtains and audits all records relating to the use or deposit of County funds and submits annual reports to the Legislature. The Comptroller recommends and the Legislature authorizes the issuance of County debt.

Albany County government began major organizational restructuring in 1997. Because County government provides services in a limited number of specific areas, the reorganization has focused on consolidating units that serve the same function and increasing coordination and cooperation among units that serve similar functions. The reorganization grouped County departments into four distinct cluster areas, with each cluster focusing on a specific function of County government.

The four clusters are: *Administration and Finance*, *General Government*, *Health and Human Services*, and *Public Safety*. While the separately elected officials and their respective departments are part of the cluster organization, they may act independently of the clusters to establish their own priority projects.

Each of the clusters is led by a coordinator, who is responsible for ensuring that the County's efforts in that area are synchronized. Since the inception of the cluster concept, Albany County has been able to realize numerous efficiencies, as services are provided in a more seamless manner. By encouraging departments to provide complementary services and reducing the chance that services are duplicated by County agencies, Albany County government will continue to provide the best possible services at the lowest possible cost.

# People of Albany County

