



## Upstate's future

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During his election campaign, Governor Spitzer once referred to upstate as Appalachia, in an attempt to underscore its stagnant economy. On Wednesday, in his first State of Upstate address, he outlined his plan to improve the lot of millions of New Yorkers who live in upstate communities that have lost jobs and population in recent decades to competition from the South, West and overseas. Revival won't be easy or cheap, but Mr. Spitzer's blueprint -- to be funded in large part by a \$1 billion upstate fund -- provides an encouraging mix of government investment, streamlined regulations, and infrastructure enhancements. How he will pay for all of it remains to be seen when he unveils his proposed budget next week.

The focus is wisely placed on helping upstate prosper in today's innovation economy, with campus-business partnerships to create thousands of new jobs in areas like stem cell research, photonics, aerospace, nanotech and biotech. Yet the plan also recognizes the role of other upstate economic staples, especially agriculture, and the need for affordable housing.

How might the Capital Region benefit from a state economic stimulus? One indication came on Tuesday with the announcement of millions of dollars in grants under the Restore NY program, including \$3.3 million for two new office/condominium buildings in Albany's Park South; \$2.5 million to replace Schenectady's Center City sports complex; \$2.5 million for Troy's waterfront redevelopment, and \$544,900 for Cohoes to improve its Remsen Street commercial corridor.

While none of these investments will lead to an urban rebirth, each can be the catalyst for private investment. For example, Schenectady is already experiencing a downtown turnaround, and replacing Center City will accelerate that process. Similarly, Albany's Park South has attracted the interests of private investors, and adding two new office/condominium buildings can only enhance the appeal of that neighborhood.

The upstate economy has long been a major issue for Republican legislators, of course, including job initiatives. But their prescription focus been largely on tax cuts as the answer. Mr. Spitzer's plan also acknowledges the need to reduce state taxes wherever possible and to hold the line on local levies, but it also a far more encompassing look at what it will really take for upstate to experience a revival.

In some cases, basic steps are needed, such as helping counties like Herkimer prepare acreage for development, or helping Rochester turn 3,000 acres of brownfields into shovel-ready sites. In others, a different approach is required. More broadband access, for example, and more efforts to attract international investment, especially from Canada. Or helping State University at Binghamton provide incubator space for start-up companies seeking to turn research at the campus into the jobs of tomorrow.

Having a plan is one thing. Making it happen is the larger challenge. The potential for playing politics will be great, but state leaders should remember that upstaters will be watching to see who is in their corner, and who is merely posturing.

**ISSUE:**Gov. Spitzer sets out his plans for upstate.**THE STAKES:**The region needs action, not more partisanship.

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