



PRESS RELEASE

Town of Bethlehem Among 13 Top Towns in New York State

Receives Gold Status in Inaugural Towns of Excellence Program

(Bethlehem, NY) – [The Town of Bethlehem](#) in Albany County, N.Y., received a Gold award from the [New York Association of Town's \(NYAOT\)](#) inaugural [Towns of Excellence Program](#). Only 13 towns among the 933 in the state received this prestigious recognition, and Bethlehem is 1 of only 6 who achieved the Gold standard.

Town Supervisor David VanLuven attended NYAOT's 2026 Annual Meeting in New York City on February 16, to receive the award on behalf of the Town. Recipients will be featured on NYAOT's Towns of Excellence webpage and are authorized to display the official Towns of Excellence badge on municipal materials and its website.

"People who live here have always known Bethlehem is a special place. Now the rest of New York knows it, too," said Town Supervisor David VanLuven. "This Gold designation reflects the everyday work of our town employees, volunteers, and community partners who are committed to delivering excellent services and protecting the quality of life our residents value."

The Towns of Excellence Program recognizes municipalities that demonstrate outstanding leadership, innovation, and a commitment to serving their residents. Towns are evaluated across categories such as economic development, sustainability and sound planning, community engagement, quality of life, governance and transparency, and workforce development. Towns can receive Gold, Silver, or Bronze recognition. After three years of "Gold Status," towns are eligible to be selected as the annual "PLATINUM Town of Excellence."

"We are incredibly proud to recognize these thirteen towns that are setting the standard for excellence in local government across New York State," said Christopher Koetzle, NYAOT Executive Director. "Each of these communities has demonstrated an unwavering commitment to innovation, transparency and serving their residents. The Towns of Excellence Program celebrates the extraordinary work happening in New York's towns every day."