



SLATE BELT RISING

RESIDENTIAL AND COMMERCIAL FAÇADE IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM

The Residential and Commercial Façade Improvement Programs are designed to help improve the exterior appearance and condition of residential and commercial properties within the four boroughs. The program's goals are to maintain historical and architectural integrity, improve neighborhood appearance, and help property owners make exterior repairs to their homes or businesses while increasing property values for all borough residents.



ABOUT SLATE BELT RISING

Slate Belt Rising is a neighborhood revitalization initiative designed to integrate and capitalize on the substantial assets of the individual Slate Belt boroughs of Wind Gap, Pen Argyl, Bangor, and Portland. While Slate Belt Rising specifically targets these four boroughs, some initiatives promote development and coordination of services throughout the entire region.

More information is available on our website under the Services tab, including program guidelines and applications. Visit slatebeltrising.org.

PROGRAM OF COMMUNITY ACTION

Community Action Lehigh Valley is an anti-poverty non-profit offering programs and services in Advocacy, Business Start-Up and Development, Food Access and Nutrition, Housing, Neighborhood Revitalization, and Youth.

COMMUNITY ACTION
LEHIGH VALLEY

Contact Brian Fenstermaker at bfenstermaker@caclv.org or 484-523-0900 with any questions.

Zrinski Administration Announces Continued Action Plan to Stabilize, Strengthen, and Rebuild Gracedale

By Kelly Prentice

Northampton County, PA – Northampton County Executive Tara Zrinski issued the following statement after the Court of Common Pleas accepted the Northampton County Investigating Grand Jury's report concerning Gracedale Nursing Home for public filing.

"The report, which investigated safety issues at Gracedale in 2025, raises serious issues about the care, safety, staffing, security, and management systems at Gracedale. Our residents and their families deserve honesty from their government, accountability from those entrusted with care, and clear evidence that the County is taking action," said Zrinski. "Gracedale has been a lifeline for generations of Northampton County families. It serves residents with significant medical needs, people of modest means, and people who too often have nowhere else to turn. That mission is essential, and protecting it requires us to confront these challenges directly and strengthen the future for Gracedale."

Executive Zrinski emphasized that the work of improving Gracedale is already underway and that the facility remains a central focus of the Administration's work to strengthen Northampton County's continuum of health and human services.

"The problems identified in this report developed over time and will not be solved overnight. Michelle Morton stepped into an extraordinarily challenging environment when she became Nursing Home Administrator in March 2025 and has taken responsibility for helping move Gracedale forward. She has my confidence as this work continues. At every level, however, our expectation is clear: leadership will be accountable for measurable improvement in resident safety, quality of care, workforce stability, and operations."

The Administration's ongoing and planned actions include:

Strengthening Executive Oversight and Accountability, including the hiring of Thomas Carson as Director of the Continuum of Care to provide focused oversight, accountability, and coordination.

Improving Communication and Transparency to help ensure that Gracedale's challenges are addressed candidly while also sharing the real, daily work of staff who care for residents and the positive role Gracedale plays in the community.

Reduce Reliance on Outside Staffing Agencies by strengthening recruitment, retention, training, County employment opportunities, and workforce partnerships.

Strengthening Quality Assurance, including more structured corrective-action monitoring, staff competency training, updated admissions screening, and revised protocols related to elopement risk and behavioral health needs.

Evaluating Security Operations and Emergency Response Procedures, including coordination with law enforcement to ensure resident safety, staff safety, clear response procedures, and appropriate follow-up.

Advancing a Sustainable Financial Strategy for Gracedale, recognizing the significant pressures caused by Medicaid reimbursement delays, inadequate reimbursement levels, and broader workforce shortages in long-term care.

Planning for Gracedale's Long-Term Future, including evaluation of a modernized Gracedale facility and a broader continuum-of-care campus that could incorporate supportive living, workforce housing, intergenerational services, and other resources that strengthen care and long-term sustainability.

Executive Zrinski stressed that the County will proceed responsibly. "No shovel will go into the ground until we have stabilized operations and identified a financially responsible path forward. Every future investment in Gracedale must protect residents, support employees, respect taxpayers, and strengthen this institution for generations to come."

"The Grand Jury report cannot simply be something we respond to and move past," Zrinski said. "It must be a catalyst for lasting improvement. Our responsibility now is to learn from what occurred, address the weaknesses that have been identified, measure our progress, and build a stronger Gracedale."

The Administration will continue reviewing the Grand Jury report and its recommendations alongside corrective actions already underway. Additional information regarding implementation, progress, and next steps will be provided to residents, families, employees, County Council, and the public as that work continues.

Additional Administration responses to and concerns about the report are included in the County Executive's response to the report, attached to the filed report.



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