

WCA revises guidelines for housing initiatives, economic growth

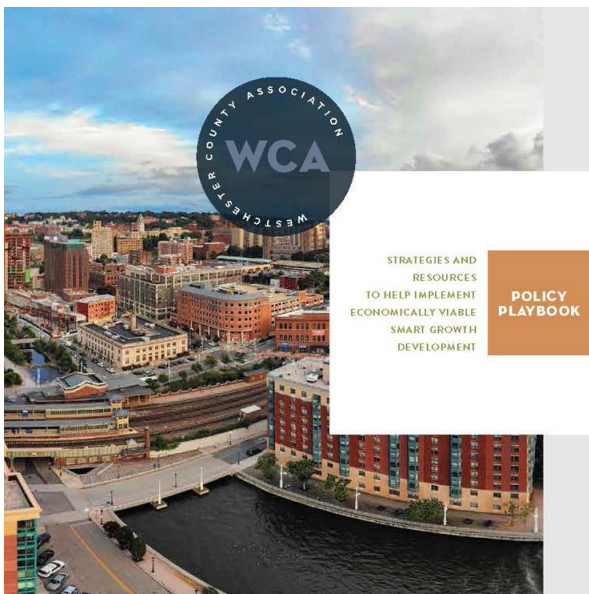
By **Peter Katz**

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The Westchester County Association has revised its Policy Playbook, a guide for development and economic growth, to include insights, resources and examples of how to develop successful housing initiatives with the goal of helping municipalities meet the needs for more diverse, affordable and available housing.

The new Housing Initiatives chapter of the playbook points out that businesses have a stake in solving housing issues.



“Local businesses that require skilled workers and a stable workforce suffer when workers cannot afford to live where they work,” the Policy Playbook states.

“A community may experience a depleted hiring pool if housing prices are too high, starving local businesses of workers or forcing these businesses to pay higher salaries to subsidize commuting costs. Communities also suffer when workers who serve the public interest, such as teachers, police, fire personnel, and local government workers, look elsewhere for affordable housing and employment.

“Additionally, longtime residents in high-cost areas, including older residents who have lived in a community for decades and young adults who grew up in the community, may be forced to move elsewhere if they cannot find affordable housing.”

The WCA's Real Estate and Housing Committee worked with Pace University's Land Use Law Center to put together the information detailing subjects such as why municipalities should create a housing initiative and how to do it, specific steps municipalities should undertake to inform and engage the community and adopting a housing component within a local comprehensive plan.

Examples of what's been happening in Westchester communities are included, such as:

- **Irvington's Housing Committee**, working to provide and maintain housing for moderate income individuals and families, including seniors and people with disabilities;
- **Hastings-on-Hudson's Affordable Housing Committee** creating affordable housing units by working with a nonprofit organization that builds, administers, and regulates affordable housing units, both rental and for-purchase; and
- **Ossining's completion of "Housing Ossining,"** a six-month multidisciplinary study focused on identifying specific housing policies to meet the village's diverse housing needs.

Jessica Bacher, executive director of Pace Land Use Law Center, said, "We're sharing proven strategies that will help local communities to efficiently and effectively establish a plan of action. These insights, examples, and resources provide a clear path for responding to the housing challenge we're all facing."

William V. Cuddy Jr., executive vice president of the real estate services firm CBRE participated in the project.

"This crisis is not abating, and every municipality in our region can contribute to the solution by undertaking a housing initiative. Westchester needs more and more affordable housing to sustain itself as the economic engine in the region," Cuddy said.

The revised Policy Playbook is available through the WCA's website.

Michael Romita, president and CEO of the WCA, said, "As local governments capitalize on this information and implement the recommended strategies, businesses and residents throughout our region will benefit."