

# WESTCHESTER MAGAZINE

## **This Westchester Community Is Getting Free Internet Access**

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Yonkers, Westchester's largest city, paves the way to narrow the digital divide in underserved communities by offering free or affordable internet access.

The Westchester County Association (WCA) is one of seven organizations that have been selected to participate in Project OVERCOME, designed to speed up the delivery of broadband services to underserved communities across the United States.

The project will provide rural and urban communities with affordable or free internet access and hopes to spread its benefits on a national scale. As part of the kickoff to Project OVERCOME, the WCA will lead a 12-month pilot program, for which it's been granted \$450,000 in funding.

The Yonkers Zone (Y-Zone) is designed to pilot a digital equity solution in the underserved area of downtown Yonkers. With the help of Y-Zone, affordable internet access will be made available to at least 250 need-based households and up to 1,000 people.

"The COVID-19 pandemic has certainly shed more light on the effects of a long-standing digital divide in our region. Those without broadband and wireless communications were left in real hardship," says Michael Romita, President & CEO of the Westchester County Association.

"Leading with our new partners to develop the Y-Zone and build a sustainable community-based solution is truly ground-breaking," remarks Christopher Fisher, managing partner of White Plains-based law firm, Cuddy & Feder and Chair of WCA's Digital Connectivity Committee.

The WCA has additionally partnered with the City of Yonkers, STEM Alliance, Yonkers Partners in Education, Fordham University, and Westhab to bring a variety of resources to the project. Should the Y-Zone area prove successful, broadband access can expand to thousands more underserved households nationwide.