

**Westchester County
Association**



IMPACT REPORT 2022



Creating Unrivaled Opportunity for Business



The Westchester County Association is the premier business membership organization in the region.

Our mission is to unite and mobilize professional leaders to advance issues and lead initiatives that strengthen our regional economy. Through collaboration, we drive economic vitality, stimulate new business development and job creation, and provide our members with the resources and talent they need to grow.

Together, we:

Drive economic vitality and development in Westchester and the region

Stimulate new business and job creation

Advocate directly for and on behalf of our members

Provide a strong and clear voice for the interests of businesses on the regional, state, and national levels

Develop and provide our members with the resources and talent they need to grow

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Westchester County Association: Creating Unrivalled Opportunity For Business

The Westchester County Association made substantial progress in 2022, identifying and addressing some of the region's most significant business and economic issues. Through the efforts of our membership-driven committee work, targeted advocacy, and innovative pilot programs, we benefitted our businesses and expanded the regional economy. Collectively we advanced initiatives around talent development, commercial real estate growth and housing, healthcare, technology and climate action. You can read more details on our 2022 accomplishments in the following pages.



Our work continues with energy and enthusiasm. We will continue to advance our core agenda, and we will be working closely with our dedicated membership to drive our strategic initiatives. We look forward to building on our past accomplishments and collaborating to strengthen our ability to create an even greater impact for our region in 2023.

Sincerely,

Susan Fox
WCA Chair

Michael N. Romita
WCA President & CEO

Climate action and
sustainability
top WCA's agenda
for economic growth

IMPACT on SUSTAINABILITY



In 2019, New York State (NYS) passed an ambitious Climate Act, requiring New York to slash greenhouse gas emissions over the next several decades. The law also created a Climate Action Council charged with developing a blueprint to meet these targets and place New York on a path toward carbon neutrality.

WCA set to play a pivotal role

New York's evolving energy policy will impact the economy in fundamental ways and the Westchester County Association is poised to play a pivotal role.

"The WCA has adopted climate action and sustainability as foundational pillars of economic growth," says Michael N. Romita, President & CEO. "We are advancing policies and developing tools to actively prepare for the new energy economy. There is no question that our businesses will need the practical knowledge and incentives to adapt."

Paying attention to environmental, social, and governance (ESG) issues is becoming increasingly critical for all companies, across all industries.

"Sustainability is a business approach to creating long-term value," says Romita. "As the expectations on corporate responsibility increase, and as transparency becomes more prevalent, companies are recognizing the need to act."

Government subsidies and incentives will go a long way to jump start the process. In addition, NYS will need technological advancement only achievable through coordination with the private sector. Ultimately, it is the private sector—the business, real estate, and financial communities primarily—that will spearhead innovation.



Convened Westchester's first-and-only Sustainable Business Conference

And it is the Westchester County Association that is playing a vital role in connecting businesses to the financial, legal, technological, and governmental resources they will need.

In 2022, the WCA:

Convened Westchester County's first-and-only sustainable business conference—"Profit and Purpose '22"—assembling hundreds of the region's power players for a day of provocative discussion and problem solving.

"We brought together a wide spectrum of people from the for-profit and nonprofit sectors," notes Horace E. Anderson, Dean of Pace University's Elisabeth Haub School of Law, which hosted the event in partnership with Pace University Energy and Climate Center. But it was the breadth of WCA members and WCA's wide reach that made this so successful.

“The up-front costs of transitioning to a carbon-free economy will require the private sector’s full attention.”

—HORACE E. ANDERSON, Dean, Pace University Elisabeth Haub School of Law

Attendees learned about sustainable, cutting-edge practices that are actually advancing the bottom line while having a social impact. The keynote speaker was Doreen Harris, Chair, NYS Climate Action Council and President and CEO of NYSEDERA. Chief sustainability officers from Nestle USA, New York Power Authority, Con Edison, Paul Weiss LLP, and PKF O’Connor Davies were among the presenters.

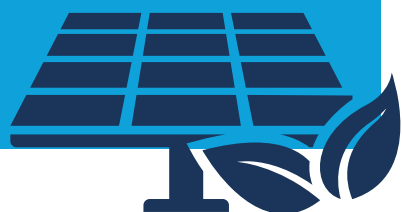
Built the award-winning Clean Energy Program portal

Available on the WCA website, the clean energy portal is a proprietary, searchable guide to the most up-to-date clean energy programs and incentives for businesses in Westchester and the surrounding region to help them transition their operations and buildings to a low-carbon footprint. This year, the WCA expanded the portal, adding dozens of additional programs.

Created a working group focused on advocating for the needs of businesses around climate change and sustainability.

Submitted comprehensive comments to the New York Climate Action Council’s Draft Scoping Plan, pointing out the massive funding requirements needed for businesses and building owners to meet the state’s clean energy goals. The WCA also advocated for necessary changes to zoning and land use regulations to bring energy projects and storage and transportation to the region.

Helped secure county’s
first-ever solar zoning ordinance



Getting to successful implementation

“How quickly and thoroughly we replace carbon-heavy energy sources with alternatives will vary from place to place,” notes Dean Anderson. “Across the USA, every municipality will have a particular energy source that will favor that location. Some will be sun, some thermal, and some wind. But the right incentives must be in place for development to happen. Finally, you need to put a bunch of best practices on the table so businesses and nonprofits can learn from each other. This will cut down the time for getting to successful implementation.”

History has shown that given enough time and government incentives, we can make great progress, but ultimately it is done through the markets.

“Assuming we don’t get to 100%, we still must go down the path,” says Anderson. “The up-front costs of transitioning to a carbon-free economy will require the private sector’s full attention.”

“As our members are learning, corporate sustainability is no longer a fringe concept when it comes to long-term profitability or stability.”

—MICHAEL N. ROMITA, President & CEO, WCA



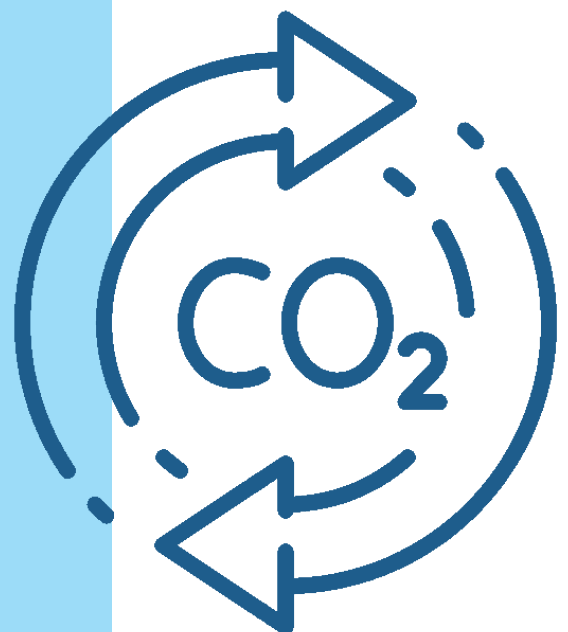
WCA created the
award-winning
**Clean Energy
Program portal**

An online database
linking businesses with
available technical
and financial resources

Contains **160** available
programs in **16** categories

GOAL:

Ease transition to a
low carbon future



Overcoming barriers to commercial and residential development

IMPACT on REAL ESTATE

The real estate sector is key to economic development in Westchester County. Housing, filling commercial space, repurposing underutilized assets, and zoning and land-use reform are continuing issues. This past year brought added challenges: inflation, new mandates governing energy consumption, and the realities of a remote workplace.

With these shifts in the marketplace, the WCA is expanding its real estate agenda and aggressively advocating for statewide solutions, with housing reform, energy, and sustainability at the top of the list.

“We are interested in what’s good for our businesses, workers, and our communities,” explains William V. Cuddy, Jr., Executive Vice President, CBRE; Chair, WCA’s Real Estate Task Force.

“We want to create housing, repurpose underused commercial space, and decrease the tax burden for essential services without overly encumbering school systems or stretching the delivery of those services.”

Approximately
**11,700 new units of
affordable housing
are needed to
meet current demand.**

In 2022, the WCA:

Authored Westchester’s **“Five-Point Housing Action Plan,”** together with its industry and nonprofit partners;

Led the call for statewide legislative solutions to solve Westchester’s acute housing need;

Hosted quarterly roundtables for industry professionals;

Wrote incisive op-eds that appeared in regional media outlets;

Convened the Sixth Annual Real Estate Conference, focused on statewide solutions for Westchester’s affordable housing crisis.

“The WCA brought together a diverse group across the entire real estate spectrum, as well as attorneys, planning and zoning officials, and government,” explains Andrew S. Weisz, President, RPW Group. “This gave us a chance to investigate many of the challenges Westchester faces from a real estate perspective, and it provided a springboard to further real estate development in Westchester. This will all be a boon to the economy.”

Weisz continued, “Historically companies want to be where the talent is. But in order to attract talent, you need to be in a place where your employees can afford to live. Generally speaking, if housing costs more than 30% of one’s gross income, it is not affordable.”



**Buildings account
for over 30%
of statewide
greenhouse gas
emissions.**

—NYS Climate Action Council



“The conference...provided a springboard to further real estate development in Westchester. This will be a boon to the economy.”

— ANDREW S. WEISZ, President, RPW Group

Currently, there are approximately 11,700 new units of affordable housing needed to meet the demand. But there are many barriers to development that the WCA seeks to reverse. Beyond NIMBYism and anti-development activism, these include:

Streamlining the local zoning and land use approval process that would help make development approvals move more quickly;

Establishing a tiered, but finite timeline for the environmental and municipal application review processes. SEQRA creates costly and unjustifiable delays in the development of new housing, so the WCA is supporting modifications that, in essence, create a ‘shot clock;’

Modernizing the appeals process for zoning changes rejected by local municipal governments;

Requiring transit-oriented development to create multi-family housing districts;

Passing legislation to create affordable housing through hotel and hospitality conversion, especially as Westchester has experienced the closure of several hotels and convention centers.

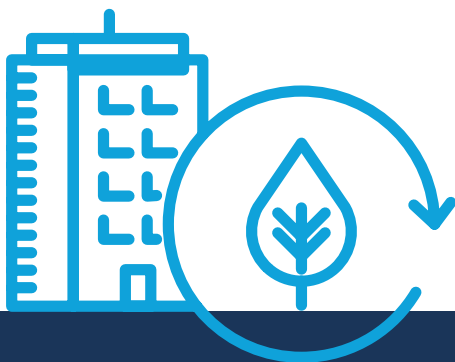
Preparing for the impacts of climate change

The State’s landmark 2019 Climate Act sets out ambitious targets for reducing greenhouse gas emissions over the next several decades. The path for New York is neither cheap nor easy, particularly in the real estate community, and they will need the WCA’s help.

For starters, the WCA is adding a new chapter to the WCA Policy Playbook addressing sustainability and climate change, zoning, infrastructure, and energy supply for buildings. The Playbook (Westchester’s go-to resource for smart growth) was conceptualized and developed by WCA’s Real Estate Task Force and dozens of community planners and economic development professionals throughout the region.

Buildings account for over 30% of total greenhouse gas emissions, because of using fossil fuels for heating, cooling, and electricity, and emissions when making and transporting building materials. To reach an 85% reduction of 1990 GHG emissions by 2050, as mandated by the NYS Climate Action Council, retrofitting buildings will be a challenge.

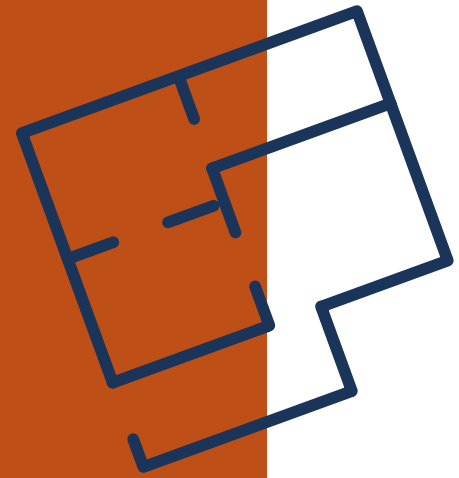
“We’re going to need the state, county, and municipalities to be partners in providing tax relief and incentives,” adds Cuddy, noting the WCA’s continued advocacy in this area. “Under the state’s current Scoping Plan, the real estate community will be unfairly burdened. The pace of decarbonization will depend on developing new sources of energy supply and creating the infrastructure in order for that to happen.”



WCA created Westchester’s only **working group** to tackle sustainability and climate change-related zoning, infrastructure, and energy supply for buildings

Advanced Adaptive Reuse through **Real Estate Policy Playbook**

Result: 3 million square feet
of commercial office space for
mixed-use housing, retail,
healthcare, recreational, and
educational facilities redeveloped



Even so, RPW Group is not waiting.

“As developers, we’re focused on sustainability,” says Weisz. For example, the company is looking to roll out rooftop solar panels and car ports at 1133 Westchester Avenue, where solar panels will be placed atop a steel frame parking lot roof.

They also are partnering with NRP Group to develop buildings fully powered by electricity. “And when we build where flooding is a concern, we are building to a 500-year storm level, even when local zoning requirements are to build to a 100-year storm level,” says Weisz.

“We’ve taken it upon ourselves to go way above and beyond the legal requirements. We agree that climate change is a factor, so we want to deliver safe and forward-looking projects.”

***In order to attract talent,
you need to be in a place
where your employees can
afford to live.***

IMPACT on **DIGITAL CONNECT**



Broadband: Indispensable for conducting business, recruiting, education, and healthcare



While the drive to connect more Americans to broadband began long before 2020, it was the pandemic that magnified the urgency of having Wi-Fi and fiber internet connections that could transmit large amounts of data at high speeds without buffering and delays.

It was this great digital divide and the corresponding need to help employers fill job openings; supporting the needs of the healthcare, real estate, service, and financial sectors; and jump-starting smart city applications that prompted the WCA to take the lead in Westchester County in advocating for the modernization of digital infrastructure.

Advocating for a clear, consistent digital connectivity policy

In 2022, the WCA:

Built a network of collaborative partners to create the region's first-and-only "Digital Navigator" system with organizations like the STEM Alliance, Nonprofit Westchester, Westchester Library System, Yonkers Partners in Education, and Fordham University;

Successfully pushed to repeal NYS's harmful "fiber fee law" which impeded much needed investment in broadband infrastructure serving Westchester and the surrounding region;

Advocated for the development of a municipal list of do's and don'ts and codes for the region in cable franchising, fiber and small cell use of public rights of way;

Advocated for federal and state legislation and programs that provide predictable and standardized approaches to the deployment of 5G and broadband infrastructure;

Partnered with national trade associations like WIA (Wireless Infrastructure Association), CTIA (Cellular Telecommunications Industry Association), and state associations and groups like NYSWA (New York State Wireless Association) and NYers for 5G, to amplify efforts to build local 5G and broadband infrastructure projects.

Y-ZONE: Connecting people to the new economy

In 2021, the WCA created Y-Zone, a community-based program to close the digital divide, thanks to a national Digital Connectivity Pilot grant. Through partnerships with local organizations, the Y-Zone helps eligible Yonkers residents receive free or low-cost digital resources, training, and technical support.

“At the beginning of the pandemic, we discovered that 2,000 kids had no devices or broadband access,” explains Bob Cacace, Commissioner of Information Technology, City of Yonkers. “Now, all students have a computer at home. But the challenge is to get our underserved residents to sign up for internet service.”

He said that initially residents were suspicious when they heard the word ‘free.’ Even the low price of \$15 per month was an impediment. “We needed to build trust, which we did through community organizations,” he said.



\$1.2 million in annual impact rippling through our economy

Thanks to the WCA, which raised over \$2 million in funding from sources such as Community Development Block Grants, the National Science Foundation, and private philanthropists such as Schmidt Futures, Y-Zone’s Digital Navigator Program, the first-ever in Westchester, is bringing enhanced broadband connectivity to hundreds of households and connecting them to the new economy.

“You cannot look for a job today without being online,” Cacace emphasizes. “The Digital Navigator Program allows for job skills training to augment a much-needed workforce in healthcare and other digitally dependent areas of our local economy.”

This one WCA initiative will create an annual economic impact of \$1.2 million by bringing new digitally literate consumers and job seekers to our banks, hospitals, schools, and businesses.

“Little by little, we are connecting underserved populations to the regional economy,” says Chris Fisher, Partner, Cuddy & Feder; Chair of WCA’s Digital Connectivity Working Group.

Created
Westchester’s
first-and-only
Digital Technologies
Stakeholder Group



*“You cannot look for a job today without being online.
WCA’s Digital Navigator Program allows for job skills training
to augment a much-needed workforce in healthcare and
other digitally-dependent areas of our local economy.”*

— BOB CACACE, Commissioner of Information Technology, City of Yonkers



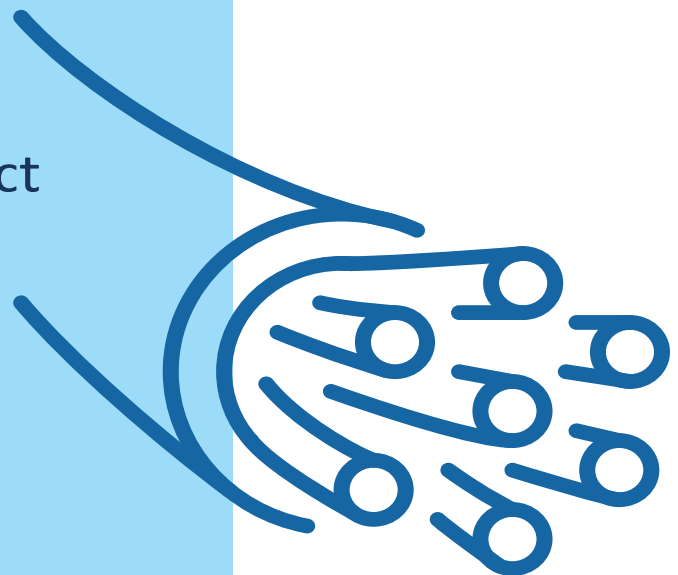
WCA created the nationally-recognized
Y-Zone

Connecting underserved residents
in the City of Yonkers to the
digital economy

\$1.2M in annual economic impact
projected from this unique pilot

This year, **200** more households
connected—Our goal is to reach
1,000 more by 2023

Westchester's first-and-only
Digital Navigator Program provides
internet access, devices, and training



A “perfect storm”
leads to
intense advocacy

IMPACT_{on} HEALTHCARE



Advocacy results: **\$801M CARES Act and ARPA funds** to Westchester hospitals and healthcare providers



Workforce shortages and healthcare reimbursements top concerns

Health and hospital systems and their related industries comprise a key economic sector in Westchester County, generating \$18 billion in economic impact and providing over 50,000 jobs. The WCA has long served as the primary business stakeholder hub for this sector to advocate policies, address the talent shortage, and communicate information.

Reimbursement levels, rising costs of labor, and workforce shortages are all top of mind for our hospital CEOs.

The pandemic triggered a “perfect storm” with healthcare providers already trying to meet increasing healthcare needs and treating record numbers of COVID-19 patients while facing significant talent shortages caused by staff retirements or quitting due to the overwhelming stress caused by a protracted healthcare crisis. On top of that, there are not nearly enough trainees in the pipeline to replace them.

“Every hospital is feeling that pinch,” says Margaret Smith, Chief Marketing Officer, Burke Rehabilitation Hospital.

***“We’ve received an
increase in reimbursements,
so we’ve benefited from
WCA’s efforts.”***

— JUDITH WATSON

CEO, Westchester Community Health Centers

Moving forward on many fronts

According to Amy Allen, Vice President, WCA, “The transformation of healthcare is going to depend on the availability of a highly-skilled workforce.” She says the WCA is putting in place a structure so that “we can all work together on the academic and professional healthcare sides to come up with ideas that will have a long-term positive effect on the workforce.”

In addition to addressing talent needs, the WCA also focused on securing funding for providers and addressing the systemic market imbalance.

In 2022, the WCA racked up major legislative wins and launched innovative programs, to wit:

Realized \$801 million in CARES Act & ARPA funds for Westchester healthcare providers;

Secured \$1.25 million in direct grant funding for healthcare-focused workforce needs;

Launched its new, county-funded Healthcare Talent Pipeline Program (HTPP) which will recruit and train 150 job seekers and incumbent workers for high-demand healthcare jobs; [See details on the following pages re WCA: Impact on Talent Recruitment.]

Eligible frontline healthcare workers will each enjoy \$3,000 bonuses as provided for in the 2023 NYS Budget;



“The transformation of healthcare is going to depend on the availability of a highly-skilled workforce.”

— AMY ALLEN, Vice President, WCA

Home care workers will see \$7.4 billion in wage increases spelled out in NYS’s 2023 Budget;

Legislation passed benefiting healthcare providers seeking to fill lab technician positions;

WCA’s Healthcare Career Launch Project, funded by the NYS Department of Labor, will recruit and train 50 job seekers to fill critical healthcare vacancies. Westchester Community College will train participants for medical and nursing assistant jobs, and the Leadership Learning Group will provide service excellence and job readiness training. Another feather in WCA’s cap.

The WCA is uniquely positioned to help create a sustainable pipeline of locally educated and trained healthcare talent through our active committees made up of the region’s largest healthcare providers and seventeen area colleges, BOCES and career centers.

“Staffing, retention, training, and reimbursement will continue to be the most critical issues on the table,” says Allen. “We’re doubling down on our efforts at the WCA to champion real change.”

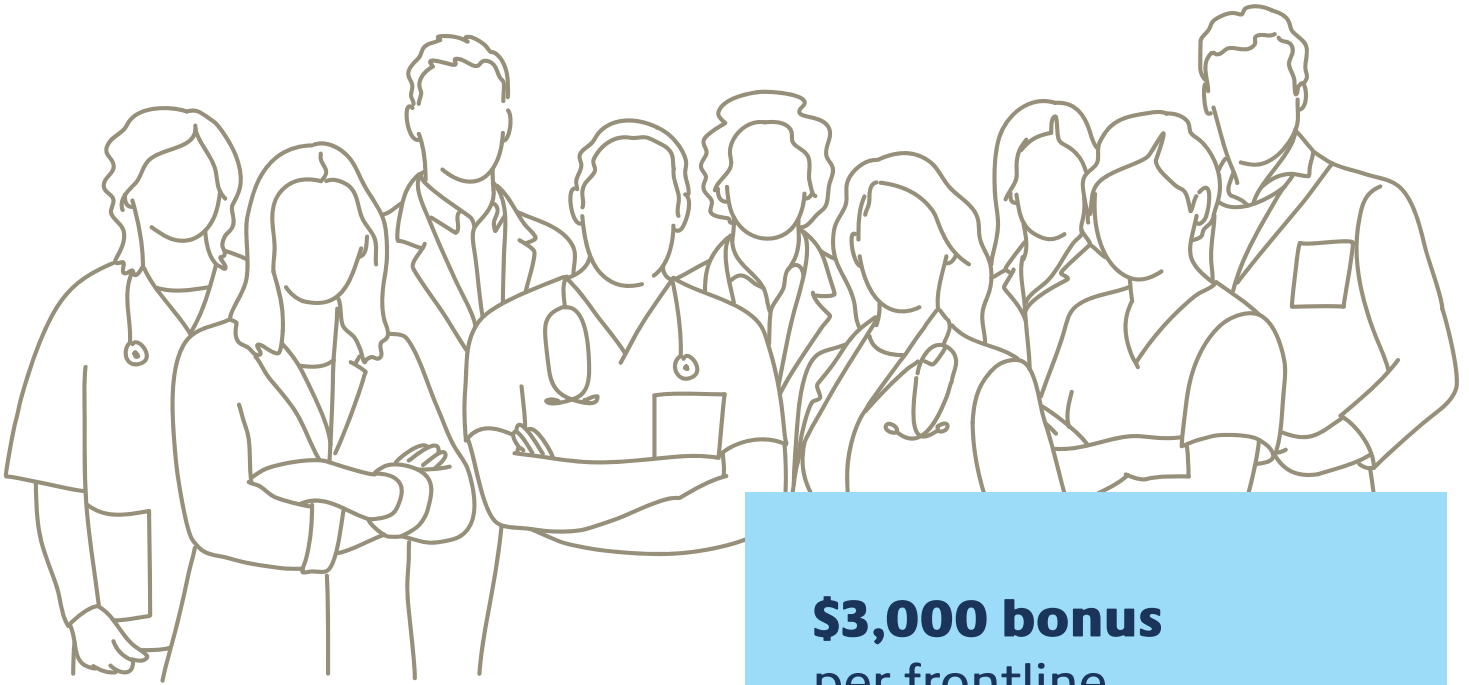
2.5% total in Medicaid cuts were restored from the 2021 and 2022 NYS budgets for the 2023 fiscal year budget.

“We’ve received an increase in reimbursements, so we’ve benefited from the WCA’s efforts,” said Judith Watson, CEO, Westchester Community Health Centers. “We’ve also been able to onboard four new medical assistants as a result of the WCA’s Healthcare Talent Pipeline Program and that’s been huge. They’re having a definite impact on our workforce challenges.”

Even though the Medicaid reimbursement rate was increased for the first time in more than a decade (a 1% increase on top of the restoration of the 1.5% cut from 2020), it is not nearly enough. “While this will help our healthcare providers, it does not keep pace with inflation. We will continue to advocate for substantial increases in the future,” said Michael N. Romita, President & CEO, WCA.

“When we benefit the community, we’re serving the community.”

— MARGARET SMITH, Chief Marketing Officer,
Burke Rehabilitation Hospital



Passage of telehealth payment parity legislation is a win for our healthcare providers and will save patients \$120 per specialist visit plus the cost of travel. All comprehensive insurance products and Medicaid managed care plans are now required to reimburse providers for telehealth services at the same rate and under the same terms as covered in-person services. However, parity sunsets in two years unless extended.

Launched the “Patients First” campaign in partnership with HANYS and Greater NY Hospital Association to draw attention to the economic importance of health systems in our communities.

Last year, the WCA also reinvigorated its Healthcare Consortium which is now under the leadership of two new chairs: Derek Anderson, Executive Director and President, Northern Westchester Hospital and Bill Harrington, Managing Partner at Bleakley Platt & Schmidt, LLP.

“The WCA is doing a very good job bringing people together and finding ways forward where we can all benefit. When we benefit the community, we’re serving the community,” observes Smith.

\$3,000 bonus
per frontline
healthcare worker
in 2023 NYS budget

**\$7.4B in home care
wage increases**
in 2023 NYS budget

\$1.25M in grants
for Westchester’s
healthcare workforce

Estimated
\$5M in
annual
economic
impact



**Solving today's
workforce issues is
a team sport**

IMPACT on TALENT

Finding talent is very challenging in a competitive marketplace, especially in the healthcare, banking, and financial services sectors. With an estimated 17,000 job openings currently in Westchester, the level of unemployment is still a critical challenge, with tens of thousands of job seekers yet to find work.

Even though there are thousands of job openings in Westchester, “it will take comprehensive training to produce the talent companies are seeking,” notes Jason Chapin, Director of Workforce Development, WCA. “Understanding and responding to the evolving current and future employer needs in our region also is going to be key to our economic recovery.”



WCA is making a huge dent

The WCA is providing employers with new ways to address their recruitment and retention challenges.

In 2022, the WCA:

Convened Westchester's business leaders at its Third Annual Regional Workforce Summit to address our region's challenges and find opportunities in workforce development. New York's newest economic and workforce development initiatives, innovative training and recruitment programs, and workforce diversity were also highlighted;

Brought together 600 job seekers with over 30 member-employers at our Job Fairs;

Launched the Healthcare Talent Pipeline Program (HTPP) with Westchester County funding to recruit and train 150 job seekers for high demand healthcare jobs. This is projected to have an estimated \$6.5 million in economic impact on Westchester County annually.

“Understanding and responding to the evolving current and future employer needs in our region is going to be key to our economic recovery.”

— JASON CHAPIN, Director of Workforce Development, WCA

But it takes a village

Because solving the workforce issue is a team sport, the WCA has partnered with several organizations to feed the Talent Pipeline: Nonprofit Westchester and its members, SUNY Westchester, Southern Westchester BOCES, and the Westchester-Putnam Workforce Development Board and their Career Centers. More than a dozen WCA members and healthcare employers are also collaborating on HTPP.

Beyond training, participants in HTPP receive instruction in computer literacy, a Chrome notebook, and internet access from The STEM Alliance, and job readiness and service excellence training from Leadership Learning Group. As of this writing, more than 25 program graduates have been hired at an average salary of \$44,000, resulting in more than \$1 million in total salaries plus benefits.

The WCA also:

Launched a \$247,000 NYS funded initiative to train and place 50 underserved job seekers in high demand healthcare jobs;

Published an enhanced and expanded regional Talent Resource Guide to provide employers with a comprehensive list of education, training, and career service providers, as well as supports and resources for employees to enhance recruitment and retention efforts. It includes information for employers seeking talent, tax credits, hiring incentives, and more;

Organized roundtables and webinars on finding the right workforce.

“What are employers looking for? People who have fundamental skills and soft skills who can communicate well, write well, who are digitally literate, culturally aware, and who can think critically,” notes Dr. Lynne Richardson, Dean of the LaPenta School of Business at Iona College. “But the winners [in recruiting talent] will be the employers who know how to package a culture that works for multiple generations.”

We’re bringing people together

During the past year, the WCA convened a Finance Roundtable connecting each of the deans of our regional business schools and their students with the heads of the major accounting firms and financial institutions. The impact was palpable.

“The roundtable was amazing,” said Laurie Urbanowitz, CPA with Selznick & Company, LLP. “It got me together with other firms in the area. It always helps to bounce ideas off each other and have a dialogue with deans of schools. In accounting, everybody looks at The Big Four, but you don’t have to go to New York City. Midsize firms like ours offer incredible opportunities and experience in a wide variety of fields. Just being able to get in front of the students and meet the deans was invaluable.”

Chapin observed that even with all the great training and recruiting efforts, sometimes employers overlook the potential employee pool—which can include veterans, people with disabilities, immigrants, minorities, youths, the formerly incarcerated, and recovering addicts.

“They should look at the largest talent pool possible in order to quickly employ as many people as they can to fill open positions,” he said.



Awarded \$1.25M in workforce grants to train workers for hard-to-fill healthcare jobs

In 2022 more than 25 Talent Pipeline graduates hired resulting in \$1M in total salaries plus benefits

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Montefiore Healthcare

Joseph Simone, President, Simone
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Anthony Viceroy, President & COO,
Summit Health

Robin White, Director of
External Affairs, AT&T

Teresita Wisell, Vice President,
Workforce Development &
Community Education,
Westchester Community College

Richard Wishnie, Division Representative,
New York Electrical Contractors
Association, Inc.



Become a member!

Membership in the Westchester County Association (WCA) is one of the best investments you can make for your business.

When you join the WCA, you gain the full force of our formidable advocacy infrastructure, and you derive great benefit from our relationships, experience, and expertise.

WCA member benefits include:

Having an influential voice in legislative and regulatory reform

Access to stakeholder-driven conferences, summits, and panel discussions

Networking opportunities with influential professionals and community leaders

Opportunities to participate in committee work that fosters collaboration and innovation

Data-driven reports and resources

Promotion and visibility for your company and brand

Discounted tickets to all events (virtual and live)

Access to weekly "Policy Pulse"—

a curated e-newsletter focused on NYS politics and policy

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