

Trump team: Democrats have an agenda

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TRENDS IN EDUCATION: SCHOOL ENROLLMENT

**Addition, or subtraction**



Sophie Grosserode/Rockland/Westchester Journal News | USA TODAY NETWORK



Above left: Students leave Ramapo High School. East Ramapo schools have had the region's fastest enrollment growth: more than 25%. PETER CARBY/THE JOURNAL NEWS

Top right: Alex Smith plays guitar with his daughter Esme, 7, at their home in Peekskill. Smith, a professional musician, and his wife, Nell Marantz, moved from Queens to Peekskill in 2013. Families like theirs are one reason that district's enrollment went up 17% from 2008 to 2018. SETH HARRISON/THE JOURNAL NEWS

Above right: Port Chester village trustee Luis Marino, right, chats with village resident Juan Plintado and his children and grandchildren in 2018. The Port Chester school district is one of the fastest growing in the region. SETH HARRISON/THE JOURNAL NEWS

In 2008, the Port Chester and Katonah-Lewisboro school districts had almost the same number of students: 3,955 in Port Chester and 3,880 in Katonah-Lewisboro. By a decade later, in 2018, Port Chester's enrollment had swelled to 4,849 students, while Katonah-Lewisboro was down to 2,995 students, leaving the two districts with distinct challenges. While Port Chester is a rapidly changing village with new developments and new arrivals from all over the world, Katonah Lewisboro is the kind of quiet, spacious suburban district that – despite high test scores and graduation rates – may no longer be the ideal for many families. ■ The divergent paths of the two districts, only about 25 miles apart, illustrate a major split that has taken place in the Lower Hudson Valley, and across New York state, between school districts with growing

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STAR savings are significant for homeowners in a state with among the highest property taxes in the nation. GETTY IMAGES

**Here's how potential STAR changes could affect your tax bill**

Joseph Spector/New York State Team  
USA TODAY NETWORK

ALBANY – More homeowners would have to wait for a check in the mail to get their STAR savings on their school taxes under a proposal unveiled Tuesday by Gov. Andrew Cuomo.

The measure in Cuomo's budget plan would be the latest annual change to STAR, the \$3 billion-a-year program that provides homeowners a savings on their school tax bills each fall.

Since its inception in the 1990s, STAR would give homeowners with annual incomes under \$500,000 an upfront rebate on their school taxes.

But the state has slowly shifted away from the savings on tax bills, instead making new homeowners and, starting last year, those who earn between \$250,000 and \$500,000 wait for a check in the mail from the state tax department to get their STAR sav-

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STATE OF REAL ESTATE

**Region sees gains in rentals near Hudson**

Mario Marroquin/Rockland/Westchester Journal News  
USA TODAY NETWORK

The year 2019 was a high point for rental development across Westchester County. Especially along the Hudson.

National, regional and local developers began placing bets on residential development as far south as the City of Yonkers in Westchester and as far north as Haverstraw in Rockland County.

And while that is not to say that the years ahead will be quiet along the Long Island Sound and in Central Westchester, 2020 is likely to yield more milestones for riverside development.

The municipal administrations in Westchester that showed willingness to work with developers also found new sources of capital in 2019. And for communities like New Rochelle and White Plains, hundreds of rental units for young professionals and empty nesters are expected to come online throughout most of 2020.

On the beat

Single-family home sales in Rockland County grew by 5.5% in 2019 on a year-over-year basis while sales in Westchester declined by 0.8%. Median sales price for Westchester grew by 0.8% to \$655,000 and Rockland's median sale price de-

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# Schools

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numbers of students and those with less. While all districts share certain priorities, like school security and the surging mental health needs of students, districts with different enrollment trends now have unique concerns.

"Growth is hard to manage, because the world can change pretty quick," said John Sipple, an expert at Cornell University on educational policy, including demographics. "People's lives are complicated. We all have different reasons for moving different places."

The Journal News/lohud analyzed enrollment data and trends for the 10-year period of 2008-18 for the 54 districts in Westchester, Rockland and Putnam counties, not including special-act districts. While districts gather and record internal enrollment data differently, the analysis looked at official enrollment figures provided by districts to the state Education Department each October. The enrollment figures include pre-kindergarten through 12th grade.

In general, districts with fewer students than in the past, largely due to low birth rates and the changing priorities of many families, have to look for cost savings and new efficiencies. Districts that are growing, thanks to immigration and attractive housing options, are trying to stretch their dollars and add classroom space.

School boards at both ends of the enrollment spectrum face difficult planning decisions and must balance community opinion, fiscal realities and fickle projections of what their future enrollments may look like.

Among the key findings:

- Katonah-Lewisboro's enrollment decreased the most in the three counties, dropping by more than 23% between 2008 and 2018.

- East Ramapo had the fastest growth — more than 25%.

- Not counting East Ramapo, Rockland County's total enrollment dropped by about 6.5%.

- Putnam County's total enrollment fell by 16%.

- School districts with growing enrollments were mostly in southern Westchester.

- The most stable district in the region was Scarsdale, which experienced an overall enrollment decline of less than 1% in 10 years.

Going forward, districts must rely on enrollment projections to determine whether past trends will continue and create strategies to respond. Critics often question the accuracy of projections, and they have a point, Sipple said. The goal of a projection is to be too wrong.

"Where the housing stock and the job base is very steady and there's nothing big going on, [projections] are pretty good," Sipple said. "When there's substantial changes in employment or in housing stock, enrollment projections are really hard, and they're really inaccurate."

## Declines: Fewer kids, less appeal

Three main factors have accounted for enrollment declines in many districts.

First, millennials had fewer babies than previous generations, which eventually led to smaller kindergarten classes.

Second, the classic leafy, car-dependent suburb, celebrated and mocked in "New Yorker" cartoons for decades, is no longer the dream for many. In fact, with traffic worsening and many would-be suburbanites anxious to reduce their carbon footprint, housing that is walking distance to a train station can be a bigger draw than an ample backyard.

Third, housing turnover is very slow in many suburban communities. Some families that might prefer the old suburban ideal can't afford it, and many homeowners who might like to scale down can't find an affordable, smaller option without fleeing New York.

"For decades, our enrollment growth has come from housing turnover. That has not been the case recently," said Ken Freeston, superintendent of North Salem schools. "That new reality, coupled with declining birth rates, explains most of our drop in students."

Enrollment in North Salem, Westchester's roomy northeastern corner, was the county's second-smallest in 2008, but declined more than 20% in the last decade. Current projections estimate that enrollment will fall from just over 1,000 students to fewer than 900 by 2028.

It was long held that the birth rate followed the economy. When times were tough, families would have fewer kids; during good times, more. But when the economy began recovering from the Great Recession of 2007 to 2009, babies did not follow like demographers expected.

The national numbers are striking. The national birth rate in 2018 — 59 births per 1,000 women — was the fourth consecutive year of historic lows. Since



Former state Education Commissioner MaryEllen Eli and state Sen. David Carlucci visit a kindergarten class at Kakiat Elementary School in East Ramapo in 2016. FILE PHOTO BY PETER CARR/THE JOURNAL NEWS



This construction is part of the expansion project at Port Chester High School. Port Chester passed a \$79.9 million bond for a capital project. Their enrollment is up over 20% in the last decade and still growing. TANIA SAVAYAN/THE JOURNAL NEWS



Lewisboro Police vehicles parked outside police headquarters at the former Lewisboro Elementary School on Bouton Road in South Salem on Jan. 8. FRANK BECERRA JR./THE JOURNAL NEWS

2017, women in their 30s have had a higher birth rate than women in their 20s for the first time in recorded history.

Jan Vink, associate with Cornell University's Program on Applied Demographics, said that millennial women are waiting longer to have babies and are having fewer of them.

"The trend is towards postponing the age of the first birth," he said. "We're still waiting to see if [millennials] will catch up later in life."

In many suburban school districts, falling birth rates are not being mitigated by families moving in with school-age children. It mostly has to do with housing, including rentals, which is either unavailable, unaffordable or not as desirable as in the past.

In Westchester, Rockland and Putnam counties, gaps continue to grow between average monthly rents and what families can afford — especially when considering the general rule that housing costs should account for 30% of a household's average monthly income, according to a report by Hudson Valley Pattern for Progress, a nonprofit research group.

These gaps create problems for young families and empty nesters alike. Seniors who might like to sell their house to a young family can't find a condo, co-op or rental apartment they can afford, let alone an affordable assisted living facility.

"In most cases, if a senior wants to stay in Westchester, they're staying in their house," said Mae Carpenter, commissioner of Westchester County's Department of Senior Programs and Services.

There are still plenty of prototypical young families moving to the suburbs, but their numbers are fewer and many have little interest in manicured lawns and white picket fences. What's hot? Walkable downtowns, easy access to trains and diverse school districts.

"This new generation are not collectors of stuff that takes up room, so they need less space," said Mary Stetson, owner of Stetson Real Estate in Mamaroneck. "They just don't have the desire, as much as the past generation did, of

having a lot of land around you. It's a generational shift in taste."

Anthony DiCarlo, Mahopac schools superintendent, called the decline of new families moving into his community "part and parcel" of the last decade. Mahopac's enrollment dropped by 1,200 students, almost a quarter, from 2008 to 2018.

"Is it ever going to go back to the way it was? Not in the short term," DiCarlo said. "Will we bump here and there? Maybe. But I don't see us ever, in the short term, going back to the size that we were many years ago."

## The economics of shrinking schools

In 2013, having seen enrollment drop by 500 students in five years, the Katonah-Lewisboro district proposed an unpopular solution: closing a school.

The idea of closing Lewisboro Elementary was met with immediate community opposition. But the district was projecting that total enrollment would decline by 25%, to below 3,000 students, over 10 years. Closing Lewisboro would save at least \$2 million a year.

The school was closed in 2014, but is rented to the Town of Lewisboro for use as police headquarters and town offices. Some savings were reinvested into full-day kindergarten. The district's projected enrollment losses came to fruition by 2018.

"Although we're still declining, the decline is significantly more gradual and appears to have begun to plateau for now," Superintendent Andrew Selesnick said.

Less than 10 miles south in the Bedford school district, enrollment declined by about 500 students between 2013 and 2019. The school board is looking at several options to deal with its changing demographics, one of which would be closing a school.

Vocal community members who oppose closing a school say the district's enrollment projections are flawed, not properly accounting for migration, new housing and other factors. They say enrollment will level off or decrease mod-

## How they stack up

District enrollment has shifted in the Lower Hudson Valley over the last 12 years. Here's how the districts stack up.

East Ramapo	33%
Port Chester-Rye	23%
Peekskill	17%
Tuckahoe	16%
Ossining	14%
Mamaroneck	14%
Yonkers	9%
Tarrytown	9%
Rye	8%
Bronxville	7%
Hastings on Hudson	6%
Edgemont	6%
Rye Neck	6%
Pelham	5%
Harrison	4%
Eastchester	4%
Ardley	4%
White Plains	4%
Nyack	4%
Dobbs Ferry	3%
Elmsford	2%
North Rockland	1%
New Rochelle	1%
Greenburgh	1%
Scarsdale	0
Nanuet	-2%
Mt. Pleasant Central	-6%
Haldane	-6%
Pocantico Hills	-6%
Irvington	-7%
Valhalla	-7%
Pleasantville	-8%
Pearl River	-9%
Blind Brook-Rye	-9%
Bedford	-10%
Croton Harmon	-11%
Suffern	-11%
South Orangetown	-12%
Putnam Valley	-12%
Chappaqua	-13%
Mount Vernon	-13%
Carmel	-13%
Clarkstown	-13%
Lakeland	-13%
Somers	-14%
Hendrick Hudson	-14%
Brewster	-14%
Yorktown	-14%
Briarcliff Manor	-17%
Byram Hills	-18%
North Salem	-21%
Garrison	-22%
Mahopac	-23%
Katonah-Lewisboro	-24%

SOURCE: NYS EDUCATION DEPARTMENT

"I don't see us ever, in the short term, going back to the size that we were many years ago."

## Anthony DiCarlo

Mahopac schools superintendent

ostly, in line with historical averages, and that savings from closing a school would be minuscule.

Pam Harney, a parent and former school board member, said the district's falling enrollment could present opportunities to improve instruction, without closing a school.

"We've been very insistent that Bedford Central will only benefit from smaller class sizes. Maybe it's a good thing that this is happening," she said.

"Let's take advantage of the decline in enrollment. Let's continue to capitalize on some of the [reductions] in sections and ... staff that we don't need and put that money into building our academics."

Even without closing a school, districts with fewer students can save money in limited ways, usually involving reductions in staff over time.

Freeston said North Salem is saving about \$500,000 a year since reducing its number of elementary school classes from 26 to 22. The district put the money into its world language program, which now begins in kindergarten.

Mahopac Middle School eliminated an entire team of teachers, using the savings to enhance district buildings, DiCarlo said.

But cost savings are minimal in many areas, officials say, which can mean fewer taxpayers with fewer children in the schools have to cover the rising costs of public education.

## Growth: Immigration and more

Alex Smith and Nell Marantz are the sort of couple that might have moved to a traditional suburb in decades past. In 2018, they left Astoria, Queens, when their daughter, Esme, was a year old, looking for a new community.

"We didn't want to be in a place that was very suburban," Smith said.

They found what they wanted in Peekskill: An arts community, a downtown and an easy commute to the city

## Schools

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for Smith, a musician who travels there a few nights a week. Affordable home prices sealed the deal.

Esme is in second grade now, and Smith said they have become "evangelists" for Peekskill to all their city friends.

"I couldn't believe the diversity here. I thought it was really a gift," said Marantz, who directs a universal preschool program in Mamaroneck. "A lot of school systems don't have this."

Families like theirs are one reason Peekskill's enrollment went up 17% from 2008 to 2018. The other is immigration - a factor in districts where enrollment is growing.



The "One World" after-school club meets at Park Avenue School in Port Chester in December. Almost 80% of students in the Port Chester school district are Hispanic. CAROLINA L. MEUSE/THE JOURNAL NEWS

The only Westchester district that grew faster than Peekskill during the decade in question was Port Chester, one of the

region's main hubs for immigrants. Port Chester's student enrollment grew by 20%.

"Villages and towns like Port Chester offer a lot," said Tom Corbia, president of the Port Chester Board of Education. "If you can't afford Scarsdale and Bronxville and Rye, Port Chester isn't a bad place."

"In my estimation, I think we do things better," Corbia said. "We have a little more diversity. People from New York City like diversity."

Four of the region's top five fastest growing districts during the decade have majority-minority student enrollments - East Ramapo, Port Chester, Peekskill and Ossining. The exception was the Tuckahoe school district. By comparison, the five districts with the largest enrollment losses all have more than 70% white students.

The fastest growing district in the region between 2008 and 2018 was East Ramapo, where enrollment soared by more than 25%. Much of that increase was due to the expansion of the district's universal pre-kindergarten program, which includes more

than 1,000 children who then leave for private religious schools.

Not counting pre-K, the district's enrollment grew by about 900 students over the decade, including many immigrants from Latin America.

East Ramapo has been continuing to add students, but at a faster rate. Between July and October of 2019, the district enrolled 868 new public school students, and lost 327, for a rapid gain of 541 new learners.

In 1995, fewer than 10% of the district's students were Hispanic. Now almost 60% are.

"The population of East Ramapo is changing," said Cornell's Sipple. "You have middle class black families and middle class white families that have left the community over the last 20 years, and you have immigrants moving in."

Sipple served from 2015 to 2018 as one of the first state-appointed monitors in East Ramapo. He analyzes data on school districts across New York and calls East Ramapo a "unique" community because of immigration and the district's large number of private-school students.

Immigrants are moving in, Sipple said, because there are jobs available. The influx is likely to continue, he said.

"As long as there's this work, and as long as there's people of common cultural background, then you see these migration patterns continuing," he said.

East Ramapo officials did not return several requests for comment about the district's ongoing growth.

East Ramapo closed the Colton and Hillcrest elementary schools in

2009 and 2010, respectively, partly based on district projections that enrollment would decline. The schools were sold to private yeshivas in 2014, when K-12 enrollment had already begun climbing again.

### Finding space for students

Districts with growing enrollments face clear priorities: Adding staff and programs - often to serve immigrant students with unique academic and English language deficiencies - and finding space to put everyone.

Port Chester voters approved a \$79 million bond in March 2017 in large part because the district desperately needed to add 25 classrooms across four of the district's six schools.

"There was absolutely no doubt," Corbia, the school board president, said. "We either had to build a school or add on to what we have."

The expansion is on track to be finished by January 2021. But if the district continues to add students at the current rate, it may quickly outgrow the new space.

"We don't have a plan B right now," Corbia said. "We're going to evaluate that as soon as we see the numbers in the next year and a half."

When Port Chester's bond plans were in their infancy in 2014, the district projected enrollment would top out at 4,700 students by 2018. The year's actual enrollment was over 4,800.

Down the shore in the Mamaroneck school district, enrollment grew about 13% from 2008 to 2018. Superintendent

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## Schools

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Robert Shaps said three of the district's four elementary schools are reaching the "precautions point," meaning that if kindergarten class sizes increase, they could be out of classroom space.

The district would have limited room to expand its schools, so officials are looking at other options. Currently, Mamaroneck has four traditional K-5 neighborhood schools. Officials are looking at a range of options, including reconfiguring grades among schools so that students would be grouped by age rather than neighborhood.

While the district's enrollment surge

presents an opportunity to rethink certain things, any proposed change would have to be educationally sound and not simply to address demographics, said Annie Ward, assistant superintendent for curriculum and instruction.

"Any redistricting is a very hot topic," Ward said. "So it has to be tied to educational enhancement and not just that we're looking to balance the budget."

Twitter: @sdgrosserode

**Alex Smith, wife Nell Marantz, and daughter Esme, 7, make cookies at their Peekskill home on Nov. 25, 2019. The family moved in 2013 from Queens to Peekskill, choosing the city for its artistic community and diversity.**

SETH HARRISON/THE JOURNAL NEWS



## STAR

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ings.

Now, Cuomo is proposing another tweak: Any household with an adjusted gross income over \$200,000 would get a check in the fall rather than seeing the savings directly on their tax bill, regardless of when they bought their home.

The state budget proposal states: "To continue the shift of administering the STAR program as a tax credit to align it with other tax relief programs, the budget limits the Basic STAR benefit for homeowners in the Exemption program to an income threshold of \$200,000 while keeping the income threshold for the STAR Credit unchanged at \$500,000."

Lawmakers have derided the changes over the years, but haven't been able to beat them back during budget negotiations.

"We don't need any more changes this year," Assemblywoman Sandra Galef, D-Osining, Westchester County, said dur-

ing a hearing last week on STAR.

### What the changes would mean

STAR savings are significant for homeowners in a state with among the highest property taxes in the nation.

Basic STAR averaged about \$790 last year.

Enhanced STAR, which is available for seniors with incomes of \$88,050 or less, averaged \$1,381 this year. Seniors who receive Enhanced STAR have not been shifted to checks.

The change can be problematic for homeowners who pay for their taxes through escrow.

Escrow amounts are based on what taxes are paid to schools, and under the original STAR system, the rebate was taken off the top of the tax bill — so the escrow amount was lower.

Now, for those who get STAR checks, the system requires homeowners to pay their full tax bill, thus a higher monthly expense, and then get reimbursed through a check.

Also, homeowners have to wait for the check, which downstate can average

more than \$1,000, to arrive in hopes of getting in time to pay their school taxes, which in most districts is due by Sept. 30.

Tax officials testified last week that 98% — nearly 540,000 STAR checks — were delivered on time before homeowners' school tax bills were due.

### Why the state keeps moving to STAR checks

State leaders say the change to checks is a better way to administer the program.

But there is also a fiscal benefit. The proposed budget estimates the shift would allow the state to count \$74 million in state spending as a reduction in tax revenue.

So at a time when New York has a \$6 billion budget deficit and Cuomo is insisting on limiting state spending to no more than 2% growth, the change helps the state's book.

In other words, the checks count as a "personal income tax credit" in the state budget. That means they are reported as a reduction in tax revenue, not as state

spending.

The state also contends the change creates a more streamlined process: Originally, schools gave out the savings on homeowners' tax bills, then got reimbursed by the state.

Now homeowners simply get the checks directly from the state, cutting out the need for schools to be involved.

"The STAR program is really a tax credit program. It's a tax credit program that was designed as a spending program in order to give people checks faster years ago," budget director Robert Mujica said Tuesday.

"So we're trying to align that program back as it should. Everyone would get their credits in the same year. They will get the same dollar amounts in the same year. But it should not be a spending program. It is a tax-credit program, and we're going to reflect it as such."

Includes reporting by USA TODAY Network staff writer Jon Campbell.

Joseph Stewart is the New York state editor for the USA TODAY Network. He can be reached at JSPECTOR@Gannett.com or followed on Twitter: @GannettAlbany.

## Real estate

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clined by 11% to \$455,000 in the previous year, according to the Hudson Gateway Association of Realtors.

HGAR said a decline in median sales price for the luxury single-family market resulted in an overall increase in sales for 2019. And a decline in the number of luxury home listings and luxury homebuyers in recent years will mean sellers will have to deal with a smaller pool of buyers in the year ahead.

Development along the train stations fronting the Hudson, and in New Rochelle and White Plains will continue to add rental units throughout 2020.

And as lohud reported in its 2019 state of real estate, the trend of building apartment complexes in former industrial and office parks is likely to continue this year. As in previous years, the Westchester County Industrial Development Authority has been a supporter of mixed-use development in office and industrial parks, and the life sciences. The year 2020 will not be the exception.

The City of New Rochelle saw more than 10 residential projects begin construction on its 300-acre downtown in 2019. Changes to the city's zoning code in 2019 have now enabled entitlements of up to 6,000 residential units, which means additional construction is likely to commence in 2020.

The next four quarters are also likely to see Clarkstown in Rockland County make a play toward transit-oriented development. Government officials cleared the way for transit-oriented zoning around the Nanuet train station on Prospect Street.

The new zoning, which allows up to 500 rentals or condominiums around the train station, has seen real estate firms like AvalonBay Communities give Clarkstown a second look.

Rockland County's Industrial Development Authority will play a role in the expansion of the life sciences in Orangetown this year, where developers are after financial assistance for conversions and modernizations.

### What to watch for

**Housing Needs Assessment:** A recent study by the Westchester County Executive Office calls for the construction of 11,700 new housing units to address the housing affordability crisis in the county. The study reported roughly 94% of those living in poverty in Westchester reside in Mount Vernon, New Rochelle, Peekskill, White Plains and Yonkers, where the county-backed economic development is limited. Westchester County Executive George Latimer said the housing needs assessment will be pivotal to the deployment of incentives in 2020. Latimer said recommendations for community land trusts and alternative zoning will also be eval-



**Expect more milestones for riverside development as 2020 unfolds in the real estate market.** PETER CARR AND JOHN MEIRE/THE JOURNAL NEWS



**The municipal administrations in Westchester that showed willingness to work with developers found new sources of capital in 2019.** PETER CARR AND ROCKY FLORES/THE JOURNAL NEWS

uated in the coming year as a way to address housing needs around the county.

**Nyack College campus sale:** The sale of the 107-acre Nyack College Campus has the potential to provide a bump in property taxes for the town of Orangetown in Rockland County. Nyack College began marketing the property back in January 2019, but it has made no formal commitments for the property. According to brokerage firm CBRE, which is managing the sale on behalf of the institution, the campus comprises 540,000 square feet across 40 buildings with the potential for expansion. The property is located less than one mile from the Hudson River, and presents an opportunity for growing Orangetown's tax base.

**New Rochelle:** Recent changes to the City of New Rochelle's zoning have allowed entitlements of up to 12 million square feet of development in the city. But the future of the city and its ability to sustain its growth rate is likely to be a point of contention in 2020. Since adopting the new zoning plan back in 2015, city officials have responded to private investors' appetite for residential development by allowing more units

to be built at the expense of commercial space. With more rental developments coming online and breaking ground in the city in 2020, New Rochelle's future and its ability to allocate parking, fire department and police resources for newcomers will be under heavy scrutiny from all stakeholders.

### Key players

**Timothy Jones — Robert Martin co-CEO**

The future of over 6 million square feet of office and industrial flex space across Westchester will be heavily influenced by Tim Jones and Robert Martin Company. After closing on the largest real estate transaction in Westchester in March, the Robert Martin CEO has begun eyeing a real estate play in the life sciences. And while Robert Martin announced Laurence Gottlieb, the former CEO of the Hudson Valley Economic Development Corporation, will head the life sciences initiative as a managing director back in October, Jones is likely to orchestrate Robert Martin's new strategy in the industry.



**Grisswald Cottage on the campus of Nyack College. The sale of the 107-acre campus has the potential to provide a bump in property taxes for the town of Orangetown in Rockland County.** JOHN MEIRE/THE JOURNAL NEWS

### Andrea Stewart-Cousins — state Senate majority leader

The temporary president and majority leader for the New York State Senate will play a key role in the future of real estate development in Rockland and Westchester counties when it comes to wage requirements for projects with public financing. Stewart-Cousins will serve as the intermediary between Gov. Andrew Cuomo's office and real estate developers in ironing out the scope of prevailing wage policies that would require real estate developers to pay union-level wages for projects partially or fully funded with government financing. Real estate developers said such a measure will grind development to a halt in areas with high taxes, such as Westchester, and make projects difficult to finance.

### Stephen Congel — Pyramid Management Group

The CEO of Pyramid Management Group, the owner of the Palisades Center in West Nyack, will play a key role in the future of Clarkstown's tax base. Pyramid Management Group is in a legal battle with Clarkstown over a covenant that prevents Pyramid from expanding the 1.85 million-square-foot mall without voter approval. Amid the Palisades Center losing anchor tenants like JC Penney and Lord & Taylor in recent years, Congel has stated Pyramid will pursue the battle until the covenant is removed.

### By the numbers

**338 units** of housing in the pipeline for renovation in 2020 by the Municipal Housing Authority for the City of Yonkers.

**\$207.8 million** of new tax revenue for New Rochelle in 20-year payment in Lieu of Tax awards.

**\$10 million** awarded to Peekskill as part of the Governor's Downtown Revitalization Initiative.

**5.1% growth** in median sales price on a year-over-year basis in Ardsley, Briarcliff Manor, Dobbs Ferry, Elmsford, Hastings, Irvington, Mount Pleasant, Ossining, Pocantico Hills and Tarrytown.