

RELOCATION & MOVING GUIDE 2022

Living In

WESTCHESTER

AND THE HUDSON VALLEY



Presented by The Business Council of Westchester
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📍 WESTCHESTER: BEST PLACES TO LIVE

From The Big Apple to the Golden Apple

The relocation boom from New York City to Westchester is still going strong. Here’s why so many are finding Westchester County to be the best place to live.



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On the banks of the Hudson River, Peekskill offers natural beauty and a thriving arts scene.

Westchester is hot! Driven largely by the ongoing impact of the coronavirus, Westchester County has continued to see an incredible influx of buyers from Manhattan and Brooklyn seeking shelter in the suburbs.

The exodus started shortly after the initial lockdown began in 2020, when many city families with the means to do so hightailed it out of their urban dwellings and flooded the rental market for homes in Westchester and the Hudson Valley. As the lockdown persisted throughout

most of 2020 and virus-related concerns lingered throughout 2021, the real estate market in Westchester remained intense, with limited inventory and bidding wars becoming the new norm.

“We saw a lot of interest in suburban and rural spaces; anything, even up to two hours away from Manhattan, became desirable,” notes Scott Elwell, principal at the SOE Team with Douglas Elliman Real Estate.

The pandemic and its impacts shifted buyers into a new sense of urgency, adds Dawn Knief, licensed real estate salesperson with Compass in Scarsdale.

“Families who were thinking about coming to Westchester and buying a house in a few years decided to speed up the process and buy right away.”

While the absolute frenzy of the real estate market at the height of the pandemic has calmed down somewhat, Knief notes, there are still a huge number of buyers waiting for new inventory to hit the market. “Prices have gone up. Bidding wars over the past year have increased values and given appraisers/banks the justification to appraise houses at higher prices,” she explains.

Also driving the staying-power of the local real estate market is continually low mortgage interest rates. “As mortgage rates continue to hover near historic lows, the affordability factor is still driving demand,” explains Anthony Lando, licensed real estate salesperson with Julia B. Fee Sotheby’s International Realty in Irvington.

With its abundance of large homes, lush outdoor spaces, easy access to safe nature activities, and the usual draws of commuting ease, competitive schools, and charming Main Streets, the lure of Westchester has continued to be incredibly strong for families seeking a new way of life that is more home-centric.

“Sales are up 43% year over year,” notes Deborah Valentino, licensed associate real

estate broker with Houlihan Lawrence in Yonkers, who adds that her firm’s proprietary data shows that New York City buyers account for one-third of buyers coming to Westchester. “Single-family homes with amenities such as a pool and grassy yard are still in demand. And homes close to train and transportation are still very desirable,” she adds.

Affordable Rivertowns, like Ossining, Cortlandt, and Peekskill, are appealing to a lot of families these days, notes Suzanne Welch of Coldwell Banker. “You can get a lot of bang for your buck in these areas. There are many buyers who want out of apartments and condos, so properties listed in Croton or Ossining for less than \$700,000 fly off the market.”

Why Westchester?

Who: Mimi Salcedo and Brennan Pothetes

Where: Brooklyn to Ossining

Why: A Thriving Ethnic Community & Easy Transport Access

New Ossining residents Mimi Salcedo and her husband, Brennan Pothetes, decided that 2020 was the right time to transition from Brooklyn to Westchester. The couple, originally from Portland, OR, spent two years living in Park Slope, and loving it, before realizing their budget would not enable them to purchase the kind of home they hoped for in Brooklyn.



© MIMI SALCEDO

Salcedo and Pothetes had been searching as far out as Bay Ridge for an affordable area that would allow them to commute to the city. They had enjoyed a weekend trip to the Hudson Valley on the Metro-North Hudson Line, and the idea of being near the river lingered in their minds as the lockdown started.

“As the pandemic struck, we looked at each other and just knew. We decided it was better to move completely out of the city and started thinking about living in the suburbs,” Salcedo says. “The transportation on the Hudson Line was a big calling, and we loved the idea of staying in New York and being near the river and commuting that way.”

“It really called to me that Ossining has a strong Hispanic and Peruvian culture. Being here just felt right to us.”

They quickly realized how much further their budget would go in Westchester. After touring homes in Tarrytown first, they eventually found a four-bedroom, three-bathroom Colonial with a wraparound front porch in Ossining that was bigger than other homes they had toured, which, Salcedo says, “really spoke to us.”

“The sellers had lived in the home for more than 30 years, and it just felt like a family home with a lot of love. Also, I’m half Peruvian, and it really called to me that Ossining has a strong Hispanic and Peruvian culture. Being here just felt right to us.”

Their city friends initially thought they were crazy. “But now, when I tell them how we could not be happier in Ossining, how we are relaxing on our patio, and the dog is having the time of his life in the backyard, they are like, ‘Oh wow, that sounds perfect. Maybe we should start looking, too...’”



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“Families who were thinking about

coming to Westchester and buying a house in a few years decided to speed up the process and buy right away.”

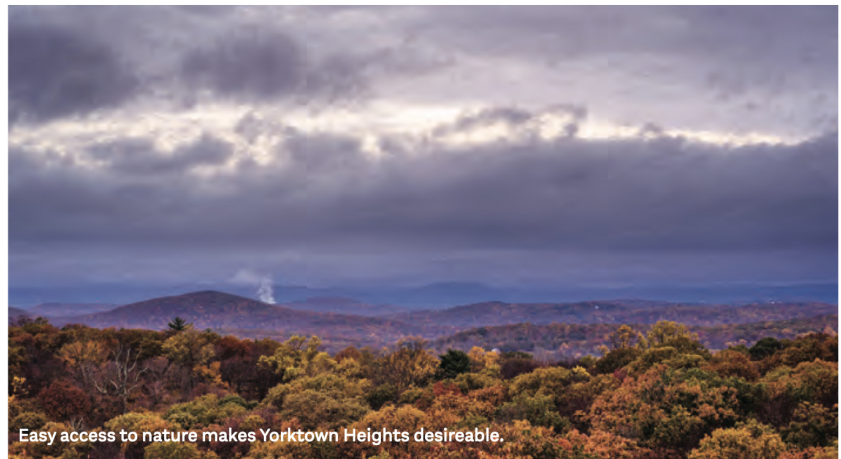
—Dawn Knief, *Compass*

WESTCHESTER: BEST PLACES TO LIVE

Northern Westchester is also increasingly popular with buyers, as the number of people making the daily Metro-North roundtrip has remained lower than typical, and the longer train ride doesn't loom as large in buyers' minds. Towns like Yorktown Heights and even Cortlandt or Garrison [in Putnam County] are becoming an option, because, Welch explains, "The commute is not as much of a concern these days; buyers aren't as worried about it, as many will be working remotely."

Adds Lando, "Space is the key, and I find that people are looking in areas where property sizes are more amenable to spreading out. The inquiries for the towns of Pound Ridge, Bedford, and the surrounding towns are more frequent than ever."

Perennially popular areas closer to the city, like Larchmont, Rye, Chappaqua, and Scarsdale, are also still very much in demand, adds Elwell of Douglas Elliman. "The towns that have always had strong demand kept surging in demand," he notes.



Easy access to nature makes Yorktown Heights desirable.

© ADOBESTOCK

Elwell also believes some of the old rules still apply. "Proximity to Manhattan is still king," he says. "The closer towns to Manhattan have traditionally been more desirable, and I don't see that changing. What's selling well now is what's always sold well in Westchester."

"Many buyers do still have the commute to the city in the backs of their minds," adds Knief of Compass. "They feel that once the coronavirus restrictions relax and things return to normal, they will be

commuting again. So, they are still driven by proximity to the city and school district."

There is a growing consensus among agents that the types of homes and amenities that are hot right now have changed across the board. The new crop of buyers, seeking refuge from the city in light of the pandemic, have embraced a "more is more" philosophy.

Tennis courts, outdoor kitchens, paddocks, basketball courts, and gardens are other hot outdoor amenities,



Affordable, and with great river views, Ossining is a current hot neighborhood.

© VILLAGE OF OSSINING

according to a recent web survey done by Houlihan Lawrence.

Ample interior space is also on the top of everyone's wish lists these days, adds Knief: "Buyers want room for kids to play, homework areas, workspaces, Zoom rooms, et cetera. Houses with a home office or two, already in place, are selling at a premium."

Adds Elwell: "We are definitely seeing buyers interested in a little more space than normal. If they were thinking of buying a three-bedroom, now they want to get a four-bedroom and use the fourth bedroom as an office."

Whatever home suits a family's needs — and whether they prefer the Sound Shore, a Rivertown, Northern Westchester, or somewhere closer to Manhattan — it's clear the Westchester suburbs are the new hotspot.



Perennial favorite Rye boasts a charming downtown and highly ranked schools.

Why Westchester?

Who: Amy and David van Erk
Where: Brooklyn to Mount Kisco
Why: Room For Baby Plus A Big Foodie Scene

Amy and David van Erk and their son, Elliott, moved from Brooklyn to Mount Kisco at the end of July 2020. Their decision to move to Westchester was accelerated by the pandemic yet fairly typical of young urban families, who know that "a 9-month-old in a one-bedroom apartment doesn't fly for too long," as Amy says.

"I knew that I loved Mount Kisco and all its great food places, which matter a lot to me. I worked remotely even before the pandemic, and my husband was fine with the commute to the city, so the location was ideal," Amy adds.

Less typical was their experience when making the transition to Westchester in the middle of a global pandemic. The van

"I knew that I loved Mount Kisco and all its great food places, which matter a lot to me."

Erks toured their current home, in Mount Kisco — an unusual property, containing a 1922 prewar Colonial three-bedroom, plus a 2,000 sq. ft. dilapidated former flower shop/greenhouse that the couple plan to turn into a home-office space — the



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weekend before the lockdown was issued. That same weekend, they had held an open house on their Brooklyn co-op and found a buyer, squeaking by just before such indoor activities were suspended.

Once the lockdown ensued, the real estate market shut down entirely, and the couple decided to proceed with buying the Mount Kisco home — even though it was the only Westchester property they toured.

A year later, they family is thrilled with their decision. "We're so grateful to be here," Amy says. And their now-toddler son, Elliot, has all the room he needs. "I wouldn't move back to Brooklyn, seeing how happy Elliott is, running all around here," says David.