

Westchester 2025: A Partnership for Westchester's Future

The Westchester County Department of Planning launched Westchester 2025 - a Web-based format of its county-wide planning policies - with the intent of showing residents and municipalities the importance of working together as we shape and grow the county's infrastructure (roads, trains, sewers, etc) and communications capabilities (wider bandwidths, GIS technology, etc.). We need to keep pace with the global economy while being respectful of the environment.

A framework for planning and partnership

What should Westchester County look like in 2025? How do we ensure that we preserve the Westchester so many people love while moving to the future in a deliberate, progressive fashion? How do we best prepare for the environmental and land use challenges of which we are not yet aware?

These are questions the Westchester County Planning Department and the county's citizen [Planning Board](#) have been exploring. Westchester 2025 expresses their thoughts on important land use policies and sets out a new framework for a planning partnership between the county and its 45 municipalities. The "[2025 Context for County and Municipal Planning and Policies to Guide County Planning](#)" was adopted by the county's Planning Board on May 6, 2008 and amended Jan. 5, 2010.

The Department of Planning maintains a "[Local Planning Law Resource Guide](#)" that provides examples of already in-place local land use ordinances that address a wide variety of subjects including sustainable development, environmental protection, historic preservation, tourism promotion, signage and parking and design review. The goals of the compilation are to allow local officials to see the vast palette of land use tools already in place in nearby communities and to make research and enactment easier.

Westchester 2025 grew from a tool chest of maps and data that municipalities and the county can reference as we plan and realize the future vision of our county over the next decade.

Patterns for Westchester

The 1996 "[Patterns for Westchester](#)" document is still an adopted plan of the Westchester County Planning Board. Only the "Assumptions and Policies" sections of "Patterns" have been replaced by the Westchester 2025's "Context for County and Municipal Planning and Policies to Guide County Planning."

Westchester 2025 is designed to assist the county government and its 45 local municipalities to work together and speak with one regional vision, a critical need in the complex New York metropolitan area. Whether you're a planner or a concerned resident, you'll find tools on these Web pages that should help you understand your community's character and possible vision for the future.

Open Space Defined

Open space means different things to different people. For some it is undeveloped land or shorelines. For some it is parkland for active recreation. For others it means rare or economically valuable lands that need permanent protection. Westchester 2025 recognizes open space in all of these manifestations, including open space as a visual quality – the presence of nature introduced so as to minimize the impact of development. Open space, in the simplest terms, gives character and contrast to developed areas.

Preservation of open spaces

In the first decade of the 20th century, foresighted planners recognized that some open space would have to be preserved in a systematic way. Their vision led to the land acquisition and other techniques that have permanently established the open space nature of Westchester County. The acquisition of the Bronx River Parkway lands shortly after 1900 led to development of the county's first open space corridor – a scenic travel route linking centers and, eventually, additional County facilities and parks.

Westchester County's open space system, public and private, vastly enhances the quality of life in the county. One doesn't have to own open land to feel enriched by the sight of it. That value judgment has deeply influenced development in Westchester. It is reflected in county and municipal policies aimed at maintaining open space character.

From the perspective of Westchester 2025, the open space system is a prevailing force in shaping development. Open space elements provide relief and contrast in urban and suburban settings, define and buffer communities and serve as linkages between major open spaces and concentrated centers. Open spaces also serve as community focal points for activities and assembly, especially in higher density areas. Increasing recognition is given to the role of wide swaths of connected open space in protecting bio-diversity corridors for the welfare and preservation of wildlife.

The Westchester 2025 open space system has two components:

- **Definite Elements of Open Space:** Definite elements are primarily publicly and privately owned properties intended to be permanently protected from development such as parks, nature preserves and cemeteries.

- **Areas of Open Space Character:** Some lands make important contributions to open space character but are not permanently protected. These parcels include golf courses, school district campuses, restrictive building coverage office campuses and lands that municipal comprehensive plans identify as significant for their open space, ecological or recreational value. Privately owned lands, although subject to development, can retain their open space function through zoning and design techniques.