

# **Westchester Workforce Housing Coalition**

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## **A Big Step for Harrison and the MTA**

**White Plains, NY.** Westchester County has announced that it has brokered an agreement with Harrison to include affordable housing in the MTA's train station development. While calling the five percent set aside inadequate, the Westchester Workforce Housing Coalition nevertheless applauded the announcement as a major step forward.

"It breaks a quarter century of resistance to affordable housing in the county's most resistant town," according to Alexander Roberts, a member of the Coalition and executive director of Community Housing Innovations.

The coalition includes over a dozen members, including Habitat for Humanity of Westchester, the White Plains/Greenburgh NAACP, the Tri-State Transportation Campaign and Westchester Hispanic Coalition. Although the number of units is small-- seven apartments in a project of 143 luxury units--the Coalition said that it demonstrates that the county can successfully influence even the most intransigent, exclusionary communities to make room for working class families and equal opportunity. A 2009 Consent Decree with HUD requires the county to build 750 units in 31 overwhelmingly white affluent communities and to overcome exclusionary zoning.

Affordability is defined as a two-bedroom apartment renting for about \$1,400 per month for a three-person household with income of up to \$56,000 per year. This compares with the market rate apartments expected to rent for about \$3,500.

The Coalition gave credit to County Executive Robert Astorino and Deputy County Executive Kevin Plunkett for brokering the deal between the MTA, Harrison and the developer, under which the County will contribute \$1 million to subsidize the affordable housing. A little over \$100,000 per apartment is less than half of the average taxpayer subsidy for fair and affordable units developed under the Consent Decree. The Coalition

pointed out that the lower cost is a result of the cross subsidy contributed by market rate units in mixed income developments.

Now that Westchester County has demonstrated success in the difficult task of modifying an already-negotiated agreement with the MTA and Harrison, the Coalition believes it should have an easier time requiring the town to include at least ten percent affordable housing in two proposed new developments. They are currently going through the local approvals process and contain 463 apartments.

“To do less,” said Jim Killoran of Habitat for Humanity of Westchester, “would continue the exodus of business and young people from Westchester County due to lack of workforce housing. We have enough luxury housing in New York. Westchester is the highest taxed county and people of all ages can’t afford to live here. We need to change that now.”

The Westchester Workforce Housing Coalition says that it has heard from an MTA Board member who plans to ask the MTA to change its policy so that all future transit oriented development includes at least 10% to 20% affordable housing. The Coalition has asked for 20% for development on land that is publicly owned.

### **Members of the Westchester Workforce Housing Coalition**

Alexander H. Roberts, Community Housing Innovations, Inc.  
James Killoran, Habitat for Humanity of Westchester  
Lena Anderson, White Plains/Greenburgh NAACP  
Graciela Heymann, Westchester Hispanic Coalition  
Dennis Hanratty, Mount Vernon United Tenants  
David Schwartz, Working Families Party  
Veronica Vanterpool, Tri-State Transportation Campaign  
V. Elaine Gross, Erase Racism  
Greg Maher, The Leviticus Fund  
Nada Khader, WESPAC  
Mara Winokur, ULI Westchester/Fairfield  
Richard Hyman, Urban Planner  
Charles Pateman, Developer  
Timothy Lewis, Greenburgh Town Attorney