

# WESTCHESTER 2025

## Centers

Westchester's centers are the focal points in the county's pattern of development, the "downtowns" that create and sustain a sense of place and community. Centers, consisting of a commercial or mixed use core and surrounding residential and industrial areas, are likely to have the principal services on which most communities depend. They are the places where stores, restaurants, professional offices, other businesses, libraries, seats of government, schools and train stations are found. Centers often provide a range of housing opportunities that outlying areas may lack. Successful centers are compact and walkable, bicycle-friendly and pleasant environments with unfettered public access.

Four **types of centers**, differentiated by scale, are found in Westchester.

The County Planning Board uses the phrase "center" to describe only traditional downtowns with an existing mix of uses and key facilities. This is a change from *Patterns of Westchester: The Land and the People* which identified 65 places as centers applying a looser application. The centers presented in *Westchester 2025*, each with its own web page, number 54. See **changes in designated centers** for more information.

*Westchester 2025* recognizes the importance of other "places" and community focal points and looks to local planning policies to identify the future for such places. Are they to become traditional centers with new development or are they to remain as special places of limited services with unique character? We are eager to include in *Westchester 2025* local planning statements for the future of these places.

**New centers?** presents the County Planning Board's analysis that finds no need for new centers in Westchester County and discusses opportunities to add characteristics of traditional centers to other places, already developed corridors and large shopping centers.

## TYPES OF CENTERS

In terms of scale, Westchester has four levels of traditional downtown centers, each with a distinctive, existing mix of uses and key facilities:

**Major Centers:** Westchester County's four major centers are the downtowns of its four largest cities - Mount Vernon, New Rochelle, White Plains and Yonkers. Each has a large area of high density development consisting of employment sites with a wide-commute shed, a full spectrum of retail businesses, mid- to high-rise residential buildings, government complexes and higher education campuses. Vertical density has been a significant characteristic and is increasingly more so. These downtowns are major transportation hubs for passenger rail service and bus lines.

**Intermediate Centers:** Intermediate centers are characterized by unmistakable urban activity but with a significantly smaller employment and retail base than major centers. All, except

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Yorktown Heights, have passenger rail service and all have well-developed infrastructure systems. Most provide a broad range of essential services to a wide surrounding area. Intermediate centers are likely to have mid-rise apartments, large-scale retail stores, office buildings and, often, light manufacturing areas at the periphery.

**Local Centers:** Local centers typically have a well-defined business district with a variety of uses including small-scale offices, retail stores, libraries, public buildings and residential uses “over the store” and in low-rise multifamily structures. Most local centers are located on major roads. Many are served by the north/south passenger rail lines. Shopping centers, featuring large-footprint stores such as supermarkets, have been constructed on the outskirts of several local centers, often with no intervening land use or walkways that connect these more recently developed retail sites to the older business district.

**Hamlets:** Hamlets, the smallest centers, offer basic community facilities for a surrounding residential area. Uses often include a post office, a municipal building, houses of worship and small-scale retail stores. Some are far from major roadways but located at the crossroads of historic travel routes. Though compact, hamlets are not always pedestrian-friendly and several lack service by the Westchester County Bee-Line bus system. Hamlets located in northern Westchester may lack the infrastructure necessary to support additional development.

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## CHANGES IN DESIGNATED CENTERS

*Westchester 2025* proposes 54 places be designated centers: four major centers, six intermediate centers, 26 local centers and 18 hamlets. In 1995, the *Patterns Map* identified 65 centers: the four major centers, eight intermediate centers, 32 local centers and 21 hamlets.

The proposed changes are not a valuation or rating of community quality. *Westchester 2025* uses the term “center” to mean a traditional downtown - a concentrated area of civic and commercial uses with multiple property owners and unfettered public access. While centers vary in scale based on the size and density of employment, retail and residential sites, each designated center has a mix of such uses serve a surrounding area.

Through *Westchester 2025*, the County Planning Board intends to open discussion and interaction with municipalities about which places should be considered centers for long-range planning. Communities have a planning decision to make – should places which are not now centers be planned to become multi-use downtowns or should they be maintained for their current qualities? Local comprehensive planning and land use regulation are required to define and to create the framework for the preferred future direction for each area. As local planning statements are updated and revised, *Westchester 2025* will be updated to include these local determinations for the future visions of these places.

Read more about the [specific changes in designated centers](#).

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Read more about the [planning opportunities for places and shopping centers](#).

## Specific Changes in Designated Centers

The *Westchester 2025* analysis found that 11 of the intermediate centers, local centers and hamlets identified in *Patterns of Westchester: The Land and the People* do not have a sufficient combination of the characteristics of a traditional downtown, regardless of scale. They are: Baldwin Place, Banksville, Cortlandt, Cross County Shopping Center, Montrose, North White Plains, Pocantico Hills, Purdys, Thornwood, Van Cortlandtville and Whitehall Corners. Three of these places (Cortlandt Station, Montrose and North White Plains) are discussed in the [Corridors](#) pages of *Westchester 2025*. The 11 places not included as centers in this draft can be discussed in three categories.

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The first is a shopping center. *Westchester 2025* proposes that large regional shopping centers have unique aspects and impacts that are outside of the context of traditional downtowns. Therefore, it is proposed that the Cross County Shopping Center in Yonkers be removed as a center and added to a new discussion of regional shopping centers located outside of traditional downtowns, a category that includes Cortlandt Town Center, Jefferson Valley Mall in Yorktown and Ridge Hill Village in Yonkers.

A second category consists of places that tend to have corridor characteristics and lack a central node. These areas (Cortlandt Station, Montrose and North White Plains) require careful and specific planning to build-in the characteristics of centers if a community decides on that future.

The third category consists of places where core downtown characteristics do not exist. For several, there appears to be no need, nor practical ability, to plan for additional mixed uses and increased density. A few others lack some core characteristics today but with proper planning could become community focal points. For both types of places, the decision on what should be the future for each place must be made by each municipality as part of its comprehensive planning

In other changes, two local centers - Larchmont and Larchmont Station - are now proposed to be considered as one, Larchmont. Four of the previously identified local centers are recommended to be reclassified as hamlets: Crestwood, Goldens Bridge, Pelham Manor and Silver Lake. Jefferson Valley is recommended to be classified as a local center, not intermediate center, in recognition of the core area north of US Route 6, not the Jefferson Valley Mall. One new place is proposed to be added as a local center – Fleetwood.

## **NEW CENTERS?**

*Patterns* did not discuss a need for development of completely new centers in Westchester. Most of Westchester's centers evolved in their locations because of historic opportunities such as location near a physical resource, a transportation junction or land suitable for industry. Based on the center analysis and in consideration of historic development patterns, *Westchester 2025* does not identify a

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need for new “greenfield” centers in the county, i.e. construction of high density mixed-use development outside of existing centers.

But *Westchester 2025* does not exclude consideration of opportunities to redevelop areas, particularly along developed corridors and on non-residential campus sites, into places with characteristics of traditional centers. In addition, communities may decide to initiate a comprehensive planning effort to change places with only few characteristics of centers today into centers. Such efforts will require committed planning in order to create a center that demonstrates consistency with the policies of this plan and that can receive the support of the County Planning Board.

Read more about County Planning Board [policy on non-center based development](#).

## **Policy on non-center based development**

In 2005, the County Planning Board did not respond favorably to a referral from the City of Yonkers of a proposed “mixed-use enhanced lifestyle center” encompassing “outdoor retail, entertainment, dining and residential environment with a wide range of uses oriented around and along a lively pedestrian-friendly streetscape” with a total floor area (excluding parking structures) of 2,795,400 square feet. The Board noted the unique characteristics of the proposed development site – an isolated location separated from other parts of the city by sharp grade differences and highways and lacking necessary access for high volumes of traffic. Discussing composition and scale, the Board advised the City that while the proposed project would include retail, residential, hotel and office uses, the proposed design and limited public realm would prevent it from becoming a center as defined in *Patterns*. The project’s EIS reached the same conclusion in this statement: “while Ridge Hill Village will be styled as a village concept, it will actually be a regional mall with destination retailers and entertainment venues that will draw shoppers from a much broader trade area than a typical village center. Additionally, given its location removed from commuter train stations and local roadway network, Ridge Hill Village will not fulfill the function of community gathering place for residents of communities that have identifiable village centers.”

## **Planning opportunities for places and shopping centers**

Click on the places and large shopping centers below for more information about the planning opportunities of each. Places and shopping centers located outside of centers but located in corridors identified by *Westchester 2025* as having planning opportunities are shown in italics.

### Places

BALDWIN PLACE

BANKSVILLE

*CORTLANDT STATION*

*MONTROSE*

*NORTH WHITE PLAINS*

POCANTICO HILLS

PURDYS

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THORNWOOD  
VAN CORTLANDTVILLE  
WHITEHALL CORNERS

### Major Shopping Centers Outside Centers (over 250,000 square feet)

<i>BRADLEES SHOPPING CENTER</i>	<i>500,000 sq ft</i>
<i>CORTLANDT TOWN CENTER</i>	<i>770,000 sq ft</i>
CROSS COUNTY CENTER	1,190,000 sq ft
<i>CROSSROADS SHOPPING CENTER</i>	<i>311,000 sq ft</i>
JEFFERSON VALLEY MALL	587,000 sq ft
KOHL'S PORT CHESTER	570,000 sq ft
THE MALL AT CROSS COUNTY	264,000 sq ft
<i>MIDWAY SHOPPING CENTER</i>	<i>300,000 sq ft</i>
RIDGE HILL VILLAGE*	1,456,000 sq ft
STEW LEONARD DRIVE	343,000 sq ft
<i>YONKERS/GATEWAY CENTER/KOHL'S</i>	<i>548,000 sq ft</i>
<i>VERNON HILLS/LORD &amp; TAYLOR</i>	<i>585,000 sq ft</i>

\* Under construction

### Major Shopping Centers Within Centers (over 250,000 square feet)

CITY CENTER	495,000 sq ft
FORTUNOFF	265,000 sq ft
GALLERIA	884,000 sq ft
NEW ROC CITY	1,200,000 sq ft
PAVILION	345,000 sq ft
WATERFRONT PORT CHESTER	550,000 sq ft
WESTCHESTER	1,000,000 sq ft