



FOCUS ON WESTCHESTER

Developers Reportedly Adapting to Natural Gas Moratorium in Lower Westchester County

By John Jordan

WHITE PLAINS—The development community in Westchester County is being forced to adapt to a new norm—a moratorium on new natural gas connection hook-ups imposed by utility Con Edison on March 15. Thus far, there have been no reports of developers walking away from their projects in the county due to the imposition of the moratorium.

To the contrary, it appears that commercial developers building mostly large-scale mixed-use multifamily projects in the county are coping with the ever-evolving energy supply issue as government agencies and the utility industry come up with alternatives, new technology and additional funding to provide viable energy options and financing going forward.

However, business leaders are concerned that the natural gas moratorium over time could prove costly if proper measures are not taken to ensure project sponsors have the ability to tap into sufficient natural gas supplies or other viable energy sources.

At an energy conference staged by the Business Council of Westchester on May 10, energy industry officials, including Con Edison President Tim Cawley, business leaders and county government officials convened to discuss the impacts of the moratorium on new development projects in the affected areas of mostly lower Westchester County and detail programs developers, businesses and residents of Westchester can employ to offset the costs of utilizing alternative energy sources and new equipment as either their primary or backup energy systems.

Westchester County Executive George Latimer opened the “Running on Empty: Transition to a New Energy Landscape” conference at the Crowne Plaza hotel in White Plains by noting that he is confident that county government and the business community can work together to find solutions to the natural gas shortage issue so that it will not have a dramatic impact on the county’s economy in the years to come.

“We are struggling through a change that we are living through now,” Latimer said. “And that change is how are we going to provide energy for the things that we need in this society?”

He noted that in addition to the natural gas moratorium, the county and the region are facing the impending closure of Indian Point in 2021 and 2022.

Latimer told the more than 100 attendees at the conference that the future of how energy will be supplied to Westchester residents and business will be “in one

part a discussion of science and the second part of the discussion will be political science.” The county executive related that while politically many are pushing for greener and cleaner technologies to be employed, such as geothermal and renewables, some of these energy sources have not matured or come at a higher cost.

Con Edison’s Cawley said that the imposition of the gas moratorium in March was due to the need of balancing gas supply with gas demand. He noted that market forces and a desire by many to convert from oil to natural gas helped contribute to a 30% increase in its natural gas business since 2011. That large spike in demand was not offset by new supply as he noted

that the last natural gas pipeline to go into service was in 2013 to supply sections of Manhattan.

“I think we are at a stage where developers are exploring all opportunities, geothermal being one of them, partial geothermal (being another) and I think there is one residential tower that is going to use geothermal and supplement it with less use of natural gas...” Cawley said.



Westchester County Executive George Latimer said sessions, such as the energy conference, are important to help solve the energy supply issue currently facing the county.

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Westchester County IDA Set to Grant Approvals For \$1.3 Billion in New Development Projects

By John Jordan

WHITE PLAINS—The Westchester County Industrial Development Agency recently granted preliminary approvals for incentives for four major projects in Downtown White Plains and along the I-287 corridor that combined will involve more than \$1.3 billion in new development.

The four projects approved at IDA sessions in March and April will create an estimated more than 3,100 construction jobs and more than 500 full- and part-time jobs in the City of White Plains.

The IDA in a session held at the Westchester County Office Building in White Plains on March 29 granted preliminary inducement for the nearly \$600-million redevelopment of the current White Plains Mall and the approximately \$500-million redevelopment of the former Westchester Pavilion Mall. Both mixed-use projects will offer a total of 1,674 rental apartments and some mostly ground floor retail space.

A senior living facility, to be located on what is now an at grade parking lot, will be developed across the street from the Bloomingdale’s department store on Bloomingdale Road and will add 132 senior living units to the city’s housing stock. Michael Glynn, vice president of National Development of Brooklyn and Lower Falls, MA, estimated the project, which will also include the construction of a parking garage, will cost between \$115 million to \$120 million to build.

The redevelopment of the current White Plains Mall by owner WP Mall Realty, LLC will involve the demolition of the 170,000-square-foot existing mall at 200 Hamilton Ave. The “Hamilton Green” project will entail 860 apartment units in four buildings with 10% of the units earmarked as affordable.

Other major components include 84,500 square feet of specialty retail and res-

taurant space, including a Food and Craft Hall, 27,000 square feet of office space, an approximately 956-space parking garage and open space.

Kenneth Narva, managing partner of Street-Works Development of Port Chester, said that the public platform component of the project, which he described as “Privately-Operated Public Space,” will include 67,000 square feet of space that “will be transformational” and is projected to cost approximately \$100 million to complete. He said the overall project totals 1.35 million square feet.

The project is being built on a brownfield. Narva said the overall project will take about four-and-a-half years to build. Demolition of the existing White Plains Mall will begin this summer, however, Narva told the IDA it will take about one-year to stabilize the property in dealing with the brownfield issues. He said that in addition to his firm Street-Works, the current owner of the property, as well as possible additional joint venture partners, could be involved in the development of the project.

Hamilton Green is expected to create 1,450 construction jobs and 500 permanent full-time jobs upon completion. The

applicant is seeking the IDA to approve approximately \$14 million in sales tax exemptions and \$3.5 million in mortgage tax exemptions.



An artist’s rendering of the mixed-use project to be built at the site of the former Westchester Pavilion Mall at 60 South Broadway in White Plains.

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Cawley noted that the utility was flooded with natural gas connection requests from property owners after it announced in January its intent to impose the moratorium two months later.

While the utility expected “an aggressive ramp up in applications,” Cawley noted that in the eight-week span from the announcement to the start of the moratorium, the utility received what would normally be 15 months of natural gas connection applications from Westchester County customers.

Previously, a Con Edison spokesman told *Real Estate In-Depth* that during that eight-week period, the utility received more than 1,300 applications from properties for natural gas. For those applicants that are granted natural gas connection permits, they have two years from that date to have their projects ready to accept natural gas.



John Ravitz, COO of the Business Council of Westchester, believes that to solve the energy supply issue, stakeholders need to discuss not only renewal energy sources, but also increased natural gas pipeline capacity for Westchester.

For those applicants that are granted natural gas connection permits, they have two years from that date to have their projects ready to accept natural gas.

Cawley acknowledged the criticism leveled by developers and others in the business community over the short time period between January and March, but added, “So, while you needed to demonstrate your plans to connect to the natural gas system on a firm basis in eight weeks, we are going to continue business as we have for the next two years connecting those customers who have applications in on a ready to accept natural gas (basis). So, it was not as if we turned the valve (off) after 57 days,” he said.

Cawley detailed a number of steps the utility has taken as part of its Smart Solutions

program that was approved recently by the New York State Public Service Commission. Those steps include providing incentives for energy efficiency measures; building renewable energy facilities and natural gas storage facilities in Westchester County, advancing efforts to reduce energy usage via the employment of heat pumps and geothermal technologies and expanding the compression capacity of existing pipelines to the region to increase the supply of natural gas.

Con Edison reported on April 24 it had reached an agreement with Tennessee Gas Pipeline to increase capacity in its existing natural gas pipeline that connects to Con Edison’s distribution system to Westchester County.

The deal, if approved, would upgrade and enhance the capability of the existing

pipeline to transport additional natural gas for Con Edison and provide the incremental capacity to enable Con Edison to lift the moratorium. The utility said the new natural gas capacity from the Tennessee Gas Pipeline could be in service by November 2023.

On May 9, the utility announced it had reached a similar agreement with Iroquois Gas Transmission System, L.P. an existing natural gas pipeline, to develop and permit incremental natural gas capacity to the Bronx and parts of Manhattan and Queens.

Under the agreement, Iroquois Gas Transmission System, L.P. would provide increased natural gas capacity to Con Edison’s distribution system that serves New York City by upgrading compression facilities on the Iroquois system. These upgrades will enhance Iroquois’ capability to transport much needed natural gas supplies to Con Edison customers. Subject to the necessary permits and approvals, the incremental capacity could be placed in service by November 2023.

Cawley said that the combination of its Smart Solutions program and the existing pipeline expansion projects could allow the natural gas connection moratorium in sections of Westchester County to be lifted by Thanksgiving 2023.

A critical ruling could be coming down any day by New York State over whether to grant permits for the \$1-billion Northeast Supply Enhancement Project that would supply natural gas to sections of Nassau County. Utility National Grid has threatened to impose a natural gas connection moratorium if that pipeline is not approved and has suggested it will not have enough power to supply the new development planned at Belmont Racetrack that will include a new stadium for the New York Islanders, according to a report in *Newsday*.

If this project is rejected, it could send a signal to utilities and developers that New York State is not interested in advancing any natural gas pipeline projects.

A major part of the energy conference involved presentations by the New York State Energy Research and Development Authority and Con Edison regarding various energy programs residents, businesses and developers can utilize to reduce natural gas usage, pay for new energy-saving technologies, etc.

Michael Reed, NYSERDA Team Leader, Advanced Efficiency Solutions, gave a presentation on the \$250-million Clean Energy Action Plan that offers a myriad of grant programs for energy reduction initiatives.

For a full list of NYSERDA programs under the Clean Energy Action plan go to <https://www.nyserdera.ny.gov/All-Programs/Programs/Clean-Energy-Action-Plan>.

The Clean Energy Action Plan provides relief for businesses and residents affected by a utility company gas moratorium. Through the plan, the state will help lower energy costs for consumers, promote economic development and provide additional resources for community awareness and support.

As part of the plan, NYSERDA is offering increased incentives for programs to help communities, businesses, and individuals access reliable clean energy alternatives to natural gas.

The Clean Energy Action Plan applies to Con Edison customers in Southern Westchester County and NYSEG customers in the town of Lansing, NY. To be eligible to participate in NYSERDA’s programs, an applicant must currently pay into the System Benefits Charge.

In addition to NYSERDA programs, the New York Power Authority and Con Edison will provide additional financing services to its customers as well.

The funding breakdown is as follows: \$165 million in grants from the Con Edison Smart Solutions package that the Public Service Commission recently directed Con Edison to deploy toward heat pumps and increasing gas efficiency for residential, multi-family and commercial and industrial customers. Other program components include an additional \$53 million in clean energy incentives and investments that NYSERDA will provide to Westchester customers; \$28 million of which will be used for grants for new customers, including low-to-moderate residential developments waitlisted by Con Edison for natural gas to use alternative heating and cooling systems and adopt energy efficient solutions. The remaining \$25 million in NYSERDA funding will be used to provide grants to improve energy efficiency in Westchester and reduce overall and peak energy demand from existing customers in the region to free up capacity.

An additional \$32 million in low-cost NYPA financing will be earmarked for its Westchester customers to retrofit heating systems with clean energy alternatives.

John Ravitz, executive vice president and chief operating officer of the Business Council of Westchester, said that major development projects in Yonkers, New Rochelle, White Plains and other sections of lower and mid-Westchester must be supported and allowed to begin construction.

Noting the high stakes at play, he said that all forms of energy must be studied carefully, including renewables, “to see what works and what doesn’t work, what will take time and what impact it will have on the communities...”

He said, “We have to have honest conversations about will renewables get us to where we want to be? Will renewables be able to allow us to have the development we seek that will create the jobs that will bring in the revenue to municipalities?”

Ravitz added that the Business Council, which has formed a task force to address the natural gas moratorium issue, believes that to solve the energy shortage problem, in addition to advancing renewable energy the expansion of natural gas pipelines to the county must also be considered.

The energy conference also featured a discussion with New York State Senator Kevin Parker, chairman of the Senate Committee on Energy and Telecommunications, and presentations by Robison Oil and Paraco Gas Corporation.



Con Edison President Tim Cawley responds to a question regarding the natural gas moratorium.



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The redevelopment of the former Westchester Pavilion mall at 60 South Broadway has been delayed while Lennar Multifamily Communities revised its original plan that had called for 707 multifamily units and 85,000 square feet of retail space.

The Westchester Pavilion Mall has been demolished to make way for the new development.

Lennar Multifamily, which in developing a more than \$223-million multifamily project at 131 Mamaroneck Ave. in White Plains, has increased the number of apartments to 814 units and has significantly decreased the retail component to more than 28,000 square feet at 60 South Broadway. The development will be built in two phases. Each phase of the project is expected to cost more than \$250 million, according to the developer's filing with the IDA.

Greg Belew, City President, NY Metro Area, for Lennar Multifamily, said the project would be undertaken in two phases and would involve two, 28-story tower buildings.

Lennar has secured mostly all approvals, but is seeking a 20-year PILOT agreement with the City of White Plains and its School District.

Lennar is looking to have the IDA approve sales tax exemptions of \$5.5 million in phase one and \$5.4 million in phase two; mortgage tax exemptions of \$1.25 million in phase one and \$1.25 million in phase two and property tax abatements of \$28 million in phase one and \$30 million in phase two.

Construction of the first phase is expected to begin in June 2020, with occupancy in September 2022. The second phase will begin construction in June 2022, with occupancy in September 2024.

The IDA also was given a presentation of a senior living project called "Waterstone" that will be built on Bloomingdale Road. The project will involve a five-story, 132-unit independent living facility.

Being proposed by a special entity of three Massachusetts-based firms—National Development, EPOCH Senior Living, Inc., and Charles River Realty Investors, the partnership will acquire 120 Bloomingdale Road, the 2.56-acre site of an existing at grade parking lot. The partnership plans to acquire 120 Bloomingdale Road as well as an easement right to build a new parking structure at an adjacent property, according to its IDA filing.

In connection with the development of the project, National Development is making a voluntary \$1.2 million contribution to the White Plains Affordable Housing Fund.

The project is expected to take 22 months to complete.

The development partnership is seeking IDA approval of more than \$2.4 million in sales tax exemptions and \$780,481.78 in mortgage tax exemptions.

Eon S. Nichols, an attorney with the law firm Cuddy & Feder LLP who represented all three development firms before the IDA in March, stated that all three firms are in negotiations with the unionized building trades regarding hiring local labor. The Westchester County IDA and the Building & Construction Trades Council of Westchester and Putnam Counties are in talks to craft workforce requirements for development firms seeking public assistance.

Nichols also said that all three development firms have been in contact with Con Edison regarding the utility's recently imposed (March 15) moratorium on new natural gas connection hookups for most of Westchester County.

Lennar's Belew said that one possible way to deal with the natural gas moratorium is to build a project with a back-up heating system that could be switched from natural gas during peak usage periods.

IDA Supported Projects in 2018 To Generate \$881M in Investment

WHITE PLAINS—The Westchester County Industrial Development Agency announced earlier this year that projects it supported in 2018 will result in \$881.4 million in private investment in the county's economy.

The projects will create 2,680 construction jobs, 222 permanent jobs and 1,756 units of new rental apartments of which 97 will be affordable at 60% of Westchester County area median income. In addition, the projects will create more than 73,400 square feet of commercial and retail space. IDA incentives for the projects totaled \$48.8 million.

"This past year we have seen significant gains for economic development in Westchester County. The financial incentives provided by the IDA will generate hundreds of millions of dollars in private sector investment in our County while creating thousands of construction and permanent jobs," said Bridget Gibbons, director of the Westchester County Office of Economic Development. "Several of the residential projects approved for IDA incentives are transit-oriented developments that appeal to the growing Millennial population in our region," she added.

Financial incentives offered by the IDA include sales tax exemptions and mortgage recording tax reductions as well as tax-exempt bonds with interest rates lower than conventional debt. These benefits are provided at no cost or risk to the taxpayers of Westchester.

In addition to providing financial incentives to businesses, the county also provides tax-exempt financing to non-profits and public benefit corporations through the Local Development Corporation (LDC). In 2018, the LDC provided tax-exempt bond financing of \$11,465,500 to Bethel Nursing Home for renovations to a nursing home in Ossining.

In an initiative to educate the not-for-profit community in Westchester on the many benefits of tax-exempt financing with the LDC, the Office of Economic Development held a series of meetings in 2018 with various organizations including the Not-For-Profit Council of the Business Council of Westchester, YWCA of White Plains, Westchester Library System, ArtsWestchester and Westhab.

RPW Group Proposes Apartment Project

A long-anticipated project to be built next to the 1133 Westchester office building received preliminary inducement from the Westchester County Industrial Development Agency for incentives.

Rye-based developer RPW Group has been studying a host of potential projects next to its 1133 Westchester office building, which formerly housed IBM, but was repurposed as a multi-tenant office building. RPW Group is the owner of the 1133 Westchester Ave. office building whose tenants now include ITT Corp., Wilson Elser law firm, the Hospital for Special Surgery, the Jackson Lewis law firm, Chubb Insurance and *The Journal News*.

Robert Weisz's RPW Group is partnering with Cleveland-based NRP Group on a \$95-million multifamily project on a 20-acre parcel next to the office building that is expected to break ground in February 2020 and be completed in February 2022.

The IDA Board at its April 18th session granted the project preliminary approval of \$1.82 million in sales tax exemptions. The development partnership is also seeking a PILOT agreement from the City of White Plains valued at \$10.5 million in tax abatements over a 15-year term. The project is expected to create 120 construction jobs and eight full-time jobs.

The development plan calls for a total of 303 units that will consist of a mix of one- two- and three-bedroom apartments. A total of 19 units would be affordable to those making 60% of average median income. The apartments will be housed in three separate five-story buildings.

Planned amenities at the property include a fitness center, pool and business lounge. The complex will also feature a 12,000-square-foot public outdoor recreation space. The project would be built to LEED certifiable standards and include rooftop solar panels on all three buildings and on-site electric vehicle charging stations. There will be shuttle service provided to tenants to Downtown White Plains and the White Plains Metro-North train station.

"We are pleased to provide preliminary approval for this innovative residential development that will bring rental housing to the I-287 office corridor. This project is part of an emerging trend which has seen the transformation of vacant office parks into new uses such as Wegmans supermarket, Life Time Athletic fitness center and a pediatric care ambulatory facility for Montefiore Medical Center," said Bridget Gibbons, director of the Westchester County Office of Economic Development.



A rendering of the Hamilton Green project that is proposed to be built at the site of the White Plains Mall.

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A Conversation with Joseph Rand on His New Book: “How to be a Great Real Estate Agent”

By Mary T. Prenon

Joseph Rand, the chief creative officer for Better Homes and Gardens Real Estate | Rand Realty, has just published his latest book, “How to be a Great Real Estate Agent.” In it, he discusses how agents can build their business by becoming better at their actual jobs.

Real Estate In-Depth asked Rand some probing questions on how agents can improve on key facets of how they do business based on his new publication.

REID: One of the main points in your book is that agents need to think more expansively about what clients need. What do you mean by that?

Rand: Let me give you an example. Right now, we’re in the middle of the very short tax grievance season, and we all have clients who really need to grieve their taxes and could use our help: a CMA to determine their market value, links to the forms they need, advice about the process, a referral to an attorney if they want to use one. That’s thinking expansively about what clients need, and then creatively about how to give it to them. Even though you don’t get paid for that kind of work, you build the kind of long-term relationship that naturally generates referrals and, eventually, repeat business. If you open your mind to think expansively about what your clients need, you’ll find lots of relationship-building opportunities like that.

REID: You argue in the book that agents are being taught the wrong way to give listing presentations. What do you mean by that?

Rand: Traditionally, we teach agents to do listing presentations like they are a

performance, a show. Think about it. We give them scripts to memorize, we tell them to rehearse their lines, we teach them to think of the seller as a passive audience member. It’s all about the agent, and your ability to sell yourself. But, listing presentations should actually be about the client, not the agent. They should be consultations, open and engaging discussions with sellers about what their needs are. Like, how do you know what sellers need if you launch into your 23-point marketing plan without actually asking them about their concerns, fears, wants, needs, all that? That’s what all other service professionals do when they meet with clients, right? Doctors don’t talk about their education, they start by asking you what you need. Same with lawyers, plumbers, accountants, everyone. No one else feels like they need to sell themselves when they meet with a client for the first time. They just start servicing their needs by asking questions and listening to the answers.

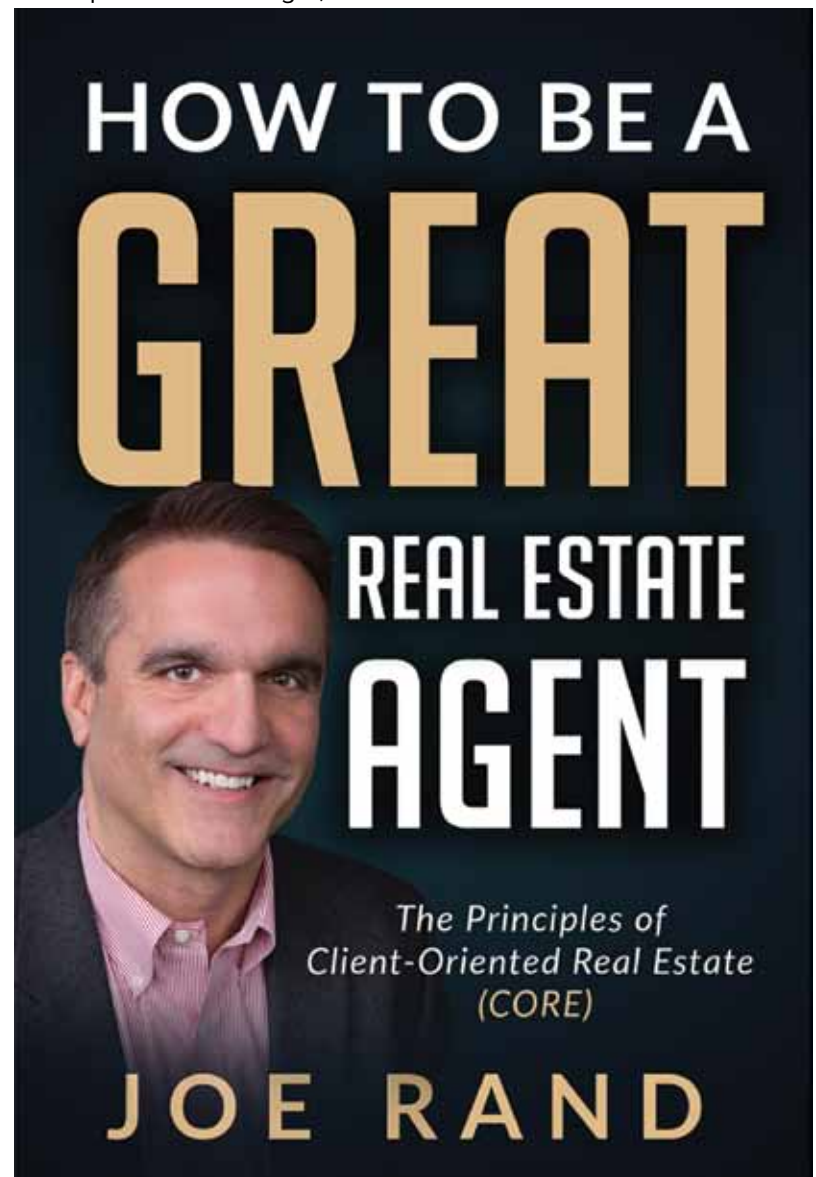
REID: Lots of agents are concerned these days about new business models like I-buyers and discount companies. What does your book say about those threats?

Rand: As an industry, we’ve opened the door to these types of competitors by not modernizing our value proposition. For example, too many agents still define their value as “I get your listing out in the market and advertise it all over the Internet.” And that might have been a valuable service 10 years ago, when you needed a certain technical know-how to syndicate a listing. But today, when the MLS puts everyone’s

listings on all the websites for free, it’s not a differentiator. Discounters live off our inability to express our value, because if all we do is put a sign in the yard and a listing on the MLS, we’re not really worth what we’re charging. That’s why we need to talk about the higher-level work we do in staging, creating marketing content, evaluating pricing, managing transactions, negotiating—all the important stuff. Every real estate agent is a professional stager, even if

actual day-to-day job of representing clients well. So, you need to work with a broker who has a robust training program not just in lead generation but in client management. And that’s on the brokers—we need to do more to train our agents about the actual job of representing buyers and sellers, not just how to prospect a FSBO or whatever.

REID: What do you think the biggest challenge agents have to building a successful career?



they don’t realize it. If we do great work for our clients, if we give them the kind of value they deserve, then we have nothing to worry about from disruptors and discounters.

REID: Can anyone become a “great agent,” or do you need a certain type of personality or skill set?

Rand: I’ve been doing this almost 20 years, and I can’t find any particular personality type that corresponds to being a great agent. It’s not just about how charismatic you are, or how gregarious. For example, right now, I’m coaching a really great agent who is a classic introvert—you would never meet her and think that she’s in a sales industry. But, she’s amazing at the technical work of helping her clients buy and sell houses. They love her, and she gets tons of referrals from past clients because of how good she is at her job. So, she’ll sell dozens of homes this year. Anyone can be a great agent. You just need to have the desire to be great. You have to be committed to doing great work: develop your skills to generating clients and servicing their needs, and then discipline yourself to grinding it out every single day.

REID: What’s the biggest mistake agents make when they start their career?

Rand: The biggest mistake I see is that they start too fast, they work with clients before they’ve been properly trained. You don’t learn anything about the job of being a real estate agent from your licensing class. Even after you get your license, you still need to learn the

Rand: The biggest challenge most agents have is maintaining the discipline to do the little things that lead to long-term success. It’s easy to get sucked in to focusing entirely on the short term, especially when you’ve got bills to pay this month. But, it’s hard work building a foundation for the long-term. It’s hard to maintain the discipline to stick with lead generation campaigns that will fail 95 times out of 100. It’s hard to build relationships with the people in your sphere by reaching out to them month after month after month in the hopes of generating a referral. It’s hard (and expensive) to cultivate a farm with mailing after mailing. And it’s hard to commit to continuing your education to build your skills and knowledge. But, those are the kinds of things you need to do if you want to build a dependable long-term base of business that doesn’t require you to live from paycheck to paycheck.

Rand’s new book, “How to be a Great Real Estate Agent,” is a follow-up to his “Disruptors, Discounters, and Doubters” about how the industry can overcome the challenges posed by disruption by raising the bar on client experiences. Rand has spoken at many industry conferences, including Inman Connect, REALTOR Triple Play, and the RIS Media CEO Summit. Last year, he was honored by RIS Media with one of the inaugural industry Newsmaker Awards, and was recognized by Inman News in 2017 as one of the Top 100 Real Estate Influencers.

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Some Unique Places in Westchester to Visit

By Mary T. Prenon

Westchester County is home to many unique attractions—from renowned historic sites to breathtaking nature preserves and parks. New and even long-time residents in the county can find a plethora of places and activities to keep themselves entertained throughout the year. And for those who love animals, there are a few special spots offering visitors the opportunity to see them in their natural environments, and learn how to respect and protect them.



Stone Barns Greenhouse

Tucked away in South Salem's thick woodlands is the Wolf Conservation Center, founded in 1999 by Helene Grimaud, to teach people about wolves, their relationship to the environment and our role in safeguarding their future. The not-for-profit organization is dedicating to protecting two critically-endangered wolf species—the Mexican gray wolf and red wolf.

In fact, three “ambassador wolves”—Alawa, Nikai and Zephyr—live on the property and help to educate the public about wolves and the vital ecological role they play in the environment. “Wolves help to control the deer population, which can sometimes get out of control,” explained WCC Executive Director Maggie Howell. “As a result, you can see more auto accidents involving deer, and more foliage consumed.”

The center's other 26 Mexican grey wolves and 20 red wolves residing there are candidates for a wild release program. “These wolves are actually part of the federal Species Survival Plan, which is dedicated to ensuring the survival of endangered animals,” added Howell. “It allows for captive breeding and then eventual release into places like Arizona, New Mexico and even Mexico. It's all about rescuing a species.”

The WCC offers many events for children and adults including early morning photo sessions, an “Evening Howl” information session, sunset hike, wine and cheese. Of course, there's the ever-popular “Sleeping with Wolves” program that lets guests camp out overnight and includes tents, a pizza party, movie, fireside snacks and breakfast.

In addition, the center offers various educational program for children, as well as a “Summer Wolf Camp” for kids in July and August.

All of the wolves are kept behind enclosures with vast areas to run and build their dens. Some have had pups, and anyone can check in on them anytime using their website's (NYWolf.org) webcam.

“It's true that wolves have had a bad rap, probably going back to fairy tales about ‘Little Red Riding Hood,’ and movies like the ‘Lone Wolf’ or ‘Wolf of Wall Street,’” said Howell. “The fact is that wolves can be very shy around people, and they're all about protecting their families.”

The WCC is open all year long, and has had visitors from as close as the tri-state area to as far away as New Zealand. “A lot of Westchester visitors can't believe we're so close, and now we've become sort of a destination spot for those traveling to the Hudson Valley,” she said.

Another popular Westchester destination featuring animals is the Stone Barns Center for Food and Agriculture in Pocantico Hills. Started in the 1990s by the Rockefeller family, along with organic farmers and others, Stone Barn's mission is to create a healthy and sustainable food system.

Both the land and buildings on the 80-acre property were once part of a 1930s dairy farm. Later, its founders invited Blue Hill, a Manhattan restaurant, to serve as the center's onsite restaurant partner. Since 2004, Stone Barns has been open to the public, offering a true farm-to-table dining experience.

Open year-round, Stone Barns is not only a working farm—complete with plants and animals—but it's also gaining a reputation as a renowned farming educational facility, offering a nine-month apprentice program that has attracted people from around the world.

“We get people from all backgrounds who are interested in learning about new ways of farming that will actually care for the land,” explained Jessica Galen, senior communications manager for Stone Barns. “We even had someone from Wall Street who was tired of that fast-paced lifestyle and looking for a completely different career.”

The center also offers food education programs for teachers and students, as well as special workshops for the public.

Hundreds of varieties of vegetables, fruits, flowers and herbs are grown in outdoor fields, as well as in its 22,000-square-foot minimally-heated greenhouse. “We probably have more kinds of greens than the average person has ever heard of,” said Galen. Plus, they rely on feedback from diners at Blue Hill to let them know which varieties they prefer. Blue Hill buys about 70% of the vegetables grown on the farm, and Stone Barns actually sells some fresh produce to the public.

To keep the soil healthy, Stone Barns practices crop rotation and uses natural deterrents for pest control in place of harsh chemicals or pesticides. Grazing sheep, goats and cattle on the property serve as “grass cutters,” and by trampling through the grasslands, they in turn, protect the soil from erosion. “Healthy soil holds in more carbon,” added Galen. “The less carbon emissions in the air, the less climate change.” In addition, the center produces fresh honey from its own honey bee colony.



Stone Barns Center for Food and Agriculture in Pocantico Hills

Visitors can enjoy a walk through the farm for free on Wednesdays through Fridays, and there is paid admission on Saturdays and Sundays from March through November. Ticket costs include a guided tour as well as pop-up events like vegetable tastings, meeting the animals or beekeeping

demonstrations.

“This is one of the few places where people can directly connect with farming and food,” said Galen. “It's a real eye-opener — especially for first-time visitors.”

Stone Barns has hosted visitors from all over the world and the comments heard most often are that people can't believe there's such a large, sustainable working

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Westchester County Picking First Entrepreneurs For New Element Incubator Program Initiative

By John Jordan

WHITE PLAINS—In coming weeks, the Westchester Office of Economic Development will be putting the finishing touches on its groundbreaking new Element 46 incubator initiative.

Westchester County Executive George Latimer recently announced the launch of the Westchester Element 46 incubator program designed to inspire and support entrepreneurial talent and the development of new businesses in Westchester.

The rollout of the incubator program was announced on March 28 at the Business Council of Westchester's Annual Business Expo event held at the Hilton Westchester in Rye Brook.

Westchester County Director of Economic Development Bridget Gibbons told *Real Estate In-Depth* in early May that since the program's launch the county received approximately 65 applications for the Element 46 program by the deadline for submissions on April 26, 2019.

A cohort of 15 selected entrepreneurs will be selected and subsequently housed in a number of co-working locations in the county and paired with some of the best minds across business, innovation, and the investment community. The first cohort of Element 46 participants will be selected by the end of May and begin classes in July 2019 and complete the program by October 2019. Gibbons said that the co-working incubator locations will also be selected by the county by the end of May.

At the time of the project's launch, Latimer said of the new initiative geared to business start-ups, "Westchester has

all of the most important ingredients for start-up success—location, infrastructure, transportation, business expertise, investor interest, talent and more. By bringing together the very best entrepreneurial ideas and supporting them with the immense talent and resources

addition to invaluable coaching and networking connections through the mentors and other entrepreneurs at the incubator. They are also often a good path to capital from accelerators, angel investors and venture capitalists. Element 46 will have a positive impact on economic growth in communities across the county by maximizing the success of emerging, startup companies, county officials stated

Startups, mentors, service providers and co-working spaces interested in learning more about the Element 46 program, should visit the web-

site at Element46.org.

Participants will have access to:

Strategic Resources—Element 46

has partnered with some of the leading experts in the community to advise, train and directly support participants.

World-Class Mentors and Advisors—Element 46 builds a community of support around founders by bringing together a robust network of seasoned entrepreneurs, experienced change-makers, and leaders across sectors.

Access to Subject Matter Experts—Element 46 helps participants gain exposure for their ventures to support their long-term sustainability, including: access to entrepreneurs, press, and supporters, during the course of the cohort session; access to potential funders, investors, and partners; access to key community figures and innovators at events.

Office Space—Full time space at a co-working office strategically located and transit-oriented - free of charge during the firm's participation in the Element 46 program.



of this county, I'm confident that we'll be able to cultivate high-growth companies that will drive economic development for Westchester and also serve as a great reminder of the benefits of working, living and playing right in our county."

Gibbons added, "We are laser focused on attracting startups to Westchester and creating an entrepreneurial ecosystem. Through Element 46 we plan to provide early-stage entrepreneurs with the support they need to professionalize and scale their businesses, and to keep them here in Westchester."

Incubators are organizations geared toward speeding up the growth and success of startup and early stage companies. They provide access to services such as accountants and lawyers—in

Commercial Investment Division to Host 'Women in CRE' Panel on June 6 in White Plains

WHITE PLAINS—The Hudson Gateway Association of Realtors' Commercial Investment Division will hold a "Women in Commercial Real Estate" panel discussion on June 6 at the HGAR offices in White Plains.

The program, which will begin at 9 a.m., will feature panelists Patricia Valenti, Executive Managing Director, Newmark Knight Frank (Moderator); Joanna Simone, Vice President of Leasing and Property Management Operations, Simone Development; Jacqueline L. Novotny, First Vice President, CBRE; Sarah Jones-Maturo, President, RM Friedland and Bonnie Silverman, President, Silverman Realty Group.

The panel will address the state of the commercial real estate market, threats and trends, along with personal stories, successes and challenges.



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Unique Places in Westchester

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farm so close to New York City. "I think it helps people understand how farming can be part of their everyday lives," added Galen.

Just a few miles north, people can get a first-hand look at agriculture and wildlife at the Alfred B. DeBello Muscoot Farm in Somers. Open almost every day of the year from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., Muscoot dates back to 1880, when it was a working dairy farm owned by Ferdinand Hopkins III, a New York City businessman.

Today, it is part of the Westchester County Park system. The county acquired the land in 1968 and Muscoot Farm opened to the public in 1975 with the help of former County Executive Alfred B. DeBello, after whom the farm was named in 2016.

Set on 777 acres, the farm features more than 50 animals including cows, horses, donkeys, sheep, goats, chickens, turkeys, ducks and pigs, as well as six miles of hiking trails. "It's all about preserving history and showing people what farming was like in Westchester at the turn of the 19th Century," said Jason Klein, director of conservation for the Westchester County Department of Parks, Recreation and Conservation.

Among the historic buildings are the milk house, ice house and carriage house displaying various modes of transportation during the late 1800s and early 1900s. Admission is free, and Klein said weekends are especially busy there. "We get a

lot of people from the area, as well as some from out of state," he said. "It's a special place that gives you a living history of farm life in our region."

Muscoot also offers guided tours for school groups, and a concession stand is open seasonally. Visitors are welcome to bring their own food, as picnic tables are provided.

The main historic house also presents occasional art shows, while the main large barn is the setting for seasonal theater. Shakespeare's "All's Well That Ends Well" will begin production on May 31 and continue through June 9 on weekends.



Three "ambassador" wolves at the Wolf Conservation Center.

One of the most popular weekend events at the farm are children's birthday parties, held on Saturday mornings from 10 a.m. to noon. Parents have the option of including a hayride through the farm. "Kids love it because they really get the chance to see the animals up close," added Klein.

In addition, the farm features some historic cattle breeds, and one famous cow "Show Girl," who has been featured in several TV commercials and some films. "She's a Holstein cow, one of the most recognized types of cattle," said Klein, describing her black and white spotted appearance. "Show Girl is pretty famous, but don't worry, it hasn't gone to her head. She's not a diva!"

So, whether you're looking to meet Show Girl, dance with wolves, or experience life on the farm, these are just a few options awaiting you for the summer season in Westchester.



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