Construction Workers' Compensation Insurance Group Reports a 30 Percent Dividend for its Members

Real Estate Group Also Announces a 30 Percent Dividend

PELHAM

New York State Workers' Compensation Group 458, the workers' compensation insurance group of The Building and Realty Institute (BRI), recently announced a 30 percent dividend that will be issued in 2026 for the policy year ending June 29, 2025. The dividend was announced at the group's Annual Meeting on April 9 in Pelham, NY.

Levitt-Fuirst Insurance and Bonding, manager of Group 458 and insurance manager of The Building and Realty Institute (BRI), made the announcement. The dividend is in addition to a 32.5 percent maximum advance discount that group members may be eligible to receive, spokesmen said.

Group 458 officials said that the group has now had 74 consecutive years of dividends. Group 458 was formed in 1951.

Continued on p. 4

Impact

Serving the Hudson Valley

News for the Building and Realty Industry

80 Years of Providing Knowledge to the Building Community

BRI

SUMMER 2026 VOL. 25 NO. 1

FEATURES

Gov. Hochul Signs Legislation That Delivers Generational Reforms to New York's State Environmental Quality Review Act (SEQRA)

Ambitious Agenda Includes Most Significant Reforms of SEQRA Since its Passage in 1975

ALBANY

Gov. Hochul on May 27 signed a key component of her Fiscal Year 2026-27 Budget, a component which includes her "Let Them Build" agenda.

The agenda, according to a press release from the state, is a sweeping set of common-sense reforms that cut red tape and remove duplicative environmental reviews for housing and other critical infrastructure. The enacted budget includes significant reforms of the 50-year-old State Environmental Quality Review Act (SEQRA), modernizing the law to expedite projects that meet criteria which ensure they have no significant environmental impacts and to let localities build the housing and infrastructure New Yorkers need in communities across the state.

"Red tape and duplicative reviews have stopped New York from doing the very building that made us the envy of the world, making our housing more expensive and our infrastructure outdated - that ends today," Gov. Hochul said on May 27. "By removing these barriers and empowering communities across the state, we are working to drive down costs of critical housing and infrastructure and sending a simple message: now is the time to build."

The press release said that, currently, it is too difficult to build major projects in New York - housing and infrastructure projects can take as much as 56 percent longer in New York State to get from concept to groundbreaking compared to peer states. Similarly, unduly burdensome requirements delay needed investment in clean water infrastructure, green infrastructure, New York City public schools, and parks and trails.

The budget, the press release said, includes landmark reforms to slash through the red tape and government bureaucracy that has stymied desperately needed housing and crucial infrastructure projects by enacting Gov. Hochul's "Let Them Build" agenda. The budget includes a series of common-sense changes to modernize SEQRA and expedite categories of housing and infrastructure projects consistently found not to have any significant environmental impact, eliminating unnecessary costs, duplicative reviews and years of delay that raise costs for New Yorkers when they can least afford it.

The actions, the press release added, will increase affordability by fast-tracking housing and infrastructure projects that communities want and that will not harm the environment. The fast-track makes it easier to build more of the vital projects that New Yorkers need while continuing to protect the state's environment and conserve New York's natural resources.

Continued on p. 7

The Westchester County Rent Guidelines Board Approves Rent Increases of 3.5 Percent and 4.5 Percent

AOAC/BRI Officials Stress That the Vote Reflects Rising Costs, but Add that Pressures for Owners Remain

WHITE PLAINS

The Westchester County Rent Guidelines Board on Jun. 22 approved rent increases of 3.5 percent for One-Year Lease Renewals and 4.5 percent for Two-Year Lease Renewals for buildings affected by the Emergency Tenant Protection Act (ETPA).

The guidelines board approved the increases during its Rebuttal and Vote Meeting at White Plains City Hall. The guidelines affect leases commencing between Oct. 1, 2026 and Sep. 30, 2027. The increases are the highest that the guidelines board has issued since its vote for the 2008-2009 term (4.5 percent for One-Year Lease Renewals and 6.5 percent for Two-Year Lease Renewals).

Representatives of the Building and Realty Institute of the Hudson Valley (BRI) and the Apartment Owners Advisory Council (AOAC) – an affiliate organization of the BRI – said the approved increases represent a departure from the lower adjustments adopted in recent years, while noting that housing providers continue to face significant financial pressures from rising operating costs and regulatory requirements.

"The board's decision is a more realistic recognition of the challenges facing housing providers," said Alana Ciuffetelli, chair of the AOAC. "However, owners continue to face pressures that affect their ability to maintain, improve, and preserve their properties over the long term."

BRI/AOAC officials said that Operating Costs

Continued on p. 6

The BRI Celebrates The 80th Anniversary of Its Formation With A Landmark Gala That Honored Industry and Community Leaders

MAMARONECK

The Building and Realty Institute of the Hudson Valley (BRI) celebrated a major milestone with its 80th Anniversary Gala on May 21 at the Mamaroneck Beach and Yacht Club.

The gala was attended by more than 200 members of the building, realty, construction and business sectors. The event also brought together many leaders from across the real estate and construction industries for an evening of recognition, connection, and celebration. The theme for the event was "Building the Future."

The gala honored two distinguished individuals whose work, according to BRI officials, has left a lasting impact on the Hudson Valley Region - Martin Ginsburg, founder of Ginsburg Development Companies (GDC), and Cynthia B. Knox, chief executive officer of Caring for the Hungry and Homeless of Peekskill (CHHOP).

A past BRI President and a member of the organization since the 1970's, Ginsburg has spent more than six decades shaping communities throughout Westchester and the Hudson Valley. As founder of Ginsburg Development Companies (GDC), his portfolio of award-winning residential and mixed-use developments has redefined how people live, work, and connect, bringing innovative design, sustainability, and a community-first approach to projects across the region. Ginsburg's work has played a pivotal role in advancing smart growth and expanding housing opportunities in some of the area's most dynamic markets, BRI officials said.

BRI 80 YEARS BUILDING THE FUTURE
The Building & Realty Institute of the Hudson Valley

"As a member of the BRI for decades, I have seen the organization grow into the effective advocacy group it has become today, advocating for policies that favorably impact both the development community and the public," Ginsburg said. "I am very honored to be recognized by the BRI on the occasion of its 80th Anniversary."

Knox was recognized for her leadership in addressing housing insecurity and supporting vulnerable populations across the Hudson Valley. As CEO of CHHOP, she has expanded the organization's impact beyond emergency services to advance long-term housing stability, increasing revenue by more than 225 percent and staffing by 280 percent while launching programs like the RISE initiative

Continued on p. 7

NAHB Helps Secure Passage of Historic Housing Bill

WASHINGTON

The U.S. House of Representatives on Jun. 23 overwhelmingly approved the 21st Century ROAD to Housing Act, advancing to President Trump legislation that NAHB helped shape through a years-long advocacy effort to significantly boost housing production, NAHB officials said.

"NAHB applauds lawmakers for working in a bipartisan, bicameral way to pass historic housing legislation that will deliver real benefits for the American people," said NAHB Chairman Bill Owens. "The 21st Century ROAD to Housing Act will help expand the nation's housing supply by reducing regulatory barriers and encouraging local governments to reform zoning and land-use policies that have limited home building."

The Top 5 Provisions

NAHB officials said the once-in-a-generation housing package includes more than 50 sections addressing housing supply, financing, disaster recovery and other priorities. NAHB, association

Continued on p. 6

From the Editor's Desk

Hanley's Highlights

by Jeff Hanley

Associate Executive Director, Building and Realty Institute (BRI), *Impact* Editor

Marking the 80th Anniversary of the BRI's Formation with An Unforgettable Event

ARMONK

There are days and nights in life that live on in our memories forever. For members of the building, realty and construction industries of the Hudson Valley, a definite example is the night of May 21st, 2026.

On that night, members of the Building and Realty Institute of the Hudson Valley (BRI) celebrated the 80th anniversary of the formation of the BRI with a magnificent gala at the Mamaroneck Beach and Yacht Club. The gala was attended by more than 200 members of the building, realty, construction and business sectors. The event, as BRI officials stressed, brought together many leaders from across the real estate and construction industries for an evening of recognition, connection, and celebration. The theme for the event was "Building the Future."

The gala honored two distinguished individuals whose work, according to BRI officials, has left a lasting impact on the Hudson Valley Region - Martin Ginsburg, founder of Ginsburg Development Companies (GDC) and a past president of the BRI, and Cynthia B. Knox, chief executive officer of Caring for the Hungry and Homeless of Peekskill (CHHOP). Lisa DeRosa, chair of the Gala's Executive Committee and a past president of the BRI, was also honored at the event. DeRosa, the first female President of the BRI, received a special award at the gala for her four years of service to the organization as its president.

The evening was hosted by Regina DeCicco, a Westchester native comedian and television personality. The program also featured recognition of BRI members across the building, real estate, and construction industries, reflecting on 80 years of advancing housing and economic development throughout the Hudson Valley. A full report on the memorable event begins on Page One and is one of several noteworthy reports in this issue of IMPACT. Other reports include:

- ❖ *A Page One report on New York State Workers Compensation Groups 458 and 530 declaring their recent dividends, announcements that contained good news for members of the building, realty and construction sectors.
- ❖ *A Page One story on Gov. Hochul recently signing legislation that New York State officials said "delivers generational reforms" to New York's State Environmental Quality Review Act (SEQRA).
- ❖ *A report on page one reviewing how the Westchester County Rent Guidelines Board, on Jun. 22, approved rent increases of 3.5 percent for One-Year Lease Renewals and 4.5 percent for Two-Year Lease Renewals for buildings affected by the Emergency Tenant Protection Act (ETPA).
- ❖ *An important analysis in Insurance Insights that covers the increases in Insurance Premium Costs for multi-family residential properties. The report explains how, over the past decade, the increases have been unprecedented, and when those increases have a severe negative impact on the affordability of "affordable" housing, the word "crisis" is arguably appropriate. The analysis was written by Ken Fuirst and Jason Schiciano, co-presidents of Levitt-Fuirst Insurance and Bonding. Levitt-Fuirst Insurance and Bonding is the Insurance Manager for the Building and Realty Institute (BRI).

Continued on p. 3

Insurance Insights

By Ken Fuirst and Jason Schiciano

Levitt-Fuirst Insurance and Bonding

The Insurance Crisis for Affordable Housing – Understanding the Most Relevant Factors

TARRYTOWN

The title for this article incudes the word "crisis." Is use of this word yet another example of over-exaggerating a situation for dramatic effect?

Most would agree, increases in insurance premium costs for multi-family residential properties over the past decade have been unprecedented, and when those increases have a severe negative impact on the affordability of "affordable" housing, the word "crisis" is arguably appropriate.

In November, the New York State Senate held a joint public hearing on: "Cost and Availability of Insurance for Residential Property."

Dozens of organizations representing the various stakeholders (e.g. affordable housing advocacy groups, insurance industry groups, and attorney groups) were invited to provide testimony on the causes of the affordable housing insurance crisis, and how to address it. As a leading organization for real estate developers and owners, the Building and Realty Institute's (BRI's) Chief Executive Officer, Tim Foley, was included.

Summary of BRI Testimony

- ❖ The average (annual per unit) cost to insure an affordable apartment is $1,770…a 103 percent increase from 4 years ago.
- ❖ While the state is working to prohibit insurers from denying coverage or increasing premiums based on discriminatory reasons (e.g. presence of affordable housing units, source of tenant income, etc.), there are many non-discriminatory factors contributing to higher premiums.
- ❖ Extreme weather events (both in New York, and nationwide), leading to more frequent, more severe, and more expensive Property claims, drive premium increases.
- ❖ Increasing repair/reconstruction costs (material and labor inflation, supply-chain delays, etc.), resulting more expensive Property claims, which drive premium increases.
- ❖ The low number of carriers offering insurance for affordable housing properties in New York impedes competition.
- ❖ Increased costs of reinsurance result in premium increases for all policyholders.
- ❖ Additional insurance policy exclusions (especially for older, or poorly maintained buildings), can lead to higher out-of-pocket costs, due to uncovered claims.
- ❖ High liability claims payouts, due in part to: a) New York's unique-in-the-nation "Scaffold Law," and b) "a pervasive culture of litigation", result in higher premiums.
- ❖ Incidents of insurance fraud (i.e. "staging of incidents on construction jobsites") result in higher premiums.

Which Is Worse – The Weather or Legal Climate?

The BRI's testimony paints an accurate picture of the key contributing factors to the insurance crisis for affordable housing; here's an additional critically important factor to provide context and prioritize the issues:

Liability insurance (i.e. General Liability and Umbrella/Excess Liability insurance) premiums usually account for the majority of total premiums paid by multi-family affordable housing properties. For example, while a portfolio of 500 Section-8 apartment units could realistically pay $1,000,000 or more in total premiums annually for Property + General Liability + Umbrella/Excess Liability insurance, approximately 80 percent ($800,000) could be attributable to General Liability + Umbrella/Excess Liability premiums (and only 20 percent or $200,000 attributable to Property insurance).

Given that "Liability" insurance often represents the greatest portion of insurance premiums for multi-unit affordable housing in New York, it makes sense to focus on issues relating to Liability insurance and Liability claims.

If you have any doubt there is opportunity for improvement of New York's legal environment relating to insurance, consider that an annual report by The American Tort Reform Foundation recently ranked the state #2 in the nation for "Judicial Hellholes." The report cited fraudulent trip-and-fall schemes. New York's "Scaffold Law" (which imposes a strict liability standard for gravity-related construction accidents) and related staged/fake construction worker injuries, Nuclear Verdicts® (verdicts over $10,000,000), and third-party litigation

Continued on p. 8

Report:

More Young Adults Are Interested in the Construction Trades, but Challenges Persist

WASHINGTON

A new study conducted by the National Association of Home Builders (NAHB) reveals that more young adults across the U.S. between the ages of 18 and 25 are interested in the construction trades.

But, the report added, more work needs to be done to educate the public that there are increasing opportunities for rewarding, lucrative careers in the skilled trades. The study was released by NAHB on Apr. 20.

NAHB said that the new research is similar to a study conducted in 2016. The NAHB survey found that the share of young adults interested in a career in the construction trades doubled from three percent a decade ago to six percent as of April. The two most important benefits young adults see in a career in the trades are good pay (73 percent) and the ability to obtain useful skills (65 percent), the report added.

With the nation facing a shortage of roughly 1.2 million housing units, closing the housing deficit will necessarily entail recruiting younger workers willing to start careers in construction trades. NAHB estimates the industry will need 2.2 million new skilled construction workers over the next three years to keep up with demand and account for industry expansion, retirements and departures, the report said.

"While this new research shows that more young adults have a positive attitude toward a career in the construction trades, many are still unaware that careers in the building trades offer workers well-paid jobs and opportunities for growth in one of the most in-demand industries in the nation," said NAHB Chairman Bill Owens, a home builder and remodeler from Worthington, Ohio. "High schools need to stress that the skilled trades are a viable alternative to four-year colleges that can pay above median wages and serve as a launching pad for small business development."

Support Is Needed

Policymakers at all levels of government can help in this endeavor by supporting funding for building and construction trades education and providing more placement services to job seekers, Owens added. NAHB supports the CONSTRUCTS Act, bipartisan legislation pending in the U.S. House and Senate that will address the severe labor shortage in the construction industry by helping to prepare young adults for fulfilling careers in construction and other essential trades, the report said.

The survey further reveals that 30 percent of young adults undecided about a future career path would likely give the trades a second look if compensation were high enough. Only 18 percent would have done so a decade ago. This shift points to a measurable improvement in young adults' attitudes toward the construction trades over the last 10 years, where willingness to enter the field increases with higher levels of compensation.

Half of payroll workers in construction earn more than $60,320, and the top 25 percent make at least $81,510, according to the latest May 2024 Bureau of Labor Statistics Occupational Employment and Wage Statistics and analysis by NAHB. In comparison, the U.S. median annual pay is $49,500, while the top quartile (the highest paid 25 percent) makes at least $78,810, the report said.

In a key finding for the home building industry, the NAHB survey found that 52 percent of undecided adults aged 18 to 25 who in theory would not choose a career in the trades would in fact reconsider that position for the right paycheck. That figure is at least $90,000 for 32 percent of this group and $60,000 to $80,000 for the other 20 percent. There are 12 construction occupations whose median annual wages already meet or exceed that threshold, the report said.

"If we are to meet the housing needs of a growing population, now, more than ever, providing opportunities for students to learn a craft that will produce well-paying and life-long career opportunities must be a top priority," Owens said.

The full study on young adults and the construction trades can be viewed **here**.

News for the Building and Realty Industries **Impact**

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REPORT

Remodeling Market Sentiment Remains in Positive Territory in Second Quarter

WASHINGTON

The National Association of Home Builders (NAHB) released the NAHB Remodeling Market Index (RMI) for the second quarter, posting a reading of 61. Although the reading inched down one point from the previous quarter, it is still in positive territory and has remained in the low 60s consistently over the past year, NAHB officials recently announced.

The RMI survey asks remodelers to rate five components of the remodeling market as "good," "fair" or "poor." Each question is measured on a scale from 0 to 100, where an index number above 50 indicates that a higher share view conditions as good than poor. The results of the RMI are seasonally adjusted, NAHB officials added.

The Current Conditions Index is an average of three components: the current market for large remodeling projects, moderately-sized projects and small projects. The Future Indicators Index is an average of two components: the current rate at which leads and inquiries are coming in and the current backlog of remodeling projects. The overall RMI is calculated by averaging the Current Conditions Index and the Future Indicators Index. Any number over 50 indicates that more remodelers view remodeling market conditions as good than poor, the report said.

"Remodeler sentiment has been positive and stable over the past year," said NAHB Remodelers Chair Elliott Pike, a remodeler from Homewood, Ala. "The major headwinds that are preventing an even stronger remodeling market include rising costs, political and economic uncertainty, and difficulty obtaining financing with favorable interest rates for larger projects."

"Despite affordability concerns, rising home owner equity and an aging housing stock are powering demand for residential remodeling," said NAHB Chief Economist Robert Dietz. "This is keeping the remodeling market relatively strong despite certain impediments, like the rising cost of building materials. In the latest RMI survey, 74 percent of remodelers reported that their suppliers have increased prices of materials since March due to higher fuel costs, with the average increase in materials prices over that time being 6.7 percent."

The Current Conditions Index averaged 70, remaining unchanged from the previous quarter. All three components remained well above 50 in positive territory: the component measuring large remodeling projects ($50,000 or more) dipped three points to 64, the component measuring moderate remodeling projects (at least $20,000 but less than $50,000) increased four points to 73, and the component measuring small-sized remodeling projects (under $20,000) held steady at 74, the report said.

The Future Indicators Index averaged 52, down two points compared to the previous quarter. The component measuring the current rate at which leads and inquiries are coming in dropped two points to 51, and the component measuring the backlog of remodeling jobs dipped one point to 54.

NAHB officials said the full RMI tables are at ***nahb.org/rmi.***

The Affordability and Economic Development Task Force of the Westchester County Board of Legislators Holds Its First Meeting

WHITE PLAINS

The Westchester County Board of Legislators' new Affordability and Economic Development Task Force on Jun. 25 held its first meeting, bringing together leaders from a broad range of sectors to tackle financial pressures straining Westchester residents and businesses, county officials recently announced.

The board created the task force in April to develop concrete, actionable policy recommendations that will make Westchester more affordable, support local businesses, and improve county residents' quality of life, county officials added.

The inaugural meeting of the task force, county officials said, was led by Task Force Chair Colin D. Smith (D-1st LD), a member of the Westchester County Board of Legislators. The meeting focused on setting priorities for the group's work, including housing, childcare, workforce development, transportation, tourism, education, sustainability, and support for small businesses.

Vedat Gashi (D-4th LD), chair of the Westchester County Board of Legislators, said families and businesses across Westchester are facing significant financial pressures.

"This task force reflects our commitment to finding real-world solutions that can make a difference. There's a lot to be done, and our first meeting represents a strong start. We look forward to the work ahead," Gashi said.

Smith added that the meeting was an important step in moving from planning to action. He said the discussion reinforced that affordability affects workers, businesses, nonprofits, municipalities, and the long-term strength of Westchester County.

"Our goal is to listen and identify the real cost drivers," Smith said. "We will develop practical recommendations for what the county can do directly, what we can coordinate with partners, and what we should advocate for at other levels of government. Thanks to Chairman Gashi for creating the task force and to all who are bringing their experience, urgency, and insights to this work. This is the start of a serious process, and I look forward to building on it."

County officials said the task force includes inaugural organizational members representing Westchester's business and nonprofit communities, including the Business Council of Westchester (BCW), the Westchester County Association (WCA), Nonprofit Westchester, and the New York Apartment Association (NYAA). The participation of the groups will help ensure recommendations reflect a broad range of economic perspectives, officials added.

Other organizations participating in the Jun. 25 meeting were Westchester County Tourism and Film, the Child Care Council of Westchester, Westchester Women's Agenda, the Hudson Gateway Association of Realtors (HGAR), SUNY Westchester Community College, and the Building and Realty Institute of the Hudson Valley (BRI).

County officials said that in the coming months, the task force will hold a countywide listening tour. The tour will provide a series of public meetings, each focused on a different topic. The sessions will give residents, employers, service providers, advocates, and subject matter experts an opportunity to share their experiences and ideas. Input gathered through the public sessions will shape a finding report and policy recommendations for the board to consider next year.

Marking the 80th Anniversary of the BRI's Formation with An Unforgettable Event, Continued from p. 2

- An analysis in Co-op and Condo Corner that provides a look at Affordable Home Ownership for Westchester County. The report, written by Jane Curtis, chair of the BRI's Cooperative and Condominium Advisory Council (CCAC), explains how Limited Equity Co-ops, sometimes referred to as Shared Equity Co-ops, are organized to remain affordable in perpetuity. The report explains how this is accomplished.
- A report in Counsels' Corner on addressing smoking in co-ops and multi-family buildings. The summary was written by representatives of Finger and Finger, A Professional Corporation. Finger and Finger is Chief Counsel the BRI.
- A Page Two summary from the National Association of Home Builders (NAHB) on how more young adults across the U.S. are interested in the construction trades.

And, there are additional reports in this issue that cover areas of interest to the building, realty and construction sectors. We hope that you enjoy this edition of IMPACT, as well as the remainder of the summer. As my Grandmother Ethel Hanley always said, enjoy summer, because as you get older, they become nothing more than long weekends.

Counsels' Corner

Addressing Smoking in Cooperatives


Kenneth J. Finger


Dorothy M. Finger


Carl L. Finger


Daniel S. Finger

By Kenneth J. Finger, Esq., Dorothy M. Finger, Esq., Carl L. Finger, Esq., and Daniel S. Finger, Esq.

WHITE PLAINS

It is an unusual day when we do not get a call from one of our cooperative board or landlord clients that a resident is complaining about second-hand smoke going into his / her unit or into the common area.

The complaint may pertain to ordinary cigarette smoke or worse yet, marijuana odors. Most cooperatives utilize all proprietary leases. Virtually all proprietary leases contain a clause prohibiting noxious and offensive odors. Certainly smoke of any sort could be considered a noxious and offensive odor. The provision found in most proprietary leases is:

Odors and Noises. The lessee shall not permit unreasonable cooking or other odors to escape into the building. The Lessee shall not permit or suffer any unreasonable noises or anything which will interfere with the rights of other lessees or unreasonably annoy them or obstruct the public halls or stairways.

This clause, in the proprietary leases, gives a Board of Directors the ability to bring a legal action against an offending shareholder for breach of the Proprietary Lease. A lessee claiming that smoke is entering their apartment may assert a claim for a breach of the warranty of habitability and breach of the lease by the cooperative if the cooperative fails to take action. If the lessee establishes such a breach, the lessee may be entitled to an abatement of the maintenance.

The warranty of habitability has been analyzed often and the New York State Court of Appeals, the highest New York State court, has decided the applicable standard for courts to review claims of a breach of the warranty of habitability. In the case of Park West Management Corp. v. Mitchell, 47 NY2d 316 (1979), the court found that "in every landlord-tenant relationship the landlord impliedly warrants as follows: first, that the premises are fit for human habitation; second that the condition of the premises is in accord with the uses reasonably intended by the parties; and third, that the tenants are not subjected to any conditions endangering or detrimental to their life, health or safety. Park West Management Corp. v. Mitchell, at 326.

As far back as 2006, a Civil court, in the case of Poyck v. Bryant. 33752 CVN 2002, NYLJ, Sept. 1, 2006, p. 22, col. 1 (Civ. Ct. N.Y. Co.) found that secondhand smoke qualified as a condition that invokes the protection of the Real Property Law (§235-b), the warranty of habitability.

The Landlord in that case owned a condominium unit and had rented the unit to the Tenants. The Tenants lived in the apartment for approximately three years when a neighbor moved in next door who smoked constantly. The tenants wrote to the Landlord and advised him of the problem of smoke entering their apartment from the neighbor's apartment. They also spoke to the superintendent of the building. They attempted to remedy the situation themselves by sealing the apartment door with weather stripping but the smoke continued to permeate the apartment. The Landlord took no action and the tenants subsequently advised him that they needed to move as a result of the health issues appurtenant to the second-hand smoke entering their apartment.

The Tenants moved out of the apartment and the Landlord brought an action to collect the unpaid rents accruing under the lease. The Tenants raised the warranty of habitability defense and the Landlord responded that he could not be held responsible for the actions of third parties. The Court noted that the Landlord "could have asked the board of managers to stop the neighbors from smoking in the hallway and elevator as well to take preventive care to properly ventilate [the smoker's apartment] so that the second-hand smoke did not seep into the [tenant's] apartment."

The Court pointed out further that the Board of Managers also had an obligation to "prevent unreasonable interference with the use of respective units and of the common elements by several unit owners" and could have commenced an action seeking injunctive relief against the smoking residents and/or the posting of a bond to insure compliance with the by-laws and decisions of the Board of Managers, if the Landlord had brought the matter to the attention of the Board of Managers. The Court required a hearing on the issues of the warranty of habitability and constructive eviction, but the fact that the Court allowed the defenses to stand and be litigated gives weight to their viability when the basis of the asserted breach of the warranty of habitability is second-hand smoke.

Issues of Fact

Reinhard v. Connaught Tower Corporation, 2011 WL 6119800 (Sup. Ct., New York Co., 2011) held that there were issues of fact (requiring a trial) regarding the claim against the cooperative corporation as to whether second-hand smoke in the complainant's apartment was so pervasive as to breach the warranty of habitability and cause a constructive eviction and also whether the cooperative kept the building in "good repair" pursuant to the proprietary lease. The cooperative was not found responsible for breach of fiduciary duty or good faith and fair dealing.

What can a board do to prevent claims that second-hand smoke is entering into an apartment and thus violating the tenant's warranty of habitability and potentially subjecting the cooperative to liability and/or a claim for an abatement, or worse? The first step is to determine whether the board wants to enact a building-wide ban on smoking, including within apartments. This decision involves a balancing of the rights of lessees to legally act in their apartments by smoking vs. the rights of others in the building who may find any smoke at all offensive and potentially hazardous. At a minimum, the Board can amend the House Rules to ban smoking in the common areas. In the event the board determines to ban smoking within the apartments in the building, the board has two options to consider. The option least likely to be successfully challenged in court would be to amend the proprietary lease to ban smoking. However, this typically requires a supermajority of the lessees in favor of the amendment. Given that many cooperatives find obtaining 51 percent to attend an Annual Meeting, a supermajority to approve anything may prove an insurmountable burden.

The second option is to amend the house rules and regulations. The board can typically amend the house rules and regulations without lessee approval. While there has not yet been a reported decision determining whether prohibiting smoking by a House Rule within a unit is a valid exercise of board authority, the house rules and regulations often do restrict other activities inside the apartment, such as music at certain hours and floor covering. Floor covering is actually an affirmative obligation potentially requiring expenditures of thousands of dollars for compliance. Therefore, an argument could be made that a house rule prohibiting another type of conduct (such as smoking within a unit) similar to music at certain hours, might seem supportable. Finally, the mere existence of the ban may provide a sufficient deterrent.

Additionally, in interviewing a prospective tenant, there might be an inquiry as to whether or not the tenant or tenants are smokers. Discretion may well call for rejecting a tenant for occupancy who is a smoker. The argument can be made that under the "discrimination" laws, smokers are not "a protected class."

Challenge Scenarios

A challenge to the house rules must be commenced with 120 days of adoption and notification to the lessees (shareholder), requiring an Article 78 proceeding to challenge the adoption of the House Rule. This was specifically determined in the Matter of Musey v. 425 E. 86 Apartments Corp., 154 A.D.3d 401, 404, 62 N.Y.S.3d 93,

Continued on p. 9

Co-op and Condo Corner

A Look at Affordable Home Ownership for Westchester


Jane Curtis

By Jane Curtis,
Chair, The Cooperative and Condominium Advisory Council (CCAC)

MOUNT VERNON

The ongoing crisis of affordable housing in Westchester County has been largely addressed thus far with financial incentives and preferential zoning to encourage the construction of new rental buildings.

Little focus has been placed on affordable home ownership options such as co-ops, although market rate co-ops are currently the most affordable form of home ownership in New York, and are sometimes more affordable than rental units. Yet, even co-ops remain out of reach for many, as the costs of land, construction, operations, and taxes continue to climb. Limited equity co-ops can provide an attractive alternative and are slowly gaining traction.

Limited equity co-ops, sometimes referred to as shared equity co-ops, are organized to remain affordable in perpetuity. This is accomplished in two ways.

The cost of purchasing an apartment is minimized by separating the ownership of the building from the underlying land, which is owned and leased to the co-op, typically by a Community Land Trust (CLT), defined as a "nonprofit, community-based corporation committed to the permanent stewardship of land and the permanent affordability of any housing located upon its land," governed by a board of CLT residents, community residents and public representatives.

The Westchester County Affordable Housing Needs Assessment recommended the creation of Community Land Trusts, noting that "the cost of land is extremely high in Westchester County. Community Land Trusts (CLT) offer a vehicle to promote homeownership while reducing the cost of entering the market."

The CLT sells or leases units built on the land while holding a renewable 99-year ground lease, not to be confused with ground leases of privately owned property of the type that have recently caused a crisis among some New York City co-ops.

The Westchester County Affordable Housing Needs Assessment recommended the creation of Community Land Trusts, noting that "the cost of land is extremely high in Westchester County. Community Land Trusts (CLT) offer a vehicle to promote homeownership while reducing the cost of entering the market."

Like market rate co-ops, limited equity co-ops are owned and operated on a nonprofit basis by their shareholders, and are governed by an elected board of directors. Unlike market rate co-ops, limited equity shareholders agree to limit the profit they receive on resale from the appreciation of the unit, such that the co-op remains affordable to the next buyer. The limit can be set in a number of ways, by formula or percentage. Eligibility to purchase is sometimes set, as well, by AMI based income maximums.

Recently introduced state legislation would provide additional support for limited equity co-ops. S5674/A6265, the "Permanently Affordable Social Housing for New Yorkers Act," would establish New York State's first Social Housing Development Authority, providing, as explained by Sen. Shelley Mayer, "publicly-funded, permanently affordable, green homes where people can live and invest in their communities."

In addition to permanent affordability, the benefits of limited equity co-ops and other forms of community-based housing include community control, wealth building, and neighborhood stability.

You can read more about limited equity co-ops at: *https://www.localhousingsolutions.org/housing-policy-library/limited-equity-cooperatives/*

You can learn more about Community Land Trusts at *https://groundedsolutions.org/ and at www.burlingtonassociates.com.*

You can read the bill here: *https://www.nysenate.gov/legislation/bills/2025/S5674.*

***Editor's Note:** The Cooperative and Condominium Advisory Council (CCAC) represents more than 400 co-ops and condos. The organization, an affiliate association of The Building and Realty Institute (BRI), was formed in 1979.*

Builder Sentiment Remains Weak Amid Affordability Concerns, Report Says

WASHINGTON

Builder sentiment across the U.S. remains subdued as rising material costs, elevated mortgage rates and ongoing affordability challenges continue to strain the housing market, according to a report from the National Association of Home Builders (NAHB).

Builder confidence in the market for newly built single-family homes fell two points to 35 in June, according to the NAHB/Wells Fargo Housing Market Index (HMI) released on Jun. 15. This is the 14th straight month that sentiment has remained below 40, a streak not seen since 2011-2012 during the foreclosure crisis, the study said.

"With the nation short about 1.2 million homes, builder sentiment will remain soft until barriers are eased and conditions improve for home building," said NAHB Chairman Bill Owens, a home builder and remodeler from Worthington, Ohio.

"Costly and inefficient regulatory policy is clearly impeding the ability of builders to increase the housing supply," said NAHB Chief Economist Robert Dietz. "According to a new NAHB study, government regulation, taxes, fees and other costs add more than 26 percent to the price of an average single-family home. Easing permitting bottlenecks, density limits and inefficient zoning rules would help reduce costs and support the housing growth the nation needs."

The latest HMI survey also revealed that 35 percent of builders cut prices in June, up from 32 percent in May. The average price reduction was six percent in June, the same rate as the previous month. The use of sales incentives was 62 percent in June, up slightly from 61 percent in May, and marking the 15th consecutive month this share has reached 60 percent or higher.

Derived from a monthly survey that NAHB has been conducting for more than 40 years, the NAHB/Wells Fargo HMI gauges builder perceptions of current single-family home sales and sales expectations for the next six months as "good," "fair" or "poor." The survey also asks builders to rate the traffic of prospective buyers as "high to very high," "average" or "low to very low." Scores for each component are then used to calculate a seasonally adjusted index where any number over 50 indicates that more builders view conditions as good than poor, NAHB officials said.

The HMI index gauging current sales conditions fell two points to 38 in June, the index measuring future sales held steady at 45 and the index charting the traffic of prospective buyers remained unchanged at 25, the report added.

Looking at the three-month moving averages for regional HMI scores, the Northeast rose two points to 44, the Midwest held constant at 43, the South fell two points to 33 and the West dropped one point to 27, the report said.

NAHB officials said that HMI tables can be found at *nahb.org/hmi.* More information on housing statistics is also available at Housing Economics PLUS.

A Year to Remember: The Welcome Home Westchester Campaign Releases Its Housing Policy Scorecards

Welcome Home Westchester (WHW), a multi-stakeholder pro-housing advocacy effort, recently announced the release of its Housing Policy Scorecards for all 43 cities, towns, and villages in Westchester County.

"Westchester, like our entire region, faces a significant housing shortage that can only be addressed by taking a comprehensive look at our local policies," said **Kate Slevin**, executive vice president at WHW partner organization Regional Plan Association (RPA). "This report card is an important step toward understanding where communities are making meaningful progress and where additional action is needed to ensure every municipality contributes to solving our shared housing challenges."

In 2025, the Welcome Home Westchester campaign unveiled the "Five in 2025: Options That Every Westchester City, Town, and Village Can Take to Address the Housing Shortage" agenda to encourage every municipality to look at what policy reforms their peer communities had adopted and make progress on the policy that made the most sense to their housing needs. The five policies cited by this agenda were:

1. Produce a housing action plan;
2. Create a Green Fast Track for environmentally friendly and sustainable types of housing;
3. Promote accessory dwelling units (ADUs) and transit-oriented development (TOD);
4. Establish a "Core Curriculum" for land use board volunteers' in-service training; and
5. Use the state-provided tools and become a Pro-Housing Community.

WHW officials said the recently-released scorecards evaluate each Westchester municipality's progress on those specific reforms, which the campaign believes will lay a strong foundation to promote sustainable growth and be part of the solution for Westchester's housing shortage. By enacting reforms such as these, communities can set themselves up for smart housing growth in the years to come, WHW officials added.

"Welcome Home Westchester's inaugural Municipal Housing Scorecard report is a first of its kind tool that tracks the advancement of pro-housing policy throughout the county. It is a transparent measure of progress," said **Michael Romita**, president and chief executive officer of The Westchester County Association, a partner organization of WHW. "The Westchester County Association applauds those municipalities that score well and encourages others to increase their efforts to embrace the Five in 2025 agenda. In addition to policy adoption, we recognize those communities that have aggressively increased their housing stock."

With statewide efforts such as the Pro-Housing Community Program and significant investments from Westchester County, addressing the housing shortage is an all-hands-on-deck effort, WHW officials said.

Tim Foley, chief executive officer of The Building and Realty Institute (BRI), a partner organization of WHW, stated: "Westchester County has seen a surge in housing production over the last five years, and we are grateful for the elected leaders who have made that happen. However, we know that changes in leadership, a surge in local opposition, or unintentionally antiquated or sclerotic processes can create multi-year delays that prevent building the housing we need. We have been championing these five policies as a way to lay a strong foundation for sustainable housing growth in which every community could play a part. We also strongly believe that nothing is as contagious as a positive example, and urge other communities to study what their peers have done and figure out if it would apply to their own city, town, or village."

The Top 10 Model Westchester Communities for Housing Reform were also recognized, representing municipalities that have successfully implemented multiple Five in 2025 policies and provide recent examples of smart housing policy reform and growth. Those recognized are: **Town of Cortlandt, Village of Croton-on-Hudson, City of New Rochelle, Village of Ossining, City of Peekskill, Village of Pelham, Village of Port Chester, Village of Sleepy Hollow, Village of Tarrytown and City of White Plains**.

During the announcement, New York State Assemblymember **Dana Levenberg** congratulated the municipalities in her district for their housing reforms.

"I am so proud that four out of this year's Top 10 Model Westchester Communities are in Assembly District 95!" she said. "Congratulations to the City of Peekskill, Town of Cortlandt, and Villages of Croton-on-Hudson and Ossining. Thanks to much needed forward-looking leadership on housing, the future is bright for residents and businesses in these communities."

Croton-on-Hudson **Mayor Brian Pugh** stated: "Croton-on-Hudson thanks Welcome Home Westchester for recognizing our successful efforts to provide new, diverse housing opportunities — from market-rate to affordable rental units and condominiums — critical for addressing the regional shortage. This investment broadens our tax base, creates jobs, supports local businesses, and provides homes for new residents, seniors, and young people returning to the community. We are grateful to all the dedicated participants and partners whose guidance will continue to be essential in the important days ahead."

Welcome Home Westchester's full 2025 Municipal Housing Scorecard report may be viewed ***here.***

Construction Workers' Compensation Insurance Group Reports a 30 Percent Dividend for its Memberst, Continued from p. 1

A total of 531 construction industry members participate in the program. Contractors, subcontractors, suppliers and renovation/remodeling companies are eligible to be members of Group 458, group officials added.

Group 530 Announces Its Dividend

New York State Workers' Compensation Group 530, the workers' compensation insurance group for The Cooperative and Condominium Advisory Council (CCAC), The Apartment Owners Advisory Council (AOAC) and The Advisory Council of Managing Agents (ACMA) of The Building and Realty Institute (BRI), recently announced a 30 percent dividend that will be issued in 2026 for the policy year ending June 1, 2025.

Group spokesmen said the dividend is in addition to the maximum advance discount of 30 percent that group members may be eligible to receive.

The announcement was made during the group's Annual Meeting on March 25 in Tarrytown, NY. A total of 435 cooperatives, condominiums, apartment buildings and office buildings participate in the program, spokesmen said. Group 530 was formed in 1990.

Builder Sentiment Across the U.S. Stays Weak as Affordability Concerns Persist, NAHB Report Says

WASHINGTON

Economic uncertainty and persistent affordability challenges driven by rising material prices, high land costs, and elevated mortgage rates continue to weigh on builder sentiment.

Builder confidence across the U.S. in the market for newly-built, single-family homes fell two points to 34 in July, down from an upwardly revised reading of 36 in June, according to the National Association of Home Builders (NAHB)/Wells Fargo Housing Market Index (HMI) that was released on Jul. 16. Sentiment has remained below 40 for 15 consecutive months, the longest such stretch since 2012, the report said.

"Many potential buyers remain on the sidelines as they wait for lower mortgage rates, more certainty on inflation and a clearer economic outlook," said NAHB Chairman Bill Owens, a home builder and remodeler from Worthington, Ohio. "The recently enacted 21st Century ROAD to Housing Act contains important provisions on land-use and zoning, regulatory reform and financing tools that address obstacles facing builders and buyers, but these reforms will take time to implement."

> **"Many potential buyers remain on the sidelines as they wait for lower mortgage rates, more certainty on inflation and a clearer economic outlook."**
>
> *— NAHB Chairman Bill Owens*

"With the HMI below 40 for 15 straight months, affordability remains the home building industry's primary challenge, as elevated mortgage rates, costly land, rising material prices, and persistent skilled labor shortages continue to affect the market," said NAHB Chief Economist Robert Dietz. "Looking ahead, the newly enacted housing law is a positive step that will help expand housing supply and lower overall housing costs, although more policy change is needed at the state and local level."

The latest HMI survey also revealed that 37 percent of builders cut prices in July, up from 35 percent in June and 32 percent in May. The average price reduction was six percent in July, the same rate as the previous month. The use of sales incentives was 63 percent in July, up slightly from 62 percent in June, and marking the 16th consecutive month this share has reached 60 percent or higher.

Derived from a monthly survey that NAHB has been conducting

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for more than 40 years, the NAHB/Wells Fargo HMI gauges builder perceptions of current single-family home sales and sales expectations for the next six months as "good," "fair" or "poor." The survey also asks builders to rate the traffic of prospective buyers as "high to very high," "average" or "low to very low." Scores for each component are then used to calculate a seasonally adjusted index where any number over 50 indicates that more builders view conditions as good than poor, the report said.

All of the HMI sub-indices posted declines in July. The HMI index gauging current sales conditions fell one point to 37, the index measuring future sales dropped two points to 43 and the index charting the traffic of prospective buyers posted a two-point decline to 23, the report added.

The report said that, while looking at the three-month moving averages for regional HMI scores, the Northeast rose one point to 45, the Midwest increased two points to 45, the South fell one point to 33 and the West dropped one point to 26.

NAHB officials said that HMI tables can be found at ***nahb.org/hmi***. More information on housing statistics is also available at ***Housing Economics PLUS***, NAHB officials added.

Positive Dialogues: The BRI's Legislative Breakfast Brings NYS Leaders & Housing Industry Reps Together

EASTCHESTER

The Building and Realty Institute of the Hudson Valley (BRI) hosted its annual Legislative Breakfast on Mar. 6 at Mulino's at Lake Isle Country Club in Eastchester, bringing together state lawmakers and housing industry leaders for a conversation about the most pressing housing challenges facing Westchester County and the broader Hudson Valley.

The event also marked the **official unveiling of the BRI's 2026 Legislative Agenda,** outlining the organization's policy priorities for addressing the region's housing shortage, stabilizing the multifamily housing market, and tackling rising costs affecting both housing providers and residents, BRI officials said.

Among the members of the legislative delegation who attended the breakfast were Senate Majority Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins, State Senator Shelley Mayer, State Senator James Skoufis, Assemblymember Amy Paulin, Assemblymember Matt Slater, Assemblymember Chris Burdick, Assemblymember Dana Levenberg, and Assemblymember Steve Otis. Westchester County Executive Ken Jenkins also made an appearance at the event.

BRI members — including builders, property owners, landlords, developers, managers, co-op and condo boards, and service providers — had the opportunity to engage directly with lawmakers on policy issues impacting housing affordability, development, and the stability of the region's existing housing stock, BRI officials said.

A key topic of discussion were the potential reforms to the State Environmental Quality Review Act (SEQRA), some of which were recently enacted. Participants noted that the current environmental review process can create significant delays for housing development projects, and legislators expressed optimism that a balanced approach could be reached that protects environmental standards while allowing responsible housing development to move forward more efficiently, BRI officials added.

Another issue raised during the discussion, BRI officials said, was the need to reconvene the temporary commission established to evaluate the impacts of the Housing Stability and Tenant Protection Act of 2019 (HSTPA). Senate Majority Leader Stewart-Cousins indicated that she would look into the possibility of convening a temporary commission of stakeholders — as called for in the law itself — to evaluate how the law has affected housing supply, building conditions, and tenants across the state.

Attendees also highlighted the impact of rising energy costs on housing providers and residents. Increasing electricity and utility expenses continue to put pressure on operating budgets for multifamily housing and contribute to broader affordability challenges across the region, BRI officials said.

The recently released BRI 2026 Legislative Agenda outlines four key policy priorities: removing barriers to housing development, stabilizing the multifamily housing market, protecting the affordability of non-profit housing cooperatives, and addressing major cost drivers such as insurance and utilities while promoting opportunities for first-time homeownership, BRI officials said.

"The BRI's Legislative Breakfast provides a backdrop for policymakers and the housing industry to have important discussions about the on-the-ground realities that most affect builders and those who own or operate existing multifamily complexes. These discussions are a real opportunity to exchange ideas and discuss practical solutions," said Tim Foley, chief executive officer of the BRI. "Housing challenges affect every community in our region, and conversations like this help ensure that lawmakers hear directly from the people working on the front lines of housing. BRI members have spent 80 years building the future of Westchester, and we're grateful for the ongoing conversation about how we can keep moving forward."

The BRI represents more than 1,000 members throughout Westchester, Rockland, and Putnam counties and advocates for policies that support housing stability, responsible development, and vibrant communities across the Hudson Valley, BRI officials said.

Presidential Perspectives:

The Pause Before Progress - All-Electric Buildings in New York State

By Michael Murphy, President, The Building and Realty Institute (BRI)

Michael Murphy

MAMARONECK

New York State's All-Electric Building Act, originally slated to take effect on Jan. 1, 2026, has been postponed as it moves through legal challenges in the court system.

While this delay creates uncertainty for developers, property owners, and municipalities, it should be viewed for what it is: a temporary pause, not a reversal. The direction of New York's energy policy is clear, and the transition toward all-electric buildings is not a question of if, but when.

The Electrification of buildings is a cornerstone of the state's broader clean energy and climate goals. Advances in heat pumps, electric appliances, energy efficiency, and grid-supporting technologies are rapidly closing performance and cost gaps, while offering long-term operational savings and resilience benefits.

As the electric grid becomes cleaner and more reliable, supported by renewable generation and energy storage, electric buildings will play a central role in reducing emissions, stabilizing energy costs, and modernizing our building stock.

For the real estate and development community, this delay presents an opportunity, rather than an obstacle. It allows time to plan thoughtfully, invest strategically, and prepare workforces and supply chains for what lies ahead.

Clean energy is the future of New York State, and all-electric buildings are an essential part of that future. The timeline may shift, but the destination remains the same. Those who prepare now will be best positioned to lead when the transition inevitably moves forward.

The BRI's ICE FAQ Page Is a Critical Resource for Members of the Building, Realty and Construction Sectors, Officials Stress

ARMONK

In today's evolving regulatory and political environment, access to clear, reliable information is more important than ever - especially for property owners, managers, and business operators navigating complex issues.

To support its members, the Building and Realty Institute of the Hudson Valley (BRI) recently announced that it has developed a dedicated ICE FAQ resource page, designed to provide practical guidance on how to respond to Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) activity.

The page covers key topics such as how to handle ICE visits to a property or workplace, what documentation agents are required to present, the rights of property owners and employees, and the best practices for maintaining compliance while protecting residents, tenants, and staff. It also addresses common scenarios, and outlines appropriate steps to take in real-time situations, BRI officials said.

BRI officials said the resource has quickly become an important tool for many of the BRI's members, particularly those managing residential and commercial properties or operating businesses across the region. By offering clear, straightforward information, the page helps reduce uncertainty and ensures members are better prepared to respond appropriately and confidently.

Importantly, BRI officials added, the value of the resource has been recognized beyond the BRI's membership. The ICE FAQ page was recently shared by the Westchester County government team, further reinforcing its credibility as a trusted and timely source of information.

BRI officials said that, as the landscape continues to shift, the BRI remains committed to equipping its members with the tools and guidance they need to navigate challenges effectively. The BRI encourages all of its members to bookmark and reference this page as needed: ***https://www.buildersinstitute.org/ice/***

Report:

Builders Are Responding to Affordability Challenges With A Variety of Buyer Incentives and Innovative Designs

WASHINGTON

During New Homes Month in April, the home building industry is responding to market conditions by constructing homes that balance price and meet modern home buyer needs, according to an analysis from the National Association of Home Builders (NAHB).

The analysis, which was released on Apr. 1, said that, according to U.S. Census Bureau and National Association of Realtors (NAR) data, newly built homes are typically priced at, or below, existing homes, offering buyers more options in today's challenging housing market.

"Homeownership remains a cherished ideal for families across the country, and builders are stepping up to make homes attainable," said NAHB Chairman Bill Owens, a home builder and remodeler from Worthington, Ohio. "We will continue working with policymakers at every level of government to address supply-side challenges and seek regulatory relief that affects housing affordability."

In 2025, the analysis said, a typical existing home sold for one percent more than a newly built home. Since 2022, median new home prices have declined by five percent. Builders are narrowing the price gap by adjusting costs and design. The analysis added that, according to a recent NAHB survey, 64 percent of builders offered sales incentives and 37 percent cut prices. In addition, the median home size in 2025 was 2,155 square feet, essentially unchanged from 2024. Smaller homes generally improve affordability for buyers, according to the survey.

Looking ahead, the analysis said that builders are increasingly expanding usable living space with patios, front porches and decks, complemented by exterior lighting and landscaping. Builders are also adapting to buyers' preferences for flexible interiors and modern features, including:

Continued on p. 7

NAHB Offers Lawmakers a Series of Recommendations on National E-Verify System

WASHINGTON

The National Association of Home Builders (NAHB) recently offered Congress several recommendations to make a national E-Verify employment verification system workable for small businesses and members of the residential construction industry, association officials recently announced.

Testifying on behalf of NAHB before the House Education and Workforce Subcommittee on Workforce Protections, Chris Gamvroulas, president of Ivory Development, a land acquisition and development firm based in Salt Lake City, told lawmakers that in order to adopt a nationwide E-Verify mandate, Congress must ensure that businesses of all sizes can best be served under a national requirement.

"Approximately 80 percent of NAHB members have fewer than 10 employees and often lack human resources, legal departments and even office-based hiring processes," said Gamvroulas. "Therefore, NAHB believes that any legislation which mandates the use of E-Verify nationwide must work for the smallest employer as well as it works for the largest."

Gamvroulas said that NAHB supports the concept of a national E-Verify system as long as it includes the following provisions to protect both the employer and the employee:

- ❖ Maintains an employer's responsibility for only verifying the identities of direct employers, meaning that home builders would not be required to verify their subcontractors or subcontractors' workers.
- ❖ Provides employers safe harbors for good-faith use of the E-Verify system, including identity fraud.
- ❖ Expedites the verification process closer to an employee's hiring date.
- ❖ Ensures that all system requirements are accessible to small business operators, including by telephone.

"Finally, any legislation which mandates the use of E-Verify nationwide must include a strong pre-emption clause, preventing state and local governments from creating and enforcing their own verification requirements for employers," said Gamvroulas. "If employers are required to use the federal E-Verify program, they must be assured there is only one set of rules for compliance."

Gamvroulas also told lawmakers that E-Verify is part of a broader workforce issue facing the housing sector, namely the significant labor shortage in the construction industry that is delaying home building projects and raising housing costs.

"A recent study conducted by NAHB, the Home Builders Institute and the University of Denver found that labor shortages are extending the construction timeline of the average single-family home by nearly two months," said Gamvroulas. "The direct cost impact of extended construction times amounts to $2.66 billion annually, meaning higher carrying costs for home builders and fewer affordable options for home buyers."

To advance solutions that invest in our nation's domestic workforce and promote opportunities for Americans to seek well-paying and meaningful careers in the trades, Gamvroulas urged Congress to immediately pass the CONSTRUCTS Act. This bipartisan legislation pending in the House and Senate would ensure residential construction training providers, such as community colleges and trade schools, have the support they need to encourage students to seek careers in the home building industry.

And with foreign-born workers accounting for roughly 25 percent of the construction labor force, Gamvroulas said that policymakers should support sensible immigration policies that protect our nation's borders while also providing a pathway for workers to fill this critical labor gap.

Community Housing Innovations (CHI) and Officials Celebrate the Grand Opening of CHI's New Headquarters in White Plains

WHITE PLAINS

Ron Abad, chief executive officer of Community Housing Innovations (CHI) recently joined with former White Plains Mayor Tom Roach and Westchester County Director of Economic Development Bridget Gibbons to celebrate the grand opening of CHI's new headquarters at One North Broadway in the heart of downtown White Plains, officials recently announced.

"We are absolutely thrilled to have our headquarters in this beautiful office tower overlooking Downtown White Plains. This is a great location for our team, with convenient parking, outstanding restaurants and shops nearby as well as easy access to the White Plains Train Station with a 30-minute commute to Midtown Manhattan," said Abad. "Downtown White Plains is enjoying a remarkable renaissance, and we're excited and proud to be a part of it."

"I, along with the members of the Common Council are pleased that Community Housing Innovations is continuing its journey in the City of White Plains. The City of White Plains is proud of its leadership in the development of affordable housing and grateful for its partnership with CHI. I congratulate and wish the CHI team the best of luck in its new space as they continue to provide critical services for the residents of the City of White Plains and Westchester County," said Roach.

Westchester County Director of Economic Development Bridget Gibbons said: "Safe, affordable housing is fundamental to a strong and resilient local economy. Westchester County is proud to support Community Housing Innovations as they expand their ability to serve our most vulnerable residents. Partners like CHI help ensure that individuals and families have the stability and resources they need to stay housed and build a secure future."

> ***"Safe, affordable housing is fundamental to a strong and resilient local economy...."***

Other officials joining the ceremony included: Luis Angel Ochoa, representing New York State Sen. Shelley Mayer; Roberto Williams, regional director for the Office of U.S. Sen. Charles Schumer; and George Asante, director of the Office of Housing Counsel for Westchester County. Williams presented a congratulatory proclamation from Sen. Schumer, officials said.

CHI's new offices feature more than 9,800 square feet of premier Class A space, nearly double the size of CHI's former offices on South Broadway. One North Broadway is part of White Plains Plaza, a complex that also includes 445 Hamiliton Avenue. The complex recently underwent a capital improvement program which included new lobbies, amenities, restrooms and corridors along with exterior improvements, officials said.

Officials said Community Housing Innovations (CHI) is a non-profit organization dedicated to providing housing and human services that support independence and growth. CHI serves individuals and families who are homeless, at risk of homelessness, or have special needs, offering a range of programs including emergency shelter, transitional and permanent housing, and supportive services.

The Westchester County Rent Guidelines Board Approves Rent Increases of 3.5 Percent and 4.5 Percent, Continued from p. 1

continue to rise across nearly every category, including Insurance (10.3 percent), Utilities (5.2 percent), Oil and Gas (7.5 percent) and higher Interest Rates (5 percent). Property owners are also anticipating higher regulatory costs in the next year, including from the New York State Department of Health's (DOH's) Lead Rental Registry program, which takes effect this year, BRI/AOAC officials added.

Representatives of the BRI/AOAC noted that while the approved adjustments provide some relief, many housing providers continue to grapple with years of accumulated cost increases that have outpaced allowable rental income. The approved increases also remain below the current rate of inflation, further illustrating the ongoing gap between rising costs and available revenue. In addition to rising day-to-day Operating Expenses, owners of older rent-stabilized buildings face growing demands related to building systems, capital improvements, and compliance with new state and local regulations, BRI/AOAC officials added.

"We know affordability remains a concern for many residents, and property owners understand those challenges," Ciuffetelli said. "At the same time, preserving safe, quality housing requires ongoing investment. The long-term health of Westchester's rent-stabilized housing stock depends on ensuring that owners have the ability to keep pace with rising costs and continue investing in their buildings."

Officials from the BRI/AOAC emphasized that maintaining and preserving existing housing must remain a priority as Westchester County continues to confront a regional housing shortage. The organizations will continue advocating for policies that support housing preservation, encourage investment in aging buildings, and ensure that rent-stabilized housing remains sustainable for both residents and housing providers, BRI/AOAC officials added.

Questions or comments can be directed to the BRI's office at (914) 273-0730. BRI/AOAC officials added that the organizations look forward to continuing to work with policymakers and stakeholders on solutions that support housing preservation and long-term affordability in Westchester County.

NAHB Helps Secure Passage of Housing Bill, Continued from p. 1

officials said, provided input to Congress on many parts of the bill, but these five provisions are especially important to members:

- ❖ **Land-Use and Zoning.** The bill targets restrictive zoning and land-use policies that have limited residential construction. It directs the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to work with stakeholders, including home builders and developers, to identify best practices and give state and local governments options to increase housing production. It also rewards communities that adopt policies that expand supply and support housing growth.
- ❖ **Aging Housing Stock.** This provision authorizes a pilot program to provide grants and forgivable loans for home repairs and health-hazard mitigation in aging housing.
- ❖ **Multifamily Financing.** FHA-insured multifamily loan limits have not changed in 12 years and no longer reflect market conditions. Raising those limits and indexing them to inflation will better align financing with construction costs and support new apartment development.
- ❖ **Environmental Reviews.** This provision streamlines the National Environmental Policy Act review process for small and infill housing projects, helping them move to construction faster.
- ❖ **Community Banks.** NAHB members and members of the building and realty industries rely on community banks to finance residential construction, but fewer of these lenders remain on Main Street. Multiple provisions are aimed at strengthening community banks and expanding access to housing credit.

NAHB Fights for the Strongest Bill

NAHB officials said the legislation caps a three-year NAHB effort to combine key bi-partisan housing bills from the previous Congress into a single package that would meaningfully increase housing production and lower costs. Throughout the legislative process, the House and Senate developed separate versions of a comprehensive housing bill. The bill the Senate passed in March included positive provisions to streamline environmental reviews and improve aging housing stock, but it also would have required institutional investors to sell build-for-rent (BTR) single-family homes within seven years.

NAHB and Urban Institute estimates found that the mandate could have sharply reduced investment in single-family rental housing and cut single-family production by 40,000 to 72,000 units annually. The Senate bill also lowered FHA-insured multifamily loan limits and removed some land-use and zoning reforms, NAHB officials said.

By contrast, NAHB said, the House amendment to the Senate housing bill:

- ❖ Removed the seven-year BTR forced-sale requirement
- ❖ Increased FHA-insured multifamily loan limits
- ❖ Added land-use and zoning reforms
- ❖ Inserted community bank provisions to support housing lending

> **"The multiyear effort resulted in landmark legislation approved with overwhelming bipartisan support in both chambers of Congress..."**

Before the House amended the Senate bill, President Trump called on lawmakers to pass the Senate version without changes. NAHB was the first major industry stakeholder to urge House Financial Services Committee Chairman French Hill and Ranking Member Maxine Waters to stand firm and ensure the final bill excluded any forced-sale provision targeting BTR single-family homes, NAHB officials said.

As the process advanced, NAHB worked with House and Senate lawmakers to pass a final housing package that combined the strongest elements of both bills and reflected Congress's goal of increasing the nation's housing supply. The legislation, which was approved by the Senate on Jun. 22 and will be signed into law by the president shortly, does just that: it preserves key NAHB-supported House provisions, including removal of the BTR forced sale mandate, and adds a Senate provision authorizing the Community Development Block Grant Disaster Recovery program for three years, NAHB officials added.

Legislative Conference Provides the Final Push

NAHB officials said it is no coincidence that this major housing package passed Congress less than two weeks after the 2026 NAHB Legislative Conference. On Jun. 10, more than 1,100 NAHB members met with lawmakers on Capitol Hill to urge passage of the 21st Century ROAD to Housing Act and press for two key House-backed changes: removing the forced sale of BTR housing and increasing FHA multifamily loan limits.

The housing bill was NAHB members' top legislative priority. In roughly 300 meetings with lawmakers, members stressed the need to send this vital legislation quickly to the president's desk, NAHB officials said.

Before heading to Capitol Hill, NAHB officials added, members heard from Chairman Hill, who worked closely with NAHB throughout the process. The multiyear effort resulted in landmark legislation approved with overwhelming bipartisan support in both chambers of Congress, reinforcing that housing is a national priority.

"The bill will expand housing opportunities for buyers and renters, strengthen homeownership and address affordability challenges in communities nationwide," said Owens.

The bill officially became law on July 11.

Building and Realty Report:

Builder Sentiment Posts a Gain in May, but Significant Affordability Challenges Persist

WASHINGTON

Builder confidence across the U.S. posted a modest gain in May even as buyers grapple with rising mortgage rates and economic uncertainty while builders continue to contend with elevated land, labor and construction costs, according to a building and realty industry report.

Builder confidence in the market for newly built single-family homes increased three points to 37 in May, according to the National Association of Home Builders (NAHB)/ Wells Fargo Housing Market Index (HMI). The report was released on May 18.

"The housing market remains soft as higher mortgage rates, rising gas prices and economic uncertainty related to the war in Iran continue to dampen buyer demand," said NAHB Chairman Bill Owens, a home builder and remodeler from Worthington, Ohio. "However, efforts in the House to modify the 21st Century ROAD to Housing Act could increase the nation's housing supply and help ease builder concerns."

"Recent increases for long-term interest rates will continue to hold back home buyer demand," said NAHB Chief Economist Robert Dietz. "Although some regional markets, including parts of the Midwest, are showing relative strength, the housing market continues to face significant affordability challenges."

The latest HMI survey also revealed that 32 percent of builders cut prices in May, down from 36 percent in April. The average price reduction was six percent, up from the five percent figure in April. The use of sales incentives was 61 percent in May, up slightly from 60 percent in April, and marking the 14th consecutive month this share has reached 60 percent or higher, the report added.

Derived from a monthly survey that NAHB has been conducting for more than 40 years, the NAHB/Wells Fargo HMI gauges builder perceptions of current single-family home sales and sales expectations for the next six months as "good," "fair" or "poor." The survey also asks builders to rate the traffic of prospective buyers as "high to very high," "average" or "low to very low." Scores for each component are then used to calculate a seasonally adjusted index where any number over 50 indicates that more builders view conditions as good than poor, the report said.

All three of the major HMI indices, the report said, posted gains in May, as some buyers who had been holding back decided to move forward this spring. The HMI index gauging current sales conditions rose three points to 40 from April to May, the index measuring future sales increased three points to 45 and the index charting the traffic of prospective buyers posted a three-point gain to 25.

Looking at the three-month moving averages for regional HMI scores, the Midwest registered a one-point gain to 43, the Northeast rose one point to 42, the South held constant at 35 and the West fell one point to 28, according to the report.

NAHB officials said that HMI tables can be found at nahb.org/hmi. More information on housing statistics is also available at Housing Economics PLUS.

IREM and AppFolio Release New Research on How AI is Transforming Property Management

CHICAGO

Artificial intelligence (AI) is reshaping industries around the world, and property management is no exception, according to a recently released building and realty industry study.

According to AI on the Rise, a new research study from IREM (Institute of Real Estate Management) and AppFolio that was recently released, AI adoption among property management professionals has more than doubled in just 18 months, signaling a major turning point in how real estate management leaders drive operational efficiency, innovation, and results.

Between late 2023 and mid-2025, the percentage of property managers using AI tools climbed from 21 percent to 45 percent, while those with no plans to adopt AI dropped sharply - from 51 percent to just 20 percent, the study said.

"As the property management industry evolves, embracing technology like AI is no longer optional, it's essential," said 2025 IREM President Dawn Carpenter. "These results help IREM provide members with clear, data-driven insights on how AI can support property managers in making informed decisions. We thank our Industry Partner AppFolio for joining us in the development and execution of this important research for our members and for the profession."

Significantly, the study found that companies promoting AI use are outperforming their peers. A total of 70 percent of firms that encourage AI use are more likely to say Net Operating Income (NOI) has increased over the past 12 months. A total of 24 percent of the firms indicate a substantial gain of 10 percent or more, the study added.

While the outlook is promising, the study said that many organizations remain early in their AI journeys. A total of 62 percent of current users only began using AI in the past year, and most rely on general-purpose tools such as ChatGPT or Microsoft Copilot rather than industry-specific solutions, the study added.

Both IREM and AppFolio emphasize the importance of training, governance, and change management to maximize the benefits of AI. But the message, the study stressed, is clear: AI is no longer a future concept - it's a present-day competitive advantage.

The report, IREM officials said, can be explored at ***complete report***.

IREM said that, for more than 90 years, its members have made the organization the world's strongest voice for all things real estate management. Almost 20,000 leaders in commercial and residential management call IREM home for education, support and networking, association officials said.

AppFolio, officials said, is the technology leader powering the future of the real estate industry. Officials added that AppFolio's innovative performance platform and trusted partnership enables its customers to connect communities, increase operational efficiency, and grow their businesses.

Builders Are Responding to Affordability Challenges With A Variety of Buyer Incentives and Innovative Designs, Continued from p. 5

- ❖ Adding drop zones (for keys and coats) (57 percent)
- ❖ Including flex/multipurpose rooms (50 percent)
- ❖ Adding a charging station for EVs (40 percent)

The analysis said that, as single-family home inventory remains low and attainability challenges persist, new construction is playing an increasingly pivotal role in expanding housing options for buyers. New single-family home inventory in January rose to 476,000 units, 0.4 percent higher than the previous month. This represents a 9.7 months' supply at the current building pace, the analysis added.

Gov. Hochul Signs Legislation That Delivers Generational Reforms to New York's State Environmental Quality Review Act (SEQRA), Continued from p. 1

Building Housing Faster by Cutting Red Tape

The Fiscal Year 2026-27 Budget, the press release said, contains landmark reforms which will provide exemptions from duplicative environmental review to accelerate housing development that is desperately needed and meets criteria that ensures it does not have significant environmental impacts. Gov. Hochul has vowed, the press release added, to tackle the housing crisis and bring down costs by building the housing that New Yorkers desperately need.

The press release stresses that too many projects in New York, including much-needed affordable housing developments, are forced to navigate a web of red tape created by state mandates that add unnecessary costs and years of needless delays, despite these projects consistently being found to have no significant environmental impact.

By cutting red tape and speeding up the timeline to construction, the press release added, Let Them Build will help cut costs and speed construction for qualifying housing at the following unit caps:

- ❖ New York City: up to 250 units citywide and up to 500 units within medium and high-density areas
- ❖ Urbanized areas outside of New York City: up to 300 units
- ❖ Non-urbanized areas: up to 100 units, and up to 20 units in areas that do not have zoning

The press release said that the housing projects must be on previously disturbed land and connected upon occupancy to existing water and sewer systems. The law does not supersede environmental requirements, permitting or local zoning, the press release added.

The common-sense reforms, the press release said, will get more urgently needed homes built faster for New Yorkers. Studies have shown that for housing projects in New York State, SEQRA can slow down building by as long as two years. These delays increase costs. Analysis of housing projects demonstrate that SEQRA reviews increase the cost of building housing by $82,000 per unit in New York City, adding up to $8 million in additional costs for a 100-unit development. By eliminating duplicative reviews, Let Them Build will get projects from the planning process to the construction site faster and make it easier and more affordable for new homes to be built across the state, the press release said.

Supporting Communities in Building Out Crucial Infrastructure

The legislation, the press release said, adds further SEQRA exemptions for critical categories of projects that New Yorkers need, including clean water infrastructure, public parks and trails, green infrastructure and public schools within New York City.

- ❖ Clean Water Infrastructure: Critical water infrastructure projects that avoid impacts to natural resources.
- ❖ Green Infrastructure: Nature-based storm water management.
- ❖ Parks and Trails: Public parks and recreational bike/pedestrian paths on previously disturbed land.
- ❖ Public Schools: New N.Y. City Public School buildings built by the School Construction Authority.

Making Government a Partner in Growth

Currently, the press release said, SEQRA review timelines vary greatly across projects, creating unpredictability for local communities, project sponsors, and state agencies alike. This uncertainty can contribute to significant project delays and add substantial costs to project budgets.

To create additional accountability for local communities and project sponsors, the bill establishes a two-year timeline to complete an environmental impact statement, creating clear project schedules and faster decisions, the press release added.

"This is a huge deal on a topic that Building and Realty Institute (BRI) members have been advocates on for decades," said Tim Foley, chief executive officer of the BRI and its affiliate organization, the Building and Allied Construction Industries (BACI) group. BACI is an affiliate of the New York State Builders Association (NYSBA) and the National Association of Home Builders (NAHB).

Foley said that, despite all of the drama, the Governor's original proposal seems to have survived largely intact – and with a larger unit count, which counts as a big win for Westchester County. He added that most of the changes that were made during the "torturously long late budget" are intended to make clear who gets to make what decision when, which the Association of Towns had been asking for, and resolve some actual ambiguity in the original text without necessarily making it more difficult to operationalize. He added that it is possible "that time will tell on that."

"These changes take effect immediately, though there may be some follow-up regulations from the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC), or elsewhere, for further clarity," Foley said.

The BRI Celebrates The 80th Anniversary of Its Formation With A Landmark Gala That Honored Industry and Community Leaders, Continued from p. 1

for domestic violence survivors. She has also helped position CHHOP as a key regional partner in tackling housing challenges, including its role on the steering committee of Welcome Home Westchester, while continuing to address food insecurity through innovative models such as its "farm-to-pantry" approach.

"CHHOP's core mission - to feed and house those in our community who struggle with food and housing insecurity - has been supported by the BRI for many years," Knox said. "The work of the BRI to advocate for industry, support responsible development, and create resources such as Welcome Home Westchester are instrumental in addressing the housing shortage in Westchester County. Tim Foley's (the BRI's Chief Executive Officer) outstanding leadership and collaboration has been such a gift to me personally, and this acknowledgement of CHHOP through the BRI's 80th Anniversary Gala reflects BRI's deep commitment to the community. I am grateful for this honor and look forward to continuing to work together in the future."

"Reaching our 80th anniversary is both a milestone and a reminder of the lasting impact this organization has had on our region," said Lisa DeRosa, chairwoman of the Gala's Executive Committee and a past president of the BRI. "The Gala was not only a celebration of our history, but of the people who continue to move our industry and our communities forward."

DeRosa, the first female President of the BRI, received a special award at the gala for her four years of service to the organization as its President. DeRosa, a longtime member of the BRI's Board of Trustees, is a former chair of the BRI's Apartment Owners Advisory Council (AOAC). She has also served on several of the BRI's special committees.

The evening was hosted by Regina DeCicco, a Westchester native comedian and television personality. The program also featured recognition of BRI members across the building, real estate, and construction industries, reflecting on 80 years of advancing housing and economic development throughout the Hudson Valley.

"What a remarkable opportunity to reflect on everything the Building and Realty Institute of the Hudson Valley (BRI) has accomplished over the past 80 years," said Michael Murphy, president of the BRI. "Few organizations have shaped our region in such a meaningful and lasting way. There truly is nothing quite like the BRI in the Hudson Valley, and that is something well worth celebrating."

The BRI was formed on Feb.11,1946 as the Home Builders Association of Westchester (HBAW). The organization became the Builders Institute (BI) in 1959. The BRI currently has more than 1,800 members in 14 counties of New York State. Those members are involved in virtually every area of the building, realty and construction sectors. The BRI's affiliate organizations are The Advisory Council of Managing Agents (ACMA), the Apartment Owners Advisory Council (AOAC), the Building and Allied Construction Industries (BACI), the Cooperative and Condominium Advisory Council (CCAC) and the Suppliers and Service Providers Advisory Council (SSPAC).

Houlihan Lawrence Commercial Facilitates A Lease at 367 White Plains Road in Eastchester

RYE BROOK

Houlihan Lawrence Commercial recently announced the expansion of Sweat440 Fitness to a new location at 367 White Plains Road in Eastchester.

Both the property owner and the tenant were represented by Houlihan Lawrence Commercial. John Seminara and Garry Klein represented the Landlord, while Teresa Marziano represented the tenant.

Sweat440 Fitness offers four-station, 40-minute workout classes that start every 10 minutes, combining HIIT cardio, cross-training, and strength training. The company chose the property for its superb location, providing phenomenal street exposure and visibility, officials said.

367 White Plains Road is situated at a signalized intersection on Route 22, in the heart of Eastchester's bustling retail epicenter. Many businesses call this corridor home, creating an environment that fosters both strong connection and engagement with the local community, officials added.

Company officials said that Houlihan Lawrence Commercial, a full-service division, specializes in Investment Opportunities; Office, Industrial and Retail Sales and Leasing; Land Acquisition and Development; and Municipal Approval Consultation. With local expertise in the markets north of New York City, the Commercial Division has a database of buyers and sellers throughout the country to effectively market commercial properties and opportunities on a national level, officials added.

Houlihan Lawrence, company officials said, is the leading real estate brokerage serving New York City's northern suburbs. Founded in Bronxville in 1888, the company is deeply committed to technological innovation and the finest client service. The company has 32 offices and 1,450-plus agents serving Westchester, Putnam, Dutchess, Columbia, Ulster and Orange counties in New York and Fairfield County in Connecticut.

The Insurance Crisis for Affordable Housing – Understanding the Most Relevant Factorst, Continued from p. 2

financing are among the reasons for New York's infamously high ranking.

"If/Then Proposition"

IF New York reforms its legal system by:

- ❖ Reforming the Scaffold Law's "strict liability" model to a "comparative negligence" model (used in the other 49 states);
- ❖ Imposing severe penalties for those attempting fraudulent slip/fall or construction accident schemes and claims;
- ❖ Placing reasonable limits, or other controls, on maximum jury verdicts;
- ❖ Requiring third-party litigation funding entities to be publicly disclosed...

THEN, (all other things being equal) New York can expect:

- ❖ More Liability insurance carriers to enter the New York market;
- ❖ Fewer New York-specific Liability policy exclusions;
- ❖ Lower Liability insurance rates and premiums, which can account for 80 percent of multi-family affordable housing insurance premiums.

These "New York legal climate" reforms will not come easily, but they may be more achievable than figuring out how to control the weather.

If you need help navigating through the complexities of today's insurance environment, please contact Levitt-Fuirst Insurance and Bonding at (914) 457-4200.

***Editor's Note:** Levitt-Fuirst Insurance and Bonding is the Insurance Manager for The Building and Realty Institute of the Hudson Valley (BRI). Jason Schiciano and Ken Fuirst are co-presidents of Levitt-Fuirst Insurance and Bonding. The firm is based in Tarrytown*

A CASE STUDY:

You're Running a Real Estate Business – Here's How to Cut Your Payroll by 50 to 80 Percent Without Losing an Ounce of Quality

Lola Gazivoda

By Lola Gazivoda, Founder and Chief Executive Officer of Bota Consulting Group, White Plains, N.Y.

WHITE PLAINS

Let me paint you a picture that might feel a little too familiar.

It's Monday morning in Westchester. You've got a maintenance call coming in from a tenant in White Plains, a lease renewal dispute in Yonkers, and a stack of invoices from three different buildings that nobody has touched yet. Your bookkeeper just gave two weeks' notice. Your admin is buried. And you, the owner, the person who built this thing, is sitting at your desk at 9 p.m., again, reconciling accounts because there is simply no one else to do it.

This is the reality for a lot of property management and real estate firms in the greater New York area right now. High operating costs, a brutally competitive hiring market, and margins that don't have much more room to give.

I'm Lola Gazivoda, founder and chief executive officer of Bota Consulting Group, headquartered in White Plains. For close to three years, my firm has been connecting businesses across the greater New York area, property managers, real estate firms, accounting practices, legal offices, general small businesses and more, with dedicated, full-time professionals based in Albania. And the results have been eye-opening for a lot of owners who didn't think this kind of solution was available to them.

New York Is an Expensive Place to Run a Business – But You Already Know That

The greater New York market is one of the most demanding operating environments in the country. Labor costs are high, turnover is constant, and finding reliable back-office talent - in Westchester, Manhattan, Brooklyn, or Queens - specifically, people who will actually show up, stay, and do the work well has become genuinely difficult and expensive.

That $70,000 salary you posted isn't really $70,000. Once you factor in payroll taxes, health insurance, paid leave, recruiting fees, onboarding time, and the inevitable months of lost productivity when someone quits and in this market, they will, you're looking at $95,000 to $105,000 per year, minimum. For one person.

Now consider a dedicated, full-time outsourced professional at $2,000 to $3,500 per month. Same hours. Same commitment. Real expertise. That is not a typo and it's why 70 to 80 percent of large enterprises have already built outsourcing into their operating model. The Fortune 500 figured this out a long time ago. The question is whether smaller and mid-sized businesses in the New York area are ready to take the same approach.

> ***"That $70,000 salary you just posted? All-in, with taxes, benefits, insurance, and turnover, you're really spending $95,000 to $105,000. That same role, done right through outsourcing, runs $2,000 to $3,500 a month."***

About the Talent - Because That's the Real Question

When I tell people we work with Albanian talent, the first question is always some version of: "But will they really get it?" And I understand the skepticism. This is New York. Standards are high. Expectations are high. You don't have time to babysit.

Here's what I tell them: Albanian professionals have a work ethic that feels almost old-school by today's standards and I mean that as the highest compliment. These are university-educated men and women who take tremendous pride in their work, show up every single day, communicate clearly in excellent English, and genuinely care about doing the job right. They're not looking for shortcuts. They're not watching the clock. They want to be excellent at what they do.

Albania has a strong tradition of education and professional culture, and the talent pool we've built in the city of Shkodër, our recruiting base reflects that. Every candidate goes through a rigorous vetting process before they ever meet a client. We're not placing warm bodies. We're matching the right person to the right role, every time.

And critically these are dedicated placements. The talent works with you, on your schedule, in your systems. They are not splitting time across five other clients somewhere. When you hire through Bota, you get someone who is fully integrated into your operation and accountable to you.

What This Looks Like for a Real Estate or Property Management Firm

Property management is one of the industries where outsourcing delivers the most immediate impact because the back-office load is enormous and growing. Think about everything your team handles that has nothing to do with actually managing properties:

- ◆ Bookkeeping, accounts payable, and monthly financial reporting
- ◆ Payroll processing and certified payroll compliance
- ◆ Lease administration and data entry
- ◆ Tenant communications and work order coordination
- ◆ Administrative and operational support across multiple buildings or portfolios

Every one of those functions can be handled by a skilled remote professional at a fraction of what you're currently paying. We've helped clients in Manhattan, the Bronx, Brooklyn, and Westchester build out entire back-office teams this way, and the owners consistently say the same thing: they can't believe they waited as long as they did.

And It's Not Just Real Estate: Not Even Close

I want to be clear about something: outsourcing is not a real estate industry solution. It's a business solution. The rule of thumb is simple if the position can be done remotely, it can be outsourced.

That covers an enormous range of roles across virtually every industry. We work with accounting firms that need bookkeepers and staff accountants. Law offices that need paralegals and administrative support. Construction companies that need project coordinators and billing administrators. Healthcare practices that need insurance verification support. Professional services firms of all kinds that need operations, communications, or analyst-level help.

If someone on your team is spending their day on a laptop handling tasks that don't require them to be physically present, that role is a candidate for outsourcing. And for many businesses, it's not one role. It's three or four. The cumulative payroll savings can be transformative.

The Timing Has Never Made More Sense

Between rising labor costs, a tight hiring market, and real economic uncertainty hitting businesses across the New York metro area right now, owners are under pressure from every direction. Outsourcing is one of the few structural moves that can genuinely change your cost base - not a one-time fix, but a long-term shift in how your business operates.

And it's not just a defensive play. When business picks up and you need to scale fast a new building, a new contract, a new service line, outsourcing lets you add capacity immediately, without the overhead drag of a full local hire. We see demand in both directions. The math works either way.

The Bottom Line

You didn't build your business to spend your best hours buried in back-office work. The good news is that you don't have to and you don't have to pay New York prices to get New York-quality results.

We're based right here in White Plains. We know this market. We know what it costs to operate here, and we know what it takes to compete. If you're ready to have an honest conversation about what outsourcing could look like for your business, reach out and let's start there.

***Editor's Note:** Lola Gazivoda is the Founder and Chief Executive Officer of Bota Consulting Group, headquartered at 75 South Broadway in White Plains. She recently appeared as a guest on Episode 110 of the BRI's "Building Knowledge with the Building and Realty Institute (BRI)" Podcast Series. The Bota Consulting Group can be reached at www.botaconsultinggroup.com.*

Houlihan Lawrence Commercial Announces That Apple Studios Has Leased 3,108 Square Feet at 14–20 Willet Avenue in Port Chester

RYE BROOK

Houlihan Lawrence Commercial, a division of Houlihan Lawrence, recently announced that Apple Studios has leased 3,108 square feet of space at 14–20 Willet Avenue in Port Chester.

The deal was successfully brokered by Russ Detres of Houlihan Lawrence Commercial. Kim Galton of Houlihan Lawrence Commercial represented the landlord, Benchmark Port Chester LLC, officials said.

The leased space will serve as a post-production hub for Apple Studios, further strengthening the growing presence of high-profile media/entertainment operations in Westchester County, officials added.

Houlihan Lawrence Commercial exclusively represents what the company termed as the stunning office spaces at 14-20 Willet Avenue. The renovated offices feature a private office, conference room, kitchenette, and open bullpen area, making it ideal for collaboration and productivity, officials added.

Located in a dynamic and rapidly developing neighborhood, the area, officials said, is undergoing significant transformation, with over 2,500 new apartments in development, reflecting substantial investment and growth in the community. Additionally, the property is near the Metro-North train station and a Bee-Line bus stop, ensuring excellent accessibility to New York City.

Houlihan Lawrence Commercial specializes in Investment Opportunities; Office, Industrial, and Retail Sales and Leasing; Land Acquisition and Development; and Municipal Approval Consultation. With local expertise in the markets north of New York City, the Commercial Division has a database of buyers and sellers throughout the country to effectively market commercial properties and opportunities within any asset class, officials said.

Houlihan Lawrence, company officials said, is the leading real estate brokerage serving New York City's northern suburbs. Founded in Bronxville in 1888, the company has 32 offices and 1,450-plus agents serving Westchester, Putnam, Dutchess, Columbia, Ulster and Orange counties in New York and Fairfield County in Connecticut.

Westchester's "Big Three Mayors" Review Their Bold Economic Growth and Housing Strategies

WHITE PLAINS

The Building Owners and Managers Association (BOMA) recently hosted the mayors of Westchester County's three largest cities - Yonkers, New Rochelle, and White Plains - for a comprehensive economic update, according to association officials.

Mayors Mike Spano (Yonkers), Yadira Ramos-Herbert (New Rochelle), and Justin Brasch (White Plains) shared a unified vision of aggressive revitalization, highlighting over 23,000 combined new housing units and a commitment to urban safety and sustainability.

Yonkers: A Model for Urban Success

Mayor Spano detailed the ongoing transformation of Yonkers, backed by $5 billion in revitalization projects. With a 90 percent high school graduation rate and a ranking as the 39th happiest city in America, Yonkers has authorized 12,000 new housing units, 22 percent of which are designated as affordable. Spano also highlighted the city's burgeoning film industry and the strategic "Medical Mile" partnership between St. John's and Montefiore.

New Rochelle: Infrastructure and Innovation

Mayor Ramos-Herbert emphasized New Rochelle's proactive approach to density, with 11,000 housing units authorized and a focus on reaching 20 percent affordability. Key initiatives include the $2.25 million tenant improvement program and "The Link" project, a transformational waterfront and stormwater mitigation effort slated to break ground in the fourth quarter.

White Plains: Sustainable Commercial Leadership

Mayor Brash noted that White Plains continues to command a 39 percent share of the county's commercial leasing. Brash advocated for the adaptive reuse of aging structures into affordable condos and emphasized a "pro-business, pro-safety" environment. He specifically called for state support to increase affordable housing requirements in major projects, such as the Galleria redevelopment, from 12 percent to 25 percent.

A Call for State and Federal Partnership

While celebrating record growth, all three mayors stressed that addressing municipal pension liabilities and rising healthcare costs requires innovative fiscal tools, such as pension-splitting. The leaders concluded with a collective call for increased state and federal intervention to ensure Westchester remains affordable for the workforce driving its economic engine, association officials said.

The annual event, which was held on Mar. 12 at 360 Hamilton Avenue in White Plains, was moderated by Kevin Plunkett, director of strategic initiatives, Simone Development Companies.

BOMA Westchester is the county's leading professional organization dedicated to meeting the needs of building owners, property managers and allied professionals and tradespeople, association officials said.

BOMA Westchester is an affiliate of BOMA International, the oldest and largest association of the office building industry, with more than 100 federated associations in the United States and around the world. The 17,000-plus members of BOMA International own or manage more than nine billion square feet of commercial properties in North America and abroad, association officials added.

Addressing Smoking in Cooperatives, Continued from p. 3

96 (2017) where the Court held that:

"[p]laintiff's allegations were in the nature of a dispute over the house rules pertaining to the use of the terrace. Where, as here, a cooperative shareholder seeks to challenge a co-op board's action, such challenge is to be made in the form of an Article 78 proceeding (see Katz v. Third Colony Corp., 101 A.D.3d 652, 653, 957 N.Y.S.2d 330 [1st Dept.2012] [finding that the shareholder plaintiffs were prohibited from challenging the proprietary of the amendments to the cooperative›s by-laws because "they [were] required to have done so via a proceeding pursuant to CPLR article 78 within four months thereof"]; see also Matter of Dobbins v. Riverview Equities Corp., 64 A.D.3d 404, 881 N.Y.S.2d 299 [1st Dept.2009]).... An Article 78 Proceeding must be commenced within four months after the determination to be reviewed becomes "final and binding upon the petitioner" (CPLR 217[1]). "A determination generally becomes binding when the aggrieved party is 'notified' " (Matter of Village of Westbury v. Department of Transp. of State of N.Y., 75 N.Y.2d 62, 72, 550 N.Y.S.2d 604, 549 N.E.2d 1175 [1989]). Here, plaintiff was provided with the final and binding house rules on or about July 27, 2013, yet, he did not commence this plenary action until on or about July 25, 2014, well beyond the four-month statute of limitations." Musey v. 425 E. 86 Apartments Corp., 154 A.D.3d 401, 404, 62 N.Y.S.3d 93, 96 (2017).

Although there is never any guaranty, it is reasonable to believe that most decisions adopting a House Rule will not be challenged in Court within 120 days and therefore might be protected.

The Importance of Action

In the event there is a complaint about second-hand smoke, whether there is a total ban on smoking via the proprietary lease, via a house rule, or only the existing provisions associated with odors, the board must take action. First, the board should investigate to confirm the validity of the complaint. This involves staff, management, and perhaps board members attending to the apartment where the complaint has been raised to try to confirm the existence of the smoke. It might even require retaining an expert to visit the complainant's apartment. The board must also confirm from where the smoke is emanating. This determination may be tricky.

Upon confirmation of the condition and the offending party, the board should have a process in place as to all violations of house rules and/or the lease. This process typically would involve an initial courtesy notice to the offending party, followed by a stern letter with a fine, then referral to the cooperative for formal procedures, including a legal notice to cure, and possible termination and eviction.

> *"The critical point for a board to take action is to not permit conditions and circumstances to fester unattended. Addressing matters early, communicating with the parties, including the complainant, will minimize the likelihood of a claim against the cooperative or an abatement of maintenance at cost to all shareholders."*

The critical point for a board to take action is to not permit conditions and circumstances to fester unattended. Addressing matters early, communicating with the parties, including the complainant, will minimize the likelihood of a claim against the cooperative or an abatement of maintenance at cost to all shareholders.

If there is an issue that a shareholder wants to have legal action taken as to an infusion of smoke into a unit, the minimum proof required may be testing by a professional air quality tester rather than subjective complaints. If the tester determines that the air quality meets appropriate standards, it may well provide a defense by the co-op against a warranty of habitability claim or other legal action by a shareholder.

***Editor's Note:** The authors are attorneys with Finger and Finger, A Professional Corporation. The firm, based in White Plains, is Chief Counsel to The Building and Realty Institute (BRI).*

New Title from NAHB's Builder-Books Offers Advice on Using AI in Residential Construction

WASHINGTON

BuilderBooks, the publishing arm of the National Association of Home Builders (NAHB), recently released a new title, ***AI in Residential Construction: A Blueprint for Lasting Impact and Success.***

Artificial Intelligence is already shaping the residential construction industry, and the builders who learn to use it now will define the next decade of the industry, NAHB officials said.

NAHB officials added that AI in Residential Construction: A Blueprint for Lasting Impact and Success will show how artificial intelligence can transform every corner of a business, from estimating and bookkeeping to design visualization, client communication and workforce management.

Author Grace Tsao Mase brings a wealth of knowledge in AI and digital innovation. She is a Yale-trained architect with more than 25 years of digital innovation experience, and a multi-state licensed contractor who has worked alongside contractors on more than 5,000 projects, earned three U.S. patents, and built AI-powered solutions that make the construction process smoother, faster, and far more profitable, NAHB officials said.

"Artificial intelligence is a growing part of our industry and is here to stay," said NAHB Chairman Bill Owens, a Worthington, Ohio-based, remodeler and home builder. "This new resource will teach housing professionals how to better incorporate these tools into their business by streamlining processes and creating success through better management of data, decisions and time."

- Readers will hear from builders and remodelers from across the country who are already successfully using AI to:
- Complete projects up to 30 percent faster without sacrificing quality
- Eliminate costly miscommunications with smarter scheduling and documentation
- Win more bids through realistic 3D visuals and accurate projections
- Forecast risks, manage cash flow and increase profit margins
- Build healthier, safer and more resilient homes for modern families

AI in Residential Construction is available for purchase at ***www.BuilderBooks.com*** Soft-cover/246 pages, $29.95 retail, $26.95 NAHB member, ISBN 9780867188295.

PickleRage Indoor Pickleball Facility Debuts in Downtown New Rochelle

NEW ROCHELLE

PickleRage, a new 42,000-square-foot indoor pickleball facility opening in the heart of downtown New Rochelle, debuted with a VIP preview event on Mar. 25 and a special weekend promotion on March 28 and 29, officials recently announced.

The events allowed people to try playing pickleball for free. Nearly 1,000 people turned out for the weekend promotion, officials added.

Located at 173 Huguenot Street, PickleRage New Rochelle, officials said, is owned and operated by Brian Snyder and Henry Sztul. It is in a building developed by the Cappelli Organization. This is the first PickleRage facility in Westchester County and the first in New York State.

> **"There were several pickleball companies that were interested in occupying this space. After meeting with several different operators, we chose PickleRage because of their expertise and local market knowledge and presence. They are fantastic and we're very excited to have them here," said Bruce Berg, chief executive officer of Cappelli Development.**

PickleRage features 13 regulation-size courts with CushionX surfaces, LED lighting, locker rooms with showers, and video recording and livestreaming capabilities. Additional amenities include a player's lounge, and a pro shop with retail displays, a gear fitting area, and demo equipment. The courts feature bright overhead lighting, high-performance non-skid surfaces, and optimized temperature and humidity controls for ideal playing conditions. In addition to pickleball, the facility also offers three Full Swing golf simulators, the same used by TGL as seen on ESPN.

"There were several pickleball companies that were interested in occupying this space. After meeting with several different operators, we chose PickleRage because of their expertise and local market knowledge and presence. They are fantastic and we're very excited to have them here," said Bruce Berg, chief executive officer of Cappelli Development.

"We're thrilled to be a part of New Rochelle's continued downtown growth and bring our passion for pickleball to Westchester," said Sztul. "Pickleball provides a really great way to stay active and meet people."

The facility offers a variety of promotional membership packages in connection with the opening, ranging from $79 for a pro monthly membership to $3,880 for an annual elite family membership. For more information about membership visit ***https://picklerageneworochelle.com.***

About the Cappelli Organization

Officials said that the Cappelli Organization and its wholly owned subsidiaries, Cappelli Development Company and LRC Construction, offer a fully vertical development and construction team with a staff of proven professionals covering every discipline of development and construction including, but not limited to, design, architecture, site planning, engineering, estimating, construction services, finance, scheduling and cost control, project management and supervision, as well as residential sales, residential and office leasing and property management.

The company is also capable of self-performing excavation, high-rise concrete, curtain wall and sitework (including foundations, SOE (Support of Excavation) and remediation). Personalized involvement, attention to detail, creativity, concern for scheduling, safety, quality control and cost containment are all essential components of a successful development and are the hallmarks of the Cappelli Organization philosophy, officials added.

Founded in 2023, PickleRage is one of America's fastest growing indoor pickleball clubs that gives novice and advanced players alike a place to play and connect. PickleRage was founded by a group of pickleball enthusiasts who saw a need for dedicated indoor facilities where players could enjoy the sport year-round. Recognizing the sport's rapid growth and community spirit, they set out to create the ultimate indoor pickleball experience. PickleRage offers a dynamic environment for both novice and advanced players to play, connect, and enjoy the sport, officials said.

Yonkers Welcomes Opening of New Mediapro Studios, Bolstering City's Reputation as "Hollywood on Hudson"

YONKERS

The reputation of Yonkers as Hollywood on Hudson – a premier destination for the entertainment industry – was further bolstered recently with the opening of the new Mediapro Studios At Great Point Studios, a state-of-the-art production complex, complete with soundstages, post-production facilities, and a host of amenities designed to attract filmmakers, content creators, and production companies from all corners of the globe. Mediapro is the city's 11th studio, officials said.

Located at 1050 North Broadway, the 100,000 square-foot facility boasts three stages totaling 50,000 square feet of stage space ranging from 10,000 to 20,000 square feet. The space is designed to accommodate both large-scale and more intimate projects. It features a mill shop with adjacent loading docks, equipment storage, office space, sound and control rooms. Mediapro Studios was recently leased to NBCUniversal Television for an upcoming series, officials added.

Officials said the new campus is within the 30-mile New York City Film Zone and is a 10-minute drive from the newly-renovated Yonkers train station which offers a 30-minute commute to Grand Central Station in Midtown Manhattan. A two-story parking deck provides ample parking for cast and crew.

"Yonkers continues to prove we are a place where world-class creativity can thrive. This new Mediapro campus is a shining example of how our city is attracting global talent and major productions, creating jobs, energizing our economy, and showcasing Yonkers as a leader in the film industry," said Mayor Mike Spano.

The collaboration between Mediapro and Great Point Studios is creating a world-class hub for film and television production right in the heart of Yonkers, officials said.

"We're thrilled to partner with Mediapro and expand our production facility footprint in Yonkers. Mayor Spano and the entire Yonkers community has been incredibly supportive and welcoming as they share in our vision for regional economic growth," said Robert Halmi, founder and chief executive officer of Great Point Studios.

Simone Development Companies and Fareri Associates Announce That The Iron Tomato Opens a New Location at Purchase Professional Park

PURCHASE

Simone Development Companies and Fareri Associates recently announced that The Iron Tomato has opened a new location at 3000 Westchester Avenue at Purchase Professional Park.

Officials said that, for many years, The Iron Tomato has earned an outstanding reputation as one of Westchester's best gourmet markets, specializing in catering. Founded by brothers Stephen and Michael Berg, The Iron Tomato has eight locations, in total, across White Plains, New Rochelle, Tarrytown, Elmsford, West Harrison, and now Purchase.

"At The Iron Tomato, we take pride in bringing the same passion for quality and flavor that built our reputation to our new Purchase Park Café," said owners Stephen and Michael Berg. "Our mission is simple — serve fresh, high-quality food with warm, attentive service in a welcoming space where guests can enjoy a great meal, a great coffee, and a great experience every time."

"We are delighted to welcome The Iron Tomato, one of the area's most beloved cafes, to our bustling community at Purchase Professional Park. This is an extraordinary amenity for our tenants and visitors, serving breakfast and lunch as well as providing catering," said Joanna Simone, principal and president of leasing and property management operations for Simone Development Companies.

In addition to the new Iron Tomato café, officials said that Purchase Professional Park's amenities include an on-site fitness center, 24/7 building access with state-of-the-art camera security, a landscaped courtyard with seating areas, on-site owner management and abundant complimentary parking.

Located on Westchester Avenue in the heart of Westchester's "Medical Mile" along I-287, Purchase Professional Park, officials said, combines Class A medical and office space, exceptional amenities, and one of the most convenient commercial locations in the region. The campus is directly off I-287, the Hutchinson River Parkway and I-684, and is 10 minutes from the Westchester County Airport.

Officials said the campus features four modern buildings totaling 220,000 square feet: 3000, 3010, 3020 and 3030 Westchester Avenue. 3030 Westchester Avenue is an 85,000 square-foot medical building that is fully leased to Westmed Medical Group/Summit Health, a large multi-specialty group medical practice.

Only three spaces, officials added, remain available at the campus: 3000 Westchester Avenue (3,149 square feet), 3010 Westchester Avenue (4,511 square feet) and 3020 Westchester Avenue (3,587 square feet).

Simone Development Companies is a full-service real estate investment company specializing in the acquisition and development of healthcare, mixed-use, office, industrial, retail and residential properties. Headquartered at the Hutchinson Metro Center, the company boasts a portfolio of more than seven million square feet throughout the Bronx, Manhattan, Queens, Long Island, Westchester County, Orange and Fairfield (Conn.) Counties and New Jersey. With what company officials termed as expertise spanning acquisition, development, construction, finance, asset management, accounting, leasing and property management, Simone Development Companies is set apart by its vertically integrated management team, long-term asset ownership and its pursuit of visionary development, company officials added.

Fareri Associates, LP of Greenwich (Conn.) is a family owned and operated real estate investment and construction company focusing on development and re-development of office, retail, mixed-use and residential properties primarily in Fairfield County (Conn.) and Westchester County, company officials said.

The New Crystal Restoration (NCR) Receives an Award From the Business Council of Westchester (BCW)

NEW ROCHELLE

The New Crystal Restoration (NCR) of Port Chester recently received a Business Hall of Fame Award from the Business Council of Westchester (BCW).

The Business Council of Westchester (BCW), each year, recognizes Westchester County's top business leaders with its Hall of Fame Awards Program. The New Crystal Restoration (NCR), along with six other members of the Westchester County business community, was honored at the 25th Annual Business Hall of Fame Awards Dinner on Apr. 28 at the Glen Island Harbour Club in New Rochelle. The New Crystal Restoration (NCR) received an award from the program's Family Business Success Category, event officials said.

"The 2026 Business Hall of Fame inductees represent the very best of Westchester's vibrant and evolving economic landscape. This year's winners are a testament to the incredible diversity of talent and industry that defines our region - from pioneering construction executives and family-owned legacies to tireless healthcare leaders. Each honoree brings a distinguished level of expertise and a track record of extraordinary accomplishment that not only elevates their respective fields, but strengthens the fabric of our entire business community. We are proud to celebrate their passion, their resilience, and the profound impact they continue to make on Westchester's future," said Marsha Gordon, president and chief executive officer of the Business Council of Westchester (BCW).

New Crystal Restoration (NCR) was founded in 1960 in Westchester County. The company is a third-generation, women-owned leader in restoration, remediation, and reconstruction services, company officials said.

As the area's first green restoration company, New Crystal Restoration (NCR), company officials said, is recognized for its health-focused, non-toxic cleaning and remediation methods, in-depth insurance expertise, and its ability to manage complex projects involving water, fire, mold, asbestos, or lead solutions. The company has established a reputation for fast response, technical integrity, and exceptional care in sensitive environments, ranging from multifamily housing and commercial buildings to hospitals, schools, and specialty care facilities, officials added.

Company officials said the New Crystal Restoration (NCR) is backed by a seasoned leadership team. The team incudes President Lisa Cordasco, Chief Financial Officer Rosemary Cordasco and Environmental Director Louis Cordasco, Jr.

Pictured above, from left to right, are Lisa Cordasco, Louis Cordasco, Jr. and Rosemary Cordasco of The New Crystal Restoration.

New Crystal Restoration (NCR), company officials added, provides full-service disaster recovery and capital improvement solutions from initial mitigation through full rebuild. The company, officials added, has a strong relationship with property managers and insurance professionals, and a commitment to compliant, high-quality workmanship.

New Crystal Restoration (NCR) recently announced that it continues to expand its commercial and environmental service portfolio, delivering reliable, knowledgeable local support to property owners and managers. Company officials said the Cordasco family has demonstrated exceptional leadership, transforming a 65-year-old family business into a modern women-owned, eco-focused restoration company with a strong foothold in the commercial and institutional sectors.

Houlihan Lawrence Commercial Announces Retail "Lease-Up" of 215 South Ridge Street in Rye Brook

RYE BROOK

Houlihan Lawrence Commercial recently announced the retail "lease-up" of 215 South Ridge Street in Rye Brook.

The landlord and tenant was represented by Garry Klein, regional manager of Houlihan Lawrence Commercial. The tenant will be renovating and upgrading the space to continue the use of the space as a nail salon. This sought-after retail location is directly across from the Rye Ridge Shopping Plaza with dozens of national retailers and medical offices, officials said.

Houlihan Lawrence Commercial, a full-service division, specializes in Investment Opportunities; Office, Industrial and Retail Sales and Leasing; Land Acquisition and Development; and Municipal Approval Consultation, company officials said.

Houlihan Lawrence, company officials added, is the leading real estate brokerage serving New York City's northern suburbs. Founded in Bronxville in 1888, the company has 32 offices and 1,450-plus agents serving Westchester, Putnam, Dutchess, Columbia, Ulster and Orange counties in New York and Fairfield County in Connecticut.

Westchester Disabled on the Move Leases 4,304 Square Feet at One Executive Boulevard in Yonkers

YONKERS

Simone Development Companies recently announced that Westchester Disabled on the Move has leased 4,304 square feet at One Executive Boulevard in North Yonkers.

Westchester Disabled on the Move helps people with disabilities, the elderly, and low-income families live independent lives by providing them with access to healthcare, housing and other assistance through social programs, officials said.

"We are delighted to welcome Westchester Disabled on the Move to their new home at One Executive Boulevard," said Joe Simone, president of Simone Development Companies. "The property offers a convenient and central location with prime visibility, incredible proximity to highways and public transportation, two entrances with easy access to abundant free parking all around the building, and the opportunity to create bespoke buildouts to suit a multitude of tenant needs."

"We are on the move! After over 40 years in the same location, we are so excited to announce that we are taking a step forward to a brand-new space with so many possibilities," said Maria Samuels, executive director of Westchester Disabled on the Move. "The convenient location and accessibility for our clients made this the perfect choice. This next chapter in our continued growth marks our commitment to providing leading services and advocacy for all of Westchester's disability community. We are delighted to remain in Yonkers."

Westchester Disabled on the Move, which is relocating from another location in Yonkers, was represented by Craig Ruoff of Colliers. Simone Development Companies was represented by Matt Lisk, Tara Long, and Kevin McCarthy of Cushman and Wakefield, alongside Simone's in-house leasing and legal teams, officials said.

Located in the North Yonkers "Medical Mile," One Executive Boulevard is a newly renovated 133,768-square-foot, four-story state-of-the-art medical building that was repurposed from a traditional office building, officials said.

The property currently has space availabilities ranging from 1,400 to 71,000 square feet, including multiple spaces on-grade to accommodate use that requires heavy floor loads, officials added.

Continued on p. 11

2026 Builders Awards Honors Westchester's Leading Builders, Developers, and Design Visionaries

Westchester Home and 914INC. Recognize the Innovators Transforming the Region's Residential and Commercial Landscape

HARRISON

Westchester Home and 914INC. honored the region's most influential builders, developers, architects, and community leaders at the 2026 Builders Awards on Apr. 16, event officials recently announced.

The annual awards program, event officials added, celebrates the individuals and organizations transforming Westchester through visionary development, innovative design, and leadership in residential and commercial real estate. The program was at the Harrison Meadows Country Club.

Presented by Westchester Home and 914INC. and in partnership with the Building and Realty Institute of the Hudson Valley (BRI), the Builders Awards spotlight the projects and leaders shaping the future of Westchester's communities and economic landscape, event officials said.

"The event highlights the extraordinary talent and leadership behind the homes, neighborhoods, and commercial spaces that define Westchester," said Amy Conway, executive editor of Westchester Magazine and editor-in-chief of Westchester Home. "From groundbreaking development to thoughtful community planning and architecture, this year's honorees represent the innovation and collaboration required to build vibrant communities."

Ana Medina Mantini, associate publisher of Westchester Home, added: "The Builders Awards celebrate the professionals who are not only shaping Westchester's physical landscape, but also strengthening the region's economic vitality. Bringing together leaders across development, design, government, and business reflects the powerful intersection of industry and community that drives Westchester forward."

The following is a list of the honorees:

Residential Single-Family Home Builder
Oran Ben-Simon, Vice President, KOSL Building Group LLC

Residential Contractor
Eric Abraham, Comstock Residential Contracting

Multi-Family Builder
Damon Woolf, Director, Land Acquisition, Toll Brothers

Community Driving Development
Pam Tarlow, assistant commissioner of planning and community development, City of Mount Vernon

Adaptive Reuse – Multifamily Residential
Amy Rose, president and chief executive officer, Rose Associates,
Christopher Gibaldi, managing director of development, Rose Associates

Adaptive Reuse – Community Project
Rob Rubico, Owner, Anna & Jack's Treehouse
Danielle DeVito, Architect, Pencil Projects Architecture

Affordable Housing – Homeownership
Bill Balter, president, WBP Development LLC

Affordable Housing – Not-for-Profit
Richard Nightingale, president and chief executive officer, WESTHAB,
Andrew Germasky, senior vice president of Real Estate, WESTHAB

Sustainability Leadership
Ron Kamen, Founder and President, EarthKind Energy, co-founder and director, the Clean Energy Action Coalition (CEAC)

Regional Leadership in Business and Development
John Ravitz, executive vice president and chief operating officer, The Business Council of Westchester (BCW)

Residential and Commercial Landscape Design
Valerio Morano, The Morano Group

Boutique Developer
Dan Bsharat, Managing Director, Hudson Hill Partners
Tariq Bsharat, Advisory Board Member, Hudson Hill Partners

Emerging Leader
Anthony Morando, partner, Cuddy and Feder, LLP

Land Use Leadership
Mark P. Weingarten, partner, DelBello, Donnellan, Weingarten, Wise and Wiederkehr

Award in Architecture
Ira Grandberg, AIA, Grandberg & Associates

Mixed-Use Builder / Developer – Commercial
Patricia Simone, Joanna Simone, Simone Development

Emerging Leader, Commercial Builder
Dale Phillips, President,
Kaitlyn Phillips, Account Manager,
E.J. York Construction Managers | General Contractors

Groundbreaker Award
Adam Bosch, former chief executive officer, Hudson Valley Pattern for Progress

Westchester Home is Westchester County's premier magazine dedicated to home design, architecture, and luxury living. Published by Today Media, the brand inspires affluent homeowners and the design trade while showcasing the region's most beautiful homes and influential designers through award-winning editorial, digital platforms, and signature events, including the Builders Awards and Design Awards, officials said.

914INC. is Westchester County's leading business magazine, delivering insight into the companies, leaders, and trends shaping the region's economy. Published by Today Media, the brand connects executives, entrepreneurs, and decision-makers through award-winning editorial, digital platforms, and signature events including Wunderkinds, Best of Business, and Women of Influence, officials added.

Luxury Markets Remain Strong in Q2 with Rising Sales and Sustained Buyer Demand, Report Says

RYE BROOK

Driven by rising sales, continued price appreciation and sustained buyer demand, the luxury real estate market across New York and Connecticut remained strong in the second quarter of 2026, according to the Houlihan Lawrence Q2 2026 Luxury Market Report released on Jul.14.

Westchester County led the region, with luxury sales above $2 million climbing more than 16 percent and homes selling above asking price. Putnam and Dutchess Counties continued to attract buyers seeking lifestyle, space, and long-term value, with homes sold over $1 million across both counties increasing five percent. In the second quarter, the highest luxury sale in Westchester was $10 million in Rye City, the report said.

Greenwich (Conn.) also posted a strong quarter, with luxury sales above $3 million increasing 10 percent and days on market falling sharply, reflecting continued demand for premier properties. Across Fairfield County (Conn.), communities including Darien, New Canaan, and Rowayton recorded notable gains in luxury sales of 11 percent, 16 percent, and 85 percent, respectively. The quarter's highest sale price in Connecticut was $25 million in Greenwich, the report added.

"While inventory improved in several luxury price segments, supply at the highest end of the market remains limited. Well-priced, exceptional homes continue to command significant interest, reinforcing the strength and resilience of the luxury market," said Liz Nunan, president and chief executive officer of Houlihan Lawrence.

LUXURY MARKETS AT A GLANCE (Q2 2026 vs Q2 2025)

WESTCHESTER COUNTY LUXURY HOME SALES /$2M AND HIGHER

Homes Sold: Up 16.1 percent
Median Sale Price: Up 2.3 percent
Q2 Highest Sale Price: $10,000,000 Rye City

PUTNAM AND DUTCHESS COUNTY LUXURY HOME SALES /$1M AND HIGHER

Homes Sold: Up 4.9 percent
Median Sale Price: Up 4.9 percent
Q2 Highest Sale Price Putnam: $2,424,221 Mahopac
Q2 Highest Sale Price Dutchess: $9,650,000 Millbrook

GREENWICH LUXURY HOME SALES /$3M AND HIGHER

Homes Sold: Up 10.2 percent
Median Sale Price: Up 1.1 percent
Q2 Highest Sale Price: $25,000,000 Greenwich

DARIEN LUXURY HOME SALES /$2M AND HIGHER

Homes Sold: Up 11.3 percent
Median Sale Price: Up 19 percent
Q2 Highest Sale Price: $7,200,000

NEW CANAAN LUXURY HOME SALES /$2M AND HIGHER

Homes Sold: Up 16.3 percent
Median Sale Price: Down 2.3 percent
Q2 Highest Sale Price: $8,000,000

ROWAYTON LUXURY HOME SALES /$2M AND HIGHER

Homes Sold: Up 85.7 percent
Median Sale Price: Up 52.4 percent

Company officials said that Houlihan Lawrence is the leading real estate brokerage serving New York City's northern suburbs. Founded in Bronxville in 1888, the company, officials said, is deeply committed to technological innovation and the finest client service. The company has 32 offices and 1,450-plus agents serving Westchester, Putnam, Dutchess, Columbia, Ulster and Orange counties in New York and Fairfield County in Connecticut, company officials added.

87 Hix Avenue, Rye, NY

Architects rendering of 510 North Broadway in White Plains.

McCullough, Goldberger and Staudt Announces Final Approval of Plans for the Development of Luxury Condominium in White Plains

WHITE PLAINS

The law firm of McCullough, Goldberger and Staudt, LLP (MGS) recently announced final approval by the White Plains Planning Board of 510 North Broadway, a new three-story, luxury condominium building featuring 12 residences above parking.

MGS successfully represented project developer Comstock Residential through the approval process. Partner Steven Wrabel assisted in obtaining variance and site plan approvals for the development from the White Plains Zoning Board of Appeals and Planning Board, officials said.

Officials said the building will feature rooftop amenity space, rooftop solar panels and landscaping. Apartments will come in three-bedroom, two-bathroom layouts and will average between 1,600 to 1,700 square feet. Residents will have access to parking in indoor and outdoor parking on site.

Comstock is demolishing the existing vacant office space. The 0.47-acre site is at the corner of North Broadway and Brookdale Avenue, in close proximity to the North White Plains Metro North station, officials said.

Officials said McCullough, Goldberger and Staudt, LLP represents a diverse group of clients. MGS (including its predecessor firm) has been, officials said, an integral part of the Westchester community for more than 60 years. The firm offers a wide range of services in areas including land use, commercial and residential real estate, banking law, trusts and estates, municipal law, construction law and all types of litigation. Its clients include corporations, insurance companies, municipalities, co-op, condo and homeowners' associations, developers, golf and country clubs and not-for-profits, as well as individual property owners. Services are provided by a team of 12 experienced attorneys, officials added.

A rendering of 510 North Broadway in White Plains is above.

Westchester Disabled on the Move Leases 4,304 Square Feet at One Executive Boulevard in Yonkers, Continued from p. 10

Simone Development Companies is a full-service real estate investment company specializing in the acquisition and development of healthcare, mixed-use, office, industrial, retail and residential properties. Headquartered at the Hutchinson Metro Center, the company has a portfolio of more than seven million square feet throughout the Bronx, Manhattan, Queens, Long Island, Westchester County, Orange and Fairfield (Conn.) Counties and New Jersey. The company has expertise spanning acquisition, development, construction, finance, asset management, accounting, leasing and property management, officials said.