

Village of Westchester

ANNUAL REPORT



2024

Barry Krumstok
Village Manager

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Dear Village Board & Citizens of Westchester,

I am pleased to present this annual report, marking my first full year as your Village Manager. Since assuming this role in June 2023, my focus has been on revitalizing Westchester through comprehensive policy and procedural enhancements aimed at improving organization, fostering transparent and accountable governance, ensuring the Village meets its obligations while investing in its future, and enhancing community engagement.

Over the past year, we have prioritized right-sizing the organization to ensure efficiency and effectiveness while positively addressing staffing needs to better serve our community. We have also implemented “true cost accounting” practices, accurately allocating budgets to provide a clearer picture of the Village’s financial health and aligning resources with both current needs and future goals.

Proper governance requires making challenging but important decisions to secure Westchester’s future. This past year, we allocated the full actuarially recommended contribution amount for public safety pensions and addressed long-overdue infrastructure needs. With new lead service line mandates, we are committed to ensuring compliance and making proactive investments in our infrastructure to protect public health and safety. These decisions ultimately reflect our focus on accountability as well as our responsibility to position Westchester for long-term success.

Transparency and communication remain key priorities. The positive feedback on the Transparency Portal on our website demonstrates our commitment to providing residents with easy access to important financial and operational information. Additionally, communication has been a major focus. Our weekly e-newsletter has quickly become a valued resource, keeping residents informed, engaged, and connected to Village updates and initiatives.

Together, we’ve laid a strong foundation for continued progress in Westchester, and I am confident that the steps we’ve taken will benefit our community for years to come. I look forward to building on this momentum in the year ahead.

Sincerely,



Barry Krumstok
Village Manager



INFRASTRUCTURE IMPROVEMENTS



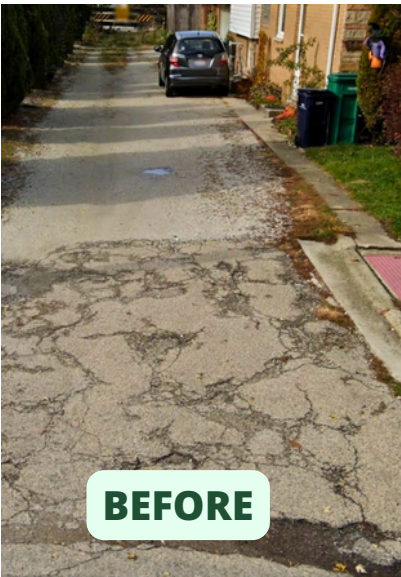
Imagine your daily routine – from the smooth commute along well-maintained roads to the seamless flow of water every time you turn on a faucet. These seemingly ordinary aspects are the backbone of our community's infrastructure. Roadways pave the way for easy travel, and water and sewer utilities ensure a constant, clean supply. They're not just structures; they are the silent architects of our convenience, shaping the comfort and quality of everyday life. We depend on this important infrastructure daily, so its maintenance and resilience is of the utmost importance. To continue providing residents with a smooth, safe and enjoyable daily experience, the Village of Westchester completed the following infrastructure improvements in 2024:

STREETS AND ALLEYS

We focused heavily on maintaining and improving roadways, resurfacing 3.4 miles of streets, micro-surfacing another 1.5 miles, and using 14,600 pounds of material to crack-fill 8.3 miles. In addition, 1 mile of alleys was reconstructed, including 0.25 miles converted into environmentally friendly green alleys.

GREEN ALLEYS

We are pleased to present some before-and-after photos from our 2024 project that transformed four gravel alleys into permeable paver "green" alleys, situated just north of 31st St, from Mayfair Ave to Sunnyside Ave. With funding assistance from the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District (MWRD), these alleys now have the capacity to store up to 92,600 gallons of stormwater. This significantly mitigates flood risk and boosts environmental sustainability. This project is an effective combination of innovative urban development and ecological responsibility.



INFRASTRUCTURE IMPROVEMENTS CONTINUED



WATER AND SEWER

A significant effort went into upgrading our aging water system, with 0.75 miles of 1920s-era water mains replaced and 126 lead service lines removed and updated to meet state mandates. Sanitary and storm sewer systems saw 6.5 miles of main lines cleaned and televised, while 1,263 feet of sanitary sewer were lined to ensure better performance and reliability.

BEAUTIFICATION & SAFETY ENHANCEMENTS

- Public Works contributed to the Village's beautification by planting 309 new trees and trimming 1,500 existing ones.
- The Village was once again recognized as an official Tree City and also received the Growth Award due to the completion of our Village-wide tree inventory and Management Plan.
- The Wedgwood Drive Bridge replacement marked another major milestone in improving safety and connectivity.
- To ensure public spaces remain accessible and safe, crews replaced 12,750 feet of curb and 1,726 sidewalk squares/trip hazards, equivalent to 1.6 miles of improved pathways
- Additionally, 285 fire hydrants were sandblasted and repainted as part of a multi-year program to enhance functionality and aesthetics.



WEDGWOOD DR BRIDGE - BEFORE



WEDGWOOD DR BRIDGE - AFTER

IN 2024, THE VILLAGE SUCCESSFULLY COLLABORATED WITH LEGISLATORS, REPRESENTATIVES, AND OTHER GOVERNMENTAL AGENCIES TO SECURE \$1.3 MILLION IN GRANT FUNDING TO ASSIST WITH CURRENT AND FUTURE VILLAGE PROJECTS AND EFFORTS.

INVESTING IN WESTCHESTER: LONG-TERM PLANNING FOR A RESILIENT FUTURE

In 2024, the Village of Westchester took critical steps to address aging infrastructure, comply with state and federal mandates, and ensure the sustainability and safety of its water and sewer systems. With much of the Village's underground infrastructure dating back nearly a century, the need for proactive and strategic investment has never been greater.

Nearly half of the Village's water mains, 27% of sanitary sewers, and 60% of storm sewers were installed in the 1920s and 1930s, leaving these systems in urgent need of modernization. Adding to the challenge is the federally mandated Lead Service Replacement Act, which requires the replacement of approximately 1,000 resident-side and 3,600 Village-side lead service lines by 2040.

In response, the Village has embraced a proactive and responsible approach that prioritizes long-term financial planning, strategic infrastructure maintenance, and transparent governance to ensure a resilient future for the community.

PROFESSIONAL WATER & SEWER RATE STUDY

To address these priorities, the Village implemented initial utility rate adjustments in July 2024 to begin funding critical infrastructure improvements. However, recognizing the need for a more detailed analysis, the Village simultaneously proposed a professional Water and Sewer Rate Study to guide long-term infrastructure planning and ensure responsible financial stewardship. Initiated in 2024, the Village partnered with Baxter & Woodman to conduct the comprehensive Water and Sewer Rate Study. This initiative reflects the Village's commitment to thoughtful, data-driven decision-making and includes:

- **A 20-Year Capital Improvement Plan:** The study will outline a strategic roadmap for prioritizing key projects, including lead service line replacements, water main upgrades, and sewer system improvements.
- **Sustainable Financing Options:** It will explore funding solutions to maintain and upgrade infrastructure over the long term.
- **Strategic Cost Management:** By analyzing current and projected needs, the study ensures transparency and accountability in how utility funds are allocated and spent.

ADDRESSING LEAD SERVICE LINE COMPLIANCE

Compliance with the Lead Service Replacement Act was a top priority for the Village in 2024, and significant progress was made toward meeting these mandates:

- **Lead Service Line Inventory:** The inventory was completed, submitted to the EPA, and made publicly available on the Village website in July 2024. This transparent approach ensures full compliance with EPA requirements and provides residents with access to important information about their water service.
- **Replacement Plan Development:** Partnering with Christopher B. Burke Engineering, Ltd. (CBBEL), the Village began drafting a comprehensive project plan to try to secure funding through the Public Water Supply Loan Program (PWSLP).
- **Water Filter Pitcher Distribution Program:** To ensure EPA compliance and protect vulnerable households during the transition period, the Village implemented a program to provide affected residents with water filter pitchers.

INVESTING IN WESTCHESTER: LONG-TERM PLANNING FOR A RESILIENT FUTURE *CONTINUED*

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT & TRANSPARENCY

Recognizing the importance of these efforts, the Village made it a priority to keep all residents informed and engaged. By fostering open communication and ensuring transparency, we created a shared understanding of the purpose and necessity behind these priorities. Throughout 2024, the Village actively connected with residents to provide clarity and encourage meaningful participation in these critical efforts:

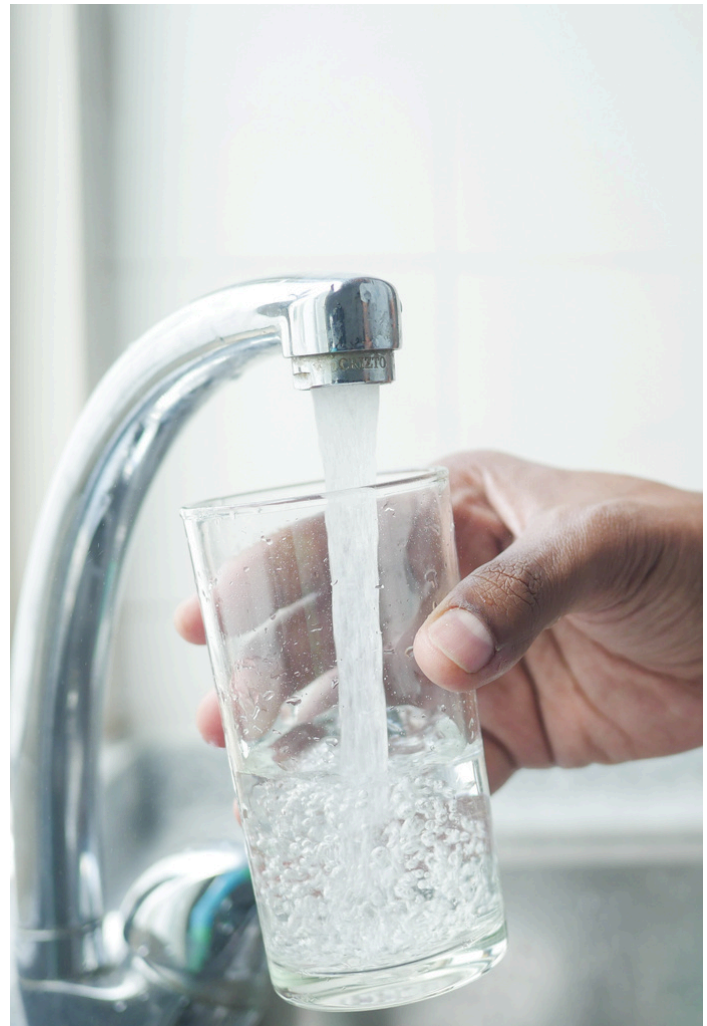
- **Public Meetings and Town Hall:** Extensive discussions about infrastructure funding and utility rate adjustments took place during public Village Board and Committee of the Whole meetings as well as a dedicated Town Hall on May 30, 2024.
- **Educational Resources:** Tools like the utility bill calculator, FAQs, and informational updates were shared via the Village website, e-newsletters, printed newsletters, and social media to help residents understand the impact and necessity of these changes.
- **Support Programs:** The Village revised its Utility Bill Hardship Program and introduced the Utility Efficiency Program to assist residents facing financial challenges.

BUILDING A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE

The Village's efforts in 2024 reflect a deep commitment to responsible governance and proactive planning. By addressing aging infrastructure, meeting lead service compliance requirements, and initiating a comprehensive rate study, Westchester is laying the foundation for a sustainable, resilient utility system.

These actions are more than necessary improvements—they represent an investment in the safety, quality of life, and long-term prosperity of our community.

Through thoughtful planning, transparent communication, and strategic decision-making, the Village is ensuring that its utility systems will serve residents effectively for generations to come.



KEY UPDATES

SWITCH TO SBC WASTE SOLUTIONS: ENHANCED SERVICES & COST SAVINGS

In April 2024, the Village Board voted to approve the transition to SBC Waste Solutions for waste, recycling, and yard waste collection services. This decision followed a rigorous and transparent review process aimed at securing the best possible outcome for residents while maintaining service quality and fiscal responsibility.

Why the Change Was Necessary

Ahead of the expiration of its previous waste contract, the Village met with Waste Management (WM) to discuss a renewal. However, WM proposed a contract with an approximate 30% rate increase, significantly impacting costs for residents. Recognizing the importance of finding a cost-effective yet high-quality solution, the Village sought proposals from multiple companies to ensure competitive pricing and enhanced service offerings.

Understanding the long-standing relationship with WM and the potential challenges of transitioning to a new provider, the Village approached this decision with careful consideration. Cost was not the sole factor; maintaining reliable service and achieving enhanced offerings were also main priorities.

A Comprehensive Review Process

The Village issued a Request for Proposals (RFP) and received responses from five companies. Each proposal was carefully evaluated based on cost, services offered, and company reputation. The review process included:

- **Detailed Service Comparisons:** Analyzing the scope of services, including waste, recycling, and yard waste collection, as well as added features or benefits.
- **Reference Checks:** Contacting other municipalities served by the bidding companies to ensure their reliability, customer service quality, and operational efficiency.
- **Thorough Vetting:** Engaging in discussions and follow-ups with each company to confirm their ability to meet the Village's specific needs.
- **Transition Planning:** Ensuring any change in providers would not disrupt service quality.

Following this comprehensive review, SBC Waste Solutions emerged as the best option, offering expanded services, competitive pricing, and a strong commitment to customer satisfaction.

Key Benefits of the Transition

- **Cost Savings:** The new contract with SBC Waste Solutions not only avoided WM's proposed rate increase but also reduced monthly fees for residents below what they were previously paying.
- **Enhanced Services:** SBC committed to providing expanded waste, recycling, and yard waste programs, ensuring improved service delivery. Specific enhancements include offering residents the flexibility to select refuse and recycling cart sizes that best fit their needs, expanding the yard waste and compost collection period to the end of December, the introduction of an annual Village-wide spring clean-up event, the expansion to two allotted bulk items and unlimited white goods for collection each week, and increased community presence and engagement.
- **Reliable Service:** The Village worked closely with SBC throughout the transition and continues to hold regular check-ins to ensure consistent service quality and reliability.



WATER USE PORTAL: EMPOWERING RESIDENTS WITH REAL-TIME INSIGHTS

In 2024, following the water meter replacement program, the Village initiated a forward-looking project to develop a Water Use Portal, a tool designed to provide residents with detailed, real-time access to their water consumption data. This innovative initiative is currently in the configuration phase and is anticipated to launch in spring 2025.

Purpose and Benefits for Residents

The Water Use Portal will empower residents to take greater control of their water usage by offering key features such as:

- **Real-Time Monitoring:** Residents can view their water consumption data in real-time, enabling them to track their usage patterns and make informed decisions about their water habits.
- **Leak Detection Alerts:** The portal will automatically notify users of potential leaks, helping to prevent water waste and reduce unexpected costs.
- **Cost Management:** By providing clear insights into water usage, the portal will help residents better manage their utility bills and plan for their household expenses.

Why This Matters

The Water Use Portal is more than a technological upgrade—it's an investment in community engagement and environmental stewardship. By equipping residents with the tools to monitor and manage their water use, the Village is fostering a culture of conservation and accountability while enhancing the quality of life for all residents.

This initiative is part of a larger vision to build a more sustainable and connected Westchester, ensuring that residents have access to modern resources that make a tangible difference in their daily lives.



ADDITIONAL UPDATES & INITIATIVES

The Village Administration team is pleased to present a summary of updates and initiatives undertaken throughout the year, including but not limited to the following:

COMMUNITY

- **100th Anniversary Committee:** Established to plan celebrations for the Village's centennial in 2025.
- **Hardship Assistance & High-Efficiency Resources Portal:** Launched in 2024 on the Village website, this directory compiles essential resources and programs to support residents.
- **Resident Discount Program for Wildlife Trapping Services:** Adopted to provide cost-effective solutions for residents addressing wildlife concerns.
- **Party in the Park:** We collaborated with the Park District and Chamber of Commerce for the return of a vibrant summer music festival, and it was a great success.
- **Expanded Juneteenth Event:** For the first time, the Village expanded our Juneteenth event to feature a freedom walk across the Roosevelt bridge as well as a large community celebration in Gladstone Park.
- **Hispanic Heritage Event:** Held for the first time in September 2024, we celebrated Hispanic culture and contributions.
- **Italian American Heritage Celebration:** Held for the first time in October 2024, we honored Italian culture through music and food.
- **Secretary of State Facility:** Located in Village Hall, this facility completed 24,740 driver's license and ID services in 2024, including 21,154 for seniors, disabled individuals, veterans, or local walk-ins.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

- **Economic Development Consultant Report:** Received with recommendations for Village growth, began process to revamp Economic Development Committee.
- **Aviator Coffee & Cocktails:** Opened at 1855 S Mannheim Rd, this establishment offers a unique blend of artisanal coffee and crafted cocktails, enhancing the local dining scene.
- **Lalo's:** Started buildout at 10229 Roosevelt Rd, aiming to open in 2025 to bring authentic Mexican cuisine to the community.
- **Tasteful:** Started buildout at 1929 Mannheim Rd, set to open early 2025 and will offer a diverse bar and grill menu.
- **Wing Snob:** Started buildout at 10350 W Roosevelt Rd and is now open, offering a delicious variety of chicken (and vegetarian!) wings as well as sandwiches and sides.

FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

- **Actuarial Funding Commitment:** The Village incorporated the full actuarial amount into the budget, demonstrating fiscal responsibility and ensuring long-term stability for public safety pensions.
- **Pension Report Presentations:** For the second consecutive year, the actuarial consultant presented detailed pension reports to the Village Board, reinforcing financial transparency and providing critical insights to guide sound decision-making.
- **FY 2022 Audit:** Successfully completed, ensuring financial transparency.
- **FY 2023 Audit:** Draft completed in December 2024, with final approval expected in early 2025.
- **Bond Sale:** Conducted to fund voter-approved infrastructure projects.

ADDITIONAL UPDATES & INITIATIVES

CONTINUED

FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT (CONTINUED)

- **Bond Rating of A2 Reconfirmed by Moody's:** In 2024, Village staff worked diligently to ensure the Village's bond rating of A2 was maintained. Moody's review of the Village began in late 2024 and was officially completed in early January 2025, with the Village maintaining our A2 bond rating. Per Moody's, this was largely due to recent policy improvements, catching up on previous audit financial reports, future capital planning, and a commitment to fund pension liabilities by the Village's new management team. Previously, these were credit weaknesses for the Village. The full Moody's press release will be posted on the Village website.

POLICY & GOVERNANCE

- **Compensation Study:** Approved to ensure equitable pay and retain talented staff.
- **Spiller Pay Fee Ordinance:** Introduced to recover costs for hazardous material incidents.
- **Personal Identity Information Protection Policy:** Adopted to safeguard employee and resident data.
- **Cook County Multi-Jurisdictional Mitigation Plan:** Collaborative effort to enhance regional disaster preparedness.
- **Extended Lobbyist Contract:** Renewed to ensure continued advocacy for the Village's interests.

PUBLIC SAFETY ENHANCEMENTS

- **New Fire Chief Appointment:** Following a professional search, a new chief was appointed to lead modernization efforts and strengthen team cohesion in the Fire Department.
- **Firefighter/Lieutenant Promotions:** Recognized and elevated personnel to leadership roles, supporting professional development within the department.
- **Police Department Promotions:** Promoted officers to key roles, ensuring leadership continuity and operational efficiency.
- **Firefighter/Lieutenant Contract:** Approved to support and retain essential personnel.
- **Lucas Chest Compression System:** Purchased to enhance emergency medical response capabilities.
- **FLOCK Camera Program:** Launched to bolster community safety through advanced surveillance technology.
- **Fire Department Radios:** Acquired in collaboration with neighboring communities to improve communication.
- **Police Department Radios:** Upgraded to enhance operational efficiency.
- **Safety, IT Updates, Security Cameras:** IT and safety updates such as security cameras were installed at municipal buildings to ensure a secure environment for staff and residents.
- **Work on Fire Stations:** Repairs and improvements began, with additional work planned for 2025.

ADDITIONAL UPDATES & INITIATIVES

CONTINUED

PUBLIC WORKS & INFRASTRUCTURE

- **Water and Sewer Capital Improvement Planning and Revenue Study:** A 20-year plan was initiated to ensure sustainable funding for infrastructure upgrades, with completion expected in 2025.
- **Water Use Portal:** Approved and under development to provide residents with enhanced access to billing information, promoting transparency and user-friendly services.
- **Tree Inventory & Management Plan:** Completed and available on the Village website, supporting urban forestry management and environmental sustainability.
- **Green Alleys Program:** Continued efforts to improve stormwater management while incorporating environmentally friendly infrastructure.
- **Streetlight Pole Replacements:** Replaced five streetlight poles to enhance public safety.
- **Fire Hydrant Testing, Repairs, and Painting:** Ongoing maintenance ensured functional water infrastructure, with a multi-year painting initiative improving both aesthetics and usability.
- **Kensington Watermain Project:** Advanced to enhance water distribution reliability, addressing aging infrastructure.
- **Guardrail Improvement Project:** Approved to improve road safety in key areas of the Village.
- **Crestwood Inflow Meter Purchase:** Acquired to monitor water flow effectively, with installation planned for 2025.
- **New Fleet Vehicles:** Purchased to enhance service delivery across departments and improve operational efficiency.
- **Welcome New Mechanic:** Hiring of an in-house mechanic reduced outsourcing needs, saving costs and increasing maintenance capabilities.
- **Fuel Station Repairs:** Completed to support uninterrupted municipal operations.
- **Public Works Building Facility Assessment:** A contract was approved to evaluate and plan for future facility improvements, ensuring operational readiness.
- **Emergency Repairs and Netting at the Public Works Building:** Addressed critical structural needs to maintain safe and efficient operations.
- **Annual Water Leak Detection Work:** Continued efforts to identify and resolve leaks, ensuring efficient water usage and reduced losses.

UTILITY SERVICES

- **Reinstated Red Tag and Water Shut-Off Program:** Reintroduced to encourage timely utility payments and to collect on delinquent utility payments.
- **Water Fixture Efficiency Reimbursement Grant Program:** Created to promote water conservation.
- **Utility Bill Hardship Program Revision:** Updated to provide better assistance to residents in need.

IMPROVED COMMUNICATIONS

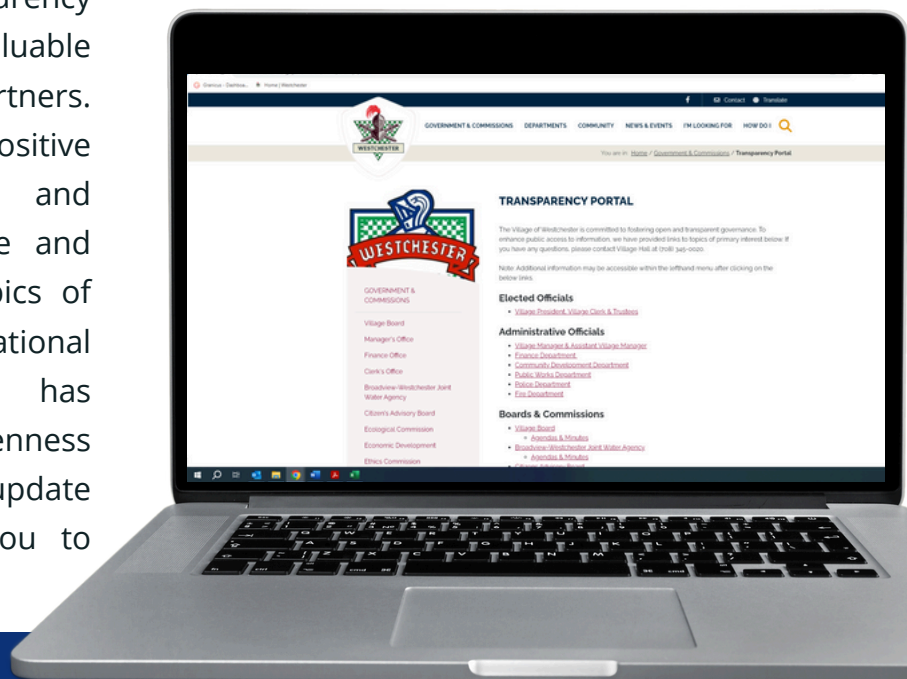


WESTCHESTER WEEKLY E-NEWS: A LEADING COMMUNICATION TOOL

The Westchester Weekly E-News continues to be one of the Village's strongest communication tools, growing from its launch in November 2023 to an impressive 3,500 subscribers in 2024. With an average open rate of 67%, which is 31% higher than the industry average according to Constant Contact, the newsletter remains a trusted and valued resource for keeping residents informed about Village operations, upcoming events, and important updates. This growth reflects the community's engagement and appreciation for clear and consistent communication.

TRANSPARENCY PORTAL: A TRUSTED RESOURCE

Launched in December 2023, the Transparency Portal on the Village website has become a valuable resource for both residents and external partners. Throughout 2024, the portal has received positive feedback, with community members and stakeholders highlighting its comprehensive and accessible format. By consolidating key topics of interest and important financial and operational information, the Transparency Portal has strengthened the Village's commitment to openness and informed governance. As we continue to update and expand its content, we encourage you to explore this vital resource and stay engaged!



OTHER RESOURCES INCLUDE:

- New Resident Guide, Dining & Shopping Guide, & Senior Resource Guide can be found on our website.
- CodeRED, a web-based critical communication solution that enables the Village to notify residents of time-sensitive information - sign up on our website.
- Facebook - The Village maintains an active social media presence on its official Facebook page. Please follow the page at www.facebook.com/villageofwestchester to see construction updates, upcoming events, and other important news.

COMMUNITY EVENTS

Throughout 2024, the Village of Westchester was an active community partner, collaborating with the Park District, Library, School District, Chamber of Commerce, Westchester Food Pantry, and other local organizations through the Westchester Special Events Committee. This collaborative approach enabled the Village to enrich a variety community event and foster stronger connections among residents. Stay tuned for more exciting events in 2025 - our centennial year!

2024 EVENTS & ACTIVITIES THE VILLAGE HOSTED OR CONTRIBUTED TO:

- **BLACK HISTORY MONTH CELEBRATION**
- **ARBOR DAY TREE PLANTING WITH LOCAL SCHOOLS**
- **DUNKIN' DONUTS COP ON A ROOFTOP**
- **TOWN HALL MEETING FOR WATER RATES AND SBC WASTE SOLUTIONS TRANSITION**
- **TWO-DAY JUNETEENTH CELEBRATION**
- **4TH OF JULY PARADE**
- **PARTY-IN-THE-PARK TWO-DAY EVENT**
- **NATIONAL NIGHT OUT**
- **SUMMER CONCERTS IN THE PARK**
- **REUSE-A-PALOOZA**
- **HISPANIC HERITAGE EVENTS AT VILLAGE HALL AND LOCAL SCHOOLS**
- **SENIOR RESOURCE FAIR**
- **TWO SHRED EVENTS**
- **FALL CLEAN-UP WITH LOCAL MASONIC LODGE**
- **FIRE STATION OPEN HOUSE**
- **MICROCHIP AND RABIES CLINIC HOSTED AT THE FIRE STATION**
- **TOUR DE PROVISO IN BELLWOOD**
- **ITALIAN AMERICAN HERITAGE CELEBRATION**
- **VETERANS 5K RUN & WALK**
- **WINTER WONDERLAND TWO-DAY EVENT WITH A NEW PHOTO AREA BUILT BY PUBLIC WORKS**
- **CHAMBER OF COMMERCE EVENTS: STATE OF THE VILLAGE LUNCHEON AND CELEBRATE WESTCHESTER**
- **SHOP WITH A COP**
- **CHRISTMAS IN PROVISO**



LOOKING AHEAD

As we enter 2025, Westchester's centennial year, we reflect on the remarkable progress that has brought us to this milestone. Over the past year, we have taken significant steps to enhance infrastructure, improve financial stewardship, and prioritize long-term planning—critical efforts that ensure a resilient and sustainable future for our community. By fostering meaningful community engagement and addressing longstanding challenges, we have worked to position Westchester for success as it enters its next century.

Our accomplishments reflect a commitment to thoughtful and proactive governance. From investing in modernizing our water and sewer systems to adopting innovative initiatives and expanding inclusive community events, we have focused on creating a Village that is prepared to meet both present and future needs. These initiatives reinforce our dedication to building a thriving, resilient community where every resident can feel proud to live, work, and participate.

As we celebrate 100 years of history, we look forward to shaping the future with optimism, determination, and a shared vision for Westchester's continued growth and vibrancy.

Your input and support are essential to our success, and we encourage you to reach out with any questions, concerns, or comments.



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WE ARE *WESTCHESTER*

