

Tyrae Woodson-Samuels**Legislator, 13th District**

Chair, Committee on Budget & Appropriations

**Committee Assignments:**Infrastructure & Housing
Public Safety & Veterans
Intergovernmental Affairs
Small Business**To:** Honorable Members of the Westchester County Board of Legislators**From:** Hon. Tyrae Woodson-Samuels, County Legislator, District 13**Date:** TBD**Re:** Memo of Legislation — Office-to-Housing and Commercial Conversion Readiness Act**PURPOSE AND OVERVIEW**

The purpose of this legislation is to establish a Countywide Office-to-Housing and Commercial Conversion Readiness Initiative to identify underutilized office buildings, aging retail centers, vacant commercial properties, and other appropriate sites that may be suitable for adaptive reuse, mixed-use redevelopment, or housing conversion.

Westchester County continues to face a serious affordability challenge. At the same time, changes in the office and retail markets have left certain commercial properties underused or financially strained. Rather than allowing these properties to sit stagnant, the County should take a proactive role in helping municipalities, property owners, and community stakeholders determine which sites can be responsibly converted into housing, mixed-use development, community-serving space, or other productive uses.

This legislation does not seek to override local zoning authority. Instead, it positions the County as a planning partner and technical resource to help move realistic projects from discussion to action.

KEY PROVISIONS

This legislation would direct the Department of Planning, in coordination with other relevant County departments, to create a Commercial Conversion Readiness Inventory identifying office, retail, and commercial properties that may be appropriate for adaptive reuse or redevelopment.

The review would prioritize sites near transit, downtown corridors, existing sewer and water infrastructure, employment centers, and public services. The County would also evaluate major barriers to conversion, including zoning, infrastructure capacity, parking requirements, building code issues, environmental conditions, financing gaps, and market feasibility.

The legislation would also authorize the County to provide technical assistance to municipalities interested in pursuing local zoning amendments, overlay districts, expedited review processes, or model legislation to support responsible conversions.

Within eighteen months of enactment, the County would be required to submit a Commercial Conversion Readiness Report to the Board of Legislators identifying potential sites, barriers, municipal partners, funding opportunities, and recommended next steps.

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FINDINGS AND RATIONALE

Data shows that Westchester's housing shortage is not only a housing issue; it is also an economic development, workforce, infrastructure, and affordability issue. Many residents who work in Westchester cannot afford to live here, and young people, seniors, essential workers, and working families are increasingly being priced out.

At the same time, certain office and commercial properties no longer serve the same role they once did. Some may be difficult to reuse without coordinated planning, infrastructure review, or municipal action. A County-led readiness process can help determine which properties are realistic opportunities and which are not.

This approach is practical, targeted, and fiscally responsible. It does not require the County to build housing directly or impose new mandates on municipalities. It gives local governments better information, stronger planning tools, and access to County support where appropriate.

COORDINATION, EXISTING LAW, AND IMPLEMENTATION

The Department of Planning shall coordinate with the Department of Public Works and Transportation, Department of Environmental Facilities, County Attorney's Office, municipalities, housing agencies, nonprofit housing providers, property owners, and other relevant stakeholders.

This legislation is intended to complement existing state and local housing, planning, and economic development programs. Because land use authority largely remains with local municipalities, the County's role would be to support planning, technical assistance, grant readiness, and intergovernmental coordination.

FISCAL AND COMMUNITY IMPACT

The initial fiscal impact is expected to be limited and may be managed through existing departmental resources, subject to available appropriations. Any future funding for feasibility studies, consultant support, grants, or municipal assistance would require separate approval by the Board of Legislators.

This legislation is not intended to require a property tax increase.

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The environmental impact may be positive by encouraging redevelopment of previously developed properties rather than greenfield development. The housing impact may also be positive by identifying sites that could support new housing production. The economic development impact may include stronger commercial corridors, increased construction activity, better use of existing infrastructure, and expanded tax base over time.

REVIEW AND EFFECTIVE DATE

The Board of Legislators shall review the effectiveness of this initiative three years after receiving the Commercial Conversion Readiness Report to determine whether it should be continued, modified, expanded, or discontinued.

This Local Law shall take effect immediately upon filing with the Secretary of State.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Tyrae Woodson-Samuels".

Tyrae Woodson-Samuels

Westchester County Legislator, District 13