

WESTCHESTER RESIDENTS SURVEY 2012

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*WCAB
Community
Surveys*

WESTCHESTER RESIDENT SURVEY 2012

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Preface

Who will benefit from this publication?

The Westchester Resident Survey 2012 (hereafter referred to as the survey) was conducted primarily to assess community needs, identifying service gaps, information that would advise Westchester Citizens Advisory Board (W-CAB) activities. The publication however grew out a realization that analyzed data from the survey is beneficial to a bigger audience of stakeholders in Westchester including governing boards and commissions, departments, community planning and development committees.

Dissemination of findings and recommendations to stakeholders outside of W-CAB is beyond the scope of functions of W-CAB. Dissemination will therefore be at the discretion of Westchester Village Board to whom the findings are submitted.

Survey Methodology

The [three-question survey](#) drafted by W-CAB was an attempt at amenity asset mapping and community needs assessment; a tool to assess adequacy of services, gain insight into residents' general perception of the village and what was going well with the village.

The survey was conducted in two phases – paper based and online based surveys. WCAB Members distributed the paper based survey randomly to residents of Westchester attending the three-day Westchester Fun Festival in July 2012. Survey responders were directed to return completed surveys to the response collection box at the shared W-CAB/ Neighborhood Watch booth at the Fest. Responders were also rewarded with a recyclable goody bag – a generous donation from the Westchester Green Team. For the online based survey, the citizenry was invited to respond to the survey through a news release in the July and August 2012 issues of the Westchester Village monthly newsletter. A link was then prominently placed on the village website September through mid-October 2012. In all 128 responded to the survey 70 to the paper based and 58 to the online based.

Survey responses were transcribed verbatim, categorized into four groups that make up the [SWOT Survey](#). Recurrent responses were tallied; the numbers in parentheses are actual frequencies with which responses occurred. Common themes were thus identified and importance weighted against a backdrop of the village [demographic profile](#) drawn from census demographic data and findings in current market [articles](#) such as the one included in appendix II. Recommendations were then made under headings from the SWOT - *Opportunities to Act On* or *Threats to Address*.

Abbreviations used in this publication?

- SWOT – Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats; a standard business analysis and decision making tool
- VOW – Village of Westchester
- W-CAB / CAB – Westchester Citizens Advisory Board

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Village of Westchester Illinois SWOT Analysis

Internal			
Positive	<u>Strengths</u>	<u>Weaknesses</u>	Negative
	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px; margin-bottom: 5px;"> What does VoW do well? What unique resources can VoW draw on? What do others see as VoW strengths? </div> <p><u>Village Characteristics:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Easy access to expressways ✓ Quiet, safe, clean ✓ Fun Fest nice community event- would like more ✓ The Citizens; strong sense of community; ✓ Family oriented and friendly people/community; great neighborhood – lots of kids ✓ The great park system/district programs - would like more 	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px; margin-bottom: 5px;"> What could VoW improve? Where does VoW have fewer resources than others? What are others likely to see as weaknesses? </div> <p><u>Schools:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⊗ No Westchester public high school system ⊗ Lacking events for teens ⊗ No central downtown <p><u>Business District:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⊗ Lack of businesses in town; business growth; evening events; recreation - nothing to attract outside residents to visit/and/or spend money here ⊗ No centralized business district ⊗ Politicians 	
External			
Positive	<u>Opportunities</u>	<u>Threats</u>	Negative
	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px; margin-bottom: 5px;"> What opportunities are open to VoW? What trends could VoW take advantage of? How can VoW turn strengths into opportunities? </div> <p><u>Services & Events:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Seniors could use extended bus services ✓ Room to grow and promote new businesses/restaurants in town ✓ Promoting some more programs for children and families in town ✓ Utilize various unnoticed talent in community 	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px; margin-bottom: 5px;"> What threats could harm VoW? What is VoW competition doing? What threats do VoW weaknesses expose VoW to? </div> <p><u>Community & People</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⊗ Un-kept houses and sidewalks ⊗ Crime increasing ⊗ The <u>perception</u> of crime in town ⊗ The conditions of some of the roads/infrastructure in town ⊗ Not keen on Proviso School System – heard rumors. As kids get closer to High School considering having to leave 	

The SWOT Analysis is drawn from the SWOT survey responses – See Appendix I

RECOMMENDATIONS – WHAT NEXT?

1) Attract new business and foster appeal, competitive edge and patronage of existing ones by strategic marketing campaign aimed at attracting new business into town using a two-step approach.

A) Village Information/Communication system recognition campaign

This campaign raises awareness and recognition of village information / communication channels (Village of Westchester VOW website, newsletter, marquees) community wide; promotes them as reliable effective ways to communicate with citizens in timely fashion.

Why:

- Recognized need for effective channels to communicate information and receiving input from citizenry
- Essential part of community wide emergency preparedness efforts

B) Use VOW website in strategic Village marketing campaign that attracts desired potential new business to consider Westchester as viable business home and promotes competitive upkeep of existing ones.

One way to strategically use the village website as a marketing tool could be to add an

“*About Westchester*” tab with links that highlight [village strengths](#) - for example

- ✓ Recognitions – incorporate survey responses that address what makes VOW the destination place to live & make your business home
- ✓ Community Profile – graphs census data rendering
- ✓ Westchester landmarks & historical sites - photo gallery
- ✓ *Things to Do When Visiting Westchester* - rotating links to local businesses; site to advertise upcoming village sponsored events; post links to other community events organized through park district, library, chamber of commerce, community groups etc.)
- ✓ Education & programs – integrate survey responses; links to school and park district, library etc.

2) Invite local business to sponsor recreation and entertainment events such as movies in the park or mini fests; advertise services before, during intermission and after events.

Why:

Survey responders reported a lack of appealing recreation, entertainment and shopping spots to patronize in Westchester as a [weakness](#). Ideas of appealing destinations included small boutiques, coffee and ice-cream places, high class sit-down restaurants and bars that open till late.

Widely popular among survey responders were movies hosted on park grounds and the Westchester Fest events along with park district and library programs. Also notable was an expressed [wish for more](#) of each of them.

Recommendation:

In the immediate term an inexpensive way to meet the need for more recreation & entertainment while boosting patronage of local business could be to invite businesses currently operational in Westchester to sponsor events like Movie Night at the Park or seasonal mini fest(s) in the park. They advertise at events to increase visibility, awareness of service/product offerings while reaching their target audience in community. Adding the sponsor aspect to events may also serve as an event planning cost saver to the department that oversees organization - in this case the Park District, Village or Chamber of Commerce.

Long term capital investment [opportunities](#) for consideration from survey responses include a movie theater, seasonal splash park, a centralized downtown shopping area with walking mall area – like LaGrange.

3) Engage the community/residents in exploration of options to address the threat to Westchester, of no appealing option for public high school education poses.

Why:

Lack of an appealing [public](#) high school option was the main complaint of an overwhelming majority of survey responders. Among families with children approaching high school age many weighted it heavily in their consideration to relocate. A precipitous fall in numbers observed between primary age children and high school aged population living in Westchester (Village profile by age [2000-2010](#)) suggests that many families with high school age children move out of the area.

Sense of [community](#) was highly valued and considered a strong attraction to Westchester among survey responders. It is also a recognized desirable attribute with direct correlation to [property values](#) of a neighborhood. Turn-over in the community not only threatens sense of community but probably contributes to [perceived](#) decline in sense of security and rise in crime which also erode property values.

Recommendation:

A practical approach to addressing the issue of a public option for high school education in Westchester would be to engage the residents in a community based participatory forum*.

This approach involves

- Community conversations in the form of Town Hall Meetings used to create awareness, inform and engage the community from onset of exploration of options through planning and implementation.
- A Task Force Team is set up consisting of volunteer resident education policy experts, educators and leaders. The work of this team is to gather evidence based information and integrate community input to inform innovative concrete steps for how to proceed – all the while keeping the community informed and engaged in the process.
- A plan is crafted - replete with management, financing and a project time line.

(* **Schools, Governance and Community: A Next Practice Intervention; Mary Sheard; Institute for Effective Education, The University of York, <http://ema.sagepub.com/content/39/1/84.abstract>)**

APPENDICES

APPENDIX I: Village of Westchester IL SWOT Survey

Type of Survey: Paper & Online Based	Total Started Survey: 122	Total Finished Survey: 122
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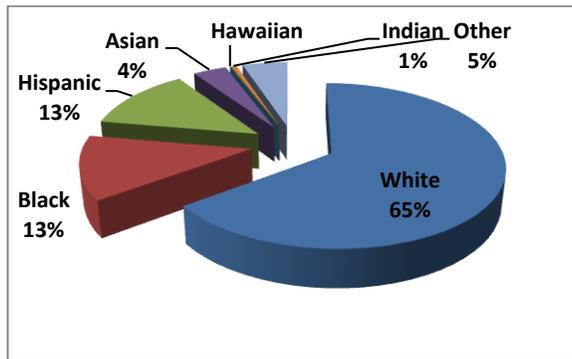
Conducted at Westchester Fest July 13-15 2012; Online via Survey Monkey September-October 2012

	Internal		
Positive	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Strengths</u></p> <p>What does VoWIL do well? What unique resources can VoWIL draw on? What do others see as VoWIL strengths?</p> <p><u>Geographical Location:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Location (27) - Proximity to expressways; shops; everything! expressway <p><u>Characteristics of Village:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Clean; Decent; Quiet; Safe neighborhood/ town (20) <p><u>Community & People:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Small town community feel (16) ✓ Neighbors/ everyone – Friendly; Good; pleasant (32) ✓ Sense of community (12) <p><u>Services & Natural Resources</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Park District (9) – super; and programs; Rec center; strong & progressive; recreational facilities; classes are good; PD is doing a great job for children; I really think Westchester has done a great job providing services for kids ✓ Fest - Wrist bands for the rides; Couple new rides; Westchester is the Best; Food and live bands ✓ Library – and the programs they offer 	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Weaknesses</u></p> <p>What could VoWIL improve? Where does VoWIL have fewer resources than others? What are others likely to see as weaknesses?</p> <p><u>Business District:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⊗ Downtown area (13) – lack of ; No Central area like LaGrange; lack of any appeal (Mannheim Rd) ⊗ Business(es) (9) – lack of growth in; we need more; no fun; in town; more along Mannheim; need better ones; too few ⊗ Business district (2) - No centralized; no future growth – zero; no Positive Plan – too much in fighting ⊗ Shopping (4) – lack of venues; small boutiques, coffee (Starbucks/ice-cream) walking mall area (no cars); ⊗ Restaurants (9) –no; no good; more; lack of; few sit-down; no open late night; not a lot to patronize; too few high-class – too many banks; bars & restaurants open ⊗ Lack of things to do with kids 	Negative
	Internal		

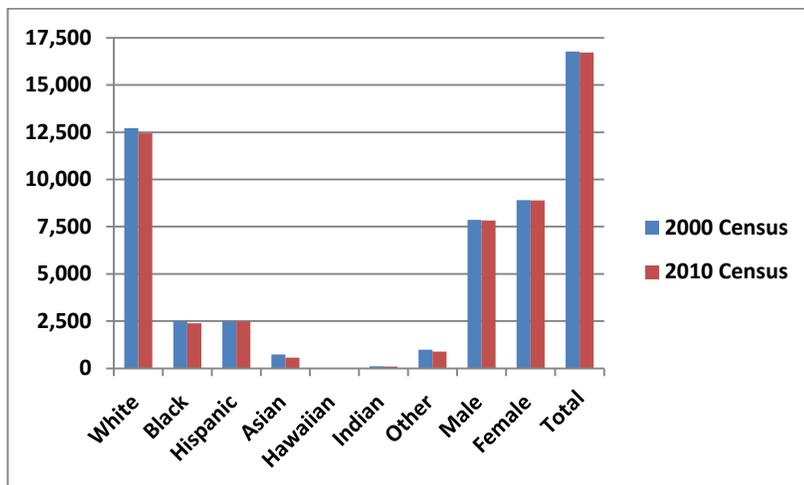
	External		
Positive	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Opportunities</u></p> <p>What opportunities are open to VoWIL? What trends could VoWIL take advantage of? How can VoWIL turn strengths into opportunities?</p> <p><u>Recreation & Entertainment:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ <i>Movies/ movie nights</i> in the park (5) – loved it; should have more of these throughout spring/summer/fall; ✓ <i>Movie theatre</i> (3) ✓ <i>Splash Park</i> (4) – get rid of sand volleyball at Mayfair and put...; Splash pad for summer...ice rink for winter; Water park area – even a little ground water spray ✓ <i>Concerts</i> (4) - in the park; more in the park; ✓ <i>Fest</i> (18) - Continue the Fest somehow; keep it going; another other than July; more; not a resident but my family attends Fest every year; Fun Fest; We love meeting old school mates & old neighbors; In fact we just met a neighbor we hadn't seen in 10 years; KEEP THE FEST GOING WITH MUSIC SOMEWHERE ELSE... SCRAP THE CARNIVAL SO SPACE DOES NOT NEED TO BE AS LARGE; ✓ <i>Teen events/clubs</i> (4); Weekend Teen Night; After school clubs (2);More things for teens to do and be involved in (2); Teen jobs – town doesn't create enough for teens ✓ <i>Restaurants</i> (10) – Not sure, just wish we had more; no nice restaurants/bars to go out to in town – Eden's and Christopher's are not nice and only have gross townies in them; better, family; more; more dinner restaurants; more family restaurants etc.; ✓ <i>Downtown area</i> (5) – would be nice. No more banks or cash advance places; A real one, some place we could call Westchester center; – lack of downtown area; better shopping (4) 	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Threats</u></p> <p>What threats could harm VoWIL? What is VoWIL competition doing? What threats do VoWIL weaknesses expose VoWIL to?</p> <p><u>Schools:</u></p> <p>⊕ <i>HIGH SCHOOL</i> (37) – Big surprise...the; ⊕; ----!!!!; lack of a good one; I have no options for; district – poor; situation; (Proviso West) We need a better high school; PUBLIC SCHOOL OPTION; none I feel great taking my kids to; !!! We need our own school!; NONE THAT'S DECENT THAT WE PAY TAXES FOR (PATHETIC); Lack of real public option; Terrible public; no public; Proviso; Better, something MUST be done or you will lose taxpayers; a viable option for; better options; our own!; ability to send our teens to better public high school. A high school with academic ratings that would benefit our children rather than endanger their future; create a Westchester high school so that families can stay in town!</p> <p>⊕ <i>No High School</i> (6)</p>	Negative
	External		

APPENDIX II: WESTCHESTER ILLINOIS DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE

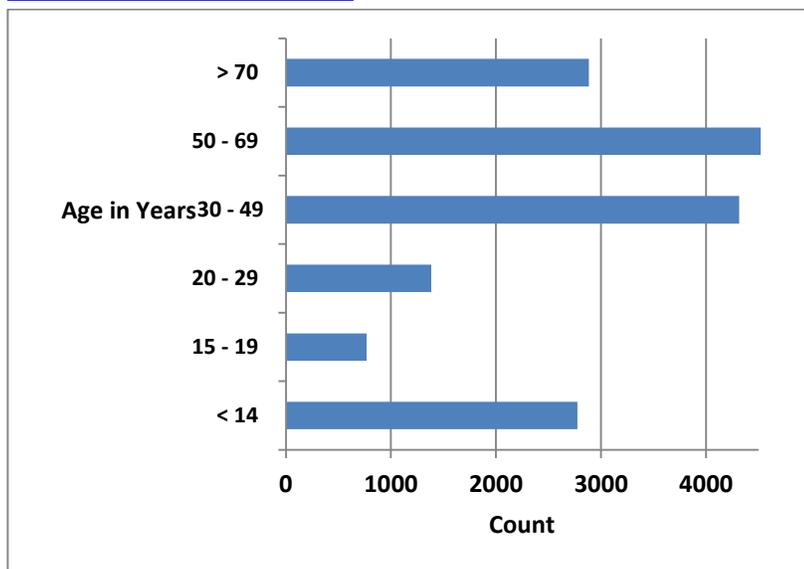
WESTCHESTER BY RACE 2000 - 2010



WESTCHESTER DEMOGRAPHICS 2000 – 2010



Westchester by Age 2010



Source: Graphs drawn from 2000 & 2010 Westchester Census Data at <http://www.zip-codes.com/>

APPENDIX II: How a Neighborhood Holds Property Value

By Claes Bell • Bankrate.com

<http://www.bankrate.com/finance/real-estate/neighborhood-holds-property-value-1.aspx>

Heading in the right direction



Buying a home that declines sharply in property value can put you underwater on your mortgage, erode your net worth and leave you unable to relocate for a new job or adapt to a change in household income. And one of the biggest factors that determines whether a home will rise or fall in value is its neighborhood.

That's actually a good thing, because you don't need a crystal ball to evaluate a neighborhood's direction, says Andrew Schiller, creator of NeighborhoodScout.com, a real estate research website.

"The places that tend to hold on to their value are places that basically do well across two primary dimensions that anyone can think about and evaluate neighborhoods by," Schiller says.

These two criteria are access to jobs and access to amenities. Those and a few others can help you get a sense of where a neighborhood is headed.

Access to jobs



The single most important determinate of real estate prices in an area is employment opportunity nearby, Schiller says. Without that, a neighborhood is at risk of taking a free fall in real estate values.

"How convenient is this to a lot of high-paying jobs? That is the most important thing for value," he says. "Over the long term, the places that are less at risk, even if they're not the nicest, fanciest neighborhoods, are going to be the places that are convenient to get to high-paying jobs, period."

There are a few telltale signs of areas with long-term opportunities for jobs, Schiller says.

- Low unemployment.
- High household income.
- Seats of federal or state government.
- Creative industries (music, television, design, publishing or advertising).
- Research facilities.
- Large or prominent colleges and universities.

Schiller says the Bureau of Labor Statistics has a wealth of information that can help you assess an area's employment picture. One key bureau feature is the Local Area Unemployment Statistics map, which can give unemployment information by metro area and county. Another data set called Current Employment Statistics can tell you how many people are employed in different sectors of the economy in a given metro area.

A wealth of desirable amenities

Having [desirable amenities](#) within the neighborhood is a second major factor in whether a neighborhood will appreciate or decline in property value, Schiller says.

In the world of real estate, "amenity" describes any asset within a community that people find desirable.

Schiller cites some examples of key amenities that can add value to a neighborhood:

- ❖ Low crime rates
- ❖ Good public schools
- ❖ Parks
- ❖ Pleasing views
- ❖ Distinctive architecture
- ❖ A variety of retail stores
- ❖ An educated population



Still, popular amenities by themselves aren't a guarantee property value will remain high, especially if the neighborhood is located in an area with a small or sluggish local economy, Schiller says.

"Any bump in the national or regional economy, and people can't find another job if they're at a high wage level," Schiller says. "When a high proportion of the value of real estate is based on amenities and not access to job opportunities, it is more vulnerable to collapse."

"Those are the places most likely to dive because people will say, 'I'm letting it go. I'm going to go back to where I can get my access to opportunity,'" he says.

Acing the 'drive-through' test



Doing a drive-through of a prospective neighborhood is a good way to get a gut feeling for where a neighborhood is now and where it's headed, says Ken Shuman, a spokesman for real estate information website Trulia.com.

"Look at the neighbor's lawns. Look at the neighbors' houses," Shuman says. "Do they take care of them? Is there pride in the neighborhood?"

Shuman says every neighborhood probably has a couple of unkempt houses, but a pattern of neglect can mean a neighborhood's property values may be headed on a downward slide.

Shuman also has one caveat for conducting the drive-through test: No test is complete without a drive-through at night.

"You usually go to open houses in the afternoon or in the morning, so definitely drive through the neighborhood in the evening," Shuman says. "This is a big mistake a lot of people make, because they see it on a sunny Sunday afternoon and they think it's a gorgeous area. But you don't know what it looks like on a Sunday night or a Wednesday night."

Features that stand out from surrounding areas



Schiller says the neighborhoods that protect homeowners' values the most are those that combine good job opportunities and amenities in ways that are unusual for the area.

For instance, if you live in or around a metro area with poor schools overall, buying in a neighborhood that has good schools can keep your property values high even as the surrounding area falls.

Schiller cites the examples of Belle Meade in Nashville, Tenn., and Beverly Hills, Calif., both of which enjoy the access to opportunities of nearby urban centers, but also have amenities like excellent public schools and low crime rates that set them apart.

"These places just go out of control as far as value," he says, weathering housing downturns much better than average.

A track record of rising home prices



Consistently rising home values over the long term is a key sign a neighborhood will protect residential property value. The critical phrase there is "long term," Schiller says.

He says looking at recent numbers can be misleading, especially since they're likely to be heavily influenced by the recent boom and bust in the housing markets.

"You don't want to look at only one quarter. One quarter can tell you, 'Is it raining today or is it sunny today?'" he says. "But that really doesn't tell you about the climate. You want to know, 'Does it rain all the time here?'"

To do that, he advises potential homebuyers to look at property values and comparables going back at regular intervals over the past 20 years, predating the housing bubble.

"When some people look at the last 10 years, some areas look like they went crazy high," he says. "And when you look at the last two years, they look like they fell through the floor because they bubbled."

Many websites can give you appreciation rates and median sales prices for homes you're looking at, including NeighborhoodScout.com and Trulia.com. A real estate agent also may be able to furnish those numbers.

Read more: [How a neighborhood holds property value | Bankrate.com](http://www.bankrate.com/finance/real-estate/neighborhood-holds-property-value-1.aspx#ixzz22JyACSX) <http://www.bankrate.com/finance/real-estate/neighborhood-holds-property-value-1.aspx#ixzz22JyACSX>

VILLAGE OF WESTCHESTER

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WWW.WESTCHESTER-IL.ORG

Village President

Village Clerk

Trustees

Village Manager

Village Attorney

The members of the Westchester Citizens Advisory Board are seeking some insight from our residents. If you would be so kind to answer the following questions we would greatly appreciate it. Thank you in advance for your participation in this matter.

1. What do you like best about Westchester?

2. What do you like least about Westchester?

3. What services or events would you like for Westchester to provide/host for it's residents? Please answer for the following age groups that you are most interested in.
 - a. Children:

 - b. Teens:

 - c. Young Adults:

 - d. Middle Age Adults:

 - e. Seniors:

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