

Westchester Residential Opportunities, Inc.

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I'm Ann Seligsohn, Fair Housing Director at Westchester Residential Opportunities, Inc. (WRO). We are from the infamous Westchester County, New York.

My agency was founded in 1968 to affirmatively further Fair Housing. Our mission is to promote equal, affordable and accessible housing opportunities for all residents of the region.

We respond to complaints from all protected classes and do audit testing– we do outreach and educate thru workshops to anyone who will listen.

I want to discuss three programs that WRO has received funding for in the past few years. Funding has come from HUD, NYS DHCR and Westchester County both the Planning Department CDBG funding and County Board of Legislators.

All the programs funds are for disability related activities.

1. From HUD in our last FHIP PEI funding we did twenty tests using persons with mobility disabilities. The results were positive and real estate agents did considerable research to Find accessible units – the problem was the difficulty in finding the accessible units in a county with old housing stock.
2. Westchester County has funded WRO for two housing accessibility surveys. WRO surveyors have visited over 1,000 buildings with 20 or more units – rentals, co-ops and condos – the information has been entered in a database on the county website and is available to all seekers. WRO devised a four part accessibility guide which is explained and the buildings can be researched by community or accessibility.
3. WRO with Westchester County as our partner has received funding from NYS DHCR for \$200,000 (2 Year grant) – twice – The program Access to Home provides up to \$25,000 per unit for modifications to keep mobility disabled in their homes or to get them out of nursing homes. Modifications may be as simple as a ramp or as extensive as kitchen and bathroom makeovers. The county sends out the bid specifications and finds the contractors and WRO works with the applicants.

Finally we are working closely with The Westchester County Human Rights Commission on a complaint involving a recently build senior condo building that has various accessibility defects that hinder the quality of life of the residents.