



From Shelter to Stability. See Inside Westchester Supportive Housing

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YONKERS – After spending months in a shelter, Najiah Williams moved into a supportive home last year and now works at a shelter, helping residents who have also experienced homelessness.

“I don’t have to think about where I’m going to live next. I can set up my plan and go for it,” Williams said. “I share my story and tell my clients not to give up, hopefully to give them a little bit of hope and inspiration.”

Supportive housing has long provided permanent housing for people who have experienced homelessness or struggled with mental illness, abuse and addiction. It is touted as an effective way to reduce homelessness and help people get back on their feet by offering services such as therapy, job training, mental health and trauma counseling.

However, as homelessness continues to rise nationwide, with New York recording the largest increase in the country in 2024, the development of supportive housing has struggled to keep pace, largely due to funding shortfalls and lengthy planning process.



Westhab's Summit on Hudson, a 113-unit affordable housing eco-friendly residence in Yonkers Jan. 27, 2026.

How Westchester supportive housing programs work

Richard Nightingale, president of Westhab, a major operator of shelters and supportive housing programs in Westchester, said the organization hopes to continue building high-quality supportive homes, although progress has been slow.



Naijah Williams and her son Ian Williams, 19, talk about transitioning from a shelter to an apartment in the Summit on Hudson in Yonkers Jan. 27, 2026. The Westhab affordable housing building has designated 45 of the 113-units as supportive housing for residents transitioning from shelters. *Tania Savayan/The Journal News*

Under the current model, supportive housing units are integrated into affordable housing developments. Rent for supportive units are largely covered by federal and state funding, while steady revenue from affordable units helps stabilize projects financially. In turn, residents of affordable units can also benefit from the on-site amenities and services that come with supportive housing.

“Supportive housing is critical to reducing homelessness in our community, but we also face an unbelievable housing crisis,” Nightingale said. “We need to produce quality housing for modest income people as well.”

In Westchester, the number of people receiving federal homeless support programs increased 19% to 1,611 in 2024 compared to 2022. In Rockland, the number rose 23% to 130.

A model of supportive housing creates a thriving community

A recent Westhab supportive housing development in Yonkers seemingly showcased how the model can work.



Residents Jyshun Thomas, left, and Anna Bruzzese play Yahtzee in the eco lounge at Summit on Hudson, a 113-unit affordable housing residence in Yonkers, Jan. 27, 2026. The Westhab building has designated 45 of the units to supportive housing for residents transitioning from shelters. *Tania Savayan/The Journal News*

Summit on Hudson, completed in 2024, includes 113 affordable units, 45 of which are supportive. Affordable units are set aside for households earning up to 60% of the Area Median Income (AMI), or \$71,400 for a single person. Demand is high, with about 4,000 applicants entering the housing lottery. Residents in supportive units pay about 30% of their income toward rent, with the remainder largely covered by federal and state funding.

The all-electric building features a garden, courtyard, and a community room overlooking the Hudson River. In a space called the Eco Lounge, insulation layers and piping are displayed in an installation designed to help residents explore the building's sustainable features. The development also offers after-school activities, homework assistance and resume help.

On a recent Tuesday, some residents played board games in a lounge while others met with peer-support partners in a community room framed by views of the Palisades cliffs.

Inside Williams' one-bedroom apartment, her 19-year-old son played piano and talked about beginning classes at Westchester Community College. Williams said her favorite parts of her new home are the view and the freedom to control the heat.

"I'm so grateful for this opportunity," Williams said. "This was not easy. It involved a lot of frustration and holding on. But if you believe in yourself and find people who work with you, eventually the hard work does pay off."

Supportive housing in Lower Hudson Valley

Westhab launched its first supportive housing project in 1981, transforming the former Windham Hotel in Yonkers to house a mix of low-income and formerly homeless tenants with on-site services. Since then, the organization has built 236 supportive housing units across eight properties in Westchester.



Rich Nightingale, right, president and CEO of Westhab, talks about Summit on Hudson, a 113-unit affordable housing residence in Yonkers in the lobby as program coordinator Justice Reyes looks on Jan. 27, 2026. The Westhab building has 45 of the units reserved as supportive housing for residents transitioning from shelters. *Tania Savayan/The Journal News*

Those developments are concentrated in the county's major cities, often rising on the sites of dilapidated buildings or vacant parking lots.

Two state funding programs — the New York State Supportive Housing Program and the Empire State Supportive Housing Initiative — have helped bolster the growth of supportive housing and services. Over time, supportive housing developments have evolved to include expanded amenities such as gyms, community rooms, laundry, free Wi-Fi, employment services, youth programs, therapy and counseling.

The goal, Nightingale said, is to provide quality housing for vulnerable populations while building community and pathways to independence.

Like other housing developments, supportive housing projects in Westchester face lengthy approval process, funding gaps and neighborhood opposition.

What New York is doing about homelessness

Meanwhile, Gov. Kathy Hochul's proposal to expedite housing projects by exempting certain developments from the state environmental review and increasing funding in the 2026-27 executive budget may offer some relief. Advocacy groups are pushing for a \$62.1 million increase as part of a five-year plan to renovate aging supportive housing buildings.



The Summit on Hudson, a 113-unit affordable housing eco-friendly residence in Yonkers Jan. 27, 2026. The Westhab building has designated 45 units to supportive housing for residents transitioning from shelters. *Tania Savayan/The Journal News*

About 158,019 people in New York were reported homeless in 2024, a rate of eight per 1,000 residents was about four times higher than the national average. The homeless population increased 53.1% from 2023 to 2024, a rise attributed largely to the arrival of asylum seekers, according to a state comptroller's report.

About 10% of people experiencing homelessness suffered from severe mental illness or chronic substance abuse and the population was disproportionately Hispanic or Black.

As homelessness increases, some community attitudes have begun to shift.

Rather than the typical concerns over property values or stigma associated with low-income housing, Nightingale said officials in Haverstraw proposed including supportive units in a recently planned affordable housing project. This was Westhab's first project in Rockland and will include 81 affordable units with 20 supportive. Affordable units will be reserved for households earning up to 60% of AMI, with rents starting at \$1,418. The development is expected to be completed in 2027.