

# REPORT: BIAS HITS HOME

BY ABBY LUBY

RACIAL discrimination in Westchester housing still exists, according to a new report released by a nonprofit housing group.

For 18 months, undercover "buyers" from the group, Westchester Residential Opportunities (WRO), shopped for potential homes through real estate firms, management companies, landlords and apartment complexes in Westchester, as well as Putnam and Rockland counties.

More than 17% of the Westchester tests revealed discriminatory practices, the report said.

"If you look at the housing

## Sez discrimination continues in W'chester

demographic map of Westchester, it is still a very segregated map," said Andrea Klausner, deputy director of WRO, a counseling agency certified by the federal Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD).

"There are still pockets of minorities. We think Westchester needs to become more integrated and more inclusive."

But the problem has dramatically declined from five years ago: A similar test in 2005 found the rate of such practices at 46.5%.

Klausner said white undercover testers were shown proper-

ties in communities that were predominately white, but minority testers were shown housing in mostly minority neighborhoods.

"Minority testers were also asked for credit reports before they were shown anything," she said. "White testers weren't asked that."

The report came on the heels of an announcement that Westchester had moved forward to build 104 affordable housing units in three towns.

The county has to build a total of 750 units in white neighborhoods as part of a settlement in a lawsuit that found the coun-

ty guilty of misappropriating federal funds intended for affordable housing.

Westchester County executive Rob Astorino said the county was ahead of schedule in the financing of 104 units slated to be built in Cortlandt, Yorktown and Rye City.

"This is a tremendous accomplishment done through a strong partnership among local governments and experienced developers," Astorino said.

The county is providing some \$2 million in housing grants to build 18 affordable condominium units in Rye that will sell for \$150,000 and \$165,000 to people

earning between \$58,600 and \$67,000.

According to Westchester officials, only 311 people have signed up for affordable housing units on the county's online application page.

When the units become available, they will be sold or rented based on a lottery. The county's next benchmark is to have financing in place for 200 units by the end of 2012.

The program is being monitored by the federal government. Last month, HUD rejected the county's analysis, calling it "incomplete and unacceptable."

HUD gave the county until April 1 to revise the document and spell out how it will enforce affordable housing projects in resistant communities.