
NEWS RELEASE

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ASTORINO ANNOUNCES GROWTH AND INVESTMENT IN TOURISM INDUSTRY Also launches new shuttle service for hotel guests going to Empire City Casino

Tourism is up again in Westchester County – something that County Executive Robert P. Astorino says is good for the county, its taxpayers and its businesses.

At a press conference today at the newly renovated Renaissance Westchester Hotel in White Plains, he reported that tourism in Westchester generated \$1.68 billion in 2012, an increase of \$26 million over 2011. Visitor spending also produced \$108 million in local taxes and supported 23,064 jobs in Westchester last year.

“We are pleased to say that the tourism industry in Westchester County is thriving and growing,” Astorino said. “We have growth in recreation, food and beverage, lodging and transportation, as well as new developments. By building on the momentum of our *Meet Me in Westchester* branding campaign, we have significantly increased awareness of what the county has to offer visitors and residents.”

Astorino also announced the launch of a new program through which Empire City Casino will provide free round-trip shuttle service Tuesdays and Thursdays from 12 Westchester hotels to the casino in Yonkers and back to each hotel.

The county executive noted that over the last year, there has been more than \$100 million invested in hotel renovations, development and tourist attractions.

These include:

- A \$50 million expansion at Empire City Casino, including a new casino entrance, 66,000 square feet of gaming floor, Dan Rooney’s Sports Pub, Alley 810, a craft cocktail lounge with bowling lanes, and Pinch Restaurant, a collaboration with Ducasse Studio.
- A \$12 million complete overhaul of the Renaissance Westchester
- A \$15 million renovation of the Crowne Plaza in White Plains

- A \$10 million renovation of the Castle Hotel & Spa in Tarrytown
- A \$2 million investment by the Westchester Marriott on a complete "reconcepting" and renovation of its on-site restaurant, now called Cooper's Mill

Two other hotels currently are under construction: a 130-room Cambria Suites hotel on Main Street in White Plains, part of a \$47 million mixed-use development; and the Green Holiday Inn in Peekskill, which is the first platinum LEED Certified Hotel in the Northeast.

Dan Conte, general manager of the Westchester Marriott in Tarrytown and president of the Westchester Hotel Association, said the robust construction was a sign of a healthy hospitality sector.

"We have an outstanding collaboration in Westchester between the county, our hotels and our tourism attractions," said Conte. "And it continues to get better, thanks to the efforts of County Executive Astorino."

Ryan Murphy, vice president of marketing at Empire City Casino, said that he expects the new shuttle service to be a great success.

"Empire City Casino is a top entertainment destination," he said. "More than 8.4 million people come to our casino each year, including both residents and out-of-county visitors. Partnering with Westchester hotels to increase tourism for the area is something we've been working on for some time. We are proud to announce today's launch of this shuttle service and look forward to its success and expansion."

Several tourist attractions also opened in the last year, contributing significant dollars to the area and adding to Westchester's status as a destination. These include:

- The only LEGOLAND Discovery Center in the northeast and one of only five in the country opened this past March at Westchester's Ridge Hill in Yonkers. The center cost \$12 million and is a draw for visitors from across the New York Metropolitan area.
- \$1 million in electric and climate-control upgrades at John Jay Homestead State Historic Site in Katonah and a new visitor center.

Westchester accounted for 53% of all travel and tourism spending in the Hudson Valley region, according to Tourism Economics, a leading economic forecasting and assessment consulting company that prepared the 2012 "Economic Impact of Tourism" report for the New York State Department of Economic Development.

The tagline for tourism in the county, *Meet Me in Westchester*, is the center of a multi-disciplinary campaign that incorporates print and digital advertising, public relations, social media and a comprehensive website that features information on hotels, events, restaurants, retailers and destinations throughout the county. For more information, please visit www.visitwestchesterny.com. Follow us on facebook.com/Westchester County Tourism and Twitter.com/WestTour.



About Westchester County Tourism & Film

Tourism & Film is Westchester County’s official destination marketing organization. Its mission is to generate economic benefits by enhancing the image and promoting Westchester County as a premier business and leisure destination in the Hudson Valley region. The Tourism & Film Office in Westchester County is a Division

within the County Executive's Office of Economic Development that is funded entirely by a portion of the hotel occupancy tax.

About Empire City Casino at Yonkers Raceway

Empire City Casino, one of the largest entertainment and gaming destinations in the country, features 5,300 of the hottest **slots**, electronic **craps, roulette, baccarat and sic bo**; year-round harness **racing & International simulcasting** from North America's leading harness and thoroughbred venues; nightly **live entertainment** including the best party and Latin **bands, dueling pianos, comedy, karaoke & more**. A plethora of **dining** options will satisfy even the most discerning palate: enjoy authentic Italian cuisine at **Nonno's Trattoria**; dine trackside with live betting at **Empire Terrace Restaurant**; convenient delicious options at the **International Food Court** or **Grab 'n Go**. A new \$50 million expansion added **Dan Rooney's**, a high-energy sports bar which boasts creations by Michelin-starred Chef Christopher Lee; **Pinch**, in collaboration with **Ducasce Studios**, not only whets the appetite but also features 100 New York craft beers; and **Alley 810**, a craft cocktail lounge rounds out the entertainment options with retro **bowling** lanes. Empire City Casino at Yonkers Raceway is located at 810 Yonkers Avenue (at Central Avenue) in Yonkers, New York, Westchester County (I-87 to Exit 2), open seven days a week from 9 a.m. to 4 a.m. Connect with us on facebook.com/empirecity, follow us on twitter.com/EmpireCity_C, visit www.empirecitycasino.com or call 914.968.4200 for more information.

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