

DA NEWS

SUMMER 2023



www.WestchesterDA.net

Justice for Families of Decades-Old Homicides

DA announces murder charges, solved cases as a result of her Cold Case Bureau and skilled investigators utilizing modern technology



Standing with DA Rocah at a June 15 press conference announcing important updates from her Cold Case Bureau, (from left) ADA Annmarie Stepancic, Chief Criminal Investigator Daniel McKenna, Cold Case Bureau Chief Daniel Flecha, and Yonkers Police Department's Cold Case Unit Detective Vionette Martinez and retired Detective John Geiss.

Westchester County District Attorney Miriam E. Rocah announced on June 15 that a Bronx woman was sentenced to 20 years to life in state prison for the 2012 shooting death of her 26-year-old girlfriend Pamela Graddick; and a Sleepy Hollow man was indicted for the 1997 beating and strangulation death of his 34-year-old ex-wife, Nusinaida Ramos. Both cases—after lengthy investigations by the Yonkers Police Department and the Westchester County District Attorney's Office—are the latest homicides charged by the Cold Case Bureau, which the District Attorney

established upon taking office in 2021.

"Today we have delivered some measure of closure to the families who have lived with these unsolved cases for a combined 36 years," DA Rocah said. "The sentence and indictment in these two cases show what can be accomplished with the resources and commitment of our dedicated Cold Case Bureau. Thanks to the tenacious work by our attorneys, investigators, and our vital police partners, we are securing justice for victims."

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Message from DA Rocah

Last month, I announced major progress updates by my Cold Case Bureau in delivering justice for families who went a combined 36 years without closure for the murder of their loved ones. In May, I also announced that upon recommendations by my Conviction Review Unit, I was seeking to vacate the convictions and charges of 27 individuals for their alleged drug sales in a 2017 Mount Vernon narcotics operation.

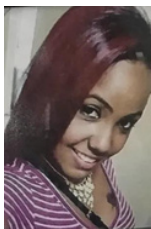
Seeking fair and just outcomes for both victims of violent crimes and their families, as well as justice-involved individuals, are the hallmarks of accountability, integrity and justice. This is how I am keeping my promise to Westchester.

Miriam Rocah

Solving open cases since DA launched Bureau in 2021



Angel Serbay



Diana Casado

By establishing a Cold Case Bureau upon taking office in 2021, District Attorney Miriam E. Rocah enabled the DA's Office to prioritize solving the approximately 135 open homicide cases in Westchester County. With a dedicated team in place, the Bureau's skilled attorneys, investigators, and crime analysts have renewed investigations and are maximizing advancements in scientific and digital forensics.

Indictments and sentences secured by prosecutors and DA Rocah's Cold Case Bureau in the last two years include:

- an indictment for the 1995 homicide of **Michael Jones** at Sing Sing Correctional Facility
- a 20 years-to-life prison sentence of Christopher Gonzalez for the 2005 strangulation murder of **Angel Serbay** of Yonkers
- a 25 years-to-life sentence of Luis Alturet-Rivera for the 2017 shooting death of his ex-girlfriend **Diana Casado** of Yonkers
- an indictment of Edmund Pennil in August 2022 for the 2017 death of **Tremayne Williams** of Mount Vernon
- the November 2021 indictment for the 1982 homicide of **Kathleen Durst** in South Salem



Tremayne Williams



Kathleen Durst

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Man Indicted on 67 Counts for Sex Offenses Involving Kids

A 67-count indictment charged Jason Ricketts, 22, of New Rochelle, of physical sexual acts involving children in Westchester County, as well as the creation and possession of images and videos of children engaged in sexual acts, between 2019 and 2023. After receiving a referral from the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children (NCMEC), an investigation was conducted by the Westchester County District Attorney's Office Child Abuse Bureau, Cyber Crimes Bureau, and Criminal Investigators with the High Technology Crimes Unit and Special Prosecutions Unit. The New Rochelle Police Department assisted with the investigation. The defendant was arrested by the Westchester DA's Office on Feb. 2, and remains in custody at Westchester County Jail. DA Rocah said: "The Westchester County District Attorney's Office is committed to working with our partners to bring to justice anyone who exploits, abuses or endangers our children through sexual contact or over the internet. We will continue to engage with families to help arm them with tools to protect our children and offer support for victims who come forward." **Deputy Bureau Chiefs Janelle Armentano and Laura Forbes, ADA Mollie O'Rourke**

City Carting of Westchester Inc. & Manager Plead Guilty

City Carting of Westchester, Inc., and its manager, Christopher Oxer, pleaded guilty on June 6 to submitting false financial records that concealed tens of thousands of dollars in company money spent at strip clubs. The District Attorney's Office investigation found the defendants submitted false financial statements that concealed transactions Oxer made at strip clubs in New York City between 2018 and 2019 totaling \$135,000 on the corporation's American Express credit card. One transaction included \$40,000 that was spent in a single visit at one establishment. Those expenditures were entered into City Carting's accounting records as business expenses for items such as tires, tolls, equipment and maintenance. Oxer will be sentenced on Aug. 2, to six months in jail, which will run concurrently to his one-year federal prison sentence for tax fraud charges related to his conduct. The corporation will be required to pay a \$5,000 fine, in addition to separate fines levied against City Carting by Westchester County, which terminated their contract. **ADA Celia Curtis**

Family Indicted for Illegal Possession of Nearly 50 Guns

Three North Castle residents, family members from the same household, were indicted for the illegal possession of nearly 50 guns, including semi-automatic rifles, shotguns, machine guns and a ghost gun, found in several rooms throughout their home. At least 15 of the guns were loaded. The defendants' arrest was the result of an investigation by the North Castle Police Department, the Westchester County Department of Public Safety and Real Time Crime Center, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, and the Westchester County District Attorney's Office. **Violent Criminal Enterprise Bureau**

Mount Vernon Man Gets 25 Years to Life for Murder

John Bobbitt was sentenced on May 19 for the 2020 murder of Mount Vernon resident Kashawn Smith. Following a verbal dispute, the defendant used a .380 caliber semi-automatic pistol to shoot the victim five times, striking him in the head, chest, torso and back, on Millington Street in Mount Vernon. A multi-agency investigation led to the defendant's arrest in New Jersey, and conviction by a jury of murder in February. **Homicide Bureau Chief Lana Hochheiser, Bureau Chief Daniel Flecha**

Bronx Couple Indicted for Armed Home Invasion, Assault

Darling Read and Jovanda Paredes were indicted for unlawfully entering a Yorktown home in the middle of the night where the victim, Read's ex-girlfriend, was staying. The defendants allegedly woke the victim and chased her into a bathroom where they repeatedly kicked and punched her in the head and body and prevented her from leaving. The defendants also allegedly hit the victim in the head with a hard object, and were armed with an un-serialized semi-automatic pistol, known as a ghost gun, that they used to threaten the victim. They are also charged with stealing two iPhones. **ADA Paige Pirtle, Domestic Violence Bureau Chief Joyce Miller**

Yonkers Man Sentenced to 12 Years for Armed Robbery

Shawn Lucas was sentenced on June 16 to 12 years in state prison for a 2021 armed robbery in Yonkers. The defendant followed the victim as he was entering his apartment building, and demanded the victim's wallet and cell phone while brandishing a loaded pellet gun, which looked like a real gun. The victim handed over his cell phone and wallet, which contained \$45, a debit card and identification cards. The defendant was convicted at trial in April. **ADA Elizabeth Z. Marcus**



THE CITY Westchester DA Moves To Vacate 26 Convictions Following Release of Police Whistleblower's Secret Recordings

Three years after a Gothamist series unearthed claims of false arrests and rampant police corruption in Mount Vernon, Westchester County District Attorney Mimi Rocah is asking the court system to dismiss 26 convictions, which her office has determined were tainted by discrepancies in police paperwork, as well as prosecutors' failure to turn over key pieces of evidence to the accused.

...after a nearly two-year investigation, Rocah's Conviction Review Unit is notifying the courts that it has uncovered more prosecutor disclosure failures and troubling police practices in a drug operation, rendering 26 people's past convictions and one defendant's pending charges untenable. Those 26 dubious convictions stemmed from a 2017 narcotics operation that Gothamist first scrutinized in its series....

"This level of transparency is unprecedented in the world of mass exonerations, and should encourage other district attorneys to expand their review of faulty convictions, and reveal how the prosecutorial gatekeeping function failed," said Karen Newirth, who investigated numerous wrongful conviction claims in Mount Vernon after the release of the whistleblower's tapes. "It is only through this process that we can be assured of the prosecution's commitment to avoid future wrongful convictions."



Read the official press release and investigation reports at [WestchesterDA.net/MVvacatur](https://www.westchesterda.net/MVvacatur)s

Patch 6 Indicted In \$2M Westchester County Home Deed Theft Scheme

Westchester County District Attorney Miriam Rocah announced on July 7 that six people and a corporation were indicted for defrauding distressed homeowners by stealing the property deeds to Westchester homes and fraudulently obtaining \$2 million in loans. The defendants, including licensed realtors and an attorney, were also charged with evading a combined total of nearly \$200,000 in state taxes.

"Deed theft schemes exploit the most vulnerable and can have lasting housing and financial impacts to families," Rocah said in a statement announcing the indictments. "My office will seek to hold the defendants accountable for allegedly stealing titles to victims' homes while pretending to help them."

According to the indictments, the defendants targeted three residential properties facing bankruptcy or foreclosure — two in New Rochelle and one in Yonkers valued in total at nearly \$2.5 million. The defendants were identified as a couple from New Rochelle, licensed real estate broker Marcia Campbell, 61, and her husband, a licensed real estate salesperson, Fred Campbell, 64; Attorney Anthony Chilliast, 53, of New York City; Gerald Smith, 48, of Elmsford; Wayne Green, 48, of Lynbrook; and Frank Palmer, 66, of the Bronx were also indicted, along with Campal Corp.



"Cold Cases" continued from Page 1

2012 Murder of Pamela Graddick

The defendant, Wanda Veguilla, 42, pleaded guilty on April 3 to Murder in the Second Degree and Tampering with Physical Evidence, for the Aug. 12, 2012 murder of Graddick. According to the investigation, in the days leading up to the murder, the defendant plotted to kill her girlfriend and purchased a gun from a "Latin King" gang associate in the Bronx, with the help of an individual, who later pleaded guilty to Conspiracy in the Second Degree, Criminal Facilitation in the Second Degree, Hindering the Prosecution in the First Degree, and Tampering with Physical Evidence, and is awaiting sentencing. The defendant then shot her girlfriend execution-style in the back of the head while she was watching television after midnight in their Morris Avenue apartment in the Bronx. The defendant then, with a second individual, who was later convicted for Criminal Facilitation in the Second Degree, Hindering Prosecution in the First Degree, and Tampering with Physical Evidence, and sentenced, wrapped the victim's body in a comforter, placed her in garbage bags and disposed of her body in a wooded area of Rossmore Avenue in Yonkers. The victim's decaying body was found by a passerby on Sept. 4, 2012.

Following the creation of DA Rocah's Cold Case Bureau in 2021,

forensic data experts in the DA's Office High Technology Crimes Unit examined the victim's cell phone and obtained GPS location data that tracked the device to Yonkers and back to the Bronx on the night of the murder. The cell phone analysis revealed text messages between the defendant and victim following the murder, which the defendant subsequently admitted to sending herself from the victim's phone. Yonkers police arrested the defendant on Jan. 23, 2022, at her residence in the Bronx, and she confessed to the murder.

1997 Murder of Nusinaida Ramos

A Westchester County Grand Jury indicted Rafael Ramos, 54, for Murder in the Second Degree, for the alleged beating and strangulation death of his ex-wife Nusinaida Ramos. The defendant was arraigned before Judge Fufidio in Westchester County Court on June 14 and remanded.

On the afternoon of March 9, 1997, the defendant, a former Corrections Officer at Sing Sing Correctional Facility in Ossining, allegedly used a T-shirt to strangle his ex-wife to death after beating her until she bled in her Colins Street apartment in Yonkers. The next day, Yonkers police conducted a welfare check at the behest of the victim's family and found her dead on her living room floor.

Yonkers police arrested the defendant on June 14 at his residence in Sleepy Hollow.

IN THE COMMUNITY



DA Rocah and Peekskill Mayor Vivian McKenzie were among local leaders and inspiring youth for Peekskill's Juneteenth flag raising ceremony June 15.



With U.S. Attorney Damian Williams as 2023's keynote speaker, DA Rocah returned to the Elisabeth Haub School of Law at Pace University on May 20 for Law Day hosted by the White Plains Youth Bureau and the Social Justice for Youth Community Youth Court Members.



Our Special Prosecutions Division was proud to participate in the 55th Annual Salute to Seniors events, free outdoor community expos, held throughout May, offering valuable information on services to seniors across Westchester County. DA Rocah (right) and Elder Abuse Bureau Chief Christine Hatfield (left) greeted attendants on May 17 in Croton Point Park.



Deputy Chief Criminal Investigator Wade Hardy (far left) joined Westchester gun safety advocates Mount Vernon SNUG, the Shamoya McKenzie Foundation and Moms Demand Action for Wear Orange Day on June 2 in honor of victims and survivors of gun violence.

IN THE COMMUNITY



Wage Theft Coordinator ADA Emily Rowe-Smith joined community advocates for a bi-lingual wage theft and labor fraud awareness and safety presentation at Fred's Food Pantry in Peekskill on June 10.



OCA Hudson Valley-Westchester chapter hosted the County's 26th Annual Asian American Heritage Festival on June 3 at Kensico Dam Plaza, where DA Rocah joined to celebrate the history, traditions and cultures of Westchester's Asian American and Pacific Islander community.



To kick off Pride Month, DA Rocah joined The LOFT LGBTQ+ Community Center's celebration in White Plains on June 4.



DA Rocah and state and local leaders spoke at the powerful Gathering Against Hate at the County legislative chambers on June 6.

Summer 2023 Interns

The Westchester County District Attorney's Office is proud to welcome 50 interns this summer—25 college and 25 law school interns representing 33 colleges and universities across the country. The eight-week program, led by Jackie Halper, Chief Development and Training Officer, provides a unique opportunity for interns to experience all aspects of prosecutorial work.



National 'Top Cop' Investigator Menton

In honor of National Police Week (May 14 to 20), the Westchester County District Attorney's Office proudly recognized our Criminal Investigator James Menton, pictured (left) with Chief Criminal Investigator Daniel McKenna, who along with three recipients from Westchester County, was awarded one of the 2023 TOP COPS AWARDS by the National Association of Police Organizations (NAPO) during the May 12 awards ceremony in Washington, D.C.

The team of CI Menton, a retired NYPD detective, along with his twin brother and retired Yonkers Police Department detective Brian Menton, Town of Greenburgh Police Department Detective Daniel O'Malley and Federal Bureau of Investigation Supervisory Special Agent Brendan Kenney (members of the Westchester FBI Safe Streets Task Force) was one of 10, out of hundreds of law enforcement nominees across the country, awarded for their bravery in action beyond the call of duty.

Leadership at the Westchester Women's Bar

ADA Elizabeth Z. Marcus (right, at podium), who led the Westchester Women's Bar Association for the past year as the youngest woman to hold the post as President, presided over the annual dinner installation of officers on June 7 where Administrative Judge of the Ninth Judicial District Anne E. Minihan delivered the keynote address. ADA Jill Oziemblewski, who served for the last year as Corresponding Secretary, was named Vice President. Joining ADA Marcus were (from left) former ADA Stefanie DeNise, ADA Celia Curtis, DA Rocah, former ADA Michelle Calvi and ADA Livia Rodriguez.



ANNOUNCEMENTS

Solving Cold Cases in Westchester County Since 2021

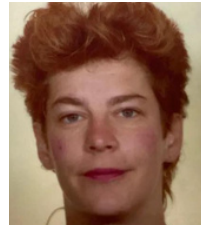
"Solving Cold Cases" continued from Page 1

The Bureau has also utilized DNA testing and investigative genealogy to advance cases by:

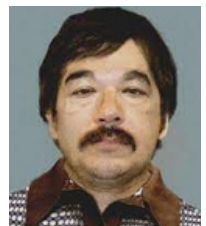
- identifying "Jane Doe Mount Vernon" in 2021 as **Veronica Wiederhold**, the homicide victim whose body was found in 1988 on Carelton Avenue in Mount Vernon
- identifying "Yonkers Jane Doe" in 2021 as **Meresa Hammonds**, another homicide victim whose body was found in 1992 on Midland Avenue in Yonkers
- creating a composite sketch using autopsy photos of a **1978 Hastings-on-Hudson murder victim** to place into the National Missing and Unidentified Persons System in May 2021



Veronica Wiederhold



Meresa Hammonds



Composite sketch
1978 murder victim

Bolstering the efforts of the Bureau's work, the Office was selected for the **Department of Justice's 2022 Bureau of Justice Assistance Grant for Prosecuting Cold Cases Using DNA**. The \$500,000 award, funded over the course of three years, supports an additional full-time ADA to prosecute cases where a suspect's DNA has been identified.

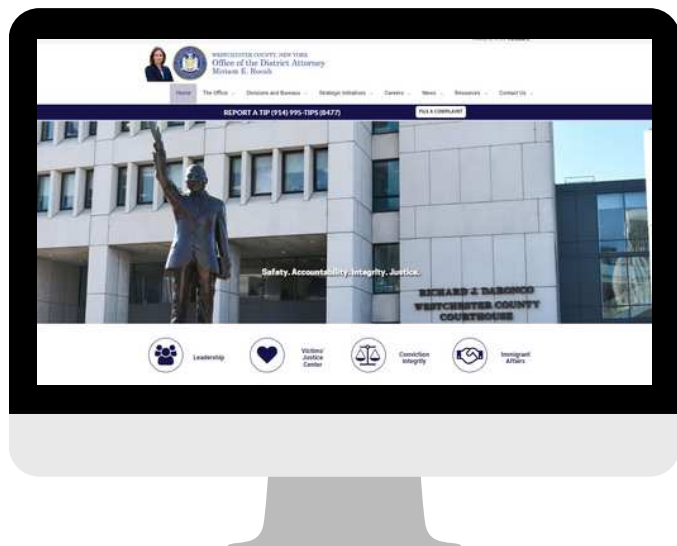
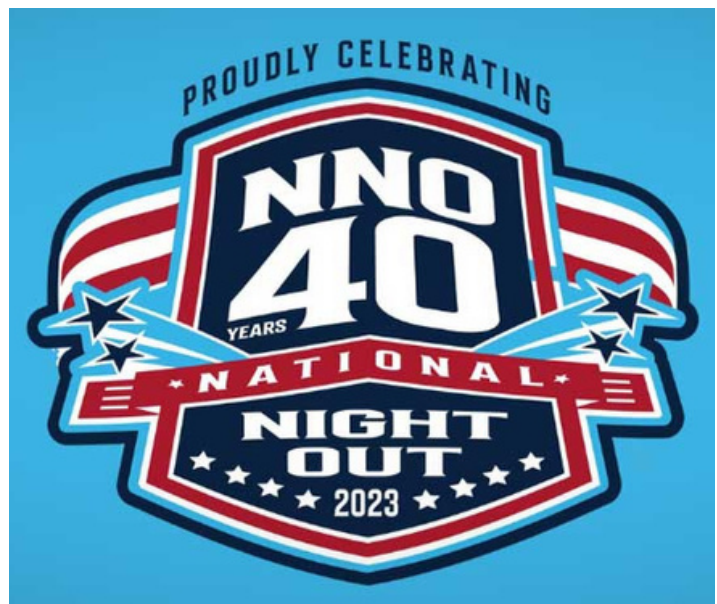
Anyone with information pertaining to an open homicide case in Westchester County is encouraged to call the **DA's Office 24-hour TIPS line at (914) 995-TIPS**.
Language assistance is available.

Westchester DA's Office to Participate in National Night Out

The Westchester County District Attorney's Office will once again join our local police partners throughout Westchester County on August 1 for the 40th annual National Night Out.

The nation-wide campaign aims to enhance the relationship between communities and law enforcement in order to provide a chance to bring police and neighbors together.

Last year, the DA's Office participated at a dozen police department events from Yonkers to Yorktown for a night of games and outdoor festivities. Our attorneys, investigators and staff will be volunteering at our tables to greet members of the communities we serve and offer info, tips and...treats!



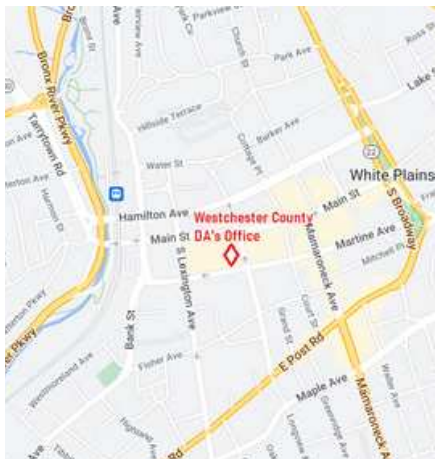
New Website, New Careers Page

The website for the Westchester County District Attorney's Office has recently undergone a redesign, thanks to the County's hardworking web and IT teams, and now boasts an updated and modernized job postings page.

The Careers section features opportunities for attorneys, criminal investigators and civil service support staff, with instructions on how to apply for available positions.

Applicants of all backgrounds are encouraged to apply.

Visit, www.WestchesterDA.net/careers



The Westchester County District Attorney's Office

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White Plains, NY 10601

(914) 995-3414

Hours of Operation: Monday-Friday 9AM - 5PM

The public can file a complaint directly with our office by filling out a complaint form online

<https://www.westchesterda.net>

or by calling

(914) 995-TIPS (8477)

Language assistance is available.

In emergencies, please call 911

Branch Offices

Greenburgh

188 Tarrytown Rd.
White Plains, NY 10607
(914) 995-4075

Mount Vernon

City Court Bldg. Roosevelt Sq.
Mount Vernon, NY 10550
(914) 813-5025

New Rochelle

475 North Ave., 2nd Fl.
New Rochelle, NY 10801
(914) 813-5800

Northern Westchester

1940 Commerce St.
Yorktown Heights, NY 10598
(914) 862-5140

Rye

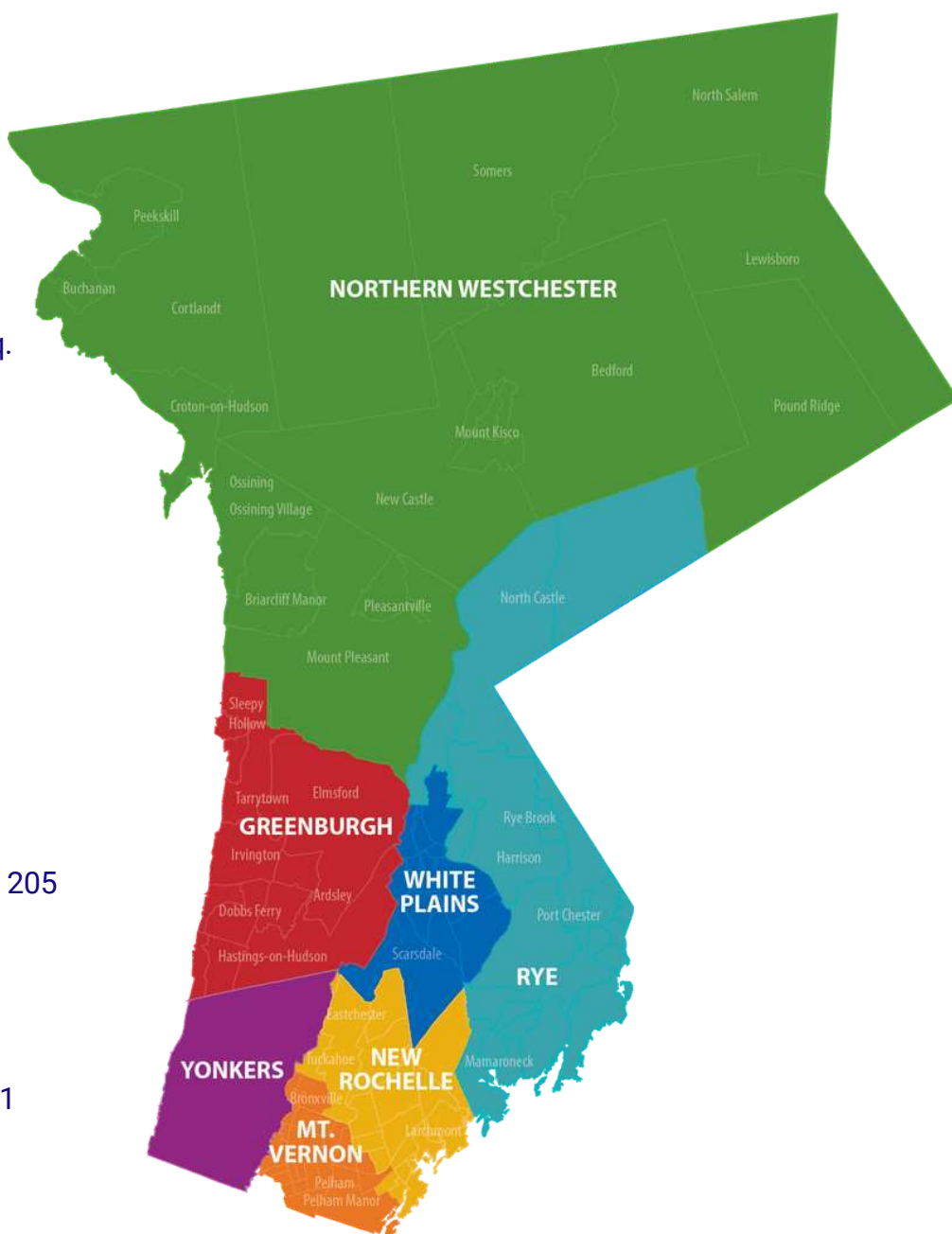
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