

# The New York Times

REAL ESTATE

## Westfield, N.J., Where Small Town Meets Urban

### Living In

By JILL P. CAPUZZO SEPT. 7, 2016



Westfield, N.J., possesses characteristics often associated with urban living: a vibrant downtown and cultural scene, and good transportation options. John O'Boyle for The New York Times

Marci Bandelli thought she would never leave [Brooklyn](#). Her husband, Stanford, who was born there, felt the same way. By 2001, with the addition of two children, the couple were outgrowing their rent-stabilized apartment in Brooklyn Heights and began looking in Park Slope.

Then the terrorist attacks happened on Sept. 11. Ms. Bandelli's brother, Alan Kleinberg, who worked at Cantor Fitzgerald, died at the World Trade Center. And everything changed.

“In my darkest days of having a newborn, a 2-year-old, and an aging dog, I was sleeping and breathing it, and knew I had to be away from all that,” said Ms. Bandelli, a psychotherapist who is now 49. So she went house hunting in northern [New Jersey](#), where her brother's family lived.

Ms. Bandelli made a beeline for Westfield, where she and her husband had attended a wedding a couple of years earlier and Mr. Bandelli had declared, “‘If we moved to New Jersey, this is the only town I'd ever live in,’” she recalled.

By October, they had put in an offer of \$355,000 for a three-bedroom one-and-a-half-bath split-level. Eight years later, with a third child, the Bandellis moved to a 1929 four-bedroom colonial, which cost \$765,000.



**221 JEFFERSON AVENUE** A four-bedroom two-and-a-half-bath 1941 [colonial](#) on 0.23 acre, listed at \$949,500. (908) 313-1542 John O'Boyle for The New York Times

Mr. Bandelli, a criminal defense lawyer, “loves the town for the kids,” his wife said.

The appeal of Westfield for [New York City](#) transplants like the Bandellis is understandable, as this central Union County town offers characteristics typically associated with urban living — a bustling downtown, a vibrant cultural scene and good transportation options — along with many benefits of suburban living, like attractive homes, well-regarded schools and a sense of community.

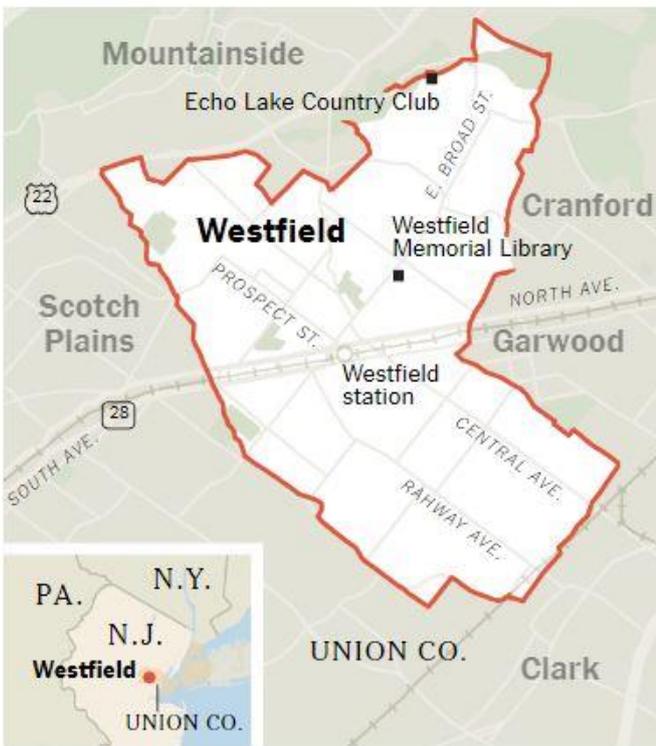
“Westfield is big enough that there are a lot of ways to get connected, but small enough to feel like you can really get to know everyone in this town,” said Laura Brockway, 60, a Realtor with Keller Williams who has lived in Westfield for 32 years with her husband, Richard, raising their three sons there.

Lauren Mays, the mother of a 10-month-old daughter, has connected with many of her neighbors through the Westfield, N.J., Moms [Facebook page](#). Though she and her husband, Tice Mays, who works in sales, had no children when they began looking to move to the suburbs from their Manhattan apartment in 2014, they sought a town with good schools.

The couple, both 35, visited towns in Westchester County and northern New Jersey, happening on an open house for a 1950s three-bedroom two-bath colonial in Westfield, which they wound up buying for \$630,000.

“We love the downtown, we’re within walking distance of the elementary school, and the people are very friendly,” said Ms. Mays.

With no children to provide built-in connections to other residents, Khushali Javeri, who works in human resources, joined the [Newcomers Club of Westfield](#) when she and her husband, Alfonso Yi, who is in information security, moved to town in 2013. They had bought a 1954 four-bedroom two-bath [Cape Cod](#) for \$455,000, which they remodeled into a four-bedroom three-and-a-half-bath colonial for another \$320,000.



By The New York Times

“It’s been a great social network for me,” said Ms. Javeri, who is now a board member of the Newcomers group. “It’s given us the ability to connect and meet many different people.”

## What You’ll Find

This 6.7-square-mile town of around 30,300 is divided by train tracks, with some of the larger and pricier homes found on the north side. Houses range from small Cape Cods and ranches to grand estates on expansive, tree-lined properties. In recent years, **teardowns** have replaced some modest homes with larger ones.

Multifamily and rental properties include a condo conversion in a former high school on Trinity Place.

Three apartment projects, with a total of 132 units, are being built near downtown, according to Sherry Cronin, the executive director of the [Downtown Westfield Corporation](#), which promotes and maintains Westfield’s Special Improvement District, consisting of 220 properties and some 450 businesses.

Westfield’s downtown includes national department and chain stores, as well as local mom-and-pop shops and highly rated restaurants. The commercial district suffered a serious blow when the [roof of the Trader Joe’s collapsed](#) during a snowstorm in January and the store had to be demolished. Town residents and officials are eagerly awaiting the rebuilt store, as well as the imminent opening of [Addams Tavern](#), a two-story American bistro that is the latest offering by the Harvest Restaurant Group, based in Morris Plains, N.J.

## What You'll Find

On Aug. 29, there were 132 homes on the market in Westfield, according to data from the [Garden State Multiple Listing Service](#) supplied by Laura Brockway of Keller Williams Realty. That included four duplexes and five condominiums. At the low end of the pricing spectrum were a one-bedroom one-bath 1966 condo listed at \$199,000 and a three-bedroom one-bathroom 1920 semidetached house listed at \$299,000. At the top end was an eight-bedroom eight-bathroom 1929 stone mansion on 4.72 acres listed at \$4.45 million.

In the 12-month period ending July 31, 406 homes sold in Westfield at a **median price** of \$809,935, Ms. Brockway said. In the 12-month period a year earlier, 407 homes sold at a median of \$785,329.



**32 MANITOU CIRCLE** A house with four bedrooms and two and a half bathrooms on 0.43 acre, listed at \$729,900. (908) 500-0116 John O'Boyle for The New York Times

Condominiums on the market in the newer developments range from \$329,000 for a two-bedroom unit at Trinity Place to \$899,000 for a two-bedroom 2015 townhouse on Prospect Street.

## What to Do

The town has a [community theater](#), a movie house, an [orchestra](#), and many other musical and arts events, like a summer jazz series where live bands play in five downtown locations on Tuesday nights.

There are nine parks in town, and the private [Echo LakeCountry Club](#).

Many residents belong to the [Westfield Memorial Pool](#), where 2016 summer memberships for residents cost \$180 for an individual and \$360 for a family.

The huge [Westfield Memorial Library](#) holds around 250,000 books and offers numerous programs for adults and children.

Townwide events, like the Downtown Westfield 5K Run and Pizza Extravaganza in July and the Halloween parade, draw thousands of participants from around the region, Ms. Cronin said.

## The Schools

The district has 10 schools, including the Lincoln Early Childhood Learning Center, for centralized prekindergarten and kindergarten, six elementary schools for first to fifth graders, two middle schools for Grades 6 to 8, and Westfield High School.



**853 NORTH AVENUE WEST** A three-bedroom two-and-a-half-bath renovated 1770 [Colonial](#) on 0.35 acre, listed at \$509,000. (908) 456-3093 John O'Boyle for The New York Times

The high school has around 1,850 students. On the **SATs**, students there scored 558 in reading, 590 in math and 567 in writing in 2015, compared with state averages of 496, 518 and 494.

Private school choices include [Holy Trinity Interparochial School](#), which has a Westfield campus for kindergarten through Grade 8, and [Union Catholic High School](#) in Scotch Plains.

## The Commute

The drive of around 24 miles to Manhattan takes about 40 minutes, traffic permitting. New Jersey Transit trains run from Westfield to New York's Penn Station, with a **transfer** in Newark during commuter hours; passengers leaving Westfield at 7:39 a.m. are scheduled to reach New York at 8:32. The fare is \$9.25 one way or \$270 a month.

In 2014, New Jersey Transit began a “one-seat ride” pilot program offering off-peak direct train service into the city. The [Raritan Valley Rail Coalition](#) is leading an effort to expand the one-seat ride schedule into commuter hours.

The New Jersey Transit bus 113X goes from Westfield to the Port Authority Bus Terminal in around an hour and costs \$9.75 one way or \$251 a month.

## The History

The cartoonist Charles Addams was born in Westfield in 1912, and grew up here. One of the family’s residences, at 411 Elm Street, was believed to be the [inspiration](#) for the macabre Addams Family house.

---

A version of this article appears in print on September 11, 2016, on Page RE9 of the New York edition with the headline: Where Small Town Meets Urban. [Order Reprints](#) | [Today's Paper](#) | [Subscribe](#)