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## Town Profile

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The Town of Cortlandt, New York is located in the northwestern corner of Westchester County. The Town is bounded on the west by the Hudson River, the north by Putnam County, the east by the Town of Yorktown and on the south by the Towns of New Castle and Ossining. Cortlandt includes two incorporated villages, Croton-on-Hudson and Buchanan and several hamlets including Montrose, Crugers and Verplanck. The Hudson River, the New York City Watershed Lands, numerous wooded hills and steep slopes, wetland areas and streams define the rural character of the Town.

Hendrick Hudson discovered the Hudson River in 1609, sailing his ship the Half Moon north anchoring at Verplanck's Point. Cortlandt derived its name from the Van Cortlandt family who began purchasing land in 1677 from the Croton River north to Anthony's Nose and east to Connecticut. Cortlandt was the site of many skirmishes during the Revolutionary War. Local Roads, such as Watch Hill and Furnace Dock Road, where the furnaces that made ammunition for the war effort were located, bear names reflecting the Revolutionary time.



With a total area of 34.5 square miles and an estimated 1998 population of about 28,672 persons, the unincorporated Town of Cortlandt composition in relation to the County remained constant from 1990 to 1998 with about 7.8 percent of the County's total area and 3.2 percent of its population. This percentage remained constant from 1990 to 1998. Although much less densely populated than the county as a whole, Cortlandt's population density is slightly higher than the average for the North County communities.



In 1788 under the Township Act, Cortlandt became one of 20 townships in Westchester County with Philip Van Cortlandt as the first Supervisor. During the 19<sup>th</sup> century the railroad was extended to the area and industrialization began to occur with the hamlet of Verplanck becoming an important brickmaking center. Throughout the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries the Town of Cortlandt was predominantly a rural, agricultural community with seasonal bungalow colonies serving the residents of New York City. By the 1950's Federal housing programs, combined with improvements to the

road network and the railroad, led to the suburbanization of the Town, which was typical throughout New York State. Today, many residents of the Town commute to the major employment centers of New York City and White Plains.

The Town has a total area of 34.5 square miles with an estimated 1998 population of 29,000, not including the Villages of Croton-on-Hudson and Buchanan. Over 94% of the Town's land is zoned for residential or open space while only approximately 6% is zoned commercial or industrial. 13% of the Town's land area, approximately 2,100 acres, is public parkland. Another approximately 550 acres of land are owned by various environmental organizations such as Brinton Brook Sanctuary, Teatown Reservation, McGregor Preserve and the lands of the New York City Watershed. In order to help preserve this residential character and balance the protection of the environment with economic development the Town Board created a professionally staffed Planning Department in 1974. In addition the Town has undertaken various studies and plans including the North Cortlandt Study of 1981, the Central and Southern Cortlandt Study of 1987 and the Comprehensive Master Plan of 1991. Currently, the Master Plan Update is a continuation of this long range, comprehensive planning effort.

The Town of Cortlandt is located in Westchester County which occupies a 450 square-mile area bounded on the west by the Hudson River, on the north by Putnam County, on the east by Fairfield County, Connecticut, and the Long Island Sound, and on the south by the Borough of the Bronx, New York City. The county has an estimated 1998 total population of about 897,920 persons, a 2.6 percent increase from 1990, and encompasses six cities, 14 towns, and 23 villages. The majority of the principal roadways and all the railroad lines in Westchester run north to south, following the orientation of the river valleys. Residential development has historically followed this pattern, spreading north as densities increased in the South and Central County areas. Over all journey-to-work patterns are also primarily north to south because of the concentration of employment centers in New York City and southern and central Westchester. Within the Town of Cortlandt, however, travel patterns are often east west to access major traffic arterials.



Cortlandt is in the North County portion of Westchester County. The City of Peekskill, estimated 1998 population 21,111, fronts along the Hudson River and is surrounded by the Town of Cortlandt on the other three sides. With the exception of the older industrial City of Peekskill and the industrial section of the Village of Buchanan, development in the North County area is predominantly residential. Community character ranges from suburban to semi-rural. Rugged terrain, large public water reservoirs, and heavily wooded areas characterize the area.



For the most part, the communities in northern Westchester are less densely populated and have less commercial development than those in central and southern Westchester. Urban development in the North County area is generally confined to historic transportation corridors along the Hudson River, the New York to Albany rail line, and the Route 9 highway, the old New York to Albany Post Road. The eastern part of the North County area, including the Towns of North Salem, Lewisboro, and Pound Ridge, tends to be less developed than the western part. The major employers in the Town are mostly institutions, such as

school districts, Town Government, the Hudson Valley Hospital, and the FDR Veterans Administration Hospital. The exception of this is the Cortlandt Town Center Shopping Center, the largest employer in the Town.



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