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OUR REGION

Young professionals fleeing Hudson Valley

High taxes, few good-paying jobs, expensive housing costs among reasons

By Daniel Axelrod
Times Herald-Record

Buying a single-family home in North Carolina's Greater Raleigh area in November 2018 was "a no-brainer," said Goshen native Cassandra Rosina.

Rosina, a 28-year-old John S. Burke Catholic High School and Mount Saint Mary College graduate, weighed road traffic congestion and the pricey local housing stock before bidding Orange County "buh-bye."

Rosina also wished the region had more high-paying jobs, lower property taxes and communities more willing to rezone to prevent congestion and high-density housing.

"I never wanted to invest that much of my money in property taxes, I didn't feel there were tremendous opportunities for me, and I couldn't wrap my



Cassandra Rosina moved from Orange County to North Carolina for several economic reasons.

[PHOTO PROVIDED]

head around the reality of being bogged down with traffic while commuting," Rosina said.

Rosina works as a sales development manager for service for the Eastern U.S. for Hach Co., which makes and services

industrial water quality testing instruments.

Rosina has had plenty of company in leaving the Hudson Valley. The region's population of 20- to 39-year-olds is shrinking, amid declining birth rates and young people fleeing high taxes, expensive housing costs, few good-paying jobs and stagnant wages, new research shows.

That age bracket made up 24 percent of the local population in 2017, down from 27 percent in 2000. That's lower than the state's share (27 percent) and the nation's (28 percent), according to Hudson Valley Pattern for Progress.

The Newburgh-based regional research institute defines the Hudson Valley as Columbia, Dutchess, Green, Orange, Putnam, Rockland, Sullivan, Ulster and Westchester counties in its new report – "The Math Just Doesn't Work: Why Young Professionals are Leaving the Hudson Valley."

Among the population loss reasons are:

- stagnant wages for those ages 22 to 44. Orange County's average annual wages rose just 1 percent to \$40,620 in 2017 compared with 2000, Ulster County's climbed a mere 4 percent to \$38,031 and Sullivan County's fell 4 percent to \$35,630.

- a lack of high-quality jobs. From 2000 to 2017, the Hudson Valley's nine counties experienced employment drops of 59 percent in the information or mass media sector; 50 percent in manufacturing; 46 percent in wholesale trade; 37 percent in finance and insurance; and 33 percent in the management of companies and enterprises.

- housing costs exceeding 30 percent of gross monthly income, an affordable housing standard. Orange County residents grossed \$3,385 per month in 2017, but they averaged \$1,940 in monthly rent.

Ulster and Sullivan counties' residents respectively grossed monthly averages of \$3,169 and \$2,969, compared with average

rents of \$1,721 and \$1,373.

"There are good jobs here, but there's no place for our youth to live" affordably, said Maureen Halahan, president and CEO of the Orange County Partnership, an economic development agency.

"Without a strong workforce and a place for them to live, we can't attract businesses," Halahan added. "In Beacon and in other places, housing has been a priority. They're literally using zoning and these amazing formulas to attract affordable workforce housing."

Pattern for Progress recently launched "Lift HV," an initiative to retain young people. The region must increase good-paying jobs and affordable housing, while marketing better, said Jonathan Drapkin, Pattern's president and CEO.

"We need to convince people not just to visit us, but to live, work and play in the Hudson Valley," Drapkin added.

daxelrod@th-record.com

Carlson: Bench trial in fatal shooting case

By Heather Yakin
Times Herald-Record

GOSHEN — A Town of Deerpark man who shot and killed a fugitive in 2013 opted on Tuesday to have a judge determine his guilt or innocence in a new trial.

The first-degree manslaughter trial of David Carlson in the death of Norris Acosta-Sanchez will begin on Thursday in Orange County Court before Judge Robert Freehill.

Acosta-Sanchez, 35, of Ramapo, was wanted on felony charges, including second-degree rape, when he began staying at a property in the Sparrowbush area of Deerpark, next door to Carlson, in 2013. Acosta-Sanchez disclosed to Carlson that he was wanted for rape, Carlson reported it to town police, and they enlisted his help

to capture the wanted man.

Acosta-Sanchez escaped from police, triggering a large-scale manhunt. Acosta-Sanchez eluded police and showed up at Carlson's home, agitated, the morning of Oct. 11, 2013. Carlson marched him at the point of a rifle to neighboring homes so someone could call 911. Carlson told police Acosta-Sanchez lunged at him, and he pulled the trigger. Within seconds, Carlson fired a second time when Acosta-Sanchez appeared to keep advancing.

Carlson claimed self-defense. Prosecutors characterized him as a vigilante.

At trial, an Orange County jury acquitted Carlson of second-degree murder, but convicted him of first-degree manslaughter. Freehill sentenced him to five years in prison, but stayed the sentence while Carlson's lawyer,

Benjamin Ostrer, appealed the verdict. Carlson has been free on bond.

An appellate court overturned the conviction last August, ruling that prosecutors made improper statements about Acosta-Sanchez's charges during jury selection.

On Tuesday, after Ostrer and the special prosecutor, Timothy Ward of the Westchester County District Attorney's Office, conferred with Freehill, Carlson signed a waiver of his right to trial by jury, opting instead to have Freehill decide all questions of law and fact in the case.

Carlson's new trial will start Thursday morning with Ward's opening statement. Because it's a non-jury trial, scheduling will not necessarily be on consecutive days.

hyakin@th-record.com



David Carlson, left, opted Tuesday for a bench trial for his retrial on manslaughter charges in the 2013 shooting death of Norris Acosta-Sanchez in Deerpark. Carlson's lawyer, Benjamin Ostrer, right, has argued that Carlson acted in self-defense. [HEATHER YAKIN/TIMES HERALD-RECORD]