

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

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U.S. | NEW YORK | NY REAL ESTATE COMMERCIAL

In Kinnelon, N.J., a Rural Ambience

It's quiet and sparsely populated—just the way residents like it



The 1,509-acre Silas Condict County Park has a 7-acre lake, hiking trails and picnic areas. *PHOTO: STEVE REMICH FOR THE WALL STREET JOURNAL*

By **MELANIE LEFKOWITZ**

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The borough of Kinnelon, N.J., is set into the ridges of the Ramapo Mountains, with picturesque lakes and reservoirs, open expanses and fewer than 11,000 people living in its nearly 20 square miles.

There are hardly any sidewalks and not much commercial development, and that's the way most residents like it.

“For people who love swimming, boating, kayaking, fishing, skating, cycling, tennis and horseback riding in spectacular natural surroundings, Kinnelon is a perfect fit,” said Lynda Hester-D’Orio, of Weichert Realtors, who has lived in Kinnelon for 22 years. “It’s an exceptional lifestyle.”

Nearly half of Kinnelon's land is undeveloped and almost all of it falls within the Highlands Preservation Area, said Mayor Robert Collins, who has lived in the Morris County borough for 25 years.

Although Kinnelon has seen new housing built in recent decades, local leaders work to retain the rural atmosphere.

"The town has grown, but it's retained its original character, and I think that's the reason people came," Mr. Collins said. "We still have that small-town feel."



L'Ecole, the Kinnelon Museum, houses the Kinnelon Historical Commission. PHOTO: STEVE REMICH FOR THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

Brokers say new residents are drawn by Kinnelon's greenery, well-regarded public schools and relative proximity to Manhattan, about 25 miles away as the crow flies.

Its many commuters can take an hourlong train or bus ride to New York City from the Wayne Route 23 Transit Center in Wayne, about 10 miles away. Residents also can take the train from nearby Denville or the Towaco station in Montville, which travels to Penn Station in about 70 minutes. Interstate 287 and Route 23 pass through the borough.

Housing ranges from about \$300,000 for a small, single-family dwelling to more than \$2 million for a large estate in a sought-after lake community.

Some of the priciest homes are within Smoke Rise, a gated community on Lake Kinnelon with about 900 houses on 2,500 acres. Amenities and activities in Smoke Rise include lake and beach access, a riding club and stable, and a community theater group.

Another lake association, Fayson Lakes, has about 500 houses that start at about



The Fayson Lakes Association in Kinnelon, N.J., offers beach access to residents. *PHOTO: STEVE REMICH FOR THE WALL STREET JOURNAL*

\$350,000. The association offers its residents beach access and annual events including a Fourth of July parade and a fishing derby.

For Kinnelon residents who don't live within a lake community, the Lake Reality Association offers memberships, but there is a three-year waiting list to join, according to its website.

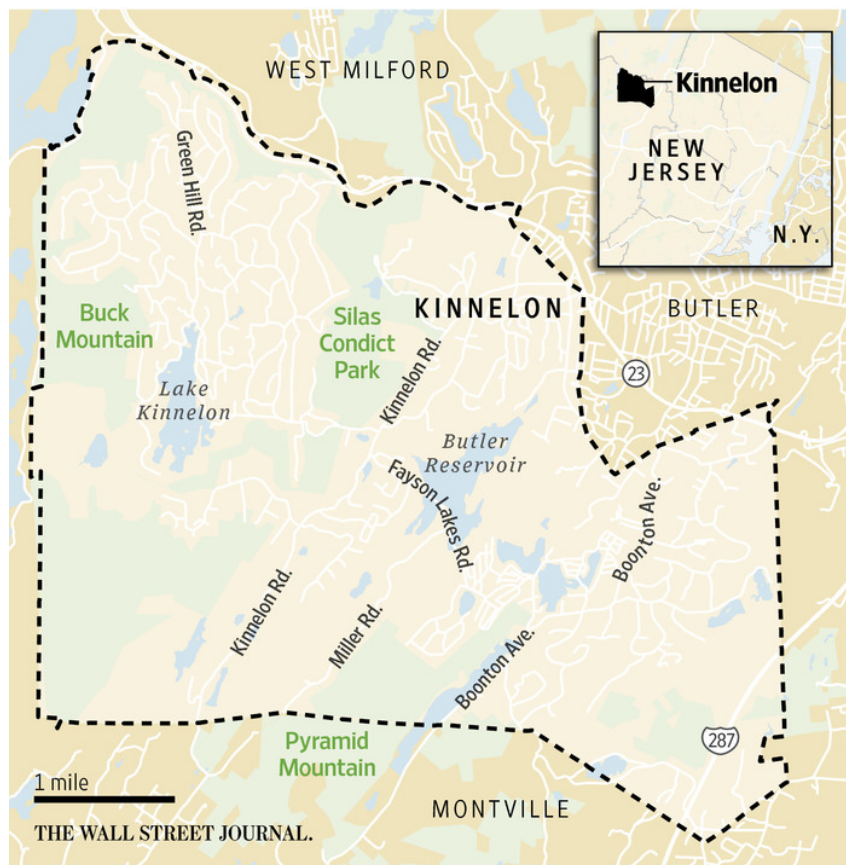
The median sale price for all real estate in Kinnelon for the past 12 months was \$510,000, said Ms. Hester-D'Orio. The average listing price in Kinnelon for the week ended June 17 was \$718,132, according to Trulia.com. Property taxes for a house selling in the \$500,000 range are about \$12,000 a year.

Though settled by Europeans more than 300 years ago, Kinnelon was incorporated as a borough only in 1922. The Kinnelon Museum, also known as L'Ecole, is in a building formerly used as a school on Kiel Avenue.

Annual events include K-Fest, a festival with music, vendors and fireworks held in the fall. The borough has a strong volunteer spirit, particularly after hurricanes Sandy and Irene, the mayor said.

"Neighbors were checking on neighbors and opening their homes to people who didn't have power, which was pretty moving to me," Mr. Collins said. "It isn't uncommon here for people to be shoveling snow and someone will bring out a tray of brandy, to make the shoveling go a little easier."

Parks: The 1,509-acre Silas Condict County Park has a 7-acre lake, hiking trails, a ball



field and picnic areas. The more than 1,500-acre Pyramid Mountain Natural Historic Area, with hiking trails and nature exhibits, as well as the 4,866-acre Fanny State Park, are on or near the borders of Kinnelon.

Schools: The Kinnelon public school district has about 2,000 students in two elementary schools, a middle school and a high school.

According to 2013-14 state data, Kinnelon High School outperforms 76% of schools across the state in academic

achievement and outperforms 87% of schools in college and career readiness.

Dining: The Smoke Rise Village Inn, a restaurant and catering hall, is in the Smoke Rise gated community but open to the public. Cypress Estiatorio, serving Mediterranean cuisine, is on Kinnelon Road. Sangiorgio's Italian Bistro is on Boonton Avenue.

Shopping: Stores can be found on Route 23, and the Meadtown Shopping Center, near the borough's border with Butler, has a mix of national and independent shops. Willowbrook Mall in Wayne is a short distance away.

Entertainment: There is a multiplex movie theater on Kinnelon Road.