

The Rhinebeck Plan

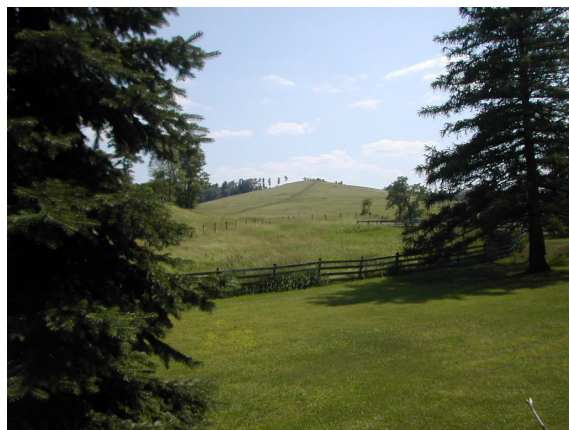
A final report on the 2009 comprehensive plan and zoning regulations to conserve Rhinebeck's rural character, scenic beauty and environmental quality

"The Rhinebeck Plan was conceived with the majority of town residents as both its audience and its authors." Sally Mazzarella, Chairperson, Rhinebeck Comprehensive Plan Committee

Community Values

In 2002, the Town Board appointed a 22 member Comprehensive Plan Committee, with diverse backgrounds and interests, to prepare a new plan and zoning. The Committee's first task was to seek resident viewpoints on conservation and development through 11 visioning sessions, more than 200 meetings and workshops, a public opinion survey, an interactive website, and biweekly newspaper columns.

Numerous studies were conducted for the Plan including a build-out analysis that mapped the Town based upon development under existing zoning regulations. A fiscal impact study of the build-out revealed what the costs to taxpayers would be to provide services required by this new development. The studies revealed that Rhinebeck would resemble Southern Dutchess County, if built-out according to present zoning, and would be more like suburbia, rather than our current rural landscape. With current zoning and available land, the number of buildings could increase from 1,416 to 4,824 and population could grow from 4,063 to 13,844. Yet, 99 % of the public opinion survey respondents believed that Rhinebeck's rural atmosphere was a major strength with



92% favoring protection of agriculture and rural character. More than 96 % want to see new development guided to the Village and hamlets.

When the fiscal analysis was conducted, it found that increased residential development generates less in revenues than it costs to provide needed services. To address these issues, The Rhinebeck Plan proposed a smart growth strategy called the "Centers and Greenspace Plan," which is shown on Figure 5.1 in the Plan. The "heart" of the Plan is a recommendation to decrease residential densities in the most rural areas of the Town, increase residential densities closest to the Village, and create affordable housing opportunities throughout the community. The fiscal costs of the build-out were calculated to go from -\$932,557 under the 1989 Zoning to +\$1,657,079 under the Comprehensive Plan.

The Rhinebeck Plan

Completed in 2006 by the Rhinebeck Comprehensive Plan Committee and updated and adopted by the Town Board in 2009, the Plan includes a Biodiversity Study and an Open Space and Affordable Housing Implementation Plan. It includes small "neighborhood infill" overlay districts in Rock City and Lake Sepasco, Village Gateway districts immediately west of the Village on Rhinecliff Road and north of the Village on Route 9. The Holy Cross site recommendation is to retain the 1989 Zoning Law's R5A (5 acre) zoning designation.

The Plan has over 400 recommendations; many have already been implemented. Major goals include:

- Maintain the rural character of the Town by integrating development into existing hamlets and the Village in key locations and enhancing protection of community character through conservation design practices in the rural portions of the Town.
- Provide a range of housing opportunities to meet the housing needs of a broad spectrum of community residents.
- Strive to achieve social, economic, and cultural diversity within the community.
- Preserve the Town's historic, cultural, scenic, and natural resources and the lands that surround those resources.
- Encourage agriculture and open space preservation as a means of maintaining the rural character and

preserving operating farms and the economic viability of farming and forestry.

- Encourage economic development and tourism that is in keeping with the rural character of Rhinebeck and the centrality of the Village.

Plan Benefits:

- Studies overwhelmingly show real estate values remain stable in communities with high quality open space, protected scenic viewsheds, and intact historic resources.
- Conserving environmental resources allows biodiversity to remain intact, filters pollutants, mitigates climate change, prevents flooding and protects drinking water.
- Protecting community character is essential to maintenance of a high quality of life experience for residents.

2009 Zoning and Wetlands Laws

The Plan addressed HOW MUCH we should grow, WHERE we should grow and how we can make IT FIT better. The Zoning Law provides the tools for accomplishing these tasks.

The Plan's recommendations for Zoning map changes have been reflected in the adopted 2009 Zoning Law. The Law also follows the Plan recommendations for density changes to address the ultimate build-out. Under the new Zoning, calculations of additional buildings will double rather than increase the number more than three-fold. The Zoning tightens regulations in the most rural and scenic parts of the Town to protect significant natural areas, biodiversity, surface and ground waters and rural

character. It allows more development than previously allowed in areas adjoining the Village and around designated hamlets.

Landowners are given greater flexibility to establish accessory apartments in their homes and accessory buildings. Multi family dwellings (up to six per building) could be built (as long as they resemble a single family dwelling) or converted from a single family home in nearly all residential districts. An affordable housing program will require new development to include 10 % as permanent affordable units but the Town's new affordable housing program will not become fully functional until the Town Board passes an additional Local Law. Home occupations will have greater flexibility with an emphasis on impact rather than use and an adaptive reuse provision has been added to provide greater flexibility for landowners who have historically significant buildings.

New subdivisions and other residential projects will be subject to a conservation design process that identifies important natural and cultural resources, avoids those areas by development and preserves them as open space. New development will be subject to other design guidance including signage, lighting, landscaping, noise, stormwater management, scenic viewshed protection, habitat management using the Town's Biodiversity study, green building standards, and historic building protection. Agriculture and forestry will be encouraged as viable economic uses of open space by new "farmer-friendly" and "forester-friendly" allowances, and solar and wind energy systems have been promoted and encouraged by removing obstacles to them in the Zoning. Finally, new provisions have been added for the voluntary transfer of development rights within the HP20, RA10 and R5A Zoning Districts.

The Wetlands Law is separate from the Zoning Law but is administered by the Planning Board. The Law is intended to protect wetlands in the Town, that are not regulated by the State, by establishing a wetland permit process for new development and setting forth procedures for obtaining permits from the Planning Board.