

Economic Development

The Town of Rhinebeck has some limited commercial uses but the majority of economic activity in the area is focused on the Village of Rhinebeck and the City of Kingston in Ulster County. The commercial uses in the Town are concentrated along Routes 9 and 9G and generally consist of highway commercial uses such as gas stations, car dealerships, and other auto related uses. Other uses found in this area include the Stop & Shop grocery store, Williams Lumber, and various other small businesses such as restaurants. The Town recognizes the function of the Village of Rhinebeck as a commercial center and wishes to limit new commercial development that may compete with the Village.

Vision: The viability of existing, locally owned businesses in Rhinebeck should be maintained, and the village commercial center should be preserved and protected as a lively and active one.

Locally owned businesses help provide Rhinebeck with its local character. When residents use locally owned services or shop at locally owned stores, more money stays and gets recycled in the town. A strong local economy with lots of businesses is one of the best ways to ensure competition. If local ownership is supported, so is free enterprise. Local ownership brings about leadership and financial support for government, not-for-profits and the community at large.

Objective: Support local businesses.

Actions:

1. Support local businesses, where possible, by establishing a “Buy Local” policy for all town-purchased supplies, materials, equipment, machinery and other provisions.
2. Start a “Think Local First” shopping program to educate residents on the advantages of buying locally.¹
3. Work to maintain a low unemployment rate by supporting locally owned businesses, which create more jobs locally and often provide better wages and benefits than do national chains.
4. Interface with the Rhinebeck business community and the Chamber of Commerce to support existing businesses, and identify new, diversified businesses, which serve Rhinebeck residents with necessary and affordable goods and services.
5. Establish defined priority growth areas within which water, sewer, and other municipal services will be provided, in order to maintain the vitality of the village and prevent strip development and retail sprawl along outlying Routes 9, 9G and 308.

6. Amend the Zoning to require that new retail proposals be subject to an economic and community impact review prior to granting approval, except for new retail development in the Astor Flats TND.
7. Work to ensure that new retail stores are geared toward meeting the needs of local residents, as opposed to visitors or the regional economy.
8. Establish a Commercial Land Trust (CLT) for local businesses² to establish and maintain affordable commercial buildings, with the requirement that buyers or lessees be independent, as opposed to national or chain businesses. Work with the Rhinebeck Chamber of Commerce on the project.
9. Consider conducting a market analysis to identify opportunities for new entrepreneurs and local businesses seeking to expand.
10. Ensure there is an appropriate jobs-housing balance in the town to prevent Rhinebeck from becoming a “bedroom community.”
11. Help local businesses by assisting in the creation of a community-wide e-commerce Web site for local retailers³.
12. Encourage business owners to issue joint loyalty cards, such as the Community Benefit Card, which can work at dozens of local stores and encourage local shopping by rewarding customers with discounts, rebates or other rewards.

Objective: Limited commercial expansion should be allowed in designated hamlet centers outside the village center.

Actions:

1. Restrict community commercial development to the Astor Flats TND and support the existing commercial district in the hamlet of Rhinecliff.
2. Permit small scale neighborhood retail and service businesses in selected locations of the town to serve only the immediate neighborhood. Applicants must demonstrate that a majority of their sales would be derived from the immediately surrounding area.
3. Work toward the comprehensive re-design of the Route 9 commercial area, from a strip commercial zone to a mixed-use TND center. Carefully integrate existing uses such as the supermarket and the automobile-oriented services presently located on the west side of Route 9, into the Astor Flats development.
4. Establish criteria and amend the Zoning Law to require that new development meet the criteria, so that its overall impact will be positive on the environment, historic and cultural resources, community character, public revenues, the local economy and existing business districts.
5. Explore the use of mandatory adaptive reuse or removal of a commercial structure that remains unused for a period of 12 or more months, as part of site development approvals, similar to the code requirements of Buckingham, PA and Peachtree City, GA.

Vision: Encourage new businesses in the town that are built to human scale; provide employment for residents; and offer goods and services geared to their needs.

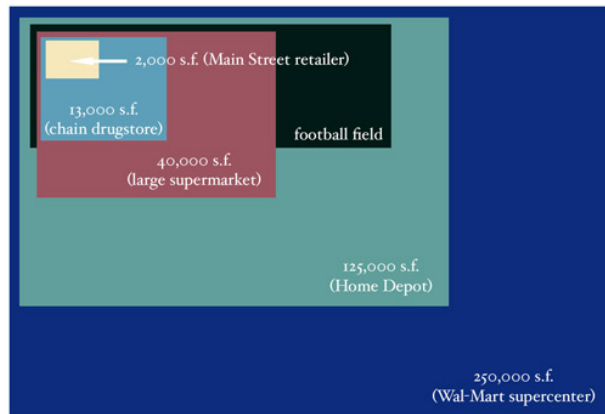
Out-of-scale chain stores have decimated downtown business districts throughout the country, and changed many communities forever. To avoid this, commercial development in the town should be appropriately sized and subjected to an impact review that examines employment (jobs gained versus jobs lost), wages, tax revenues, and other impact issues such as roads and other public services, historic resources, air and water pollution, and traffic. Independent consultants must conduct economic and fiscal studies and then the project's overall costs need to be weighed against its benefits, or lack thereof, before proceeding.

Objective: Commercial development should be limited to the scale and character necessary to protect Rhinebeck’s historic, small town atmosphere.

Actions:

1. Support and complement the village center through location of commercial areas in the town only in Astor Flats and to serve only the immediate neighborhood.
2. Discourage development that will detract from the ability of the village of Rhinebeck to function as the primary commercial center of the community.
3. Concentrate new commercial development in the village and within the proposed Astor Flats development, where infrastructure exists or can be efficiently provided.
4. Plan the new commercial ventures, locating in Astor Flats, so that they do not draw business away from existing businesses located in the village.

5. Prohibit additional “big box” businesses by limiting the size of new retail facilities in the town. Establish a maximum of 8,000 square feet on all new retail development, so that only businesses scaled to serve Rhinebeck and the immediately surrounding rural communities can locate in the town. Allow reasonable changes to be made to existing big-box businesses over 8,000 square feet provided such changes are consistent with the purposes and intent of the Astor Flats development.



Comparison of the relative size of stores

6. Review and amend the current permitted Principal and Special Permit uses allowed in the town’s non-residential zoning districts to ensure that they are appropriate uses to serve community needs.
7. Strive to restrict land uses that could be classified as “adult uses” and which have negative secondary adverse effects on their neighborhoods, to the fullest extent permitted by law. Ensure that town decision-makers study the issue and then set specific requirements in accordance with guidelines developed by the U.S. Supreme Court.

Objective: Discourage chain stores and franchises, and limit the size of commercial businesses in order to serve local, as opposed to regional, needs.

Actions:

1. Enact a formula fast food amendment to the Zoning Law that disallows the establishment of fast-food chain stores in the town, given that formula, fast food chains are available within a ten-minute drive of Rhinebeck.
2. Provide clear design standards for architectural compatibility, scale and form, signage, colors, landscaping and lighting for all development in the town to preclude national chain stores that wish to conduct business in the town from taking on their corporate appearance. Encourage the Town Board to empower the Planning Board to design regulations for architectural review of national chain development.
3. Discourage the architectural “formulae” that franchise businesses employ for purposes of corporate identify.

Objective: Encourage the expansion of employment opportunities.

Actions:

1. Promote the creative use of agricultural and natural lands in the town to serve the needs of such *niche* markets as the Rhinebeck Farmers Market, green markets in the New York metropolitan area, nurseries, botanical and nutraceutical production, and other soils-based crops.
2. Promote sustainable forestry management in the town as a viable economic activity that helps to maintain lands in their natural state. Examine the Zoning Law and town policies that affect sustainable forestry to make them forester-friendly.
3. Encourage the Chamber of Commerce to work with the Dutchess County Economic Development Corp. to prepare a comprehensive economic development strategy for the town. Tour towns in the area that have been successful in attracting new businesses to learn about and mimic strategies that others adopted to encourage economic growth. Establish an enterprise center or incubator that provides small businesses in the same or related industries with a facility and shared services. Invite speakers from Mid-Hudson Patterns for Progress, New York State Economic Development, Regional Plan Association, and the Dutchess County Economic Development Corporation to talk about how to achieve job growth, which reflects the strategic objectives of The Rhinebeck Plan. Consider these strategies for integration into the Office Research Park Zoning District.
4. Identify and build on existing, small-scale local enterprises by seeking input from local entrepreneurs who are working on the cutting edge of new business creation. Identify such entrepreneurs is through the US Patent Office, using the search engine provided on the US Patent Office's Internet Web site to find all patents granted to individuals or companies by zip code. Incent economic growth in Rhinebeck by identifying the specific needs of these innovative thinkers and assisting them in developing their ideas into town business ventures.
5. Encourage the Northern Dutchess Alliance to look for opportunities to identify specific job-creating uses in town, and work with Dutchess County Economic Development Corporation to accomplish this task.
6. Consider appointing planning staff to research or promote economic development or to assist with implementing The Rhinebeck Plan policies – perhaps in cooperation with local businesses or business associations.
7. Approach area banks to invest in Rhinebeck's economic growth, in accordance with the Community Reinvestment Act of 1997, which requires that banks affirmatively seek out lending opportunities in the local communities they serve.
8. Set up a revolving loan fund to jump-start local, home-based businesses (including farmers), and to entice related out-of-town businesses that would provide employment opportunities for residents to locate in Rhinebeck.
9. Provide information and technical assistance directly to businesses in the targeted sector.
10. Provide expertise to assist new businesses in the development review and approval process.
11. Review the submissions of developers and recommend changes to them to ensure their compatibility with the vision for Rhinebeck expressed by its residents and set forth in The Rhinebeck Plan.
12. Continue to support tourism-related businesses as employment generators.

Objective: Encourage home occupations that do not disrupt neighborhood character.

Actions:

1. Promote home occupations in the town. Establish a permit procedure for monitoring and enforcement to safeguard uses that may be potentially objectionable.
2. Expand the home occupations provisions of the Zoning Law to set additional thresholds for home occupation activities that would potentially cause a disruption to neighborhood character; require a special use permit from the Planning Board for activities that exceed the thresholds.
3. Address parking, lighting, signage, noise and daily business activity to avoid impacts on nearby residential properties.

Objective: Encourage the development of manufacturing and office research in designated locations.

Actions:

1. Implement the changes to the light industrial and office/research facility parcels recommended in the proposed Zoning Map in The Rhinebeck Plan (based on the environmental constraint maps), and re-zone them for these uses. Work with the Chamber of Commerce and the Northern Dutchess Alliance to attract research facilities, professional offices, small manufacturing, and high tech firms in locations where effective transportation and other suitable services are available.
2. To encourage light industrial and office research development consistent with Rhinebeck's rural character, adopt updated performance standards to reduce or eliminate environmental impacts of this type of new development.

Vision: Encourage tourism in Rhinebeck at a scale that respects the town's historic and rural character, making visitors feel welcome and respecting the primary needs of residents, year-round.

Rhinebeck has become a destination and is well situated near regional tourism attractions, such as: the Bard Performing Arts Center, Kaatsbaan, Wilderstein, Staatsburg State Historic Site (Mills Mansion) and Norrie Point State Parks, Montgomery Place, the Fairgrounds, Burger Hill Park, Old Rhinebeck Aerodrome, the Rhinebeck Performing Arts Center, Catskill Mountains, the Appalachian Trail, the Franklin D. Roosevelt and Eleanor Roosevelt National Historic Sites, Vanderbilt Mansion National Historic Site, and Kingston's Rondout Creek Waterfront, which has boat rentals and access to the Hudson River

Objective: Encourage tourism activity that takes advantage of Rhinebeck's history of farming and agriculture, as well as its proximity to historic sites and destinations; discourage tourism activity that detracts from Rhinebeck's history and sense of place.

Actions:

1. Encourage adaptive reuse of historic or unique farm buildings that merit special attention for specialized, commercial operations, such as antique shops or gift shops, to help preserve them and to encourage appropriate tourism. Use a performance-based approach. Give special consideration to preserving such pre-existing farm structures as barns.
2. Capitalize on Rhinebeck's proximity to regional tourism attractions and destinations by encouraging inns, bed-and-breakfasts and other facilities serving tourists. Work with Dutchess County Tourism to promote Rhinebeck as a "Destination to Stay," providing lodgings for visitors to nearby regional sites.

3. Re-examine the regulations for bed & breakfasts to ensure compatibility with and to reduce impacts on residential neighborhoods. Consider broadening the threshold for special use permits. Add requirements for examining well and septic system suitability, among other impact issues.
4. Permit and promote accessory farm businesses such as “Pick Your Own” and Christmas tree cutting in the Zoning Law, to capitalize on their tourism potential.
5. Develop the Hucklebush Rail Line as a rail-trail, and identify linkages to other trail networks (including the 20-mile Historic District Bike/Hike Trail and the Central Hudson Gas & Electric corridors), both in and outside of Rhinebeck. Work with the state’s Hudson River Estuarine Sanctuary Program to provide linkages to the planned Blueway Trail on the Hudson River.
6. Take advantage of and promote Rhinebeck’s proximity to the Hudson River as a stop on the Blueway Trail from Albany to New York, and as an important part of the Historic District Hike/Bike Trail. Provide facilities for launching canoes and kayaks, and coordinate efforts to encourage the development of bed and breakfasts and small inns in Rhinecliff and other appropriate locations to serve the users of the trails. Investigate the feasibility of establishing a River interpretative center in Rhinecliff – perhaps at the Morton Memorial Library – as a destination stop along the Blueway Trail. Apply for state funding, if feasible.
7. Encourage re-establishment of ferry service at Rhinecliff as a tourism activity.
8. Delineate gateways to the town from surrounding towns through appropriate entrance statements, possibly upgrading town signs in order to do so.
9. Work with the Northern Dutchess Alliance and the towns of Red Hook, Hyde Park, Clinton, and Milan, the three villages in Northern Dutchess, and others that would be interested in establishing a joint tourism information booth at the gateway to Northern Dutchess County from the Kingston-Rhinecliff Bridge. The booth could direct tourists to areas of interest, accommodations, and provide clues to the historic, cultural, natural and economic attractions of the area.
10. Work with the village to establish gateways that clearly demark the transition from the rural town to the more developed village.
11. Establish a gateway that clearly demarks the transition from the rural town to the more developed hamlet of Rhinecliff.

¹ A recent study in Chicago found that spending \$100 at locally owned businesses generates 70 percent more local economic impact than spending that same amount at national chain stores.

² CLTs are funded largely by community development block grants, which are available for both housing and economic development projects – similar to a Community Land Trust for affordable housing, but adapted to the needs of local businesses.

³ Business owners could share the expense of creating and marketing the e-commerce site by developing a community-wide portal, where residents could shop at any local store.