

Issues

There are a few large parcels in Pine Plains that have the possibility of being developed or redeveloped in the future. These parcels include the St. Anthony's Catholic Church lot near the intersection of Main Street and Church Street, Dillinger Farm, the 20-acre parcel on Lake Road, and the 70-acre parcel at the intersection of Routes 82 and 83. These parcels may warrant additional study due to their location and/or size.

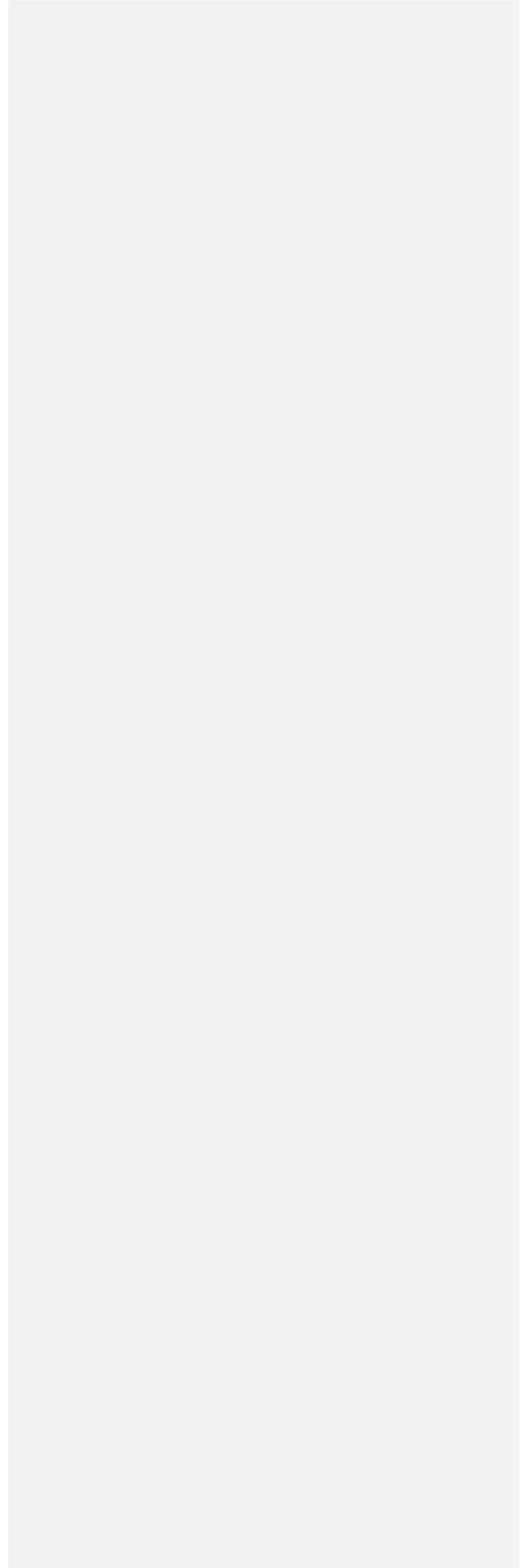
The Pine Plains zoning code is approximately 10 years old, and some ~~small~~ issues have been identified by the Planning Board and Zoning Board of Appeals. In general, the Planning Board and Zoning Board of Appeals want to make the zoning code reflect the uses that exist in Pine Plains to lessen the number of buildings that are non-conforming. They also want the zoning code to allow for some flexibility with the goal of reducing the number of applicants who have to apply for a minor zoning variance.

One example is the case of minimum setbacks for homes in some of the Hamlet zoning districts. A stated minimum setback may work in most cases, but it may also result in a home being set back from a lot line at a different distance than neighboring homes. Allowing homes to meet the setbacks of neighboring homes or the minimum setback distance could help reduce the need for a variance. The location of accessory building and solar arrays has also been identified as an issue that requires additional study.

Another issue is whether the current minimum lot size of five acres in the Rural zoning district is sufficiently preserving the Town's rural character. Minimum lot size is only one of several tools in the rural preservation toolkit. The 2004 Comprehensive Plan discusses the role that site planning and design has on conserving open space. Pine Plains created design standards for the Rural district and conservation subdivisions using guidelines from Randall Arendt, a planner who specializes in rural conservation. Figure 1 shows a conventional two-acre subdivision compared with a conservation or cluster subdivision in which individual lot sizes are reduced so that open space is preserved. In this case the 32 units allowed on the site are clustered into 1-acre lots leading to the preservation of approximately half of the site. If this were 5-acre zoning approximately 14 units would be allowed and over 75 percent of the area would be preserved. The Town should consider studying this issue further; it may be that the minimum lot size in the Rural zoning district should be adjusted, but there may be other ways to further utilize Pine Plains' existing design standards to conserve the Town's rural nature.

The NND zoning district may also need to be studied to ensure that it is consistent with the Town's current goals regarding affordable housing and preserving rural character.

Figure 1: Rural Conservation Planning



Chapter 4. Natural Resources

Pine Plains is known throughout the region for its bucolic natural environment and pastoral beauty. The Town's rural landscape is defined by Stissing Mountain, rolling hills, lakes and streams, and land dedicated to farming, forestry, and conservation. These natural resources benefit quality-of-life through their aesthetic beauty, but they also help provide the people of Pine Plains clean water to drink, productive soils for agriculture, and provide habitat for wildlife.

Water Resources

Unlike communities in western Dutchess County, Pine Plains is not located on the banks of the Hudson River. Surface water in the town is limited to streams, ponds, and wetlands, as shown on Figure 2. The four main streams that flow through the Town are the Roeliff-Jansen Kill, Shekomeko Creek, Wappinger Creek, and the Bean River. Each of these streams has been given a "C" classification from the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) indicating that they support fisheries but are not suitable for use as drinking water. Portions of the Roeliff-Jansen Kill, Shekomeko Creek, and Bean River support trout fisheries and/or trout spawning, and are therefore especially sensitive.



Thompson Pond.

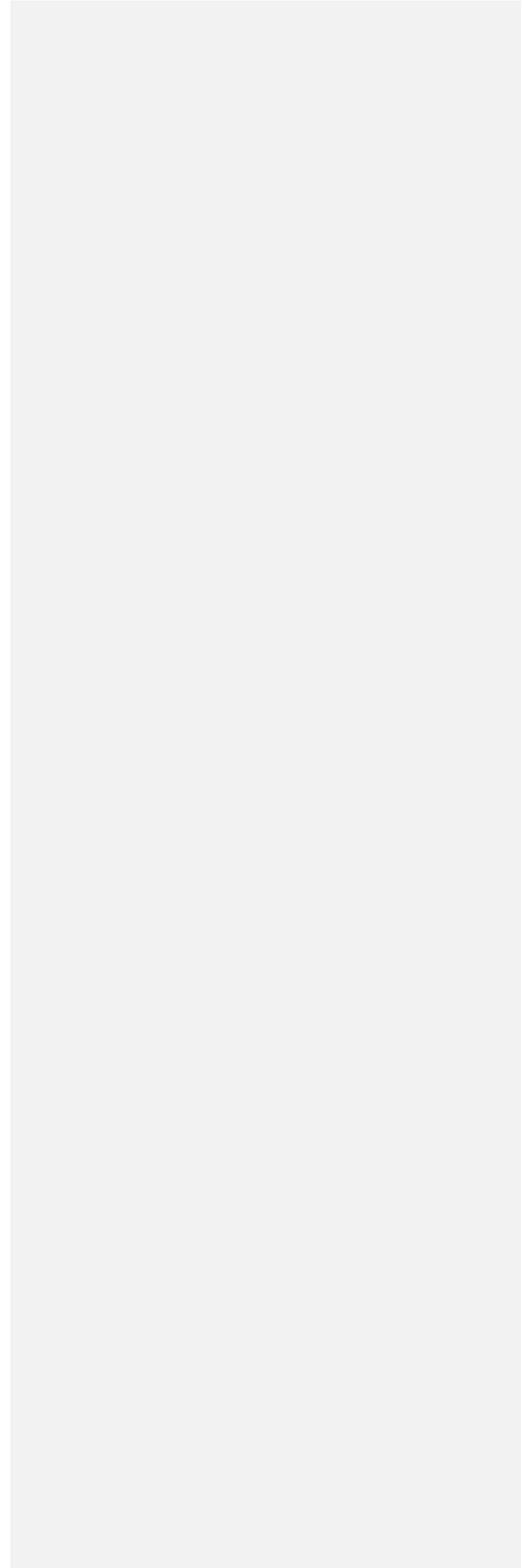
Source: Wikipedia Commons User Daniel Case

There are numerous ponds and other surface water bodies in the Town. The three most notable are located directly east of Stissing Mountain: Thompson Pond, Stissing Pond, and Mud Pond. All three areas are circumneutral bog lakes, which are rare in the Hudson Valley, and were formed by melting glaciers approximately 15,000 years ago. Thompson Pond was listed as a National Natural Landmark in 1973. Wetlands, which are also referred to as swamps, marshes, and bogs, are areas that are saturated by surface or groundwater enough to support distinctive vegetation which has adapted to those conditions.

The Town's streams, ponds, and wetlands are critical to the health of the Town's natural resources. They provide wildlife habitat, replenish the groundwater supply, and help protect the Town from floods. Streams and wetlands are protected by federal, state, and local regulations. In Pine Plains, the Planning Board reviews actions that require site plan, special use permit, or subdivision approval. In their review authority, the Planning Board prohibits any excavation, filling, clearing, or other disturbances that would negatively impact a stream. The Planning Board also encourages the preservation of streams, surface water, and wetlands through design standards for subdivision applications.

Figure 2: Water Resources and Floodplains

INSERT Figure 2: WATER FEATURES AND Floodplains



Floodplains

The parts of Pine Plains that are most susceptible to flooding are generally located in low-lying areas near streams, ponds, or wetlands. The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) maps these areas and rates them on the percent chance that a flood event will occur each year. A “100-year flood” is a flood that has a 1 percent chance of occurring each year. Figure 2 shows the locations of the 100-year floodplains as currently identified by FEMA. FEMA has not done detailed studies to map all of the floodplains in Pine Plains. The locations of floodplains can change over time, and actions that disturb floodplains in the Town or further upstream may cause flood hazards to increase. Floodplains full of natural vegetation and limited impervious surface can help mitigate the risk of flood hazards.

Topography and Drainage

The topography in Pine Plains varies between steep terrain of Stissing Mountain, the relatively flat valley around Pine Plains Hamlet, and the rolling hills in the eastern portion of Town. Figure 3 shows that roughly one-third of the Town consists of steep slopes, which are areas that have a gradient of 15 percent or higher.

Stissing Mountain is a large ridgeline that runs south from Church Street/Route 199 into the Town of Stanford. The area west of Stissing Mountain has hilly terrain, much of which qualifies as steep slopes. The area east of Stissing Mountain is relatively flat, making it suitable for residential and agricultural uses. The topography in the eastern portion of the Town also features steep slopes, but they are more spread out than the area west of Stissing Mountain, making the area suitable for agriculture. The cost of developing on steep slopes is greater than developing on flat land, and developing on very steep slopes can be dangerous. Preserving steep slopes benefits water quality because vegetation slows down stormwater helping reduce erosion and allowing water to absorb it into the soil.



Stissing Mountain from Mashomack Polo Grounds
Source: Dyan Wapnick, Inphs.com

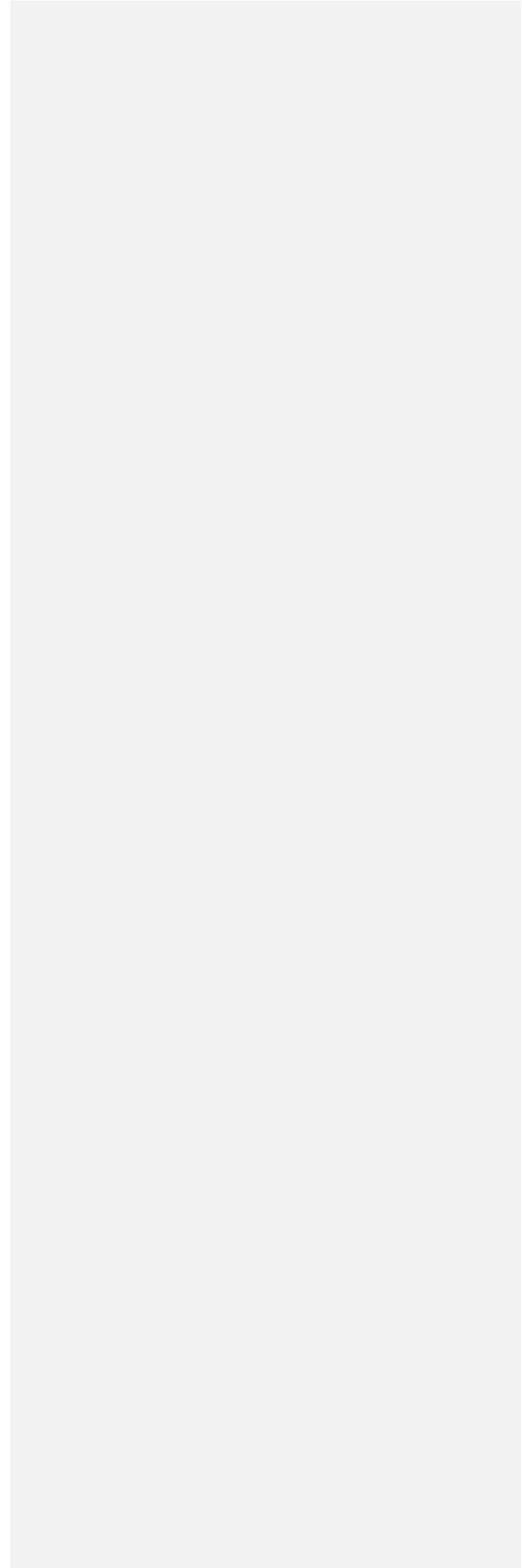
The vast majority of Pine Plains is located in the Hudson River watershed; however, the southeastern corner of the Town is in the Housatonic River watershed. These two watersheds contain smaller sub-watersheds that cover areas where water travels into local streams. There are three of these smaller watersheds in Pine Plains: the Roeliff-Jansen Kill, Tenmile River, and Wappingers Creek.

Soils

Soils are important to Pine Plains for two main reasons: agriculture and septic systems. Roughly one-fifth of Pine Plains is covered by prime agricultural soils, which according to the U.S. Natural Resource Conservation Service are soils that are best suited to a wide variety of crops. Agricultural soils are also easily developed and are vulnerable to permanent loss. The zoning code’s Agricultural Overlay district helps preserve productive soils by requiring that properties developed as conservation subdivisions set aside 50 percent of the land as permanent open space.

Insert Figure 11: Steep Slopes

Figure 3: Steep Slopes



Soil permeability is the measure of how quickly water flows through layers of soil. Pine Plains does not have a municipal sewer system, so sanitary waste is treated via septic systems. Septic systems require good drainage and their locations can be restricted by local soil conditions and topography. Septic systems are less costly in areas with deep and permeable soils. In Pine Plains, these areas are in the flatter, central area of the Town. In addition to cost, the density of septic systems in areas not served by central water can be limited by the principles of wastewater dilution through precipitation recharge of aquifers.

Protected Lands

Approximately 29 percent (5,852 acres) of the land area in Pine Plains (19,922 acres) is protected through easements or ownership. These conservation areas include a range of land types including farms, municipal parks, and other open spaces. These conservation lands are protected through easements by seven different organizations: Dutchess Land Conservancy, the Town of Pine Plains, New York State, Dutchess County Partnership for Manageable Growth, The Nature Conservancy, Friends of Stissing Landmarks, and Winnakee Land Trust. Figure 4 illustrates the parcel locations and identifies each of the protectors. Table 1 shows the amount of land area protected by each of the conservation organizations. Approximately 73 percent of the conservation land in Pine Plains is secured by the Dutchess Land Conservancy (DLC). Properties that have been conserved through DLC easements include the Mashomack Preserve Club, Black Sheep Hill Farm, and Folly Farm. The Dutchess County Partnership for Manageable Growth is the protector for ten percent of all conserved lands in the Town and The Nature Conservancy protects nine percent of the conserved lands.

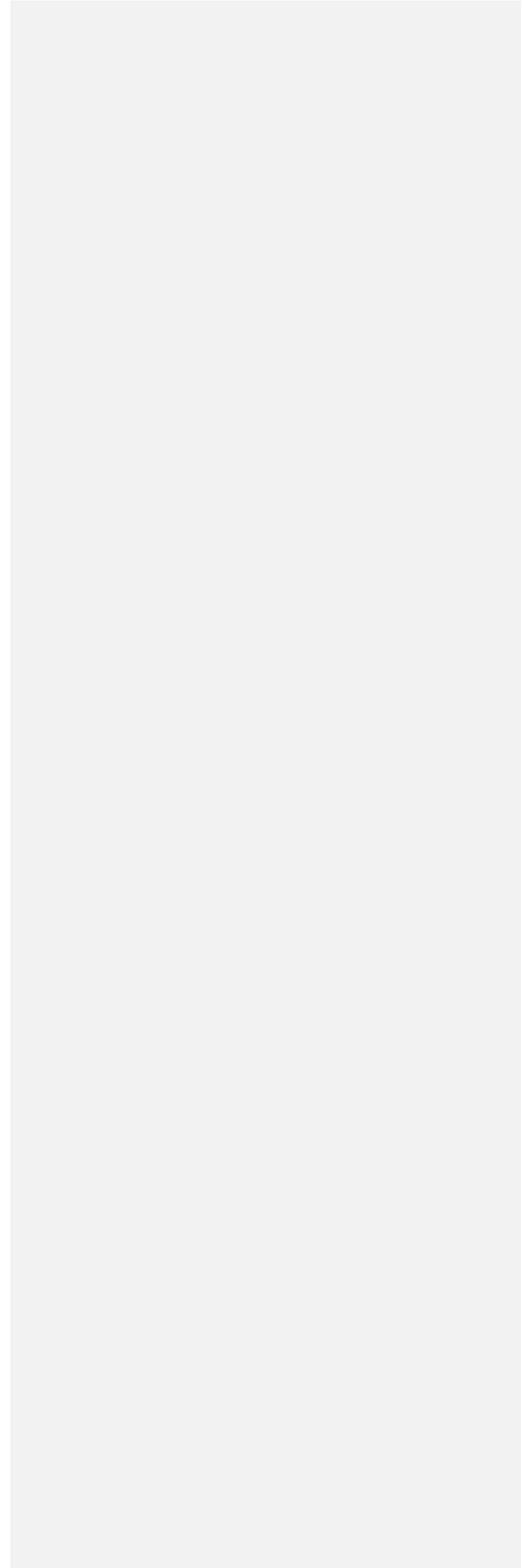
Table 1: Conservation Lands

Conservation Sponsor	Acres	Percentage
Dutchess Land Conservancy	4,279.52	72.6%
Partnership for Manageable Growth	608.43	10.3%
The Nature Conservancy	510.29	8.7%
New York State	363.35	6.2%
Municipal Government (Town of Pine Plains)	49.17	0.8%
Friends of Stissing Landmarks	43.3	0.7%
Winnakee Land Trust	41.36	0.7%
Total Conservation Lands	5,895.33	100.0%

Source: Dutchess County

Figure 4: Protected Lands

Figure 12: Protected Lands



Issues

Stissing Mountain is a unique geologic feature and a symbol of Pine Plains and the Hudson Valley. It should be preserved along with the other unique and high-quality habitats that were identified by Hudsonia in their report for Pine Plains. Preserving wildlife habitats is an important way for the Town to preserve wildlife diversity. Additionally, the Town should continue to support and promote the conservation efforts of nonprofits, conservancies, and government.

The Pine Plains zoning code currently promotes development that is sensitive to natural features. The Town should continuously review the code to ensure important resources such as ridgelines and steep slopes are protected. Pine Plains should continue to balance conservation and development in a manner that protects ~~the~~ wildlife and natural resources. Encouraging development in the suitable areas in the Hamlets helps the Town keep its rural charm in addition to preserving land cover which helps prevent erosion and reduce the impacts from flooding.

Pine Plains may need to examine the extent and impact of conservation easements in the Town in order to determine whether this strategy for conserving land should be expanded in the future. This could include studying whether there are any positive or negative economic impacts of the conservation easements.

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The Comprehensive Plan Update Survey and other public engagement efforts revealed that residents of Pine Plains believe there is a need for affordable housing for both renters and homeowners in the Town. Census data shows that Pine Plains has a higher percentage of single-family detached homes and a higher rate of homeownership than Dutchess County. Pine Plains also has a much higher percentage of homes that are for seasonal use by people who claim their primary residence elsewhere.

Pine Plains is a rural community, and mid-rise or high-rise multifamily housing will likely not be a reality. Moderate-sized, attached single-family homes are being explored by the Columbia County Habitat for Humanity as an option for workforce housing in rural communities. The Pine Plains zoning code also allows for the construction of accessory dwelling units, which could provide additional rental units for Town residents. Survey respondents indicated that affordable housing was needed in the residential areas of Pine Plains Hamlet.

A recent development in housing is the use of short-term rentals (e.g. Air BnB). The Town should monitor this to see if the use of short term rentals becomes a problem. If so there are a number of methods to control short term rentals, such as requiring the "host" to own the home with the listing and limiting the number of nights a home can be used for short term rentals.

Agriculture is still very important to the Pine Plains economy, but the business of agriculture has changed. Technology and other market factors have led to the consolidation of small farms, and others have been developed for residential use. Farming is still important to the economy and identity of Pine Plains. The Town has many active fruit and vegetable, dairy, and horse farms, which sell their products in the traditional sense but are also exploring agritourism as another revenue stream.

Issues

Town Hall is currently located outside of the Hamlet center and is too small to fulfill its function as local government offices and community meeting space. The temporary building that serves as the rear annex is nearing the end of its life span. Comprehensive Plan Update Survey respondents indicated that they would like to see Town Hall in the center of Pine Plains Hamlet, but some respondents did not want it moved in the place of existing businesses.

There may be a possibility of creating a campus-like area in Pine Plains Hamlet by connecting the Pine Plains Free Library, the Stissing Center, and the Catholic Church property. The Town should consider a specific study of this possibility.

Local Roads

The local roads in Pine Plains are any public road that is not maintained by New York State or Dutchess County. The Town of Pine Plains Highway Department is responsible for resurfacing and repairing these routes and clearing them of snow. In a rural community like Pine Plains, New York State does not track the Average Annual Daily Traffic for local roads, but in a rural community like Pine Plains, it is not expected to be very high.

Previous Planning Efforts

The following plans are discussed in order to show the good work that has been done by the Town of Pine Plains and the Poughkeepsie-Dutchess County Transportation Council. These plans provide relevant concepts that are compatible with the vision and goals of this Comprehensive Plan Update. The purpose of these plans is not to mandate specific designs but to capture design ideas for the future. However, portions of these plans may now be out of date, and other parts of the plans may need to be reconsidered.

Moving Dutchess 2

Moving Dutchess 2 was created by the ~~Poughkeepsie~~-Dutchess County Transportation Council and is the long-range transportation plan for Dutchess County. The Plan was approved in 2016 and will be updated every five years. The goals of the Moving Dutchess 2 include improving road safety, reducing traffic congestion, and maintaining transportation infrastructure. Additional goals

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include increasing public transit use, promoting walking and bicycling, and reducing the environmental impacts associated with transportation.

Moving Dutchess 2 includes goals that pertain to pedestrian and roadway infrastructure in Pine Plains. The plan has identified 14 pedestrian improvement projects, 3 bicycle and multi-use trail opportunities in the Town. The plan also identified Route 199, and two bridges on North Main Street as priorities for maintenance.

Pine Plains [Town Center Pedestrian Center Plan](#)

The Pine Plains Town Center Pedestrian Plan was ~~created~~[published](#) by the Poughkeepsie-Dutchess County Transportation Council¹ and was adopted in 2014. It includes a discussion of the Pine Plains 2004 Comprehensive Plan, existing zoning regulations, and an inventory of sidewalk conditions in the Town. The planning process included a survey and public workshop and resulted in a three-phase sidewalk improvement strategy and policy recommendations.

Bus Service

Dutchess County [Public Transit](#) bus service serves the Villages of Rhinebeck and Red Hook but no bus routes currently Pine Plains or the neighboring Towns. Dutchess County does have Flex bus service, which is aimed at helping people who live in the more rural parts of the county. Once residents of Pine Plains are registered with Dutchess County they can request rides to and from anywhere in the county between the hours of 9:15 am and 1:15 pm Monday through Friday. The North East Community Center also operates a free dial-a-ride transit service that residents of Pine Plains, Millerton, Stanford, Millbrook, Amenia, and Dover to any destination in Dutchess County or to a hospital in Sharon, Connecticut. Reservations for this service must be made at least three days in advance.

Pedestrian and Bicycle Facilities

Pedestrian Facilities

Pine Plains Hamlet is a traditional hamlet center that features a mix of uses in close proximity to each other, which creates an environment that is very friendly to walkers. The Poughkeepsie Dutchess County Transportation Council published the Pine Plains Pedestrian Center Plan in 2014, which included an inventory of sidewalk facilities in the Town. There are sidewalks along Main Street and Church Street, and on some smaller connecting roads in residential areas, as shown in **Error! Reference source not found.** The Plan stated that approximately 85 percent of the sidewalks in Pine Plains were in ["Excellent or Good"](#) condition, and 13 percent were in ["Fair condition"](#).

¹ [The Poughkeepsie-Dutchess County Transportation Council is now the Dutchess County Transportation Council.](#)

Land Use and Zoning

Goal 1. Update the Comprehensive Plan every 10 years.

The Town of Pine Plains has worked very hard to improve Town services and overall communication within the Town. The Town should continue these efforts by updating the Comprehensive Plan every 10 years. This allows the Town to review policies and other municipal documents to ensure they are relevant for the conditions of that decade.

Housing

Goal 2. Promote affordable and workforce housing options that benefit all ages and income levels.

Pine Plains, like other neighboring rural communities, does not have enough affordable housing options for its residents. The Town can promote affordable housing and make sure that local regulations are receptive to housing opportunities.

Strategies

- Explore opportunities for affordable housing options including vacant parcels and adaptive reuse.
- Review the zoning code to ensure it allows various types of affordable housing that would be consistent with the development patterns in Pine Plains and other nearby rural communities, such as the attached single-family homes proposed by Columbia County Habitat for Humanity.
- Review regulations and pursue programs that balance housing opportunities for both renters and homeowners.
- Encourage the construction of accessory dwelling units to increase the number of rental units in Pine Plains.
- Site affordable housing options in the Hamlet areas to improve access to Town resources and to conserve farmland and open space.
- The New Neighborhood Development (NND) zone should be reviewed to ensure it includes adequate provisions for affordable housing and for land conservation.

Communication

Goal 3. Pine Plains Community

There is a perceived split in the community between second homeowners and local residents. Maintaining effective communication is also posing an increasing challenge in a community with without a local newspaper.

Strategies

- The Town should continue to pursue strategies for bridging the divide between second homeowners and local residents. Existing economic impacts and potential future economic impacts of this divide might be identified in a future study. That study would determine whether the Town should be trying to attract additional second homeowners or should be attempting to attract more permanent residents to the Town.
- The Town should continue to enhance communication by building upon the existing strategies of using the Town website and emails from the Supervisor.

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Goal 3, Goal 4.

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The ~~Conservation Development area~~dotted line on **Error! Reference source not found.** ~~indicates reflects~~ the location of a current application that is before the Pine Plains Town Board and Planning Board. Although this area is shown ~~as the Conservation Development area in on~~ the Future Land Use Plan, the Town of Pine Plains **will not** consider rezoning any area of this property until after a full Environmental Impact Statement is complete and separate public hearings have occurred. Any development in this area should pay particular attention to natural resource conservation and be designed to link new residents and visitors with the hamlet center of Pine Plains to support the existing businesses, services, and infrastructure.

<u>Study the potential for linking the Stissing Center and the Pine Plains Free Library via the Catholic Church property.</u>	<u>Chapter 8: Community Facilities, Infrastructure, Cultural Resources, and Recreation</u>	<u>Planning Board Study</u>	<u>Medium</u>
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