

Introduction

Comprehensive Plan Board:
Jesse Feiler, Chair
Nancy Brousseau, Vice-Chair
Robin Andrews
Carol Friedman
Tom Hotalen
Hattie Johnson

Village Board Liaison:
Brian Johnson

Consultant:
F. Steven Kirk, DBS Planning

Secretary:
Peggy Alt



In July 2000, the Philmont Village Board launched the process of preparing a comprehensive plan. This document summarizes that process.

Initially, a committee was established to oversee the process. Late in 2000, the Village Board reconstituted that committee as a special board under New York State law.

With grants from the Governor's Office for Small Cities and the Hudson River Valley Greenway, the Comprehensive Plan Board hired F. Steven Kirk of DBS Planning as a consultant to assist in the process. Those grants also provided funding for a series of public meetings, newsletters sent to all Philmont residents, and the preparation of this document.

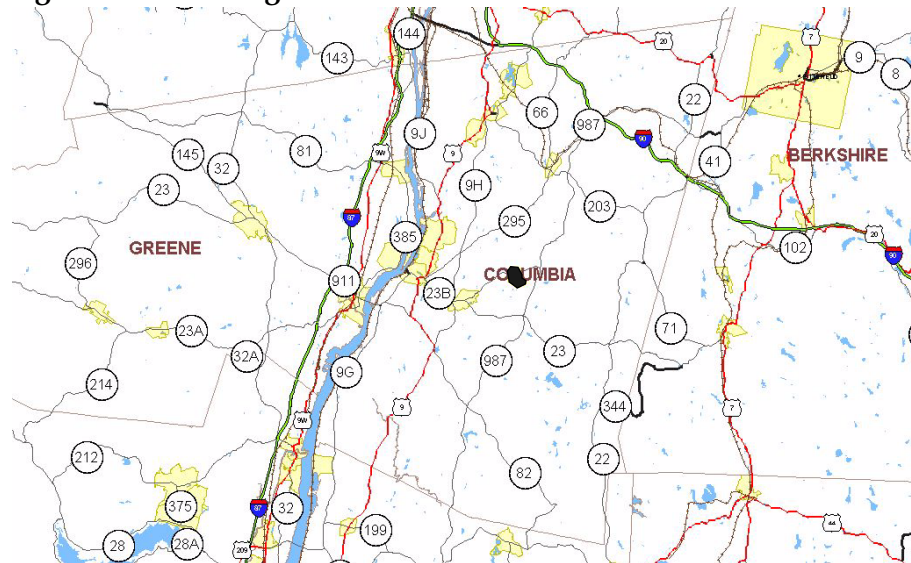
Introduction to Philmont

This document provides a detailed look at the Village of Philmont as it is today, as it was in the past, and as it could be in the future. Here is a very brief overview: it will be elaborated on throughout this document.

Location

Philmont is located in the center of Columbia County; it is an incorporated village in the Town of Claverack. Its Main Street is State Highway 217; other major streets lead out in the direction of Martindale and Hillsdale (Summit Street) and towards Chatham and Ghent (Maple Avenue).

Figure 1: The Village of Philmont



History

Philmont was first settled in the early 19th century. Known then as Factory Hill, the falls of the Ockawamick Creek powered many mills. Early on, the Village attracted attention—not all of it positive.

Mid-Nineteenth Century In 1842, Charles Dickens passed through and wrote in his *American Notes*¹:

The country through which the road meandered, was rich and beautiful; the weather very fine; and for many miles the Katskill mountains, where Rip Van Winkle and the ghastly Dutchmen played at ninepins one memorable gusty afternoon, towered in the blue distance, like stately clouds. At one point, as we ascended a steep hill, athwart whose base a railroad, yet constructing, took its course, we came upon an Irish colony. With means at hand of building decent cabins, it was wonderful to see how clumsy, rough, and wretched, its hovels were. The best were poor protection from the weather; the worst let in the wind and rain through wide breaches in the roofs of sodden grass, and in the walls of mud; some had neither door nor window; some had nearly fallen down, and were imperfectly propped up by stakes and poles; all were ruinous and filthy. Hideously ugly old women and very buxom young ones, pigs, dogs, men, children, babies, pots, kettles, dunghills, vile refuse, rank straw, and standing water, all wallowing together in an inseparable heap, composed the furniture of every dark and dirty hut.

The railroad that Dickens described was the Harlem Railroad which, in 1852, linked Philmont and its mills to markets throughout the country (and later abroad). Philmont prospered, and its mills hummed day and night.

Early Twentieth Century Philmont was similar to many small northeastern manufacturing centers: its mills were originally powered by waterfalls, and they attracted immigrants and rural residents to work in them. Railroads linked the mills to commercial centers. Unfinished goods came in, and finished goods went out. Salesmen travelled back and forth. Among Philmont's amenities were no fewer than three hotels; centrally located, Richardson's Hotel on Main Street was one of these. Figure 2 shows Richardson's Hotel in the 1930s.

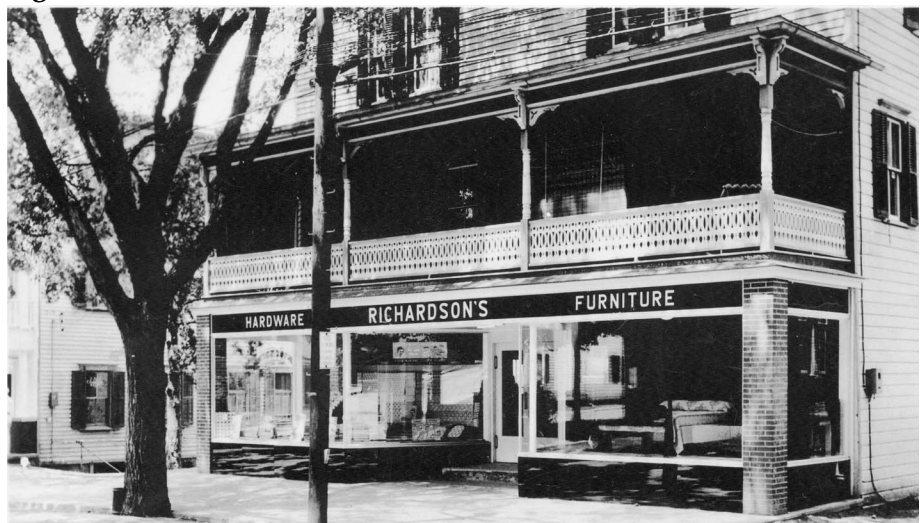
1. *American Notes for General Circulation*, Charles Dickens. Penguin Books, 1972, page 256. Although not identified by name in the book (Philmont as yet had no formal name), the description of the location matches that of Philmont and no other community in the area between Hudson and New Lebanon (between which Dickens was traveling).

Figure 2: Richardson's Hotel in the 1930s



Next door, a hardware and furniture store was also owned by Richardson. It is shown in Figure 3, also in a photo from the 1930s.

Figure 3: Richardson's Store in the 1930s



This prosperity continued well into the 20th century. However, as with many other communities, some ominous clouds were on the horizon. The conversion of manufacturing from water power to electricity decreased the value of a location near a waterfall; that, in turn, allowed mills to be built near sources of cheaper labor. And, the railroads that were so essential for commerce also allowed outward mobility.

Late Twentieth Century In a relatively brief period of time after World War II, the mills in Philmont (and many other northeastern communities) closed. Richardson's Hotel closed, as did the store. Many people

left the Village for other opportunities. Dickens’s words seemed once again to describe the Village.

Whether or not Philmont had deteriorated too far to recover was an open question. Figure 4 shows Richardson’s Hotel in 1997.

Figure 4: Richardson’s Hotel in 1997



Next door, the store had closed. Figure 5 shows the building in 1997.

Figure 5: Richardson’s Store in 1997



Nevertheless, Philmont’s central location in the county, its proximity to the Taconic State Parkway and to Amtrak in Hudson, its infrastructure (water, sewer, street lights, library, garbage collection, and so forth), its small town atmosphere, and its buildings that were ripe for repair and renovation kept many residents in the Village and attracted newcomers.

A variety of people bought and fixed up fine Victorian homes. Housing Resources of Columbia County sponsored the conversion of an old mill on Rock Street into apartments and a Head Start center, and by the renovation of the Richardson properties into Richardson Hall—24 units of subsidized senior citizen housing. Richardson Hall is shown in Figures 6 and 7 as it was in 2001.

Figure 6: Richardson Hall in 2001/Former Hotel



Figure 7: Richardson Hall in 2001/Former Store



Twenty-First Century The changes in the Village are noticeable to even the most casual observer. At such a time in its history, the development of a comprehensive plan for future growth is more essential than ever.

What Is a Comprehensive Plan?

A comprehensive plan is developed by a local government to set guidelines for the growth and development of the community. Its components are suggested by New York State law. These components include

general guidelines and objectives for growth and development as well as specific steps that can be taken to implement the plan. Zoning laws and other municipal ordinances must conform to the comprehensive plan.

A comprehensive plan is designed to be updated on a periodic basis as circumstances change. Once adopted, however, its guidelines and recommendations remain in force until such a change occurs.

Members of the Comprehensive Plan Board

Jesse Feiler, Chair

Jesse Feiler moved to the Village in 1989. He is a software developer and author of a number of books on technology. His clients have included New York State Department of Health, Apple Computer, Prodigy, and the Federal Reserve Bank of New York. In the Village, he is founder of the Main Street Committee, and he has been a member of the Library Board and is a member of the Zoning Board of Appeals.

Nancy Brousseau, Vice-Chair

Nancy Brousseau moved to the Village from New Hampshire in the mid 1960s. A distinguished teacher, she also has been involved in many Village activities. Her husband, Al, and their now-grown children continue to participate in local civic, church, and school activities. The family tradition of raising sheep is still being carried on by some of their grandchildren. Nancy is a member of the Philmont Fire Company Auxiliary and is currently chair of the Zoning Board of Appeals.

Robin Andrews

Robin Andrews works out of her Philmont home as a consultant helping individuals and organizations meet their business and financial objectives. She moved to Philmont in 1999. She is Chair of the Philmont Main Street Committee, on the board of the Lively Arts at Christ Church as Treasurer, a Philmont library volunteer and a member of the choir at Christ Church Episcopal in Hudson.

Carol Friedman

I have considered Philmont my home since 1992. I have served on the Philmont Planning Board for 8 years. I work for the State of New York

licensing homes for mentally disabled people. I live with my husband, William Mazzali. Since I grew up around New York City, I didn't really understand how great living in a small village could be.

Tom Hotalen

Born Wellsboro, PA. Graduate of Mansfield University of PA (then Mansfield State College) with a B.S. in Secondary Education in Mathematics. Graduate of Bucknell University with an M.S. in theoretical mathematics. Additional graduate study at SUNY Plattsburgh, Colgate University, University of Hartford, and Manhattan College. Taught high school mathematics for 32 years in the Taconic Hills Central School District, retiring after 32 years of instruction.

Past associations: Taconic Hills PTA (treasurer, 2 years), Philmont Public Library (trustee and treasurer, 11 years), Hudson Valley Choral Society (treasurer, 6 years, grants writer and executor, 2 years). Present associations: Reformed Dutch Church of Claverack (20 years, sing baritone with the church choir), Association of Mathematics Teachers of New York State, Philmont Comprehensive Board member. Resident of Philmont since 1973. Married 33 years, one son.

Hattie Johnson

I was born in Copake, NY and moved to Philmont when I was 2 years old. I have been a resident of Philmont and Mellenville for 83 years where I raised three sons: Ronald, who is deceased, and Ralph and John. I have been a member of the Methodist Church for 76 years, and a member of the Philmont Fire Auxiliary for 46 years, more than 25 years as president.

Other memberships include Community Day for 3 years, Republican Club for over 10 years, the Town of Claverack Senior Citizens since 1972 (as group leader for trips for 20 years+), Chairperson for the United Methodist Church Fair and Auction for at least 10 years, Co-chairperson for the 100 Years of the Village Store for the Centennial, President of the United Methodist Women for over 20 years, and currently on the Philmont Comprehensive Planning Board. I also attended Philmont Union School and obtained my GED diploma when I was 65 years of age.

Other Comprehensive Plan Board Participants

Brian T. Johnson

A life-long resident of Columbia Avenue, Philmont. A member of the Philmont Village Board. A former member of the Philmont Planning Board. Liaison between Comprehensive Plan Board and the Village Board. A 19 year member of the Philmont Rod and Gun Club. I am a proud resident of Philmont and plan to raise my family in the Village. I am looking forward to contributing to the future growth of the Village.

F. Steven Kirk

F. Steven Kirk was born and raised in Plattsburgh, New York. After graduation from Plattsburgh High School, Mr. Kirk attended the University of Buffalo, graduating with a bachelors degree in Environmental Design and Planning in 1981. Mr. Kirk began his planning career as a City Planner for the City of Utica. In 1994, Mr. Kirk moved to the private sector, taking a position with Kestner Engineers of Troy, New York as the Director of the Division of Planning Community Development.

In 1987, Mr. Kirk incorporated DBS Planning Consultants, Inc., a community development consulting firm. Mr. Kirk still serves as president of the corporation. Mr. Kirk currently resides in Valley Falls, New York with his wife Mavis and two children, Bryce and Mackenzie.

Peggy Alt

I was born and raised in Brooklyn, lived in Philmont since 1984. I have worked in the family planning field on and off for 20 years, and am now Director of the Philmont Public Library. My family consists of two teenagers, Zac and Jess Cropper-Alt; spouse Doug Cropper, a high school technology teacher; and four unemployed cats.

The Public

Members of the public participated in the development of the Comprehensive Plan by attending a number of meetings over a period of two years and by completing the surveys that form the basis of much of the opinion research in this document.

Major Findings

The primary sources for the data we used in the planning process have been the 2000 Census and a building condition survey conducted by DBS Planning. In addition, information about business registrations has been collected from various sources. Finally, the Comprehensive Plan Board conducted a survey of Philmont residents to get their opinions about the community.

Census 2000

The 2000 Census provides a great deal of demographic and housing data for Philmont. In addition, data with regard to economic, social, and housing characteristics that was collected during the census is currently being tabulated.

Population The population of Philmont is 1,480. This is a decline of 10% from 1990, and it represents a very substantial decline from some periods in the past.

Buildings The number of buildings in the Village has remained relatively stable over time, and it is likely that the decline in population is attributable largely to the decline in family size (fewer people living in the same number of houses).

Age The population is young, with approximately 30% under the age of 18, and a median age of 34.7. (This is substantially younger than surrounding areas.)

Home Ownership Households are almost exactly divided between owners and renters. This is in sharp contrast to the county as a whole in which 70% of households are owners.

Households Residents live in a total of 576 households, with an average of 2.55 people per household. (This is almost exactly the national average.)

36.8% of households have children under 18; 27.3% have people 65 and over. Furthermore, there are 170 (29.5%) households consisting of one individual. (This last is higher than the national average.)

Households are bigger on average than in the county or the country as a whole; at the same time, there are more single-person households in Philmont. Taken together, the statistics suggest a village with many families containing young children as well as many older people living

alone. This is typical of small communities like Philmont: it is suburban areas that tend to have the most homogeneous types of households.

Building Condition Survey

The building condition survey, conducted by DBS Planning as part of this project, examined every building in the Village according to standard criteria used by the Department of Housing and Urban Development. The standards and their definitions are:

Dilapidated These buildings do not provide safe and adequate shelter. They are uninhabitable.

Severely Substandard This category includes buildings that are not dilapidated but do not have heat, electricity, or plumbing.

Substandard Buildings with one or more structural defects that can be repaired for a reasonable amount.

Standard This category includes buildings that are “decent, safe, sanitary, and in good repair” according to the Department of Housing and Urban Development. They may need improvement and maintenance, and some may be in better condition than other.

The results are shown in Table 1. Overall, the condition of the buildings in Philmont is good. The building-by-building survey indicates that there are some sections of the Village with clusters of substandard buildings.

Table 1: Building Conditions

LOCATION	NUMBER
Dilapidated	4
Severely Substandard	1
Substandard	85
Standard	364
TOTAL	454

Thanks in part to the recent HUD grant obtained by Housing Resources of Columbia County (\$400,000), a number of buildings in the Village have recently been improved.

There is a fairly widespread impression that the buildings in Philmont are in poor condition. However, it is not backed up by the data.

Businesses in Philmont

To date, we have identified over 90 businesses in Philmont. They are split roughly into three equal-sized groups when looked at by location as shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Location of Businesses in Philmont

LOCATION	NUMBER
Main Street (Route 217)	29
Off Main Street	21
Home-Based	41
TOTAL	91

There is a wide variety of types of businesses in Philmont, as is shown in Table 3.

Table 3: Types of Businesses

TYPE	NUMBER
Professional Services	12
Arts & Crafts	11
Contractors	10
Public Service	8
Auto & Transportation	7
Agriculture	5
Personal Services	5
Religious Organizations	5
Restaurant/Bar	5
Social Services	5
Performing Arts	4
Utilities	3
Elder Care/Housing	2
Food/Liquor Stores	2
Gas/Convenience	2
Health Services	2
Social Club	2

Table 3: Types of Businesses (Continued)

TYPE	NUMBER
Manufacturing	1
Retail	0
TOTAL	91

Opinion Surveys

The Comprehensive Plan Board met many times to discuss the survey that was mailed out to all Village residents in July. Our goal was to collect the most useful set of data available to find out what people think about life in Philmont. We deliberately omitted questions that we thought would discourage people from responding (income, for example).

Surveys were mailed to all Philmont post office box holders. In addition, representatives of DBS Planning as well as a number of surveyors hired by the Comprehensive Plan Board attempted to knock on each door in the Village to make certain that the survey had been completed and, if not, to complete it.

The results exceeded our expectations. Just under 200 surveys were returned. Compared to other communities, this is an extremely high return rate.

We would like to thank everyone who has taken the time to provide us with survey information.

Who Participated Although we did not ask detailed demographic data questions, we can compare some of the Census 2000 data to the demographic questions that were on our survey.

Our 200 surveys accounted for 564 people (based on the responses to the question about how many people live in a household). This suggests that over a third of the Village's residents are covered.

The most serious discrepancy is in the owners and renters: 130 of our survey respondents were owners, and 52 were renters. Since the breakdown is approximately 50/50 in the Village, this means that renters were under-represented in our survey.

Long-time residents comprised the largest group—111.

Consensus Opinions About Philmont The opinions expressed on the surveys were remarkably clear. While there are certainly many questions

about which people have mixed opinions, on other questions, there is strong agreement.

Businesses Philmont Needs On the question of whether Philmont has enough or needs more of various types of businesses, here's what we found.

- Convenience stores. 89% of people surveyed said there were enough convenience stores in the Village, while only 11% said we needed more.
- Other retail. 79% thought we needed more other types of retail stores, and 21% thought we had enough.
- Smaller but still significant proportions suggested we needed more food and restaurants (67%/33%) and more manufacturing (65%/35%).

Advantages and Disadvantages of Philmont When it comes to advantages and disadvantages of Philmont, there also are clear opinions in some areas. The most significant advantages were

- Ease of getting to Philmont (92%)
- Small town life (91%)
- Ease of getting around Philmont (90%)
- Schools (89%)
- Friendliness (85%)
- Convenience (82%)

Disadvantages were less sharply marked:

- Choice of shopping/ services (66%)
- Appearance (53%)
- Cleanliness (50%)
- Parking (50%)

Village Services It is interesting—and encouraging—that the positive aspects of Philmont are so much more strongly appreciated than negative ones. This pattern recurs in the ratings of Village services. The ones at the top of the list are rated Good by large numbers of people:

- Fire Protection/Rescue (89%)
- Library (89%)

At the bottom of the list, those rated Fair or Poor (combined) are:

- Reservoir/Lake (75%)
- Youth programs (87%)

Improving Philmont When it comes to improving Philmont, there also was a wide diversity. The top four suggestions were

- Increasing personal service businesses (81%)
- Rehabilitate storefronts (74%)
- Increase the number of smaller, speciality shops (64%)
- Increase recreational opportunities (63%)

Concerns of Property Owners In the questions addressed to property owners, we also saw patterns.

- Water/sewer costs were seen more as a problem than as a benefit (65%/35%).
- Insurance costs were seen more as a benefit than a problem (69%/31%).
- The condition of surrounding buildings was seen as a problem more than as a benefit (70%/30%).

Perhaps the most interesting statistic of all regarded plans for the property over the next year. 93% do not intend to sell their property, and only 1 out of 120 property owners intends to change its use. But 57% of respondents said they intend to improve their property in the next year.

Basic Conclusions

The findings outlined in the previous section—along with informal anecdotal reports and observations—suggest three basic conclusions:

1. Most people in Philmont like the Village
2. There are severe misperceptions about the Village—both within the Village and outside it.
3. Most home owners expect to stay in the Village. When asked how it could be improved, their suggestions indicate that they do believe improvement is possible.

People Like Philmont

Positive rankings (advantage vs. disadvantage, for instance) are uniformly higher than negative rankings.

Perceptions Don't Match Research Gathered

This is the common theme that runs through everything that we've found. Partly for this reason, we have included much of our background research in this document even if it does not lead to specific recommendations.

Building Conditions A large number of property owners, for example, believe that the condition of surrounding buildings is a problem (70% / 30%). Further, the appearance of the Village in general was seen as an advantage by only 47% vs. 53% who saw it as a disadvantage.

Yet, the building condition survey shows remarkably good condition of the buildings in Philmont. This suggests two underlying issues:

1. The condition of many buildings in Philmont may be structurally sound, but they can benefit from improvements that are relatively easy to make.
2. Some of the buildings in Philmont don't look good. If you combine the information that small town life is attractive, that we have enough convenience stores, and that we need more smaller, specialty stores, perhaps the look of some of the Main Street stores with big blacktopped parking lots in front is troubling to people. (This result has been found in many other communities.)

Fortunately, both of these issues are amenable to relatively easy changes.

What the Village Can and Can't Do The expectations of what the Village can do are often at odds with reality. This is true on both sides: people sometimes think the Village can do things that it cannot, yet the Board sometimes does not understand what people expect of it.

People Want to Stay in and Improve Philmont

People want access to the reservoir; they want new personal service and smaller specialty stores; and they want more manufacturing. In our research into businesses in Philmont, we have discovered a large number of crafts/light manufacturing businesses that are relatively unknown.

Chief Recommendations

Recommendations are found throughout this document. Three overarching recommendations are presented here.

Update and Implement the Plan

A Comprehensive Plan needs continual review and revision to adjust to changing conditions. In addition, there needs to be a continuing assessment of compliance with the Plan and with its implementation.

Accordingly, the Comprehensive Plan Board makes two recommendations:

RECOMMENDATION Each year, one of the sections of the Comprehensive Plan should be reviewed by a committee appointed by the Village Board. It is not necessary that each section be reviewed in turn: some sections will require more frequent review than others.

RECOMMENDATION The Village Board should issue an annual report at its annual organizational meeting on its compliance with the Comprehensive Plan and indicate the steps it intends to take during that year to implement aspects of the Plan.

Improve Communication

Throughout the process of developing the Comprehensive Plan it became clear that many misperceptions about the Village abound. Communication in the Village demonstrates the advantages—and disadvantages—of small town life (one of the widely acknowledged benefits of living in Philmont).

Communication in the Village can be swift and effective—and also inaccurate. Many people work in the Village, but many others do not. The population of the Village is quite young—and that means that many people are involved not only with jobs but also with raising children. In short, keeping up with what's going on can be difficult. This is one reason why there is a sense (from anecdotal reports) of a core of old timers who are separate from the newcomers. Indeed, many old timers and senior citizens are far more tuned into Village events than are people who are working and raising families.

One step that can be taken to improve communication is embodied in the following recommendations:

RECOMMENDATION Open the Village office one evening or Saturday morning each week.

RECOMMENDATION Provide email addresses for the Village office, and all

elected officials. In that way people can communicate with them at any convenient time.

RECOMMENDATION Post meeting schedules, important documents, meeting minutes, and forms on the Internet. This has been started with the Zoning ordinance which is available at philmont.org

Monitoring email and updating a Web site with information will require a certain amount of time. However, the improvement in communication will be well worth it. Many organizations have discovered that after an initial increase in work during a transition to a more electronic communications mode there is a subsequent decrease in work as mail and telephone communications decrease.

Focus on the Mill District

The Mill District, including Summit Mill, the Reservoir, and the area between Main Street and the Reservoir/Ockawamick Creek includes natural resources, interesting architecture, and buildings that are amenable to multiple uses. This district demonstrates many of the features of Philmont that were rated most positively in the surveys, and it should be enhanced and promoted.

RECOMMENDATION Preserve and promote the Mill District which contains many of the features people like most about Philmont today—and remember fondly from its past.

How the Plan Was Developed

After the formation of the Comprehensive Plan Board in late 2000, the survey was developed during that winter. At the same time, a week of public hearings was held (5 in all) to let people know what the process would be and to gather initial input.

The surveys were completed during the summer of 2001 along with the building condition survey.

Initial results were tabulated, and another week of public hearings was held in December 2001 (3 meetings).

The first draft of the Comprehensive Plan was completed in January 2002, and another series of public hearings (4 in all) was held.

Acknowledgments

Grants

This project was funded by grants from the Governor's Office for Small Cities and by the Hudson River Valley Greenway.

Organizations

Support from the Village of Philmont, particularly Eilene Morris and Kimberly Simmons in the Village office and Michael Schuller at the Waste Water Treatment Plant was critical in producing this report. In addition, Columbia Hudson Partnership, Bernadina Torrey, and Todd Erling made major contributions to the economic development sections.

Individuals

- Joan Harder
- Leo Maisenbacher
- Emilie Haag
- Angela Potts
- Mary Ellen Burger
- Brandon Graziano
- DBS Planning

Production

The comprehensive plan was typeset on Apple Macintosh computers using FrameMaker. It has been printed by ProPrinters with support from the Governor's Office for Small Cities and the Hudson River Valley Greenway.



Village of Philmont Comprehensive Plan

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- Recommendation The Village should repair or replace the current windows with insulated windows in the Village Hall.

- Recommendation A good space use analysis of the Village buildings should be autho-

rized by the village.

Department of Public Works (DPW)4

- Recommendation The village should establish a plan for street paving on a rotating basis.
- Recommendation The village should establish a plan of water line replacement, doing some replacement of older lines every year.

Cleaning the Village5

- Recommendation The Village should review its laws pertaining to property maintenance to make them enforceable; it should then enforce them aggressively.
- Recommendation Sweep the streets more often.
- Recommendation Provide more small receptacles for garbage.
- Recommendation Establish one day/year for a day when volunteers and residents paint/clean/repair/spruce up properties in need of such work. Local contractors might be able to assist with repairs of a minor nature on this day on a volunteer basis.
- Recommendation Provide one day/year for free, large dump/trash disposal with Village pick-up and disposal.
- Recommendation Provide better publicity about the county Hazmat day(s).
- Recommendation It is recommended that the village enact a “pooper scooper” law requiring dog owners to clean up after their dogs when they walk them; the leash law should be enforced.
- Recommendation Create an Adopt-a-Street program.
- Recommendation The Village should work with Mellenville and the Township of Claverack to help with the general appearance of the former Town Garage to render a more attractive alternative to what exists as the “Welcome to Philmont” first impression as one arrives from the west on State Route 217.

Developments6

Zoning6

- Recommendation Institute an administrative fee for building permits issued after construction has been started without appropriate authorization.
- Recommendation Require new construction to meet New York State building standards. This will have the effect of allowing existing trailers to remain in the Village, but it will not allow new ones.
- Recommendation Rezone the area south of the reservoir to fit into the Village better. Varying lot sizes and densities (as is the case throughout the Village) should be implemented; the street pattern should match the types of streets elsewhere in the Village.
- Recommendation Add a report from the Building Inspector to the monthly reports at the

Village Meeting.

Topography7

- Recommendation The large number of stone walls in good condition could be an attraction for tourists.

Architectural Styles8

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Street Layout10

- Recommendation Provide additional space for Memorial Walk trees.

Mills12

- Recommendation Due to their historic significance, the Village should establish a plan to keep the existing mills from being razed.

Main Street12

- Recommendation The village should plant trees on Main Street. This would provide more greenery in an aesthetic way, and would echo to the Main Street of Philmont’s historic past.

- Recommendation The village should pursue a plan to “spruce up” Main Street by requesting that homeowners/landlords paint and/or repair their properties as needed. If the homeowners/landlords are unable to effect the work themselves, then the village should try to obtain grant money for this purpose.

- Recommendation Parking lots in front of businesses are not conducive to walking and window shopping; therefore, the village should require parking in back or, new Main Street buildings. To help with this requirement, the village should waive/reduce requirements for off-street parking to avoid “in-front” parking for ground floor retail uses.

- Recommendation Parking lots should have low hedges/plantings to help break up the linearity of the parking lot and to be more visually pleasing.

Property Ownership13

- Recommendation The Village should notify residents that fixing up their property does not increase their assessment if they paint their structure(s), or if they make similar replacement, e. g., a new set of steps for an old set of steps.

- Recommendation The Village should establish a plan to assist/aid lower income and/or disabled or elderly residents with property upkeep, with possible funding by means of a grant.

- Recommendation The Village can sponsor a photo contest—perhaps as part of Philmont Community Day—highlighting houses and properties throughout the Village that are distinctive.

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Play and Recreation, Present and Future15

- Recommendation The Village should provide more recreational opportunities for teens, including a skateboard park.
- Recommendation The Village should promote itself as being more reflective of its median age of 34.7 years, which is the youngest median age of all Columbia County communities.

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- Recommendation The Village should keep Forest Lake and not sell it.

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- Recommendation The Village should either get and provide safe access to the High Falls viewshed, or it should change its banner symbol of the High Falls, which at present are visible only in photographs or the imagination.

Underground Canal System18

Working in Philmont1

Where Do Philmont Residents Work?2
 Location3

- Recommendation Open the Village office one evening or Saturday morning each week to accommodate people who work outside the Village.

Size of Business3
 Type of Business4
 Large Employers Outside the Village4

- Recommendation Maintain mix of skilled and unskilled labor needs.
- Recommendation Support area businesses in recruitment from Philmont.
- Recommendation Develop and maintain outreach to area employers; monitor their plans and conditions.
- Recommendation Create youth employment resources, matching youth labor with local needs.
- Recommendation Create an internship or mentoring structure with the many “hidden” businesses within Philmont.

Where Are Businesses Located?5
 Main Street Businesses6

- Recommendation Create better merging of the two ends of Main Street encouraging the

use of the current residential area in between the two sections for personal and professional services such as lawyers, accountants, doctors, counselors, etc.

- Recommendation Create zoning restrictions that require new construction to locate parking in the rear.
- Recommendation Review the current Main Street layout to see if additional landscaping is possible. Create zoning to require recommendations to future construction. Support the continued use of planters, hanging plants and banners.
- Recommendation Focus on ensuring empty storefronts still have attractive displays—and encourage an attractive look for all storefronts.
- Recommendation Encourage retail stores or more “invitational” businesses.

Home-Based Businesses8

- Recommendation Continue to support and encourage home-based businesses. Gather input from home-based businesses to see how Philmont can help support them.

Off Main Street8

Mill District8

- Recommendation Change zoning to allow multiple uses on one parcel in the Mill District
- Recommendation Create a list of businesses allowable in the Mill District and incorporate into revised zoning.

What Types of Businesses Are in Philmont?9

- Recommendation Invite businesses to Philmont with existing clientele that will continue to patronize the business and would service Philmont residents.
- Recommendation Continue to support the Main Street Committee, founded by the Village Board in 1998.

Professional/Health Services11

- Recommendation Promote the middle section of Main Street as office space for professional services businesses.

Arts and Crafts/Performing Artists11

- Recommendation Create an artistic alliance to support artisans in the area.
- Recommendation Create a gallery space that could be used by local artisans.
- Recommendation Market Philmont as a place for artisans.

Tradespeople11

- Recommendation The Village should continue to work with the school and community college on training programs using the skilled tradespeople of the Village as teachers or men-

tors.

Auto andTransportation12
 Restaurants /Food12

- Recommendation Encourage more and varied restaurants.
- Recommendation Support clearer retail signage where appropriate.

Personal Services12

- Recommendation Encourage personal service businesses. If these are provided by chain stores, there should be architectural requirements so that they fit in with the small town look of Philmont and do not have parking in the front.
- Recommendation Consider alternative ways for Philmont residents to get prescriptions filled without going out of town to meet the need for a pharmacy. Work with Richardson Hall to create a system of ordering and delivery of prescriptions electronically.

Agriculture13

- Recommendation Support the use of agricultural lands outside the lines of Philmont to sustain the natural beauty that surrounds Philmont.

Other Economic Development Issues13

Parking13

- Recommendation Create better usage of existing parking lots with clearer signage and marked spaces.
- Recommendation Encourage off-street and rear parking for new construction on Main Street to enhance its walkability.
- Recommendation Consider relaxing individual parking requirements if property owners on Main Street make payments to a fund to create and improve common parking areas.
- Recommendation Emphasize the pedestrian nature of the Mill District; clearly identify the existing parking lots there.
- Recommendation Create a guide to parking in the Village.

Mill District Expansion14

- Recommendation Common landscaping that leads you up Summit Street (e.g. special street lamps or benches or banners) will encourage the connection of the reservoir to Main Street (Route 217).

Business Development14

- Recommendation Encourage the Main Street Committee to expand in order to support the many and variety of businesses in Philmont, including the home based businesses.

- Recommendation Arrange to have the Micro-Business seminars, currently offered by the Columbia Hudson Partnership, offered at a space in Philmont.
- Recommendation Obtain and promote funding for business support including co-operative artist support, facade rehabilitation, and business development.
- Recommendation Create a youth and internship employment opportunities exchange.

Ongoing Economic Development15

- Recommendation Create a part-time position to apply for, and administer grants and economic development projects.
- Recommendation Make sure to understand and maintain the diversities of incomes, employment opportunities and housing resources that give Philmont the small town feel.

Living in Philmont1

A Little Background2

A Residential Community for the County2

Taconic Hills Central School3

Household Statistics3

- Recommendation Improve and increase library space and funding, particularly for these groups.

Revitalization in the 1990s3

- Recommendation Plan cooperatively with future developers of the designated subdivision.
- Recommendation Encourage future housing development to be consistent with the historical building patterns of the Village.
- Recommendation Restrict subdivisions of uniform lot sizes in favor of varying lot sizes and densities.
- Recommendation Street design should reflect established Village patterns.
- Recommendation Continue to work closely with Housing Resources of Columbia County to improve the housing stock of the Village.

How People Feel About Living in Philmont4

- Recommendation Improve street and sidewalk maintenance.
- Recommendation Encourage new businesses to provide more choices.
- Recommendation Enforce existing building ordinances.
- Recommendation Include realtors in Village promotional activities.

The Building Survey5

- Recommendation Identify existing homes and other structures in need of repair and improvement.
- Recommendation Encourage and assist owners in maintenance and repair.
- Recommendation Reduce the number of substandard buildings.

The Look of Philmont5

- Recommendation Encourage rehabilitation of housing where needed.
- Recommendation Require all new construction to adhere to New York State building code standards.

Zoning6

- Recommendation Continue strong enforcement of current Zoning Regulations.
- Recommendation Charge an administrative fee for building permits to property owners who are cited for violations.
- Recommendation Provide periodic training to members of Zoning, Planning, and Village Boards;
- Recommendation Adopt New York State Building Standards.
- Recommendation Regularly review and revise Zoning Regulations to most appropriately reflect the needs of the community.

Governing Philmont1

General Governance2

- Elected Offices2
- Appointed Bodies3
- Appointed Offices3
- Other Appointments3
- Designations3
- Fire Company4

- Recommendation Continue community and Village support for the vital service provided by the Fire Company.

Rescue Squad4

- Recommendation Continue community and Village support for the vital service provided by the Rescue Squad.

Budget4

General Fund5
Water Fund5
Sewer Fund5
Library Fund5
Water and Sewer Rents5
Village Personnel6

- Recommendation The Village should budget for continuing training and education for its employees.

Office Staff7

- Recommendation Modernization of record-keeping is advised
- Recommendation Increasing access of Village services to the people needs consideration.
- Recommendation Explore additional space options for the Village office.

Library Staff7

- Recommendation Explore additional space options for the Village library.

Court7

Police7

- Recommendation Clarify the role of the Village police.
- Recommendation Publicize the mechanism for complaints, suggestions, praise.

Fire Company7

- Recommendation Space needs are obvious.

Village-Owned Real Estate8

Parks, Memorials and Playgrounds8

- Recommendation Village-wide playground programs and a multi-generational playground including picnic areas, tables and benches, to encourage family use.
- Recommendation Improve the playground area at the World War II Memorial. Increase lighting to protect area after dark.
- Recommendation Clarify how to use and reserve the Memorial Field Baseball Diamond. The public parking area needs improvement.
- Recommendation Remember to open the Time Capsule in 2092.
- Recommendation Maintain the playground equipment on Lakeside Drive.
- Recommendation Improve the playground and all the facilities in area including the boat launch, beach, and shore line access. Complete the community center on the site.

- Recommendation Investigate restoring the swimming area at the reservoir.

Sidewalks9

- Recommendation Create a schedule of maintenance. Implement a better (or enforceable) law for snow removal.

Other Village Properties9

- Recommendation Continue or increase current bimonthly schedule for disposal of recyclables and newspapers at the site.
- Recommendation Investigate expanding the availability of the site for annual or semi-annual village clean-up days.
- Recommendation Explore the use of the Old Village Hall site for a Village information center.
- Recommendation Improve the parking lot with new signage and striping of parking areas.
- Recommendation Reserve for possible future use. Suggestions have included quarters for the rescue squad, or for municipal parking. Parking would include more visible signage and lined parking areas.
- Recommendation Catalog all village properties, including tax map number, size, exact address, accessibility, current use (i.e., right-of-way for water/sewage lines, buildings, vacant, etc.) and approximate value.

Village Hall10

- Recommendation Apply for State Archives Records Administration funding.
- Recommendation Space needs analysis for all Village functions.
- Recommendation Provide information to the public for reserving the Village Hall for functions. This should include reservation and rental requirements as well as a clear description of what groups and uses are permitted.

Library11

- Recommendation Space limitations curtail the implementation of some programs that would meet community needs, especially children's programs. Space needs are a priority.
- Recommendation In the short term, request funding from the Town of Ghent to cover technically "unserved" residents of Ghent (outside the Chatham School District) who use the Philmont Public Library.
- Recommendation Longer term, explore a Section 259 initiative in conjunction with the libraries in Claverack and Hillsdale. This would tie common library funding to Taconic Hills Central School district property taxes and would formalize town-level funding for "unserved" areas.

Department of Public Works12

- Recommendation Fix up the DPW building for safety, looks, and efficiency.
- Recommendation Need covered storage for salt/sand.

Waste Water Treatment Plant13

- Recommendation The recommendation suggested by the supervisor was for a “pressure reducer” for the lower end of the Village. This would make repairs of broken water mains easier and less costly for the Village.

Water Resources14

- Recommendation An overall recommendation is the continued judicious use of all water resources.

The Reservoir14

- Recommendation Promote the reservoir as a recreational and tourist attraction to the Village in general and the Mill District in particular.

Forest Lake15

- Recommendation Provide information to facilitate public access to Forest Lake.

Gravel Bank (Wells)15

- Recommendation A Rural Water Study, completed recently about the Gravel Bank area should be acted on by the Village Board. A cooperative agreement with the Town of Claverack to protect the watershed at the Gravel Bank should be a priority.

High Falls and Agawamuck Creek15

- Recommendation The actual access to the High Falls area, the acreage and ownership, should be clarified. There is a potential for recreational use or tourism.

Main Street Committee16

- Recommendation Continue to support the Main Street Committee.

Getting Around Philmont1

How People Feel about Getting Around Philmont2

Streets and Highways2

Getting Through Philmont3

Getting Around Philmont3

- Recommendation New streets in Philmont should be planned to adhere to the existing pattern of long streets with destinations and few harsh curves and the pattern of small connectors. Cul-de-sacs and dead ends without destinations at their ends should be avoided.

Walking in Philmont	6
• Recommendation Provide walking/hiking access to High Falls.	
• Recommendation Work with Rails-to-Trails to bring the walking path through the center of the Village.	
Parks	7
• Recommendation Improve park, street, and sidewalk maintenance.	
The Reservoir	7
• Recommendation Create a walking trail through Philmont that includes the reservoir.	
• Recommendation Improve access to the reservoir and make it an attraction for visitors to the Village. Add signage for the parking area at the Village recreation center.	
The Park	7
Public Transportation	9
Taconic State Parkway	9
Accidents	9
Speeding Tickets	9
Rules and Regulations	9
Speed Limits	9
Snow Clearing	9
Parking	10
• Recommendation Promote the existing parking lots.	
• Recommendation Continue to work to make Main Street and the expanded Mill District pedestrian friendly.	
• Recommendation Designate at least one parking location at each end of the Main Street blocks as short-term (15 minute) parking.	
Community Suggestions	10
• Recommendation Try to improve the Church Street/Main Street intersection, possibly by expanding the no parking zone on Church Street.	
Visiting Philmont	1
Visiting Philmont for Work and Errands	2
• Recommendation When promoting the market size of local business, include the surrounding communities.	
• Recommendation Encourage businesses that will provide goods and services that will be attractive to both residents and non-residents. Encourage businesses that will encourage peo-	

ple to come to Philmont for a unique product.

- Recommendation Encourage established businesses to relocate to Philmont. This would directly serve the Philmont community as well as increasing the numbers of regular visitors.

Visiting Philmont for Fun3

Annual Events3

- Recommendation Give promotional materials about Philmont to Road Race participants.
- Recommendation Promote the House and Garden Tour through Columbia County Tourism.
- Recommendation Additional public events with publicity would encourage other visitors (e.g., concerts in the new Park).

Natural Resources4

- Recommendation Make access to Summit Lake more visible via signage pointing to the lake.
- Recommendation Have events or activities that draw people into the Summit Lake area.
- Recommendation Continue to pursue the possibility of swimming in Summit Lake.
- Recommendation Pursue walking trail ideas and a path to the High Falls.

Sports, Clubs, and Groups4

- Recommendation Encourage further use of the Rod & Gun club, the American Legion Building and the Village Park to host interesting and enjoyable events that would be a pleasure to the community as well as, if well marketed, encourage visitors.
- Recommendation Support the marketing of the clubs and chorus to encourage them to become larger and stronger groups with even more following.
- Recommendation Provide informational support for funding availability and space availability for people who are interested in starting new clubs/activities. Complete survey of public space available for rental.

Churches5

Community Center5

- Recommendation Support the Philmont’s Community Center to make programs available to people outside of Philmont, as well as residents.

Residences5

Agricultural6

Historical Interest6

- Recommendation Create a historic self guided walking tour of Philmont.

- Recommendation See if the Columbia County Tourism Board is interested in a Columbia County Tour of Mills in which Philmont could be featured.
- Recommendation Consider other ways to capitalize on the existing historic structures to be used in some way that can honor and share the history of Philmont.

Mill District6

- Recommendation Support the concept of the Mill District to offer residents and visitors an unique and distinctive aspect of Philmont.

Passing Through Philmont6

- Recommendation Keep Welcome to Philmont banners up except when holiday banners are up. That avoids double work in putting them up and down and keeps the Village’s efforts visible.
- Recommendation Choose plants that require the level of maintenance that the DPW can provide for Main Street planters.

Who Passes Through7

- Recommendation Businesses that would cater to travelers to Hawthorne Valley and/or the convenience of the Taconic State Parkway would encourage visitors to make a stop in Philmont, and they should be encouraged.

Lodging7

- Recommendation Encourage overnight facilities for guests, perhaps in the Mill District near the reservoir.

Main Street1

Project Area2

West Main Street2

Central Main Street2

East Main Street2

Perceptions3

Main Street is the Focal Point of the Village3

Gap Between Data and Perceptions About Main Street4

- Recommendation Implement an aggressive marketing strategy to change impressions about Philmont.
- Recommendation Philmont will continue to monitor public opinion relative to the perceptions of Main Street and will take actions to address any identified deficiencies, either real or perceived.
- Recommendation Philmont will attempt to identify and secure funding through Federal, State and regional agencies to implement community improvement projects that will address building façades, economic development, parking, and other related Main Street issues.

Businesses on Main Street5

- Recommendation The Mill District Association should recommend aid to local crafts and art-related businesses in the establishment of an artists’ cooperative that will provide space for local artists and craftsman to display and sell their work. The co-op will also provide an excellent space for visitors and shoppers to see a sample of the goods produced in the area and will also give people an opportunity to purchase these products.

Business and Economic Development6

- Recommendation A marketing strategy should be developed to encourage business growth by touting the small business friendly atmosphere of the Village and of the existence of an educated and trainable existing work force.
- Recommendation A central location should be identified to be used as an arts and crafts cooperative. This facility will serve several functions. It will be used as a display area where visitors can examine the goods produced by the artists and crafts persons within the Mill District. People will also have the opportunity to purchase these goods either from the shops themselves or from the cooperative.
- Recommendation Prepare legislation that will prevent owners of commercial property on Main Street from converting commercial space on the first floor to residential space. The new laws will also consider offering incentives to property owners on Main Street that convert first floor residential space into commercial space.

Philmont’s Existing Niche – Economic Development in the Mill District7

Advantages of Expanding the Mill District8

- Recommendation The Comprehensive Plan Board recommends the expansion of the Mill District to include the south side of Main Street, from Elm and Canal Streets to the west to Martindale Road to the east. The area also is bordered by Martindale Road to the east, Lakeview Drive (the reservoir and Ockawamick Creek) to the south, and Summit Street to the east, which includes a small block created by the inclusion of Elm Street.
- Recommendation Philmont, in association with the Comprehensive Plan Board, should develop the Mill District Association, a not-for-profit organization that will be charged with overseeing and managing all aspects of the Mill District, including promoting the district, managing any special events that are planned for the Mill District, and related responsibilities.
- Recommendation Encourage appropriate new business growth within the Main Street and Mill District area. Businesses will include artists and craftsmen and other ventures that could be utilized in complementary and supporting roles. These could be described as food and restaurant businesses, bed and breakfast establishments, and other related industries.
- Recommendation Develop a marketing strategy that will highlight the Mill District as a place to come and visit high end specialty shops that cater to arts and crafts buyers. The marketing plan will also publicize the other resources within the district, including the reservoir, recreational facilities and other related businesses.
- Recommendation Seek to secure grant funds to assist in developing the Mill District. This will include implementing projects that will offer low interest loans to new and existing businesses to develop and grow. Efforts will also be made to secure funds to improve housing conditions and facades within the Mill District.

- Recommendation The Mill District Association will encourage the addition of appropriate signage along Main Street to help draw attention to and identify the commercial area within the Central Main Street section.
- Recommendation The Mill District Association will seek grant funds through the Small Cities, HOME, AHC and other related funding programs to introduce building improvement and façade restoration programs for properties along Main Street.
- Recommendation The Mill District Association will work with existing commercial property owners to encourage beautification projects, including landscaping, lighting, and façade improvements.

Building Conditions9

- Recommendation Continue to actively pursue funding to implement building improvement programs. Specifically, Philmont will access the Governor’s Office for Small Cities, The New York State Division of Housing and Community Renewal, The Rural Development Administration, and any other agencies that can offer financial assistance to the Village to introduce building improvement programs that will address the negative aspects of buildings within the Main Street area.
- Recommendation Develop guidelines for growth within the Mill District. Specifically, the Comprehensive Plan recommends passage of legislation that will foster the growth of arts and crafts and related businesses within the Mill District. This may include adopting zoning laws that will be less restrictive regarding the number uses permitted and on site parking required by current zoning laws.

History of Philmont1

My History of a Lovely Old Village—Hattie Johnson2

A Walk on Main Street and Its Environs, Historically3

Upper Main Street, heading East from the intersection of State Route 217 and County Route 11 (Martindale Road)3

Main Street, between the intersection of State Route 217 and Summit Street, heading East to the intersection of County Route 11 (Martindale Road)3

Main Street, from the intersection of Summit Street, heading West, to Rock Street 5

Lower Main Street, from Rock Street, heading West, to the Philmont Village Line 6

Main Street Environs6

A Philmont Time Line6

Factory Hill/Early 19th century6

School and Library/18427

Dam/18457

High Rock Mill/18477

Railroad/18527

Post Office/18537

Paper Mill/18557

Paper Mill/18587

Civil War/1861-1865	8
Underwear/1861	8
School Building/1861	8
Population 700/1871	8
Methodist Church/1872	8
Catholic Church/1881	8
Midland Mill (Underwear)/1886	8
High Rock Knitting Company/1890	8
Incorporated Village/1892	9
Reformed Church/1892	9
Episcopal Church/1892	9
Kerosene Street Lamps/1893	9
Hose Company/1896	9
Newspaper/1897	9
Library/1898	9
Population 1,956/1900	9
Masonic Lodge/1902	10
Columbia Mesh Mill/1903	10
Bank/1904	10
Gas Street Lights/1907	10
Crusader Club/1909	10
Grange/1911	10
Electric Street Lights/1913	10
Main Street Paved/1915	10
Strand Theatre/1916	10
War/1917 – 1918	11
Victory Lingerie Company/1919	11
Telephone/1920	11
High Rock Knitting Company Abroad/1920's	11
American Legion/1922	11
Rod and Gun Club/1923	11
Royal Neighbors/1927	11
First Mayor/1928	11
Bank Robbed/1938	12
Flood/1938	12
Mills Founded/1938	12
Mills Reconstructed/1939 +	12
World War II/1941 – 1945	12
Korean War/1950 – 1953	12
School Closed/1952	12
Mills Close/1953 +	12
Fire Company Auxiliary/1955	13
Rotary Club/1956	13
Rescue Squad/1959	13
Vietnam War/1964 – 1973	13
Fire/1977	13

Philmont Hearth/198213
Zoning/199013
Centennial/199213
Library Internet/199313
Main Street Rebuilt/199714
Main Street Committee/199814
High Speed Internet/200014

Comprehensive Plan public meeting, December 13, 2001 (one of 12 public meetings held during the plan's development)



Building the Philmont Village Green park
June 8, 2002



Looking at Philmont

Tom Hotalen
Nancy Brousseau



2 • Philmont Comprehensive Plan

This part of the comprehensive plan focuses on the look of Philmont—everything from its building styles and topology to the cleanliness of its street and the upkeep of its houses.

There are four sections in this part of the plan:

- *Yesterday—a few comments on the past*
- *Today*
- *Philmont outside Philmont—Village-owned property outside the Village*
- *Hidden Philmont—what is not visible although it is here*

Yesterday

Philmont was built up in a relatively brief period of time. Maps and lithographs showing the Village 100 years ago depict many recognizable buildings and streets.

Living Spaces

Many of the living spaces in the village were factory houses – some owned outright, some rented from the factories. Single family houses with driveways and gardens were common. Sheds and barns to accommodate chickens and horses were also common and still exist today for different purposes, including apartments on the second floor.

Land Usage

Land usages were prudent by both residents of the village and industry. The majority of the homes were located on modest plots of sizes of one-third to one-half an acre. The mills followed the watercourses, real and man-made. At its economic height, the village had 17 mills.

100 Years of Progress, Then a Gradual Decline

The village was self-contained. Almost anything needed could be obtained within the village. From the 1850s to the 1950s, mill work was available. In the 1950s, mill work left the industrial Northeast and headed South, where cheaper, non-unionized labor was readily available. One by one, the mills closed and employment opportunities became diminished. The population shrank from over 2000, to several hundred

less than that. Little remained to encourage new residents or new businesses. One venture in diversified business was a rubber vulcanization industry, located in a former mill on Main Street.

In January 1977 a major fire destroyed that business, the old mill building that housed it and several surrounding buildings. That area today had been rebuilt and includes a town park/memorial, an insurance business, a supermarket, a convenience mini-mart store/gas station, and several new businesses. Most of the half mile long Main Street looks more or less as it has for the past forty years. One addition has been the floral tubs which, in season, have beautiful flowers in them, thanks to the Columbia Hudson Partnership, Main Street Committee, and the Philmont Beautification Committee and their efforts.

Today

With the exception of a single large tract of land located just south of the reservoir, most of the Village is built up today. Particularly in the center of the Village, the densities and uses described in the zoning law are not always in effect. Many pre-existing uses and lot sizes were “grandfathered” in with the zoning law. They can remain as long as they do not become more nonconforming.

Municipal Buildings

At 122–124 Main Street is the brick-faced Municipal Building, housing the Village Office, including the Mayor’s office, Village Hall, and Police Department Office and Village Justice (upstairs), the Fire Department and Rescue Squad (downstairs), and the Library (within the Municipal Building and adjacent to the Village Hall). It is shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Municipal Building



The original windows in this building are now 40 years old; they are single-glazed and do not close well. As a result, the building is hard to heat. New windows pay for themselves in reduced fuel bills

RECOMMENDATION The Village should repair or replace the current windows with insulated windows in the Village Hall.

The part-time Philmont Police Department is augmented by the New York State Police and Columbia County Sheriff.

The Library is part of the Mid-Hudson Library System based in Poughkeepsie. The resources of over 60 libraries can be accessed on-line.

Space Needs It should be noted that the Village Garage housing its trucks, sweeper, plows, etc. is located on Eagle Street. The Municipal Building is cramped for space, especially for the Village Office and the Philmont Public Library.

The Library has only about 1040 square feet of space and the Village Office has less than that. The libraries of 1962 and the libraries of the 21st century are very different entities in that the former provided only books and magazines, while the latter is expected to provide all that the former did, as well as computer access, videos, DVD films, books-on-tape, large print books, and revolving collections.

RECOMMENDATION A good space use analysis of the Village buildings should be authorized by the village.

Department of Public Works (DPW)

The Department of Public Works currently includes 3 employees (2 full time and 1 part time) who pick up refuse and recyclables, maintain the 5.2 miles of Village roads (including snow plowing, patching, sweeping, and paving), repair sewer and water pipes for which the village is responsible, flush the water hydrants, and other work as needed. The sewage plant has 2 full time employees.

The DPW garage is located on Eagle Street. As streets get rutted or potholed due to weather or excavations relating to water line problems or sewer connections, the worst of the streets have been getting “chip sealed” to bring the street up to a more drivable condition. There does not seem to be an actual repaving timetable; streets are dealt with as problems arise.

Water lines have been replaced on some streets. Those that have not been replaced can be older than 100 years and constructed of cast iron. Water quality, with respect to discoloration, often depends upon street location and whether the lines have been replaced or not and the frequency of breaks.

RECOMMENDATION The village should establish a plan for street paving on a

rotating basis.

RECOMMENDATION The village should establish a plan of water line replacement, doing some replacement of older lines every year.

Cleaning the Village

Village services include weekly garbage & recyclable pickup (residents do pay a separate village tax and must pay for garbage stickers), streetlights on most streets, and extensive hydrant protection.

Statistical results of the surveys, comments written in, and anecdotal reports from a variety of sources show concern over the appearance of some of the properties in the Village. One issue that the Comprehensive Plan Board has noted is that there are laws on the Village books that deal with property maintenance—laws that are generally not enforced. In part, this may be because their enforcement mechanisms are very awkward.

RECOMMENDATION The Village should review its laws pertaining to property maintenance to make them enforceable; it should then enforce them aggressively.

Due to the fact that only 50% view the Village as being clean enough, and that only 47% think that the Village general appearance is positive (statistics from the Comprehensive Plan surveys), the Village should: adopt the following recommendations.

RECOMMENDATION Sweep the streets more often.

RECOMMENDATION Provide more small receptacles for garbage.

RECOMMENDATION Establish one day/year for a day when volunteers and residents paint/clean/repair/spruce up properties in need of such work. Local contractors might be able to assist with repairs of a minor nature on this day on a volunteer basis.

RECOMMENDATION Provide one day/year for free, large dump/trash disposal with Village pick-up and disposal.

RECOMMENDATION Provide better publicity about the county Hazmat day(s).

RECOMMENDATION It is recommended that the village enact a “pooper scooper” law requiring dog owners to clean up after their dogs when they walk them; the leash law should be enforced.

The state has an “Adopt-a-Highway” program; part of Main Street (a state highway) has been adopted as is shown in Figure 2. The village should encourage an “adopt-a-street” program similar to the adopt a stretch of road projects on highways in the county. Volunteer groups, service organizations, homeowners, and renters should be encouraged to keep a stretch of street clean. The village might provide free bags for this purpose to encourage its citizenry in this effort to maintain a clean village appearance. A slogan, such as “Pride in YOUR village begins with YOU”, could be adopted

Figure 2: Adopt-a-Highway on Main Street



RECOMMENDATION Create an Adopt-a-Street program.

Looking at the Township of Claverack Town Garage at the village edge, but outside the village on Lower Main Street, the general appearance of the building and the grounds is unattractive.

RECOMMENDATION The Village should work with Mellenville and the Township of Claverack to help with the general appearance of the former Town Garage to render a more attractive alternative to what exists as the “Welcome to Philmont” first impression as one arrives from the west on State Route 217.

Developments

Summit Heights, on Overlook Court Street (just off upper Summit Street), has 14 houses at present with room for many more. Union Court Street (off Summit Street just after its highest point) has 7 houses.

Zoning

Zoning is in effect in the Village. Because the law was enacted in 1990, after most of the buildings were built, it does not reflect the current conditions in many cases. Often, buildings take up more of a lot’s area than would be permitted for new construction.

There is relatively little new construction in the Village, but there is continuing renovation and rehab work going on. The Comprehensive Plan Board has identified three recommendations that could improve the process of zoning and permitting:

RECOMMENDATION Institute an administrative fee for building permits issued after construction has been started without appropriate authorization.

RECOMMENDATION Require new construction to meet New York State building standards. This will have the effect of allowing existing trailers to remain in the Village, but it will not allow new ones.

RECOMMENDATION Rezone the area south of the reservoir to fit into the Vil-

lage better. Varying lot sizes and densities (as is the case throughout the Village) should be implemented; the street pattern should match the types of streets elsewhere in the Village.

RECOMMENDATION Add a report from the Building Inspector to the monthly reports at the Village Meeting.

Topography

Philmont is hilly; much of its subsurface is rock. Because of the hills, many of its streets are hilly. Ellsworth Street, shown in Figure 3, is both hilly and narrow.

Figure 3: Ellsworth Street



Throughout the Village, century-old retaining walls of local stone are found. One of them (on Summit Street) is shown in Figures 4 and 5.

Figure 4: Stone Wall on Summit Street



Figure 5: Close up view of Stone Wall



RECOMMENDATION The large number of stone walls in good condition could be an attraction for tourists.

Architectural Styles

The Village homes are a mix of architectural types dominated by plain Victorian houses. There are evidences of Greek Revival, Italian Bell Tower, and Georgian with mansard roof styles. Attic windows within the village include round, rectangular, and a few of stained glass. Figures 6., 7, and 8 show some of the Village houses.

Figure 6: Main Street House



Figure 7: House by Reservoir



Figure 8: Main Street Houses



Churches

The churches, four in number, reflect turn of the century architectural styles. Two are constructed with brick exteriors and two are constructed with wood and/or siding exteriors.

Street Layout

Street layout was basically determined by the hilly topography and the location of the Philmont Reservoir (Summit Lake) and the Ockawamick (Agawamuck) Creek. The Village was built on a series of small hills and the waters fell in a matching series of falls that provided the power for the early mills. Paths became roads; roads became streets.

State Route 217, running east-west, bisects the village and is, indeed, the Main Street. It is shown in Figure 9.

Figure 9: Main Street



Most of the village streets are on the north side of the Ockawamick Creek. The only bridge, within the village proper, spanning this creek is on Summit Street, next to the former Summit Mill, with a clear view of the waterfall created by the dam on the Philmont Reservoir. Summit Street and its bridge are shown in Figure 10.

Figure 10: Summit Street and Bridge



Maple Avenue has seen a replacement of younger maple trees as older ones have had to be cut down. A Memorial Walk of dedicated trees planted in honor and memory of Village residents has been created.

RECOMMENDATION Provide additional space for Memorial Walk trees.

Many of the Village streets are narrow: the entrance to Railroad Avenue is shown in Figure 11. Some people have been known to mistake it for a driveway.

Figure 11: Railroad Avenue



Mills

Many of the former mills have been razed; none serve as a mill at the present time. Speculative plans include turning the former Summit Mill into condominiums, although it should be noted that this “project” is in the earliest planning stage. What once provided livelihood to hundreds could find new uses in the future. As of this writing, only four mill buildings still exist.

RECOMMENDATION Due to their historic significance, the Village should establish a plan to keep the existing mills from being razed.

Main Street

The Main Street of Philmont has seen some changes in the last hundred years, but still retains the flavor the past. Visitors to Philmont usually enter by one end of Main Street or the other, i.e., from the west or from the east.

RECOMMENDATION The village should plant trees on Main Street. This would provide more greenery in an aesthetic way, and would echo to the Main Street of Philmont’s historic past.

What they encounter visually is a mix of well-maintained houses and businesses and those in need of some exterior work, including painting and/or repairs. This is demonstrated in Figure 12.

The overall image is not a completely positive one. A general “sprucing up” of both residences and businesses that are not what they should be would do wonders for the first impressions of the village and make it more inviting to visitors and prospective home or business owners.

Figure 12: Main Street Houses in Varying States of Repair



RECOMMENDATION The village should pursue a plan to “spruce up” Main Street by requesting that homeowners/landlords paint and/or repair their

properties as needed. If the homeowners/landlords are unable to effect the work themselves, then the village should try to obtain grant money for this purpose.

In addition, some of the Main Street businesses break the traditional Victorian building line with large parking lots in the front and buildings placed askew on the lots as shown in Figure 13.

RECOMMENDATION Parking lots in front of businesses are not conducive to walking and window shopping; therefore, the village should require parking in back or, new Main Street buildings. To help with this requirement, the village should waive/reduce requirements for off-street parking to avoid “in-front” parking for ground floor retail uses.

Figure 13: Parking Lot and Building Askew



RECOMMENDATION Parking lots should have low hedges/plantings to help break up the linearity of the parking lot and to be more visually pleasing.

Property Ownership

Homeowners and renters are split nearly 50-50 (U.S. Census Bureau – Census 2000). There are many multiple-occupancy buildings in the village. Large pluses include village water and sewer. In-home businesses are on the rise. Some properties are in need of a coat of paint, exterior repairs such as a new roof, chimney repairs, or porch planking, cutting back of shrubs, lawn mowing, leaf raking, or snow shoveling, depending on the season. Some of this is due to limited funds and/or energies of home owners. Some can be traced to absentee landlords with minimal concerns about property appearance. When the sewer project was done in 1977-78, some of the sidewalks were replaced in part or in whole where the pipeline ditches were dug. Other parts of the village have sidewalks in need of repair or replacement.

RECOMMENDATION The Village should notify residents that fixing up their property does not increase their assessment if they paint their structure(s), or if they make similar replacement, e. g., a new set of steps for an old set of steps.

RECOMMENDATION The Village should establish a plan to assist/aid lower income and/or disabled or elderly residents with property upkeep, with possible funding by means of a grant.

RECOMMENDATION The Village can sponsor a photo contest—perhaps as part of Philmont Community Day—highlighting houses and properties throughout the Village that are distinctive.

Reservoir

The reservoir (sometimes called Summit Lake) lies at the center of the Village. Originally built to provide a reliable supply of water power to the mills, today it is available for recreation. It is shown in Figure 14.

Figure 14: Reservoir and Lakeshore Drive



Amenities include a beach and boat launch, shown in Figure 15.

Figure 15: Boat Launch and Beach



In the expanded Mill District, the reservoir will anchor the south end (with Main Street the north end). The narrow streets (Elm, Ellsworth, and Ark) provide a pedestrian-friendly area, and the existing density of houses allows for expanded use by home businesses and craftspeople.

Play and Recreation, Present and Future

Play and recreation areas within the village include the Memorial Field (on Church Street) for softball games, either in the daytime or under the lights. A playground, with gazebo containing a picnic table, one-half basketball court, and jungle gym/slide is located on Lakeside Drive. The playground also houses the newly formed Summit Lake Community Center which is a merger of an existing 10' X 40' bath house and a new 15' X 30' addition. It is shown in Figure 16.

Figure 16: Summit Lake Community Center (under construction)



Play areas for village children and teenagers are limited. Village youth are seen skateboarding in streets, paved parking lots, and on sidewalks. A skateboard park would help with this problem. Teens are also seen hanging out in groups, sitting on business steps, and walking Main Street for lack of something better to do. Many years ago, the Crusader Club offered them an alternative; however, that Club no longer exists and the building is now in private hands. Efforts by village adults to provide a space for teen activities have been limited. The most recent effort was terminated due to damage by the youths to the space provided for them.

Future recreation plans include a small bandstand and landscaped garden behind Richardson Hall, and a possible walking trail through the Village including the reservoir.

In the Comprehensive Plan surveys, youth programs ranked last in perception as being good (14% said so, while, 38% rated them as fair, and 49% rated them as poor.)

RECOMMENDATION The Village should provide more recreational opportunities for teens, including a skateboard park.

Philmont is incorrectly perceived as being a town full of older people, when in fact, it is just the opposite. Columbia County has 16.4% of its population being 65 or older, while Philmont has a 13.8% rate or about one in seven who is 65 or older. Of households in Columbia County with at least one person under 18, 32.2% fit the requirement, while in Philmont 36.8% fit the requirement. Philmont is much younger than is

generally perceived, and it is recommended that the village promote itself as such. Senior citizen resources far outweigh the resources for youth programs.

RECOMMENDATION The Village should promote itself as being more reflective of its median age of 34.7 years, which is the youngest median age of all Columbia County communities.

Armed Services Memorials

On the corner of Elm Street and Main Street is the Memorial to soldiers of all wars who honorably served their country in time of need. A large stone and plaque honor those who served in World War I, including honored dead.

A second memorial to veterans of World War II is located at the south end of Memorial Field, just off State Route 217.

The Minkler-Seery American Legion Post No. 252 on upper Main Street (State Route 217) has a small memorial area on its front lawn.

Group Homes and Subsidized Housing

Senior Citizens Resources for senior citizens include Richardson Hall, a newly created 24 apartment complex, in the heart of the village on Main Street. The buildings involved were originally Richardson's Hotel and Richardson's Hardware. Although separate buildings, they are connected by a second story-covered walkway. Other resources include the Al Tripp Center, serving some meals to senior citizens. The Tripp Center displays a painted mural on its outside wall. The Tripp Center is also located in the heart of the village, on Main Street. It provides lunches to local senior citizens both at the center and through the Meals-on-Wheels program.

Another resource is Philmont Terrace Apartments, located on upper Main Street, which provides apartments for senior citizens.

Nursing Home Just beyond Philmont Terrace Apartments, heading east on upper Main Street is Pine Haven Home (Columbia County). This Home offers 120 beds for skilled nursing only.

Group Home The Philmont Hearth on Maple Avenue provides services to 14 residents.

Philmont Outside Philmont

Village owned properties outside the village boundaries include Forest Lake (located off NY State Route 23, just east of Martindale and entirely within the Township of Claverack. Forest Lake is approximately 50 acres in size and the entire site, including Forest Lake, is approximately 100 acres), the Solid Waste Treatment Plant (located in the hamlet of Mellenville on the south side of Claverack Creek and 5.11 acres in lot size), and the Gravel Bank (located between Preusser Road and the Taconic State Parkway. It covers 40 acres on the west side of Preusser Road and 88.4 acres on the east side of Preusser Road).

Forest Lake has the potential for recreational use or alternate water supply.

RECOMMENDATION The Village should keep Forest Lake and not sell it.

Finally, it should be noted that the Village provides many views of the Catskill mountains as shown in Figure 17.

Figure 17: Catskill View



Hidden Philmont

High Falls and the Associated Water Course

The telephone poles on Main Street display banners with drawings of a magnificent waterfall known as High Falls, which is created by water dropping from Summit Lake.

The High Falls area is part of a unique watercourse that drops 250 feet over the course of half-mile in a series of cascades. In this half-mile, Ockawamick Creek continues to fall, passes under the Roxbury Road

bridge, just outside of the Philmont village limits, and continues to Melenville, where it joins with another small stream to become Claverack Creek at the bridge over State Route 217, near the old 2nd Reformed Church of Claverack (now Amble Dance Studio). Access to the High Falls is in private hands; consequently, one of the most spectacular outdoor areas of interest to visitors and locals is denied them. Efforts to provide safe access could generate interest in Philmont as a place to visit to view its water fall system.

RECOMMENDATION The Village should either get and provide safe access to the High Falls viewshed, or it should change its banner symbol of the High Falls, which at present are visible only in photographs or the imagination.

Underground Canal System

Another not visible aspect is the underground canal system that powered some of the 17 mills (Canal Street bears testimony to the canal system's existence). The canals were man-made, gravity fed waterways that eventually emptied into the Ockawamick Creek.



Working in Philmont

Robin Andrews



A common perception is that when the mills left Philmont during the mid-twentieth century, the jobs left, too. While it is certainly true that those mill jobs left, other jobs arrived. A hundred years ago, people walked to their jobs in the mills; today, they frequently drive to jobs in and around Philmont. (Half of the jobs identified in the residents' survey were actually further afield—outside the Village and the Town of Claverack.)

The largest employer in Philmont today is Pine Haven, employing 165 people. Large employers nearby offer additional significant employment opportunities. It is quite likely that there are more jobs available in Philmont and its surrounding area than when the mills were here.

COARC, for example, is just over the Village border in Mellenville, and it employs a hundred people at that location. At the end of December 2001, six jobs were open ranging from bus driver (\$5.25/hour) and production worker (\$6.50/hour) to social worker (\$35,360-41,600/year). Organizations such as COARC did not exist a century ago, and many of the jobs that it offers also did not exist then.

Another large employer outside Philmont—Taconic Hills Central School—is a similar example of the evolution of work in the area. Not only is it many times larger than the old Philmont School, but its jobs are far more varied than the teaching and administrative jobs in the old school.

This section of the comprehensive plan focuses on economic development. In particular, it covers the following issues:

- *Where do Philmont residents work?*
- *Where are Philmont businesses located?*
- *What types of businesses are in Philmont?*
- *Other economic development issues*

Where Do Philmont Residents Work?

There are three answers to this question:

1. Location
2. Size of business
3. Type of business

In addition, this section examines large employers located close to Philmont that employ significant numbers of Village residents. It also looks at job prospects for the Village and its residents—including young people in the Village.

The answers are derived primarily from responses from the residents' survey.

Location

Table 1 shows the results of the surveys (note that multiple responses were received for people with more than one job).

Table 1: Where People Work

In Philmont	62
In Claverack but outside of Philmont	40
In Columbia County but outside of Claverack and Philmont	122
Outside Columbia County	47
TOTAL	271

Significant numbers of the jobs shown in Table 1 are local—either in the Village or in the surrounding area (Claverack). Together, the Village and Town account for half of the jobs.

Distant commuters—to jobs outside of the county—represent only about 23%. By far, the largest number of jobs (more than half) are semi-local—in the county, but beyond the confines of the Village and Town. This has significant consequences, particularly in the fact that those people are commuting at least half an hour a day.

RECOMMENDATION Open the Village office one evening or Saturday morning each week to accommodate people who work outside the Village.

The mixture of locations helps to provide the diversity of Philmont's population: some people rarely leave the Village while other people do every day.

Size of Business

Based on the business survey of Philmont, over 45% of the businesses are home based. This also indicates that the majority of people working within the boundaries of Philmont may be working in their own homes. All but one of the businesses within the boundaries of Philmont are small businesses (that is, with fewer than 100 employees).

The one large employer within the boundaries of Philmont is Pine Haven Nursing Home, employing 165 people. This accounts for almost half of the employment in Philmont.

The Philmont Hearth, a psychiatric group residence, employs 14 people. The other larger employers, with about 10 employees each, are Jack's Village Market and MS Johnston Trucking and Buses.

Type of Business

There is a strong mix of types of employment opportunities available, from professional to unskilled labor required as well as full-time and part time opportunities. This supports the mix of incomes we have in the Village.

According to the census, we have the youngest population in the County. This would indicate that we also will have more youth to employ, who certainly require unskilled labor opportunities for part-time or summer jobs or when they are starting out.

Large Employers Outside the Village

In addition, it should be noted that there are large employers located just outside the lines of Philmont where Philmont residents could represent the largest part of the workforce. Together, these employers account for nearly 1000 jobs in the Philmont area. These range from unskilled jobs to semiskilled and to professional positions (each employers has a different mix).

There is reason to believe that these employment opportunities will remain for some time. The Taconic Hills school, for example, has only just been completed. Hawthorne Valley School and Farm Store is a private school (and farm); it appears to be financially solvent. Over the years, significant investments have been made in its physical plant.

COARC serves the entire county, and its central location is important to its services.

Novapak, the only large, for-profit company in the area, is obviously subject to the vicissitudes of its highly competitive market. However, in recent years, it has weathered changes well.

Taconic Hills Central School The school, located in Hillsdale, employs over 350 full-time employees and over 150 part time employees. It is shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Taconic Hills School



COARC COARC in Mellenville provides services and training for people with developmental disabilities. A hundred full and part-time staff members work with 200 developmentally disabled people at their Mellenville headquarters; COARC also has other facilities throughout the county; in total, it employs 400 staff and serves over 500 people.

Novapak The former Charter Supply company, Novapak manufactures plastics, and employs about 150 people.

Hawthorne Valley School The Harlemville complex of school, store and farm employs 120 people, about 60% of which are full-time.

RECOMMENDATION Maintain mix of skilled and unskilled labor needs.

RECOMMENDATION Support area businesses in recruitment from Philmont.

RECOMMENDATION Develop and maintain outreach to area employers; monitor their plans and conditions.

RECOMMENDATION Create youth employment resources, matching youth labor with local needs.

RECOMMENDATION Create an internship or mentoring structure with the many “hidden” businesses within Philmont.

Where Are Businesses Located?

A survey was conducted to create a list of businesses within the boundaries of Philmont. Although this is an ever changing and emerging list, the survey has identified 91 businesses within Philmont. The locations of these businesses are shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Where Businesses are Located

Main Street	29
Off Main Street	21
Home-Based	41
TOTAL	91

Main Street Businesses

The most visible businesses are located directly on Main Street, and therefore have the most impact on the impressions of Philmont. There are currently 29 businesses directly on Main Street including 2 convenience stores, a grocery store, 5 restaurants/bars, a bank, religious organizations, a car wash, public service offices, a uniform manufacturer, a barber and a salon, an insurance and real estate agent, a garage, a trucking/bus company, a liquor store, a recycling consultant, a wool/felt artist (Carapace Farms) and the largest employer of Philmont, Pine Haven nursing home.

Figure 2: Carapace Farms



One of the interesting things about the Main Street businesses is that there is a split between upper and lower Main Street. Between the library and the Vanderbilt Inn/Car Wash is a relatively long sweep of residences (except for the Catholic church), although that entire area is zoned for business. This creates a lack of continuity on Main Street.

RECOMMENDATION Create better merging of the two ends of Main Street encouraging the use of the current residential area in between the two sections for personal and professional services such as lawyers, accountants, doctors, counselors, etc.

Storefronts play a role in creating the visual impact of whether or not a business community is vital or not. Many of the businesses on Philmont's Main Street are set back from the street and a number of the largest ones having parking lots in the front of the storefront area.

Figure 3: Parking Lot in Front of Main Street Business



RECOMMENDATION Create zoning restrictions that require new construction to locate parking in the rear.

RECOMMENDATION Review the current Main Street layout to see if additional landscaping is possible. Create zoning to require recommendations to future construction. Support the continued use of planters, hanging plants and banners.

In addition, some of the storefronts were not being used as display cases. More recently laws have prohibited storefronts from being converted into apartments and some of the empty storefronts are being at least used for attractive displays.

RECOMMENDATION Focus on ensuring empty storefronts still have attractive displays—and encourage an attractive look for all storefronts.

Figure 4: Storefront Converted to Residential Use (on left)



Another of the interesting points about the Main Street businesses is that currently there are few general retail businesses. A retail store is the type of store you would just “browse” in to see what they have (and perhaps buy). One of the advantages of retail stores is that one of their focuses is to appear inviting.

With the businesses currently offered, patrons go to Main Street to do their errands, or what they need to do, and little else. Without the kind of invitation that retail stores tend to offer there is not much incentive to just wander Main Street. Therefore, although Main Street stays busy, it does not really invite you to it. Philmont is currently not conducive to “window shopping.”

RECOMMENDATION Encourage retail stores or more “invitational” businesses.

Home-Based Businesses

The majority of businesses in Philmont are home-based businesses, which confirms that it is attractive to live and work in Philmont. The large, reasonably priced homes and convenience of services make operating a home business in Philmont very inviting. The zoning law makes a distinction between home-based businesses in which customers come to call and those where one or two people work at home and sell the products or provide their services at other locations. In the first case, a special use permit is required and there are strict parking and signage restrictions. In the second case, no permit is required and no special parking rules exist; no signs are permitted for this category of home business.

RECOMMENDATION Continue to support and encourage home-based businesses. Gather input from home-based businesses to see how Philmont can help support them.

Off Main Street

Of the other 21 businesses that are non-Main Street based, many are still located within the business district of Philmont, they are just off Route 217. This includes health services (the doctors’ office and a chiropractor), churches, public and social services, utilities and agriculture.

Mill District

Through the efforts of the Comprehensive Plan, an additional business district has been identified. The concept of the Mill District is to combine one of our strongest business assets, the fact that there are many people running home-based business with creating a mixed-use district that could appear more attractive. This would address issues of both home-based and Main Street businesses.

The Mill District is currently zoned residential, but it is home to a variety of non-residential uses ranging from Sacred Heart Church and social hall, a number of “under the radar” home-based businesses, a doctor’s office, a loft building for artisans, and the Village warehouse.

Several existing businesses (established before zoning) have multiple uses on a single parcel, often using rear barns as shown in Figure 5.

Figure 5: Rear Barn-Based Business



RECOMMENDATION Change zoning to allow multiple uses on one parcel in the Mill District

RECOMMENDATION Create a list of businesses allowable in the Mill District and incorporate into revised zoning.

What Types of Businesses Are in Philmont?

Philmont is made up of a variety of businesses so that no one business, or even industry, dominates the village as is shown in Table 3.

Table 3: Types of Businesses in Philmont

Professional Services	12
Arts & Crafts	11
Contractors	10
Public Service	8
Auto & Transportation	7
Agriculture	5
Personal Services	5
Religious Organizations	5
Restaurant/Bar	5
Social Services	5
Performing Arts	4
Utilities	3
Elder Care/Housing	2

Table 3: Types of Businesses in Philmont (Continued)

Food/Liquor Stores	2
Gas/Convenience	2
Health Services	2
Social Club	2
Manufacturing	1
Retail	0
TOTAL	91

The largest numbers of businesses are 11 businesses in arts and crafts, 12 businesses in professional services and 10 contractors. Of these 33 businesses, about one third of the businesses, only 5 are located on Main Street. The remaining businesses are all home-based, which once again indicates that Philmont’s most visible businesses are not its majority of businesses.

A number of the businesses draw a clientele from outside Philmont as well as servicing residents. According to the returned surveys, over 50% said that over 90% of their clientele resided outside Philmont. Only 20% said that their clientele resided mostly in Philmont (more than 50%).

RECOMMENDATION Invite businesses to Philmont with existing clientele that will continue to patronize the business and would service Philmont residents.

Philmont is deeply steeped in the history of a manufacturing community. Although there is only one traditional manufacturer in the village today, there is an overwhelming number of artisans and craftsmen's trades that continue the tradition of manufacturing. Comments on the surveys noted that manufacturing that is “clean and good” is desirable. Businesses that are “non-polluting” are desirable. Businesses that are “unique, distinctive and well run are what is needed.” A resident even noted that Philmont “should not inhibit home-based businesses. Also encourage small scale crafts people, including cabinet makers, plumbers, potters, etc. to occupy ... commercial spaces.”

As one reviews the list of businesses that are in Philmont, it is immediately apparent that the strongest business strength is in the business that we cannot easily see. Given that, it seems that there are probably additional “unseen” businesses that did not even make the list. Creating a way for people to know what is really here would be advantageous to everyone.

RECOMMENDATION Continue to support the Main Street Committee, founded by the Village Board in 1998.

Professional/Health Services

Twelve businesses offering professional services include various business support companies, such as consulting, programming, research, bookkeeping, etc. as well as an insurance agent, real estate and bank. Most of the business support companies service clientele outside Philmont. We do not have many of the “common” professional services such as accountants, lawyers and/or counseling.

There are also two health services, a chiropractor and a doctor in the village, and both of these seem filled to almost maximum. Additional professional services, which are very low impact businesses, would not be adverse for Philmont.

The central section of Main Street is zoned for business but consists largely of large residences. These are highly amenable to adaptation to professional offices.

RECOMMENDATION Promote the middle section of Main Street as office space for professional services businesses.

Arts and Crafts/Performing Artists

Arts & crafts account for 11 of the businesses in Philmont and in addition there are 4 businesses of performing artists. All but two of these are home based businesses, suggesting that there is a significant artistic community working and living in Philmont. The combination of these two artistic categories create the largest percentage of businesses in the village. This has been a natural evolution, probably strongly supported from the reasonable priced and large homes. There has not been any obvious support for an “artistic” community, but it certainly seems to be here. It may be the best treasure of Philmont that has not yet been “discovered.”

RECOMMENDATION Create an artistic alliance to support artisans in the area.

RECOMMENDATION Create a gallery space that could be used by local artisans.

RECOMMENDATION Market Philmont as a place for artisans.

Tradespeople

In addition to the 11 arts and crafts professionals in Philmont, there are also at least 10 professional contractors, whose craftsmanship is only of another form. All these contractors have home-based businesses, and there are a number of other individual contractors who work under other contractors not based in Philmont. It is important to recognize that we have a wealth of skilled labor within our village limits.

RECOMMENDATION The Village should continue to work with the school and community college on training programs using the skilled tradespeople of the Village as teachers or mentors.

Auto and Transportation

There are 7 businesses within the boundaries of Philmont that service the auto and transportation businesses, not including gas stations. They include the bus company, carwash, auto and body repair, and trucking companies. In addition, there are 2 gas station/convenience stores.

Restaurants/Food

It may be a surprise to realize that we already have 5 restaurants/bars in Philmont—the Vanderbilt, LaGonia’s Pizza, High Falls Café, Nick’s and Scoops Ice Cream. The reason that there is an impression that there are not many places to eat in Philmont is reflected in the hours of the current establishments.

The Vanderbilt is currently only open for lunch, High Falls Café is open only through lunch, Scoops is outdoors and seasonal and Nick’s is known more as a bar. The only place that is considered a place to go out to get dinner is LaGonia’s Pizzeria. Also High Falls Café and Nick’s are both, especially considering their lack of signage, meant for a local clientele. In addition there is a full service grocery store, a liquor store, and two convenience stores.

RECOMMENDATION Encourage more and varied restaurants.

RECOMMENDATION Support clearer retail signage where appropriate.

Personal Services

According to the surveys gathered, the best thing Philmont could do to improve Philmont would be to increase the number of personal services (drugstore, hardware, laundromat, etc.). 80% of the surveys indicated this. There are only 5 personal services businesses in the village including a beauty shop and a barber and 3 additional home-based services (i.e. personal cook, piano tuner, and cleaning). This certainly indicates a large area for growth.

It should be noted that these are the very types of businesses that are now represented by chain stores—which, according to our survey, are the least desirable new businesses for Philmont. Specifically hardware stores and pharmacies are usually chain stores. Yet there is certainly a desire for this type of service.

RECOMMENDATION Encourage personal service businesses. If these are provided by chain stores, there should be architectural requirements so that they fit in with the small town look of Philmont and do not have parking in the front.

RECOMMENDATION Consider alternative ways for Philmont residents to get prescriptions filled without going out of town to meet the need for a pharmacy. Work with Richardson Hall to create a system of ordering and delivery of prescriptions electronically.

Agriculture

Although Philmont has zoning requirements prohibiting farms within the confines of Philmont, there are 5 businesses run out of Philmont who work their agricultural land outside the lines of Philmont. We have the owners of sheep farms, a Community Supported Agricultural (CSA) farm and a farm management research service living in Philmont. As a rural community in a county that has been heavily agriculturally based, it is helpful to continue support of agriculture within the County to preserve the scenic beauty of the area.

RECOMMENDATION Support the use of agricultural lands outside the lines of Philmont to sustain the natural beauty that surrounds Philmont.

Other Economic Development Issues

Finally, it is important to look at some general economic development issues that affect Philmont and its economic life:

- Parking
- Mill District expansion
- Business Development
- Ongoing economic development

Parking

One of the major problems for businesses in Philmont is parking. Main Street is narrow for regular traffic and even though parking on one side of the street is legal, the street is not really wide enough to accommodate a row of parked cars and traffic. If there were more active businesses on Main Street, this would become more of a problem. In addition, there are strict zoning parking requirements, yet there is little parking available, or seemingly a place to allow people to park.

This problem is common to small villages such as Philmont, and there are two ways of dealing with it. One is to increase the amount of park-

ing. The other is to help people to understand that the Main Street business area is a relatively small place—smaller than the Crossgates Mall, for instance. With additional retail businesses that are conducive to window shopping, the experience of parking and then walking for one or two blocks is positive.

RECOMMENDATION Create better usage of existing parking lots with clearer signage and marked spaces.

RECOMMENDATION Encourage off-street and rear parking for new construction on Main Street to enhance its walkability.

RECOMMENDATION Consider relaxing individual parking requirements if property owners on Main Street make payments to a fund to create and improve common parking areas.

RECOMMENDATION Emphasize the pedestrian nature of the Mill District; clearly identify the existing parking lots there.

RECOMMENDATION Create a guide to parking in the Village.

Mill District Expansion

One of the main advantages of Philmont is its beautiful reservoir, and the possibility of the new park. Yet, the businesses of Philmont are not connected to any of the many natural resources of the Village. Historically, it was the natural resources of the village that created the strong business community, since the mills used the hydraulic power available from the reservoir and creek. Now the reservoir is disconnected from most of the daily activity of the town.

The building of the new community center lake side is the first step to connecting Philmont back to the beauty and use of its natural resources. Continuing this concept would be beneficial to Philmont. The Mill District will create a connection between Main Street to the natural resources of the village.

RECOMMENDATION Common landscaping that leads you up Summit Street (e.g. special street lamps or benches or banners) will encourage the connection of the reservoir to Main Street (Route 217).

The artisans and artisans' trades seem to be Philmont's naturally occurring uniqueness and distinction. Enhancement of the Mill District to create an area that fosters these existing businesses of artisans and craftsmen's trades into a visible asset of Philmont creates a point of destination as well as honors the village's history of manufacturing.

Business Development

There are so many businesses in Philmont that it would be productive for the Village to coordinate some development projects for them. The Main Street Committee was created by the Village Board in 1998, and it

can be used as a catalyst for future in-Village support. The Columbia Hudson Partnership has been very helpful to the Village in the past and it should be used as a resource in the future.

RECOMMENDATION Encourage the Main Street Committee to expand in order to support the many and variety of businesses in Philmont, including the home based businesses.

RECOMMENDATION Arrange to have the Micro-Business seminars, currently offered by the Columbia Hudson Partnership, offered at a space in Philmont.

RECOMMENDATION Obtain and promote funding for business support including co-operative artist support, facade rehabilitation, and business development.

In addition to business development, it is important to develop opportunities—and awareness of opportunities—for youth in Philmont. It is important to note that many of the young people in Philmont will move away: that is the world-wide pattern of small towns. However, in the world today, many work opportunities do not require people to move to the “big city.” Notwithstanding that fact, there are many other reasons why people leave small towns—and why others move to them. These include the noise and bustle of big cities (perceived as advantage and disadvantage by different people). It is in the interest of the Village to make certain that every local employment opportunity is known so that people can make informed choices.

RECOMMENDATION Create a youth and internship employment opportunities exchange.

Ongoing Economic Development

In the initial public hearings conducted by the Comprehensive Plan Board, a number of residents stood up and asked why the Village couldn’t “do something” about encouraging businesses, getting grants, and so forth. A wide variety of funding and development programs are available today, and there is an expectation that the Village be more aggressively involved in searching them out.

Applying for and administering grants and economic development projects is not something that can be done on an ad hoc basis, and the Village should formalize this process. This can be done with a part-time position, and it will cost the Village a small amount. However, that cost should be more than offset by incoming revenues.

RECOMMENDATION Create a part-time position to apply for, and administer grants and economic development projects.

Finally, Philmont is very supportive of a large variety of businesses, and maintains an eclectic base of artists, white and blue collar workers. This mix indicates a tolerance and enjoyment of the diversity of the community that represents different income levels, family structures

and employment options. This mix is one of the reasons that Philmont maintains a small town atmosphere, because this kind of mix is indicative of a time past when communities were farther flung and therefore diverse within themselves. This is an important element in what makes Philmont special and it something that should not be lost in a zeal of making things “better.”

RECOMMENDATION Make sure to understand and maintain the diversities of incomes, employment opportunities and housing resources that give Philmont the small town feel.

Living in Philmont

Carol Friedman



Philmont is in the geographic center of Columbia County. The Village is located 40 miles southeast of Albany and 120 miles north of New York City. With a population of less than 1500, Philmont encompasses 1.8 square miles. However, within this relatively dense space there is surprising topographic diversity. There are broad and gently curving Village streets as well as steep hills, dramatic waterfalls, secluded woods and spectacular vistas. While most residents live on village streets that have not changed much since the early 1900's, there are also those who live in multiple unit apartments buildings, trailers, suburban style tract homes, and gracious mansions.

Philmont provides for its residents important community services: library; police and fire protection; rescue squad; weekly trash removal, water and sewer. The children are served by the Taconic Hills Central School District, currently boasting the newest facility in the County. Several excellent private schools are within commuting distance.

Consumers are afforded the basic necessities without leaving the Village. Grocery, gas station, bank, doctor's offices, and churches are all easily accessed.

The Post Office is undoubtedly the social hub of Village activity. On practically any Saturday, even on the coldest winter days, there is usually someone standing outside taking advantage of the fact that everyone who lives in Philmont eventually shows up at the Post Office. So whether it's a Village Trustee campaigning for office, the local Brownie Troop selling cookies, or just two old friends taking a moment to catch up with one another, it's usually the Post Office that provides the backdrop.

A Little Background

The Village of Philmont was incorporated in 1892. For much of the 19th and 20th Centuries, the Village was dominated by seven large textile mills, and was a manufacturing and agricultural center. The mills began to close in the 1950's, and the last mill closed in 1977.

A Residential Community for the County

Since then, the Village has been primarily a residential community for all of Columbia County. While much of Columbia County experienced a housing boom in the late 1980's, many long-time residents from elsewhere in the County settled in Philmont after being displaced by the rising housing market elsewhere in the County. This has continued in the 1990s. The fact that almost half the people surveyed indicated that they work in the County outside the Village and Town confirms the notion that Philmont is a residential community for the entire County.

Taconic Hills Central School

With the building of the Taconic Hills Central School, significant numbers of families with children have moved into Philmont. It has been noted that the school district is included in a number of real estate listings as a benefit. The school replaces two separate buildings located at either end of the district. Prior to formation of the school district, Philmont's own school served from 1861 until 1952.. It is shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Philmont School



Household Statistics

Residents live in a total of 576 households, with an average of 2.55 people per household. (This is almost exactly the national average.) The population is young, with approximately 30% under the age of 18, and a median age of 34.7. (This is substantially younger than surrounding areas.) Households are bigger on average than in the county or the country as a whole; at the same time, there are more single person households in Philmont. Taken together, the statistics suggest a village with many families containing young children as well as many older people living alone. This is typical of small communities like Philmont.

RECOMMENDATION Improve and increase library space and funding, particularly for these groups.

Households are almost exactly divided between owners and renters. The number of buildings in the Village has remained relatively stable over time.

Revitalization in the 1990s

During the 1990's, there was a renewed interest in revitalizing and improving housing within the Village. A private developer proposed a

large (100+) subdivision and twenty-one new homes were built on previously vacant land.

RECOMMENDATION Plan cooperatively with future developers of the designated subdivision.

RECOMMENDATION Encourage future housing development to be consistent with the historical building patterns of the Village.

RECOMMENDATION Restrict subdivisions of uniform lot sizes in favor of varying lot sizes and densities.

RECOMMENDATION Street design should reflect established Village patterns.

In addition, the Village received Housing Rehabilitation Funding, and money became available to assist residents in making structural improvements and maintaining their homes. Housing Resources of Columbia County was instrumental in obtaining these funds and developing the projects listed here.

RECOMMENDATION Continue to work closely with Housing Resources of Columbia County to improve the housing stock of the Village.

Simultaneously, two major housing and rehabilitation projects significantly improved the appearance of downtown Philmont and while increasing the availability of quality rental units for people of lower incomes. The rehabilitation of the old Rock Street Mill resulted in 6 new rental units and the creation of a pre-school and offices. Then,

In the spring of 2001, the new Richardson Hall opened. Richardson Hall, a project paid for by public and private funds, not only rehabilitated two large vacant Victorian structures right on Main Street, but also provided 24 quality housing units for senior citizens. The culmination of both projects has served to revitalize and beautify the Village Business District.

How People Feel About Living in Philmont

Survey results showed that residents gave generally high ratings to all Village services such as fire protection/rescue, library, garbage collection/recycling, water/sewer, and snow removal, and police. Services rated less highly were street/sidewalk maintenance.

Qualities of the Village such as ease of getting to and around Philmont, small town life, schools, friendliness and convenience were considered the biggest advantages for living in Philmont. Convenience of shopping was rated as an advantage, although choice of shopping/services was rated as a disadvantage. Other qualities rated as disadvantages related to cleanliness and appearance of the Village.

In addition, a significant number (70%) of property owners indicated that the condition of surrounding buildings was seen as a problem. However, this issue seems to be gaining recognition within the village, since 57% of those responding to the survey said they intended to improve their property during the next year.

The Village can build on its strengths in these areas and address residents' concerns by implementing the following recommendations.

RECOMMENDATION Improve street and sidewalk maintenance.

RECOMMENDATION Encourage new businesses to provide more choices.

RECOMMENDATION Enforce existing building ordinances.

Anecdotal evidence shows that some realtors are less than enthusiastic about Philmont.

RECOMMENDATION Include realtors in Village promotional activities.

The Building Survey

In 2001, DBS Planning, a private consulting firm, conducted a building survey to study the condition of the buildings in the Village. Every building was examined according to standard criteria used by the Department of Housing and Urban Development.

The results showed that the buildings in Philmont are generally in good condition. Of the 454 rated buildings, 80% were determined to be "Standard." That is, buildings that are "decent, safe, sanitary, and in good repair." The building-by-building survey indicated that the overall condition of the buildings in Philmont is good. There are some sections of the Village with clusters of substandard buildings.

Table 4: Building Conditions

CONDITION	NUMBER
Standard	364
Moderately Substandard	85
Severely Substandard	1
Dilapidated	4
Not Rated	2
TOTAL	456

RECOMMENDATION Identify existing homes and other structures in need of repair and improvement.

RECOMMENDATION Encourage and assist owners in maintenance and repair.

RECOMMENDATION Reduce the number of substandard buildings.

The Look of Philmont

With the exception of the area south of the reservoir, Philmont is largely built up. Its look is that of a typical small northeastern town from a century ago. In many cases, the buildings were built before zoning, and they are larger than would be permitted today. For that reason, it is likely that many of the buildings will remain.

RECOMMENDATION Encourage rehabilitation of housing where needed.

Trailers are permitted in the Village only in one area. Other trailers scattered throughout the Village are grandfathered in—they predated zoning. The grandfathered trailers can be replaced with trailers the same size or smaller. In the one area in which trailers are permitted to be installed, quite a few could be. Significant input from residents suggests that they would not like to see more trailers there. Accordingly, it is proposed that zoning be modified to no longer permit any new trailers in the Village. This can be accomplished by requiring that all new construction adhere to New York State building code standards.

RECOMMENDATION Require all new construction to adhere to New York State building code standards.

Zoning

Philmont adopted the local zoning ordinance in 1990. Many members of the community recognized that there were conditions that negatively impacted on the quality of life for all residents of the village. Other communities had successfully addressed similar conditions through zoning regulations.

RECOMMENDATION Continue strong enforcement of current Zoning Regulations.

RECOMMENDATION Charge an administrative fee for building permits to property owners who are cited for violations.

RECOMMENDATION Provide periodic training to members of Zoning, Planning, and Village Boards;

RECOMMENDATION Adopt New York State Building Standards.

RECOMMENDATION Regularly review and revise Zoning Regulations to most appropriately reflect the needs of the community.

Governing Philmont

Nancy Brousseau



Philmont, with a history now spanning over 150 years, began with three ingredients necessary for the start of a successful village. One was the availability of falling water from the Agawamick Creek to power the many mills that eventually were constructed here. Another was the completion of the New York Central Railroad, Harlem Division, only seven years after the first small mills opened their doors. Lastly, there was apparently a willing population of workers, led by ambitious mill owners and businessmen, who encouraged not only the expansion of local industry, but also all the services that came with being a part of a prosperous community.

The railroad and local roads provided transportation to larger commercial centers. In September 1853 a postmaster was appointed for the Philmont, Columbia County area. Mail was originally distributed from a house on Main Street. A school district was formed, a schoolhouse built and a library established by 1860.

Philmont men served with the Union Army during the Civil War. A resident of this area was on the Monitor, an innovative ironclad ship used during the War Between the States. The mills, among them knitting mills, paper mills, and a feed mill provided employment to over 700 citizens.

The early 1890's saw the Village incorporated with a president, three trustees, and a village clerk. A three-story wooden Village Hall was purchased and renovated in 1899. Assessors were named, taxes collected, sidewalks built, water and sewer projects initiated, police and fire protection provided; though almost twenty years elapsed before a concrete road was laid on Main Street.

General Governance

The Village of Philmont is governed by New York State Village law. Accordingly, much of its organization and many of its procedures are not within its control. The timing of its elections (March of each year) and fiscal year (starting June 1), for example are part of State law.

Elected Offices

Village elections are held in March of each year. Traditionally, the county's political parties (Republican, Democrat, Liberal, and Conservative) have not fielded candidates; local ad-hoc parties have emerged. Vacancies between elections are filled by appointment by the Village Board.

Mayor The mayor is elected for a two-year term in odd-numbered years.

Village Trustees Four trustees are elected for two-year terms, with two elected each year.

Village Justice The judge is elected for a four-year term in even-numbered years.

Appointed Bodies

The Village Board appoints three boards, each of which functions independently under State law. Other boards—such as the Comprehensive Plan Board—can be appointed as needed.

Zoning Board of Appeals The Zoning Board of Appeals is appointed by the Village Board in accordance with NY State law. There are five members. The Chairperson is designated by the Village Board. Terms are for five years each, and they are staggered.

Planning Board The Planning Board also consists of five appointed members with a designated chair. Both boards' members are appointed for five year terms on a staggered basis. Both boards require a secretary, which is a paid position.

Library Board The Library Board is appointed by the Village Board. Its five members serve five year staggered terms; they elect their own officers. The Library budget is prepared and overseen by the Library Board which then passes it on to the Village Board. The relationship between the Library and Village Boards are governed by State law.

Appointed Offices

Zoning Enforcement Officer There is also a village code enforcement officer. This position is also paid and governed by the Village Board.

Attorney A Village attorney is retained to represent and advise the Village officials.

Other Appointments

The Village Board appoints members of the Fire Department.

Designations

A local newspaper is designated as the official paper for the Village. All public notices—such as of meetings or bids—are placed in that newspaper.

Fire Company

The Fire Company was incorporated in 1896 as Philmont Volunteer Fire Company No. 1, Inc. It drew its members from the Village or the Philmont Fire Protection District. Residency is not always a requirement nowadays. Application is made to the Company and after approval by the membership the candidate is also approved by the Village Board. Funding for the Fire Company is provided by the Village.

RECOMMENDATION Continue community and Village support for the vital service provided by the Fire Company.

Rescue Squad

The Philmont Rescue Squad, Inc. is an organization that provides emergency medical and health services to the area. The Mayor and the Board of Trustees provide continued support to this vital group. Currently one of the Rescue Squad ambulances is housed in the Village Hall Fire Company area and a second is housed in a Village-owned building on Canal Street. Funding sources include public donations. It is a non-profit organization.

RECOMMENDATION Continue community and Village support for the vital service provided by the Rescue Squad.

Budget

The Village budget is adopted in late spring to take effect at the beginning of the fiscal year on June 1.

The format of the budget is determined in large part by the New York State Department of Audit and Control which regularly reviews the Village's bookkeeping at approximately two-year intervals.

There are four sections of the Village budget:

1. General fund
2. Water fund
3. Sewer fund
4. Library fund

In addition, significant revenues are received from the rents (usage fees) charged to residents for the use of Village water and sewers.

General Fund

The largest part of the Village budget (\$613,600 in 2002) consists of the General fund. This fund contains the appropriations for the cost of running the Village. Salaries, street maintenance, recreation, zoning enforcement, and refuse collection are funded through this fund.

The fund is supported by revenues from fees (zoning, garbage removal), fines in the Village court, county tax revenues, and state aid. The difference between revenues and expenses is made up by the Village tax. In 2002, a total of \$263,000 was raised from Village taxes.

Water Fund

The Water fund (\$126,200 in 2002) is used to support the water plant. Its revenues consist primarily of water rents from users (\$106,663 in 2002).

Sewer Fund

The Sewer fund (\$247,800 in 2002) supports the waste water treatment plant and the maintenance of sewers. Its revenues come primarily from sewer rents. Note that while almost all Village residents pay both water and sewer rents, some out-of-Village users receive Village water and pay water rents; these users do not pay sewer rents and do not use the Village's sewer system. That is the reason there are two separate funds.

Library Fund

The Library fund (\$20,900 in 2002) supports the Library. The appropriations are split primarily between personnel and equipment (book) charges.

Revenues for the Library fund come from a variety of sources including the Village (\$7,000), the State (\$1,500), the County (\$5,000), and the Town of Claverack (\$5,500).

Water and Sewer Rents

Usage fees are charged for water and sewer users. Most Village residents pay both. Out-of-Village water users (primarily along Martindale Road) pay only water rents. The Martindale Road users were accommodated when Forest Lake was used as a water supply. The water main passed by their homes and they were allowed to connect to it.

With the switch to Preusser Road wells, changes were made so that they would still receive water.

Some people feel that the water and sewer rents are excessive. Accordingly, we examined the rates in other localities. The water rents are comparable to those in other communities. The sewer rents vary widely by municipality; they chiefly reflect the age of the sewer system. In Hudson, for example, sewer rents are lower than they are in Philmont, since their sewers were installed many years ago. (Philmont's sewers were installed in the 1970s.) Newer systems have higher rates, and it is expected that communities that are only now installing sewer systems will have rates that are even higher.

It is difficult to make exact comparisons since there are a number of different ways of charging. Table 1 shows a basic comparison for water using the quarterly minimum fees.

Table 1: Comparison of Water Rents

COMMUNITY	QUARTERLY MINIMUM
Philmont	\$25.00
Valatie	\$20.25
Kinderhook	\$9-\$20 plus usage
Chatham Village	\$22.26
Hudson	\$23.00
Catskill	\$25.00

In Philmont, the sewer rents are calculated by multiplying the water rents by a factor of 3. A variation on this process is common in many communities.

Village Personnel

The Village has 24 full- and part-time employees. In general their responsibilities have increased and become more complex over time.

RECOMMENDATION The Village should budget for continuing training and education for its employees.

Office Staff

There is a clerk-treasurer and a deputy clerk-treasurer. These are permanent appointments by the Mayor with Board approval. The positions are defined as non-competitive class.

RECOMMENDATION Modernization of record-keeping is advised

RECOMMENDATION Increasing access of Village services to the people needs consideration.

RECOMMENDATION Explore additional space options for the Village office.

Library Staff

The Library has a director and part-time assistants and substitutes as needed. Funding is included in the Village budget.

RECOMMENDATION Explore additional space options for the Village library.

The Library was one of the highest-rated Village services.

Court

The Village justice is an elected official whose salary is paid by the Village. The justice has a court clerk.

Police

The Village Police Department has several part-time police officers and owns one police vehicle. That vehicle is housed in the warehouse off Canal Street, along with the second rescue vehicle and sometimes other pieces of village equipment. A Village trustee oversees the department and reports to the Village. The County Sheriff's Department also is available.

Comments on some surveys indicate that some people do not understand the scope of the responsibilities of the Village police or have questions about their actions.

RECOMMENDATION Clarify the role of the Village police.

RECOMMENDATION Publicize the mechanism for complaints, suggestions, praise.

Fire Company

The Village of Philmont provides funding for the Philmont Fire Company and also garaging for the vehicles on the lower level of the Village

Hall building. This large area has four bays with three used by the fire company for their equipment and one bay used by the Rescue Squad. Both groups are manned by volunteers, although a county financed medical technician is currently available during limited hours to Philmont residents. A second Rescue Squad vehicle is housed in a village-owned building called the warehouse off Canal Street. A trustee is assigned as liaison with the Fire Company. Both groups are strong assets to the community.

RECOMMENDATION Space needs are obvious.

The Fire Company was among the highest rated Village services.

Village-Owned Real Estate

Parks, Memorials and Playgrounds

All of the following are overseen by the DPW which reports on their condition to the Village Board. Maintenance, expenses, etc., are the responsibility of the Village.

RECOMMENDATION Village-wide playground programs and a multi-generational playground including picnic areas, tables and benches, to encourage family use.

World War II Memorial / Playground. Accessible off Lower Main Street; has 80 feet of frontage and 90 foot depth.

RECOMMENDATION Improve the playground area at the World War II Memorial. Increase lighting to protect area after dark.

Memorial Field. Ball Diamond/playground/cement block building. Accessible off Church Street. Has lighting poles for night time ball games, play areas, food service capability, bleachers and a fenced ball diamond area.

RECOMMENDATION Clarify how to use and reserve the Memorial Field Baseball Diamond. The public parking area needs improvement.

Main Street Memorial and Pocket Park. Has a monument listing the Village residents involved in the World War of 1917–1918. The second monument is in honor of all residents in all wars. It is on the corner of Main and Canal Streets. This is the site of Memorial Day observances and holiday lighting in December. Also, there was a Time Capsule buried during the Village centennial celebration in 1992 to be opened in 2092.

RECOMMENDATION Remember to open the Time Capsule in 2092.

Play park, basketball court, picnic area, gazebo and site of proposed communi-

ty center. Accessible on Lakeside Drive and from Ellsworth Street. Cement block building, playground equipment and picnic table shown in Figure 1.

RECOMMENDATION Maintain the playground equipment on Lakeside Drive.

Figure 1: Community Center (under construction)



Across from the recreational beach area and boat launch site on the Philmont Reservoir is the new community center.

RECOMMENDATION Improve the playground and all the facilities in area including the boat launch, beach, and shore line access. Complete the community center on the site.

RECOMMENDATION Investigate restoring the swimming area at the reservoir.

Sidewalks

Most Village streets have standard or wide sidewalks.

RECOMMENDATION Create a schedule of maintenance. Implement a better (or enforceable) law for snow removal.

Other Village Properties

Former Dump Former solid waste/village dump area off road known by the two following designations: Carpenter Road and Knapp Road. It's a gated area of 15.5 acres, sometimes used for disposal of nontoxic natural materials such as brush, leaves, trees, etc. At one time it was the official village all-inclusive trash repository. It was finally closed as an all-purpose dump in the 1980s according to NY State mandates on disposal of all trash.

RECOMMENDATION Continue or increase current bimonthly schedule for disposal of recyclables and newspapers at the site.

RECOMMENDATION Investigate expanding the availability of the site for annual or semi-annual village clean-up days.

Old Village Hall

RECOMMENDATION Explore the use of the Old Village Hall site for a Village information center.

Canal Street Parking Lot

RECOMMENDATION Improve the parking lot with new signage and striping of parking areas.

RECOMMENDATION Reserve for possible future use. Suggestions have included quarters for the rescue squad, or for municipal parking. Parking would include more visible signage and lined parking areas.

Other Village Properties

RECOMMENDATION Catalog all village properties, including tax map number, size, exact address, accessibility, current use (i.e., right-of-way for water/sewage lines, buildings, vacant, etc.) and approximate value.

Village Hall

After several other locations were outgrown, the current Village hall on Main Street was built in 1962. It shares frontage and space with the Village library. It also supports many other Village departments and activities. The Village Office houses the desks of the clerk-treasurer, the deputy clerk-treasurer, the files for the building inspector, the copier, the fax machine, as well as current files for the Department of Public Works, Water and Sewer files, Fire Company and Rescue Squad records, village budgets, minutes, laws, codes etc. The rear of the building houses the offices of the village justice, the police department, a large meeting hall, an adjoining kitchen and many file cabinets which line the walls.

A lot of space is taken up with files and storage of official Village documents. Funding is available through the State Archives Records Administration (SARA) for municipalities and school districts to undertake records management activities. More information is available at www.archives.nysed.gov. Records management would not only improve storage conditions but it could rescue needed space now taken up by file cabinets.

RECOMMENDATION Apply for State Archives Records Administration funding.

Directly below the hall area with access from Maple Avenue is the space for the fire company and rescue squad vehicle as well as their vehicles. There are three fire company trucks and rescue vehicles. A second emergency ambulance is in village-owned quarters in a warehouse on Canal Street. Back on Maple Avenue there is also a small meeting room on the lower level. There are two public restrooms on the upper level and one on the lower level. Upstairs, the library is truly needful of larger quarters for its collections and services for the community. The

Village Hall is listed in tax-exempt properties 113-9-2-52 frontage 60 feet, depth 122. It is listed separately from the parking lot on Maple Avenue.

RECOMMENDATION Space needs analysis for all Village functions.

RECOMMENDATION Provide information to the public for reserving the Village Hall for functions. This should include reservation and rental requirements as well as a clear description of what groups and uses are permitted.

Library

The Philmont Public Library was officially incorporated in 1898. It currently adjoins the Village Hill and stores approximately 18,000 items in a slightly over one thousand square foot area. It serves area residents of all ages.

Included in available collections are videos, DVDs, CDs, CD-ROMs, two encyclopedias in software format and two general encyclopedias on the shelves. There are two public access computers and several other services available with your library card. Residents enjoy the walk-in accessibility.

Although the library serves all ages, it is disproportionately used by children and by senior citizens. Since the Village's population is now quite young, and in view of the survey results indicating a need for improvement in Youth Services, improvement in Library services would likely be a significant benefit to the Village.

Like school funding, library funding in New York state is a combination of state, county, and local funding. At the state level, the Division of Library Development has divided the State into chartered service areas. Much of the State's population can thus be assigned to an individual library, and per capita funding from the State is sent to that library.

In "unserved" areas, the per capita funding goes not to a library (there being none designated) but to the library system that covers that area (in this case, Mid-Hudson Library System). Residents of "unserved" areas are indeed served by local libraries, but a variety of funding mechanisms are employed. In some cases—such as the Town of Ghent outside the Chatham School District, residents pay no town-level taxes to their own library. Many of the Town of Ghent "unserved" residents use the Philmont Public Library. (Other nearby "unserved" areas include the towns of Copake, Ancram, and Taghkanic.)

RECOMMENDATION Space limitations curtail the implementation of some programs that would meet community needs, especially children's programs. Space needs are a priority.

RECOMMENDATION In the short term, request funding from the Town of Gh-

ent to cover technically “unserved” residents of Ghent (outside the Chatham School District) who use the Philmont Public Library.

RECOMMENDATION Longer term, explore a Section 259 initiative in conjunction with the libraries in Claverack and Hillsdale. This would tie common library funding to Taconic Hills Central School district property taxes and would formalize town-level funding for “unserved” areas.

Department of Public Works

The Department of Public Works (DPW) has two full-time employees and one part-time. They belong to the United Public Employee Service Union. The DPW garage is situated on 18 Eagle Street; it is shown in Figure 2.

Figure 2: DPW Garage



It is a cinder block building with a wooden addition. There are four bays to house village maintenance equipment. The Village owns several large vehicles, including two trucks for snowplowing, another for sanding, a specially designed truck for trash collection, a street sweeper and a smaller one ton pickup truck.

Figure 3: Garbage Truck



The building appears to be old but adequate, albeit unattractive and nearly an eyesore. Responsibilities of the DPW include street and side-

walk maintenance, water pipe and sewer pipe repairs and maintenance, trash collection, snowplowing, leaf removal, street cleaning, street sign monitoring, painting of all non-parking curbs and maybe a baker's dozen of other responsibilities. The DPW building area also stores the sand/salt mix for the winter roads on its lot that is 130 feet of frontage and 212 feet deep, tax map 113-9-3-17. One Village trustee is responsible for overseeing the DPW.

RECOMMENDATION Fix up the DPW building for safety, looks, and efficiency.

RECOMMENDATION Need covered storage for salt/sand.

Waste Water Treatment Plant

The Philmont Waste Water Treatment Plant is located in the hamlet of Mellenville off Route 217, west of the village. It has currently two certified employees and one part-time. It is a facility that has been improved and updated as needed. The access road is off Route 217. There is also another right of way at the rear of the property. Part of the plant is shown in Figure 4.

Figure 4: Waste Water Treatment Plant



The facility takes in an average volume of 120,000 gallons of waste water daily and holds a permit that allows up to 250,000 gallons a day. Theoretically, the facility could manage twice the current use. (It is interesting to note that, like pipe organs in great cathedrals, waste water treatment plants are generally custom built, and each one has its own idiosyncrasies.)

The staff is also responsible for overseeing and maintenance of fire hydrants in the Village. These are flushed every spring and fall and needed repairs are done.

The State of New York Department of Health conducts yearly inspections (water) or has come randomly to sample. The Department does monthly testing of the facilities.

A village trustee also oversees this department and reports directly to the Village Board.

Additional water-related facilities owned and operated by the Village include a water storage tower on upper Summit Street. This structure is between Village-owned wells and pumps out on Martindale Road and the water users and helps to maintain the pressure necessary to service the water supply. The water is treated (chlorinated) on that property. The village trustee for the Water/Sewage Plant has the responsibility for monitoring these operations.

RECOMMENDATION The recommendation suggested by the supervisor was for a “pressure reducer” for the lower end of the Village. This would make repairs of broken water mains easier and less costly for the Village.

Water Resources

The importance of the bodies of water in the Village cannot be overstated. Public awareness of these resources should be maintained to include protecting public water consumption, increased recreational opportunities, and protecting the environment as a natural habitat for wildlife.

RECOMMENDATION An overall recommendation is the continued judicious use of all water resources.

The Reservoir

One, within the Village boundaries, is a 24 acre reservoir bordering Lakeside Drive. Extensive repairs in the year 2001 brought the very picturesque dam at the south end of the lake up to state standards. The Philmont Fire Company maintains two dry hydrants on the lake shore for potential use in emergency situations. The lake area also has great potential for recreational or expanded services for residents.

RECOMMENDATION Promote the reservoir as a recreational and tourist attraction to the Village in general and the Mill District in particular.

Forest Lake

The second lake is Forest Lake, situated off Route 23 in the Martindale area. It consists of 47.5 acres of lake and over 50 acres of woodland, and is not currently being used as a source of water. State regulations several years ago excluded surface water, i.e., ponds and lakes unless a filtration plant was installed. Although the expense of such a plant made it not feasible for current water needs, the prospect of future water needs must be kept in mind.

Both bodies of water support a wide range of fish and wildlife. Deer, fox, turkey and small animals find water, food and shelter in the woods and on the shores. Resident water birds such as Canada geese, swans and ducks are joined by herons, songbirds and hawks. Migrating birds join the others.

RECOMMENDATION Provide information to facilitate public access to Forest Lake.

Gravel Bank (Wells)

A third Village-owned water source is known as the Gravel Bank and is the site of the Village water wells and pumping station. There are 40 acres on the west side of Preusser Road and 88.4 acres on the east side. This is the site and source of all the water used by Village residents today.

RECOMMENDATION A Rural Water Study, completed recently about the Gravel Bank area should be acted on by the Village Board. A cooperative agreement with the Town of Claverack to protect the watershed at the Gravel Bank should be a priority.

High Falls and Agawamuck Creek

A fourth area in the Village, known as High Falls, and historically significant as the original source of the water power that enabled the many early mills to function begins at the east end of the Village at the Summit Reservoir dam. The stream is known as the Agawamuck (or Ockawamick) Creek. It flows through Mellenville and Claverack and eventually into the Hudson River.

RECOMMENDATION The actual access to the High Falls area, the acreage and ownership, should be clarified. There is a potential for recreational use or tourism.

Main Street Committee

In 1998, the Village formed a Main Street Committee to look into conditions on Main Street and to economic development. It adopted a mission statement:

The Main Street Committee is a catalyst for positive change, encouraging economic development and community revitalization appropriate to the scale and resources of Philmont.

The Main Street Committee has met monthly since that time and has undertaken a variety of projects including

- “Welcome to Philmont” banners
- Hanging planters made by students at Taconic Hills Central School
- The initial work on this comprehensive plan
- The House and Garden Walking Tour
- An inventory of public space in Philmont (still in process)
- Creation of the Main Street Collection, a unique resource of books on new urbanism, rural economic development, and sustainable growth. The collection is housed at the Philmont Public Library; it was initially funded by a grant from the Hudson River Bank & Trust Company Foundation.
- Public lecture by James Howard Kunstler (1999)
- Obtaining funding from Columbia Hudson Partnership for summer plantings on Main Street

Membership is informal, and all are welcome. The chair of the Main Street Committee is appointed by the Village Board.

RECOMMENDATION Continue to support the Main Street Committee.

Getting Around Philmont

Nancy Brousseau
Jesse Feiler



Philmont was originally founded as a mill town, with its mills powered by the Ockawamick Creek's fall. The railroad was an integral part of Philmont's development: it was the means by which the first products of Philmont reached their markets.

The railroad served Philmont until the 1950s; many long-time residents remember taking the train to Chatham, 10 miles away, to buy shoes or to visit friends. (The distance was short enough that if they missed the return train, they could walk home.)

Today, the most striking characteristic of streets and roads in Philmont is that almost all of them go somewhere: there are very few dead ends or cul-de-sacs. Even streets that technically are dead ends may have destinations at their ends: Railroad Avenue, for example, dead ends into the Philmont Rod and Gun Club: traffic has a reason to go to the end of the street.

The layout of streets is that of a typical nineteenth century American village.

How People Feel about Getting Around Philmont

Survey questions related to getting around Philmont, traffic, and parking showed general satisfaction. Table 1 shows the proportions of people who found each of these areas to be advantages and disadvantages.

Table 1: Opinions about Traffic and Infrastructure

	ADVANTAGE	DISADVANTAGE
Parking	50	50
Traffic	51	29
Infrastructure	74	26
Convenience	82	18
Ease of Getting Around Philmont	90	10
Ease of Getting to Philmont	92	8

Ease of getting to and around Philmont was rated an advantage by over 90% of respondents. This set of questions reflects some of the highest ratings of Philmont's assets.

Streets and Highways

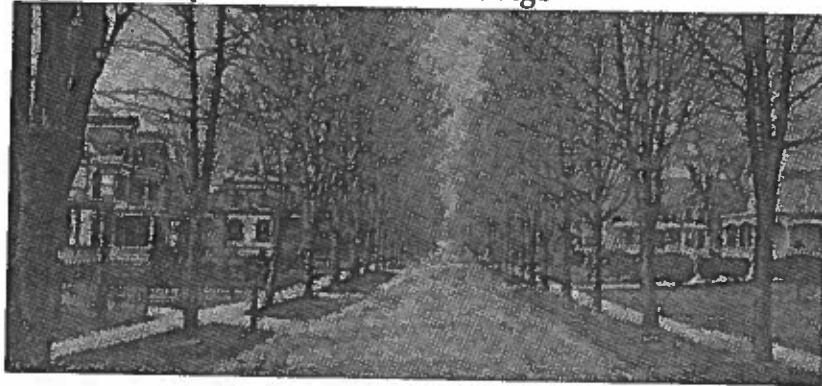
There are 5.25 miles of public road in Philmont.

Getting Through Philmont

Philmont is a crossroads. Main Street (State Route 217), is the state highway that runs from Claverack through Philmont and then on to Harlemville and to County Route 21 and to State Route 22, the highway connecting Hillsdale, Austerlitz, and New Lebanon.

Intersecting Main Street at right angles, Maple Avenue and Summit Street provide a route from Martindale and State Route 23 (the Hudson/Hillsdale highway) to Carpenter Road and County Route 9 (the Mellenville/Ghent road). Maple Avenue is shown in Figure 1 in a historic photo.

Figure 1: Maple Avenue 100 Years Ago



Within the village, Main Street runs predominantly in an east-west direction, and it runs downhill almost continuously from the eastern Village line to the western boundary in Mellenville.

Summit Street begins at the Village's southern border with Stevers Crossing Road; it runs uphill to the summit, then downhill to Main Street. Crossing Main Street, Maple Avenue is basically flat with a short rise as it leaves the Village at its northern end.

Getting Around Philmont

Within Philmont, there are two types of local streets: major streets and connectors.

Major Streets The major streets in Philmont other than those forming the crossroad are:

- Columbia Avenue
- Eagle Street
- Railroad Avenue
- Prospect Street

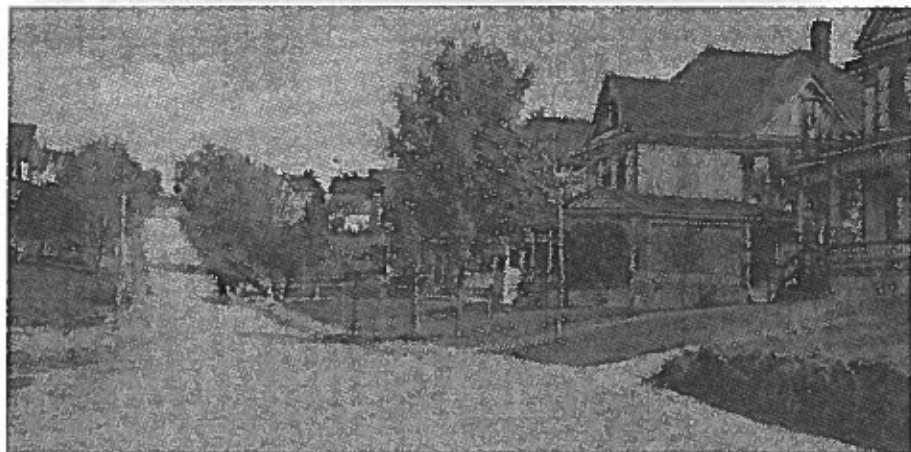
4 • *Philmont Comprehensive Plan*

- Church Street
- Canal Street
- Highland Avenue

These streets are relatively straight with gentle curves on some of them. This makes it easy to see oncoming traffic, and generations of children have played in these streets with safety. In addition, the long stretches of visibility make it safe to walk and live on those streets since there are few surprises possible.

Most of these streets go somewhere; Highland, Eagle, and Columbia are dead ends. Prospect is typical of major streets: relatively straight, long, and somewhat hilly. It is shown in Figure 2 today and in the past..

Figure 2: Prospect Street today and 100 years ago (from the opposite direction).



Connectors Short connector streets link the longer streets in many places. These streets (sometimes only long enough for two or three building lots) help to avoid dead ends and facilitate circulation. As a result of the existence of connectors, there is almost always more than one way to get from any place in Philmont to any other.

New Street is a typical connector. It is one block long and has three houses facing it. Four others at the corners face neighboring streets. The connectors are

- New Street
- Elm Street
- Maple Terrace
- Rock Street
- West Street*
- Block Street
- Garden Street
- Ham Street
- Ames Street

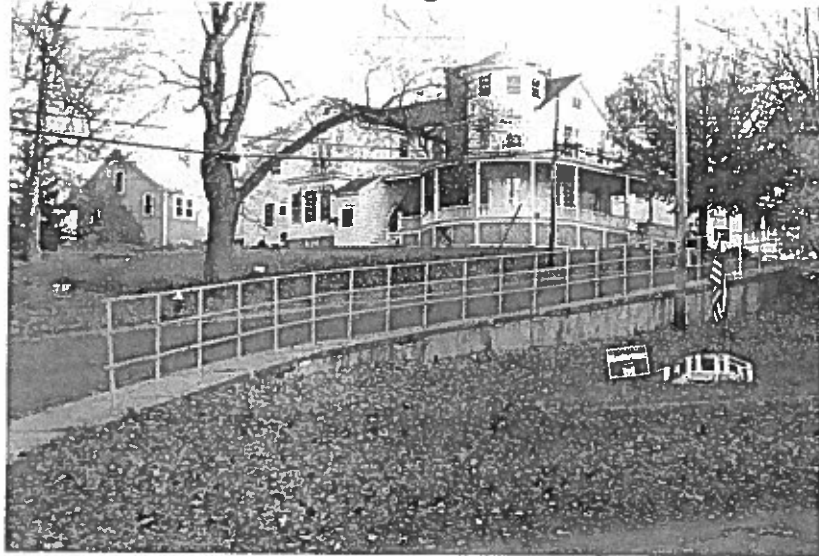
Other Streets Overlook Court and Union Court were laid out as part of subdivisions built in the 1990s. Unlike any other Village streets, they are characteristic of twentieth-century suburban subdivisions. Their layout is problematic for emergency vehicles and discourages the walking and sightseeing that longer streets facilitate.

RECOMMENDATION New streets in Philmont should be planned to adhere to the existing pattern of long streets with destinations and few harsh curves and the pattern of small connectors. Cul-de-sacs and dead ends without destinations at their ends should be avoided.

Walking in Philmont

Many people walk in Philmont. The layout of the streets encourages this—walking around the block is easy, and walkers (sometimes accompanied by dogs or baby strollers) are common. Sidewalks and handrails where appropriate help people get around. Philmont is hilly, and many of the streets are, too. Church Street has a hilly curve with a railing to prevent people from falling off. It is shown in Figure 3.

Figure 3: Church Street Railing



Unfortunately, one of the most scenic areas within the Village is inaccessible to most Village residents. This is the High Falls.

RECOMMENDATION Provide walking/hiking access to High Falls.

The Post Office and central business district are within walking distance of a large number of Village residents.

RECOMMENDATION Work with Rails-to-Trails to bring the walking path through the center of the Village.

Parks

Parks and maintenance were not rated well by survey respondents. Of those judging them good, fair, or poor the majority were disappointed as shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Opinions about Parks and Maintenance

	GOOD	FAIR	POOR
Reservoir/Lake	26	39	35
Parks	35	33	32
Street/Sidewalk Maintenance	47	29	24

RECOMMENDATION Improve park, street, and sidewalk maintenance.

The Reservoir

The reservoir was created as a means of providing constant, year-round water flow through the hydraulic system of the mills. It was never used for drinking water. Today, it is used for recreation with boating (no motor boats) and fishing. It is a habitat for birds, and is sometimes stocked with fish for the fishing season. Its potential for further recreation purposes has not yet been fully tapped.

RECOMMENDATION Create a walking trail through Philmont that includes the reservoir.

RECOMMENDATION Improve access to the reservoir and make it an attraction for visitors to the Village. Add signage for the parking area at the Village recreation center.

The Park

The proposed Philmont Park will provide walking paths through the largest block in Philmont. Eventually, it will have access to Maple Avenue, New Street, Church Street, and Main Street.

The paths have been built formally and informally over many years.

The paths include many old stone structures from the former Harder Mansion. A stone bridge is shown in Figure 4.

Figure 4: Stone Bridge



Public Transportation

Public transportation consists of a weekly bus between Philmont and Hudson run by the Columbia County Department of the Aging. Additional public transportation is provided by taxis from Hudson.

Taconic State Parkway

Although not located in the Village, the Taconic State Parkway is a significant factor for the Village. Located three miles away, it is a major thoroughfare to New York City, and many weekenders who live in and around Philmont rely on it.

It is closed to commercial traffic.

Accidents

The Philmont Volunteer Fire Department and Philmont Rescue Squad handle accidents on the Taconic.

Speeding Tickets

Half of the fines levied on the Taconic State Parkway is returned to the towns through which the parkway passes. This is significant in that this is Town-wide money: it goes to support services that are provided for the entire Town including Philmont.

Rules and Regulations

Speed Limits

The speed limit within the Village is 30 MPH.

Snow Clearing

The Village clears all of its local streets. The state is responsible for clearing Main Street. On-street parking is prohibited overnight (mid-

night to 6 AM) from December 1 to April 1; this allows for snow removal as needed.

Parking

Parking can be a problem along Main Street where people often expect to park directly in front of their destination. As additional service and retail businesses open in Philmont, people will have more things to do in Philmont, and so walking from one location to another may be less onerous than it can be perceived today.

However, there will remain a need for short-term parking for pickups and deliveries.

RECOMMENDATION Promote the existing parking lots.

RECOMMENDATION Continue to work to make Main Street and the expanded Mill District pedestrian friendly.

RECOMMENDATION Designate at least one parking location at each end of the Main Street blocks as short-term (15 minute) parking.

Community Suggestions

A number of suggestions were made at public hearings on the Comprehensive Plan. A series of suggestions (traffic light and one-way street, for example) was made with regard to the intersection of Main Street and Church Street. Visibility is limited, and the intersection is perceived as quite dangerous. However, it may be the case that this perception causes people to be extra careful as it does not appear that a large number of accidents occur there.

RECOMMENDATION Try to improve the Church Street/Main Street intersection, possibly by expanding the no parking zone on Church Street.

Transportation in the Past

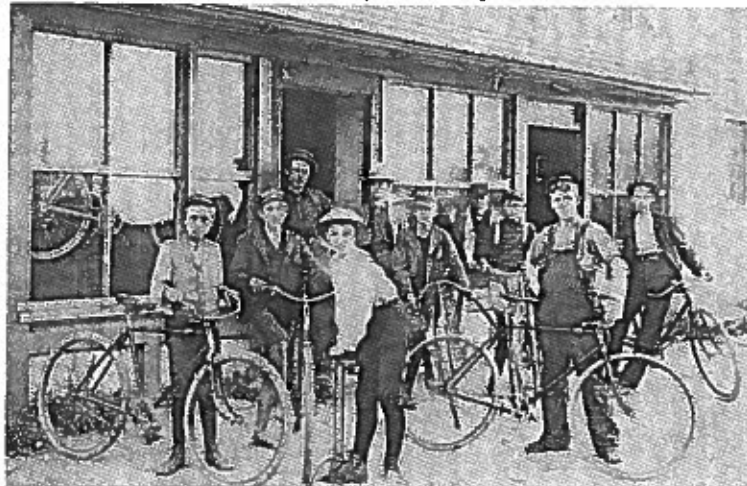
Served by the Harlem Division of the New York Central Railroad from 1852 until the 1950s, Philmont had direct connections to the rest of the world for passengers and freight. The first station is shown in Figure 5..

Figure 5: First Philmont Railroad Station



Stables were located throughout the Village including behind Richardson's Hotel and near the railroad station. In addition, then, as now, people used bicycles to get around Philmont. Figure 6 shows Bill Barton's Bicycle Shop in 1887..

Figure 6: Bill Barton's Bicycle Shop [1887]



Visiting Philmont

Robin Andrews



The other sections of the comprehensive plan focus on the residents of Philmont—how they live, where they work, and the like. This section focuses on people who come to Philmont—for a single errand, for several hours, or for an extended visit.

When we started work on the Comprehensive Plan, the notion of tourism in Philmont was considered somewhat of a joke. Since then, it has become clear that Philmont has significant attractions for tourists; the success of the Philmont House and Garden Walking Tour (now in its third year) has proved the point.

Because of its location, many people come through Philmont—often without stopping. If Philmont and its businesses can encourage people to stop (and patronize local merchants), a healthier retail and service environment will ensue.

This section focuses on:

- *Visiting Philmont for work and errands*
- *Visiting Philmont for fun*
- *Passing through Philmont*

Visiting Philmont for Work and Errands

Just as many Philmont residents work outside of the Village, many of the people who patronize Village businesses live outside of the Village. The Post Office, for example, serves a large number of out-of-Village residents who appreciate the convenience of a post office box rather than rural delivery. (Many of these are weekenders who feel uncomfortable leaving a week's worth of mail by the side of the road.)

The largest employers outside of the Village have on-site facilities for food, but many of their employees come into Philmont on a regular or irregular basis for a change of pace. The Vanderbilt Inn has long been a County-wide meeting place for special events and lunch meetings.

Businesses—particularly those with specialized clienteles—also benefit from many outsiders. Delphi Chiropractic, for example, attracts many people from elsewhere in the County (as well as from Massachusetts).

RECOMMENDATION When promoting the market size of local business, include the surrounding communities.

Philmont will never be able to offer the range of businesses that a large commercial center can offer. That is why one-of-a-kind businesses in a pedestrian-friendly environment can help attract people to all of the businesses in Philmont.

RECOMMENDATION Encourage businesses that will provide goods and servic-

es that will be attractive to both residents and non-residents. Encourage businesses that will encourage people to come to Philmont for a unique product.

Also, a new resident of Main Street, Carapace Farm is bringing back an older tradition of Philmont with the sheep-to-shawl manufacturing of wool felt products. In addition to creating goods that will attract a clientele from within and outside of Philmont, they also offer regular classes for adults and children

RECOMMENDATION Encourage established businesses to relocate to Philmont. This would directly serve the Philmont community as well as increasing the numbers of regular visitors.

Visiting Philmont for Fun

Leisure time attractions can draw people to Philmont; they also can entice people to spend more time in the Village when they come here to run errands. Also, they can help people from outside Philmont to choose to come to a business in Philmont rather than to one elsewhere.

Attractions in Philmont range from specific annual events to a variety of resources and organizations that are available year-round.

Annual Events

Currently there are at least 3 community sponsored events which encourage attendance from the local community as well as visitors. They are:

Philmont Community Day Held in July/August, Philmont Community Day usually includes craft vendors, food, a softball game, and a fishing derby for kids. This typically attracts people from Philmont and the immediate surrounding area.

Road Race Held in April, this 10 year old event attracts 150 entrants, drawing mostly from outside Philmont. If there were more attractions promoted in Philmont (such as a self-guided walking tour of the Mill District and reservoir), people might stay or return.

RECOMMENDATION Give promotional materials about Philmont to Road Race participants.

House and Garden Tour Held Memorial Day weekend, this 3-year old event draws 50-100 people to a self-guided walking house, garden and building tour of Philmont, drawing from within and outside of Philmont.

RECOMMENDATION Promote the House and Garden Tour through Columbia County Tourism.

Other Events There are also many parades for Halloween, Santa Claus, Memorial Day, and so forth.

RECOMMENDATION Additional public events with publicity would encourage other visitors (e.g., concerts in the new Park).

Natural Resources

Philmont is the home to a beautiful lake and an unusual laid-up stone dam as well as lovely views of the Catskills. Visitors come to Philmont to enjoy the views of the lake, to fish in the lake and streams, and to skate. Currently, there is not easy access to High Falls; better access could encourage more visitors. Opening the Philmont reservoir to swimming, which is now under investigation, could also encourage visitors.

Currently, most of Philmont's natural resources are not easily accessible to the public. Ideas of a rail trail, a walk around the lake, a path to the High Falls—among others, would avail the natural resources not only to the residents of Philmont, but to visitors.

RECOMMENDATION Make access to Summit Lake more visible via signage pointing to the lake.

RECOMMENDATION Have events or activities that draw people into the Summit Lake area.

RECOMMENDATION Continue to pursue the possibility of swimming in Summit Lake.

RECOMMENDATION Pursue walking trail ideas and a path to the High Falls.

Sports, Clubs, and Groups

The Village of Philmont includes the Philmont Rod & Gun Club, the American Legion building, which holds Philmont Rotary meetings and offers Bingo, and the Philmont Village Park. There is also a community chorus.

The American Legion Building hosts their monthly meetings and a weekly Bingo game. It is also available for rental. The Philmont Rotary Club holds its weekly meetings there. And like the Philmont Rod & Gun club, despite its name, the Philmont Rotary is actually made up of mostly non-Philmont residents.

The Philmont Village Park (Memorial Field) is a wonderful resource which is used constantly during the summer months. Softball and baseball games are most prominent at the park - which services not only

Philmont teams and their opponents, but also hosts games for other townships. The concession stand and Memorial Field's excellent maintenance make it an attraction for Philmont. In addition, every other year there is usually a circus held there.

The Philmont Community Chorus accepts and encourages members from outside Philmont; their performances draw from the entire community.

RECOMMENDATION Encourage further use of the Rod & Gun club, the American Legion Building and the Village Park to host interesting and enjoyable events that would be a pleasure to the community as well as, if well marketed, encourage visitors.

RECOMMENDATION Support the marketing of the clubs and chorus to encourage them to become larger and stronger groups with even more following.

RECOMMENDATION Provide informational support for funding availability and space availability for people who are interested in starting new clubs/activities. Complete survey of public space available for rental.

Churches

There are four churches in Philmont mostly serving the local community, but able to attract visitors, and certainly have visitors during ceremonial events (weddings and funerals). They include Sacred Heart (Roman Catholic), St. Mark's Episcopal, The Methodist Church of Philmont, and The Second Reformed Church of Claverack (Dutch Reformed). In addition the churches hold special events (e.g. Christmas Fairs) which attract visitors. Sacred Heart also features a large separate hall for receptions and other events.

Community Center

The new community center currently under construction has the prospect of attracting visitors, if the events are open to the larger public. The concept that this will be supervised and have guided events makes the possibility of opening this to the larger community quite reasonable.

RECOMMENDATION Support the Philmont's Community Center to make programs available to people outside of Philmont, as well as residents.

Residences

In addition to its private homes, Philmont is home to a number of support entities that provide services beyond the local clientele. Pine Haven, Philmont Terrace, and Richardson Hall provide housing to lower income seniors. The Tripp Center provides low cost lunch to those over 65. Columbia Opportunities offers Head Start child care as well as res-

idential help for lower income households. These services attract people not only to live in Philmont, but to visit the facilities.

Agricultural

Although Philmont itself does not allow any livestock farming, there are number of Philmont residents who preside over farms within the area. Threshold Farm, a local community sponsored agriculture (CSA) project, has their local pick-up spot in Philmont (in the Mill District). Also High Falls Gardens, located just outside Philmont is specifically designed as a display garden for growing ginger and herbs.

Historical Interest

Philmont has a rich history and many of the houses are still intact.

RECOMMENDATION Create a historic self guided walking tour of Philmont.

RECOMMENDATION See if the Columbia County Tourism Board is interested in a Columbia County Tour of Mills in which Philmont could be featured.

RECOMMENDATION Consider other ways to capitalize on the existing historic structures to be used in some way that can honor and share the history of Philmont.

Mill District

Despite all the above reasons for visiting Philmont, Philmont is not brought to mind as a place that offers something unique and distinctive. Creating an identity for Philmont as “the place with the X” would clearly allow people to consider Philmont a destination spot.

The uniqueness that has become prevalent from the research gathered is brought together in the concept for the Mill District. The Mill District capitalizes on Philmont’s proximity, its walkability, its natural resources, its history and its current business strengths. It resolves issues of bringing people off Route 217, making the lake more accessible and visible and gives Philmont a distinction, therefore making it a place of destination.

RECOMMENDATION Support the concept of the Mill District to offer residents and visitors an unique and distinctive aspect of Philmont.

Passing Through Philmont

Many people pass through Philmont without stopping. New attractions—and existing attractions featured more prominently—may cause

them to stop. In addition, the Village and Main Street Committee should continue to maintain the hanging planters, banners, and flowers on Main Street to make it a place worth visiting.

It should be pointed out that this effort needs to be aggressive and continuous. It seems from anecdotal evidence that many of the people who pass through Philmont do so regularly—several times a day, once a week to shop at the Hawthorne Valley Farm Store, and so forth. It may be their 100th trip through Philmont that registers, “Something is happening here.”

RECOMMENDATION Keep Welcome to Philmont banners up except when holiday banners are up. That avoids double work in putting them up and down and keeps the Village’s efforts visible.

RECOMMENDATION Choose plants that require the level of maintenance that the DPW can provide for Main Street planters.

Who Passes Through

The location of Philmont directly on Route 217 and its accessibility to the Taconic Parkway and Harlemville (where the Hawthorne Valley complex is) means that Philmont can be perceived as “on the way” to someplace else. In addition, Philmont is at the very center of the County, making its proximity to most all of Columbia County advantageous.

RECOMMENDATION Businesses that would cater to travelers to Hawthorne Valley and/or the convenience of the Taconic State Parkway would encourage visitors to make a stop in Philmont, and they should be encouraged.

Lodging

One would not need to leave Philmont if visiting friends or family, unless one needed a separate sleeping space. Currently, Philmont provides no bed & breakfast or motel services nearby. This often means that visitors are forced to leave Philmont to sleep. The closest one B&B are in Claverack or Ghent, each almost 15 minutes away. The Vanderbilt Inn once provided this service, but no longer does. It would be a great benefit to Philmont to provide overnight accommodations.

Although there is no Bed & Breakfast open to the public, there is a Research/Scholar Hostel located in Philmont, which draws academics interested in studying the Dutch history of the greater area. This large library collection is maintained at one of the old mansions in the community and provides a lovely addition to the community, as well as drawing visitors from as far as Europe.

RECOMMENDATION Encourage overnight facilities for guests, perhaps in the Mill District near the reservoir.

Main Street

F. Steven Kirk, DBS Planning

This component of the Comprehensive Plan is made possible with a grant from the New York State Governor's Office for Small Cities.



One of the most significant findings of the Comprehensive Plan is that the central part of Main Street can be joined to the natural resource of the reservoir in a logical and convenient manner by expanding the existing Mill District. As will be noted later, it is proposed that a Mill District Association (formed either as a non-profit corporation or a local development corporation) be established to help promote and market the Mill District.

Project Area

For the purposes of this report, the Main Street area can be divided into three distinct components. Each of the three segments can be distinguished by the property uses that are found in each. The sections are separated as follows:

West Main Street

West Main Street begins at the western border of the Village and continuing easterly to Rock Street. West Main Street can be described as primarily residential in nature, although there are some commercial activities (a garage, a monument, and a tavern, etc.).

Central Main Street

This section begins at Rock Street and continues in an easterly direction to Martindale Road. This section of Main Street can best be described as typical small town Main Street. It contains a mix of commercial and retail establishments as well as some residential use. Most commercial activity within the Village can be found on Main Street. Contrary to popular belief, there is very little vacant space within this section of Main Street. Unfortunately, several property owners have previously converted commercial space on the first floor to residential space. While this may have alleviated short term vacancy problems, it is not conducive to developing a thriving, attractive Main Street. This area would benefit from a housing rehabilitation program and a façade improvement program for commercial properties.

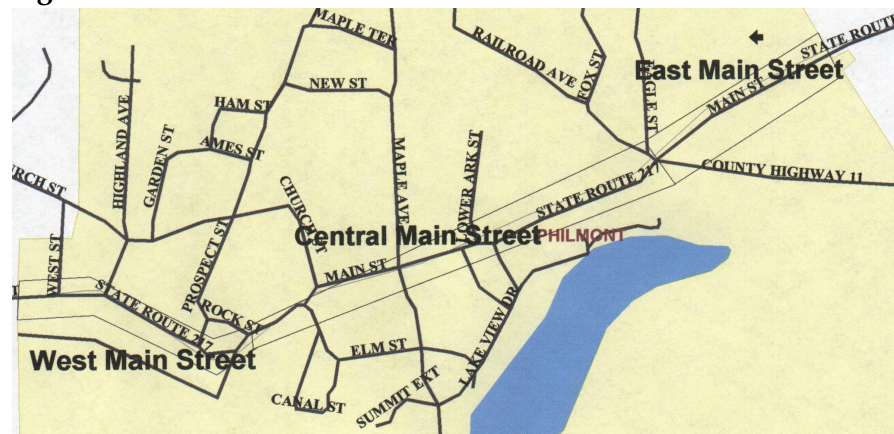
East Main Street

The final section begins at Martindale Road and continues east to the eastern border of the Village. Unlike the other two sections of Main Street, this area is almost exclusively made up of residential use (including Pine Haven). There are some single family homes as well as multiple dwelling clusters. The housing stock in this area is generally

sound but would benefit from an improvement program of some type including a housing rehabilitation program.

Figure 1 provides a view of the three segments of the Main Street area.

Figure 1: Main Street Sections



Perceptions

Figure 2 shows the recently completed Richardson Hall, a subsidized residence for senior citizens located in the Central Main Street section of Philmont.

Figure 2: Richardson Hall



Main Street is the Focal Point of the Village

Philmont is similar to many small communities in that “Main Street” serves as the focal point of the Village. Much of commerce, retail and food related activity is found on Main Street. A significant portion of social interaction also takes place in the Main Street area, particularly

in and around the post office, library, bank, the Village hall, Stewart's, and Richardson Hall.

Philmont recognizes that a healthy Main Street is more often than not indicative of a strong community. An initial inspection of Main Street, within the identified boundaries (with the exception of the Mill District), may lead one to conclude that Philmont's Main Street is indeed unhealthy. In fact, anecdotal evidence supports this conclusion. Many residents were of the opinion that the Main Street area was filled with old, unkempt, dilapidated, buildings and unattractive, storefronts. These subjective, conversational observations are supported by responses to the residential opinion survey conducted in the summer of 2001.

Gap Between Data and Perceptions About Main Street

Empirical data collected during the summer and fall of 2001 contradicts the opinions espoused by the majority of respondents to the survey. A building condition survey indicates that only 22 of the 108 buildings (23%) in the three sections of Main Street area are substandard. While there may be some truth to the perception that the Main Street area and Mill District has some negative aesthetic issues, it includes many attractive buildings that can easily be revitalized into attractive spaces that will be more conducive to shoppers and visitors to the area.

Also, recent events have begun to change the appearance and direction of Main Street. One only needs to look at the recently completed Richardson Hall to understand that Philmont is a viable community and is worth investing in. Several properties within the Central Section of Main Street have recently changed hands and will soon be revitalized with new commercial uses. While the change is subtle, with a measured pace, there can be no argument that the face of Main Street is changing for the better.

The Comprehensive Plan Board recognizes the vast misconceptions that undermine the positive aspects of Main Street and will recommend the implementation of an aggressive marketing strategy that will be focused on changing impressions from within and without Philmont. The goal of this strategy is to improve the image of Philmont to increase community pride among residents and to encourage non-residents that Philmont is an opportune place to live, work, and visit.

RECOMMENDATION Implement an aggressive marketing strategy to change impressions about Philmont.

RECOMMENDATION Philmont will continue to monitor public opinion relative to the perceptions of Main Street and will take actions to address any identified deficiencies, either real or perceived.

RECOMMENDATION Philmont will attempt to identify and secure funding through Federal, State and regional agencies to implement community im-

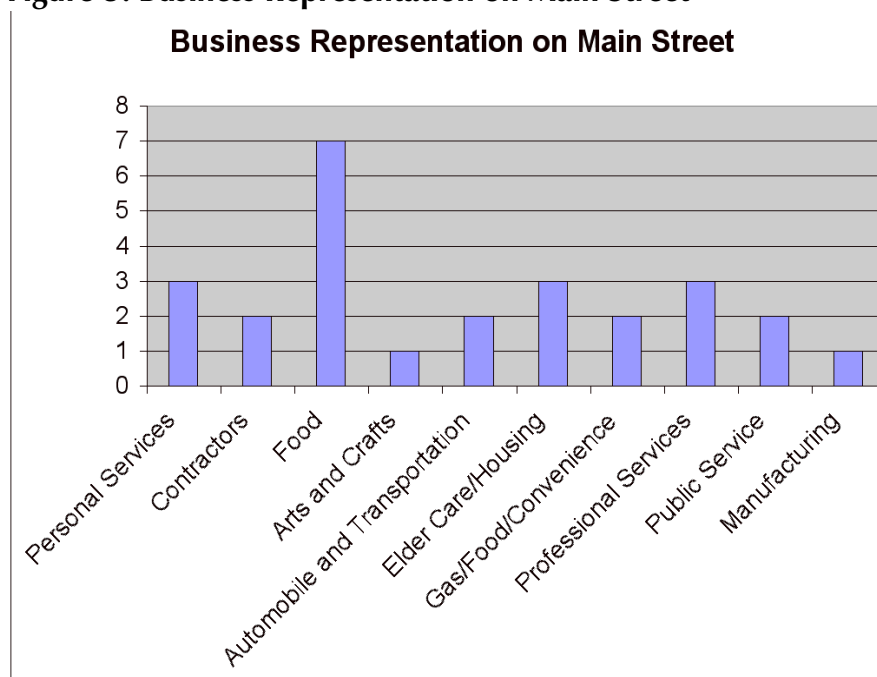
provement projects that will address building façades, economic development, parking, and other related Main Street issues.

Businesses on Main Street

Contrary to the views expressed during the opinion survey, there are few vacant commercial/retail spaces available in the Main Street area. In fact, an analysis of local businesses conducted in 2001 indicates that there are a total of 26 businesses located on Main Street in Philmont. Figure 3 offers a snapshot of the business activity as it now exists within Main Street Philmont.

The businesses located on Main Street make up approximately 32% of the businesses in Philmont. The majority of these businesses are related to the food industry. The Mill District, which is contiguous to Main Street, contains—in addition to many residences—a number of home-based, craft, and other businesses.

Figure 3: Business Representation on Main Street



RECOMMENDATION The Mill District Association should recommend aid to local crafts and art-related businesses in the establishment of an artists' cooperative that will provide space for local artists and craftsman to display and sell their work. The co-op will also provide an excellent space for visitors and shoppers to see a sample of the goods produced in the area and will also give people an opportunity to purchase these products.

Business and Economic Development

2000 Census data indicates a Median Household Income of \$24,583 and a poverty rate of 17%. 62% of the Village's population over the age of 24 possess a High School diploma, while 31% have some level of post high school education. Given these statistics, the Village of Philmont has an able, trainable work force and is attractive to smaller, specialty businesses. The Village has adopted legislation encouraging this type of business, and has shown a willingness to continue to do so.

Data collection for the entire Village revealed some interesting facts about Philmont. According to the research conducted for this document, the Village contained a total of 91 businesses. It is likely that there are even more businesses in Philmont that were not identified during the research phase of the Comprehensive Plan. The majority of these existing ventures were small, home based businesses. While analyzing the businesses within Philmont, a very specific trend began to materialize. Many of these businesses are rooted in activities that are associated, either directly or indirectly, with artist and craftsmen trades. This business activity is consistent with the Village's history of light industry and the mills of Philmont's past. Clearly, if the Village of Philmont can be identified with any type of specific industry, arts and crafts must be considered the dominant form of commerce.

Several of these shops can indeed be found in storefronts located along the Main Street corridor. However, through research and anecdotal information, a number of businesses operating in this cottage industry are actually located near the vicinity of the reservoir and the boundaries of the proposed Mill District.

RECOMMENDATION A marketing strategy should be developed to encourage business growth by touting the small business friendly atmosphere of the Village and of the existence of an educated and trainable existing work force.

RECOMMENDATION A central location should be identified to be used as an arts and crafts cooperative. This facility will serve several functions. It will be used as a display area where visitors can examine the goods produced by the artists and crafts persons within the Mill District. People will also have the opportunity to purchase these goods either from the shops themselves or from the cooperative.

RECOMMENDATION Prepare legislation that will prevent owners of commercial property on Main Street from converting commercial space on the first floor to residential space. The new laws will also consider offering incentives to property owners on Main Street that convert first floor residential space into commercial space.

Philmont's Existing Niche – Economic Development in the Mill District

As indicated in Business and Economic Development section, data was collected that showed that 91 businesses were located within Philmont. 15 (16%) of those businesses are related, either directly or indirectly, to the arts and crafts and performing arts industry. This type of business represents that largest segment of businesses within Philmont. This discovery is significant in that Philmont has never been able to lay claim as the home of any one type of industry. Without any involvement from the Village, other than collecting data, a community of thriving cottage industries has been identified.

The area of focus includes the expanded Mill District that is bordered by the south side of Main Street, Martindale Road to the east, Lakeview Drive (the reservoir and the Ockawamick Creek) to the south, Summit Street, and a small but important block that is created by the inclusion of Elm Street. The following image provides a map of the enlarged Mill District.

Figure 4: Proposed Mill District



The Mill District is a strategic area that is easy to navigate and provides a number of beautiful views and points of interest including the reservoir, parks, and specialty shops. The area promotes pedestrian traffic and is especially suited for use as an arts and crafts district.

It should be noted that the Mill District is already in existence. Its size is limited to the Summit Mill building which is located on Summit Street, in the southwest corner of the Main Street/Mill District area. The Comprehensive Plan Board has proposed the expansion of the Mill District to include the area described previously. The mill building itself is now vacant, but it is in very good condition and will no doubt play a prominent role as the Mill District realizes its full potential.

After further analysis, members of the Comprehensive Plan Board realized that a number of arts and crafts related businesses are already located in the Main Street area as described previously. Thus, the expansion of the Mill District that would capitalize on the existence of so many complementary businesses was the next logical step in revitalizing Main Street.

Advantages of Expanding the Mill District

- The location of the expanded Mill District is of particular benefit. The district is contiguous to Main Street and allows for easy access to the streets located within the District boundaries. This will be especially helpful when installing signage in the area to show visitors where the district is located.
- Many of the businesses that will gain from the implementation of this district are already located there.
- Creation of the Mill District will provide a greater profile for existing resources within the District, including the reservoir, the Village recreation area and the children's playground and park.
- The Mill District is contiguous to Main Street and many of the businesses in both areas are similar in nature and complement one another.

The Mill District currently is made up mostly of residential, home based business and civic uses. The Mill District will allow those uses to continue, but will also encourage the development of new businesses, including arts and crafts related businesses and supporting businesses, such as coffee houses and bed and breakfast establishments.

Creating the Mill District in the specific location identified will in effect create a niche for the Village that is now so sorely lacking. People will have a reason to come to Philmont, instead of just passing through. Owners of shops within the Main Street and Mill District will have a vested interest in the appearance of the area and will keep their properties neat and clean of debris. With little public investment, the area will continue to improve and transform into a desirable area that will continue to be a viable engine for Philmont's economy

RECOMMENDATION The Comprehensive Plan Board recommends the expansion of the Mill District to include the south side of Main Street, from Elm and Canal Streets to the west to Martindale Road to the east. The area also is bordered by Martindale Road to the east, Lakeview Drive (the reservoir and Ockawamick Creek) to the south, and Summit Street to the east, which includes a small block created by the inclusion of Elm Street.

RECOMMENDATION Philmont, in association with the Comprehensive Plan Board, should develop the Mill District Association, a not-for-profit organization that will be charged with overseeing and managing all aspects of the Mill District, including promoting the district, managing any special events

that are planned for the Mill District, and related responsibilities.

RECOMMENDATION Encourage appropriate new business growth within the Main Street and Mill District area. Businesses will include artists and craftsmen and other ventures that could be utilized in complementary and supporting roles. These could be described as food and restaurant businesses, bed and breakfast establishments, and other related industries.

RECOMMENDATION Develop a marketing strategy that will highlight the Mill District as a place to come and visit high end specialty shops that cater to arts and crafts buyers. The marketing plan will also publicize the other resources within the district, including the reservoir, recreational facilities and other related businesses.

RECOMMENDATION Seek to secure grant funds to assist in developing the Mill District. This will include implementing projects that will offer low interest loans to new and existing businesses to develop and grow. Efforts will also be made to secure funds to improve housing conditions and facades within the Mill District.

RECOMMENDATION The Mill District Association will encourage the addition of appropriate signage along Main Street to help draw attention to and identify the commercial area within the Central Main Street section.

RECOMMENDATION The Mill District Association will seek grant funds through the Small Cities, HOME, AHC and other related funding programs to introduce building improvement and façade restoration programs for properties along Main Street.

RECOMMENDATION The Mill District Association will work with existing commercial property owners to encourage beautification projects, including landscaping, lighting, and façade improvements.

Building Conditions

In August of 2001, the Comprehensive Plan Board commissioned a building condition survey to determine, in an objective manner, the condition and usage of all buildings within Philmont. It is important to remember that this survey was conducted to determine the condition of the exterior of the building. No interior inspection was conducted on these buildings. The Village ordered this study so that an inventory of buildings could be established and a determination of area needs could be articulated.

The Main Street and Mill District areas include a total of 82 buildings. A breakdown of these buildings, along with use, is included in the following table:

Table 3: Building Conditions and Mill District and Main Street

CONDITION	RESIDENTIAL	COMMERCIAL
Standard	63	
Moderately Substandard	15	1
Severely Substandard	2	1
Dilapidated		
	80	2

By percentage, residential buildings represent the majority of structures in the area. The overwhelming majority of buildings are in standard condition. However, many buildings require substantial cosmetic improvements to improve the overall aesthetics of the area.

Figure 5: Main Street Façades



The photograph on the left indicates that indeed, some of the façades located directly on Main Street are in less than desirable condition; however, the structural integrity of these same buildings appears to be in excellent condition. Thus, the concern identified with the façades is easily addressed and rectified by the introduction of a façade improvement program. The retouched photograph on the right gives a glimpse of the impact some simple façade improvements would have on Main Street.

The buildings located within the Mill District, while containing different styles and uses, are for the most part in very good condition. Many buildings would benefit from a fresh coat of paint and other routine maintenance, but the structures located in the Mill District are stable. There are two notable exceptions to this observation. Specifically, two buildings located on Ark Street are in various stages of disrepair and desperately need attention. Each of the buildings can be saved but careful consideration must be given when calculating the cost of repair versus the value of the rehabilitated building.

Figure 6: Mill District House in Need of Repair



Figure 6 shows the existing condition of one of two buildings on Ellsworth Street that are considered to be severely substandard.

RECOMMENDATION Continue to actively pursue funding to implement building improvement programs. Specifically, Philmont will access the Governor's Office for Small Cities, The New York State Division of Housing and Community Renewal, The Rural Development Administration, and any other agencies that can offer financial assistance to the Village to introduce building improvement programs that will address the negative aspects of buildings within the Main Street area.

RECOMMENDATION Develop guidelines for growth within the Mill District. Specifically, the Comprehensive Plan recommends passage of legislation that will foster the growth of arts and crafts and related businesses within the Mill District. This may include adopting zoning laws that will be less restrictive regarding the number uses permitted and on site parking required by current zoning laws.



History of Philmont

Thomas Hotalen
Hattie Johnson
Nancy Brousseau



The Comprehensive Plan for the Village of Philmont examines the Village today and how it can and should grow in the future. The Comprehensive Plan Board has looked to the past for lessons both positive and negative that can be incorporated into the planning process. This component of the Comprehensive Plan summarizes the historical information gathered during the process.

Some of this material comes from the Centennial Book prepared in 1992. Other material comes from a history of the Village prepared by Charles R. Nichols for the dedication of the Philmont Community Building in 1962. Still more comes from other secondary sources as well as primary sources such as Hattie Johnson's memoir of growing up in the Village. Most of the buildings shown in the figures are still standing. Notes in the captions indicate those buildings that are not extant.

This component consists of three sections:

- *Hattie Johnson's memoir of growing up in the Village*
- *A historical walk down Main Street*
- *A timeline of Village history*

My History of a Lovely Old Village—Hattie Johnson (1903-2003)

I was born in Copake, New York and moved to Philmont when I was two and a half years of age.

My dad delivered milk for Mr. Frank B. Harder. My mother worked in the factories.

When I was a young girl growing up Philmont had four hotels, six mills, a needle shop, and two blacksmiths.

Some boys would go to the blacksmith and had a stick to keep the flies off the horses while being shod.

Also there were three millineries, five grocery stores, and four barber shops. We have only one barber in town now.

Two movie theaters, a weekly paper called the Philmont Sentinel, and three livery stables. I remember Mr. Charlie Whiteman meeting the train up by the railroad station; he had a surrey with fringe on top.

The roads were so dusty that people could not sit outside. In later years, they were paved. Also, remember the old Red Fin? [The Red Fin was a swimming area east of the reservoir; it was silted up by the hurricane of 1938.]

We now have water and sewer systems. For a long time it was only wells and out houses. In 1896, Philmont Hose Company was formed and in later years a rescue squad.

Old timer outfits of high lace collar, long skirts, and crochet shawls were the style. The Philmont United Methodist held an old timers night in 1981 in the Church to help with the celebration of 109 years in service. In the years of 1886 – 1899 the church had 494 people as members.

We had plenty of dirt roads at one time. There was a booklet on Philmont and it illustrated that Philmont was a flourishing mill town with \$1,000,000 invested in different industries.

I made a tour of the Village pointing out sites to Tom Hotalen as Pat Harder drove us around. [That tour follows this history.] We had an enjoyable day, especially myself as I reviewed the history of Philmont.

Our newest building is the Philmont Family Practice built for Dr. Baillargeon where the old "beehive" used to be. Dr. Baillargeon started in the former Dr. White office. Dr. Baillargeon and Dr. Silvernail have over 2,000 patients. Much credit is due them, for people without transportation can stay in town or out of towners can come in.

My home used to be dismantled and taken to Copake Lake for the summer when Harder owned it. It was bolted together in the attic.

Some of the blocks of streets were known as the Capelli Block, Eliza Parks Block, and Harder Square Carney Block.

At one time where the park is in the center of town there used to be a pond.

Remember the High Falls by #4 Mill?

—Hattie Johnson

A Walk on Main Street and Its Environs, Historically

Upper Main Street, heading East from the intersection of State Route 217 and County Route 11 (Martindale Road) The Columbia County Sanitarium opened about 1920. It was moved from the Ghent Old Folks Home (County Home) to its present location adjacent to Pine Haven because the facilities in Ghent got too small. Pine Haven (County Home) was opened in 1978 and was added to in 1985. Its location is on upper Main Street.

Figure 1: Columbia County Sanitarium



The oldest home in the village of Philmont is on the corner where State Route 217 and County Route 11 meet. It was constructed in 1815.

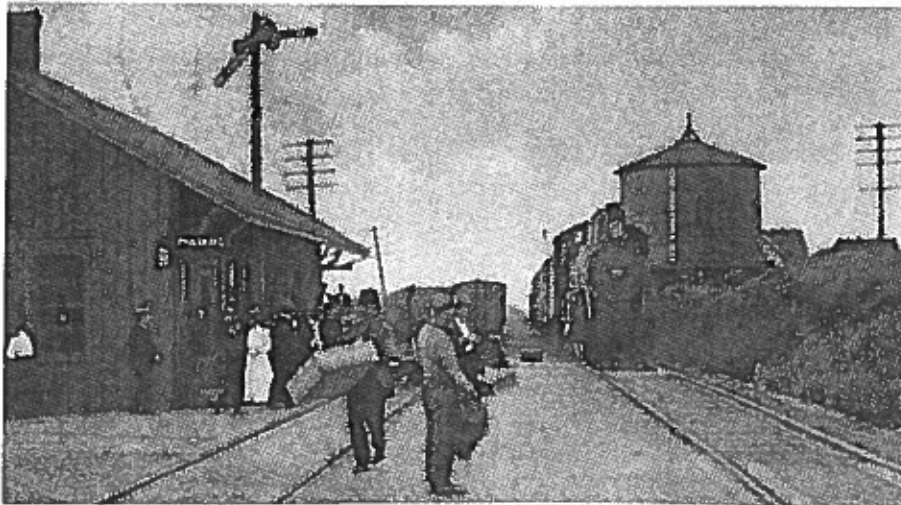
Main Street, between the intersection of State Route 217 and Summit Street, heading East to the intersection of County Route 11 (Martindale Road)

Where the present Mike Johnston Trucking is located, just before the turn onto County Route 11, prior businesses were owned by Dick Shelton, Kenny Harris, Mr. Grau, and Stanley Stickles.

The American Legion Hall (Minkler-Seery Post No. 252) was a factory, an opera house, and then 3 factories.

On the lot where Ritchie's Car Wash (and Scoops Ice Cream) are located, next to the American Legion Hall, the Philmont Railroad Station was located.

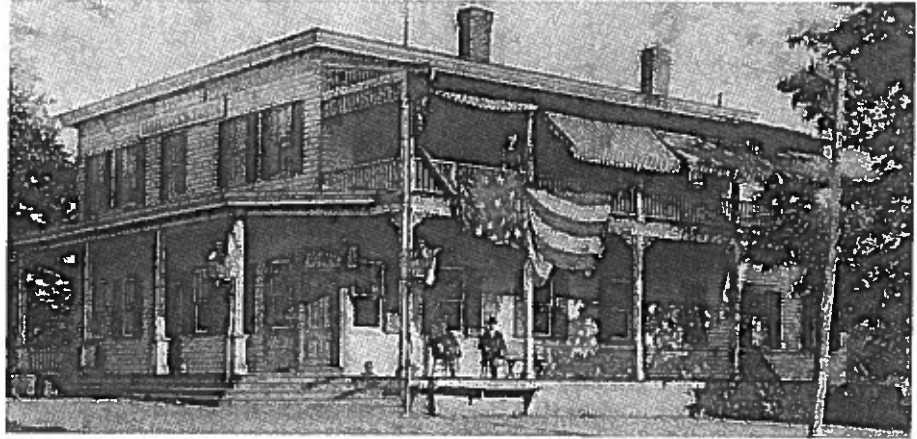
Figure 2: First Railroad Station (burned)



The building below Ritchie's Car Wash was the Gas Co. and a lumber company at one time. Later, it was owned by Mr. Splittberger, and later Mr. Elliot; it was a hardware store.

Crossing Main Street, the Vanderbilt Inn has been a hotel and bar since its opening in 1860 and continues as a bar and restaurant today.

Figure 3: Vanderbilt Inn



The building adjacent to, and below, the Vanderbilt Inn was Wasner's Grocery at one time.

Figure 4: Wasner's Grocery



A large green house, two doors below the Vanderbilt Inn and on the same side, housed at least three generations of Snyder's Insurance. Then it was James N. Johnston's funeral home, and later a stained glass business.

The building below Johnston's had a grocery store downstairs and an apartment upstairs.

Sacred Heart Roman Catholic Church was at first a small wooden structure, but was torn down and replaced with its present brick structure. It is located at the intersections of Ark and Main Streets. At the top of Ark Street is the Parish Hall. Five apartments were demolished to provide room for this structure.

Figure 5: Sacred Heart Roman Catholic Church



Near the Reservoir, the Ice House was located, its function indicated by its name. It stood where the future Community Center and the adjacent playground are today.

Figure 6: Cutting Ice on the Reservoir

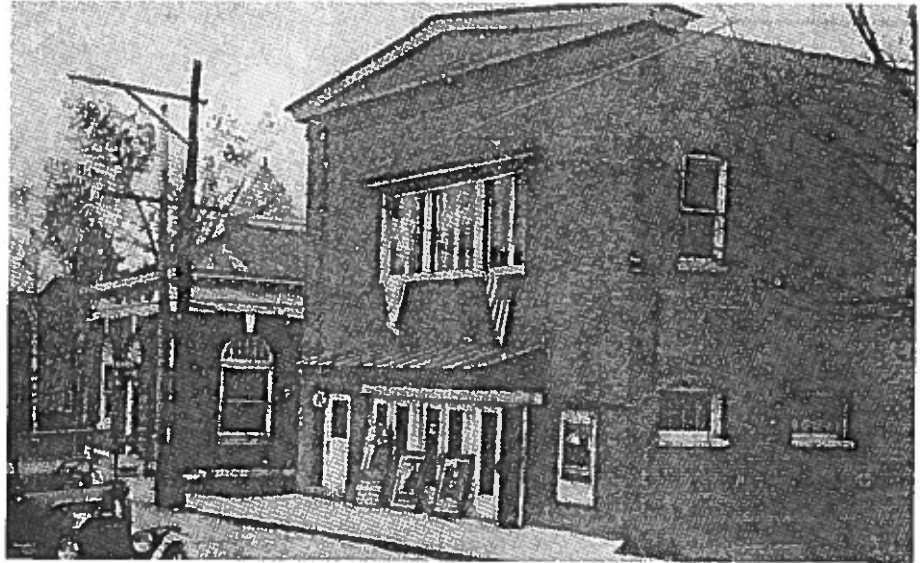


The Flood of 1938 broke out of the Reservoir at the top of Ark Street, rushed down Ark and Lower Ark Streets, eventually cutting a swath of destruction to the bottom of the hill of Prospect Street, and on to Melleville and eventually to the Claverack Creek.

Crossing Main Street, at 130 Main Street is the second oldest house in the Village. It was constructed circa 1817.

Just east of the present bank was the location of the Strand Theater and Nick's Ice Cream Store.

Figure 7: Strand Theater (demolished) with Bank in Rear



On the corner of Main Street and Maple Avenue was the 1st National Bank (1904), which later became the Farmer's Bank, and later the present Key Bank, Philmont Branch.

Crossing Main Street, on the corner of Main Street and Summit Street, where Lou's Barber Shop is presently located, was a shoemaker.

Figure 8: Shoemaker



Just up Main Street, East from the barbershop and on the same side, was the 1899 Firehouse. The fire company was located on the first floor, the library on second floor, and an apartment on third floor. This building was recently torn down, but the 1899 dated arch from its roofline and its stained glass windows were preserved.

Main Street, from the intersection of Summit Street, heading West, to Rock Street

Across from the present Stewart's Shop location were Wildermuth's Grocery, White's Shoe Store, and DeCaneo's Barber Shop. The present Stewart's Shop was the site of the Village of Philmont School. The school used St. Mark's Episcopal Church Hall, next door, for its gym.

Figure 9: Philmont Union Free School (demolished)



Richardson's Hardware was located next to the present Stewart's Shop and it is presently part of Richardson Hall, a senior residence center with 24 apartments, recently refurbished from Richardson's Hardware and its adjacent building Richardson's Hotel and joined by a second story walkway. At one time, Richardson's Hardware had a dance hall on 2nd floor and the Odd Fellows fraternal organization met there as well.

Main Street had many stores, including still another grocery, an ice cream shop, a shop for bicycles, a corsets and hats store, and later, a beauty parlor (run by Mr. Hawes).

Figure 10: Bicycle Shop



Dr. Raver had a dentist's office and there was also Rion's Paper Store. Roy's Restaurant was located in the presently closed Laundromat, which also housed a newsroom. In the buildings between the closed Laundromat and the corner of Main and Church Streets were a drug-store where LaGonia's Pizza is now located, Glickman's Clothing Store next to the present LaGonia's, and a grocery store where Sharper Image Beauty Parlor is presently located on the corner. [This was known as the Beadell Block.]

Figure 11: Beadell Block



Across Main Street from the present LaGonia's was an A & P Store, with a Chinese laundry in the back. This building later became Dingman's Grocery, and still later was a hardware store.

Figure 12: A & P Store



On the corner of Main and Church Streets, on the same side as the present Sharper Image, was Keen's, later Palen's, and presently the High Falls Café. This building also housed, at one time or another, a gas station, a shoe store, a hat store, and a drug store.

Figure 13: Palen's

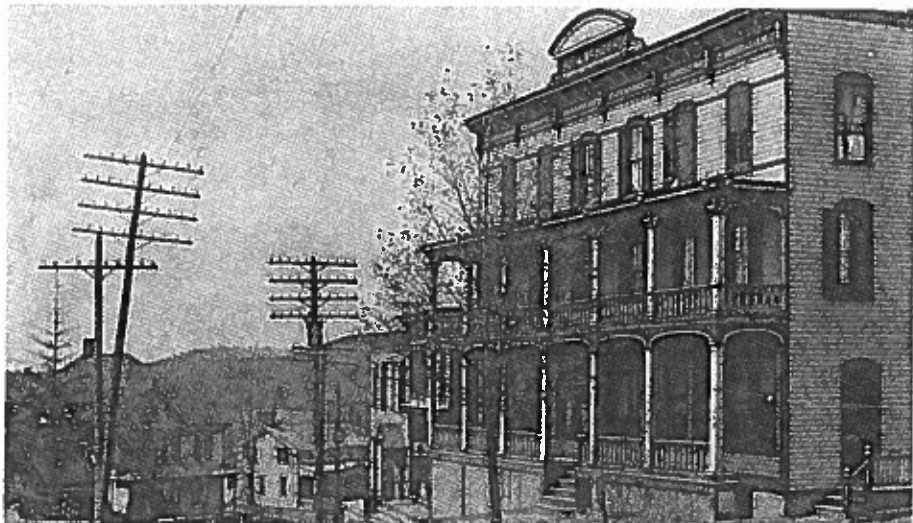


At the locations of the present Jack's Village Market and Cumberland Farms Store was the High Rock Mill, destroyed by fire in 1977.

Lower Main Street, from Rock Street, heading West, to the
Philmont Village Line

The first house below the former Hill Top Hotel [also known as Hopkins House] was the telegraph office.

Figure 14: Hopkins House



A little further up Main Street, is the Yerick House (later Richardson's), where, in the back, a stove polish business was located.

Figure 15: Yerick House



Most of the houses on this same side, across from the Hill Top Hotel, were owned by the mills. Just past the last house was the storage mill, followed by Cedar Row.

At the corner of Block and Main Streets was a mill which later became a garage. Between it and the present Nick's Restaurant and Bar was a bakery. The next building down Main Street on the same side as Nick's was a gas station. Further down the street, on the other side where the sand pile is located at the Town of Claverack Garage, was a paper mill.

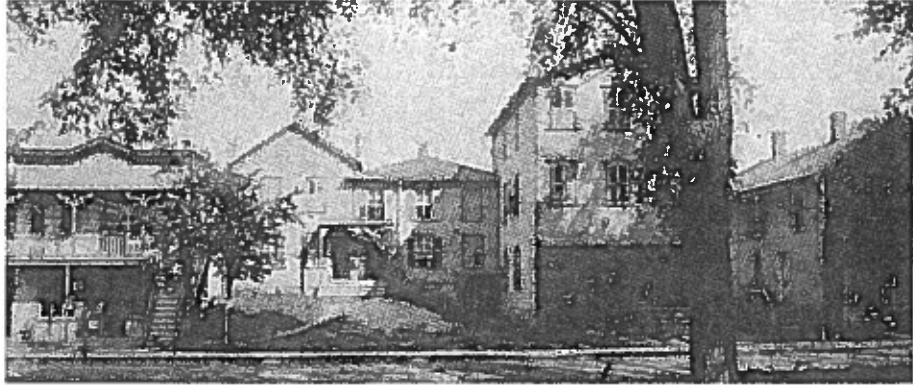
Main Street Environs

Taking a bit of a stroll from Main Street, between Garden Street and Highland Avenue, on Church Street, was an auction hall (by day) and a dance hall (by night). This building was razed in 2001.

Further up Church Street, on the other side was the Crusader Club founded by Miss Clara Harder in 1909. It housed a gym upstairs, used by Philmont High School, and downstairs, a pocket billiards, ping pong, and games room. Recently the building housed a glassblowing business.

Returning to Main Street, take a turn at the Tripp Center onto Elm Street. The "Beehive", which housed 5 apartments was located where the present Philmont Family Practice and its parking lot are today. Jutting off Elm Street onto Canal Street, the #4 mill was located at the far end of Canal Street. Turning the corner of Elm Street, and following Elm Street to its intersection with Summit Street, across from this juncture was a funeral parlor.

Figure 16: The "Beehive"



A Philmont Time Line

Factory Hill/Early 19th century

Philmont was then known as Factory Hill. In 1847 a school house was built.

School and Library/1842

School district for Factory Hill formed by people of towns of Claverack and Ghent. First public library established in connection with the school. In 1847 a school house was built.

Dam/1845

George P. Phillip constructed a dam above the High Falls and cut a dam through solid rock along the hill slope at an angle to Agawamuck (Ockawamick) Creek, to provide power for several mills.

High Rock Mill/1847

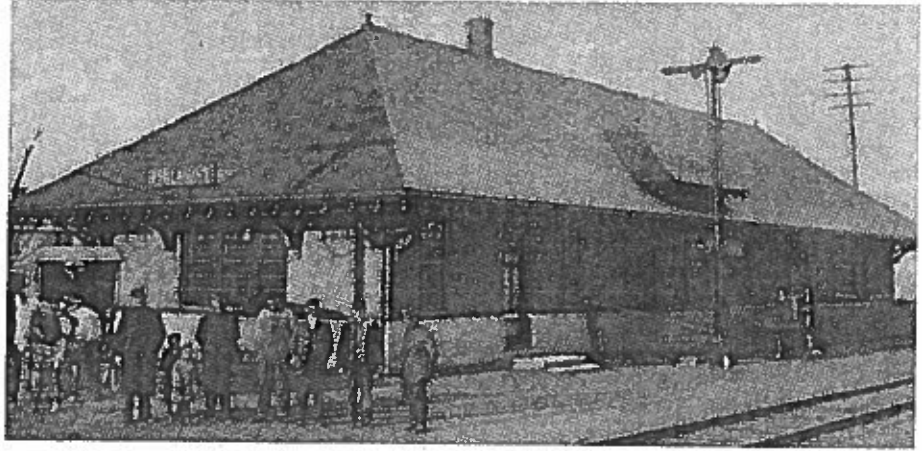
Mr. Phillip constructed a mill for the manufacture of fine woolen goods on "High Rock."

Railroad/1852

Completion of the Harlem Railroad helped to boost local industries, including a machine shop and foundry, a machine works, a scale works

making platform and counter scales, and a needle factory. The local station was named by the railroad in honor of Mr. Phillip.

Figure 17: Second Railroad Station (demolished)



Paper Mill/1855

Mr. Phillip began manufacture of paper. The mill operated until 1890.

Post Office/1858

First post office established.

Paper Mill/1858

Philmont Paper Mills established by Samuel Rogers on the site of the old Gifford Grist Mill on the main stream, just below the foot of the falls.

Civil War/1861-1865

Some of Philmont's men served in the Civil War.

School Building/1861

The school building (later added to and known as Philmont High School) constructed and used until completion of Ockawamick Central School in 1952.

Figure 18: Union Free School Building (before addition of wing)



Underwear/1862

Nelson P. Aiken started an underwear factory. This factory was expanded in 1865 and became Philmont Hosiery Mills.

Population 700/1871

Population 700. Philmont now contained 3 knitting mills, 3 paper mills, a machine shop, a building and joiner shop, a feed mill, one hotel, 3 stores, 2 blacksmith shops, and one school.

Figure 19: Interior of a Mill

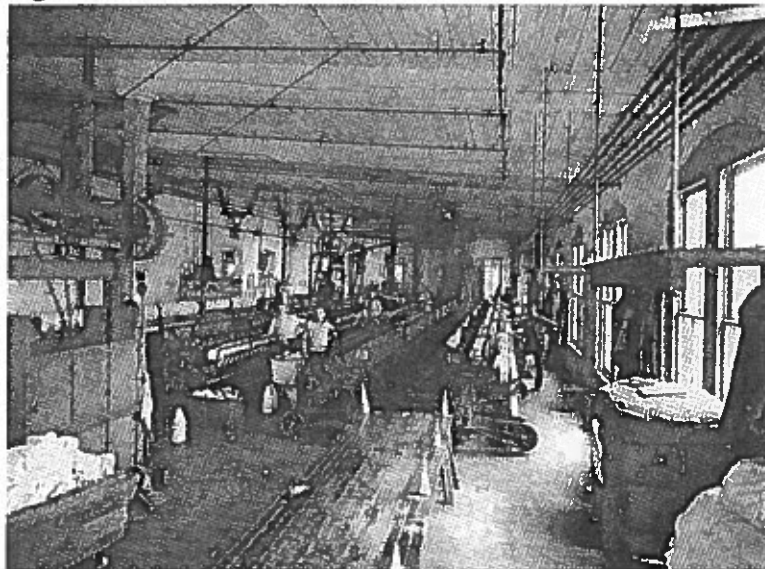
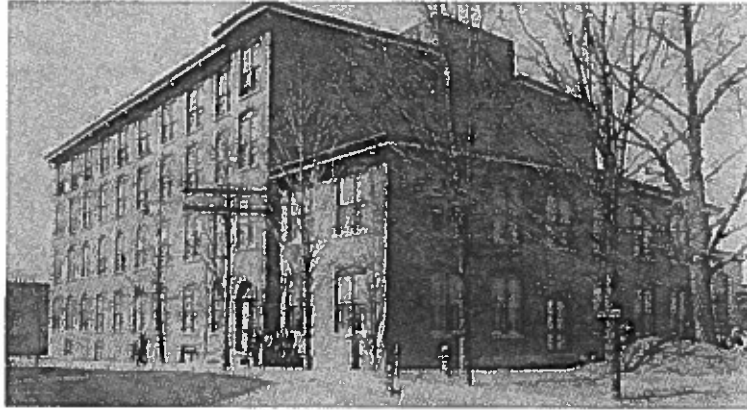


Figure 20: Mill # 1 (demolished)



Methodist Church/1872

Present United Methodist Church of Philmont completed.

Figure 21: Methodist Church and Parsonage



Catholic Church/1881

Sacred Heart (Roman Catholic) parish established. Present brick church replaced smaller wooden church in 1902.

Midland Mill (Underwear)/1886

Midland Mill established by John Hayes to make underwear.

High Rock Knitting Company/1890

High Rock Knitting Company organized by P. M. Harder and Son.

Incorporated Village/1892

Philmont incorporated as the Village of Philmont on July 2, 1892. George Baker served as the first Village President.

Reformed Church/1892

Reformed Church of Philmont organized. (After merger with Reformed Church in Mellenville in 1969, it was renamed the 2nd Reformed Church of Claverack).

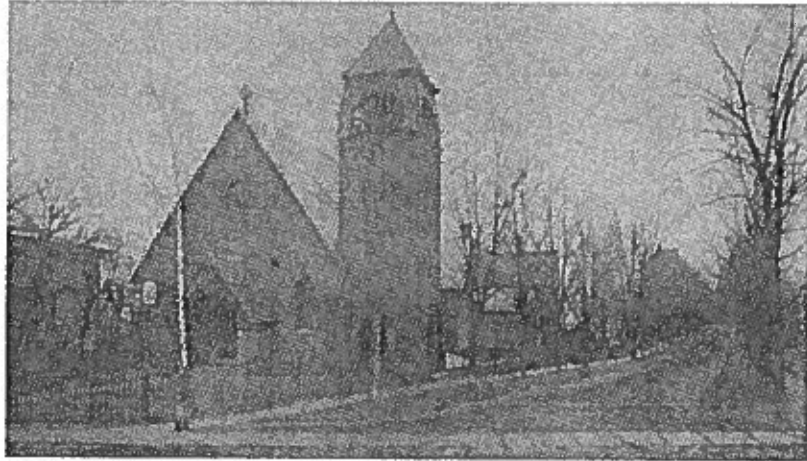
Figure 22: Reformed Church



Episcopal Church/1892

St. Mark's (Episcopal) Church was organized in 1882 and the present church building was consecrated in 1892.

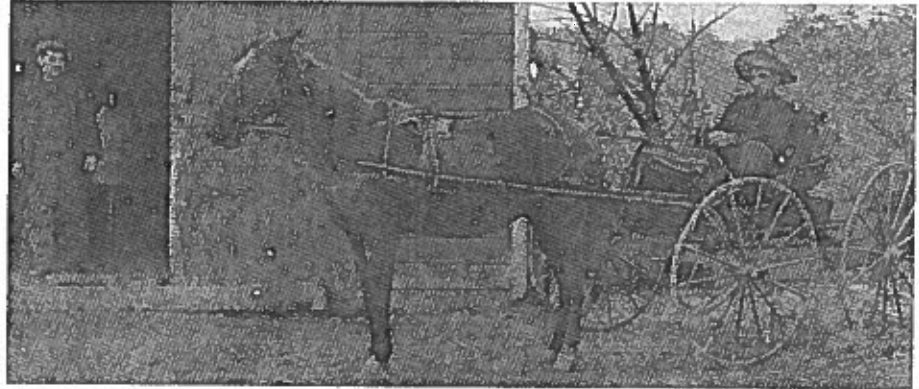
Figure 23: St. Mark's Church



Kerosene Street Lamps/1893

Kerosene street lamps installed.

Figure 24: Village Lamplighter



Hose Company/1896

Philmont Volunteer Hose Company No. 1 organized.

Newspaper/1897

Philmont Sentinel named the official Village paper.

Library/1898

Philmont Public Library chartered as a municipal library to serve the village of Philmont.

Population 1,956/1900

Population 1,956. The Village contained 3 drug stores, 6 general stores, 2 hardware stores, 1 furniture store, 2 hat stores, 12 groceries, 3 hotels, 4 churches, and 4 doctors.

Figure 25: Johnnie Walker Insurance and Bill Yerick, barber



Trainwreck/1901

A trainwreck drew attention in 1901.

Figure 26: Trainwreck



Sacred Heart Church/1902

The church was completed in this year.

Figure 27: Sacred Heart Church



Masonic Lodge/1902

Agawamuck Lodge #841 F. & A. M. (Masonic lodge) established.

Columbia Mesh Mill/1903

Columbia Mesh mill started operation.

Bank/1904

First National Bank of Philmont established.

Gas Street Lights/1907

Gas lights replace kerosene street lights.

Crusader Club/1909

Crusader Club founded by Miss Clara Harder (1887-1970). Construction of Crusader Club completed 1911, with gymnasium, sewing room, and game room.

Figure 28: Crusader Club



Grange/1911

Mellenville Grange #1255 organized. (Incorporated in 1913).

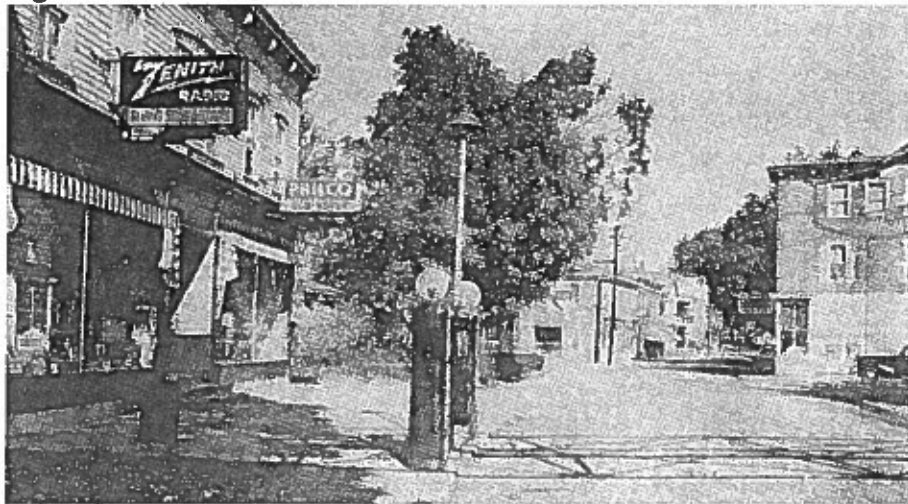
Electric Street Lights/1913

Electric street lights replaced gas street lights.

Main Street Paved/1915

Main Street has concrete road laid.

Figure 29: Main Street



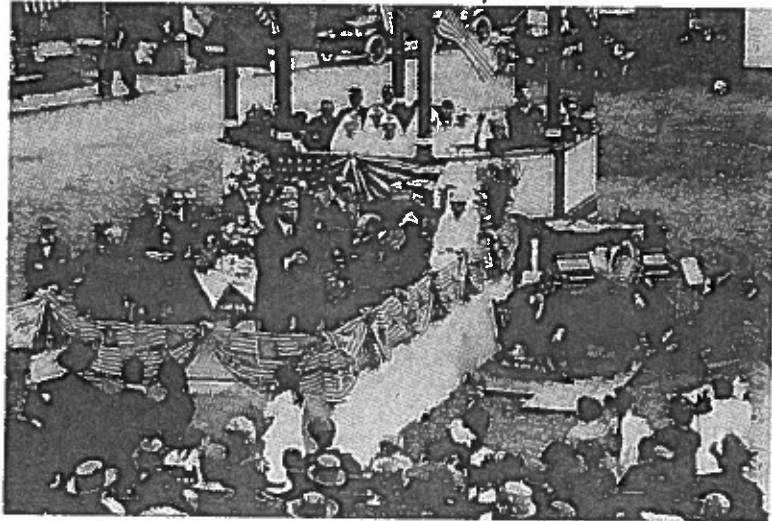
Strand Theatre/1916

Strand Theatre constructed and had 400 seats.

War/1917 – 1918

April 5, 1917 – November 11, 1918 Philmont sends men to fight in World War I. Sgt. Guy Minkler and John W. Seery lost their lives in this conflict. Philmont American Legion Post # 252 was named in their honor.

Figure 30: World War I Bond Rally



American Legion Minkler-Seery Post #252/1919-1920

The post was organized in 1919 and received its charter in 1920.

Figure 31: American Legion (formerly Empire House)



Victory Lingerie Company/1919

Victory Lingerie Company begins making fine shirt waists and underwear.

Telephone/c. 1920

The telephone exchange has 144 customers. The Village has a telegraph office, a dentist, and Columbia Sanatorium (for TB patients).

High Rock Knitting Company Abroad/1920's

High Rock Knitting Company employed 750 people and had offices in New York City and London.

American Legion Auxiliary/1922

American Legion Auxiliary to Minkler-Seery Post # 252 was formed.

Rod and Gun Club/1923

Philmont Rod and Gun Club organized.

Royal Neighbors/1927

Royal Neighbors of America (fraternal benefit society) organized Mayflower Camp in Philmont.

First Mayor/1928

Abram Palen served as the first Village Mayor. In 1927 he served as the last Village President.

Auction/1935

High Rock Knitting Company auction disposed of 37 houses.

Figure 32: An Auction Disposed of Mill Property

ANNOUNCING THE SALE
AT PUBLIC AUCTION TO THE HIGHEST BIDDER

37 Valuable Dwelling Properties
OF THE
HIGH ROCK KNITTING CO.
OF
PHILMONT, NEW YORK

ATURDAY, MAY 11, 1935, at 10.00 A. M. (Daylight Saving Time)

SALE INCLUDES:

- 18 Cottages
- 10 Two Family Dwellings
- 3 Three Family Dwellings
- 6 Four Family Dwellings
- 1 Seven Family Dwelling
- 1 Ten Family Dwelling
- Unimproved Land

To be Sold on the Respective Premises, in Separate Parcels Only, as set forth and Described Herein

Bank Robbed/1938

Philmont National Bank robbed at gunpoint of \$9,800 by 2 gunman. A manhunt by the New York State Police and the FBI later captured the two bandits.

Flood/1938

On September 21, 1938, flood waters from the Hurricane of '38 broke out of the Reservoir above Ark Street, carving a swath of destruction all the way to Mellenville. The dam held.

Figure 33: Ark Street after the Flood



Figure 34: Prospect Avenue after the Flood



Mills Foundered/1938

A Reconstruction Finance Loan is denied. The mills foundered. Hard-ers lose control of the mills in 1939.

Mills Reconstructed/1939 +

Susquehanna Mills Corporation reconstructed the mill organization and continued until 1953.

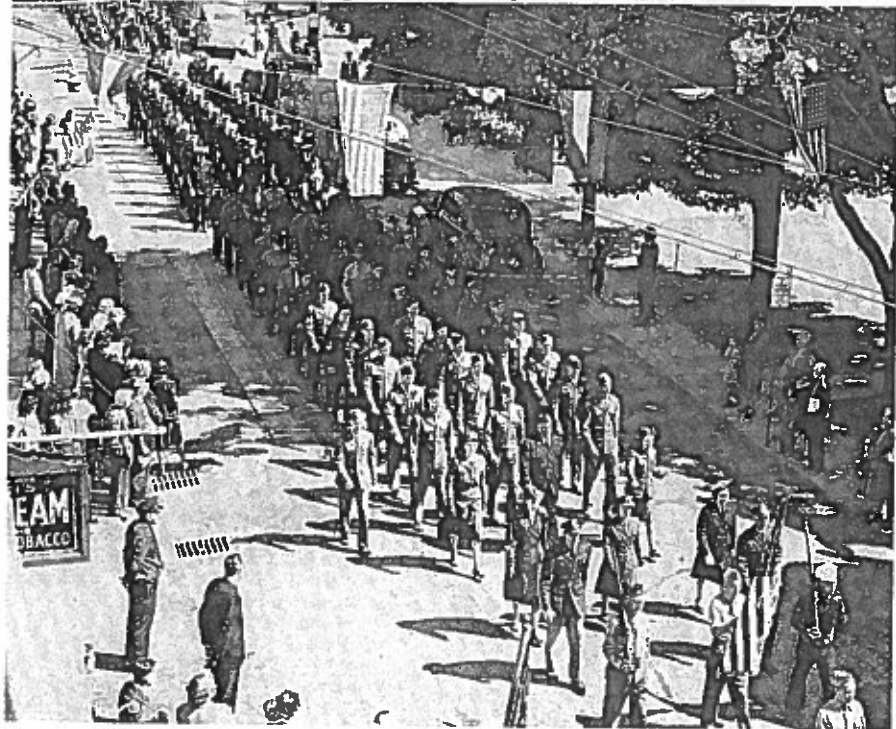
World War II/1941 – 1945

Philmont sent men and women to World War II. 9 died serving their country.

Figure 35: Homecoming Parade, September 14, 1946



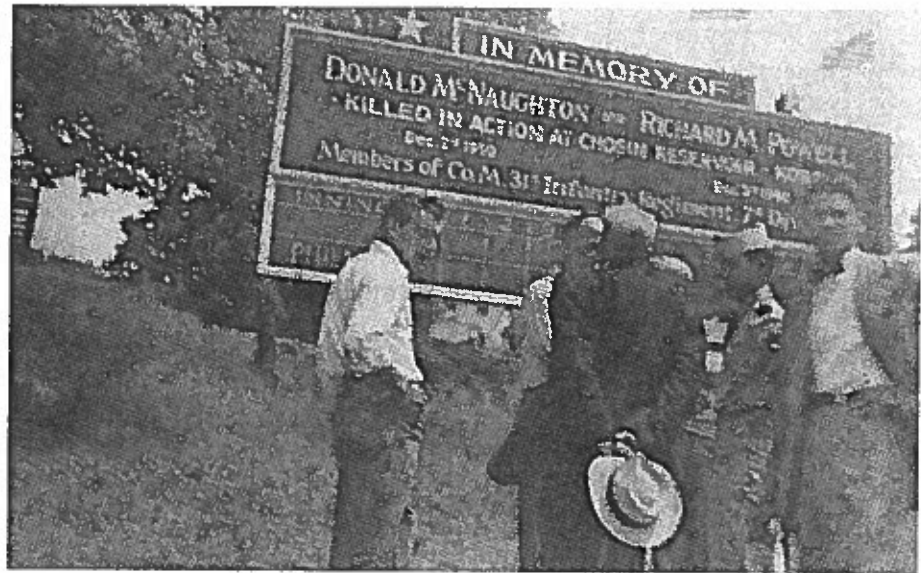
Figure 36: Home coming Parade, September 14, 1946



Korean War/1950 – 1953

The Korean War claimed 2 area men.

Figure 37: Dedication of Memorial Field in Memory of Donald McNaughton and Ronald M. Powell



School Closed/1952

Philmont School closed.

Mills Close/1953 +

Competition from synthetic fibers and cheaper labor in the South caused the mills to close, one by one.

Fire Company Auxiliary/1955

Philmont Volunteer Fire Company Auxiliary was organized.

Rotary Club/1956

The Rotary Club of Philmont, Inc. was organized.

Rescue Squad/1958

Philmont Rescue Squad was organized.

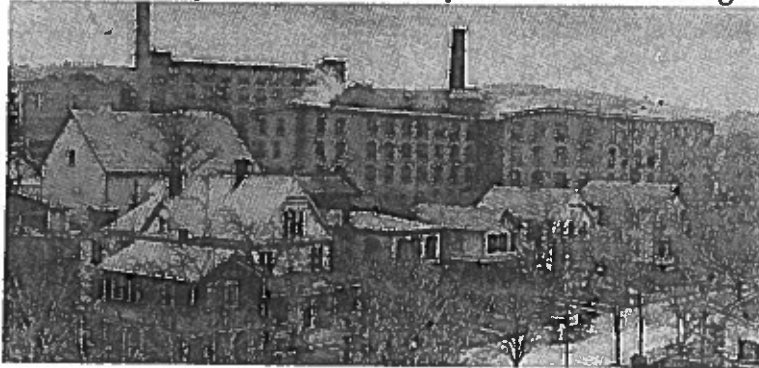
Vietnam War/1964 – 1973

Vietnam War claims 3 area servicemen.

Fire/1977

X-Tyl Corporation (a rubber vulcanization factory), located in the former High Rock mill, burned in a spectacular fire. Four other businesses were destroyed.

Figure 38: High Rock Mill (Prospect Avenue in foreground)



Philmont Hearth/1982

Philmont Hearth, Inc., a psychiatric community residence, opened in the former F. B. Harder Greek Revival mansion on Maple Avenue.

Figure 39: Harder Mansion



Zoning/1990

Zoning ordinance enacted.

Centennial/1992

Village of Philmont Centennial celebrated.

Library Internet/1993

Philmont Public Library offers free public access to the Internet.

Main Street Rebuilt/1997

Main Street reconstructed by NYS DOT.

Main Street Committee/1998

Main Street Committee established by Village Board.

High Speed Internet/2000

High speed Internet access installed throughout the Village by Mid-Hudson Cablevision.

Comprehensive Plan Adopted/2002

After more than a year of work by the Comprehensive Plan Board, consultants, and residents of Philmont, the Village Board adopted the Comprehensive Plan to guide the Village in its future growth and development.

Snapshots of Philmont

In preparing this component of the Comprehensive Plan, the committee assembled a number of photographs, many of them from the 1992 Centennial booklet. Some photos of historical interest were left over; they are presented here.

Reservoir Sights

The railroad trestle at the east end of the reservoir was a popular spot. The reservoir itself was used for swimming.

Figure 40: Railroad Trestle

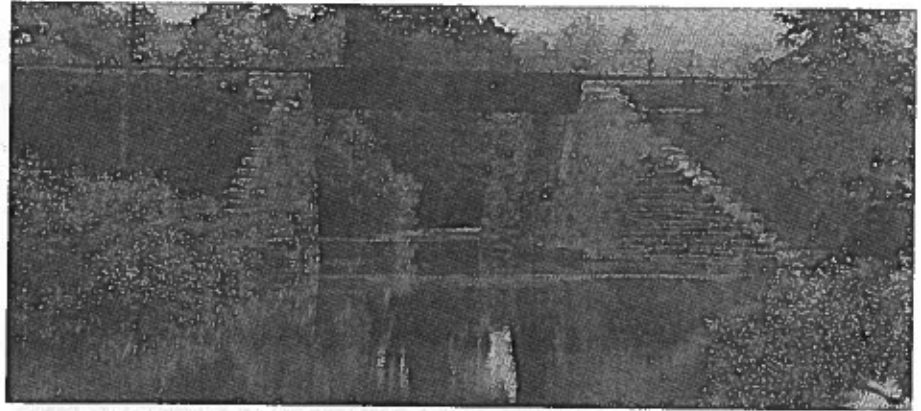
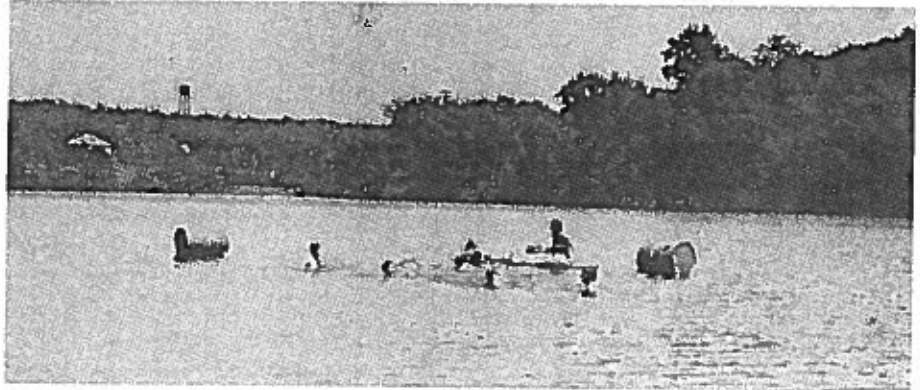


Figure 41: Swimming in the Reservoir



Streetscapes

It is remarkable how much of Philmont's past is preserved. The large mills are mostly gone as are the school and a number of Main Street buildings. However, in these photos of Philmont streetscapes, many of the buildings remain.

Maple and Prospect Avenues sport the same buildings today (although the Mansion Gate House on Maple Avenue has been moved a block away). In the Main Street photo, the buildings are gone although the intersection (with Elm Street) is immediately recognizable.

Figure 42: Maple Avenue



Figure 43: Prospect Avenue

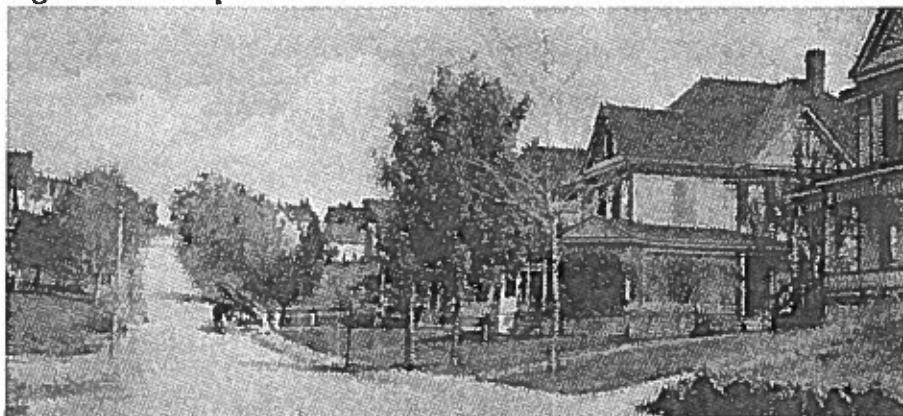
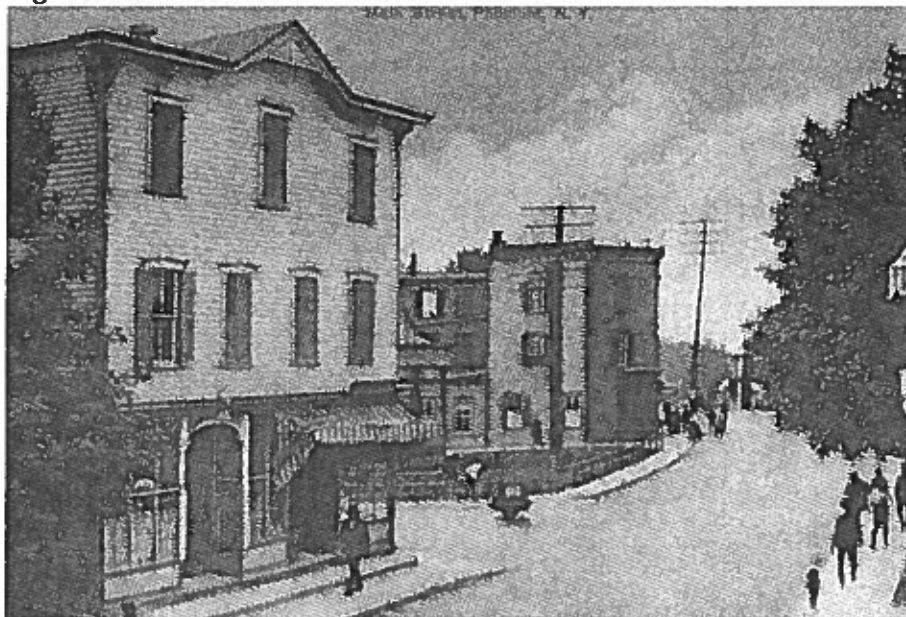


Figure 44: Main Street



Summit Mill, the last of the large mills in Philmont, is planned for conversion to residential use.

Figure 45: Summit Mill

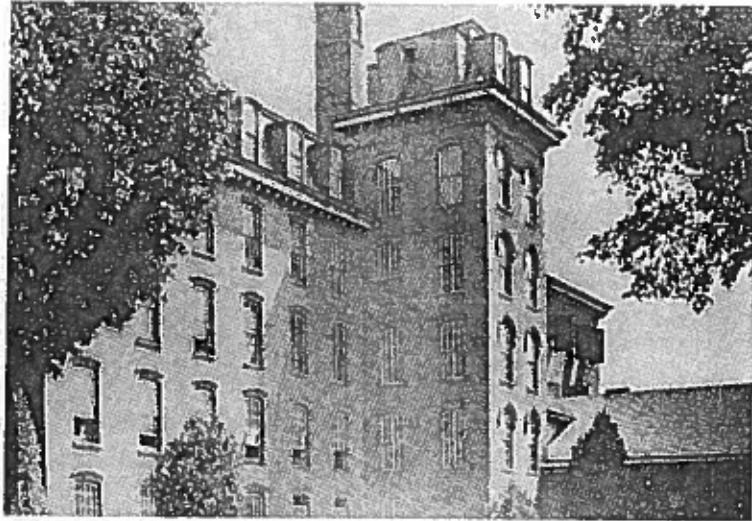


Figure 46: Summit Mill and Summit Street Showing the Dam at Lower Right

