

Visiting Philmont

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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 clientele—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.

