

# Working in Philmont

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*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*

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## **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.

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## 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.

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## 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.

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### 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.

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### 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.

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## 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.

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## 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.

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## 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.

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## 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.

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## 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.

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## 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.

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## 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.

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## 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.

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## 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.

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## 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.

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## 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.

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## 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.

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## 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

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### 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.

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## 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.

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## 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.

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## 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.