

# Getting Around Philmont

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*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.*

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## 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.

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## Streets and Highways

There are 5.25 miles of public road in Philmont.

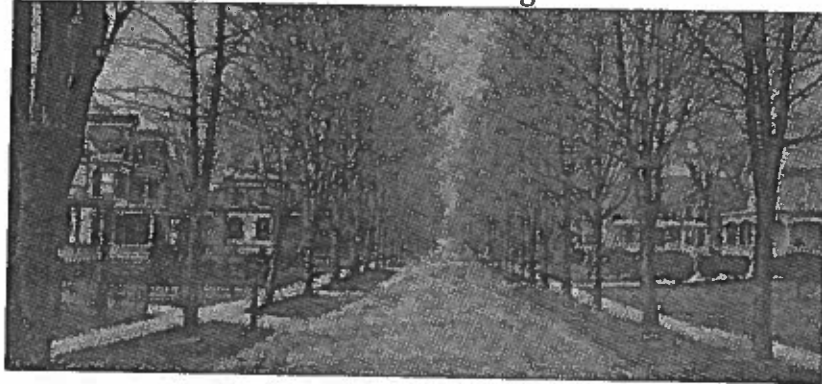
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## Getting Through Philmont

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.

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## 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

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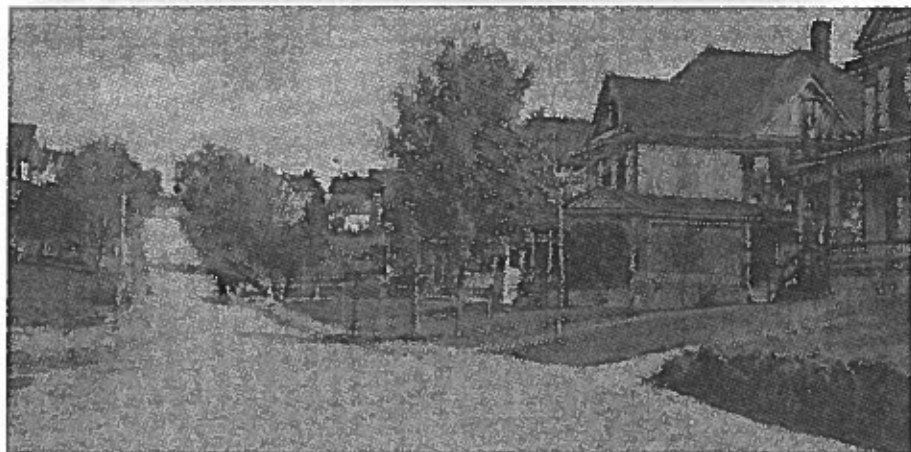
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- Church Street
- Canal Street
- Highland Avenue

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.

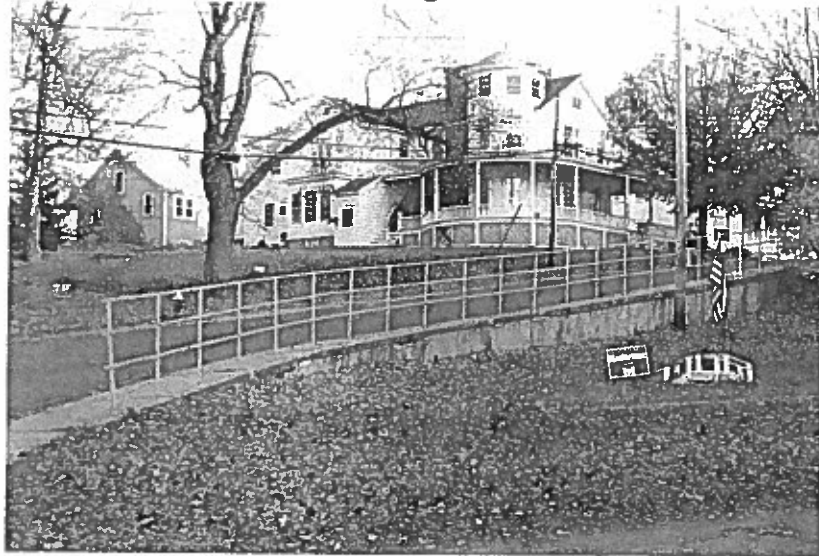
**RECOMMENDATION** New streets in Philmont should be planned to adhere to the existing pattern of long streets with destinations and few harsh curves and the pattern of small connectors. Cul-de-sacs and dead ends without destinations at their ends should be avoided.

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## 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.

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## 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.

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## 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.

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## 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.

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## 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.

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### Accidents

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

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### 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.

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## Rules and Regulations

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### Speed Limits

The speed limit within the Village is 30 MPH.

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### 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.

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## 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.

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## 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.

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## 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]**

