

**TOWN AND VILLAGE OF ATHENS
COMPREHENSIVE PLAN UPDATE**

**VOLUME II
INVENTORY AND PROFILE**

FINAL

ADOPTED BY VILLAGE DECEMBER 2020

ADOPTED BY TOWN MAY 2021

Table of Contents

History of Athens..... 2

Community Outreach Process..... 4

Previous Planning Efforts in the Town & Village 32

County Planning Efforts..... 36

Demographic Profile..... 38

Municipal & Community Resources 46

Roadway Maintenance and Repair 49

Agricultural Resources 59

Industrial Businesses 60

Regional Planning and Economic Development Resources 62

Transportation Resources 63

Physical and Environmental Features 71

Historical and Cultural Resources 92

Appendix A Maps 95

History of Athens

An excellent account of the history of Athens can be found in “Athens: 1776-1976 Its People and Industry.” The following is excerpted from an historical account on file with the New York State Historic Preservation Office for the Village of Athens:

“The Village of Athens is a community along the Hudson River which has retained much of its architectural and historical integrity since its settling in 1706. It reflects over 250 years of development and change, from farmland to a prosperous shipbuilding center and railroad terminus, to a tranquil residential and commercial community. Athens is also typical of numerous Hudson River communities which prospered in the 19th century due to the resources of the Hudson River, but which never greatly changed since that time.

The earliest residents of the Athens area were Indians of the Algonquin Nation, mostly Mohicans and Delawares. They fished in the river and planted corn along its banks. An area off Washington Street along the river, known as Black Rock, is thought to have been a significant ceremonial site for these Indians, but no testing for archeological resources has been done.

Athens is mentioned in a diary kept by Robert Juet of his trip up the Hudson with Henry Hudson on the Halfmoon in 1609. He describes their running aground on the flats between Athens and Hudson, and their subsequent anchoring for several days. During the anchoring, the crew visited the west shore and marveled at the “good ground for corn, and other garden herbs, with great stands of goodly oaks, and walnut trees, and chestnut trees, ewe trees, and trees of sweet wood in great abundance, and a great store of slate for houses.”

The earliest European settler in Athens was Jan Van Loon, who secured title to the land from various owners in 1685. In 1706, Van Loon was living on his land known as Loonenburgh. The Jan Van Loon House still stands, although only one wall remains from the original structure. The Albertus Van Loon House, an exceptional stone, Dutch Colonial built in 1724, also remains from the Van Loon era.

In 1794, a company of New York City speculators led by Edward Livingston purchased a tract of land forming what is now the upper village area. These men began to lay out a dream city called “Esperanza” which they hoped would become the capital of New York State and the terminus of the Erie Canal. But these plans never materialized, due to the loss of much of their financial support. The land was partitioned in 1799. A small community grew in the upper village area in the initial years of the 1800’s, but it never rivaled the lower village in size or importance.

At the turn of the 19th century, Athens began to form. This was largely due to the efforts of Isaac Northrup, who in 1800, purchased the large farm of the Van Loons and other adjoining properties and set about the planning of the village along the Hudson.

By 1805, several elegant structures were built, each reflecting the wealth of the early settlers of Athens. The Northrup House, built by the village's founder, was constructed in 1803 and is a fine Federal style residence. Another exceptional Federal residence is the Nichols House built in 1803. Nichols fought at Yorktown, Bull Run, Fredericksburg, and the Battle of the Wilderness during the Civil War.

The initial years of the village were so successful, that in 1805 the village of Athens was incorporated, making it one of the oldest incorporated villages in New York State. The incorporation joined the lower village and the small, scattered community to the north known as the upper village. Three turnpikes, the Schoharie Turnpike (1802), the Albany-Greene Turnpike (1806) and the Athens Turnpike (1809), were begun in the early years of the 1800's, bringing Athens in closer proximity to the surrounding areas.

By the middle of the 19th century, Athens was an established and successful community. Numerous factors were significant in the village's prosperity, the most important being its location along the Hudson. The Hudson-Athens Ferry, which operated from 1778 to the late 1940's, attracted numerous individuals and industries to the area. The largest of the industries was the Athens Shipyards.

Another important industry which contributed to the village's growth and stabilization at mid-century was the Clark Pottery. This manufacturer of assorted stoneware began operating in 1805 and continued until 1900. Many examples of earthenware produced at Clark Pottery are in museums, including a large collection at Cooperstown, NY.

By 1877, several new industries had contributed to the village's prosperity. In 1864, the Saratoga and Hudson River Railroad was formed by two of the nation's wealthiest men, Daniel Drew, and Cornelius Vanderbilt. The southern terminus of this line was in Athens, where a large terminal was built in the upper village area. The Brick Row District was constructed at that time to house the railroad line's operating staff. But the prosperous line lasted only twelve years, for in 1876, the Athens terminal and yards burned to the ground, leaving only Brick Row in testimony to the once successful cargo line.

Also significant in Athens' development was the ice industry. The ice industry continued in importance into the 20th century, but of all the ice houses which dotted the riverfront, only one remains on Water Street.

Thus, by 1877, the Village of Athens had experienced its peak in industrial and residential development. The years from mid-century to 1877 were fruitful and although little remains from these industries, there are exceptional residences which testify to this period in Athens' history. At the turn of the 20th century, Athens remained virtually as in 1877. Most homes from 1877 still survive, leaving the village rich in architecture and history."

Community Outreach Process

The foundation of a good Comprehensive Plan is the incorporation of public input early and often throughout the Plan’s development. To develop an updated plan built upon public consensus on key issues and common goals, receiving feedback from the Town and Village elected and appointed leaders, business owners, and residents is imperative.

This section summarizes the public outreach and participation process that occurred during the plan development process. The approach focused on obtaining input from the appointed Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee and the Town and Village elected officials, appointed boards and Town and Village staff. With the intent to ensure representation from each community, the Town Board and Village Board appointed the *Athens Comprehensive Plan Committee*, which was comprised of representatives from the Town and Village. The individuals appointed to the *Committee* represented elected and appointed boards, as well as residents and business owners. They were chosen to bring a wide range of experiences to the *Committee* with local knowledge of the key issues concerning residents of Town and Village.

The other major effort was targeted toward receiving feedback from the general public. The COVID-19 Pandemic prevented implementation of several planned public workshops, but the Committee developed and conducted an extensive community survey in which 497 people participated. As per both Town and Village State law, public hearings were also held on the draft updated plan prior to its adoption by the Town and Village boards.

Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities & Threats (SWOT)

This Comprehensive Plan Update and the goals and policies it establishes are based upon an analysis of the Town and Village of Athens’ Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT). These SWOT were identified through input received from the Committee, elected and appointed Town and Village officials, the community survey, and a detailed analysis of the Town and Village demographic, economic, environmental, cultural, and historic profiles.

Strengths are resources or capabilities that will help the Town and Village fulfill its joint vision. Weaknesses are deficiencies in resources and capabilities that will hinder Athens from fulfilling its vision. Opportunities are factors or situations that can affect the Town and Village favorably and can help reach future goals. Threats are factors, situations or challenges that can affect Athens negatively and prevent the Town and Village from reaching its goals.

The SWOT analysis provides many valuable clues about potential effective strategies, since every successful strategy builds on strengths and takes advantage of opportunities, while it overcomes or minimizes the effects of weaknesses and threats. These elements, both positive and negative, have a

powerful impact on future community development. See Volume 1 for a summary and consolidated SWOT that reflects all elements. The sections below record the comments received directly from the public and are presented without commentary, editing for accuracy, or agreement. The final version in Part 1 reflects a comprehensive SWOT.

Steering Committee SWOT Workshop

The following details the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats identified by the Steering Committee. These comments should be considered 'raw data' and reflect what various participants said at the workshop:

Positive Features

- Charm
- Sense of Pride
- Water and sewer in Village
- Waterfront
- Village very walkable
- Village child friendly
- Diversity
- Heritage/historic buildings
- Vistas (Town)
- Open space and rural character (Town)
- Traditional neighborhoods (Village)
- People – kind and caring
- Accessible location
- Unique in people – people work together
- Athens Performing Arts Committee (APAC)
- Open Space in Village
- Community resources like the Athens Cultural Center, Athens Pool, D.R. Evarts Library, and the Rivertown Senior Center
- Local associations working to better the community
- Volunteers for community
- History of waterfront
- Good community services (fire, etc.)
- Have lots of opportunities
- Connections to adjacent communities – good neighbors
- Diversity of ages
- Relatively unspoiled (Town)
- Views and remarkable scenery (Town)
- Farms (Town)
- W. Athens – history in Town
- Decent roads (Town)

- Economically strong (Town)
- Hudson/Athens Ferry
- Airbnb's
- Gorgeous sunrises here
- Lighthouse
- Village street trees – beautiful
- Dog Park
- Rt. 385 scenic highway – popular with bikers
- Four Mile Point Preserve
- The Lakes

Weaknesses

- Local economy not strong
- Lack of employment
- Deteriorated and vacant buildings – impacts property values
- Sense of apathy – it is hard to change
- Aging infrastructure – sewer is bad, and every storm has Riverkeeper alert
- Speeding on Rt 385
- No residential delivery of The Daily Mail (the local newspaper)
- Lack of affordable housing
- Threat of large solar (in Coxsackie) impacts our viewsheds
- New upgrade by Iroquois
- Lack basic services such as hair salon, grocery store, etc.
- Flood susceptibility – impacts waterfront
- Hard to tell what is available on Second Street – reach out to businesses
- People gravitate to Hudson and Catskill, not Athens
- Public health – high opioid death rate in Greene and surrounding counties.
- Aging population and lack of services for aging
- Air quality
- High school graduation rate is low
- There is a disconnect and lack of communication between Town and Village
- Water quality
- Sidewalks in Village are poor
- Street lighting in Village needs improvement
- Parking in Village is tight
- Dilapidated housing – not stable
- Lack of media coverage and lack of media outlets for coverage
- Poor code enforcement
- Climate changes

Opportunities

- Clean up dilapidated and vacant buildings and lots
- Condos and town homes – take advantage of

- Four Mile Point Preserve – opportunity for walking, farmers’ market
- Tourism potential – build on assets and existing events
- Lots of opportunities for small businesses to stay or come in
- Use social media to market Athens better
- Form a Chamber of Commerce to recruit businesses
- Do a tour of historic homes to bring people in
- Cruise ship dock
- Have bar along waterfront
- Support for small local businesses that serves locals, not just tourists
- Museum – is a missed opportunity
- Build hotels – rethink Airbnb’s – regulate them so people can have them but ensure they are beneficial to area
- There are large numbers of outside people coming to Village we can tap economically
- Use historic buildings for new housing – still a lot to be developed
- Sleepy Hollow Lake
- Bikers – capture them with bike lanes and being more welcoming to them
- Have a Business Improvement District
- Has a revolving loan fund that is not well utilized – change how it is given out to expand its use

Joint Town and Village Workshop

The following details the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats identified by elected and appointed officials attending the Joint Town and Village Workshop. These comments should be considered ‘raw data’ and reflect what various participants said at the workshop:

Positive Features

- Hudson River
- Waterfront
- Small Town Charm
- Historic Architecture
- Peace and Quiet
- Mix of Density Village and Town
- Great Highway Department
- Excellent Businesses
- Lighthouse
- Athens Cultural Center
- Local Schools
- Library
- Street Festival
- Friday Night Music
- Brick Row
- Pool

- Commercial 9W Corridor
- Lakes
- Broadband and Wi-Fi
- Village Communications Committee and revised Website
- Commitment to climate smart and clean energy initiatives in Village

Weaknesses

- Lack of revenue for local government work
- Water and sewer are aging and in need of repair
- Can be more business friendly
- Lack of foot traffic to support businesses
- Fewer full-time residents
- Lack of clear vision for waterfront
- Threat of Athens Stevedore
- Lack of clear vision for type of businesses we want
- Speeding
- Truck traffic in village has been increasing
- Current zoning does not address commercial 9W corridor well enough
- Potential rise in Hudson River water level – must plan for this
- Peckham – trucks, barges, pollution
- Lack of health care access – at least needs to increase telemedicine accessibility.
- Lack of available and affordable housing
- Too many Airbnb's resulting in loss of sense of community. Does not like how people are buying homes solely for rental
- Lack of jobs
- Religious camps in Town – Green Lake and others

Opportunities

- Upgrade sewer and fix water infrastructure in Village
- Pursue brownfield grant to improve former industrial/polluted areas
- Initiate community choice aggregation for electricity to lower bills
- Implement clean energy community and climate smart community initiatives
- Zoning change to require first floor of commercial spaces remain commercial, not converted to residential
- Form Business Council
- Use solar development in town to support park and recreation opportunities
- Zoning change to allow residential and appropriate waterfront uses instead of industrial
- Programs, incentives, efforts to adaptively reuse resorts

Community Survey

From June through August, a Community Survey was conducted. A postcard was mailed to most Town and Village residents to advertise and encourage participation in an online survey. Paper copies of the

survey were made available at the Town and Village Hall. Steering Committee members augmented the postcard with personal phone calls, email notifications, and use of and social media to advertise the survey. Four hundred and ninety-seven people participated in the survey. The intent of the survey was to get specific information from Town and Village residents, business owners and property owners on how they would characterize current living conditions and municipal services, what they feel are the priority actions that should be undertaken by the Town and Village to improve quality of life, and what types of development and businesses residents would encourage or discourage. A copy of the survey questionnaire and the complete survey results is contained in the Appendix.

Summary of Town/Village Survey Results

Q1. Survey represents residents or property owners from both Town and Village: 168 (34%) were from Town; 234 (48%) were from Village; 82 (17%) lived or owned land in both Town and Village. Eight people participated who did not own or live in either place.

Q2. Survey represents long-term and newer residents: 135 (28%) have lived in Town/Village for less than 5 years; 81 (17%) 5-10 years, 98 (20%) 11-20 years, and 176 (36%) over 20 years.

Q3. Most respondents were both full-time residents and homeowners (371 or 76% and 284 (58% respectively). Ninety-one people were part time residents. Seventeen people were renters. Ten were business operator owning property in the Town or Village.

Q4. Respondents represented all ages but was weighted heavily by those who are 55 years and older (300 or 62%). Of those, 159, (33%) were 65+ years. Thirty-four people were less than 34 years old (7%). Sixty-five were aged 35-44.

Q5. Respondents also represented all income levels, but of those who preferred to say, the survey represents more people in the mid-income range (\$50,000 to \$199,999 or about 50%). About 8% of respondents indicated they had incomes less than \$49,999. 116 or about 24% preferred not to indicate their income levels.

Q6. Most respondents (65%) indicated they do not have children living at home.

Q7. For those with children at home, 117 attend Coxsackie Athens Central School District, and 33 (7%) are home schooled, with 4 having children that attend Catskill Central. (This does not reflect possible in-home schooling this year because of COVID.)

Q8. 255 (52%) were female, and 206 (42%) were male respondents, with 30 (6%) preferring not to say.

Q9. The vast majority (344 or 70%) were married.

Q10. The survey represents a variety of education levels, but 64% (316) had a bachelor's degree or higher. Four had less than high school education with the remaining participants having high school graduate (8%), some college but no degree (15%) or an associate's degree (24%).

Q11. The most common words to describe what people like about the Town (excluding Village) were: Rural, Quiet, Small, Peaceful, and various words to describe the landscape such as beautiful, scenic, views, nature, clean, bucolic, quaint, etc. Being a river town, sense of community, friendly (nice people, nice neighbors, helpful, etc.), safe, good location, agriculture, and historic were other common descriptors used. Other positive values expressed were about the Town's location, accessibility, low taxes, the Hudson River (waterfront)

Q12. Quaint, quiet, river town, historic, waterfront/river/riverfront, small community with small town feel, friendly people, peaceful, beautiful, walkable, architecture, safe, charming, picturesque and scenic were among the top phrases used to describe the Village. Community and sense of community were also strongly expressed in various ways (community, community-driven, closeness of the community).

Q13. Many items to be addressed in the Town were identified in this question. In the Town, the most common things identified that need improvement included roads, more businesses, lower taxes, cleaning up vacant and derelict properties, better code enforcement, more walking trails, parks, and recreational opportunities, better communication among governments and people in general, and infrastructure for that (broadband). But the list includes a wide variety of comments ranging from more parks development to listing of specific types of retail needed. Related to business development, restaurants, grocery store, and more food choices were common. Many comments were generally related to enhancement of the business community and aesthetics of the community. It is unclear when respondents indicated the need for more businesses if they were referring to being in the Town or the Village. Clearly some comments were related to the waterfront and Village.

Q14. In the Village, the most common things that need improvement included better code enforcement, improved sidewalks, derelict properties (often associated with comments related to code enforcement), business development, infrastructure repairs (water and sewer as well as drainage, lighting,), more restaurants, more parking, improved waterfront, lowered taxes, and a community center. Vacant and derelict buildings and business development were the most frequent types of responses. Better roads, especially Route 385 were also common responses.

Q15. Economic Development Topics. Overall, most people thought all the economic topics were important. However, there were some that were more important or less important than others. The topic that had the most people indicate it was very important (59%) was "waterfront needs to transition from industrial use to more recreation, cultural, and small business uses." Other highly ranked, very important

topics were “lack of business and employment opportunities and weak local economy” (52% and “decreased property values and economic opportunities due to deteriorated and vacant buildings” (52%). All economic topics had about 25% of respondents indicated that they were important. “More tourism and tourism-related businesses are needed” was the statement that got the most people indicating it was a direction for Athens that was NOT important (32%).

Open ended comments related to the economy included the following:

Improvements to the waterfront for recreation and maintaining the natural beauty and greenspace at the waterfront was noted much more often by residents than were the ideas of bringing cultural events or small business to the waterfront area. Residents overall are in favor of encouraging more small businesses in the Village, including restaurants, a grocery, and small shops. There seems to be a slight preference to keep industrial use along the 9W corridor. Thoughts on Airbnb’s for or against seems to be about a 50/50 split. Thoughts standing out were that more regulation is needed, and that there should be no absentee landlords.

Vacant and derelict properties are a great concern to many residents. There is an overall view that in addition to making before use of code enforcement, residents may have difficulty affording necessary improvements, especially in the historic district. Several noted that perhaps the Village could help with incentives or volunteers for cleanup tasks.

Several respondents noted a disconnect between part-time, new, and old residents, and a need to bridge the cultural gap; and to foster a diverse community and acceptance.

Some stated a need to provide jobs that will attract families. Also, some stated there is a need for environmental conservation; and that the lack of quality drinking water needs to be addressed.

Q16. Environment/Open Space Topics- A majority of respondents indicated that all topics in that category were important or very important. The two topics which received the most very important responses were ‘Protection of the Hudson River Estuary and its associated natural resources’ (63%), followed very closely by ‘impaired water quality’ (62%). The topic which received the most not important responses (32%) was the ‘viewshed impact from large solar farms’ topic.

Open responses/other concerns: Solar was a topic that was elaborated on frequently in this section. Comments ranged from concerns about large solar farms to the benefits of solar and other alternative energy. There was also a notable amount of comments regarding adverse environmental impacts from industry, which had many very important responses (59%). Many others expressed concerns about air quality and drinking water.

Q17. Agricultural Topics. All the agricultural topics explored had most respondents indicate they were important to very important. The topic that had the most people indicate it was very important (56%) was 'Increase availability of locally grown foods and agricultural products for sale on farms or through a farmers' market'. 'Impacts of large-scale solar farms and other developments on productive agricultural lands were considered not important by 23% - the topic that received the most 'not important' rankings from all those ag-related explored in this question.

Open-ended comments included many comments in support for a farmers' market and vegetable stands, and there is some support for organic farming as well. There is overall support for farmland protection among those who wrote comments. Environmental protection was also desired by respondents, including protecting streams and lakes and minimizing runoff and related contaminants from solar and ag farms. There is a desire for sustainable farming in the Town.

Thoughts on solar farms were evenly split, for or against. Issues noted included whether farmland owners should have the right to decide whether to continue to farm or to allow solar; and that solar farms need to have post-production clean up addressed before permitting. People commented about the need for farmers' markets, preserving farmland, supporting local farmers, and more farmers/farms. Many comments were received related to wind and solar development, but the opinions are varied with some supporting that, while others do not.

Q18. Transportation and Pedestrian-related Topics. Again, most respondents indicated that all the transportation and pedestrian-related topics were important to very important. There were however, about ¼ to 1/3 of participants who indicated these were not important topics. By far (60%), the most important transportation and pedestrian-related topic was the aging water and sewer infrastructure. "Impact of truck traffic" was very important to 47%. Lack of parking in the Village was the topic that received the most 'not important' votes (36%).

Open-ended comments included those regarding the impact of truck traffic particularly along Route 385, Second Street, Union Street and Vernon St. in the Village. Traffic speeds was considered a significant problem, especially on Route 385. Some felt that trucks should not be on Second Street. Speed bumps were mentioned on Second St for traffic calming.

There were several comments regarding needed sidewalk improvements and additions. Several were in favor of additional bike and walking paths and enhanced lighting. A few folks stated that they were against complete streets; and a couple noted the desire to save the cobblestone sidewalks. Several people noted that they wished to preserve historic character.

Also, a few folks noted a need for volunteer transportation.

Q19. Historical, Cultural, and Recreational Resource Topics. Although most of the topics in this category were considered by the majority of respondents to be either very important or important, two items stand out: 68% said it is not important to develop a skateboard park and 61% said it is very important to preserve the historic/small town character of Athens. Forty-one percent indicated they did not think it was important to develop another park in Town outside Village. Topics considered 'important' were lack of year-round cultural and recreational activities (51%) and promoting more interest and involvement among residents in our local cultural resources (48%). Combining the important and very important category, enhancing use of and access to the Hudson River/waterfront, promoting more interest and involvement in local cultural resources, preserve and reuse historic structures, preserve historic/small town character and imposing fines for those ignoring local building and preservation codes were all topics supported by >75% of participants.

Open-ended comments talked about Athens uniqueness and assets such as the waterfront, cultural center, and library. Regarding a lack of year-round cultural and recreational activities and promoting more interest and involvement among residents in our local cultural resources, ideas included that the Athens Museum, currently operating out of the municipal building, should be housed elsewhere for people to explore, and that the library needs space to hold events. Recreation comments focused on the need to fix the state boat launch and to not allow industrial development on the river, leave it natural. Many noted that the waterfront is a great asset that should be preserved. Several respondents noted the desire for more walking trail and biking trails and more park space.

There is not an apparent strong desire from responses to increase density along the waterfront. Several noted that business incentives are needed where it is desirable to attract, for example on Second Street. Many expressed a desire for small storefront businesses to support economy and employment. It seems most want big industry out of the Village, and in an appropriate location along the industrial corridor.

Many overall comments revolve around topics which relate to historic preservation and character of Athens, extending the historic district, identifying National Register eligible properties, a historic preservation commission, and imposing fines. There are just as many comments not in favor of these topics as there are in favor of them. Several respondents are not in favor of extending the historical district or of forcing people who cannot afford it to do historic restorations or are against imposing fines for those ignoring building and preservation codes. There's a sense among those with unfavorable responses that too much emphasis is placed on historic residences while the rest of the Village is considered secondary, and that making the Village a historic district has exacerbated the disparity of means in the village, leading to building decay. It is also noted that some feel that preserving an historical house is important to a certain extent, but depending on cost to preserve a house, it is sometimes better to just let it go. Many of these folks do not appear in favor of a historic preservation commission to prevent demolition.

More positive comments noted that existing preservation work is unrecognized and unsupported; and that compliance with sound policies should be encouraged, and violations should not be punished. While concern over historic property was mentioned as good, people also said care must be given to avoid overregulation. In the Village there appears to be mixed standards. Within reason, the homeowners should be allowed greater say as to how they want to maintain their home. Having buildings on the historic register is a "two-way street"- very impressive yet very restrictive. Historical building designation puts added burden on the homeowner when trying to upgrade their property.

Other respondents have noted that code enforcement is sporadic, and in general needs to be improved and become a priority. The Village needs to use the laws currently written to enforce code violations and increase fines for non-compliance. Building codes should be enforced as it can lead to structural issues with building and fires for improperly installed electrical systems.

Ideas included possible tax penalties for keeping a property vacant and incentivize residing in a house. Currently the property tax system rewards owners who neglect properties (low assessments). It punishes newcomers with high assessments.

Q20. Riverfront Park was the park used by most people (97%), followed by Union Street Park (35%), the State-Owned Boat Launch (30%), Kayak Launch (28%) and the Village Green (25%). Isabella Rainey Park and the Edward J. Arthur Fields were used by the fewest number of respondents.

Q21. A variety of good ideas were presented for improvements to parks. Many of those comments revolved around improvements such as clean-up and garbage receptacles/pick-up, repairs, walking/jogging paths, bathrooms, and other improvements for locals. Many comments also revolved around improvements for residents, but not necessarily to draw in visitors.

The most common comments from respondents stated that more restroom facilities are needed at parks; fencing, lighting and upkeep is needed around ice skating park; repairs and seating are needed on sidewalks. Dog concerns included that more space for dog walking is needed, including a small dog section at dog park, fencing, the desire to get dogs off of the waterfront park, concern that a lot of people don't clean up poop, and that garbage cans with poop bag dispensers could be provided. More trash and recycling receptacles up on streets in Village was suggested, and municipal garbage pickup is desired.

More comments and ideas on recreation included moving the Athens pool to the waterfront and upgrade with decking and restaurants on the Hudson River; management of the Athens pool needs improvement; water feature desired, sprinklers for toddlers, a beach area, and a marina. Make parks bigger to include children activities and trails to walk along river or snowshoe/cross country ski. Sleigh riding and ice-skating areas need to be more plentiful, more lighting at boat launch needed, create more walking and bike trails, to be well maintained and with benches. Provide a surface other than mulch at the playground, add more

picnic tables and benches to parks and a covered area where space permits. Add more variety of music in the parks, add signage to indicate public access points and parking. Include and feature native habitat and environmental/wildlife conservation friendly elements.

Others included:

Extend Riverfront Park both north and south so it becomes a place to walk/run along the river; repair/reconstruction of the state boat launch; kayak launch needs improvement and more parking; dredge out the boat slip at the State boat launch; remove commercial non- tax paying business from kayak launch and parking lot; landscaping improvements including re-seeding the lawn at Riverfront Park, and baseball fields should be more available and open for use, not locked to prevent use.

Increase volunteer networks for maintaining parks and developing programming- get people to feel like public spaces are for everyone; start community gardens or public art projects in the spaces; farmers' markets held at parks, and regular local gardening and vitality-boosting days that are community driven.

Green Lake - create more seating and shade areas for people and dogs; create a ground surface that isn't mud for the dogs; install a water fountain for people and dogs; plans for a running/walking park should be explored up and around the dog park and into SHL; offer seasonal rowboat/kayak rentals on Green Lake; allow swimming in and improve access to Green Lake; quality of Green Lake waters should be protected, tested and should be stocked well with appropriate fish to maintain the recreational fishing quality; provide tables and benches at Green Lake.

Create more rules and regulations regarding use of Middle Ground Flats (MGF) to make more user friendly and reduce litter. Regulate boating noise and speeds along the Hudson along entire MGF.

Q22. Housing Topics. There are a variety of opinions expressed for this question. There was not a single topic that was identified as the overwhelmingly most important housing need. The majority of respondents felt all the housing topics were 'important' to 'very important'. Over half felt that regulating short-term rentals was very important or important (65% combined), and about 70% felt it was very important to important that there was a lack of affordable housing for all ages and incomes. About ¼ of respondents did not feel it was important to promote construction of new housing that reflects the areas unique local history and in harmony with existing structures to increase the tax base. About ¼ of respondents did not think affordable housing or regulation of short-term rentals was important.

Open ended comments included:

Several comments from respondents regarding unsightly properties and those in need of restoration in general and historic district properties. One concern echoed was that rules in the historic district limit the ability of locals and increase absentee ownership. Although there were several comments regarding a need for stronger code enforcement and perhaps steeper fines for violations, there were just as many

comments regarding the need to help homeowners fix up their homes and help rehabilitate run-down middle-class housing. It was noted that programs to help residents maintain their homes could be pursued, such as leverage grants, tax credits, community intervention, and low-cost supervised loans.

Regarding senior housing, there were a couple of comments that no more senior housing is needed. Other comments noted that more community involvement with assisted living and older community housing residents is needed; there is a need to help seniors keep independent and living in their homes and that it is important to have decent, affordable senior housing with beautiful landscape and healthy buildings and environment. Also, it was noted that there is a need for safe, affordable, rental housing for seniors not income eligible, that are one level.

Lack of affordable housing was commented on by at least a dozen respondents. It was stated that low income housing is needed as well as affordable apartments with amenities, and that encouraging improvement in the quality of current rental options is needed. Other comments note that there is a need to preserve existing middle-class housing and financially assist owners to make modest upgrades and improvements and that the lack of nice affordable housing is a key issue and homes should be affordable for all income levels. Respondents have said that Athens is rapidly becoming high end real estate and middle-income people are being squeezed out of Athens due to property values increasing.

Many comments focused on regulating short-term rentals. A few comments were in favor of short-term rentals as they bring income and are how some folks discover this community. At least 15 other comments though were in favor of more regulation of, or against allowing any more short-term rentals. Comments desiring more regulation included that the short-term rental law should address a term or length of stay (in favor of limiting more temporary stays), fines to property owners if renters violate rules should be increased, and that care must be taken to avoid the properties from going into disrepair by absent property owners. Also, it was noted that perhaps a law could be passed to preserve housing stock and security by not allowing people to buy up multiple properties for short-term rental use only.

Q23. Municipal and Community-Related Topic. Several trends emerge from this question. By far, keeping Athens a safe place to live (66%) and addressing dilapidated and vacant buildings (56%) were considered 'very important' as the most important topic in this category. Increasing presence of local police in the Village was considered 'not important' by 40% of respondents, and lack of media outlets covering Athens was considered 'not important' by 35%. The other municipal and community topics were in general, considered 'important' by about 35% to 52% of respondents.

Open-ended comments related to this topic related to safety, building rehabilitation, and some health issues. Although respondents overall felt that safety is important, several commented that they did not feel more police should be hired. A few stated that the police department could be seamless with the Sheriff's Department, or that the Sheriff's Department could have a satellite office in Athens.

Many respondents were in favor of consolidating Town and Village services as well. A few respondents stated that they were not in favor of rehabilitation of the Town/Village municipal building. Also, it was noted that the municipal building is an historic structure and should be rehabilitated in a way that preserves it.

There were several comments stating that there is a need to stop the proliferation of dilapidated and vacant buildings in the Village. Comments included a need for more code enforcement, and suggestion to begin a program to help residential and commercial owners make basic upgrades.

There were a few comments regarding provision of more support to address addiction related health issues. Most were not in favor, noting that there are already support services available.

Q24. When asked about the preferred economic future desired for the Town and Village, 110 people or 39% liked all the options offered including having a strong downtown commercial district, a community with diverse businesses including agriculture and light industrial, and tourism. For those who did not see all those directions as an option, more people chose having a downtown commercial district with a concentration of stores, restaurants, and professional services (77 or 22%), compared to a community with diverse businesses, including agricultural and light industry (49 or 24%). Being a tourist destination alone was the least desired economic vision.

Open-ended comments on this topic offered many visionary statements about Athens having a combination of a vibrant downtown, with limited tourism and light industrial. Diversity in the economy was a common theme. The written comments were more oriented towards economic diversity, and not to become solely a tourist destination.

Several respondents noted that they would like Athens to maintain its historic and rural character, regardless of ultimately what economic direction the Town and Village take. Comments that seemed to adequately sum up several others were, “A downtown commercial district with a concentration of stores, restaurants, and professional service businesses, balanced with farmland and community-led support for agricultural businesses” and “An historic, walkable, residential waterfront town with a vibrant core of restaurants, stores, arts organizations and service businesses.” In addition, several respondents noted either that they were not in favor of light industry, or that if allowed, should be located on 9W.

Q25. The majority of respondents did not have an opinion as to whether the Town or Village needs a more structured disaster response plan (45%). For those with an opinion, more (133 or 38%) thought a more structured plan was needed compared to those who did not feel that was needed (60 people or 17%).

Q 26. Similarly, many respondents (52%) did not have an opinion as to whether there was enough support to assist them during the COVID or other crises. For those who did have an opinion, more people felt there was enough support (36%) compared to not having enough support (11%).

Q27. This question explored whether there is enough support during emergencies or disasters, and what Athens needs. The main issue that emerged from this question, as noted by many respondents, is that the general public is not aware of any plans for emergencies and there is a need for better communication regarding available services during the event of an emergency. People do not know where shelters would be located, or whom they should contact. Ideas for improvement included: a list of resources available for the public, such as where to go or whom to call for situations other than calling 911; publishing emergency management plans to the community, and an automated notification system for flood, other bad weather, power outages, locally designated emergency shelter locations, etc.

It is felt that clear instructions are needed for where to seek shelter if electricity is lost due to winter or summer storm, e.g., a designated meeting place for vulnerable populations should power go out, and a system for checking in with senior citizens in times of emergencies. The related topic most often mentioned was planning for a major flood or hurricane.

Another area that received several comments was the need for more community-based support systems for food and other needs such as: community gardens that serve the food bank and neighbors, volunteer networks that are available to share information/do tasks for those in need, availability of food and other basics for future widespread poverty. Other respondents noted a need for plowing alleyways during winter, better water treatment and the ability to address water quality issues after storms.

An additional topic that had several comments is related to the COVID pandemic: more medical help and equipment for future virus outbreaks, availability of testing for COVID, loss of jobs from COVID and other disasters, more leadership in wearing masks and social distancing, and more accessibility to health services, including an ambulance service and a hospital.

Q28. The library was considered to be 'Very Good' by 31% and 'Good' by 39%. Other than the library, other municipal services listed were rated as 'Adequate' by about 30% to 45% of respondents. Several had a few people feeling there was improvement needed: 38% felt that road maintenance needed improvement and 34% said code enforcement needed improvement. Thirty percent also felt responsiveness of local government to residents' concerns needed improvement and 27% felt that accessibility and communication with local officials needed improvement. There was a high percentage of 'no opinions' for this question.

Q29. The two most preferred ways for the community to obtain information about Athens was via email (70%) or social media (Town/Village websites, Twitter, Facebook, Instagram) by 58%. The least favorable media was via text (13%).

Q30. There were several issues that were noted by many respondents in response to this question. The topic most often mentioned was that there is a run-down look in general of the Town and Village, which needs to be cleaned up. Several respondents stated that more code enforcement is needed. A couple responses suggested that the Town and Village need a comprehensive clean-up and fix-up program, to help property owners fix and improve their deteriorating properties. A few respondents also noted that beautification and improvement is needed at Riverfront Park.

The topic next mentioned most often addressed business. People noted that there is a need to attract businesses to the Village, preferably allowing only businesses that will not disrupt either current aesthetic character or a quality environment. There is a need for more restaurants and establishments and vacant buildings could be used for those purposes.

Several respondents commented that there should be consolidation of Town and Village services. In addition, it was noted by one that the water and sewer treatment plants should be combined with Town, Village, and Sleepy Hollow Lake community.

Another issue that arose several times is that better communication is needed from the Town and Village to the residents. It was suggested that a volunteer coordinator could inform residents about actions, programs, projects, and events. It was noted that information on how to volunteer should be available, especially to help seniors with pickup and deliveries.

There were several comments regarding taxes as follows: the taxes are out of control; stop raising taxes; lower taxes; unfair taxes are imposed on Sleepy Hollow residents; end double tax of people whose residence falls under both Town and Village, and partner with Cocksackie to make the school taxes fair.


There were a few comments against tourism in general, including: tourists bring no direct tax benefits and sometimes cost us more through damage to parks and streets; do not be tourist friendly; no need to be a tourist district, and Athens will have problems sustaining a tourist-based structure.

Comments related to cultural activity include improve the responsiveness of the cultural center to the needs of the residents and encourage more residents to participate on the library board. People desired more creative events and activities (carriage rides through town, history tours, sleigh rides in winter, river cruises), and increase of promotional materials, including an upgrade of the walking tour map.

There were also a few comments related to too much constant truck traffic, the speeding of trucks, and other traffic in general, especially through the Village.




Finally, there were a few comments related to the Athens Pool as follows: the Athens Pool (privately operated) is a critical asset for young families and needs a complete rebuild; the Town/Village should get creative to help with the pool, and we need to find a way to increase pool membership.





Compiled SWOTs

The SWOTs learned from the Joint Town/Village Planning Workshop, the Committee and the resident survey were compiled into a final SWOTs table. For each table below, features deemed to be ‘very important by more than 50% of all survey participants are identified with the following icon: . Some features identified in the SWOTs represent comments from one or two members of the public. No comments were excluded.

Strengths



The following features have been identified by Athens’ residents as community strengths. These are features desired to be maintained or protected.


Positive Features Identified from Public input (T=Town, V=Village)	Identified as Very Important in Survey	Details of SWOTs from Public Comments
T: Rural character		Pastoral, small town atmosphere, open spaces, natural beauty/bucolic, country, quaint
T: Community Atmosphere		Quiet and peaceful, tranquility, privacy
T: Aesthetics		Scenic, rural and river and agricultural landscapes, scenic Route 385, views, and remarkable scenery, Riverfront is picturesque
T/V: Sense of Community		Friendly, hometown feel, sense of pride, volunteers working for the community
T/V: Hudson River		Foundational to the community, offers recreational and economic opportunities, Athens has access to river, beautiful views of river
T/V: Location and Proximity		Good location and proximity to the Hudson River, Thruway, Amtrak, surrounding culture, good access to many things




Positive Features Identified from Public input (T=Town, V=Village)	Identified as Very Important in Survey	Details of SWOTs from Public Comments
T/V: Sense of safety		Safe streets, safe for children
T/V: Environment		Quality open spaces, natural beauty, nature, greenery, clean
T/V: Historic		Includes historic character of buildings and homes, architecture, history, lighthouse, heritage, traditional neighborhoods
T: Good roads		Town roads
T: Farmland		Remaining farms and farmland
T: Lakes		Sleepy Hollow and Green lakes
T: Route 9W		With its commercial corridor and opportunities
V: Character		Charming and quaint, quiet, and peaceful, clean and with a small town and hometown feel. Also described as beautiful and scenic, Riverfront park, charming, architecture, clean, hanging baskets and flowers, street trees
V: Restaurants		
V: Cultural Opportunities		Including arts center, library, pool, Village square and music, dog park/Athens Cultural Center, street festival, 4-Mile Point Preserve
V: Community services		Including police department, fire department, camp program, elementary school, senior center, Little League field, houses of worship
V: Walkable		Village is highly walkable
V. Climate Smart efforts		Commitment to Climate Smart and Clean Energy initiatives
V. Child-friendly		Good place to have a family
<p>T/V: Other items identified by public as strengths</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Diversity of population including ages, incomes, and cultural backgrounds Lighthouse Good Schools/Broadband exists Athens Ferry Good connections to adjacent communities Mix of density in Town and Village 		


Weaknesses



The following features have been identified by Athens’ residents as weaknesses, issues or concerns in the community. These are those features that need to be enhanced, improved, or otherwise alleviated as a negative.

Negative Feature Identified from Public Input	Identified as Very Important in Survey	Description of SWOTs from Public Comments
T: Lack of communication		Perceived lack of communication between Town government and residents, little local news, we need transparency of operations and more inclusiveness, lack of communication and coordination between Town and Village, better commercial utilization of 9W corridor, fiscal inefficiency is a concern
T: Lack of Business		Lack of businesses and lack of jobs, not many business opportunities, need more retail/ restaurants, need better places to eat, need grocery store, more local shops, need more diverse commerce, current zoning does not address commercial 9W corridor well enough
T/V: Visual Character		Poor planning, industrial development, needs planning for commercial development, get rid of derelict buildings, dilapidated homes, abandoned homes and buildings, run down residential and commercial neighborhoods, ugly industrial areas, zoning enforcement is poor and with rampant unchecked development, especially 9W; appearance of 9W, Main Street needs to be made more attractive, trash pick-up needed, cleanup of some properties, houses on Washington Street. in disrepair, enforcement of basic home and property upkeep by owners, junk car ordinance not followed, noise ordinance needed, stronger design/planning standards for 9w commercial properties needed, junk yards, vacant storefronts, lighting needed, historic preservation needed, improve sidewalks
T: Recreation and cultural		Need a town park, a park system, more recreational activities, no real public park space, more trails, walking and biking spaces, need activities for town residents, i.e., annual ice fishing contest for Town residents (in Green

Negative Feature Identified from Public Input	Identified as Very Important in Survey	Description of SWOTs from Public Comments
		Lake), poor public access to land and trails, need more activities for youth and more playgrounds, need to improve access to Town Court/museum
T: Broadband		Need improved access to internet
T: Taxes		Need fewer tax reassessments, more equity and fairness with property assessments, no double taxation on SHL owners, Sleepy Hollow taxes are too high for Town services, high residential property and business property taxes, lack a broad tax base (i.e., more commercial activity)
T/V: Attitudes		Athens is less friendly than it used to be, attitudes toward neighbors need to improve, we have racism issues, sense of community is lacking, there is an attitude of the Town residents against the Village, confederate flags are a concern
T/V: Traffic and transportation		Have too many trucks going through Town, speeding is a concern in general, railroad crossing is bad, do something about the trains holding up traffic, public transportation needed
T/V: Environmental protection		Lack of protection for natural resources is a concern, concern about hazardous waste disposal, need to improve water source, water quality, potable drinking water, lack of information and testing, need more waterfront protection, regulate polluters, lack of land preservation, farms going out of business, loss of farmland, poor air quality
T: Solar farms		Need to protect against large solar farms (Note - opinions are split between protection against and encouragement of solar farms)
T: Police		Need to expand the police department to the Town - this can be cost effective, enhance police presence
T: Airbnb's		Stop Airbnb's or have additional management of Airbnb's, need short term rental policy restrictions (Note: there are differing opinions on Airbnb's. Further, both Town and Village have short-term-rental regulations now.)

Negative Feature Identified from Public Input	Identified as Very Important in Survey	Description of SWOTs from Public Comments
<p>Other Town Negatives Identified by public as negatives or weaknesses:</p> <p>T: Needs emergency contact weekends for Town issues, for example with the water department</p> <p>T: Town clerk's pay should not have been lowered while Board increased</p> <p>T: Need more small family- owned shops</p> <p>T: Have more health offices</p> <p>T: Lack of affordable housing for lower incomes</p> <p>T: Animal control – needs improvement, deer control is needed</p> <p>T: Disapprove of new jail</p> <p>T: Snow plowing needs improvement</p> <p>T: Signage improvements</p> <p>T: Coordinate an effort to do trail clean ups & local plant life education/ harvesting efforts</p>		
V: Derelict Buildings		<p>Have poor code enforcement, derelict properties, empty storefronts, and facade repair on all building on Second Street, buildings in disrepair on Second St. and Union St, unkempt properties, get rid of derelict buildings, abandoned homes and buildings, remove derelict homes, remove junk cars, improve housing sites in Town, better 'curb appeal' for entire Village and Town,</p>
V: Business		<p>Have lack of clear vision for type of businesses we want, lack of business (especially small retail and restaurants), no small business incentives or help for existing businesses, lack of businesses and commerce support, lack of jobs, lack of parking, lack of businesses that serve basic needs, no affordable grocery store, need pharmacy, more shops/restaurants, more entertainment, Village not always business friendly, lack of foot traffic to support Village businesses, not more seasonal tourism jobs, need to preserve /improve existing workforce and middle class</p>
V: Infrastructure		<p>Aging water and sewer infrastructure, roads need repairs (especially on Route 385) and new pavement on roads including alleyways, sidewalks in poor shape, infrastructure is in need of repairs (water and sewer as well as drainage, lighting), poor water quality, snow plowing improvements needed, street lighting needs improvement, need to conserve air quality and drinking water</p>

Negative Feature Identified from Public Input	Identified as Very Important in Survey	Description of SWOTs from Public Comments
V: Public Services		Need to merge DPW with Town highway, the DPW staff is not particularly well-staffed nor effective in their work, trash/garbage pickup needed
V: Education and Cultural Activities		Need better schools, allow open use of community center gym, community center needs to be updated and used in a better manner, more activities needed, cultural center should better supported, more cultural offerings, showcase the arts in more ways, library needs development and better management ,
V: Waterfront Improvements		Need improved waterfront, lack of unified vision for waterfront, Riverfront needs to be cleaned up, ferry slip in Village is overgrown with weeds and not well- maintained, clean the barge graveyard on the Hudson near Peckham, secure waterfront protection
V: Waterfront Uses		Concentrate on use of waterfront for tourism, zoning on Riverfront needs improvement, need laws protecting Riverfront and historic district, abandoned properties, prevent large waterfront uses such as the proposed stevedore
V: High Taxes		Need an increased tax base, lower taxes, taxes are too high for services residents receive, reduce residential and business property taxes, do more for tax-paying Sleepy Hollow residents
V: Traffic and Transportation		Speed of traffic in the Village, additional parking needed, truck traffic in Village, noise levels from traffic (including motorcycles and boats) poor traffic flow, illegal parking issues
V: Poor Attitudes		Need more diversity, needs more respect for residents of all backgrounds, bigotry (needs to stop), cliques - us vs, them, newcomers vs. locals, relationship of "old" families and "new" families; the old have stranglehold on politics and personnel of village, newer energies are not welcomed, and one must be careful to know and understand the intermarriage and combinations, special acknowledgement and support of local Black owned

Negative Feature Identified from Public Input	Identified as Very Important in Survey	Description of SWOTs from Public Comments
		businesses (including churches), general lack of support for any people of color, need proactive attempts to bring a very divided Village together
V: Police Department		Need internal improvements, several viewed as corrupt and ineffective
V: Housing Improvements Needed		Have a lack of affordable housing, housing incentive low/mid-income housing needed, row housing, small lots, more rental housing/fewer Airbnb's, short-term rental policy restrictions, rental properties are not regulated well enough, fewer full-time residents have changed neighborhood character, too many Airbnb's resulting in loss of sense of community. Do not like how people are buying homes solely for rental, lack of housing for young or lower income people
V: Alternate sources of power needed		
V: Establish a Farmers' Market for local food and vegetables		
T/V: Impacts of Industries		Smell, pollution, upgrades at Iroquois, traffic, vacant industrial buildings
T/V: Access to Local Food:		Need increased availability of locally grown foods and agricultural products for sale on farms or through a farmers' market
V: Dogs roaming loose, waste not picked up, need to promote awareness to Bunker Hill dog park		
V: More signage for places of interest		
V: Improve Little League Field access		
V: Flood susceptibility – bad now and getting worse		

Negative Feature Identified from Public Input	Identified as Very Important in Survey	Description of SWOTs from Public Comments
<p>Other Village Negatives Identified by public as negatives or weaknesses:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> V: Expand commercial areas to bring new business V: Adherence to rules for historic restorations by residents in historic district V: Village does not help property owners maintain properties V: Give homeowners tax credits to improve their property V: Leaf pickup communication V: Trees and planting along 2nd Street 		
<p>Other Negatives Identified by public as negatives or weaknesses:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Municipal Building needs upgrading Ambulance /urgent care services needed Pool is independently run Make side streets narrower to slow down traffic in these neighborhoods More frequent ferry to Hudson, more access to the lighthouse Disapprove of new jail There is a disconnect between Town and Village, lack of communication. Threat of large solar farm (in Cocksackie) impacts our viewsheds Speeding on Rt 385 and other places Lack of health care access Lack of media coverage and lack of media outlets for coverage Sense of apathy Aging population and lack of services for aging 		

Opportunities

The opportunities offered below were identified through public input and represent programs, projects, regulations, policies, or other actions, that could be implemented to maintain the strengths or address the weaknesses. Opportunities are organized into themes and listed alphabetically.

Business and Economic Development

- Add more community sponsored events
- Better economic opportunities, create positive environment for economic development
- Bike rentals and sales or develop a bike rental program
- Build hotels – rethink Airbnb’s – regulate them so people can have them but ensure they are beneficial to area
- Control speeding
- Develop more access to high speed broadband
- Do a tour of historic homes to bring people in
- Encourage small businesses in concrete ways
- Form a Chamber of Commerce to recruit businesses or a business council
- Establish a Business Improvement District
- Develop a more robust association with surrounding towns
- Have bar along waterfront
- Identify businesses that meet needs of residents and those that can provide jobs
- Less emphasis on tourism businesses and promote businesses that meet local needs
- Make Athens more of a destination – more shops/restaurants to get people to come here
- More grocery and restaurant choices
- More parking
- More walking and biking trails will bring more people to Town
- Offer tax and other incentives to attract businesses and non-profit startups
- Partner with Sleepy Hollow Lake to market the area better
- Pilot plan for businesses which want to be established here
- Programs, incentives, and efforts to adaptively reuse resorts
- Promote arts and culture
- Promote events better and develop events to draw people – festival with public relations support
- Pull resources to promote tourism like the lighthouse
- Pursue brownfield grant to improve former industrial/polluted areas
- Propose regulations promoting small businesses and constraints on large industry
- Seek out types of businesses we want to come to the Town and Village
- Small business incubator program
- Some things to attract visitors such as art galleries, better restaurants, interesting shops, music venues for classical music
- Support businesses that serve locals, not just tourists
- Support local magnets like riverfront and shops
- Tax incentives for Route 9W development

- Tourism potential – build on assets and existing events
- Town and Village marketing improvements needed – have a single promotional website
- Revolving loan fund that is not well utilized – change how it is given out to expand its use
- Change zoning to allow residential and appropriate waterfront uses instead of industrial. Require first floor of commercial spaces remains commercial, not converted to residential

Community Character

- Adaptive reuse of buildings is an opportunity in both the Town and Village
- Better oversight of building design will enhance character
- Clean up buildings
- Maintain affordability of property and/or housing to keep diversity of population
- Maintain zoning and building requirements to preserve the integrity of our small town
- Restore the Town Hall

Environment, Ecosystems, Open Space, and Scenic Beauty

- Preserve agriculture
- Add scenic view protection
- Allow for small, dense residential zones and save the rest for open space
- Encourage clean energy efficiency
- Encourage land preservation and beautification
- Expand pedestrian access to natural resources
- Implement clean energy community and Climate Smart community initiatives
- Improve water source, water quality, potable drinking water information and testing, waterfront protection, and regulation of polluters (e.g., pollution from the electric plant, toxic industrial usage, Athens Gen, Northeast Treaters)
- Initiate a New York State ‘community choice aggregation’ program for electricity to lower bills
- Provide for hazardous waste disposal
- Try locally organized compost efforts and education
- Water improvements, including zoning updates should be made

Transportation, Communication, and Infrastructure

- Better broadband
- Better pedestrian/infrastructure
- DPW - maybe hire more
- Expand tax base beyond property taxes – have a more balanced tax base – could benefit services and infrastructure
- More street lights
- Possible restructuring of police department
- Public access ways for dog walking
- Public transportation
- Reduce truck traffic and speeding in multiple locations
- Repair existing sidewalks
- Upgrade sewer and fix pipe problems such as excessive infiltration and inflow of water lines in Village to save water

- Water quality improvements
- Use solar development in Town to support park and recreation opportunities

Historic Character, Recreation, Cultural Resources, and Education

- Adherence to rules for historic restorations by residents in historic district
- Beautification
- Encourage the renovation of the old houses
- Enforcement of basic home and property upkeep by owners
- Give homeowners tax credits to improve their property
- Landmark status for buildings of historical significance
- Four Mile Point Preserve – opportunity for walking, farmers’ market
- Bikers – encourage them with bike lanes and being more welcoming to them
- Create a lifetime fishing permit for the reservoir
- Create a Town park or park system
- Create activities for Town residents, i.e., annual ice fishing contest T in Green Lake
- Open public access to land and trails, more activities for youth, more playgrounds
- Create new events (e.g., public art, more music in the parks, farmers’ market, street fairs)
- More walking and biking spaces, more trails including recreational hiking
- The Athens Museum is a missed opportunity
- Raise awareness that arts, culture, and quality of life are positive for the area and all residents

Housing

- Affordable housing for the middle class
- Allow multi- -use buildings for business and housing
- Condos and town homes – use this type to increase housing opportunities
- Grants available for Hudson River Housing, Inc. to help rehab housing that can be offered affordably
- Historic housing – still a lot to be developed
- Maintain attractive, neat, clean housing
- Maintain zoning and building requirements to preserve the integrity of our small town
- Possible workforce housing that also meets the needs of seniors and is handicap accessible
- Town and Village can solicit groups to repair aging housing

Civic Involvement, Volunteerism, Communication, and Local Government

- Better communications –Town website and blast email list
- Combine Town and Village resources, shared services, coordinate planning and policy
- Comprehensive events calendar that is frequently updated and easily accessed
- Decrease overlap of taxes between Village, Town, and Sleepy Hollow
- Encourage volunteerism
- Finding way to overcome old/new conflicts and learning to appreciate one another
- Make elected officials accountable and responsive
- Mechanisms to integrate all parts of the diverse community
- More communication for community engagement including more community meetings
- More frugal and efficient government use of tax dollars and better control of funds

- More Town/Village collaboration at board level
- More transparency in government
- Provide additional services for seniors
- Seek more funding for needed projects
- Support agriculture
- Use social media to market Athens better

Threats

Threats are potential issues or problems caused by factors either outside the community or by factors the community cannot control – usually because they are regional, state, or national issues, or because they are larger environmental or economic trends that affect areas beyond the Town and Village.

- Changing demographics, including an aging population and loss of young adults and young families
- Climate change
- Lack of funding
- Natural disasters
- Real estate market that influences affordability
- Social and cultural divisiveness

Previous Planning Efforts in the Town & Village

Village of Athens Local Waterfront Revitalization Program

Following the award of a joint Town and Village Local Waterfront Revitalization Program (LWRP) planning grant, a joint Town/Village Waterfront Advisory Committee was appointed. This committee included members of various local boards, business representatives, civic, planning, and environmental groups, and area residents. The community was kept informed of the planning effort through periodic releases and public meetings. A questionnaire was distributed to area residents to ascertain their opinion on a variety of applicable issues. While both communities worked on developing the LWRP, only the Village adopted its LWRP and associated implementation measures in 1999. The NYS Secretary of State approved the Program in 2001 and the U.S. Ocean and Coastal Resource Management Office (OCRM) approved the Program in 2002.

The Village LWRP divided the waterfront area into four land use categories: (1) urban area, (2) urban waterfront area, (3) waterfront recreation and open space areas, and (4) planned open space residential. The urban area was identified as appropriate for intensive commercial and residential development. While a variety of uses were regarded as appropriate for the urban waterfront area, the LWRP indicated that priority should be given to those that require a waterfront location. The waterfront recreation and open space area included areas that, given their natural features and habitats, ought to be preserved. The LWRP remains valid as the adopted waterfront revitalization plan approved by New York State.

Overview of the LWRP Recommendations

Since the adoption and approval of the Village of Athens Local Waterfront Revitalization Program (LWRP), the Village has implemented many of the recommended actions of the LWRP to improve the Hudson River waterfront with assistance from the Greene County Soil and Water Conservation District (GCSWCD). The Village of Athens LWRP identified several projects as important mechanisms to advance the goals of the LWRP. These priority projects included (1) Substantial phased improvements to the Village's Riverfront Park, (2) Removal of old barges from the waterfront, (3) Improvement to Village-owned waterfront properties to facilitate public water recreational uses, (4) Pursuit of walking and hiking trail opportunities, (5) Development of scenic overlooks, and (6) Historic preservation and revitalization programs. Many of these riverfront improvement projects have been further pursued and studied by the Greene County Soil and Water Conservation District (GCSWCD), through the Athens Waterfront Restoration Feasibility Study, the Athens Fourth Street Kayak Launch and Promenade Project, and the Athens Abandoned Barge Project, which are briefly discussed in the following sections.

Recommended improvements to the Village's Riverfront Park included developing improved docking space and installing a new standpipe/dry hydrant for firefighting capacity. Improvements were recommended for the NYS Boat Launch and the Village-owned Fourth Street Kayak Boat Launch. In

addition, improvements were recommended for Rainey Park at the mouth of Murderers Creek and the Wastewater Treatment Plant. The LWRP also recommended that opportunities for public acquisition of waterfront land, through donation or easement, be pursued.

The LWRP included three major trail development recommendations. The “White Elephant Railroad” right-of-way, which runs from the northern part of the Village to the Coxsackie Town line, was identified as a potential hiking/cross-country skiing/snowmobile trail. A cleared roadway that runs under the Niagara Mohawk transmission line from NYS Route 385 to the Hudson River in the southern end of the Village was identified as a potential easement site that would permit access for viewing and picnicking. Finally, a third idea was to widen NYS Route 385 to provide for an on-road bike trail. Scenic overlook stopping areas were also recommended for development along NYS Route 385. Street beautification efforts (sidewalk and curbing replacement and resetting and street tree planting) were also recommended to improve accessibility in the Village’s historic district. The LWRP also identified several methods to guide future development in the community to ensure the community’s resources are preserved and maintained. One such recommendation included the establishment of design guidelines to guide development in the planned open space residential area (including the Sleepy Hollow development).

Other objectives identified by the LWRP were to conduct historic preservation studies, including developing design guidelines, and to create a multi-faceted tourist program to identify markets, design promotional efforts, and coordinate advertising campaigns. To preserve the Middle Ground Flats area, it was recommended that a management plan be created. To assist the Village in preserving additional open lands, it was recommended that the Village conduct a study examining the feasibility of establishing a trust that can accept and administer easements, donations, or land acquisitions to protect natural resources and scenic views.

Athens Waterfront Restoration Feasibility Study

In 1999, the Greene County Soil and Water Conservation District (GCSWCD), with financial and in-kind assistance from the NYS Department of State Local Waterfront Revitalization Program, Iroquois Gas Transmission System, Army Corps of Engineers, Athens Generating Regional & Community Historic Preservation Benefit Program, and other State and Federal funding agencies, developed a feasibility study and final design plans to revitalize the Village’s waterfront area. The Study identified recommendations to restore the Village ferry slip and adjoining Riverfront Park to benefit both small pleasure craft users as well as larger tour boats. It was even recommended that the Village (and/or others) investigate the feasibility of establishing a small tour boat operation.

Specific recommendations related to the ferry slip restoration addressed a myriad of environmental issues that might arise due to the restoration activities. Techniques to address these concerns included retrofitting the stormwater system (to include sediment traps and stabilized outfalls); working with appropriate County, State, and Federal agencies on dredging techniques and practices; reconstructing 525

linear feet of bulkhead along the Village shoreline and constructing an improved promenade; and designing all aspects of the project including docks, access ramps, information kiosk, lighting, benches and landscaping to be consistent with the historic character of the downtown. The Riverfront Park was renovated with steel bulkheading and additional dockage. The Army Corps and NYS DOS will not allow dredging of the ferry slip as to not disturb the Hudson River.

According to Greene County Soil and Water Conservation District (GCSWCD), additional actions associated with the riverfront project include the construction of a central plaza at the end of Second Street and a small restroom/ticket office facility. There was also an expressed need for additional parking capacity. Methods to increase parking included rearranging and redefining existing on-street parking. Additional parking was added by the ferry slip.

Proposed Barge Removal Project

According to Greene County, there were ongoing attempts by the Village and Greene County Soil and Water Conservation District (GCSWCD) to remove the eleven abandoned vessels that have been stored along the Athens waterfront since the 1970s. According to the County, the vessels, which include barges, tugboats, and a yacht, were brought to Athens by the owner with the intention of rehabilitating the vessels into a series of “waterfront commercial enterprises.” As these plans never materialized, the vessels were abandoned and have deteriorated significantly. Peckham Industries has control of the underwater land grants below the barges.

The blighted vessels, in addition to aesthetic concerns, also present safety and environmental concerns. The area around the barges is heavily covered by wetlands and little is known about what may be stored on the vessels.

Most recently, GCSWCD, who would work in partnership with NYSDEC and Hudsonia, Inc., had been seeking funding to implement the clean-up activities. Working with NYSDEC, GCSWCD was seeking to establish a protocol on unknown vessel removal, establishing standard investigation procedures addressing applicable ecological, navigational, historical, and social impacts. The removal was slated to receive funds several years ago from the Hudson River Estuary Program, but the EPF budget did not get passed and the proposal has since been postponed.

Athens Kayak Launch

This project has been completed. This project developed a safe launching/land area for paddle boats such as canoes and kayaks. Ultimately, other project components hoped to be completed include:

- Development of a small kiosk to direct paddle visitors to Village businesses
- Aesthetic improvements including improvements to streetscape, utility relocation, and improvements to adjoining private buildings and the old slip
- Installation of landscaping, benches, and planters

- Development of parking spaces which can be used by paddlers

Hudson River Improvement Fund Grant

In March 2000, the Village of Athens submitted a grant application to the Hudson River Improvement Fund for \$15,000 to fund municipal planning services to “help reorient and attract business activity and tourism towards the riverfront and Second Street business district.” The intent behind this proposed activity was to enhance these facilities so that they will encourage the public to visit the village’s center and its riverfront park, helping to restore the area to its former role as the center of the community for inhabitants and visitors. It was desired that the plan guide future development of the Village’s waterfront assets and business district. In addition to a public outreach effort, this planning process included review of the previously completed LWRP, a marketing strategy to attract appropriate business and tourism to the riverfront and Village business district, and a prescriptive and objective revitalization plan.

Town and Village of Athens Municipal Community Center: Evaluation of Existing Municipal Offices and Feasibility Study of Future Government Space

In August 2004, J. Robert Folchetti and Associates completed a study to evaluate options related to the shared Town and Village Municipal Community Center. One option they examined involved the construction of a new Town Hall/Town Center to house Town offices while the Village offices remained in the existing Community Center building. The alternative was to rehabilitate the existing Community Center to better meet the needs of both the Town and Village. The rehabilitation efforts would also have to include modifications to make the facility compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

As part of the study, the consultants conducted interviews with both the Board of Trustees and the Town Board as well as with Town and Village employees to gain a better understanding of the future needs of each department. They also examined the potential historic impacts associated with modifying the existing Community Center. A survey was prepared to evaluate the opinions of the community, especially on the issues considered to be “intangibles.” Approximately 80% of respondents expressed the opinion that the municipalities should share a common location, share costs, and that a central location provides an overall convenience to residents.

Village Main Street Plan

In 2000, the Village of Athens applied for a technical assistance grant from the Governor’s Office for Small Cities. Gathering data on building conditions and soliciting public opinion, the Village then set out to prepare a Main Street plan that would revitalize the Athens Business District. A “L” shaped study area, the delineated Main Street, originating at Warren and Second Streets continuing to Water and Fourth Streets, included a mixture of commercial, retail, restaurant, and residential buildings. Although a draft was presented to the Village Board, the plan was never completed or adopted.

Town and Village Comprehensive Plan and 2007 Main Street Study

A multi-year effort between 2005 and 2007 resulted in the development and adoption of a joint Town and Village of Athens Comprehensive Plan. That document included three volumes, including a significant Geographic Information System (GIS) mapping of natural resources in the community. This plan was adopted by both the Town and Village in 2007. The Plan outlined the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats facing the community, a long-range vision, community goals, actions, and strategies to address those goals, and an action plan. At the same time, the Village completed a Main Street Study that evaluated conditions and proposed actions and strategies for improvements to the Main Street area. After the adoption of the 2007 Comprehensive Plan, both the Town and Village undertook a major update to their respective zoning and subdivision laws to bring them into consistency with the 2007 Plan goals and recommendations. This 2020 version updates that plan.

County Planning Efforts

Greene County Economic Development Plan

Initiated by the Greene County Legislature in 2007, the Greene Business Partnership prepared a countywide Comprehensive Economic Development Plan. The plan provides a comprehensive assessment of the County economy and provides a set of prioritized strategic directions and actions to improve the livability and quality of life for residents.¹ The County has been working on implementing this plan since then.

Greene County Habitat Management Plan

In 2004, the Greene County Soil & Water Conservation District (GCSWCD), the Greene County Industrial Development Agency (GCIDA) with assistance from a wide range of other key stakeholders such as Audubon NY and NYSDEC Hudson River Estuary Program initiated two efforts targeted at a developing a better understanding of habitat resources in the 9W corridor, 1) the training of local stakeholders and 2) the development of a detailed plan for habitat assessment and protection. The focus area for the Greene County Habitat Management Plan is 29,468 acres (46 square miles) bound by the Albany County border to the north, the Hudson River to the east, NYS Route 23 to the south, and Interstate 87 or US Route 9W (whichever is most westerly) to the west.

¹ About the Greene County Comprehensive Economic Development Plan <http://www.greenebusiness.com/about.html>

Other Greene County Planning Efforts

Greene County has also developed and adopted several other significant plans that offer relevant information about and for Athens. These include the Greene County:

Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan

Water and Sewer Study

Telecommunications Plan

County Natural Resource Inventory

Coordinated Transportation Plan

Open Space and Recreation Plan

 Tourism Trails Plan

 Tourism Economic Impact Analysis & Strategic Goals

 Second Homeowners Marketing Profile

 Buy in Greene Initiative

Demographic Profile

This section summarizes several trends including population, age, housing, education, and income currently impacting the Town and Village of Athens. It updates similar information categories that were included in the 2007 Town and Village of Athens Comprehensive Plan.

This information is culled primarily from the 2010 U.S. Census of Population and Housing Summary File 3 (SF3²), from American Community Survey 2018 (the last year data is available for), and from a report by Headwaters Economics: Economic Profile System for the Town and Village of Athens.

To document trends, some information from the 2000 Census is included. Please note that because the Village is wholly within the Town, the Town figures presented include the Village figures. The source data has not been adjusted to show only the remainder of the Town, (the Town outside of the Village). For comparative purposes, data of neighboring riverfront villages (Village of Catskill and Village of Coxsackie), New York State, and Greene County are also evaluated for some demographics.

Population

Both Town and Village have experienced population declines.

Local population growth or decline is often dependent upon several factors including economic expansion, environmental capacity, housing suitability, age driven needs, and regional desirability. According to the US Census Bureau, the Town of Athens population increased by 12.1% from 1990 to 2000. Over the next decade, the Town of Athens population increased from 3,991 in 2000 to 4,105 in 2010, reflecting a slow 2.8% growth rate. However, the five-year average of estimates (ACS estimates)³ between 2000 and 2018 show the Town of Athens population decreased to 3,947, representing a loss of -3.8%.

At the Village level, Athens grew 8.4% between 1990 and 2000, but then suffered a population loss of -1.8% by 2010, and the estimate shows an even more significant loss of -6.3% from 2000 to 2018. There is an estimated 1,559 people in the Village.

In comparison, New York State had 5.5% growth in 1990 to 2000 and a 1.3% growth between 2000 and 2010. Greene County growth rates were 7.7% (1990 to 2000) and 2.5% (2000 to 2010). Subsequently, Greene County has been estimated to have lost -3.8% population (2010 to 2018).

² Note that SF3 data are based on a sample of the population and housing units throughout the Town and Village and are subject to sampling errors.

³ Note that the ACS is an estimate, and that is not an actual count. The error levels can be high for some demographics. This data will not be fully counted and confirmed until the 2020 Census is computer.

Table 1: Historic Population Trends

Year	Athens Village		Athens Town		Greene County		New York State	
	Number	Growth	Number	Growth	Number	Growth	Number	Growth
2000	1,695	8.4%	3,991	12.1%	48,195	7.7%	18,976,821	5.5%
2010	1,664	-1.8%	4,105	2.8%	49,410	2.5%	19,229,752	1.3%
2018*	1,559	-6.3%	3,947	-3.8%	47,791	-3.3%	19,618,453	2.0%

Source: U.S. Census of Population and Housing, 2000, 2010; and 2018 American Community Survey;

*Estimates

In comparison, between 2010 and 2018, the Village of Coxsackie, located north of Athens, is estimated to have experienced a decrease in population of -6.2%, while the Village of Catskill, located south of Athens estimates a decrease of -6.9%.

Age Distribution

The population is aging at both the Town and Village level. The median age has increased and is higher than the statewide median age. The Town has decreasing numbers of people under 45 years. The area has lost younger people, and especially school-aged children for many years.

According to the 2018 American Community Survey estimates, the median age is increasing in both Town and Village (49 years for both). This compares to a median age in 2000 at 41 years in both communities.

The proportion of individuals 19 years or younger in the Villages of Catskill (18.6%) and Coxsackie (25.3%) is comparable to trends occurring in the Town and Village of Athens. There was a higher percentage of residents between the ages of 20 and 34 in the Village of Catskill (29.4%) compared to the Village of Coxsackie (16.4%), the Village of Athens (16.2%) and the Town of Athens (17.0%).

The Town and Village have a slightly larger proportion of their population aged 35 - 54 (1,077 people in the Town, or 27.3% and 29.8% in the Village) than the County (12,556 people or 26.3%), or New York State (26.1% of the total). Perhaps of more importance is that this age group dropped in percentage of the total population for the Town, Village, and County compared to that seen and reported in the Town and Village of Athens 2007 Plan. Statewide, this age group has increased.

The number of older residents has increased over the years. The 55 - 64 age group increased significantly to include 14.8% of the Village population (it was (9.6%) in 2007), 16.6% Town-wide (was 11.6%), 15.6% in the County (was 10.6%), and 13.0% statewide (was 8.9%). The percentage of citizens aged 65 and over also has increased. Now, the Town and Village’s population is estimated to be 24.2% aged 65 and over (was 15.8%) and the County is at 20.3% (was 15.7%).

Household Income

Income levels have increased.

A comparison of household incomes in the Town and Village of Athens, Greene County and NYS between 2000 and 2018 shows some positive trends with fewer households earning smaller incomes, and more households earning higher incomes. In 2000, the Town had the smallest share of households earning less than \$25,000 (27.6%) compared to other communities. In 2018, this figure is estimated to have dropped and was 24.3% of households. In 2000, the Village had 31.8% of households earning less than \$25,000, the County had 32.6% and New York State had 29.6%. By 2018, fewer households are estimated to have lower incomes in the Village (23.1%), in Greene County (22.2%) and for New York State (20.7%).

In 2018, 24.7% of Town households were estimated to have earned between \$25,000 and \$49,999. This was similar to the Village (24.1%) and the County (25.0%), all of which have a higher percentage of households in that income bracket than the State (19.1%). The County, Town and Village have similar percent of households earning between \$50,000 and \$74,999 (all about 31%) while statewide, there was a slightly lower percentage of earners in that bracket (27.5%).

In 2000, the median household income was \$36,655 in the Village, \$39,728 in the Town, \$36,604 in the County, and \$43,393 in New York State. In 2018, the median household income is estimated at \$52,143 in the Village, \$51,066 in the Town, \$53,214 in the County, and \$65,323 in New York State.

Between the 2000 and 2010 census, median household income in the Town increased by 44.6% while it increased about the same (44.1%) in the Village. Median income in the Town and Village did considerably better than either the County or the State. In comparison to the 44% increase in the Town and Village, median household income in the County increased by 33.3% and by 31.6% statewide.

Housing Value

Median housing values in both the Town and Village have increased more than in Greene County, but remains lower than statewide.

In 2000, the Town and Village of Athens had a median housing value of \$87,406, and \$79,412, respectively. At that time, both the Town and Village had lower median housing values than the County (\$91,927) or the State (\$147,598).

In 2018, however, the Town of Athens's median housing value is estimated to be \$192,700 and the Village \$180,200 – both of which are estimated to be higher than either the County level (\$176,100), but lower than the median housing value statewide (State \$293,000).

Housing Inventory

The Town has a higher housing construction rate than the Village. Both have construction rates higher than the State as a whole.

Between 2000 and 2010, both the Town and Village of Athens experienced an increase in construction of new housing units of 14.6% and 8.0%, respectively. Greene County experienced an 11.8% increase at the same time, and statewide, there was a considerably lower construction increase of only 6.4%.

According to the most recent data, the Village of Athens has an estimated total housing count of 775 units, of which 644 or 83.1% are occupied - up from 79.3% in 2000. In 2018, 67.2% of all occupied units were owner-occupied (up slightly from 65.4% in 2000) while the remaining 32.8% were renter-occupied units. The number of rental units decreased (down slightly from 34.6% in 2000.)

Of all units, there are an estimated 473 single-family detached units in the Village and 23 1-unit attached, 38 two-family units, and 49 multi-family units (3 to 4 family) units. The Village also had three multi-family units (5 to 9 units), and 53 structures having 10 + units. There were 5 units listed as mobile home or other types. In 2018, the Village had 131 vacant units (16.9%), down from 20.7% in 2000. Of the total vacant units in the Village, 93 were used for seasonal, recreational purposes.

Between 2000 and 2018, the Town of Athens is estimated to have 1,214 single-family units, and 32 1-unit, attached dwellings. There were an estimated 48 two-family units and 147 multi-family units of other configurations in 2018. There is an estimated decrease in the number of mobile homes in the Town (from 77 to 48 units estimated in 2018).

The Town has a slightly reduced number of rental units but a much higher number of ‘vacant units’, of which half are used for seasonal and recreational purposes. There is an increasing number of units used for seasonal and recreational purposes.

The 2018 Town of Athens housing stock was estimated to consist of 2,102 units, up from 1,972 units in 2000. Of these, 1,515 units, or 70.8% are estimated to be occupied. Of the total occupied units, 1,181 (56%) were owner-occupied, down from 74.6% in 2000. The remaining 334 (15.9%) were renter occupied, down from 25.4% in 2000.

In 2018, the Town estimated 587 vacant units, which is a significant increase over the number of vacant units in 2000 (372). This likely reflects former single-family units converted to seasonal or short-term rental use: of the total vacant units, 365 were used for seasonal, recreational purposes.

Household Composition

In 2018 the Village of Athens is estimated to have had 644 households, of which 357 households or 55.4% were considered family households. This is a decrease from that counted in 2000 (65.6%). About 287 households (44.6%) were categorized in the estimate as non-family households, up from 2000. The number of non-family households in the Village of Athens is lower than that seen in both the County (40.5%) and New York State (36.7%).

Of the Village's total family households, 265, or 41.1% (down from 48.8% 54.8% in 2000) are now estimated to be married-couple families. The Village had 262 householders living alone compared to the County (35.4%), and New York State (29.7, %).

In 2018 the Town of Athens had 1,515 households, of which an estimated 967 households or 63.8% were considered family households. This is a slight decrease from that seen in 2000 (69.4%). Of the Town's total family households, 803 were estimated to be married-couple families. The Town had an estimated 477 householders living alone.

The average household size for New York State (2.60) is slightly lower than that in the Town (2.72), and almost equal to the County (2.59). The average family size for the Village of Athens is 2.60 compared to the County (3.35) and New York State (3.27).

Additional Demographic Data of Importance

- Educational Attainment for 2018 in the Town of Athens: high school or equivalent degree – 40%; Some college, no degree – 18.6%; Associate degree – 12.7%; Bachelor's degree – 9.9% and Graduate or professional degree – 9.0%.
- In 2018, the number of persons estimated to be living in poverty in the Town of Athens was 13.1%. This is slightly higher than that in the Village (12.3%), about the same as the County (13.3%), and slightly lower than New York State (13.6%).
- In 2018, the estimated employment rate in the Town of Athens was 51.9%. This was lower than the Village (54.1%), about the same as the County (50.0%), and lower than New York State (59.6%). There are no figures yet as to the impact of the COVID-19 PAUSE on this figure.
- Both the Town and Village have predominantly white populations (93.8% in Town and 92.5% in Village).
- About 5% of the population in the Town and Village speak a language other than English at home.
- About 18.2% of the population in the Town is estimated to be disabled as are about 19.2% in the Village. Of those, about 10% have ambulatory difficulties and 8-9% have independent living difficulties – both of which have streetscape and land use implications. Both the Town and Village also have residents who have hearing, vision, and cognitive difficulties.
- The average commute to work is slightly higher in the Town (26 minutes) compared to the Village (22 minutes). Most people drive to work alone (only about 10% carpool). In the Town, about 4.5% work from home and 4.9% work from home in the Village. The Village has about 2% who walk to work, while the Town has about 1.4%.
- 83% of housing units in the Town and 78% in the Village have a broadband subscription. 8.5% of units in the Town and 15.6% of units in the Village have no computer.

- An analysis of data indicates a high level of difficulty affording housing in both the Town and Village. Housing affordability is generally measured as a ratio between the value of a house compared to a household’s income. When that ratio is calculated to be greater than 2, conditions are considered unaffordable. In both 2000 and 2010, the average affordability ratio was higher than 2. Data suggests that affordability issues have worsened since then. For the 2018 ACS, additional information is offered.
- The 2018 estimated figures for housing affordability are:

Affordability Ratio for Households with a Mortgage	Number of Households in Town	Number of Households in Village
<2	314	136
2-2.9	120	51
3-3.9	67	28
4+	210	60

For households without a mortgage, the pattern is similar: There are 212 households in the Town without a mortgage with an affordability ratio > 4, and 48 in the Village.

Another common measure of affordability is whether a household spends more than 30% of its income on housing. For households in the Town earning < \$20,000, 72 of them spend more than 30% on housing (about 5%). In the Village for the same income level, 11 (7.7%) spend more than 30%.

This compares to households earning > \$75,000: 29 households in the Town spend more than 30% on housing (1.9%) and 5 (.78%) in the Village spend more than 30% of their income on housing.

Summary tables are as follows:

Table 2. Summary of Demographic Data for the Town of Athens

	2000	2010	2018, Estimated and Where Available	Change
Population	3,991	4,105	3,991	Down
Population Growth Rate	12.1	2.8	-6.3	Down
Median Age	41.1	46.4	49.7	Up
% of Population > 65 years old	15.8% (633)	17.6% (720)	24.2	Up

	2000	2010	2018, Estimated and Where Available	Change
% of Population < 18 years old	25.7 (1,026)	20.0% (816)	19.9% (788)	Down
% Family Households	69.4 (1,111)	63.0 (1,080)	60.6 (967)	Down
% Non-Family	30.6 (489)	37.0 (635)	39.4 (573)	Up
Median HH Income	\$39,728	\$56,394	\$56,550	Up
Total Housing Units	1,972	2,248	2,102	Down
Total Occupied Housing Units	1,600	1,749	1515	Down
Total Vacant Housing Units	372	499	587	Up
Total Seasonal, Recreational, Occasional Housing Units	234	299	365	Up
Median Housing Value of homes with a mortgage	87,406		\$92,700	Up

Table 3. summary of Demographic Data for the Village of Athens

	2000	2010	2018, Estimated and Where Available	Change
Population	1,695	1,664	1,559	Down
Population Growth Rate	8.4%	-1.8%	-6.3%	Down
Median Age	40.6	45.3	49.6	Up
% of Population > 65 years old	18.6 (316)	18.1(302)	24.2% (332)	Up
% of Population < 18 years old	26.5 (449)	22.5 (376)	14.9 (256)	Down
% Family Households	65.6 (451)	58.1	55.4 (357)	Down
% Non-Family Households	34.4 (236)	41.9	44.6 (287)	Up
Median Household Income	\$36,655	\$59,063	\$52,143	Down
Total Housing Units	793	760	760	Same
Total Occupied Housing Units	687	664	644	Down
Total Vacant Housing Units	106	96 +/-49	116	Up

Total Seasonal, Recreational, Occasional Housing Units	42	NA	93	Up
Median Housing Value of homes with a mortgage	\$79,412	175,700	\$180,200	Up

Municipal & Community Resources

Municipal Properties

Athens Community Center

The Town and Village of Athens currently share a community center on First Street in the Village of Athens. Constructed in the early 1900s as a local elementary school, the building has been updated over time to accommodate a variety of uses. The current configuration of the building is home to the Town and Village offices, court facilities, Village police, and other community organizations. The gymnasium is often used by library events, basketball, boy's and girl's baseball, the Victorian Stroll, and other miscellaneous events. The Athens Museum is on the second floor and open by appointment.

The current center has several insufficiencies including needing more office space, a bigger conference room and courtroom, and more storage space. The existing facility is not handicapped accessible, does not have a fire protection system that meets New York State codes, and lacks central air conditioning. The building's existing heating units are inefficient, and the window insulation is poor. The restrooms are not handicapped accessible. The Town has been evaluating rehabilitation options.

The existing 10,600 square foot parking lot can be designed for up to 25 parking spaces plus two additional handicapped spaces for a total of 27. This falls significantly short of the required 51 spaces (48 spaces plus three handicapped spaces) needed to meet the Code requirement of one space per 200 square feet floor area. In addition, although a precise tally has not been estimated, more parking is needed to meet peak time needs (especially Town Court nights).

The Community Center, although not registered as a historic landmark in Greene County, is located within the Village of Athens Historic District and provides a "tangible connection to the Village's past and contributes to the community's identity." The Village of Athens had previously been awarded a \$100,000 grant from Athens Generating Plant Funds, administered by the NYS Office of Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation (NYSOPRHP) to make repairs to the building.

Other Municipal Properties

In order to illustrate the other Village and Town owned properties, a Geographic Information System map has been prepared, utilizing the data provided in the local tax rolls, and additional information obtained from members of the *Athens Community Comprehensive Plan Committee (ACCP)*. A new DPW facility is the newest addition to municipally owned properties.

Public Access Recreation Land

The Village and Town of Athens have several park or park-like resources available for the enjoyment of its residents. All currently open parks listed below are open dawn to dusk. See the Recreation and Tourism Locations Map.

Community Parks

The Athens Village Green is a park in the village. It hosts the Athens Little League field and there is a concession stand with handicapped bathrooms open during games. The Athens Green also has the Playscape playground, which is a big draw as one of two park facilities for children in the village. There are also basketball hoops, which are popular with teens. There is on-street parking, and the location is centrally accessible to the village population.

The EJ Arthur Elementary School also has children’s playground equipment along with two public, asphalt tennis courts. It is accessible on foot and there is ample parking during non-school hours.

Triangle Park is a small, landscaped pocket park with a bench located at South Franklin and 5th Streets. It features a memorial for Town and Village Veterans. Pearl Harbor ceremonies are held here annually.

A key gathering spot in downtown Athens is the Riverfront Park located at Second and Water Street. It has a gazebo, picnic tables, and benches. The Park features floating docks that are open to the public for private boating use as well as dockage for the Athens-Hudson Ferry service in season. There is on-street parking with a few handicapped accessible spaces, which are also for use by patrons of nearby downtown businesses.

Athens is a greenway community and a designated access point for the Hudson River Water Trail. Recently, the Park has had restoration work completed.

The Kayak Launch is located on 4th and Water Streets. The launch provides canoe/kayak dockage and launching facilities within a short walk from the Athens Riverfront Park. This is a designated Hudson River Greenway Water Trail launch site, with on-street parking available.

The Isabelle Rainey Park is located on the north side of Murderers Creek and is used primarily for a girls’ softball league. It is available for public use, but the entrance gate is locked when games are not scheduled. It is accessible to most of the Village population by walking, and there is ample vehicle parking during games.

There is a state-owned public boat launch providing drive in / drive out boat launch access to the Hudson River adjacent to the Murderers Creek and near Rainey Field. It has roughly 15 large parking spaces for

vehicles with boat trailers and about 20 regular vehicle spaces. The New York State Department of Environmental Conservation manages this popular boating access point to the Hudson.

Slightly more out of the way for the main Village population is Bunker Hill Dog Park (formerly Union Street Park), Bunker Hill Dog Park is in Union Street Park (separately gated area), which has a large, mowed field, a fenced dog park, and a picnic pavilion. It used to have a skating rink but that is no longer used. There is parking for approximately 10 vehicles, and it is within walking distance of Sleepy Hollow Lake.

A community-based not-for-profit corporation operates a seasonal, membership-based community pool located on Evergreen Place off Maple Lane and Market Street. The pool is used by resident and non-resident families and youths. It has a large pool and a separate kiddie pool.

Natural Open Spaces / Preserves

See Also the Greene County Open Space Plan for other information, maps, and descriptions of natural open spaces and preserves in Athens.

Cohotate Preserve is a nature preserve operated by the Greene County Soil & Water Conservation District with self-guided tours on nature trails along the Hudson River and occasional active programs for school groups. The parking lot is ample and can accommodate school buses. Because of its location along State Route 385 in the Town, it is only conveniently accessed by car.

Green Lake is the only publicly accessible lake in the Town that has a small boat launch and slip. Community residents also use it unofficially for swimming. The lake is stocked for summer and winter fishing, and there are annual fishing tournaments. The property is a State public fishing access point.

Buttermilk Falls is a natural feature in the Town near Green Lake. It is set in the woods a short distance from a small parking area along Buttermilk Falls Road. The property is owned by the state and managed by the Greene County Soil & Water Conservation Service.

The Middle Ground Flats is a large, wooded island located on the eastern edge of the town in the Hudson River, mid-way between the Village and City of Hudson. A number of squatters' cabins used to exist on the property, but most have been removed, especially on the Athens side. The island is a nest location for breeding Bald Eagles. The north and south portions of the island also have sandy beaches that are popular destinations with boaters. There are currently no active plans to manage or operate the island for park facilities although it is used for recreational purpose without oversight.

Hollister Lake on Schoharie Turnpike is the Village of Athens Reservoir. It is accessible for shore fishing with a permit.

Neither Athens nor its surrounding communities has a significant bike trail or linear park facility, although there are walking trails in the Village of Catskill, at Olana State Historic Site, and along the Rip Van Winkle Bridge.

Brandow Point know known as “The Willows” and maintained by the Greene Land Trust is a riverfront property located in the southern portion of the Village. This site has views of the Olana State Historic Site, Rogers Island, and the Hudson River. The Greene County Soil & Water Conservation District (GCSWCD) currently maintains an office and meeting space at a house on Brandow Point. Like the Cohotate Preserve, it is located along Route 385, but is closer to the village and has been linked with a pedestrian-friendly route.

Private Access Recreation Land

Sleepy Hollow Lake

The Association of Property Owners (APO) of Sleepy Hollow Lake is a private homeowners’ association that lies within the Towns of Coxsackie, Athens, and the Village of Athens. The lake is a 326-acre manmade class A reservoir with 17-miles of shoreline and is the source of drinking water for the community. The lake is used by the residents and their guests for boating, swimming, fishing, tubing and more. The lake has an excellent fish population with small and largemouth bass, white and black crappie, several species of panfish and more. The community offers other amenities including two swimming pools, two sets of tennis courts, basketball courts, a driving range and several parks that allow lake access to off-lake property owners. The Community is governed by a Board of Directors and managed by the Association Manager with a staff of approximately 20 FT and 10 PT/Seasonal staff. The APO also manages the Water and Sewer Companies for the community. All utilities are underground.

Roadway Maintenance and Repair

Village and Town Department of Public Works and Highway Department

The Village of Athens Department of Public Work (DPW) is responsible for cleaning and maintaining 12 miles of Village roadways, including, snowplowing, sidewalk and sign maintenance and replacement, brush removal, repair of water line breaks, hydrant flushing, as well as the maintenance of municipal parks, buildings and grounds. A new DPW facility is under construction (as of 2020) behind the Firehouse on 3rd Street.

Major equipment owned by the DPW includes, but is not limited to:

- 1-Int. CD520 Plow/Dump Truck
- 1-Ford 550 Plow/Dump Truck
- 1-Int. Plow/Dump Truck
- 1-Utility Truck
- 1-F350 Pick-Up Truck
- 1-CatTractor/Backhoe

- 1-Ford Tractor/w brush hog
- 1-Roller
- 1-Sewer Cleaning Machine
- 1-Leaf loader
- Utility-Trailers

The Town of Athens Highway Superintendent manages the Highway Department for the Town and is assisted by other full-time staff personnel. According to the Highway Superintendents, the Town Highway Department is responsible for maintaining approximately 34 miles of Town roads and the Department maintains several pieces of equipment including, but not limited to, a dump truck, loader, grade-all, back-hoe, snowplow, roller, stone box, hand tools and torches. There are currently no bike paths in the Town of Athens.

Greene County Highway Department

The Greene County Highway Department is responsible for maintaining Greene County's highway and bridge infrastructure. As indicated on the County website, Greene County is 653.8 square miles in size with 14 municipalities and 5 Villages.⁴ It has 261.49 miles of County roads, with 134 bridges, and 147 culvert structures measuring 4 feet in diameter or larger.

Work ranges from sweeping and plowing road and bridge surfaces, to complete deconstruction and reconstruction of both roads and bridges. To perform its functions, the department maintains its own fleet of light and heavy equipment and personnel.

Currently the County Highway Department has one main office building located at 240 West Main Street in Catskill, and four substations located throughout the County. Two of the facilities are located on the mountaintop, in Ashland and Hunter, and two are in the valley, in Athens and Freehold. The mechanic's shop is in Athens. A highway facility is located on Route 9W in Athens and another one in Hunter just off State Route 23A.

Water, Sewer and Sanitation

Public Water Supply

The Town of Athens does not have its own public water supply. Properties within the Town generally have private wells and are dependent upon groundwater aquifers; however, some properties along Schoharie Turnpike are serviced by the Village public water system. The bedrock formations of Athens generally provide enough water for domestic uses.

⁴ Greene County Government Website, www.greenegovernment.com/department/highway/index.htm

Municipal water is provided to a majority of properties within the Village of Athens. According to the Annual Drinking Water Quality Report for 2005, the Village provided water through 795 service connections and current water usage is 122,000 gallons per day. The source of the public water supply is Hollister Lake located along Schoharie Turnpike in the northwestern part of the Town of Athens. See the Water and Sewer Map.

The Village operates a conventional water treatment facility. Northdome Company is the operator on behalf of the Village. The water from the main source is pumped to the treatment plant for 1) coagulation using aluminum sulfate to cause small particles to stick together forming what is termed a “floc”; 2) sedimentation which causes the floc to drop out of the water to the bottom of a tank for removal; 3) filtration through two layers of media - anthracite, a form of carbon, and sand; and 4) chlorination to protect against contamination from harmful bacteria and other organisms. The finished water is then piped to the storage facility where a corrosion inhibitor is added to protect the distribution system piping and household plumbing fixtures from corrosion.

Residential Water and Sewer Rates Base water rate \$97.00 Includes 15,000 gallons per quarter. Excess billed at \$3.00 per 1000 gallons:

Sewer Rate: \$129.00 per quarter

Residential Water Rates Outside the Village: \$161.50 Includes 15,000 gallons per quarter

Public Sewer System

Most Town residences and businesses are served by private septic systems which consist of septic tanks with leach fields, although a few properties are hooked up to the Village public sewer system. The residents living within the Sleepy Hollow Lake residential development, located in the Town and Village, are served by a private sewage treatment facility. Most properties within the Village of Athens are served by the municipally operated sewer system.

The Village Sewer System consists of two wastewater treatment plants owned and operated by the Village. Both wastewater treatment plants discharge to the Hudson River. The Main sewer plant is located on Water Street and has a State Pollution Discharge Elimination System (SPDES) permit to treat up to 400,000 gallons per day (gpd). A second plant exists at Brick Row. This plant is also at capacity. The sewer plant underwent a major renovation to meet regulatory standards. Previous orders on consent have been lifted and new permit ratings are now in effect (2020).

Solid Waste Disposal

The Greene County Solid Waste Management Department manages four solid waste transfer stations located in Catskill, Coxsackie, Windham, and Hunter. Village and Town residents either bring their trash to the nearest transfer station or contract with a private waste disposal service. The Village of Athens

holds a brush cleanup day twice a year, and the brush is stored on Village-owned land located behind the new firehouse on Third Street until it is chipped into mulch for Village residents to use. There is a new disposal site for brush, trees, leaves and garden refuse available to Town and Village residents. There are two town-wide cleanup days at which residents can dispose of any non-hazardous material free of charge.

The County transfer stations accept and properly dispose of municipal solid waste, including construction and demolition debris, and process and market the source-separated recyclables generated by the county's residents and businesses. Greene County Solid Waste is open five days a week and is closed on Wednesday and Sunday.

The Greene County Solid Waste Management Department also supports newspaper collection boxes throughout the County and recycling centers in the Towns of Cairo, Durham, Greenville, Halcott and New Baltimore. The recycling centers do not accept appliances, batteries, or tires (except for Greenville, which does accept tires). Salvation Army donations are accepted at receptacles at each of the transfer stations. The Department is developing an annual Household Hazardous Waste (HHW) collection day.,

Utilities

Electric & Gas

The Central Hudson Gas and Electric Corporation provides electrical power to the Town and Village. A natural gas line along Union Street was installed by Central Hudson to accommodate a large commercial customer. There is no other natural gas service in the Town and Village. There is currently a new alternative program available to all Athens residents. However, few have taken advantage of the program to obtain natural gas service.

Telephone, Cable & Internet Access

Local land-line telephone service is provided to the Town and Village by Verizon. State Tel, a private telephone and internet provider, also services the Sleepy Hollow area and some other parts of the Village and Town. State Telephone installed a new fiber optic network in the Village and in Sleepy Hollow Lake that offers high-speed internet. Mid-Hudson Cablevision Inc. offers customers high-speed broadband internet connection. DISH also offers cable and digital television.

Mid-Hudson Cablevision Inc. offers cable and digital television as well as high-speed internet service to anyone who has a cable account in the Town and Village. Certain property owners may not have access to cable services in remote areas of the Town. Verizon also offers high-speed internet and digital television to areas in the Town and Village, such as the Sleepy Hollow Lake area, where Digital Subscriber Line (DSL) technology is also available.

Emergency Services

Police Services

The Town of Athens does not have its own police department. Police protection is provided by Greene County Sheriff's Department and the NY State Police. The closest satellite office provided by State Police is in South Cairo, New York. Police emergencies are dispatched to the County Sheriff's Department and to the NYS Police Department through 911.

The Village does have its own Police Department. The Village Police has part-time deputy officers available, typically in the evening hours. The remainder of the day is serviced by the NY State Police. The Village Police has a direct emergency phone number that is forwarded to the NY State Police should no one be available to answer at the Village Police Station.

Fire Districts & Departments

The Town has three fire districts: 1) Athens Fire Protection District, 2) West Athens – Lime Street Fire District, and 3) Leeds Fire Protection District. All of the fire departments within the Town are staffed by volunteers.

The Athens Fire Protection District covers the eastern portion of the Town, east of the railroad tracks to the Hudson River, including the Village of Athens. According to the Athens Volunteer Fire Department Chief, and their website, this fire department is a public department (with the Village Board serving as the Board of Fire Commissioners) whose volunteer members protect 2,500 people living in an area of 10 square miles.⁵ The active and social volunteer members also provide a number of other services to the community at the fire station located at 39 Third Street.

The West Athens Fire District covers the northwest corner and central portion of the Town, west of the railroad tracks. The fire company is known as the West Athens - Lime Street Fire Company #1, and there are two fire stations, one located on Leeds-Athens Road, and the other located on Bambie Lane.⁶ See Fire Districts Map.

The Leeds Fire Protection District is located approximately in the southwestern quadrant of the Town, west of I-87 and south of Green Lake Park and Buttermilk Falls. Not only does the Leeds Fire District cover the south-western portion of the Town of Athens but it also covers portions of the Town of Catskill. The Leeds fire company is known as the Leeds Hose Co. #1, and the firehouse is located on Route 23B.

⁵ Athens Volunteer Fire Department website: <http://cms.firehouse.com/dept/Athens2NY>

⁶ “**History of the West Athens - Lime Street Fire Company #1, Inc at the Celebration of their 50th Anniversary**”: http://www.rootsweb.com/~nygreen2/west_athens_lime_st_fire_company_1.htm

Catskill Ambulance Services

Greene County EMS provides paramedic services to contracted towns. Emergency medical services for the Town and Village of Athens have been contracted to Town of Catskill Ambulance Service since 2004. The Town Board reviews the contract with the Catskill Ambulance Service annually. The Catskill Ambulance Service is licensed by the New York State Department of Health and operates in the Towns and Villages of Athens and Catskill.

The Catskill Ambulance Service provides 24-hour a day general ambulance service that includes pre-hospital emergency medical treatment and transportation to the nearest appropriate hospital. The Catskill Ambulance Service owns and operates four ambulances. If all ambulances are actively responding to an emergency, additional EMS is dispatched from another municipality as part of the County's Mutual Aid Agreement.

Greene County Emergency Medical Services, Inc.

The Greene County Emergency Medical Services, Inc., is a not-for-profit corporation that provides paramedic-level services to contracted towns to people who suffer serious medical emergencies, such as heart attacks and vehicular accidents. The local town and village boards of Greene County created Greene County Emergency Medical Services, Inc. to address a critical gap in paramedic services in the County. The Board of Directors of the Greene County Emergency Medical Services, Inc. is largely comprised of representatives from each municipality.

Under the Greene County EMS contracts, each municipality pays a percentage of the overall corporate budget. Greene County Emergency Medical Services, Inc. receives approximately 90% of its funding from local towns and villages. The remaining 10% of its funding is obtained from the Greene County Rural Health Network, a local not-for-profit corporation that receives funding from the New York State Department of Health.

The paid staff of paramedics travels to an emergency site and work closely with the local voluntary ambulance squad that also arrives at the emergency site. After stabilizing the patient, one of Greene County Emergency Medical Services, Inc. paramedics boards the ambulance and travels with the patient to the hospital.⁷

⁷ Advisory Opinion on Tax Exempt Status, New York State Department of Taxation and Finance, Office of Tax Policy Analysis, Technical Services Division, October 19, 2006 - http://www.tax.state.ny.us/pdf/advisory_opinions/multitax/a06_5m_27s.pdf.

Educational Resources

Three public school districts serve the Town and Village of Athens. Most residents live within the Coxsackie-Athens Central School District and the Catskill Central School District. A small area at the southwestern tip of the Town is located within the large, rural Cairo-Durham Central School District. Questar III BOCES and Columbia-Greene Community College are other educational facilities available to Athens residents. See Public School Districts Map.

Coxsackie-Athens Central School District

The Coxsackie-Athens Central School District covers over 75 square miles and is made up of four (4) public schools: the Coxsackie Elementary School (Grade Level K-4, Coxsackie), Coxsackie-Athens High School (Grade Level 9-12, Coxsackie), Coxsackie-Athens Middle School (Grade Level 5-8, Coxsackie), and Edward J. Arthur Elementary School (Grade Level K-4, Athens).

Education related statistics provided by the New York State Department of Education for the Coxsackie-Athens Central School District Are:

2018-2019 Enrollment

Grades 9-12: 420

Grades 5-8: 399

Grades K-4: 481

Total 1300

Racial Background

Black/Afro-American: 3%

Hispanic/Latino: 7%

Asian/Indian/Pacific Islander: 1%

White: 85%

Multiracial: 4%

Gender

Male: 54%

Female: 46%

Questar BOCES

Formerly named Rensselaer-Columbia-Greene Board of Cooperative Educational Services (B.O.C.E.S.), the organization changed its name to Questar III in 1994. Employing approximately 550, the school's Central Offices are located at 10 Empire State Blvd. in Castleton.

Questar III is an educational service agency providing hands-on learning from pre-kindergarten to adult learning. It also provides affordable management and administrative services ranging from grant writing to financial planning.

For other school districts, Questar III provides support services such as state aid planning, legal and labor relations, staff development, health and safety and communications. Through its services, the school assists school districts by providing the expertise of professionals in the field, as well as valuable connections to resources around the state.

Columbia-Greene Community College

Columbia-Greene Community College, located on NYS Route 23 in the Town of Greenport, is a two-year college that is part of the State University of New York public school system. It is a comprehensive, two-year college offering a variety of transfer and career programs leading to the degrees of Associate in Arts, Associate in Science, Associate in Applied Science, and Associate in Occupational Studies, as well as one-year certificate programs and specialized courses geared toward community interest.

Columbia-Greene has 12 different departments that allow students to study such diverse tracks as Education, Arts and Humanities, Automotive Technology, Behavioral and Social Sciences, Business, Criminal Justice, Construction Technology, Computer Science and Mathematics, Nursing, and Science. In addition, the school offers web-based courses as well as various other levels of web-enhancement for classroom-based courses.

Tourist Attractions in Athens

Hudson River Waterfront

The Village of Athens was once a prosperous shipbuilding village. The homes in the main business district preserve the scale of a small, mid-nineteenth century village. The Village’s waterfront is considered a gateway to the Village. Continued revitalization efforts for the riverfront is beneficial to residents and will also help bring positive economic changes the local business community. With the Riverfront Park revitalized, ferry service between Athens and Hudson may be a viable option for the future. In addition, the Hudson Athens Lighthouse and Middle Ground Flats, located just off the shore of Riverfront Park attract tourists to the area.

Considering the restoration of the river’s health and ecosystem, further riverfront development is predictable. In addition, Middle Ground Flats, approximately two miles long and 1,200 feet wide, provides an excellent opportunity for recreational use and is included in the Village’s Coastal Area. The floating docks, available in season at Riverfront Park create a maritime entrance to the Village. The Village of Athens LWRP recommended that to preserve the Middle Ground Flats area, a management plan should be created. The New York State Open Space Conservation Plan identifies Priority Conservation Projects

for the Hudson River Estuary/Greenway Trail Corridor.⁸ The Plan recommends the transfer of Middle Ground Flats, along with other state lands with river access and natural resource values, to the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC), The NYS Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation (OPRHP), or local entities for management agencies. Middle Ground Flats would make a nice addition to the Hudson River Islands State Park, bringing potential increased tourism to the Athens' waterfront.

Festivals

The Athens Street Festival has been held every July for the past 30 years and draws approximately 10,000 people with activities, vendors, and music from morning to night, ending with a fireworks spectacular. Friday night music from June through Labor Day, presented by Athens Performing Arts Committee (APAC), regularly attracts audiences of 100 or more to the Village's Riverfront Park.

The Victorian Stroll is an annual festival that takes place the first Saturday of December. Horse drawn carriages, Victorian House tours, music and various other events take place throughout the day. The day ends with caroling and a tree lighting ceremony.

Athens Community Day, a family-oriented event, is held at the Riverfront Park every June.

Athens Oktoberfest is held every October and features local wineries, breweries, distilleries, and food trucks.

Museums and Cultural Attractions

The Jan Van Loon House is located at the corner of South Washington and Route 385. The Athens Cultural Center is located on Second Street and is used for art shows and cultural learning classes. The Athens Museum is located within the Community Center and is open upon request for special functions such as historic walking tours and events. The historic district covers a large area in the Village including the Lower Village and Brick Row. The D.R. Evarts Library is located on Second Street and is on the National Register of Historic Places.

Hudson-Athens Lighthouse

⁸ The New York State Open Space and Conservation Plan and Generic Environmental Impact Statement, 2006 - <http://www.dec.state.ny.us/website/dlf/opensp/2006/osp2006.pdf>.

A Second Empire architectural style lighthouse, the Hudson-Athens Lighthouse, as it stands so visible in the middle of the Hudson River between Hudson and Athens, is a unique resource. At one time called the Hudson City Lighthouse, dredging of the Hudson River Channel resulted in the “relocation” of the lighthouse from Hudson to Athens.

The Hudson-Athens Lighthouse Preservation Society or H.A.L.P.S. is a non-profit organization that was established to maintain, preserve, and restore the lighthouse, which is chartered as a museum. According to the lighthouse website, the organization was established to provide a way for individuals to become actively involved in the museum development, preservation, and maintenance of the historic lighthouse.

Since 2003, Hudson Cruises has run a ferry service between Hudson, Athens, and the lighthouse. In 2019 the Hudson-Athens Lighthouse was awarded the Seven-to-Save designation, by the Preservation League. This list highlights New York’s threatened historic sites.

An important asset for Greene County tourism and economic development, the lighthouse is mentioned in numerous promotional brochures, including those developed by the Hudson River Valley Lighthouses Coalition, the Columbia County Council on the Arts, and the I Love NY Office.

Tourism Promotion Resources

Greene County Tourism Association

The Greene County Tourism Association is a membership organization founded in 1948 and has been an active organization promoting tourism in Greene County. The membership includes all tourism related businesses. The organization maintains a website at www.thegreatnortherncatskills.com through which they provide information on events, attractions, lodging, dining, and members. The site provides information on outdoor adventures, lodging and dining opportunities, community services, and history and heritage. There is also a detailed calendar of events listing regional special events. As the Greene County Tourism Promotion Department is also the official Tourism Promotion Agency for Greene County, it can apply, receive, and administer funding from the NYS Division of Tourism under the annual I Love New York Matching Funds program. The department supports other regional tourism programs including the Catskill Association for Tourism Services (Delaware, Sullivan, Ulster, and Greene), Hudson Valley Tourism Association (10 counties), and the Hudson River Regional Festival (Ulster, Dutchess, and Greene). The department also produces several widely distributed publications and brochures.

Agricultural Resources

Preserving and enhancing agricultural and natural resources are a key component to comprehensive planning and economic development. Assisting prospective, beginning, and established producers in the planning, production, marketing, and business management would go a long way in fulfilling a thriving local economy, while balancing land conservation and preservation. Keeping agriculture productive and economically viable has been a challenging task across the region. However, there are many programs in place to assist. Particularly, programs focused on preserving and enhancing farming as part of economic development strategies, but also in improving and enhancing the local quality of life. Many people move to a region for its unique agricultural identity, but at the same time, the locality's identity becomes threatened by the increasing amounts of growth pressure. The key is not just allowing growth but guiding it while keeping agricultural industries profitable and not susceptible to development pressure.

Greene County has an Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan in place to assist in these efforts. According to the Plan, "Farming is much more important than a starting point on the development scale." The Top 10 Reasons why farming is important to Greene County are: (1) Farming is big business, generating millions of dollars in the County, (2) Farming provides year-round business for other Greene County enterprises, (3) Income from agriculture goes farther than other sectors in helping the economy, (4) Agricultural opportunities can actually increase with growth of an area, (5) Farms lower taxes, (6) Farms create rural character and attract tourism, (7) Successful farming limits suburban sprawl, (8) Farms and forests preserve natural environments, (9) Farms and forests support wildlife, sport hunting and other recreational land uses, and (10) Farmland is an invaluable resource for future generations.

County Agricultural Districts

Through Article 25AA of the NYS Agriculture and Markets Law, counties may establish Agricultural Districts. Agricultural Districts are a locally initiated farm protection tool designed to preserve, protect, and encourage the development and improvement of agricultural land. Each district must be formally established by the County Legislature and certified by the State's Commissioner of Agriculture and Markets in accordance with the authorizing provisions of New York State's Agriculture and Markets Law (AML). See the Agriculture Map and the Farmland Map.

Under law, each Agricultural District must be reviewed by the County's governing body eight, twelve, or twenty years following its establishment to determine whether the district will be continued, terminated, or modified. In conducting such reviews, the County Legislature takes into consideration recommendations regarding the addition or deletion of properties submitted by the County Agricultural and Farmland Protection Board and the County Planning Board.

Agricultural district designation provides farmers with protection from local laws restricting farming, gives some protection from eminent domain proceedings, and provides certain tax advantages. Sewer and water taxes, for example are not levied on the farm portions of lands within the agricultural districts.

According to the Greene County Agricultural Development and Farmland Protection Plan, while Greene County has approximately 30,073 acres inside its Agricultural Districts, nearly 3.5% of this land is in the Town of Athens. Athens' districts encompass a total of 1,047 acres. Athens' Agricultural Districts are distributed throughout most areas of the Town. Large, unconnected District lands are in the southwest, northeast, and southeast quadrants of the Town. No delineated areas are located within the Village.

In general, Athens' agricultural soils are mixed, with richer soils located near the creeks and waterways and poorer soils located in many of the hilly areas. According to the Greene County Cornell Cooperative Extension, the Town's farmers tend to engage in a variety of farming activities. Some lands are used for raising dairy and beef cattle, pastureland, and growing hay, corn, and other marketable crops. See Appendix A for a map indicating the remaining farms in Athens.

Agroforestry

Agroforestry is an approach to agricultural and natural resources management that involves the deliberate integration of trees and shrubs with root crops, and sometimes livestock, to obtain both sustainable production and the benefits of ecological conservation.

According to Cornell Cooperative Extension of Greene County, agroforestry is a relatively new field of study that explores forests, focusing on forest farming and forestry practices that do not necessarily require the harvest of trees. The focus includes providing incentives for forested land to remain that way in order to provide the environmental, economic (tourism, hunting and fishing) and public health benefits to the surrounding residents and still provide economic development opportunities to the landowner through selective timber harvests and forest farming practices that include growing and selling native herbs, ginseng, mushrooms and shade tolerant crops.

The Cornell Cooperative Extension Agroforestry Resource Center of Greene County provides education and research in agroforestry. The goal is to maintain and enhance the forested land of the rural Northern Catskills region while also creating opportunities for financially stressed landowners to remain on the land by introducing agroforestry practices and helping to create markets for these products.

Major Industrial Businesses

Athens Generating Plant

With construction completed in 2003, the Athens Generating Plant, a 1,080-megawatt combined-cycle generating plant in Athens, went into commercial service in 2004. According to its website,

www.athensgen.com, Athens Generating sells its electricity on a competitive basis to municipalities in the Mid-Hudson Valley, southeastern New York and the New York City regions.

The facility consists of three Siemens Westinghouse 501G combustion turbine generators. The plant is fueled by natural gas combined-cycle technology that provides a much more efficient production as compared to older power plants. Through the combined-cycle process, heat recovery steam generators recycle heat from the exhaust of the combustion turbines and use it to produce steam, which is then used to drive the steam generators and produce additional power. This process is regarded as one of the most efficient electricity production techniques.

The Athens facility is owned by New Athens Generating Company, LLC (a subsidiary of Pacific Gas and Electric) and managed by Competitive Power Ventures out of Silver Springs, Maryland. The plant is operated by North American Energy Services out of Issaquah, Washington.

Iroquois Gas Transmission System

According to its website, Iroquois Gas Transmission System, L.P. is a partnership of affiliates of six U.S. and Canadian energy companies. The company owns a 411-mile interstate natural gas pipeline that extends from the U.S.-Canadian border at Waddington, NY through western Connecticut to its terminus in Commack, NY, and from Huntington to the Bronx. Its wholly owned subsidiary, the Iroquois Pipeline Operating Company, headquartered in Shelton, Connecticut, is the agent for and operator of the pipeline.

Iroquois' compressor station in Athens, similar to its stations in the New York communities of Croghan, Boonville, Wright, and Dover, rates as a minor emissions source under New York State regulations because it utilizes technology which nearly halves the nitrogen oxide emissions traditionally associated with more conventional compressor stations. Although this pipeline and compressor station is in Athens, Town and Village residents are not serviced with natural gas from this source.

Regional Planning and Economic Development Resources

The Town and Village of Athens have a variety of regional economic development resources available to encourage the growth and stabilization of the local economy. The Greene County Department of Planning and Economic Development and the Greene County Industrial Development Agency (IDA) administer several programs that together can promote and generate economic opportunities. Economic Development assistance is also available through the Greene County Chamber of Commerce and the Greene Business Partnership. The following is a description of these programs taken from the GCDPED web site.

Greene County Department of Planning & Economic Development

Greene County provides several services and programs to business start-ups or expanding companies that are either already located in Greene County or are planning to relocate to the county. The following is a listing of these programs. More information can be found on their website at www.greencountyedc.com.

Loan Programs and Financial Incentives

- Quantum Fund Financing
- Microenterprise Assistance Program
- Real Property Tax 485(b) Exemption
- SBA Microloans

Site Identification and Selection Support including GIS Interactive Map
Exit 21 Catskill

Transportation Resources

The general goal of a transportation system is to facilitate the economical movement of people, goods, and services. Therefore, because we are all very dependent on surface transportation systems, including roads, bridges, transit, walkways, trails, and the railroad, a well-planned and designed surface transportation system should be accommodating, safe for use, visually and environmentally friendly.

The transportation network within the Town and Village of Athens is comprised of Federal, State, County and Local roads. The major transportation corridor is the New York State Thruway (Interstate 87), which traverses the Town in a north-south direction. Access to the Thruway for Town and Village residents is either at Interchange 21 or 21B. A portion of Interchange 21 is located at the southern edge of the Town. However, most of the Interchange is in the Town of Catskill. Interchange 21B is in the Town of Coxsackie, which is approximately 10 miles from the Village of Athens. An inventory and analysis of I-87 was not conducted for this project. See the General Map

The major non-interstate transportation corridors that carry a significant amount of commercial, commuter and local traffic in the Town and Village are US Route 9W and NYS Route 385. Other roads such as County Roads (CR) 28, 49, 49A, 53, 57, 74 and Town/Village roads such as Union Street and Flats Road also generate commuter and local traffic based upon their location and functionality.

Roadways are generally classified into six (6) categories, which are Urban or Rural Arterials, Local or Rural Collectors and Local or Rural Roads. A description of the various roadway classifications is as follows:

- Urban and Rural Arterials – varies from two-lane roadways to multi-lane, divided, controlled access facilities. They serve major areas of activity and are located between major destination points.
- Urban and Rural Collectors – typical two-lane roadways that collect and distribute traffic while providing access to abutting properties.
- Rural and Local Roads – typical low speed and low volume two-lane roadways that primarily provide access to abutting properties.

The functionality of a road is a critical element, along with traffic volumes, operating speed, type of terrain, development density and land use that should be considered during the planning and design of a safe and efficient transportation system. Roadways that are classified as collectors or arterials may be eligible to receive federal and/or state funding for rehabilitation or reconstruction.

Existing Roadways Network

State/Federal Highway Non-Interstate Routes

A portion of US Route 9W and NYS Route 385 are within the Town and/or Village of Athens boundaries. The functional classification of these routes as noted in the NYSDOT Highway Sufficiency Ratings document is as follows:

- US Route 9W – Minor Rural Arterial
- NYS Route 385 – Major Rural Collector

The NYS DOT Traffic Data Viewer shows that in general, traffic volumes are highest on Route 9W and Route 385. From Athens west, traffic volumes are generally below 1000 vehicles (measured as Average Annual Daily Traffic or AADT). The following traffic count and road condition data was obtained from the 2020 NYSDOT Traffic data Viewer:

US 9W from CR 28 W. Athens to Rts 81 and 385: 7308 vehicles AADT

US 9W from Rt 910 Jct to CR 28W: 8937vehicles AADT

Second Street to Lawrence Ave: 1065 vehicles AADT

Second Street from Washington St. to CR 28: 840 vehicles AADT

Deyoe Rd CR 74 from CR 53 to Second St: 760 vehicles AADT

Deyoe Rd CR 74 from 9W to CR 53 Howard Hall Road: 1097 vehicles AADT

Schoharie Tpk CR 28 from 9W to CR 53 Howard Hall Road: 1884 vehicles AADT

NY 85 from Rt 23 Jct Catskill to Second St: 2184 vehicles AADT

Farm to Market R CR 57 from Athens VL to Athens TL: 512 vehicles AADT

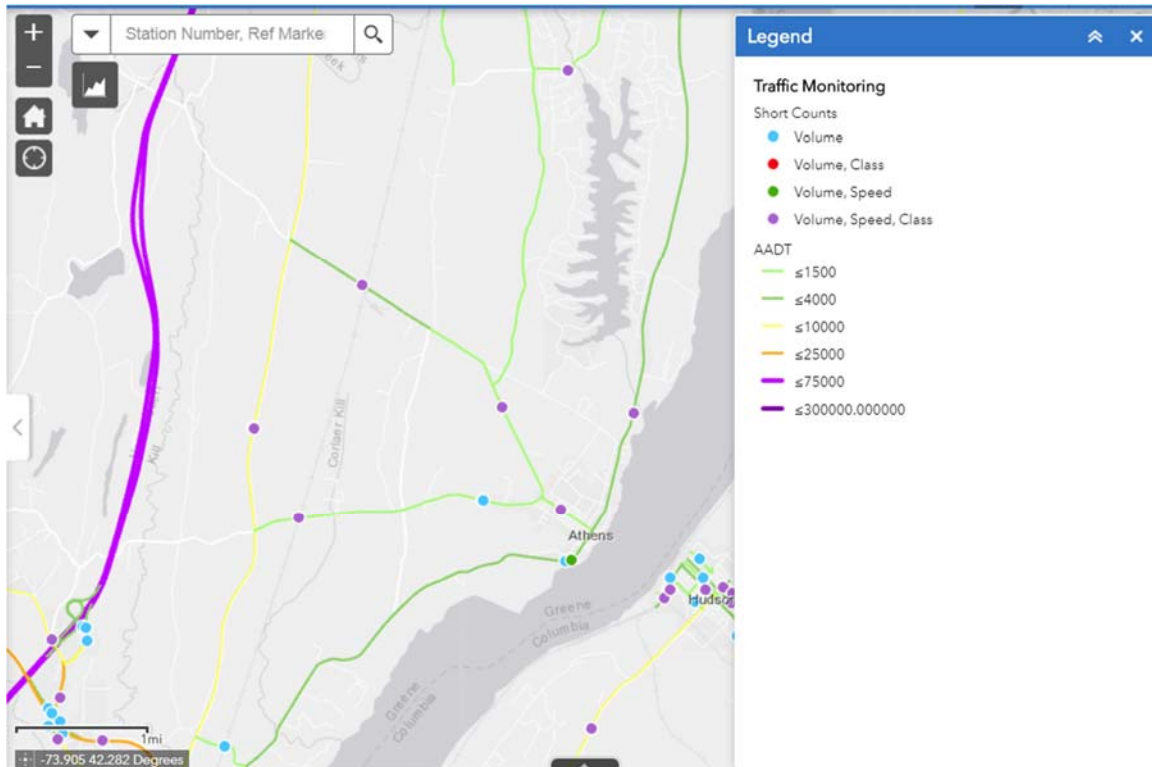


Figure 1. New York State DOT Traffic Data Viewer for Town of Athens, 2020

The speed limit from the Town of Athens/Coxsackie boundary line to north of the bridge over Murderers Creek is 55 MPH. However, posted speed limit signs are not provided. From south of the bridge over Murderers Creek to south of the intersection with South Washington Street, the posted speed limit is 30 MPH. The posted speed limit changes back to 55 MPH from South Washington Street to the Town of Athens/Catskill boundary line for most of this roadway.

The roadway section changes considerably within the limits of the Town and Village. Within the 55 MPH posted speed limit areas, the roadway character is rural. Pedestrian and bicycle traffic are accommodated on either the travel lane or narrow shoulders. Within the 30 MPH posted speed limit, the roadway character is urban. Concrete gutters and sidewalks are generally provided in the “urban” area. However, the condition of the sidewalk is fair to poor. In addition, there are gaps where sidewalks are not provided, such as adjacent to the Playground/Park area between Wheat Street and Goodrich Street.

Parking is also allowed in the “urban” area, generally within the limits noted above. However, vehicles typically park on the concrete gutter and sidewalk due to the lack of adequate on-street parking spaces. On - street parking spaces are not striped.

County Roads

The Town/Village of Athens has six (6) County highways within their boundary. They are County Road (CR) 28, 49, 49A, 53, 57 and 74. County highways typically link state highways to local roads and provide connections with other County or Town roads.

A summary of the characteristics and/or features of these road segments are as follows:

County Road (Cr) 28 – Within the Village Boundary

This segment of County Road 28 (Schoharie Turnpike) runs in an east - west direction. The roadway provides two undivided travel lanes with no paved shoulders. Centerline markings are provided to separate the travel lanes, along with edge line markings. The posted speed limit is 30 MPH. The terrain is rolling with several horizontal and vertical curves, which in some cases reduce the desirable sight distance.

County Road (Cr) 28, From Us Route 9W To Town/Village of Athens Boundary Line

This segment of County Road 28 (Schoharie Turnpike) also runs in an east - west direction. The roadway provides two undivided travel lanes with no paved shoulders. Centerline markings are provided to separate the travel lanes, along with edge line markings. The posted speed limit is 45 MPH. The terrain is rolling with several horizontal and vertical curves, which in some cases reduce the desirable sight distance. A highway-railroad grade crossing exists with gates and signing for traffic control. However, pavement markings such as crossbars, clearance line and symbols on the approaches are not provided.

County Road (Cr) 49, From Gypsy Point Road to Cr 49a

This segment of County Road 49 (Green Lake Road) runs in a north - south direction. The roadway provides two undivided travel lanes with no paved shoulders. Centerline markings are provided to separate the travel lanes. Edge line markings are not provided. The posted speed limit is 45 MPH, and the terrain is rolling with numerous horizontal and vertical curves, which in some cases reduce the desirable sight distance. One notable concern is the triangular shaped intersection with Buttermilk Falls Road.

County Road (Cr) 49a, From Cr 28 To Cr 49

This segment of County Road 49A (Green Lake Road) runs in a north - south direction. The roadway provides two undivided travel lanes with no paved shoulders. Centerline markings are provided to separate the travel lanes. Edge line markings are not provided. The speed limit is 55 MPH. However, it is not posted as such. The terrain is rolling with numerous horizontal and vertical curves, which in some cases reduce the desirable sight distance.

County Road (Cr) 53, From NYS Route 385 To Cr 28

County Road 53 (Howard Hall Road) runs in a north - south direction. The roadway provides two undivided travel lanes with no paved shoulders. Centerline markings are provided to separate the travel lanes. Edge line markings are not provided. The speed limit is 55 MPH. However, it is not posted as such. The terrain is rolling with numerous horizontal and vertical curves, which in some cases reduce the desirable sight distance. One notable concern is the triangular shaped intersection with CR 28.

County Road (Cr) 57, From Union Street to Town Athens/Coxsackie Boundary Line

This segment of County Road 57 (Farm to Market Road) runs in a north - south direction. The roadway provides two undivided travel lanes with no paved shoulders. Centerline markings are provided to separate the travel lanes. Edge line markings are not provided. The speed limit is 55 MPH within the limits of the Town of Athens. However, it is not posted as such. The posted speed limit is 30 MPH within the Village of Athens and the terrain is rolling with numerous horizontal and vertical curves, which in some cases reduce the desirable sight distance.

County Road (Cr) 74 – From US Route 9W To Cr 28

This segment of County Road 74 (Leeds-Athens Road) runs in an east - west direction. The roadway provides two undivided travel lanes with no paved shoulders. Centerline markings are provided to separate the travel lanes, along with edge line markings. The posted speed limit is 30 MPH within the Village of Athens boundary. However, the posted speed limit changes to 55 MPH in the Town of Athens. The terrain is rolling with several horizontal and vertical curves, which in some cases reduce the desirable sight distance.

A highway-railroad grade crossing exists with gates and signing for traffic control. However, pavement markings such as crossbars, clearance line and symbols on the approaches are not provided.

Local Roads

The Town and Village have a well-designed transportation system that generally functions well for residents. For the most part, the roadways are well maintained and traffic flows smoothly. In the Village, pedestrians are generally accommodated via concrete or old slate sidewalks along various roadway segments. Crosswalks are provided at some of the major intersections and side street crossings.

Flats Road – From Cr 28 To Hallenbeck Road

This segment of Flats Road runs in a north - south direction. The roadway provides two undivided travel lanes with no paved shoulders. Centerline markings and edge line markings are not provided, and the posted speed limit is 45 MPH. The terrain is rolling with several horizontal and vertical curves, which in some cases reduces the desirable sight distance.

Union Street – From Cr 28 To NYS Route 385

The roadway runs in an east - west direction and provides two undivided travel lanes. Centerline markings and edge line markings are not provided, and the posted speed limit is 30 MPH. From CR 28 to Constantine Court, the character of the road is more rural, and from Constantine Road to NYS Route 385 it is urban. A 5-TON weight limit restriction is posted from NYS Route 385 to CR 57. The terrain is rolling with several horizontal and vertical curves, which in some cases reduce the desirable sight distance. A bicyclist was witnessed utilizing the road for access.

Previous Transportation Studies

Route 9W Corridor Study

The Greene County Planning Board performed a study of Route 9W in 1991. The purpose of the study was to develop design standards and an action plan that would assist the local municipalities in planning for better development. The study included background information such as existing land use, population, physical features and regulations, circulation, business, and industry. The following recommendations resulted from the study:

- Development Design Standards that include layout, roadway and conservation setbacks, height of structures, property access, separation of vehicular and pedestrian, separation of uses, landscaping, buffering, signage, lighting, and gateways
- Actions on Zoning, Subdivision and other Laws and Regulations

The following transportation related items were recommended:

- Proposed roadway setbacks from an arterial shall be 72 feet from the centerline of the road. The setback from a collector road shall be 60 feet
- Access to individual properties shall be from local roads, which will connect to collector road, which in turn connects to an arterial road
- Driveways to major commercial, office or industrial developments should only be provided if controlled by a traffic signal system or provided with proper turning lanes
- Vehicular and pedestrian traffic should be separated via well designed pathway systems
- In mixed developments, commercial and residential traffic should be provided with separate access routes
- Establish sign design standards
- Curb cuts along arterials and collector roads need to meet design and sight distance criteria

Greene County Transit System

The Greene County Transit system has been providing public transportation since 1980 and includes bus service between the Village of Catskill and the outlying areas of the county. The morning run brings

passengers from the pickup points to any point along the route on its way to Catskill. In addition, a mid-day shuttle circulates throughout the Village of Catskill.

Buses are handicapped accessible and the Greene County Department of the Aging subsidizes fares for qualifying seniors. Transit service stops in Athens twice per day at the intersection of 9W and Schoharie Turnpike, the Athens Post Office, Stewart's, Rivertown Center and Rivertown Apartments.

In addition to the listed designated stops, buses may be flagged down at any safe point along the route and, with appropriate notice to the driver, passengers can request alternate drop-off points. The schedule allows for up to three route deviations of up to one mile off the main route. Any passenger, regardless of age may take advantage of the route deviation service but must contact the bus company in advance.

Funding for the Greene County Transit system includes the above-mentioned subsidy, fares, cash match by Greene County and Operating Assistance from NYS Department of Transportation. The state's assistance is based upon the number of passengers served and the number of miles traveled.

Air Transportation

Air transportation for the Town and Village of Athens is provided by three major airports within the region, Albany International, Stewart International and Dutchess County Airport, as well as a number of small craft airports such as the Columbia County Airport, Catskill Valley Airport, Deer Run Airport and Hunter-Mountain Airport. Albany International Airport, located in Albany County, New York, is approximately 33 miles north of Athens by way of the NYS Thruway.

Stewart International Airport located approximately 57 miles south of Athens in the Town of Newburgh, Orange County, is the nation's first privatized commercial airport that is operating under a 99-year lease agreement with the New York State Department of Transportation. The airport's main terminal was completely redesigned in 1998. The airport is affiliated with several nationally recognized carriers and regional providers.

Dutchess County Airport, located in Wappingers Falls, New York, about 7 miles south of the City of Poughkeepsie, provides corporate and general aviation transportation services. Their major carrier is USAir/USAir Express.

Scenic Byway Route 385

Running 3.5 miles long from Athens to Coxsackie, a segment NYS Route 385 was designated a Scenic Byway in 1992. The Scenic Byway Program was created through the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA) to basically offer an official name for back roads that Americans have enjoyed for years. The development of the Interstate system demanded a re-recognition or appreciation of the slower pace of these back roads. The Scenic Byway Program attempts to allow travelers to rediscover the

beautiful and unique places along America’s varied countryside. In doing so, it promotes tourism and encourages beautification and maintenance of the route. The NYS DOT offers grant opportunities through the Scenic Byway Program for things such as safety and access improvements along designated byways. Grant opportunities would only be available to the Town and Village of Athens if the governing body adopted an official management plan for Route 385. In 2003, the Towns and Villages of Athens, Catskill, and Coxsackie drafted an agreement to form “The Greene County Rivertowns Association” to “promote and protect natural and man-made historic, cultural, scenic and recreational resources along and adjacent to Scenic Byway Route 385.” Broadly, the goals behind this agreement were to build the local economy by fostering tourism of the coastal communities, increase public awareness of local resources, and develop a Corridor Management Plan for Scenic Byway Route 385, to be named “The Thomas Cole Scenic Byway.” This resolution was also an early attempt at promoting intermunicipal cooperation among the communities. There was some controversy surrounding the creation of this Corridor Management Plan, concerning State regulations for advertising signs along the Scenic Byway, and at this time this plan is not being pursued.

Road Intersections of Concern

The 2007 Town and Village of Athens Comprehensive Plan outlined the following concerns over several intersections and areas of traffic and pedestrian safety. Many of these issues remain today. These areas include:

Traffic Safety Concerns	Pedestrian Safety Concerns
Second Street and 385	Second Street and 385
Route 385 through the Village	Route 385
Third Street with no sidewalks	
Howard Hall Road	Leeds-Athens Road at various locations
Intersection of Green lake and Buttermilk	Schoharie Turnpike
Leeds-Athens & 9W	Sleepy Hollow Road (both entrances)
Vernon Street at 385	Union Street
Schoharie Turnpike	Vernon Street
Sleepy Hollow Road	
Union Street	

It should be noted that most of these concerns overlap, indicating both traffic and pedestrian safety issues for each.

Physical and Environmental Features

The physical and environmental features in the Town of and Village of Athens have been studied, analyzed, and mapped. The following maps illustrate these features:

Topography	Wetlands	Water Features
Scenic Areas of Statewide Importance	Slope	
Bedrock Geology	Floodplains	

Topography

The topography of Athens includes three major areas: a fairly level terrace flanking the Hudson River; the Kalkberg Hills, just west of the terrace, and the Hooeberg Hills, extending from the Kalkbergs to an area beyond the western border of the town. The terrace is mostly level and ranges in elevation from 150 to 200 feet. It is about four miles wide and rises steeply up from the Hudson River, especially in the town south of the village. Some portions of the terrace are somewhat hilly – in an area west and south of the village and in areas where streams have eroded the terrace. The entire Village of Athens lies within this topographical area.

The Kalkbergs (Dutch for “limestone mountain”) is a range of low hills parallel to and at the west margin of the Hudson River terrace. New York State Route 9W is located along the line which divides these two areas. The range is less than a mile wide and varies in altitude from 200 to 350 feet.

The Hooeberg Hills in northern Greene County is a triangular area lying between the Kalkbergs and the valley of the Catskill Creek. Within the Town of Athens, it extends from the vicinity of the Hans Vossen Hill and the NYS Thruway to the Town’s western border along the Potic Creek. It is composed of numerous rounded hills rather than distinct ranges. Elevations here range from 200 to 700 feet.

This topographic pattern is easily identifiable on the Topography Map.

Steep Slopes

Slopes that limit development are usually defined as those more than 15%. Using this definition, there are relatively few areas within the town that are constrained. A narrow band of very steep slopes (over 45%) is seen on the edge of the Kalkbergs. Some slopes of about 15% are scattered in a north/south direction mostly west of the Thruway. Along the Hudson River terrace, steep slopes are confined mostly to stream edges and banks. See the Steep Slopes Map

Water Features and Wetlands

Freshwater wetlands are a valuable natural resource. When associated with a stream, they have the ability to temporarily store and gradually release large amounts of water. By helping streams maintain a more constant flow rate, they serve as flood and storm water control areas and are important to controlling erosion and flooding to areas downstream. Other benefits of wetlands include water purification, maintenance of important wildlife habitats and open spaces, and recreation. Wetlands are identified based on existing vegetative types and soils. Certain plants are predominant in wet soils and are, therefore, a good indicator of wet conditions over time.

Pursuant to ECL Article 24 Parts 662 and 663, New York State protects freshwater wetlands larger than 12.4 acres. Smaller wetlands may also be protected under federal regulations. The Freshwater Wetlands Act, aimed at preventing wetlands being filled or drained, regulates activities within or adjacent to designated wetlands. A permit issued by the NYS DEC for regulated activities is required. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers has jurisdiction over all wetlands not administered by the NYS DEC. Permits need to be secured prior to any filling, alteration, or construction in or adjacent to any wetlands. See the Water, Wetlands, and Wet Soils Map

The wetland map shows many regulated wetlands in Athens, mostly in the mid-portions of the Town and east to the Hudson River. An extensive wetland complex, including tidal pools, exists along almost the entire boundary with the Hudson River, except in parts of the Village of Athens. This large complex includes areas near the Cohotate Preserve starting where Corlaer Kill Creek enters the Hudson River, north to the border with Coxsackie, except for certain areas of the Village. Most of the other wetlands away from the River are associated with and found along creeks and streams. Another large complex of regulated wetlands exists from Green Lake Park, north to the town boundary. Corlaer Creek and Murderers Creek also have extensive wetlands along them.

Flood Hazard Areas

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) provides floodplain boundary maps. The mapped boundaries delineate the flood elevation that has a 1 percent chance (100-year zone) or 0.2 percent chance (500-year zone) of being equaled or exceeded each year. The Flood Insurance Rate maps identify areas within the town which are prone to flooding. The Town participates in the National Flood Insurance Program and is eligible for assistance from FEMA in the event of a flood and has adopted the flood plain regulations as set forth in the Flood Insurance Study for the Town and Village. Many of the NYS DEC regulated wetlands are also located in or adjacent to floodplain areas.

In Athens, the designated floodplains are concentrated along the Potic Creek and the Hudson River. Along the Hudson, the floodplain includes all the shoreline, Middle Ground Flats, and up Murderers Creek to the

dam. A narrow floodplain exists along the length of Potic Creek and then widens at the border between Athens and Catskill. See the Flood Hazards Map.

Other Water Features:

The Hudson River and its tributaries within the Town, along with the man-made reservoir at Sleepy Hollow, are the other predominant water features in Athens. The Sleepy Hollow Lake was formed by damming Murderers Creek.

Water Quality

The Hudson River is classified as a Class A water by New York State. A Class A water body is considered a source of water supply for drinking, for processing purposes, fishing, and primary/secondary recreation. The waters are also suitable for fish propagation and survival. The other creeks in Athens are classified as Class C (best usage is fishing, fish propagation and survival) or Ct (same as C, but with the addition of suitable for trout propagation and survival).

New York also develops an annual list of impaired water bodies. In the Town of Athens, Sleepy Hollow Lake is on the Section 303d List of Impaired Waters due to silt and sediment caused by stream bank erosion. It is considered a high priority water to have a restoration strategy developed for submission to the USEPA. Sleepy Hollow Lake has a watershed and lake management plan that is currently being implemented to improve the turbidity issues. There are currently no other impaired water bodies identified in the Town.

Coastal Zone

The entire boundary of the Town and Village of Athens along the Hudson River is included in the New York State Coastal Zone (See Coastal Zone Map). A Local Waterfront Revitalization Plan (LWRP) has been developed for the Village of Athens (adopted September 1999) but not in the Town. Not all of the Village of Athens is included in the coastal zone: it is bounded on the west by NYS Route 385 except where the boundary extends inland approximately one-half mile to include the more developed section of the Village. The LWRP details land uses, fish and wildlife habitats, wetlands, flood areas, water quality, and other natural resources of the Village's coastal zone. For the Village of Athens, three major issues are addressed in the LWRP: preservation of the natural waterfront environment while allowing public use, restoration of the village center, and affordable housing. The land and water use plan for the Village proposes four general land use categories: urban area, urban waterfront area, waterfront recreation and open space areas, and planned open space residential. Proposed public and private projects discussed in the LWRP include Village park improvements, removal of abandoned barges, improvement and/or acquisition of waterfront property, creation of walking and bike trails, creating of accessible scenic overlooks, and historic district improvements.

Bedrock Geology

Bedrock is the many-miles-thick crust of the earth. It is solid rock made up of many individual rock types. It is present everywhere but is usually covered by other surficial deposits. Bedrock generally is covered by a skin of soil and other loose material, especially in regions with humid climates. This cover material results as weathering breaks down the surface rock. The loose materials may remain in place or be eroded, transported, and deposited by water, wind, or glacial ice. In 90 percent of New York State, bedrock is buried by surficial deposits that are more than one meter thick. Most of these deposits were left by a continental glacier (an ice sheet) that was perhaps 2 km thick.

The Town of Athens is underlain by several major bedrock formations (see Bedrock Geology Map). Most of the Town and the entire Village are located on Normanskill and Deephill Shales. These rocks consist of gray sandstone, shale, chert, and thin-bedded limestone. This area yields small to moderate supplies of commonly hard water with an average well yield of 6 to 10 gallons per minute. Further west is the bedrock of Onondaga limestone and Esopus Shale. This mile-wide area consists of blue-gray limestone, siltstone, and chert. These formations yield small to moderate water supplies with average well yields of 8 to 10 gallons per minute. To the west of this formation is the Bakoven Shale, Mount Marion Formation, and the Ashokan Formation. The small amount of Bakoven shale is narrow (500 feet wide) and has no known supply of water. The Mount Marion and Ashokan formations are mainly gray sandstone. These rocks typically have small water yields (3 and 7 gallons per minute, respectively).

Soils

The soils in the Town of Athens are largely a reflection of the last ice age, composed of materials deposited in that era and subsequently tempered by climatic conditions. The area of the Town east of the Thruway is composed of soils which are glacial lake deposits while to the west are found soils composed of glacial till. Fifteen different soil associations have been identified in the Town of Athens. Analysis of the soils data indicates that only small portions in the southwest and northeast corners of the Town have soils suitable for intense development. Suitable building sites can often be found within the unsuitable areas if an adequate septic system is constructed.

Ecological Data

The following summary description and maps are from the Hudson Valley Natural Resource Mapper (www.gisservices.dec.ny.gov/gis/hvnrm). This shows the various ecological features in the Town and Village of Athens.

Athens is part of the Hudson River Estuary. Significant coastal fish and wildlife habitats include the Vosburg Swamp, Middle Ground Flats, and Brandow Point.



Figure 2. NYS DOS Significant Coastal Fish and Wildlife Habitats

New York lists priority waterbodies in the area and most of the streams in the western portion of Athens west of the Thruway have minor impacts. Many are unassessed. Streams are classified by New York State as Class C. As of September 2020, Sleepy Hollow Lake remains listed as an impaired waterbody. The Hudson River is also listed as an impaired waterbody. There are several migratory fish runs identified in Athens.



Figure 3. Migratory Fish Runs



Figure 4. Priority Waterbody List: Streams. Orange is minor impacts and black is not assessed.

The Hudson Valley Forest Condition Index maps and prioritizes forest patches based on metrics related to size, fragmentation, connectivity, stressors, habitat value, and carbon sequestration. In Athens, a variety of forest condition indices can be found. The highest forest condition is found in the western part of Town in the Potic Mountain area. Those forests are in the top 1% of condition classes. East of that area, additional high-quality forest patches can be found. East of Potic, high condition forests exist but further east, forest condition decreases. East of the Thruway, most forest patches have condition indices of less than 40. However, the forests that exist in Athens, especially that west of the Thruway, are considered core forests that are interior forest areas surrounded by at least a 100-meter wide buffer of edge forest habitat. These areas are especially important for sensitive wildlife included many forest songbirds.

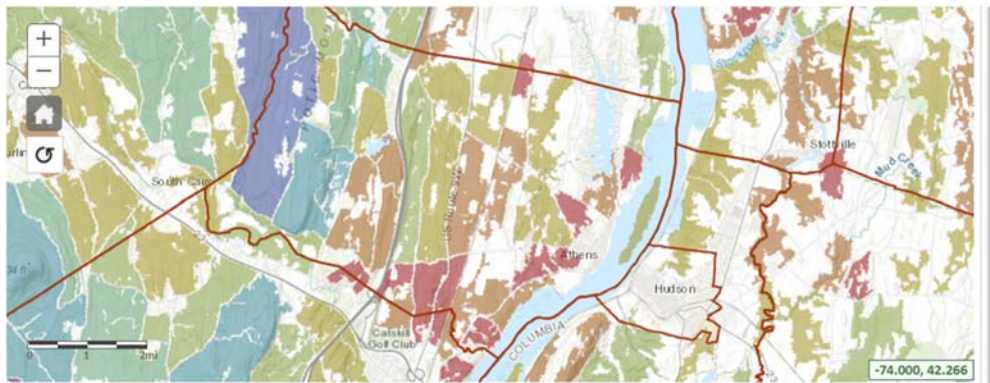


Figure 5. Forest Condition Index

Biodiversity in Athens is also identified and mapped by the NYS DEC (viewable at their Hudson Valley Natural Resource Mapper). The Hudson River is a known Important Area for Rare Aquatic Animals.

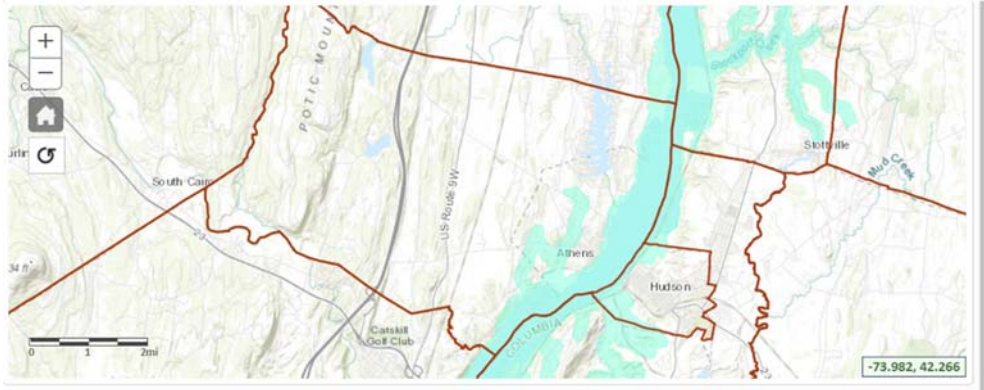


Figure 6. Known Important Areas for Rare Aquatic Animals

It is also a Known Important Area for Rare Plants, as an Important Area for Rare Wetland Animals, and an Important Area for Rare Terrestrial Animals.

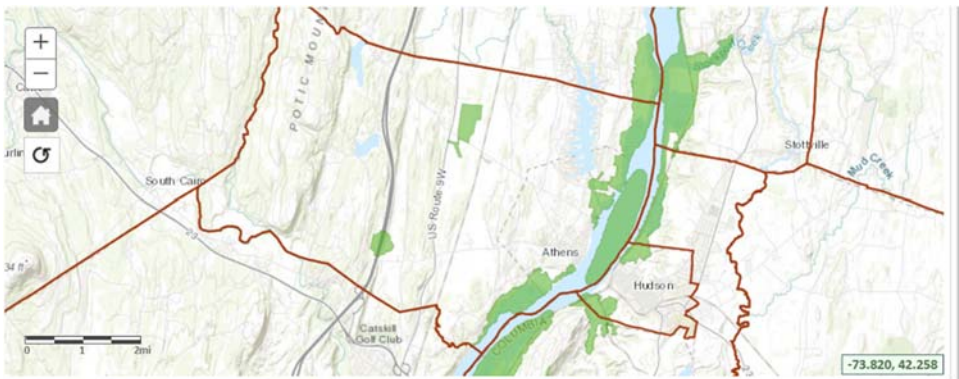


Figure 7. Known Important Areas for Rare Plants

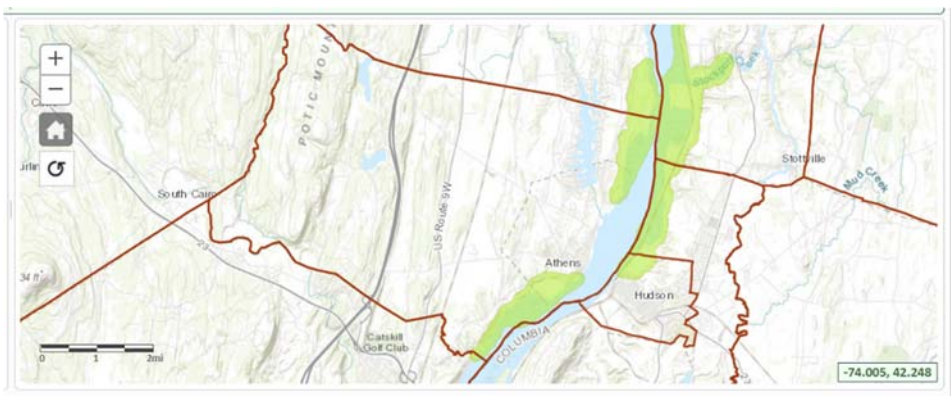


Figure 8. Known Important Areas for Rare Wetland Animals

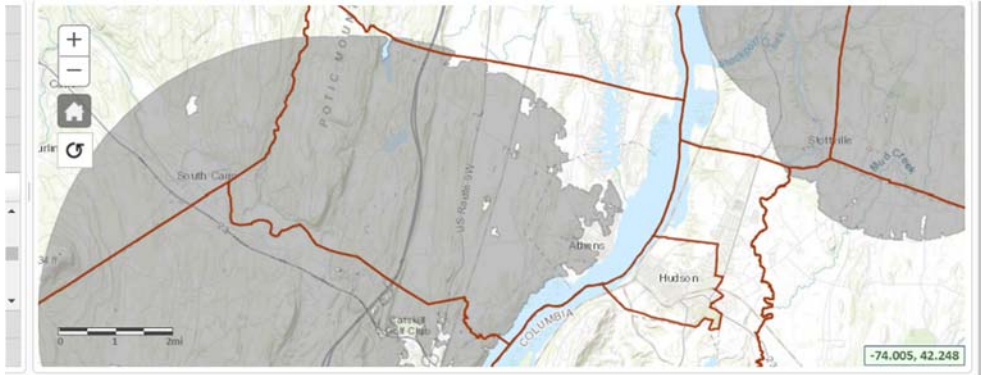


Figure 9. Important Bat Foraging Areas

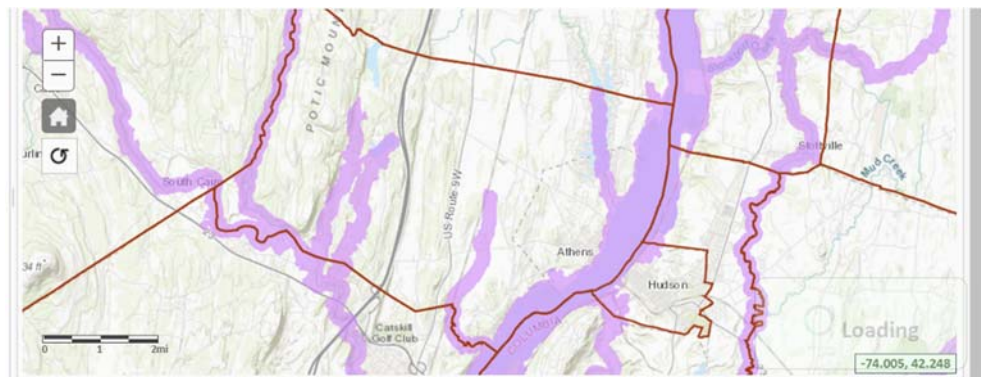


Figure 10. Known Important Areas for Migratory Fish



Figure 11. Significant Natural Communities

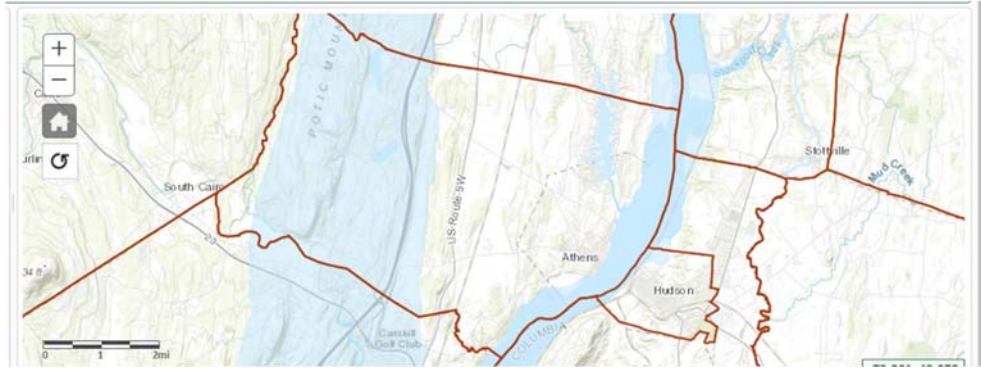


Figure 12. Significant Biodiversity Areas

Two other locations in Athens are also identified for rare plants: one located along the NYS Thruway in the southern portion of Athens, and another one just east of Route 9W in the north-central portion of Town.

Almost the entire Town is identified as having Important Bat Foraging Areas. The Hudson River including several large creeks in Athens are Known Important Areas for Migratory Fish. These are stream habitats that provide important passage for fish traveling between ocean and freshwater habitats such as American eel and river herring.

The Hudson River, as well as an area in the western portion of Town west of Potomac Mountain Road, are identified as a significant natural community. This is a natural community having an assemblage of interacting plant and animal populations that share a common environment. Significant natural communities may provide habitat for rare plants and animals, support intact ecological processes, and contribute other ecosystem benefits.

From the NYS Thruway corridor west to the Town boundary, the land is considered by NYS DEC as a Significant Biodiversity Area in the Hudson River Valley. These are landscape areas that contain high concentrations of biodiversity or unique ecological features.

Rare Species and Ecological Communities

Several rare species and ecological communities have been identified in the Town of Athens by the New York Natural Heritage Program. These species include the following:

Plants

- Long's Bittercress (Threatened)
- Downy Wood-mint (Endangered)
- Stiff-leaf Goldenrod (Threatened)
- Estuary Beggar-ticks (Rare)

- Smooth Bur-marigold (Threatened)
- Golden Club (Threatened)
- Heartleaf Plantain (Threatened)
- American Waterwort (Endangered)
- Spongy Arrowhead (Threatened)

Birds

- Least bittern (threatened)

Fish

- Shortnose Sturgeon (Endangered)

Significant Ecological Communities

- Freshwater Tidal Marsh (considered imperiled in NY and globally vulnerable)
- Calcareous Cliff Community (vulnerable in NY, but globally secure)
- Calcareous Talus Slope Community (vulnerable in NY, and globally vulnerable)
- Shale Talus Slope Woodland (vulnerable in NY, and globally vulnerable)
- Oak-Hickory Forest (Apparently secure)
- Shale Cliff and Talus Community (vulnerable in NY, but globally secure)
- Freshwater Tidal Swamp (considered critically imperiled in NY, and imperiled globally)
- Freshwater Intertidal Mudflats (considered imperiled in NY, and globally vulnerable)
- Freshwater Intertidal Shore (considered imperiled in NY, and globally vulnerable)

Critical Habitats

New York State's Coastal Management Program includes a total of 44 policies which are applicable to development and use proposals within or affecting the State's coastal area. Any activity that is subject to review under Federal or State laws, or under applicable local laws contained in an approved LWRP will be judged for its consistency with these policies. One of the policies established relates to fish and wildlife resources. To meet this policy, New York State has evaluated, designated, and mapped significant coastal fish and wildlife habitats. New York has designated several critical habitats within the Town of Athens.

These include Middle Ground Flats and the tidal flats and swamps along the Hudson River. These tidal flats include the West Flats and Vosburgh Swamp. These areas were included due to a high significance related to ecosystem rarity (rare in the Hudson Valley), potential species vulnerability (mud turtle and least bittern), human use (shad fishery and waterfowl hunting), and unusual population levels of waterfowl and various anadromous fish species. Directly across from the Middle Ground Flats critical habitat area is the Stockport Creek State Wetlands Preservation Area on the Columbia County side of the

river which includes another complex of tidal flats, wetlands, and the Stockport Creek on that side of the River.

Habitat Description

Vosburgh Swamp and Middle Ground Flats have been designated by New York State as a Critical Habitat and it extends for approximately four miles along the western shore of the Hudson River, upstream from the Village of Athens, in the Towns of Coxsackie and Athens, Greene County (7.5' Quadrangle: Hudson North, N.Y.). The fish and wildlife habitat encompass approximately 1,200 acres, comprised primarily of extensive mudflats and shallows, off-channel open water areas, hardwood swamp, a freshwater impoundment (Vosburgh Swamp) and spoil bank islands. The habitat also includes Murderers Creek, upstream approximately one-half mile to Sleepy Hollow Lake dam, which is the first impassable barrier to fish.

Fish and Wildlife Values

Extensive tidal mudflats and shallow areas are relatively rare in the Hudson Valley region. These habitat types, along with the emergent wetlands and open water areas, make the Vosburgh Swamp and Middle Ground Flats area very attractive to many fish and wildlife species. This area provides valuable feeding and resting habitat for large concentrations of waterfowl during the fall and spring migrations. Approximately 10,000 canvasbacks, along with various other waterfowl species, have been reported in the area during seasonal migrations. When open water is available, this area also provides an important waterfowl wintering area in the upper Hudson Valley region, especially significant for redhead and canvasback ducks. Several spoil bank islands on Middle Ground Flats provide relatively unique vertical sand banks that have been colonized by bank swallows. This is one of the few locations in this section of the Hudson River where this species has been confirmed breeding. Mud turtles (T) and least bittern (SC) have been reported to reside in Vosburgh Swamp, but this has not been confirmed for either species. This wetland area does provide potential habitat for various other marsh-nesting birds, including green-backed heron, American bittern, black duck, mallard, wood duck, Virginia rail, common moorhen, and marsh wren. Several rare plant species, including heartleaf plantain, and subulate arrowhead, occur in river shoreline areas near Vosburgh Swamp. Human use of the Vosburgh Swamp and Middle Ground Flats area is of regional significance. The area receives very heavy waterfowl hunting pressure during the fall migration period.

A heavy concentration of American shad utilizes the littoral zone areas at West Flats and around Middle Ground Flats for spawning. This area, including Murderers Creek, is also utilized as a spawning, nursery, and feeding area by striped bass, alewife, blueback herring, white perch, and a variety of resident freshwater species. In addition, one of the northernmost commercial shad fisheries is established in the vicinity of Middle Ground Flats. A NYSDEC boat launch is located on the south side of Murderers Creek, providing access for recreational fishing throughout the area.

Impact Assessment Requirements

A **habitat impairment test** must be met for any activity that is subject to consistency review under federal and state laws, or under applicable local laws contained in an approved local waterfront revitalization program. If the proposed action is subject to consistency review, then the habitat protection policy applies, whether the proposed action is to occur within or outside the designated area. The specific **habitat impairment test** that must be met is as follows: In order to protect and preserve a significant habitat, land and water uses or development shall not be undertaken if such actions would destroy the habitat or significantly impair the viability of a habitat.

(Habitat destruction is defined as the loss of fish or wildlife use through direct physical alteration, disturbance, or pollution of a designated area or through the indirect effects of these actions on a designated area. Habitat destruction may be indicated by changes in vegetation, substrate, or hydrology, or increases in runoff, erosion, sedimentation, or pollutants. Significant impairment is defined as reduction in vital resources (e.g., food, shelter, living space) or change in environmental conditions (e.g., temperature, substrate, salinity) beyond the tolerance range of an organism. Indicators of a significantly impaired habitat focus on ecological alterations and may include but are not limited to reduced carrying capacity, changes in community structure (food chain relationships, species diversity), reduced productivity and/or increased incidence of disease and mortality. The tolerance range of an organism is not defined as the physiological range of conditions beyond which a species will not survive at all, but as the ecological range of conditions that supports the species population or has the potential to support a restored population, where practical. Either the loss of individuals through an increase in emigration or an increase in death rate indicates that the tolerance range of an organism has been exceeded. An abrupt increase in death rate may occur as an environmental factor falls beyond a tolerance limit (a range has both upper and lower limits).

Any activity that would substantially degrade water quality, increase turbidity or temperature, or alter water depths in the Vosburgh Swamp and Middle Ground Flats habitat would result in significant impairment of the habitat. Disruption of the freshwater or tidal flows in these areas could have major consequences to the littoral zones, wetlands, and mudflats which contribute significantly to the value of this habitat. Elimination of productive wetland and littoral areas, through dredging, filling, or bulkheading would have significant impacts on the fish and wildlife resources of Vosburgh Swamp and Middle Ground Flats. Spills of oil or other hazardous substances are an especially significant threat to this area because the biological activity of tidal flats is concentrated at the soil surface, much of which may be directly exposed to these pollutants. Thermal discharges, depending on time of year, may have variable effects on use of the area by aquatic species (and wintering waterfowl); shad spawning activities and survival are directly affected by water temperature. Installation and operation of water intakes could have significant impacts on fish populations in the area, through impingement of juvenile and adult fish, or entrainment of fish eggs and larval stages.

Scenic Areas & Views

Community meeting feedback indicates that Town and Village residents value the scenic nature of the community and the surrounding landscape. Responses particularly noted the quaint small-town architecture and layout, its Hudson River setting, the quantity of green open space, the diversity of natural habitats, and views of the Catskill Mountains and foothills.

Specific scenic locations include the following: High Hill Road at Schoharie Turnpike with scenic views of Coxsackie, Athens, the Hudson River, the City of Hudson, and the Berkshire Mountains; Leeds Athens Road at Forest Avenue with views of the Blue Mountains of Saugerties; Howard Hall Road with views of the Hudson River and the Catskill Mountains; and Sandy Plains Road at High Hill Road with views of the Cauterskill Creek, the Helderberg Mountains, and Windham Mountain. Residents also identified scenic views along both Vosenkill and Cross Roads in the town.

Both the Town and the Village have portions of their Hudson River waterfront located within the designated State Coastal Area overseen by New York’s Department of State. New York’s Coastal policy #24 mandates that state actions and decisions “prevent impairment of scenic resources of statewide significance,” and policy #25 mandates that the state “protect, restore, or enhance natural, and man-made resources which are not identified as being of statewide significance, but which contribute to the overall scenic quality of the coastal area.” Both policies potentially affect the Town and Village of Athens.

The Village has also adopted a state-approved Local Waterfront Revitalization Program under the Department of State’s Coastal Zone Management Regulations, adding weight to these state criteria in its decision-making as well as formally identifying scenic resources and enhancements of local significance.

State Route 385 is a State Scenic Byway for 3.5 miles of its length south of the Village of Coxsackie border. It was originally designated as a scenic road under a program of the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation later transferred to the NYS Department of Transportation. Until the Town and/or Village adopt a corridor management plan for Route 385, this Scenic Byway designation essentially has no real influence on the future development of the corridor.

Scenic Area of Statewide Significance (SASS)

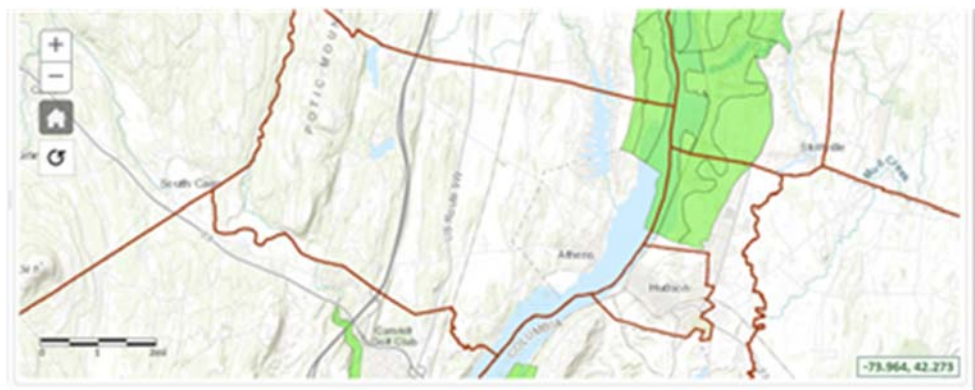


Figure 12. Scenic Areas of Statewide Significance

In recognition of the scenic value of the coast, New York's Coastal Management Program (CMP) includes two policies which provide for the protection and enhancement of this unique resource. Policy 24 provides for the designation and protection of scenic areas of statewide significance, and Policy 25 requires that proposed actions located outside a designated SASS must protect, restore, or enhance the overall scenic quality of the coastal area. Both policies call for agencies to determine if a proposed action would impair scenic quality. The policies state that impairment of a landscape's scenic quality can occur in two principal ways: 1) through the irreversible modification or destruction of landscape features and architectural elements which contribute significantly to the scenic quality of the coast, and 2) through the addition of structures which reduce views or are discordant with the landscape because of their inappropriate scale, form, or construction materials. See the Scenic Areas of Statewide Significance Map.

Regulations governing the designation of scenic areas of statewide significance are found in 19 NYCRR Part 602.5. Both policies include siting and design guidelines which are to be used to evaluate the impact of proposed development, recognizing that each situation is unique and that the guidelines must be applied accordingly. The guidelines address the appropriate siting of new structures and other development; the use of scale, form and materials which are compatible with the landscape's existing scenic components; the incorporation of historic elements in new development; the maintenance of existing landforms and vegetation; and the removal and screening of discordant features.

The Hudson River coastal landscape has a wealth and variety of scenic resources, shaped by a unique combination of geological forces and historical events. Majestic mountains and formidable bluffs rise above the Hudson's waters in some stretches of the river.

In others, forested slopes, estate lawns, extensive marshlands and farm fields line its shorelands. The Hudson River region has played an important role in the nation's history. It spawned the Hudson River

School of Painting and the Romantic Landscape style. World-renowned artists have responded to its beauty, and the works of major architects line the river's corridor. Historic river landings and villages evidence the Hudson's past as a bustling transportation corridor. Today, tourism is the major industry and national and State parks, and historic sites attract visitors from around the nation and the world.

Six stretches of the Hudson River and its shorelands have been designated as scenic areas of statewide significance. These are the Columbia-Greene North SASS, the Catskill-Olana SASS, the Estates District SASS, the Ulster North SASS, the Esopus-Lloyd SASS, and the Hudson Highlands SASS. They include a fiord in the Hudson Highlands, an impressive collection of significant estates along the Hudson River's mid-section, the landscape where Thomas Cole and Frederic Church made their homes, and the pastoral landscape south of the State capital. Each designated SASS encompasses unique, highly scenic landscapes which are accessible to the public and recognized for their scenic quality. Each designated SASS is comprised primarily of clusters of distinctive subunits.

Designation affords special protection from potentially adverse federal or state actions which could impair the scenic quality of the SASS. Narratives prepared for each SASS describe the character and scenic quality of the SASS landscape, providing guidance to the public and regulatory agencies as to which landscape elements should be protected and which actions could impair the scenic quality of the SASS.

Additional protection of SASS can be afforded by municipalities which prepare Local Waterfront Revitalization Programs (LWRP). Local land use authority is an important tool for the protection of scenic resources. In communities with an approved LWRP all three levels of government - federal, state, and local - are working toward a common goal. Designation of the SASS does not impinge on local government decisions.

Two Scenic Areas of Statewide Significance (SASS), centered on the Hudson River, bookend the north and south borders of the Town. The Catskill-Olana SASS is centered around Olana State Historic Site, Rogers Island. Portions of the Town and Village shoreline would be visible from this designated scenic area, potentially affecting its integrity. Portions of The Columbia-Greene North SASS centered on the Vosburgh Swamp (subunit 11) and historic farmlands located on the Hudson River shore between State Route 385 and the west flats (subunit 12) are located in the Town's northeast corner. Within these two scenic areas, three subunits have been designated and include the Vosburgh Swamp Subunit, the Athens-Coxsackie Farmland Subunit, and the Stockport Creek Subunit of the SASS. The following descriptions of these subunits of the SASS were taken directly from the website of the NYS Department of State, Division of Coastal Resources ⁹:

⁹ New York State Department of State, Division of Coastal Resources, <http://nyswaterfronts.com/index.asp>.

Vosburgh Swamp Subunit of the SASS:

Location

The Vosburgh Swamp subunit encompasses some 450 acres midway between the Villages of Coxsackie and Athens, including the west flats and Vosburgh Swamp as well as Four Mile Point. The subunit's northern boundary, a common boundary with the Lampman Hill subunit, lies just south of Beecher Road. Its western boundary, a common boundary with the CGN-12 Athens-Coxsackie Farmland subunit, generally follows the edge of the wetland except in the north where the boundary reaches west to NY Route 385. The subunit is in the Towns of Coxsackie and Athens, Greene County.

Physical Character

Topographic variety is limited. The southern two-thirds of the subunit is comprised of a broad, flat marsh at the base of wooded bluffs. The northern portion consists of long, gradual slopes at the bottom of which lie a broad plain and low hill located along the Hudson River. There is a diverse mix of vegetation types including marsh vegetation, woodlands, pasture, orchard, and lawns. The great variety of marsh vegetation contrasts with the heavy cover of trees on the surrounding upland. Water, including the Hudson River, coves, ponds, and rivulets in the marsh, is the dominant element. The Hudson is about 3500 feet wide in this area. The shoreline is diverse, encompassing meandering streams, irregular marsh boundaries and more regular pond configurations. Small sandy beaches appear at low tide.

Cultural Character

Isolated by the marsh, a small group of homes is clustered on a low rise called Four Mile Point. Partially hidden in the trees, they symbolize an older way of life along the river. The buildings provide a charming cultural element amid this natural area. The subunit is generally well maintained, but some discordant features such as abandoned gravel pits and scattered new housing are present. Wildlife, river traffic and rising mists over the Hudson contribute ephemeral effects.

The roadbed of the Saratoga and Hudson River Railroad is still visible in the northern portion of the subunit. Built in 1867 by Cornelius Vanderbilt to bring farm produce and other goods from inland areas to the docks in Athens, the railroad was dubbed the White Elephant Railroad when its docks and depot burned nine years after their construction.

A 19th century stone lighthouse with clapboard wings still stands at the elbow of Four Mile Point. Once the site of ice houses, the point is now a quiet, rather isolated landscape with a strong relationship to the Hudson River. The Scenic Hudson Land Trust, Inc. owns the 7.6 acre Four Mile Point Preserve, opened in September, 1992, which provides public access to the river, a beach, picnic area, and a promontory trail and overlook with spectacular views of the river, Stockport Middle Ground Flats, and agricultural lands of Columbia County. The Town of Coxsackie manages and maintains the preserve.

Views

The subunit offers full views of the Hudson, its islands, and the bluffs and hills of the Hudson's eastern shore. The depth of views is limited only by the relatively low elevation. There are moderately long views up and down the Hudson for two to three miles. Some broad views extend 90 to 180 degrees, and those from the upland areas to the east extend to the Taconic Hills. Views to the west across the pastures at the top of the slopes reach to the distant Catskill Mountains. With a background of river and low hills, the composition is horizontal, unified, and tranquil.

Interior landward views are of historic barns and houses framed with large trees and surrounded by lawns with the Hudson for a backdrop. Four Mile Point Road is narrow and winding, revealing new compositions with each turn. Views from the road include the Hudson River, ponds, marshes, woodlands, and historic structures.

The Vosburgh Swamp subunit is accessible from Four Mile Point Road and from the Hudson River. It is visible from NY Route 385, the Hudson and its eastern shore, including the passing railroad trains. There is evidence of use of the beach areas for picnicking and viewing the Hudson River. The abandoned right-of-way of the White Elephant Railroad is used informally by residents to gain access near the Hudson River. Public accessibility has increased with opening of the Four Mile Point Preserve.

Public Recognition

The Vosburgh Swamp is known for its wildlife values and attracts bird watchers from around the Northeast. Four Mile Point is well known to boaters. Otherwise the subunit is known primarily by residents, particularly hunters. NY Route 385 is a designated Scenic Road under Article 49 of the Environmental Conservation Law, and the Vosburgh Swamp subunit is visible from the highway. The Scenic Hudson Land Trust, Inc. recently purchased land on Four Mile Point for a park open to the public.

Reason for Inclusion

The Vosburgh Swamp subunit is included in the Columbia-Greene North SASS because it is a distinctive landscape with a great variety of vegetation and a moderately varied landform. The texture and color of the marshland vegetation contrast with that of the wooded uplands. The historic structures also provide an element of contrast, although they are well integrated with the natural setting. The water elements of the Hudson River and the Vosburgh Swamp are dominant and unify the subunit. The subunit is publicly accessible from the Hudson River and NY Route 385 and visible from Route 385, the Hudson River and its eastern shore. Public recognition is generally limited to residents except for that segment of the public involved in bird watching and hunting. Public accessibility has increased with opening of the Four Mile Point Preserve.

Athens-Coxsackie Farmland Subunit of the SASS

Location

The Athens-Coxsackie Farmland subunit is comprised of about 500 acres of land bordering NY Route 385. Its northern boundary is a common boundary with the Lampman Hill subunit, anchored at the intersection of Route 385 and Four Mile Point Road. The eastern boundary of the subunit is the common boundary with the Vosburgh Swamp subunit. The Village of Athens northern boundary constitutes the southern boundary of the subunit and the southern boundary of the SASS on the Greene County side of the Hudson River. The subunit is in the Towns of Athens and Coxsackie, Greene County. Consult the Columbia-Greene SASS map sheet number 3 for subunit boundaries.

Physical Character

The subunit is characterized by successional farmland on a low bluff overlooking Vosburgh Swamp and the Hudson River. The land slopes down from the highway to the Hudson, from an elevation of 100 to 150 feet, creating a moderate amount of topographic diversity. Vegetation is a mix of second growth deciduous forest, pasture, hayfield, and scrub. The shoreline is moderately varied, consisting of small coves and bays and the marsh edges.

Cultural Character

The Athens-Coxsackie Farmland subunit has a rich cultural and historic heritage evident in traditional farmstead clusters and attractive vernacular architecture. The area has been occupied since prehistoric times. Robert Juet, crewman on Henry Hudson's Halfmoon, recorded in his diary having run aground on the flats and trading with the Indians. He describes the beauty of the landscape in his writings. In 1667 the Loonenburg Patent, which included lands in the southern portion of the subunit, was granted to Adrian Van Loon. The first house on the large farm was built to the south of the subunit in what is now the Village of Athens by Jan Van Loon in 1708. The land was then subdivided over the years. The early settlers of these fertile flat lands were farmers, many of whom had migrated from the Manor of Rensselaerwyck to the north.

The northern portion of the subunit lies in the Town of Coxsackie, which was founded in 1788. The Town of Coxsackie once extended south to Murderers Creek in what is now the Village of Athens. The Town of Athens was founded in 1815 and incorporated the southern portion of the original area of Coxsackie.

The subunit was once traversed along its eastern edge by the Saratoga and Hudson River Railroad. Built by Cornelius Vanderbilt in 1867 to bring farm produce and other goods to Athens docks, it was dubbed the White Elephant Railroad nine years later when its docks and depot were destroyed by fire. Its abandoned right-of-way, sometimes atop a six-foot berm across open fields, is still visible.

The contrast of the farmsteads with their open, natural surroundings is blurred by recent residential development along the highway. A greenhouse, as well as cultivated clusters of trees belonging to a commercial nursery are located along NY Route 385. In general, the area seems to be in transition, with many abandoned fields and new homes in evidence. There is some evidence of neglect. Farming activities

provide some ephemeral effects. Scattered new development contributes a moderate degree of discordance.

Views

The subunit overlooks Vosburgh Swamp and the Hudson River. Views from the subunit include partial vistas to the east of the Hudson with the Taconic Hills visible in the distance. Views to the west include the dramatic backdrop of the Catskill Mountains. The views extend from one to two miles in length and are 90 to 180 degrees in width. The varied landscape provides a pleasing variety of visual elements, organized around a pastoral theme. There exists a dynamic balance of elements in the view compositions, with the Catskills and Hudson River islands providing some focal points.

Public Accessibility

The subunit is primarily in private ownership. It is visible from the Hudson River and the subunits on the eastern shorelands as well as from NY Route 385. In the southern portion River Road provides access to the southern edge of the subunit, and the Hudson River provides access to its length. Its eastern edge along Vosburgh Swamp is visible from the Hudson River. The abandoned right-of-way of the White Elephant Railroad runs along the eastern boundary of the subunit and is used informally by residents for hiking and snowmobiles.

Public Recognition

The subunit is not widely recognized by the public, although it constitutes the eastern foreground of the NY Route 385 viewshed. A portion of NY Route 385 is a designated Scenic Road under Article 49 of the Environmental Conservation Law.

Reason for Inclusion

The physical character of the subunit is its most dominant scenic attribute. The low bluffs and pastoral landscape of the Athens-Coxsackie Farmland subunit are highly visible from the Hudson River and its eastern shorelands as well as from NY Route 385, a designated Scenic Road under Article 49 of the Environmental Conservation Law. The subunit is accessible from the Hudson River and River Road. The subunit exhibits a moderate variety of topography and vegetation highly unified by the historic farming activities. The contrast among the landscape elements of broad fields, woodlands and river is moderate. The composition and extent of views to the Catskills and Taconics is dramatic.

Stockport Creek Subunit of the SASS

The Stockport Creek subunit encompasses approximately 1,000 acres of eastern shoreland and the adjacent waters of the Hudson River. Its southern boundary is Gifford Parkway and the center of North Bay, the southern boundary of the SASS. The subunit extends north and east to include the corridors of Stockport Creek and Kinderhook Creek. Its western boundary is a common boundary with the Vosburgh Swamp subunit except south of the swamp where the western boundary is the mean high tide line on the

eastern shore of Middle Ground Flats. Its eastern boundary is a common boundary with the CGN-28 Stottville Farms subunit. The subunit is in the Towns of Greenport and Stockport, Columbia County, and in the Village of Athens, Greene County. Consult the Columbia-Greene North SASS map sheet number 3 for subunit boundaries.

Physical Character

The landform consists of steep ravines and bluffs from 75 to 150 feet high along the Hudson River and the Kinderhook and Stockport Creeks and their tributaries. Water dominates the landscape, the Hudson River varying in width from 1,000 to 4,000 feet. The shoreline of the Hudson is convoluted, consisting of wetlands, mudflats, coves, and creek mouths. The Stockport Creek winds around islands and flats, and its water tumbles over falls and rocky platforms. In places the creek bluffs have sheer rock faces. The Stockport Creek, the second largest unobstructed tidal freshwater stream on the Hudson, receives the waters of the Kinderhook and other smaller creeks which drain the uplands to the north, east and west, and then empties into the Hudson in the northern portion of the subunit.

Cultural Character

The intrusions of civilization in this predominantly untouched natural area are few, being limited to the railroad along the shore of the Hudson, a few modest vernacular structures along the banks of the Stockport Creek and the tops of the bluffs, and the river traffic of commercial and recreational vessels. This belies the once-bustling nature of Stockport. Stockport was formed in 1833 from Stuyvesant, Ghent and Hudson and named after Stockport, England, the origin of James Wild, a prominent resident. Upstream on the Stockport Creek the waterfalls and remains of dams indicate former sites of the mills which once made Stockport a manufacturing community. The town even hosted an academy dedicated to training workers for the mills. The hills around Stockport Creek were covered with vineyards during the 19th century.

The area of confluence of the Stockport Creek with the Hudson is reputed to be the site of the first visit in Columbia County by Henry Hudson's crewmen. In 1609 they found a prospering, friendly native community with a lodge, cornfields, and granaries. Standing near the mouth of the creek on its northern bank is the Staats House, the second house built on the site after the original homestead was burned by the Indians in 1664 by order of the English. The creek mouth was included, along with what is now the City of Hudson, in the area called Claverack Landing. At that time Claverack extended from Kinderhook south to Livingston Manor. Major Abraham Staats, a fur trader and surgeon general for the Dutch West India Company, owned a farm on the north side of Stockport Creek which was originally farmed by a tenant. In 1667 Major Staats received a patent for the land from the English. The existing house was built in the mid-17th century and was occupied by the Staats family until late in the 18th century.

Today the subunit is primarily in a natural state. Except for some structures along the Stockport Creek, the subunit is generally well maintained. With few discordant features to mar the scene, the symbolic

value of the subunit as a pristine natural area is very strong. Ephemeral effects of wildlife, river traffic, sunsets and passing trains serve to reinforce the area's natural tranquility.

Views

The subunit has wide, full views of the Hudson, up to 180 degrees in breadth. They are of moderate length, extending one to three miles up and downstream. The variety and dynamic balance of the landscape's visual elements, together with the background provided by the unspoiled west shore of the Hudson and the distant looming Catskills to the southwest, yield many unique and outstanding compositions. Several small, wooded islands and navigational lights on the river provide focal points within the viewshed.

Along the Stockport Creek the views are of a meandering water body with tumbling waterfalls and sheer cliffs. The perspective is narrow and intimate, except at the mouth of the creek where the water surface broadens and encircles islands and the footings of the railroad bridge. Rowboats tied along the shore are the only reminders of man's presence in the surrounding area.

Public Accessibility

The subunit is accessible to the public via County Route 22, also known as Station Road, which runs along the north shore of Stockport Creek west of NY Route 9. East of Route 9 the road runs along the top of the southern creek bank. The Hudson River shorelands and lower creek are accessible from the Hudson River, but the railroad tracks limit landing areas. At the end of Station Road on the shores of the Hudson and Stockport Creek are located a parking lot and boat ramp operated by the Hudson River Estuarine Sanctuary and Research Reserve which provides boating access to both the Hudson and the creek. The NYS Boat Ramp provides protected deep-water access/egress and temporary floating dock facilities for two boats at a time. The parking lot also provides visual access to the shoreline and lower creek.

The Estuarine Sanctuary and Research Reserve conducts educational program tours of the area during all seasons of the year. In addition, 200 acres of waterfront property in the southern portion of the subunit, including Priming Hook and North Bay wetlands and upland, have been purchased by the Columbia Land Conservancy and the Open Space Institute to create the Greenport Hudson River Conservation Area, which extends east into the Stottville Farms subunit. Public access will increase when this property is opened to the public.

The subunit is visible from the Hudson River and the railroad trains on the eastern shore. It also constitutes the middle ground in views from the west shore of the river, including those from NY Route 385, a Scenic Road designated under Article 49 of the Environmental Conservation Law and located in the Athens-Coxsackie Farmland subunit.

Public Recognition

Public recognition of the subunit's scenic attributes is limited due to its secluded nature. The shorelands are well known to birders who travel to the area to observe the resident and migrating wildlife. The importance of the landscape has been recognized through the creation of the Greenport Hudson River Conservation Area.

Reason for Inclusion

The Stockport Creek subunit is included in the Columbia-Greene North SASS because it has an unusually varied shoreline and changing topography which are unified by the dominant water elements. The subunit is accessible to the public via local roads, the Hudson River and the Estuarine Sanctuary boat launch and is visible from local roads, passenger trains and from the Hudson River and its western shore. The subunit is recognized by hunters and birders for its abundant wildlife, as well as through the creation of the Greenport Hudson River Conservation Area. Except for the railroad tracks and a few deteriorated structures, the subunit is generally free of discordant features.

Historical and Cultural Resources

Historic Resources

New York State's Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation indicates several sites on both National and State Historic Registers in the communities of Athens: West Athens Hill Site (Town), Newkirk Homestead (Town), Hudson-Athens Lighthouse (Village), Stranahan-DelVecchio House (Village), Albertus Van Loon House (Village), and the Zion Lutheran Church (Village).

The Hudson-Athens Lighthouse is located near the middle of the Hudson River near the southeast edge of the Village border. It is open to the public once per month during June to October through cruises run by the Hudson-Athens Lighthouse Preservation Society. This organization also works to maintain and rehabilitate the structure. Since 2003, Hudson Cruises has run a ferry service between Hudson, Athens, and the Lighthouse. In 2019 the Hudson-Athens Lighthouse was awarded the Seven-to-Save designation.

In the Village, the Stewart House B&B, the Brooks Opera House, the Jan Van Loon House, the Black Rock Native American Flint Quarry and the Northup House site on Route 385, are also identified as locally significant historic properties. In the Town, the site of the Black Horse Inn (prop. Isaac Hallenbeck) on Route 9W, the Native American encampment area off Route 9W and north of the Leeds-Athens Turnpike were indicated as additional historic sites with local significance.

The Athens Lower Village Historic District and Brick Row Historic District in the village are also on the National and State Registers. According to the National Register nomination, the Lower Village Historic District "reflects the architectural and historical growth of the small Hudson River community of Athens. Within the district are excellent examples of residential, ecclesiastical, and commercial architecture which

vividly portray the village’s growth from the beginning of the nineteenth, through the twentieth century. These structures reflect the community’s Dutch heritage as well as a strong river-based economy that included a shipyard along with pottery and brick manufacturing.” See the Historic Sites Map.

The Brick Row district contains a group of thirty historic row houses built in 1864 to house workers of the Saratoga and Hudson River Railroad, built by Daniel Drew and Cornelius Vanderbilt. It remains the only evidence of Athens once bustling role as the water terminus of this rail line, which ferried goods between Schenectady and the Hudson River. The route allowed freight to bypass delays at Albany arising from the number of canal locks and the amount of shipping traffic. Before the terminal and docks burned in 1876, the volume of freight handled rivaled that of Albany. Following the demise of the railroad, Brick Row became an immigrant settlement of primarily Italian descent.

Places of Worship

Village

First Reformed Church, North Church Street

Federated Church, North Franklin Street (within this building there is a new congregation, Lighthouse Church)

Saint Patrick’s Roman Catholic Church, North Washington Street

Zion Evangelical Lutheran Church, North Washington Street

Town

High Hill United Methodist, Schoharie Turnpike

Cemeteries

The following list was compiled by the Vedder Research Library:

- Chappel Cemetery
- Rushmore Cemetery
- Friends Cemetery in Mt. Hope Cemetery
- Mt. Hope Cemetery
- Athens Rural Cemetery
- Van Loan - Fowks Cemetery
- Alanson Vail Cemetery
- Groom Cemetery
- Van Hoesen/Van Valkenburg Cemetery

There are several other unnamed cemeteries throughout the Town.

Cultural Events / Resources

The Athens Street Festival has been held every July for the past 45 years and draws approximately 10,000 people with activities, vendors, and music from morning to night, ending with a fireworks spectacular.

Friday night music from June – Labor Day, presented by the Athens Performing Arts Corporation (APAC) attracts large audiences to the Village’s Riverfront Park.

The Victorian Stroll is an annual festival that takes place the first Saturday of December. Horse drawn carriages, Victorian house tours, music and various other events take place throughout the day. The day ends with caroling and a tree lighting ceremony.

Athens Community Day, a family-oriented event, is held at the Riverfront Park every June.

Athens Oktoberfest is held every October and features local wineries, breweries, distilleries, and food trucks.

The Athens Community Center is a turn-of-the-century era elementary school, which now houses Town and Village municipal offices, courts, and police department. The attached gym is often used for youth sports practice, meetings, and various other events.

The Athens Museum is a one-room collection of images, artifacts, and documents of community life and industry primarily during the 1800’s. Located on the second floor of the community center, it is open upon request to groups or during special community events. The Town Historian administers the museum.

The Athens Cultural Center on Second Street, is a village-owned building being used by a not-for-profit group which organizes art shows, cultural enrichment classes, etc. The building was once the local Athens Generating Co. headquarters.

The D.R. Evarts Library is located on Second Street in the Village. It became its own district in 2005 and is part of the Mid-Hudson Library system.

Appendix A. Maps

Maps that Remain Valid from the 2007 Plan and included in Volume 2:

- Geology
- Topography
- Steep Slopes
- Water, Wetlands, Wet Soils
- Flood Hazards
- Coastal Zone
- Habitat Overlays and Predictions
- Environmental Constraints
- Scenic Areas of Statewide Significance
- Build-Out Analysis (Town and Village) (Series)
- Main Street Study Maps (Series)
- 9W Corridor Study Maps (Series)
- Surrounding Area
- Water and Sewer Infrastructure
- Municipally Owned Properties

Updated Maps (Included in Part I)

- Aerial Photograph, Village
- Aerial Photograph, Town
- Agricultural Zoning Districts and Areas Permitting Agriculture
- Agricultural Zoning Districts, New York State Certified Agricultural Districts, and Current Parcels in Agricultural Use
- Prime Farmland Soils, Soils of Statewide Significance, and Current Parcels in Agricultural Use
- Historic Buildings and Districts
- Property Class by Tax Parcel Town
- Property Class by Tax Parcel Village
- Zoning Districts Town
- Zoning Districts Village