

Recommendations for Housing and Conservation Planning

Hudson Valley Alliance for Housing & Conservation

February 2025



Healthy and vibrant communities need a range of housing options that can be affordable for people of all income levels, and protected land that supports clean water, food production, climate resilience, and outdoor recreation. An integrated approach to simultaneously planning for housing and open space can help communities achieve a balance between growth and protection of resources now and into the future.

The following are a few recommendations from the Hudson Valley Alliance for Housing & Conservation, developed for local communities.

A. Find ways for housing and open space planners and advocates to regularly collaborate:

- Include people with affordable housing expertise on conservation-related boards and committees, and likewise incorporate conservation expertise into housing-related boards and committees.
- Share available data and reports, and engage stakeholders to talk about your community's housing and conservation needs and opportunities.
- Create a collaborative community-supported plan that integrates open space and housing priority areas, with an accompanying map when feasible. Update, combine and/or modify existing open space and/or community preservation plans as appropriate.

B. Expand Community Preservation/Community Housing Fund opportunities:

- Encourage state policymakers to pass statewide legislation enabling community preservation funds and community housing funds to ensure municipalities can raise funds for both open space and affordable housing. (The Hudson Valley Alliance for Housing and Conservation is actively advocating for these funds – talk to us about how you can help!)
 - Identify if your community is currently covered by the Hudson Valley Community Preservation Act, or has standalone Community Preservation Fund authorization from the state.
 - If yes: begin working with your municipality to get a measure on the ballot and ensure enough voters will vote “YES” on your referendum. Write and adopt a Community Preservation Plan to guide how the funds can be spent.
 - If no: Speak with local legislators, enlist the support of local, regional, and national-level land conservation organizations, and generate interest and support in your community. Reach out to other Community Preservation Fund communities (via the CPF Coalition or individually).
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C. Regularly review planning and zoning regulations:

- Update single family and large lot zoning to make regulations inclusive rather than exclusionary. Some options to consider include:
 - Allow accessory dwelling units and tiny houses when specifically used for affordable housing.
 - Allow multi-family dwellings in all residential and mixed-use areas.
 - Require a minimum percentage of affordable units in all developments of certain sizes.
 - Incentivize set asides for green space (pocket parks, trails, etc.).
 - Reduce or eliminate parking requirements in residential zones.
 - Allow smaller parcel sizes to encourage higher density and in-fill development.
 - Change bulk requirements near transit, business and community hubs to encourage higher density and in-fill development.
 - Create or modify zoning to encourage sustainable growth (e.g. cluster/conservation subdivisions that offer density bonuses; mixed-use planned zoning districts that allow for greater planning board discretion; and required green infrastructure).
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D. Work collaboratively with surrounding municipalities and relevant organizations:

- Create an intermunicipal task force with neighboring cities, towns and villages to achieve integrated and more expansive open space and affordable housing outcomes that cross boundaries.
- Engage regional affordable housing groups and land trusts to leverage their resources and expertise when discussing next steps for encouraging conservation and housing.

Resources for Municipalities

The State of Housing and Conservation in the Hudson Valley

- Out of Reach 2024 (Hudson Valley Pattern for Progress): <https://www.pattern-for-progress.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/07/2024-Out-of-Reach-2.pdf>
- Threats to Biodiversity in the Hudson River Watershed (Cornell Univ. College of Agriculture and Life Sciences): <https://hudson.dnr.cals.cornell.edu/natural-areas-biodiversity/threats-biodiversity-watershed#toc-helpful-links>
- At a Crossroads: Agricultural Economic Development in the Hudson Valley (American Farmland Trust): https://farmlandinfo.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2019/09/New_York_Hudson_Valley_Summary_Report_1.pdf

Housing and Land Use Policy Resources

- NYS Homes and Community Renewal Program (Rental & Home Ownership Resources): <https://hcr.ny.gov/>
- Preserving Affordable Homeownership: Municipal Partnerships with Community Land Trusts (Lincoln Institute of Land Policy): <https://www.lincolninst.edu/publications/policy-focus-reports/preserving-affordable-homeownership-municipal-partnerships-community-land-trusts/>
- PACE Land Use Law Center - Land Use Leadership Alliance Training Program: <https://www.pace.edu/law/centers-and-institutes/land-use-law-center/training-programs-and-technical-assistance/land-0>

Land Conservation and Municipal Planning Resources

- Conservation and Land Use Planning Tools for Municipalities (NYS DEC): <https://dec.ny.gov/nature/waterbodies/oceans-estuaries/hudson-river-estuary-program/conservation-and-land-use-program>
- Community Preservation Funding: <https://defendthevalley.org/campaign/community-preservation-fund/>
- Natural Resources Protection in the Hudson Valley: Municipal Conservation Stories: <https://dec.ny.gov/sites/default/files/2024-06/naturalresourcesprotectionhv.pdf>
- Land Trust Alliance (find your local conservation land trust): <https://landtrustalliance.org/land-trusts>

Additional Resources

- Hudson Valley Alliance for Housing and Conservation: <https://rpa.org/hudson-valley-affordable-housing-conservation-strategy#additional-resources>
- Annotated list of articles, reports, tools and organizations related to conservation and affordable housing: https://docs.google.com/document/d/1-D2gI_QsLwZrWjPGkMNwLbtfxEHV6sUcJAiX7SHWIOo/edit?tab=t.0
- Glossary of Common Affordable Housing and Conservation Terms: <https://s3.us-east-1.amazonaws.com/rpa-org/pdfs/Glossary-of-Affordable-Housing-Conservation-Terms.docx.pdf>
- Land Use Planning and Regulation Training and Assistance (NYS Dept. of State): <https://dos.ny.gov/training-assistance>

