
COMPREHENSIVE PLAN ADDENDUM

INTRODUCTION

Since the 2007 Comprehensive Plan Update, the need for workforce and affordable housing has continued to grow. This Comprehensive Plan Addendum (“Addendum”) and the accompanying zoning text amendments build on Goal #4, to “encourage more housing – low, affordable, moderate-income, high-end, and rental – to create a genuinely multigenerational community.” Specifically, this Addendum and the proposed text amendments jointly support the following objectives:

- Preserve and encourage affordable housing units within the Town;
- Promote the construction of moderate-income housing units within the Town; and
- Clarify the approvals and administrative process within the Workforce Housing Law.

DEMOGRAPHIC CHANGES AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS

Demographic information can be used to portray the characteristics of residents of the Town of Amenia. This section reviews the population composition, growth and decline of the population, and the various factors involved with changes in population. In addition, a description of data on education, household income, housing, and the labor force for the town is provided.

Population

Since the 1991 Master Plan, the Town of Amenia experienced a net loss of population of 27.45 percent, decreasing from a 1990 population of 5,195 to its current total population of 3,769 residents, as of 2020. This substantial decrease was inconsistent with Dutchess County as a whole, whose population generally increased over the same time period. As shown in **Table 1**, the County’s growth rate has exceeded that of the Town over the last 30 years.

Table 1
Population Trends 1990-2020

Area	1990	2000	2010	2020	1990-2020 % Change
Town of Amenia	5,195	4,048	4,436	3,769	-27.4%
Dutchess County	259,462	280,150	297,488	295,911	14.1%

Sources: Census 2020, 2010, 2000, 1990, Prepared by Social Explorer, SE: T002

Much of the decline in the population of the Town of Amenia indicated in Table 1 is due to the decrease in number of Amenia residents living at the Taconic DDSO. This conclusion is indicated by the steep decline in the number of persons living in institutional or non-institutional group quarters and the decrease in population density of the census block group that includes the Taconic DDSO. As shown in **Table 2**, in 1990 a total of 1,262 persons in Amenia resided in group quarters, including the Taconic DDSO. With the decline of the number of consumers residing in that facility, the number of group quarters residents in Amenia has dropped by 81.2 percent, 237 persons in 2020.¹ While the group quarters residential population declined, the number of persons living in households increased somewhat from 3,933 persons in 1990, to 4,087 persons in 2020, a net increase of 3.9 percent.

Table 2
Population Trends Adjusted to Reflect Non-Group Home Residents

Town of Amenia	1990 ¹	2000 ¹	2010 ¹	2020 ²	1990-2020 % Change
Persons in Households	3,933	3,991	4,125	4,087	3.9%
Persons in Group Quarters	1,262	57	311	237	-81.2%
Total Population	5,195	4,048	4,436	4,324	-16.8%

Sources: ¹US Census Bureau, 1990, 2000, 2010 Census of the Population, SF-1
² American Community Survey (ACS) 2020 (5-Year Estimates), "Group Quarters Population, 2020" U.S. Census Bureau; Prepared by Social Explorer.

At the time of the 2007 Update, the Town had already been seeing a considerable increase in weekend, commuter, and telecommuter populations. As many businesses continue to embrace remote and hybrid work schedules, telecommuting has increased allowing workers to live farther from urban employment hubs. Yet locally, the area has lost significant employers over the past 30 years. This loss in local jobs has led to a decrease in residents who earn their income locally. Combined, the loss of local jobs and lack of affordable housing have made it increasingly difficult for

¹ The 2000 number represents the Town of Amenia group quarters population reported by the US Census in 2000. Employees of the Taconic DDSO have indicated that this number is an under representation of the current number of people living at the Taconic DDSO.

long-time local residents to afford to live in Amenia. Since 1990, the population of Amenia has dropped by 27.4 percent (see Table 1).

The character of the community continues to shift. The population is older, increasing from a median age of 38.0 in 1994 to 40.5 in 2020. Between 2010 and 2020, the percent of the population under age 18 decreased by 8.1 percent, while the percent aged more than 75 increased by 37.9 percent.² This change is also reflected in the reduced household size, which decreased from 3.2 people in 1990 to 2.6 people in 2020 (see **Table 3**). The changing demographics affect the kinds of stores and services the town attracts, as well as community needs, grade school enrollment, and employment sectors.

Table 3
Regional Household Sizes

	Town of Amenia	Town of Dover	Town of North East	Town of Washington	Dutchess County
Average Household Size in 2020	2.6	2.4	2.3	2.0	2.5
Sources: American Community Survey (ACS) 2020 (5-Year Estimates), "Average Household Size" U.S. Census Bureau					

The number of households and the average size of households in the Town of Amenia has decreased over the past 30 years (see **Table 4**). On the other hand, in Dutchess County, the number of households increased substantially. The Town of Amenia and Dutchess County both experienced a decrease in average household sizes and now have similar averages of 2.6 and 2.5, respectively, as of 2020. Yet, this decrease was more substantial for Amenia, which fell from an average household size of 3.2 in 1990; whereas in Dutchess County, the average household size was 2.7 during the same period. These declines generally reflect the aging of the population, as older populations generally have fewer children living at home. In addition, the sharp decline in the average household size in Amenia reflects the decline of the institutional and non-institutional group quarters residents. Currently, the average household size in Amenia, 2.6 persons, is slightly higher than in surrounding communities, with Dover averaging 2.4, North East averaging 2.3, and Washington averaging 2.0 persons per household.³

² American Community Survey (ACS) 2010, 2020 (5-Year Estimates). "SE:A01001B Age – Cumulative (Less)." and "SE:A01001A:Age - Cumulative (Less)" U.S. Census Bureau. Prepared by Social Explorer.

³ US Census Bureau, Census 2000.

Table 4
Household Trends since 1990

Area	1990 ¹	2000 ¹	2010 ¹	2020 ²	1990 – 2020 % Change
Number of Households					
Town of Amenia	1,620	1,625	1,741	1,552	-4.2%
Dutchess County	89,567	99,536	107,965	110,095	22.9%
Average Household Size					
Town of Amenia	3.2	2.5	2.4	2.6	-19.8%
Dutchess County	2.7	2.6	2.6	2.5	-6.0%
Sources: ¹ US Census Bureau, 1990, 2000, 2010 Census of the Population, SF-1 ² American Community Survey (ACS) 2020 (5-Year Estimates), "Household by Type, 2020" and "Average Household Size, 2020" U.S. Census Bureau Notes: As of the date of this writing, the 2020 Census report has not been fully released, and limited datasets are available. Where information was not available from the 2020 Census, the information was sourced from ACS 2020 5-year estimates. The source is noted for each column.					

Population Distribution by Age

According to the 2020 ACS 5-Year Estimates, the median age of Amenia's population is 40.5 years old, notably older than the median of 38.0 identified in the 1991 Master Plan. The rise in the median age in the Town of Amenia is consistent with the trends reported in the 1991 Master Plan. The median age in Amenia has generally increased over the past forty years from 36.2 in 1980, to 36.9 in 1989, to 38.0 in 1994, 40.2 in 2000, 38.2 in 2010, and back up to 40.5 in 2020.

Currently, the highest proportion of residents in the community falls within the 35-44 and 45-54 age categories, comprising 29.3 percent of residents. This proportion is consistent with previous years. Notably, however, the percent population over 75 years has been growing. In 2000, 7.8 percent of residents were more than 75 years old, and 2.0 percent were more than 85 years. As of 2020, 9.3 percent of the population is over 75 years, and 4.0 percent is over 85 years. Therefore, a large percentage of the town's total population falls within the retirement and elderly age category.

The increase in median age from 1991, and the large proportion of town residents within the retirement age category, is consistent with observed trends that the Town of Amenia has attracted retirees and empty nesters from the more urban areas of New York. Combined with national trends of the aging "baby-boomer" generation, longer life expectancies, and lower birth rates, the median age of Amenia has risen higher than the County as a whole, whose median age in 2020 was 38 years.

Table 5
Population Distribution of Amenia and Dutchess County, 2000-2020

Age Group	2000		2010		2020	
	Amenia	Dutchess County	Amenia	Dutchess County	Amenia	Dutchess County
Under 5 Years	5.5%	6.2%	4.6%	5.1%	4.3%	4.6%
5 to 9 Years	7.3%	7.3%	5.5%	5.9%	7.2%	4.7%
10 to 14 Years	6.8%	7.4%	6.0%	6.6%	6.5%	5.8%
15 to 17 Years	4.1%	4.1%	4.3%	4.5%	6.3%	3.8%
18 to 24 Years	6.5%	9.4%	8.6%	10.9%	8.1%	10.8%
25 to 34 Years	11.3%	12.5%	9.4%	10.6%	9.2%	11.9%
35 to 44 Years	16.3%	17.7%	12.9%	13.4%	16.3%	11.5%
45 to 54 Years	14.8%	14.2%	16.1%	16.9%	13.0%	14.3%
55 to 64 Years	10.3%	9.0%	15.0%	12.5%	12.3%	15.1%
65 to 74 Years	9.4%	6.50	9.4%	7.2%	7.5%	10.0%
75 to 84 Years	5.8%	4.0%	5.9%	4.5%	5.2%	5.1%
85 Years+	2.0%	1.5%	2.3%	1.9%	4.0%	2.5%

Sources: American Community Survey (ACS) (5-Year Estimates). "Age." U.S. Census Bureau. Prepared by Social Explorer.

Median Household Income

As shown in Table 6, the median income in Amenia, after dipping in 2010 (after the economic crash of 2008), has remained similar since 1990.

Table 6
Median Household Income (Adjusted for 2020 Inflation Value)

Area	1989 ¹	1999 ¹	2010 ²	2020 ²
Town of Amenia	\$66,282	\$61,556	\$45,156	\$64,604
Dutchess County	\$89,941	\$83,295	\$69,838	\$81,842
New York State	\$70,223	\$68,086	\$55,603	\$71,117

Notes: For the years 1989 and 1999, adjusted values were calculated using the US Bureau of Labor Statistics Inflation Calculator (bls.gov/data/inflation_calculator.htm)

Sources: ¹ US Census Bureau, Census 2000 and 1990 Census of the Population and Summary Table, SF-3
² American Community Survey (ACS) 2020 (5-Year Estimates), 2010 (5-Year Estimates) "Median Household Income (In Inflation Adjusted Dollars)" U.S. Census Bureau. Social Explorer.

Employment

Approximately 50 percent of the Amenia labor force was employed by the government in 1980, which clearly indicated the importance of the Taconic DDSO as a major employer. However, since the significant downsizing of the center, the distribution of employment has changed; as of 2020, only 17.2 percent of Amenia's labor force is employed in the educational, health and social services industry (see Table 7). Tables 7, 8, and 9 show the current employment distributions of the Town of

Amenia and Dutchess County. In both America and Dutchess County, the highest percentage of the employed population works in management, professional, and related occupations, followed by sales and office occupations.

Table 7

Town of America and Dutchess County: Employment by Occupation, 2020

Occupation	America		Dutchess County	
	Employed Population	% Employed Population	Employed Population	% Employed Population
Management, professional, and related occupations	564	29.7%	60,290	41.2%
Service	357	18.8%	28,031	19.1%
Sales and Office	505	26.6%	31,600	21.6%
Farming, fishing, and forestry	47	2.5%	760	0.5%
Construction, extraction, and maintenance	151	8.0%	13,247	9.0%
Production	87	4.6%	4,645	3.2%
Transportation and Material Moving	187	9.9%	7,882	5.4%
Total	1,898	100.0	146,455	100.0%

Sources: American Community Survey (ACS) 2020 (5-Year Estimates) "Occupation for Employed Civilian Population 16 Years and Over" U.S. Census Bureau

Table 8

Town of America and Dutchess County: Employment Sector

Sector	America		Dutchess County	
	Employed Population	% Employed Population	Employed Population	% Employed Population
Private Sector	1,201	63.3%	91,104	62.2%
Public Sector	286	15.1%	23,192	15.8%
Self-Employed (Incorporated and Not Incorporated)	259	13.6%	13,678	9.3%
Private Non-Profit	152	8.0%	18,191	12.4%
Unpaid Family Workers	0	0.0%	290	0.2%
Total Employed Population	1,898	100.0%	146,455	100.0%

Sources: American Community Survey (ACS) 2020 (5-Year Estimates) "Employment Sector for Employed Civilian Population 16 Years and Over"

As of 2020, the industries with the highest percent of America's workers are retail trade and education, health, and social services, with 17.2 percent each. America's significantly larger farming and forestry industry, as compared with Dutchess County overall, indicates the region's rural

character and agricultural importance. Although agriculture is a vital industry in this area, it comprises only 4.4 percent of the labor force, a sharp decrease from 7.4 percent in 1980. As noted above, this table illustrates the notable change in the percentage of Amenia’s work force employed in “educational, health and social services,” which was 50.1 percent in 1980 and decreased to 17.2 percent in 2020. Industries that have seen a notable increase in percentage of workers include “retail trade,” which increased from 8.7 percent in 1980 to 17.2 percent in 2020; “finance, insurance, real estate, and rental and leasing,” which increased from 2.2 percent in 1980 to 8.2 percent in 2020; and “arts, entertainment, recreation, accommodation, and food services,” which increased from 2.3 percent in 1980 to 8.9 percent in 2020. These changes may reflect an increase in tourism and shift to the service industry.

Table 9
Town of Amenia and Dutchess County: Employment by Industry, 2020

Industry	Amenia				Dutchess County	
	1980		2020		2020	
	Employed Population	Percent of Employed Population	Employed Population	Percent of Employed Population	Employed Population	Percent of Employed Population
Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting, and mining	152	7.4%	83	4.4%	1,666	1.1%
Construction	100	5.0%	164	8.6%	9,061	6.2%
Manufacturing	208	10.2%	207	10.9%	8,988	6.1%
Wholesale trade	223	2.1%	0	0.0%	2,847	1.9%
Retail Trade	NA	8.7%	327	17.2%	16,373	11.2%
Transportation and warehousing, and utilities	59	2.8%	121	6.4%	7,499	5.1%
Information	NA	NA	28	1.5%	2,540	1.7%
Finance, insurance, real estate, and rental and leasing	45	2.2%	155	8.2%	9,114	6.2%
Professional, scientific, management, administrative, and waste management services	1,139	5.3%	145	7.6%	16,225	11.1%
Educational, health and social services	NA	50.1%	327	17.2%	42,458	29.0%
Arts, entertainment, recreation, accommodation, and food services	48	2.3%*	169	8.9%	13,730	9.4%
Public administration	80	3.8%	131	6.9%	7,131	4.9%
Other services	NA	NA	41	2.2%	8,823	6.0%
Total	2054	100.0%	1,898	100.0%	146,455	100.0%
Notes: *Defined as “Personal Services” in 1991 Master Plan						
Sources: U.S. Census Bureau and Social Explorer. "Industry, 1980"; American Community Survey (ACS) 2020 (5-Year Estimates) "Industry By Occupation Civilian Population 16 Years and Over" U.S. Census Bureau						

Housing

Nationally, amidst demographic shifts and economic changes accelerated by the COVID pandemic, the housing shortage has become a housing crisis, with an estimated 4.3 million apartment rentals needed by 2035.⁴ At the time of the 2007 Comprehensive Plan Update, Dutchess County, along with the country, was experiencing a housing boom, creating thousands of jobs and new homes. Yet even at that time, Amenia, through its Comprehensive Plan, recognized the need for more housing, particularly, affordable housing. And as we know now, that housing boom was a bubble that burst in 2008, causing one of the worst recessions in American history. The need for affordable housing is acute.

While there remains a supply of existing affordable housing within Amenia (many of them mobile homes), a significant percentage of households are “cost-burdened,” meaning that they are paying more than 30 percent of their income for housing. Moreover, the percentage of Amenia residents who are cost-burdened has increased considerably since the 2007 Update. At that time, approximately 22 percent of homeowners were cost-burdened, as were 34.5 percent of renters. Current data reports that approximately 29 percent of homeowners and 45.9 percent of renters are paying more than 30 percent of their income for housing.^{5,6}

Even during the time leading up to the 2007 Update, the housing boom was of little help to areas like Amenia where the new housing construction was geared toward the higher end of the market, decreasing the proportion of housing options affordable to most residents. After the economic crash of 2008, the gap between incomes and home prices expanded further in Amenia and throughout the country.

Amenia’s housing affordability problem, which was already significant at the time of the 2007 Update, has continued to swell, exacerbated both to national economics, where incomes have not kept pace with the costs of living, and regionally, where wealthier new residents continue to raise the demand for higher housing prices. As the availability of moderately priced homes decreases, this growing

⁴ “U.S. Needs 4.3m More Apartments by 2035 to Address Demand, Deficit and Affordability,” NMHC, July 22, 2022, <https://www.nmhc.org/news>.

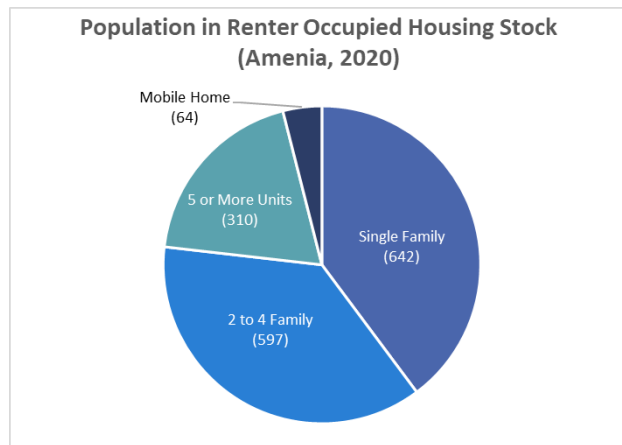
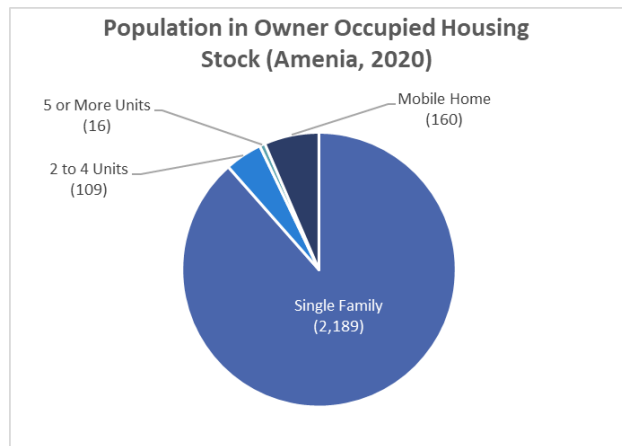
⁵ Defining Housing Affordability." US Department of Housing and Urban Development. 2014. <https://www.huduser.gov/portal/pdredge/pdr-edge-featd-article-081417.html>.

⁶ US Census Bureau; ACS 5-Year Estimates 2017-2022; Social Explorer. "SE:A10049: Selected Monthly Owner Costs as a Percentage of Household Income in the Past 12 Months (Dollars) for Housing Units with a Mortgage" and; "SE:A10051:Selected Monthly Owner Costs as a Percentage of Household Income in the Past 12 Months (Dollars) for Housing Units Without a Mortgage;" and "SE:A18002:Gross Rent as a Percentage of Household Income in the Past 12 Months".

imbalance will continue to impact on social and economic diversity of Amenia if the community does not take action. In addition, the of affordable housing has historically created recruitment and retention problems at area employers. For example, in 2007 the Taconic DDSO went gone so far as to have the Dutchess County Loop Bus System run a special bus for each shift at the facility.

Adequacy of Existing Housing Stock

The statistical portrait of Amenia’s housing stock is portrayed in **Tables 10, 11, and 12** below. The data shows that as of 2020, of the 4,087 Town residents, approximately 60 percent are homeowners and 40 percent are renters.⁷ Compared to Dutchess County, where 73 of residents are owners and 27 percent renters. As such, Amenia has a higher rate of renters than Dutchess County. Moreover, as shown in Table IV-9, the ownership rate in Amenia has markedly shifted over the last 20 years, decreasing from 68.8 percent in 2000 to 60.5 percent in 2022. These tables also show that, although single-family homes make up the majority of Amenia’s owner-occupied homes, renters are almost evenly split between single-family and 2-4 family homes. These factors about the growing proportion of renters and their housing preferences are important for determining the types of new housing that are most needed, and should be encouraged, in Amenia.



⁷ Housing structures include the total of single-family houses, multi-family buildings, mobile homes, and boats, RVs, etc. in which people reside.

Table 10
Population in Occupied Housing Stock,
Town of Amenia and Dutchess County, 2020

Tenure and Number of Units in Structure	Amenia		Dutchess County	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Population in Owner Occupied Housing				
1 (Detached or Attached)	2,189	53.60%	184,639	67.10%
2 To 4	109	2.70%	5,611	2.00%
5 or More	16	0.40%	3,505	1.30%
Mobile Home	160	3.90%	6,047	2.20%
Boat, Rv, Van, Etc.	0	0.00%	77	0.00%
Subtotal	2,474	60.50%	199,879	72.60%
Population in Renter Occupied Housing				
1 (Detached or Attached)	642	15.70%	23,154	8.40%
2 To 4	597	14.60%	25,649	9.30%
5 or More	310	7.60%	24,245	8.80%
Mobile Home	64	1.60%	2,436	0.90%
Boat, Rv, Van, Etc.	0	0.00%	0	0.00%
Subtotal	1,613	39.50%	75,484	27.40%
Total	4,087		275,363	
Sources: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey (ACS) 2020 (5-Year Estimates) "Total Population In Occupied Housing Units By Tenure By Units In Structure". Social Explorer.				

Table 11
Town of Amenia Housing Ownership Status, 2020

Type	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
	2000 ¹		2020 ²	
	Population in Owner-Occupied Housing	1,118	68.80%	2,474
Population in Renter-Occupied Housing	507	31.20%	1,613	39.50%
Sources: ¹ U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey (ACS) 2020 (5-Year Estimates). "Total Population In Occupied Housing Units By Tenure By Units In Structure, 2020". Social Explorer. ² U.S. Census Bureau. "Tenure, 2000". Social Explorer.				

A high percentage of Amenia’s housing structures were built before 1960. Of the estimated total number of 1,855 housing structures, approximately 1,188 (64 percent) were built in this period, with 789 (43 percent) being built prior to 1940. This is generally true, however, for most of the communities in the Harlem Valley with the exception of Dover, which has a higher percentage of mobile homes.

Table 12
Town of Amenia Year Housing Structures Built

Year Built	Number	Percent	Std. Error
2014 or Later	25	1.3%	16.97
2010 To 2013	8	0.4%	9.70
2000 To 2009	24	1.3%	13.33
1990 To 1999	149	8.0%	56.97
1980 To 1989	90	4.9%	31.52
1970 To 1979	107	5.8%	28.48
1960 To 1969	264	14.2%	64.85
1950 To 1959	307	16.5%	71.52
1940 To 1949	92	5.0%	45.45
1939 or Earlier	789	42.5%	115.76
Total:	1,855	100.0%	123.03
Year Built	Number	Percent	Std. Error

Sources: U.S. Census Bureau. American Community Survey (ACS) 2020 (5-Year Estimates). "B25034:Year Structure Built." Social Explorer.

Housing Trends and Costs

The housing situation in Dutchess County has changed significantly over recent decades. Lower- and middle-income people wishing to stay within, or move to, the community have had a difficult time affording homes. The rise of housing prices, which has accelerated at a much higher rate than incomes, has created an affordability crisis among a growing majority of the population. The high cost of housing is also reflected in the rise in land prices which, as noted in the 1991 Master Plan, has limited farmer-to-farmer sales of agricultural land.

A review of current real estate offerings on the Multiple Listing Services (MLS) and Zillow for the Town of Amenia in August of 2020 showed limited listings. Most of the listed homes had three bedrooms with lot sizes either less than one acre or more than 20 acres, without much in between. The homes on the smaller lots were valued around \$300,000, and the homes on the large lots ranged from \$725,000 to several million dollars. There were also several listings for undeveloped parcels ranging from 27 to 422 acres and from \$630,000 to \$8,900,000. Interestingly, although the number of housing units has increased since the 2007 Update (see housing stock tables, above), the number and types of homes listed for sale seem to have decreased. Most notably, the 2007 Update observed multiple listings for mobile homes, the most affordable housing type, whereas the current search showed no mobile homes and few others. The MLS site lists three single-family homes, and Zillow listed five single-family, one multi-family, and four undeveloped lots.

A search of rental homes produced four listings: two single-family homes, one within a duplex, and one within a four-apartment building. The rent prices ranged from \$1,275 for the apartment to \$8,500 for the larger single-family home. These prices represent a substantial increase from the 2007

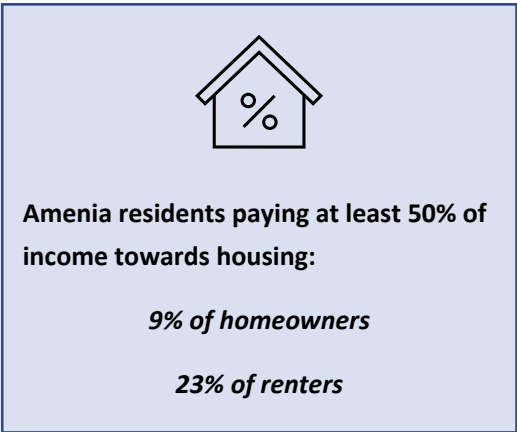
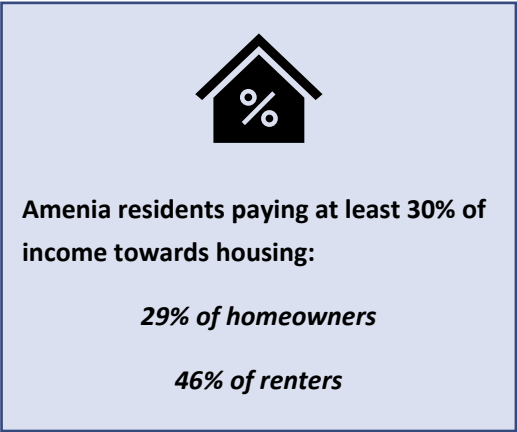
Update, which stated that the rent for nearly 45 percent of Amenia’s rental units was between \$500 and \$749.

Affordable Housing Issues

As discussed in Chapter 2, Amenia, like the rest of the country, has a growing housing affordability problem. A comparison of **Tables 12 and 13** shows that renters generally pay a greater percent of their income on housing than homeowners. According to the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), “the generally accepted definition of affordability is for a household to pay no more than 30 percent of its annual income on housing. Families who pay more than 30 percent of their income for housing are considered cost burdened and may have difficulty affording necessities such as food, clothing, transportation and medical care.”⁸

Another term for “affordable housing” is “workforce housing” – housing that is affordable to a large majority of the workforce in any region. In Amenia, approximately 45.9 percent of renters reside in housing that is considered “unaffordable”, as compared to 28.7 percent of homeowners. Both of these percentages have increased since the 2007 Update, which reported that 34 percent of renters and 22 percent of homeowners were paying more than 30 percent of their income on housing costs. Yet, the percent of renters who are cost burdened continues to grow at a higher rate than the percent of homeowners. This dichotomy indicates a greater need for affordable rental housing. As reported in the 1991 Master Plan, the demand for affordable rental housing was primarily from young families and the elderly. While these sectors of the population continue to place a high demand for affordable housing, a growing portion of the greater population has become cost burdened as rising housing costs continue to outpace income levels.

As the demographic analysis shows, the median age of Amenia is increasing, indicating a growing population that will increase demand for affordable housing. Oftentimes, people prefer to “age in



⁸ <http://www.hud.gov/offices/cpd/affordablehousing/>

place” and retire in their hometown because that is where their friends, family, place of worship, community, and general support system is. To do so, they may also wish to “downsize” from their existing home to something more manageable in terms of affordability, accessibility, and maintenance. This increases the demand for smaller, more affordable housing in a community that is already experiencing a housing shortage.

Table 12
Cost-Burdened Homeowners, Amenia, 2020

Affordability Characteristic	Number of Homeowners	Percent of Total Homeowners
Homeowners Who are Paying at Least 30% of Income for Home Ownership Costs	273	28.7%
Homeowners Who are Paying at Least 50% of Income for Home Ownership Costs	85	8.9%
Notes: Total Owner-Occupied Housing Units: 951		
Sources: U.S. Census Bureau. American Community Survey (ACS) 2020 (5-Year Estimates) “SE: B10040: Residents Paying More Than 30% or at least 50% of Income on Home Ownership Expenses”. Social Explorer		

Table 13
Cost-Burdened Renters, Amenia, 2020

Affordability Characteristic	Number of Renters	Percent of Total Renters
Renters Who are Paying at Least 30% of Income for on Rent	276	45.9%
Renters Who are Paying at Least 50% of Income on Rent	139	23.1%
Notes: Total Renter-Occupied Housing Units: 601		
Sources: U.S. Census Bureau. American Community Survey (ACS) 2020 (5-Year Estimates) “SE:B18002: Residents Paying More Than 30% or at least 50% of Income on Rent”. Social Explorer		

The limited supply of affordable housing is a problem discussed in the 1991 Master Plan and continues to be a problem today. Among the groups most affected by this problem in the Town of Amenia are schoolteachers, town employees, emergency services volunteers, and the elderly.

Due to the Town’s attractive character and accessibility to the New York City area, Amenia continues to see an increasing number of second-homeowners, weekenders, and visitors. These part-time residents bring benefits to the Town, including that they typically generate more tax revenue than they consume in municipal services, that they spend money that stimulates the local economy, and that they can provide employment opportunities to local workers. However, it is important that the benefits provided by this demographic is balanced with the housing needs of full-time residents and local workers, such that a healthy percentage of “naturally affordable” housing (e.g. apartments, accessory dwelling units, and small homes) are available for long-term rentals and entry-level buyers. (See the discussion of “Large-Scale Resort and Second-Home Development Projects,” under the section on Specific Changes and Policy Implications.) As shown in **Table 14** below, according to the US Census, the rate of vacant housing units that are actually available for rent or purchase is zero

percent. This is consistent with the 2021 Dutchess County Rental Housing Survey which reported a 0.2% vacancy rate in market rate apartment complexes in the Town of Amenia.⁹ However, approximately 25.7 percent of units are rented but not occupied, and approximately 32.3 percent are used for seasonal, recreational, or occasional use.

Table 14
Vacancy Status of Housing Units in Amenia, 2020

Unit Type	Number of Units	Percent
For Rent	0	0.0%
Rented, Not Occupied	78	25.7%
For Sale Only	0	0.0%
Sold, Not Occupied	0	0.0%
For Seasonal, Recreational, or Occasional Use	98	32.3%
For Migrant Workers	0	0.0%
Other Vacant	127	41.9%
Total	303	100%
Sources: U.S. Census Bureau. American Community Survey (ACS) 2020 (5-Year Estimates). "B25004:Vacancy Status." Social Explorer.		

At the local level, zoning revisions can respond to the housing affordability problem by encouraging accessory apartments, higher density housing, especially multi-family housing, smaller units, and senior housing. These housing options increase the range of housing choice, and, through the introduction of smaller dwelling units, reduce housing costs as well. Denser development also places less strain on municipal resources. The Town may also consider regulating the short-term rental market and bolstering the country inn and hotel market to balance the important economic benefits provided by the tourism economy with local housing needs.

Inclusionary housing is a zoning technique that goes further in promoting housing affordable to the local workforce by granting a developer a density bonus in exchange for the provision of a certain percentage of housing units affordable to low- and moderate-income households. Regulations that require developers to provide affordable housing are called "mandatory" inclusionary housing policies; unsurprisingly, mandatory programs are more effective than incentive programs. The affordable unit's selling prices are indexed to the median income of the residents of the area or to the average salary of municipal or school district employees.

Amenia’s inclusionary housing regulations provide a density bonus to developers who provide workforce housing, defined in the Zoning Code as, "Single-family, two-family, or multifamily housing

⁹ "2021 Dutchess County Rental Housing Survey," Dutchess County Department of Planning and Development.

that is owned or rented by an eligible household, as defined in § 121-42, and priced to be affordable to moderate-income households whose members live and/or work in the Town of Amenia and who cannot otherwise afford market rate housing.”

Social and Economic Issues

As discussed in the 2007 Comprehensive Plan, largely because of the housing affordability crisis, there is growing concern that Amenia is losing the traditional economic diversity of its population. This diversity is reflected in a wide variety of incomes, occupations, and backgrounds. Amenia is the kind of place it is because of the solid corps of middle-class families who work in the local economy and staff emergency services and volunteer activities. As this segment of the population is priced out of the market, Amenia is at risk of losing its historic identity. Most new housing construction is available only to wealthy purchasers, leaving a dwindling portion that is affordable to existing local residents. History is not just about buildings and landscapes; it is also about the generations of families and the organizations and businesses that occupy those buildings and landscapes.

Amenia has managed to maintain much of its rural appearance and beauty, but the composition of its population is changing, and many long-term local families are feeling squeezed by increased property values and a shortage of local jobs. They are also finding it hard to build and operate local businesses because of the lack of suitable locations. This has exacerbated tensions between those who have come to Amenia from elsewhere to enjoy its rural tranquility and those who grew up here and seek opportunities to make a living locally.

The weekender population and tourism industry has continued to grow since 2007. Tourism and weekender residents are important to the local economy. However, it is important that the growing tourism economy and weekender population do not displace existing residents. Throughout the country, vacation communities are finding that the short-term rental market is consuming the local housing supply and pricing out long-time residents and workers. The Town of Amenia should consider short term rental regulations to help preserve existing entry level rental and for sale homes for local residents and workers.

SUMMARY OF ACTION RECOMMENDATIONS

Housing

As described in this Addendum, Amenia faces a worsening crisis in housing affordability. There are several concrete steps that the Town should now take to address this situation. They include the following actions.

1. **Zoning.** A number of positive zoning changes were implemented following the 2007 Update to encourage the production of housing for those who can no longer afford to live in Amenia.

These changes should be maintained and adjusted as necessary to further advance the Town's affordable housing goals:

- Allowing high density housing in hamlets that have water and sewer services, both existing (hamlet of Amenia with a new sewer) and new (transit-oriented development at Ten Mile River station using the state's existing water and sewer systems).
- Reduce regulatory hurdles to allow accessory apartments on single-family lots as-of-right.
- Allowing two-family, multi-family, and other multiple housing types, such as apartments and townhouses in more locations, subject to appropriate siting and design controls. Such housing should be part of a larger community and make a positive contribution to its design, rather than standing alone in an isolated compound.
- "Workforce housing" set-asides in new developments. This is housing that is restricted in price or rental cost, and that is maintained at a below- market rate in the future through deed restrictions; also called, affordable housing. Amenia's Zoning Code currently provides density incentives for developers to include workforce housing, and in some cases, requires a certain percentage of workforce housing. Alternatively, developers can pay a "fee in lieu" of providing such housing; these fees are kept in the Workforce Housing Trust Fund, which is used "exclusively to provide for the acquisition, purchase, planning, development, construction, improvement, rehabilitation, sale or resale, rental, subsidy, support, or other legal means of creating or supporting more workforce housing for income-qualified households within the Town and/or to provide or make capital improvements to water and/or sewer infrastructure to the hamlets of Amenia or Wassaic."¹⁰

2. **Institutional and administrative changes.** The Town should improve the administration and implementation of the workforce housing program. Administration of the program involves selecting eligible owners and tenants, and ensuring that the housing continues to be affordable and occupied by qualified owners and tenants in the future. The workforce housing program is administered by the Housing Board.

- The construction of workforce housing can be further incentivized by reducing regulatory obstacles, including: eliminating fees for municipal review and building permits; reducing the minimum required floor area per unit to the State minimum; and reducing the required amount of off-street parking, particularly in the hamlet areas.

¹⁰ Town of Amenia Zoning Code § 121-42

- To ensure that the “fee in lieu” amounts are appropriate and sufficient, the required amount should be dynamic and correlated to the median income of the area.
- For orderly implementation of the workforce housing program, the procedures and responsibilities of the Housing Board should be clarified.
- Unnecessary tenant restrictions, including minimum income requirements, should be removed.