



# PAST AS PROLOGUE: PRESERVATION AS A TOOL FOR SOCIAL INCLUSION

POUGHKEEPSIE, NEW YORK

Historic Preservation Studio II

Columbia University  
Graduate School of Architecture,  
Planning, and Preservation

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POUGHKEEPSIE STATION

EXIT

To New York,  
Tracks 1 & 3  
Tickets In  
Overpass

WAY



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Main Street  
HEALTH CENTER

Downtown  
DELI  
GROCERY  
24 Hours

KING FASHION  
Men's Wear

Mainstay  
CoWorking Space  
Neatline



A photograph of a city street corner. On the left is a large, multi-story brick building with light blue architectural details around the windows and roofline. The building has many windows, some with white frames. In the foreground, there are bare tree branches and a street lamp. In the background, other buildings are visible, including one with a sign that says "ATING". Traffic lights are visible at the intersection, and a blue banner hangs from a pole. The sky is overcast.

# INTRODUCTION



# INTRODUCTION

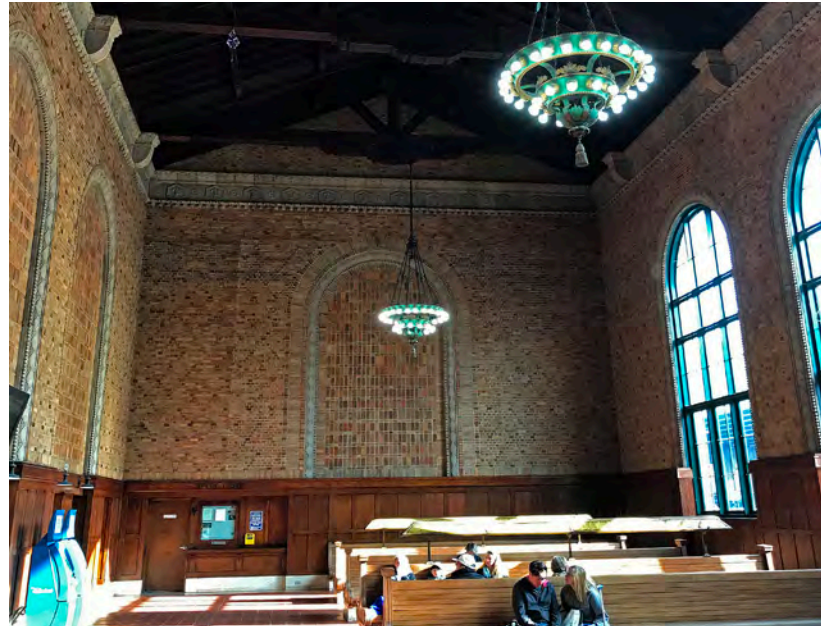
A small, post-industrial city on the Hudson River, Poughkeepsie has stood witness to transformations both paradigmatically American and uniquely site specific. The convergence of these histories throughout the built and social fabric of the city presents a series of ongoing challenges and compelling opportunities.

The most commonly cited obstacles with which Poughkeepsie must grapple today are the legacies of twentieth century urban renewal and economic fallout from the loss of industry. In exploring the roots of these legacies, it is clear that the city's urban form and social configuration have undergone permutations in tandem, though often to asymmetrical effects. Understanding these conditions requires an in-depth consideration of the city's kaleidoscoping demographic composition, the organizing role of community institutions, infrastructural connectivity both within the city and to the surrounding region, efforts to preserve the city's historic resources and narratives, as well as Poughkeepsie's capacities for political will.

Beyond this wider historical and contextual framework, this studio paid particular focus to Poughkeepsie's Main Street as a subject. The findings presented here highlight the significance of Main Street as a mixed-use commercial corridor, the strength of which resides in its diverse community of small business owners. The social-spatial dynamics that have contributed to the evolution of this urban artery underscore the imperative for integrating explicitly inclusionary practices into preservation work writ large.

## RESEARCH AIMS

The studio premised its research on an activist position that preservation can serve as a tool toward broader social, economic, and environmental goals, rather than simply as an end in and of itself. If what one is fundamentally seeking to preserve are the values society ascribes to the built



Poughkeepsie Train Station main hall.



A beauty salon storefront at 384 Main Street



Main Street east of Catharine/Academy Street



The Bardavon Theater located south of Main Street on Market Street

environment through people-place interactions, preservationists must orient their work in direct relationship to those broader aims. Poughkeepsie's populations have been diverse and changing over its 350-year history, and the built heritage along the city's historic Main Street has suffered dislocation and decline in various forms. This study aims to examine pathways to positive long-term outcomes for both people and the urban environment through rigorous evaluation of change in the city's urban form and its driving forces.

This studio purposefully did not start with particular buildings that might warrant physical preservation. Rather, it worked from the perspective that preservation should serve as a tool that enhances the dynamic between people and places. It therefore took a larger lens to the built environment and community of the city, and sought to understand the evolution of the built environment as it has come to exist today, and a consideration of the role that preservation has played, if any, in these narratives to date.

While preservationists often cite social justice and cultural understanding as driving goals of the field, there has been a limited evidence-based exploration of preservation as a tool for social inclusion, or of the progressive development of the current preservation toolbox. Poughkeepsie provides an interesting case for studying the possibilities of more thoroughly integrating social inclusion into the preservation field. The city has a 100 year-long history of preservation action. It has a diverse community that has changed over its history and continues to evolve. Poughkeepsie has witnessed some of the worst examples of devastation through urban renewal, and it continues to confront severe post-industrial financial challenges. This makes the experiences of Poughkeepsie both generalizable and unique. Generalizable, because these are common experiences of cities throughout the United States, and unique because Poughkeepsie experienced a perfect storm of all these factors.

In exploring the history of Poughkeepsie's urban form and the potential role that preservation can play in its future, this studio seeks to address a gap in the field's understanding of how preservation can develop a more progressive and robust toolbox that fosters social inclusion.



## DEFINITION OF STUDY AREA/FOCUS

In the city of Poughkeepsie, Main Street runs east from the Hudson River until it becomes Dutchess Turnpike in Poughkeepsie Town. This 2.5 mile road acts as the main commercial corridor of the city and is commonly divided into three sections - Lower Main, Middle Main, and Upper Main. Lower Main refers to the western portion by the waterfront, while Upper Main extends into the town. Middle Main is a fairly new term used to describe the long stretch in between - from Market Street to Corlies Avenue. The Central Business District (CBD) encompasses part of Middle Main and a small slice of Lower Main, and is bounded by Hamilton Street to the east and the East-West Arterial to the west, north and south. These arterials are three-lane highways that create an island around Main Street, sometimes referred to as the “arterial island.”

The study area for this studio consists of the CBD and Main Street from the waterfront through the Middle Main area - roughly the first 1.5 miles of the corridor. This area presents an interesting case for study because it is a flashpoint of so many of Poughkeepsie’s defining characteristics. It is a major mixed-use artery of the city that is home to a diverse group of residents and small businesses, but it has faced several challenges to its urban form. The waterfront, one of Poughkeepsie’s natural assets, is separated from most of the city by train tracks and highways, and Main Street provides one of the few access points to the waterfront from the eastern side of Route 9 and the Metro North rail line. However, this access is hampered by the north-south portion of the arterial, which divides Lower Main from the CBD. Main Street was also the target of much of the urban renewal era demolition projects and also struggles economically. While the CBD has historically been the commercial center of the city, it has suffered decline for the past fifty years, and Middle Main has experienced even more disinvestment and demolition.

Definition of this study area allowed the studio to capitalize on a wealth of complementary analytic resources and a confluence of shared urban interests within this central commercial district. In doing so, this study synthesized

decades worth of research on Poughkeepsie’s downtown, facilitating the development of a deep and critical longitudinal perspective within a geographically focused locale.

## RESEARCH LIMITATIONS

This studio’s focus on Poughkeepsie’s Main Street, although well-founded, was also a key limitation of the project. Looking solely at Main Street as a priority commercial hub followed in the footsteps of decades of planners and anxious politicians, whose attempts to “save” the corridor seem to have only further damaged it. Because of this limited focus, the study did not deeply investigate Main Street’s relationship with the residential neighborhoods throughout the rest of the city.

This studio recognizes the difficulty in attempting to analyze complex and sensitive social history, particularly from the lens of preservation, which has not always had a strong record of broad social inclusion. The field of preservation is fundamentally committed to sustaining historic markers of difference in the built environment, and to preserving the values ascribed to place. In so doing, it is imperative for the field to directly confront the mechanisms of exclusion that have shaped so many American cities. While the work of preservationists cannot alone dismantle embedded power structures, social disparities, or spatial injustice, this report hopes to contribute positively to a growing dialogue on how heritage can be instrumentalized to help address these challenges.



The “arterial island” within the study area.





Sections and neighborhoods within the study area.



## METHODOLOGY

Poughkeepsie's downtown has been the topic of many studies over the years. This studio builds upon this trove of existing research, but differs in orientation. The team focused on Poughkeepsie's Main Street heritage as an integral element of its urban form and community. Using the lens of preservation, broadly defined, this studio sought to understand the relationship of people and places within the mixed-use Main Street area. The studio collected both quantitative and qualitative data and employed a range of analytical tools to understand how the study area has evolved through time, to characterize its condition today, and to support proposals for the future.

An understanding of Poughkeepsie's architecture, urbanization, social development, and political dynamics was built through historical analyses of primary and secondary source literature. Policy analyses shed light on the regulatory and political factors shaping Poughkeepsie's urban landscape and historic resources at critical moments in history as well as today. Case studies of municipalities facing similar challenges of post-industrial decline, historic downtown revitalization, and the residual scars of urban renewal served as illustrative tools for comparative policy analysis. To better understand the diverse population of Poughkeepsie's Main Street area, its socio-economic character, and trends within the community, demographics were examined longitudinally by pulling theme-based data sets from SocialExplorer.com. Hudson River Housing's Middle Main Initiative survey data was also used to understand the most current trends on Main Street.

Geospatial analyses served as a critical tool for understanding the Main Street built environment as a dynamic historic corridor. The studio aggregated existing property datasets, then conducted a building-by-building survey to ground-truth the information and incorporate additional observations. This inventory of over 500 entries allowed for the identification of patterns in building height, street wall, use, occupancy, condition, and accessibility. In analyzing these patterns, the



The team conducted building-by-building surveys to understand and categorize the built environment of Main Street.



Adam Lubitz and Mike of Queen City Tattoo Gallery discussed old Main Street and the role of local businesses.





Morgan O'Hara meeting with Refugio, owner of C&F Shoe Repair

team was able to understand how older buildings contribute to the experience and vitality of Main Street.

Finally, in-person interviews with Main Street business owners and operators provided important stakeholder perspectives. All team members completed Institutional Review Board (IRB) Human Subjects research certification training prior to undertaking these interviews. Business owners were identified based on the Middle Main Initiative's previously developed relationships. A total of ten interviews, five with businesses identified as minority-owned, took place from April 19-22, 2017. These interviews were structured to elicit stories about the meaning and significance of Poughkeepsie and Main Street to these owners, as well as gain information regarding their background and relationship with their local business.

In using all of these tools, the studio sought to understand not just the current conditions of Main Street, but the forces that shaped these conditions' creation.



Adam Lubitz and Ziye Tang interviewing Pat, owner of Pat's Kitchen

"I like to walk on the streets because there's a lot of old houses with nice architecture. Right now they're not in great shape but 80 years ago...Why can't it come back to something similar? Poughkeepsie was once one of the major cities of New York. It has a lot of potential."

*Refugio, C&F Shoe Repair*



## KEY FINDINGS AND SIGNIFICANCE

The studio's overarching finding is that Main Street is significant as a holistic mixed-use commercial corridor, demonstrating viable and historic urban form, and anchoring a community of immigrant- and minority-owned businesses. In support of this, five key findings have been identified as constitutive of Poughkeepsie's Main Street today.

Derived from the comprehensive analysis that follows of Poughkeepsie and Main Street's built and social evolution, these findings inform the proposals presented in the latter half of this report as well as conclusions developed regarding the preservation field's capacities to contribute to issues of social inclusion, economic vitality, and preventing displacement.

"All times, all races have contributed their records to Main Street and have made it what is today. Whether seen from sidewalk or from trolley, the records unfold into a vast panorama far more wonderful than those of reel and of scenario."

*Lucy Maynard Salmon, Vassar Professor, 1915*

- *Poughkeepsie demonstrates legacies of fraught decision-making in planning and governance still visible in its urban form today. The evolution of Poughkeepsie's cityscape is punctuated by eras of alternating industrial and governmental paternalism. From these eras of over-reliance on top-down mechanisms there are important lessons to be learned.*
- *Patterns of social exclusion throughout Poughkeepsie's history have inhibited robust civic participation in shaping the built environment, generating legacies that contribute to the vulnerability of immigrant and minority populations on Main Street.*
- *While having suffered a barrage of interventions that destroyed older architecture and reduced density along Main Street, the primary arrangements of cohesive street wall and high-visibility storefronts are still largely intact. From the eastern edge of the study area to its western terminus at the Hudson River, there remains an important collection of older, densely assembled, mixed-use buildings on Main Street. As a pedestrian thoroughfare, Main Street furthermore provides one of the few remaining connections between the waterfront and the rest of the city.*
- *While demonstrating some indicators of socio-economic vulnerability, the diverse range of immigrant and minority communities who reside and maintain thriving small businesses on Main Street are significant resources towards the preservation of diverse histories throughout the city.*
- *Lastly, there is momentum for change in Poughkeepsie, visible in the wealth of new efforts afoot in the public, private, and not-for-profit sectors.*





# **KEY FACTORS IN THE EVOLUTION OF MAIN STREET'S BUILT AND SOCIAL FABRIC**



# KEY FACTORS IN THE EVOLUTION OF MAIN STREET'S FABRIC

## POUGHKEEPSIE'S EARLY HISTORY

Before the arrival of Dutch and English Colonial settlers, the Algonquins occupied the landscape of the Hudson Valley. The area presently known as Poughkeepsie, located on the east bank of the Hudson River, was included in this landscape with the Fall Kill Creek and its waterfall emptying into the Hudson River as its most notable geographic element (Flad and Griffen 2009).

Beginning in 1683, Native Americans began to sell land to Dutch and English settlers. Slowly over the course of the next twenty years, colonial settlers sought land grants and patents to establish themselves throughout the northeast (Platt 1905). Because of its location on a hill with accessible river landings, water power, and an existing Native American trail, the location of Poughkeepsie was ideal for trading (Ghee and Spence 1997). Founded on a plateau above the Hudson River, Poughkeepsie started to grow faster after

1703, when the Albany Post road developed through what is now downtown, connecting Manhattan and Albany. The road allowed for marketplaces to spring up, bringing area residents to a central location for commercial interaction. The result of this community gathering on Poughkeepsie's plateau was the development of churches, taverns, shops and homes (Flad and Griffen 2009). Over the course of the next 20 years, Poughkeepsie continued to grow slowly, eventually becoming the Dutchess County seat in 1734. This marks the beginning of Poughkeepsie's significance as a regional center for government (Platt 1905).

In addition to the development of land, water power helped spur the growth of industry in Poughkeepsie. In 1755, Martin Hoffman built the first mill on the Fall Kill Creek, and one year after that, built a dock at the end of the Fall Kill for shipping sloops (Platt 1905). Other locations along the waterfront became major points of access for the slowly growing city on top of the plateau, particularly when Union Street



Boat racing in the 1800s along Poughkeepsie's waterfront.



was developed as the first connection between downtown Poughkeepsie and the Hudson in the 1770s (Flad and Griffen 2009). Poughkeepsie experienced its first major industrial boom during the Revolutionary War in 1776 when it was chosen as a location for shipbuilding for the Continental Army. Its position midway up the Hudson River to Albany made it safe from the British Army (Platt 1905).

Shortly after the Revolutionary War, Poughkeepsie hosted the New York Constitutional Convention in 1788. The US Constitution was ratified by New York State on July 26, 1788. The ratification was approved by a close 30 - 27 vote and after a long floor fight (Faber 1988). After the ratification, Poughkeepsie briefly became the New York State Capitol. Eleven years after the convention, Poughkeepsie incorporated as a village in 1799 (Platt 1905).

In the early nineteenth century, the Village of Poughkeepsie continued to develop more infrastructure and grow as a commercial hub. The Dutchess Turnpike, completed in 1805 and Beekman's Pawling Turnpike, completed in 1811, allowed access for more land trade routes (Simons 2017). Also in 1811, Main Street was extended from Market to the waterfront, making the Main Street landing on the Hudson the primary dock for Poughkeepsie (Flad and Griffen 2009). The infrastructure improvement spurred growth in Poughkeepsie. The village built a new City Hall in 1831, which is extant today and the oldest public building in the city. By 1854, the Village was incorporated as a city (Flad and Griffen 2009).

While this early history established Poughkeepsie as an important settlement, growth accelerated in the nineteenth century. This was due to an influx of new populations, changes in transportation and communication, industrial development, urbanization and its related planning and renewal activities, and preservation efforts. These factors contributed to changes in both the built and social fabric of the city, which will be explored in the following sections.

The origin of the name of Poughkeepsie is thought to come from the Native American word Apokeeping, however, there is no evidence that this word was used to describe the area of Poughkeepsie. In 1683, some of the first Dutch settlers note the name of the Fall Kill's waterfall as Pooghkepesingh and the land nearby on the east side of the Hudson as Minnisingh (Platt 1905).



A harness maker was one of the many businesses located on Main Street from its early years.



## COMMUNITY EVOLUTION

Poughkeepsie has a diverse population. Many migrant and immigrant groups found their homes in Poughkeepsie and left their mark on the city, both culturally and architecturally. The diverse ethnic and religious groups that have populated the city over time have had a great influence on its social evolution, making an examination of these groups key to understanding the evolution of Poughkeepsie's built and social fabric.

### *Immigration and Demographic Change*

The ethnic and racial composition of the Hudson Valley's population has changed periodically and dramatically since the seventeenth century. After the arrival of Dutch and English settlers, the next major influx of immigrants was from Western Europe, primarily England, Ireland, and Germany, in the early and mid-nineteenth century. The Irish and Germans had fled famine and overpopulation, respectively. The region was attractive to immigrants because of available jobs in construction work for the Hudson River Railroad in the 1830s. By 1860, Irish- and German-born people made up one-third of the total labor force of the city (Flad and Griffen 2009).

The third wave of immigrants, from Italy and other parts of Europe (including Germany and Poland), came in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Italians were an influential group, arriving in large numbers and establishing a lasting presence in Poughkeepsie. The first group came from Cosenza in the southern toe of Italy in 1888. More families joined the rapidly expanding Italian community in 1890s. During the 1930s, Italian-born and first generation Italian-Americans comprised ten percent of Poughkeepsie's population. Employed in building trades and blue-collar manufacturing, the Italian community was a key workforce for rapidly expanding infrastructure in Poughkeepsie and across the northeast (Walkway Over the Hudson 2015).

A stream of African Americans moved in to Poughkeepsie between 1910 and 1970 from the South, primarily from North



A public mural located near Hudson River Housing's newly completed Underwear Factory celebrates the diversity of the Middle Main neighborhood

Carolina and Virginia. During the era described as the Great Migration, African Americans left rural areas in the American South and relocated into urban areas in the North. Due to combined forces of racism, mortgage discrimination, and the growth of suburbs after World War II, white residents in urban regions often began to move out to more racially homogeneous suburban regions at this time--patterns commonly referred to as "white flight." In Poughkeepsie, these forces exacerbated existing tensions between ethnically segregated neighborhoods, reinforced systems of structural exclusion, and ultimately contributed to the racialized image that the city struggles to shake today.

Since World War II, there have been significant migrations to Poughkeepsie from the Caribbean, South and Central America, the Middle East, and South and Eastern Asia. The largest among these has been Mexican immigrants. Individuals and families from Mexico first arrived in Poughkeepsie in the 1970s, in a wave of migration from Latin America to the mid-Hudson Valley. In the last two decades of the twentieth century, they have come primarily from the Mexican state of Oaxaca. Like many of the early Italian immigrants to the city and county who immigrated from relatively few villages in southern Italy and Sicily, the Oaxacan community established a village-city relationship organized by chain migration of friends and

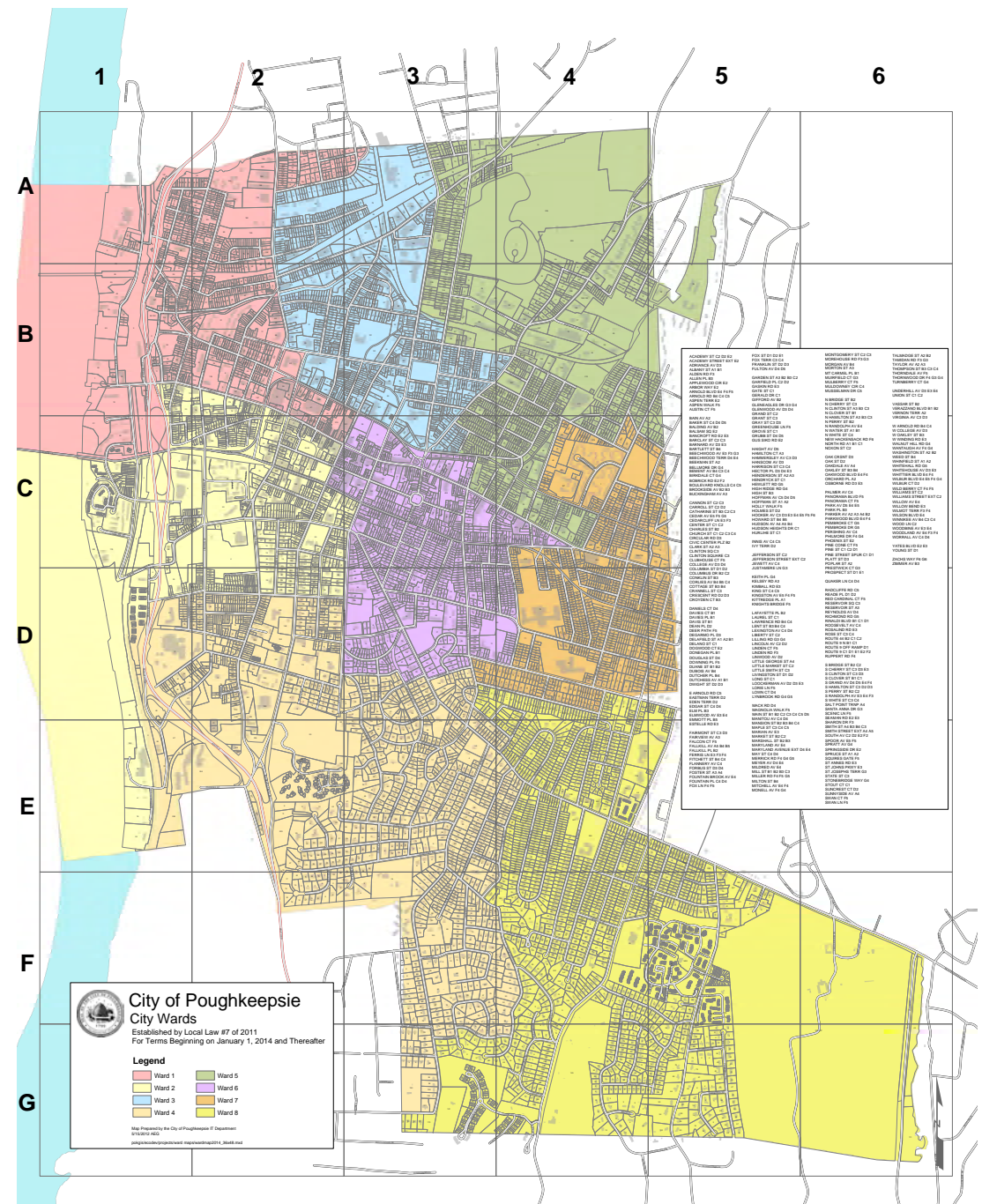


relatives from certain villages, such as La Cienaga, San Agustin, and Zaachila. For these Mexican immigrants, Poughkeepsie has been the “central community” (Flad and Griffen 2009). According to recent census data, the Hispanic population in Poughkeepsie is still in a trend of growth, almost doubling from 2000 and 2010 (Regional Plan Association and Hudson Valley Pattern for Progress 2015).

### Wards and Enclaves

The division of the city into wards has influenced the investment allocated to housing, education, and other public goods. Varying demographic composition, especially in terms of income and race, has resulted in tensions between wards, and these differences reflect patterns repeated throughout history of migration to Poughkeepsie.

The current ward structure has been influenced by the evolution of the city's boundaries, developed through colonial settlement, precinct, village, and city. By 1737, Dutchess county was divided into seven precincts, one of which was Poughkeepsie (Smith 1882). In 1799, the Village of Poughkeepsie was incorporated, and retained these boundaries until 1905. In 1854, the City of Poughkeepsie incorporated separately from the surrounding Town of Poughkeepsie. It was at this time that the city was divided into four wards, with the first and third on the north side of Main Street, and the second and fourth on the south side. Market and Garden Streets formed the boundaries dividing east from west (Platt 1905).



Map of the current city ward boundaries.



The Charter of the City of Poughkeepsie, issued in 1865, reorganized the city into six wards. By 1900, there were seven wards in the City of Poughkeepsie, as shown on the population chart of Dutchess County with data for every five year interval from 1865 to 1910 (Manual for Use of the Legislature of the State of New York). By 1940, there are census records for eight wards in Poughkeepsie and this remains true today.

Immigrants coming to Poughkeepsie, in general, formed ethnic enclaves that often reflected economic status. By 1850, Jay Street between Market and Jefferson had one-fifth of the city's German workers living nearby. The area was also home to many African Americans, low-income whites, and other immigrants. Jefferson Street remained consistently working class between the mid-nineteenth to the turn of twentieth century, while German workers, having gained wealth and social status, mostly moved to the Union Street area. On the other side, the city's African Americans became more concentrated over time in pockets around Jay Street and the Long Row. Although there were mixed demographics across some of these pockets, segregation existed without a doubt, easily seen from the city's reluctance to desegregate public schools in 1873.

The Union Street area, around Union, Perry, and South Bridge Streets on the upper river slope, was a predominantly German community by 1880, although Irish and English families also lived there. Meanwhile, the area immediately north of the Old St. Peter's Church (currently the Lady of Mount Carmel Church), was largely Irish around the same time. Unlike German immigrants, the Irish did not tend to relocate after they prospered economically. During this time, the Irish also became politically active in what had been delineated as the First Ward 1 in 1854. the First Ward had a large concentration of Irish immigrants and became politically important, as it helped elect Franklin Delano Roosevelt for State Senator in 1910 (Marshall 1996).

By the 1910s, the neighborhood encompassing the area of Mill Street and the cross streets of Clover, Perry, Bridge, and Vassar Streets accommodated a vibrant community composed

of English, Irish, Italian, Polish, and Slavic immigrants. In the same decade, further eastward from the waterfront and north to our study area, a mixed neighborhood emerged in the area to the north of North Clinton Street and in the blocks adjacent to Smith Street and Cottage Avenue along the tracks of the Poughkeepsie and Eastern Railroad. Residents included African American, ethnically European working-class families, as well as poor rural families.

The Fifth Ward, by 1970, had the highest concentration of black families in the city. At the time, racial tensions were increasing among the community as well as Poughkeepsie's business and political elite, especially in terms of housing. In the 1990s, the Hispanic community concentrated in the central core area of the city's downtown along Main Street. Main Street and this studio's study area spans Wards 1, 2 and 6.

### ***Social Institutions***

Immigrants who came to Poughkeepsie over the course of the eighteenth, nineteenth, and twentieth centuries, often set up their own community institutions, separate from the institutions of other immigrant and racial groups. They had their own shops and schools, and most notably, they often had their own religious institutions. A church was often one of the first structures built by new communities within the city. Religious institutions were an important social organizing resource for immigrants, and as well as for the African American community in Poughkeepsie. While white immigrant communities were able to integrate through work, school, scouts, and sports, African Americans were left out of many of these organizations. These religious institutions functioned simultaneously as ethnic enclaves and institutes of Americanization (Flad and Griffen 2009). As Reverend Nicholas Pavone put it, "the building of their own church will serve to settle them and make them better citizens of the town" (Rhoads 1987).

Another important social organizing resource for immigrant communities in Poughkeepsie were ethnic centers. Ethnic centers, like the Italian Center, were often used for wedding receptions, parties, community gatherings, and





Church of the Holy Comforter, designed by Richard Upjohn, 1860.



The Italian Center on Mill Street is one among many important community gathering spaces.

The Church of the Holy Comforter illustrates the importance of religious institutions to Poughkeepsie communities. When the arterials were planned as part of urban renewal efforts, the congregation successfully battled to save the church from demolition, but the church community was decimated by the destruction of the surrounding neighborhoods. The church is now vacant. While saving the church focused the community, those energies and resources could not be effectively mobilized to save their homes (Flad and Griffen 2009).

meeting places. These were the spaces where immigrant communities could immerse themselves in their own culture and cultural practices. They would host festivals, dances, and competitions. Some, like Germania Hall, would participate in city parades and festivals, as well as host their own (Germania of Poughkeepsie Inc. 2017). By necessity, many of these associations started off being hosted within their ethnic community's church, and then moved to their own building later, emphasizing the religious center as an incubator of immigrant community organizations. These ethnic centers acted as points of intersection and integration with American culture, even more than churches. They adopted organizational structures and parliamentary rules of American voluntary associations, and also cooperated with other groups in sporting and other events (Flad and Griffen 2009).

Religious institutions and ethnic associations like the Italian Center served many of the same purposes within immigrant communities. Both reinforced religious and ethnic divides while also providing mechanisms of assimilation for different groups over time.



## TRANSPORTATION AND COMMUNICATION

The transportation history of Poughkeepsie can be divided into three eras: the River Era from the 1700s to 1850, the Railroad Era from about 1850 to 1930, and the Highway Era from approximately 1930 to the present (Poughkeepsie - Dutchess County Transportation Council 1997).

The River Era was characterized by the use of steam-powered vessels to transport people and goods up and down the Hudson River between Albany and New York City, with Poughkeepsie as the middle stop on the route. Horses and carriage travel were also in use at this time, but travel by river was much faster. The municipality of Poughkeepsie had one of the largest publicly accessible Hudson River waterfronts in the region (Flad and Griffen 2009).

The waterfront and docks of Poughkeepsie were much in use during this time. Many people, a large percentage of them immigrants, worked and lived down by the waterfront. Warehouses and factories were also built by the waterfront to shorten the distance between them and the ships carrying goods up and down the Hudson River. Over the course of the eighteenth century, Poughkeepsie's industries grew, especially the milling industry on the Fall Kill, developing the need for a connection between downtown and the riverfront for better commercial access. Main Street was first connected to the waterfront by the serpentine Union Street, and then eventually in the early nineteenth century Main Street itself was extended to the waterfront. This connection allowed goods to be brought straight up to Main and Market Streets to be sold (Platt 1905).

The relationship between the river and the rest of the city began to breakdown when the river was no longer the primary method of moving goods. In terms of moving people, river travel had long been in competition with horses and carriages, and even early cars, but much of the money coming into the riverfront area was from the transportation of goods up and down the Hudson River. Once a faster and cheaper method was found in the form of railway transportation, there could hardly be any competition. Furthermore, as more lines were



Many modes of transportation contributed to the bustling downtown.

built all over the country, trains became a much more versatile and punctual form of transportation. It should also be noted that, although there was significant residential and commercial activity on and near to the waterfront, the area was not used as a major public space. Throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, there was never a park or public attraction along the waterfront. Its importance stemmed from its commercial use during the River Era (Flad and Griffen 2009).

The Railroad Era started with the extension of the Hudson River Railroad into the city in 1850. Railroad travel was faster and eventually cheaper than travel by ship. The railways opened up travel through the state and country, increasing not just trade, but also tourism. Having its own stop on the railway system allowed Poughkeepsie to take advantage of this mode of transportation, ushering in an era of increased prosperity for the city (Platt 1905). A major element of Poughkeepsie's railroad infrastructure was the Poughkeepsie-Highland Railroad Bridge. Constructed in 1889, it was the first to traverse the Hudson River and became a critical artery for connecting Midwest agriculture and Northeast industry. After the decline of rail and a damaging fire, the bridge was



removed from service in 1974. In 2009, through a public-private partnership, it reopened as a linear park known as the Walkway Over the Hudson.

The railroad era was also the heyday of the electric trolley system in Poughkeepsie. The trolleys began operation in 1894 and helped ease transportation through the city, allowing increased integration between the different areas of the city. The trolleys were short-lived, and by 1934 the fleet had been replaced by buses (Flad and Griffen 2009). Also important to note was the increased use of cars at the end of the nineteenth and into the early twentieth century. Poughkeepsie had changed its cobbled streets to asphalt by 1893 (Platt 1905).

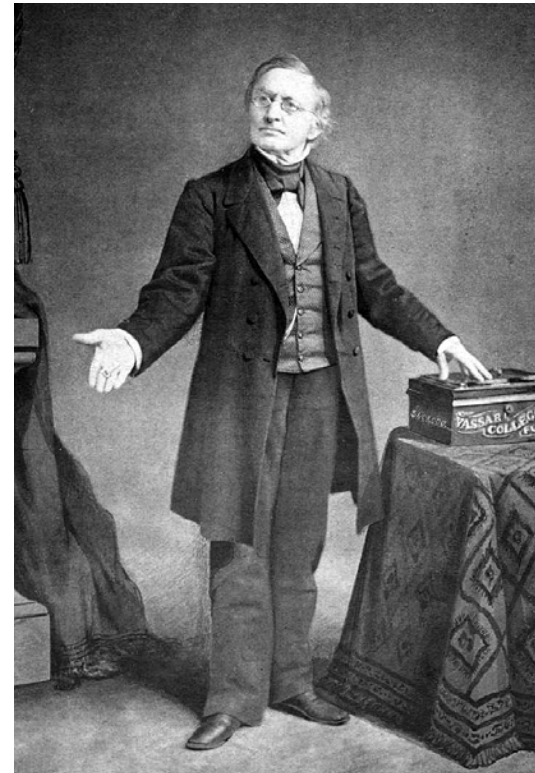
The Highway Era started with the opening of the Mid-Hudson Bridge in 1930. This is the present era, the era of mass automobile and air transportation. Rail and river transportation still continue, but not as the primary method of transportation (Flad and Griffen 2009). This era saw the completion of the North-South Arterial (Route 9) and the East-West Arterials (Routes 44/55) between 1963 and 1979, which bypassed the city center in an effort to alleviate traffic congestion. Stewart Airport, a local airport outside of nearby Newburgh, opened for passenger travel in 1990 (Poughkeepsie - Dutchess County Transportation Council 1997).

Poughkeepsie was not only a center for commerce and travel but also a center for communication. Samuel Morse's telegraph wire was laid initially from Buffalo to Poughkeepsie, and information was then mailed from Poughkeepsie to New York City. That is in part what established Poughkeepsie's prominent position in the telegraph system and allowed the city to be one of the first places where news from Europe arrived. The telegraph station was on Main Street and was a central place in the city for receiving news and information (Hasbrouck 1909).

## INDUSTRY

Poughkeepsie was a manufacturing city throughout most of its history, providing a port for shipping agricultural goods to New York City and producing garments, furniture, glass, and machine parts for the industrializing Northeast. Poughkeepsie's primary infrastructure was established by a group of local industrialists in the 1830s who called themselves the "Improvement Party." Headed by Matthew Vassar, of Vassar Brewing and then Vassar College, the Improvement Party was equal parts business and political party, aiming to promote new industry, pave streets and sidewalks, and establish private academies. Made up of highly influential men with legal as well as financial interests, the party strategized to attract wealthy families and new business to Poughkeepsie.

In addition to the great number of large brick factories and new shipyards that went up during this period, the Improvement



Matthew Vassar, founding member of the Improvement Party and of Vassar College.



Party helped establish a reservoir with pipes designed to fight fire, as well as several banks and government buildings. It was a period of great investment and prosperity, evidenced by the fact that there were no unoccupied tenements in 1835 (Smith 1882).

Later, municipal investments in infrastructure projects put the city in debt during a nationwide recession in the 1890s, which contributed to a reactionary political culture concerned primarily with keeping wages and taxes low. Attracting industry and their investments was paramount. Diversity of manufacturing presented obstacles for sustained collective action, and attempts to unionize were met with considerable repression and powerful systems of blacklisting. By the 1920s Poughkeepsie was known as a “scab town” to unions throughout the Northeast (Flad and Griffen 2009).

Poughkeepsie’s industries had declined by the first quarter of the twentieth century and wider patterns of suburbanization began to manifest relocation beyond the city limits. Early, unadopted city plans in the 1920s proposed annexing portions of the town into the city limits in order to best capture tax

dollars from the relocation of businesses as well as residents. In this era, however, city leadership was afraid of financial burdens presented by increasing the land through which state highway construction would run (Flad and Griffen 2009). Poughkeepsie opted instead to focus its energy on the eye-catching completion of the Mid-Hudson Bridge to car traffic in 1930.

Beginning as a munitions manufacturing subsidiary of International Business Machines, IBM’s campus in the Town of Poughkeepsie was established in 1941. IBM chose the location of a former World War I tomato canning factory in the Town of Poughkeepsie because of its proximity to IBM’s key punch factory in the city limits, as well as Poughkeepsie’s reputation for low wages and lack of strong union activity or labor consciousness (Flad and Griffen 2009).

IBM became the largest organizer of social and economic forces in the immediate region through comprehensive systems of welfare capitalism by which employees were given in-house health care, exclusive access to recreational clubs, and intentionally crafted corporate culture. Signature



Poughkeepsie's industrial waterfront.



to this culture was a unique brand of job security involving comprehensive relocation plans whereby IBM would buy and sell your house for you. IBM preferred to guarantee employment for their workers by moving employees around within the company to other jobs rather than laying them off when jobs were eliminated (Flad and Griffen 2009). Unions, by contrast, fought for security through contracts that emphasized protection of workers in their current jobs, making firing or transferring workers difficult matters of contractual agreements. Both sides insisted their approach was more just for workers.

IBM's intensive investment in the Town of Poughkeepsie drove the development of highways and further catalyzed middle-class suburban relocation trends already in progress across the United States. The incredible amounts of money that IBM poured into a range of ancillary industries affected the surrounding population at all age brackets. When IBM shut down the majority of its Dutchess County operations in 1993, thousands were laid off and the entire urban region was left scrambling to develop new modes of economic resilience (Hammonds 1995).

"IBM was...it was great. You should have been here to see it. They could spend money, they were like the government. We'd get a multimillion-dollar job done, and before you knew it, they'd rip it out and start something new. We thought it would never end'-Ronald J. Weiss, C.B. Strain & Son, mechanical contractors" (Hammonds 1995).



IBM East Fishkill employees celebrate the introduction of the IBM 4381 processor, 1983.



## URBAN DEVELOPMENT, PLANNING, AND RENEWAL

### *Pre-Twentieth Century Development*

The development of Poughkeepsie since its founding in the late seventeenth century begins with the construction of the Albany Post Road in 1703. The road connected Manhattan to Albany, allowing for markets to thrive in what is now downtown Poughkeepsie along Market Street and Main Street. The intersection of Market and Main Street marks the traditional and historic center of downtown Poughkeepsie.

During the early nineteenth century, streets in Poughkeepsie began to develop and take the shape of their present-day forms. There are a number of modern day highways that were constructed in the first decade including the Dutchess Turnpike-Route (Route 44) in 1805, and Beekman's Pawling Turnpike (now Manchester Road), and Route 55 in 1811 (Simons 2017). 1811 also marks the year that the Main Street waterfront docks became the primary docks on the Hudson for Poughkeepsie, establishing the connection on Main Street between downtown Poughkeepsie and the Hudson River waterfront and creating an active commercial corridor (Flad and Griffen 2009).

By the 1830s, the growing village faced issues with its urban form, prompting Matthew Vassar and the Improvement Party to respond through advocacy and private investment. As previously discussed, the Improvement Party promoted the creation of new industries, new streets, pavements and brick sidewalks, while also addressing institutional needs with schools for young men and women. Part of the Improvement Party's plan included making Delafield Street, close to Upper Landing, an avenue of handsome homes, with lawns and setbacks of fifty feet, as well as an elite residential square uptown. Poughkeepsie was also beginning to improve its civic architecture with the construction of City Hall in 1831, the oldest public building in the city (Flad and Griffen 2009).

In the latter half of the nineteenth century, Poughkeepsie experienced an economic boom, resulting in increased construction, industry, and wealth. However, this boom also created problems within the city. Around 1860, most of the area within the Poughkeepsie City limits remained undeveloped, with the Upper and Lower landings separate clusters of businesses and residences connected with the main business area along Union and Mill Streets. Mill Street was a fashionable address with comfortable brownstones. By the end of the 1860s, prominent businessman Harvey Eastman predicted Poughkeepsie would reach 80,000-100,000 in population. This was in response to the construction boom in 1867, as rents and construction increased. Shortly following the boom, the city hired James P. Kirkwood, a water engineer, who designed a water filtration system that utilized water from the Hudson River. In 1871, Harvey Eastman was elected mayor and implemented a plan for major municipal improvements, putting the city into debt to achieve a state-of-the-art sewage and water system. In 1872, John Sutcliffe constructed water filters a mile north of the city, allowing water to flow into houses and businesses in the city. By the late nineteenth century, the city was increasingly characterized by beautifying techniques like Arbor Day tree planting and the removal of fences from residential streets to allow for a more welcoming community atmosphere. In 1893, the Chicago Exposition and the successive City Beautiful Movement had its influence on the city, especially through notable Poughkeepsie advocate and Vassar History Department Chair Lucy Maynard Salmon, who would go on to help make improvements in the city in the early twentieth century (Flad and Griffen 2009). The increase in construction combined with outside influences and the connection between downtown and the waterfront created a high street wall-oriented downtown commercial core, centered on Main Street.





Map of the Village of Poughkeepsie from 1834. Along Main Street, there is a high concentration of buildings and street wall, especially around the corner of Main and Market Streets.





1874 Bird's Eye View orients the viewer from the perspective of the water, with Main Street fluidly connecting the waterfront and the central hub of activity in the Central Business District, defined by a notable street wall.





Main Street in 1860, shown here at Garden and Liberty streets, was a vibrant, mixed-use street with clear presence of retail storefronts.



Market Street north from Cannon Street, 1865. Banks, offices, hotels, and businesses were all present along Market Street.

Lucy Maynard Salmon, a member of the Vassar faculty, played a large role in Poughkeepsie civic improvement around the turn of the twentieth century. Salmon communicated through letters to newspapers and protests to provoke change, arguing that Poughkeepsie was far behind in organizations playing a role in civic improvement, including municipal leagues, civic clubs, city improvement societies, art leagues, city music commissions, civic art guilds, playground associations, tree planting societies, and street cleaning leagues. Salmon was the only female member of an organizing committee for public conferences on city affairs in Poughkeepsie, and she helped to create standards for hygiene for food stores on Main Street, who exposed their food to traffic on the street, and helped to enforce rules of smoking (Flad and Griffen 2009). Her 1915 book *Main Street* characterizes her favorite things about the mixed-use commercial corridor. She writes, “All times, all races have contributed their records to Main Street and have made it what is today. Whether seen from sidewalk or from trolley, the records unfold into a vast panorama far more wonderful than those of reel and of scenario.” (Salmon 1915, 28).



## Early Twentieth Century Planning

The early twentieth century continued this pattern of civic improvement for Poughkeepsie. Electricity began to run underground, sewer and water under the streets, and streets were paved and aligned. Along with the pavement of Lower Main, the area began to sprout commercial and residential activity. These improvements increased the pedestrian environment along Main Street.

The first significant change in the urban form along Main Street is the extension of Market Street north of Main Street. The corner of Main and Market Streets was close to the Collingwood Opera House, the Nelson House, The Pomfret House, and many restaurants and social gathering spaces. Traffic became challenging with the growing popularity of the automobile combined with existing street trolley usage, causing the bustling center of town to have an awkward street arrangement, where there was no straight path for north-south directional movement. This awkward formation caused the city to extend Market Street northwards, demolishing buildings as a result (Flad and Griffen 2009). However, this change occurred incrementally. The slow transition into creating New Market Street started out as a tunnel arcade underneath the Pomfret House (Ghee and Spence 1997). The change allowed for traffic to flow beneath a building that contributed to the high street wall of Main Street, allowing shops to exist underneath within a friendly pedestrian-scale environment. The removal of these buildings marks the first major example of using the justification of traffic alleviation for the destruction of the built environment in downtown Poughkeepsie.

In 1924, Myron West, a well-known planner from Chicago, presented a comprehensive zoning and street plan with street corrections, evaluation of local transit, rail and water transportation, streets, schools, parks, and public buildings, as well as revitalization of its waterfront. This came at the same time as President Hoover's Standard State Zoning Enabling Act, which set in place authority of a legislative body to "divide the local government's territory into districts" and established "a statement of purpose for zoning regulations, and procedures



WWI Parade on Main Street, looking west towards the corner of Main and Market.



The Pomfret House in the 1920s as an arcade for traffic and pedestrians to pass underneath, during the transition to New Market Street.

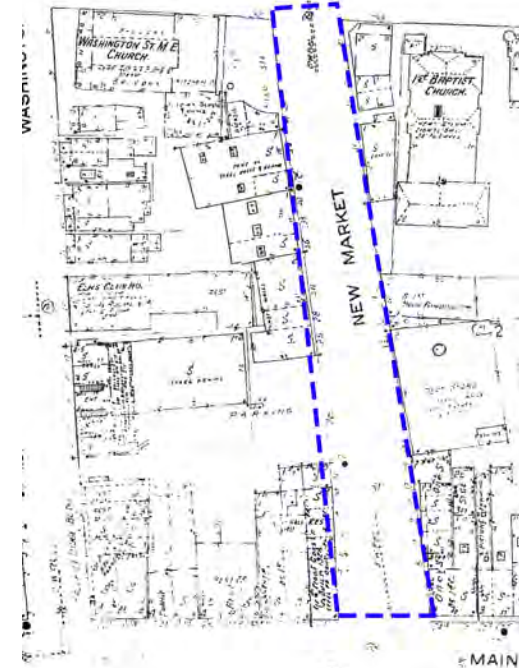




1913 Sanborn Map showing the building outlines on the northern side of the intersection of Main and Market Street (in blue), the original routes of Market Street (in red), and Main Street (in yellow).



1952 Sanborn Map showing where New Market Street extended north through the buildings that once existed on the north side of Market and Main Streets.





for establishing and amending zoning regulations” (American Planning Association 2017). The Poughkeepsie Common Council accepted the plan for a \$5,000 fee. The plan was favorable to the public, especially for its traffic and street plan, however the businessmen and legislators in power were more interested in city expansion, zoning and the widening and extending of streets (Griffen 2007). The plan’s top-down approach and execution by the city officials and leading businessmen set up the pattern for more drastic top-down planning approaches over the next several decades.

### ***Redlining***

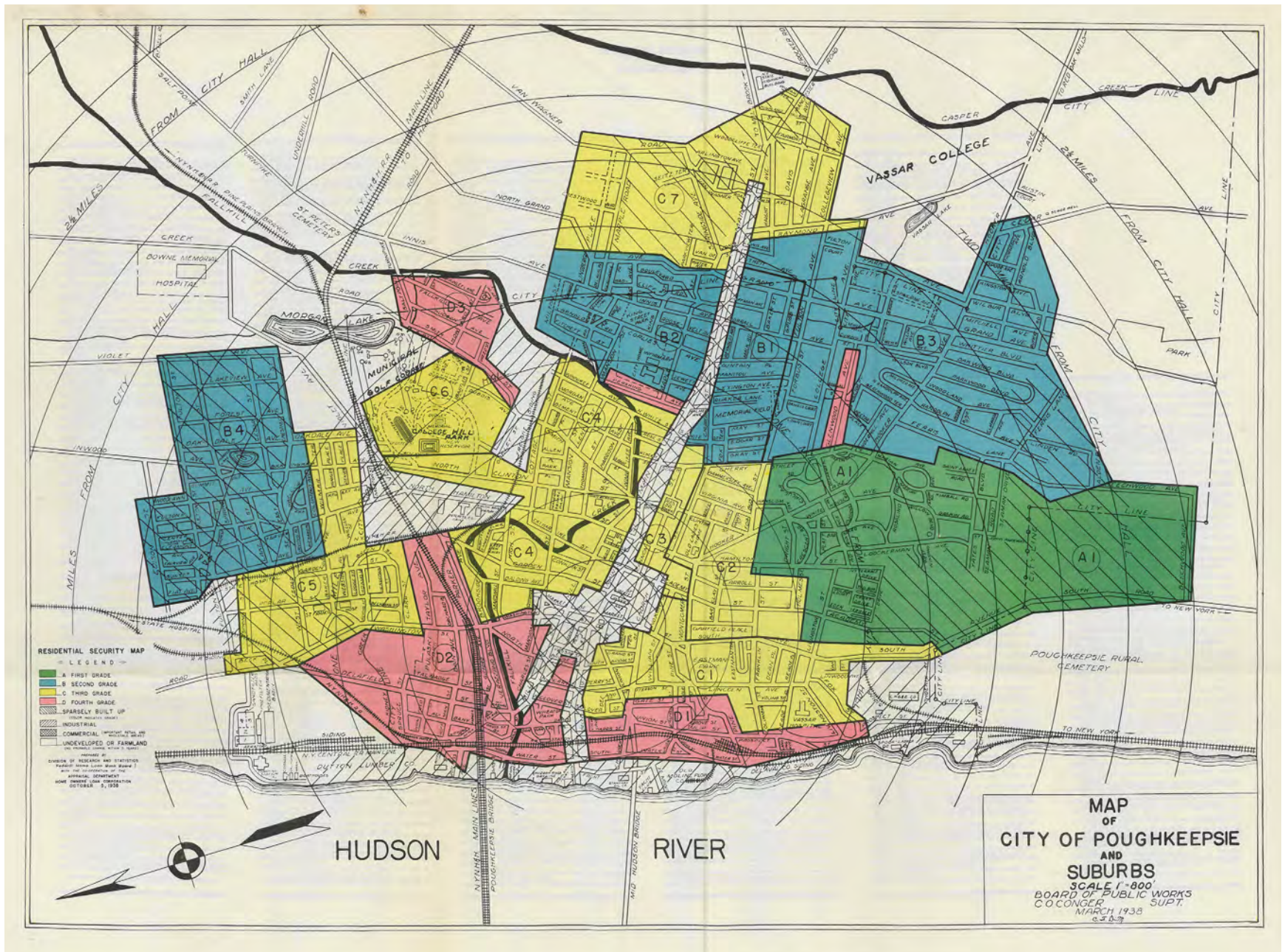
As part of a nationwide campaign to assess urban real estate markets for federal mortgage refinancing efforts during the New Deal, the Home Owners’ Loan Corporation (HOLC) and Federal Home Loan Bank Board (FHLBB) leveraged local developers in the production of Residential Security Maps. Now commonly referenced as “redlining,” the City of Poughkeepsie was one of 239 cities to participate in the delineation of unique geographic boundaries for neighborhoods judged A through D -- “Best,” “Still Desirable,” “Definitely Declining,” or “Hazardous” (Misra 2016). The social and economic policies represented in Residential Security Maps, whose ideological foundations lay in the prejudiced assessment of risk within poorer, ethnically minority communities, have had lasting consequences for Poughkeepsie’s social geography such that disadvantaged neighborhoods continue to experience the effects of uneven investment.

The Fifth Ward, having been judged “Security Grade D” or “Hazardous,” at the area surrounding Salt Pond Road by assessors in 1937 and 1938, has consistently demonstrated the highest percentage of African-American residents for nearly 80 years. Significant portions of today’s First and Second Wards along the waterfront were appraised harshly for housing low-income, foreign-born residents living in older building stock; they were razed in 1960s and 1970s urban renewal efforts. The present day distribution of wealth as witnessed through median income levels similarly continues

to demonstrate consolidation of greater income within communities that were judged “Still Desirable,” whereas redlined portions of the city exhibit levels that are consistently lower.

While the 1938 Residential Security Map for the City of Poughkeepsie cannot itself be held accountable for manifesting persistent patterns of urban inequity, the practices surrounding its creation illustrate a pervasive ideological basis for policy-making decisions that defined generations of twentieth-century urban thinking across the United States (Rutan 2016). These were perspectives that sought by design to direct investment away from communities of color and older built environments, precipitating legacies of exclusionary geographic separations. Poughkeepsie’s participation in this nationwide regime of urban assessment nevertheless required the active and eager buy-in of local stakeholders, and their perspectives as arbiters of political influence can be easily implicated in the persistence of the conditions they described. The years following the creation of redlining maps saw the codification of risk assessment within underserved urban environments through either complete neglect or wholesale demolition and redesign, described amply in other parts of this report.





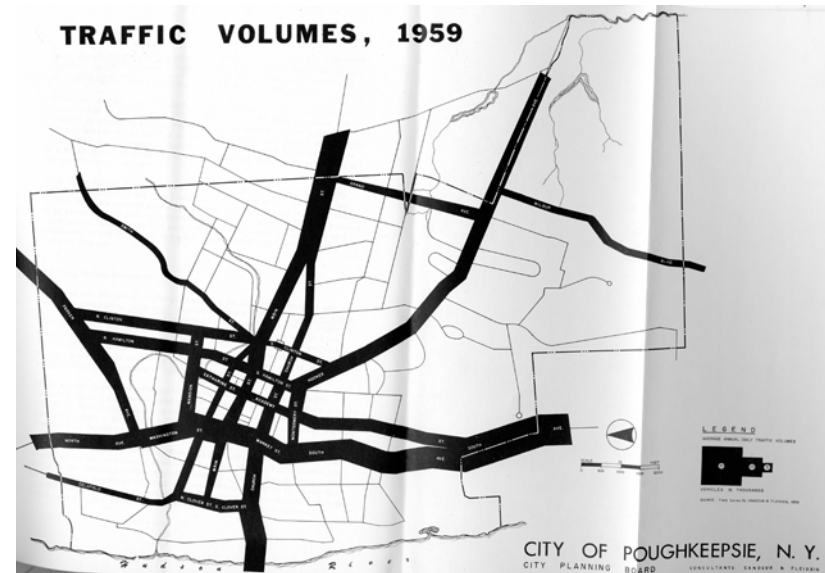
Residential Security Map for the City of Poughkeepsie, 1938. Oriented towards the east with the Hudson River at the bottom, this map features Main Street extended through the center in cross-hatching, denoting it as commercial and containing "important retail and wholesale areas."



## Urban Renewal

By 1948, Poughkeepsie once again faced traffic congestion downtown. The post-war boom doubled wheeled transit compared to pre-war levels (Pierces 1948). The opening of the Mid-Hudson Bridge in 1930 created a surge in automobile traffic, and by 1950, the congestion began to negatively affect downtown businesses (Flad and Griffen 2009). Post-World War II Poughkeepsie also witnessed a migration of population from the City of Poughkeepsie to the Town of Poughkeepsie, as well as pure growth in the latter. Between 1950 and 1960, the City of Poughkeepsie's population decreased by 3,114, while the Town of Poughkeepsie's population increased by 12,239. Meanwhile, Dutchess County's population increased by 28,978 (Candeub and Anderson 1960). In addition, 25.9% of the land in the City of Poughkeepsie in 1958 was undeveloped (Candeub and Anderson 1960). This increase in town and county population created pressure on the downtown, and was viewed as a development opportunity to secure the status of Poughkeepsie City as a significant regional metropolis. The city hired Candeub & Fleissig from Newark, NJ, as planning consultants to address these issues. They produced the 1960 General Development Plan, which prioritized new construction, often at the expense of old buildings and vulnerable city communities, for the benefit and convenience of a suburbanizing and increasing population over the next two decades.

Poughkeepsie's aging buildings, particularly its residential building stock, were seen as one of the city's primary challenges. National housing policy post-World War II set the stage for major government investment in high-density residential living in order to improve the housing stock. The Housing Act of 1949 stated that every American, regardless of income or origin, was entitled to "a decent home and a suitable living environment;" the 1956 Housing Act furthered this aim. In Poughkeepsie, government investment in redevelopment did not necessarily achieve that goal. Consultants and city officials, while admitting they were an important aesthetic asset to Poughkeepsie, judged older homes as deteriorating, hard to maintain, and not up to code. These assessments



Candeub & Fleissig Planning Consultants mapping daily amount of traffic through downtown Poughkeepsie. Market Street and Washington Street see the most with 20,000 daily vehicles.

often took on a socio-cultural bias. This is exemplified by a statement made by Leon Bloom, the city's director of urban renewal. In reporting that the Main Street area housed most of the city's low-income families and almost one third of its senior citizens, he characterized the neighborhood as a "critical area of derelict alcoholism" and a "Negro ghetto" (Flad and Griffen 2009).

Projects in the General Development Plan eliminated long-standing neighborhoods and used the land for building civic structures and new, high-density residential units, with part of the waterfront established as open space. The Poughkeepsie Urban Renewal Agency (PURA) was created in 1965, in response to the federal government's new Housing and Urban Development agency (HUD). PURA described the General Development Plan as being a "physically integrated" residential plan that would "eliminate blight." Only one project, encompassing the area bound by Main Street on the north, Pine Street on the south, the railroad and North-South arterial

on the east and the Hudson River on the west, was not carried out as envisioned, although the agency did obtain private properties through eminent domain (Flad and Griffen 2009).

As a part of Lyndon Johnson's Great Society and War on Poverty initiatives in the 1960s, the City of Poughkeepsie received large amounts of direct federal urban aid investment through the Model Cities program (Flad and Griffen 2009). While urban renewal efforts were already underway, Model Cities and the War on Poverty brought federal agendas into local settings. Along with PURA, the Poughkeepsie Model Cities Agency (PMCA) was intended to facilitate community participation in these redevelopment efforts. It was ultimately unsuccessful in addressing the social issues that precipitated from the dramatic urban transformation underway.

As the Model Cities narrative unfolded in all of the urban settings chosen, older and working class parts of town – especially the waterfront area along lower Main in Poughkeepsie – were classified as “blighted,” ultimately rationalizing displacement and redevelopment in the years to come. A housing crisis naturally followed and several large, low-income high-rise apartment complexes were constructed in an attempt to house hundreds of displaced families. The People's Housing Development Corporation (PHDC) was created to offer a complementary solution by acquiring multiple family houses, rehabilitating them, and selling them to people of modest means who could then use the income from the other units to finance the mortgage. Sadly their projects were stonewalled in 1975, when the mayor refused to renew their contract with the city unless PHDC's leadership stepped down and the organization agreed to redirect their focus away from neighborhoods deemed too desirable for the black and other minority families with whom they worked. The PHDC took the Common Council to federal courts, but sadly the case was dismissed. Nevertheless, the presiding judge acknowledged that the city's actions were “deplorably rooted in prejudice and bigotry” (Flad and Griffen 2009, 236).

Reverend Robert W. Dixon and representatives from several neighborhood councils boycotted their required participation

in the Model Cities Agency, stalling operations for a time. While the Model Cities Program indeed dramatically failed to integrate community interest into their design decisions, the civil rights era and the participatory rhetoric of many urban renewal initiatives, however empty and misguided, provided a kind of foil for true collective action and thus nevertheless planted seeds for increased not-for-profit activity in the latter decades of the twentieth century.

In his discussion of the People's Housing Development Corporation's case against the Common Council, Harvey Flad quotes US District Court Judge Charles S. Haight, Jr. from a footnote to his decision, as reported by the Poughkeepsie Journal, “While I make no finding on the issue, the papers submitted by [PHDC], in particular the minutes of meetings attended by members of the Common Council, leave the court with the clear impression that the City of Poughkeepsie terminated [PHDC's] contract for reasons deplorably rooted in prejudice and bigotry” (Flad and Griffen 2009, 236).

The efforts to improve Poughkeepsie's building stock through federal investment operated simultaneously to federally subsidized highway construction through Poughkeepsie. These highway projects utilized similar “blighted” language to justify removing neighborhoods for the alleviation of traffic through downtown. As noted previously, the post-war era brought a surge in vehicular traffic, which the North-South Arterial (Route 9) and East-West Arterials (Route 44/55) sought to alleviate.

The plans for the current Route 9 began as early as 1953. Formerly, Route 9 went directly through downtown Poughkeepsie on Market Street, which could not handle



the increasing amounts of traffic. Candeub and Fleissig's "Poughkeepsie Master Plan Report No. 4" maps traffic flows through Poughkeepsie, marking the former Route 9 along Market and Washington Streets as handling 20,000 vehicles a day. They also note that traffic over the Mid-Hudson Bridge increased 61% between 1947 and 1959 (Candeub and Fleissig Planning Consultants 1960). These findings rationalized the construction of the current Route 9 between 1963 and 1966, which bulldozed through historic neighborhoods located west of downtown and created a barrier between the waterfront and the Central Business District. It cut into 228 parcels, including 178 dwellings housing 200 families, and resulted in the loss of \$600,000 in tax revenue at the then-current rate (Simons 2017). The highway crosses Main Street with two large overpasses, creating a perceived barrier between the waterfront and the rest of Main Street leading east towards the Central Business District.

Eight years after the completion of Route 9, the East-West Arterials (Route 44/55) were constructed following Mill and Church Streets to the north and south of Main street. Between 1974 and 1979, the project displaced 48 homeowners, 59 tenants, and 26 businesses, and created a street level three lane highway through downtown Poughkeepsie, separating surrounding neighborhoods from the Central Business District (Simons 2017). As previously mentioned, these highways created what is now referred to as the downtown's "arterial island," over a mile in length and with limited connections to the rest of Poughkeepsie City.

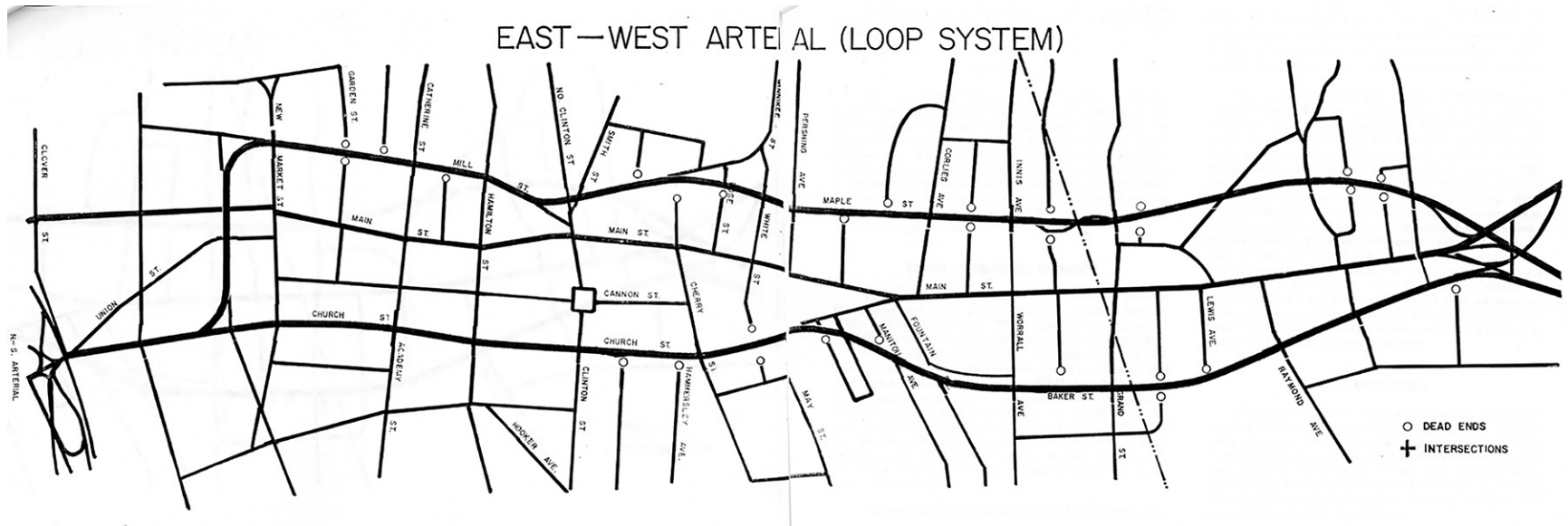
The East-West Arterials were framed as the "least disruptive or damaging road that could be built and still meet the City's requirements" for better highway infrastructure to alleviate the traffic on Main Street (East-West Arterial 1966). Candeub and Fleissig wrote that "Main Street shows the most severe congestion: peak hour traffic volumes exceed the street capacity by about 42%" (City of Poughkeepsie 1966). A publicly distributed pamphlet laid out the plan for the overlay of Mill and Church Streets, and included 30 cul-de-sacs that would result when existing north-south streets were cut off at the arterial and physically separated from downtown (City of



1956 aerial photo of the southwest side of downtown Poughkeepsie, before the construction of the North-South Arterial (Route 9).



1978 aerial photo of the same section of the southwest side of downtown after the construction of the North-South Arterial (Route 9).



The plan for the East-West Arterial and the north-south disconnection it creates. (1966)



View east on Main Street under the Route 9 arterial bridges. The highway and arterials create an uncomfortable pedestrian barrier on Main Street for crossing from the Central Business District to the Waterfront.



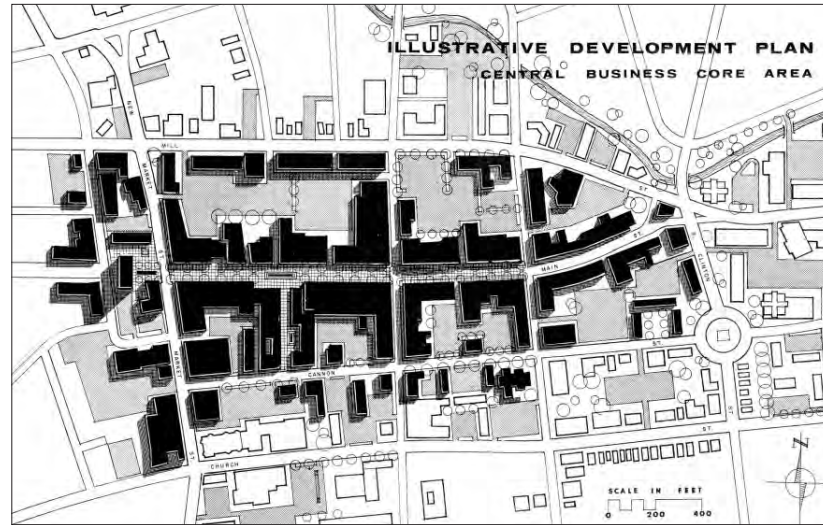
View west on Mill Street on the arterial between Catharine Street and Garden Street.



Poughkeepsie 1966). Most of these cul-de-sacs were planned for the north side of the arterial island.

The aforementioned pamphlet included a “Partial List of Objections to Proposed East-West Arterial Highways and Their Rebuttals.” By anticipating and a priori providing answers to questions and challenges, government authorities took control of the narrative and exercised strong top-down planning muscle, as evidenced by such objection-rebuttal statements as, “Property damage and disruption in City. Any highway in an urban area is disruptive—this proposal was felt to be least disruptive” (City of Poughkeepsie 1966). The resulting three-lane highway presents an opportunity for fast moving traffic to exist within close proximity to thin sidewalks and minuscule building setbacks, creating an unsafe threshold for pedestrians to cross and access Main Street.

In order to compensate for the installation of more highway infrastructure and compete with suburban strip malls, Main Street between Market and Hamilton became a pedestrian mall between 1972 and 1974 (Simons 2017). The 1960 General Development Plan envisioned the Main Mall being serviced by new highways, which would bring people to the north or south side of Main Street where they could park for easy access to the shops through alleyways and small pedestrian walkways. In this plan, Main Street was characterized as a pedestrian-friendly shopping destination, with pictures of busy street life and shop life. The intent was to preserve this type of environment during an age of mass change in urban form. Planning officials argued that this is the next “logical” step for Main Street, as the effort was to preserve this pedestrian-friendly environment while also providing for economic growth (Candeub and Anderson 1960). The mall was only approved after a group of 42 civic leaders visited Kalamazoo, Michigan, in 1969 to see the very first open air mall (Flad and Griffen 2009). The change in traffic flow to allow for quicker access through Poughkeepsie, while attempting to create a destination for shoppers drastically changed the Main Street historic commercial corridor and its surrounding context within the span of less than 13 years, erasing a cohesive urban form that had developed over two centuries.



Plan (top) and rendering of Main Mall from Candeub & Fleissig's 1960 General Development Plan for Poughkeepsie.



National Register photo of Main Mall Row (1970)

### ***Late Twentieth Century/Early Twenty-First Century***

Despite the positivity surrounding its opening, Main Mall struggled to attract customers. Rather than facilitate shopping on Main Street, the new highways had actually made it easier for people to pass through the city entirely (Flad and Griffen 2009). The city was struggling from the lost physical connections, as well as economic loss from suburbanization and a decreasing tax base. Other factors also led to a perceived danger around the Main Street area. Interviews with Main Street stakeholders revealed that the centralization of county services in Poughkeepsie, combined with the deinstitutionalization of mental health facilities in the 1980s, led to patients, many perceived as different or dangerous, being dropped off at Main Mall on a regular basis.

These issues of infrastructure, negative image, and cultural change, seriously impacted the commercial success of Main Street. In 1997, a storefront survey of first floors in the Mall's 160 buildings showed that 39% were vacant, and that of more than 40 retail businesses in a 1988 survey, only 14 survived

(Flad and Griffen 2009). Although only 22 retail stores were left on Main Mall by 1997, it should be noted that 14 of these establishments were over 10 years old, and that 35.6% of the total establishments surveyed were over 10 years old (City of Poughkeepsie Comprehensive Plan 1998). By 1998, the population of Poughkeepsie had decreased 24.7% since 1960, and with the median housing value at \$87,300 it was not in good economic shape compared to other cities in the Hudson Valley (City of Poughkeepsie Comprehensive Plan 1998).

A new city charter in 1996 followed by integrative planning efforts launched Poughkeepsie into a new era of urban planning, one focused on obtaining community input for projects, and one scarred by the missteps of the urban renewal period. The 1998 City of Poughkeepsie Comprehensive Plan focused on surveying the community and developing the waterfront (City of Poughkeepsie Comprehensive Plan 1998). This inspired smaller scale projects for civic improvement, like removing Main Mall in 2001 and the proposal to make Market Street a two-way street in 2016.

These political processes of economic development and



Main Mall in 2000.



urban planning had dramatic effect on the physical form of Poughkeepsie's downtown, profoundly altering social-spatial dynamics. Main Street developed as a commercial corridor from the waterfront, through the Central Business District, Middle Main, and east into Dutchess County. The historic use of the street played a large role in the development of its urban form, which is characterized by a high street wall, with a commercial storefront and residential or commercial upper floors. Urban renewal, however, changed the streetscape and its density, and surrounded the downtown with highways, cutting off the city from the waterfront.

The historic buildings along Main Street stitch together the long history of planning decisions and their consequences. Simple before and after comparisons through historic photographs illustrate how much change has occurred on Main Street throughout the city's history.



(Right) Main Street at Market Street was a key intersection of historic and present-day downtown. Views from 1906, 1970, and today show small and dense mixed-use buildings that were demolished in the urban renewal era, but continuity through other historic buildings.

## PRESERVATION

The preservation movement in Poughkeepsie began at the turn of the twentieth century, when the local chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR) started fundraising for restorations to the Clinton House on Main Street, built circa 1765. Even then, Clinton House was one of few remaining colonial-era buildings in the city, and its connection to George Clinton, first governor of the state of New York, made it a prime candidate for the DAR's attentions. By 1900, the Daughters had purchased the house and were restoring it (Poughkeepsie Eagle-News 1900).

At the turn of the century, the DAR was a white-only organization that promoted patriotism, which they equated with conservative, Anglo-Saxon values. The DAR is an inherently exclusionary group because their membership is limited to those who can trace their lineage back to the Revolutionary War, which therefore excludes recent immigrants. Although thousands of African Americans did participate in the American Revolution, the DAR ignored this history and barred entry to black women until the 1970s. The development of social groups like the DAR in the late nineteenth century were in part a reaction to immigration and social changes in the United States in the decades after the Civil War (Smith 2016). The organization's fight to save Clinton House was possibly viewed through this lens by the residents at the time.

Thirty years later, another colonial home on Main Street, the Glebe House, was similarly saved from neglect. The house was purchased jointly by the Dutchess County Historical Society and the Junior League, with help from the City of Poughkeepsie, and the two organizations shared the house for office space (Poughkeepsie Daily-News 1929). While the Clinton House had been strictly a DAR project, the Glebe House was saved by extensive community fundraising over two years. The Poughkeepsie Eagle-News, a local newspaper with a conservative audience, seems to have been a big player in this fight, as well as the local chapters of the Rotary Club and American Legion Luncheon Club. In 1928, the Eagle-News sponsored an essay-writing contest for high school



The Glebe House today, one of Main Street's earliest buildings.

and elementary school students with cash prizes for the best response to the question, "What is the importance of the Glebe House to Poughkeepsie?" From Eagle-News reports, it seems the Glebe House engendered support not just from locals but from people all over Dutchess County (Poughkeepsie Eagle-News 1928). It is important to note that this same newspaper ran an article in 1908 exclaiming dismay at changes being made to the house under the headline, "Old Glebe House is Being Altered: The Handsome Antique Porch Being Changed, Marring the Architecture - Owned by Conrad Gindra" (Poughkeepsie Eagle-News 1908). Conrad Gindra was a local horticulturist whose father was a German immigrant (Foy 2013). It is possible that anti-immigrant sentiment was also a factor in the fight to save a colonial home that some felt had been "marred" under its current ownership. Like other preservation efforts nationwide in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the fights to save Clinton House and Glebe House reflected a nationalist sentiment of the time and were couched in patriotic language and symbolism.



The next major push for large-scale preservation efforts in Poughkeepsie began in the late 1960s, as the age of urban renewal was sweeping through cities across the country. In 1969, the Dutchess County Planning Board prepared a book on locally significant heritage sites, titled "Landmarks of Dutchess County 1683-1867: Architecture Worth Saving in New York State." The book was published by the New York Council on the Arts and helped galvanize a local push for preservation efforts. That same year the Dutchess County Landmarks Association was formed and Springside, the A. J. Downing-designed country estate of Matthew Vassar, was named a National Historic Landmark.

In 1971, the city passed a zoning ordinance to add a new district to the city zoning map -- R-1, HD -- to represent historic districts (Poughkeepsie Journal 1971). The ordinance also created a Historic Districts Commission, precursor to the current commission, with the power to regulate these historic districts. The city's three municipal level historic districts - first Garfield Place, then Academy Street, and Dwight Street-Hooker Avenue - were all created following this zoning change. It was not until 1979 that a formal preservation ordinance was added to the city code, which called for a commission with the ability to regulate and nominate districts and sites (Wahlberg 2017). The city's first survey of historic places was conducted in 1977, which resulted in a slew of city landmarks and districts being nominated for the National Register throughout the 1980s (McElhiney Sharp 1977). These include a few in this studio's study area, such as the Main Mall Row, Market Street Row, Church Street Row, and the Church of the Holy Comforter.



The original Poughkeepsie City Hall, which was spared during the urban renewal era.



Demolition to make way for the construction of the new Civic Center. Old City Hall visible in the background.

## Establishment of the Union Street Historic District



In 1971, the area between Main and Church Streets and to the west of the north-south arterial was named a National Register Historic District. This followed two years of tension between residents of the neighborhood and the Poughkeepsie Urban Renewal Administration (PURA). As part of the Queen City Urban Renewal Plan, PURA had planned for the complete demolition of the properties and street grid in this area, calling it a “physical slum.”(Opdycke 1971).

Union Street was the first road in Poughkeepsie running from Market (then called Old Post Road) to the waterfront, predating the Main Street expansion by 33 years. Because it led from the small town to the sloops in the Hudson, it was once the main thoroughfare in the village. Union Street is principally made up of two-story brick homes built in the mid-1800s by the many different immigrants groups who called this neighborhood home - first Germans in the 1850s, followed by Irish, Scottish, and finally Italian immigrants in the 1920s (Opdycke 1971). PURA's planned razing of these homes and the historic street grid, prompted fierce resistance by residents and community groups led by the newly formed Dutchess County Landmarks Association (Landmarks).

The group recognized that the neighborhood was not just historically significant but that it provided critical affordable housing for low and moderate-income families. Landmarks conducted their own building inventories and created their own renewal plan for the neighborhood. The plan stated, “Because Landmarks is concerned about more than just the physical condition of individual houses, plans to design an improved social environment and a more cohesive neighborhood have been formed” - this included the creation of a common park and community center, and a scheme to purchase and rehabilitate houses, using the profits to purchase more properties. The plan even outlines the leasing Landmarks-owned properties to moderate-income families or to the Poughkeepsie Housing Authority (Poughkeepsie Journal 1970). Meanwhile, the Union Street Citizen's Advisory Committee, led by Eleanor Massa, carried out a letter-writing campaign to local, state and national representatives, put up flyers throughout the city and circulated a petition among residents (Raker 1971).

After two years of neighborhood resistance, the Queen City-Model City Advisory Committee, a citizen's committee set up to assist PURA, managed to persuade PURA to designate the Union Street area as a “rehabilitation neighborhood” (Opdycke 1971). In the language of urban renewal, this meant that localized infill would be prioritized as opposed to wholesale demolition. To further protect the neighborhood, the Union Street Citizen's Advisory Committee and the Dutchess County Landmarks Association put forth an application to name the area as a historic district on the National Register. This effort, which involved volunteer residents, Poughkeepsie Day School students, Vassar students, and the typing class at Our Lady of Lourdes High School, resulted in Union Street being named the first National Register historic district in the city of Poughkeepsie (Opdycke 1971). This designation makes section 106 approval necessary for federally-funded projects, but carries no other enforceable restrictions, allowing the neighborhood to continue to change over time.



“You can’t see any evidence that the city has received more than \$35 million in federal money when you look at the north side. The only thing we got out of federal money was the East-West Arterial so the rich folks could speed past the poor folks”

(Quoted in a 1980 Poughkeepsie Journal article)

It is important to note that after historic districts were established, some residents felt that they received preferential treatment. Throughout the 1970s, the City of Poughkeepsie was receiving federal money through Housing and Urban Development’s (HUD) Community Development funds, which the Common Council was responsible for distributing. One of the projects they allocated funding to was facade rehabilitation for homes in the Union Street Historic District. Under this program, the city provided homeowners with funds for their facades, if they agreed to fix code violations and make improvements to their interiors. Residents of the Third and Fifth Wards, which are on the north side of the city, felt this allocation of funding to one neighborhood was unfair. Both wards had significant black populations in the 1980s, 44.51% and 67.72%, respectively, according to the 1980 census - and still do today (U.S. Census 1980). To many Poughkeepsie residents, it seemed like the historic preservation movement only served to save and rehabilitate a couple, mostly white, neighborhoods from demolition. At a town hall meeting in 1980, one homeowner was quoted as saying, “You can’t see any evidence that the city has received more than \$35 million in federal money when you look at the north side. The only thing we got out of federal money was the East-West Arterial so the rich folks could speed past the poor folks” (Hertz 1980).

Following the city’s creation of the more robust Historic Districts and Landmarks Preservation Commission in 1979, local landmarks were designated. As of 2017, 30 sites have

been listed in Poughkeepsie, with no new historic districts. Locally designated properties must go through commission review for alterations, additions, and demolitions. Despite this legal protection, two listed properties have been demolished - as was the case for the Nelson House - and six others are unoccupied and deteriorating. The maintained relevance of these historic properties is a challenge for the city. Few are openly accessible to the public, and in fact half the properties are private homes, so it is difficult for people to engage with these locally landmarked sites.

The history of preservation in Poughkeepsie is a reactionary one. There is a clear trend of activists fighting to “save” buildings and neighborhoods from demolition or neglect, to varying degrees of success. This reactionary mode is inefficient and unsustainable, and has led to a weak preservation-oriented civil society. In addition, there is substantial evidence to suggest that preservation policy in Poughkeepsie has, at worst, frequently been used as a tool for exclusion and, at best, had limited success as tool for social inclusion.

Investigating the city’s individual historic landmarks designation, this inclusion problem does not seem to have improved. There are sites on the local register that have a known history of exclusion, particularly for the city’s black residents. For example, the Nelson House, a prominent and popular hotel, restaurant and venue on Market Street was the site of many positive memories for Poughkeepsie’s white, middle class residents. But it was also racially segregated, frequently discriminating against black Poughkeepsians, and is known to have refused rooms to both Marian Anderson and Langston Hughes. Similarly, College Hill Park - which was recently landmarked by the Preservation Commission, was a site of Klan cross burnings, as revealed by a 1980 oral history project (Mamiya 1980). Neither of these two sites is interpreted to acknowledge this exclusion. Over the course of this semester-long study, this studio was unable to find a representation of Poughkeepsie’s black history among the city’s landmarked sites. However, this research was limited by



The Nelson House, shown in the 1920s, has been demolished despite being a recognized city landmark.



One of three interpretive panels located in the park where the former Nelson House stood, across the street from the Bardavon Theater.

the absence of a publicly accessible (i.e. online) repository of information for Poughkeepsie's locally designated properties.

This fact leads to another point of exclusion for the city's preservation landscape: there is almost no easily accessible information on the city's current landmarks, their history, or how they came to be designated. This lack of centralized information does not help the field become more inclusive or encourage citizens to participate in the landmarking process; it perpetuates perceptions that the process is opaque and biased. Limited investment in interpretation, public participation, and social inclusion reflects an overall weakness of the preservation field writ large. Within Poughkeepsie, there appears to be little interest in preservation, and local designations are legally weak and sometimes completely forgotten (Wahlberg 2017). Preservationists have subsequently been stuck in a reactionary mode focused on saving threatened properties, not allowing much time or energy for the larger work of maintaining these properties' cultural significance to the wider Poughkeepsie public.

Despite this somewhat bleak picture of preservation in Poughkeepsie, the very energized and effective work of Hudson River Housing, and other community groups, should not be discounted. Hudson River Housing has rehabilitated dozens of buildings in Poughkeepsie for use as affordable housing - some listed on the national register, some not. They just opened the newly rehabilitated Underwear Factory in spring 2017, a National Register property that Hudson River Housing has successfully turned into mixed-use affordable housing complex, including fifteen apartments, space for local art organizations, North River Roasters and Coffee House, and a new shared-use commercial kitchen.

Mid-Hudson Heritage Center has also been actively reusing historic buildings in the study area. In addition to their gallery space and arts center (Art Centro) on Main Street, the Mid-Hudson Heritage Center has just recently opened the Glebe House, one of two colonial homes still extant on Main Street, and plan to use the space for art shows, exhibitions and community events. Roy Budnick, the head of Mid-Hudson



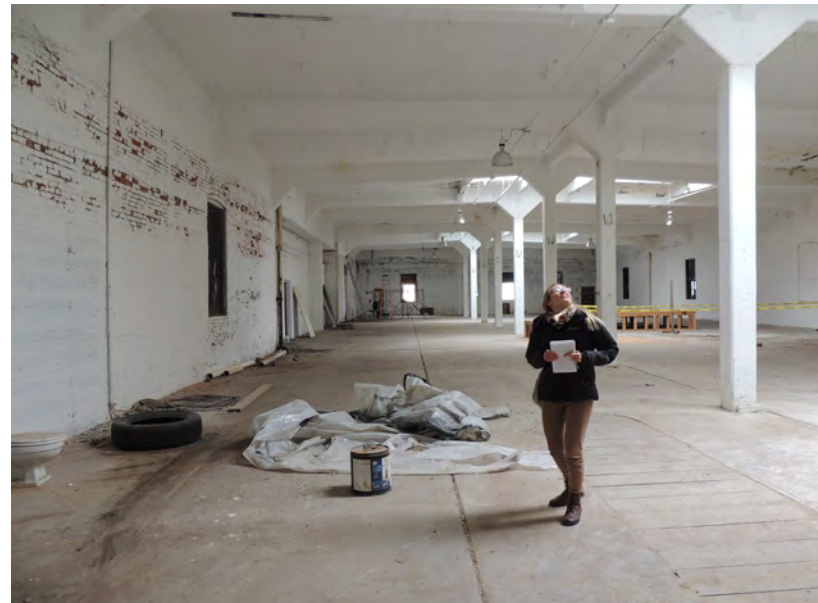
## Historic Property Tax Exemption

Inspired by a tax credit in Beacon, the Poughkeepsie Common Council passed legislation in 1999 to create a historic property tax exemption. This exemption was designed as an incentive for owners of property located in locally designated historic districts and owners of property locally designated as landmarks to invest in the upkeep and rehabilitation of properties without incurring higher property taxes. It provided for 5 years of tax exemption for any increase in property value attributed to rehabilitation or alterations, and four additional years of gradually decreasing exemption (Poughkeepsie Journal 1999). While this exemption exists in the city code, it has unfortunately never been used due to the pressure not to reduce property tax revenues, which are desperately needed to fund Poughkeepsie's public schools (Wahlberg 2017).



The recently rehabilitated and reopened Underwear Factory, adjacent to the Fall Kill creek and located just off Main Street.

Heritage Center, also has plans for the old trolley barn on Main Street, which he hopes to turn into a large exhibition and arts-oriented space. Such activities demonstrate that, within the city today, there is significant momentum and energy behind creative, broadly-defined preservation endeavors.



The former Trolley Barn



A photograph of a city street scene, likely in a historic district. The street is lined with multi-story brick and stone buildings. A black SUV is parked on the right side of the street, and a blue car is parked further down. A sidewalk with a brick pattern runs along the left side, with a pile of snow on the edge. A person is walking on the sidewalk. A semi-transparent white banner with the text "UNDERSTANDING MAIN STREET TODAY" is overlaid across the middle of the image.

## UNDERSTANDING MAIN STREET TODAY



## UNDERSTANDING MAIN STREET TODAY

Profound scars persist on Poughkeepsie's physical and social landscape, due to the fraught histories described in previous sections. However, there remains a viable and historic built environment on Main Street that supports vitality through an older intact building stock and pedestrian access to the waterfront. Main Street has functioned, in the past and still today, as an important corridor in Poughkeepsie, both in use and in physical form.

## ARCHITECTURAL CHARACTER

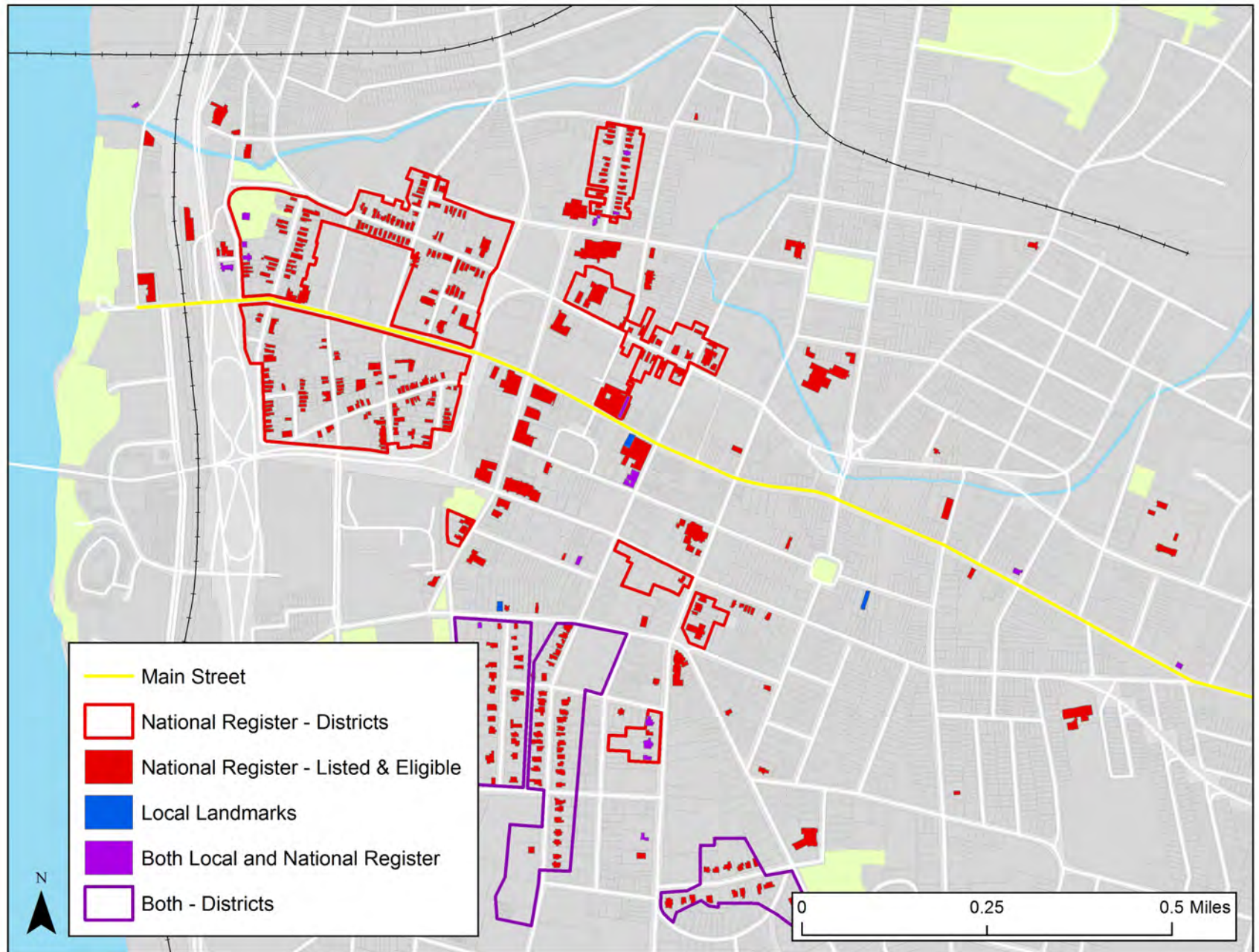
Although this study purposefully did not identify particular buildings that might warrant landmark designation, it is important to characterize the great variety of architectural styles that exist in Poughkeepsie. Some of the most notable architectural styles found on Main Street include: Dutch Colonial, Greek Revival, Gothic Revival, Romanesque, Italianate, Queen Anne, French Renaissance, Italian Renaissance, Beaux-Arts, Colonial Revival, Arts and Crafts, Art Deco, and Modern (Landmarks of Dutchess County 1969; Rhoads 1988; Design Manual 1988). As a large city that was connected to the rest of the region through the Hudson River, the railroads, and the telegraph wire, Poughkeepsie was a faithful follower of architectural trends. Even after enduring multiple downtown redevelopments, Poughkeepsie's Main Street is still home to a collection of diverse building styles that quite comprehensively reflect the region's architectural evolution from the colonial era to modern times.

The oldest architectural style along the Hudson Valley, Dutch Colonial, dominated the region's landscape for at least a hundred years, from the 1680s to 1780s (Rhoads 1988). However, only a few Dutch Colonial houses are still extant in the Hudson Valley region, and two of the most intact examples are located on Poughkeepsie's Main Street, the aforementioned Clinton House and the Glebe House.

The Greek Revival style was introduced in Poughkeepsie between the 1780s to 1840s. The style was popular in the

post-revolutionary United States as a representation of civic ideals in a classical building form associated with democracy. A prominent example of this style is the original Poughkeepsie City Hall, which is located at the intersection of Main and Washington Streets, and is a post-colonial design with evidence of Greek Revival influence in its pedimented gable roof, columned belfry, and pilasters at the entrance. Between 1830 and 1890, Gothic Revival developed as popular style for new churches, with thirteen major churches built in this style on and around Main Street. Meanwhile, on Main Street, Romanesque and Italianate buildings flourished, characterized by glazed first-floor storefronts, upper floor residences or offices, and bracketed cornices. Despite the demolition that occurred during the urban renewal era, a number of vivid Italianate storefronts still survive. The row of eight buildings from the corner of Main and Garden Streets to 315 Main Street are preserved examples of this style that are listed on the National Register as the "Main Mall Row."

French Renaissance, Italian Renaissance, and Beaux-Arts architecture dominated the landscape from the early twentieth to the mid-twentieth century. The Beaux-Arts style buildings scattered along Main Street include the Poughkeepsie Railroad Station and the Luckey, Platt and Company Department Store, which was one of the major retail destinations throughout most of the twentieth century, not only for Poughkeepsie residents but for the entire Hudson Valley region. Although Art Deco was a very popular style nationally in the early twentieth century, it was not as prevalent in smaller cities and townscapes (Rhodes 1988). Main Street surprisingly has two outstanding Art Deco buildings: the Church Building on the southeast corner of the Main and Market Street and the currently vacant French Pastry Shop at 370 Main Street. There has been limited new construction in the city since the urban renewal era, but the projects that have been completed are largely modern in style, such as the Rip Van Winkle House and the Mid-Hudson Civic Center. This more recent construction has mostly occurred in Lower and Upper Main. The Middle Main architectural landscape, although disrupted by the abundance of ground-level parking lots and vacant properties, has maintained a diverse collection of historic buildings.



The above map illustrates the individual landmarks and historic districts that are currently listed at the local and/or national level. Many of these properties have been recognized for their architectural significance.



## KEY HISTORIC BUILDINGS ON MAIN STREET



Panoramic view of Main Mall Row, 315 Main Mall to 11 Garden Street; Italianate; Year Built: 1860s



Poughkeepsie Trust Company, 236 Main Street; Neo-Classical, Beaux-Arts; Year Built: 1902



The Elting Building, 294 Main Street; Renaissance Revival; Year Built: 1880s



Poughkeepsie City Hall, 228 Main Street; Greek Revival; Year Built: 1900





Luckey, Platt & Company Department Store, 332-346 Main Street; Italianate; Year Built: 1923



Clinton House, 547 Main Street.; Dutch Colonial; Year Built: 1765



(Left) The Church Building, 1-11 Market St. (Right) French Pastry Shop; 370 Main Street; Art Deco; Year Built: 1930s





## URBAN FORM

While there are many individually distinctive buildings along Main Street, the picture of the Main Street corridor becomes much richer when considering its built landscape as a whole. There is a substantial stock of old buildings that together unite Main Street and contribute to the street's vitality. The formal qualities of the Main Street area in terms of its streetscapes, relationship to its surroundings, and the architecture itself present challenges inherited from the urban renewal-era decisions, yet it retains a distinct character and opportunities for enhanced connectivity.

For the purposes of this study, the older, historic buildings are characterized as those that are 50 years old or older, in keeping with the "age-eligible" criterion established for inclusion on the National Register of Historic Places. The majority of buildings on Main Street are age-eligible, and reflect the three largest waves of construction prior to 1900, between 1900 and 1930, and from 1930 to 1967. Using the age-eligible criterion rather than nationally or locally listed landmarks allows the studio to consider many more old buildings as potentially valuable and contributing assets to Main Street.

The old buildings of Main Street directly contribute to measurable aspects of urban form that improve the welcoming atmosphere of public spaces. Building upon commonly recognized criteria and metrics for successful urban design (Gehl and Svarre 2013; Ewing and Clemente 2013), the studio undertook an assessment of Poughkeepsie's Main Street and found strengths and weaknesses in relation to many of these measures, including walkability, enclosure, transparency, coherence, human scale, and linkage.

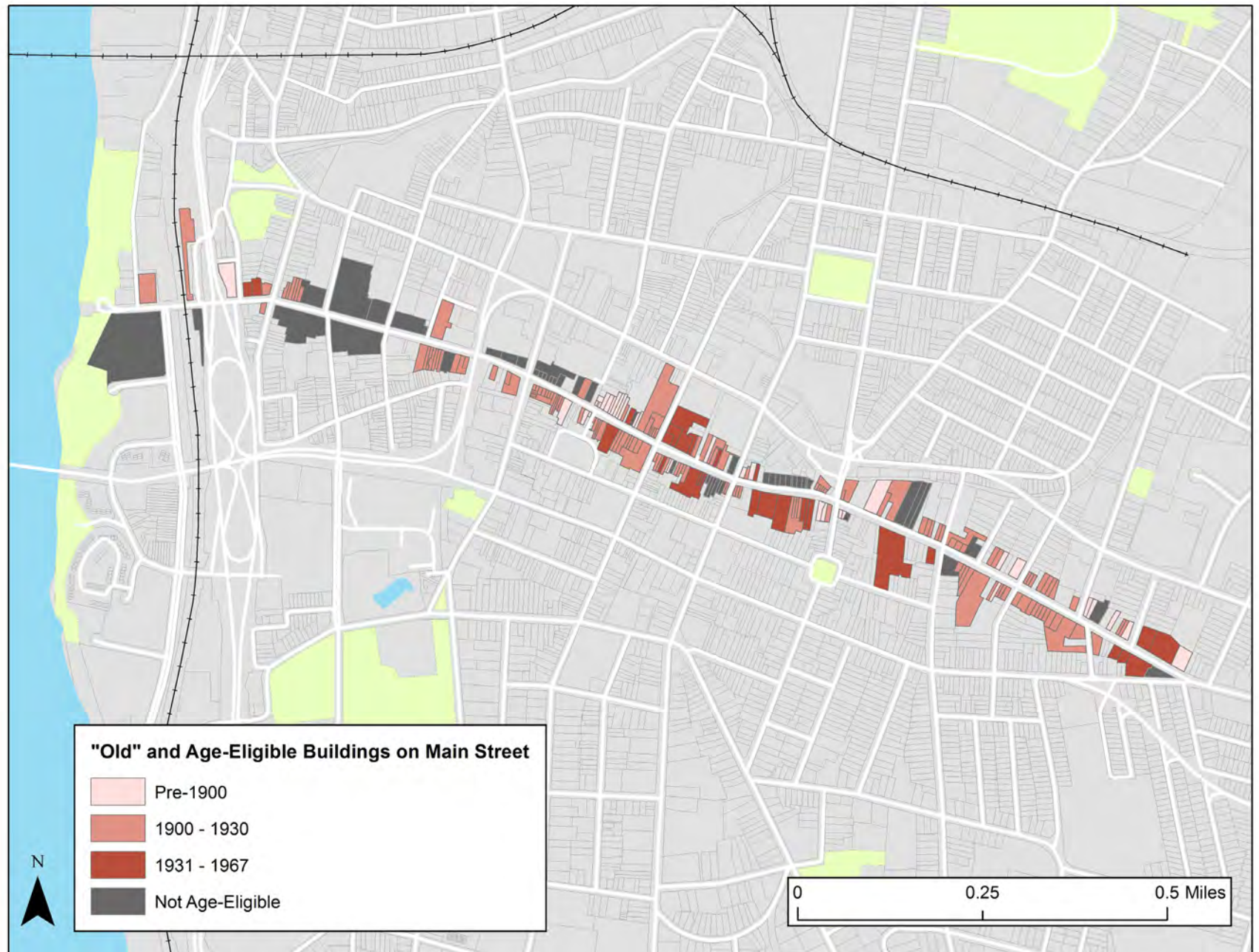
To better understand how Main Street's built form contributes to the pedestrian experience, the studio conducted a building-by-building survey to understand the physical characteristics of Main Street and to ground-truth assumptions and impressions gleaned from existing research. The team collected survey data on three points of physical form derived from the

aforementioned urban design criteria and metrics - street wall integrity (related to the concept of enclosure), visual accessibility (transparency), and building height (human scale) - to characterize the existing streetscape. Acknowledging the subjectivity of individual surveyors, the assessment of these features provided relative points of comparison with both historic conditions and widely acknowledged design criteria for successful public spaces.

Evaluating the factors of street wall integrity, building height, visual accessibility, and public accessibility indicated areas of Main Street where there is a high integrity of urban form, in addition to places in need of improvement and where targeted alterations could be beneficial. It is clear that the age-eligible buildings play significant roles towards the positive and negative indicators of a successful urban form, in part due to the sheer volume of older buildings located on Main Street. The older buildings most positively contribute to street wall integrity and building height within the CBD. Visual accessibility is generally higher, but public accessibility is mixed across Main Street and the age-eligible buildings. Currently, much of Main Street within the CBD and to the east has high visual access but mixed public accessibility.

### ***Street Wall and Building Height***

The presence of a defined street wall, and in some areas a lack thereof, is one of the most immediate impressions of the pedestrian experience on Main Street. The concept of a street wall or enclosure is the "room-like quality" of the urban area, including "building, walls, trees and other vertical elements," and affects the way people perceive their sense of position within their surroundings (Ewing and Clemente 2013). For the studio's survey, street wall integrity was determined by the physical presence of the building and amount of setback from the sidewalk, as well as its relationship to adjacent buildings.



Mapping the construction dates for each building on Main Street shows the volume of old building stock that is extant.



Street wall integrity is not consistent along Main Street, illustrated by the survey results and geo-spatial analysis. The survey results were qualified as high, medium, low, and null, which was reserved for parking lots or vacant lots. Overwhelmingly, Main Street buildings presented high street wall integrity (200 of 304 responses, or 66%), followed by null (14%), low (11%), and medium (9%). Age-eligible buildings contribute greatly to high and medium street wall integrity on Main Street (84% and 71% respectively). Only 9 of the 33 low street wall entries were age-eligible buildings, suggesting that older buildings are contributing positively to the visual continuity of the street.

Mapping street wall integrity revealed patterns of high and continuous street wall to be most present in the Central Business District in the age-eligible buildings, with surrounding portions of Main Street having intermixed patches of high, medium, low, and null responses. Main Street between Garden Street and Hamilton Street offer the longest continuous street wall along the entirety of Main Street within our study area. This portion contains the National Register-listed Main Mall Row and similar commercial structures that offer storefronts at street level. West of Garden Street, the street wall becomes defined by the larger-scale modern buildings of the Civic Center and One City Center Plaza. East of Hamilton Street is a mix of mostly high and medium levels of integrity. West of Market Street towards the waterfront, there are only two sections of high street wall integrity where there are rows of extant older buildings. The remainder of the street is broken up by setback buildings and large surface parking lots, detracting from a continuous enclosed environment along Main Street.

The lack of street wall continuity throughout Main Street does not allow for visual and experiential connection to the fullest extent for the pedestrian. In this respect, the older buildings counteract this disconnection by contributing the most to a pleasant “room-like” environment on Main Street.

Building height also contributes to the sense of enclosure for a pedestrian and is complementary to street wall integrity in defining the street. Building heights, compared to street wall,



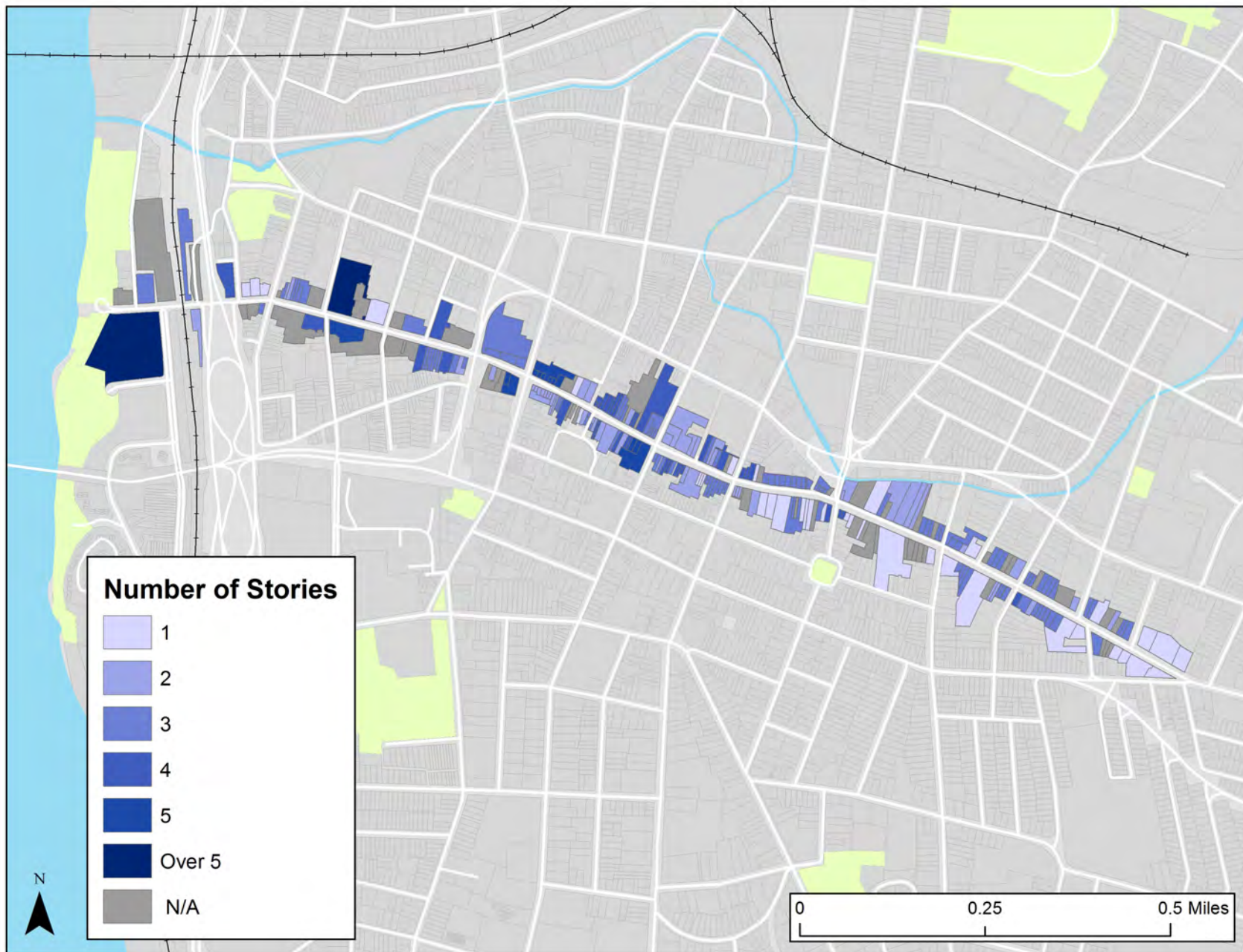
Looking west on Main Street. The vacant lot and vacant building demonstrate the failure of enclosure and the loss of street wall integrity.

have more variance along the areas where there is high street wall. For example, between Garden Street and Academy Street, where the street wall is continuous, the building heights are not uniform. The tallest concentration of buildings happens near the only intersection in the CBD that has continuous high street wall, which is the corner of Academy and Main streets, where the Luckey Platt building is located. Both west and east along Main Street outside of the CBD, heights vary between two and three story buildings, with the exception of the tall apartment buildings near the waterfront. The smaller scale still supports the overall pedestrian friendly environment and adds complexity to the street; however, the combination of low building height and the lack of continuous street wall, as can be seen in the eastern end of Main Street, make for a sometimes-disjointed urban form.



Street wall integrity survey entries mapped across Main Street reveal areas of concentrated street wall around the CBD, as well as scattered, smaller pockets.





Building height (in number of stories) survey entries mapped across Main Street.



Main Mall Row, with high street wall, commercial storefronts, and similar building height.

### ***Visual and Public Accessibility***

Visual access or transparency of commercial storefronts refers to the ability for people to perceive what lies beyond the facade of a building, helping them understand the building's use and underscore connections between exterior and interior spaces. It is a powerful feature in creating a welcoming urban form for pedestrians and encouraging activity. The visual accessibility of buildings was collected by survey measurements of high, low, and none. On Main Street, slightly less than half of the buildings had high accessibility (141 of 304, or 46%). A total of 68 buildings had low accessibility and 45 had no accessibility (22% and 15%). Age-eligible buildings accounted for 112 of the 141 high accessibility responses (79%), 48 of the 68 low responses (71%), and 37 of the 45 buildings with no accessibility (82%).

These results revealed that while old buildings contribute significantly to the high visual accessibility of the street, there

are many buildings negatively affecting the street and could be improved. Areas of low visual accessibility were most prevalent in the Central Business District and east of Cherry Street.

Visual accessibility is especially important for commercial uses located at the ground floor that interface with the street. The survey found that 44% of the storefronts have low or no visual accessibility, counteracting a sense of economic vitality. Uneven visual accessibility is especially detrimental to commercial activity within the Central Business District, where 38% of the storefronts have low or no visual accessibility. Limiting the public's ability to perceive the use of buildings creates a disconnect on the street, especially when it occurs in long segments. These pockets become dead zones for pedestrian activity along the street and prevent the buildings from positively contributing to a vibrant corridor.

A complementary factor to visual accessibility recorded in the survey was public accessibility. This variable indicated the permeability of the street for a pedestrian and was



Example of various forms of high and low visual accessibility along Main Street between Academy and Hamilton streets.





Results of visual accessibility factor mapped across Main Street.



Results of public accessibility factor mapped across Main Street.



judged on whether any pedestrian could enter a building, if access was limited or required an appointment, or if access was private. Survey responses showed that 99 entries were accessible (33%), 66 were semi-accessible (22%), and 90 were inaccessible (30%). The variable of public accessibility showed a fairly even distribution along Main Street. Mixed results were also found within the age-eligible buildings; 77 of the 99 accessible entries were located in old buildings (78%), 52 of the 66 semi-accessible responses (79%), and 68 of the 90 inaccessible buildings (75%). These results show that older buildings are factors in both the positive and negative findings regarding public accessibility.

### ***Disconnections and Discontinuity***

In addition to these building-level and street wall characteristics, several landscape factors create a challenging urban form for Main Street. The East-West Arterials that surround Main Street suffocate the Central Business District and Middle Main and isolate them from the surrounding neighborhoods. The arterials present a danger to pedestrians and prohibit easy north-south travel through the Main Street area. While the arterials officially have a 30 mile-per-hour speed limit, the one-way, three-lane highway allows drivers to exceed this limit, leading to vehicles of all sizes speeding down the road in close proximity to sidewalks and homes. The sidewalks provide limited protection or spatial barrier between pedestrians and fast-moving traffic. In addition to unsafe pedestrian environments, the arterials physically disconnect many of the nearby residential neighborhoods from Main Street by creating vehicular and pedestrian barriers with dead ends and one-way streets.

The spatial distribution of dead-ends represents an unfriendly walking environment for the residents living north and southeast of the arterial, with slightly more access for residents that live by the waterfront or in the Lower Main area. The convergence of fast traffic, small sidewalks, poorly marked crosswalks, and limited signage all contribute to the isolation of pedestrians from downtown.



Looking west at the corner of Main Street and Columbus Street (Arterial Highway), a prominent corner on the Main Street corridor that features a municipal parking lot.

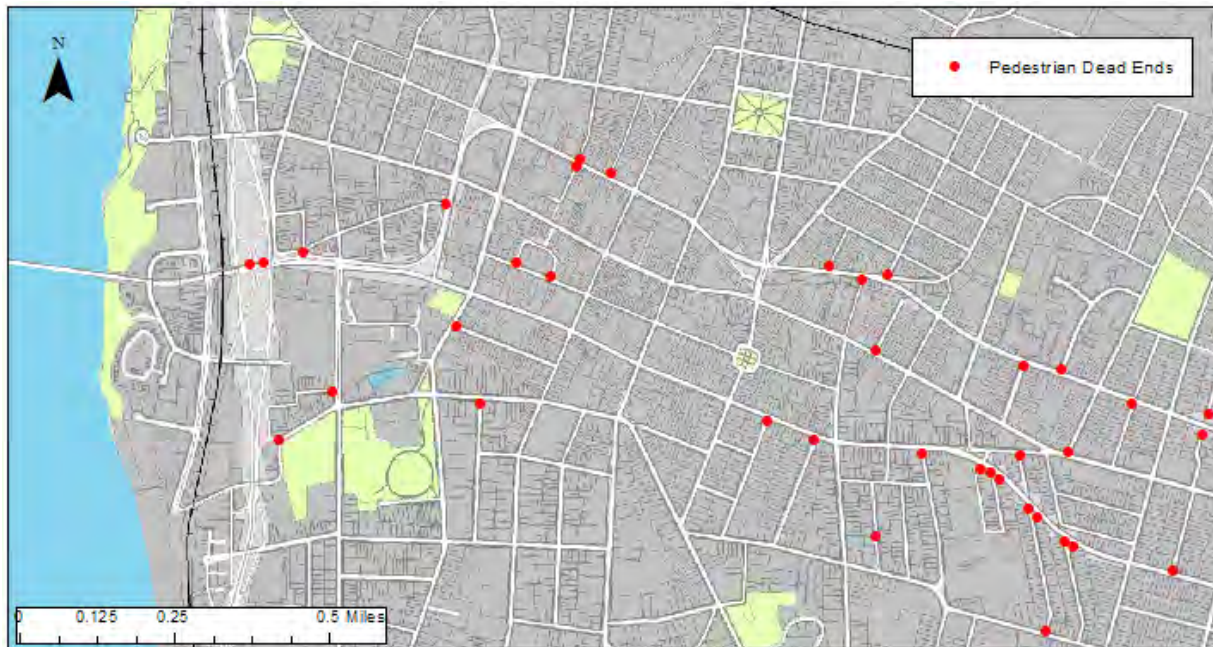
Discontinuity on Main Street is underscored by the many parking lots that disrupt the street wall and legibility of the downtown's urban form. There are several large parking lots along the arterials, within the CBD, and generally surrounding Main Street. These lots detract from the perception of a welcoming and coherent built environment in downtown. The spaces provided in public and private parking lots are disproportionately high considering low rates of car ownership among Main Street residents. The number of spaces is geared largely toward people who drive into Poughkeepsie to work during the week, but the lots are generally not filled during business hours, and even less so in the evenings and on the weekends. The surface-level parking lots are underutilizing space that could otherwise support residents and businesses within the city.

The confluence of parking lots, pedestrian barriers, and inconsistent building form appears most prevalently as a disconnecting force between the waterfront and the Central



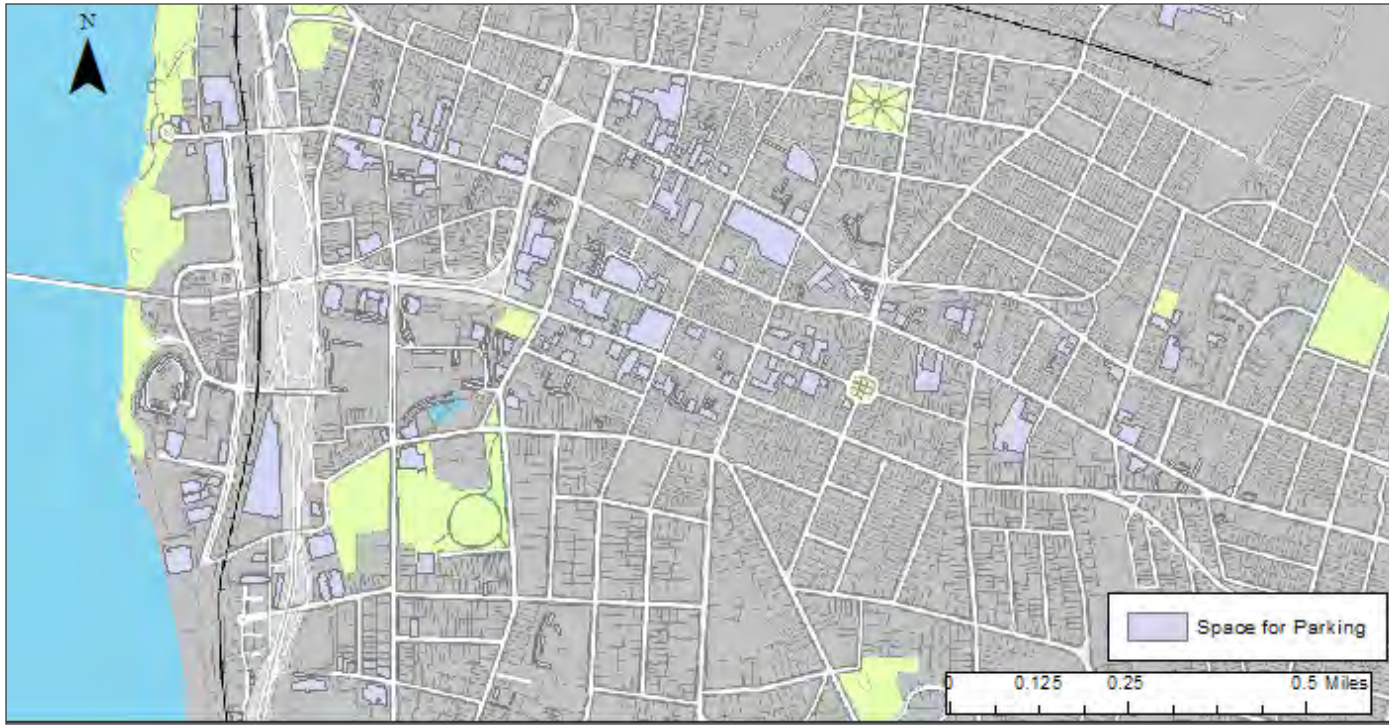


A 1874 map of Poughkeepsie (left) shows many streets that led from the CBD and surrounding neighborhoods to the waterfront. The area between the two bridges contained at least five streets that ended at the waterfront (indicated with orange circles). Today, only Main Street remains as a viable vehicular and pedestrian connection and the rest terminate before Route 9.



Pedestrian dead-ends in the study area are represented by red dots. The majority of pedestrian dead-ends are around the arterial island and southeast of the island.





Parking lots distributed throughout Poughkeepsie's downtown create a disconnect in the city's urban form.



parking lot, approach from waterfront

Business District and Middle Main neighborhood. Interviews with local business owners and residents indicated that Main Street does serve as an important link to the waterfront and that the perceived barriers in terms of urban form may not be as limiting as they appear on paper. However, there are factors that could be improved to encourage an even more inviting sense of connection.

The Route 9 highway that runs over Main Street adjacent to the Poughkeepsie Train Station. When pedestrians arrive on the train, they are greeted by highway infrastructure that they must walk underneath in order to gain access to the commercial center along Main Street. There is little indication in the urban form that anything significant lies beyond the highways, potentially deterring comfortable pedestrian activity.

Lower Main and the waterfront suffer from a lack of consistent street wall, as there is not a clear connection between the various components of the built environment. Two high-rise





Waryas Park infrastructure



One of the many municipal parking lots located within the CBD, this large lot on Cannon Street between Market and Academy streets connects directly to Main Street through the pedestrian walkway at Liberty Street

apartment buildings closer to the waterfront are not consistent with the lower scale older buildings in Lower Main and do not relate directly to the sidewalk due to the setbacks, parking lots, and lack of first floor commercial access. Coherence between the pedestrian-friendly Waryas Park along the river and the rest of Main Street is lacking as people can enjoy the park without being drawn further east on Main Street. The waterfront park is heavily loaded with pedestrian infrastructure, unlike the rest of Main Street.

The evolution of urban form on Main Street from tightly packed commercial buildings to disconnection caused by urban renewal has impeded pedestrian life in the city. Improving crosswalks and signage infrastructure in addition to general urban form is important in creating an environment that welcomes and invites pedestrians to interact with it. The disconnection of urban form in downtown Poughkeepsie has created challenges, yet there is potential in the existing built landscape to increase connectivity and reinforce the role of Main Street as a central path through the city.

### ***Development Potential***

Main Street's built fabric is pocketed and disrupted across its span by empty lots and parking lots. Parking lots occupy a huge portion of land within the CBD, and clusters of parking lots and vacant lots are found in the eastern area of Main Street. Such "soft sites" can sometimes auger a threat to the historic corridor of Main Street. Lot aggregation is a common strategy to amass land area to allow for larger construction, and could endanger some contributing historic structures, especially those isolated by vacancies surrounding them (see Use section), and further disrupt street wall continuity along Main Street.

Nonetheless, these spaces present opportunities within Poughkeepsie for new construction and redevelopment, especially as the city is beginning to experience increased development interest. The variation in size of existing open space provides a range of possibilities. Some individual or clustered vacant parcels in the CBD or nearby can only



accommodate relatively small-scale new construction, hemmed in by the buildings on either side. These parcels are assets that provide opportunities to maintain the existing scale of the corridor and introduce new infill that is contextual and reflective of its surroundings. Towards the eastern end are larger lots that signal more potential for a range of interventions, and the identified factors of street wall and accessibility could be more robustly reinforced in this east portion of Main Street by well-considered design. The parking lots of the western portion of Main Street are also an opportunity to improve the pedestrian experience and encourage connection between the waterfront and the CBD through a perceived Main Street corridor.

## USE

Main Street is a valuable physical corridor created through the form of its buildings. Yet it is equally important for its historic and present-day function as a mixed-use corridor. The vitality of Main Street stems from shared commercial, residential, and civic use. The identity of Main Street is most commonly associated with the concentrated retail and commercial activity in the Central Business District, and across the full study area commercial uses accounts for little over half of the observed uses. There are a significant number of residential units woven throughout Main Street, often occupying several stories above a ground-floor storefront. Many city and county offices and service are housed on and around Main Street as well, underscoring the street's importance to the wider community. The age-eligible buildings of Main Street play a crucial role by providing space for all three uses, and more importantly by mixing them together. Compact, older buildings were originally designed to be mixed-use and support the amount of density and vitality that is sought and planned for today.

### ***Residential***

Because the Main Street corridor continues to function as the economic, social, and public services center of Poughkeepsie, the residential use of the area is sometimes inconspicuous. Yet Main Street contains hundreds of housing units, and the older

**43%**  
of Main Street  
buildings contain  
residential use

**81%**  
of residential  
use occurs in old  
buildings

**60%**  
of Main Street  
buildings contain  
commercial use

**81%**  
of commercial  
use occurs in old  
buildings

buildings particularly provide much needed housing in already mixed-use buildings. The studio's building survey found that 43% of all Main Street buildings include some residential use, and 88.5% are in age-eligible buildings. Residential use has always been present on Main Street, as apartments above commercial storefronts and walkable neighborhoods were historically more prevalent. The close proximity to goods and services, the train, and trolley made Main Street a convenient place to live, and as the city center, business owners and operators could be close to their places of work.

The census block groups that encompass the Main Street study area between the waterfront and White Street have over 700 housing units, while the blocks for the easternmost section of Main show slightly fewer. This is among the highest density of housing units per census block across Dutchess County (U.S. Census Bureau 2015). Land use data from the Dutchess County Assessor has designations for residential use

(multi-family homes, single-family homes, commercial units with residential usage, agricultural complexes with residential use, etc.), yet it does not reflect known units along Main Street (NYS Tax Parcels 2017). While it is difficult to collect an exact number of residential units on Main Street, there is sufficient evidence to show that it is an important residential corridor.

Residential uses are dispersed throughout Main Street, with the exception of the intersection of Main and Market streets. This corresponds to the urban renewal Civic Center, several historic commercial and civic buildings (including the courthouse), and the 1980s One Civic Center Plaza building. Modern high-density apartment buildings are located toward the waterfront, but otherwise the majority of units are in age-eligible buildings. East of the Central Business District contains the most residential use and pockets of older buildings, despite lower building density and disruptions by vacant lots. The modern apartments notably do not have first floor retail storefronts and are surrounded by surface parking lots. This new building typology introduced in the wake of urban renewal contrasts with the more ubiquitous nineteenth and early twentieth century mixed-use building typology. A handful of residential age-eligible buildings also lack a commercial ground floor, yet are adjacent to mixed-use buildings or designed in the same style, softening their visual impact. Main Street, and particularly the older buildings, houses a substantial residential community that supports an urban vitality that is distinct from solely commercial endeavors.

### ***Commercial***

Main Street is most commonly associated with commercial activity and the older buildings contribute to this commercial use. Of the field survey results, recorded at the level of individual storefronts, 60% are used for commercial purposes. This overarching category encompasses retail, grocery stores, restaurants and bars, offices, and all other non-retail endeavors. Over a quarter of all commercial uses were restaurants and bars, illustrating that food is a significant contributor to the overall vitality of Main Street. These businesses are well distributed across the study area, with



Modern apartment buildings surrounded by surface parking are present in the western portion of Main Street.



One block west of the above apartment tower is a row of early twentieth century residential mixed-use buildings that survived urban renewal.



slight concentrations in the central and eastern portions, echoing historic patterns of commercial use on Main Street extending well beyond the confines of the Central Business District.

Most of the commercial activity (81%) occurs in age-eligible buildings, indicating that older buildings provide most of the space for this dominant and historic function of Main Street. These age-eligible buildings are spread across the study area. Main Street has a distinct character of small businesses and family-run enterprises. The old buildings in particular provide small-scale and often economically viable space for these businesses, and several businesses have occupied different locations along Main Street over their long tenures.

### ***Occupancy***

Despite the clear presence of commercial and residential activities along Main Street, building and lot vacancies challenge the perception of a cohesive corridor at the pedestrian level. Just as the previously discussed physical characteristics of urban form impact the pedestrian experience of Main Street as a continuous entity, overall low occupancy rates detract from a vibrant streetscape. Building vacancy is already an identified issue and a target for ongoing city and community action (Kevin Dwarka LLC Planning & Land Use Consultants 2015; Middle Main Initiative 2015). When examining Main Street, the studio survey results returned a 56% occupancy rate (170 occupied out of 304 total entries). Of the remaining sites, 14% are partially occupied (43 entries), and 13% are unoccupied (40 entries). Parking lots or vacant lots comprise the remaining 17% and are therefore not applicable; however, these vacant lots have their own impact on the street that contributes to perceptions of vacancy.

The older buildings on Main Street have a higher occupancy rate than Main Street as a whole. Of the 197 age-eligible building entries, 66% are occupied, 17% are partially occupied, and 17% were unoccupied. This higher occupancy suggests that older buildings are attracting commercial and rental tenants and are contributing factors to Main Street vitality.



Historic buildings at 382-394 Main Street were recently renovated to have residential apartments above ground-floor stores, anchoring the southwest corner of Main and Hamilton streets.



Four businesses occupy the ground floor of this historic building at Main and Clinton streets, including the Jamaican restaurant Pat's Kitchen.



The vacant storefronts in the Central Business District, such as these two storefronts located in one of the Main Mall Row buildings, present challenges to economic vitality but are also opportunities for new businesses and growth.

However, plenty of old buildings are unoccupied or partially occupied, and are therefore ideal targets for rehabilitation and reuse.

A high number of vacant storefronts (a subset of the vacancies outlined above) contribute to the issue of building vacancy and are detrimental to the perception of healthy commercial activity. Old buildings host the majority of vacant storefronts on Main Street, and through reactivation have the potential to contribute even more positively to the street. The survey identified 49 vacant storefronts on Main Street. This included vacant ground floor commercial space in otherwise occupied buildings as well as completely unoccupied buildings. This translates to 14% of the full Main Street area. Of those 49 vacancies, 41 (83%) were located in age-eligible buildings.

The Central Business District contains 27 of the total number of vacant storefronts, and 25 of these vacancies are within age-eligible buildings. Such a large concentration of vacant storefronts is a concern for an area that is supposed to be the hub of commercial activity. However, it indicates that the Central Business District is an area ripe for reinvestment. The vacant storefronts were cited as a challenge by the interviewed Main Street business operators, who would like to see the spaces filled to continue an upward trend of pedestrian-level commercial activity, and also as an opportunity for expansion. The older buildings tend to have smaller footprints and usually accommodate two or more businesses on the ground floor, which encourages higher density, the potential for more jobs per square foot, and lower costs. These spaces can support new small businesses that need affordable space or a “starter” or incubator space. Supporting local businesses and job creation is a priority for the city and emphasized by programs like the Middle Main Initiative’s Made in Middle Main business network. A few of the vacancies are located in buildings with larger, one story footprints, found in the eastern half of Main Street, and provide space for other types of businesses that require more square footage. As the older buildings tend to have higher visual accessibility, they are well suited to commercial and retail reuse.



## RESIDENTIAL COMMUNITY

Poughkeepsie is home to a diverse residential community. Of the city's current population of 30,635 people, the largest racial and ethnic groups are White (39%), Black (34%), and Hispanic or Latino (20%). Since 2000, there has been a 10% decrease in white residents and a 10% increase of Hispanic or Latino residents (Regional Plan Association and Hudson Valley Pattern for Progress 2015). Nearly a quarter (23.4%) of the population speaks a language other than English at home, and 19.6% of the population was not born in the United States (U.S. Census Bureau 2015).

The demographics of the Main Street area (primarily census tract 2211.0, including most of the arterial island) vary from those of the city writ large. They provide a more nuanced representation of the population that calls Main Street home in terms of density, diversity, and socio-economics. The following analysis of Poughkeepsie's social fabric derives from US Census and American Community Survey (ACS) data from 1970 to 2015.

### ***Population Density***

Overall, the city's current population density is similar to what it was in 1970. However, between 1970 and 1980 there was a decline in density in tandem with urban renewal efforts, including the East-West Arterial highway construction and the creation of Main Mall in the Central Business District. After 1980, density remained relatively low until 2010. Between 2010 and 2015, there is a higher rate of growth, resulting in levels of density akin to those of 1970. Compared to the rest of Poughkeepsie, Main Street has a higher population density, with 12,869 people per square mile, compared to Poughkeepsie's 5,955 people per square mile. The rise and fall of population density surrounding Main Street correlates to the overall population changes Poughkeepsie has experienced between 1920 and 2015. The significant growth in Main Street population density since 2010, compared to the more moderate population growth of Poughkeepsie writ large suggests that more people are moving to the Main Street

area, which comprises around 14% of the entire population of Poughkeepsie.



Boundary of U.S. Census tract 2211

Average population density of  
the City of Poughkeepsie:

**5,995**

people per square mile

Population density of the  
Main Street area:

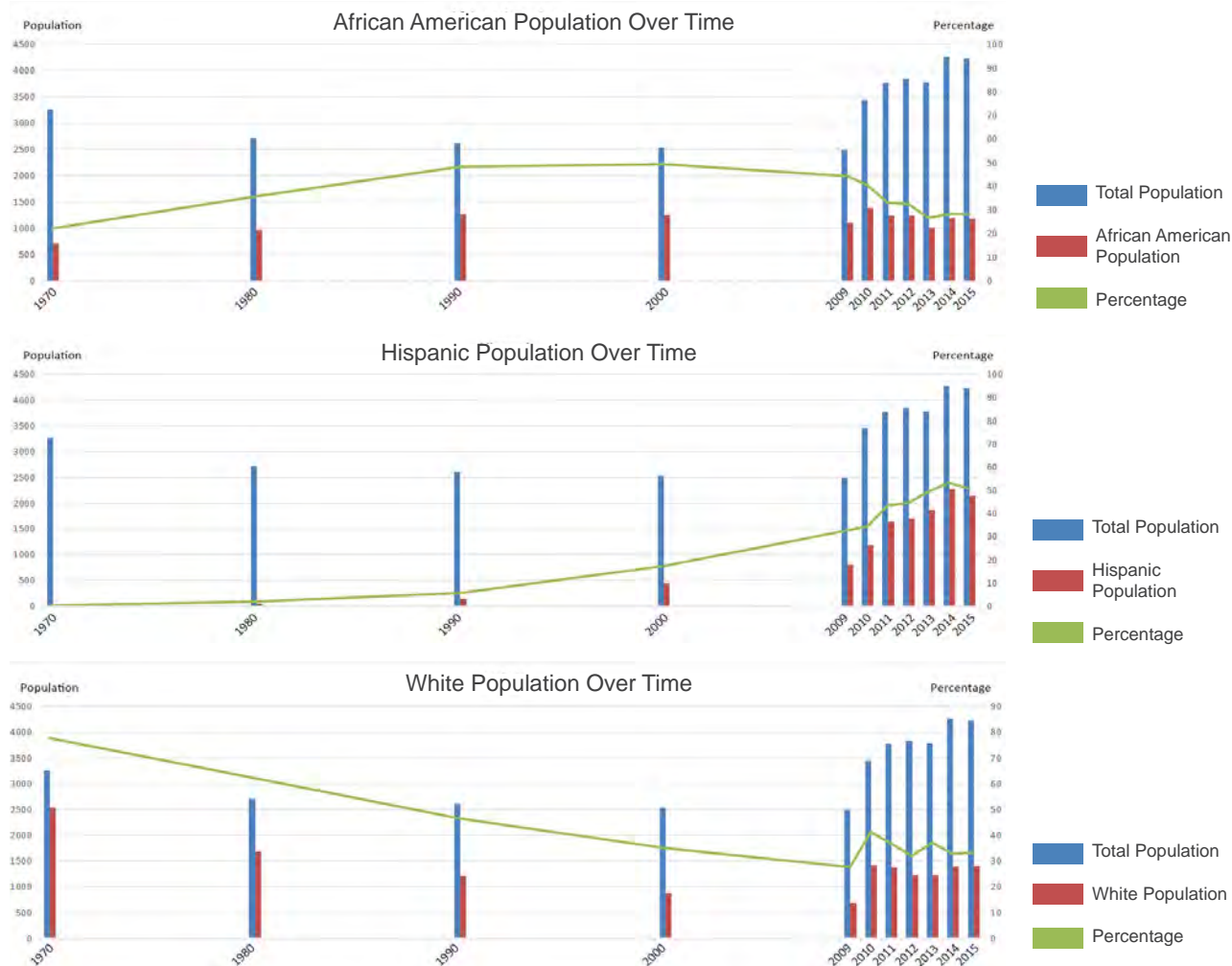
**12,869**

people per square mile

## Diversity

Poughkeepsie's diverse city population is represented on Main Street, in higher concentrations. Since 2009, the Hispanic population has been a significant contributor to the neighborhood's population growth, with steady growth since 1970; it constitutes over 50% of the Main Street population. The African American population in the Main Street area rose gradually from around 20% to 50% between 1970 and 2000. The overall population of the corridor has grown since 2009,

largely due to the increase of Hispanic residents. The African American population now constitutes only about a quarter of Main Street's community, but has remained stable in overall numbers. The Asian population in Poughkeepsie has always been relatively low. Although a small presence, Asians have resided in the Main Street area since the 1980s; a couple of Chinese restaurants, still open today along Main Street, reflect this small community. Since 1970, the white population around Main Street has steadily declined.



In 2015,  
**19%**  
of City of  
Poughkeepsie  
residents were  
foreign-born

**39.75%**  
of Main Street  
corridor residents  
were foreign-born

The above graphs illustrate changes over time in the diverse populations within the Main Street area.



The diversity of Main Street is partly due to the high concentration of foreign-born residents. Despite the total population decrease during 1970 to 2009 period, the percentage of foreign-born Poughkeepsie residents has steadily risen, with a 13% increase since 2000. In the Main Street area, from 1970 to 2015, the foreign-born population grew from less than 10% to nearly 40%.

### ***Socio-Economics***

Within the Main Street census tract exists a diverse, yet arguably vulnerable community. The population is generally less educated compared to the rest of Poughkeepsie and New York State. The Main Street community has about a 64% high school graduation rate, compared to Poughkeepsie's 79% and New York State's 86% high school graduation rate (U.S. Census Bureau 2015). According to the ACS 2015 5-Year Estimates, the median household yearly income in the City of Poughkeepsie is \$38,919, compared to the Dutchess County median of \$71,904 (U.S. Census Bureau 2015). Main Street's median household yearly income is slightly lower than that of the city, at \$37,566. However, income growth has been disparate and unevenly distributed. The average household income in the Main Street area grew at less than half the rate of Dutchess County income between 1970 and 2010.

The most common industries in the City of Poughkeepsie are healthcare and social assistance, educational services, and retail. Meanwhile, the most common jobs are Administrative Supervisors, Retail Supervisors, and Food & Serving Supervisors (U.S. Census Bureau 2015). The unemployment rate within the study area has been on the rise since 2010. Unemployment has plagued the Main Street community with rates double that of rest of the city and the state. In the 2015, the unemployment rate within the Main Street area was 13.46%, compared to 5.8% within the City of Poughkeepsie and a national average of 4.9% (U.S. Census Bureau 2015).

As of 2015, nearly a quarter (24.1%) of the population of Poughkeepsie City lives below the poverty line (U.S. Census Bureau 2015), and the statistics are only slightly higher in the

Main Street area with 26.25% living in poverty. In Dutchess County as a whole, less than 6% of the population lives in poverty. Within the City of Poughkeepsie, 24% of residents receive food assistance benefits (Regional Plan Association and Hudson Valley Pattern for Progress 2015).

In general, the City of Poughkeepsie has been economically disadvantaged since the late twentieth century, and has not shared in the income and educational advances experienced by Dutchess County writ large. The Main Street corridor has been an amplifier of each of the social and economic issues that has heavily impacted and impaired the City as a whole.

#### Unemployment (as of 2015):

United States: 4.9%  
City of Poughkeepsie: 5.8%  
**Main Street area: 13.46%**

#### Average household income in Dutchess County:

1970: \$12,735  
**2010: \$98,684**

#### Average household income in the Main Street area:

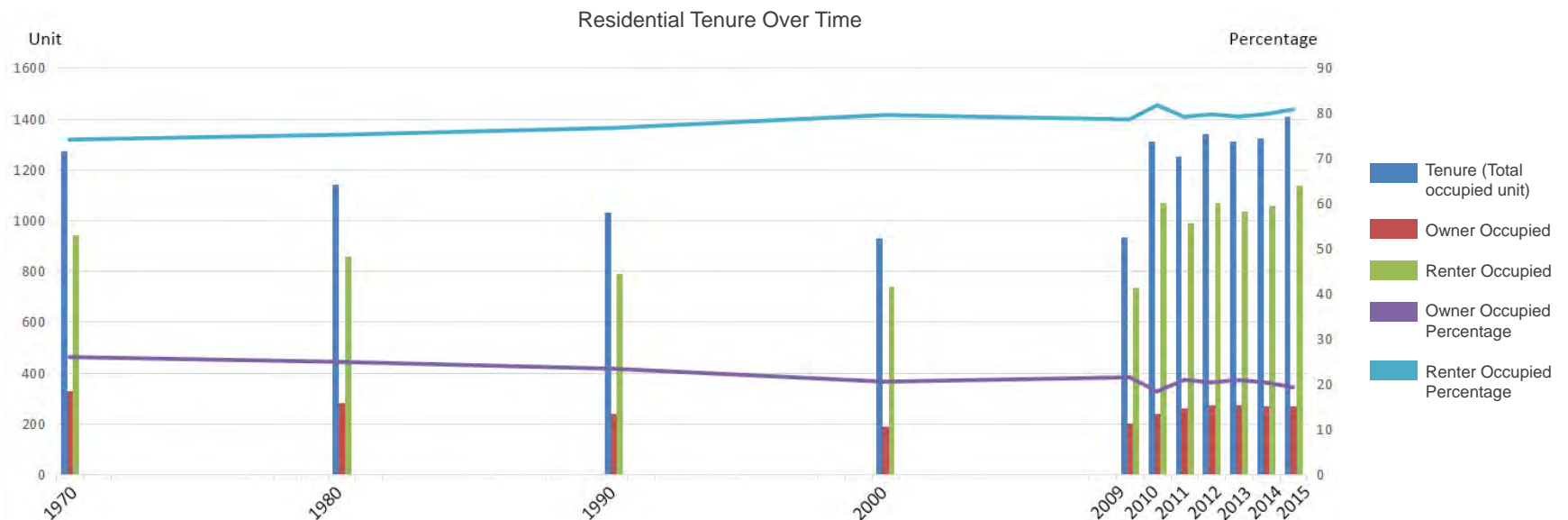
1970: \$10,100  
**2010: \$35,606**

## Housing and Transportation

The Main Street neighborhood is largely dominated by renters, with an increase in renting and a decrease in homeownership between 1970 and 2015. There is a notable decline from 1970 to 2000 in the total number of occupied housing units in the area, correlating with urban renewal and the economic decline of Poughkeepsie's Main Street. However, the number of occupied housing units has been increasing from 2009 to 2015. There are less than 124 owner occupied in the Main Street census block, one of the lowest concentrations in Poughkeepsie. Meanwhile the concentration of occupied rental units (480) in the same census block ranks high within all of Dutchess County. This high renter ratio can contribute to tenure vulnerability and inhibit wealth creation through homeownership. On average, 38% of a Main Street household's income is spent on housing and transportation combined; the threshold of affordability is generally 45%, per the Center for Neighborhood Technology's Housing and Transportation (H+T) Affordability Index. Any investment in the Main Street area will need to consider the vulnerability of the largely rental community to prevent displacement.

The aforementioned vulnerability is made more acute when car ownership is included as a factor. Renting households in the Main Street area have, on average, zero to one vehicle, while owner-occupied households have two to three vehicles. Lower rates of car ownership among renters indicate that many residents are reliant on public transportation in and around Main Street. With the City ceasing bus service and Dutchess County planning to provide expanded service, meeting the needs of the Main Street community in this transition will be critical.

The 2014 Poughkeepsie City Center Revitalization Plan included a recommendation to introduce frequent transit along Main Street, providing high-speed connections from the waterfront, to the train station, the Central Business District, the Middle Main Area and the Vassar College Campus. In addition to serving the community, the reintroduction of local transit could increase the amount of tourists to the city center and stimulate economic development (Kevin Dwarka LLC Land Use & Economic Consulting 2014). This studio's findings suggest that local transit is a priority for the Main Street area (see Proposals for further discussion of transit opportunities).





## BUSINESS AND INSTITUTIONAL COMMUNITY

### *Arts and Artists*

Poughkeepsie is home to a number of arts outlets, many of which lie in the studio's study area. Working from the waterfront up Main Street are a number of key businesses and institutions: Walkway Wools, a yarn and knit arts store; the Cuneen-Hackett Arts Center, a venue for theater, music and visual arts, and home to the Willow Dance Center; the Bardavon Theatre, the city's premiere performance venue; the New York Academy Ballet, located close to the Bardavon on Cannon Street; the Mid-Hudson Heritage Center, an arts and cultural center; the Chance Theater, a rock music venue; Queen City Tattoo Gallery, a tattoo shop and art gallery; the Underwear Factory, a new mixed-use project that will house artist and printmaking studios; and Art Centro, a community arts space that hosts artists and art classes.

With a concentration of cultural activities on and around Main Street, there is great potential to engage residents in local arts programming and training, and to make Poughkeepsie an arts destination for the rest of Dutchess County. There is already interest in creating an arts/ cultural district (see Proposals – Arts and Culture District). This opportunity has been recognized by Mayor Rolison, who said in April 2016, “The arts are part of the rebirth. We’re not going to grow without the arts and there’s so much out there.” (Poughkeepsie Journal 2016).

“The arts are part of the rebirth. We’re not going to grow without the arts and there’s so much out there.”  
(Poughkeepsie Journal 2016).



Art Centro



The pop-up shop at the Mid-Hudson Heritage Center featuring local artists.

## ***Food and Restaurants***

Poughkeepsie benefits from a wide variety of restaurants, take-outs shops, and bars (more than 50 in total) that reflect its history of cultural diversity. Main Street in particular is home to an assortment of food establishments that vary in taste, setting, and price. As a sampling, down by the waterfront, the River Station is a full-service steak and seafood restaurant that calls itself the oldest continually operating restaurant in Poughkeepsie. Up the street, past the Route 9 overpass, the eye-popping El Azteca Mexican Deli serves tacos and tamales. Across the street is The Derby, an American restaurant and pub - which also claims to be the oldest in the city. On the next block up, Milanese, a popular Italian restaurant, is a remnant of the era before urban renewal - it was spared demolition in the 1970s and 80s while so many neighboring lots were not.

Alex's Restaurant sits in a two-story Art Deco building at the corner of Main Street and Market Street, where it has been serving Dutchess County employees and visitors since 1911. Between Hamilton and Clinton Streets, Nelly's Restaurant offers Dominican food and Island Flavah serves Caribbean fare, with a focus on Jamaican food. Closer to the end of the study area is El Bracero, the first Mexican restaurant in Poughkeepsie, opened by Oaxacan immigrant Honorio Rodriguez in 1990.

## ***Religious Institutions***

Poughkeepsie has always had a multitude of religious institutions. In the Main Street area alone there are currently at least 13 religious institutions of various faiths, denominations, and sects, including Catholic, Lutheran, Pentecostal, Congregational, Baptist and Reformed churches. There is also at least one synagogue and a mosque. Some of the churches were historically divided along national and ethnic lines, such as the German Lutheran Church or the Zion African M.E. Church.

Over the past few decades decreased religious observance has become a trend nationwide. Poughkeepsie as a whole



Alex's Restaurant, housed in a 1930s Art Deco building.



El Bracero, Main Street's first Oaxacan restaurant.



has followed this trend, with a decreasing number of religious centers since the turn of the century. However, Sanborn maps show that the number of religious institutions has actually increased in the study area. In 1887 there were two religious centers, today there are 11. In countering these larger trends, these findings suggest the importance of religious institutions to the social fabric of Main Street, as well as a potential role in maintaining Poughkeepsie's cultural diversity.

### ***Educational Institutions***

Poughkeepsie was historically known as the city of schools, with many higher educational facilities in and around the city (Flad and Griffen 2009). Poughkeepsie is home to five colleges within the bounds of the town and city: Ridley-Lowell Business & Technical Institute-Poughkeepsie is in the city, while Dutchess Community College, Marist College, Vassar College, and Dutchess BOCES-Practical Nursing Program are in the town of Poughkeepsie. There are also six major colleges within 25 miles: the Culinary Institute of America (4 miles), the State University of New York at New Paltz (9 miles), Mount Saint Mary College (14 miles), Ulster County Community College (16 miles), the United States Military Academy at West Point (22 miles), and Bard College (23 miles).

Vassar and Marist historically were very involved in Poughkeepsie City, with students living in the city and faculty engaging in urban issues through field research. Invited speakers from around the country also added to Poughkeepsie's cultural life. Although less today than in the past, the students and faculty of both schools are still involved in the city, though only a limited number take advantage of the cheaper housing and the restaurants and bars in the city. Professors and their students conduct applied research in the city on issues germane to Poughkeepsie's urban agenda (Watson, Flad pers. comm. 2017). Nonetheless, multiple stakeholders and interviewees for this study commented that the students of these colleges tend to stay on their campuses, and rarely come to Main Street. Because student populations change so rapidly and many are from outside the region, and because of the increase in activities and infrastructure on

campuses, many in Poughkeepsie feel that these institutions have little interest in or incentive to invest in the future of the city (Watson, Flad pers. comm. 2017).

Other institutions, such as the Culinary Institute, SUNY New Paltz, and the community colleges have more students living in the city, taking advantage of the cheaper housing and the city's businesses. Also, the students at SUNY New Paltz and the area community colleges are more likely to be from Poughkeepsie, so they tend to have a more vested interest in the city (Watson, Flad pers. Comm. 2017).

While all of these institutions can be considered stakeholders in Main Street, they seem to have very little presence in the study area. While the research conducted for this study did not fully explore why students and faculty from these institutions underutilize Main Street, possibilities raised by interviewees included a lack of attractive activities on Main Street and the students having most of their needs met on or near their campuses (Watson, Flad pers. Comm. 2017). Increased utilization by students and faculty of Main Street, potentially living in the Main Street area and patronizing the businesses, has been viewed as an untapped opportunity that could strengthen the economy as well as the relationships between these institutions and the city.

### ***Financial Challenges***

One of Poughkeepsie's biggest challenges is its current financial situation. Due to the unmet revenue projections of earlier years, the rising costs of healthcare and labor, and the national economic recession of 2008, the city has \$11 million in general fund debt. Since coming into office two years ago, Mayor Robert Rolison's administration uncovered another \$7.8 million in unpaid bills (Fries 2016). While this debt is a formidable challenge for the city, it is important to note that total is down from 2010 debt levels of \$75.2 million, and Poughkeepsie seems poised to continue closing the gap (City of Poughkeepsie 2015).

Poughkeepsie depends significantly on financial support from New York State government -- consistently about 12% of the city's budget comes from state financial assistance, mostly for specific programs. But the city recently lost out to nearby Middletown for \$10 million in funding through the Regional Economic Development Council's Downtown Revitalization Initiative. This highlights the fact that Poughkeepsie is just one of about 40 towns and cities that New York has determined to be in a state of low to significant fiscal stress. So while this fiscal stress designation makes Poughkeepsie eligible for certain state resources, it also means that the city has significant competition from other communities for attention from the state (New York State 2017).

Beyond property taxes, the city also generates revenue from a portion of the county's sales tax, from parking pay stations, from water meters, and through the sale of tax liens on abandoned properties. This last point is interesting because it eliminates the possibility of establishing a land bank, an idea that has been suggested as a way to combat vacant properties and that has been established in nearby Newburgh. Land banks require city ownership of abandoned properties, but rather than taking ownership of the property, Poughkeepsie sells the tax liens to generate over \$1 million in revenue a year (Friesl 2016).

The closest Poughkeepsie currently has to an anchor industry cum institution is Vassar Brothers Medical Center, which employs over 1,700 people. In 2015, the hospital announced an expansion of its facilities, which will add 696,000 square feet and create 300-400 temporary construction jobs. It is believed to be the largest construction project ever undertaken in the city (City of Poughkeepsie 2015). It is currently unclear how many permanent jobs will be created by the new facilities and whether new employees would positively affect Poughkeepsie's tax base, but it does suggest the possibility of a core industry for the city.

"Poughkeepsie's vision for its future is as a self-sustaining small riverfront city with a traditional downtown and Main Street whose activities and commerce serve the surrounding neighborhoods. The City will be a place where people choose to live and work because they prefer the convenience, diversity, sense of community, entertainment and other benefits of an urban environment. Neighborhoods are well maintained and provide safe, healthy places to raise families. Work, shopping, and schools are within walking distance of each other, and the City's street system makes it easy to navigate for pedestrians and vehicles alike. The City serves as a regional hub for government, culture, education, transportation, and business. The City's waterfront will continue to be a vibrant focal point of the community. This vision is a shared goal of the community for Poughkeepsie's future." (City of Poughkeepsie 2015).



## Image

Despite a promising vision for Poughkeepsie's future, many stakeholders and references allude to the image issues that have plagued Poughkeepsie over the past few decades. Once known as the Queen City on the Hudson, its image has declined significantly in the eyes of its regional neighbors, as well as in the eyes of much of the country. Many issues have contributed to Poughkeepsie's negative reputation, including but not limited to the feeling that the city is a resource sink for the rest of the county, the perception that the Poughkeepsie has so-called "inner city problems," the school-to-prison pipeline, and the poor state of public education in the city. Online forums discussing schools and youth activities in Poughkeepsie frequently mention the problems of violence and gangs, noting the high percentages of minorities in the city's public schools (Poughkeepsie, New York 2017).

It is important to note that there are separate public school districts in Poughkeepsie: the city has a single school district and the town contains or is part of several others (Spackenkill, Arlington, Wappingers, and Hyde Park). Low performance of the city public schools continues to negatively impact Poughkeepsie's image and directly influences the residential real estate market. The Poughkeepsie City School District includes five primary schools, one middle school, one high school and one community learning center. As the financial resources of the city have diminished over time, the public schools have directly suffered. Poughkeepsie High School has 1,146 students and a 58% graduation rate according to US News & World Report (U. S. News and World Report 2017). The school is considered to be underperforming, with test scores in English and Math consistently lower than those of the rest of the state (U. S. News and World Report 2017). The overall image of the school district is not good, and contributes to the negative image of Poughkeepsie as a whole.

Like many American cities with struggling school districts, Poughkeepsie has a growing population of young people of color, mostly men, in prison. A combination of factors, such as a lack of well-paying jobs, low high school completion

rates, and problems with the justice system and policing have contributed to this problem across the country (Watson, Flad pers. Comm. 2017).

"It is critical to expand the perception and understanding of Poughkeepsie beyond a deficit model to see the richness and multiplicity of experiences that exist within the district." (Schlosser 2014)

## COLLECTIVE ACTION AND INVESTMENT

Since the 1920s, Poughkeepsie has routinely depended on outside experts to help solve problems with the city's economy and urban form, historically with limited community input. Heavy dependence on expert-led, top-down planning has frequently led to decisions that have harmed the community, especially socio-economically vulnerable and non-white residents. The scars of these failed plans have incurred a distrust of the planning community in Poughkeepsie. Today, Poughkeepsie does not have a planning commission, relying on Dutchess County to support planning initiatives within the city (Hesse 2017).

In response to this distrust, the city's more recent planning efforts have sought more robust community input, often through the use of charrettes, a public engagement tool to solicit ideas and opinions on government agendas and plans. However, after decades of urban renewal projects and post-urban renewal reduses, Poughkeepsians seem to be experiencing what the county's Community Development Coordinator Paul Hesse describes as "charrette fatigue." To combat this charrette fatigue and engage as many residents as possible, the city has embarked on creative projects to reach

the public. In the fall of 2016, the city hosted a complete street demonstration in order to bring attention to the Poughkeepsie City Center Connectivity Project. The demonstration closed off one of the lanes of Market Street with orange cones, while volunteers set up temporary tables and planters, and asked passersby about their impressions of Market Street. This approach was an attempt to generate excitement about the possibility of making more permanent changes to Market Street and to solicit impressions from new audiences beyond the “usual suspects” of the city’s charrettes (Hesse 2017).

This recent trend of empowering the public in planning decision-making is in stark contrast to the past. There are several current planning efforts advancing in city that are attempting to continue this positive trend.

### ***Central Business District Rezoning***

The City of Poughkeepsie is currently developing a rezoning plan for the Central Business District (CBD) as part of a larger urban revitalization effort. One of the six strategies outlined in the 2015 Main Street Economic Development Strategy is updating the zoning code. The rezoning strategy aims to maximize walkability and economic productivity through high-density, mixed-use development, with an emphasis on mixed-income housing. It targets vacant lots and parking lots as areas to be developed to their fullest extent without drastically changing the scale of the existing urban form (Kevin Dwarka LLC Planning & Land Use Consultants 2015). The hope is to create a downtown center that attracts and retains residents, businesses, and civic and educational institutions. The current “Central Commercial District” (C-2) zoning of the CBD aims to:

Provide for and encourage a variety of retail businesses, business and professional offices, service businesses, entertainment and cultural establishments and related activities, such as parking and pedestrian spaces, designed to serve the City and the region; to encourage the concentration of retail and service uses to achieve continuity of frontage devoted to such purposes

which will strengthen and complement one another; further, it is a purpose of this district to protect the major public investment made and to be made toward revitalization of the central business area, a vital part of the City’s tax base, by conserving the value of land and buildings (Poughkeepsie City Zoning and Land Use Regulations 1996).

Uses permitted in C-2 areas are retail, business, and service-oriented. Residential use is restricted to “urban density” multi-unit structures provided the first floor is devoted to retail or service use (Poughkeepsie City Zoning and Land Use Regulations 1996). The opportunity that Poughkeepsie has in rezoning the CBD is to move away from overemphasizing commercial use, and move towards a better functioning network of mixed-use buildings, including increased residential, while still supporting current and new businesses downtown. It provides the opportunity to increase private investment and economic vitality, and to help improve street wall integrity and accessibility through design regulation, while also addressing concerns of displacement with provisions for mixed-income housing. A city-backed land use inventory of all the buildings in the CBD followed the Main Street Economic Development Strategy and combined Dutchess County Tax Assessor parcel data with observed data on tenants, distinctive architectural elements, access, and indications of distress, vacancy, or violations (Kevin Dwarka LLC Planning & Land Use Consultants 2016). The survey serves as a tool for officials and planners to examine how rezoning might operate on a building-by-building level, with close attention to the uses, tenants, and architecture.

Recent zoning amendments for the Walkway-Gateway District (near the Walkway Over the Hudson) and Waterfront Transit-Oriented Development District (near the train station) have introduced form-based codes into Poughkeepsie’s zoning controls (Wouters 2015, 28). A form-based code aims to create predictability for developers and designers and to ensure that new buildings are compatible with the city’s existing architectural scale and appearance. The design parameters that accompany form-based codes create an acceptable



standard for new buildings and can streamline planning review processes. The recent rezoning plans suggest adopting form-based codes in the CBD. The many underused parking lots and vacant lots along Main Street and in the CBD are recognized opportunities for new construction, and a form-based zoning code allows an increased amount of control over the aesthetics as well as use. Such plans to encourage development and investment are often accompanied by concerns about threats to historic buildings and displacement of residents from the CBD and surrounding area. Rezoning would allow for private investment to develop sites in the CBD (presumably) to maximize profit, and added measures may be needed to protect current residents and historic buildings. If this form-based code is pursued, it is incumbent upon those initially developing the design standards to ensure that sufficient research and community engagement are undertaken to mitigate potentially negative consequences.

Notably, the existing zoning amendments do not include requirements or provisions for affordable housing. One of the outlined purposes of the Waterfront Transit-Oriented Development District is “to create a more complete and diverse neighborhood with a balanced mix of housing types and incomes” (Waterfront Transit-Oriented Development District 2014). Residential use and the inclusion of above-ground floor residential is encouraged within the district, but it does not appear to be ensured by the language of the amendment. While the downtown rezoning strategy calls out incentivizing mixed income housing and seeks to increase residential use, requirements for affordable housing opportunities are not explicit.

Another concern with incentivizing development and higher density buildings is lot aggregation and demolition (see previous section, Understanding Main Street Today – Urban Form - Development Potential). Although this issue is not imminent in downtown Poughkeepsie, there is potential for developers to purchase adjoining lots and demolish the existing buildings in order to create a larger footprint for construction. The downtown parking lots have already been identified as targets for consolidation and redevelopment, so

buildings adjacent to those lots are possibly more vulnerable, as are lots containing older buildings in deteriorating condition. While a wholesale limitation on lot consolidation may not be appropriate in all cases for the downtown area, the rezoning plan is not yet clear on limits and additional design review in cases of age-eligible buildings. The city has stated that it hopes to retain the downtown area’s “historic Main Street,” and much will depend on how this is characterized and delimited (City of Poughkeepsie 2015).

The city has also considered seeking National Register eligibility for a historic district in the Central Business District area. National Register designation differs from local historic districting. If a property is listed on the National Register, there are no guarantees that it is protected from demolition, as the property owner retains the right to change their property in any way. However, National Register designation and eligibility both open up the possibility for obtaining tax credits that would incentivize preservation projects on Main Street. The highest concentration of vacant storefronts, continuous street wall, and age-eligible buildings identified in the field survey exist between Market Street and Hamilton Street on Main Street. The consistent residential-over-commercial building typology, current National Register listings, and a majority of age-eligible buildings make an historic district a plausible opportunity in the CBD (see Proposals section for further discussion).

The planned changes to Poughkeepsie zoning offer the opportunity to address the land use needs of the city’s current population while considering possible detrimental effects on Main Street’s communities and historic buildings.

### ***Waterfront Development***

Two of Poughkeepsie’s primary environmental assets are bodies of water. The Hudson River serves as the city’s western border, and it historically drove the development and economy of Poughkeepsie. Similarly, the Fall Kill Creek provided a means of industrialization for Poughkeepsie with the village’s first mills, and has changed over time with additions and demolitions of dams. The river and creek are assets today

because they provide residents the opportunity for waterfront recreation. The creek's connectivity and small-scale beauty opens up to the wide Hudson River and offers a variety of natural landscapes. Capitalizing on these assets is of great interest to the city, as both are close to the train station, providing a convenient destination for visitors and residents alike.

Poughkeepsie's waterfront has been host to a number of events over the years, including restored boat sailings and regattas; however access to the waterfront was severely diminished with the construction of Route 9. It is now only accessible via three streets that run below the raised highway (including Main Street). Two parks were created on the waterfront after the urban renewal period, Waryas Park and Kaal Rock Park. The city has expressed interest in connecting these two parks around Kaal Rock in order to forge links to a longer portion of the waterfront, with more continuous pedestrian access to both parks. Just north of these two parks, the Walkway over the Hudson offers an attraction for walking,

jogging, and biking over the river, and provides unmatched views of the river.

The waterfront is currently experiencing heightened development interest and planning attention, often overshadowing important development efforts afoot in other parts of the city. Recognition of the natural assets at the waterfront drove the creation and adoption of the Poughkeepsie Waterfront Redevelopment Strategy in 2014. The strategy outlined the city's overarching goals to enhance connectivity from the waterfront to Main Street and nearby neighborhoods, and illustrated a park improvement plan with increased recreational and redevelopment opportunities (Wouters 2014). As discussed earlier, the city's strategy also proposed a Waterfront Transit-Oriented Development District that would employ a form-based code zoning amendment. This district was adopted into the city zoning code in November 2014 with the purpose of creating a recreational, residential, and commercial hub that connects pedestrians to the train station, Main Street, and the waterfront



View from Waryas Park, with the Hudson and the Walkway Over the Hudson featured on the left, and picnic tables and pavilions featured throughout the park.



parks (City of Poughkeepsie 2014). A hotel, public market plaza, new parking structures to replace surface parking lots, townhouses and multifamily housing, and retail are all proposed for the waterfront district parcels. Beyond this identified district, hundreds of new residential and mixed-use units are currently in planning stages and under construction along the waterfront. Although the Redevelopment Strategy intends to connect the waterfront and downtown, it is uncertain how the rest of Main Street will effectively capitalize on this development, and how the Main Street community might be affected.



The view of the Mid-Hudson Bridge from Waryas Park.



View north at the entrance to the Train Station from Main Street. The Walkway Over the Hudson is featured prominently in the waterfront vista.



View west from the Train Station onto a parking lot adjacent to Waryas Park and existing restaurant and commercial space.

## Fall Kill Plan

The Fall Kill Creek runs through the neighborhoods north of Main Street, connecting major areas of recent investment including the Walkway Over the Hudson, Middle Main, the Underwear Factory, and the waterfront. The Fall Kill Watershed Committee, formed in 2002, serves as an advisory board for the watershed of the Fall Kill Creek and is represented by a coalition of community groups, educational institutions, businesses, local government officials, environmental advocates, social services groups, and interested community members who live and work in the Fall Kill watershed. Plans for the development of a pocket park and trail connector would maximize the natural landscape of the Fall Kill to activate pedestrian leisure activity throughout the city. The Fall Kill Plan offers an enormous opportunity for connectivity, interpretation, and urban design. But the plan also highlights the creek's problematic current conditions and challenges to its reinvention.



The Fall Kill Plan and the opportunities it offers to connect five different neighborhoods, including the Transit Oriented Development Zone and Middle Main on Main Street.

The Fall Kill Watershed begins north of Poughkeepsie in the town of Clinton, and runs south through nearby Hyde Park, Pleasant Valley, and Poughkeepsie Town, before ending in the City of Poughkeepsie at the Hudson River. Any pollution in the watershed from municipalities north of Poughkeepsie affects the southern portion of the Fall Kill. However, most of the developed areas along the watershed are in Poughkeepsie, both the city and the town. The 2012 Fall Kill Watershed Source Assessment Management Plan concluded that the entire length of the Fall Kill has been negatively impacted by human activity, including yard and lawn conditions, rooftops, storm drain inlets, sidewalks, curbs and gutters. Rainwater runoff can cause flooding, and wash off pollutants and debris all contribute to the negative impact on the creek. Especially in the City of Poughkeepsie, the infrastructure of combined sewers creates a pollution problem. When there are high volumes of precipitation, especially in the areas where water volumes are poorly controlled by large expanses of concrete landscapes, the sewers overflow into the creek, spreading both runoff and sewer water into the creek and creating high volumes of fecal coliform in the water (Palmer and Hesse 2012). This pollution necessitates changes in infrastructure and population behavior.

The Fall Kill Plan's ultimate goal is to create, in phases, a connection via walking, biking paths, and pocket parks from the Hudson River waterfront to the northeast corner of the City of Poughkeepsie. The first phase is the creation of pocket parks that would be located at Verrazano Boulevard and Mill Street, close to the train station and the Hudson, Malcolm X Park near the north side neighborhoods, and the Crossroads at Mill and Clinton Street near Middle Main. The very first pocket park is planned at the recently opened Underwear Factory. These pocket parks would help to connect a pathway along the Fall Kill as well as serve as centers for neighborhood activities, activating space that is either unused or is currently causing environmental damage from former parking lot usage.

Although the Fall Kill plan definitely strives for social inclusion by connecting neighborhoods of minority and immigrant populations, which were often devalued by past projects and



development, the potential for displacement is worrisome. The Fall Kill Plan seeks to strengthen economic vitality through the proposed market places and community activities along the Fall Kill, thereby supporting a stronger business core in Middle Main and along the creek. However, the Fall Kill runs extremely close to neighborhood homes, and in some instances requires lot size reduction to allow for the parks. Although the plan does not seek to displace people, it may cause people to lose portions of their property, and there is potential for the development to increase property values. Given the high number of renters in the Main Street area (see Understanding Main Street Today – Residential Community – Housing and Transportation), an increase in property values could drive up rental prices, and potentially contribute to displacement if not proactively managed. Nonetheless, feedback from the Fall Kill Plan Kick-off meeting and public meetings show that the community is interested in making this happen (Hudson River Sloop Clearwater et al 2012).

Because it links a number of different neighborhoods in Poughkeepsie, the Fall Kill has the potential to act as a strong physical connection for the city. By engaging and uniting different people along the creek in these neighborhoods, the Fall Kill Plan offers the opportunity to foster community pride in the city's environment. The Fall Kill plan is an exciting collective action plan that serves an historic and environmental Poughkeepsie asset. The historic resources located along the creek, and the connection to Middle Main and the Underwear Factory provide the opportunity to extend connection between north side neighborhoods and Main Street.

### ***Middle Main Initiative***

One of the most highly visible examples of collective action in the studio's study area is the Middle Main Initiative. Middle Main is a program of Hudson River Housing, a non-profit organization dedicated to helping residents of Dutchess County find affordable housing. The organization seeks to activate the Middle Main area of the arterial island. One of their prominent initiatives is the "Vacant to Vibrant" program that "aspires to embolden entrepreneurs and investors to



Fall Kill Creek as it runs behind the Underwear Factory near Main Street.



The Fall Kill Creek, located on the rear side of the parking lots, as it runs behind the Underwear Factory, a fire station and the Trolley Barn.

join Hudson River Housing in activating Poughkeepsie's historic commercial corridor" by informing people about the current assets that exist on Main Street, highlighting the demand for new businesses, and informing the public about available resources and incentives (Vacant to Vibrant 2017). While the CBD lies within the Middle Main area, the rest of the neighborhood has been seen decades worth of disinvestment. By naming this section of Main Street "Middle Main" and sustaining a responsive and dedicated presence in the neighborhood, the Middle Main Initiative helps to generate a sense of community and belonging. Placemaking devices like trash can covers, Middle Main signage, as well as entrepreneur leadership training, community trash clean-ups, and surveys all help people who live in this area feel like their neighborhood is significant and cared for.



Hudson River Housing's Middle Main initiative trash-can signage being installed at the opening of the Glebe House on April 22, 2017.

There are other community organizations with a presence on Main Street to varying degrees, including Scenic Hudson, Dutchess County Historical Society, Sloop Clearwater, Nobody Leaves Mid-Hudson, as well as many religious institutions. However, it is Middle Main that has been the most prominent and is putting forth the most sustained effort.

While there is a persistent negative image associated with the City of Poughkeepsie, there also exists significant pride of place among residents in the Main Street area. This pride was captured by a Community Impact Measurement Survey done by Middle Main in 2016. A majority of residents on Main Street (66%) reported being satisfied with their neighborhood and overwhelmingly felt satisfied with the response time of public services like the fire department, emergency medical services, sanitation collection and the police force. Importantly, the survey also asked residents if they would be willing to work with others to make improvements to the neighborhood and if they felt like they could make a positive difference - the responses were again overwhelmingly positive with 87% and 89% answering "yes," respectively. This pride of place translated to community service - 47% of survey respondents had attended a community clean up in the past year, 64% had supported a local business, and 59% had participated in a community meeting or social event (Middle Main 2016). The results of this survey are an indication that, at least in the Middle Main area, residential dedication to the neighborhood represents a powerful resource for the community.



Middle Main flag along Main Street. Each flag highlights different businesses and organizations in the neighborhood.



DOUGHKEEPSIE  
*in motion*







## PROPOSALS



# PROPOSALS

Fundamental to the composition of the city as a whole is a typology of ethnic enclaves both celebrated and forgotten, a marked infrastructural dependency on the car, and the legacies of economic fallout from paternalistic industry-past. A civic climate fatigued by disengaged, top-down planning, and an underemployed strategic toolbox for preservation further exacerbate these conditions.

Main Street, in turn, demonstrates a scarred but intact urban form—a disrupted but viably consistent street wall with diverse architectural character—and historically continuous mixed-use. The rise of the immigrant and minority communities on Main Street, both residentially and through an established small business presence, helps to characterize this study area as demonstrating significant cultural resources and collective practices of use that have seized upon the built form as an important urban feature. Though the city faces acute financial challenges, an unpopular public image, and frustrated legacies of attempts to establish popular collective agency, there exist networks of positive and strategically engaged aspirations for the city and for Main Street that cannot and should not be dismissed.

The proposals that follow have approached preservation as both a measured lens and tactical support system, engaged to strengthen connections between people and place. It will not be by any one intervention that Poughkeepsie achieves inclusionary vibrancy, nor should it be. Nevertheless, preservation can contribute advantageously to the approach.

The development of proposals derived from the studio's five key findings and an understanding of Main Street's significance as a dynamic mixed-use corridor and anchor of important communities. To establish criteria through which to ground the proposals in the overarching studio goals and as actionable recommendations, the following key questions were asked:

- Who will benefit?
- How is it activating the role of preservation?
- Who are potential actors?
- What is being prioritized?

The proposals are grouped thematically around three primary objectives to enhance Main Street connectivity, integrate preservation in urban policy, and support vitality. Some proposals utilize more traditional tools and others are new approaches. Yet all of the proposals look at preservation through an integrated lens, seeking action and policies that play out at an urban scale. Informed by analysis of the key findings, the proposals are framed with the specific intent to benefit vulnerable communities, valorize existing assets, specifically avoid a tourist focus or plans solely dependent on tourism, and limit burdens on the strained resources of the municipal government. Overall, the proposals seek to benefit the local community and capitalize on the promising existing momentum for change.

Poughkeepsie offers a number of opportunities for historic preservation to play a role in creating social inclusion, economic vitality, and preventing displacement within the context of its historic Main Street commercial corridor. By diversifying and increasing accessibility of preservation efforts, Poughkeepsians can identify heritage sites often not exemplified in the traditional history of Poughkeepsie. Placing more power, especially financially, into the hands of Main Street stakeholders will more accurately represent Poughkeepsie's diverse cultural heritage. A more community-oriented approach to historic preservation encourages the residents of Poughkeepsie to interact with Main Street in new ways that highlight its diversity within the context of its historic architectural past. Complementing community-driven preservation efforts, it is also critical to shape the urban form

to better allow for physical connectivity and human-scale development with emphasis on old buildings. From smaller-scale public participation projects to large-scale city planning and zoning projects, historic preservation can be used to shape the urban form of Main Street as a pedestrian-friendly, interpreted, and connected – both physically and socially -- space.

## ENHANCE MAIN STREET CONNECTIONS

### *Revive the Trolley*

The Poughkeepsie and Wappingers Falls Electric Railway trolley car made its final run in 1935, marking an important moment in the American understanding of cities and what they might become. Crowded, overwhelmed with traffic, marked by Depression-era suffering and suffused with federal funding through the New Deal, cities across the United States were laying pavement and investing in highways. The primacy of the car would not be questioned.



(Left) Poughkeepsie trolley at the intersection of Main Street and Market Street one day before the trolley system closed in 1935. (Right) Present-day bus at the same intersection of Main and Market streets.

In Poughkeepsie, as in other cities, trolley lines were replaced by bus routes, allowing for more regularized road traffic and intrinsically more flexible service expansion. Today the City of Poughkeepsie is bracing for change again at the discontinuation of city bus services in exchange for expanded routes from Dutchess County Division of Mass Transit or LOOP. Slated for mid-2017, the new routes are not yet available to the public, though many fear reductions or impoverishment of service (Connor 2016).

Public transportation, in the context of Poughkeepsie's multivalent histories of exclusion discussed amply elsewhere in this report, presents a unique opportunity for intervention--both interpretive and infrastructural. We propose the creation of a new Poughkeepsie Trolley. Providing public transit services along the length of Lower and Middle Main, the new-old Trolley would make stops at the Poughkeepsie Train Station as well as the Walkway Over the Hudson, connecting communities marked by recent investment as well as those that have undergone systemic neglect.

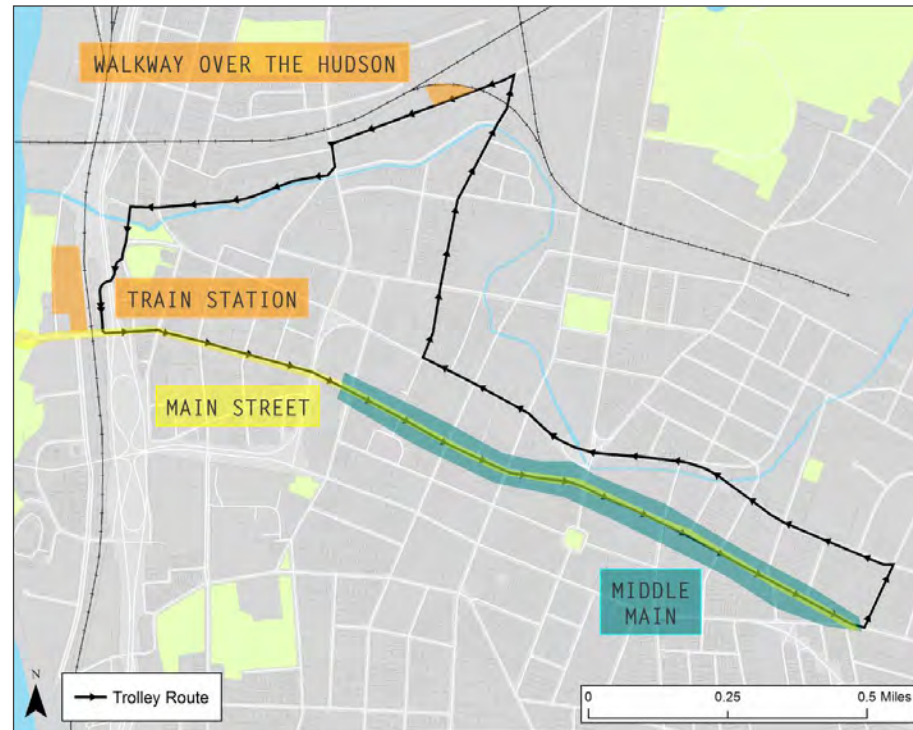




According to data collected for the 2009 Dutchess County Transit Development Plan, the majority of today's city and LOOP bus riders use the system five or six days a week, demonstrating stable and dependent commuter use. By contrast, only 0.3% of Metro North riders arriving in Poughkeepsie continued their trip onto the city bus system, which indicates a missed opportunity to continue public transit use into the city (Debald 2009). By offering a direct route down Main Street from the train station before linking to the Walkway Over the Hudson, trolley services would promote increased public transit ridership from travelers on Metro North, bringing Walkway visitors to Main Street while simultaneously improving ease of access for local residents to the waterfront.

Though the city plans to relinquish bus services to the county, the Trolley could be operated through a public-private partnership or sole non-profit organization, with additional funding secured via collaboration with the Walkway Over the Hudson and through on-trolley banner advertising for Main Street businesses. An arts and cultural district (discussed later) would benefit greatly from improved visibility provided by an historically inspired and socially inclusive transit option, branded by Poughkeepsie's diverse population and persevering pride of place. Fares could be priced nominally for Poughkeepsie residents or business owners, with slightly higher rates for out-of-towners for whom the ride would provide a destination experience in addition to car-free mobility around the city. Though taking form as a gas or diesel powered trolley bus to avoid the development of additional infrastructure, the Poughkeepsie Trolley could nevertheless reference its historically electric counterpart, relaying the history of transportation in Poughkeepsie and citing the soon-to-be repurposed Trolley Barn en route.

The Ladders of Opportunity program, administered by the US Department of Transportation, is premised upon the variety of twentieth century transit failures evidenced throughout the United States, heralding investment in multimodal forms of transportation infrastructure as a pathway toward improving urban quality of life. Promoting a manifold network of



Proposed downtown trolley route.



A trackless trolley, such as this one from Louisville, Kentucky, would be a method to "test before invest" by recreating the trolley without building the necessary rail infrastructure immediately.

strategic funding options, Ladders of Opportunity initiatives acknowledge the need to address bus services through a Federal Transit Administration Bus and Bus Facilities “Ladders of Opportunity” Initiative, which awards funds to “modernize and expand transit bus service to disadvantaged and low-income individuals...to local workforce training, employment, health care, and other vital services” (DOT 2015). Beyond funding, policy solutions endorsed by the Department of Transportation prioritize public empowerment, improved connectivity, and inclusionary job creation.

In an optimal vision of Poughkeepsie’s sustainable future, the Poughkeepsie Trolley could even plant seeds and serve as a testing ground for the rebirth of a local light rail. The return of rail transit to the popular urban design lexicon has seen recent success in cities such as Los Angeles and Toronto, both of which had removed city rail lines to make way for automobile traffic. Ever-improving technologies for electric power sources offer exciting options for cleaner urban transit. In Poughkeepsie’s case, as in so many others, engaging thoughtfully with the city’s material and infrastructural past can provide powerful solutions for the future.

### ***Reconnect Across the Arterials***

Main Street can only function as a vibrant, mix-used corridor if it is accessible through multimodal means of transit, including walking. To fully assess requirements for safe access to Main Street, a robust traffic study is needed to investigate the possibility of reconnection across the arterials in key locations. Currently, the City of Poughkeepsie is very aware of the detrimental effect of the arterials on public safety and connection. The idea to turn Poughkeepsie’s arterials into boulevards has been suggested in the Main Street Economic Development Strategy and the City Center Connectivity Project as a way to calm arterial traffic and provide attractive green space. This idea follows a trend that is happening nationally.

Across the country, there has been a growing backlash against the highway projects that cut through America’s cities in the

twentieth century. This anti-highway sentiment developed early in cities like Portland, Oregon, which removed its four-lane freeway on the Willamette River in 1974, thirty years after it was constructed. But for most cities, the movement to remove or alter highways has been growing more recently. A profusion of highway remediation projects have been planned or completed in just the past ten years, including the East Inner Loop in Rochester, the Riverfront Parkway in Chattanooga, and most recently the Sheridan Expressway in the Bronx. While each project is different – some highways are sunken, some are at grade, etc. – in almost every case the solution has been to create a boulevard. “Boulevarding” refers to the practice of replacing or altering current highways to include green space, medians, modified traffic patterns, and/or lower speeds (Sam Schwartz 2015). In many cases, boulevarding is combined with the “complete streets” concept, which encourages the addition of bike lanes and bus or trolley lanes to make streets work for all types of users.

Despite the popularity of boulevarding today, and highway reclamation more broadly, there has been little research on the outcomes of these projects, particularly when it comes to social inclusion and preventing displacement. There is significant evidence to suggest highway removal results in higher property values and an increased tax base (Partnership for Sustainable Communities 2010; Kang and Cervero 2009). However, the connection between this and the displacement of lower-income residents has not been directly explored. Because the long-term outcomes of these projects have not been studied through the lens of social inclusion, there is no data to back up claims of increased community connectivity.

While the Main Street Economic Development Strategy and the City Center Connectivity Project address changes that should be made to the city’s arterials, neither plan sufficiently emphasizes the need for reconnection across the arterial island.

Through aerial imagery comparisons and the documentation of observed urban features in GIS, one finds a number of disconnected roads and sidewalks distributed along both





Chance imagery captured on Google Streetview reveals the everyday problem of missing crosswalks and pedestrian right-of-ways across the arterial.

the east and west arterials. Along both sides of the arterials, there are a handful of roads that terminate in cul-de-sacs or vehicular dead-ends just before the arterials, an inelegant solution from the urban renewal era. Furthermore, several streets are now vehicular one-ways that largely limit the options for motorists to logically and efficiently reach their destinations. More importantly, the Central Business District is designed and promoted as a pedestrian-friendly environment with retail businesses in historic and aesthetically pleasing storefronts, but the number of cross roads with no crosswalks or traffic lights along highways and especially the arterials do not support this intent.

The studio used GIS to explore this idea more concretely and developed the following map demonstrating the extent of this disconnection. The red dots (at right) represent pedestrian dead-ends, places where there is an absence of crosswalks in major vehicular routes. The blue dots represent vehicular dead-ends (cul-de-sacs), where vehicles have to find another way to circle around, creating confusion and delay. The small light yellow dots are representing parcels (NYS Tax Parcels 2017) that have any kind of residential use. The turquoise boxes refer to areas that most urgently call for reconnection due to the density of population and frequency of pedestrian

and vehicular dead-ends.

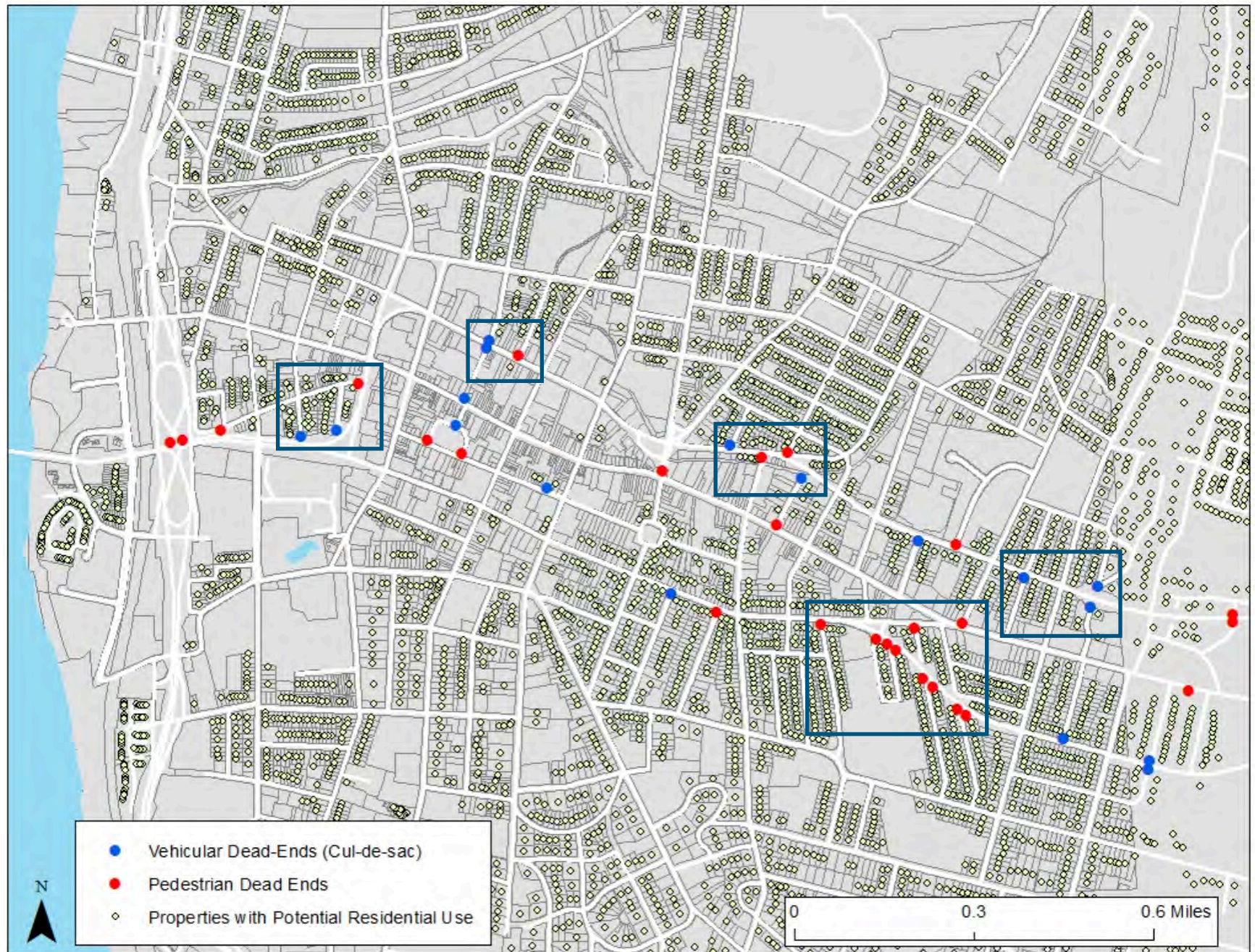
The majority of intersections with missing crosswalks and traffic lights are concentrated on the southern end of Middle Main, where substantial residential neighborhoods are located. The Union Street Historic District, to the west of the arterial island, is almost completely enclosed by highways on three sides. No streets in this neighborhood directly connect to the arterial, and heading towards Main Street, its major sidewalks do not have crosswalks or a traffic light. Reconnecting this historic district to its urban surroundings will create a more cohesive historic landscape in downtown Poughkeepsie. Moreover, such connections can also stimulate the communication between communities that currently suffer from physical separations within Poughkeepsie.

As this report has established, Main Street is a significant asset for Poughkeepsie as whole, and as such it should be easily and safely accessed by both pedestrians and vehicles. This is achievable through the re-creation of through-streets and/or the introduction of crosswalks, traffic lights, speed bumps, or even bridges.

#### Suggested areas for reconnection:

- Boulevard Knolls and the East-West Arterial
- Conklin Street and the East-West Arterial
- Bement Avenue and Winnikee Avenue
- Garden Street and the East-West Arterial
- North Cherry Street and East-West Arterial
- The triangular section comprised of Church Street, Fountain Place, and the East-West Arterial, just south of Main Street, at the eastern edge of the study area.
- Grant Street and Rose Street are both very physically cut off from Main Street, because this is where the arterial crosses the Fall Kill. This is the only section of the arterials to have metal rails physically blocking access across the street.
- The eastern edge of the Union Street Historic District (west of the arterial island) should be reconnected across the Columbus Drive portion of the East-West Arterial.





Map of vehicular and pedestrian dead-ends around East-West Arterials.  
Boxes indicate the highest concentrations of dead-ends.



Addressing the aesthetics, use, and safety of Poughkeepsie's arterials is important and it is very encouraging to see the city tackling these issues. However, given the current inaccessibility of the so-called "arterial island" to both vehicles and pedestrians, any boulevarding projects on the arterials must also address transverse accessibility.

## INTEGRATE PRESERVATION IN URBAN POLICY

In examining past preservation and planning policies in Poughkeepsie, the studio recognized a need for preservation to be better integrated with urban policy-making. Past preservation endeavors in Poughkeepsie have tended to be reactionary, and the field in general suffers from a perception that it is a barrier to development and progress. Preservation policy cannot effectively function as a public good if it is isolated from broader urban planning decisions. Both top-down and bottom-up approaches are necessary for preservation to be a positive contributing factor in Poughkeepsie. New approaches to identifying heritage and community-sourced ideas of what is important about Poughkeepsie can be used to make preservation a socially inclusive process that reflects the current and diverse community of the city. A top-down approach can complement grassroots action by formalizing a regulatory framework that accepts this new information and incorporates it into larger urban planning decisions.

### ***Make Information on Landmarks Accessible***

According to the city's preservation ordinance, the purpose of local designation of landmarks is not just for their legal protection, but also to "foster civic pride in the accomplishments of the past" and to promote the "cultural, educational and general welfare of the public" (Poughkeepsie Code of Ordinances 1999). As previously discussed, this intended purpose is currently falling short. In order to promote more participatory preservation, it is essential that accurate and engaging information on the city's current landmarks be made accessible to the public. The city's website and

the Adriance Library provide readily available conduits to accomplish this.

The city of Poughkeepsie's website currently hosts an underused page for the Historic District and Landmark Preservation Commission. This site includes links to frequently asked questions, meeting agendas, and nomination and applications forms - all of which are downloadable PDFs. The only list of current landmarks and districts is located within the FAQ document. This list is inaccurate and provides no images or explanation for the sites' designations. In order to meet the goals of the city's preservation ordinance, the city should update their website with a complete list of current landmarked sites and historic districts, including images, maps and their histories. This should be done with a permanent page, rather than a downloadable PDF, to allow for in-site searchability and easier mobile viewing. Online mapping tools are also becoming increasingly available and could be embedded with this page as another way of visualizing current historic resources and accessing the existing documentation.

Poughkeepsie's Adriance Library runs its own online local history project called Main and Market: Sights and Sounds of the Queen City and Beyond. This site, which digitally shares photos, postcards, and oral histories in the library's collection, is an ideal place to include further information about locally designated sites and their histories. The Poughkeepsie Public Library District serves over 300,000 visitors annually and is a destination for varied a cross-section of the Poughkeepsie community (Poughkeepsie Public Library District 2015). Because of its popularity and as home to the local history collection, the district's main branch, Adriance Library, could also serve as the optimal place to display a physical exhibition of this information.

In considering new methods for engaging the public, a multi-lingual aspect should be included. Because of the rich diversity of Poughkeepsie's residents, a repository that provides information in different languages would help to ensure that everyone is able to access and contribute to this knowledge. Translation of this material could mean an increase in cost, but

it is a critically important element to consider if the city hopes to represent and include all of its residents.

Ultimately, this is perhaps the most important step the city can take in the near-term to make preservation more inclusive. To connect with the existing landmarks of Poughkeepsie, people need to know that they are there and what they represent. Having the existing information and documentation inaccessible to the public renders it almost meaningless as a tool for fostering civic pride or promoting general welfare.

### ***Pursue Low-Cost Ways to Engage the Public***

In addition to making information on previously landmarked sites more accessible, the city should democratize the identification of significant sites.

Enhanced public participation in preservation efforts has increasingly become a focus of the field. This is driven by a desire to democratize the process of landmark designation, by engaging residents to identify sites of importance rather than only relying on architectural experts. A bottom-up approach allows preservation to be a tool for community building and engagement. Instead of informing a community about what they should value, the following proposal is premised on the idea that preservation is a means of civic engagement and social inclusion; it is an ever-evolving process rather than an end in itself.

A prominent example of efforts to institutionalize such participation is SurveyLA, a citywide survey of historic resources conducted in Los Angeles that was innovative in its use of technology and its approach to public participation. SurveyLA was made possible by a matching grant of \$2.5 million from the Getty Conservation Institute and was a long term project - the planning began in 2000, the surveying in 2006, and the project was not complete until 2016. The result of the survey was not designation, but a gathering of baseline data that could be used by planners, developers, and the public. The public outreach portion of the project involved a volunteer program that mobilized over 200 volunteers to

participate in photography, research, and report writing; use of the online platform MyHistoricLA to crowdsource information; dissemination of materials in multiple languages; and piloting of an online geospatial platform for recording and sharing historic resources under the name HistoricPlacesLA that makes survey results searchable to the public.

The New York City-based project Place Matters is another example of an alternative, more community-based method of identifying heritage sites. Begun in 1998, as a collaboration between the Municipal Arts Society and City Lore, Place Matters seeks to create an information repository from individual and community input about what places represent the traditions, culture, and history of a neighborhood. Place Matters staff conducted surveys throughout New York City neighborhoods, asking open-ended questions about what places matters to them and why. The identified sites are collected in a “Census of Places that Matter,” which is published online and is continually expanded. Nominations to the Census can also be submitted online. To date, over 880 places have been entered into the Census (Place Matters 2017). There are no criteria established for nominations and all nominations are published in the Census. When possible or as staff are available, Place Matters staff do additional research and “place profiles” on certain nominations to augment the initial information.

Place Matters is also involved in some formal landmarking endeavors and has created a Place Matters Toolkit for others to learn about identifying and protecting sites. In addition to operating as an information resource, Place Matters has created a book, films, signage project, and virtual tour sourced from the Census nominations. The Place Matters survey and advocacy model has been used by other preservation groups around the country, including in Canton, New York (Place Matter History 2017). The Census and all of their information is easily accessible online in simple and user-friendly ways. All Census entries are searchable and listed on the Place Matters website, and are linked in interactive online map. Through the Census, Place Matters is trying to create a community-



sourced, equitable, and more representative understanding of the city's heritage.

While SurveyLA and Place Matters are encouraging examples of public participation in the identification of historic resources, for Poughkeepsie such an investment would only be feasible in the long term. They nonetheless provide important insight and inspiration for more timely and less resource-intensive approaches. In the short term, there are alternative ways to democratize the preservation process, and to strengthen the connection between people and places at a smaller scale and a lower cost. In 2012, Buffalo's Young Preservationists, a community group in Buffalo, New York, showered its favorite historic buildings with valentines in the first ever "heart bombing" event (BYP 2014). Since then, the movement has taken off and heart bombs have been spotted in cities across the country. These events typically involve an organized group of community members crafting hand-made hearts, cards, and love letters to favorite buildings - sometimes with a focus on threatened, vacant, or unrecognized properties. For example, this past February, the Community Land Bank in nearby Newburgh organized what they called, "A Public Display of

Affection" to celebrate the properties that had been purchased from the land bank in 2016 (Foretek 2017).

Thus far, heart bombing campaigns have been used to raise awareness and generate goodwill for historic buildings chosen by community groups. It has become a popular, low-cost, high-impact tool for information spreading, but we also see potential for their use as an information gathering tool. It is possible that the same events could be organized with groups not previously associated with preservation efforts in order to identify places of significance.

These examples serve as helpful precedents and inspirations for creating a more participatory way of identifying heritage. These models have different ways of collecting information yet all emphasize the need for valorization and identification from within the communities. The outlined models also try to find a way for all members of community to articulate the places and histories that are meaningful to them and to bring unrepresented histories to light. Updated preservation policies at the city level need to be better equipped to receive and act upon this new information by forging a stronger connection with urban planning decisions.

The first step in a proposed new method of public participation in Poughkeepsie preservation focuses on public engagement by inspiring people to think about their relationship with the built environment. A heart bombing event designed to be an open-ended information gathering tool could be spearheaded through the Middle Main Initiative or the Mid-Hudson Heritage Center. The day-long event would ask participants to place the paper hearts in places that meant something to them or that they believed had some public value, as well as to write why those placed mattered on the hearts. The first event would focus on the Central Business District and Middle Main for ease of collecting information and walkability, and later events could expand to other area of the city. Volunteers would be on hand to explain the event to passersby and have additional hearts available so that people can spontaneously participate. There is no criteria for where the hearts go; the emphasis of the event is to give people a chance to highlight what they



Ohio Valley Young Preservationists' Heart Bombing event

believe has value. All of the hearts would be recorded in photographs and posted online, for example in a blog post on the Middle Main website or shared through social media. The anticipated outcome is a collection of stories and buildings deemed important by people within the community, which can be augmented with future events. As a free, on the ground, and open-ended information-seeking event, it prevents exclusion by soliciting information from everyone, with no preconceived notions of what “should” come out of the event. Over time, this collection of information can be incorporated more formally into the centralized repository and can be a resource for planning and policy-makers. The purpose is not to fast-track designation, but to provide an opportunity for people to tell their stories and encourage a more flexible definition of “significance,” to get people thinking about their surroundings in new ways.

The real result of these proposals is not a mere list of buildings or places. The buildings are a conduit for values held by a community. These values are likely to be varied and perhaps even contradictory, and hopefully will give voice to narratives that have not been traditionally included in the story of Poughkeepsie. These heritage-related values are what should be protected and recognized at a policy level.

### ***Rezone, List, and Incentivize***

Better integrating preservation policy with broader urban planning policies can help to maintain viable aspects of Poughkeepsie’s historic urban form. The current zoning code has not been updated since the 1970s and is considered one of the barriers to development interest and a productive downtown. New policy frameworks and zoning amendments are well underway at the city level (see Understanding Main Street today -- Collective Action and Investment -- Central Business District Rezoning). The following proposal outlines suggestions that could be considered and incorporated, so as to provide more effective guidance for enhancing the historic character and functionality of Main Street.

The major issue with the rezoning efforts currently underway

in Poughkeepsie is the influx of streamlined private investment opportunities that pose a major threat to old buildings on Main Street and in the Central Business District. There are talks of utilizing the recent trend of innovation districts with anchor educational and cultural institutions. Because of the high number of educational and cultural institutions located in the Poughkeepsie area, there are a number of potential connections and investment opportunities for this type of district. Building on the form-based Waterfront Oriented Transit Development ideas, there is also discussion of creating form-based building typologies for specific areas of downtown, including an historic building typology that mimics the extant commercial buildings with 100% lot coverage, zero lot line setback, and four to five stories. Provisions for this type of development are well-intended, as the city is trying to optimize use of all available space, valorize the Central Business District as the city’s commercial hub, and address issues of urban form by creating a continuous high street wall and maintaining the human-scale nature of the historic architecture. However, there is no protection against demolition of the existing age-eligible buildings, which are significant contributors to the residential and commercial character of Main Street. By creating a more predictable development strategy for investment with a rezoning and form-based code approach, the quality of urban form can be preserved and improved, with lower-scale commercial and residential buildings that enhance pedestrian activity. The non-existent and inadequate protections against building demolition are worrisome for the large number of age-eligible buildings along Main Street, and although significant community attitudes against demolition exist, they are not enough to effectively preserve Main Street’s physical assets.

The current building stock in the Central Business District and along Main Street presents opportunities for the goals of creating mixed-use, mixed income development that would enhance walkability and economic vitality within the central business core of downtown Poughkeepsie. The use of old buildings supports the city’s goal for rezoning the CBD, with an already existing desirable urban form. Within the CBD, 25 storefront vacancies surveyed were within age-eligible





Vacant ground-floor retail on Main Street offers existing opportunities for mixed-use buildings.

buildings. Occupancy of these vacant older storefronts is important to retaining the small commercial business corridor, with upper residential development opportunities. Establishing and integrating an historic district in downtown Poughkeepsie would complement the current rezoning initiatives and serve as a vital measure for maintaining the historic mixed-use commercial corridor and cultural center for all Poughkeepsians to enjoy in the future. This traditional preservation tool can serve as an effective counterpart to the more community-driven approaches noted above. National Register Historic District eligibility could be pursued for the Main Street corridor between Market Street and Hamilton Street, extending south from Main on Academy Street to Church Street. This intersection is important because it highlights a part of Main and Academy Streets with high street wall, age-eligible buildings, and a diverse array of mixed use historic architectural design that create a pedestrian-friendly commercial corridor ripe for investment. Expanding the proposed boundaries of the historic district to cross parking lots and the arterials could be explored as a method

for unifying an often-labeled disconnected area. A number of age-eligible buildings exist across these boundaries, and the risk for lot aggregation and new development would most likely threaten older structures. The incentives provided by National Register eligibility could help to retain old buildings and make a more cohesive connection between Main Street, the Central Business District, and the neighborhoods to the north and south.

While the city's downtown revitalization vision contributes to the ideas of social inclusion, economic vitality, and preventing displacement, there is limited language or proverbial currency to empower historic preservation to act as a tool in service to these efforts. The city historic tax credit has not yet been successfully utilized, and with a small municipal tax base at present, it is not likely to be used on any large-scale preservation projects in the near future, leaving no financial incentive for the rehabilitation and reuse of old buildings. While National Register listing does not protect against demolition, the creation of an historic district opens up the possibility for 20% Federal and State Historic Tax Credits that could incentivize the rehabilitation and reuse of historic buildings. So rather than prevent demolition through "command and control" regulation, a more market-driven approach could incentivize historic preservation through development, thereby attracting new residents and businesses and growing the city's tax base (which in turn could activate the city's unimplemented historic tax credit).

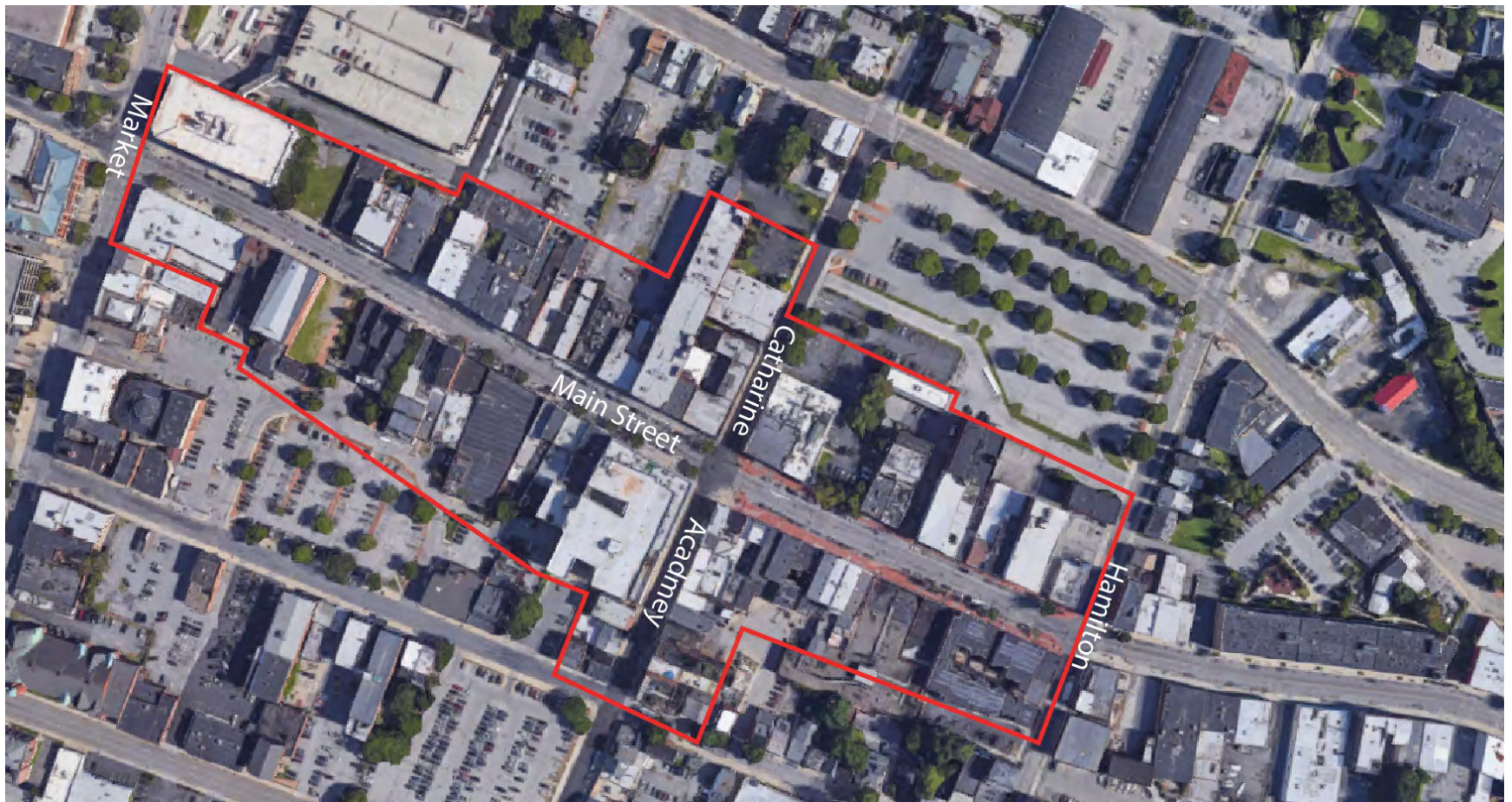
The Federal Historic Preservation Tax Incentives program has two available rehabilitation tax credits: a 20% tax credit for "certified" historic structures and a 10% credit for non-certified buildings built before 1936 (National Park Service 2012). The 10% credit applies more broadly to any buildings constructed before 1936, whereas the 20% credit is limited to buildings that are listed individually on the National Register, a contributing building to a listed or certified national, state, or local historic district, or have received a preliminary determination of significance (or "eligibility") as part of an eventual designation process. Projects seeking the 10% credit do not undergo design review by the State Historic Preservation Office or



National Park Service, work does not have to comply with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation, as in the application of the 20% credit. However, the 10% credit requires that a percentage of original walls and structure be retained. In addition, the 10% credit excludes residential uses, meaning that rental housing does not qualify; the 20% credit includes income-generating residential properties.

Currently within the study area (Main Street and the Central Business District), 36 buildings are eligible for the 20% credit as individual or district-contributing National Register listings, while 127 buildings are eligible for 10% credit as partially or completely non-residential use. It should be noted that these

statistics are created from year built county data combined with corrected dates found through this studio's research. With the proposed historic district, 46 buildings would become eligible for 20% federal and 20% state tax credits, priming the pump for rehabilitation work on residential and commercial mixed-use buildings. An additional five buildings could also be eligible; however, they are likely to be outside of the district's envisioned period of significance and listed as non-contributors, and therefore not eligible for the tax credit. Because rental residential uses are allowed under the 20% credit, work on the full building would qualify rather than just the commercial portion, incentivizing mixed-use development and the retention of apartments on Main Street. Even more



Proposed historic district boundary



buildings would be included if the district boundary were extended to cover the full CBD.

As indicated above, an additional 20% New York State tax credit can be used in conjunction with the federal tax credit. The property must also be located in an eligible census tract, meaning that the tract has a median family income at or below the state median income (New York State Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation Department 2017). The proposed historic district is located within census tract 2211, which currently has a median income well below the state level (American Community Survey; Social Explorer 2015).

Tax incentives could help offset developer and owner costs for rehabilitating older buildings and generate additional economic benefits for the city. In 2016 alone, \$7.16 billion worth of rehabilitation work was approved for federal historic tax credit projects nationwide; 108,528 jobs were created as a result. Additionally 7,181 new low and moderate income housing units were created (National Park Service 2017). Granted, the use of tax credits can incur additional design review, which may result in added transaction costs for developers. But these are largely outweighed by the capital that can be raised for brick and mortar costs through tax credits and their potential syndication. In addition, design reviews would be undertaken by the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) and National Park Service, limiting the burden on Poughkeepsie's municipal government.

Building owners could also opt to donate a deed of easement, which prohibits the demolition of the building and allows for the rehabilitation of the building to be financed by historic preservation tax credits following National Register listing. The donations – which can provide additional tax deductions to owners -- would go toward the Trust for Architectural Easements, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, requiring any modifications to be approved by the National Park Service, and administered by the Internal Revenue Service. This would be a binding agreement between current and future building owners, as it becomes part of the building's deed. This could thus provide an additional financial incentive to ensure the

survival of significant structures in the Main Street area.

While the aforementioned incentives help to create favorable financial conditions for preserving historic fabric, the toolbox for preserving social fabric is more challenging. Nonetheless, the city can leverage additional incentives in order to celebrate its cultural diversity while providing for economic vitality through historic preservation.

In order to protect the cultural diversity of Main Street, to work against fears of displacement, and to promote investment in their buildings, the city could provide a tax benefit for minority/immigrant-operated small businesses. At the state level, the New York State Division of Minority and Women's Business Development could provide additional financial assistance for these businesses if they become a certified Minority and Women-owned Business Enterprise (MWBE).

A Legacy Business Preservation Fund could also serve as an important incentive for protecting downtown Poughkeepsie diversity and business operators. Such an incentive draws inspiration from San Francisco's recent success in establishing the first such fund in the US, which began as a crowdsourced registry of iconic bars and restaurants that contribute to the culture, character, and lore of the city. This initiative could build from the heart bombing or similar community-driven initiatives described above, allowing the public to propose businesses that are significant to the communities and narratives of Poughkeepsie. A subsequent phase would involve establishing a formal Legacy Business Registry, which could highlight businesses with minority or immigrant ownership to preserve diversity. A final phase would create an additional fund for providing grants to these business operators, or to their property owners for agreeing to reasonable lease extensions for their Legacy Business tenants.

## SUPPORT VITALITY

### ***Develop an Arts and Culture District***

Cultural districts encompass a range of economic and policy-based strategies that cities can mobilize toward the enhancement of a distinctly branded urban region with identity-based, local cultural production and heritage assets. Americans for the Arts has produced an instructive online resource of literature for cultural district development through their National Cultural Districts Exchange, heralding the measurable positive impact of these districts to the social and economic landscapes of the cities that use them.

A cultural district model provides an opportunity to both centralize and diversify some key initiatives already underway in Poughkeepsie. Roy Budnik, proprietor of the Mid-Hudson Heritage Center, has laid the groundwork for local partnerships towards an “Arts District” within a portion of Middle Main. With a gallery at 317 Main Street, the Mid-Hudson Heritage Center aims to provide a community gathering space that honors the region’s cultural diversity through historical exhibitions, art events, meeting space, and workshops. In 2013, their facilities expanded to Art Centro at 485 Main Street, integrating artist studios and arts educational programming into their community offerings.

Through the Middle Main Initiative, Hudson River Housing has been forging connections between businesses and residents along the central expanse of Main Street, bounded by Market Street to the west and the convergence of Main and Church Streets to the east. Investing comprehensively in community engagement strategies, real estate rehabilitation projects, and socially-oriented business development, Hudson River Housing has been promoting the Middle Main brand, which might readily function in concert with further cultural districting development. As discussed previously, their investment in the Underwear Factory project near Main and Cherry Streets along the Fall Kill provides an exciting model for mixed-use community space. The building now houses programming for youth arts education with the Mill Street Loft/Spark Media

Project, printmaking facilities and artist studios, in addition to a coffee house, shared kitchen, and several affordable apartment rentals.

Based on these ongoing efforts, Poughkeepsie should explore a marriage of the “Downtown Area Focus District” and “Cultural Production Focus District,” as outlined by the National Cultural District Exchange (Americans for the Arts 2014). The first valorizes a small city’s walkable downtown urban form and is often tied to tourism, while the latter focuses on livability for residents by linking resources such as community centers and arts-oriented educational facilities, along with affordable housing and local business.

While most cultural districts operate independently of government formalization, there are many instances of county- and city-level mechanisms put in place to acknowledge boundaries of cultural or heritage considerations (Americans for the Arts 2014). In addition, fourteen states have enacted district-based legislation in order to provide tax incentives for arts and culture-oriented businesses in distinct urban areas, and New York has similar legislation pending. While these higher-level transformations may be out of reach for the immediate Poughkeepsie context, various partnerships and associations should be developed to promote a cultural district and its benefits, such as Special Improvement, Special Taxing, Downtown Development or Business Improvement Districts. Though efforts to implement a BID in Poughkeepsie have notably failed in prior attempts, the central principles of creating a local business alliance to leverage tax dollars should not be altogether abandoned in future district designs. The creation of formal planning schema is also recommended by the National Cultural District Exchange for their legitimizing function within political and professional arenas, as well as for branding and developing shared goals between partners.

Potential drawbacks to the creation of an arts and culture district in Poughkeepsie would be the risk of confusion in branding and weakening of resources distributed to an overabundance of revitalization projects throughout Poughkeepsie. As mentioned in our discussion of “charette



fatigue,” there is a history of belabored attention paid to well-meaning but unexecuted initiatives in Poughkeepsie, which has produced a somewhat jaded popular sentiment to new ideas. For instance, the Middle Main Initiative and Fall Kill Plan both already encompass much of the same territory where an arts district would be most appropriate. Though the organizational stakeholders discussed here are deeply invested in the neighborhood they hope to improve through district creation, and are well endeared to surrounding communities, it would be wise for any future district plan make full use of existing branding paradigms as well as the networks of positive relationships that such paradigms employ.

### ***Activate Sites and Communities***

Supporting the Main Street area as a vibrant historic corridor requires activation strategies that reconnect people and places. To reactivate sections of Main Street and the Central Business District overtaken by parking lots and empty parcels, and to mitigate their negative impact on the streetscape, two proposals are explored: temporary “pop-up” events and art installations to reimagine former streetscapes. Introducing activity in empty lots would fill in some of the areas that contribute to disconnections along Main Street. Community surveys have also indicated that there is a dearth of activities for youth and a desire for evening events and those that include a range of user groups (Hudson River Housing 2016; City of Poughkeepsie 2017). Interest in “pop-up” events has been expressed for the programming of Mural Square on Main Street, and this park is but one example of spaces that provide an open canvas for diverse activities, for which there is a local demand. A series of events and installations in lots throughout Main Street could link different sections of the community – physically and socially -- and encourage people to walk and spend more time in the area.

The first proposal utilizes the network of underused parking lots and vacant lots for pop-up events catering to youth and families and open to whole community. Free and inexpensive events would ensure that cost is not a barrier to participation and hopefully encourage neighborhood interaction and

cohesion along Main Street. The varied sizes and locations of the vacant lots, parking lots, and limited green space offer possibilities for a range of activities that can be introduced in a more immediate timeframe and at low cost, without the need for permanent infrastructure investment. The following proposes options to consider for performance-, food-, and arts-related events.

Performance-related events could activate a number of lots along Main Street. Many cities and towns have free movie nights during the summer. In New York there are multiple parks all over the city that host weekly or biweekly free movies. Many of the venues host two movies each night, an earlier that is family friendly, and a later movie (NYC Parks Film Events 2017). While there are two drive-in movie theaters within a 15-minute drive from Main Street, there is an admission fee and guests cannot bring their own food, although there is the option to purchase (Overlook Drive-In 2017), and films are generally only English-language. Poughkeepsie’s free movie night could offer Spanish-language films, for example, and could allow people to bring their own food or set up a barbecue, so as to enhance inclusion by reducing cost and language barriers. Food could also be sold, providing additional revenue and marketing opportunities for local establishment. People could come with blankets, chairs, or just sit in their cars. Youth-oriented performance events could include an outdoor party like the “Freedom Party NYC,” which has been an annual event every summer in Central Park since 2003 (City Parks Foundation 2017). Local bands or DJs could play. Outdoor movies and outdoor concerts or musical events were among the suggestions proposed for Mural Square, but these uses also lend themselves well to the larger vacant areas further east on Main Street.

Food-related events could make use of different lots along Main Street, hosting stalls from farmers markets, food trucks, the Poughkeepsie Plenty Mobile Market providing local produce, and outdoor dining areas. Inherently family-friendly and easily adaptable to day and evening uses, such events would invite a variety of vendors and highlight the ethnically diverse food culture in Poughkeepsie.

The network of lots could also be used for arts-related events included in the First Fridays series and Poughkeepsie Open Studios tour. Artists can request to use the lots for outdoor exhibition space, live studio or demonstration spaces, and groups like Art Centro could lead free or sponsored art classes. Paved lots present excellent opportunities for chalk drawing, similar to street painting festivals in other cities, and could have designated areas for kids, individuals or groups that request canvases ahead of time, and a large communal piece open to all.

The benefit of temporary, frequent, and pop-up activation of underused lots is that the events would be responsive to community input and require little permanent financial investment. The hope is to support community connectedness and reinforce social ties, as well as foster a sense of life and vitality in the built environment. Short term uses aim to animate the street in different ways and to address gaps in the types of activities offered for all residents. Encouraging creative use of Main Street and engaging the built environment in new ways will hopefully inspire future reinterpretations of existing and underused buildings. Instilling life within the empty areas on Main Street could lead to more lasting patterns of stewardship of the built environment and create a sense of community ownership.

The second site activation proposal uses large-scale temporary installations to reimagine historic streetscapes and buildings that used to exist in the many parking lots across Main Street and the CBD. The legacy of urban renewal and the demolition that accompanied the top-down planning decisions weigh heavily on Poughkeepsie's downtown and within community memory. An art installation is proposed to repopulate these parking lots with temporary representations of the demolished buildings to spatialize and concretize this urban renewal history as an activist reckoning of the spatial injustice it created. Utilizing a 1976 inventory of all buildings in Poughkeepsie at the onset of the urban renewal era, which captured a small image of each individual facade in the city, building-size frame and fabric scrims could be installed along

**BUILDING-STRUCTURE INVENTORY FORM**  
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 UNIQUE SITE NO. \_\_\_\_\_  
 QUAD. \_\_\_\_\_  
 SERIES \_\_\_\_\_  
 NEG. NO. \_\_\_\_\_

YOUR NAME: Kate Mearns DATE: November 5, 1977  
 YOUR ADDRESS: 79 Dunneman Av. Kingston TELEPHONE: 914-338-4618  
Poughkeepsie Historic Survey, 9 Vassar Street,  
 ORGANIZATION (if any): Poughkeepsie, New York 914-471-9444

\*\*\*\*\*  
**IDENTIFICATION**  
 1. BUILDING NAME(S): \_\_\_\_\_  
 2. COUNTY: Dutchess TOWN/CITY: Poughkeepsie VILLAGE: \_\_\_\_\_  
 3. STREET LOCATION: 581-583 Main Street (01400) Map 38  
 4. OWNERSHIP: a. public ☐ b. private ☒  
 5. PRESENT OWNER: \_\_\_\_\_ ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_  
 6. USE: Original: stores/apartments Present: stores/apartments  
 7. ACCESSIBILITY TO PUBLIC: Exterior visible from public road: Yes ☒ No ☐  
 Interior accessible: Explain: no

**DESCRIPTION**  
 8. BUILDING MATERIAL: a. clapboard ☐ b. stone ☐ c. brick ☒ d. board and batten ☐  
 e. cobblestone ☐ f. shingles ☐ g. stucco ☐ other: \_\_\_\_\_  
 9. STRUCTURAL SYSTEM: a. wood frame with interlocking joints ☐  
 (if known) b. wood frame with light members ☐  
 c. masonry load bearing walls ☒  
 d. metal (explain) \_\_\_\_\_  
 e. other \_\_\_\_\_  
 10. CONDITION: a. excellent ☐ b. good ☒ c. fair ☐ d. deteriorated ☐  
 11. INTEGRITY: a. original site ☒ b. moved ☐ if so, when? \_\_\_\_\_  
 c. lost major alterations and dates (if known): \_\_\_\_\_

12. PHOTO: HP-1  
 13. MAP:

Survey form from the 1976 inventory. Many buildings were documented with extended forms and all buildings were captured in photographs.



Printed scrims, such as one created for the American Museum of Natural History in New York City during a renovation, can be used to represent buildings around Main Street that have been lost.



the parking lot sidewalks. The scrims would be printed with the historic 1976 images.

An extension of the proposal would use the scrims as canvases granted to different artists to represent the demolished buildings. Installations in parking lots in the eastern portion of Main Street could be a participatory event in the lead-up to the establishment of a formal Arts and Culture district. In the CBD, where several of the parking lots were already in place by the time the 1976 inventory was

undertaken, other historic images could be used or provide inspiration to artists. Activating the parking lots would recreate the street wall of former buildings, reintroducing urban design concepts and testing how the street might feel if the parking lots were reclaimed. It presents a new way of telling the urban renewal history and visualizing its effects on today's landscape and daily life. The scrims would become a tangible object to spark discussion both of history and of future designs that might take their place.



(Above) These 1976 inventory photographs show the buildings that used to populate the south side of Main Street east of Clinton Street, creating a very different feel than exists today. Images are arranged from east to west, ending with the westernmost building at the corner which remains today.

(Left) This portion of the south side of Main Street formerly housed several buildings of the common Main Street mixed-use typology. A parking lot now surrounds the lone historic building at the corner (shown in the above inventory as number 468-470) and could be an installation site for the printed scrims.



## Capitalize on the Diversity of Food and Shelter

With such a wealth of diverse immigrant-originated and minority-owned small businesses, Main Street definitely earns itself a brochure of restaurants that allows both tourists and local residents to explore all that the corridor has to offer. Such a brochure could be developed by either the business community of Poughkeepsie, the city, or local groups like Middle Main or the Mid-Hudson Heritage Center. Any of the local colleges may also be interested in this project, if they hope to better integrate their students into the Poughkeepsie community.

Poughkeepsie previously had a similar food tour. The mayor started and led a “First Friday” tour that began at the Bardavon Theater and took participants down Main Street, stopping at various restaurants along the way. According to one business owner the tour was well-received by the business community on Main Street, although only about four or five tours were conducted.

Based on the studio’s research, expanding the original tour may help to encourage further investment in and engagement with the historic fabric of Main Street. The expanded tour



Example of a food and shelter tour brochure for a proposed new and expanded tour on Main Street.



would include restaurants, as well as architectural and artistic highlights along Main Street. This tour could be organized in both formal and informal ways. A published brochure full of restaurants, bars, and artistic and architectural highlights could allow residents and visitors to embark on their own adventure through the city. A more structured tour, with a guide and a reasonable admission fee, could organize stops at various historic buildings and arts institutions, interspersed with visits to a selection of the diverse array of restaurants Main Street has to offer. The tour guide would share stories from the city's history while participating restaurant owners would provide samples of one of their signature dishes for tour participants.

An extensive list of architectural and historical highlights, arts highlights, and food destinations is included in the appendix, but following is an example of a more structured itinerary gleaned from the larger list:

Examples of possible Architectural/Historical highlights:

- Glebe House
- Clinton House
- Main Mall Row
- Site of former Nelson House

Possible Arts Highlights:

- Art Centro
- Bardavon Theater
- Mid-Hudson Heritage Center
- Underwear Factory and Park
- 283 Main Street Mural

Possible Restaurant Highlights:

- Main Street Pizza & Cafe: Italian Restaurant. Signature dish: Main Street Special, with every traditional topping.
- Schatzi's Pub and Bier Garden of Poughkeepsie: German Brewery and Restaurant. Signature drink: Captain's Kolsch on the Randal with fresh raspberries, thyme, and lemons.
- Mahoney's Irish Pub. Irish Pub and Steakhouse. Signature steaks: Filet Mignon, NY Stripe Steak and Rib Eye.
- El Bracero. First Mexican Restaurant in Poughkeepsie. Signature dish: Enchiladas de Oaxaca cheese.
- The Artist's Palate. Contemporary American food. Signature dish: Roasted Four Onion Soup.

A photograph of a row of historic brick buildings. The central building is red brick with ornate arched windows and a decorative cornice. To its left is a white building with similar arched windows and decorative elements. To its right is a yellow building with rectangular windows and a classical pediment. The word "CONCLUSION" is overlaid in the center.

# CONCLUSION



## CONCLUSION

Through the work of eight researchers over three months, a portrait of Poughkeepsie emerges that is framed by uneven narratives and ambiguous trajectories. Poughkeepsie's Main Street cityscape is significant because of the transformations it has witnessed, the trials it has suffered, and the people for whom it provides a home and an economic hub today. However fractured or stigmatized, Main Street shelters vibrant communities who are proud to call Poughkeepsie home.

This studio has endeavored to dematerialize the traditional voice of preservation in order to more fully embrace a broad range of tactics by which preservation can aspire to better serve society at large. In anticipation and embrace of inevitable change, the preservation perspective is strengthened and made more relevant by experiments such as these to explore pathways towards creative valorization of relationships to the built environment.

In tackling questions of the roles preservation might play in promoting social inclusion, economic vitality, and preventing displacement, this studio asserts the following:

- Through a DEEP CONSIDERATION OF SPATIAL HISTORIES, preservation contributes an important analytic perspective that should not be undervalued. Investigating and synthesizing the causes of current conditions in the built environment is vital to integrate lessons of the past in plans for improved futures.
- Towards the AMPLIFICATION OF DIVERSE NARRATIVES, preservation can engage a variety of communities by charting historical connection to place. This is not just a gesture. Creating spaces of official or collective acknowledgment of lesser-known narratives can be leveraged to generate political and infrastructural safeguards against inequity.

- And thus, preservation can offer important avenues towards VALORIZING COLLECTIVE AGENCY. The preservation skill set for assessing value and developing policy to safeguard resources at the scale of neighborhoods are already important mechanisms for collective action in the free market. To more intentionally craft this role towards agendas of justice, preservationists can and should more profoundly acknowledge that built and social fabrics are embedded within ever-shifting political and economic structures of power.

Preservation provides a robust pairing of formal-structural and socio-cultural analyses—perspectives that are often understood apart from one another. Through the analyses and proposals articulated here, this studio has endeavored to demonstrate the mutual productivity of these perspectives as dynamic endeavors, demanding a praxis of multivalent attentions rather than mere curation. It is this dynamism of creative stewardship practice that ensures the utility of our material-cultural past.






FURNITURE







CLINTON  
HOUSE  
c.1765

Dutchess County  
Historical Society  
Est. 1914





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# APPENDICES





# APPENDIX A

## PRESERVATION POLICY COMPARATIVE CASES

Because the highest degree of preservation regulation occurs at the municipal level in the United States, the studio undertook comparative analysis of other municipalities to identify issues and approaches relevant to Poughkeepsie.

### *Hudson, NY*

At one fifth of the population and half the land area, the preservation initiatives that transpire in Hudson, NY, differ from Poughkeepsie in both resources and challenges. Though both cities experienced economic decline through the mid-twentieth century, Hudson attracted the niche markets of antiques dealers and LGBTQ business owners in the 1980s, both of which fostered stewardship of the historic building stock throughout the city. Formalization of the preservation field in Hudson, and thus the expansion of tools available to the public to pursue it, did not occur until later with Historic Hudson's formation in 1996, followed by the passing of the Historic Preservation Ordinance and formation of the Commission in 2003. Hudson has experienced great amounts of recent revitalized business activity throughout its main Warren Street Historic District, though subsequent sharply rising property values have put stress on the existing population whose median income remains barely over \$35,000.



Warren Street in downtown Hudson, NY.

### *Kingston, NY*

Kingston has a unique confluence of tools at both state and municipal levels. The Kingston Urban Cultural Park was established in 1982 along with 15 other "Heritage Area" communities throughout the state. The city's Historic Landmarks Preservation Commission was created in 1986 and has since designated four districts. As a Certified Local Government, Kingston can receive funding for preservation projects from the NY State Historic Preservation Office, and has thereby completed three cultural resource surveys. The city celebrates its arts and historic tourism and appears to be engaged in integrated planning initiatives both within the Heritage Area(s) and extending to the waterfront in order to improve local resilience to rising water levels as well as quality of life throughout the city. With a population of 23,893 and land area of 7.8 square miles, Kingston is slightly larger than the City of Poughkeepsie, though half as dense.



Wall Street, Kingston, NY.

## ***Beacon, NY***

Beacon is often lauded as the Hudson River Valley success story and derided as a gentrification cautionary tale. Part of what has made Beacon's Main Street a success is the strong vision of Mayor Clara Lou Gould, who was in office from 1990-2007 (5 terms). Her strategy in Beacon was to work with larger county and regional groups to help revitalize her city's Main Street and make it a destination in the Hudson River Valley. Some of her successes include:

- Making Beacon one of the initial Hudson River Valley Greenway communities (a state-level project)
- Working with Scenic Hudson to: create Mount Beacon Park, Long Dock Park and Madame Brett Park
- Bringing Dia to Beacon's abandoned Nabisco factory in 2003
- Revitalizing the east end of Main Street, which was mostly vacant in the 1990s: new street lights and frequent "Main Street" signage supported this effort (Dutchess County Planning Board, 2014).

Ms. Gould's long tenure as mayor likely helped her build some of these relationships and projects over time. By contrast, Poughkeepsie has term limits that limit any mayoral administration to a maximum of eight years.

Despite successes, Beacon still faces many of the same problems that plague Poughkeepsie. They have encountered similar disconnection between their waterfront and Main Street, which is also separated by Route 9. To combat this, they have instituted a new zoning overlay called a "linkage district," which allows for flexibility in land use and development between Main Street and the Metro North Train Station, subject to site plan review. Like the Central Main Street District, the zone comes with strong guiding design standards for setbacks, building heights, and landscaping (Linkage District 2013).

Like Poughkeepsie, Beacon has a big tourist attraction in Dia:Beacon, but also like Poughkeepsie's Walkway Over the

Hudson, this resource is cut off from Main Street by a highway. Some Beacon businesses expected more traffic from the Dia:Beacon visitors, that has yet to fully materialized. There has also been concern that Beacon's economy is too service-based - which does not provide large numbers of high quality jobs (Simms 2016).

Critically, within the region there is a strong impression that Beacon has been "Williamsburged," that it is more of a Hudson River escape for people from New York City, and that Beacon residents are not seeing the benefits of reinvestment in the city.



Lower Main Street Historic District, Beacon, NY



## ***Saranac Lake, NY***

Saranac Lake is a village, not a city like Poughkeepsie. It is much smaller in population and in physical size. It has not had its waterfront cut off and the Main Street still connects to the waterfront area. The waterfront area is actually a focal point of the village, both in terms of tourism and for the local population. Saranac Lake's preservation tool kit is slightly different in that it is located within a national park (Adirondack Park), which offers further protection to the village's historic buildings. In 2006 Saranac Lake was actually named a "distinctive destination" by the National Trust for Historic Preservation for "its commitment to protection of its historic core through historic preservation practice, its dedication to well-managed growth, the viability of its locally owned small businesses, and its accessibility as a walkable community for its residents and visitors" (Historic Saranac Lake 2017).

The village can also utilize historic tax credits and grants, because of eligibility on local, state and national registers. The organization Historic Saranac Lake has been involved with listing and helping people to list their historic buildings since 1980. The Saranac Lake village council was very vested in the preservation of their downtown/waterfront area and their historic Main Street in the late 1990s. This government interest was a factor in enabling the successful preservation of many buildings on the historic Main Street. Another contributing factor in mobilizing public support may have been the absence of racial differences within the community, which is 96.87% white. From photographs it seems that the influence (and damage) of urban renewal was not felt as strongly in Saranac Lake as it was in Poughkeepsie, so Saranac Lake does not share Poughkeepsie's history of spatial injustice.

In her time on the village council, Deborah McDonnell was able to encourage community engagement in bringing back the historic Main Street and the waterfront area. Such community investment is reflected in the village's rejection of Walmart's

offer to build a 250,000 sq. ft. supercenter in the village, and instead started a community-owned store so that the local businesses and the character of the village would not be affected (Cortese 2011).



Downtown Saranac Lake, NY

## ***Pontiac, IL***

Located one hundred miles south of Chicago on Route 66, Pontiac is a case study of how a small town of approximately 12,000 residents used improved wayfinding, tax increment financing, and local marketing for tourism (with assistance from the regional tourism office) to capitalize on their historic resources and bring their tourism figures to between 50,000-75,000 visitors annually. Their tourist infrastructure improvements included, "directional signage provided for vehicles, along with adequate parking for both coach buses and cars...For pedestrians in town, footprints are painted on the sidewalks to direct visitors to attractions; blue footprints lead to the museums and red to the murals" (Avrami 2013).



A mural behind the Route 66 Museum in Pontiac, IL



Downtown Sapulpa, OK

## ***Sapulpa, OK***

Closer in population size to Poughkeepsie at 20,544 (U.S. Census 2010), Sapulpa is branded as the “Crossroads of America,” intersecting the two pre-Interstate highways of Route 66 and Route 75. Sapulpa remains an important crossroads as five major highways converge in the town today. At the hub of several transportation arteries, by 1990 Sapulpa was in a state of decline due to interstates bypassing the town and the development of malls and big-box stores. To address these challenges through preservation, Sapulpa became a Main Street community.

Significant investment by the community through public participation and volunteerism. The “façade squad,” worked to remove 1960s and 70s era sheet metal façades that covered historic elevations. The “funk fighters” undertake quarterly downtown clean-ups, similar to efforts in Poughkeepsie sponsored by Hudson River Housing through the Middle Main Initiative, and Sapulpa has partnered with Show, Inc., to employ adults with disabilities to assist daily downtown maintenance.

Revitalization efforts have included the painting of murals, accomplished through donations and school fundraising campaigns, which have become a tourist attraction drawing visitors to the Main Street area. In 2006, the Sapulpa Historical Society purchased an historic gas station, restoring it as a museum. The city also hosts an annual car show, the Route 66 Blowout. Over the course of 25 years, the event has grown to 25,000–30,000 visitors and serves as Sapulpa Main Street’s biggest fundraiser. The energy and commitment within the community has also helped to attract corporate investment in two major downtown rehabilitation projects, Berryhill and the Wells Building, which created senior housing units and retail spaces through the use of historic tax credits and affordable housing tax credits. Downtown occupancy was over 90 percent as of 2013, and reinvestment has totaled over \$41 million (Avrami 2013).



# APPENDIX B

## BUILDING SURVEY

In order to assess urban form in Poughkeepsie first-hand, we developed a survey using the app platform KoBo Toolbox. This open-source, web-based platform allowed the team to input survey information individually, then combine the results into a master database for collective analysis. Our survey entailed creating variables to assess the character of and variations within the built environment of the study area, especially along Main Street. These variables were:

- Street name
- Street number
- Lot vacancy
  - Vacant
  - Under construction
  - Parking lot
  - Green space
  - Other
  - N/A
- Number of floors:
- First floor use:
  - Residential
  - Restaurant/food/bar
  - Retail/Grocery
  - Commercial non-retail (e.g. office, hair salon, services)
  - Public/government use
  - Other
  - N/A
- First floor business name
- First floor public accessibility
  - Accessible, Semi-accessible, Inaccessible
- First floor visual accessibility
  - High, Low, None
- Building occupancy
  - Occupied, Partially occupied, Unoccupied
- Street wall integrity
  - High, Medium, Low

- Physical condition
  - Good, Fair, Poor
- Photos
- GPS Degrees Latitude N
- GPS Degrees Longitude W

With this survey, the team took a theoretical snapshot of how these disconnections between Lower Main, the CBD, and Middle Main look and feel at the ground level. The variables are meant to elicit the most distinct changes in the quality of the streetscape of the survey area. Using android tablets with the app Kobocollect loaded with the custom-designed survey, as well as GPS devices, we joined our data by address with the existing county lot parcel data in order to map these survey variables.

By using comparative photographs from various sources, we analyzed the changes to the urban form of Main Street. These sources included CRIS, the Library of Congress, the Dutchess County Historical Society, the Poughkeepsie Public Library, and Sanborn maps.

# APPENDIX C

## INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

The following questions were designed to prompt dialogue with business owners during interviews:

- Why did you choose to open a business on Main Street?
- Do you live near Main Street?
- How did you end up in Poughkeepsie?
- When did you come here?
- Where do you come from?
- What do you like about Poughkeepsie?
- What are some of your favorite spots/personal landmarks in Poughkeepsie?
- What are your favorite places to eat in Poughkeepsie?
- Has Main street changed a lot since you first arrived here? How?
- Do you do most of your shopping in or out of the city?
- How long have you owned this business?
- Did you start this business?
- Have you used the bus system?



## APPENDIX D

### FOOD AND SHELTER TOUR RESOURCES

The sample brochure and structured tour outlined previously only included some of the highlights; following is a more complete list of resources in the Main Street area.

#### *Significant Buildings and Structures*

- Booth, O. H., Hose Company, 532 Main St.
- Poughkeepsie Trust Company, 236 Main St.
- Poughkeepsie Underwear Company, 6-1 N. Cherry St.
- St. Paul's Episcopal Church, 161 Mansion Ave.
- Poughkeepsie City Hall, 228 Main St.
- Poughkeepsie Railroad Station, Main St.
- Elting Building, 294 Main St.
- Clinton House, 547 Main St.
- Glebe House, 635 Main St.
- Bardavon Theater
- Site of former Nelson House
- Mid-Hudson Bridge

#### *Historic Districts*

- Academy Street
- Balding Avenue
- Main Mall Row, 315 Main Mall to 11 Garden St.
- Market Street Row
- Mill Street-North Clover Street Historic District
- South Hamilton Street
- Springside Gatehouse
- Upper Mill Street
- Vassar-Warner Row

#### *Arts Highlights*

- Art Centro
- Mid Hudson Heritage Center
- The Poughkeepsie Underwear Factory
- 283 Main Street Mural (Mural Square)

#### *Food and Drink Establishments*

- Schatzi's Pub and Bier Garden of Poughkeepsie
- El Bracero
- Brasserie 292
- The Artist's Palate
- Mahoney's Irish Pub
- Main Street Pizza & Cafe
- La Deliziosa
- Mill House Brewing Company
- Milanese Restaurant
- Amici's Restaurant
- El Azteca Mexican Deli
- Alex's
- Cafe Primavera
- Union Tavern
- The Poughkeepsie Grind
- Chinese Doll/Yummy Asian Cuisine
- The Nuddy Bar and Grill
- El Patron
- La Bahia
- La Cabañita
- Island Empress Cuisine



BARDAVON

BUILDING

## IMAGE CREDITS

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TJ's PIZZA Express

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