

Plan On It

A Dutchess County Planning Federation eNewsletter

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Rhinebeck Village: Worth Walking

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Rhinebeck Village is an historic and unique center in northwest Dutchess County. The village hosts an active commercial district, attracting residents and visitors alike, which contributes to a high level of pedestrian activity. This pedestrian activity is supported by a sidewalk system that is similar in breadth and composition to other historic villages and hamlets in the area. Pedestrian friendly places such as Rhinebeck provide people with the opportunity to explore their environs without driving a car, promoting a more sustainable environment that keeps people connected to their community. And like our roads, sidewalks require regular maintenance to improve their safety and operations.

Recognizing the importance of sidewalks to their community, the Village requested assistance from the Poughkeepsie-Dutchess County Transportation Council (PDCTC) and the Dutchess County Department of Planning and Development (Planning Department) to inventory and evaluate their sidewalk system. In the summer of 2010, Village representatives and Planning Department staff developed a scope of work that identified two major tasks:

1. An inventory of existing sidewalk conditions;
2. Development of recommendations to guide future sidewalk improvements.



The Route 9/308 intersection (the "Four Corners") serves as the Village's central hub.

The PDCTC would conduct the sidewalk inventory and develop a sidewalk improvement strategy, while the Planning Department would provide GIS mapping support and develop a design proposal for the Village center.

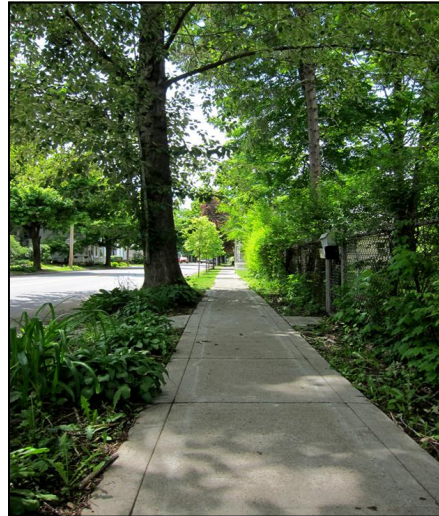
The Village also established a Pedestrian Task Force to guide the study. The 8-member Task Force consisted of a diverse group of professionals that proved invaluable to the project. The Task Force researched major issues surrounding local sidewalks, including maintenance and

construction, legal statutes, co-location with trees, and material costs. The Task Force also conducted extensive public outreach, including a written survey of property owners.

Inventory of Existing Conditions

The first task focused on an inventory and assessment of existing sidewalk conditions, which provided important baseline information for subsequent sidewalk improvement strategies. Conducted in August 2010, the inventory gathered data on a variety of attributes related to sidewalks and other pedestrian infrastructure. Three attributes were of particular importance: overall sidewalk condition, type of material, and specific sidewalk issues. The inventory also collected data on crosswalk locations, curb ramp conditions, sidewalk widths, and handicap accessibility. A catalog of digital photos with GPS data was compiled to locate issues identified during the inventory. The inventory used four ratings to measure a sidewalk's condition:

1. **Excellent:** No maintenance required.
2. **Good:** Unlikely to hinder mobility of the average pedestrian. Sidewalk free from significant cracking, buckling, gravel surfaces, or other debris which would impede pedestrian traffic.
3. **Deficient:** Uneven and distressed surface that hinders mobility of the average pedestrian. Contains surface cracks, vegetation overgrowth, or debris.
4. **Damaged:** Impassable to mobility impaired pedestrian; hinders mobility of average pedestrian. Deep cracking or buckling, significant vegetative overgrowth, and/or debris such that pedestrian travel would be impeded.



Tree-lined, concrete sidewalk in excellent condition.

The condition inventory identified over 11 miles of existing sidewalks, with 54% rated as excellent or good and the remaining 46% rated as deficient or damaged.

The inventory also identified the types of materials used to construct sidewalks: concrete, bluestone, stone aggregate, asphalt, brick, or other. The material inventory showed that concrete was the most prevalent material, making up 54% of all sidewalks; followed by bluestone at 28%. Concrete was typically found in the commercial district and newer sections of the village, while bluestone was concentrated in the historic district. The inventory further pinpointed the following types of issues:

- **Lifted:** Pieces of sidewalk lifted up with uneven surfacing;
- **Cracked:** Cracking or broken pieces in the sidewalk;
- **Removed:** Sidewalk sections have been removed or are missing;
- **Clearance:** Insufficient room to walk due to branches, bushes, trash, or parked cars (temporary);
- **Obstruction:** Utilities, signs, etc. in the sidewalk itself, limiting walkability (permanent);
- **Worn:** Sidewalk surface worn to an unsafe level;
- **Other:** Any issue not captured above.



Concrete panels lifted by tree roots.



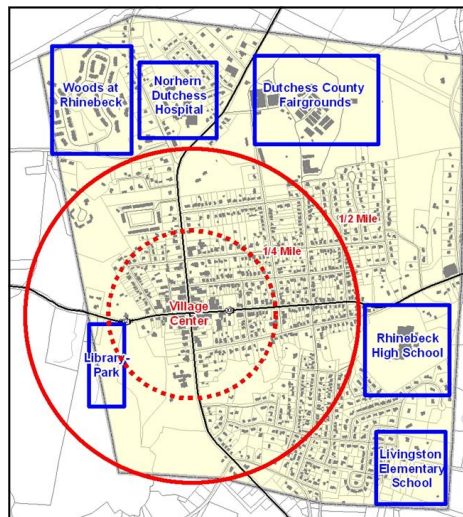
Cracked bluestone sidewalk.

Almost 500 individual sidewalk issues were identified, with lifting and cracking the most prevalent (77% of all issues).

Sidewalk Improvement Strategy

The second study component focused on developing a sidewalk improvement strategy to assist the Village with prioritizing future sidewalk infrastructure investments. The strategy relied on data from the inventory, feedback from the Village Board and Pedestrian Task Force, public comments, and the PDCTC and Planning Department's own assessment. These inputs informed a sidewalk improvement strategy with three objectives:

1. Improve pedestrian access within the Village center, focusing on the area within a 1/2 mile walking distance from the Route 9/308 intersection ("Four Corners");
2. Improve pedestrian access to public facilities such as the library and schools;
3. Improve pedestrian access to the Village center from the northern and southern sections of the Village.



The study sought to improve connections between the Village center and nearby activity centers. [CLICK IMAGE to enlarge]

Given the cost and complexities associated with achieving these objectives, the PDCTC and Planning Department recommended a three-phased [sidewalk improvement strategy](#) that identified priority work items for the Village. A total of 29,000 linear feet of sidewalk improvements were recommended.

First Phase (4,000 feet total):

1. Repair the Village Center sidewalk system:
 - a. Route 9 (Montgomery/ Mill Street)
 - b. Route 308 (East/West Market Street)
 - c. Four Corners Intersection (Route 9/308 intersection);
2. Install crosswalks at priority locations on Route 9 and 308;
3. Improve access to Livingston Elementary School and Rhinebeck High School.

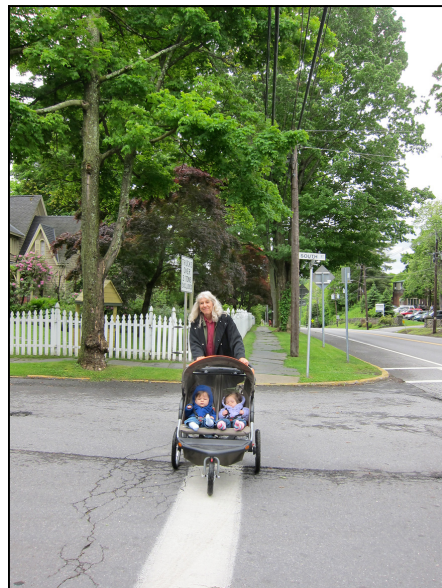


A mid-block crosswalk is recommended near this location on East Market Street.

Photo Credit: Klara Sauer

Second Phase (11,000 feet):

1. Repair the remainder of the Village Center sidewalk system within ¼ mile walking distance of the Four Corners intersection, including side-street sidewalks;
2. Install additional crosswalks on Route 9 and 308;
3. Improve access to Starr Library and Recreation Park;
4. Improve access from southern part of Village.



Pedestrians would benefit from new crosswalks.

Photo Credit: Klara Sauer

Third Phase (14,000 feet):

1. Repair the Village Center sidewalk system within ½ mile walking distance of the Four Corners intersection, including side-street sidewalks;
2. Improve access to Northern Dutchess Hospital and the Dutchess County Fairgrounds.

Pedestrian Enhancement Project

The PDCTC and Planning Department also recommended a [pedestrian enhancement project](#) for the Four Corners intersection, including the following improvements:

- Shorten crosswalks to increase pedestrian safety and visibility;
- Add diagonal parking on West Market Street to calm traffic;

- Provide extra shade trees, landscaping, and sitting places;
- Enhance the central green as a unifying symbol of Village history;
- Add hotel patio and rear walkway to activate center of green.

The Pedestrian Task Force, PDCTC, and Planning Department staff presented their Final Report, titled [Rhinebeck Village: Worth Walking](#), to the Village Board in February 2011. The report included a set of implementation recommendations to improve sidewalks:

1. Make bluestone and concrete the only allowable materials for all sidewalks;
2. Require residential owners in the Historic District to use bluestone when replacing existing bluestone sidewalks;
3. Encourage residential owners in Historic District to use bluestone when building new sidewalks;
4. Use concrete for all other sidewalks;
5. Adopt Task Force Report as Amendment to 1993 Village Comprehensive Plan;
6. Planning Board should enforce sidewalk standards in site plan reviews;
7. Use the Village Highway Department to reduce costs;
8. Include Pedestrian Task Force members on the Village's Tree Commission.



Finding a good fit between sidewalks and trees will be a challenge for the Village and property owners.

The Village of Rhinebeck Sidewalk Study continues a tradition of transportation-related community planning projects conducted and funded by the Poughkeepsie-Dutchess County Transportation Council ([PDCTC](#)), the designated Metropolitan Planning Organization for Dutchess County.

Final Thoughts

Communities across the nation face the challenge of prioritizing the repair of aging infrastructure or constructing new infrastructure to meet future needs. Such improvements take time and funding, both of which can be in short supply. That said, all communities must start somewhere. This study provides the Village with that start — first, by identifying the scope of the challenge through an assessment of existing sidewalk facilities; and second, by presenting priority work improvements to improve the sidewalk system and reinforce pedestrian connections throughout the Village.

More Information

[Summary Handout](#)

Final Report — [Rhinebeck Village: Worth Walking](#) (40 pages)

[Project Overview, Presentations, and Reports](#) (info on PDCTC website)

[Sidewalk Improvement Strategy](#)

[Pedestrian Enhancement Project](#)

[Activity Centers Map](#)

[CLICK HERE](#) to view past issues of the DCPF's newsletter, *Plan On It*.

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