

Returning to Rail-Centered Development

By John Clarke, Development and Design Coordinator

What type of new construction can reinforce traditional centers, use existing infrastructure, minimize traffic and school impacts, and provide a clear alternative to sprawl? Think Transit-Oriented Development (TOD), a pedestrian-friendly mix of storefronts, housing, employment, civic and cultural uses within a ½-mile walk of a rail station or express bus stop. Although TODs are a hot new trend from Washington D.C. to San Francisco, rail-centered development would be a return to historic roots in

Dutchess County. Our villages and cities flourished from the mid -1800s, when new rail lines encouraged concentrated development around stations. Millbrook and Pawling, for example, grew as transit villages surrounding new train stops.

But now, almost all new development is car-dependent, causing traffic congestion, air pollution, and asphalt landscapes everywhere. Rather than sprawling into the countryside with large park-and-ride lots around rail

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stations, why not focus development in traditional walk-and-ride neighborhoods, where most trips are possible by foot, bicycle, and public transportation? Four places in Dutchess County have high priority TOD potential.

The Poughkeepsie and Beacon rail stations can become gateway development districts, with spectacular river settings, easy access to the cultural capital of the world and a huge population of potential

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An illustrative sketch of a new Beacon Station bridging the tracks, with a station square overlooking the river and mixed-use development above structured parking.



Rapid Growth Demands New Land-Use Practices

By Roger P. Akeley, Commissioner, Planning and Development

Recent population estimates prepared by the U.S. Census Bureau reveal that Dutchess County grew by 10,000 people between 2000 and the middle of 2003. This means that each day, Dutchess County grows by nearly 10 people. If this growth continues, the 2010 population might top 310,000 people. This would represent the fastest rate of growth in Dutchess County since the 1970s.

Even northern Dutchess is not immune to the current growth pressures. More than 900 homes are being proposed on the Carvel property in the Towns of Pine Plains and Milan. What should we do in the face of this most recent growth pressure?

We have to do more than just zone our rural areas for large-lot development. Looking at recent proposals, we can also see that proposed subdivisions are scattered almost randomly through the towns. Most of our existing zoning is a recipe for sprawl.

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visitors. In 1997, the Poughkeepsie Common Council endorsed the Transportation Strategy, a TOD concept plan for the station area. Many Phase 1 elements have been completed, including an award-winning parking structure with a direct walkway and overlook to the river, a bus transfer center at the restored walkway to Main Street, and new bulkheading and Greenway promenade along Waryas Park. Also, two former industrial buildings on Water Street are now the Mid-Hudson

off the riverfront into a parking structure and build a new station/visitors center, surrounded by mixed-use development leading to Main Street, Dia, and the proposed Rivers and Estuaries Center. These two TODs would replace dead-all-day parking lots with high value commercial districts, promote tourism, and increase transit ridership. Typically, TOD housing attracts commuters, smaller households, singles, and retirees, with far fewer children to burden schools.

In eastern Dutchess, along the Harlem Line, two train stops with existing central

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There are three strategies that each town must employ if it is serious about protecting its rural character.

1. Develop open space plans and strategies to achieve a framework of open space trails, preserved scenic vistas, parks, agricultural and forested reserves and protected gateway locations. To implement such a plan, towns need to consider local bonds to match resources with County, State and private funding. This was the subject at a workshop hosted by County Executive Steinhaus on April 29th at the Wallace Center in Hyde Park. A follow-up workshop will occur later in the year.
2. Identify priority-growth areas in town and develop policies to encourage growth within those preferred areas. (See *Greenway Connections*, Guide B1.)

These could take the form of density bonuses, provision of utilities, pre-development approval of well-planned subdivisions. Towns need to be engaged in actually laying out subdivisions rather than simply reacting to developers who do not look beyond their site boundaries when they are doing their planning. Towns can go so far as to suggest road networks, building envelopes and open space reserves within the priority-growth areas.

3. Take charge of diversity in housing types. Large-lot zoning yields one kind of house – an expensive dwelling, for people who drive a long way to work. The result is more traffic congestion, inadequate housing choices for local workers and inability to foster neighborliness. Some towns have already taken steps to assure that a percentage of new housing can be afforded by local workers.

We need to keep "open" what should be open space; but it is just as important to develop the areas that should be developed. "No growth" is not an option. We just need to shape growth to



Proposed TOD at the Poughkeepsie Railroad Station would create a high-value waterfront destination district with a central plaza/performance space, making the park more alive and much safer with all-day, all-season adjacent activities.

Children's Museum and Dooley Square, a mixed-use plan that will serve as a commercial anchor for lower Main Street. Despite these successes, the City has not yet designated the Water Street frontage as a TOD district.

In Beacon, the City, County, Metro-North, Scenic Hudson, Dia and others are working on a plan to consolidate parking

utilities are prime TOD sites. The former psychiatric center in Dover has been sold for primarily senior housing and a commercial outlet center with direct rail access to the New York metropolitan market. Amenia is also considering a TOD designation in its master plan for surplus state land east of the new Ten Mile rail stop.

Compact centers along main bus routes, such as the proposed LaGrange Town Center, can also serve as TODs. Future planning projects should identify priority growth areas, based in part on convenient access to public transit. In many ways, TODs are the best cure for the unsustainable suburban contradiction – how low-density, sprawling land consumption creates high-density traffic congestion, caused by all those car trips.

For more information, see *Greenway Connections*, Guides B1, B2, and C2.

PLAN ON IT STAFF

Editor - Lynette Wacker
Graphic Designer - Patricia M. Houston



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fit within Dutchess County's traditional development patterns.

We have over one hundred traditional hamlets in Dutchess County. These hamlets coexisted naturally with the working agricultural landscape. We should do the same today – build in relatively concentrated pockets and preserve land in the process.

Ironically, we are best able to preserve land when the development pressure is great. So let's use the current demand on our land to inspire improvements to our land-use practices. Let's harness the energy and resources associated with development to protect and advance important scenic, cultural and economic conditions. 🌳

Awards Dinner Honors Outstanding Projects

By Lynette Wacker, DCPF Program Coordinator

On January 29th, more than 100 people from throughout the County gathered at the Casperkill Country Club to celebrate the 2004 Dutchess County Planning Federation (DCPF) and Dutchess County Greenway Award winning projects.

Keynote speaker Allan Shope, principal architect with Shope Reno Wharton Associates, impressed attendees with the story of his forest preservation project and a slideshow of his work. The slides depicted many of his beautiful designs that were created with wood harvested and crafted on his property in Amenia. He also discussed his Listening Rock Farm project on the former Wassaic Developmental Center property in Amenia (featured in



The new Studio Complex at the Kaatsbaan International Dance Center houses a performance space equal in size to the stage of the Metropolitan Opera House in a building that compliments the one hundred year old barn and cottage it sits next to.

our May 2003 issue, available online), where he has restored buildings, developed a renewable energy program, planted a vineyard, and makes custom-made wood products, raises cows and produces cheese. He invited everyone to come by and tour his facility.



DCPF President Neil Wilson presented the following awards: for "Historic Preservation" - to the City of Poughkeepsie and Hudson River Housing for Garden Street's Queen Anne Row; for "New Development" - to the Village of Tivoli's Planning Board and ZBA, and Kaatsbaan Internation Dance Center for their Studio Complex and Dancers' Inn; for "Redevelopment" - to the Village of Millerton Planning Board and WKHL Properties for Salem Saddlery; and for "Open Space Preservation" - to the Town of Wappinger for Carnwath Farms, formerly Greystone, overlooking the Hudson River.

Dutchess County Planning and Development Commissioner Roger Akeley presented the following Dutchess County Greenway Awards: for "Outstanding Regional Contribution" - the Dia Arts Foundation for Dia:Beacon; and for "Outstanding Public Contribution" - the Town of Red Hook for their newly-adopted \$3.5 million Farmland Preservation Program.



Red Hook's Farmland Preservation Program will help preserve their agricultural heritage and scenic beauty.

A special Service Award was also presented to Marcy Appell, former Town of Red Hook Planning Board Chair, for 22 years of service on the DCPF Board. The evening's events also included the election of three new DCPF board members: Bruce Donegan, Town of Pleasant Valley Councilman (Bruce will hold the office of Secretary/Treasurer); Victor Fanuele, Town of Wappinger ZBA Chair; and Jay Trapp, Village of Red Hook Planning Board Chair. 🌳

Reports Look at Dutchess Housing Market

By Anne Saylor, Housing Coordinator

The Dutchess County Department of Planning and Development has released two reports that provide a comprehensive view of Dutchess County's housing market: the 2003 Rental Housing Survey, which has been completed annually for the past 22 years, and the 2003 Owner-Occupied Housing Sales Report, which is brand new.

Rentals

The 2003 Rental Housing Survey shows a continuing trend of rising rent costs and low vacancy rates over the past year. In apartment complexes, the average one-bedroom monthly rent increased 3.5% to \$858, and the average two-bedroom rent increased 3.6% to \$1,029. Rents for studio and three-bedroom units decreased slightly. Apartments in multi-family homes showed a similar trend, with average rents for one- and two-bedroom units increasing 7.0% to \$808 and 15.4% to \$995, respectively.

The vacancy rate in the 7,616 apartment complex units covered by the survey was 1.8%, which is considered extremely low. Housing experts consider a 5% vacancy an indicator of a healthy rental market, where landlords have acceptable vacancies and there are sufficient vacancies for tenants to move. Condominiums and homes for rent showed increases similar to the apartment complex and multi-family rental housing, and also showed an increase in the number of units available. Subsidized housing continued to show significant waiting lists.

Each year the Rental Housing Survey calculates the annual income needed to

afford the average rents using the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development standard that a household should pay no more than 30% of their gross income for housing, including utilities:

Rental Unit Size	Annual Income Needed	
	Apartment Complexes	Multi-Family Units
Studio	\$26,480	\$27,440
1-bedroom	\$35,280	\$34,560
2-bedroom	\$42,600	\$42,800
3-bedroom	\$53,920	\$53,080

Sales

The first annual Owner-Occupied Housing Sales Report showed that the average sale price of a single-family home in Dutchess County in 2003 was \$275,089 and the median was \$252,000. The Town of East Fishkill had the highest median sale price at \$360,000, while the lowest was in the Village of Wappingers Falls at \$134,000. The median sale price for a condominium unit was \$170,000.

A Housing Affordability Index (HAI) was calculated, modeled on the National Association of



Meadow Ridge, a 54-unit apartment complex for families in the City of Beacon, was completed this fall. The complex of two and three bedroom units, which start at \$886 per month, is already 100% occupied. The project was developed by Hudson Valley Housing Development Fund Company, a local non-profit organization. Matteawan Road, which leads to this complex as well as two schools and a park, was reconstructed with CDBG funds (see following article: CD Advisory Committee Members Appointed).

median priced home. The HAI for condominiums was 158, indicating that they are a much more affordable housing type in Dutchess County.

The full reports are available on the County's website at www.dutchessny.gov or from the Department of Planning and Development, 27 High Street, Poughkeepsie, NY 12601, (845) 486-3600 for \$4.00 (plus postage if mailed.)

Realtor's HAI. This index measures whether or not a median income household could qualify for a mortgage loan on the median priced home. A value of 100 means a household with the median income has exactly enough income to qualify for a mortgage on a median priced home. The County's overall HAI index was 106, which means that a median income household in Dutchess County had 106% of the income necessary to qualify for a mortgage on a

Community Development Advisory Committee Members Appointed

By Elizabeth Doyle, Community Development Administrator

Dutchess County Executive William R. Steinhaus issued an Executive Order in 2001 which established the Dutchess County Community Development Advisory Committee, the advisory board for the federally funded Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) and HOME Programs. This committee makes funding recommendations to the Dutchess County Executive, assisting him in the annual policy and allocation decisions.

Membership consists of three chief elected officials of local municipalities who are members of the Urban County Consortium and four community representatives from the categories of local government, economic development, housing and human service. The terms are one year and coincide with the annual program year beginning March 1st of each year.

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In March of 2004, Dutchess County Executive Steinhaus made the following seven appointments to the CD Advisory Committee representing the various community categories:

Robert Allers (Chairman), Commissioner, Dutchess County Social Services, Human Service
Clara Lou Gould, Mayor, City of Beacon, Chief Elected Official
Robert Liffland, Mayor, Village of Pawling, Chief Elected Official
Dave Tetor, Supervisor, Town of Stanford, Chief Elected Official
Richard Altman, Executive Director, Workforce Investment Board, Economic Development
Joseph Luna, Councilperson, Town of LaGrange, Local Government
Gail Webster, Executive Director, Hudson River Housing, Housing

The County Executive's Office and the Dutchess County Department of Planning and Development look forward to working with the Advisory Committee members in the upcoming year. We also wish to thank Penny Hickman, retired Supervisor, Town of Pleasant Valley; Jill Way, Supervisor, Town of Dover; and Ron Coan, President, DC Economic Development Corporation for their time and commitment during their recent service on the Advisory Committee.

The CDBG and HOME Programs are administered by the Dutchess County Department of Planning and Development through the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development and provide grant funds to municipalities, human service agencies, developers and senior citizens for activities that benefit low-to-moderate income residents of Dutchess County. 🌳

Training to Help Preserve Biodiversity

By Lynette Wacker, Planner

According to Hudsonia Ltd's Biodiversity Assessment Manual, the term 'Biodiversity' is short for 'Biological Diversity', which can be defined simply as "the variety of life and its processes". Why preserve biodiversity? Because every species contributes to the ecological balance of the environment. For example, destroying the habitat of certain predators such as owls may contribute to the over-abundance of mice that carry Lyme disease-causing ticks.



The class examines a hardwood swamp during the fieldwork portion of the training.

Photo Credit: Hudsonia Ltd.

In order to better understand how to do this, I attended a 3-day Biodiversity Assessment Training Course sponsored by Hudsonia. Most of the 16 or so attendees were affiliated with conservation committees or land trusts, but the training was appropriate for anyone making land-use decisions or advising those who do. The purpose of the training was to enable people to determine where habitats that could support rare, threatened or endangered species are. No expertise was needed - we learned to interpret aerial photos, topographic and water resource maps, soils and bedrock data. Based upon this information, we were able to make a very good determination where these habitats might be found. We then verified our predictions by field-checking the sites.



Photo Credit: Hudsonia Ltd.

Tom Lynch, Associate Professor of Environmental Science at Marist College, studies a pair of stereo aerial photos using a stereoscope, which provides a "3-D" image of the topography and other ground features.

Armed with this kind of data, decision-makers can take steps to protect areas worthy of preservation. According to Laura Heady, Biodiversity Educator with Hudsonia, "numerous Hudson Valley municipalities are currently working on open space planning, comprehensive plan updates, and creation of conservation ordinances. This is an important time for land use planners to increase their understanding of the ecological landscape — our training is designed to help them identify what biological resources they have, and what conservation actions will be most effective in protecting them and the biodiversity they support."

Hudsonia will be offering the 3-day Biodiversity Assessment Short Course on September 21-23. Hudsonia also offers a 10-month Biodiversity Assessment Training. The program runs from January to October, and four teams are selected competitively each year and awarded a \$1000 grant from the State's Hudson River Estuary Program. Hudsonia's Biodiversity Education Project was initiated following publication in 2001 of the *Biodiversity Assessment Manual for the Hudson River Estuary Corridor*, a joint publication of Hudsonia and NYSDEC. The project implements Governor Pataki's Hudson River Estuary Action Plan by providing training and assistance to local decision-makers on methods of conserving the valley's rich heritage of native plants, animals, and their habitats.

For more information, contact Laura Heady at 845-876-7200, or visit www.Hudsonia.org 🌳

Staff Notes

Congratulations and good luck to Tracy Lee, Principal Program Assistant who has been with Planning since 1984. Tracy has earned a degree in Computer Networking and is now working in the County's Office of Computer Information Systems. Filling Tracy's position at Planning is Janet Silvestri. Janet has an AA Degree from DCC and will be working on a variety of administrative tasks. Welcome Janet!

Our thoughts go out to Mark Debald (that's Major Debald now) who has taken a leave from his position as Planner to serve our country in the Middle East. We look forward to his safe return.



2003 Zoning Referral Summary

By Jennifer Coccozza, Planner

General Municipal Law requires that municipalities refer certain zoning actions to the Dutchess County Department of Planning and Development for review. These actions include requests for site plan and special permit approval, area and use variances, rezonings, and zoning amendments.

According to General Municipal Law, the purpose of referring an action to the County Planning Department is to bring pertinent inter-community and county-wide planning, zoning, site plan and subdivision considerations to the attention of surrounding municipalities and other agencies. In addition, the Department

comments on site-specific items such as building placement, landscaping and context issues and will, upon request, provide comments on projects outside the purview of General Municipal Law.

In 2003, the Department processed 643 referrals for 689 actions (some referrals were submitted for more than one action.) The number of referrals increased from 625 in 2002, a 3% increase. As in past years, the Town of Poughkeepsie submitted more zoning referrals than any other municipality, 146, which accounted for 23% of all referrals submitted to the County. Other municipalities with a large number of referrals are the City of Poughkeepsie with 58 and the Village of Rhinebeck with 42. The Town of Wappinger was next with 41 referrals, followed by the Town of Fishkill with 40. The Town of Washington and the Village of Tivoli were the only municipalities without any referrals to the County.

County Planning considered approximately 64% of the referrals a matter of local concern and did not offer comments. Comments letters were written to the municipalities for 22% of the referrals received. In 14 cases, the County recommended denying the proposed actions. Of these, the County was informed that the municipalities granted ten approvals and denied three. 🌳

The Census – More Than Every Ten Years

By Lindsay Carille, Planner

The Census Bureau doesn't stop working between censuses. Every month, quarter and year, the Census Bureau conducts nearly 100 surveys that update and add to the decennial information collected. One of the many ongoing surveys that Dutchess County residents may be seeing is the American Community Survey. This important survey will provide detailed data for communities on a yearly basis. Participation in Census surveys is important, as local governments, community organizations and businesses use this information in order to better serve the local communities. Many grants, community programs and policy decisions are based on Census data.



Photo Credit: U.S. Census Bureau

Households that are chosen to participate in a survey will receive a "welcome" letter in the mail, and may also be contacted by a Field Representative. All Field Representatives carry a photo ID badge. Due to the large amount of ongoing survey work, the Census plans to hire over 200 Field Representatives throughout the Northeast Region this year. Anyone interested in employment, or in more information on any of the Census surveys, can access the information at: www.census.gov 🌳

Greenway Compact Update

Congratulations to the newest Greenway Compact members: the Town and Village of Rhinebeck and **the** Town of Milan. Now 26 out of 30 Dutchess County communities, plus the County government, have adopted the Greenway principles and guidelines for better planning. Joining the Greenway Compact is voluntary, based on incentives not requirements, and involves no sacrifice of local home rule powers. The Greenway Compact is the best way to coordinate local planning initiatives with neighboring communities, receive direct assistance from the County and Greenway planning staff, and improve communications with state agencies.

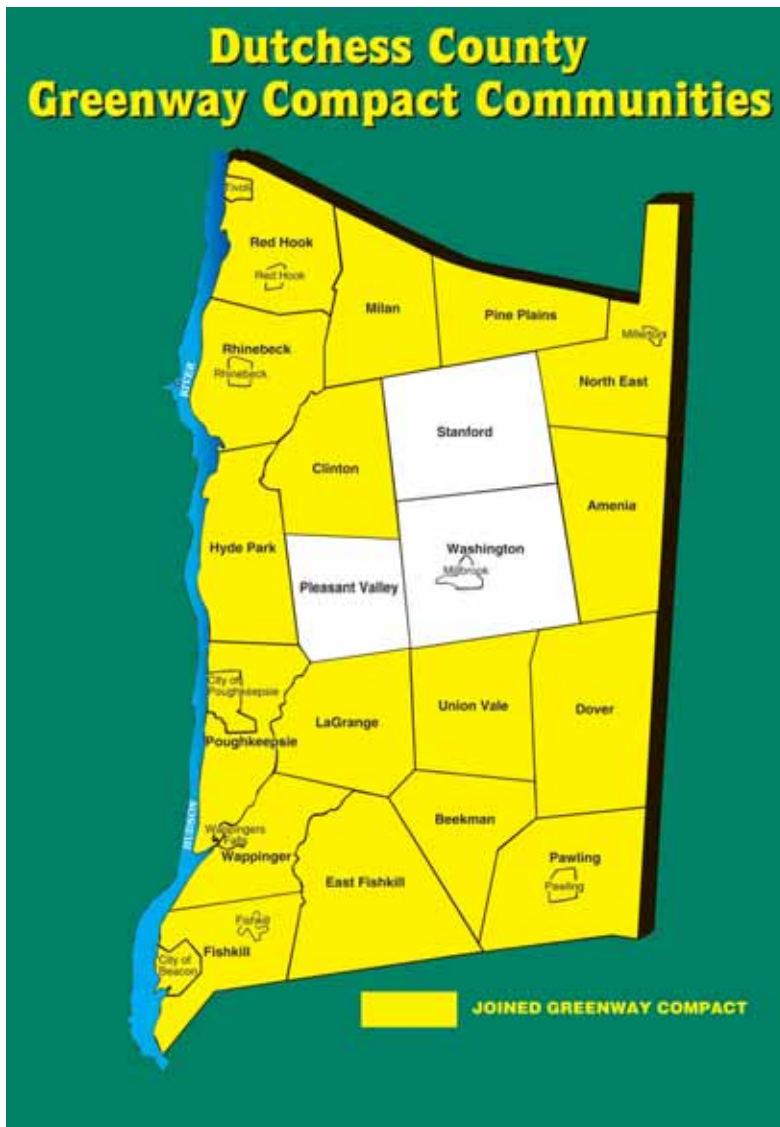
And the Greenway benefits can be well worth the effort. At last count, over \$1.2 million in Greenway-related grants have been directed toward projects in

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Dutchess County through the Hudson River Valley Greenway Council. This includes smaller matching grants of \$5,000 to \$10,000 for participating Greenway communities and sometimes larger planning grants for Greenway Compact members. The Town of Fishkill, for example, was recently awarded a \$25,000 grant for an update of its comprehensive plan. As an added incentive, state agencies are also authorized to give Greenway Compact members a five percent higher rating for much larger competitive planning and capital grants. Last year, the Town of Amenia received a \$100,000 State Bond Act grant with Greenway assistance for hamlet revitalization and streetscape improvements.

Dutchess County's Greenway Compact has an overwhelmingly positive track record since its original adoption in 2000 and is considered a model for the rest of the 13-county Hudson Valley region. Because Dutchess was the first county to adopt a Greenway Compact program and has, by far, the most individual Greenway Compact members, we have maintained a clear advantage in terms of Greenway activities and grant requests. For more information on joining the Greenway Compact, call Dutchess County Planning and Development. *Greenway Connections: Greenway Compact Program and Guides for Dutchess County Communities* is available online at www.dutchessny.gov. For information on Greenway grants or other benefits, contact the Hudson River Valley Greenway Communities Council at (518) 473-3835 or visit www.hudsongreenway.state.ny.us.



Join the Growing List of Zoning School Graduates

Last year the Dutchess County Legislature, co-sponsored by the Dutchess County Planning Federation, announced a one-day training program for local leaders entitled "The Dutchess County Land Use Leadership Certification Program". At the training program local leaders had an opportunity to learn about the New York Municipal Insurance Reciprocal (NYMIR) Zoning School and to bring this training program back to their communities. Once a majority of a community's zoning and planning board members have taken and passed the at-home NYMIR course modules, their Board is certified. The certification program is produced by the Pace University Land Use Law Center and the New York Planning Federation and made available through the NYMIR, which is owned by the 530 New York Municipalities it insures.



To date, nine Dutchess County communities have become the first in the state to receive certification through the new program. They include:

- Town of Clinton ZBA
- Town of Hyde Park ZBA
- Town of LaGrange Planning Board
- Town of Pawling Planning Board
- Town of Pleasant Valley Planning Board
- Town of Union Vale Planning Board and ZBA
- Village of Fishkill Planning Board
- Village of Rhinebeck ZBA
- Village of Wappingers Falls Planning Board

Upcoming Conferences

July 9-10: 2004 NY ReLeaf Conference at Marist College. www.treesny.com

July 14-18: Sustainable Communities 2004 in Burlington, VT. www.global-community.org/conference/

September 19-22: NY Planning Federation Annual Conference in Lake Placid. www.nypf.org



Trout Lily
(*Erythronium americanum*)

A Picture Is Worth A Thousand Words



Before



After

Planners consistently recommend that buildings be in keeping with the character of the surrounding area and that pleasing architectural details be incorporated into the design. Well, Steven Domber, President of Prudential Serls Prime Properties, did just what planners ask for. When he was looking for office space with a great location, he found a place in a gateway to Fishkill with easy access to Route 52 and I-84, but the building on the property was not so great. Originally a single-family Victorian home, the 120-year

old structure had been converted into multi-use office space in the 60s and for decades had been neglected. Its deteriorated condition would have led many to demolish the building and start anew; but Mr. Domber saw its potential, and with the expertise of local architect Paul Varanouskas and local builders Luke Regier and Mike Meyers of Farm Development Corporation, brought it back to its original glory.

In addition to bringing the building up to code, and installing a new HVAC system and other mechanicals, the

former beauty of the building was recreated both inside and out. Original interior doors and moldings were saved and restored, and the exterior was renovated to match some of the original period detailing. The result is a gorgeous building that serves a commercial purpose, while fitting in harmoniously with the surrounding historical and residential area.

PLAN ON IT

A Dutchess County Planning Federation Newsletter

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