



Centers: Compact, Complete, and Connected

Centers are the focal points for community history, commercial exchange, and close-knit development, including the cities of Beacon and Poughkeepsie, the county's eight villages, multiple small hamlets, and larger town centers, such as Hyde Park, Hopewell Junction, and Amenia. They are traditionally defined by a human-scale 5-15 minute walking radius. Within a ¼-mile radius is the mixed-use core, where visitors can park once and walk around. The ½-mile radius contains surrounding residential blocks, where people can easily walk from the edge to the center. Cities combine multiple mixed-use and walkable neighborhood centers.

Ideally, larger centers contain a complete range of commercial stores, services, restaurants, lodging, job sites, schools, parks, and important civic buildings, such as libraries and post offices. They are linked to other centers by bus or train services and include an interconnected sidewalk system to provide multiple means of getting around, other than just the automobile. Smaller hamlets may lack sidewalks and essential services, but still act as places of local historic identity.

In order to promote a stronger sense of community, encourage efficiencies in land use, energy, and transportation, and protect the rural countryside from commercial strip and residential sprawl development, most new growth should be concentrated in and around existing or emerging centers. This may include infill between buildings, redevelopment, or extensions of existing centers within walkable distances. Local plans should identify priority growth centers and provide zoning incentives and design standards for these designated areas.

Emerging centers are locally identified mixed-use areas, most often created by retrofitting an outdated commercial district with good existing access to roads, transit, infrastructure, and nearby residential areas. A new, more integrated and walkable center can be built, without destroying natural areas or farmland. Large, well-located vacant sites, such as the Harlem Valley Psychiatric Center, are also excellent places for planned emerging centers.

Local Example: LaGrange Town Center
LaGrange identified the need for a Town Center to replace the commercial strip in Freedom Plains as far back as 1987, but finally adopted its new Comprehensive Plan, zoning, and Illustrative Plan in 2003. The plan featured roundabouts to slow traffic on Route 55, a main street with a central civic building and amphitheater green, a mix of multi-family buildings, and residential neighborhoods to the south. A large proposal consistent with the plan was withdrawn in the recent recession, but when completed, it would be the first new village-scale center built in the county since the mid-1800s.

