

**Regional Pattern**

**CENTERS AND GREENSPACES**

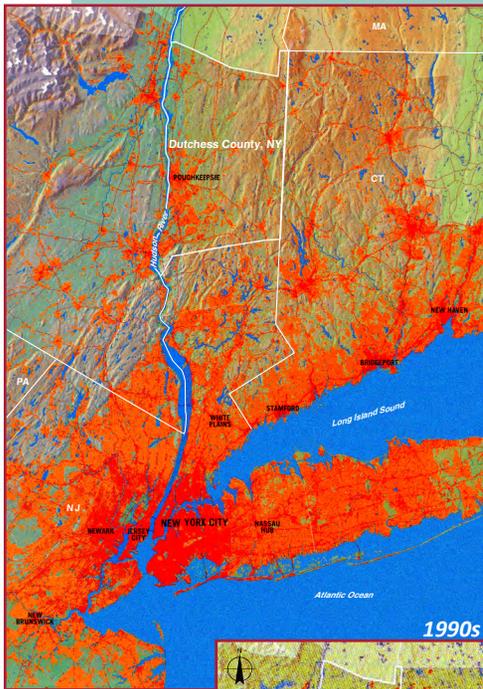
Define smart growth within a traditional and ecological pattern of Centers and Greenspaces, where new development should either:

- strengthen an existing city, village, hamlet, or town center;
- transform a suburban strip or subdivision(s) into a center in the form of a more walkable, mixed-use neighborhood; or
- fit gently into the rural countryside as a background element, preserving continuous natural and agricultural greenspaces.

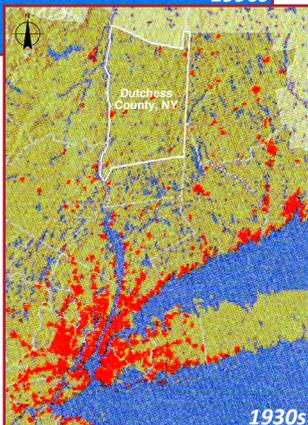
Most development before 1950 focused around walkable centers, surrounded by expansive rural and natural landscapes. Forming a combined ecosystem, cities and smaller centers concentrated diversity and innovation in commerce and culture, while large areas of farms, woods, and wetlands generated a wide diversity of natural species.

This interconnected pattern of central places and surrounding greenspaces, evolved over centuries and embedded in nature, has now segmented into suburban forms that mandate driving for every major movement. Commercial strips line most highways and residential sprawl spreads far into the countryside, fragmenting both communities and nature. Auto-dependency also fuels a basic contradiction: low-density sprawl creates higher levels of traffic congestion.

Limited land, unlimited traffic aggravation, and escalating local taxes to service all those scattered subdivisions make the continued strip-and-sprawl conversion of outlying areas unsustainable. Global energy and climate concerns make policy changes even more urgent. A Greenway-inspired Centers and Greenspaces approach that re-centers most new development into walkable, mixed-use forms can protect our natural and agricultural heritage, end wasteful land, energy, and pollution practices, and provide a wider range of transportation choices, from walking, biking, and cars to transit alternatives.



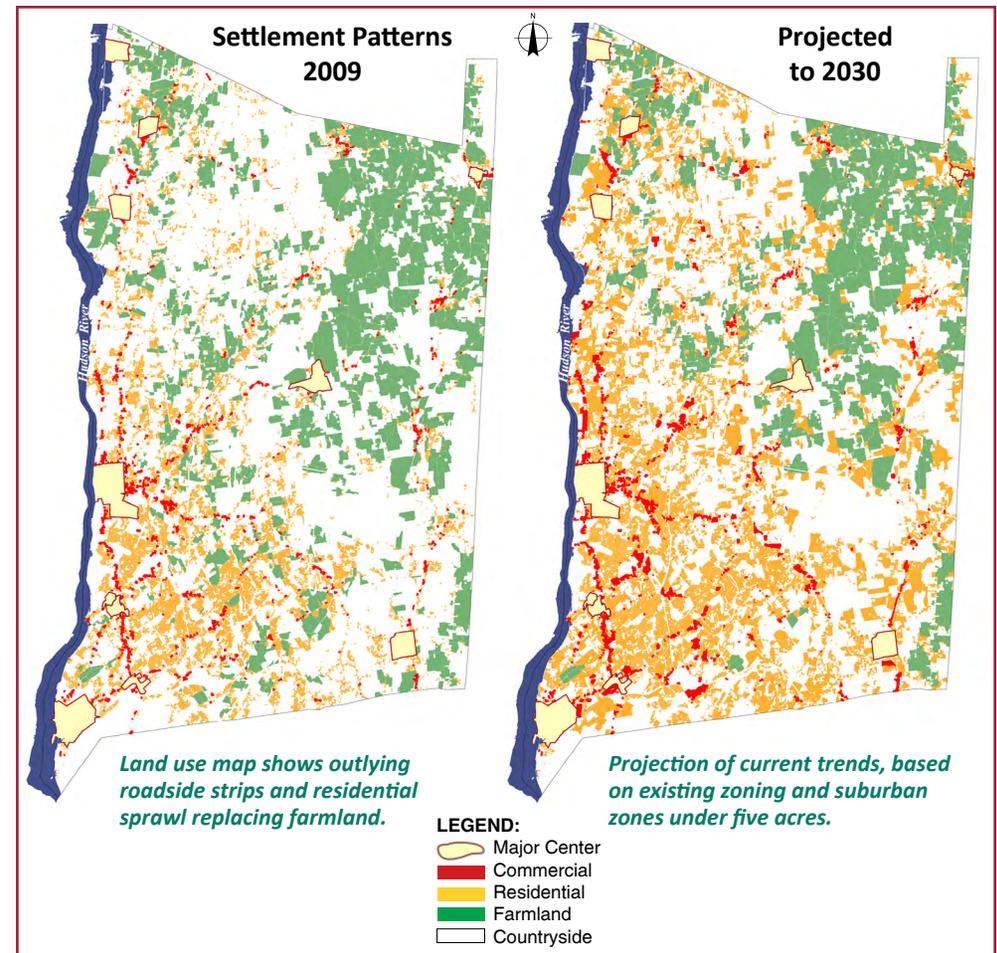
1990s



1930s

*The regional spread of strip-and-sprawl development compared to more compact, centered patterns in the 1930s.*

(Original maps by Regional Plan Association, Cornell University and U.S.G.S.)



*Land use map shows outlying roadside strips and residential sprawl replacing farmland.*

*Projection of current trends, based on existing zoning and suburban zones under five acres.*

**LEGEND:**  
 Major Center  
 Commercial  
 Residential  
 Farmland  
 Countryside

The Centers and Greenspaces initiative integrates land use, transportation, and ecological planning to implement Greenway principles and prevent strip-and-sprawl patterns. The goal is to encourage municipalities to identify natural and agricultural greenspaces for possible protection and priority growth centers with positive development potential.

The Centers and Greenspaces approach was

first applied in the Rhinebeck Town Plan and a Red Hook intermunicipal plan, then with the towns of Poughkeepsie and Pleasant Valley and the City of Beacon. These plans not only identify growth centers and greenspaces, but also tried to illustrate what new close-in development might look like. The Centers and Greenspaces map builds on these local examples and will evolve on the interactive website as new municipal plans and projects are completed.

*“Greenway principles support reinforcing centers as primary growth areas, fitting any outlying development into the natural landscape to preserve farmland and open spaces, and providing strategies to pull together separated subdivisions and commercial districts into more connected neighborhoods or mixed-use centers.”*

*Greenway Connections, page 27*