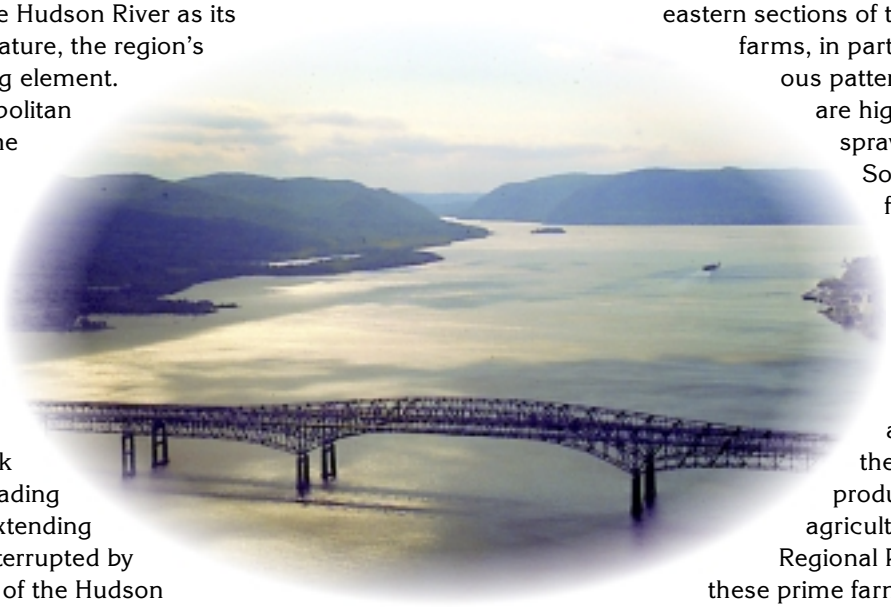
Regional Panorama

When these landscape patterns are considered as a whole, they become a regional panorama of three-dimensional land forms flowing down the Hudson Valley to New York City and the ocean, as illustrated in our bird's-eye view on the following page. Landscapes and connecting patterns appear as if looking south from high over Columbia County.

Unlike conventional county maps with cut-off borders, the Panorama has the Hudson River as its central connecting feature, the region's most obvious unifying element. The New York metropolitan area is depicted on the horizon to the south as the largest determinant of our regional economy and a world capital for finance, art and culture. There are many significant benefits from our proximity to New York City, but its ever-spreading suburbs have been extending up the Valley, only interrupted by the natural greenbelt of the Hudson Highlands. Dutchess County lies beyond the Highlands, between the Taconic and the Catskill Mountains at the heart of the Hudson Valley. Poughkeepsie is the Valley's central city, half way between Albany and New York City.



The Panorama deemphasizes municipal boundaries, since natural patterns and the economy freely cross them. It stresses instead the region's interdependence, the relationship of settlements to natural topography, and the Valley's primary connectors, including the river systems and bridge crossings, the Hudson and Harlem rail lines, regional trails, and the Taconic State Parkway.

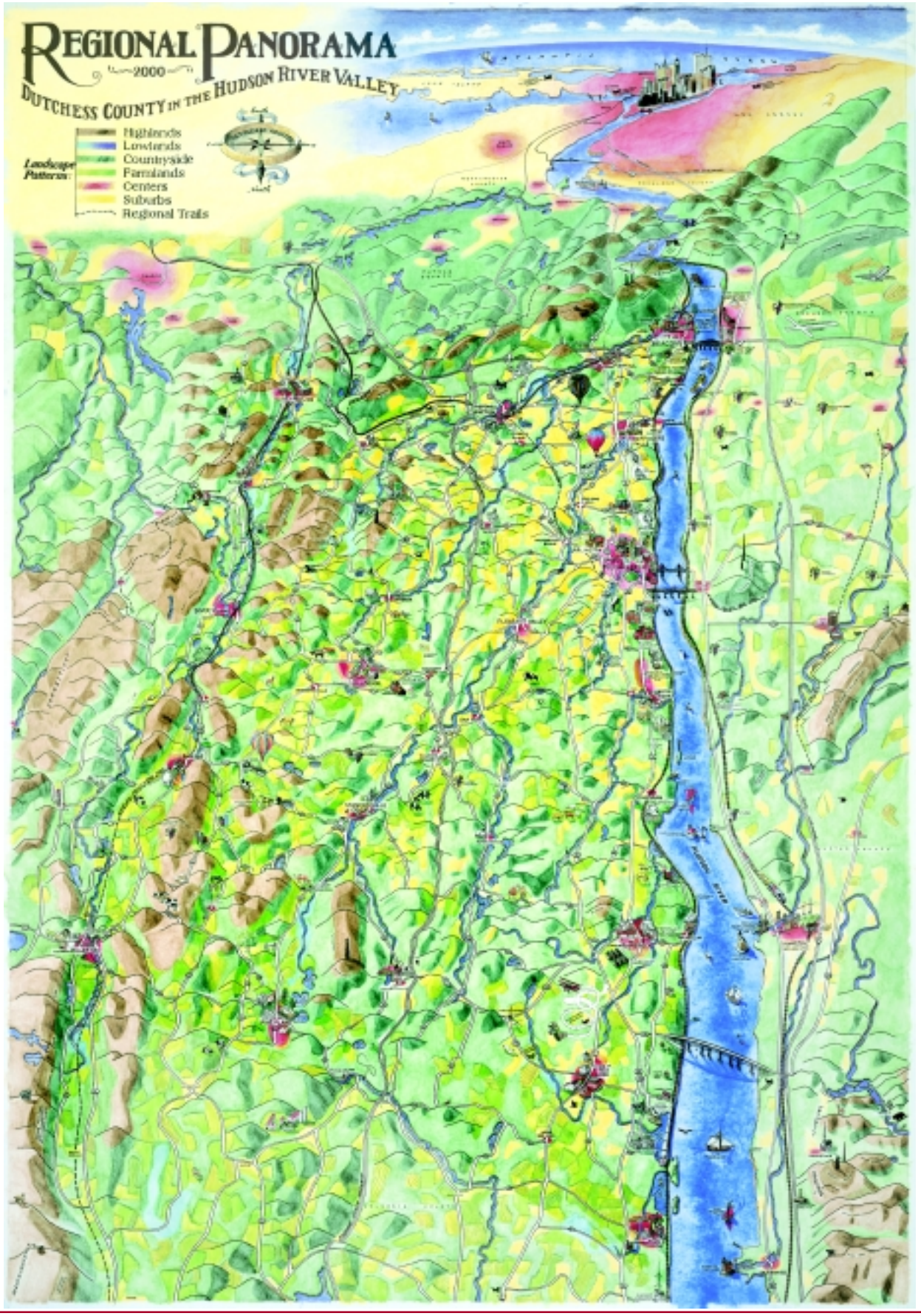
What does this unique perspective tell us?

First, the historic settlement centers still prevail and are important focal points for our future. Originally located along rivers, creeks, or former rail lines, these traditional centers can use Greenway connections, such as waterway linkages, rails-to-trails corridors, or waterfront redevelopment projects to help reinforce their role as central places for community activities. The Panorama highlights these primary centers, as well as other landmarks and cultural attractions.

Second, the aerial view reveals the vast extent of remaining forests and farmlands, especially in the northern and eastern sections of the county. The farms, in particular, form continuous patterns of open land that are highly vulnerable to sprawling subdivisions. Some of the area's best farm soils have already been converted to house lots. The *Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan* identifies ten large agricultural areas with the county's most productive and scenic agricultural resources. The Regional Panorama illustrates these prime farming areas that should be given high priority protection.

Third, the emphasis in the last few decades on cars and a higher speed road network has opened rural areas to rapid development. The front lines between the existing countryside and suburban development extending up the valleys and roadways from the southwest are clearly evident on the Panorama. Greenway policies, principles, and guides that emphasize farmland and open space conservation, prevention of strip development, and planning for priority growth areas will help make new construction complement, not replace the county's rural character.

In the end, Dutchess County appears as a unique place in the Hudson Valley, where natural wealth and a history of community and commerce combine to present us with our own set of opportunities. The Greenway Compact Program challenges us to protect this vast endowment and to join together to recognize our role in this regional setting.


REGIONAL PANORAMA
2000
DUTCHESS COUNTY IN THE HUDSON RIVER VALLEY
Landscape Patterns:
Highlands
Lowlands
Countryside
Farmlands
Centers
Suburbs
Regional Trails

Regional Panorama Guidelines

Landscape Patterns	Development Density	Clearing & Planting	Building Forms	Access	Primary Activities
Steep slopes Mountainous areas	Very low density	Protect steep slopes/ridgelines Selected clearing for vistas	Scattered clusters or buildings within tree lines	Limited roads along contours Ridgeline trails	Parks, trails, and recreational uses Scattered Residential Forest Management
Highlands					
Regulated wetlands 100-year floodplains	Protected from development Limited uses	Natural 100-foot buffer Natural vegetation preferred Filling limited to centers	No buildings Buildings restricted	Elevated trails or in buffer Roads/parking in centers Waterfront trails	Nature study Parks & recreation Water access & trails Farming Parking
Lowlands					
Rural land outside centers Farmlands	Low density More than 50% open space Wells and septic systems Conservation density	Natural terrain and fields rather than large lawns Preserve stone walls Protect farm soils Tree lines as wind-breaks, habitat, & house locations	Small scale, traditional Scattered or grouped in hamlet forms Traditional farm groupings Dispersed buildings or conservation development	Local roads Bike routes and trails Buses along regional routes Access roads & trails along edge of fields or on marginal soils	Mix of small scale uses, mostly residential No strip commercial Farming Farm supportive businesses Scattered residential; No subdivisions on farm soils
Countryside					
Existing or new hamlets, villages, & cities Growth areas at edge	More than 4 units/acre (6+ du/ac needed for transit) Central utilities	Continuous street trees Central green or park Greenbelt to prevent sprawl	Compatible architecture Infill encouraged Housing over storefronts	Regional connections Network of small blocks Bike & sidewalk systems 1/4 to 1/2 mile walking radius	Mixture of uses, especially encouraged in core areas Civic uses at focal points Neighborhood parks & schools
Centers					
Outlying single use residential districts Retrofitted highway commercial districts	Existing density plus infill Central utilities preferred Infill mix of uses Limited to 1/2 mile length	Street trees Central greens or parks Continuous street trees, planted medians, and shaded parking	Infill encouraged Compact civic/commercial core Quality architecture, not bland boxes & pole signs Small stores along frontage	Interconnected local roads Sidewalks & greenbelt trails Shared entrances/parking Internal connecting roads Sidewalks and bus stops No front yard parking	Broader mix of neighborhood scale uses as central focus Integrate housing and other uses for a more walkable neighborhood center
Suburbs					