

POLICY AREA: Population, Economic Base, and Growth of Centers

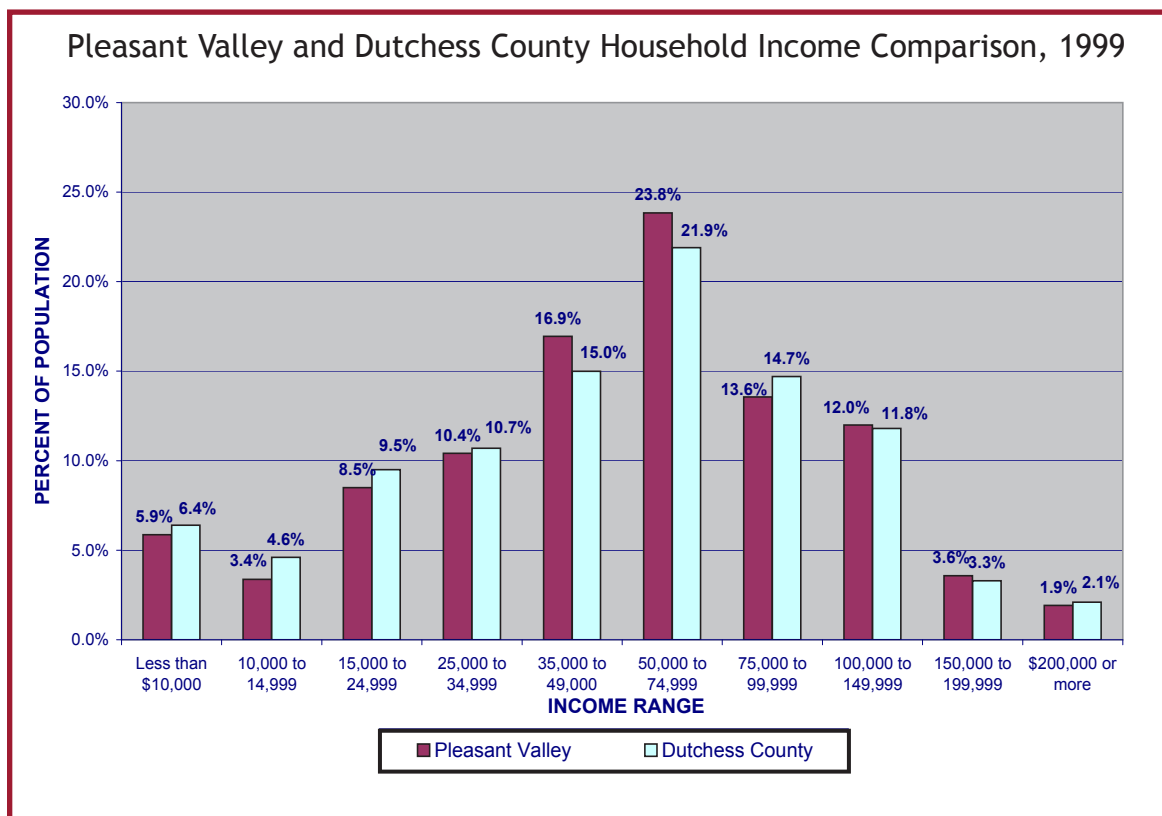
Pleasant Valley has grown from a small town of a little over 1,400 people in the early 1900s, to a bustling town of over 9,000 residents in 2005. The Town's population grew 16.9 percent between 1980 and 1990, and 12.4 percent between 1990 and 2000. This makes it the tenth most populated municipality in Dutchess County. The number of housing units has correspondingly increased. Between 1990 and 2000, there was an increase of 13.4 percent, or 428 housing units.

The Census figures reinforce the dichotomy of Pleasant Valley as being both rural and suburban. According to the Census, 4,256 people are living in an urbanized area¹. There are 4,810 people living in a rural area, 45 of which live on a farm and 4,765 are non-farm residents.

The median family and household income is about average when compared to the County income medians. The percentage of individuals below the poverty level is significantly lower than for Dutchess County. The Town also has a higher average per capita income than the County.



Local businesses in the hamlet of Pleasant Valley



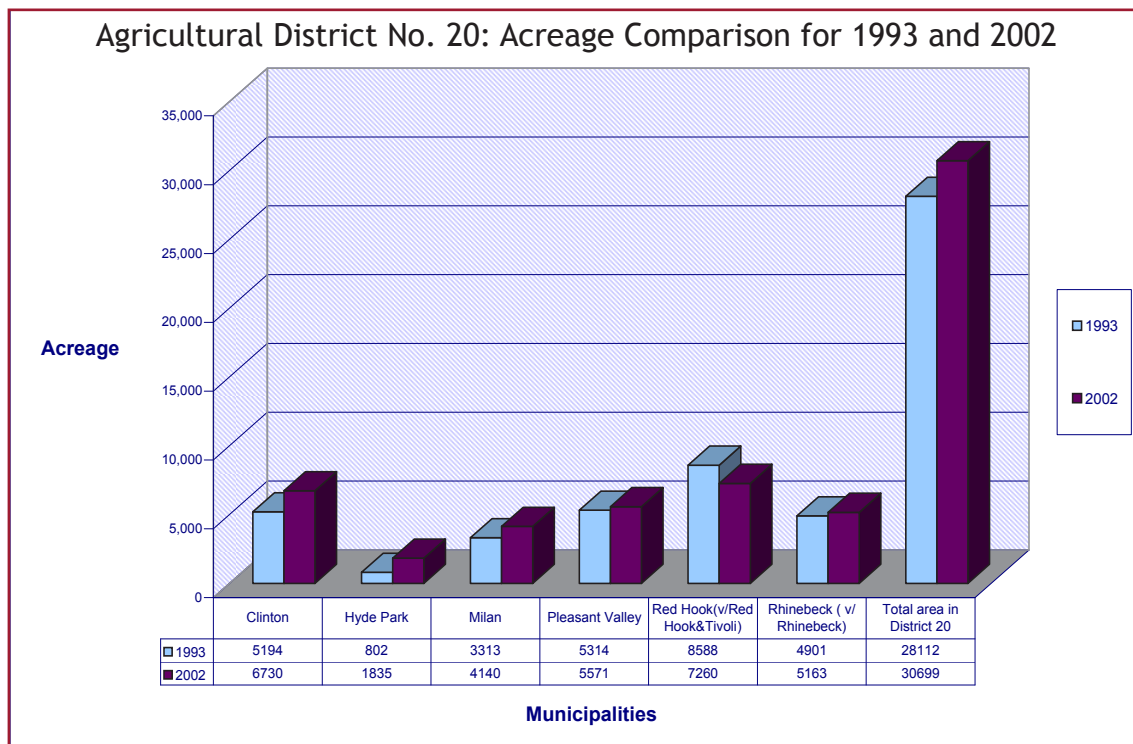
Source: U.S. Census data

¹ An area consisting of a central place(s) and adjacent territory with a general population density of at least 1,000 people per square mile of land area that together have a minimum residential population of at least 50,000 people

Agriculture and Industry

Of the 4,512 employed residents, only 656 (14.5%) work within Pleasant Valley. The remainder of residents work in other towns within Dutchess County (67.2%) and out-of-county/out-of-state (18.3%). In terms of overall employment categories, “Educational, Health and Social Services” is the top industry category for Pleasant Valley workers (25.2%), and “Manufacturing, Professional, and Related Occupations” is the top occupational category (40.2%) according to the 2000 Census.

Agriculture is undergoing rapid change in the region, with agricultural employment steadily declining in the past two decades. From 1980 to 1990 there was a decrease of the agricultural labor force from 4.6 to 1.2 percent. The 2000 Census shows that only 0.8 percent is employed in agriculture. While the number of residents working in the agricultural industry has declined, the acreage devoted to agriculture has increased. The 2002 Agriculture District Recertification data shows that since 1993 the number of acres has increased by 4.84 percent, from 5,314 acres to 5,571.



Source: Dutchess County Department of Planning and Development, 2003: 1993 and 2002 Agricultural District Recertification data compiled by the Dutchess County Agriculture and Farmland Protection Board. Population statistics based on 1990 and 2000 U.S. Census data

Business Growth

Municipalities across Dutchess County are looking for ways to expand their business base to bring in new jobs and revenues, and Pleasant Valley is no exception. The Town is unlikely to attract very large industries, and instead should promote what it has always had to offer:

- Hamlet centers with space for new shops and smaller-scale businesses;
- A lifestyle that accommodates work at home, in small work spaces and adapted buildings;
- Natural and scenic resources that can support increased tourism, recreation, agricultural production, and cottage industries;
- Central location within the county;
- Direct access to the Taconic State Parkway and NYS Route 44.

Pleasant Valley should not plan for only a few sectors of its population, or count on one major employer. Instead, the Town should focus on diversifying its business base to provide more jobs for local residents, especially ones based on quality of life factors. In particular, the Town should evaluate the use of local resources such as the Wappinger Creek in new ways, recognize and retain the importance of its remaining rural character and land-based businesses, and draw on its increasingly diverse population to strengthen the Town's hamlet centers and self-image. This can be accomplished by encouraging a greater variety of businesses, specialty shops, and employment opportunities, and encouraging the coordination of promotional and merchandizing efforts among Pleasant Valley's business merchants.

Agriculture deserves community support as a viable economic resource, an environmental enhancement, and a tourism booster. The Town should actively encourage existing and new agricultural operations including farm-related businesses, the on-site sale of farm products, lower taxation of active farmlands, and the protection of the right-to-farm from constraints associated with adjacent non-agricultural development. A secondary value is the beautiful setting acting as a greenbelt to residential neighborhoods.

In the past ten years the percentage of residents working at home has almost doubled. In 1990 2.5 percent of the population worked at home, and by 2000 it was 4.7 percent. With the increased usage of technology that allows residents to work at home, coupled with the increase in average commute time, from 25 minutes to 28 minutes, the Town should encourage home occupations and telecommuting. With sensible standards that prevent neighborhood disruption, promotion of local, home-based businesses is advantageous.

Strengthening the Hamlets

The Town should continue to develop and promote the hamlet of Pleasant Valley as a viable economic center, with a concentrated mix of business, residential, and community uses. Salt Point and Washington Hollow should also be seen as centers, where business uses should be attractively designed.

The Town should recognize that one of its most important assets for attracting business customers and new economic development is retaining its rural character. In particular, the Wappinger Creek corridor and the Little Wappinger Creek are scenic natural resources that could support new marketing efforts and recreation or tourism-related businesses.



The Pleasant Valley Department Store has been a mainstay in the hamlet since the 1940s

Salt Point should improve its economic base by promoting its tourism resources, such as re-using existing buildings for shops, small offices, bed and breakfasts, craft workshops, and home occupations that capitalize on the hamlet's historic character and proximity to scenic farmlands.

Surrounding the intersection of routes 82 and 44 in Washington Hollow, a commercial cluster could be designed as an important gateway to the Town. New commercial uses should be directed to these hamlet and business centers, rather than spread along the major roadways.

Pleasant Valley should be viewed not as a convenience stop for Route 44 commuters, but rather as a community and business center for its residents. The overall economic goals are to promote business opportunities that meet the needs of the residents and provide a stronger economic base, yet are still consistent with the rural character of the Town.

Implementation Strategies: Population, Economic Base, and Growth of Centers

Short-term:

- 2.1 Zoning districts should reflect areas appropriate for additional commercial and mixed-use development.
- 2.2 Consider a program for the Hamlet Residential districts that requires payment to an open space fund in order to increase the development potential.
- 2.3 Adopt design guidelines that will help to enhance the hamlet centers and create desirable destination areas for residents and tourists.
- 2.4 Adopt zoning regulations that include right-to-farm provisions.
- 2.5 Adopt zoning regulations that allow appropriate home-based businesses.
- 2.6 Adopt zoning regulations that prohibit “big box” retail establishments.
- 2.7 Work with Dutchess County Tourism to create a brochure that includes a listing of agricultural related businesses and local establishments for dining, shopping and recreational opportunities.
- 2.8 Complete the community water supply feasibility study for the Pleasant Valley hamlet.

Long-term:

- 2.9 Work with Dutchess County Economic Development Corporation to explore the feasibility of creating Empire Zones within the Town, and explore tax incentive opportunities for businesses.
- 2.10 Establish a community water district in the Pleasant Valley hamlet.
- 2.11 Initiate a sewer study for the Pleasant Valley hamlet.

