

7. COMMUNITY SERVICES & FACILITIES

7.1 Town Government

The Town of Poughkeepsie manages multiple departments which provide community services and facilities to residents through the allocation of local tax dollars. While the list of services the Town provides is extensive, generally appropriations are dedicated to:¹

- Town Board
- Justice Court
- Office of the Supervisor
- Comptroller
- Tax Receiver and Assessor
- Police
- Planning & Zoning
- Street Lights
- Town Clerk
- Legal
- Engineering
- Elections
- Records Management
- Traffic Control
- Water Department
- Arlington Business Improvement District
- Building Department
- Highway Department
- Programs for the Aging
- Parks & Recreation
- Drainage Agency
- Fire fighting
- Sewer Department
- Ambulatory Services

Certain departments, such as highway, fire, water, sewer, streetlights and the Arlington BID are supported by separate taxing districts within the Town while other services such as the Police Department, Programs for the Aging and Planning and Zoning are supported through Town-wide taxation.

7.2 Police

The Town of Poughkeepsie Police department serves the entire Town with a patrol division, traffic division and detective division employing 83 officers spanning 5 patrol zones (**Map 18**).² The department also provides specialized services such as a bike patrol unit (one part time position), community policing, crisis negotiation, drug recognition, field intelligence, community policing, K-9 unit, a school resource officer (SRO), polygraph unit, S.W.A.T. and a crime scene unit. The Town Animal Control Officer is based out of the Police Department but has a contract with the DC SPCA.³

The department describes its duties and responsibilities as:

¹ https://townofpoughkeepsie.com/comptroller/2019_Adopted_Budget.pdf

² April 24, 2019 Comprehensive Plan Committee Meeting #9

³ Ibid.

“...targeted at reducing crime rates, reducing the opportunity to commit crimes, identifying and apprehending violators, prosecuting offenders, recovering and returning property and proving the public with services as necessary. These goals are accomplished by, but are not limited to, preserving the peace, enforcing all applicable laws, codes and ordinances, protecting the life, property, and personal safety of all persons, and assisting all citizens in times of need.”⁴

According to the meeting minutes from a Comprehensive Plan Committee Meeting on April 24, 2019, the Town of Poughkeepsie Police are responsible for policing 20 Town parks, 4 school districts, 4 parochial schools, 4 private schools, 16 malls or plazas, three colleges (as needed) and 18 religious buildings. In addition, the traffic department oversees approximately 140 miles of Town roadways, 100 miles of County roadways, 26 miles of State roadways and 12 miles of railroad line. Typically the Town has 11 officers on a shift at any given time.

The department reportedly receives 24,500 calls for service per year and made over 1,000 arrests in 2018 which is down from previous years.

The Town of Poughkeepsie Police Department also holds events throughout the year such as “Cops and Coffee” held at the Town Senior Center once per month, this event is highly attended by local residents interested in interacting with Town officers in an informal setting. The Department also hosts a Youth Academy which allows community youth to interact with officers and learn how officers do their jobs.

During the April 24, 2019 Comprehensive Plan Committee meeting, the Chief discussed capacity with the committee as well. He expressed that it is difficult to plan for how future growth and development within the Town will impact the Police Department, especially with new development projects taking place on current vacant or open space. The department expects that those involved in new development proposals will maintain communication throughout the planning and development phases of any given project in order to ensure the department is properly staffed.

7.3 Fire Protection

Fire protection for the Town of Poughkeepsie is split among three main Fire Districts (See **Map 18, Emergency Services**). On March 27, 2019 the Comprehensive Plan Committee met with the Chiefs of the Fire Departments to learn more about their departments. The following is a summary from that meeting, supplemented with information gathered from the district websites.

⁴ <http://www.townpolice.net/about-us/department-purpose-and-mission>

The Fairview Fire District is located in the northwest part of Town west of Vero Drive and north of the City of Poughkeepsie. The district covers approximately 5 square miles spanning the Town of Poughkeepsie (3.3 square miles) and Town of Hyde Park. The department hires approximately 20 career professionals with at least 4 working a shift around the clock. According to the Fire Chief, approximately 55% of the Fairview Fire District is tax exempt. This can stretch the services for the district thin, especially if the tax-exempt properties contain a significant population. Currently the department is outgrowing the Violet Avenue fire station and is working on plans to build a new facility near the existing firehouse.

The Arlington Fire District covers about 22 square miles and operates four stations covering the northeast and central part of Town from the R-4 zoning district adjacent to the Towns of Hyde Park and Pleasant Valley and as far south as Camelot Road and the hamlet of Spackenkill. The department is comprised of 74 career firefighters, 1 civilian paramedic and 50 volunteers however, 28 of the career firefighters are also paramedics and the rest are Emergency Management Technicians (EMT's). The fire Chief for the Arlington Fire District noted that new development along Salt Point Turnpike, Rochdale and within areas along Route 9 that are currently vacant or commercial may impact the fire district services.

The New Hamburg Fire District encompasses the remaining area south of the Crown Heights hamlet area to the hamlet of New Hamburg. It covers approximately 5 square miles and is completely volunteer based. The Fire Chief notes that there is not much vacant land left within the district for growth or additional development.

In general, the representatives of the fire districts agree that the trend toward walkable communities still needs to accommodate the necessary emergency access for vehicles and equipment. The fire district should be involved in the site plan review of development proposals from start to finish and standard map notes relating to fire safety need better enforcement. The chiefs also agreed that a sprinkler ordinance is necessary within the Town.

The fire chiefs also noted the impacts of non-taxable institutions and PILOT (payment in lieu of taxes) programs on their ability to provide services. While some institutions, such as Marist College and Dutchess Community College, provide an annual contribution to the Fairview Fire District, Vassar College does not contribute to the Arlington Fire District. These high population institutions receive service from the Fire Department but do not contribute to the district fund.

Chiefs point out that false alarms impact the Fire Department by mobilizing the unit and wasting resources. In addition, the majority of calls that the fire departments respond to are EMS related. Volunteer firefighters are more and more difficult to come by, this is a local and national issue. In addition, education costs are high for fire department training, and wages are low, which exacerbates the issue of low volunteerism in the Town and elsewhere.

7.4 Education

The Town of Poughkeepsie is well served by educational facilities from early childhood to university level, including both public and private institutions. The Town is served by four (4) school districts: Wappinger Central School District spans from New Hamburg north to Crown Heights and east to New Hackensack Road, Spackenkill Union Free School District spans from Crown Heights north to the City of Poughkeepsie and east to Cedar Avenue, Arlington Central School District spans from Spackenkill Road north to Van Wagner Road, and Hyde Park Central from the City of Poughkeepsie to Hyde Park (**Map 19**).

School District	2017-2018 Enrollment	2018-2019 Budget
Wappingers Central School District	10,822	\$231,312,631
Arlington Central School District	8,144	\$205,894,000
Hyde Park Central School District	3,476	\$95,087,640
Spackenkill Union Free School District	1,465	
Source: NYS Department of Education website, 2017-2018 School Enrollment Data. Wappinger CSD 2018-2019 Board Adopted Budget. Arlington CSD 2018-2019 Educational Plan and Budget. Hyde Park CSD Proposed 2018-2019 School Year Public Budget Information Packet.		

Wappinger Central School District serves as the southern portion of the Town, from New Hamburg to the end of Vassar Road, and is the largest in terms of enrollment. The District enrolled 10,822 students and employed 733 teachers, 23 school counselors, 12 social workers and 14 principals between 2017 and 2018. The district operates four (4) elementary schools in Poughkeepsie: Kinry Road (58 Kinry Road), Vassar Road (174 Vassar Road), Oak Grove (40 Kerr Road) and Sheafe Road (287 Sheafe Road). Students then go on to either Van Wyck Junior High in East Fishkill, or Wappinger Junior High in Wappingers Falls before going to high school at Roy C. Ketcham in Wappingers Falls, or John Jay in East Fishkill. Average classroom size across the district was 23 students per classroom. ⁵

Spackenkill Union Free School District serves the western portion of the Town, from Crown Heights to the City of Poughkeepsie, and is the smallest district in terms of size and enrollment. The Spackenkill Union Free School District enrolled 1,465 students and employed 142 teachers, 5 school counselors, 3 social workers and 4 principals between 2017 and 2018. The district operates four (4) schools, Nassau Elementary (7 Nassau Road) from kindergarten to second grade, Hagan Elementary (42 Hagan Drive) from grades 3 to 5, Orville A. Todd Middle School (11 Croft Road), and Spackenkill High School (112 Spackenkill Road). Average classroom size across the district was approximately 21 students per classroom.

⁵ Wappingers CSD School Report Card. 2017-2018. Data.nysed.gov.
Wappingers CSD Student and Educator Report. 2017-2018. Data.ny.gov

Arlington Central School District serves the eastern portion of the Town, and is the largest district in terms of area. The district enrolled 8,144 students and employed 630 teachers, 24 school counselors, 11 social workers and 12 principals between 2017 and 2018. The district operates only one school in the Town, Arthur S. May Elementary at 601 Dutchess Turnpike. Elementary Students go to LaGrange or Union Vale middle schools before going to Arlington High School in Lagrangeville. Average classroom size district-wide is approximately 22 students per class.⁶

The Hyde Park Central School District covers the northernmost extent of the Town, between the borders of the City of Poughkeepsie and the Town of Hyde Park. The district enrolled 3,476 students and employed 292 teachers, 8 school counselors, 5 social workers and 6 principals between 2017 and 2018. Average class size across the district is 24 students. The district operates one (1) school in the Town, Violet Avenue Elementary (191 Violet Avenue). Students graduate and go to Haviland Middle School before going to Frederick D. Roosevelt High School, both in Hyde Park.⁷

School District	District Enrollment						
	2013-2014	2014-2015	2015-2016	2016-2017	2017-2018	Change in Enrollment	% Change in Enrollment
Wappingers CSD	11,634	11,455	11,093	10,937	10,822	-812	-6.9%
Arlington CSD	9,041	8,634	8,455	8,224	8,144	-897	-9.9%
Hyde Park CSD	3,677	3,624	3,576	3,527	3,476	-201	-5.4%
Spackenkill UFSD	1,501	1,457	1,440	1,410	1,465	-36	-2.3%

Source: NYS Department of Education website, School Enrollment Data.

It should be noted that across the board, the school districts attended by Town of Poughkeepsie residents have seen declining enrollment over the past five years, with Arlington Central School district seeing the sharpest decline of 9% in the past five years. This may be a natural fluctuation given the distribution of age groups within the area, as empty nesters downsize and young families move in, enrollment trends may shift again.

When planning for school age populations, particularly within the established neighborhoods of the Town of Poughkeepsie, safe and efficient transportation for students is vital. Increased residential density and single occupancy vehicle (SOV) travel generally have a negative relationship; increasing density tends to decrease vehicle miles driven and increase pedestrianism and transit use, including school buses.⁸ Walking opportunities reflect favorably

⁶ Arlington CSD School Report Card. 2017-2018. Data.nysed.gov.

Arlington CSD Student and Educator Report. 2017-2018. Data.ny.gov

⁷Hyde Park Central CSD School Report Card. 2017-2018. Data.nysed.gov

Hyde Park CSD Student and Educator Report. 2017-2018. Data.nysed.gov

⁸ (Cervero 1997)

on students' health and wellbeing, with students who walk to school being measurably better at tasks requiring concentration than students who ride.⁹

The Town also contains many private schools, most notably Our Lady of Lourdes High School, Oakwood Friends College Prep, and Poughkeepsie Day School. Oakwood Friends School is a boarding and college preparatory school based on Quaker fundamentals, offering a 4:1 student-faculty ratio. Established in 1794, it is the oldest co-educational boarding school in New York State.

Poughkeepsie Day School is a private, K-12 school focusing on alternative learning and hands-on experience. Our Lady of Lourdes High School is a coeducational, Roman Catholic high school with a focus on college prep and spiritual development. Our Lady of Lourdes had 734 enrolled students as of 2019 with a 17:1 student-faculty ratio last year.



Figure 1. Marist College.

Poughkeepsie is also home to three (3) colleges: Marist College, Vassar College and Dutchess Community College. Marist College was initially established as a Catholic School before being established as a liberal arts college in 1929. Today, Marist enrolls over 6,000 students, both

⁹ (Jancovich 2015)

graduate and undergraduate, with nearly 3,500 living on campus. The College employs 232 full time faculty, with an additional 348 adjuncts for a student to faculty ratio of 16:1.¹⁰

Vassar College is a private liberal arts school, established in 1861 by Matthew Vassar as a women's college. Today, it operates as a co-educational undergraduate institution, with 2,450 students and 336 faculty members, giving a student: faculty ratio of 8:1 and an average class size of 17.¹¹

Dutchess Community College was established in 1957, and is a public community college, enrolling 9,076 students. It is currently a member of the State University of New York (SUNY) system.

The private colleges present in the Town provide opportunity for private economic development. Students and faculty frequently leave campus, and nearby attractions can become popular venues for students. Finding ways to connect students and ancillary university-related populations to nearby businesses, services and even existing natural resources should be considered. Connecting the universities to nearby centers and cultivating the relationship between institutions and these centers can help unify the community and afford a reciprocally advantageous social and financial relationship. One example might be the expansion of Marist College's North Campus and the redevelopment of the Hudson River Psychiatric Center. Ensuring adequate pedestrian or public transportation connectivity between universities and the centers will also be important.

¹⁰ (Marist College 2018)

¹¹ (Vassar College 2018)

