

3. SOCIOECONOMICS AND HOUSING

3.1 EXISTING CONDITIONS

3.1.1 Methodology and Data Sources

This chapter compares conditions in the Village of Nyack today to historic conditions and future projections, and also draws comparisons from Rockland County and Westchester County to frame a regional context for analysis. Unless otherwise noted, contemporary data is taken in most cases from the 2009-2013 American Community Survey (ACS), the most current available dataset from this U.S. Census Bureau tool which combines results from rolling five-year periods of surveying to make estimates. In most cases, ACS estimates are also used to benchmark for 2010 (using ACS survey data from 2006-2010 unless otherwise noted), because 2010 Census counts are not available for most datasets at this geographic level. Conditions from 2000 are also included, to understand a broader time scale of change and to provide a point of comparison to the 2006 Comprehensive Plan for the Village of Nyack, which used data from the 2000 Census. ACS is a sophisticated analytic tool and is the most reliable method available to demographers to understand the scale of change in local communities and to assess future needs.

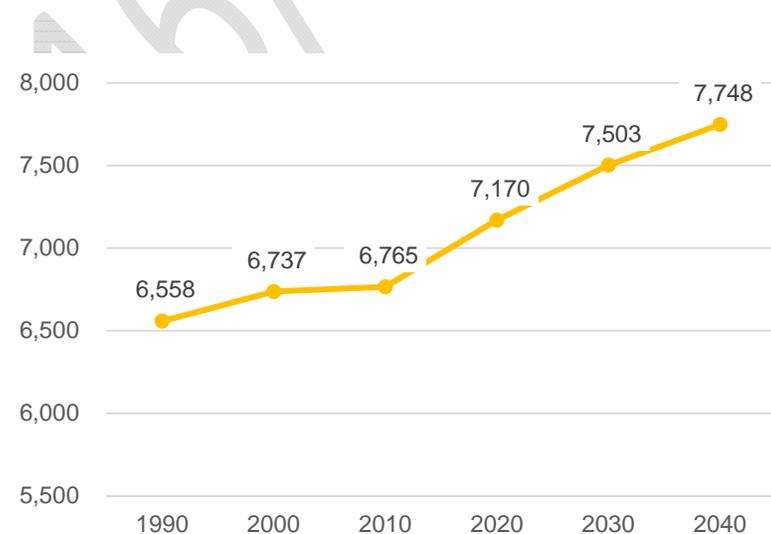
3.1.2 Socioeconomic Conditions

Population

Nyack had an estimated population in 2013 of approximately 6,980 individuals and 3,334 households. The population has grown 3.6% since 2000, when population was 6,558. The Village's population is stable, with modest projected growth at a rate of less than 1% per year based on

a proportion of the growth rates of Rockland County over the period to 2040.¹ This would represent a growth of 768 individuals in Nyack, or 11% above today's population. That growth would create 250 additional households, assuming average household size remains constant over the period.

Chart 3.1: Nyack Past and Projected Population, 1990-2040



Age Distribution

The median age in Nyack is 38.5, which is slightly older than in Rockland County (36.4) but slightly younger than Westchester County (40.2). Nyack has fewer children under 20 (22% of the population) than do Rockland County (31%) and Westchester County (26%), and the Village has a larger

¹ Population projection data from Cornell Program on Applied Demographics.

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cohort in the workforce age groups of 25-64 (59%) than do Rockland (49%) and Westchester (53%). The upper threshold of age distribution is about the same size in Nyack as in Rockland and Westchester.

The percentage of Nyack’s population in the 65-and-older cohort is expected to increase to 18% by 2040, based on Rockland County population projections. The labor force (25-64), which represents 61% of today’s Village population, is predicted to decrease slightly to 58% by 2040. Teens and young adults (15-24), who are today 21% of the population, are expected to make up just 16% of the population by 2040. And the school-aged cohort (up to 14 years of age) will remain steady at approximately 16% of the population. While these numbers are relatively stable, as is the overall population, the slow growth in the oldest cohort presents the most pertinent questions for housing and community services.

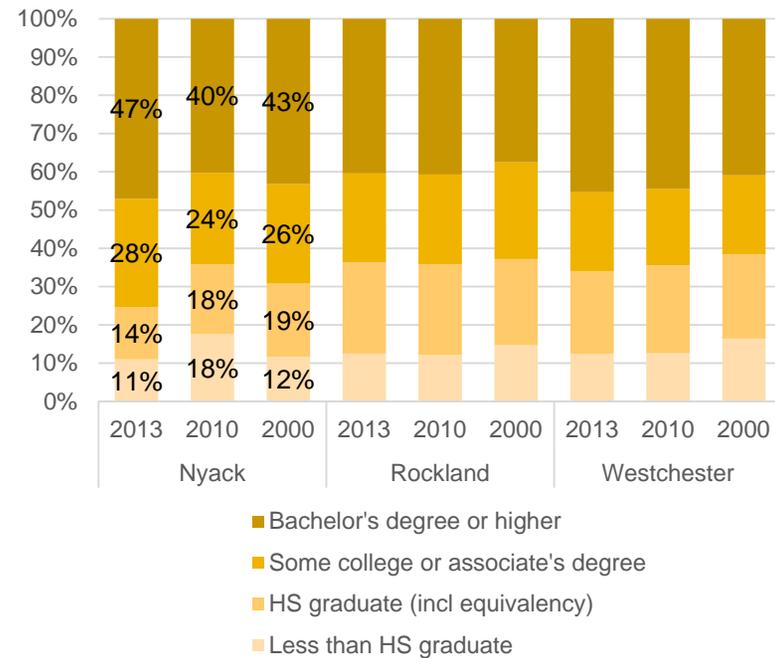
Racial and Ethnic Composition

The relationship between 2013 population identifying as white (68%) and non-white (34%) in Nyack is relatively similar to Rockland County (73% and 29%, respectively) and Westchester County (69% and 34%). However, the variation in the non-white population in Nyack is different from these two counties, with a higher proportion in the Village identifying Black/African American (27% of total population) than in Rockland (13%) and Westchester (16%). Conversely, Nyack has a smaller Hispanic population of any race (10%) than does Rockland (16%) or Westchester (22%).

Education

Educational attainment in Nyack is favorable to conditions in the regional context. Some 47% of residents of the village 25 years of age or older hold at least a bachelor’s degree, and an additional 28% have completed some college or hold an associate’s degree. In Rockland County overall, 40% of residents have a bachelor’s degree and 23% have completed some college or hold an associate’s degree. In Westchester, the figures are 45% and 21%, respectively. Likewise, the Village’s population with less than a high school education is slightly lower than in both counties overall.

**Chart 3.2: Educational Attainment -
Nyack, Rockland, Westchester: 2000, 2010 and 2013**



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The five public schools in the Nyack Public School district together enroll 3,032 students at facilities located in immediate proximity to the Village and its 1,536 school-age children. Class sizes average 21 students at the three K-5 schools (Liberty, Upper Nyack and Valley Cottage) and 24 students in grades 6 and up (Nyack Middle School and Nyack High School). Successful post-secondary education outcomes may reflect the quality of schools in Nyack. Test scores at Nyack High School meet or exceed statewide test scores, and the school has a 2% non-completion rate and a 91% postsecondary matriculation rate.²

Economic Indicators

Median household income in Nyack is estimated at \$56,469 in 2013. In real terms, income has grown by 2.3% in the Village since 2000, but incomes have actually fallen by 24% when adjusted for inflation to 2013 dollars.³ This loss in real buying power is echoed in similar, though not as pronounced, inflation-adjusted decreases in Rockland County (-8%), Westchester County (-5%) and nationally (-7%).

Following regional trends, incidence of poverty in Nyack has increased significantly, from 6% of individuals in 2000 to an estimated 15% of individuals in 2010. While Rockland County had a higher incidence of poverty than the Village prior to and during the economic downturn (10% in 2000 and 11% in 2010), Nyack is now more closely aligned to the countywide incidence of 14%.

Chart 3.3: Median Household Income (2013 dollars) – Nyack, Rockland, Westchester: 2000, 2010 and 2013



While reliable interim employment rates for the specific geography of Nyack and other small villages are not calculated by the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the wider

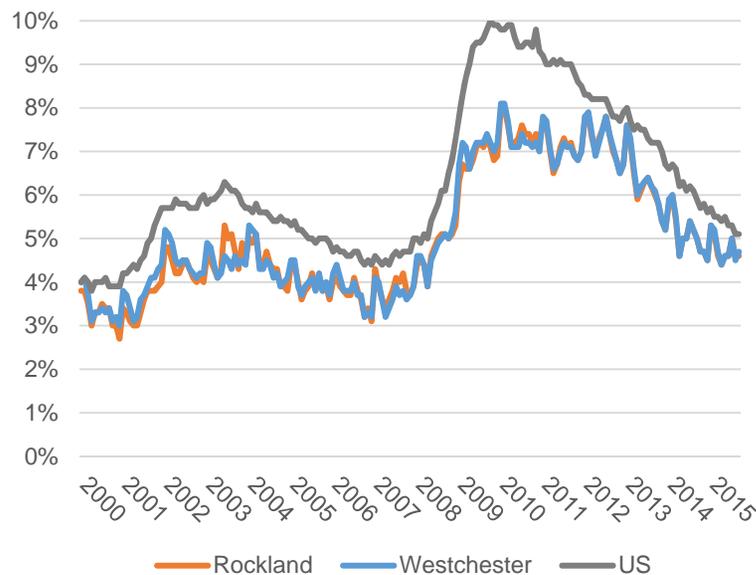
² Schools data from Nyack Public Schools – District Profile (www.nyackpublicschools.org).

³ Inflation adjustments use Bureau of Labor Statistics CPI Inflation Calculator (www.bls.gov).

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Rockland County unemployment rate is 4.6%.⁴ The United States average is slightly higher, at just over 5%. Unemployment rates in Rockland and Westchester Counties have closely mirrored each other since 2000, reaching highs of 8% during the recession before falling to current rates. These figures demonstrate an economic recovery since the 2008 recession in jobs, but not in incomes, again mirroring broader national trends, as job growth has largely been in lower-paying sectors.

**Chart 3.4: Unemployment Rate –
Rockland, Westchester, U.S.: 2000-2015**



⁴ Unemployment data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics, Local Area Unemployment Statistics.

Existing Housing Supply and Production

Count and Age of Units

Nyack has 3,602 housing units in predominantly low-rise building stock, with 27% of units built before 1940. The 1960s and 1970s were a period of robust housing production in the Village, during which 55% of today's single-family units and 39% of today's multifamily units were created. Production of housing in the last 35 years has been limited, representing only 14% of housing units, and very recent new construction (since 2000) comprises just 1% of the total stock.

Density

Nyack has a density of approximately 9,064 persons per square mile, and 4,677 housing units per square mile. This is considerably denser than the density of Rockland County overall of 1,866 persons per square mile and 603 housing units per square mile.

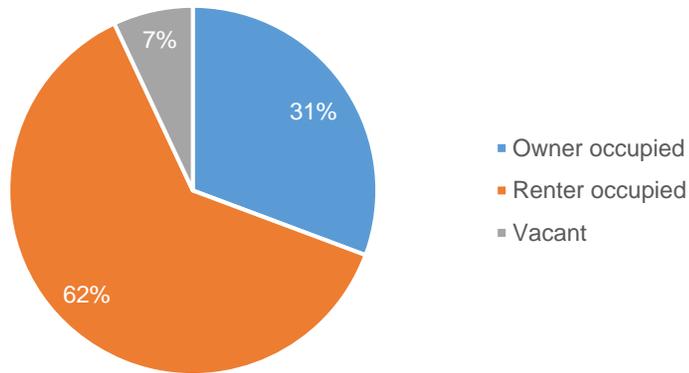
Occupancy Characteristics

A distinguishing characteristic of housing in Nyack is the predominance of rented units, which comprise 62% (or 3,297) of the total occupied units. This is a reversal of tenancy proportions in the Village's suburban regional context, including in Rockland County (28% rental units) and Westchester (35% rental units). These proportions have remained stable over the last 15 years. Nearly half (44%) of all rented units in Nyack are located in structures with 10 or more

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units, whereas 59% of owner-occupied units are in single-unit structures and just 16% are in structures with 10 or more units.

3,602 residential units | Nyack: 2013



A total of 7% of Nyack's total housing stock is vacant, similar to vacancy rates in Rockland and Westchester Counties (6% each). Rental vacancy is slightly higher in the Village, at 8%. There is not a significant difference in household size between renter-occupied and owner-occupied units.

Market-Rate Multifamily Housing

Multifamily residential structures are located throughout Nyack, mixed in neighborhoods with single-family homes, though concentrated more heavily in the Village's southern

and eastern quadrants. Among the multifamily condominiums and cooperative stock are these buildings:

- The Ivanhoe (45 units)⁵
- Rivercrest Cooperative (95 units)⁶
- The Clermont (170 units)⁷

The 2,230 rented units are distributed in a range of sizes of structures, with the largest proportion located in the largest class of structure:

- 1 unit, detached: 322 units (14% of rented units)
- 2 units in structure: 264 units (12%)
- 3 or 4 units in structure: 396 units (18%)
- 5 to 9 units in structure: 273 units (12%)
- 10 to 19 units in structure: 224 units (10%)
- 20 to 49 units in structure: 201 units (9%)
- 50 or more units in structure: 550 units (25%)

Among the 2,230 rented apartments in Nyack are 1,773 market-rate units (50% of the total units in the Village). These units encompass a range of price points and product types, from large, amenity-rich luxury complexes to walk-up apartments above ground-floor retail (the latter concentrated predominantly on Main Street and Broadway).

⁵ Realtor.com

⁶ "A Tough, Expensive Recovery for the Sandy-Damaged Rivercrest Co-op." *Habitat Magazine*. September 2014.

⁷ "Nyack waterfront development: Big plans vs. long memories." *The Journal News*. October 25, 2015.

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Among the largest market-rate complexes are:

- West Shore Towers (145 units)⁸
- Warren Hills Apartments (190 units)⁹
- Tappan Zee Manor (100 assisted-living units)¹⁰

Income-restricted multifamily housing

Nyack has 136 public income-restricted apartment units in two buildings, owned and operated by the Village of Nyack Housing Authority (VNHA).¹¹ Waldron Terrace has 88 units serving disabled residents; Depew Manor has 48 units serving seniors. While Depew Manor is well-located within a short walk from shops and services in the downtown, Waldron Terrace's location near the western edge of Nyack puts its residents at a distance from those amenities.

The Village also has 297 privately owned income-restricted units, administered by the VNHA through the Section 8 voucher program. The Pine Street Homes is a newly constructed cluster of units catering to disabled residents, managed in partnership with the VNHA and located near Waldron Terrace at Nyack's western edge. Rockland Gardens has 68 units for seniors and families a short walk north of Main Street. Nyack Plaza serves families and seniors in 173 units, while Tallman Towers serves seniors and families in 28 units in a newly renovated structure, located near Nyack Plaza and Depew Manor.

The VNHA administers 236 Section 8 vouchers, including 18 enhanced vouchers, 28 project-based vouchers and 190

tenant-based vouchers. Tenants qualify for these vouchers at 50% or less of area median household income, and receiving unit owners are reimbursed from VNHA (through a grant from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development) for the difference between market rental rates and the subsidized rates charged to qualifying lower-income tenants.

Housing Demand Characteristics

Housing Costs

Median contract rent in Nyack in 2013 is \$1,274. Rents in the Village are high compared with regional averages, where median contract rents in 2013 were \$1,182 in Rockland County in \$1,195 in Westchester County. Median rents in Nyack have increased slightly in inflation-adjusted dollars since 2010, and have risen 16% since 2000.

Similar stability is seen in residential sale transaction prices and volume.¹² The median sale price in Nyack in 2015 to date is \$400,000, up 10.3% from the 2014 median. While that suggests a rapidly rising housing market, the annual transaction volume remains small (30-40 per year in the recent three-year period) and relatively stable, creating volatility in year-to-year median prices. The overall price trend is slightly positive on a linear basis, and the broader Rockland market shows a similarly steady post-recession rebound in both prices and transaction volume, reinforcing the overall stable picture of the Nyack market.

⁸ Westshoretowers.com

⁹ Apartments.com

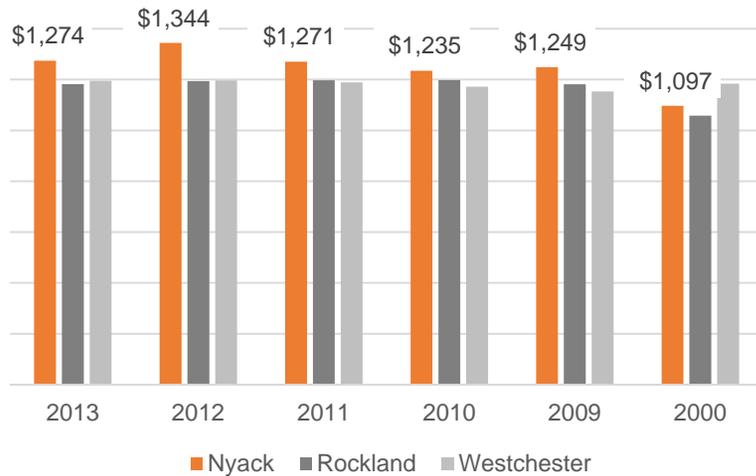
¹⁰ Assistedlivingfacilities.org

¹¹ Income-restricted apartment data from the Village of Nyack Housing Authority website.

¹² Residential transaction and inventory data from Zillow.com.

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**Chart 3.5: Median Rents (Inflation-Adjusted) –
Nyack, Rockland, Westchester: 2000, 2010 and 2013**



A recent scan of inventory in Nyack found 29 housing units on the market, including no new-construction units, representing a 3.37-month supply based on the pace of sales absorption since late 2012.

Drivers of Housing Demand

Housing demand in Nyack is driven in part by the attributes that make it an attractive place for households of many types to stay or relocate. These attributes are related to its community and cultural amenities, its local and regional recreation opportunities, its strategic location relative to jobs in the region, the quality of its built environment and the Village's positive image.

Among the Village's collection of community assets are gathering places (the community garden, the YMCA, Nyack Center, the Senior Center and several houses of worship);

public services (the 375-bed Nyack Hospital, the public library); and a roster of annual and recurring events (including the weekly Thursday farmer's market and the annual ART WALK). Cultural facilities – including the Elmwood Playhouse, the Edward Hopper House and the Rockland Center for the Arts – provide year-round cultural amenities. The Nyack Center and the historic Nyack Library also provide programming for diverse groups, including holding semi-regular events for Rivertown Film and the Rockland County Jazz & Blues Society. The Village's central location in the region provides easy access to cultural programming elsewhere in Rockland and Westchester Counties, the Hudson Valley region and New York City farther afield.

While the Catskills region offers outdoor opportunities a 90-minute drive north of the Village, there are recreational opportunities right in Nyack. The 11-acre Memorial Park is the Village's largest, located on the Hudson River waterfront, and is poised for a series of enhancement projects to increase programming and utilization. Mountainview Nature Park offers further recreation options just outside Nyack. Access to the Greenway Water Trail, the Long Path Trail and New York State Bike Route 8 connect Village residents (and many visitors from elsewhere in the region) to hundreds of miles of high-quality recreation and exercise amenities.

Several points of private and public waterfront access offer opportunities for actively engaging with the Hudson River through boating, sailing, kayaking and fishing. Additionally, a number of local and nearby parks, beaches and public spaces offer alternatives for riverside recreation, from public events and concerts at Memorial Park to picnicking at Nyack Beach State Park. Over 50,000 acres of diverse park and outdoor recreation opportunities are within an hour's drive of

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the Village, from fishing at Rockland State Park to hiking at Bear Mountain.

On a practical level, Nyack's central location within its region, and its immediate access to I-87 and the Tappan Zee Bridge, provide access to jobs and amenities across the region, including over 900,000 jobs in Rockland, Westchester and Bergen Counties.¹³ The nearest large employment center is White Plains, a 20- to 30-minute drive away, and numerous employers are located along the 20-minute drive to Suffern. Attractions and jobs in Manhattan are reachable within 75-90 minutes by Metro-North (accessible at Tarrytown) or by car.

These community, cultural, recreational and locational assets contribute to an attractive sense of place that is enriched by the character of the village fabric: its walkable, inviting downtown and its neighborhoods with their well-maintained heritage buildings. Community members express pride in the image of Nyack as a place that is warm, welcoming and creative, and the services and programming described here reflect a community with a civic life that meets a diverse range of wants and needs.

3.2 ISSUES AND OPPORTUNITIES

3.2.1 Socioeconomics: Access to Economic Opportunity

This chapter has noted the disconnect in rates of recovery for Nyack between the jobs sector and housing market. It also indicates a downward trend in income for Village

households – a trend echoed in regional and national data on household incomes. The result of this lopsided recovery is that Nyack residents experience greater incidence of poverty and increased housing cost burdens relative to incomes – concerns also voiced by residents and stakeholders in this planning process. While housing costs are high, the data suggests that increasing access to economic opportunity is the strongest lever by which to address the mismatch.

Transportation access is a key means by which to connect residents to a broader range of economic opportunities. For decades, Nyack's relative inaccessibility to regional job centers, largely attributable to the traffic choke points at peak hours at the Tappan Zee Bridge and regional arterials, have been the primary cause of hindered economic growth in the Village. As early as 2017, a rebuilt Tappan Zee Bridge and some associated enhancements to public transit are slated to come online. Further enhancements to fast and efficient transportation options for residents within the Village to job centers and transit networks on both sides of the Tappan Zee would, if enacted, help to better connect residents to the widest possible range of job opportunities within a reasonable commuting time of the Village, and thus positively impact its local socioeconomic conditions.

In addition to connecting residents to job options in the region, opportunities may exist to increase the job base in and/or near the Village to provide economic opportunity close to home. Such economic development opportunities are described in Chapter 10 of this report.

¹³ Jobs data from US Census Bureau, County Business Patterns.

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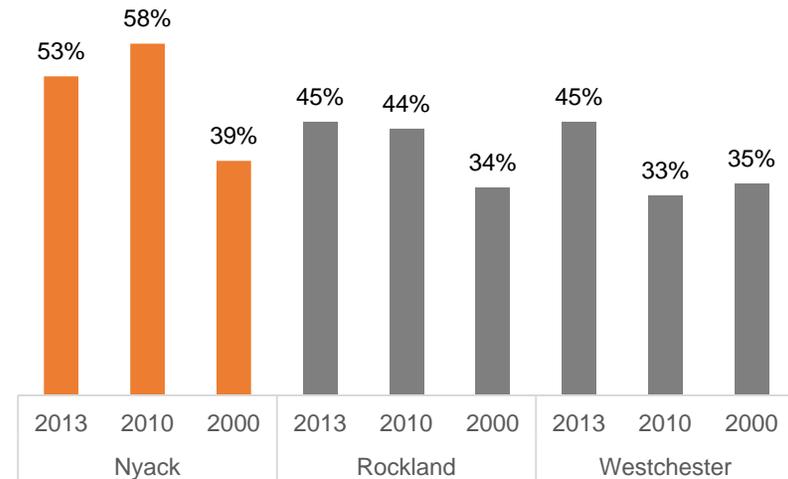
A third approach to protecting the financial well-being of Nyack residents is to protect the current economic base by taking a thoughtful and balanced land-use approach. The current residential development pipeline suggests strong interest in infill and adaptive reuse sites in the Village and the potential of some non-residential locations to convert to residential use. While housing production is an essential means to address the affordability concerns expressed by the community, the zoning code and design guidelines explored elsewhere in this study are tools to balance residential development demand with nonresidential uses, such as innovative and flexible office and “maker” craft and small manufacturing spaces, that are compatible with the special character of the Village and protect and grow its base of jobs.

3.2.2 Housing for All Residents

Housing Affordability

Housing affordability was a central concern raised by the local community in the 2006 plan and was echoed in the community consultation process that produced this plan update. One measure of measuring and understanding affordability is housing cost burden, which relates monthly housing costs to monthly household income: A household is housing-cost burdened if housing costs consumes 30% or more of a household’s income. In 2013, 53% of Nyack households were housing-cost burdened. This is a reduction in housing-cost burden of 5% since 2010, but is higher than 2013 levels in Rockland and Westchester Counties (at 45% of households cost-burdened in each). While housing costs are high throughout the region, households in Nyack seem to be especially affected by a housing market that has rebounded while incomes appear to have remained flat or decreased.

Chart 3.6: Percentage of Housing-Cost Burdened Households – Nyack, Rockland, Westchester: 2000-2013



Development Pipeline

One source of unaffordability is lack of available supply of units for rent or purchase sufficient to meet demand. Development of new construction housing units is one means by which to meet that demand. At the time of this report, the development pipeline of 366 units includes 168 approved units and 198 proposed units. A selection of projects in the development pipeline at the time of writing (see Figure 4.2 for a map of these projects):

- Pavion: 135 units. Approved.
- Nyack Point: 33 units. Approved.
- TZ Vista: 118 units. Mixed-use. Proposed.
- 2-6 North Midland: 47 units. Proposed.
- Gateway Lofts: 33 units. Proposed.

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This represents a historically significant volume of private residential investment in new ground-up residential development in the Village, at a scale that exceeds housing need relative to Nyack's share of Rockland County population growth projections to 2040. The Village has the opportunity to manage and shape this new development according to the community's desired scale of change and values of affordability, urban design, and sustainability.

Housing Choice

A key to creating a stable, accessible housing market is to encourage a wide range of housing choices. While Nyack today has an attractive mix of multifamily and single-family homes, and of rented and owned housing options, the limited land available for redevelopment warrants an efficient approach that prioritizes attractive multifamily options in locations that maximize access to the transportation and community assets that make the Village so attractive. This approach is particularly useful in retaining new young families who may find the schools and community quality of Nyack attractive but for whom the existing supply of larger single-family houses is financially out of reach. The growth in older cohorts of the population over the coming decades, while modest, further suggest encouraging siting and design of new and infill development of smaller, lower-maintenance units for seniors near services and transit, enabling more of the population to age in place and stay connected to the community physically and socially. The same logic applies for housing for young adults, who, nationally and in the Hudson Valley, increasingly desire to put down roots in the kind of vibrant, walkable community of which Nyack is emblematic.

Finally, even modest increases in overall property prices in the Nyack market will have an outsize impact on the community's lowest income residents. The unique needs of this population to access affordable housing and uplifting economic opportunities can be met by encouraging affordable housing development and preservation near transportation, shops, jobs, and social services; bringing this group (and all residents) closer to these amenities makes living with one or no car more feasible, reducing overall cost of living.

3.2.3 Public Realm Opportunities to Support Economic Growth and Housing Solutions

The community has opportunities to invest in the public realm in ways that reinforce its best qualities, provide new opportunities for residential and non-residential development, and sustain Nyack's attractiveness for public and private investment into the future. The community planning process has yielded general support for targeted infill development at a scale contextually appropriate to the surrounding physical fabric and consistent in quality with the architectural character of the village as a means to continue supporting the Village tax base and promoting residential housing production that responds to market pressures.

Waterfront

The Hudson River waterfront provides valuable views and open spaces to gather and play close to home, but to-date a cohesive vision that balances needs for public access, enjoyment, and protection of the waterfront with demand for development on privately held parcels has not been codified in zoning.

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A community-led design and planning process reflected in an updated zoning code for this district could open new connections between the waterfront and upland neighborhoods, and among three key parcels at the waterfront itself: Memorial Park, the Marina parking lot, and the vacant Gedney Street parcel. Building community consensus around a more civic waterfront experience sets the stage for shaping development at the water's edge, accommodating demand for new mixed-income housing in a way that satisfies community needs and standards.

Downtown

Of additional interest is protecting and enhancing the Village's walkable and historic downtown, which contributes significantly to the value of and demand for housing in Nyack. The Superblock site, which in its current configuration is inconsistent with the most desirable downtown experience, presents an opportunity to stitch back together the fine-grained pedestrian fabric of downtown to the highest standard of urban design. A reconceived Superblock can provide better connections to downtown for the community while creating new cultural amenities, public spaces, commercial spaces, and market-rate and affordable housing. Market absorption of approved and planned residential units throughout the village must be accounted for when planning for any mixed-use redevelopment of the Superblock that includes new residential units.

Gateway

Finally, the Village Gateway area provides an important opportunity to reconceive an automobile-oriented entry point into Nyack as an increasingly pedestrian-friendly, walkable, and better connected place that extends the Village's attractive Main Street corridor to a new "front door."

The mix of land uses, building configurations, and streetscape designs can be updated in this district to create a welcoming and desirable location for new private investment in residential and innovative job-creating uses, while sustaining existing uses that continue to contribute positively to the Village economy and character and retaining the highway access that provides a vital transportation and economic link to the rest of the region.

3.3 RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Prioritize the siting and highest-caliber design of a user-friendly transit hub serving the Village core and connecting it with regional economic hubs.
2. Manage growth demand by prioritizing townhouse and multifamily development where appropriate, with sensitivity to the village context of 3-4 story single-, two-, and three-family residences and small apartment buildings.
3. Increase housing opportunities that respond to Nyack's changing population, including seniors and young adults.
4. Continue to seek federal and state grants for affordable housing.
5. Establish and codify a waterfront vision that guides its future redevelopment to provide maximum public benefit and preserve community character; create a new, cohesive civic place and guide future development according to community goals.

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6. Encourage redevelopment of the Superblock site with new ground-floor retail, a cultural anchor, upper-floor housing and a public gathering place.
7. Guide new development toward the most walkable and transit-proximate places to reduce household costs and maximize efficiency of public investments.
8. Facilitate maintenance of existing neighborhood multifamily housing stock.

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