

Town of Shandaken

Climate Education and Engagement Guide



July 4, 2022 Phoenicia Parade

Overview

Shandaken is a town on the northern border of Ulster County, comprised of 119 square miles, 12 hamlets, and two downtowns. The northern town line is the border of Greene County and the western town boundary is the border of Delaware County. The Town lies inside the Catskill Park and New York City watershed and is surrounded by (clockwise from the west) the towns of Middletown, Halcott, Lexington, Hunter, Woodstock, Olive, Denning, and Hardenburgh. Approximately 85-89% of land is owned by New York State and/or New York City. The Esopus Creek flows through the town. The name of the town is believed to be from an Esopus phrase for “land of rapid waters.”

First settled at the time of the American Revolution, the Town was established in 1804. During pre-European times, Shandaken, like much of the Central Catskills, was inhabited by the Minsi subgroup of the Lenne Lenape people.

At the time of the 2020 census, the population was 2,866. The number of households is 1,598 and the median income is \$47,388. 25% of households are below \$25,000. The median age is 55.6.

Shandaken has always taken pride in its strong mountainous rural character and natural resources. Wild forestland, abundant wildlife, wetlands, water resources and unique natural areas contribute greatly to the quality of life.

In 2016, the Town signed the Climate Smart Pledge, but it wasn't until 2022 that a local law was passed creating a Conservation Advisory Council (CAC) and Climate Smart Task Force. Since then, the CAC has been working to implement climate smart actions to reduce greenhouse gases and increase sustainability both for the town government and residents of Shandaken.

For 2023, the CAC has prioritized outreach, creating a food waste collection and composting programs, home and municipal energy audits and renewable energy, installing EV infrastructure, working on a Government Operations Climate Action Plan, and beginning a natural resource inventory.

Goals of Outreach Program

Awareness – Increase public awareness of actions related to reducing GHG and increasing sustainability

Engagement – Involve the public in activities related to reducing GHG and increasing sustainability

Assistance – Create partnerships with other organization and businesses to reduce GHG and increase sustainability

Support – Instill a positive energy for combating climate change and empowering people to make sustainable choices

In the spirit of outreach, this document serves as a guide to the various methods the Town currently employs and plans to implement as we adapt to the challenges presented by our changing climate.

Key Partners in the Community and Region

The Town has a strong commitment to engage and inform its residents. All of the Town meetings are televised live, and then recorded and posted as YouTube videos on the town's website. Our target audience includes residents, tourists, and seasonal homeowners and the general public of all ages. We have a large and viable community of partners to work with. Their support and participation magnifies our audience.

County Government – Ulster County Environmental Management Council (EMC) and Department of Environment, Ulster County Resource Recovery Agency, Ulster County Soil and Water Agency.

Non-governmental organizations – Cornell Cooperative Extension, Ashokan Watershed Stream Management Program, Central Catskills Scenic Byway, Hudson Valley Regional Council.

State Government – NYS Climate Action Plan, NYS Department of Environmental Conservation, Olympic Regional Development Authority.

New York City – Department of Environmental Protection

Non Profits and Advocacy Groups – Pine Hill Community Center, Phoenicia and Pine Hill Libraries, Phoenicia Farmer's Market, Phoenicia Playhouse, Catskill Center, Ashokan-Pepacton Chapter of Trout Unlimited, Catskill Visitor Center, Outdoor recreation clubs, Catskill Mountain Keeper, Rotary Club (Phoenicia).

Businesses – Phoenicia Business Association.

Schools and Churches

Recommended Engagement Methods

In the past year, we have held two public education classes on composting at the Pine Hill Community Center in partnership with Ulster County Resource Recovery Agency. We had a three-month display of materials in Ulster Savings Bank's Phoenicia branch related to our priority actions for 2023 – composting and food waste, energy audits and use of renewable resources, electric vehicle infrastructure, and publicizing our government operations greenhouse gas inventory and report. We purchased a notice board for use at the Town's recycling center where we can post notices of our CAC-related events and activities. We participated in the Town's 4th of July Parade with a Rivian electric pickup truck and answered public queries at the park after the parade. The CAC has a designated page on the Town web site and we use the Town Facebook account to publicize our events.

In the future, we plan to work more closely with our partners in Town to establish a stronger presence and to get feedback from the public. We hope to expand our digital education through our web page and social media, and to establish a closer connection with the school system.

Conclusion

The positive response to the actions taken this past year and a half by the newly created CAC has reinforced the Town's commitment to adapting to and mitigating the challenges presented by our changing climate. We have many strong partners who are willing and able to amplify our education strategy and to assist the Town's CAC as we move forward toward a more sustainable future.