

Chapter 6. Recreational Resources

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Spratt Park,
Photo credit: Lauren White

Publicly-accessible recreational resources provide the opportunity for people to engage with the outdoors and have positive place-based experiences. Access to natural space is especially critical in the age of nature deficit disorder, where lack of time spent in nature has been shown to lead to a range of behavioral problems in children (Louv, 2008). Recreational areas also are essential to a healthy lifestyle by providing access to open spaces for outdoor sport and recreation. Furthermore, areas such as parks and sports facilities also act as dynamic community spaces, where education and community-building occur, and neighborhood identities are cultivated.

A variety of important recreational resources exist within and nearby the City of Poughkeepsie. Located in the Mid-Hudson region, many large recreational areas, including the Catskills, Shawangunks, Taconic Mountains, and Hudson Highlands, are within an hour's drive from the City, through farmland, forested hills, and a broad urban-rural gradient. Features such as the Hudson River, Dutchess County Rail Trail, Vassar Farm and Ecological Preserve, and Fall Kill Creek connect Poughkeepsie to the surrounding areas. Within the City, Poughkeepsie's many public parks provide green space, gardens, playgrounds, picnicking, and athletic fields and courts ([Map 6.1](#), [Table 6.1](#)). The 24 public parks and green spaces in the City total nearly 500 acres, with about 250 acres located on the Vassar Farm and Ecological Preserve. The City of Poughkeepsie owns 18 of the recreational areas identified here and the recreation office, overseen by the City's Department of Public Works (DPW), oversees maintenance of these

parks. Nubian Directions II, a local workforce skills development organization, assists the City DPW by maintaining many of the park's flower gardens, pots, and raised beds through a cooperative agreement. The remaining open spaces are privately owned or are part of the New York State Park system.

The City of Poughkeepsie Recreational Resources map displays parks and green spaces in the City and the recreational features that may be found there. Park, trail, and golf course data was procured from Dutchess County. Park data was updated and recreational resources mapped by Addison Tate (Environmental Cooperative at the Vassar Barns) with consultation from Natalie Quinn (City of Poughkeepsie) and Paul Hesse (Dutchess County Planning).

Table 6.1. Parks and recreation areas in the City of Poughkeepsie.

| Name | Ownership | Amenities |
|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|--|
| Bartlett Park | City Park | Playground |
| Clinton House State Historic Site | NYS State Park | Historic building, flower garden |
| College Hill Park | City Park | Basketball court, playground, flower garden, hiking trails, historic site, golf course |
| Dongan Place | City Park | Basketball court, Fall Kill view |
| Earline Patrice Park | City Park | Flower garden, memorial |
| Eastman Park | City Park | Stitzel Field (baseball diamond) |
| Forbus Park | NY Champion Tree Project | Open space, historic relevance |
| Fall Kill Community Garden | Family Partnership Center | Community Garden, Fall Kill view |
| Hulme Park | City Park | Basketball court |
| Jardin de las Rosas | Hudson River Housing | Garden |
| Kaal Rock Park | City Park | River views, picnicking |
| King Street Park | City Park | Basketball court, baseball diamond, tennis court |
| Lincoln Park | City Park | Soccer field |
| Malcolm X Park | Poughkeepsie City School District | Basketball court, tennis court (not functional), Fall Kill views |
| Morgan Lake Park | City Park | Fishing, rail trail access point |
| Mural Square | City-owned lot | Event space |
| Murphy Park | Hudson River Housing | Gardens, play equipment |

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| North Perry Street | City Park | Picnicking |
| Pershing Ave Park | City Park | Basketball court |
| Pulaski Park | City Park | Swimming pool, playground |
| Reservoir Square Park | City Park | Gardens, memorial |
| Soldiers Memorial | City Park | Gardens, a memorial fountain |
| Spratt Park | City Park | Pool, baseball diamonds, tennis court, dog park, golf course |
| Springside National Historic Landmark | Springside Landscape Restoration | Historic site, interpretive walking trails |
| Skate Park | City Park | Skateboarding facility, river views |
| Upper Landing Park | NYS State Park | River views, Elevator to Walkway Over the Hudson, picnicking |
| Vassar Farm and Ecological Preserve | Vassar College | Hiking trails, community garden, flower garden |
| Victor C. Waryas Park | City Park | Boat Launch, fishing, playground, picnicking, river views |
| Walkway Loop Trail | NYS State Park | Interpretive walking trail |
| Walkway Over the Hudson | NYS State Park | Interpretive walking trail |
| William R. Steinhaus Dutchess Rail Trail | County Park | Walking trail |

The Hudson River has driven centuries of development in Poughkeepsie and continues to provide important recreational opportunity, natural habitat, and economic activity. Poughkeepsie’s western waterfront along the Hudson consists of a number of parks. Upper Landing Park, opened by the Dyson Foundation in 2013, sits at the outflow of the Fall Kill into the Hudson River and provides access to the Walkway Over the Hudson State Historic Park’s glass elevator. A walking bridge over the Fall Kill Creek leads from Upper Landing Park to the Mid-Hudson Children’s Museum and waterfront pavilion, which hosts a fishing pier and the weekly Poughkeepsie Waterfront Farmers Market. Waryas Park Promenade skirts the shoreline to the south, passing the Poughkeepsie Skate Park. Victor C. Waryas Park sits at the foot of Main Street and includes a playground, green space, picnic tables, grills, a pavilion, a boat launch, and a dock. Further south, Kaal Rock is a high ledge and wooded area that sits to the north of Kaal Rock Park, a quieter park for picnicking along the waterfront. Kaal Rock Promenade leads south to Shadows Marina and Promenade.

The average size of parks in Poughkeepsie is about 14 acres, however, most parks in the City are less than ten acres. There are several larger parks and open spaces that serve important roles for recreation and access to nature in the City, specifically College Hill Park, Springside, and the Vassar Farm and Ecological Preserve. These have also been identified as significant habitat areas in the City and support not only human health and well-being but also a

diversity of wildlife and plant communities (for more information about the habitat value of these spaces see Hudsonia's *Significant Habitats of the City of Poughkeepsie* Report, [Appendix A](#)). The Dutchess Rail Trail, Walkway Over the Hudson, and the Walkway Loop Trail are also important recreational assets that provide a connection to nature to those pursuing healthy lifestyle habits through walking, running and biking.

College Hill Park is the largest park in the City of Poughkeepsie, totaling around 100 acres including the College Hill Golf Course. Designated a local historic landmark in 2017, the park includes two local historic sites, the Guilford Dudley Memorial Shelter, and the Clarence Lown Memorial Rock Garden (Wahlberg, 2013). The Guilford Dudley Memorial is at the top the hill. Built in 1934, it sits at the highest point in the City of Poughkeepsie and marks the location of the Collegiate School, which occupied the space until 1865. This structure was added to the National Register of Historic Places in 1982 (Wahlberg, 2016). The Lown Memorial Rock Garden was added to the Local Register of Historic Places in 2014 (Wahlberg, 2013) and was partially restored in 2015. Restored areas are currently being managed as a pollinator garden and plans are underway to restore the remaining portion of the garden with native rock garden plants. College Hill Park is an important community resource as it also hosts a ballfield, basketball court, playground, and the privately-owned College Hill Golf Course. The park abuts Morgan Lake Park and the Dutchess County Rail Trail. College Hill Park is maintained by the City of Poughkeepsie and the Revive College Hill Park Coalition.

Springside is a designated National Historic Landmark and large green space that is owned and maintained by [Springside Landscape Restoration](#) (Springside Landscape Restoration, 2015). The property is the site of the country estate of Matthew Vassar, Poughkeepsie brewer, philanthropist and founder of Vassar College, and is the only landscape of Andrew Jackson Downing, famous landscape architect, to remain largely intact. The only remaining original structure on site is the Porter's Lodge/Gatehouse. The site is currently a part of the Hudson River Valley Greenway Trail and hosts a network of interpretive trails that are open to the public year round.

The [Vassar Farm and Ecological Preserve](#) (Vassar College, 2018) lies across the southern border of Poughkeepsie, with 243 of its 522 acres within city limits, and the remainder extending into the Town of Poughkeepsie. The land is privately owned by Vassar College, however, there are hiking trails open to the public from dawn to dusk daily. The area was farmed to provide food for Vassar College until 1957 and was converted into an ecological preserve in 1967. It features a network of hiking and biking trails, rugby fields, and a variety of ecological habitats. The Poughkeepsie Farm Project is located at the entrance to the Preserve and hosts a working farm with educational programs, community gardens, and community supported agriculture. Research and education opportunities occur on the Preserve through Vassar College, the Environmental Cooperative at the Vassar Barns, and the Student Conservation Association.

The [William R. Steinhaus Dutchess Rail Trail](#) (Dutchess County Government, 2018) and [Walkway Over the Hudson State Historic Park](#) (New York State, 2018) connect Poughkeepsie to broader Dutchess County and neighboring Ulster County. Since opening its first section in 2008, the Rail Trail has been converted from the Maybrook Rail corridor into a 13.4-mile paved trail that runs from Hopewell Junction to Poughkeepsie (Dutchess County Department of Planning and Development, 2014). It connects directly to the Walkway Over the Hudson, a paved scenic walkway that spans the Hudson River to reach Highland on the converted

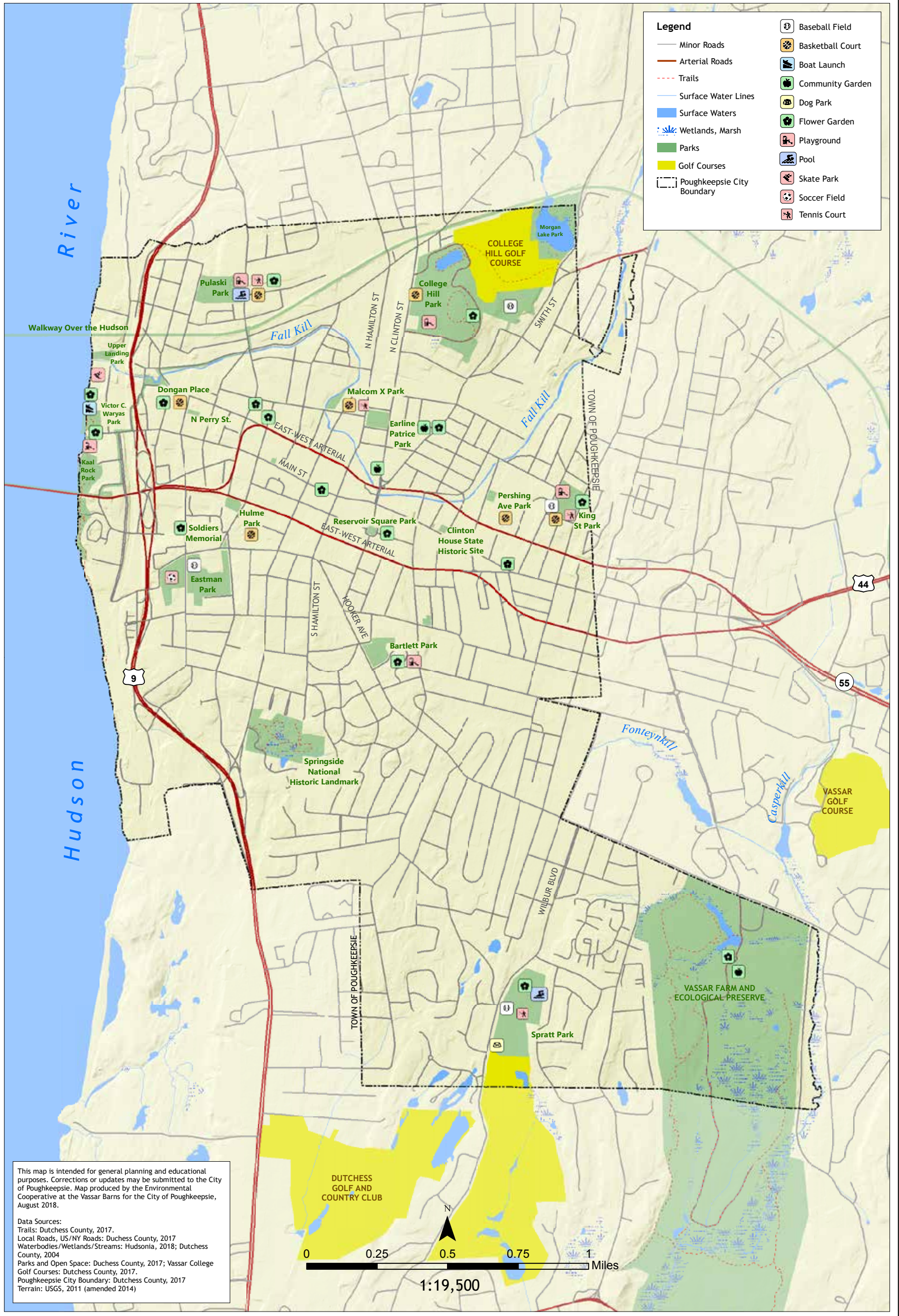
Poughkeepsie-Highland Railroad Bridge. The Walkway is part of the Walkway Loop Trail, and also part of the Empire State, a 3.6-mile loop that includes the FDR Mid-Hudson Bridge and connects to trails in Dutchess and Ulster Counties.

Community gardens and farmers' markets in Poughkeepsie provide residents with opportunities to grow their own food and connect with farmers in the surrounding areas. Dutchess Outreach coordinates the Fall Kill Partnership Garden at the Family Partnership Center. Garden plots are also available at the Vassar Farm and Ecological Preserve. The Waterfront Farmers Market at the Mid-Hudson Children's Museum offers farm-fresh food Monday afternoons during the summer.

While parks are abundant in the City of Poughkeepsie, access to these spaces should be taken into consideration. [Map 6.2](#) shows open space areas in the City of Poughkeepsie greater than 2.5 acres with a 500m (.31 miles) radius, representing a ten-minute walk, around each open space (Heffernan & Stevens, 2018). While much of the Northside of Poughkeepsie has access to public parks and open spaces, there are gaps near Main Street and on the Southside. Additionally, high traffic roads and park conditions need to be considered when discussing accessibility. In 2018, the City of Poughkeepsie began comprehensive parks improvement planning to address infrastructure in the City park system (City of Poughkeepsie, 2018).

Recreational Resources

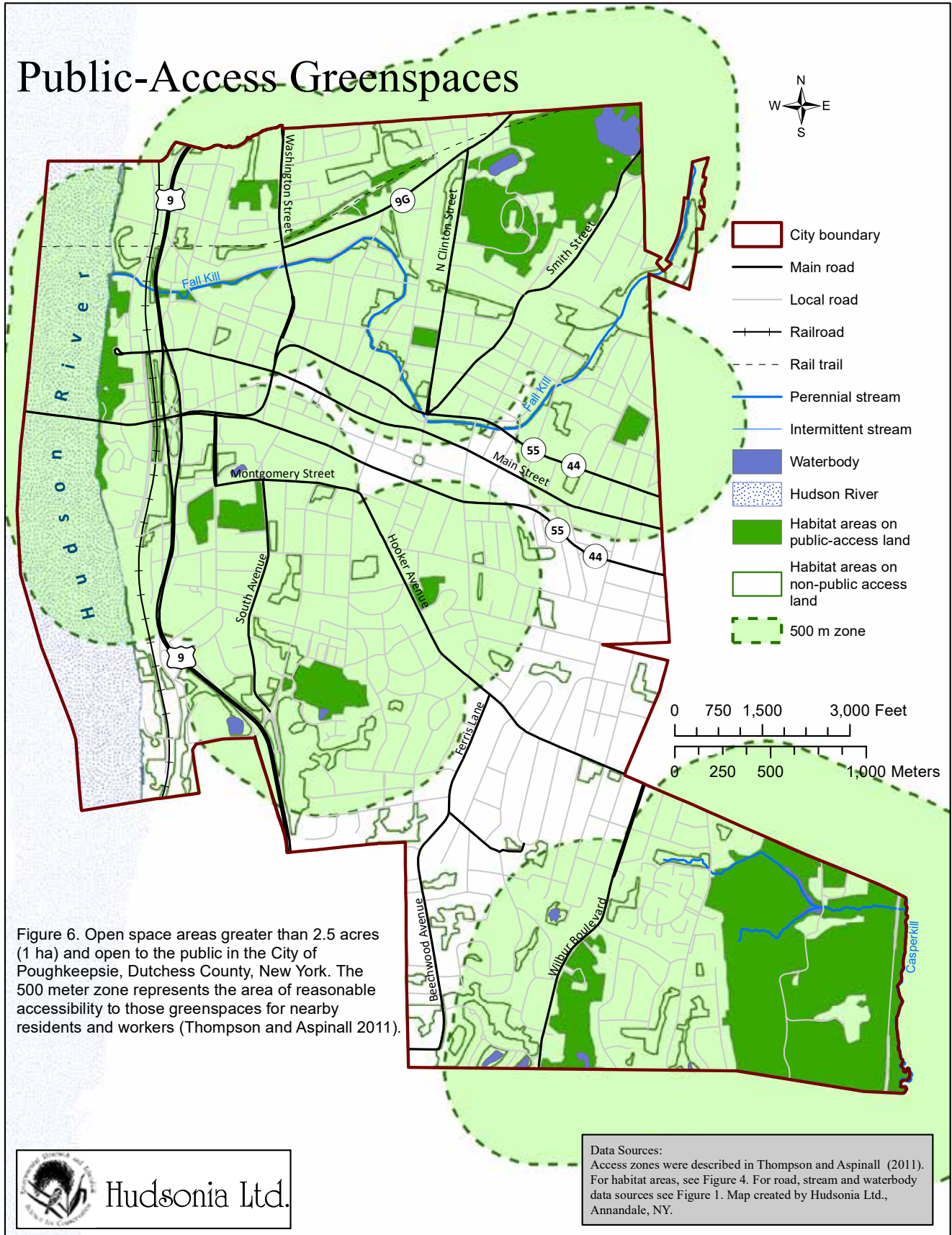
City of Poughkeepsie, New York



This map is intended for general planning and educational purposes. Corrections or updates may be submitted to the City of Poughkeepsie. Map produced by the Environmental Cooperative at the Vassar Barns for the City of Poughkeepsie, August 2018.

Data Sources:
 Trails: Dutchess County, 2017.
 Local Roads, US/NY Roads: Dutchess County, 2017
 Waterbodies/Wetlands/Streams: Hudsonia, 2018; Dutchess County, 2004
 Parks and Open Space: Dutchess County, 2017; Vassar College
 Golf Courses: Dutchess County, 2017.
 Poughkeepsie City Boundary: Dutchess County, 2017
 Terrain: USGS, 2011 (amended 2014)

Map 6.2 Access to public green spaces from Hudsonia's Significant Habitats of Poughkeepsie Report.



References

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