

Shandaken Community Survey #2

Summary of Feedback for Guiding the Future

The second community survey for the new Shandaken Comprehensive Plan was open for public response from early July through Labor Day of 2025 and gathered responses from **206 community members**. Of those, **149 were full-time residents** while others were part-time residents or owned a business or other property in the town. While the first survey identified broad themes and priorities, this second survey asked more detailed questions, which will inform new policies that will shape the future of the town.

Overarching Themes

Across the board, survey responses reflected a strong emphasis on addressing challenges while protecting what people love about Shandaken. When asked what this might look like, survey respondents shared ideas that fell broadly under **four key themes**.

1) Protecting the environment and designing with nature in mind was ranked as a top priority for housing, tourism, and economic development. Residents want responsible regulations that guide growth in a sustainable way, while offering enough flexibility so that residents can take initiative to maintain and build upon their assets. Policies that could support these priorities could include streamlined permitting for homeowners, flexibility for small projects, and clear standards to ensure new development respects public health, environmental integrity, and the natural landscape without placing undue burden on local residents.

2) Scale matters. With very few exceptions, most residents do not want mega-developments, sprawl, large corporate businesses, or big box stores anywhere in town. Instead, they prefer gentle density that honors the natural landscape and small-town character, with concentration and colocation of restaurants, shops, lodging, and multifamily housing in the hamlet centers, alongside appropriate spacing, clustering, and low-impact businesses in more rural areas.

3) Rehabilitation and repurpose of vacant or dilapidated buildings is a priority across the town. Many noted that this strategy is an effective way to meet many of Shandaken's aspirations for more housing, more services, Main Street revitalization, and environmentally responsible development.

4) People want businesses that bring direct benefit to locals, sharing concerns about outside economic interests and their influence on Shandaken's character. For example, most people welcome tourism as an integral part of the economy, but they worry about it pricing out locals or driving up costs. This affects short term rental policy, as well; there is an overwhelming sentiment that lodging and hotels should be encouraged in hamlet centers, while short-term rentals in residential buildings should be limited to local homeowners who seek to leverage tourism to offset their own housing costs.

A Deeper Dive...

The survey included a series of questions to build a detailed vision for the future of Shandaken. This section outlines local priorities around **housing, economic development, tourism, environmental protection, and development ideas for the hamlets, hollows, and Route 28 corridor.**

Housing

Overall, survey respondents expressed strong support for a **greater diversity of housing options** and **increased affordability** across the spectrum of income and family constellations. Rehabilitating existing structures and mitigating dilapidation was a top priority. There is strong support for multifamily residential and mixed-use buildings in the hamlet centers, alongside a preference against oversized development patterns such as suburbanization and sprawl, high-density, or “McMansions” in the town. Although some expressed a desire to preserve character and design in a way that honors existing aesthetics, others are proponents of loosening design guidelines to allow for new green building materials, off-grid housing, and modern technology, noting that uniformity of design may take away from the diversity of character that makes Shandaken unique.



Survey Says...

“A variety of houses at all prices so that we can continue enjoying neighbors who do or have done all kinds of jobs” -70-year-old female; full-time resident; owns home, lives in Phoenicia

“Allowance for individual creative choice, green building methods, off grid and non traditional housing. The area has a long history of handmade cabins, off grid camps, homesteads, and self made housing.” - 27-year-old female; full-time resident; lives with parents; born and raised in Oliveria

“Affordable to a family of middle-class income. Ideally 100% energy efficient. Architectural esthetics harmonious with the wilderness environment. Responsible and sustainable riparian land management. To achieve affordability, likely cluster housing.” -73-year-old male; full-time resident; owns home, lives in Chichester

“It aligns historically, and with Smart Growth principles for housing to be concentrated in the hamlets of Phoenicia and Pine Hill. Zoning should encourage multi-use, multi-family, and accessory dwelling units that service workers can afford” - 64-year-old female; full-time resident; owns home, lives in Phoenicia

“The town needs to step back a bit on what they tell HOMEOWNERS they can and cannot do with their properties... I currently know a resident that is being told she cannot replace her trailer with a new one, because she is in a flood plane.... but shes more than welcome to live in a RV in her yard because that makes ALOT OF SENSE!!!” - 38 year old female; full-time resident; owns their home; family has lived in Shandaken for generations

Tourism

People in Shandaken are overall supportive of tourism activity as a core economic driver, with a caveat: **economic benefits of tourism need to be shared with residents**. For example, respondents want services that are affordable for residents and tourists alike. Some people also discussed the need for opportunities for locals to invest and generate income from tourism assets. The top pick for tourism that is aligned with the character of Shandaken was **outdoor recreation** and trail management, followed by **support for local businesses** and **environmental protection**. Residents also expressed interest in the **arts and cultural events**. The top concern among survey participants regarding tourism was related to **visitor behavior**, including adverse impacts on the environment, noise, and rubbish. Other top concerns around tourism were the impact on housing availability and affordability, economic benefits for outsiders as opposed to locals, and prices that reflect the economic standing of tourists rather than locals. Many people expressed concerns about catering to tourists over meeting local needs.



Survey Says...

“Tourism is needed and welcome. It is a much-needed source of income to the residents. However, there needs to be affordable/available housing to the residents as well as businesses that support a local community that the local residents can afford.” - 49-year-old male; long-time connection to Big Indian; lives outside of Town

“Tourism aligned with the character of Shandaken is small-scale, respectful, focused on nature, hiking, skiing, swimming, fishing, etc. It supports local businesses, preserves the environment, and welcomes visitors who appreciate the area's quiet beauty, history, and year-round community—without displacing the people who live here.” - 72-year-old female; full-time resident; owns home; Chichester

“[Tourism threatens the character of Shandaken when] the economic benefit is not distributed equally leading to inequality in the residents and local businesses will struggle to compete with the commercial larger owned businesses.” - 68-year-old female; part-time resident; owns home; Phoenicia

“When other people fall in love with nature they might be better guardians. And when they spend money locally, it's good too...” - 70-year-old female; full-time resident; owns home; Phoenicia

Commercial and Economic Development

Survey respondents expressed **strong support for small, local businesses** and **opposition to chain stores and franchises**. Many emphasized the importance of ensuring that new development aligns with Shandaken's small-town and rural character. Environmental protection was also a key concern, with respondents stressing that economic and commercial growth should not come at the expense of the natural environment. **Striking a balance between meeting local needs and accommodating tourists** was another common theme. Respondents emphasized the need for **affordable, locally relevant** options and posed questions about how to leverage tourism spending to benefit the community. Many also supported concentrating new commercial development activity in existing hamlets, reusing vacant buildings, and prioritizing infill development. Additionally, respondents highlighted the need for **living-wage, year-round employment** and recognized the arts as an important contributor to the local economy.



Commercial and Economic Development, cont'd

Survey Says...

“Efforts to expand the local economy should include support for workforce housing, small business development, and infrastructure improvements that benefit residents as well as visitors.” - 63-year-old female; full-time resident; owns home, Pine Hill

“Commercial and economic development aligned with Shandaken’s character supports small, locally owned businesses, creates year-round jobs for residents, respects the natural environment, and strengthens the town’s rural, community-centered identity.” - 72-year-old female; full-time resident; owns home, lives in Chichester

“No strip malls! Even the one by Phoenicia Diner draws people away from our town and relies on cars. We need development that imagines people parking once and not using their cars again.” - 53-year-old female; part-time resident; owns home, Phoenicia

“In-fill development primarily centered in Phoenicia and Pine Hill; small, individualized businesses rather than chain operations” - 70-year-old non-binary; part-time resident; rents home, Mount Pleasant

“Geared towards lifting the local population.” - 61-year-old male; part-time resident; owns home, Mount Tremper

The Future of Route 28



Feedback about development along Route 28 leans toward cautious and limited revitalization of existing structures. Many respondents support **reviving existing businesses and adding essential services** like gas stations, grocery stores, or restaurants, especially if locally-owned and thoughtfully designed to fit the rural character. Route 28 is seen as more appropriate for large-footprint businesses than quiet hamlets, but **large-scale or chain developments and strip malls are widely opposed**. There is a strong desire to **revitalize existing**

vacant or rundown structures before building new ones. Residents generally value the scenic byway designation, and many express concerns about traffic, road safety, loss of natural beauty, and commercialization.

Survey Says...

“There are plenty of unused structures along 28. I think any further development should be restricted to developing these properties. Any new development should benefit the local population.” - 61-year-old male; full-time resident; owns home, Mount Tremper

“Route 28 is a Scenic Corridor, and limited development to in-fill development on existing parcels protects the scenic and “wild forest” character of this main corridor through the Catskill Park” - 48-year-old female; full-time resident; owns home, Mount Pleasant

“I think the focus of services for visitors should be focus on the hamlets. It would pain me to see the stripping of nature and be surround by a cookie cutter corporate America strip mall along 28.” - 59-year-old male; works in the Town of Shandaken

Future of Route 28, cont'd

Survey Says...

"I would mainly caution that I would prefer all businesses and development to be local vs big chains like Dunkin Donuts, etc." - 35-year-old female; part-time resident; owns home, Chichester

"Develop town centers. High development diverts people away from our towns. The old ways were best, walkable towns with everything folks need right there. Nothing on the highway!" - 53-year-old female; part-time resident; owns home, Phoenicia

"It needs cell service. It is incredibly dangerous should someone get in an accident and need emergency service, but can't reach them for miles. This might be a matter of life or death." - 30s, male; full-time resident; owns home, Pine Hill

"We've already lost forest. Protect it! Look at all the empty places on 28, we don't need more." - 69-year-old female; part-time resident; owns home, Chichester

"Development should be concentrated within the existing villages and towns and Route 28 treated as a wooded parkway" - 73-year-old male; part-time resident; works in Woodland Valley

The Hollows

The Hollows are forested, sparsely populated areas outside of the hamlet centers. Survey respondents commented that any development should **preserve the Hollows as quiet and wooded**. Those in favor of **more housing** made up the largest group of responses, but with clear specifications: **small scale, low-density** multifamily opportunities and **clusters of homes** with shared garden space. Some survey respondents expressed caution about development where there are **flood risks**, while others shared concerns about new development generating noise or other disruptions to the **peace, quiet, or environmental integrity** of the area. Several people feel **short-term rentals are contributing to the housing shortage**. Others stressed the need to **prioritize rehabilitation of existing structures** to meet housing needs.



Survey Says...

"Small multifamily clusters of homes with shared gardens. Not very big, not environmentally disruptive but that can support either extended families or older folks who would benefit by supportive members of the cluster who maintain gardens, small animals like goats or rabbits or chickens..." - 53-year-old female; full-time resident; owns home, Phoenicia

"Accessory dwellings on residential lots. Small multifamily structures where they may fit. Please no more big noisy tourist facilities!" - 60-year-old female; full-time resident; owns home, Phoenicia

"Modest, affordable homes that serve local families and seniors, allowing them to stay in the area." - 72-year-old female; full-time resident; owns home, Chichester

"If we got rid of short term rentals we would not need further development." - 73-year-old male; full-time resident; owns home, Shandaken

Pine Hill

Input on new development and housing in Pine Hill highlighted a widespread priority to **revitalize Main Street through storefront activation and rehabilitation of existing buildings**. A significant number of respondents expressed a need for more **affordable housing** and **retail or dining options**. Many support a **range of multifamily housing types** throughout the hamlet, such as accessory dwelling units (ADUs), cluster housing, small-scale multifamily structures, and boarding houses, with higher-density housing and mixed use in the inner core. Additional frequently mentioned priorities included **improvements to streets, sidewalks, and bridges**; updated policies for vacant structures and building codes; and accounting for parking needs.



Survey Says...

“Fix up existing building and make them usable for affordable housing” - 60-year-old; full-time resident; owns home, Pine Hill

“There is a need for worker housing in the town. The municipal septic and water located in PH seemingly make it a good candidate for this type of housing.” - 42-year-old male; full-time resident; rents home, Big Indian

“Restore and adapt as much as possible, like what is being done in the Wellington. Where that can't happen, build small scale apartments that are well designed for seniors especially.” - 75-year-old female; full-time resident; owns home, Pine Hill

“I don't want development in Pine Hill beyond revitalizing and repairing Main Street and some structures on it.” - 63-year-old male; part-time resident; owns home, Pine Hill

“Mixed use buildings seem like a good development, providing apartments and commercial or studio spaces.” - 51-year-old female; part-time resident; owns home, Phoenicia

Phoenicia

Like Pine Hill, respondents emphasized the importance of **restoring Main Street in Phoenicia** by improving its appearance and **revitalizing neglected or dilapidated buildings**. There was strong support for reusing vacant structures to create **affordable and senior housing**, as well as to accommodate essential services such as a grocery store or hardware store. Several respondents specifically mentioned empty commercial spaces on Main Street, the former elementary school, and the former tube rental store. Residents expressed interest in mixed-use buildings that combine residential and commercial uses, along with small-scale, well-designed apartments. Additional suggestions included enhancing local amenities such as **parks, community facilities, and healthcare services**. Underlying many of these ideas was a broad concern about **sewer and flood issues**, with calls for environmental and infrastructure improvements, such as better stream management and sidewalk networks, and requests to **revisit conversations about how to address wastewater treatment in the hamlet**. Many participants also voiced opposition to short-term rentals.



Survey Says...

“Garden apartments. Accessory dwellings on residential lots. Small multifamily structures where they may fit. Need a hardware store, deli, which we had already but closed. Sewer system!” - 75-year-old female; full-time resident; owns home, Phoenicia

“A sewer system to ensure there can be more apartments and uses in the limited commercial buildings we have.” - full-time resident; owns home, Phoenicia

“It would be great to develop some housing right by the Post Office; between Mt Ava Marie Drive and St Ursula Pl.” - 68-year-old; full-time resident; owns home, Phoenicia

“More affordable housing and better services. A Grocery store that is actually affordable. Full storefronts. What's the point of a walkable town if the services aren't there or affordable?” - 52-year-old female; part-time resident; owns home, Phoenicia

“None. Phoenicia feels like the right size. Can fix up existing structures for new purposes, like the tubing building.” - 46-year-old male; full-time resident; owns home, Shandaken

“Flood-resilient design that considers Phoenicia's vulnerability to climate impacts, particularly along the Esopus Creek.” - 72-year-old; full-time resident; owns home, Chichester

What does affordable housing look like?

Affordable housing - especially for seniors, young people, families, and members of the workforce - was named as a top priority for Shandaken. We asked people to share with us what “affordable” means to them.

Question: What do you think would be a reasonable monthly rent for young people to pay without financial distress?

- Responses ranged from \$500-2000/month, depending on the size of housing.
- On average, people noted rents of **\$1000/month**.
- **Most responses landed between \$700-1200.**

Question: What do you think a starter home should cost to be affordable to first-time homebuyers?

- Most respondents suggested prices around **\$250,000**.
- Some noted that to be realistically affordable, starter homes would have to cost between **\$100,000-200,000**.
- A small number of people suggested \$300,000-400,000 could be attainable, suggesting a strong range in perception around affordability.



Responses by Category

Below are lists of the number of responses by category. Lists include categories that were reflected by more than 5% of resident respondents. Comments that included multiple themes were coded under multiple categories, which is why the total percentages sometimes add up to more than 100%. This method of summarizing results allows elected officials and government staff to create policies and procedures that are rooted in a solid understanding of community preferences.

Housing

Housing that is aligned with the character of Shandaken looks like...

	Nonresidents		Residents		All	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Design & building with the natural landscape	20	35%	58	39%	78	38%
Affordability & local needs	12	21%	51	34%	63	31%
Compact & diverse housing formats	8	14%	44	30%	52	25%
Single-family only	6	11%	28	19%	34	17%
Limiting short-term rentals and Airbnbs	12	21%	19	13%	31	15%
Community ownership & stability	6	11%	7	5%	13	6%
Good maintenance & avoiding dilapidation	6	11%	7	5%	14	7%
Climate resilience & mitigation	2	4%	8	5%	10	5%

Housing that threatens the character of Shandaken looks like...

	Nonresidents		Residents		All	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Large scale and high-density	10	18%	35	23%	45	22%
Unregulated short-term rentals	6	11%	29	19%	35	17%
Neglect, blight & dilapidation	12	21%	22	15%	34	17%
Sprawl, suburban/cookie-cutter design, & monster homes	6	11%	20	13%	26	13%
Unaffordability & pricing-out locals	6	11%	20	13%	26	13%
Economic vitality & tourism impacts	5	9%	11	7%	16	8%
Investor & absentee ownership (LLCs/second homes)	4	7%	8	5%	12	6%
Climate vulnerability and environmental degradation	1	2%	9	6%	10	5%



Tourism

Tourism that is aligned with the character of Shandaken looks like...

	Nonresidents		Residents		All	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Outdoor recreation & trail management	18	32%	39	26%	57	28%
Support for local business & Main Street	12	21%	27	18%	39	19%
Environmental protection	8	14%	31	21%	39	19%
Arts, culture, & events	2	4%	27	18%	29	14%
Lodging & locally owned STR policy	3	5%	17	11%	20	10%
Respectful visitor behavior	5	9%	11	7%	16	8%
Balance between tourists and locals	1	2%	13	9%	14	7%
Affordable to locals & diverse visitors	3	5%	10	7%	13	6%
Traffic & parking	2	4%	8	5%	10	5%
Locally owned & local jobs	1	2%	9	6%	10	5%

Tourism that threatens the character of Shandaken looks like...

	Nonresidents		Residents		All	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Visitor behavior & noise	11	19%	39	26%	50	24%
Litter, trash, pollution, & need for restrooms	12	21%	26	17%	38	18%
Adverse environmental impacts	7	12%	31	21%	38	18%
Lax STR policy	2	4%	26	17%	28	14%
Outside corporate ownership rather than local	5	9%	22	15%	27	13%
Outsized scale	2	4%	22	15%	24	12%
Driving up prices	1	2%	10	7%	11	5%



Economic and Commercial Development

Economic and commercial development that is aligned with the character of Shandaken looks like...

	Nonresidents		Residents		All	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Local small business & entrepreneurship	15	26%	79	53%	94	46%
Green and Sustainable	7	12%	35	23%	42	20%
Main Street storefronts & activation	2	4%	18	12%	20	10%
Balance serving local community & visitors	1	2%	13	9%	14	7%
Affordable to locals	3	5%	7	5%	10	5%
Jobs, wages & year-round work	3	5%	6	4%	9	4%
Arts, culture, & events	1	2%	8	5%	9	4%

Economic and commercial development that threatens the character of Shandaken looks like...

	Nonresidents		Residents		All	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Chain stores / franchises	12	21%	42	28%	54	26%
Litter, trash, pollution, & need for restrooms	7	12%	17	11%	24	12%
Adverse environmental impacts	3	5%	19	13%	22	11%
Lax STR policy	6	11%	16	11%	22	11%
Outside corporate ownership rather than local	4	7%	16	11%	20	10%
Oversized scale	6	11%	13	9%	19	9%
Luxury / too expensive	3	5%	11	7%	14	7%



Locations

What, if any, development along Route 28?

	Nonresidents		Residents		All	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
More services, businesses, shopping	5	9%	43	29%	48	23%
Preserve greenways and views / limit sprawl	6	11%	38	26%	44	21%
Restore / repurpose vacancies	4	7%	26	17%	30	15%
No development / preserve the scenic by-way "as is"	4	7%	25	17%	29	14%
Traffic concerns / safety / reduce speed limit	2	4%	18	12%	20	10%
No big box or chain stores	1	2%	14	9%	15	7%
More attractions / activities for tourists	4	7%	10	7%	14	7%
Develop in hamlets instead	2	4%	11	7%	13	6%
Housing	0	0%	7	5%	7	3%

What, if any, development in the Hollows?

	Nonresidents		Residents		All	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Small scale multifamily	4	7%	28	19%	32	16%
Limit Development	1	2%	26	17%	27	13%
Rehab Abandoned Buildings	0	0%	12	8%	12	6%
Environmental Preservation	1	2%	9	6%	10	5%
No Development	0	0%	8	5%	8	4%
Affordable	2	4%	7	5%	9	4%
Arts, culture, & events	1	2%	8	5%	9	4%



Locations - Continued

What, if any, development in the Phoenicia?

	Nonresidents		Residents		All	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Retail Development /Revitalize Main Street	5	9%	42	28%	47	23%
Affordable	4	7%	33	22%	37	18%
Multifamily housing	2	4%	33	22%	35	17%
Rehab Abandoned Buildings	2	4%	24	16%	26	13%
Phoenicia Elementary	2	4%	16	11%	18	9%
Limit Development	0	0%	17	11%	17	8%
Sewer System	0	0%	10	7%	10	5%
Senior Housing	1	2%	8	5%	9	4%

What, if any, development in Pine Hill?

	Nonresidents		Residents		All	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Main Street storefronts & activation	6	11%	36	24%	42	20%
Rehabilitation or repurpose existing structures	4	7%	37	25%	41	20%
Affordable housing	5	9%	31	21%	36	17%
Retail/food options	5	9%	30	20%	35	17%
ADUs/ Cluster housing/Multi-Unit/Boarding	3	5%	19	13%	22	11%
Street Paving/Sidewalks and Bridge Repair	5	9%	8	5%	13	6%
Updating existing laws about property use addressing underused properties & 2nd/3rd floor additions	1	2%	8	5%	9	4%
Parking concerns	0	0%	7	5%	7	3%

