



WALKWAY

**OVER
THE HUDSON**

Quality of Life Impact Study

HUDSON VALLEY
PATTERN
for
PROGRESS

Hudson Valley Pattern for Progress
Hudson Valley Pattern for Progress

August 2018
August 2018

Executive Summary

Finding its way into corporate logos and panoramas over coffee-shop counters, the Walkway Over the Hudson State Historic Park (WOTH) is one of the architectural and scenic icons of the Hudson Valley region. A miracle of modern engineering when it was first constructed from an abandoned railroad bridge, it is the world's longest elevated pedestrian bridge – spanning 1.28 miles over and 212 feet above the Hudson River. With roughly half a million visitors each year, the Walkway has hosted nearly 5 million visitors since its opening in October 2009. The Walkway attracts local area residents and visitors from all 50 states and at least 42 countries and drives visits to a rich array of nearby amenities ranging from bike paths to historic sites and commercial areas.¹

At the request of the Board of Directors of the Walkway Over the Hudson organization (the nonprofit friends group established to support the State Park, fund capital improvements and amenities, and host community events), Hudson Valley Pattern for Progress conducted an analysis of how the WOTH has impacted the quality of life (QoL) of the residents in the surrounding Poughkeepsie-Highland community. Several prior studies have focused on the Walkway's ability to attract visitors to the area as well as the economic impacts of this popular tourist destination. This study reviews the impact that the Walkway has had on the everyday lives of the people living in and around the City of Poughkeepsie and the Hamlet of Highland, and whether its existence has made a measurable improvement in the QoL of local residents.

This study examines the history of the WOTH, reviews the literature on QoL metrics and methodologies, presents findings on the WOTH's effects on local QoL, and recommends ways to further leverage the WOTH for its local and regional QoL benefits. This report shows that the WOTH has had a measurable and meaningful impact on the QoL of local residents, especially in the City of Poughkeepsie and the Hamlet of Highland, but also in the greater Walkway Corridor area, and that it has contributed to both a renewed sense of pride and actual investment in the city's downtown.

¹ (Waldstein-Hart, 2018)

Table of Contents

Executive Summary.....	2
Introduction	4
The Poughkeepsie-Highland Railroad Bridge.....	6
The Walkway Over the Hudson	7
Defining Quality of Life	9
The Quality of Life Impacts of the Walkway: Pattern’s Research Process.....	13
Literature review.....	13
Data Collection Methodologies	14
Walkway Ambassador Survey.....	17
Methodology.....	17
Walkway Visitor Survey Results	17
Marist Student Field Work.....	22
Methodology.....	22
Resident Survey Results	23
Business Survey Results	24
Marist Student Presentations	26
Marist Student Papers	27
Pattern Fellows Research.....	29
Methodology.....	29
Resident Survey Results	29
Business Survey Results	31
Social Media Survey.....	32
Methodology.....	32
Social Media Survey Results.....	32
Walkway Stakeholder Interviews.....	35
Methodology.....	35
Stakeholder Survey Results.....	35
Research Findings	37
Conclusion.....	38
Recommendations.....	38
Appendices.....	46

Introduction

From Pattern for Progress President and CEO Jonathan Drapkin

The creativity, imagination, and determination that converted a burnt-out old railway bridge into a modern pedestrian elevated pathway is nothing short of a marvel. This research starts with the recognition that the adaptation of the old bridge to a park is an extraordinary effort that one should not minimize. The region will be forever better off for its creation.

Early cost/benefit analyses suggested that tearing down the rusted old bridge would be more costly than finding a creative adaptive reuse. And so those who reimagined it and found the funding to create a Walkway are to be commended for their grit and determination.

Ten years after its opening, the staff at the Walkway decided, having already conducted several studies that showed its net positive economic impact, to test what impact the park was having on local Quality of Life.

The Walkway Over the Hudson Organization in March of 2017 issued an RFP to study the Walkway's impact on the Quality of Life. Hudson Valley Pattern for Progress was chosen to undertake this year-long study.

Ask any two people to define what is important to their quality of life, and you will get two entirely different answers. Read any literature on how to measure the Quality of Life and you will find a startling number of approaches, but no one universally accepted methodology.

It is with these somewhat ill-defined parameters that Pattern decided to undertake an "MRI" approach to understand what the impact on the QoL has been. In other words, no single applied theory could answer this question, so an MRI or a series of "slices" of perceptions would be our approach to ascertaining its impact.

Pattern has gone to great lengths to find these slices. From teaching a course at Marist College to engage students to help with its research, to employing Pattern's Regional Fellows training program students, to conducting numerous surveys online and in person – these efforts have been layered together to form an impression of the Walkway Over the Hudson's impact on the local community's Quality of Life.

One more point. While the research led us in many different directions, we will be forever moved by the story of a 66 year old woman who visited the Walkway fully intent on ending her own life by leaping from the bridge. When she made it out onto the Walkway and took in the beauty of her surroundings, she had a moment of clarity and regained the will to live from the serenity of the space.

While this may have been the most dramatic story about how the bridge has had an impact on an individual's Quality of Life, it is equally compounded by the experience of non-profit organizations who

have used the bridge for fundraisers or the many community groups that have used it to express their social and political points of view. Events like the Women’s March and the Walk to End Gun Violence have gathered at the Walkway to make their voices heard. There is no doubt that the Walkway, to many, is not simply a pedestrian bridge with a view, but also an anchor of place that has significantly enhanced their Quality of Life.



The Poughkeepsie-Highland Railroad Bridge

The year 1868 was an historic year for the United States of America – the first Memorial Day was announced and celebrated, the fourteenth amendment to the US Constitution was ratified, and the Poughkeepsie Eagle, predecessor of the Poughkeepsie Journal, published the first mention of a dream – a railroad bridge spanning the Hudson River at Poughkeepsie.

In the late 1870s-1880s, the City of Poughkeepsie became the focal point of the international community. Engineers and laborers, working day and night, had amassed a spectacular wonder: the world's longest bridge. For this time period, the task seemed impossible (note: this was around the same period that the Eiffel Tower was being erected using similar engineering practices with newly invented "Bessemer Process" steel). But, with the age of innovation in its infancy years, the technology needed eventually caught up to the work at hand.

By the very end of 1888, 20 years after a local engineer was ridiculed for his op-ed pitching the idea in the *Poughkeepsie Eagle*, the Poughkeepsie-Highland Railroad Bridge had been completed. It took three years to build for an estimated \$3.6 million (over \$100 million in 2018 dollars²) and at the time, it was the longest bridge in the world and the only bridge to span the Hudson River between Albany and New York City.

The bridge formally opened for passenger service beginning on January 1st, 1889, creating a direct route to ship raw materials from the western parts of New York to the industrial centers of New England, and accommodating passenger trains connecting Boston, New Haven, New York, Harrisburg, Philadelphia, Baltimore and Washington.

For the next thirty five years, the Poughkeepsie-Highland railroad bridge was the sole crossing of the Hudson River between New York City and Albany, and the only alternative to the ferries and railcar-floats of Manhattan. Transporting everything from coal and iron ore, to circus animals, passengers, and daily household necessities, this steel cantilever double track railroad bridge saw nearly 3,500 rail cars utilize the bridge daily at its peak.³

As the years passed and the ubiquitous automobile and trucking industries flourished, the relevance of the bridge began to fade. The monopoly that the Poughkeepsie-Highland Bridge had was broken with the installation of several other bridges along the Hudson River, beginning with the Bear Mountain Bridge which opened to foot and automobile traffic in 1924.⁴ By the 1970s, the low profitability of old rail systems coupled with a neglectful lack of maintenance on the part of the bridge's owner, turned the Poughkeepsie-Highland Railroad Bridge into a shell of its former self.⁵ The railroad bridge operated for 85 years until 1974, when a fire caused by the sparks of a locomotive's wheels screeching over the steel tracks destroyed

² https://www.bls.gov/data/inflation_calculator.htm

³ (Waldstein-Hart, 2018)

⁴ Frosell, Mary. "Walkway Over the Hudson: A History."

⁵ (Waldstein-Hart, 2018)

the wooden decking that supported the tracks of the bridge, rendering it useless⁶. The bridge would sit dormant for the next 20 years.

The Walkway Over the Hudson

In 1979, the Poughkeepsie-Highland Railroad Bridge was listed on the National Register of Historic Places, but it was not until 1992 that the Poughkeepsie-Highland Railroad Bridge Company organization (now known as Walkway Over the Hudson, a nonprofit organization) was formed. In 1998, the bridge was deeded to the Walkway Over the Hudson.⁷

With the economy turning around in the early 90s, an idea began circulating around the city about redesigning the bridge. After mixed receptions and constant debate, the idea formed to reconstruct the bridge, transforming it from the longest rail bridge to the longest pedestrian walking bridge. After a considerable and lengthy advocacy effort by local philanthropists and other stakeholders, funding totaling nearly \$40 million was secured for the original repurposing of the bridge. Major donors included the Dyson Foundation, New York State Parks and other State agencies, the Federal government, and several other community organizations and foundations have made significant contributions. Construction of the present-day pedestrian bridge moved very quickly once underway, and was completed in 17 months through a public-private partnership.⁸

Fred Schaeffer, a local attorney and the preeminent promoter of the project, justified the redesign stating, "Everyone thought it was just a rickety old railroad bridge and didn't have any idea of how well built and historic it is. There is 120-year-old Carnegie steel on this bridge. This is one of the great world structures."⁹ Statements such as these, combined with pictures of similarly built walking bridges, eventually swayed public opinion. In October 2009, ten years after word first began to circulate about the bridge's redesign; the bridge re-opened as the Walkway Over the Hudson State Historic Park.

Today, the Walkway is operated by the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation, which is responsible for the day-to-day management. The New York State Bridge Authority is responsible for the maintenance and upkeep of the physical structure of the bridge, and the Walkway Over the Hudson nonprofit friends group coordinates the promotion of the park, fundraising, community relations, and programming. All three entities work in close collaboration. It is open year-round, from sunrise to sunset, and offers visitors the chance to walk, run or bike with the whole family; including family members of the four-legged variety.

In summer 2014, an elevator connecting Upper Landing Park in Poughkeepsie to the Walkway was opened, allowing easier access to the Poughkeepsie waterfront area, the Mid-Hudson Children's Museum, and the Metro North train station – not to mention making it more accessible to people of all abilities. The Walkway continues to maintain its reputation as a connector. The Walkway is part of the Hudson

⁶Ibid

⁷ Frosell, Mary. "Walkway Over the Hudson: A History."

⁸ (Waldstein-Hart, 2018)

⁹ Ibid

Valley Rail Trail Network and was inducted into the Rail-Trail Hall of Fame in 2016¹⁰. The Walkway connects Ulster County's Hudson Valley Rail Trail to the William R. Steinhaus Rail Trail in Dutchess County. The Walkway will serve as a key point of interest and connector for Governor Cuomo's Empire State Trail, a project that, when completed by the end of 2020, will be a "continuous 750-mile route spanning the state from New York City to Canada and Buffalo to Albany, creating the longest multi-use state trail in the nation."¹¹



The Walkway Over the Hudson at sunset, from the Poughkeepsie Ice House patio.¹²

¹⁰ <https://www.railstotrails.org/our-work/trail-promotion/rail-trail-hall-of-fame/>

¹¹ <https://www.ny.gov/programs/empire-state-trail>

¹² Pattern staff photography

Defining Quality of Life

As mentioned in the introduction, a precise commonly shared and accepted definition for Quality of Life is elusive. Quality of Life (QoL) has been defined as “multidimensional factors that include everything from physical health, psychological state, level of independence, family, education, wealth, religious beliefs, a sense of optimism, local services and transport, employment, social relationships, housing and the environment.”¹³ However, there is no consensus among experts on what exactly QoL is, as the various metrics used to identify it are often subjective terms and cannot be easily quantified. In fact, precisely defining QoL can be so difficult that “in some scientific articles a definition of the concept is not even attempted, and QoL is only measured and meant as an indicator.”¹⁴

The ultimate purpose of this study is to make a determination on whether or not the WOTH has made a measurable impact on the QoL for the residents of the community in which it was built. So this begs the question - if the term “quality of life” cannot be easily or even clearly defined, how can it be measured? This section of the report will examine the existing literature surrounding QoL and use the most broadly accepted definitions possible for the purposes of informing this project’s efforts to measure changes in the perceived QoL in the greater WOTH community. Despite the term’s varied definition it has nonetheless become widely used in both academia and popular culture for the ease with which it seems to capture an array of important factors affecting people’s sense of wellbeing.

Standard of Living vs. Quality of Life

In an attempt to provide the best possible definition of QoL for the purposes of this study, and considering the aforementioned difficulty in defining it, it is logical then to first define what QoL *is not*. “Standard of Living” (SoL) is a term used mainly in the fields of economics and development, and is a term that is often conflated with QoL. SoL has been defined as “the level of wealth, comfort, material goods and necessities available to a certain socioeconomic class or a certain geographic area.”¹⁵ The SoL typically includes easily quantifiable measures such as Gross National Income (GNI), Gross Domestic Product (GDP), life expectancy, level of educational attainment, and other indicators.¹⁶

When discussing SoL and QoL, the most common measure used is the United Nations’ Human Development Index (HDI), which provides researchers with a scale of .000 to .999, with countries on the higher end offering a higher SoL than countries on the lower end. The issue with using HDI for a study such as this is immediately apparent in that the indicators used to determine HDI are macro-level, and cannot be cross-tabulated for a population as small as that found in the greater Walkway community. Even if the data were available at this micro -level, there would still not be any way to control for changes

¹³ <https://www.forbes.com/sites/iese/2013/09/04/quality-of-life-everyone-wants-it-but-what-is-it/#31901724635d>

¹⁴ Barcaccia, B., Esposito, G., Matarese, M., Bertolaso, M., Elvira, M., & De Marinis, M. G. (2013). Defining Quality of Life: A Wild-Goose Chase?. *Europe’s Journal of Psychology*, 9(1), 185-203. doi:10.5964/ejop.v9i1.484

¹⁵ <https://www.investopedia.com/terms/s/standard-of-living.asp>

¹⁶ Ibid

in those data sets over the past 9 years that the WOTH has been open to ensure we could attribute any statistically significant changes to the WOTH's existence.

Comparing Indicators

So Quality of Life is not a composite statistic of easily quantifiable indicators – but then what is it? Can we not simply put the factors listed in the definition at the beginning of this section onto scales of .000 to .999 and create a separate composite index similar to the UN HDI? Fortunately, an attempt at creating this type of index would not be the first. The most applicable example is the government of Bhutan's Gross National Happiness index, which is used to measure the collective happiness and well-being of a population by valuing collective happiness as the goal of governance, and measuring progress against the "nine domains and 33 indicators of happiness". The nine domains are psychological well-being, health, time use, education, cultural diversity and resilience, good governance, community vitality, ecological diversity and resilience, and living standards.¹⁷

This approach seems plausible on its face, but a deeper dive reveals that perhaps using a tool as complex as HDI or GNH is not only a futile effort, but ultimately wrongheaded in that the creation of a new index would propagate the belief that researchers can decide which factors and external indicators are the most important and are therefore worthy of being included in such an index.

In "Beyond GDP and HDI: Shifting the focus from paradigms to politics", authors Monni and Spaventa posit the question "whether it is possible to shift the focus of policy from a battle between competing paradigms to a mechanism for eliciting information on well-being directly from the population."¹⁸ They go on to state that "proposals of alternatives [to the HDI and GNH] often focus on outcome targets (health, education, nutrition), but in fact the process of political participation is far more important and meaningful"¹⁹

Monni and Spaventa of course are discussing direct democratic principles, in which they could solicit input from a majority of citizens rather than relying on data that has been manipulated several times and diluted in the process. On the macro-level, this would be incredibly difficult – which is exactly why researchers have created indices like the HDI or the GNH which use complex mathematical formulas to weight various indicators and can often lead to an unintentional misrepresentation of data.²⁰

Creating a Methodology

On the macro-level, obvious barriers exist to directly interacting with large swathes of a population, like the sheer scale of the task – but on the micro-level, it becomes much more plausible. This is where the Pattern research team saw an opportunity for appropriately measuring QoL in a small community.

Direct community engagement on multiple levels through a variety of platforms allowed the Pattern research team to glean multiple pieces of anecdotal evidence from key community stakeholders while

¹⁷ <http://www.grossnationalhappiness.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/04/Short-GNH-Index-edited.pdf>

¹⁸ Monni, S. & Spaventa, A. *Development* (2013) 56: 227. <https://doi.org/10.1057/dev.2013.30>

¹⁹ Ibid

²⁰ Ibid

also using a stratified surveying process to obtain and compile anonymous bulk data that can be quantified. This approach of creating numerous data points where community members can directly explain their perceived changes to their quality of life as it directly pertains to the Walkway Over the Hudson provided an array of “snapshots”. When taken individually, these snapshots are nothing more than anecdotes, but observed in the aggregate they portray the entire picture – much in the same way that an MRI takes individual photographs which are two-dimensional “slices”, and combines them to create a three-dimensional image. Therefore, Pattern chose to take this “MRI”-style approach to analyzing the QoL.

As one of the guest lecturers in the class Pattern created to assist this study, Dr. Leonard Nevarez, Professor of Sociology and Urban Studies at Vassar College, discussed the difficulties of applying broad generalizations of QoL and warned against making assumptions that specific factors that might improve one person’s quality of life would have an equal or even related impact on a different person’s QoL.²¹

Dr. Nevarez also discussed the importance that place determinism, the concept that a place itself determines people’s quality of life, has a large impact on the QoL of the people who live in a given city. Place determinism is composed of three factors: amenities, public space, and place character. Amenities, according to Dr. Nevarez, “denote landscape features and physical aspects that please the eye aesthetically or offer an enjoyable experience.”²² The Walkway Over the Hudson, which acts as an amenity in the Poughkeepsie-Highland community, is not only aesthetically pleasing but also offers residents and tourists the opportunity to experience the beauty of the Hudson River from a perspective unavailable anywhere else.

Several studies have concluded that the mental health of residents in urban areas is directly linked to the distance that these residents are from the nearest park or green space, as well as the quantity and quality of parks and green spaces in their community. Some studies have even gone as far as to suggest that, “a nearby urban park is associated with the same mental health benefits as decreasing local unemployment rates by 2 points,” which highlights how critical it is for urban citizens to have quick and easy access to local parks and green spaces.²³

Urban parks and green spaces allow members of a community to experience increased physical activity, more exposure to nature, and increased social interaction. Social interaction specifically is an aspect of Dr. Nevarez’s “public space” factor. Dr. Nevarez states that social interaction is a by-product of public spaces, which “enhance a place’s QoL by offering the small intrinsic pleasures of walking and people-watching as well as promoting the lofty ideals of tolerance, citizenship, and the spontaneity of informal

²¹ Leonard Nevarez, lecture, 2018

²² 6. Leonard Nevarez, “Place,” in *Pursuing a Quality of Life: From Affluent Society to Consumer Society*, (New York: Taylor & Francis Group, 2011): 149-180.

²³ Charles Oliver and John Stephen, “State of Play: Parks, Green Spaces Improve Quality of Life,” *Valdosta Daily Times*, (Valdosta, Georgia), Mar. 26, 2017, http://www.valdostadailytimes.com/news/local_news/state-of-play-parks-green-spaces-improve-quality-of-life/article_66141091-1ead-551c-b364-d2959285ef9a.html

social order.”²⁴ Since the Walkway acts both as a public park and as a walking space that allows members of the community to interact, it can be considered both an amenity and a public space.

Residents’ contact with “urban nature has been linked to a greater ability to cope with life stressors, improved work productivity...and greater life satisfaction,” which allows for improved mental health for those residents who are positively affected by the Walkway.²⁵ It is impossible to ignore the positive effects of a public park in an urban setting; it gives residents of all socio-economic backgrounds a chance to improve both their physical and mental health, improves the physical attractiveness of an area, and, in the case of the Walkway, encourages tourism, which improves the economy and further improves the quality of life of the people who reside there.

The third component of place determinism is place character, defined as “a set of patterns in meaning and action that are specific to a distinct locale,” which includes features such as physical attraction, heritage and overall ease of living.²⁶ The Walkway has improved the physical attractiveness of the city of Poughkeepsie and has given residents a chance to learn about the rich history and heritage of the city. Before the bridge was transformed into the Walkway, it was seen as a “local eyesore,” and officials were considering tearing the structure down altogether.²⁷

When considering a city’s heritage, this concerns a city’s ability to “know its roots and [that] it tries to preserve its physical and cultural heritage.”²⁸ The Walkway Over the Hudson has been able to incorporate the history of the Hudson Valley and the history of the structure along the bridge, giving residents and tourists alike the chance to learn about the Poughkeepsie-Highland community, which is rich in historical significance.

²⁴ 6. Leonard Nevarez, “Place,” in *Pursuing a Quality of Life: From Affluent Society to Consumer Society*, (New York: Taylor & Francis Group, 2011): 149-180.

²⁵ Roland Sturm and Deborah Cohen, “Proximity to Urban Parks and Mental Health,” *Journal of Mental Health Policy and Economics* 17, no.1: 20, accessed May 1, 2018, <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4049158/>

²⁶ 6. Leonard Nevarez, “Place,” in *Pursuing a Quality of Life: From Affluent Society to Consumer Society*, (New York: Taylor & Francis Group, 2011): 149-180.

²⁷ “The Pulse of Parks: Walkway Over the Hudson,” *Open Space Institute*, 2015, <https://www.openspaceinstitute.org/research/the-pulse-of-parks-walkway-over-the-hudson>

²⁸ 6. Leonard Nevarez, “Place,” in *Pursuing a Quality of Life: From Affluent Society to Consumer Society*, (New York: Taylor & Francis Group, 2011): 149-180.

The Quality of Life Impacts of the Walkway: Pattern’s Research Process

Literature review

The project methodology takes into account the findings of prior Walkway-related studies and extends the scope to assessing the quality of life impact of the Walkway on local communities and businesses. Key takeaways from prior studies that informed the analysis were:

- Walkway Brand and Perception Drivers (Vox Inc, 2012):
 - The Walkway is the primary reason people will come to the area
 - The Walkway is a physical connector for the area
 - It is the experience of being on the Walkway that defines the brand
 - The Walkway is inclusive; it offers different kinds of people more options of things to do.
- Walkway Economic Impact (Camoin, 2007 and 2011):
 - The Walkway draws approximately 500,000 annual visitors
 - 48% of visitors are non-residents of Dutchess and Ulster counties
 - Estimated spending per visitor is \$64.36, resulting in \$23.9 million in expected sales, 383 jobs, and \$9.4 million in wages

The desired outcome of previous research was to identify and measure sources of outside dollars brought in to the local community from the tourist appeal of the bridge, and determining what elements of the WOTH best serve to market the experience to outsiders. This meant that prior analyses were predominantly outwardly focused, i.e., on visitors and tourists from outside the local area. Our study focuses on the local community, i.e., the people in the surrounding communities and the businesses located in the area which represents the majority of Walkway users, according to the previous research (52%)²⁹.

For the purposes of this analysis, “local” is defined as the geographic area within a 30 minute drive time radius from the Walkway. As outlined in the table below, this 30 minute drive time radius encompasses more than 625,000 residents of which the majority lives and works locally.³⁰ This study refers to this “local” area as the “Walkway Corridor.”

²⁹ Camoin Economic Impact Study and internal data collection – An important distinction between the initial Camoin study and the Pattern research is that they use different groups of visitors and study methodologies.

³⁰ CHMURA Economics and Analytics – JobsEQ tool (*accessed via Ulster County Government*)

Summary of 30-min Drive time Area (Source JobsEQ):

	ACS 2016	Study Relevance
Population (ACS)	625,561	Large catchment area
Median Household Income	\$68,788	Limited spending power of local population given also NYS 1.5x higher cost of living than the US average
Per Capita Income	\$33,494	
Poverty Level	11%	
Mean Commute Time	31min	High commuting times
<u>Commute via Public Transport</u>	4.5%	Public transport need
<u>With Disability, Age 18-64</u>	10.7%	Need for ADA accessible facilities

The Walkway Corridor’s businesses are predominantly in the Health Care and Social Assistance sector which employ 41,257 workers. The next-largest sectors in the region are Retail Trade (30,431 workers) and Educational Services (28,248). Similarly, the largest major occupation group in the Walkway Corridor is Office and Administrative Support occupations, Sales and Related occupations, and Food Preparation and Serving Related occupations. Our business analysis focused on Retail, Food Services, and related businesses that fall within the 30-min drive time radius and would be open and accessible to local and out-of town visitors during Walkway operating hours.

Data Collection Methodologies

In keeping with our “MRI”-style approach to ascertain the impact on QoL, Pattern designed numerous data collection methodologies. The analysis in this report draws primarily on first-hand research conducted by four different research teams using different methods and tools.

The first of these teams and tools was a survey designed by Pattern for Progress and administered by the WOTH organization both in-person and online.

The second team was a class of Marist College students in the School of Management, who created a survey under the direction of Pattern for Progress and administered it to City of Poughkeepsie area residents as well as provided direct research and in-class presentations.

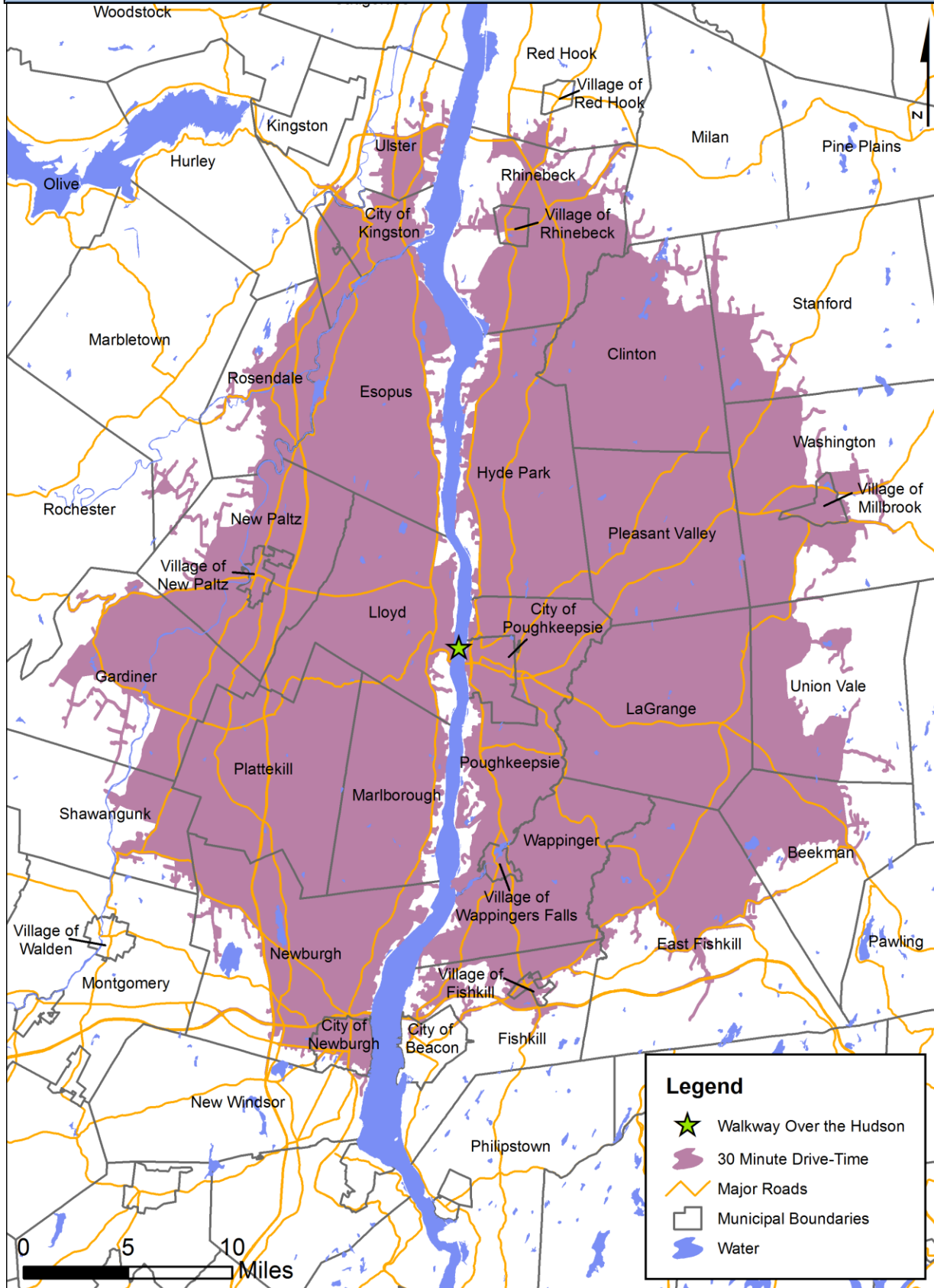
The third research team was one of three Pattern Fellows research groups that compiled secondary data as well as devised their own survey that they administered to local residents in the Hamlet of Highland.

The fourth research team was the Pattern research team themselves, who conducted stakeholder surveys with various community leaders, and completed direct research with other parties with vested interests in the WOTH.

Data was also acquired and analyzed from secondary sources such as the U.S. Census Bureau's decennial census and annual American Community Survey, and two previous economic impact studies conducted by Camoin & associates, and focus groups conducted by VOX, on behalf of the WOTH organization.

Other insights, anecdotes, and examples have been drawn from the experience of the authors of this report, who have spent collective decades as participant-observers and residents of the Hudson Valley region.

The Walkway Corridor



Walkway Ambassador Survey

Methodology

Beginning in the summer of 2017, Pattern created a comprehensive survey (Appendix A) to be administered to visitors of the WOTH. The survey consisted of 31 questions that asked for respondents to provide information about demographics, how often they visit the WOTH, how they travel to the WOTH, what types of activities they engage in on the Walkway, spending habits when visiting the park, their overall impression of the park, and whether or not they feel that the WOTH has had any impact on their personal QoL or on the overall QoL for their local community. The survey was created using the SurveyMonkey tool, and a link to the survey was provided to the WOTH staff to approve the questions prior to administering the survey.

Commencing in the late summer of 2017 and continuing through the fall, WOTH volunteers in the “Walkway Ambassadors” program administered the surveys to visitors of the Walkway that they encountered on the bridge. The survey was intended to be taken via wi-fi enabled tablet devices, however due to unforeseen limitations in accessing the necessary technology, the surveys were printed and provided to Walkway Ambassadors for administration to Walkway visitors.

Ambassadors were tasked with stopping as many Walkway visitors as possible to administer the survey. Over the course of two and a half months, the Walkway Ambassadors were able to procure 253 survey responses.

In the late spring and early summer of 2018, Walkway Ambassadors were again tasked with administering surveys to visitors of the Walkway. Over the course of approximately 1 month, ambassadors were able to procure another 53 survey responses, bringing the total number of responses to the Walkway visitor survey to 306 responses.³¹

Walkway Visitor Survey Results

Respondent Demographics

Results from the Walkway Ambassador survey revealed that Walkway Over the Hudson visitors came from all across the world, but mostly focused on the tri-state region. A map of visitors by home ZIP code can be found as Appendix B.

Of the 296 respondents who answered the question, 189 or almost 64% of Walkway visitors were female, while 36% were male. Walkway visitors tended to visit the WOTH with one other guest (46%), while

³¹ **Potential Bias**

Due to the fact that Walkway visitors taking part in specific activities (i.e. running, jogging, cycling) were not inclined to stop to speak with an ambassador, it may be that those populations were underrepresented in the study.

groups of 3 or 4 represented 25%, and groups of 5 or more represented 18%. Approximately 12% of respondents were visiting alone.

Analysis of survey results show that the typical visitor to the Walkway is between the ages of 46-65 (49.5%), while the 21-45 age group accounts for 27% and the over 65 age group accounts for another 15%. Visitors under 21 represented the smallest group at 5% of the survey population.

Walkway visitors were asked to self-report their race/ethnicity. 76% identified as white/Caucasian. 4% identified as Hispanic/Latino, 4% identified as black/African-American, 4% identified as multiple races/ethnicities, 3% identified as Asian. 9% identified as a 'different' race or preferred not to answer.

Visiting the Walkway – First Time Visitors

First time visitors to the WOTH reported that they were visiting the Walkway overwhelmingly to enjoy the view (59%), because they were a tourist (40%), for fitness/exercise (33%), and for entertainment (28%). Other reasons for visiting included meeting family/friends (13%), because the park is easily accessible for differently-abled visitors (3%), and to attend a fundraiser or community event (2%). One respondent stated that visiting the Walkway was on their “bucket list”, while others came for a reunion or for a meetup.com gathering.

When asked how they heard about the WOTH, with the option to select multiple sources, approximately 50% of first-time visitors had learned about the Walkway from family or friends. Social media sites accounted for 15% of visitors, 11% from the Walkway website, 9% from a newspaper or news website, 5% from TV, and 24% listed other sources as well such as tourism brochures, Marist College events, looking at a local map, and just being from the area.

First time visitors travelled to the Walkway overwhelmingly (79%) by car. Only 9% of first time visitors walked to the park, while less than 5% biked and less than 5% came by train. With only one respondent (<1%) each, tour bus, taxi/ride-sharing service, and shuttle bus from Marist College were the least popular means of transportation to the Walkway.

In accordance with their means of transportation, 43% of first time visitors parked in the Parker Avenue parking lots and 31% parked in the Highland/Haviland road parking lots. Other visitors accessed the Walkway via the Washington street stairs in Poughkeepsie (10%), the Dutchess County Rail Trail (9%), the Walkway Elevator (6%), and the Ulster County Hudson Valley Rail Trail (2%).

When asked if they will be visiting other nearby destinations after their trip to the Walkway, over 58% of first time visitors said yes. The remaining approximately 42% of first time visitors were only visiting the Walkway. When asked for details about the other places they would visit, most visitors reference restaurants in the area –but not the immediate vicinity. Most visitors planned to travel to Beacon, Hyde Park (Culinary Institute of America), New Paltz, Rhinebeck, and the Town of Poughkeepsie.

Pattern’s analysis of the self-reported spending habits of first-time WOTH visitors found the following:

- **57%** intended to spend at City of Poughkeepsie restaurants (over 45% planned to spend more than \$10).

- **Over 44%** intended to spend at other nearby restaurants (over 29% planned to spend more than \$10)
- **Over 36%** intended to spend at other retail businesses in Poughkeepsie or near the Walkway (over 16% planned to spend more than \$10)
- **Over 21%** planned to spend more than \$50 at local hotels
- **Over 41%** intended to spend at a local gas station (over 26% planned to spend more than \$10)
- **Over 31%** intended to spend at other tourist destinations in the area (over 10% planned to spend more than \$10).
- **Over 48%** intended to spend on Walkway souvenirs (over 9% planned to spend more than \$10).
- **Over 64%** intended to spend on food/drink kiosks on the WOTH (over 11% planned to spend more than \$10).³²

Visiting the Walkway – Repeat Visitors

When asked if this was their first time visiting the WOTH, 46% stated that this was in fact their first visit. The remaining 54% had visited the park at least once before. The majority of repeat visitors (42%) were very frequent users of the bridge, having visited over 20 times. The second largest group (30%) of repeat visitors, however, had only been to the park between 1-5 other times. Other repeat visitors reported visiting between 6-10 times (17%), between 11-15 times (6%), and between 16-20 times (5%). This majority being frequent users can be explained by the population of local visitors who use the bridge on a regular basis for exercise, relaxation, and meditation.

Repeat visitors overwhelmingly choose to visit the WOTH during weekends (85%) versus weekdays (45%) and holidays (27.5%). They also overwhelmingly report to use the bridge for exercise (72%) and to enjoy the view (69%). Other less popular reasons for visiting the bridge include for entertainment (29%), to meet with family and friends (22%), and to attend fundraisers or community events (15%). A small population of repeat visitors (5%) enjoy the Walkway because it is easily accessible/ADA compliant.

Regarding the usage habits of the repeat visitors, over 82% will walk all the way across the Walkway and back to their starting point when visiting the park. Just fewer than 10% of repeat visitors typically walk to the halfway point and back, while approximately 3% will walk just a quarter of the way across, or “to the elevator and back”. The remaining 5% would complete a variety of different trips including walking from Poughkeepsie to the downtown Hamlet of Highland and back, completing the “Walkway Loop” trail by going across the Walkway one-way and back over the Mid-Hudson Bridge, or go up or down the elevator to continue their walk through Upper Landing Park and Waryas Park. Approximately 50% of repeat visitors complete their visit within 60-90 minutes, while another 33% will complete their visit in 45-60 minutes. The remaining 17% is roughly split between even shorter or longer trips.

Repeat visitors, much like first-time visitors, will overwhelmingly travel to the WOTH via car (81%) and accessed the Walkway using the Parker Avenue parking lots (47%) or the Highland parking lots (25%).

³² These findings portray the economic impacts of the Walkway on the local economy, and contrast with estimates originally provided by the Camoin studies.

Visitors also accessed the park via the Washington Street stairs (17%) or the Dutchess County Rail Trail (8%). Very few respondents accessed the WOTH via the elevator (2%) or the Ulster County Rail Trail (1%).

When asked if on a typical visit to the Walkway, do repeat visitors patronize other nearby destinations after or before their trip to the Walkway, 46% of repeat visitors said yes. In comparison to first-time visitors where 58% of respondents said yes, this indicates that first time visitors (generally majority tourists) have a higher chance of patronizing local businesses than do repeat visitors. When asked for details about the other places they would visit, unlike first time visitors, most repeat visitors reference restaurants in the area and in the immediate vicinity, roughly a 10-minute drive. Most repeat visitors planned to visit restaurants such as Lola's, Shadows on the Hudson, and Mill House Brewing Company. Other places mentioned were New Paltz and Hyde Park, but no mentions of Beacon, Cold Spring, Rhinebeck, Kingston, or other further regional destinations, unlike first-time visitors who preferred leaving Poughkeepsie after visiting the Walkway.

Pattern's analysis of the self-reported spending habits of repeat WOTH visitors found the following:

- **65%** spent at City of Poughkeepsie restaurants (over 45% spent more than \$10)
- **52%** spent at other nearby restaurants (over 31% spent more than \$10)
- **Over 44%** spent at other retail businesses in Poughkeepsie or near the Walkway (over 33% spent more than \$10)
- **Over 50%** spent at a local gas station (over 26% spent more than \$10)
- **Over 34%** spent at other tourist destinations in the area (over 13% spent more than \$10)
- **Over 38%** spent on WOTH souvenirs (over 5% spent more than \$10)
- **Over 57%** spent on food/drink kiosks on the WOTH (over 7% spent more than \$10)

Pattern's analysis of self-reported spending habits showed that even though repeat visitors were more likely to visit local establishments, as they may be local residents, a minority of repeat visitors expressed interest in visiting anywhere other than the Walkway. This was further illuminated by the fact that, when asked about their typical spending habits when visiting the WOTH, repeat-visitors who did choose to visit another local establishment were overall more likely to spend less than first-time visitors per capita, and represent a larger share of total WOTH visitors (54%).

Impact on Quality of Life

In order to understand how the WOTH has impacted the QoL for local residents, only repeat-visitors (who tend to be local residents vs. tourists) were asked about how the Walkway has impacted their QoL.

When asked "How much has the Walkway improved your quality of life?" repeat visitors were offered four options: 1) Has made it worse, 2) No change, 3) Has improved somewhat, and 4) Has improved a lot. Out of 139 respondents who answered this question, not a single visitor stated that the WOTH has made their life worse, and fewer than 17% stated that they had no change. Over 44% stated that the WOTH had improved their QoL somewhat, and over 38% stated that the WOTH had improved their QoL a lot. A total of **82% of repeat visitors reported improved QoL due to the existence of the WOTH.**

When asked about the impact that the WOTH has had on QoL for residents of the City of Poughkeepsie and the Hamlet of Highland, the results were even more positive. Over 31% of respondents stated that they thought the municipalities' QoL had improved somewhat, but a further 65% believed that local residents QoL had improved a lot. Only 3% believed that it had had no change, and one single respondent stated that they believe it had a negative impact on the community. When asked for a comment, that single respondent – a woman from the Saugerties area who was a very frequent user of the Walkway – believed that the park had created more traffic in the area. A total of **96% of repeat visitors believe the existence of the WOTH has improved the area's QoL**. It is likely that for repeat visitors, it is the “experience” of being on the Walkway (the view, the fresh air, the relaxing, peaceful environment) which is something they consider to be fulfilling and enjoyable; hence they consider the bridge to be increasing their Quality of Life.

All survey respondents, first-time and repeat visitors alike, were asked to identify the top three words or feelings that they associate with the Walkway Over the Hudson. The number one most mentioned word was “beautiful”, with over 31% of respondents using it to describe the park. Other commonly used words were “scenic”, “view”, “fun”, and “peaceful”. Overall the comments were incredibly positive and expressed that local residents had a sense of pride that this park was located in their community.

beauty great view nice calming exercise friendly fun
 great scenic happy beautiful clean
 view pretty peaceful invigorating relaxing refreshing
 fresh air awesome

A visual representation of the answers based on response rate.

Improving the Park

When asked what might improve their visit to the Walkway, the majority of respondents stated “nothing”, implying that they enjoy the park exactly the way that it is. The most common suggestions for improvements included adding bathrooms, more benches, better parking, water fountains, more food vendors, and more trash receptacles. Other notable suggestions were including more activities for children on the bridge, providing transportation for seniors who may have difficulty walking back after making it out to the center of the bridge, and better ways to control “aggressive” bike riders and dog feces on the bridge.

Marist Student Field Work

Methodology

During the spring 2018 semester at Marist College, Pattern CEO Jonathan Drapkin and Junior Research Planner Evan Menist taught a course entitled ECON 383 “How Anchor Projects Impact the Quality of Life in Urban Areas – A case study of the Walkway Over the Hudson and the City of Poughkeepsie.” Sixteen Marist College students ranging from sophomores to seniors in majors spanning economics, business, and finance stepped out of their comfort zones of financial and economic analysis to study the impact of the WOTH on the QoL in the surrounding community, specifically the City of Poughkeepsie and its residents. The syllabus for the course (Appendix C) described the course as follows:

“Urban areas such as cities can speed their revitalization with the assistance of what are commonly known as ‘anchor’ projects. Typically these can be an institution of higher learning, a hospital, a sports stadium/complex or even an aquarium. Their goal is to stabilize and enhance the quality of life of the community where they are located by direct investment and provide indirect benefits through ancillary investments and encouraging complementary growth. But there are also non-traditional anchors. In the city of Poughkeepsie, the Walkway Over The Hudson is such an attraction. Several hundred thousand visitors come to enjoy this park in a variety of ways. This course will examine how to measure the impact of anchor projects and use the Walkway as a case study. We will explore traditional measures such as financial analysis, as well as more difficult to quantify measures, e.g. Quality of Life.”

There were two major components of the course which are particularly relevant to this WOTH QoL study. The first is that the sixteen students were divided into 4 separate groups to complete field research and synthesize their findings into reports (Appendix D). The field research consisted of the sixteen students collaborating to devise two surveys, one for residents (Appendix E) and one for business owners (Appendix F) that could be administered in the City of Poughkeepsie during two separate surveying periods. The surveys designed by the students were reviewed by Pattern staff prior to being administered.

In Week 11 of the semester (Wednesday, April 4th) the four groups of four students each partnered up with a staff member from Pattern and spent two hours canvassing specified neighborhoods in the City of Poughkeepsie spanning wards 1, 2, 3, and 4. In week 12 (Wednesday, April 11th), students reconvened in class and discussed the successes and difficulties they had with the fieldwork and implemented changes to their surveying process. In Week 13 (Wednesday, April 18th) student groups returned to the field and spent another two hours canvassing different neighborhoods in the City of Poughkeepsie, spanning wards 5, 6, 7, and 8.³³

³³ The effort to survey in each of the City’s eight wards was designed to reach a cross section of residents, but not to compare the impression between wards. Any effort to do so would have been beyond the capacity of this project to capture in a statistically significant way.

Resident Survey Results

Respondent Demographics

Results from the Marist Student Field Work revealed that over 71% of the 281 respondents were local City of Poughkeepsie residents and that those residents had lived in the City of Poughkeepsie for an average of 16 years. Respondents' time living in the City of Poughkeepsie ranged from new transplants of less than one year to octogenarians that had spent their entire lives as residents of the City of Poughkeepsie. Adjusting for outliers, the median time spent as a city resident was 12.5 years.

As part of the survey respondents were asked to disclose their housing style. A combined 51% live in an apartment – either in a complex or a multi-family residence home. Almost 8% of respondents rent a room but not a whole apartment, and for single family residences the response was 38%. Approximately 2.5% of respondents reportedly lived in a half-way house or were homeless.

Visiting the Walkway

A combined 41% of residents stated that they visit the WOTH “once a year” or “once in a while”. A combined 32% of residents reported to surveyors that they patronize the WOTH “often” or “all the time/every day”. After almost a decade of operation, over 15% of City residents reported that they had never visited the WOTH, while 11% had only been there once or twice.

Over 82% of city residents reported that they lived within 10 minutes³⁴ of the Walkway Over the Hudson, yet only about 51% of residents stated they would walk to the WOTH with over 43% stating that they would drive to get there. Less than 4% of residents would ride a bike and less than 2% would ride the bus, while no residents reported taking a taxi or ride-sharing service to access the WOTH.

When asked how likely they were to visit the WOTH over other parks in Poughkeepsie, over 60% of residents stated that they were either “likely” or “very likely” to choose the WOTH over other City of Poughkeepsie parks.³⁵ Just fewer than 24% are “unlikely” or “very unlikely” to choose the WOTH over other City of Poughkeepsie parks, while the balance of 15% stating there was no preference.

Impact on Quality of Life

When it came to the question of perceived change to QoL, over 51% of the City of Poughkeepsie residents surveyed stated that the WOTH has “made my life better”, and over 5% stated that the WOTH has “made my life much better.” Fewer than 2% of respondents stated that the presence of the WOTH has negatively impacted their lives. When pressed for an explanation, some of the most common responses were that the WOTH has increased their ability to exercise – with one city resident stating they “lost 150 lbs” due to

³⁴ “10 Minutes” was self-reported by respondents, and may include various modes of transportation such as walking, driving, or taking public transportation.

³⁵ Additional information: When residents were asked if they thought Walkway Over the Hudson visitors were mostly local residents or mostly tourists, 49% stated that they thought it was a 50-50 split or that they were not sure. Of the remaining 51%, there was an even split, with approximately 25% believing the majority of visitors were local residents, and approximately 25% believing that the majority of visitors were tourists.

the existence of the Walkway. Other notable common responses were that the WOTH cured people's "fear of heights", "added perspective", "made the area better", gave them "something to do / walk to", helped them "spend more time with [their] family", and gave them "access to the other side of the bridge/mountain."

When residents were asked what would make them want to use the WOTH more (an open-ended question), respondents who were able to offer suggestions overwhelmingly looked for the addition of food vendors on both sides of the WOTH. Other common suggestions included more WOTH events targeted towards locals specifically, better parking (especially because almost half of local residents drive to the Walkway), and more benches. Multiple respondents also mentioned having a second elevator, or having the current one open more often. The number one overall response was simply "nothing." This shows that many residents either believe that the Walkway is great the way that it is, or there is nothing that could be done to improve the Walkway that would make them use it more.

Perception of the City of Poughkeepsie

Residents were asked what they like the most about the City of Poughkeepsie (an open-ended question), and the number one answer was the people who live there. The second most popular response, however, was "nothing" or "nothing at all." The third response overall was the Walkway Over the Hudson. This answer however may have been affected by bias, due to previous walkway questions bringing it to the forefront of their mind, and respondents wanting to "please" the interviewer. Other popular answers were "history", "diversity", "close proximity to businesses/restaurants", and "everything". Even though "nothing" or "nothing at all" was the second most common response, it was still only 14 respondents, accounting for approximately 7% of the survey sample.

Resident Stories – Positive Impact of the Walkway on Resident's Lives

One city resident told an incredible story of visiting the Walkway for a very specific purpose – with the intent to jump off the bridge and end their own life. When this 66 year old woman, a City of Poughkeepsie resident for 18 years, took the bus from her neighborhood to Washington Street and got up onto the Walkway, she stopped and took in the scenic tranquility of the surroundings. Just being on the bridge made her "feel close to God" and convinced her to see the beauty in life and chose not to jump.

Other residents had this to say about the Walkway Over the Hudson:

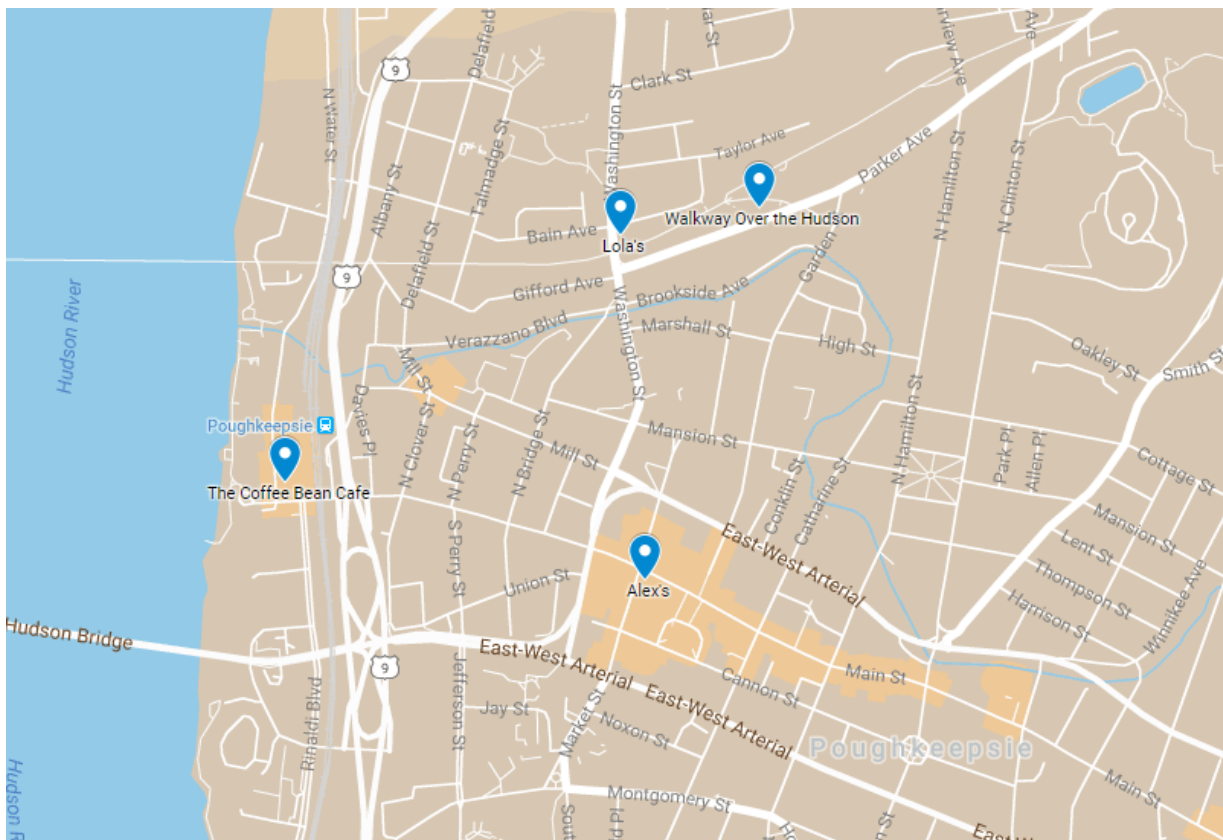
- "I take my son up there everyday...I think it's really turning this place around."
- "I think the Walkway is doing great things for this community."
- "My buddy was severely overweight and then the Walkway opened up ... he ran on it every day he could ... he really turned his life around ... it can change lives."

Business Survey Results

Marist Student researchers were able to administer surveys to 29 business owners or managers in the City of Poughkeepsie, from across all 8 wards. Responses were not stratified by business category or City Ward. The survey consisted of 10 questions that were mainly open-ended.

The majority of businesses (17 of 29, or 59%) stated that they have seen no change at all in their revenue since the opening of the Walkway. However, 12 or 41% stated that the WOTH's opening has "somewhat increased" or "greatly increased" revenue for their business. No businesses claimed to have had decreased revenue since the opening of the Walkway Over the Hudson.

The effect of the Walkway on local businesses varies due to several factors, the most prevalent being geographic location to the Walkway. Businesses that have experienced "greatly" increased revenue are businesses located close to the WOTH and those that tend to serve Walkway visitors directly, such as the Coffee Bean (located at the Metro-North Train Station), Lola's Café (located directly under the WOTH on Washington Street), and Alex's Restaurant (a popular diner located on the corner of Market and Main street). It is also important to note that all three establishments have 4.5 stars or higher on their Google reviews, which could explain attraction from tourists who do not know the area and rely on technology to find somewhere to stop for coffee or lunch. Businesses further from the Walkway's entrances, or offering products/services that do not directly cater to the needs of Walkway visitors. They did not report notable revenue growth because of the Walkway, and infrequently utilize the Walkway's many promotional opportunities.

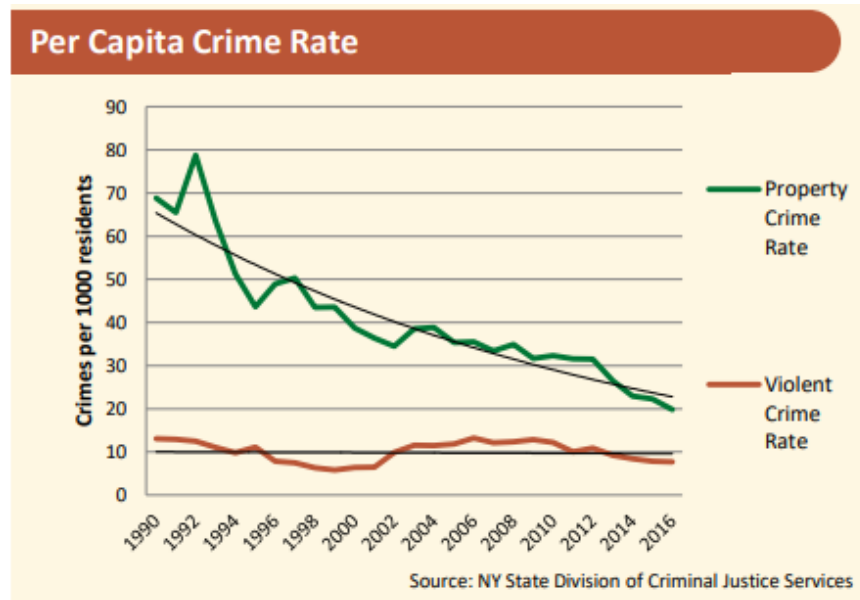


When business owners and managers were asked their general perception about the future of the neighborhood where their business is located, 17 of 29 (59%) said they had a positive outlook. Six of 29 (21%) businesses stated the neighborhood will most likely stay the same, while another 6 (21%) believe

that the neighborhood will get worse and generally had a negative outlook on the City of Poughkeepsie in general.

Business Stories

One business owner specifically mentioned Dutchess County's acquisition of the Taylor Manufacturing plant for construction of a new wing of the Dutchess County Jail, and how they believe this to be a huge negative for the neighborhood that is counterproductive to the benefits that the WOTH has brought.



Going back to the perception of the City of Poughkeepsie, a couple of business owners who had a generally negative outlook of the City made statements about the crime rate staying the same as it ever was and nothing changing. According to Pattern's Urban Action Agenda Community Profile of the City of Poughkeepsie, the property crime rate has dropped over 70% since 1990³⁶.

Marist Student Presentations

Marist Students were also tasked with synthesizing their findings from the surveys into group reports and presentations, which were delivered during week 15 (Wednesday, May 2) of the semester. The four student research teams presented their findings from the two weeks of fieldwork as well as other research they had completed outside of class. In attendance for the presentations were local stakeholders including the WOTH organization's Executive Director Elizabeth Waldstein-Hart and Director of Program & Visitor Services Theresa Sanchez, as well as several members of the WOTH organization board of directors.

Thinking Outside of the Box

As part of these presentations, the Marist Student research groups were asked to come up with one "out-of-the-box" idea that could help grow the impact of the WOTH, regardless of feasibility. The groups came up with the following suggestions:

³⁶ <http://www.pattern-for-progress.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/Poughkeepsie.pdf>

- Partner with the City of Poughkeepsie School District to make the Walkway the site of after-school programs, including a “focus on fitness” competition where students are motivated to get fit with prizes and a leader board.
- Host “Movie on the Hudson” events, where the world’s largest projection screen would hang from the bottom of the Walkway and could be seen from Waryas Park, Highland Landing, Upper Landing Park, and from boats on the river.
- Contract a vendor to create “PKX” or “Poughkeepsie Extreme” – a bungee jumping attraction from the center of the WOTH.
- Host an annual event where the world’s longest “slip and slide” is stretched across the WOTH – the current record is 611.7 meters, which at over 2,000m long the Walkway could easily break.

Questions of feasibility aside, several of these ideas could be game-changing attractions for the Walkway Over the Hudson and the greater community.

Marist Student Papers

Another portion of the Marist Economics class (as can be seen in the syllabus, Appendix C, and the assignment itself, Appendix G) was for each student to conduct their own independent research separate and apart from the class-based field work.³⁷ In these reports, students were tasked with authoring an 8-page research paper focusing on the impacts that the WOTH has had on the quality of life in the City of Poughkeepsie and the greater community. Students were tasked with answering the following questions:

- What is an anchor? What is an amenity? What is the difference and where on the spectrum does the Walkway fall?
- Where does the Walkway fit into the larger fabric of the revitalization of the City of Poughkeepsie?
- What lessons were learned from the field work that you completed, and how can these lessons be leveraged to improve the quality of life in the City of Poughkeepsie?
- What is your assigned organization? What do they do? How do they do it?
- How has this organization leveraged the Walkway for an event? How did the event go? Was it well-attended? Did it help the organization to achieve their goals? Would they do it again?
- Other than the events, has the Walkway's existence made it easier or harder for this organization to achieve their mission? How much has it had an impact?

Other Local Organizations/Non-Profits

Community anchors are generally expected to have a direct impact on the QoL of their community by “applying their long-term, place-based economic power, in combination with their human and intellectual

³⁷ Selected portions of student research papers contributed to the synthesis of this report. The full student reports can be found as Appendix D.

resources, to better the long-term welfare of the communities in which they are anchored.”³⁸ However, anchors can impact a community in diffuse and indirect ways without directly leveraging their purchasing power or human capital. The WOTH often serves as a venue for other local non-profit organizations to host fundraising and awareness events. The concept is that each of these local non-profits plays their own role in improving quality of life for the community, and it is possible that the Walkway, as an anchor, has made it easier for these organizations to achieve their goals and mission by leveraging the Walkway.

In 2017, the WOTH was host to at least 21 confirmed fundraising and awareness walking-based events. The Marist Student researchers were tasked with reaching out directly to these organizations to determine what type of impact having the WOTH in the community has had on their ability to fundraise and raise awareness for their various efforts. Of the 21 events, 20 were contacted and 14 responded. Of the 14 responses, 8 organizations disclosed how much money they were able to raise at their events, 3 declined to disclose the amounts, and 3 organizations held events that were celebrations or awareness events that were not designed to raise any funds.

Of the 8 organizations that disclosed their fundraising levels, 7 of the organizations each raised an average of over \$57,000 dollars, and each organization said that the amount they were raising each year was increasing and that they intend to continue working with the WOTH for future annual events. The eighth organization stated that they had been raising fewer dollars each year since holding their first event at the WOTH, and this past year the organization was only able to raise a little over \$2,000 when their target was \$10,000. This outlier organization attributed the decline in fundraising to the “novelty” of the WOTH beginning to wear off. However, based on the responses from other organizations’ fundraising efforts, it must not be related to the bridge itself, but to the fundraising practices or some other compounding factor within that specific organization.

Of the organizations that responded to the Marist Student researchers, there was a wide disparity between turnouts for each event, with some only bringing out about 100-150 people and others attracting 500 to over 2000 participants. Various organizations’ spokespersons stated that weather always plays a factor in actual turnout for the event, but that it often does not affect the amount they are able to fundraise as those dollars are typically secured prior to the actual event itself in the form of pledges and/or pre-registrations.

While not part of the student research, it is also worth noting that several marches or “cause”-related events have used the site of the Walkway for their event. This speaks to a location that can give rise to important events affecting the lives of people in the region. Events such as these include the Woman’s Rights Walk and the Gun Sense Walk that were organized by private individuals in 2017.³⁹

³⁸ <https://community-wealth.org/sites/clone.community-wealth.org/files/downloads/AnchorDashboardCompositeFinal.pdf>

³⁹ <http://walkway.org/calendar>

Pattern Fellows Research

The Pattern Fellows program is an innovative leadership program designed to expand the horizons of those already active in their communities and disciplines. Prominent guest speakers from government, business, education, and the non-profit sector provide insights and share their experiences with program participants, who then spend several months working on a research project to be presented at a graduation luncheon each June. Since the program's creation, over 250 fellows have graduated, including leaders from the fields of finance, government, economic development, land conservation, law, human services, healthcare, academia and more.

Methodology

The 2017-2018 Pattern Fellows cohort was tasked with studying three anchor institutions and the impact on QoL in their respective communities. The sixteen Pattern Fellows were divided into three groups to look at one anchor institution each. One of the three anchors that were studied was the WOTH.

During the course of the Pattern Fellows program, the WOTH organization's Executive Director Elizabeth Waldstein-Hart and Director of Program & Visitor Services Theresa Sanchez participated as guest speakers to provide background information on the Walkway. During their presentation, they provided detailed information regarding the history of the Poughkeepsie-Highland Railroad Bridge, the fire that damaged it, and its eventual opening as the Walkway Over the Hudson. They also discussed prior research that had been conducted regarding the economic impact of the WOTH and the number of visitors brought to the region each year due to the existence of the WOTH.

The Pattern Fellows team assigned to the WOTH conducted their own primary research by designing and administering a survey of local residents in the Hamlet of Highland as well as a separate survey for business owners in the Hamlet of Highland.

The WOTH organization also provided the Pattern research team as well as the Pattern Fellows and Marist Students with access to previous research commissioned by the WOTH organization for use in their research.⁴⁰

Resident Survey Results

The Pattern Fellows research team interviewed twenty-one individuals. The vast majority were local residents of either Dutchess or Ulster counties. A majority of respondents were interviewed on the Walkway. Most drove, walked, or rode a bicycle to the Walkway. It was an even split of how often the respondents visited the Walkway - for a few it was the first time, a few come monthly, a few three-four times per week.

Summary of key findings from the majority of respondents:

- People feel safe on the WOTH

⁴⁰ Selected portions of the Pattern Fellows research papers contributed to the synthesis of this report.

- People are comfortable going alone or in a group
- People come for recreational, social, and wellness activities as well as for special occasions like birthdays, including milestones such as a sweet sixteen party, engagements, and other celebratory life events
- People love bringing visitors there
- It is a great place for families to gather and is pet-friendly

Direct respondent feedback about the WOTH:

- Attracts local residents as well as people from out of town
- Enhances local businesses by bringing in patrons
- Free, and accessible to people of many abilities
- Utilized for public events and awareness raising events with such subjects as: Mental Health, Domestic Violence, Suicide Awareness, etc.
- Allows access to/from two counties without having to drive a vehicle to both. This further enhances accessibility to those who do not own vehicles.

Resident Stories – Positive Impact of the Walkway on Resident’s Lives

Throughout the team’s visit to the Walkway and the Hamlet of Highland, a number of great personal stories about the Walkway were revealed. The WOTH’s impact on the lives of local residents and the successes felt by businesses were discussed. The Pattern Fellows research team found that most people were outwardly passionate about the community they live and work in and they were often eager to provide suggestions for possible improvements that can be made. These improvements were often small, yet would yield a great impact. It is interesting to note the ability of the Fellows team to capture a greater sense of attachment to the WOTH from Highland than the Marist student interviews with residents from Poughkeepsie.

Many individuals interviewed spoke of considering the Walkway for special events or to celebrate special occasions; such as a wedding proposal, a birthday, or a graduation. Celebrating these events by spending time on the Walkway with friends and family made the event even more special. One particular comment was "Such a beautiful attraction only enhances anyone’s visit to Highland. It put Highland on the map. Before the Walkway, Highland was just a sleepy town that no one visited."

A particular theme that stood out on the Poughkeepsie side of the bridge was the need to provide direction to/from the Walkway and the surrounding attractions. One team member was approached by four individuals that overheard an interview with a business located at the train station. These four arrived from NYC with the intent to go to the Walkway. Each of them originated from different parts of the country and found themselves connected socially within the past year after each moving to NYC. Their ages ranged from 24 to 38. They had long spoken of visiting the Walkway, and they made the spur of the

moment decision to visit due to the break in the cold weather that day. Upon arrival to Poughkeepsie, they discovered they had no real idea how to get to the Walkway and needed to ask questions. After wandering aimlessly for several minutes to try to find signage, they were happy to overhear a team member discussing the impact of the Walkway and found the student to be a source of information.

Business Survey Results

Sixteen businesses (focusing on retail and services, based on the “Walkway Corridor” catchment area analysis) were surveyed surrounding the Walkway in both Highland (Ulster County) and Poughkeepsie (Dutchess County). The Pattern Fellows team spoke with the owner or manager, or long-term employee if management was unavailable in each establishment. Of the businesses interviewed, eight were open prior to the Walkway (four in Poughkeepsie and four in Highland), five were opened post 2009 (two in Poughkeepsie and three in Highland) and one in Poughkeepsie was opened around the same time as the Walkway. Some overall findings from the surveys are as follows:

Overall impact the Walkway has had on businesses:

- The number of visitors has increased including bikers, foot traffic and the number of tourists from NYC.
- An increase in foot traffic is directly correlated with good weather and events taking place on the Walkway. One establishment suggested that Walkway customers make up approximately 1/8-1/16 of their business, on nice weather days.

For businesses, the most important characteristics of the WOTH in order of importance are:

1. No Cost
2. Variety of Events
3. Promotion of Businesses and Municipalities

The response from Businesses was favorable: of all businesses surveyed, all but one responded that there has been a positive impact on the QoL for local residents. The positive impacts include exercise, convenience, a sense of connection for the community, more knowledge of the area, traffic from tourists, makes the area livelier and adds to the neighborhood, different scenery than walking in the neighborhood or going to the gym, and it helps the local businesses. One owner has seen many artists moving in and credits the rise in popularity of the City of Poughkeepsie with the Walkway and the renovated train station.

Social Media Survey

Methodology

Beginning in the summer of 2017, Pattern created a comprehensive survey (Appendix H) to be administered to followers of the WOTH on various social media platforms as well as via a direct email campaign. The survey consisted of 19 questions that asked for respondents to provide information about demographics, how often they visit the WOTH, how they travel to the WOTH, what types of activities they engage in on the Walkway, spending habits when visiting the park, their overall impression of the park, and whether or not they feel that the WOTH has had any impact on their personal QoL or on the overall QoL for their local community. The survey was created using the SurveyMonkey tool, and a link to the survey was provided to the WOTH staff to approve the questions prior to administering the survey.

During the spring of 2018, the WOTH organization administered the survey by sharing a link to it on their various social media accounts. The Pattern research team wrote copy/text and provided it to the WOTH organization to use as a call to action in their social media posts. 44 survey responses were collected via the Walkway organization's social media accounts.

A separate collector link for the same survey was provided to the WOTH organization for distribution in their direct email marketing campaign. This survey went out to 821 email addresses and resulted in 149 responses, which is a response rate of just over 18%.⁴¹ For the purposes of this study the results from both collector links were combined for analysis, totaling 193 respondents.

Social Media Survey Results

Respondent Demographics

The demographics of the social media survey respondents were similar to those found in the Walkway Ambassador survey. Over 63% of respondents were female, and over 48% were between the ages of 46-65, while 37% were over 65 and 13% were between 21-45. None of the respondents were under the age of 21. Just over 88% of respondents identified as White/Caucasian, while approximately 3% identified as Hispanic/Latino, 2% as Black/African-American, 2% as multiple races/ethnicities, and 1% as Asian. Fewer than 6% preferred not to answer.

Visiting the Walkway

The vast majority of social media survey respondents were frequent users of the Walkway, with 54% stating they had visited between 10-100 times, and a further 33% reporting they had visited more than

⁴¹ **Potential for duplication of responses**

It is plausible that there is a high degree of overlap between people who follow the WOTH's Facebook page and are also on the WOTH organization's direct email list. This also means that it is entirely possible that some respondents answered the survey more than one time, which could skew results. There is no way to control for this, however with the very low number of Facebook responses, the odds of any response duplication being significant enough to skew the results are very low. Therefore as part of the MRI we believe there is value to the responses by adding a group of frequent users.

100 times. The balance (13%) had visited between 1-10 times, and none of the respondents reported having never been to the Walkway.

Of this population, Walkway visitation was most commonly conducted on weekends (78%) and weekdays (72%), however holiday visitation was considerably lower (31%). When asked for the reasons that they like to use the Walkway, the greatest majority of respondents stated that it was for fitness/exercise (86%) and to enjoy the view (89%). One single respondent said that they were a tourist, and over 77% stated they first learned about the Walkway by living nearby, which indicates that the vast majority of respondents in the social media survey were local, frequent users of the Walkway. This was further confirmed by Pattern's analysis of self-reported ZIP codes that were highly concentrated in the Walkway Corridor (30-minute drive time radius) surrounding the WOTH.

This core group of users exhibits very similar transportation habits as previous surveys found, with over 82% of users travelling to the WOTH by car and parking in the Parker Ave parking lots (43%) or the Highland Parking Lots (26%), or taking the Washington Street stairs (16%). Social media survey respondents also biked (9%) and walked/jogged (6%) to the park, accessing the Walkway via the Dutchess County Rail Trail (9%) and the Ulster County Rail Trail (5%). Less than 2% took the elevator from Upper Landing Park.

Impact on Quality of Life

When asked "How has the Walkway affected your Quality of Life?" the results mirrored those of the Walkway Ambassador survey. Nearly **88% reported a positive impact on their QoL**, with 40% saying it improved their life "somewhat" and 48% stating that the WOTH had improved their QoL "a lot." Approximately 12% stated they saw no change, and a single respondent claimed that the Walkway had made their life worse. This respondent, a 21-35 year old woman from Highland who lives under the Walkway, stated that the "parking in highland makes it very difficult for residents to get home. People walking in the middle of the road, cars parked on both sides where there is [sic] no parking signs. Trash being thrown off the Walkway ends up in the river or on my road." However, comments from the vast majority of respondents included statements such as:

- "It's improved my health, attitude, and it is the greatest asset to our area"
- "I simply love going to the Walkway. The view is amazing and my dogs and I enjoy meeting and greeting the other visitors. It is an amazing resource - I always feel revitalized after my walk."
- "We love the Walkway! Even when I'm not on it, it makes me happy to know that it's there and I *could* be on it. It feels like a mini vacation, right in town."

When social media survey respondents were asked what they thought the impact has been on QoL for residents of the City of Poughkeepsie and the Hamlet of Highland, the results were even more positive. Nearly 96% believed the WOTH had a positive impact on QoL for local residents, with 37% saying it improved area QoL "somewhat" and 59% stating that the WOTH had improved area QoL "a lot." Less than 4% thought there was "no change" to area QoL, and again the same one respondent stated they believed the WOTH made life for the locals worse due to increased traffic. Comments from the vast

majority of respondents seemed to acknowledge both the great benefits of the Walkway but also the stresses that it may be putting on the community. Feedback included statements such as:

- “Local businesses have developed, more tourism dollars have come to the area, the neighborhoods, especially in Poughkeepsie have improved in value and appearance, etc. The only negative impacts might be the lack of privacy for those immediately adjacent, and parking issues during large events.”
- “Brings people to Poughkeepsie who might not otherwise visit. Good for businesses. Good for tourism. Good for fitness.”

Respondent comments included mention of a lack of local residents using the park, with comments such as “I don't think enough people in the localities know/appreciate/benefit from it” or “the folks who use it love it, but there are so many people who don't know about it. Successful PR takes a long, long time.” The prevalence of comments such as these, in conjunction with the overwhelmingly positive response to the effect on area QoL, indicates that those who have discovered the Walkway can often become frequent users and proponents of the park, and that this subset of the population believes that this great local amenity is under-utilized by the majority of the local population, and that more can and should be done to engage them.

Walkway Stakeholder Interviews

The final portion of primary research completed for this report was a stakeholder survey (Appendix I) administered by the Pattern research team to community leaders identified as having a vested interest in the outcomes of the Walkway Over the Hudson in the local community.

Methodology

The survey consisted of 5 open ended questions regarding opinions of the Walkway's impact on the community and how the WOTH can be better leveraged to improve QoL for the community. Pattern determined the stakeholders to be contacted based on internal knowledge and recommendations. The survey questions were as follows:

- *In your opinion, has the Walkway Over the Hudson had an impact on the quality of life for local residents?*
- *Do you believe there has been a different impact for City of Poughkeepsie and Hamlet of Highland residents vs. the surrounding communities?*
- *Can you provide any specific examples for how the existence of the Walkway Over the Hudson has affected the quality of life in the community?*
- *What are your suggestions for how the Walkway Over the Hudson could be leveraged to have a greater positive impact on the quality of life in the surrounding community?*
- *Do you believe that the existence of the Walkway Over the Hudson has altered the trajectory of the City of Poughkeepsie, the Hamlet of Highland, or the surrounding community?*

Surveys were sent via email to stakeholders who completed them on their own time and returned them to Pattern staff. Some stakeholders have requested to remain anonymous with their statements.

Stakeholder Survey Results

All stakeholder responses were incredibly positive, and echoed similar responses from other portions of this study. The overall takeaways from the survey were as follows:

- Stakeholders have heard from specific business owners in the area that their sales are up, their vacancies are down, and they believe it is directly attributable to the popularity of the WOTH.
- The Walkway has helped to encourage more civic participation and community engagement, which contribute to the overall quality of life in the community.
- There are residents of Poughkeepsie and Highland using the Walkway to commute to work, which is increasing economic viability for both communities.
- The Walkway is a wonderful amenity for the area, and builds upon other amenities such as the waterfront and train station.

Some stakeholders were at odds on specific points, however, as there was no consensus on whether or not the Walkway Over the Hudson has altered the trajectory of the City of Poughkeepsie and the Hamlet of Highland. One stakeholder posited that the only thing that can change the trajectory of the City of Poughkeepsie is its own government, not projects like this. Others believe it has marked the dawn of a

new era for the community and contributed to many of the positive forces of change that are occurring.

“I think the WOTH has been a highly successful disruptive innovation that has definitely altered the trajectory of the City of Poughkeepsie, the Hamlet of Highland and surrounding community.” – Dr. Pamela Edington

Research Findings

When we look back at the “MRI” slices of our study, one set of data continually stands out – what people’s perception has been about the improvement of their own QoL, and the QoL of others in the area. Consider these responses to QoL questions across all of the surveys of this study:

- Walkway Visitor Survey: **96%** said area QoL had **improved** “somewhat” or “greatly”
- Marist Resident Survey: **57%** said the WOTH made their QoL **better** or **much better**
- Marist Business Survey: **59%** of Businesses have a **positive** outlook for Poughkeepsie
- Fellows Business Survey: **94%** said the WOTH had a **positive** impact on area QoL
- Social Media Survey: **88%** said the WOTH **improved** their QoL “somewhat” or “a lot”
- Social Media Survey: **96%** said area QoL had **improved** “somewhat” or “a lot”

Based upon our research, Pattern can conclude that the Walkway Over the Hudson has improved the Quality of Life for the residents of the City of Poughkeepsie and the Hamlet of Highland by improving their mental and physical health, improving the physical appearance of the area, highlighting the rich history of the Hudson Valley, enhancing community character, promoting economic growth (while not being a major direct contributor), and by acting as both an amenity and a public space. Are there more ways that the WOTH could enhance the QoL for the City of Poughkeepsie and Hamlet of Highland? Of course – but after its first (almost) decade, it has unquestioningly begun to do so.

The Walkway Over the Hudson State Historic Park is a net positive for the City of Poughkeepsie, the Hamlet of Highland, and the Mid-Hudson Valley region. Activists worked tirelessly through a true grassroots effort to take what was a glaring example of urban decay in a rust belt city, and turn it into a shining case study of adaptive reuse. There is arguably no project in the Hudson Valley region more symbolic of the revitalization of orphaned industrial centers than the Walkway Over the Hudson.

Early estimates for demolishing the old bridge were even more expensive than the final costs for turning it into a state park, and so in the long run it has actually saved taxpayers money by costing less to begin with and by attracting tax revenue via tourism which offset its operating costs. All this before even mentioning the psychological cost to the local residents if the bridge were to be torn down, due to a loss of community character – something that the City of Poughkeepsie has already had to endure after the period of “Urban Renewal” in the 1960’s and 1970’s flattened historic neighborhoods to make way for highways that physically divide the city. By saving the Poughkeepsie-Highland Railroad Bridge and turning it into the Walkway Over the Hudson, it has created an obvious sense of pride in local residents which can be observed by asking virtually anyone on the street what they think about the Walkway Over the Hudson.

It remains obvious in the stories of those who doubted the project and have since changed their tune. It is even obvious in the numerous ways that local businesses use the likeness of the Walkway in their logos, and how local artists capture it on film and in paintings and murals. All communities need a sense of place, and landmarks and structures that can anchor that place in the landscape. The Walkway Over the Hudson may not necessarily be a major economic engine for the region, but it is a symbol of community pride and a pin on a map – a true anchor of place for those that live nearby.

While many people may not think that Poughkeepsie has had the same resurgence of its peer river cities, Beacon or Kingston, in reality it has made extensive progress. While it is difficult to quantify the Walkway's entire immediate and direct economic impact, the existence of this amenity has played a role in other organizations and businesses developing in the downtown City of Poughkeepsie as well as the Hamlet of Highland. It is difficult to say if the WOTH, for example, had any impact on the decision of Vassar Brothers Medical Center to invest \$545 million in a new patient pavilion, or for developers all throughout the City of Poughkeepsie to move forward with approximately 800 new rental units over the next few years, but what can be said without hesitation is that the WOTH is one huge piece of the puzzle for developers when deciding where to invest their capital dollars.

Conclusion

The beauty and accessibility of the WOTH has had widespread positive impacts on the Quality of Life of residents and tourists, as well as beneficial impacts to local businesses and other tourist attractions. The introduction of public parks in urban areas has been correlated with a decrease in mental and physical health issues, which are widespread in impoverished areas, through an increase in social interaction and an increase in exposure to nature, showing that "a community's quality of life is directly tied to both the quantity and quality of parks and green spaces."⁴² The Walkway, although not technically "green" in-and-of itself, is a prime example of a world-class urban park – providing unrivaled access to sweeping views of the Hudson River and surrounding mountains. The Walkway also acts as a community pillar, allowing numerous non-profit organizations to hold events there, to support everything from women's rights to autism awareness to working to end gun violence. The impacts of the WOTH range from restoring a sense of pride in the community, providing health and fitness benefits, serving as a place to celebrate a milestone or show solidarity for a cause, and generally being an accessible place to enjoy the beauty and tranquility of the Hudson River.

⁴² Charles Oliver and John Stephen, "State of Play: Parks, Green Spaces Improve Quality of Life," *Valdosta Daily Times*, (Valdosta, Georgia), Mar. 26, 2017, http://www.valdostadailytimes.com/news/local_news/state-of-play-parks-green-spaces-improve-quality-of-life/article_66141091-1ead-551c-b364-d2959285ef9a.html