

## LIVING IN AMENIA, N.Y.



PHOTOGRAPHS BY LAUREN LANCASTER FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

# Near the City, but Remote Enough

A quiet area with a growing creative scene, just a two-hour ride from Grand Central.

By HEATHER SENISON

The village of Amenia, N.Y., tucked along the Connecticut border in eastern Dutchess County, is both close and just remote enough for New Yorkers. Roughly a third of new buyers are Brooklynites moving to Amenia full time thanks to the rise in working from home, said Diana Bisselle, a real estate agent with William Pitt Sotheby's International Realty.

Amenia is convenient to the greater Hudson Valley, to the west; Litchfield, Conn., to the east; and the Berkshires in Massachusetts, to the northeast.

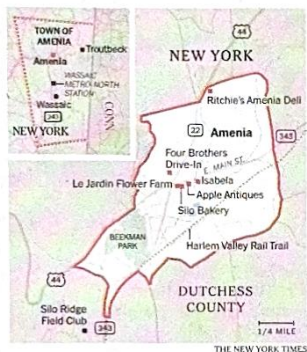
It's minutes from the Wassaic train station, the last stop on Metro-North's Harlem Line and a two-hour ride from Grand Central Terminal.

"People don't have to drive out," Ms. Bisselle said. "Their friends don't have to drive out. You can just hop on the train." That has long made the area a popular choice for weekenders and second-home buyers, a trend that amplified during the pandemic-era exodus to the Hudson Valley.

Today, the village and the surrounding area are increasingly drawing attention, with new restaurants and a growing artistic community. But change is proceeding at a slower pace and on a smaller scale than in Hudson Valley hipster havens like Beacon and Hudson.



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While "Amenia" is how locals refer to the few streets that make up the 1.25-square-mile village, it's technically one of several hamlets within the Town of Amenia.

The attention on the village is thanks in part to activity in the neighboring hamlet of Wassaic, N.Y., Ms. Bisselle said, which is now home to the Lantern Inn, a pizza place featuring the Michelin-starred chef Johnny Dearth, from Brooklyn's Far and Meatball Shop. A creative scene is growing there, too, driven by the Wassaic Project, a contemporary arts institution hosting exhibits and artist residencies.

But the village of Amenia holds its own, locals say. At its central intersection, Four Brothers anchors the community with a restaurant, a canteen and a popular drive-in movie theater.

"It acts as a hangout spot during the day, like a park almost," said John Stefanopoulos, whose family owns the Four Brothers restaurant chain. Outfitted with string lights, vintage motorcycles, live music and a playground, it serves as an entertainment and communal gathering space.

Amenia's reputation as a bucolic retreat formed centuries ago. About five minutes east of the village is Troutbeck, a 250-acre resort on a 1700s homestead that once welcomed figures like Teddy Roosevelt and W.E.B. Du Bois, according to its website.

Reopened in 2018 after a major renovation, Troutbeck now offers a boutique inn, wellness activities and a members' club. Its farm-to-table restaurant is led by the Hudson Valley native Vincent Gilberti, formerly of the Finch in Brooklyn.

For visitors, Amenia pairs hospitality

**Location** Eastern Dutchess County, about 90 miles north of New York City

**Population** 725 in the village of Amenia; 3,769 in the Town of Amenia (U.S. Census Bureau 2020 estimates)

**Area** 1.25 square miles (village); 44 square miles (town)

**Housing** 65 percent homeownership (town)

**The Vibe** A quiet farming and second-home community that is undergoing a renaissance.

with access to the outdoors, Ms. Bisselle said, through fishing, cycling, and hiking the 26-mile Harlem Valley Rail Trail, which begins at the Wassaic station.

The village faces some growing pains. Its business district remains dotted with empty storefronts, and nightlife is limited.

Local leaders are working to fill the gaps, said Mr. Stefanopoulos, who served on the Amenia town planning board for eight years. The primary business strip along East Main Street recently attracted new tenants, including the Le Jardin flower shop and Silo Bakery.

Isabela, a new bistro led by the Michelin-starred chef José Ramirez, opened nearby, and a classic car shop is on the way, Mr. Stefanopoulos said.

New real estate development in the village is sparse, and at the high end. A new luxury community, the 850-acre Silo Ridge Field Club, offers condos, houses and buildable lots, along with an 18-hole members-only golf course, a competitive equestrian facility, a spa and other amenities. Two-bedroom, two-and-a-half-bath condos start at \$3.15 million, and private homes range from \$5.75 million to \$10.5 million.

But 80 percent of Amenia's housing stock is resale, ranging from multimillion-dollar estates to more modest homes, such as a three-bedroom near the Wassaic station listed for \$439,000.

For new arrivals, the village offers what Mr. Stefanopoulos calls the "Amenia lifestyle." "You're able to be yourself and enjoy the really good things in life," he said, "but you're also a direct ride down to the greatest city in the world."

## Going Out and About

**Restaurants** For breakfast, grab a croissant at Silo Bakery. For lunch, try Ritchie's Amenia Deli for sandwiches and wraps — perhaps the Cowboy, with roast beef, melted mozzarella, bacon and barbecue sauce. For an upscale farm-to-table dinner, head to Isabela or Troutbeck.

**Culture** Four Brothers anchors the town center with a restaurant and a drive-in movie theater. Its canteen, the Grand Shack, serves lobster rolls, hot dogs and boozy beverages. For youngsters there's a sandy playground. In nearby Wassaic, the Wassaic Project hosts artist residencies, exhibits and community events.

**Recreation** A stay or a membership at Troutbeck offers tennis, a pool, wellness programs, food and drink. The 26-mile Harlem Valley Rail Trail starts at the Wassaic train station. The 48-acre Beekman Park has ball courts and green space. For Hudson Valley views, head to the overlook along U.S. Route 44 just west of the village.

**Shopping** Peruse treasures at Apple Antiques. Pick up flowers and vases at the Le Jardin Flower Farm.



Le Jardin, on East Main Street.

## Getting There, Getting Around

The center of town is walkable, but cars are the preferred method of travel in the area.

**Car** Route 44 takes a northeasterly trajectory through Amenia. From the south, Interstate 684 becomes Route 22/Route 343, passes through the center of town and continues east to Connecticut.

**Train** The village is 10 minutes from the Wassaic train station, the last stop on Metro-North's Harlem Line and two hours from Midtown Manhattan.



The Metro-North station in Wassaic.

## Housing

**Homes and Lots for Sale** 29 (Realtor.com)

**Median List Price** \$459,000 (Realtor.com)



A home listed at \$398,000.

## Schools

**Public Schools** Amenia is served by the Webutuck Central School District, which includes elementary, intermediate and high schools.

**Private Schools** Maplebrook School offers coed boarding and day school for Grades 7 through 12 for students with learning disabilities. Nearby boarding schools include Hotchkiss School and Indian Mountain School in Lakeville, Conn.; Salisbury School in Salisbury, Conn.; Millbrook School in Millbrook, N.Y.; and Berkshire School in Sheffield, Mass.

**Higher Education** Dutchess Community College, Bard College, Marist University and Vassar College are all within a 45-minute drive. The State University of New York at New Paltz takes about an hour.



Webutuck Elementary School.