

Prioritization Criteria: A Framework for Choosing Environmental Projects for Rhinebeck’s Future

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As a part of the 2020 Comprehensive Plan review project with the Joint Environmental Committee, a prioritization criteria framework has been developed to score and rank future environmental projects in Rhinebeck.

This framework can serve as a first-level filter for environmental or climate-facing projects that the Town or Village wish to undertake. It is designed to balance the myriad aspects of project planning: short- and long-term costs, reductions in emissions, environmental justice, public participation, and naturally, whether the project fits within the vision set forth by the Town’s Comprehensive Plan.

Projects are ranked based on these criteria and given a score of up to 200 points. For example, a new trails project would score poorly in terms of upfront affordability and maintenance costs; however, it would score very highly in terms of community benefits and sustainability goals.

While this framework will not definitively decide policy and project prioritization, it is a first step which can be applied to climate, environment, and sustainability focused planning in Rhinebeck’s near future.

| Category | Total Possible Points | Moderate/high/highest impact | Explanation |
|--|-----------------------|------------------------------|--|
| Cost | | | |
| Upfront affordability | 10 | Highest | How much capital is required of the Town/Village to instigate and complete this project? |
| Initial policy implementation effort | 6 | High | What are the permitting, zoning, public inquiry, SEQR review, etc. requirements of this project? |
| Grant availability | 5 | Moderate | Can this project be partially funded by grants? With what facility can those grants be acquired? |
| Long-term cost savings for Town/Vil | 6 | High | What costs could this project avert down the road for the Town/Village? |
| Long-term maintenance costs | 5 | High | What regular maintenance costs will be incurred by this project in the future? |
| Precedent/previous work/like-minded municipalities | 4 | Moderate | What is the state of previous work on projects like this one? Have other municipalities pulled this sort of thing off? |
| Availability of technology/support | 5 | Moderate | Does the technology or engineering network exist to implement and maintain this project? |
| Community Benefit | | | |
| Public buy-in | 7 | High | Is the public likely to support this project? |
| Community benefit: Economy and amenities | 10 | Highest | Will this project provide a benefit to the community? Will it benefit local independent businesses and workers, the school system or library, or other community groups? |
| Community benefit: Rhinebeck's character | 6 | Moderate | Does this project further Rhinebeck's mission, enhance its character, and bolster its reputation? |
| Safety and accessibility | 8 | High | Does this project potentially enhance or degrade accessibility for Rhinebeck's differently abled residents? |

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| Justice and equity | 8 | High | Will this project serve to reduce inequality, and will it benefit all members of Rhinebeck's community equally? |
| Benefit to neighboring munis/region | 6 | Moderate | Will this project provide a benefit to Rhinebeck's immediate and global neighbors? |
| Benefits to local economy | 8 | High | Will this project provide jobs, bring money into the local economy, and provide a lasting benefit? |
| Public involvement | 6 | Moderate | Can this project involve the public, integrate public opinion, and involve community members on an ongoing basis? |
| Youth benefit | 10 | Highest | Can this project involve Rhinebeck's youth in project implementation and planning? |
| Public-private partnership | 6 | Moderate | Will this project involve collaboration between Rhinebeck's governments and the private sector? |
| Food systems | 6 | Moderate | Will this project positively or negatively affect Rhinebeck's food and farmers? |
| <i>Sustainability goals</i> | | | |
| CSC points applicability | 6 | High | Could this project be applied to gain Rhinebeck Climate-Smart Community points? |
| Net carbon emissions savings | 10 | Highest | What are the projected emissions reductions of this project? |
| Climate change resiliency | 10 | Highest | Will this project serve to bolster Rhinebeck's climate resilience? |
| Fulfillment of existing goals | 8 | High | Does this project fulfill NYS goals, comprehensive plan goals, CSC goals, or other preexisting goals? |
| Opportunity for leadership | 6 | Moderate | Does this project present an opportunity for Rhinebeck to lead for its neighboring communities? |
| <i>Impacts on natural resources</i> | | | |
| Biodiversity | 8 | High | Does this project impact, positively or negatively, Rhinebeck's native biodiversity? |
| Water systems (wetlands, surface freshwater, drinking water) | 10 | Highest | Does this project impact Rhinebeck's drinking water, surface freshwater, wetlands, vernal pools, or other freshwater features? |
| Air quality | 7 | Moderate | Does this project impact, positively or negatively, the air quality of Rhinebeck and surrounding communities? |
| <i>Intermunicipal cooperation</i> | | | |
| Intermunicipal cost-sharing | 6 | Moderate | Does this project present opportunities for Rhinebeck to cooperate with other communities? |
| Prioritization of implementation | 7 | High | Is this a project that should be implemented immediately, on an ongoing basis, or at a later date? |
| Village and Town cost-sharing/cooperation | 8 | High | Will the Village and Town be able to jointly implement and share the costs of this project? |
| | 200 | | |