

# ◆ WALKWAY IMPROVES **QUALITY OF LIFE** IN THE HUDSON VALLEY



walkway.org  
(845) 454-9649



In the nearly ten years since its opening, the Walkway Over the Hudson has become many things to many people. A place to walk, run, bike, and exercise. A unique setting to relax and clear one's head. A one-of-a-kind experience offering unsurpassed panoramic views. An iconic destination for events and outings. A natural gathering point for friends and families.

While there is seemingly no end to how residents and visitors make use of the bridge, a recently completed study by the friends of the Walkway, Hudson Valley Pattern for Progress, and Marist College illustrates one clear conclusion – the Walkway Over the Hudson has significantly improved the quality of life in the Hudson Valley, brought new customers to local businesses, and bolstered the fundraising capabilities of the nonprofit community.

## KEY TAKEAWAYS ◆▶▶▶▶▶

**96%**

Visitors surveyed on the Walkway believe the Hudson Valley's quality of life has improved "somewhat" or "greatly" since the Walkway's opening.

**96%**

Respondents to a survey on the Walkway's social media channels believe the Hudson Valley's quality of life has improved "somewhat" or "a lot" since the Walkway's opening.

**94%**

Hudson Valley business owners believe the Walkway has made a positive impact on the quality of life in the Hudson Valley.

**57%**

City of Poughkeepsie residents report their own personal quality of life as "better" or "much better" since the Walkway's opening.



# THE STUDY

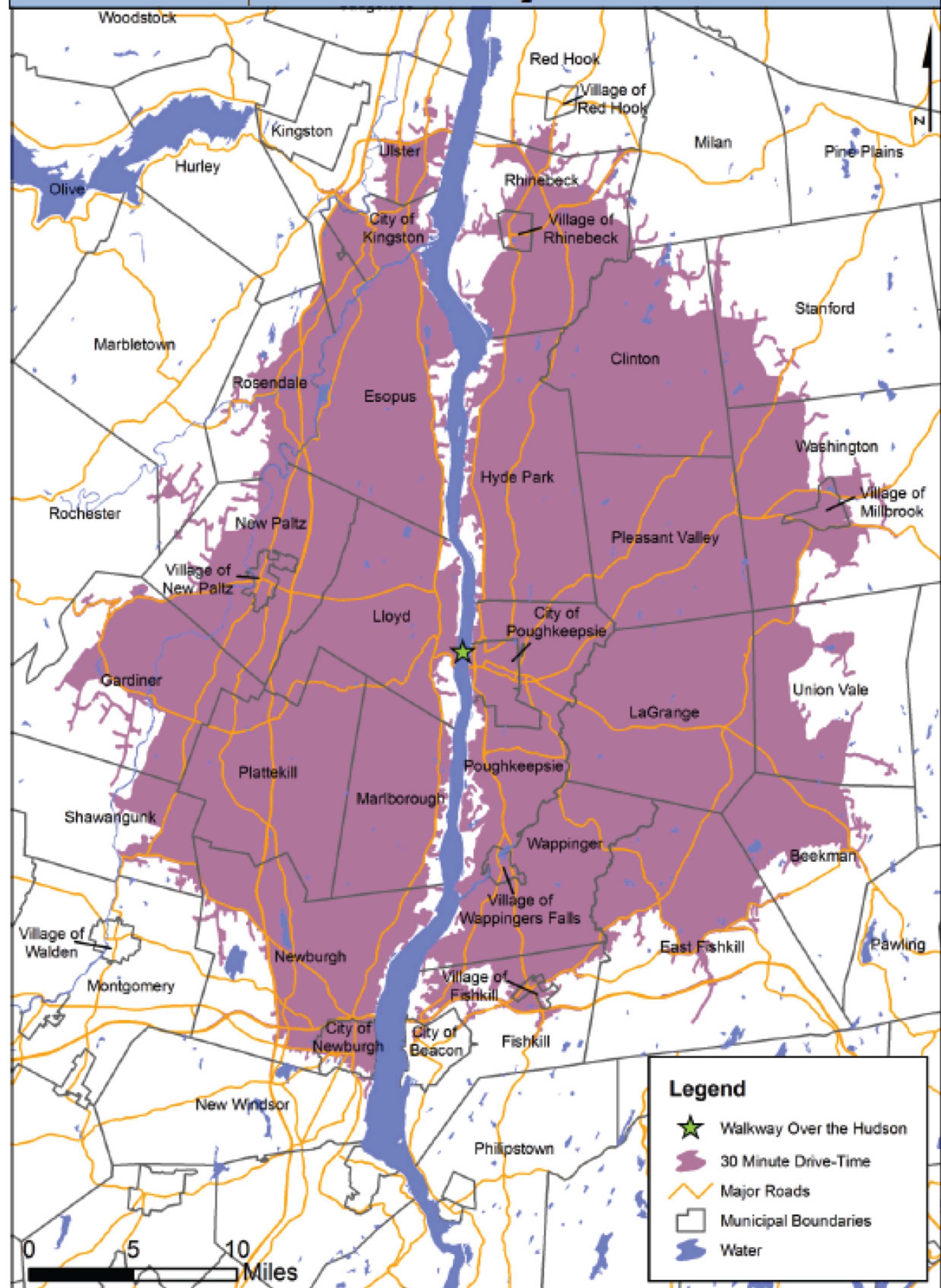
In summer 2018, Walkway Over the Hudson sought to review the impact of the Walkway on the quality of life in the area, specifically whether its creation has made a measurable difference to local residents in the City of Poughkeepsie and Hamlet of Highland. With help from Hudson Valley Pattern for Progress, Marist College, and Walkway’s volunteer ambassadors, the “Walkway Corridor” was defined and five different surveys were conducted comprised of responses from people within this area. These surveys focused on visitors to the Walkway, City of Poughkeepsie residents, business owners in the corridor, Walkway social media followers/e-mail newsletter subscribers, and nonprofits that have hosted events on the Walkway. In total, 830 points of data were collected.

HUDSON VALLEY **PATTERN** for **PROGRESS**

# MARIST

**WHAT IS QUALITY OF LIFE?** Quality of Life is 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” (Source: Forbes Magazine)

## The Walkway Corridor



## WHAT THEY'RE SAYING

“We’re happy that the study completed by Pattern for Progress has validated what we already knew anecdotally – that the Walkway Over the Hudson is a tremendous community resource that is positively impacting not only Poughkeepsie and Highland, but a large stretch of the Hudson Valley. We extend our sincere thanks to Pattern for Progress, the Pattern Fellows, Marist College, and all of the volunteers that assisted in collecting the data to make this report possible.”  
- **Elizabeth Waldstein-Hart, Executive Director, Walkway Over the Hudson**

“Collaborating with our partners for this important study fit perfectly into Pattern’s mission of improving the quality of life in the Hudson Valley. State parks like Walkway Over the Hudson contribute tremendously to enhancing the experience of living in a community, and we believe this report delivers a clear view of the impacts the Walkway has had. One area that we found especially important was the power of the Walkway for gathering people together for local causes and non-profit fundraising events.”  
- **Jonathan Drapkin, President & CEO, Hudson Valley Pattern for Progress**

“I think the Walkway Over the Hudson has been a highly successful innovation that has definitely altered the trajectory of the City of Poughkeepsie, the Hamlet of Highland, and the surrounding community.”  
- **Dr. Pamela Edington, President, Dutchess Community College**

## CORRIDOR DEMOGRAPHICS

### POPULATION

625,561

### POPULATION WITH DISABILITIES

10.7%

### PER CAPITA INCOME

\$33,494

### MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME

\$68,788



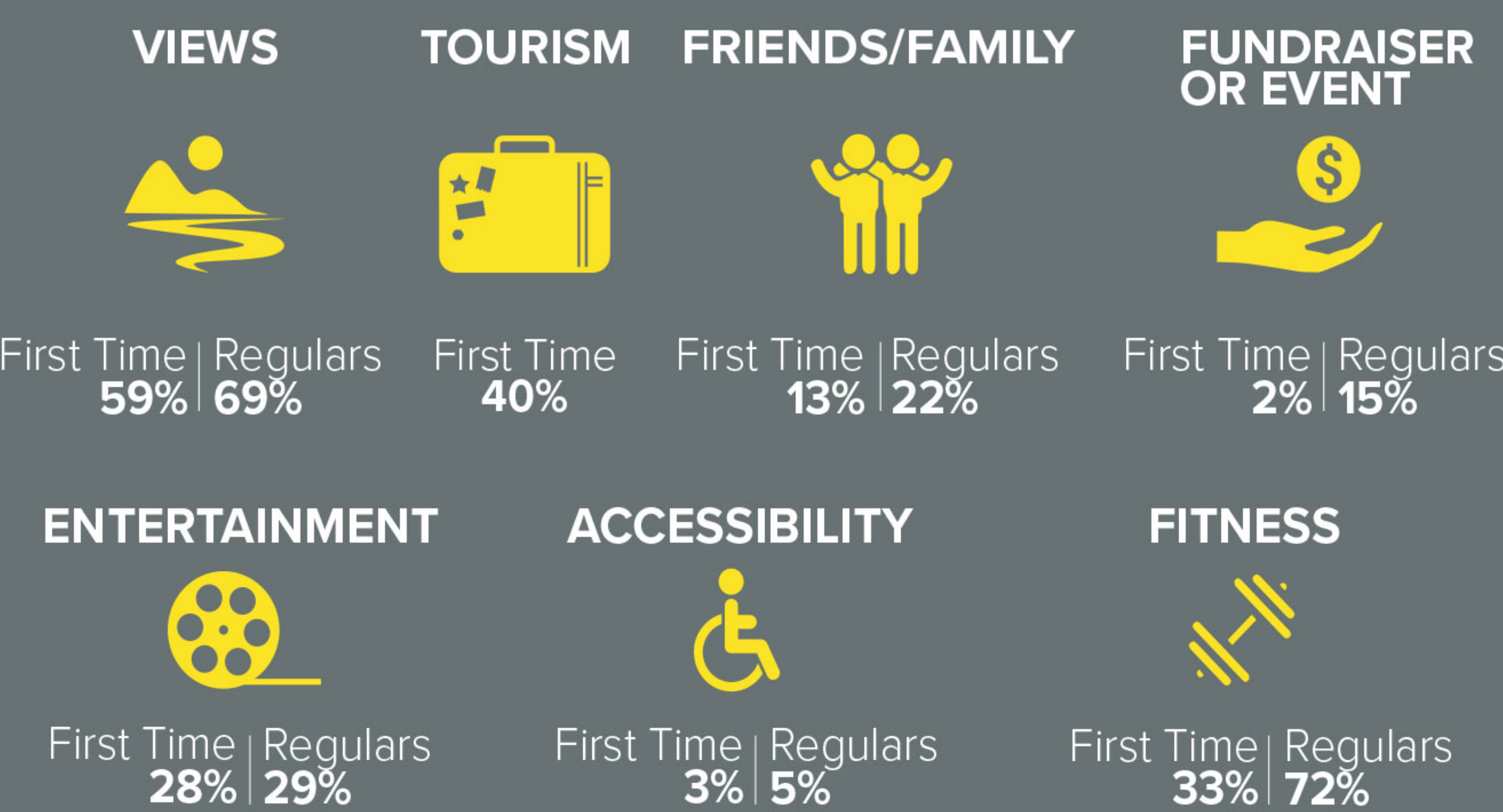
# 5,000,000 VISITORS 50 STATES | 52 COUNTRIES

 \$64.36 Estimated Spending Per Visitor (Camoin & Associates 2012)

 58% of First-Time Visitors Visit Nearby Destinations



## WHY ARE THEY VISITING?



## MAKING A DIFFERENCE FOR LOCAL NONPROFITS

The research found that 88 percent of nonprofit organizations that disclosed fundraising numbers and hosted fundraisers on the Walkway generated more donations than previous, similar events not held on the bridge. Walkway data indicates that all nonprofit events on the landmark structure since 2009 have resulted in over \$8 million raised for local causes.

## SPENDING HABITS

| NEW VISITORS   | REPEAT VISITORS   |
|--|---|
| <b>57%</b> intend to spend at City of Poughkeepsie restaurants       | <b>65%</b> spend at City of Poughkeepsie restaurants                            |
| <b>44%</b> intend to spend at other nearby restaurants               | <b>52%</b> spend at other nearby restaurants                                    |
| <b>36%</b> intend to spend at other retail businesses                | <b>44%</b> spend at other retail businesses in Poughkeepsie or near the Walkway |
| <b>21%</b> plan to spend at local hotels                             | <b>50%</b> spend at a local gas station   |
| <b>41%</b> intend to spend at a local gas station                    | <b>34%</b> spend at other tourist destinations in the area                      |
| <b>31%</b> intend to spend at other tourist destinations in the area |   |

## VISITOR PROFILE

The self-reported demographics found in the Quality of Life study provides a snapshot of who uses the Walkway, how they use it, and how often.

Residents of Dutchess or Ulster Counties comprise 52 percent of visitors to the Walkway. 64 percent are female. The typical Walkway user is between the ages of 46-65 (49.5 percent) with 27 percent of users between the ages of 21-45. 15 percent are over 65, and five percent are under 21.

Most Walkway users visit with one other person (46 percent), while 25 percent are in a group of 3-4, and 18 percent with five or more people. 12 percent of Walkway users come to the park alone.

The majority of first-time Walkway visitors reported visiting to enjoy the view (59 percent), with 40 percent saying they were a tourist, 33 percent coming for fitness/exercise, and 28 percent for entertainment. Among repeat Walkway visitors, 72 percent report primarily utilizing the bridge for exercise, with 69 percent citing to enjoy the view.

Among the 54 percent of visitors that have made multiple visits to the Walkway, 42 percent are frequent users who have been to the bridge more than 20 times.

## BOLSTERING LOCAL BUSINESS

In the business community, 94 percent of business owners said the Walkway has improved the area's quality of life, and 41 percent of City of Poughkeepsie businesses (sampled across all eight wards) report increased revenue since the opening of the Walkway.

The effect of the Walkway on local businesses varied due to several factors, the most prevalent being geographic location. Businesses that have experienced "greatly" increased revenue are businesses located close to the Walkway and those that tend to serve Walkway visitors directly, like cafes, coffee shops, and retail stores. These businesses also took greater advantage of the promotional and sponsorship opportunities offered by the Walkway.



## THE STUDY CONCLUDES...

The beauty and accessibility of the Walkway Over the Hudson 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.”

The impacts of the Walkway 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.

*(Pattern for Progress, August 2018)*

## THE FUTURE



### **Lighting The Walkway**

To increase safety and security, assist and guide visitors, and benefit special events on the Walkway, aesthetic, state-of-the-art lights will be installed on the bridge’s surface.



### **Dutchess Welcome Center**

Opening late spring 2019, the Dutchess Welcome Center features indoor restrooms, an information booth, expanded seating, a new entrance to the Orchard Place neighborhood, and more.



### **East Gate Arrival Plaza**

Plans for the new Arrival Plaza (outside the Walkway’s east gate) include a larger gathering area, new pavilion, covered space for tours and events, and easier access via the Washington Street stairs.



### **Washington/Parker Corner**

Plans for terraced seating and fresh landscaping will create a welcoming “front door” for the Walkway at the corner of Washington Street and Parker Avenue in Poughkeepsie.