

New York Forward – Downtown Profile and Assessment: Phelps, NY

July 2025

PREPARED FOR:

State of New York
Department of State
New York Forward Program



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In support of the NY Forward Downtown Profile for the Village of Phelps, Colliers conducted a comprehensive economic and market assessment to identify challenges and opportunities related to housing, commercial development, retail demand, and tourism within the NY Forward Study Area. The findings presented here reflect an in-depth analysis of current conditions and future potential to guide strategic investment, revitalization, and policy efforts.

Conditions and Trends

The Village of Phelps is a compact, walkable community located in the heart of the Finger Lakes region, offering rich historical assets, scenic amenities like Flint Creek, and a strong sense of civic pride. While population growth has remained relatively flat, demographic shifts such as a growing senior population and declining household sizes have generated new demand for housing diversity and accessible community amenities. Despite limited housing construction over the last two decades, the community has maintained strong homeownership levels and stable rental markets.

Key public infrastructure, such as full fiber-optic internet, upgraded public works facilities, and robust civic amenities like the Phelps Arts Center and Phelps Community Center, supports Phelps' vision for long-term livability and balanced economic growth. Historic preservation and environmental stewardship are central to this vision, as seen in recent downtown improvements, LED streetlight conversions, and extensive community engagement around sustainability.

The NY Forward Study Area, which includes the village core, is characterized by both its historic charm and the potential for revitalization. It has experienced limited housing growth and contains a higher

proportion of cost-burdened renters and low-income residents than the broader region. However, its walkability, mix of underutilized buildings, and cultural resources position it well for targeted infill housing, tourism development, and business attraction.

Growth Opportunities

Tourism and Visitor Economy Potential

Phelps is uniquely positioned within the Finger Lakes tourism corridor and offers natural, historic, and cultural assets that could drive a more robust visitor economy. Key opportunities include:

- **Recreation Activation:** Flint Creek, Redfield Park, and the upcoming Crooked Bridge Park provide strong foundations for outdoor and ecotourism.
- **Arts and Culture:** The Phelps Arts Center and active local theatre scene enhance the village's appeal for cultural tourism.
- **Events and Food-Based Tourism:** Festivals like Sauerkraut Weekend and a growing number of craft beverage venues can be leveraged to create themed itineraries and visitor experiences.



Visitor Opportunity Profiles

To maximize its potential as a tourism destination, Phelps can tailor its offerings to attract and retain key visitor segments. Each profile reflects distinct motivations and behaviors, yet they all intersect around a shared appreciation for small-town authenticity, rural charm, and immersive experiences.

The Campground Voyager

Outdoor and RV camping enthusiasts, often families, couples, or retirees, who are drawn to nature, flexibility, and shared experiences.

To extend their stay and deepen their engagement, Phelps should enhance the camping experience and better connect it to the village and surrounding assets. This can include:

- **Nature Based Programming** - Guided hikes, evening bonfires, equipment rentals
- **Interactive Agri-tourism** - Coordinate farm visits, berry picking, cider tasting
- **Pop-up Food and Craft Events** - Rotating schedule of food trucks, "Wine & Fire" nights with local producers
- **Creative Lodging** - Glamping, Tiny Cabins, Treehouses (Instagram worthy spaces)
- **Wellness-focused** - Morning Yoga, nature meditation, paint-n-camp, forest meditation

The Spirit Seeker

Craft beverage lovers, often couples, friend groups, or solo travelers, who are motivated by authentic, locally made food and drink experiences.

For this audience, Phelps should aim to elevate its craft beverage offerings and position itself as a welcoming, walkable destination with curated experiences. Recommended strategies include:

- **Exclusive Phelps-only Access** - Behind the scenes tours and pairings, meet the makers events, limited edition bottles
- **Anchoring Downtown Activities** - Sip and stroll events with music/activities, pop-up stores
- **Curate Lodging + Beverage Packages** - Partner with campgrounds for "Sip & Stay" bundles, ride car service, picnic-ready kits with local products, Spa/wellness additions for girls' weekends

The Sauerkraut Loyalist

Festival-goers and community event supporters, often families, multi-generational travelers, and returning expats, who are drawn to nostalgia, tradition, and quirky experiences.

This group already shows up for the village's signature event. To keep them engaged, tap into nostalgia, love of quirky charm, and desire for multigenerational, small-town fun.

- **Encourage Return-Trips** - Seasonal mini-events with a similar quirky vibe and connected theme
- **Enhance Awareness** - Mini-documentaries or storyboards around downtown, Kraut-focused products offered year-round



Retail and Commercial Development

Complementing tourism development, there are clear opportunities to grow the local retail and food economy based on spending patterns and leakage analysis. Much of Phelps' potential retail demand is currently being captured by neighboring communities, representing millions in lost economic activity. Strategic new business development could include:

- **Limited-Service Restaurants:** Phelps could support at least one fast-casual or counter-service restaurant, including coffee shops, cafes, or fresh-food eateries.
- **Full-Service Restaurants:** A family-style sit-down dining establishment would meet unmet local demand while drawing regional traffic and tourists.
- **Experience-Based Retail:** Mixed-use businesses like wineries, craft beverage producers, or bakeries that incorporate production and sales in one space would appeal to both residents and tourists. These spaces can also function as informal community gathering points.

Housing Development and Improvements

The village is projected to need at least 40 new housing units over the next five years, with one-third of this demand tied to rental housing. Redeveloping existing buildings, especially upper-story spaces in downtown structures, offers an efficient and community-compatible solution.

- **Upper-Floor Renovations:** These conversions of vacant or underused second-story spaces into apartments support downtown revitalization while meeting housing needs for young professionals and couples seeking walkable, affordable living.
- **Workforce Housing:** There is an unmet need for housing affordable to middle-income workers such as teachers, service workers, and first responders. These units help stabilize the workforce and support local businesses by keeping essential workers in town.
- **Senior-Friendly Housing:** Given that nearly 28% of Phelps residents are over 60, the village needs housing options that support aging in place, such as single-level layouts and units with accessible design features, close to community amenities.



INTRODUCTION

The Village of Phelps offers a compelling blend of rural character, historic architecture, and emerging economic opportunity in the heart of the Finger Lakes region. Anchored by a walkable downtown and bolstered by direct access to major transportation routes, Phelps combines small-town charm with regional connectivity. The village's development priorities are focused on improving quality of life, fostering tourism, supporting local businesses, and increasing housing options—especially through adaptive reuse and mixed-use revitalization within its NY Forward Study Area. With strong civic leadership, high-speed infrastructure, and a readiness for strategic investment, Phelps is well-positioned to advance both its community and economic goals.

Phelps retains deep ties to its historic legacy, visible in its preserved Main Street corridor, the iconic Flint Creek waterfall, and long-standing civic institutions such as the Phelps Arts Center and the annual Sauerkraut Weekend. These assets not only define the village's identity but also serve as platforms for tourism, recreation, and local pride. Recent efforts to enhance Crooked Bridge Park and expand access to trails and public gathering spaces signal a commitment to leveraging natural and cultural amenities to attract residents and visitors alike.

The village's revitalization strategy centers on balancing growth with preservation—maintaining architectural character while introducing new housing, retail, and public spaces that meet contemporary needs. Projects include renovating upper-floor apartments, supporting local food and beverage businesses, and strengthening public infrastructure. Active community participation, coupled with local business engagement and public-private partnerships, continues to shape a shared vision for Phelps: a vibrant, resilient, and inclusive village where heritage and progress work hand-in-hand.

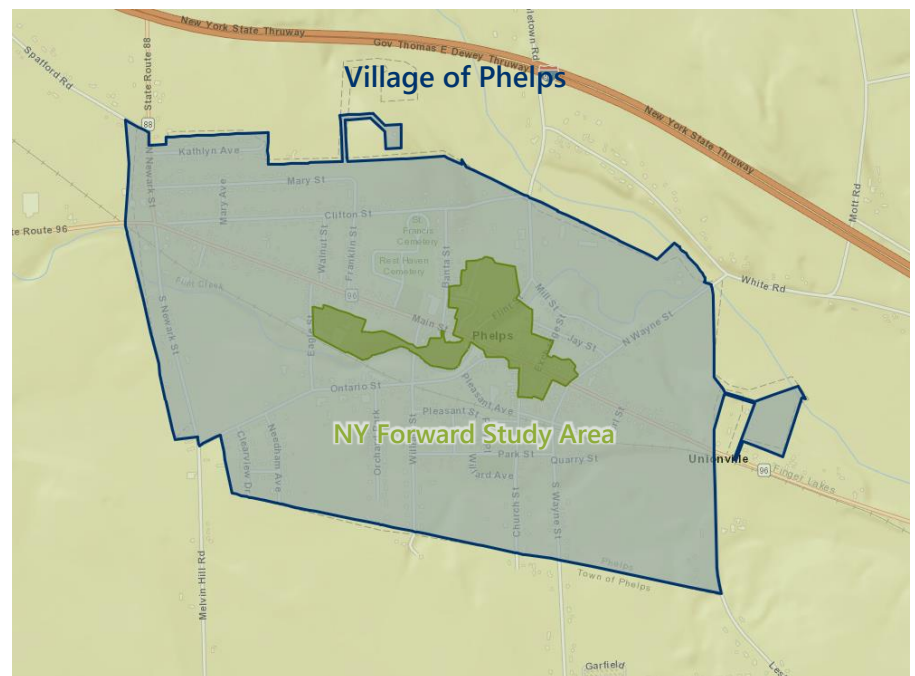


STUDY AREA DEFINITION

LOCATION

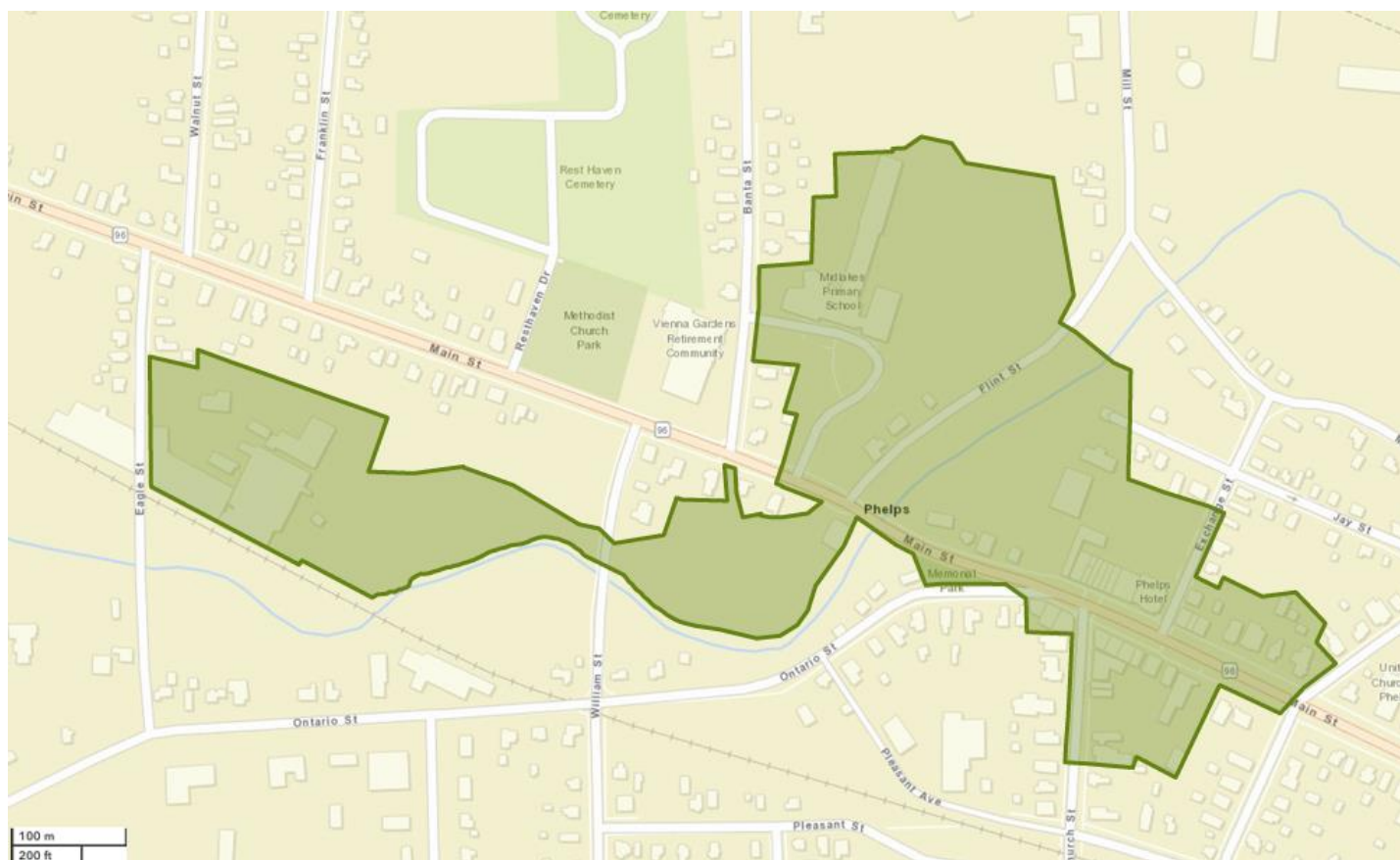
Geographic Description

The Village of Phelps is in the northeast corner of Ontario County in the Finger Lakes region of Upstate New York. The village lies approximately 25 miles southeast of Rochester and sits along Route 96, just south of the New York State Thruway (I-90). The village is traversed by the Flint Creek and Canandaigua Outlet, which feed into the Erie Canal. Its landscape includes tree-lined streets, historic architecture, and a compact, walkable town center.



THE NEW YORK FORWARD STUDY AREA

Phelps' NY Forward Study Area centers on Main Street (Route 96), forming the village's historic and commercial center. Local landmarks include the Phelps Hotel, Memorial Park, and Midlakes Primary School. The walkable area features a mix of small businesses, civic institutions, and residential neighborhoods.



DEMOGRAPHIC SNAPSHOT

OLDER HOUSEHOLDS CALL FOR A CHANGE IN HOUSING STOCK CHARACTERISTICS

As part of Ontario County's broader housing market, Phelps represents a microcosm of countywide demographic and housing trends. The Ontario County Housing Needs Assessment (2023) projects demand for 250 new housing units annually through 2030, with Phelps' projected need of 40 units over five years aligning proportionally with this regional growth pattern.

Phelps falls within what the county study designates as 'Submarket Three,' which includes the Towns of Manchester, Hopewell, and Phelps. This submarket experienced 370 home sales from 2017-2022 and is characterized by higher homeownership rates (82.9%) but limited recent housing construction. The county analysis identifies this submarket as having significant potential for targeted infill housing and adaptive reuse projects, particularly in walkable village centers like Phelps.

The Village of Phelps has experienced a steady population decline over the past decade, reflecting a demographic trend seen in many rural areas of New York State. Most recently, the village population declined by nearly 8% from 2000 to 2024. Despite this, Phelps continues to maintain a steady foundation for revitalization, with demographic patterns showing both emerging needs and opportunities, particularly in housing and visitor attraction.

The community population in the Village of Phelps is aging, with nearly one-third (29%) of residents aged 60 or older, and more than one in twenty (6%) aged 80+. This brings a growing demand for senior-friendly services, healthcare, and accessible amenities. At the same time, the village is experiencing shrinking household sizes — a pattern reflected in a national trend toward smaller families and a rise in single-person households. This highlights the importance of diversifying the local housing stock — developing smaller, accessible, and low maintenance homes geared towards the aging population.

Educational attainment among adults 25 and older is concentrated at the high school level, with generally lower levels of college completion than at the Three-County Area or state levels. The median household income in Phelps (\$58,529) also trails behind that of the surrounding county and state averages, due in part to the larger senior population. Despite these challenges, homeownership remains strong, with nearly three-quarters of households owning their homes. This highlights the community's stable housing market amidst changing demographics.



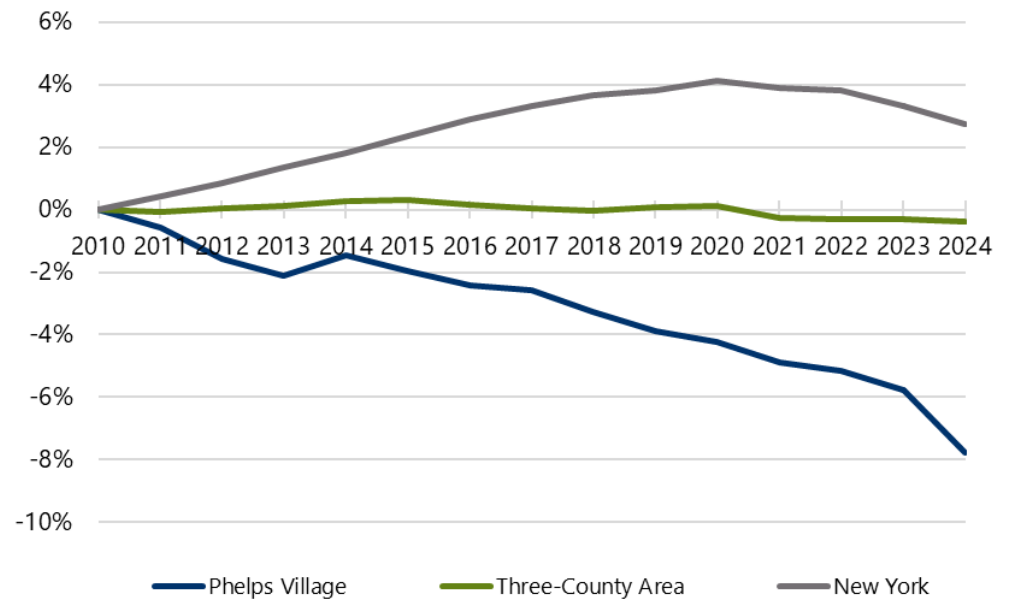
TOTAL POPULATION

Steady population declines over two decades

From 2010 through 2024, the village experienced steady population decline, hitting nearly 8% in 2024.

The broader Three-County Area demonstrated relative stability, with only .3% gain from 2010-2020. In contrast, New York State overall grew significantly by 4.2% from 2010-2020 before the most recent contraction between 2022-2024.

Cumulative Percent Change in Population Since 2010



Source: Esri

Total Population, 2000-2024

Geography	Population Level				Population Growth		
	2000	2010	2020	2024	2000-2010	2010-2020	2020-2024
Phelps Village	1,968	1,987	1,851	1,826	1.0%	-6.8%	-1.4%
Three-County Area	227,346	236,953	237,555	236,086	4.2%	0.3%	-0.6%
New York	18,976,453	19,378,097	20,201,249	19,924,635	2.1%	4.2%	-1.4%

Source: Decennial Census; Esri



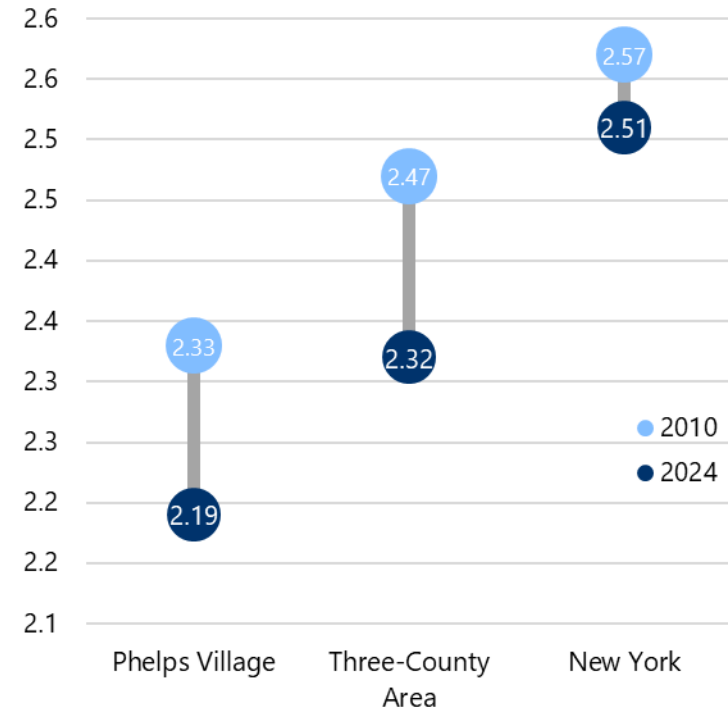
HOUSEHOLDS

With shrinking household size, the number of households declines

The national trend of declining household size has been more intense at the village level. This reduction has softened the decline in the number of households, even as the population has fallen.

The Three-County Area has seen a steady increase in households, increasing by over 6% between 2010 and 2024. Even though population growth was flat, the rise in households suggests a trend toward smaller households or more independent living arrangements.

Average Household Size



Source: Decennial Census; Esri

Households, 2010-2024

Geography	Households			Household Growth	
	2010	2020	2024	2010-2020	2020-2024
Phelps Village	847	829	829	-2.1%	0.0%
Three-County Area	92,996	97,592	99,012	4.9%	1.5%
New York	7,317,754	7,715,172	7,705,781	5.4%	-0.1%

Source: Decennial Census, Esri

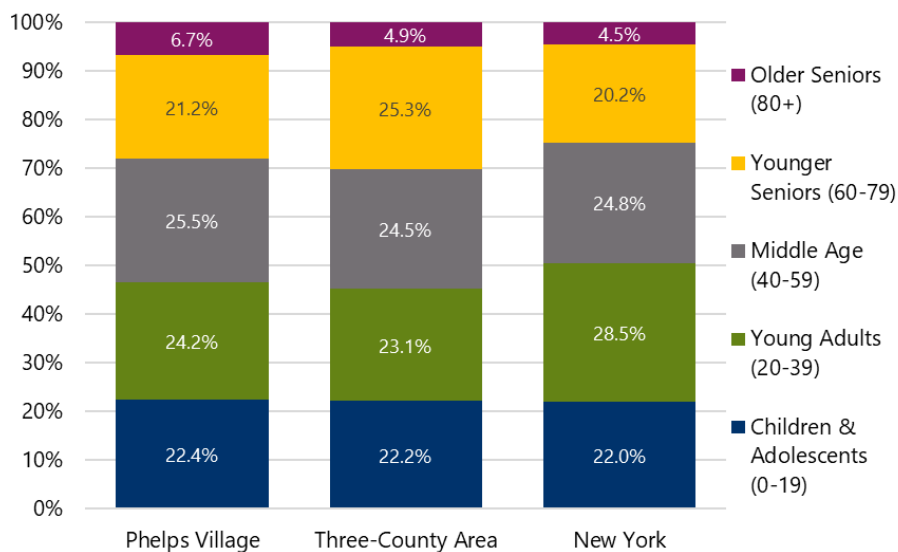


AGE DISTRIBUTION

Phelps Village has an aging population, with nearly 28% of residents aged over 60 years, including 7% aged 80+, the highest share of older seniors among the comparative geographies. Conversely, the share of young adults (ages 20-39) in Phelps Village represents a significantly more modest proportion (24%) of the population than is seen at the state level, 29%. This suggests limited retention or attraction of younger working-age residents.

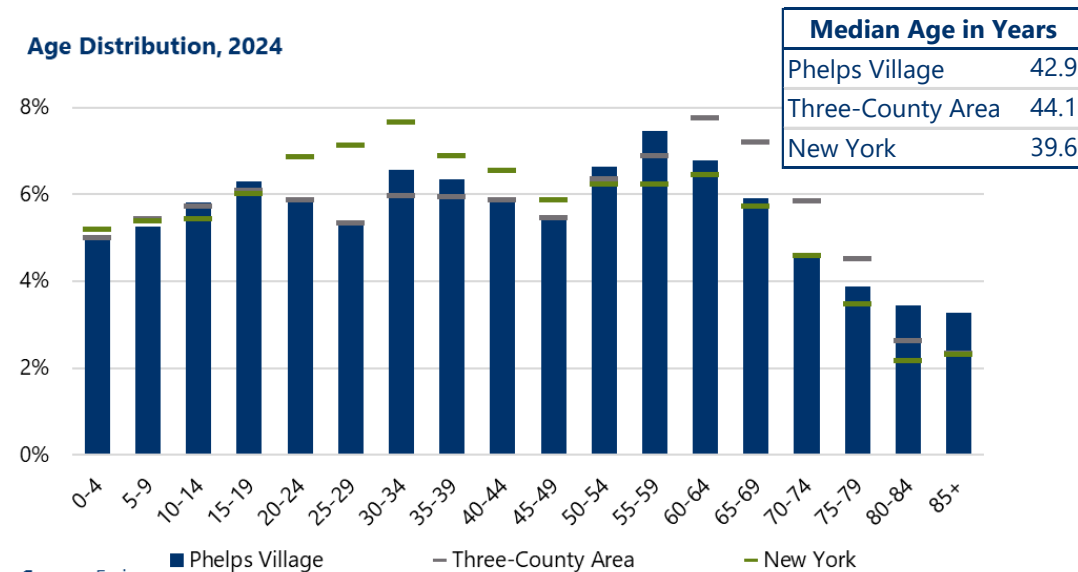
These aging patterns mirror countywide trends, where Ontario County projects a 28% increase in residents over 65 by 2040. The county's analysis indicates that senior households will grow by nearly 5,000 units over the next two decades, with most of this growth occurring by 2030. This demographic shift creates demand for senior-friendly housing formats, including single-level layouts and accessible design features—opportunities that Phelps' walkable downtown core is well-positioned to address through adaptive reuse and mixed-use development.

Composition by Age Cohort, 2024



Source: Esri

Age Distribution, 2024



Source: Esri

Median Age in Years	
Phelps Village	42.9
Three-County Area	44.1
New York	39.6



EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

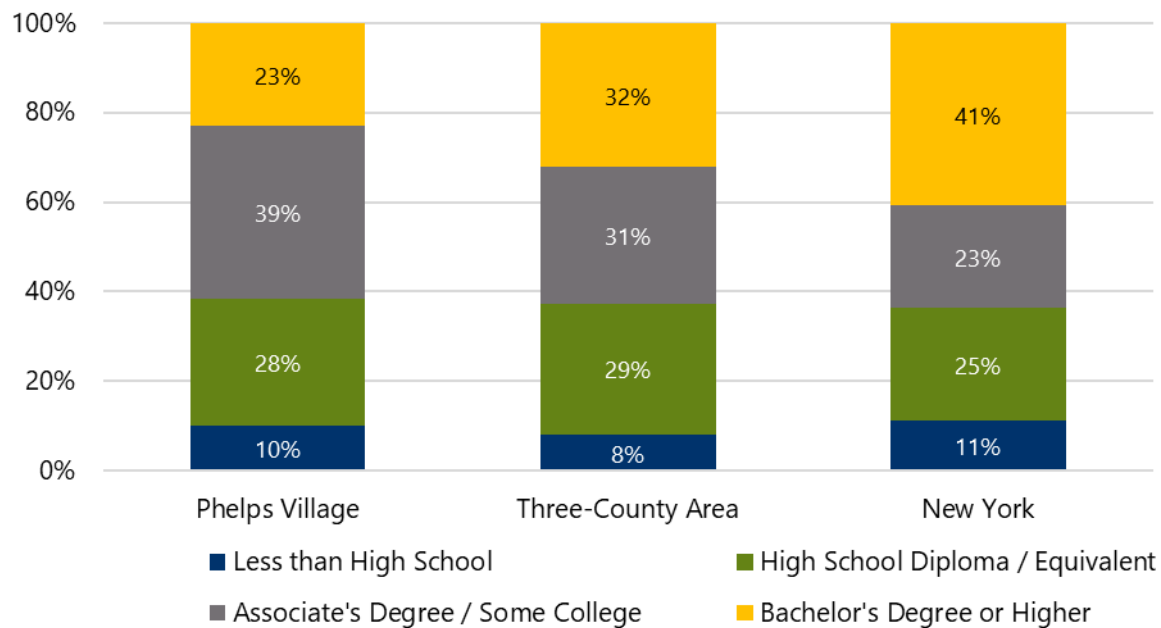
Share of workers in Study Area on par with state proportion, well above town and county

Only 23% of working-age adults in Phelps Village have a Bachelor's degree or higher, significantly below the New York State average of 41%.

The share of those holding an associate's degree or having attended some college (39%) registered a significant share in the village, indicating moderate educational achievement, potentially geared toward trades, technical work, or service industries.

In total, this leaves the share of working-aged adults in Phelps Village who completed their education with high school (38%), largely on par with the county level (37%).

Educational Attainment of Age 25+ Population, 2024



Source: Esri



HOUSEHOLD INCOME

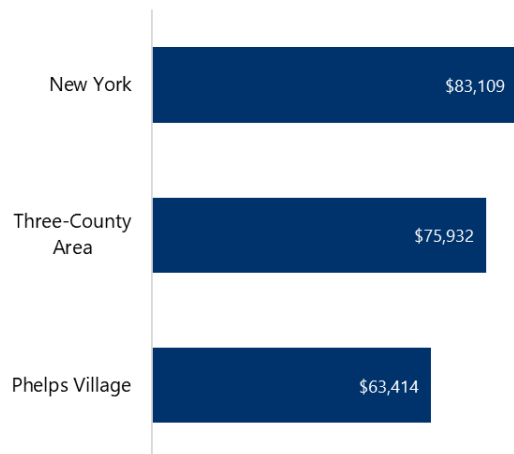
Lower household income levels in the Village

At \$63,414, the Village of Phelps' median household income is nearly \$20,000 below the New York State median and more than \$12,000 below the Three-County Area. This indicates weaker earning power and more limited overall economic opportunities.

Over 40% of Phelps households fall into the \$25K-\$74K range, highlighting the village's middle-income concentration, while the community sees a notable shortfall in the higher earnings brackets compared to the county or statewide measures. Notably, over 25% of households in the village fall into the \$100K-\$149K bracket, a proportion higher than statewide averages, but this comes at the cost of only a very modest proportion of residents falling into the highest brackets.

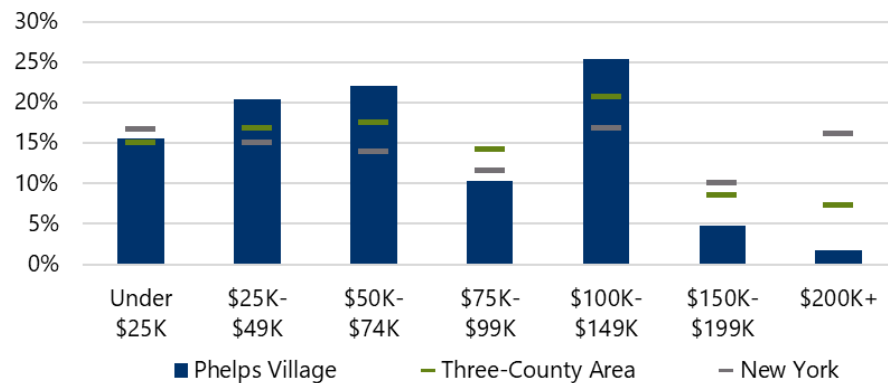
Phelps' median household income of \$63,414 falls within the middle range of Ontario County's Area Median Income (AMI) categories. Using HUD's 2023 AMI standards for the Rochester Metro Area (which includes Ontario County), a four-person household earning \$89,700 represents 100% of AMI. Phelps' median income suggests many village households fall between 60-80% of AMI—a segment the county identifies as 'workforce housing' that faces significant affordability pressures. The county's housing assessment found that 40.9% of Ontario County households earn less than 80% of AMI, with 22.4% earning less than 50% of AMI. Phelps' income profile indicates the village serves an important role in providing housing for middle-income workers who support the broader regional economy but face affordability constraints in higher-cost areas of the county.

Median Household Income, 2024



Source: Esri

Household Income Distribution, 2024



Source: Esri



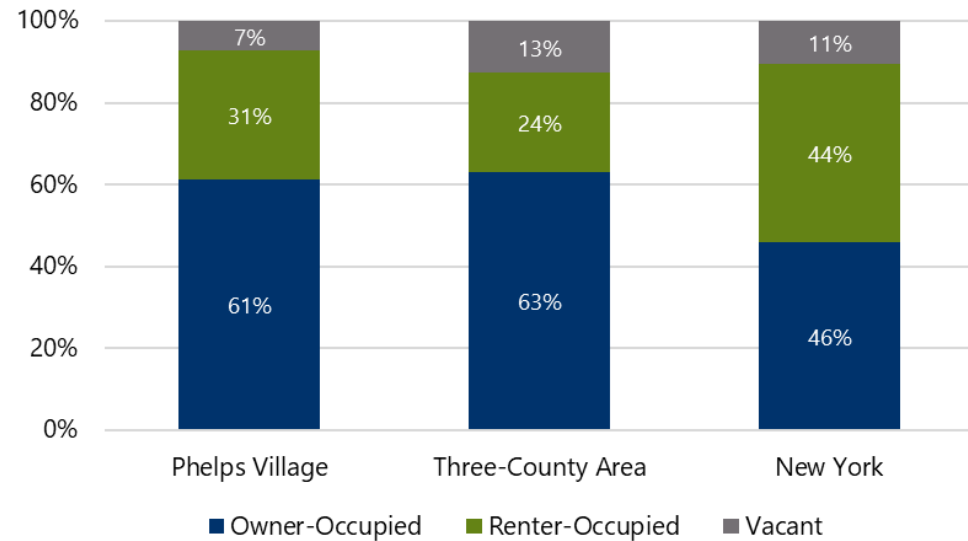
HOUSING TENURE

High rates of homeownership and Cost-Burdened Renters

Over 60% of Phelps Village households own their homes — similar to the Three-County Area (63%) but significantly over the statewide proportion (46%).

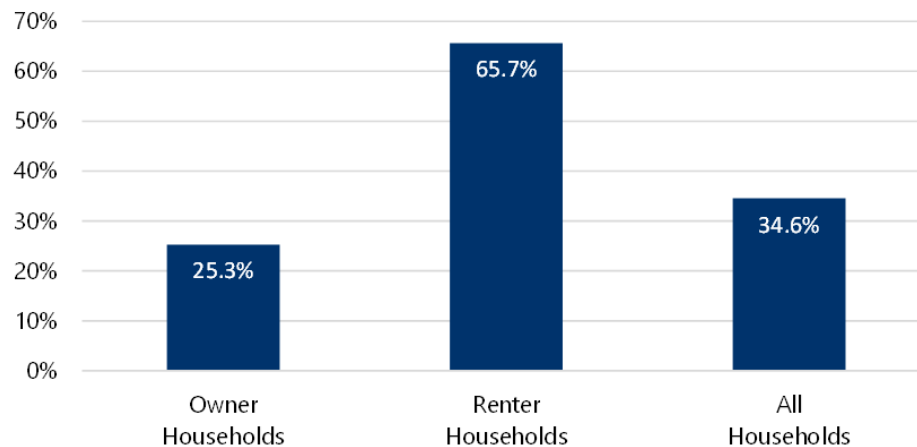
Meanwhile, one-third (35%) of Phelps households are *cost-burdened*, meaning that over 30% of their income is dedicated to housing. As this share increases, it leaves fewer funds available for other necessities such as food and healthcare.

Housing Inventory, 2024



Cost Burdened Households in the Phelps Village - 2023

Source: Esri



Source: ACS report B25070

For renters, the proportion of cost-burdened households jumps to two-thirds (66%). In addition, 11% of all renters are severely cost-burdened, with *more than half* of their income going to housing.

While being cost-burdened is less common for homeowners, it nevertheless continues to challenge one quarter (25%) of these households. Over half of those (14% of the total) are severely cost-burdened.

REGIONAL AND HISTORIC CONTEXT

EVOLUTION OF THE DOWNTOWN

Canal-Era Commerce and Agrarian Roots

Located in Ontario County within the Finger Lakes region of New York State, the Village of Phelps has served as a center of agriculture and commerce. While not directly on the Erie Canal, Phelps has benefited from regional trade routes and rail access that supported a thriving 19th-century economy based around farming, mill work, and manufacturing.

More recently, industrial activity has declined while river transportation has become less central to the overall economy. Phelps maintains its local identity as it plays the role of a commuter-friendly community, supported in part by tourism and local agriculture.

Located between Geneva and Rochester, the Village of Phelps benefits from proximity to the broader regional economy. With easy access to I-90, it offers connectivity while still maintaining its small-town character. Its location in the Finger Lakes wine region offers additional economic opportunities. The community now intends to further its visitor appeal through streetscaping improvements and support for small businesses. The village also sees the need for additional residential space, spurring interest in greater housing development.



RECENT PLANS AND INVESTMENT

PAST INVESTMENT AND FUTURE POTENTIAL

The Village of Phelps has worked towards the revitalization of its downtown business area for several years. Key investments incorporated the past with the promise of a dynamic future:

Recent studies and planning documents include:

- 2024 - NY Forward grant recipient — Projects identified support adaptive reuse and rehabilitation, promote infill development, expand housing and small business opportunities, improve public spaces, and enhance streetscapes to increase walkability and interconnectivity.
- Anticipated - Updating Comprehensive Plan and Zoning Review

Past and recent investments:

- 2006-2024 - Mary Hicks Preston Foundation — Sponsored multiple projects supporting historic preservation, socialization, recreation, education, and culture.
- 2011 - Phelps Community Center — Conversion of an elementary school to create a multi-generation community center operated by a nonprofit organization.
- 2018 - Ontario Telephone Company — Relocated its corporate headquarters to Phelps and built a fiber internet network that covers the entire town as well as much of the Finger Lakes.
- 2019 - Phelps Business Development & Tourism Council — Rent subsidy for new businesses for up to two years.
- 2020 - Redfield Park — Updated community assets inside the park, including the gazebo, an outdoor kitchen facility, and renovated the existing playground.
- 2022 - Downtown Investments — Enhancements in the downtown area, including streetlights and façade improvements, funded through the New York State Main Street Grant and a mix of public and private funding.



COMMUNITY PRIORITIES

The Village of Phelps recently secured \$4.5 million in state funding via the NY Forward program to revitalize downtown areas. These funds will be dedicated to enhancing public spaces, rehabilitating buildings for mixed-use purposes, and improving walkability. Consistent with the Village of Phelps' NY Forward application, efforts are to be focused around four primary areas of improvement through revitalization, growth, and a focus on heritage.

Strengthening the Village Core

At the heart of Phelps' revitalization strategy lies a deep commitment to strengthening its village core. Efforts are currently underway to ensure that the downtown area thrives with a mix of attractions. The village envisions increasing downtown residency by converting underutilized upper-floor spaces into apartments, bringing new walkable housing units to seniors, young professionals, and smaller households. With the goal of downtown vibrancy, the village also supports small businesses to ensure that occupancy in commercial structures remains sustainable and that the collection of local tenants provides an appealing mix in order to meet the demands of both local residents and visitors. Together, this dedication to the downtown core strengthens Main Street, increases foot traffic, and provides a more lively and economically diverse environment.

Quality of Life Investments

Successful revitalization in Phelps must move beyond buildings and businesses. It is also about creating an environment that improves residents' and visitors' daily experiences. To reach these goals, the village is actively working towards improved public offerings such as Crooked Bridge Park, improved trail connectivity to Ontario Pathways, and better access to the beauty of Flint Creek. Cultural institutions like the Phelps Arts Center and the Community Theatre further enrich local life and serve as outlets for residents to express their artistic talents and for visitors to discover the village's character. The regionalized infrastructure and connectivity focus, as noted as a core area of focus in the Finger Lakes Regional Economic Development Council's Strategic Plan, is a critical quality of life issue in the more rural areas. Infrastructure improvements, such as new lighting, region-wide broadband coverage, and sidewalk enhancements, support both accessibility and environmental sustainability. The availability, quality, and affordability of housing is also a top area of priority for both the FLREDC region and the Village of Phelps.

Partnership-Driven Development

Phelps' revitalization strategy places great emphasis on collaboration among the village's citizens, businesses, and community leadership. Development of the overall town center requires partnerships between the public, private, municipal, and nonprofit sectors. Programs like the Building Improvement Fund and initiatives with the Phelps Business Development & Tourism Council (BDTC) and local arts organizations illustrate the village's commitment to success. These partnerships help focus resources—such as facade improvements, business expansion, and cultural events — in ways that align with the community's values while also attracting investment.



Historic Preservation with Modern Purpose

The historic architecture found in the Village of Phelps gives it great character and provides some of its best opportunities. Through adaptive reuse of existing buildings, the village envisions maintaining its architectural heritage while redeveloping interior space to accommodate current needs. In the case of the former Phelps Hotel, the structure has already undergone restoration and now serves as a local success story and as an example of how preservation efforts can result in economic growth. Additional properties have been identified that share the same potential for transformation into mixed-use developments, new and renovated housing units, or cultural venues. This approach by the Village of Phelps is dedicated to creating a built environment that both reflects the past while also providing for the community's future, and attracts new residents, businesses, and tourists.



ECONOMIC CONTEXT

TOTAL EMPLOYMENT

Holding steady

Over the last five years, Phelps' (ZIP Code 14532) total employment declined significantly, falling by nearly 6%. This contraction outpaced job losses in the surrounding Three-County Area, which saw a more modest 3% decline, and stood in stark contrast to the essentially flat employment trends statewide.

Phelps' employment landscape was especially impacted by deep losses in the public sector, with Government positions alone accounting for nearly 90% of the town's net job loss. Smaller declines were seen in industries such as Manufacturing, Wholesale Trade, and Other Services — all key contributors to the local economy.

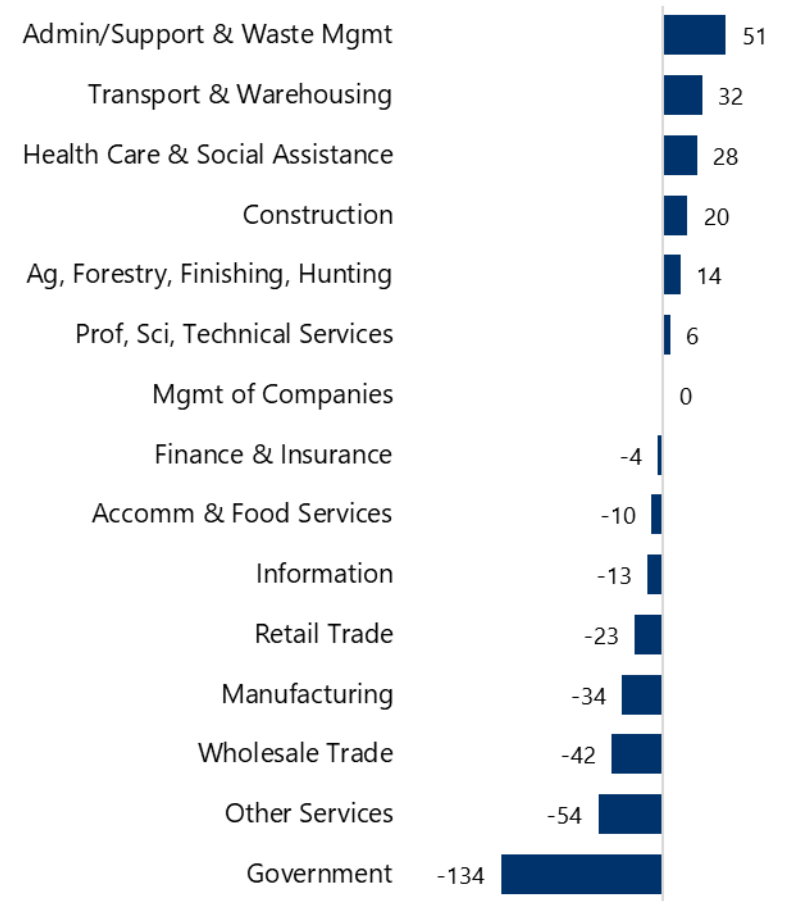
Despite these losses, several sectors in Phelps did manage to post modest gains, including Administrative & Waste Services, Transportation & Warehousing, and Health Care. While these growth sectors may point to a shift in the town's employment base toward service-oriented and logistics, these slight increases were not sufficient to offset broader declines found elsewhere.

Employment Levels and Change, 2019 to 2024

Region	2019 Jobs	2024 Jobs	Change	
			Jobs	Percent
Phelps (ZIP Code 14532)	2,245	2,113	-148	-5.9%
Three-County Area	103,796	100,824	-2,972	-2.9%
New York	10,554,614	10,554,390	-224	0.0%

Source: Lightcast

Change in Jobs by Sector, 2019-2024, Phelps (ZIP Code 14532)



Source: Lightcast



EMPLOYMENT BY INDUSTRY

Phelps remains a home for Transport & Warehousing

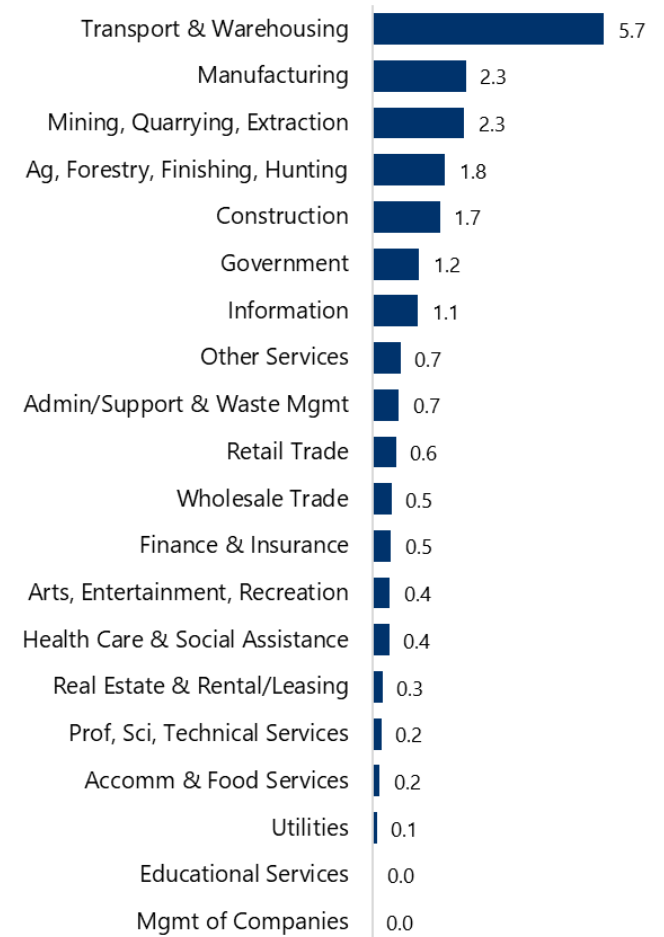
The Location Quotient (LQ) provides a measure of an industry's concentration in a community as compared to the national average.

For its size, Phelps provides over five and a half times as many Transport & Warehousing positions as is typical nationwide (LQ of 5.7).

- Anchored primarily by Wadhams Enterprises, Inc., the Phelps-based company is the parent company of RIST Transport Ltd., Earl T. Wadhams, and ARG Trucking.
- Other notable companies in Phelps include:
 - Sheppard Grain Enterprises
 - Air Land Delivery Solutions, Inc.

Also registering a significant presence are the Manufacturing and Mining, Quarrying, & Extraction sectors. Manufacturing is supported by employment in Magnus Precision Manufacturing and Z-Axis, while the Mining, Quarrying, and Extraction-based jobs come from employment at Phelps Sand & Gravel, Phelps Cement Products, and Dendis Sand & Gravel.

**Location Quotients by Sector, 2024, Phelps
(ZIP Code 14532)**



Source: Lightcast



ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS

Community Assets

The Village of Phelps offers a variety of historic structures and cultural activities, providing character to a downtown, anchored by classic architecture and tree-lined streets. The community's commercial sector has benefited from revitalization efforts, including streetscaping and improvements to building facades. Flint Creek serves as a scenic natural feature and natural recreational draw. Key public investments include the development of the Phelps Community Center and the restoration of the Phelps Arts Center, which have created multipurpose venues for residents and visitors alike. Additional features attractive to local residents and out-of-town visitors include themed events such as the annual Sauerkraut Weekend.

In addition, easy access to the interstate system provides a valuable asset to its transportation-based companies. The community also enjoys a fully fiber-optic internet network—a rare asset in a rural setting.

Opportunities

Phelps is positioned to expand its role in the Finger Lakes' \$4B+ tourism economy by capitalizing on its central location, historic character, and growing cultural attractions. The community's defining features, including the Historic Phelps Hotel and Flint Creek, make it an appealing destination for tourists. Planned enhancements to Crooked Bridge Park, including kayak and canoe launches, trails, and a municipal rental program, illustrate the community's intentions to include outdoor recreation as a key element of its appeal to tourists. This is further enhanced with the addition of a railroad viewing platform and expanded pedestrian connectivity to Ontario Pathways trails.

Historical preservation has served as a focus for the community with adaptive reuse projects such as the conversion of a former sauerkraut factory into a mixed-use facility, encourage new businesses and enhance town's cultural appeal. Expanding the arts district and updating facilities at the Phelps Arts Center are expected to boost local events, further enhancing the village's identity. Mixed-use housing initiatives, especially those centered around redevelopment of underutilized upper floors on Main Street, offer new residential space or potentially lodging opportunities.

Future strategies might include the development of tourism activities centered around Phelps' food and drink offerings, including its nano-brewery, distillery, wine bar, and seasonal farm-to-table restaurant. In addition, future marketing efforts, already underway through a community branding initiative, can be further leveraged to position Phelps as a destination in the Finger Lakes region, serving as a centralized location to find art, food, recreation, and relaxation. Elements such as enhanced signage, social media marketing, and promotion through regional tourism networks will also support these goals and encourage a greater visitor economy.

Alignment with County Tourism Strategy

Phelps' tourism development potential directly supports Ontario County's broader economic development goals. The county's housing assessment identifies tourism as a key growth sector, noting the county's position 'within the Finger Lakes tourism corridor' and opportunities for 'recreation activation,' 'arts and culture,' and 'events and food-based tourism.'

The county analysis specifically identifies three visitor profiles that align with Phelps' assets: recreation-focused visitors drawn to waterways and trails (supported by Phelps' Flint Creek and planned Crooked Bridge Park improvements), cultural tourists attracted to arts venues (reinforced by the Phelps Arts Center), and festival-goers seeking authentic community experiences (exemplified by Sauerkraut Weekend).

This tourism development supports housing demand by creating economic opportunities that can attract residents and justify mixed-use development. The county notes that tourism-supportive housing, particularly upper-floor units that can serve both residential and occasional lodging needs, helps communities like Phelps capture visitor spending while addressing local housing supply constraints.



HOUSING ASSESSMENT

OVERVIEW

Since 2000, the village of Phelps has seen very limited growth in its housing stock, adding only 18 units—a pattern consistent with Ontario County's Submarket Three, which added virtually no net housing units over the past decade. This constrained growth occurs within a county context where housing demand continues to outpace supply, with Ontario County projecting need for 2,491 new units by 2030.

The county's housing analysis identifies several trends that directly impact Phelps: aging demographics creating demand for accessible housing options; declining household sizes requiring smaller, more diverse housing types; and cost burden affecting 43.2% of county renters and 16.5% of county owners. Phelps' higher cost burden rates (66% of renters, 25% of owners) reflect the limited housing supply and position the village as a priority area for the county's housing strategies.

Ontario County's assessment emphasizes upper-floor renovations, workforce housing, and senior-friendly development as key solutions—strategies that align directly with Phelps' NY Forward Study Area potential for adaptive reuse and mixed-use conversions along Main Street.



HOUSING INVENTORY GROWTH

Strong growth in housing stock

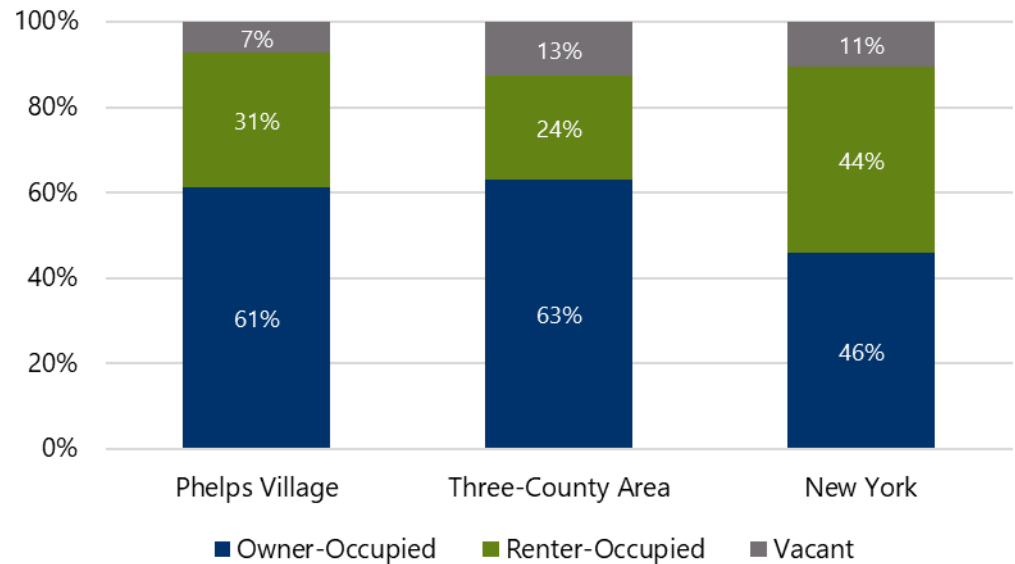
Since 2000, Phelps Village has increased its residential space by just 18 net new housing units, a mere 2% increase over 24 years. This limited growth stands in stark contrast to the broader Three-County Area, which posted a robust 18% gain, adding over 17,000 units in the same period.

New York State's housing stock also expanded more vigorously, growing by over 12% since 2000.

Phelps' current housing inventory shows a somewhat stronger share of rental units (31%) than is found in the broader Three-County Area (24%). This difference is largely due to the notably smaller portion of the local housing stock that stands vacant — just 7% for Phelps compared to 13% for the broader region.

Notably, the share of vacant units within the Phelps is due to a very limited number of vacation and seasonal homes as compared to the other geographies.

Housing Inventory, 2024



Source: Esri

Housing Inventory, 2000-2024

Geography	Total Units				Growth in Units		
	2000	2010	2020	2024	2000-2010	2010-2020	2020-2024
Phelps Village	876	879	887	894	0.3%	0.9%	0.8%
Three-County Area	96,214	105,292	110,938	113,338	9.4%	5.4%	2.2%
New York	7,679,306	8,108,102	8,488,066	8,622,250	5.6%	4.7%	1.6%

Source: Decennial Census; Esri



HOUSING MARKET

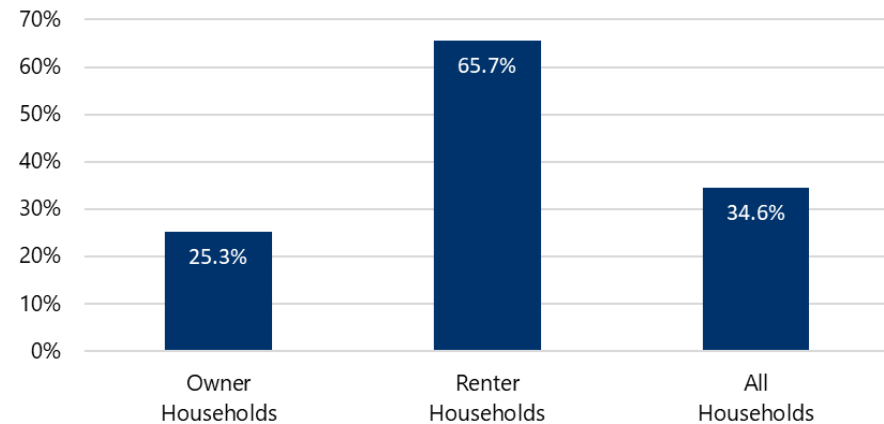
Cost Burdened housing market impacting households

One-third (35%) of Phelps households are *cost burdened*, meaning that over 30% of their income is dedicated to housing. As this share increases, fewer funds are available for other necessities such as food and healthcare.

For renters, the proportion of cost-burdened households jumps to two-thirds (66%). In addition, 11% of total renters are severely cost burdened, with more than half of their income going to housing.

While being cost burdened is less common for homeowners, it nevertheless continues to challenge one quarter (25%) of these households. Further, over half of these cost-burdened owner households (14% of the total) are severely cost burdened.

Cost Burdened Households in the Phelps Village - 2023



Source: ACS report B25070

Cost Burdened Households in the Phelps Village - 2023

	Owner Households	Renter Households	All Households
Moderately Cost Burdened	76	108	184
Percent of Total	11.4%	54.5%	21.3%
Severely Cost Burdened	92	22	114
Percent of Total	13.9%	11.1%	13.2%
Total Cost Burdened	168	130	298
Percent of Total	25.3%	65.7%	34.6%

Note: Cost Burdened households spend 30%-49% of income on housing. Severely Cost Burdened households spend 50% or more on housing.

Source: ACS reports B25070/B25091

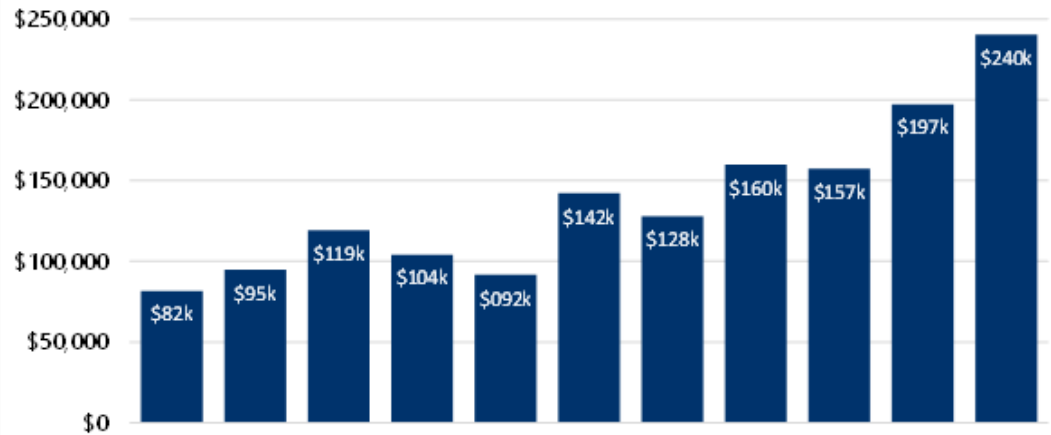
HOUSING MARKET

Owner Market

The cost of owning a home in Phelps has become increasingly challenging for potential buyers. The median price of a single-family home in the village jumped by 195% from 2014 to 2024.

Rising prices, along with higher mortgage rates, have pushed homeownership beyond the means of many would-be buyers

Single-Family Home Median Prices in the Town of Phelps



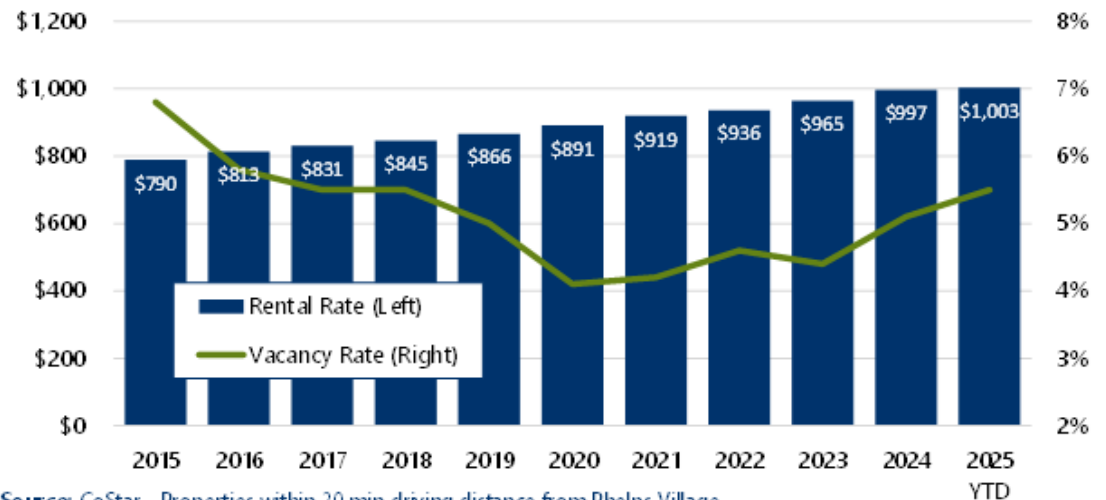
Rental Market

The rental market in the Phelps area* has remained balanced over the past decade, with vacancies largely holding between 4% and 6%.

Demand has remained sufficiently strong, however, to support a slight increase in rental rates in the area — up by a modest 27% over the past decade. That compares to a 39% increase in rental rates for Ontario County overall.

*Data includes properties within a 20-minute driving distance from Phelps Village

Rental Rates and Vacancies in the Phelps Area*



Source: CoStar - Properties within 20 min driving distance from Phelps Village

ADDITIONAL HOUSING OBSERVATIONS AND PROJECTED NEEDS

The Village of Phelps' slow-growing housing inventory has created a supply shortage that is felt within both rental and ownership markets. Vacancies remain suppressed, and there appear to be limited options available for residences.

Tightness in the market has pushed up prices, most notably for owner-occupancy properties. Affordability pressures have grown, and two-thirds of renters are now cost burdened. New residential development opportunities stand as one of the community's goals, and demand is anticipated over the coming several years for both owner and rental options.

The Town of Phelps is projected to need 40 new housing units over the next five years. This comes from a combination of both anticipated household growth and the likelihood that older, unmaintained units will fall into disrepair and need replacement.

Land availability is limited, and this creates a strong case for the redevelopment of existing properties and investing in infill housing. Along with the village's designation as a Pro-housing Community and its access to available infrastructure, the NY Forward Study Area stands as a prime location to build towards the new housing demand anticipated over the coming five years.

Notably, one-third of all the anticipated new housing demand is expected to come from renters, positioning the NY Forward Study Area as a prime location for growth. The Study Area's historic mixed-use buildings offer an opportune location for the development of upper-floor apartments. This approach makes the best use of existing space while adding value to the village's historic buildings. This type of added residential use would spur greater economic activity downtown, creating enhanced activity in shops, restaurants, and arts venues.

These projections align with Ontario County's broader housing strategy, which identifies need for 3,264 additional owner-occupied units and 494 rental units countywide by 2040. Significantly, the county projects that 60% of new housing construction should target the senior market, with 2,580 new senior homeownership units and 810 senior rental units needed.

Phelps' demographic profile—with 28% of residents over 60—positions the village to capture a meaningful share of this senior housing demand. The county specifically recommends communities like Phelps pursue 'senior-friendly housing formats, such as single-story designs or buildings with accessible features, will help address the village's aging population and support aging-in-place goals.'

The village's walkable downtown, proximity to healthcare services, and cultural amenities like the Phelps Arts Center make it particularly attractive for the county's identified senior housing market, which the assessment notes often prioritizes 'walkable, amenity-rich neighborhoods with design features suitable for senior living.'

Five Year Residential Development Needs for the Town of Phelps

Demand	Owners	Renters	Total
Household Growth	14	3	17
Replacement	13	10	23
Total	27	13	40

Source: Camoin Associates



RETAIL MARKET AND SERVICES ANALYSIS

A retail gap analysis identifies the amount of retail goods and services spending by residents living in a specific geography, in this case the 14532 ZIP Code area, that they are spending outside of that area (and is therefore “leaking” out of the area rather than being spent at local businesses). Leakage occurs for a number of reasons, which may include specific types of stores and service providers not being located within a reasonable distance, or businesses may be present but don’t align with the preferences of local households (price point, variety, quality, etc.). Residents may also choose to purchase goods online and have them delivered directly to their homes.

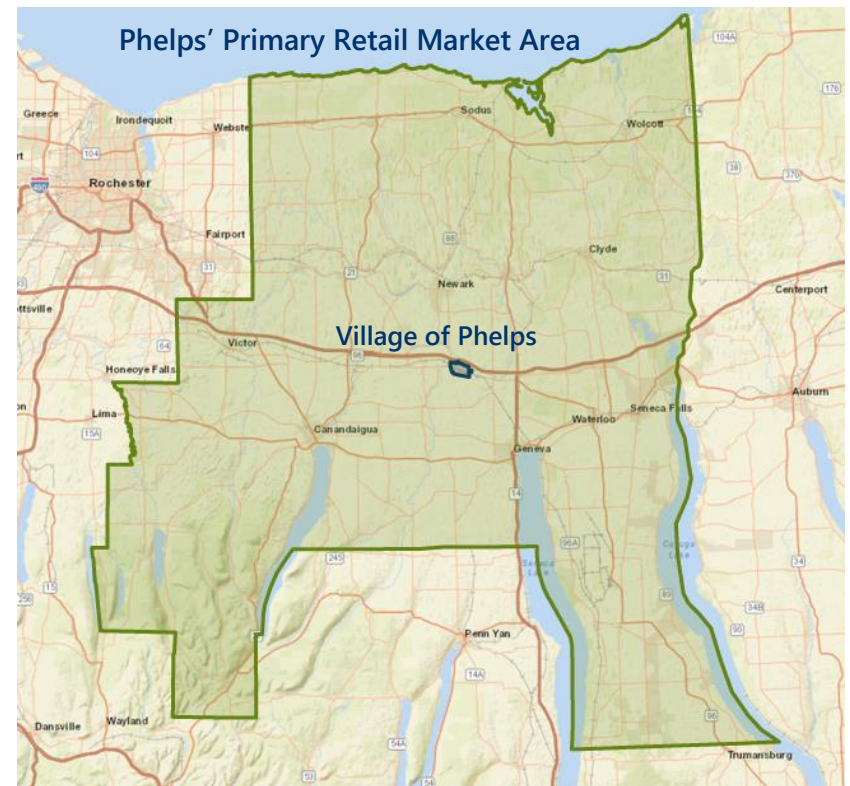
As there is a wide variety of reasons for retail leakage, it is typically not possible to “recapture” all the spending that is leaking out of an area. However, it is usually possible for new (or expanded) businesses to recapture a portion of that leakage. This discussion examines the specific retail sectors in which there is currently retail leakage in the Phelps market area and identifies the types and numbers of new businesses that might be supported by recapturing a portion of retail spending leakage.

Phelps’ Primary Market Trade Area

This leakage analysis is based on the Primary Retail Trade Area specified as the Three-County Area, including:

- Ontario County
- Seneca County
- Wayne County

The Primary Retail Market Area was defined as the area from which most customers would be expected to be drawn for retail and services, such as those needed on a frequent basis (e.g. pharmacy, convenience store, etc.), but also as potential destination retail opportunities that may be able to draw customers from further away.

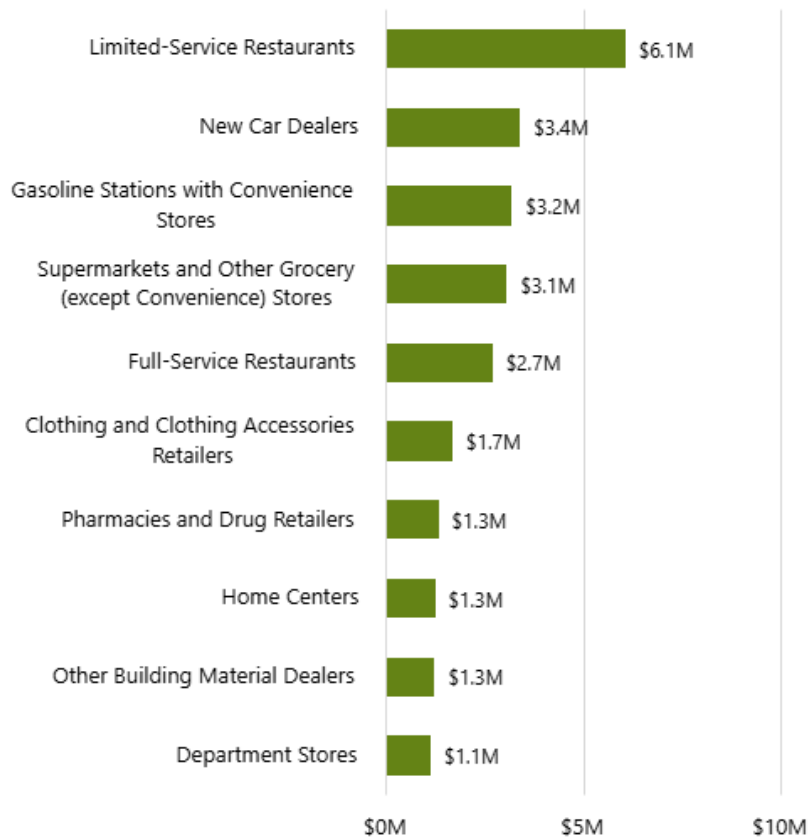


RETAIL GAP ANALYSIS

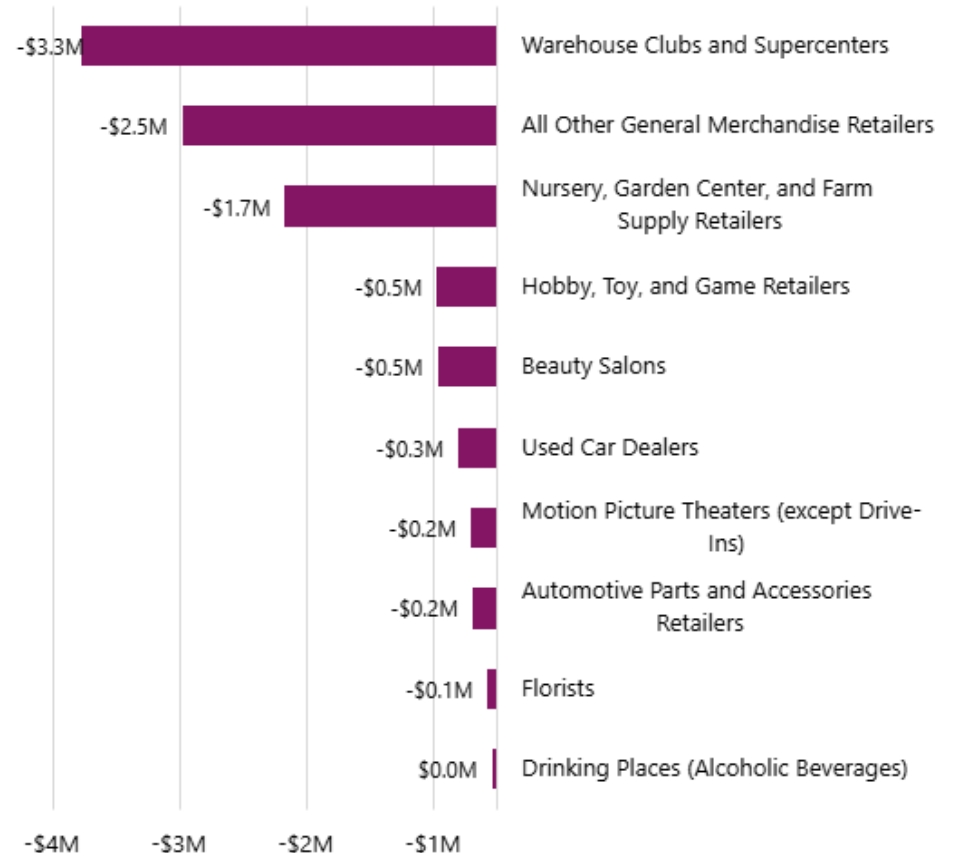
A well-served retail market

The gap analysis shows that the Phelps trade area is well served by existing retail offerings, including warehouse clubs and supercenters, all other general merchandise retailers, and nursery and garden centers. However, local residents spend substantial amounts outside of the Phelps area on both limited- and full-service restaurants, new car dealerships, supermarkets, and other grocery stores.

Retail Gap in Phelps: Top 10 Leakage Industries



Retail Gap in Phelps: Top 10 Surplus Industries



RETAIL MARKET AND OPPORTUNITY

Consumer Preferences of Village Residents:

- Family-oriented purchases and activities
 - Value time at home
 - Enjoy “Family Restaurants”
- Well Connected with Many Screens
 - Online Gaming
 - Television Programming
- Outdoor activities and sports
 - Swimming, Golf
 - Team Sports
- High vehicle ownership
- DIY House Maintenance and Gardening
- High Participation in Community Activities

Opportunity for dining and select retail

Specific types of retail and service businesses were examined to determine if there is market potential for growth. Limited-service restaurants show notable levels of sales leakage as compared to the average sales per business, indicating that the local area is likely underserved by restaurants, with local households spending approximately \$6.1 million at limited-service restaurants located outside of the 14532 area. Convenience stores are another category with significant sales leakage, with local households spending approximately \$3.3 million outside of the area each year. While capturing a substantial portion of this leakage (35% is the recapture value used) may not be sufficient to support an entirely new business within the study area, the analysis shows sufficient demand to allow for the expansion of existing retailers within the market area. A breakdown of the retail and service sectors with an opportunity to capture existing sales leakage is presented below.

New/Expanding Business Opportunities

NAICS	Description	2024 Total Demand	2024 Total Sales	Retail Leakage (Surplus)	35% Recapture	Average Sales per Business*	New/Expanding Business Opportunities**
458110	Clothing and Clothing Accessories Retailers	\$8,143,000	\$393,000	\$7,750,000	\$2,712,500	\$1,538,000	1.8
812113	Nail Salons	\$1,619,000	\$227,000	\$1,392,000	\$487,200	\$300,000	1.6
722511	Full-Service Restaurants	\$23,944,000	\$18,271,000	\$5,672,000	\$1,985,200	\$1,896,000	1.0
457110	Gasoline Stations with Convenience Stores	\$7,997,000	\$4,269,000	\$3,728,000	\$1,304,800	\$1,286,000	1.0
722513	Limited-Service Restaurants	\$26,433,000	\$20,971,000	\$5,462,000	\$1,911,700	\$2,214,000	0.9

***Note:** Average sales for businesses in Two-County Area

****Note:** Values greater than 1.0 indicate potential number of new businesses supported. Positive values less than 1.0 indicate strong support for expansion of existing businesses.

Source: Lightcast, Camoin Associates



Opportunities for Tourism — Visitor Profiles

The Campground Voyager

Outdoor and RV Camping Enthusiast

Age: 35-70

Travel Style: Families, Couples, Retirees

Motivation: Flexible, low-cost travel; time in nature; bonding over shared experiences

Needs & Interests:

- Full hookup RV sites or cozy cabins
- Pet-friendly spaces and kid-friendly amenities
- Clean bathhouses, laundry, and relaxing outdoor spaces
- Local attractions to explore between campground stays

Alignment with Phelps, NY:

- **Junius Ponds Cabins & Campground** offers a relaxing base with family amenities and easy access to the Finger Lakes
- **FLX Retreats at Heritage Lake** appeals to nature-focused travelers seeking scenic, creative lodging
- **Close to Finger Lakes Wine Trail** and outlet shopping for day excursions

The Spirit Seeker

Craft Beverage Tourist & Fan

Age: 28-55

Travel Style: Couples, Friend Groups, or Solo Travelers

Motivation: Seeking authentic, locally made food and drink experiences

Needs & Interests:

- Craft distilleries, wineries, and tasting experiences
- Knowledgeable staff and behind-the-scenes tours
- Unique products to take home
- Charming Towns to explore between tastings
- Nearby lodging or camping options

Alignment with Phelps, NY:

- **Home to Smokin' Tails Distillery** offers craft spirits, BBQ, and relaxed rural vibe
- **Easy Access to the Larger Finger Lakes** wine and craft beverage region
- **RV parks and vacation rentals** support overnight visitors

The Sauerkraut Loyalist

Festival-goer and Community Event Supporter

Age: 25-65

Travel Style: Families, Multi-Generational Travelers, Locals, and Expats Returning to the Area

Motivation: Nostalgia, tradition, family fun, and quirky experiences

Needs & Interests:

- Engaging community events and local vendors
- Parade, live music, and kid-friendly activities
- Traditional foods and quirky, Instagram-worthy moments
- Opportunities for small-town charm and rural scenery

Alignment with Phelps, NY:

- **Phelps Sauerkraut Festival**, a beloved annual celebration with small-town flavor
- **Combines well** with visits to local farms, roadside stands, or distilleries



Opportunities for Tourism — Visitor Profiles

The Campground Voyager

Goal: Enhance the camping experience with amenities and programming.

Nature Based Programming – Guided hikes, evening bonfires, equipment rentals

Interactive Agri-tourism – Coordinate farm visits, berry picking, cider tasting

Pop-up Food and Craft Events – Rotating schedule of food trucks, “Wine & Fire” nights with local producers

Creative Lodging – Glamping, Tiny Cabins, Treehouses (Instagram worthy spaces)

Wellness-focused – Morning Yoga, nature meditation, paint-n-camp, forest bathing

The Spirit Seeker

Goal: Connect the craft beverage experience to a Phelps experience.

Exclusive Phelps-only Access – Behind the scenes tours and pairings, meet the makers events, limited edition bottles

Anchoring Downtown Activities – Sip and stroll events with music/activities, pop-up stores

Curate Lodging + Beverage Packages – Partner with campgrounds for “Sip & Stay” bundles, ride car service, picnic-ready kits with local products, Spa/wellness additions for girls’ weekends

The Sauerkraut Loyalist

Goal: Tap into nostalgia, love of quirky charm, and desire for multigenerational, small-town fun.

Encourage Return-Trips – Seasonal mini-events with similar quirky vibe and connected theme

Enhance Awareness – Mini-documentaries or storyboards around downtown, Kraut-focused products offered year-round

KEY OBSERVATIONS

TAKEAWAYS AND OPPORTUNITIES

The Village of Phelps is undergoing a strategic revitalization rooted in its small-town charm, historic assets, and growing capacity to serve as a regional destination. With its walkable downtown centered along Route 96, direct access to I-90, and location within the scenic Finger Lakes region, Phelps is leveraging state support, community input, and targeted investments to reposition its core for residential, economic, and tourism growth. Anchored by strong homeownership, a tightly-knit civic culture, and a historic built environment, Phelps has created momentum through its NY Forward designation, façade and streetscape improvements, and cultural asset development such as the Phelps Arts Center and Community Center.

Cultural and recreational amenities are a growing draw. The Phelps Arts Center, the Phelps-Clifton Springs Community Theatre, and unique community events like the Sauerkraut Weekend festival provide strong cultural anchors that can be expanded and more deeply promoted. Planned investments in Crooked Bridge Park, including kayak launches, nature trails, and event space enhancements, will further diversify Phelps' recreation-based tourism offerings. These improvements support not only tourism but also quality of life for residents, reinforcing a "live-work-visit" strategy.

These local opportunities align with Ontario County's comprehensive housing strategy, which identifies similar challenges and solutions across the region. The county's analysis reinforces Phelps' approach by recommending identical strategies: adaptive reuse of historic buildings, upper-floor apartment conversions, mixed-use development supporting walkability, and senior-friendly housing options.

The county's projection of 250 new housing units needed annually provides regional context for Phelps' 40-unit, five-year projection. As one of 18 county subdivisions, Phelps' proportional share reflects both the village's current market position and its potential to capture growth through strategic downtown revitalization that serves broader county housing needs while maintaining local character.

Economic leakage analysis reveals local demand for dining, entertainment, and specialty retail, creating ideal conditions for tourism-supportive businesses to recapture local spending, particularly in limited-service restaurants, grocery stores, and convenience stores. These gaps signal high demand for everyday goods and dining, positioning Phelps for targeted small business growth. Façade improvements, business development incentives, and proactive zoning updates can enable retail expansion while preserving the community's historic aesthetic.

Establishments such as cafés, farm-to-table restaurants, tasting rooms, and artisan boutiques could thrive in the village's historic core, especially if paired with experiential offerings like cooking classes, craft production, or guided heritage tours. The ongoing NY Forward investments and branding work present timely opportunities to align new business development with visitor needs. Opportunities for tourism growth are further bolstered by Phelps' strategic location near the New York State Thruway and its proximity to wine trails, bike paths, and waterways. Enhancing trail connectivity to Ontario Pathways and building out infrastructure like wayfinding, EV chargers, and bike amenities can help draw active travelers.



Demographic shifts, including declining household size and a growing senior population, are reshaping the village's housing and service needs. Despite a 2% housing stock increase since 2000, Phelps now faces clear demand for diverse housing options. Affordability challenges are evident—especially for renters, 66% of whom are cost-burdened—but the market is primed for adaptive reuse and infill development. The NY Forward Study Area, in particular, offers a compelling opportunity to activate upper-floor apartments and pursue mixed-use conversions that enhance livability and support commercial vitality. Projections call for at least 40 new housing units in the next five years, with one-third of the anticipated demand focused on rentals.

The village also benefits from a robust civic infrastructure, including full fiber-optic internet coverage, modern waste management facilities, and an efficient Department of Public Works. These assets support both residential quality of life and economic expansion. In the transportation and warehousing sector, anchored by Wadhams Enterprises, Phelps demonstrates above-average employment concentration, highlighting a strategic advantage for future logistics and industrial activity. Additionally, the presence of advanced manufacturers and quarrying operations adds economic depth.

Tourism represents a transformative opportunity. Phelps' natural and cultural assets, like the Flint Creek waterfall, restored Phelps Hotel, and planned Crooked Bridge Park amenities, provide a strong foundation for outdoor recreation, heritage tourism, and arts-based experiences. With strategic enhancements such as kayak launches, trail connections to Ontario Pathways, and expanded arts programming, Phelps is poised to become a vibrant "third place" in the Finger Lakes region. Curated tourism itineraries, culinary offerings, and downtown lodging, particularly upper-floor units, can increase visitor spending while reinforcing the town's cultural identity.

Looking forward, Phelps' continued success will depend on leveraging its designation as a Pro-Housing Community, sustaining public-private partnerships, and aligning local investments with long-term regional trends. By pursuing infill housing, activating underutilized buildings, addressing retail gaps, and enhancing public spaces, the village can ensure that its historic downtown remains a welcoming, dynamic, and inclusive hub for residents and visitors alike.

APPENDIX: DATA SOURCES



Lightcast (formerly Emsi Burning Glass) is a global leader in labor market analytics, offering a data platform that gives a comprehensive, nuanced, and up-to-date picture of labor markets at all scales from national to local. Key components of the platform include traditional labor market information, job postings analytics, talent profile data, compensation data, and skills analytics. Lightcast integrates government data with information from online job postings, talent profiles, and resumes to produce timely intelligence on the state of the labor market. Job and compensation data is available by industry, occupation, educational program, and skill type. [Click to learn more.](#)



Esri ArcGIS Business Analyst combines proprietary statistical models covering demographic, business, and spending data with map-based analytics to offer insights on market opportunities for industries, businesses, and sites. Business Analyst integrates datasets covering a wide range of topics including demographics, consumer spending, market potential, customer segmentation, business locations, traffic counts, and crime indexes, which can be overlaid spatially to produce customizable maps and uncover market intelligence. Data can be pulled for standard and custom geographies, allowing for valuable comparison between places. [Click to learn more.](#)



CoStar is a comprehensive source of commercial real estate intelligence, offering an inventory of over 6.4 million commercial properties spanning 135 billion square feet of space in 390 markets across the US. CoStar covers office, retail, industrial, hospitality, and multifamily markets. Property- and market-level data on absorption, occupancy, lease rates, tenants, listings, and transactions are researched and verified through calls to property managers, review of public records, visits to construction sites, and desktop research to uncover nearly real-time market changes. [Click to learn more.](#)



Conducted every ten years in years ending in zero, the **US Decennial Census of Population and Housing** is a complete count of each resident of the nation based on where they live on April 1st of the Census year. The Constitution mandates the enumeration to determine how to apportion the House of Representatives among the states. The latest release of the 2020 Census contains data for a limited number of variables, including: total population by race/ethnicity, population under 18, occupied and vacant housing units, and group quarters population. [Click to learn more.](#)

OnTheMap | US Census Bureau



OnTheMap is a tool developed through the US Census Longitudinal Employer-Household Dynamics (LEHD) program that helps to visualize Local Employment Dynamics (LED) data about where workers are employed and where they live. It offers visual mapping capabilities for data on age, earnings, industry distributions, race, ethnicity, educational attainment, and sex. [Click to learn more.](#)



