

Creating Opportunity and Building Community through Food

The Poughkeepsie Open Kitchen (POK), a shared-use commercial kitchen, is one project within Hudson River Housing's renovation of the Poughkeepsie Underwear Factory. The POK fuels sustainable economic growth and celebrates the rich cultural assets in the city of Poughkeepsie.



The Poughkeepsie Open Kitchen (POK), a shared-use commercial kitchen for small food entrepreneurs, is one project within Hudson River Housing's historic renovation of the Poughkeepsie Underwear Factory. The renovated Poughkeepsie Underwear Factory is a 22,000 square foot mix-use building, with two thirds of the space as apartments and one third of the space as a commercial community hub. The POK is part of Hudson River Housing's broader efforts to celebrate the rich assets of Poughkeepsie's Middle Main Street district, and to provide food entrepreneurs and start-ups with an affordable space to develop and grow their business.

Located in the heart of the Hudson Valley, the POK is surrounded by culinary institutions, local farms, food businesses, and diverse ethnic cultures, and is centrally situated in the Middle Main district of Poughkeepsie. According to the 2014 Poughkeepsie Plenty: A Community Food Assessment Report, the Middle Main neighborhood has a poverty rate of 33.6% and is in close proximity to a USDA defined food desert area in the city of Poughkeepsie. Additionally, it also has a higher percentage of Hispanic population (75%-100%) in comparison with the rest of the city because of an influx of a large Oaxacan community over the years. Given the Middle Main neighborhood's geographical and demographic context, the POK is designed to be a space that fuels sustainable economic growth in the city of Poughkeepsie, celebrates Middle Main's rich ethnic culture, and brings the rich bounty of food in the Hudson Valley into the city of Poughkeepsie.

The POK is a full size commissary commercial kitchen available for community rental 24/7 at an affordable hourly or monthly rate. It was designed in collaboration with a team of professors and students from the Culinary Institute of America. The POK is well-suited for

caterers, food truck operators, retail or wholesalers, cooking or nutrition instructors and food concept developers. It shares the same space on the first floor with the North River Roasters Coffee House, which is also available for rental for events, conferences, lectures, parties, and even pop-up restaurants for chefs to pilot a new concept. North River Roasters, a social enterprise, sells and brews fair trade coffee and partners with Hudson River Housing's employment training program to provide work experiences to those facing barriers to employment. The shared space not only fosters interactions between the employees in North River Roasters' training program and the larger food community of the Hudson Valley to give them exposure to kitchen operation and business development, but also gathers diverse groups of community members every day, strengthening community pride and connectedness in the Middle Main neighborhood.

Since POK's opening in March 2017, it already has 8-10 active kitchen members using the kitchen. Here are some of our kitchen members:

Underground Chef uses the POK every week to cook locally sourced and wholesome vegan/vegetarian meals. Operating with two partners, it provides catering services to local events and sells food at two local farmers markets in the city and town of Poughkeepsie.

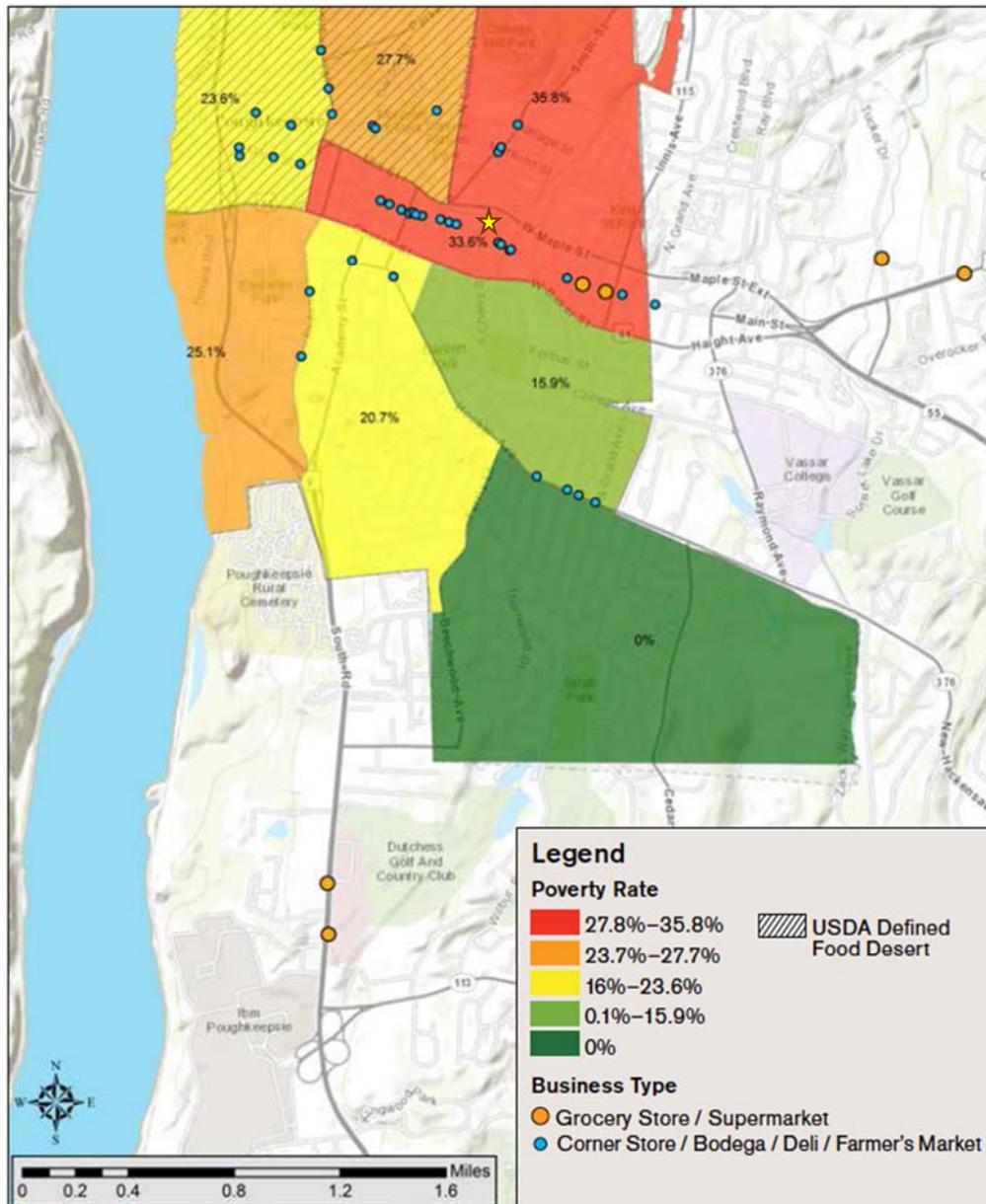
Ever tempted to eat your raw cookie dough before it gets put into an oven? Founded by a registered nurse, Cookie in the Raw prepares chocolate chip, oatmeal, and your classic sugar cookie dough in the POK and sells them online on their website.

Earth Wind and Fuego prepares food that is free of gluten, refined sugar, soy, hormones, antibiotics and preservatives. It prepares light meals, conducts cooking classes and does catering prep at the POK.

Aside from the POK and the Coffee House, the Poughkeepsie Underwear Factory's commercial hub also houses art and printmaking studios, and the a space for a youth arts non-profit in the city of Poughkeepsie.

We are capitalizing on this building's history as an innovative center of industry, and bringing it back to life as a dynamic and inclusive community space and a great place to live. The Poughkeepsie Underwear Factory joined the National Register of Historic Places in 1982, and Hudson River Housing's work attempts to restore the Underwear Factory to its rightful place as a key part of the social and economic fabric of the Middle Main neighborhood. The POK, in particular, is a collaborative and creative space that harnesses our collective love of food to build community pride and connectedness. This project is ripe with opportunity for those seeking a forward-thinking, innovative space to collaborate, build community, and achieve their **#poughtential!**

Map 1. City of Poughkeepsie Food Stores and Poverty Rate by Census Tract



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2008-10 American Community Survey 3-year estimates. Store locations are as of September 2012.

Figure 1: Map showing poverty rate % and USDA Defined Food Dessert Area in the City of Poughkeepsie. Source: http://www.newpaltz.edu/benjamincenter/discussion_brief_11.pdf

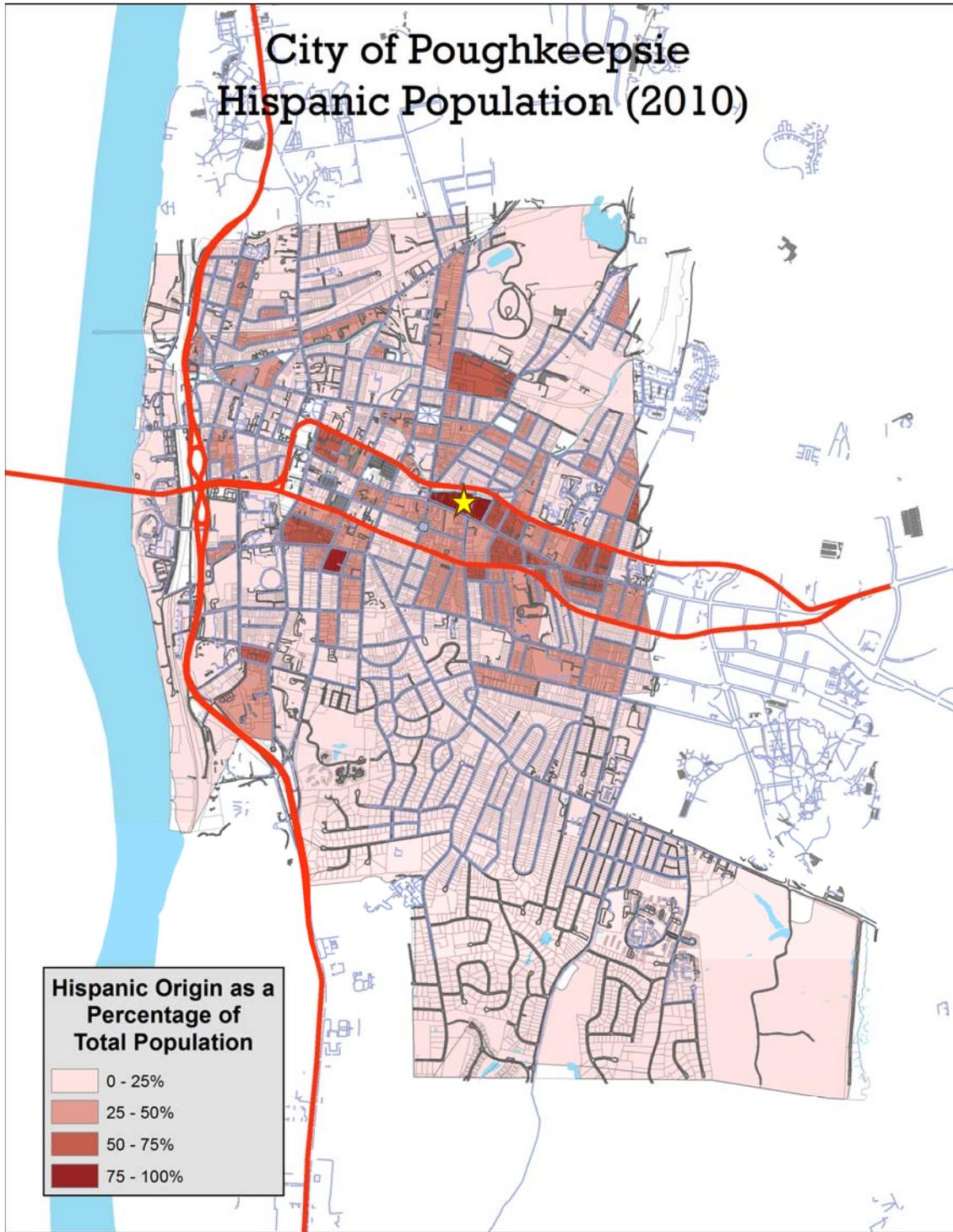


Figure 2: Map Showing Hispanic Population Distribution in the City of Poughkeepsie.
 Source: <https://hawksites.newpaltz.edu/currents/files/2017/04/Median-Income-23om6wn.png>

★ Poughkeepsie Underwear Factory