

1. Historical Background

Sullivan County was established through an act of the New York State Legislature on March 27, 1809. The County has a land area of 1,011 square miles and is located just beyond the New York metropolitan region. The terrain is generally hilly, with higher elevations in the northern portion of the County – elevation ranges from 460 to over 3,000 feet above sea level.

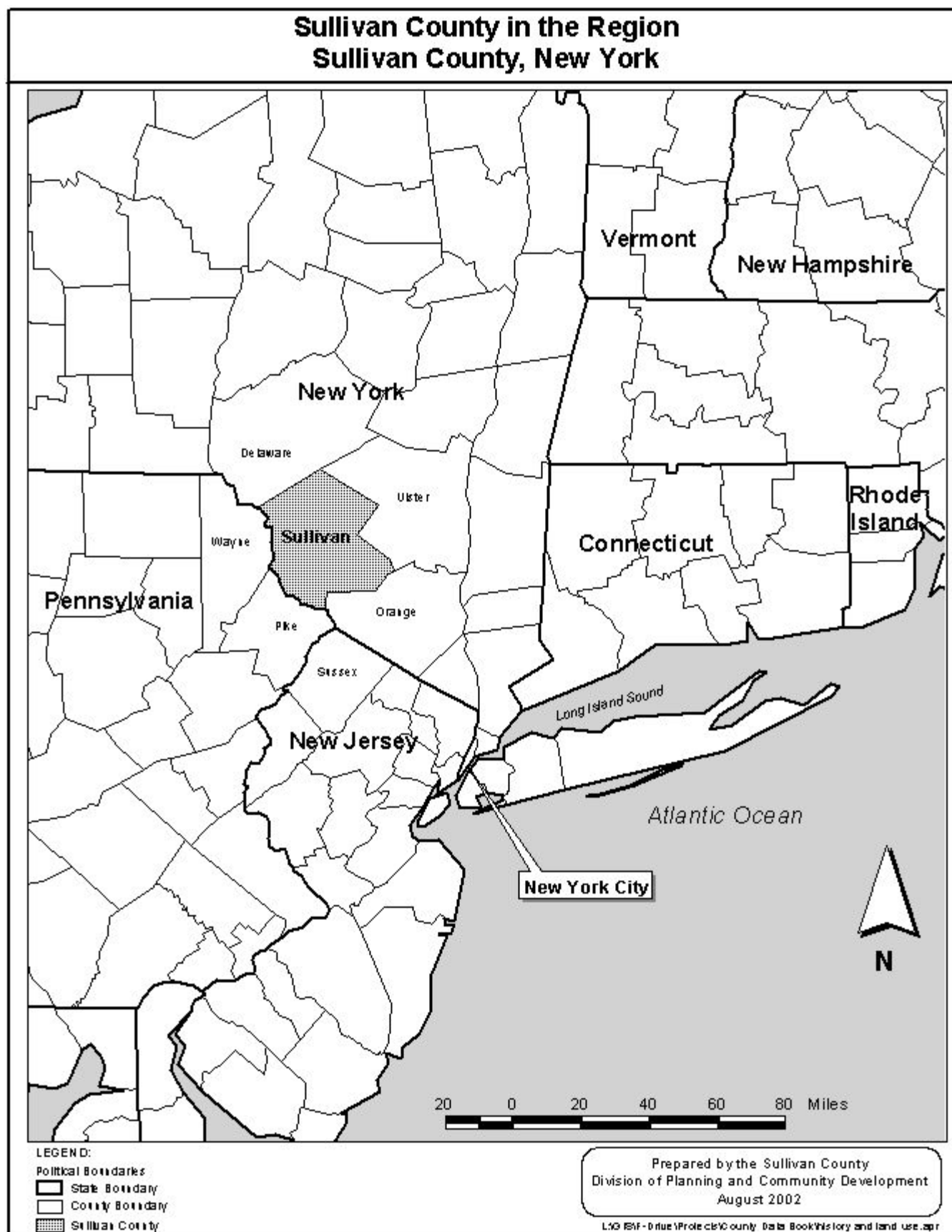


The first inhabitants of Sullivan County were the Lenape Native Americans and European settlement began in the early 1600's. "Settlement before 1790 was slow. The earliest settlers were Dutch from the Hudson River Valley, Connecticut Yankees and New Jerseymen. The Germans were among the early settlers. The Cohecton-Newburgh turnpike and D&H Canal that linked the Hudson and Delaware rivers stimulated growth and brought in many Irish workers. However, the Erie Canal by opening the West caused development to leapfrog over Sullivan County. The building of the railroads brought new stimulus to its growth. Early in the 19th Century, the Jewish Agricultural Society settled immigrants on Sullivan County Farms. Some of these farmers took borders and the outcome was the great development of the resort industry."¹

During the height of the Resort era in the 1950's and 1960's, the County boasted hundreds of small hotels that catered to persons from throughout the northeast. Since that time the tourism industry in the County has gone through a slow but steady transition from resort-based tourism to eco-tourism. The agricultural sector of the County's economy has also become more diversified over time. While tourism and agriculture remain the two primary industries in the County, there has been a slow but steady diversification in the County's economic base. Within the County, there is an emerging Finance Insurance and Real Estate (FIRE) sector, new warehouse distribution facilities, arts & entertainment, small high technology companies, specialized manufacturing industries, etc. This diversification is healthy and has been fostered by the Sullivan County Legislature along with local, state and federal economic development agencies.

In the early 1970's New York State Route 17, a four-lane limited access roadway was completed, greatly increasing the accessibility of the County to the New York metropolitan region and the Southern Tier. In 1997, Route 17 was officially designated Interstate 86 (I-86). Improvements to this roadway to bring it up to interstate standards have been designed and conversion to I-86 is anticipated before the end of this decade. The I-86 designation coupled with advanced telecommunication infrastructure opens up two superhighways to the County. This infrastructure will have a profound effect on our growth while creating new opportunities for economic development. With most of the land in the County still undeveloped, we can encourage new growth while preserving our history, scenic beauty and quality of life. The County is committed to doing so.

¹ Source: Sullivan County Comprehensive Master Plan 1963.



Land Area Sullivan County, New York

	Total Area (Square Miles)	Acres	Percent of Total County
Sullivan County	1,011.3	647,212.8	100.0%
Bethel Town	93.5	59,846.4	9.2%
Callicoon Town	49.6	31,769.6	4.9%
Cochecton Town	38.1	24,358.4	3.8%
Delaware Town	35.1	22,444.8	3.5%
Fallsburg Town	79.2	50,713.6	7.8%
Forestburgh Town	56.7	36,262.4	5.6%
Fremont Town	51.4	32,876.8	5.1%
Highland Town	50.6	32,390.4	5.0%
Liberty Town	81.9	52,403.2	8.1%
Lumberland Town	50.4	32,268.8	5.0%
Mamakating Town	100.0	64,019.2	9.9%
Neversink Town	86.9	55,584.0	8.6%
Rockland Town	97.3	62,252.8	9.6%
Thompson Town	90.5	57,907.2	8.9%
Tusten Town	50.2	32,115.2	5.0%

Source: Sullivan County Department of Public Works. Prepared by Sullivan County Division of Planning & Community Development.