

New Paltz Open Space Plan

A Framework for Conservation



For the Town and Village of New Paltz, New York

May 2006

Prepared by Behan Planning Associates, LLC

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FOREWORD

Why plan for conservation in New Paltz?

The New Paltz community is fortunate to possess many wonderful open spaces - its farms, scenic views, and streams, to name a few - that are widely recognized as important for food production, tourism, and their environmental and economic values. To date, approximately 2,800 acres of this network can be considered permanently protected. The New Paltz Open Space Plan (“the plan”) is a framework and premier opportunity to ensure that the other locally-valued open space is identified clearly and comprehensively, with a plan of action for aiding in its conservation.

The plan is a call to action, and such action is urgently needed if New Paltz is to retain the open space character that makes it special. Open space is part of the community’s environmental, economic and cultural fabric, as evidenced by the tourists who flock to the community throughout the year, and by the pride that local residents of all persuasions take in their landscape. But development pressures have increased so much in the past few years that this landscape, and the values it bolsters, are threatened. Taking steps to conserve these resources now will benefit New Paltz in many ways, including economically. Conservation of open space will guide new development to the best locations so that it does not result in drastically increased municipal costs, for roads, sewer, water, school, police and fire services.

The plan includes an action-oriented set of recommendations that include the following:

- Creating and implementing a local land conservation program that works with willing landowners to conserve valued open space.
- Developing conservation financing, to enable the community to purchase open space and conservation easements from willing landowners.
- Planning for development in New Paltz that respects and conserves open space, by working with developers and landowners through the site planning process when development proposals are put forward.

Open Space Conservation is Cost Effective

Planning for conservation takes as much time, effort and investment as planning for development – but the good news is that planning and investment in the community’s open space resources offers significant benefits to the fiscal health of the community. Many communities have found that conserving land is an investment in the future and can reduce future tax burdens.

- A study by the New Jersey Office of State Planning found that communities would save \$1.3 billion in infrastructure costs over 20 years by limiting unplanned sprawl type of development.
- Without the option of the Town’s investment of \$9 million in open space and farmland protection, a study for the Town of Warwick, Orange County, NY estimated that continued development would cost taxpayers an estimated \$4 to \$5 million per year in additional school taxes.
- When the Town of Pittsford, in Monroe County, NY reviewed the fiscal impact of their \$9.9 million dollar open space bond, it was determined that the approximate \$64 per year

cost to the average household would be far less than doing nothing about open space, as the cost of community services to serve that additional development would impact the average household about \$250 per year in new taxes for schools, road maintenance, and other community services.

- In Webster, Monroe County, NY, the 2002 fiscal model prepared for the Town and school district showed that for every dollar invested in open space conservation, Town residents would save an equal dollar in avoided costs associated with growth. Hence, in that community, there was no net cost of investing in open space land acquisitions. Open space protection can balance and reduce the future costs of growth. Webster voters approved a \$5.9 million bond program in 2004, and subsequently have secured matching federal, New York State, and Monroe County grants to leverage local dollars to meet their program budget of close to \$7.9 million.

Open Space is Important to Citizens—Locally and Nationally

Respondents to a community survey conducted by the New Paltz Open Space Committee indicated support for investing in open space conservation. More than 67% of the respondents to the 2003 mailed survey indicated their household would be willing to pay some level of tax increase to support open space protection. Of those who would accept a tax increase for open space, about two of three respondents supported a range between \$10 to \$100 per year, with another third supporting a range from \$100 to \$300.

New Paltz's interest is not an isolated one. Americans recognize the value in investing in conservation. Across the nation, voters are willing to put their money where conservation interests are, according to the Trust for Public Land (TPL), the national organization that tracks these conservation finance ballot measures. In 2005, voters in 22 states approved 106 of 134 ballot measures: a 79 percent passage rate. The 2005 measures will generate over \$1.7 billion in new conservation funding. Previously, from 1993 to 2004, communities generated \$29 billion through conservation finance ballot measures. According to TPL, a full 77 percent of these land conservation ballot measures were approved.

In November 2005, voters in the Town of Beekman, Dutchess County, supported a \$3 million open space bond by a 2.5 to 1 margin. "Preserving open space is such an important thing," stated one of the Town council members, "not only for community character but the economic impact it has in the long term. It's such a great investment." (Poughkeepsie Journal, November 9, 2005).

In Red Hook, Dutchess County, voters approved a \$3.5 million open space bond by an approximately 80 percent margin in 2003 to purchase the development rights from interested Town farmers. The Town's investment was leveraged with dollars from a Dutchess County matching grant program, and follows significant investment by Scenic Hudson, a regional conservation organization as well. As of the date of this report, Red Hook has protected two farms through a purchase of development rights program, was working on additional farm protection projects, had adopted cluster zoning, and was working on additional initiatives to address the changing nature of agriculture and continuing growth pressures.

Another regional example, the citizens in Warwick, Orange County voted in favor of a bond for about \$9 million for the purchase of development rights on farmland in 2000. The local goal is to protect approximately 3,000 acres of the Town's farmland and open space.

Open Space Conservation Makes a Community More Economically Competitive

Open space conservation is sound economic development policy. In the Sierra Nevada region of California, for example, the Sierra Business Council, "...explicitly rejects the notion that Sierra communities must choose between economic and environmental health. On the contrary, we view environmental quality as key to the Sierra Nevada's economic prosperity, and natural resource conservation as essential to building regional wealth. What defines our region, more than any fact or figure, is the dramatic beauty, ecological uniqueness, and natural bounty of the landscape."

Placer County, a fast-growing county in the Sierra Nevada region cites quality of life as the top reason companies like Oracle, NEC, and Hewlett Packard are moving to the county (Placer County Department of Economic Development, September, 2004). Marketing this quality of life includes a major focus on open space and recreation. The county has established the Placer Legacy project, an open space program to, "...maintain the county's high quality of life."

At home, Ulster County Development Corporation's website highlights the county's environment. "Our communities are adopting land-use and environment strategies that will benefit economic development and the environment for the long-term." Clearly, open space amenities provide quality of life benefits and contribute to the economic attractiveness of the town and county.

Retaining Farms Does Not Reduce the Property Tax Base

The Trust for Public Land conducted a study of Ulster County to explore strategies for the financing of the protection of lands such as parks and open space. To ensure that local taxpayers have the capacity to invest in open space along with other municipal needs, the 2005 draft report acknowledges that financing open space will require a multi-part strategy and contributions from many funding sources. The report identifies federal, State of New York, Ulster County, local county municipalities, and non-profit conservation partners. The New Paltz Open Space Committee has also identified the importance of New Paltz landowners, as current stewards of the land, as having an important role to play.

Much of the land identified in this plan as important for conservation in New Paltz is already receiving some type of tax abatement, e.g., as a working forest or as part of an agricultural operation. Should the Town purchase a conservation easement on a working farm, there would be no effect on the taxable value of the farm, as most farms receive an assessment set by state law, which is based on the agricultural productivity of the soils. For other open lands, the value of the land is taxed as vacant property. The vast majority of the Town's tax base comes from developed property, not vacant land. And, as noted above, increasing development can actually cause taxes to rise in order to provide community services.

Communities recognize that agricultural land uses generate value and support maintaining these types of land uses as an overall fiscally positive land use policy. A nearby example of this support is the Town of Montgomery, in Orange County, NY, which has protected about 1,200 acres through a purchase of development rights program with funding support from outside sources including the Open Space Institute.

Conserving Open Space Enhances Property Values

Open space resources fill an important role—in particular in a community like New Paltz, where these resources are so much a part of the landscape and life of residents and visitors. New Paltz citizens have long recognized the benefits of open space: social, cultural, environmental and economic.

Looking forward, New Paltz is poised for continued growth and development. The future character of New Paltz and associated property values will be dependent, in a large part, on how well the community manages that growth.

Communities that protect their resources as they grow become noteworthy from an economic perspective. These are not esoteric values. These are real values evidenced on a daily basis in the real estate marketplace. By conserving open space; views to the mountains, working farmlands, places to observe and enjoy wildlife, recreation areas, and by creating a trail system, the community has invested in securing its real estate value. Proximity to open space is a recognized economic amenity. Lands near and adjacent to open space and recreation amenities are higher in value than those that are distant or where these amenities are unavailable. Conserving open space resources in the community will help to protect and enhance residential values.

For example, a Boulder, Colorado realtor placed this statement prominently on its website: “The City and County of Boulder together own over 100,000 acres of pristine wildlife habitat and farmland, set aside as greenbelt/open space with an extensive trail system. As a result, Boulder County has avoided the housing sprawl plaguing much of the rest of the nation’s suburban areas. These lands are safe from future development and protect a lifestyle consistently rated among the highest in the country by national publications, such as Newsweek and Money Magazine.” (<http://www.martinsugg.com/>)

Many constituencies exist for sound open space investments. A recent article from the National Association of Homebuilders highlights the benefits of a comprehensive approach to open space planning. “From the builder’s perspective, an advantage of having a well-planned program of open space acquisition is that it removes the focus from a parcel-by-parcel attempt to stop development. In contrast, in the absence of an open space acquisition program, each development proposal is seen by the community as a threat to open space, and defeat of the development proposal is seen as the only way to preserve open space.” (National Association of Homebuilders, “Using Public Funds to Acquire Open Space”, November, 2005.)

Residential real estate located near open space can be more valuable than properties that have no nearby open space. Several studies have been conducted on the economic effect of greenbelts and nature preserves on property values. As reported in *The Economic Value of Open Space* (Wilder Research, 2005), the earliest study from Boulder, Colorado (Correll, et al., 1978), found that the existence of greenbelts (linear open space features such as trails or stream corridors) showed a beneficial impact on adjacent residential property values ranging from 8 to 32 percent. In a study on the effect of proximity to forest preserves from Grand Rapids Michigan, (Thorsnes, 2002), a premium of 19 to 35 percent in the value of lots bordering the preserve was found. In Portland, Oregon, a study on single family home sales (Lutzenhiser and Netusil, 2001) found that natural area parks could add up to 20 percent to the value of nearby homes, and that the beneficial effect extended farthest from large, natural parks relative to other open spaces.

Other elements that contribute to property value, including the availability of employment opportunities, proximity to transportation systems, and the quality of the school system are also

noteworthy. A quality open space system complements these other factors and helps to maintain and enhance property values in New Paltz.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

What is the Open Space Plan for New Paltz?

This open space plan is a community-driven response to protect New Paltz's unique character by balancing open space conservation with appropriate planning for future settlement. The culmination of an extensive public planning process starting in 2001, this plan presents the following components as a guiding framework for acting on open space conservation initiatives in New Paltz:

- An illustrated **2005 open space vision map** that synthesizes the most important resources and themes that were publicly identified as meriting some level of protection.
- **Additional resource synthesis maps** prepared in 2005 (specifically for protected lands, agricultural resources, cultural resources, natural features, and important habitats) are discussed in the report and provided in Appendix A as a reference. This digital data will be available to the Town and Village for future management, updating, and analysis. Notably, the data that was utilized to create these 2005 resource maps will need to be managed and maintained over time, and should be updated as land use, resource management, and ownership information changes.
- **Town-wide conservation goal of an additional 3,000 acres.** The plan includes acreage and resource conservation goals for the community to strive for, because setting goals inspires and motivates action, and establishes a basis for measuring success. This plan recommends the conservation of an additional 3,000 acres of open space in the Town and Village of New Paltz. Building on the 2,800 acres protected to date, this 3,000-acre milestone would provide conservation for nearly 25% of the overall Town and Village landscape. Achieving this goal would more than double the existing acres protected to date – advancing the community to a goal of protecting close to 6,000 acres out of the total of 22,848 acres combined for both the Town and Village.
- **The New Paltz open space vision utilizes a landscape approach.** The plan identifies seven defining character areas (meaning geographic areas) of the New Paltz landscape, which are illustrated on the 2005 Open Space Vision Map. The plan recommends milestones to work towards that will protect the important features of each of these seven areas. Each of the individual character areas is an important part of the balanced open space composition of New Paltz, and include:
 - The Shawangunk Ridge; with a recommended goal of conserving 500 additional acres
 - The Butternut-Canaan Foothills; with a goal of 500 additional acres
 - The Wallkill River Corridor and Flats; with a goal of 500 additional acres

- The Northern Woods and Eastern Wetlands which include the Plutarch wetlands complex; with a goal of 500 additional acres
 - The Orchards, Farms and Ridge-Views; with a goal of 1,000 additional acres
 - The Heart of New Paltz and the connections to and from the Village and Town, including trails and greenway links throughout the community
 - The Scenic Cultural Landscapes experienced along the many scenic roads in the community
- **Future conservation project selection criteria** are included in the plan for evaluating potential conservation projects for the Town and Village of New Paltz as landowner interest opportunities arise and financing opportunities are realized.
- The plan embraces a **range of landowner options for conservation**, including cooperative planning with individual landowners. The plan identifies a suite of alternatives for landowners to conserve their lands or to develop with sensitivity to the natural and cultural features of the landscape. This component of the plan recognizes that landowners need and want custom solutions and options depending on their needs and the value the community places on their lands. Whether through outright protection projects involving whole parcels, or portions of parcels, landowners and the community need help with land planning.

This plan outlines many tools and options that exist, which the community can pursue for New Paltz, such as, but not limited to the following:

- Purchase of conservation easements / development rights programs
 - Permanent and term conservation easements
 - Agricultural district benefits
 - Agricultural assessment
 - Lease of development rights
 - Right of first refusal
 - Assistance for farm business corporations
 - Resource-based or character-based conservation design guidelines
 - Town-financed conservation easement transaction costs and easement monitoring stewardship costs
 - Cooperative land conservation planning
 - Open space incentive zoning
 - Coordinated area-specific master planning
- The plan includes a summary of the **public process and landowner outreach** conducted, including the community survey.

Major Recommendations and Action Plan

Following is a summary of the plan's major recommendations for open space conservation. Section IV: Fulfilling the Community Vision, provides more detail on these recommendations.

1. Create and implement a local land conservation program

- Identify an entity or person to oversee implementation and ensure that the open space plan recommendations are acted upon.
- Conduct parcel rating using the draft resource criteria in the plan to identify future priority projects.
- Develop a local permanent conservation easement program and explore a range of conservation easement options with landowners.

2. Develop conservation financing

- Create fiscally smart investment in conservation and open space projects in a way that leverages local dollars to the fullest extent possible, and manages any tax impact burden on local citizens.
- Continue to make annual budget allocations for conservation projects and program delivery.
- Pursue a strategy for financing open space conservation projects, such as a municipal bond, within the next year.
- Pursue all relevant grants to match/implement land conservation and trails projects.

3. Conduct planning for the “settlement or development side” of land use for New Paltz

- Hire a land planning/design professional to provide conservation planning interpretation to implement the concepts and principles in the open space plan for conservation projects and to guide conservation planning and design during development projects.
- Conduct a community-wide build-out analysis to understand community capacity for growth and fiscal capacity.

Who Should Read This Plan?

The open space plan is intended for the collective community of the Town and Village of New Paltz: its residents, business owners, and landowners. Local elected officials, planning boards, zoning boards, and other boards and municipally-sponsored or appointed working committees will benefit and should read, understand and help to implement this plan as is applicable to their purview and overlapping interest. Neighboring municipalities, the State of New York and state agencies, Ulster County and county-wide agencies, regional municipal neighbors, as well as non-governmental entities, such as but not limited to the Wallkill Valley Land Trust, The Nature

Conservancy, and the Open Space Institute, are also encouraged to understand and complement the community's stated vision and goals.

Who Prepared This Plan?

This open space plan was created by a joint committee composed of citizens from the Village of New Paltz and the Town of New Paltz as a cooperative intermunicipal effort, primarily funded through the Town. The joint committee was aided by several community planning consultants throughout the project, including Allee King Rosen & Fleming (AKRF), Inc. (for inventory services in 2003), Shingebiss Associates (for fiscal / conservation finance research services in 2004), and culminating with final assistance from Behan Planning Associates, LLC (for open space planning consulting services and plan report preparation).

Related Plans and Policies

There are a variety of federal, state, county and local plans that have been completed, or are currently underway, in the region that are directly related to the New Paltz Open Space Plan. The Shawangunk Mountains Byway Regional Open Space Plan is being initiated by the Shawangunk Mountains Regional Partnership, made up of the nine towns and two villages which encircle the northern Shawangunk Mountains. Ulster County is currently in the process of developing an open space plan which will help to set a policy and implementation framework at the county level. In addition, the neighboring Towns of Gardiner and Marbletown are currently developing their own open space plans, and the Town of Lloyd is developing a comprehensive plan. These parallel processes have helped to highlight the importance of a regional approach and intermunicipal cooperation, as many open space resources cross municipal borders.

Other plans which are relevant to the New Paltz Open Space Plan, many of which are mentioned throughout this document, include, but are not limited to: Federal wetland and biodiversity policies, the New York State Open Space Conservation Plan, the New York Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan, the Hudson River greenway plans, the Ulster County Long-Range Transportation Plan, the Ulster County Priority Housing Strategies, the Shawangunk Scenic Byway Corridor Management Plan, Ulster County Intermunicipal Watershed Agreements, and the Palisades Interstate Park Commission's 21st Century Plan.

CONCLUSION

This local open space plan is a comprehensive summary of resources that reflect the best of the entire landscape of the Village and Town of New Paltz. It also establishes an implementation procedure through the lens of a locally created action plan. The open space plan prepared herein helps to frame the local values that reflect the diversity, variety, and richness of open space in New Paltz – as voiced and empowered by our community of citizens and local governments – and not just from outside entities, no matter how well-meaning, on New Paltz's behalf.

Several very important resources that lie (at least partly) within the municipal boundaries of New Paltz have been identified in the 2002 New York State Open Space Plan as worthy of protection. These include the Shawangunk Ridge, Hudson Valley farmland, and the Black Creek-Plutarch Wetlands complex. Our current understanding of local open space priorities is contained within the Town of New Paltz 1995 Comprehensive Plan, the 2004 New Paltz Open Space Inventory, and in the places and values identified by citizens, citizen groups, and local land trusts. This open space plan provides the bigger picture and a framework for how individual parcels may fit into the context of our whole landscape.

Now is the time to work together, to recognize the widely-shared values that exist in New Paltz for conserving its most important open space resources. We must conduct this conservation work in a manner that respects landowners and their contributions as stewards of their lands, and fosters creative collaboration among municipalities, landowners, non-governmental entities, and outside governmental sources.

Communities like New Paltz that are widely known and treasured for their scenic, recreational, and open space resources - such as Boulder, CO and Pittsford, NY - have proactively planned and invested in their open spaces. The benefits of such planning are directly visible in the exceptional quality of life, health, and well being of residents, and in their strong local economies. New Paltz should build on the public momentum and strong interest in open space conservation, as well as landowner interest and support in creating new options for achieving mutual conservation goals.

For the New Paltz community to realize its open space goals, efficient use of fiscal resources and investments in open space, as well as continued cooperation among governments, landowners and other non-government partners is imperative. The New Paltz Open Space Plan points the way toward making this happen.

Introduction



New Paltz is distinguished by its unique and much cherished landscape setting including the Shawangunk Mountains and the expansive Wallkill River Valley and flats. The New Paltz community (the collective Town and Village) is also graced with equally important wetlands, woodlands, and farms, as well as valued scenic and historic landscapes. This plan provides a community-based vision and course of action for preserving these significant landscape assets in the midst of continuing growth. It sets milestones for open space protection and provides a framework for achieving open space goals in both the short-and long-term using a model partnership approach among the community, landowners, and the Town and Village of New Paltz.

There has been diverse interest in preserving the landscapes and open spaces of New Paltz, both in the past and present. The preservation and stewardship of significant acreage of the Shawangunk Ridge and the creation of the Wallkill Valley Rail Trail are just two of the community's many success stories. These two open space resources are widely valued, respected, and visited by the community and have become integral components of the regional character. New Paltz is also known for its success in conserving historic landscapes and places including the Huguenot Historic District in the Village of New Paltz.

As the population continues to grow and suburbanize, it is increasingly important to define a

vision and goals for the future of the New Paltz community. Protecting New Paltz's open space includes preservation and conservation of significant ecological areas such as the Shawangunk Ridge and wetlands near the Wallkill River and the Swartekill on the eastern side of the Town. However, it also includes protection of the character of the community, which includes a balanced mix of farms, old fields, historic landscapes, streams, and water features to name just a few. This can be accomplished through comprehensive protection of open space, and with development that respects the open space assets and unique character of the land. Increasing development pressures,

What is Open Space?

Open space is a system of natural, cultural and recreational lands and resources that collectively provide critical benefits for people and wildlife. An open space system includes natural resources such as streams, wetlands and watersheds. It includes working landscapes such as farms and managed forests. It includes cultural and recreational resources such as heritage resources of historic places and scenic corridors; as well as trails and fishing access.

Protecting open space resources such as lakes, rivers, farms and forests is an important step in maintaining the exceptional quality of life that sets the New Paltz community apart from other regions. It also helps to sustain important economic, scenic, historic and recreational landscapes that attract residents and visitors to live, work, shop and recreate in New Paltz.



A protected farm field along Plains Road provides an attractive winter landscape scene.

The Mission of the New Paltz Open Space Committee

New Paltz is fortunate to possess a diversity of natural resources, small-town quality of life and a vibrant tourist economy nurtured by the aesthetic beauty of its countryside. The New Paltz Community Comprehensive Plan, adopted in 1995, cited the need to retain and protect the Town's unique environmental features and natural resources. In recognition of this, the Town Board created the New Paltz Open Space Committee in 2000. The mission of the Committee is to define, inventory, and evaluate our priority open space resources and work with the New Paltz community to recommend and promote a plan for the protection of these resources.

-Adopted May 22, 2001

mounting especially on foothills and valley area (where lands are flat and easily developable) have the potential to alter the viewshed to and from the Shawangunks. Development along the foothills and up to the "break in slope" of the ridge can also stress the fragile ridge ecosystem. Likewise, development in the valley flats has the potential to change the character of the "town and country" feel of the area (for example, as one drives out of the Village along Route 299).

This open space plan sets the stage for identifying, prioritizing, and implementing protection of the community's open spaces. The plan recommends an open space program that includes three components: **a comprehensive land conservation program** (to protect open spaces outright through purchase, conservation easements, and other mechanisms); **a conservation development program** that provides tools

for planning new development in a way that will protect the rural character and ecological integrity of the New Paltz community; and a **strategic funding program** to ensure that the open space program can be fully implemented.

A History of Open Space Involvement

The area has a long history of research, community activism, and interest in protecting and conserving open space in New Paltz and the surrounding region. Primarily, this research has been centered on key regional landscape features such as the Shawangunk Mountains, which has been extensively studied, photographed, and visited. Some of the partners in research and conservation in New Paltz and the surrounding region include:

- Hudson Basin River Watch
- The Open Space Institute
- The Nature Conservancy (TNC)
- The Shawangunk Ridge Biodiversity Partnership
- Mohonk Preserve
- New York State Department of Environmental Conservation
- New York-New Jersey Trail Conference
- Friends of the Shawangunks
- Palisades Interstate Park Commission (PIPC)
- Wallkill River Task Force
- Wallkill Valley Land Trust
- Wallkill Valley Rail Trail Association

The roles of these organizations and agencies include scientific research, open space conservation, nature interpretation and education, and trail construction and maintenance. Many of these entities will be discussed later in this report.

A Community Planning Process

A formal effort to protect open space on a community-wide level was initiated in 2000, with the formation of the Town of New Paltz Open Space Committee (“the committee”). The committee was formed partially as a result of the 1995 Town comprehensive planning process, which identified a significant level of plan objectives related to open space protection.

The mission of the committee is to “define, inventory, and evaluate our priority open space resources and work with the New Paltz community to recommend and promote a plan for the protection of these resources” (see complete mission statement in the text box on page 3). Since its formation in 2000, the committee initiated the development of an open space inventory for the Town and Village, entitled *New Paltz Inventory of Open Spaces*, which was completed in December 2003. The committee also helped to organize an



Open space committee co-chair Michael Zierler discusses conservation options with workshop participants.

open space photo shoot that received a volume of exceptional submissions, many of which have been used throughout this report. A public workshop on open space visioning was conducted in January 2003, in conjunction with the inventory process. This workshop was aimed at identifying the most valued open spaces in the community. The open space inventory report identified existing open space lands and resource-

2004 Community Open Space Survey Results

Of those who responded to the 2004 community open space survey:

- 77% said the Town and Village should actively pursue protecting open space as a strategy to keep New Paltz fiscally healthy and affordable.
- 66% supported concentrating development in or near the village center of New Paltz, and preserving open space in outlying areas.
- An overwhelming number (82%) supported policies to retain agricultural activity in our community.
- Over 2/3 of respondents (67%) favored some level of a tax increase to support open space protection.
- Of those who would accept a tax increase for open space, 2/3 supported a range of \$10 - \$100 per year. Another third supported a range of \$100 - \$300.
- Over 75% of the people believed the community should pursue innovative strategies to protect open space.

es and helped to evaluate community preferences in this regard. In addition, the committee designed and conducted a community-wide survey to gauge citizen support for protecting open space in early 2004 (see Appendix C). These early efforts demonstrated strong community support for conserving open space in New Paltz.

This most recent phase of the planning process began in early 2005. Initial efforts were focused on synthesizing the inventory report and the community values into the New Paltz Community Open Space Vision Map, which is discussed in Section II of this report. The vision map expresses a landscape-level approach for interpreting the community's open space character.

Two early focus groups were conducted specifically for conversation with large-acreage landowners in the community, many of whom were agricultural landowners. These meetings were aimed at understanding the existing and emerging issues, opportunities, and concerns of such landowners as a precursor to identifying options for landowners to keep their lands active and open, or to develop with sensitivity, if this is a landowner's preferred option. Section III: Landowner Options, identifies numerous alternatives for landowners, many in partnership with local governments and regional organizations.

Next, a community-wide workshop was held to present the community vision concepts and the draft plan recommendations in June 2005. This workshop was well-at-

tended (in excess of 60 people) and produced a strong favorable sentiment towards the plan recommendations and the cooperative approach. **This resulting plan is a marriage of the community's vision and call to action balanced with landowners' needs and priorities.**

Community Values

As mentioned above, a workshop to obtain community feedback on the most important open space resources was held in January 2003. This workshop resulted in a list of the community's most valued open spaces, with a "top 10" list (see text box below) of repeatedly-mentioned places, which include natural features such as streams and wetlands as well as scenic views, locally-special places, and agricultural and open lands. **The workshop participants identified approximately 7,000 acres (an additional 30% of the New Paltz community) illustrating the community's high standards for preservation.**

The New Paltz Community's "Top 10" List of Important Open Spaces:

1. Scenic view from Route 299 west of the Wallkill River
2. Wallkill River and its floodplain
3. Swaartekill/Plutarch wetlands complex and aquifer
4. Village woodlands between Shivertown Road and Henry Dubois Road
5. Tributary 13 (desired to be renamed as the Mill Brook)
6. Kleinekill and Humpo Marsh
7. Woodland in the Shawangunk foothills
8. Lands between Huguenot Street and the Wallkill River
9. Open land between Route 299 and Libertyville Road
10. Open land between the Thruway, South Putt Corners Road, and Route 32 South

Further, the New Paltz Open Space Committee's 2004 survey was designed to measure community interest in open space protection, through a random sampling of the New Paltz population. The survey was intended to identify the community's priority resources and the level of support for eventually investing in protection of open space resources. In addition, the survey was geared to gauge interest in where growth should occur.

The community's response to the surveys (35% response rate) was substantial and generally indicated support for open space and farmland protection. For example, 77% of respondents indicated that the Town and Village should actively pursue protecting open space as a strategy to keep New Paltz fiscally healthy. Details of the community survey are provided in the text box on page 4, and the full community survey and results are provided in Appendix C.

Open Space Planning Partners

Protecting open space and managing future growth is a shared effort, involving the New Paltz community, its residents, and its landowners. The Town is leading the planning effort and is providing the initial organizational and financial support to develop an open space program. The Open Space Committee has provided administration and guidance to the project, and has met monthly to accomplish open space planning goals, including the development of this plan.

The community has helped to identify important open spaces and has created an open space vision for the future of

New Paltz. As mentioned previously, the community has set high standards for open space protection and has been extensively involved and interested in the development of open space priorities, and in the development of this plan.

All parties recognize that landowners play a key role in the use and protection of lands in New Paltz. In fact, many of the lands that have been identified by the community as important to the overall open space vision are owned by a handful of landowners. Landowners continue to keep lands open (in farming, forestry, or undeveloped parcels for example) and are the primary stewards of the land. The Mohonk Mountain House along the Shawangunk Ridge is a primary example. Landowner efforts should be respected and supported to the highest extent. They should be provided with options and flexibility so that they can keep their lands open, if they choose to do so, amidst an expanding residential and commercial market. This plan will help to ensure that there is a range of options available for landowners who wish to keep their lands open for future generations.



This plan addresses the need to protect historic resources, such as these homes along Huguenot Street, as an important component of the community's character.

Existing Open Space Framework

Currently, about 2,800 acres, or 12% of the total land area of the Town and Village (22, 848 acres) are permanently protected. Over half of the protected lands are part of the Mohonk Preserve and the vast majority of this protected land occurs west of the Wallkill River. Several private landowners of smaller but significant parcels have opted to place conservation easements on their property in concert with land trusts. While the community has a sizable portion of open space protected, it is mainly focused on the ridge and does not provide any protection for other significant ecological, cultural, agricultural and scenic areas, including many of the “top 10” landscape features that were identified for protection by the public (see text box on page 5).

The Protected Lands Map (Appendix A) illustrates existing protected open space lands.

Summary

This plan has grown from previous efforts, including an early visioning process in which the community helped to identify open space values and priorities. The community’s high standards for open space call for the conservation of a significant acreage of New Paltz’ resources, and a diverse and well-connected system of open spaces. **The significant amount of land and resources desired for protection engenders the need for a partnership-based approach for this plan in which landowners and community work together to obtain mutual benefits.**



Protection of open spaces such as the Wallkill Valley Rail Trail pictured above is a lasting contribution.



The Wallkill River as it traverses the Town of New Paltz is surrounded by agriculture and forest lands, with the dense village settlement on the eastern side, at the top of this photo.

Landscape Overview

The landscape character of New Paltz is best understood within its regional context. The majority of New Paltz's central landscape consists of a flat to gently sloping valley that is situated between the Shawangunk Ridge and the Hudson Highlands. The Shawangunk Ridge and the Wallkill River and Valley are dominant landscape features that shape the region and provide visual continuity to the western landscape. The dramatic relief between the Wallkill River Valley

and the steep slopes of the Shawangunk Ridge is one of the community's most defining features, as is evidenced by the vast collection of landscape photography and paintings "looking west" towards the ridge.

Historically, settlement in the area was focused in the Village, adjacent to the floodplains of the Wallkill River and tributaries, and in the hamlets that formed at the intersection of country roads and/or railroads. The Wallkill Valley provided the flatter working landscape of farms and

farmlands, with an important railway connection to New York City, Poughkeepsie, and other regional markets. Thus, the majority of settlement occurred in the valley and especially along the major roadways and railways that provided connections between farms and markets.

In contrast, the Shawangunk Ridge in the west was a vacation destination and remained relatively undeveloped. However, it is important to note that the ridge has had a history of human transformation, including burning of forest vegetation by Native Americans and early European settlers, as well as mineral mining and clearing of trees for farming and development.

Natural, Cultural and Agricultural Resources

New Paltz is rich in natural and cultural history. The landscape of New Paltz as we see it today is a product of both natural and human processes and interactions. This interaction between humans and nature has shaped many of the treasured landscapes which we now consider to be open space - such as the farm fields and river edges. Even the ridges



An aerial "cross-section" depicting many of New Paltz' most prominent landscape features, including the edge of the central village, the Wallkill River, farmlands, and foothills leading up to the forested ridge.

and forests have been altered to some degree by human intervention throughout history. In order to conserve the community's existing rural character and charm, a balanced composition of both "natural" and "cultural" landscapes and features will need to be protected. A cultural resource analysis is currently underway, to better understand the scenic and rural resources in strategic areas of the Town (as a separate project).

The resources of New Paltz are diverse and include natural, cultural/historical, and agricultural resources. Natural resources are those that are generally considered a product of natural processes, including water resources such as rivers, streams, floodplains and wetlands as well as forests, wooded hillsides and ridges, and fields. Cultural resources are experienced or produced by humans and include scenic roads and viewsheds, landscapes or built features such as the Skytop Tower (although physically outside of New Paltz), and historic hamlets such as Springtown and Ohioville. Agricultural resources include active farms and farmlands, farm stands, and farm markets throughout New Paltz. These

resources will be discussed in detail in the following section and are illustrated in the resource maps in Appendix A.

Open Space Vision: A Landscape Approach

It is impossible to plan for open space in New Paltz without understanding the context of the landscape, which has such a profound effect on land uses and human experiences. **The open space vision for the New Paltz community reflects landscape-level "character areas": places with similar natural and physiological features that determine the character of the land's uses and open space resources.** They include the following:

- Shawangunk Ridge
- Butternut-Canaan Foothills
- Wallkill Flats and River Corridor
- North Woods and Eastern Wetlands
- Orchards, Farms and Ridge-views
- Heart of New Paltz
- Scenic Cultural Landscapes



Open landscapes such as the one pictured above help to create diverse experiences and frame the scenic ridge in the background.

With the exception of the scenic cultural landscapes, which occur in locations throughout the community, each character area is conceptually identified in a geographic area of the Town and Village and all are depicted on the *New Paltz Community Open Space Vision Map*. Each of the character areas is discussed further in the following sections along with general conservation concepts for these areas.

New Paltz Community Open Space Vision Map

Shawangunk Ridge

Key wildlife corridor and unfragmented-high-quality habitat west of the "break-in-slope"

- Partner with landowners and conservation organizations to permanently protect remaining ridge habitat not currently part of the Mohonk Preserve
- Protect ridge views (views to and from the ridge) from the impacts of new development
- Connect habitat corridors to adjacent lands

Scenic Landscapes

Rural, traditional and historic character: views from scenic roads, rural hamlets, historic cultural landscapes and traditional village settlement pattern (located throughout Town)

- Protect the "village-to-ridge" scenic gateway (Route 299 and beyond)
- Protect and expand access (visual and/or physical) to scenic vistas and historic and cultural landmarks
- Maintain and protect scenic roadway corridors throughout the Town
- Protect the character of historic hamlet and settlement areas

Wallkill Flats and River Corridor

Farms, floodplain and tributaries in the heart of the valley that serve as a primary wildlife corridor and greenbelt

- Conserve river-edge forest habitat
- Expand passive recreation (kayaking and canoeing, eg.) and trail links
- Conserve floodplain for farming production

North Woods and Eastern Wetlands

Large natural areas and wildlife corridors (forest, woodlands, streams and wetlands)

- Protect large "patches" of habitat; minimize fragmentation of woodlands and wetlands
- Protect the aquifer as an important water supply
- Create a greenbelt along the Town's eastern edge
- Utilize conservation design for new development; use model of cooperative partnership (eg. Mill Brook Preserve)
- Conserve scenic views and farmlands

Mill Brook Preserve Concept

Heart of New Paltz

Greenways and connections between major population centers such as the Village center and Town neighborhoods, linking people to the Town's many natural and cultural resources

- Strengthen Village center as the "heart of the town" and a place with unique character
- Expand connections between the Village and the Town's open space and recreational amenities
- Safeguard key parcels and linkages, such as within the Mill Brook Preserve area
- Protect Town and Village gateways

Orchards, Farms and Ridge-views

Critical mass of active farmland and open lands east of the Wallkill River

- Protect and promote active farmlands as key components of the Town's economy, rural character, and scenic quality, and for their open space and tourism value
- Adopt regulatory tools to accommodate activities that support agriculture
- If development is to occur on farmlands, seek to minimize impacts through conservation design; obtain open space and trail amenities as feasible

Butterville-Canaan Foothills

Woodlands and open lands at the base of the ridge

- Conserve active farmlands and agricultural heritage
- Utilize conservation design for new development to maintain open lands and views
- Develop transition "buffer" in land use along break-in-slope

Vision Map Legend

- Major Historic Landmark
- Major Natural Landmark
- Core Farming Area
- Core Farming Area in Wallkill Plains
- Rural Hamlet
- Wallkill Rail Trail
- Scenic Roadway
- Greenway Connection



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Planning Community Futures

Character Areas and Conservation Concepts



Shawangunk Ridge

Key wildlife corridor and unfragmented high-quality habitat west of the “break-in-slope”

The Shawangunk Ridge is perhaps the most dominant landscape feature in New Paltz and provides a distinct edge along the western side of the Town that extends both north and south into adjacent communities. The ridge technically begins at the “break-in-slope,” the topographic line at which the percent slope dramatically increases, resulting in a steep incline.

The Shawangunk Ridge is a unique geological feature that extends in a southwest-northeast direction from northern New Jersey to the Town of Rosendale in Ulster County. It traverses three counties and approximately 16 towns. The Nature Conservancy (TNC) has identified the Shawangunk Ridge as one of the “last great places”

because of its significant ecology including rare and endangered species habitat. According to TNC, the Shawangunk Mountains support over 35 natural communities, “including one of only two ridgetop dwarf pine barrens in the world, chestnut oak forests, hemlock forests, pitch pine forests, lakes, rivers and wetlands.” In addition, according to TNC, 27 rare plant and animal species have been documented to exist in the Shawangunks.

The Shawangunk Mountains support over 35 natural communities, “including one of only two ridgetop dwarf pine barrens in the world, chestnut oak forests, hemlock forests, pitch pine forests, lakes, rivers and wetlands.”

-The Nature Conservancy

In the Town of New Paltz, a large area of the Shawangunk Ridge is permanently protected as part of the Mohonk Preserve. This preserve includes over 6,500 acres, approximately 1,200



A panoramic vista atop the Shawangunk Ridge.

of which are located within the Town of New Paltz. The Mohonk Preserve was established in 1963 as the first land trust to protect the Shawangunk Ridge. It has since grown to become one of the region's most respected land protectors, stewards, and educators.

While not within the Town of New Paltz, the ridge contains two distinctive cultural icons: Skytop Tower and the Mohonk Mountain House. Skytop Tower is the fourth of a series of towers built from 1873 to 1923. Looking west from eastern portions of the Town and Village, Skytop Tower is a visual icon and an important reminder of human history on the ridge. The Mohonk Mountain House, a 19th century building and resort that was created by visionary Alfred H. Smiley in 1869, is now a National Historic Landmark and continues to serve as a resort and hotel. Also worth noting, the Bonticou Crag is a unique geological feature along the ridge in the northern portion of the Town.

The ridge and its associated chestnut oak forest is perhaps the most ecologically-fragile and significant feature in the Town and should be preserved and protected to the highest extent possible. As identified by TNC, the most significant threat to the ridge is "encroaching development...particularly along the base of the ridge." In New Paltz, a good portion of the ridge top

is protected as part of the Mohonk Preserve, however, there are numerous parcels along the base of the ridge above the "break-in-slope" that are unprotected. Some of these parcels have been subdivided and developed with residential houses while others remain relatively open.

Also worth noting, there are several large parcels of land along the ridge top that are privately owned and managed as part of the Mohonk Mountain House.

While these parcels are currently being managed and stewarded as open space with minimal resort-style tourism, they do not as of yet have permanently protected status. Permanently protecting the remaining ridge habitat is critical to the ecological integrity of the ridge. Also of importance is the need for habitat connectivity between the ridge and other major wildlife habitats such as wetland and stream corridors.

Another major concern related to the ridge is its increasing popularity as a recreational destination. With opportunities for hiking, rock-climbing, fishing, and much more, the ridge's fragile ecosystem is often taxed to its limits by the human impacts of recreation. The Mohonk Preserve has so far been addressing this issue by



The popularity of the Mohonk Preserve as a recreational destination calls for limits on the amount of visitors in order to protect the fragile ecosystem.

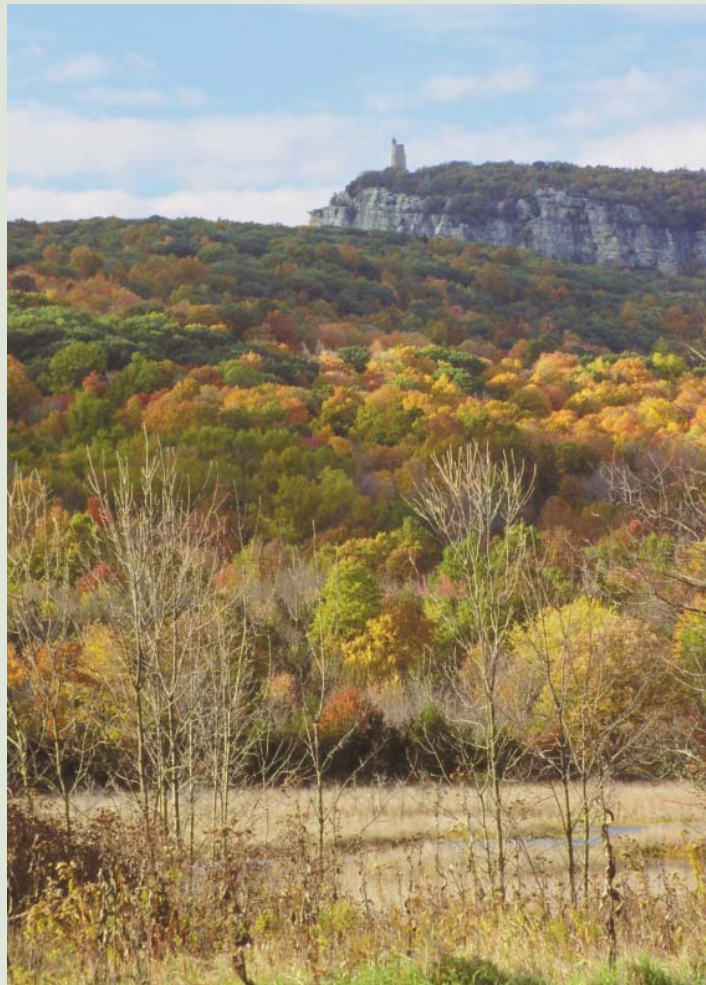
limiting daily visitorship to match the carrying capacity of the ridge.

The scenic quality of the ridge is also a major asset that is treasured by the community. Views to, and from, the ridge are considered to be of equal importance and can be affected by development

and clearing of land. Many of the existing open fields along the valley help to frame the view and create a more dramatic effect; managing these areas and keeping them open (rather than allowing for natural succession) is an option worth exploring.

Conservation Concepts for the Shawangunk Ridge:

- Partner with land-owners and conservation organizations to permanently protect remaining ridge habitat not currently part of the Mohonk Preserve.
- Protect ridge views (to and from the ridge) from the impacts of new development through conservation site planning and design, as well as through design guidelines and other tools that help to reduce visual intrusion and habitat fragmentation.
- Connect existing habitat corridors to adjacent lands that can serve as wildlife habitat.



Skytop tower serves as a central focal point in this fall ridge setting.

Butterville-Canaan Foothills

*Woodlands and open lands at
the base of the ridge*

The Butterville-Canaan Foothills are centered between the Shawangunk Ridge and the Wallkill River, along the scenic, wooded, and picturesque Butterville-Canaan Road and environs. The foothills are characterized by moderately-sloping wooded hillsides that increase gradually from the Wallkill flats up to the “break-in-slope.” This area also includes important water resources, including the Kleine Kill and Humpo Marsh, and numerous smaller wetlands that provide a habitat connection between the Wallkill River and the Shawangunks.

The Butterville-Canaan foothills are perhaps one of the most vulnerable areas within the Town from a development standpoint. Much of the Town’s recent development has been occurring along the foothills as they offer a desirable ridge-side location, exceptional views and attractive, wooded lots. Because the foothills essentially form the base of the ridge, development can have a dramatic effect on scenic views of the Shawangunk Ridge from eastern locations such as the Village and Wallkill River floodplain area.

The Butterville-Canaan foothills are dotted with agricultural lands, with a larger core occurring at the eastern edge of the foothills, closer to the Wallkill River floodplain. Wallkill View Farm, which begins along the edge of the Wallkill River, extends as a scenic landmark into the foothills

area. Many of the farmlands in the foothills have become fallow or are in a stage of old field succession. Agricultural lands are also rapidly being converted to residential development in this area where relatively flat lands with exceptional views are available.

The Butterville-Canaan foothills landscape is especially important to the character of the Town. It frames the transition between the Village and the Ridge and provides the break in the landscape (the open areas) that creates the dramatic village-to-ridge experience. This experience is exemplified by traveling along Route 299 as it exits the Village and continues west past the Wallkill View Farm and open lands, and rises into the Butterville-Canaan foothills to the ridge top. This experience and landscape was identified by the community in the 2003 public input session as the “number one” cherished landscape. Butterville-Canaan Road also offers exceptional scenic views at the base of the ridge.

At the western edge of the Butterville-Canaan foothills, near the break-in-slope that defines the Shawangunk Ridge, a transitional buffer to the sensitive and fragile ridge habitat should be created. This buffer area would allow for much less intensive land uses and development than the eastern areas of the Butterville-Canaan foothills.



This idyllic composition of open lands and traditional rural farmscape exemplifies the character of the Butterville-Canaan foothills.

Some protection of the Butternut-Canaan foothills is already occurring through the efforts of the Mohonk Preserve and the Wallkill Valley Land Trust, who have been working cooperatively with landowners to obtain conservation easements.

New development within the foothills area should be designed with sensitivity to the natural and cultural features of the land, including the gentle to steep sloping hills, scenic viewsheds, farm lands, wetlands, and stream corridors. This can be accomplished by using a “conservation design” approach. In contrast to the conventional subdivision approach where a tract of land is graded and streets and houses are laid out to maximize the lot’s buildable area, conservation design aims to preserve the site’s unique features such as streams, woodlands or farmland hedgerows and cluster homes together in a manner that will preserve the site’s integrity.

In the foothills, designing to protect the views to and from the ridge is especially important. “Tucking” development into existing woodlands (rather than clearing the site of trees) as part of the conservation design process can help to minimize impacts to ridge views. Blending house colors and roof treatment and colors into the landscape can also help to minimize the impacts of development on ridge views. Other techniques, such as the use of shared entry roads and driveways, can help to minimize fragmentation of the sensitive areas along the edges of the ridge. The *Shawangunk Ridge Conservation and Design Guidebook* published by the Catskill Center for Conservation and Development offers some substantial guidance on the conservation design approach, as an immediate resource for the community.

Conservation Concepts for the Butternut-Canaan Foothills:

- Conserve active farms and agricultural heritage in the Butternut-Canaan foothills using donation and purchase of development rights (PDR), conservation easements, and other mechanisms and by providing options for landowners to keep their lands in farming and agriculture (see Section III for more detail).



An aerial view of farms and open lands in the Butternut-Canaan foothills, looking towards the Village.

- “Design with nature” by utilizing custom guidelines on conservation design for new development to maintain open lands and views. A process for conservation design that fits the needs of the Butternut-Canaan foothills area can be developed and integrated into the community’s existing zoning and land-use regulations.
- Develop a transition “buffer” in land use along break-in-slope. This could be accomplished through zoning and other land-use regulations that provide for appropriate intensity and level of development along the fragile habitat of the base of the ridge.

Conservation Analysis: A Four-Step Design Process

This technique for area planning, subdivision planning, and site planning employs a design approach that places primary importance on the resources and natural setting to be conserved as the first step in the design process. Contrary to the typical process, in which lots, homes and roads are laid out and the remaining area (if any) is considered open space or natural lands, **this process begins by identifying the important natural and cultural features for protection.** The process includes several major steps, as outlined below:

1. Create a conservation analysis map (or maps) identifying the site's most important resources and features, such as

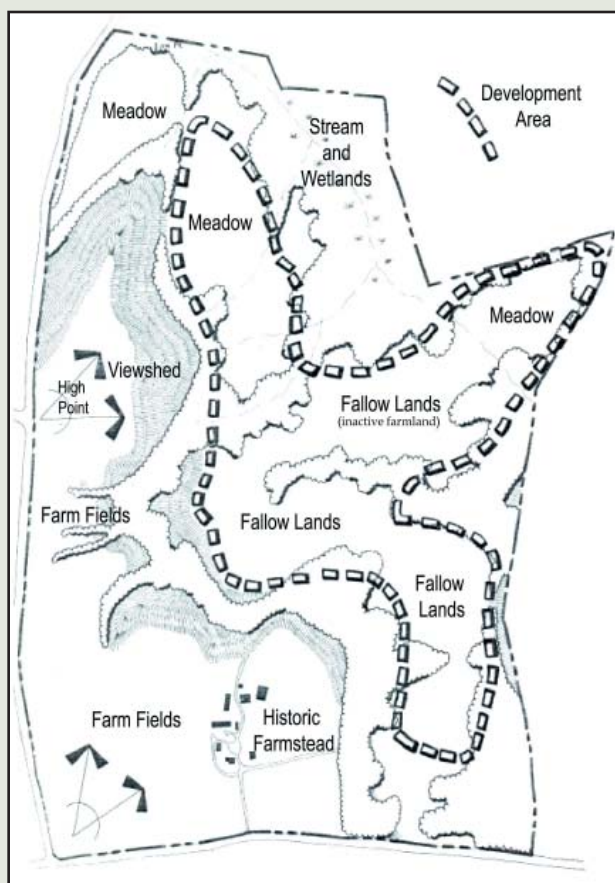
important wildlife habitat, streams, wetlands, farms, and historic homes.

In addition, a map that indicates how the site relates to major regional features, such as wildlife corridors, greenways, trail linkages, and historic landscapes, for example, should be created (regional context map).

2. Determine the site's conservation and development areas. This step involves an important judgment process in which a thorough analysis leads to identification of the most important resources for protection – these are the conservation areas. The remaining area is the development area.

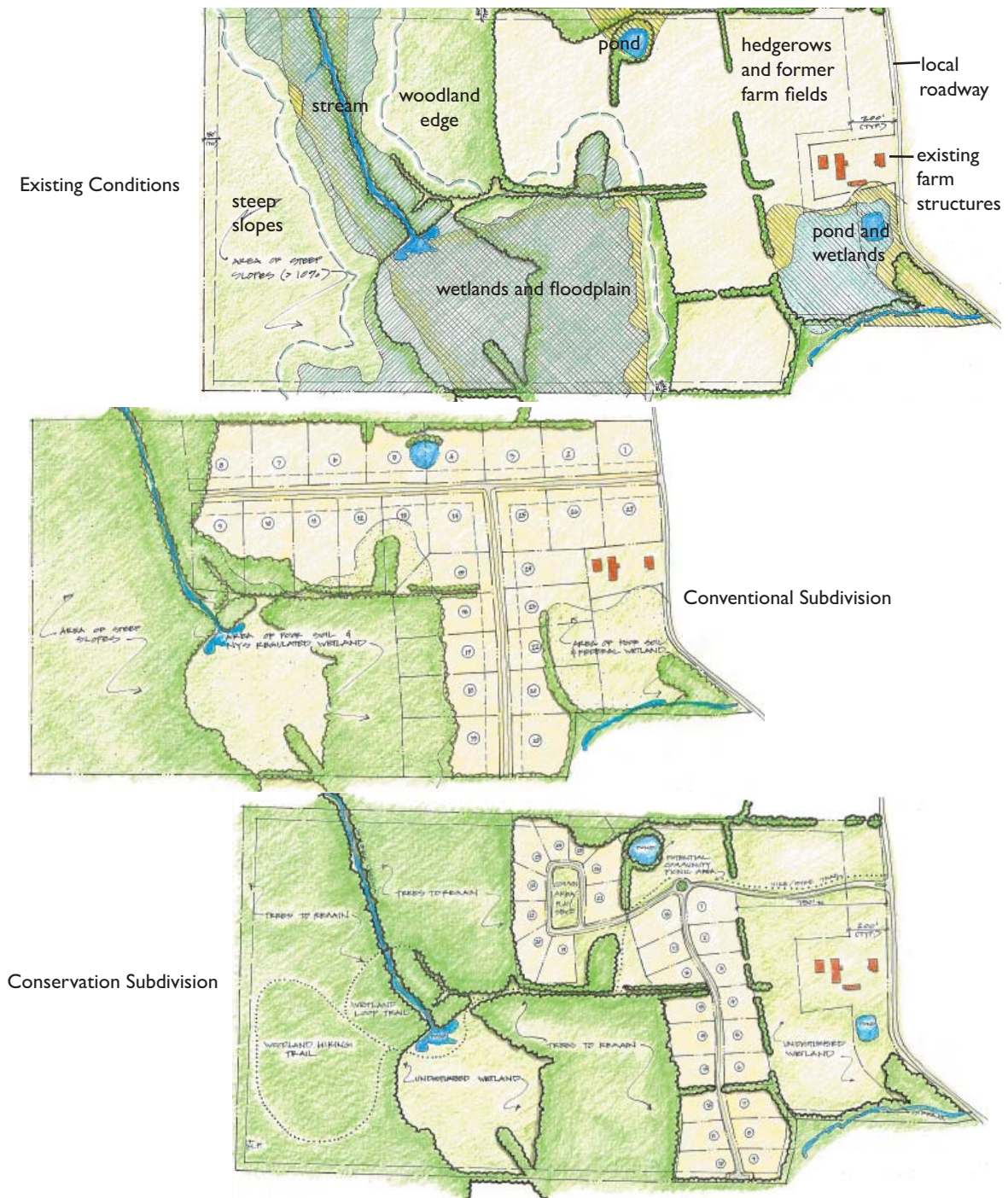
3. Identify a proposed layout for development that complements the conservation areas (conservation design). This process should result in the protection of important open space and landscape character, as well as the creation of functional public open space and attractive residential development that is an asset to the community.

4. Synthesize conservation and development concepts into a draft concept plan including detailed location of trails, preserves, houses, and streets.



This conservation analysis map illustrates the site's most important features (such as farm fields, farmsteads, streams, wetlands, meadows, and important views) and identifies conservation and development areas. This analysis should help to inform development and infrastructure configurations in a manner that respects the most important landscape features.

New Paltz Open Space Plan



Above: This example shows an existing site's primary conservation features (top), a conventional subdivision (middle), which does not take into account these features, and a conservation subdivision (bottom), which is based on the conservation analysis process. In the conservation subdivision example, the homes are clustered on smaller lots and the woodlands, wetlands and associated stream are conserved. Homes are set back from the main roadway to protect the roadside views and the existing hedgerows are extended as screening. Additional amenities such as trails are provided in appropriate locations within the conserved areas.

Wallkill Flats and River Corridor

Farms, floodplain and tributaries in the heart of the valley that serve as a primary wildlife corridor and greenbelt

The Wallkill River and its floodplain traverses the center of the Town and also the western edge of the Village. The river unites the Town and Village and provides a greenway connection north and south through Rosendale and Gardiner and beyond. The predominant existing land use along the Wallkill River is agriculture, with areas of sparse residential development on larger lots that abut the river's edge. However, the river was the first major area of modern-day settlement, as evidenced by the Village of New Paltz. Small rural settlements such as the hamlet of Springtown were focused along the river's edge. The Wallkill River flats were also a summer vacationing destination.

Nearby recreational access along the Wallkill River includes two boat launches in the Village (one on the west side of the river and one on the east side in Sojourner Truth Park) and a boat launch on the west side of the river in the Town of Rosendale.



The Wallkill River offers opportunities for fishing in a serene riverfront setting.

The Wallkill River flows from the New Jersey Highlands to the Hudson River near Kingston, NY. The river begins in Lake Mohawk, a spring-fed lake in northern New Jersey and flows north through Sussex and Passaic Counties in New Jersey and Orange and Ulster Counties in New York. It merges with the Rondout Creek south of Kingston and ultimately enters the Hudson River Estuary. More than two-thirds of the river's 94-mile length occurs in New York State.



The majestic Wallkill River is a defining feature within the Town and Village.

New Paltz Open Space Plan

The Orange County Soil and Water Conservation District is currently in the process of developing the *Wallkill River Watershed Management Plan* through funding from the Hudson River Estuary Program. This plan will provide a detailed analysis of the current “state of the watershed” and its resources and will serve as a source of guidance for local communities in addressing watershed planning issues.

The Wallkill River corridor and its many tributaries and intermittent streams serve as a wildlife pathway, connecting the Wallkill River flats to the foothills, ridge woodlands, and wetlands that provide habitat and refuge for numerous wildlife species. The riparian lands that border the Wallkill River offer critical habitat for aquatic and terrestrial plants and animals. Floodplain forest lands in the northeast portion of the river corridor (approximately 170 acres of forest and associated wetlands) have been identified by the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) as Important Habitat - a unique and special habitat that should be protected. Preserving riparian lands also offers

community benefits, as these lands act as a natural filtration system to improve water quality, and reduce flooding and erosion of the riverbanks.

The Wallkill River floodplain is a primary agricultural corridor, providing flat and fertile lands and irrigation water along the river edge for numerous farms. This river farmland core helps to keep lands open and contributes to the community's economic and scenic base. The area includes the landmark Wallkill View Farm, two community supported agriculture (CSA) operators, (Taliaferro Farms and Huguenot Street Farm) and three organic farms north of the Springtown hamlet. The southwest portion of the river also includes the Ulster County Fairgrounds and the farm fields cultivated by the Cornell University Cooperative Extension Hudson Valley Research Laboratory for important agricultural research.

The Wallkill Valley Rail Trail follows the Wallkill River floodplain for its length in the Town and Village (and beyond) and crosses the river via a former railroad bridge converted into a pedestrian bridge. The rail trail offers exceptional opportu-



An aerial overview of the Wallkill River in northern New Paltz, including the important habitat of the floodplain forest along the eastern bank of the river.

Conservation Concepts for the Wallkill River Flats and River Corridor:

- Conserve river-edge forest habitat, including the unique floodplain forest habitat that extends from the northeast bank of the Wallkill River. This can be accomplished through purchase, conservation easements, and regulatory mechanisms, among other options.
- Expand passive recreation (e.g., kayaking and canoeing) and trail links along the Wallkill River. Trail and access points can be identified and developed as part of a community-wide trail master plan.
- Conserve the floodplain for farming production. The floodplain can be conserved through purchase of development rights (PDR), conservation easements, and by providing options for farmers to keep their lands open.



Open farmlands and woodland patches and tributaries surround the banks of the Wallkill River in the southern portion of New Paltz.

nities for hiking, biking and other recreational activities. The Wallkill River has the potential for additional community recreational and scenic opportunities. Additional access to the river for fishing, kayaking, canoeing and also potentially swimming in some places, should be explored for the future.

Scenic roads in the Wallkill River floodplain vicinity include Route 299, Springtown Road (leading to Rosendale), Route 32 North (leading to Rosendale) and Libertyville Road (leading to Gardiner).

North Woods and Eastern Wetlands

Large natural areas and wildlife corridors (forest, woodlands, streams and wetlands)

The eastern edge of the Town is characterized by a large area of north-south trending streams and wetlands, as well as a relatively intact large cluster of woodlands. The area is primarily residential with larger parcel sizes, except for the long and narrow settlement lots along the Swartekill on the Town's eastern-most border. This area is an important water supply aquifer.

The eastern wetlands and woodlands area includes the hamlets of Plutarch and Ohioville, as well as the highly-visible Elliott farm protected by the Wallkill Valley Land Trust through a conservation easement along North Ohioville Road. It also includes the scenic Ohioville and Plutarch Roads.

Protecting the eastern wetlands and woodlands is a part of the Town's investment in "green infrastructure." Wetlands serve multiple functions including aquifer recharge, pollutant filtering, flood protection, and wildlife habitat. Similarly, woodlands are important wildlife habitat and act as a natural stormwater drainage system. Where possible in this landscape, large unfragmented "patches" of wildlife habitat (woodlands or wetlands) should be protected and linked together to create a "greenbelt" along the eastern edge.

Similar to the Butternut-Canaan foothills, new development in this area should be designed with sensitivity to the natural landscape and features. Conservation design should be employed in the development of new residential subdivisions. In contrast to the Butternut-Canaan foothills, where the most critical design feature is protecting the viewshed and visual and wildlife connectivity of the Shawangunks, the most criti-



Wetlands and woodlands east of I-87 are important components of New Paltz's eastern landscape character, including a portion of the Swartekill wetland complex. View is looking approximately south.

cal design feature in this area is the maintenance of unfragmented woodland and wetland habitat.

Design should incorporate buffers for wetlands, woodlands and streams and the configuration of the subdivision should minimize fragmentation of large patches. This can be accomplished by siting the homes closer to existing development and preserving the woodlands/wetlands as open space. Other tools, such as shared driveways and reduced pavement and other impervious surfaces can help to maintain natural drainage and water quality.

Conservation Concepts for the North Woods and Eastern Wetlands:

- Minimize fragmentation of woodlands and wetlands by protecting large “patches” of habitat. Large patches can be protected through purchase, conservation easement or other mechanism and also through conservation design.
- Create a greenbelt along the Town’s eastern edge, connecting together as many intact woodlands and wetlands as possible.
- Utilize conservation design for new development. Use the Mill Brook Preserve planning process (described on pages 25 and 26) as a model of cooperative planning.
- Conserve scenic views and farmlands.



The Swartekill wetland complex along the Town’s eastern edge provides important water quality benefits to the community.

Orchards, Farms and Ridge-Views

Orchards, farms and ridge-views: critical mass of active farmland and open lands east of the Wallkill River

Open farms and orchards in the southeastern part of the Town, specifically between the Thruway and the Wallkill River, are part of a large “critical mass” of farms and farmlands that extend beyond New Paltz and south into Gardiner. These farms south of the Village provide a dramatic contrast to the dense urban setting and help to preserve the magnificent views west to the Shawangunks.

Two prominent and productive landmark orchards are in this area. Apple Hill Farm owned by the Moriello Family on Route 32 south of the Village provides a green buffer along the southern edge of the Village. Together with Dressel Farm along Route 208 (continuing into Gardiner), these farms present exceptional views of the ridge and opportunities for apple and pumpkin picking against a scenic backdrop. Scenic roadways weave through these open lands, including Route 32 south, Route 208 and Putt Corners Road. The Wallkill Valley Rail Trail runs across the western portion of Dressel Farm.

The value of protecting farms and farmlands is priceless to the community. Farms are a key component of the Town’s economic base. Numerous “cost of community services” studies nationwide have produced similar conclusions that open lands such as farms (and forests) generate more local revenue than they require in services. In contrast, residential lands cost a municipality more to service (schools, roads, and police protection, for example) than the revenue they generate. A study conducted by the American Farmland Trust synthesizes over 15 years of research on the costs of community services as follows: for every dollar of revenue raised, it costs \$0.27 to service commercial and industrial land uses, \$0.36 to service working lands (farms and forests) and other open space, compared to \$1.16 to service residential development. For more information on cost of community services studies and farmland protection, visit the American Farmland Trust website at: <http://www.farmland.org>, (also see text box on page 50).

Farms also help to protect scenic views and play a large role in the Town’s rural character. They provide opportunities for the community to connect with the land and the foods they eat through agritourism, farm markets and pick-



Aerial view of Dressel Farm along Route 208, with the Wallkill Valley Rail Trail in the foreground.

your-own operations. A more recent trend is the emergence of community supported agriculture (CSA), in which residents of the community buy a share of a local farm's production, providing the farmer with a more stable income and share holders with opportunity to experience locally-grown, in-season foods. Two CSA's exist in the Town of New Paltz: Taliaferro Farms along Plains Road on the eastern bank of the Wallkill River and Huguenot Street Farm on Huguenot Street.

Farmland protection is a key component of this plan. In the New Paltz community, an area of approximately 4,000 acres is enrolled in the agricultural districts program (for more information on this program, see page 35 of this report). This represents approximately 18% of the Town and Village land area, and there are additional active farms that are not enrolled in the agricultural district program.

The contribution of farms to the community's open space and rural character network should not be overlooked or taken for granted. It is not always feasible for a landowner to keep farms

"working" in perpetuity and thus we must consider farms to be a finite resource and one worthy of protecting. Compensating the landowner fairly for this protection, and working with landowners to develop creative solutions to keep lands open while still meeting their financial needs is critical in order for this plan to become successful. Numerous options for protection of farms, suited to a landowner's specific needs, are presented in Section III.

If development is to occur on farms, great care should be taken in the design within these open landscapes and along adjacent scenic roadways. Again, the use of conservation design, while not the only solution, can help to reduce the impacts of development on the landscape. With respect to rural character, which is the predominant feature to preserve in the open farms and farmlands area, it is important to design residential development that does not impact scenic rural roadway experience. This can be accomplished by setting homes back from the road and tucking them into a wooded area, or using appropriate street trees or vegetation so that the homes are not highly visible from the roadway.

Conservation Concepts for Orchards, Farms and Ridge-Views:

- Protect and promote active farms as key components of the community's economy, rural character, and scenic quality, and for their open space and tourism value. Farms can be protected through conservation easement and purchase of development rights (PDR), and also through appropriate options and tools for landowners to keep their lands open (see Section III for more detail).
- Adapt regulatory tools to accommodate activities on the farm that support agriculture, such as farm stands, and bed & breakfasts. Ensure that the zoning code provides adequate flexibility for farms to diversify and generate income to support farm operations.
- If development is to occur on farms, seek to minimize impacts through conservation design. Obtain open space and trail amenities as feasible through development.



Active farming at the Wallkill View Farm, in the shadow of the Shawangunk Ridge.

Heart of New Paltz: Greenways and Connections

Connections between major population centers such as the Village center and Town neighborhoods, linking people to the Town's many natural and cultural resources

The “heart of New Paltz” is the Village and the connected residential fabric that surrounds it. It includes the commercial “main street,” the SUNY New Paltz campus, and the Huguenot Historic District. This area is home to a large portion of the community that will eventually benefit from protection of the open lands surrounding the Village.

The proposed Mill Brook Preserve is a current-day model for cooperative planning and open space protection, in which the New Paltz Open Space Committee is working with several landowners and developers to obtain open space protection (woodland protection through the creation of the Mill Brook Preserve) while also meeting the developers’ needs. This type of model could be expanded throughout the community, including in and near the “heart of New Paltz” area.

A primary goal in this “heart of New Paltz” area is to enhance connections between the major population center (the Village) and the surrounding lands. Trail and pedestrian connections between the Village and the Town’s many natural and cultural features should be explored through a separate trail planning process. Ideally, a greenbelt through the Town and Village will connect existing and future open space resources such as the popular Wallkill Valley Rail Trail.

Gateways into the Town and Village are the first identifying features experienced by residents and visitors and help to express the area’s unique charm. Primary gateways, such as the eastern entrance from the Thruway along 299 should be strengthened and enhanced. This can be accomplished through the conservation of distinct and unique lands and features, and can be supported by the use of appropriate signs and other gateway amenities (such as gazebos or landscaping) or something more unique to the Town and Village). Other potential gateway areas include the western gateway (Route 299), the northern gateway (Route 32 North), and the southern gateways (Route 32 South and Route 208 South).



The Village of New Paltz and the surrounding residential fabric, with the Wallkill River in the middleground and the Shawangunk Ridge in the background.

A Model Cooperative Planning Process: Mill Brook Preserve

When four applications for several contiguous developments concurrently came before the Village and Town planning boards, members of the Open Space Committee envisioned the potential for cooperation amongst landowners, the Town, and Village to protect the important natural features, including wetlands surrounding Tributary 13 (historically known as the Mill Brook). A member of the Village planning board translated the idea into a concept plan for a preserve of up to 125 acres, **featuring the Mill Brook and its associated wetlands as the primary natural feature.**

The Open Space Committee quickly adopted the Mill Brook Preserve concept (graphic on following page) as part of its open space planning and conducted meetings with landowners, Village and Town officials to determine whether there was interest and support for the project. The landowners saw the benefits of cooperation and of the concept in its own right - to protect the most important features of the landscape and create development that enhances and respects the surrounding open space. Landowners recognized the financial benefits of the proposed preserve in an area where open space and natural landscapes are highly valued and have begun to market the open space features of their proposed developments as key selling points.

To date, one of the landowners has provided an easement to the Town as part of the development proposal, and three others have indicated intentions to convey land as well. Discussions are continuing with several additional parcel owners to complete the assemblage. This type of cooperative process, between landowners, the Town and Village, and the community, serves as a model for open space planning in the New Paltz community.

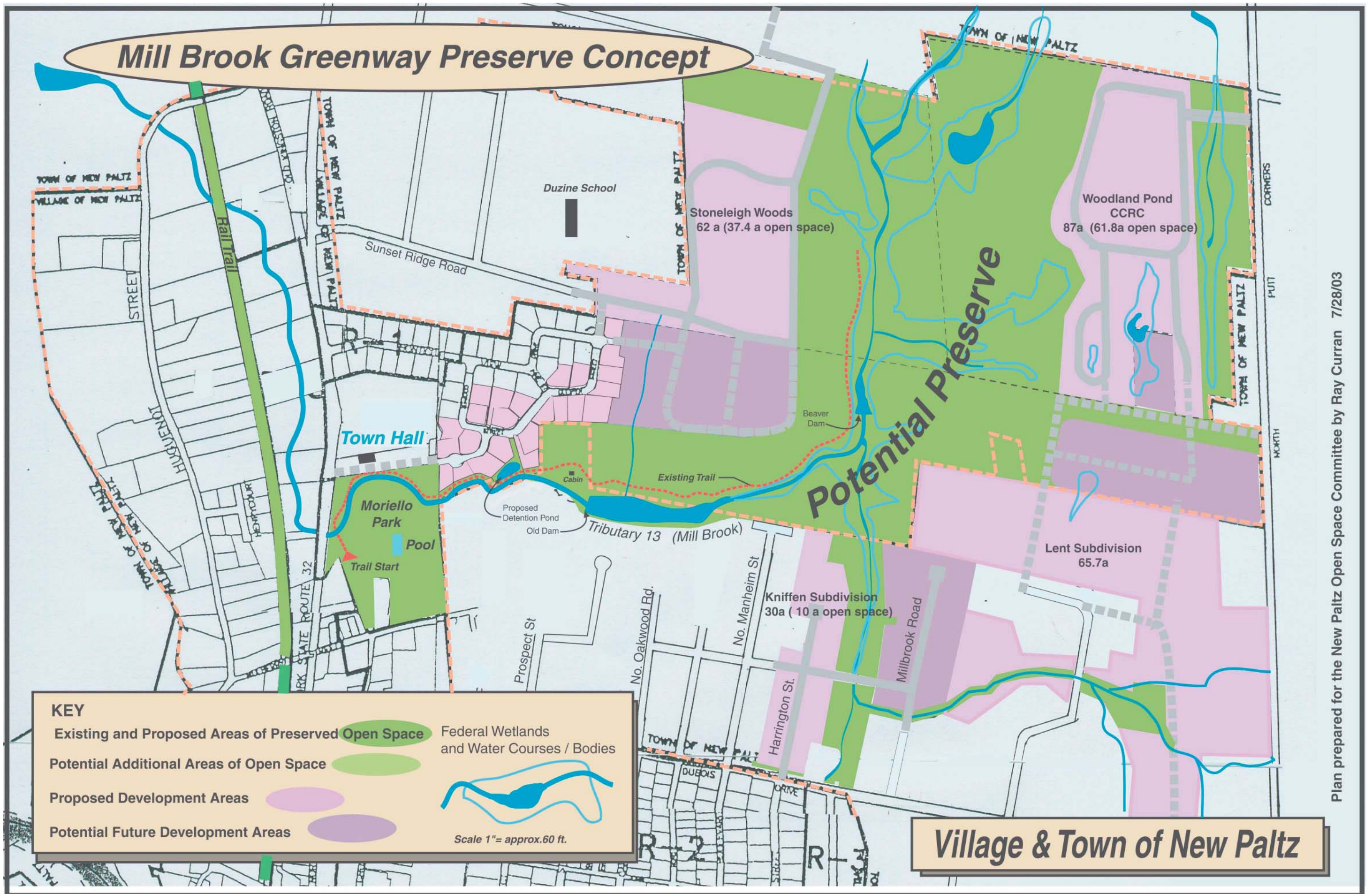
Conservation Concepts for the “Heart of New Paltz”:

- Strengthen the Village center as the “heart of the Town” and a place with unique character. Strengthening the Village includes maintaining the current “town-and-village” land-use pattern of focused development in the Village surrounded by a countryside greenbelt, which can be accomplished through cooperative, comprehensive land-use planning.
- Expand connections and joint initiatives between the Village and the Town’s open space and recreational amenities (e.g., Mill Brook Preserve). Connections can be explored and implemented through a comprehensive community-wide trail master plan.
- Protect Town and Village gateways by identifying them within the Town and Village comprehensive plans, implementing design standards, purchasing or protecting key gateway lands, and by developing and implementing a plan for gateway amenities.



A converted rail bridge now serves as a connection between the Wallkill Valley Rail Trail and the Village of New Paltz.

Mill Brook Greenway Preserve Concept



Village & Town of New Paltz

Scenic Cultural Landscapes

*Rural, traditional and historic character:
views from scenic roads, rural hamlets,
historic cultural landscapes and traditional
village settlement pattern*

From the sweeping views of the ridge, to the majestic beauty of the Wallkill River's wide floodplain, scenic views abound in New Paltz. These scenic landscapes have instilled in many residents an appreciation for the community's open space. They are tangible landmarks within the community's viewshed, such as Skytop Tower and Bonticou Crag, or scenic roads such as Buttersville-Canaan Road and Plutarch Road. Without them, the Town would not be the same.

Protecting scenic landscapes is perhaps one of the most important elements of this open space plan; it is also the unifying factor or common ground between all of the various areas within the Town. Each of the character areas contains some element of natural or cultural scenery, whether it is ridge views, open farms and farmlands, historic homes, or natural wetlands. These scenic elements help to engender support and appreciation for the conservation of New Paltz landscapes.

One exceptional and extremely important scenic landscape is the view between the Village and the ridge along Route 299. This is the quintessential New Paltz experience and has been identified by the community as a high priority for protection.

In contrast to the "natural" views (such as views of the ridge or Bonticou

Crag), cultural landscapes are also important to the scenic quality of the Town and Village. Historic districts, hamlets, and other historic settlement patterns often serve as examples of settlement patterns that respect natural landscape features. A detailed field study of some of the major historic landscape resources in the Town and Village is currently underway and being conducted as a separate but complementary planning effort to this open space plan.

Scenic roads throughout the New Paltz community include the following: Libertyville Road, Springtown Road, Buttersville-Canaan Road, Route 299, Mountain Rest Road, Route 32 North and Route 32 South, Route 208, Ohioville Road, Plutarch Road, Elliott Lane, Putt Corners Road, Jansen Road, and Plains Road. These roads were identified as scenic through the community visioning process and inventory stages of open space planning. Many of these roads are part of a much larger regional scenic byway system that has been identified in the *Shawangunk Mountains Scenic Byway Corridor Management Plan*. Scenic roads are often the main lens through which we view the landscape and thus it becomes important to preserve views along these roads.



An historic tree-lined gateway and carriage road in the Buttersville-Canaan Foothills leads to the Mohonk Mountain House.



The Huguenot Historic District protects the earliest European settlement of New Paltz - a cluster of homes built along the Wallkill River floodplain by French Huguenots.

Conservation Concepts for Scenic Cultural Landscapes:

- Protect the “village-to-ridge” scenic view and gateway (Route 299 and beyond).
- Protect and expand access (visual and/or physical) to scenic vistas and historic and cultural landmarks.
- Maintain and protect scenic roadway corridors throughout the Town.
- Protect the character of historic hamlet and settlement areas through land-use planning and zoning and also by planning for new development that respects traditional settlement patterns. Rural landscape design guidelines and hamlet design guidelines can also help to protect the unique hamlet experience.



Bonticou Crag stands out against the vibrant greenery of the forested ridge.

New Paltz Biodiversity: A Brief Summary

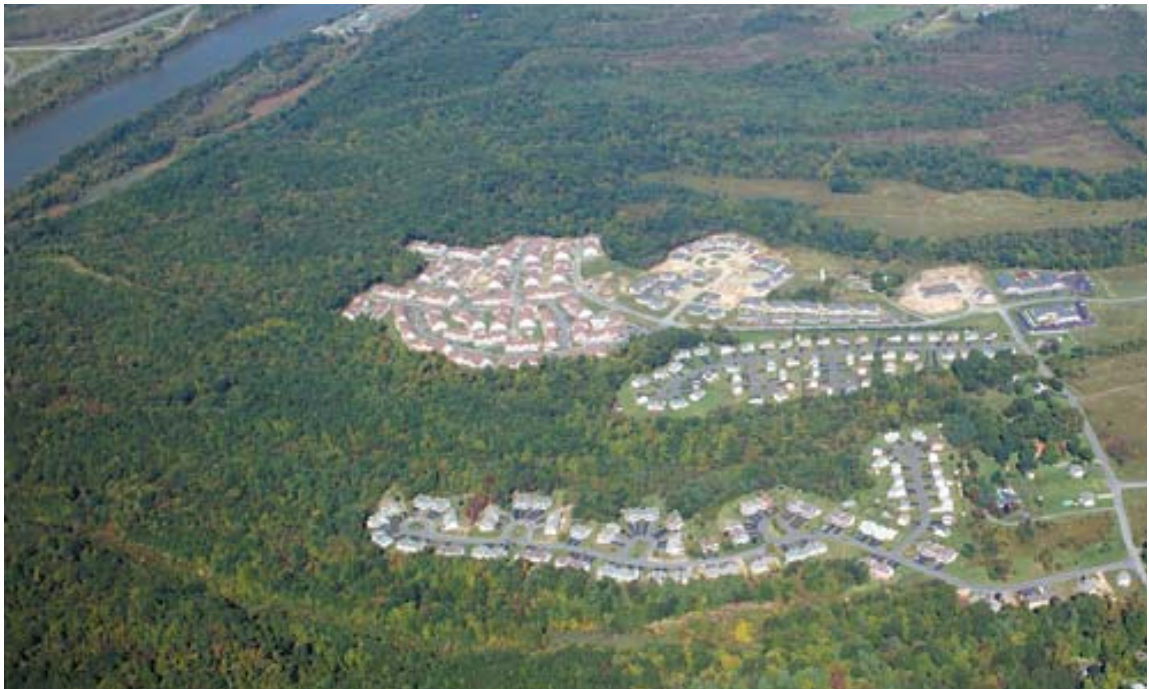
Biodiversity is defined for the purposes of this plan as the biological variety of plant and animal life in all forms, as well as their interactions with the non-living (abiotic) environment. The concept of biodiversity includes ecosystem diversity, species diversity, and genetic diversity, as well as the structure, function and processes within the ecosystem. **Maintaining biodiversity in New Paltz is an important goal for wildlife protection as well as human needs.** For example, biodiversity can be an important element of economic development as is evidenced by the large population sector engaged in birding and other wildlife tourism.

In the past few decades, scientists have helped to paint a picture of the major issues regarding biodiversity. From a wildlife perspective, the most prominent threat to biodiversity is habitat frag-

mentation, in which large patches of landscape habitat are disconnected by roads, houses, and other types of development. Larger patches of habitat (such as forested woodlands, mountain ridges, grasslands, and wetlands) are critical to maintaining biodiversity and protecting wildlife from the effects of human development.

Landscape ecologists have helped to synthesize the broad and detailed scientific research on biodiversity issues into some general principles that can be used in landscape planning and design. This report will focus on two major biodiversity principles:

- Protect large patches of habitat (including the associated buffer distance needed).
- Provide connection between patches through protection of landscape corridors and “stepping stones,” or small patches that are used to connect larger patches.



Habitat fragmentation occurs when large areas of natural habitat, such as these woodlands, are broken up into smaller pieces by development. This image was taken outside of New Paltz.

These principles are helpful in developing a broad understanding, and for designing for open space at the landscape level, yet many planners and designers would like to have more specific guidance, for example on the appropriate size for a habitat patch, or the adequate stream buffer width. A recent report developed by the Environmental Law Institute has taken a first step in addressing these needs by creating general “conservation thresholds” based on a detailed review and summary of the scientific research to date. A summary of the major conservation thresholds is provided in the text box on this page. It should be noted that these figures are generalizations and do not necessarily reflect the needs of wildlife specific to the New Paltz region.

There are currently several efforts using different approaches to understand specific biodiversity needs in the Town and region. Much of this biodiversity research is ongoing, and results are not yet available for this open space plan. It should be noted that a portion of the research is focused on areas west of the Wallkill River and especially on the Shawangunk Ridge, and does not necessarily paint a community-wide picture. Also, as much of the research has a specific

focus, it is not intended to be a community-wide analysis and may be inappropriate at such a scale. A brief summary of these complementary research efforts is provided in the text box on page 32.

Based on the current understanding of biodiversity in the Town, it is apparent that there are several large-scale habitats (as identified by NYS Hudson River Estuary Program, Appendix D) that are indicative of high biodiversity. Protection of the overall integrity of these major resources is a primary goal of this plan and can be achieved through numerous programmatic and regulatory tools. However, there are other smaller-scale habitats, such as old fields, certain types of farmlands, and larger tracts of woodlands within the Town that may be considered important elements of local biodiversity. A detailed biodiversity analysis such as the ongoing research being conducted by the Metropolitan Conservation Alliance (MCA) east of the Wallkill River will help to create a clearer picture of the community’s critical resources. In the meantime, several recommendations are provided as overall guidance in maintaining the community’s biodiversity.

General Land-use Planning Conservation Thresholds

- Protect habitat patches of 55 hectares (138 acres) or greater.
- Preserve 20-60% of the total landscape for wildlife habitat.
- Landscape buffers of 230-300 meters (755-985 feet) are recommended to protect large habitat patches.
- A minimum riparian buffer of 100-meters (328 feet) is recommended.
- Use habitat corridors and stepping stones to reduce fragmentation and increase connectivity.

Adapted from: *Conservation Thresholds for Land Use Planners*, Environmental Law Institute

Note: these thresholds are provided as general guidance until more detailed research is able to provide thresholds specific to New Paltz’s biodiversity needs.

General Recommendations for Protecting Biodiversity in New Paltz

- Consider biodiversity concepts when defining acceptable land-use patterns through comprehensive planning. Use this information to inform any update of zoning and development controls. For example, stream buffers can be adopted to protect riparian areas as wildlife corridors, or zoning techniques and conservation analysis and design can be used to create compact development footprints, well placed to minimize habitat fragmentation.
- Integrate biodiversity goals into the open space conservation program. This can be accomplished by rating parcels for their biodiversity value within the resource criteria.
- Consider the effects of infrastructure development (roads, water, sewer, etc.) on biodiversity. For example, when building new roads, minimize the amount of fragmentation of existing habitat patches and consider wildlife crossings and linkages where necessary.
- Create conservation and development design guidelines for site planning and subdivision planning, to reduce impervious surface, clearing and grading, minimize habitat fragmentation, reduce the building footprint, and promote the use of green building techniques.
- Identify and restore lands that could potentially serve as key wildlife habitat patches, stepping stones, or corridors.



Water resources serve as wildlife habitat and corridors and should be protected as an important element of biodiversity.



Two contrasting examples of settlement: in the left corner, a traditional village hamlet pattern with dense mixed-use development; in the middle conventional development with sparse settlement and large lots, homes and driveways.



Homes such as the ones pictured above maximize the destruction and fragmentation of habitat by using individual, long driveways that extend across the parcel.

Please note that all above photos were taken outside of New Paltz.

Ongoing Biodiversity Efforts in New Paltz

Hudsonia

In 2001, the Wallkill River Task Force completed Hudsonia's habitat mapping training program based on the Biodiversity Assessment Manual for the Hudson River Estuary Corridor, to develop habitat maps using aerial photography, maps and field observations. The results of this training program were maps of habitats of ecological significance for two separate areas: the east side of the Wallkill River corridor from the northern boundary of the Village to the Town's northern boundary, and the Humpokill (Kleinkill) corridor and associated wetlands from Mountain Rest Road to Cragwood Road.

Metropolitan Conservation Alliance

From 2003-2005, the Metropolitan Conservation Alliance (MCA), a program of the Wildlife Conservation Society based at the Bronx Zoo, worked in the region to identify important biodiversity areas. Field studies, conducted throughout the Town and region, used a focal species approach, which concentrates on individual species or species assemblages that are either "development-sensitive" or "development-associated." Development-sensitive species are typically habitat specialists, meaning that they require a specific habitat type for breeding, mating, etc. and thus are extremely sensitive to development. Development-associated species are often habitat generalists that do not require specific habitats and often thrive in areas that are disturbed by development (such as edges). Striking an appropriate balance between these two categories is the goal of the focal species approach.

Green Assets

Green Assets is a project of the Shawangunk Ridge Biodiversity Partnership, a consortium of 10 environmental groups that has been studying the ecology of the ridge to provide guidance on conservation and land-use decisions from a regional perspective. The Green Assets maps provide data on landscape-level structural ecosystems that are useful in making land-use decisions at a local level. The Green Assets program recently completed maps of the natural communities of New Paltz from the west side of the Wallkill River to the ridge.

Hudson River Estuary Program

In addition to the above described research efforts in the Town and region, the Hudson River Estuary Program of the New York State Natural Heritage Program also provides information and guidance to communities on biodiversity topics. Based upon existing data compiled through the NYS DEC, the USGS, the New York State Reptile and Amphibian Atlas, and the New York State Natural Heritage Program, the Hudson River Estuary Program has identified four major important habitats in the Town of New Paltz. These habitats include: the Wallkill River and associated riparian areas, the Shawangunk Ridge wetlands, the Black Creek Swartekill wetlands, and the Shawangunk Ridge. A copy of a memo dated April 22, 2005 is provided in Appendix D and provides a summary of Important Habitats in New Paltz as defined by the NYS DEC Hudson River Estuary Program.

Mohonk Preserve

The Mohonk Preserve operates a biological field research center, known as the Daniel Smiley Research Center. Research at the Daniel Smiley Research Center aims to "document and explain long-term environmental change on the ridge." The center engages both long-term research studies (such as monitoring changes in amphibian breeding and hemlock parasite infections) as well as providing an environment (and an extensive collection of field data) for focused studies by visiting researchers.

Introduction

As mentioned throughout this plan, partnership with landowners is the key to a successful open space program in New Paltz. This partnership allows for open discussion and creative “win-win” solutions for landowners, the Town, Village, and community. The open space program includes a suite of potential options for landowners of different means and circumstances. With all options, voluntary program participation is essential to creating an environment that will foster partnership and make landowners feel comfortable participating.

Landowner Options: Suited to Needs

Developing the right set of options for protecting open space lands depends greatly on the circumstances and needs of the landowner as well as the long-term use goals of the open space.

For example, a landowner who is not ready to permanently protect his/her land for a variety of personal reasons but needs some temporary financial relief may wish to apply for a term conservation easement, which would allow him/her to keep using the land while protecting the land from development for a given period of time (10-15 years, for example). This approach can be used to “buy time” while the landowner works towards his/her long-term goals and also offers short-term tax abatements. Another landowner who wishes to develop a part of his/her land but protect a large amount as open space through a conservation easement may work with the Town through a cooperative planning process to obtain the necessary density or use variances in zoning in exchange for permanent protection of a significant portion of the land. These are just a few of the potential options.

Following are several tools or options, suited to specific needs/desires of a landowner. Following these options is a chart detailing the potential



An example of a cooperative approach: the scenic Tyson property is conserved with an easement held by a local land trust while the lands remain in private ownership and on tax rolls. The property is important to the viewshed of the Shawangunks (to and from the Village), and to the rural character of the Buttrick-Canaan foothills.

application of the options for landowners with specific needs as follows:

- Landowner wishes to continue farming
- Landowner interested in open space conservation
- Landowner interested in protecting historic/scenic qualities of the lands
- Landowner wishes to develop all or part of the lands

State Farmland Protection Program

The state Farmland Protection Program is administered by the New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets. The program awards grants to local governments (town or county with approved agricultural protection plan) that cover up to 75% of the cost to acquire development rights (also known as Purchase of Development Rights, or PDR) on qualifying farms. It requires a 25% local match, which can come from the municipality, landowner (who can offer a bargain sale of the 25% or sell at 25% below appraised value and use this as a tax deduction), or other partner such as a private land trust.

A Future Purchase of Development Rights (PDR) Program

The Town could develop its own program to purchase development rights to specific properties, as well as to supplement the state and nonprofit grant programs to purchase development rights. Under PDR, the development rights of a property are purchased but the property otherwise can continue to be farmed or used for purposes other than development, which is restricted as part of the easement. PDR can be applied to agricultural properties as well as lands with scenic, natural, or other open space values. The development of a Town PDR program is dependent on the establishment of a dedicated fund for the program. This can be created through municipal bonding, a dedicated reserve

account, or other mechanisms. According to the American Farmland Trust, a nationwide authority on farmland protection, the success of a local PDR program depends on several factors, including:

- The types of land-use restrictions developed
- Easement costs
- Raising purchase funds
- Administration of the program
- Monitoring and enforcement of easements

PDR Grant Application Assistance

The Town and Village, and other partners such as nonprofits, could offer assistance to landowners in the preparation of grant applications for state, local, and other grant programs. Grant applications can be time-consuming for landowners and often can be quickly completed by an experienced grant writer. This type of service is greatly appreciated by landowners who have busy schedules.

Term Conservation Easements

In general, term easements provide tax abatement in exchange for protection of the agricultural, open space, or historical values of land or buildings. The easement is created for a specific period of time (for example 5 to 20 years) and the landowner's taxes are abated (for example by 30%, 50% or 80% for differing terms) for this period in compensation for the term conservation easement. Term easements are generally considered to be a short-term option to protect land. However, the term easement offers an alternative (or supplement) to a PDR or other land protection program and provides a valuable short-term option to "buy time" while finances are raised to purchase land outright or through a PDR program or other mechanism, or as community values shift. Term easement programs can be developed to protect agricultural, open space, and historic properties of lands and buildings. While the open space and agricultural

conservation easements limit development, the preservation easement limits the types of modifications that are allowed to be made to the property. For example, the easement may prohibit the modification or removal of historic features. This type of program would be voluntary.

Lease of Development Rights

The lease of development rights (LDR) is similar to PDR except that the Town leases development rights from the landowner for a specific period of time, rather than purchasing the development rights outright. The landowner receives reduced property taxes and in some cases an annual fee for lease of the development lands from the municipality. Under this option, less up-front cash is needed by the community to protect the land. This option does not ensure permanent protection, but may be a good way to protect vulnerable agricultural lands from conversion (to development) in the short-term and could be complemented by a PDR program.

New York State Agricultural District Benefits

New York State's agricultural districts program is a multi-faceted initiative designed to promote the continued use of farmland for agricultural production. The program's benefits include "preferential real property tax treatment (agricultural assessment and special benefit assessment), and protections against overly restrictive local laws, government funded acquisition or construction projects, and private nuisance suits involving agricultural practices." In the New Paltz community, there are currently two agricultural districts: District 2 and District 3. Many (but not all) of the active farms are enrolled in the district.

Clifton Park's Term Conservation Easement Program

The Town of Clifton Park, in Saratoga County, NY developed a term conservation easement program to respond to landowners' needs. The Town offers term easements for agricultural, open space, and historic properties. There is a minimum 15-year term for the easements (but no maximum), and the reduction in taxes increases as the easement term increases. The program was enacted in 1996. Approximately 2,450 acres have been enrolled in the program as of 2004.

New York State Agricultural Assessment

The state's agricultural assessment allows owners of farmland to receive a lower land assessment if the farming operation meets certain criteria. Through this program, agricultural land is assessed for its value for agricultural production rather than for development.

Right of First Refusal with Farm Landowners

Landowners whose circumstances do not allow for a conservation easement or other type of permanent mechanism for conservation may offer "right of first refusal" to farmers interested in their lands. A list of interested farmers could be generated through the agricultural lands database (see page 40 for more detail on the agricultural lands database). The "right of first refusal" allows interested farmers to match a purchase offer when the land eventually goes up for sale. This is specifically important for farmers looking to increase contiguous land holdings.

Conservation Easement and Purchase of Development Rights (PDR) Programs

Ownership of land includes a suite of legally recognized rights including the right to subdivide and develop, farm, and harvest timber, to name a few. Landowners can choose to forego a portion of these rights to protect the land for future generations. These rights can be donated or sold to a municipality or land trust through the creation of a conservation easement and the landowner can continue to use the land for purposes that are not prohibited by the terms of the easement. The landowner continues to hold the deed to the property, including the right to sell, donate, or transfer the property.

A conservation easement restricts development of a property only to the extent necessary to protect the land's conservation value. For agricultural lands, the conservation value is often achieved by restricting new subdivision and development to protect farming operations. This does not mean that new farm buildings are prohibited.

A Purchase of Development Rights (PDR) Program is a type of conservation easement program that is focused on farmland protection. It is a way of compensating willing landowners for not developing their lands. Development rights are purchased from a landowner in order to ensure that the land is kept undeveloped. The benefit to the landowner includes the receipt of cash payment for keeping the land in farming production, possibly tax benefits for a reduced assessment of the land (based on farming rather than development potential), and in many cases, the comfort of knowing that the farm legacy will live on.

A conservation easement is a carefully-crafted document between the landowner and the easement holder (municipality or land trust, for example). The easement parameters are flexible and can be defined by the landowner to ensure that his/her goals are met.

Under a conservation easement, the landowner:

- Still owns the property and can still sell the land (the easement, however, stays with the land and the property is sold with the easement).
- Does not have to put an easement on all of his/her property (for example, a portion can be reserved for the family and can retain development rights).
- Does not require public access on the property.



In Pittsford, NY an early vision and action plan ("Greenprint for Pittsford's Future") has resulted in the protection of all seven of the Town's active farms through a PDR program, including Mark Green's farm, pictured above.

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Resource or Character-Based Design Guidelines

Resource or character-based design guidelines help to define a more specific vision (than general design guidelines) for the appearance of new changes in the landscape. The images below illustrate the types of design guidelines or standards that might apply to a rural countryside setting in New Paltz.



A new residential development is disguised along the roadway by conserving a horse farm as part of the roadside buffer. (Malta, NY)



A home is “tucked” in to the surrounding woodlands rather than sited in the middle of the open fields. (East Greenbush, NY)

Assistance for Farm Business Corporations

The Town could explore specific ways to help farmers/farm families who have incorporated their farms as business corporations. By doing so, they do not qualify for as many of the tax benefits through agricultural districts, STAR for farmers, etc.

Permanent Conservation Easement

A permanent conservation easement restricts development on land in perpetuity, as defined by the easement language. The conservation easement can be used to protect agricultural value, scenic quality and views, important wildlife habitat, or other unique open space features. Conservation easements are discussed in detail in the text box on page 36.

Town-Financed Conservation Easement Transaction Costs and Easement Monitoring

The conservation easement process most often involves the need for a lawyer, appraiser, and possibly financial advisor. Once the easement is developed, the landowner may need to contribute to an easement monitoring program. Transaction costs (appraisals, attorney fees, surveys, title searches, etc.) are also associated with the easement. These costs can be prohibitive to landowner participation in a PDR program. By offering to compensate the landowner for these costs, the Town may encourage broader participation and interest in the program.

Resource or Character-based Design Guidelines/Standards

Design guidelines for residential and other types of development (for example commercial corridor guidelines) can help landowners understand how to create development that enhances New Paltz's open spaces and preserves the "rural character" and other special character areas in New Paltz. Design guidelines should be based on character areas rather than universally applicable to the Town.

For example, design guidelines for the Route 208 South corridor might focus on preserving the rural roadside character by defining architectural and landscape guidelines/standards for residential and commercial development along the roadways. An example of such a standard might include setting development back from the road at a distance that conforms to the roadway character, to continue the roadway "greenspace" buffer. Architectural standards, including suitable lighting and signage, for example, would complement the appropriate siting and context of development.

For the Butternut-Canaan Foothills/Mountain Rest Road area design guidelines/standards might focus on preserving the natural, wooded and scenic views of the Shawangunk Mountains and might include site planning guidelines that call for a compact building footprint while tucking development into wooded areas. They might also include architectural standards, such as roof and building color palettes that blend into the landscape.

Cooperative Land Planning

Cooperative land planning is essentially the spirit of this entire plan. The concept of cooperative planning includes an ongoing discussion between landowners and the Town and Village as to their needs and options. The Town and Village may be able to provide the landowner with options (many of which are outlined in this report) so that the community's open space goals can be

met as well within the context of the landowner's needs.

Open Space Incentive Zoning

Incentive zoning allows a landowner or developer to work with a municipality to obtain specific incentives in exchange for providing desired community amenities such as open space conservation. Incentives may include modifications to density, allowed uses, setbacks, or other zoning controls. The landowner or developer may provide, in exchange, dedicated open space, trail access, park land or potentially cash (in lieu of land) to contribute to a PDR program.

Coordinated Area-specific Master Plans

Landowners can directly benefit from working cooperatively with the Town and Village to develop plans for specific areas of New Paltz. Such a detailed master plan might include an in-depth site analysis of potential conservation resources and identification of potential areas that may be preferred for future development. For example, a master plan for the "Heart of Town" area might engage the public in a discussion about the desired level and intensity of development for the remaining undeveloped lands and would help to frame future scale and location of development and conservation efforts. Area-specific master plans, such as a future area master plan for the Mill Brook Preserve, can also be created in a spirit of cooperation between multiple adjacent landowners.

New Paltz Open Space Plan

Landowner Options Table: the table below provides an overview of the type of options available to landowners of differing circumstances. The options are discussed in this section of the plan in more detail.

Program or Option	Landowner Interested In...			
	Continuing Farming	Open Space Conservation	Protection of Scenic or Historic Qualities	Developing Part or All of Lands
State Farmland Protection Program	●			
A Future Town Purchase of Development Rights (PDR) Program	●	●	●	●
Term Conservation Easements	●	●	●	
New York State Agricultural District Benefits	●			
New York State Agricultural Assessment	●			
Lease of Development Rights	●			
Right of First Refusal with Landowners	●	●	●	
Assistance for Farm Business Corporations	●			
Permanent Conservation Easement	●	●	●	●
Town-financed Conservation Easement Transaction Costs and Easement Monitoring	●	●	●	●
Resource or Character-based Design Guidelines/Standards		●	●	●
Cooperative Land Planning	●	●	●	●
Open Space Incentive Zoning		●	●	●
Coordinated Area-specific Master Plans		●	●	●

Other Potential Policies to Help Farmers Keep Their Lands Open:

Create an Agricultural Lands Database

The Town/Village could create and maintain a database of agricultural land supply in the community to serve as a clearinghouse/point source on available agricultural land supply, land use and protection status in New Paltz. This database would help direct farmers to potential parties with interest in renting or leasing lands, as well as other business development and growth sharing opportunities. It would provide information to long-time existing farmers, as well as new, start-up farms and community supported agriculture. Agricultural education and outreach materials should be created along with this database. The materials could be used to inform landowners who are interested in conservation about their options, including economic and other implications of their choices.

Form a New Paltz Agricultural Committee

Form a dedicated agricultural committee in New Paltz, and/or merge with a regional agricultural committee, such as exists in the Rondout River Valley on the western side of the Ridge. The committee is an invaluable tool to help inform the Town of emerging concerns and issues and can help represent the agricultural community through planning processes. This committee could help maintain the agricultural lands database and could also help develop agricultural educational material working with county and state resources.

Create a Town Agricultural Land Reserve

The Town could protect important agricultural lands for future agricultural needs by creating an agricultural land bank or land reserve. Through this process, the Town could purchase important farm lands (potentially through the right of first

refusal option) and hold the lands for future sale or lease to interested farmers (who may be identified through the agricultural lands database). This type of land reserve helps to safeguard important agricultural lands until need or demand for such lands arises.

Agricultural / Farm Viability Grant Application Assistance

The New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets administers a Farmland Viability Grant Program for farmers. Under the program, funding is provided to applicants who wish to develop or implement a business plan or a Comprehensive Nutrient Management Plan (CNMP). One of the requirements of the grant is that there is a demonstrated mechanism for increasing profitability while practicing sound environmental management of the farming operations. Business plans may address the “value-added processing of agricultural products, transitioning to an alternative product, construction of new facilities, or the protection of natural resources.” The Town/Village could help landowners prepare grant applications for this program.

Support Local Research and Development

Supporting local research, such as the existing Cornell research farming area along the Wallkill River, and the work of SUNY students, all helps to maintain and enhance the agricultural community in the region. These types of innovative work demonstrate the region’s commitment to cutting-edge agricultural research and development. The community can aid such research efforts by reaching out to the respective universities to identify potential opportunities for support.

Support Agritourism

Agritourism is a growing sector in the region, especially in Ulster County and New Paltz, and should not be overlooked as an important income-generating tool. Agricultural landowners can increase their diversity and profitability, and

in some cases extend their income throughout the four seasons, by incorporating agritourism opportunities into their business plans. The Shawangunk Wine Trail is an excellent example of successful agritourism in the New Paltz region. Other examples of agritourism include bed and breakfast (B&B)'s, corn mazes, and hay rides, all of which help to supplement farm income and generate interest and new customers.

The region's chamber of commerce and other organizations also produce valuable guides and materials that help to promote New Paltz' farm stands, pick-your-own, and other agritourism destinations. The Town and Village can continue to support and expand upon such valuable marketing and explore future areas for expanded agritourism. Additionally, the Town's zoning code and other land-use regulations can be reviewed to ensure that agritourism options are fully supported.

Support Farm Products Through Local Consumption

The Town and Village, along with the local institutions (e.g., SUNY), could support local agriculture by contracting with local farms to purchase their goods for regular and special events. For example, the local school districts, with support from the Town and Village could contract with local farms for school lunches, helping to support local farmers, keeping expenditures local, and also providing for healthier alternatives to school lunches. More information on connecting farms and schools is available from the national Farm to School Program (<http://www.farmtoschool.org>) and the Cornell Farm to School Program (<http://www.cce.cornell.edu/farmtoschool>).

Local Laws

The Town and Village's comprehensive plan and zoning ordinance, which are essentially land-use blueprints for the future, can be fully supportive of agriculture. The comprehensive plan can include an agriculture element, with specific goals

and objectives for protecting farmland as a part of the area's economic base and rural character.

The Town's zoning ordinance can ensure that agricultural uses are allowed in various zoning districts and that allowed accessory uses provide flexibility for landowners. For example, providing flexibility for farmers or large-acreage landowners to develop a bed & breakfast or a farm stand to supplement the farm income will help to diversify income options and thus keep the land in farming while ensuring enough land resources remain available for agricultural production.

For landowners that choose development as an option, the Town's subdivision regulations could also allow for creative conservation development of farms so that the land and rural heritage is preserved to the maximum extent during development. The conservation design process detailed in Part II of this report, which could be applied towards new subdivisions, could help to achieve the goals of preserving rural heritage and minimizing impacts to any adjacent farms.

The Town should formally recognize the State's existing "Right to Farm Law" to build awareness of this important existing legislation to support continued viability of farms in New Paltz. The state's "Right to Farm Law" helps protect farmers from nuisance lawsuits when they are abiding by reasonable standards of operation. Building awareness of this law is especially useful in growing communities such as New Paltz, in which subdivisions are erected within close proximity to farms and the residents become increasingly intolerant of essential farmland operations (tilling, spraying, smells of livestock, etc.). These types of land-use conflicts can also be abated through the use of good site planning and design of subdivisions, and through the inclusion of appropriate buffers, landscape treatments, and other techniques.

Another mechanism for protecting farms from nuisance suits has been implemented by the Town of Goshen. The Town requires that subdivisions created near active farms include a notice in the deed that there is a farm nearby that may create typical farm noises and odors.

Summary

This section has outlined many options for landowners to keep farming, conserve their lands, and to develop with sensitivity for the community's natural, cultural, agricultural and scenic character. The Town and Village, working with landowners, should develop a land conservation program that implements the most desired and useful options for landowners. Landowners can then partner with the Town and Village to create “win-win” open space conservation results.



A winter setting at Taliaferro Farms, a community supported agriculture (CSA) operation near the Wallkill River.

Land Conservation Acreage Milestones

Acreage goals set a milestone to achieve and a sense of accomplishment when they are reached. Ultimately, they are used as a measure of program success. Below are some land conservation acreage goals, including specific milestones for the resource character areas discussed in Section II of this report.

- Aim to protect an additional 3,000 acres of Town and Village lands in the long-term. This amount would more than double the existing 2,800 acres (12% of total Town and Village land area, 22,848 acres) protected to-date and would protect approximately 25% of the total Town and Village land area.
- Aim to protect a balanced mix of acreage and resources in each of the open space vision character areas. Acreage milestones for each character area are as follows:

Shawangunk Ridge: 500 acres

Butterville-Canaan Foothills: 500 acres

Wallkill Flats and River Corridor: 500 acres

North Woods and Eastern Wetlands: 500 acres

Orchards, Farms and Ridge-Views: 1,000 acres

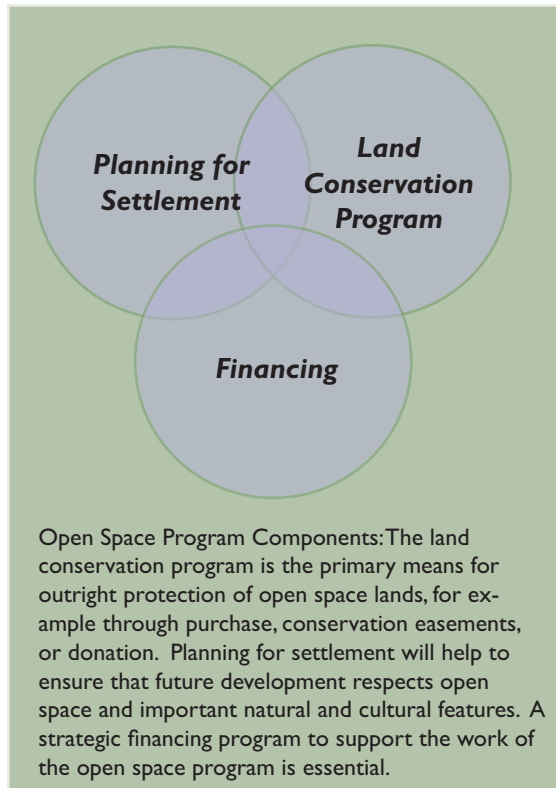
Three Components of the New Paltz Open Space Program

Fulfilling the open space vision of the New Paltz community will require a substantial investment of financial resources as well as a dedicated investment in planning for the future. The land conservation program helps to directly preserve open space through purchase, donation, conservation easement, etc. However, preserving priority parcels alone will not deliver the ambitious open space vision of the community. Open space must also be preserved by creating smarter development that preserves natural resources and open space (planning for

settlement or development-side planning). In a parallel process to the land conservation program, development-side tools to protect open space (e.g., changes to local laws and design guidelines) should be implemented.

Implementing both the land conservation program and the development-side planning requires an appropriate funding program. Thus, when planning a comprehensive open space protection program in New Paltz, three important and intersecting components should be considered concurrently: the land conservation program, financing the open space program, and planning for future settlement. It is also important that continuous administration, coordination, education and outreach be woven into each of these components.

The following sections will include a more detailed discussion of the needs and goals of each of the three open space program components, as well as long and short-term recommendations.





The scenic Butterville-Canaan Road follows the edge of the ridge through rolling hills and a rural setting.

Introduction

This section of the plan sets the stage for implementation by outlining conservation milestones and providing recommendations for achieving the milestones. **This plan recommends setting a milestone of 3,000 acres of additional open space** (or 25% of the Town and Village land area) with a balanced mixture of lands in all of the Town and Village character areas. Recommendations for achieving this goal, through both land conservation and planning for settlement that respects the natural, agricultural and scenic qualities of New Paltz, are provided.

General Conservation Goals

Conservation goals help to ensure that the intent of the program is carried out and provide guidance in making decisions. Below are some general goals to consider in advancing the open space plan.

- Protect significant lands for each type of resource or character area identified in the vision: Shawangunk Ridge, Butterville-Canaan Foothills, Wallkill Flats and River Corridor, North Woods and Eastern Wetlands, Orchards, Farms and Ridge-views, Heart of New Paltz, and Scenic Cultural Landscapes.
- Create connections, trails and greenway linkages on a Town-wide basis as part of the conservation process. Providing public access to conservation lands (as appropriate) helps the community connect to the land and raises support and awareness for future conservation efforts.
- Conserve working landscapes where landowners are stewards of the landscape.
- Create a balanced geographical distribution of resource protection by conserving lands across the Town, and especially east of the Wallkill River, where a very limited acreage of land is currently protected.
- Focus primary efforts on protecting priority parcels, as identified through a detailed ranking process.
- Balance public investments in open space and resource conservation with the community's tax base and fiscal capacity; and in proportion with the community's other important investment needs.
- Facilitate intermunicipal and regional conservation initiatives for mutual community benefit.

Table 1: Open Space Milestones and Implementation Summary for Character Areas in New Paltz

Character Area*	Major Conservation Value	Major Resource(s) for Protection	Existing Total Land (acres)	Existing Protected Land (acres)	Land Conservation Milestone (acres)	Future Protected Land (acres)	Major Tool(s) For Protection	Major Recommended Project(s)
Shawangunk Mountains	Wildlife corridor, biodiversity, scenic views	Forestland, ridges	3,100	1,800	500	2,300	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Fee simple purchase and donation• Conservation easements	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Support and partner with land trusts and conservation organizations. This can be done through dedicated staff time, or the provision of seed funding or matching funds.
Butterville-Canaan Foothills	Habitat buffer, scenic views	Foothills, wetland patches, stream corridors, agricultural and open lands	3,600	400	500	900	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Conservation development• Conservation easements	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Create a greenbelt system along the streams and open lands in the area.• Develop a bike tour and map for the area’s scenic roads.• Revise zoning and subdivision regulations to provide a process for conservation development.
Wallkill Flats & River Corridor	Greenway and wildlife corridor, water quality, agricultural productivity	River corridor, river wetlands, floodplain forest, agricultural lands	2,200	100	500	600	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Regulatory protection (FEMA and floodplain protection)• Conservation easements• Park and trail development	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Support /develop matching seed funding for local and regional land trusts for a proposed PDR of farmlands along the Wallkill River (farms below Huguenot Street).• Conduct a specific Wallkill River water trail planning process along the Wallkill River and tributaries.• Explore conservation opportunities in the oxbow and forest floodplains and adjacent tributaries, and connect to the “north woods.”
North Woods & Eastern Wetlands	Wildlife habitat, water quality	Wetland patches, woodland patches	2,900	200	500	700	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Regulatory protection (wetlands)• Conservation development• Conservation easements and fee simple purchase and donation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Conserve the Swartekill wetlands and buffer major stream corridors.• Enhance development setbacks.• Acquire key parcels for access and protection.
Orchards, Farms and Ridge Views	Agricultural productivity; scenic/rural character	Active farmlands and open lands	2,300	200	1,000	1,200	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Conservation easements or PDR• Conservation development	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Develop a Purchase of Development Rights (PDR) program to protect productive agricultural lands and safeguard scenic views.
Heart of New Paltz	Community connections to open space	Parks, trails and greenway connections	1,100	100 6.5 miles (rail trail)	Establish in trail plan	Establish in trail plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Trail and parkland construction	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Create a joint Town and Village trails master plan.• Develop and implement the internal conservation concepts within the Mill Brook Preserve.• Develop the concept for a greenway park and trail along Mill Brook towards the Wallkill River area and other off-site trail links.
Scenic and Historic Landscapes	Historic and scenic quality; rural character; community appreciation and awareness	Scenic viewsheds, scenic roads, historic hamlets, historic buildings, homes, and landscapes	Unknown	Unknown	Protected through above acreage	Protected through above acreage	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Scenic/historic easements• Inclusion of scenic/historic features in all conservation projects	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Enhance historic resource inventory by conserving identified resources.• Develop design guidelines for scenic areas.
Town and Village Overall	Balanced diversity of above	Balanced diversity of above	22,848	2,800 (12%)	3,000	5,700 (25%)		See Recommendations Section

**Note: Some character areas have overlapping resources and a portion of the New Paltz land area does not fit into any of the character areas. Thus, the character area acreages do not add up to the total town acreage. All numbers are rounded to the nearest 100.*

The Land Conservation Program

The primary goal of the land conservation program is to protect the Town's priority open space lands through land purchase, conservation easement and other innovative mechanisms. The community open space vision and concepts presented in Section II of this report were used to develop resource criteria for rating and prioritizing parcels for inclusion in an open space conservation program. The resource criteria are provided in Appendix B, and include both pragmatic categories such as the potential for project success as well as community values developed in the visioning process and resource-based character-area goals.

Once the parcels are rated, priority parcels can then be acquired through the land conservation program. However, before land transactions and acquisition begins, it is important that a dedicated funding source for the program is established. This plan recommends that a municipal bond be established to help fund the program. Advance education and outreach to the community on the goals of the conservation program will help to garner support for the program and bond. There are, however, many other potential opportunities and tools for protecting priority open space lands through the land conservation program, many of which are highlighted in the following recommendations.

Land Conservation Program Recommendations:

IMMEDIATE (Present to 2 years):

- Identify/appoint a temporary representative(s) to oversee the below recommendations of the open space planning process.
- Conduct third-party parcel rating (by a consultant or other neutral entity who is not directly associated with New Paltz) using the

resource criteria and parcel rating system in Appendix B and develop a priority parcel list.

- Explore a range of conservation easement options and programs including permanent and term easements as one open space conservation tool.
- Provide technical assistance for landowners in the form of grant writing, legal advice, etc. to remove potential barriers to program participation.
- Conduct ongoing outreach and education on the land conservation program and its benefits to the community.
- Conduct ongoing landowner outreach to gauge interest and participation in the land conservation program.
- Develop educational materials to provide to realtors, the development community, and landowners on the open space plan, conservation easements, and other conservation options for landowners.

SHORT-TERM (3-5 years):

- Hire a Town planner or seek a long-term consultant relationship to provide consistent oversight of open space implementation and to serve as a direct contact for landowners. See page 53, Land Planning Services, for more details on the types of services that this person could provide to the Town's landowners.
- Create and maintain a database of agricultural land supply in the community to serve as a clearinghouse/point source on available agricultural land supply, land use and protection status in New Paltz. This database would help direct farmers to potential parties with interest in renting or leasing lands, as well as other business development and growth sharing opportunities. It would provide information to long-time existing farmers, as well as new,

start-up farms and community supported agriculture. Agricultural education and outreach materials should be created along with this database.

- Conduct a cooperative planning workshop (or set of workshops) with agricultural landowners to identify potential zoning and other barriers to successful farming and revise zoning and other local laws as appropriate to ensure that farmers can continue to keep their lands open.
- Create a master plan for trails and greenways in the Town (keeping regional connections in mind). Coordinate with other existing Town, Village, and regional bicycle, pedestrian and trails committees and with other relevant work, such as the Shawangunk Mountains Scenic Byway plan, the recommendations of the ongoing Town and Village Department of Transportation study, and the trail work of the Southern Ulster Alliance. Ensure that all new development (and conservation plans where appropriate) includes trail access as indicated within the trail plan.
- Support the efforts of local land trusts by matching funds for projects that help to pro-

tect priority open space parcels or otherwise achieve the open space vision.

- When completed, review the biological research of the Metropolitan Conservation Alliance and incorporate its recommendations into this planning process and/or the parcel rating criteria. Similarly, review the research currently being conducted on historic landscapes and incorporate its findings. Continue to revise this plan as more regional open space/ conservation and agricultural planning and research becomes available.

Financing Open Space Protection

Obtaining the necessary level of funding for the open space program requires an extensive fundraising and financing program. To achieve the level of protection desired by the community, it is recommended that the Town develop a municipal bond, tailored to meet the community's fiscal capacity. However, this should not be considered the sole source of funding but rather as one of many potential opportunities. There are numerous opportunities to leverage local investment with local, federal and state grant programs and other funding sources.



An agricultural database will help to track active and potential farmland.

To achieve success at financing the program, it is important to conduct continuous community and landowner outreach. Ensure that the community is aware of the goals and intentions of the program, how their potential contributions will be spent and how the projects will benefit the community as a whole. It is also important that landowners understand how much the program will cost them and what they will receive for differing funding levels. This level of outreach will help to raise the level of awareness for open space investment.

Financing/Fundraising Recommendations:

IMMEDIATE (Present to 2 years):

- Continue to set annual budget allocations for “green infrastructure” including capital and program delivery costs. As mentioned earlier, engage a consultant or staff services to deliver the community’s open space program.
 - Conduct a cost of community services study to compare the costs of bonding for open
- space conservation to the costs of population growth without conservation.
 - Seek county, state and federal grants to match/ implement land conservation and trail projects.
 - Prepare a bonding package and conduct municipal bonding that is appropriate for the community’s fiscal capacity. Bonding involves several important steps, including: identifying the purpose of funding, amount of funding requested, terms of bonding, and developing the bond ballot language. See the below text box on weighing strategies for developing a bond package.
 - Review and consider adoption of a local law (upon pending enabling law passage by the State of New York) to impose an up to 2% real estate transfer tax to increase the dedicated funding available for preservation of open space resources.

Strategies for Open Space Bonding

Bond Amount Proposal

Some communities have successfully pursued voter approval or permissive referendum of a designated amount of funding authorization. Funding expended under this authorization must meet its purposes, but the work remains to identify the specific projects and to bring projects to closure. The advantage of this approach is that the community has a commitment of funding to work on real estate transactions for conservation. However, the specific projects are not necessarily identified upfront. This approach also postpones the costs of preparing the projects. The Town of Red Hook, in Dutchess County, NY followed this approach, obtained successful voter authorization and is proceeding with closing on projects that permanently conserve key farms in the community.

Project-Driven Bond Proposal

Some communities choose to identify specific projects first, and propose a body of projects for authorization. The benefit of this approach is that the Town board and voters know exactly what projects are proposed for funding. This approach requires up-front costs to identify and refine the proposed projects ahead of an authorization. The Town of Pittsford and its Greenprint for the Future program and the Town of Webster, both in Monroe County, NY identified specific parcels for investment through this process.

Major Open Space Program Financing Options

Local Appropriations

Local government can appropriate funds (through local budget authority) collected through property taxes to purchase lands, development rights, etc. This type of budget allocation can be a one-time annual appropriation or a multi-year appropriation. Local appropriations are limited to available funds and are weighed against other public costs, often producing limited results for open space conservation.

Municipal Bonds

A local government can issue a bond to finance special projects, such as open space preservation. A municipal bond allows for a municipality to raise capital applicable for investment in capital projects (not operating costs) and repay the debt (bond principal and interest) over time. Bonds can be retired in 20 years or 30 years, for example. A municipal bond can be placed on a ballot during a local election for voter approval, or it can be subject to permissive referendum. Under permissive referendum, the municipal board may take an action without a vote, however, voters have an opportunity to petition the decision and require a ballot measure. Successful municipal bonding requires extensive public outreach and education, but provides the opportunity to obtain necessary dedicated open space conservation funds for the open space program.

Real Estate Transfer Tax

An emerging and very promising opportunity for local open space financing is currently being considered by the New York State legislature called the “Community Preservation Act.” This legislation would allow local governments (upon voter approval) to impose up to a 2% tax on real estate transactions to fund agricultural and open space conservation, recreational opportunities, and other important environmental benefits. This option is interesting to local governments because it is a way to generate open space funds without charging the taxpayer. First-time homebuyers and purchases below the median home value in the County would be exempt from the tax.

- Conduct local fund-raising efforts within the community to supplement program funds and more importantly help to raise awareness and interest in the land conservation program. Collaborate with the Wallkill Valley Land Trust on this initiative.

SHORT-TERM (2-5 years):

- Consider an annual property tax levy to create a dedicated open space capital reserve fund. This would provide consistent funding for the land conservation program.

- Explore increasing the recreation fee for new development in the Town and Village to help fund open space/trail development and maintenance.
- If the community decides to pursue an updated comprehensive plan, and/or a generic environmental impact statement (GEIS) to evaluate build-out and future land-use alternatives, the community may be in a position to develop additional laws that could serve to protect open space. As an example, over the span of about four years, the Town of Clifton Park, in Saratoga County, NY created

General Obligation Bonding for New Paltz: Community Willingness to Pay

In June 2005, Behan Planning Associates talked with the Town's assessor for a brief, up-to-date look at what the preliminary, potential costs would be for the Town of New Paltz based on 2005 data. Below is a breakdown of bond costs for \$1 million, \$2 million and \$5 million for a Town conservation program, based on Town of New Paltz information.*

Municipal Bond Principal	Average Town Payment at 5%, 30-year term	Tax Rate/ \$1,000 AV	Annual Cost to Household Assessed Value of \$175,000	Annual Cost to Household Assessed Value \$275,000
\$1 Million	\$64,419/year	0.0873	\$15	\$24
\$2 Million	\$128,838/year	0.1746	\$31	\$48
\$5 Million	\$322,095/year	0.4364	\$76	\$120

A national land conservation organization that has worked extensively throughout New York State, the Trust for Public Land (TPL) has identified that for communities in New York, there has been clear voter support for community open space bond votes that are \$50 or less of annual cost per average household.

Based on the findings of the community survey conducted by the New Paltz Open Space Committee in 2003, the community indicated a general willingness to pay for open space protection. The survey mailed to 1,600 sample households of property owners and renters had a response rate of about 35%. About 77% of the survey respondents said the town and village should actively pursue protecting open space as a strategy to keep New Paltz fiscally healthy and affordable. Over 67% of the respondents favored some level of a tax increase to support open space protection. Of those 67% that would support some level of a tax increase: about 2/3 supported a range of \$10 to \$100 per year per average household; and the other 1/3 supported a range of \$100 to \$300 per year per average household. (See Appendix C for details about the survey results.)

In summary, the potential costs of investing \$1 million to \$2 million in green infrastructure may be a viable option for the community. It is recommended that New Paltz present detailed program information to the community as part of any bond proposal. Identifying specific projects, costs and benefits will also be important.

** NOTE: Town's total taxable assessed value is \$738 million for all properties. Average home value (assessed value) is about \$275,000 according to Michael Dunham, Town assessor on June 3, 2005.*

Cost of Community Services

A summary of 58 “costs of community services” (COCS) studies by the American Farmland Trust calculated the median cost per dollar of revenue raised to provide public services (such as police and fire protection, water and sewer services, roads and schools) to each of the three different land uses. These studies have been conducted around the United States, and primarily have been conducted on communities of less than 25,000 residents. The studies have shown that for every dollar these communities received from residential uses, the median amount the communities had to expend to service them was \$1.16. In contrast, for every dollar received from commercial/industrial uses and from farm/forest/open space uses, the median amount they had to expend was \$0.27 and \$0.36 respectively. For every dollar in tax revenues received from the residential sector in Beekman, NY, for example, \$1.12 was spent on public services. In contrast, every dollar of revenue accruing from farm/forest/open space uses in Beekman required only \$0.48 in public service costs.

The main conclusion of the COCS study findings is that, as a rule, typical residential development does not pay for itself: it costs local governments more to provide services to homeowners than residential property owners pay in property taxes. Likewise, the findings of COCS studies have been remarkably consistent in confirming the same overall pattern: that farm, forest and open land generate a surplus of revenues for local budgets, while residential development creates a net loss due to its high service demands. Although farm and open lands generate less revenue overall than residential, commercial or industrial properties, they have modest requirements for public services, and thus typically provide a fiscal surplus to offset the shortfall in revenues for residential services.

Sources:

- American Farmland Trust (2000). Cost of Community Services Studies Fact Sheet. http://www.farmlandinfo.org/documents/27757/FS_COCS_11-02.pdf
- Crompton, John L. (2000). The Impact of Parks and Open Space on Property Values and the Property Tax Base. Ashburn, VA: National Recreation and Park Association.
- American Farmland Trust and Cornell Cooperative Extension of Dutchess County (1989). Cost of Community Services Study: Towns of Beekman and Northeast, Dutchess County, New York. Milbrook, NY: American Farmland Trust and Cornell Cooperative Extension.



Fishing access in the Village of New Paltz along the Wallkill River.

an Open Space Plan, followed up with an updated Comprehensive Plan, and conducted additional focused land-use planning and build-out analysis for the western, rural half of town through the context of a Western Clifton Park Generic Environmental Impact Statement. The GEIS process helped the town develop open space incentive zoning (also known as amenity zoning) for which in exchange for allowing some increased density up to a cap, developers would buy development rights for parcels within identified priority areas of town, or alternatively pay a mitigation fee. This tool was adopted and enacted in 2005.

Planning for Settlement

It is not realistic to think that every landowner will be willing to permanently protect his or her “priority parcel.” And, even if this was the case, without appropriate land-use planning for the remaining town and village lands, these parcels may become “islands of green” in a surrounding matrix of development. Ideally, future development in the town and village will complement and support the goals of the open space plan, for example by protecting the function of habitat corridors (i.e., large unfragmented patches of lands, stream and river corridors).

Furthermore, a full build-out of the town and village under current zoning and development controls is not likely to support the community’s open space vision. Working creatively with landowners and developers to create solutions to zoning and other land use planning tools can help to ensure that open space goals are met through the development process.

This open space plan is not a substitute for a solid comprehensive plan that effectively addresses housing, services, transportation, health and welfare, and environmental well-being.

This plan has identified conceptual conservation areas. One of the major recommendations of the land conservation program is to refine these areas using a rating system to identify specific parcels desired for conservation. This process should be simultaneously complemented with a similar process to identify desired areas for development, with extensive community input through planning charrettes and workshops. This process is an important implementation item of the open space plan, and can be conducted jointly with a comprehensive plan update.

Alternatives for development and conservation should be fully explored through cost of community services (COCS) studies, fiscal impact analysis, and/or cost-benefits studies to ensure that they are fiscally sound and meet the community’s goals, including the need to maintain workforce and housing affordability in an expanding regional housing market. Ulster County’s *Priority Strategies to Support Housing Development* identifies housing targets, and can serve as a guide for this work.

Planning for settlement includes conducting planning processes to identify conservation and development areas and examining their fiscal impacts; it includes creating or updating planning documents (such as the comprehensive plan); it includes making revisions to zoning code and other land use controls. It also includes a suite of innovative and creative ways that landowners and the community can partner to create development that respects and enhances the open space vision. Many of these creative tools have been discussed throughout this report, including the ideas of area master planning (page 38) and conservation analysis (pages 16-17). These planning for settlement processes and tools should be developed together in a comprehensive manner with the open space conservation program.

Model Communities With Voter-Approved Public Investments in Conservation

In the Hudson Valley Region:

In November 2005, voters in the Town of Beekman, Dutchess County, NY supported a \$3 million open space bond by a 2.5 to 1 margin. The Town Board had adopted a town open space plan in Spring 2005.

In 2003, voters in the Town of Red Hook, Dutchess County, NY approved a \$3.5 million open space bond by an approximately 80 percent margin to purchase the development rights from interested farmers. The Town's investment is being leveraged with dollars from a Dutchess County matching grant program, technical assistance from Dutchess Land Conservancy, a land trust, and follows significant investment by Scenic Hudson, a regional conservation organization. The Town adopted an open space plan in 2000.

In 2000, voters in the Town of Warwick, Orange County, NY approved a \$9 million bond for open space and farmland protection. The local goal is to protect approximately 3,000 acres of the Town's farmland and open space. A study for the Town of Warwick estimated that the continued development otherwise would cost taxpayers an estimated \$4 to \$5 million per year in additional school taxes.

In New York State:

In 2004, voters in the Town of Webster, Monroe County, NY approved a \$5.9 million bond program, and subsequently have secured matching grants from federal, New York State, and Monroe County to leverage their local dollars to meet their program budget of close to \$7.9 million. The 2002 fiscal model prepared for the Town and school district showed that for every dollar invested in open space conservation, town residents would save an equal dollar in avoided costs associated with growth. Hence, in that community, there was no net cost of investing in open space land acquisitions.

In 1998, the Town of Pittsford, Monroe County, NY approved a \$9.9 million bond for open space and farmland protection. When the Town reviewed the fiscal impact of the \$9.9 million dollar open space bond, it was determined that the approximate \$64 per year cost to the average household to pay for the bond would be far less than doing nothing about open space bonding, as the cost of community services to serve that additional development would impact the average householder about \$250 per year in new taxes for schools, road maintenance, and other community services.



The O'Connor farm in the Town of Beekman is important to the community both as an active farm and for its natural and scenic values.

Planning for Settlement Recommendations:

IMMEDIATE:

- Conduct a community-wide build-out analysis to assess the potential contributions and impacts of development in the landscape, and the community capacity to absorb additional development as feasible under exist-

ing zoning and land use controls. The fiscal costs and benefits of these conservation and development alternatives should be evaluated through this process, which can help to inform the comprehensive plan update.

- Build the community's fiscal resources and capacity through "development side" planning and zoning review. If the community is

Land Planning Services

As a key component of the land conservation process, it is recommended that a planning and design professional(s) is hired to serve as a specific point person for the community to provide ongoing, consistent consultation services on the community's comprehensive plan, open space plan, trails plan, etc. This person can also offer consistent guidance on future planning endeavors in the Town and Village to ensure that they are consistent with the goals of the open space plan.

Land planning services can help to provide landowners with guidance on the community planning concepts for conservation and development. Land planning services can also help landowners interpret the community's broader planning concepts in relation to the site specific parcels and areas and help to identify opportunities for trail connections, resource greenbelt corridors, and much more.

Land Planning Recommendations:

- Provide early consultation with landowners on preliminary concepts for conservation and development.
- Provide education and guidance on available tools, handbooks and guidelines, zoning, planning, design guidelines, conservation options, etc. that offer alternative design concepts and other options.
- Specific site planning design and layout for conservation and development should be conducted by the landowner using their own private consultant following initial consultation with the town's planning representative. The Town's planning representative could remain involved for ongoing consultation, but would not be responsible for delivering the project designs.



A winter image of the Swartekill wetlands in the eastern part of Town.

interested in reducing its out of pocket costs for increasing investments in open space, one way to address the fiscal capacity is to increase the net revenue generating land uses (tax base), such as commercial land uses – in balance with the community’s desired overall land use vision and other impacts of increased types of commercial development.

- Continue to partner with landowners where development is the option – to create open space conservation developments (use the Mill Brook Preserve as a model for this type of partnership).
- Provide support for landowners (e.g., by providing staff assistance) to conduct detailed land planning to prepare for conservation and development.

SHORT-TERM:

- Conduct a comprehensive plan update with broad community and landowner involvement program. Update the land use plan and implement zoning and other tools to achieve the desired growth patterns. Use a character-area level analysis during this process to ensure that the land-use vision and tools represent the unique resources and characters of the town. Assess natural limitations (such as floodplains, topography, wildlife habitat, etc.) of specific character areas in amending the town and village zoning to conform to the updated land use vision.
- Develop conservation design standards and design guidelines on a character-area level to help protect and build on the unique features within each character area.

Summary

New Paltz should continue to invest in servicing the needs and demand for conservation in balance with local fiscal capacity. Continued conservation and development-side planning will require investment in staffing as well as financial commitments. Guiding future growth and development is critical to maintaining sound fiscal health as well as for conserving resources in a comprehensive manner at the site level.

New Paltz has many potential partners that can provide assistance in achieving its conservation goals: landowners, not-for-profits, regional entities, conservation organizations, farmland organizations, and outside governmental sources, to name a few. Partners can help leverage local investment and ultimately lead to the goal of this plan: achieving the community’s open space vision.



New Paltz’s Open Spaces are an important investment for current and future generations.



Conclusion

The New Paltz community faces both exceptional opportunities and challenges to protecting its open space and community character amidst continuing regional growth. Achieving the community's goals for protecting open space will require multiple strategies.

Taking a partnership approach in which landowners and the community work together should be a priority. As noted in the plan, the Mill Brook Preserve area and the efforts to plan ahead around the Mill Brook (Tributary 13) concurrently for both conservation and development offers a model for this partnership approach.

Creating a local funding source(s) for the community to be able to offer compensation for land or development rights, is another key priority.

Identifying an individual(s), a committee, and/or staff or consultants to help the Town coordinate and advance its open space goals through specific projects and initiatives is critical to ensuring that the work gets done.

Finally, the Town of New Paltz should continue to collaborate with the Village of New Paltz and neighboring towns and regional partners to achieve open space protection for all intermunicipal resources, such as the Shawangunk Ridge and the Town's other significant natural systems, the working landscapes of farming and forestry, the recreational resources and trail systems, and shared scenic, cultural and historical heritage.

Appendix A: Maps

Protected Lands

Resource Maps:

Agricultural Resources

Cultural Resources

Natural Features

Important Habitats

Town of New Paltz Open Space Plan

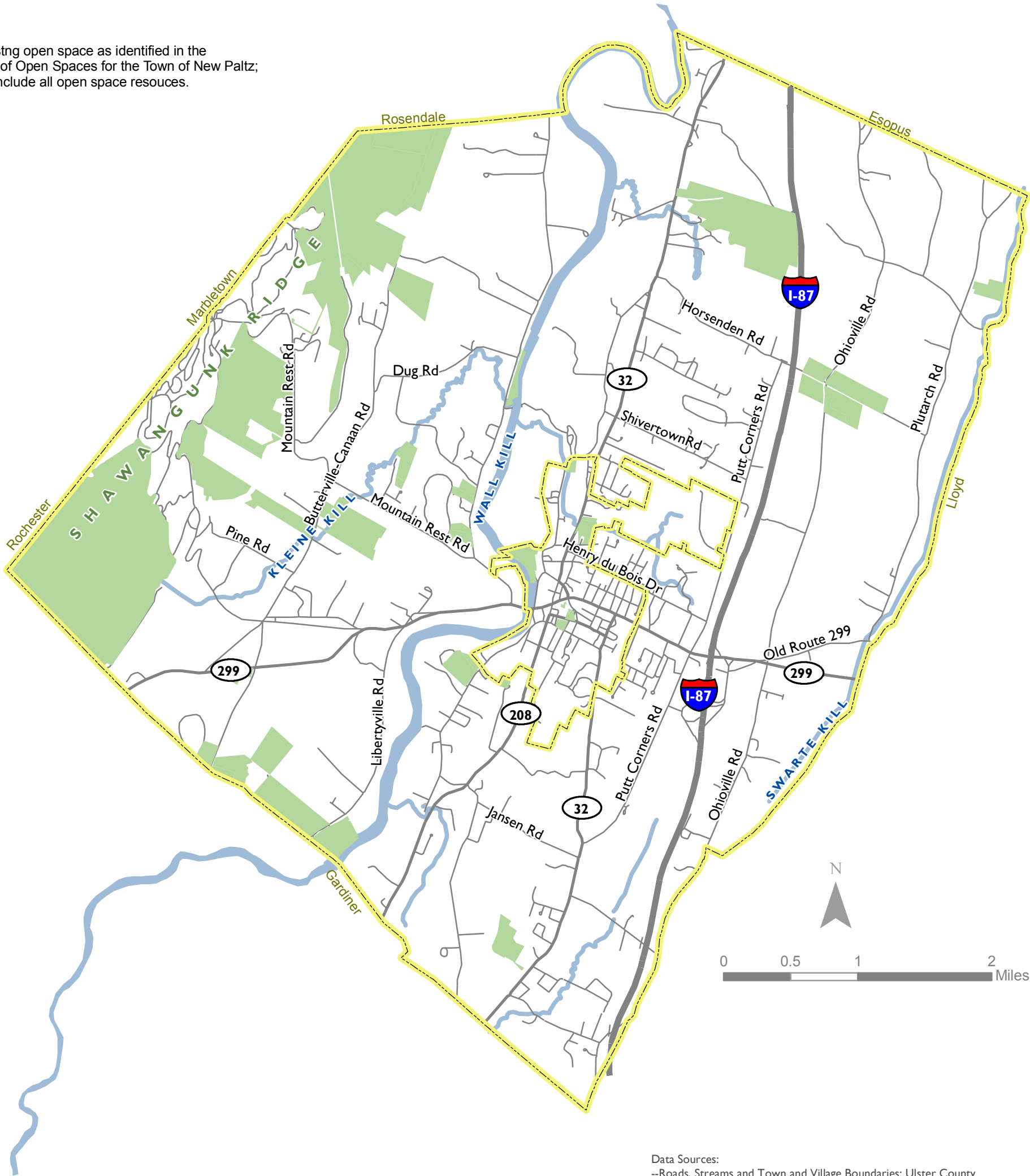


Protected Lands

Legend

Existing Open Space

Note: existing open space as identified in the Inventory of Open Spaces for the Town of New Paltz; may not include all open space resources.



Data Sources:
--Roads, Streams and Town and Village Boundaries: Ulster County
--Protected Lands: AKRF

Data intended for planning purposes only.
February 2006

Map produced by:



Behan Planning Associates, LLC
Planning Community Futures

Town of New Paltz Open Space Plan



Agricultural Resources

Legend

Agricultural Assessment*

Agricultural Land Use* (Outside of Agricultural District)

Agricultural District**

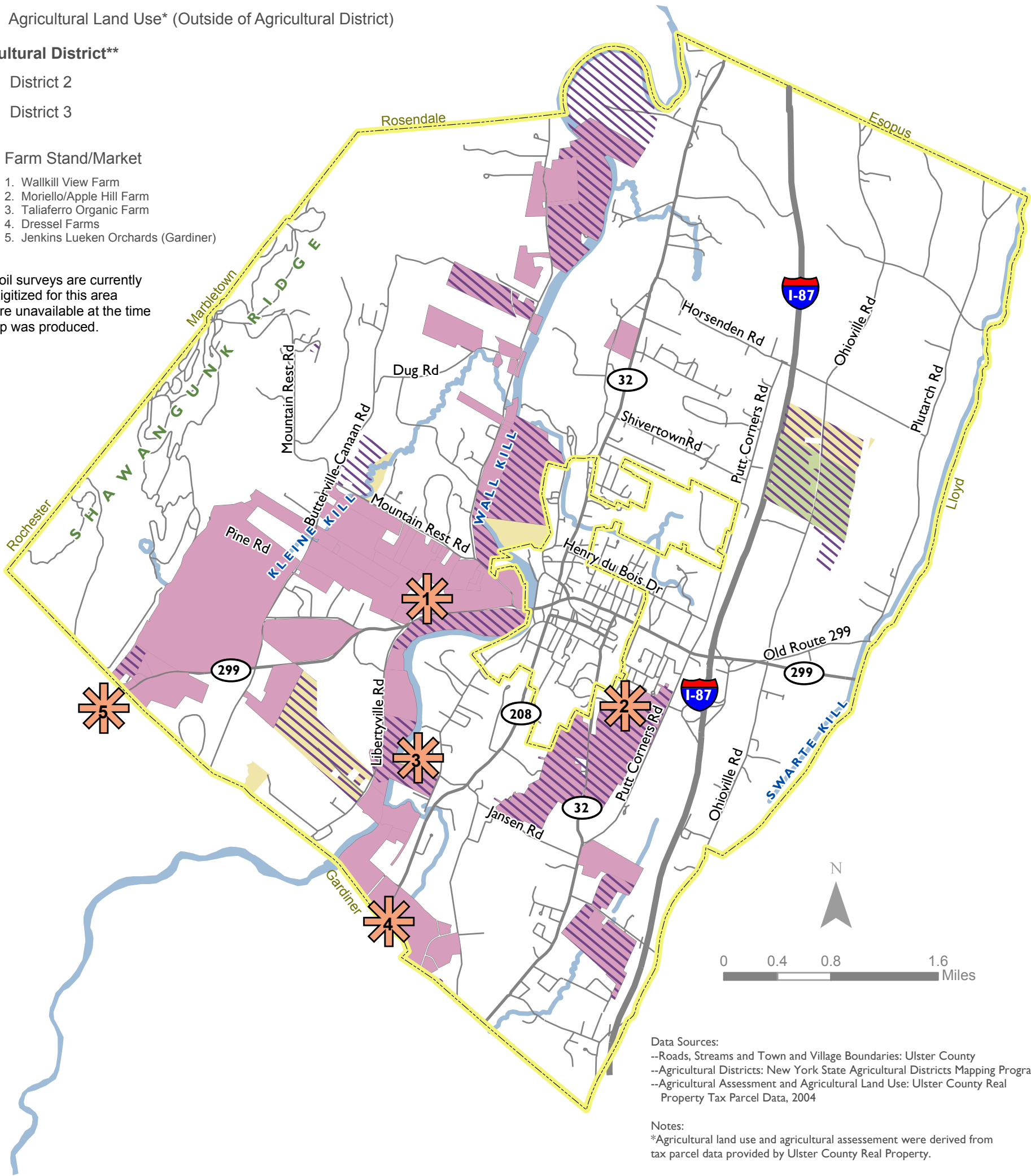
District 2

District 3

Farm Stand/Market

- 1. Wallkill View Farm
- 2. Moriello/Apple Hill Farm
- 3. Taliaferro Organic Farm
- 4. Dressel Farms
- 5. Jenkins Lueken Orchards (Gardiner)

Note: soil surveys are currently being digitized for this area and were unavailable at the time this map was produced.



Data Sources:
--Roads, Streams and Town and Village Boundaries: Ulster County
--Agricultural Districts: New York State Agricultural Districts Mapping Program
--Agricultural Assessment and Agricultural Land Use: Ulster County Real Property Tax Parcel Data, 2004

Notes:
*Agricultural land use and agricultural assesment were derived from tax parcel data provided by Ulster County Real Property.

Agricultural Districts are generalized and are not meant to be a substitute for up-to-date tax parcel information; districts are updated periodically. District boundaries currently proposed - up for recertification

Data intended for planning purposes only.
February 2006

Map produced by:



Behan Planning Associates, LLC
Planning Community Futures

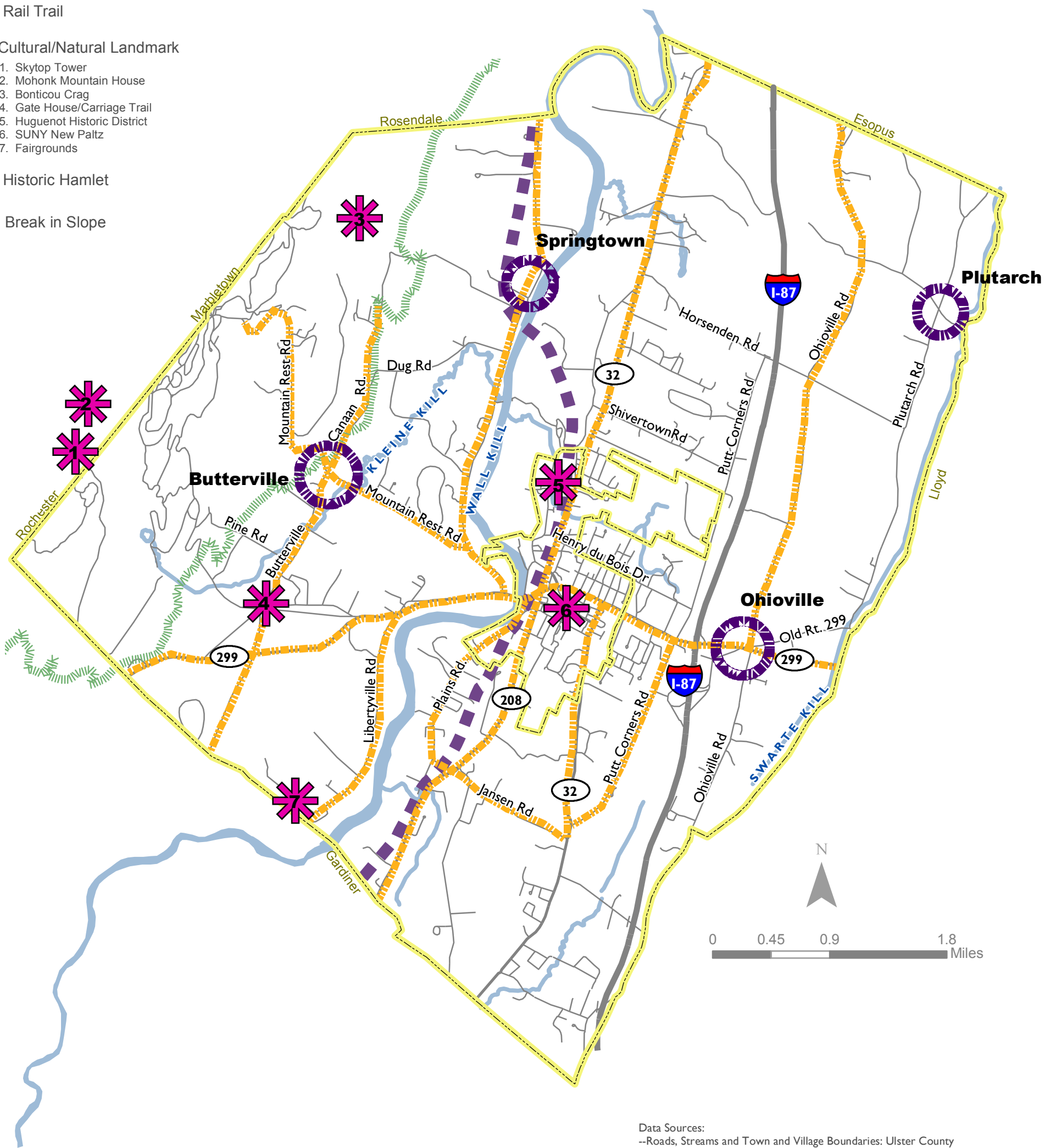
Town of New Paltz Open Space Plan



Cultural Resources

Legend

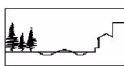
- Scenic Road
- Rail Trail
- Cultural/Natural Landmark
 1. Skytop Tower
 2. Mohonk Mountain House
 3. Bonticou Crag
 4. Gate House/Carriage Trail
 5. Huguenot Historic District
 6. SUNY New Paltz
 7. Fairgrounds
- Historic Hamlet
- Break in Slope



Data Sources:
--Roads, Streams and Town and Village Boundaries: Ulster County
--Break in Slope: The Shawangunk Ridge Biodiversity Partnership GIS (2005)
--All other data generated from USGS basemaps

Data intended for planning purposes only.
February 2006

Map produced by:



Behan Planning Associates, LLC
Planning Community Futures

Town of New Paltz Open Space Plan



Natural Features

Legend

100-Year Floodplain

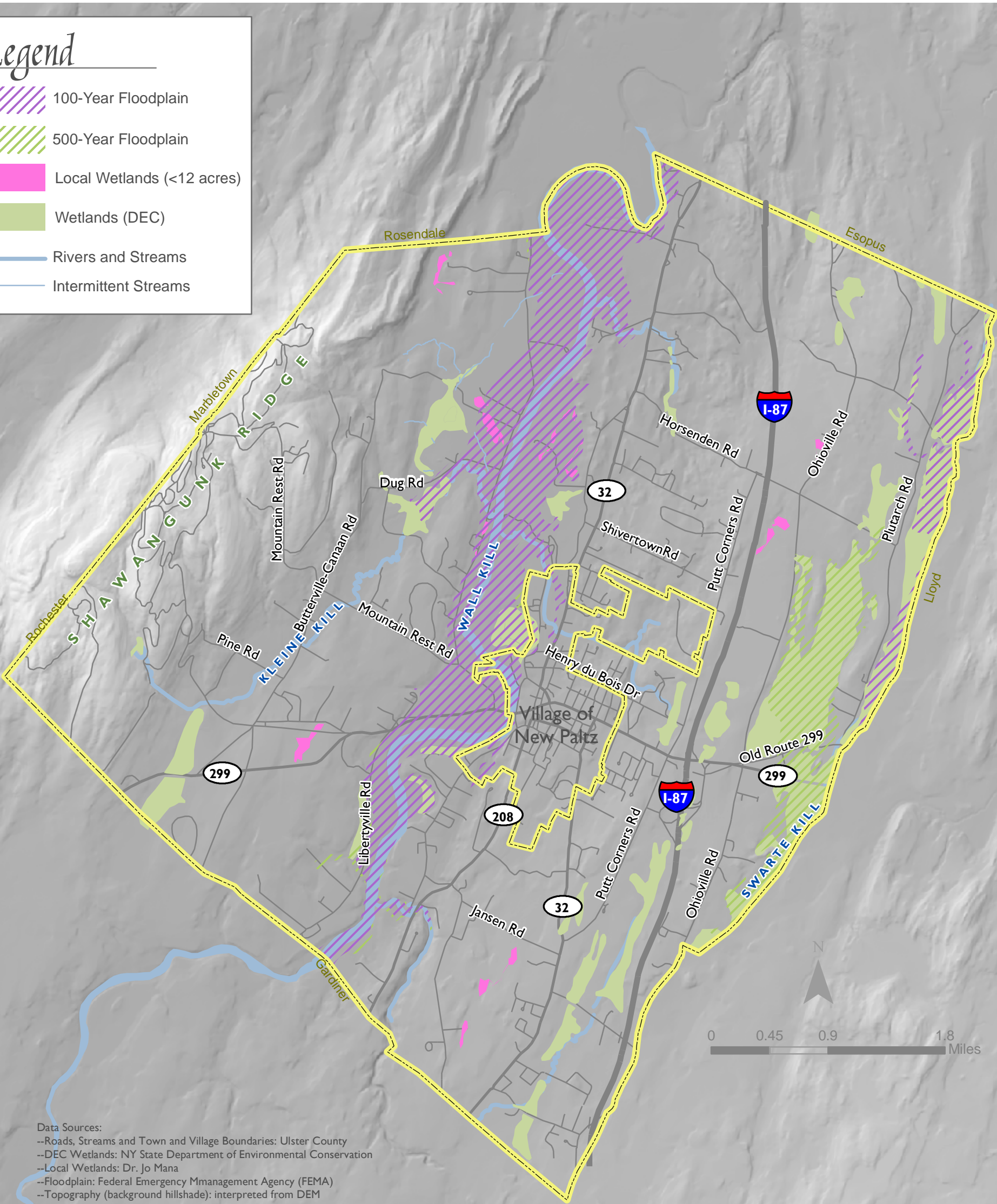
500-Year Floodplain

Local Wetlands (<12 acres)

Wetlands (DEC)

Rivers and Streams

Intermittent Streams



Data Sources:
--Roads, Streams and Town and Village Boundaries: Ulster County
--DEC Wetlands: NY State Department of Environmental Conservation
--Local Wetlands: Dr. Jo Mana
--Floodplain: Federal Emergency Mmanagement Agency (FEMA)
--Topography (background hillshade): interpreted from DEM

Data intended for planning purposes only.
February 2006

Map produced by:



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Planning Community Futures

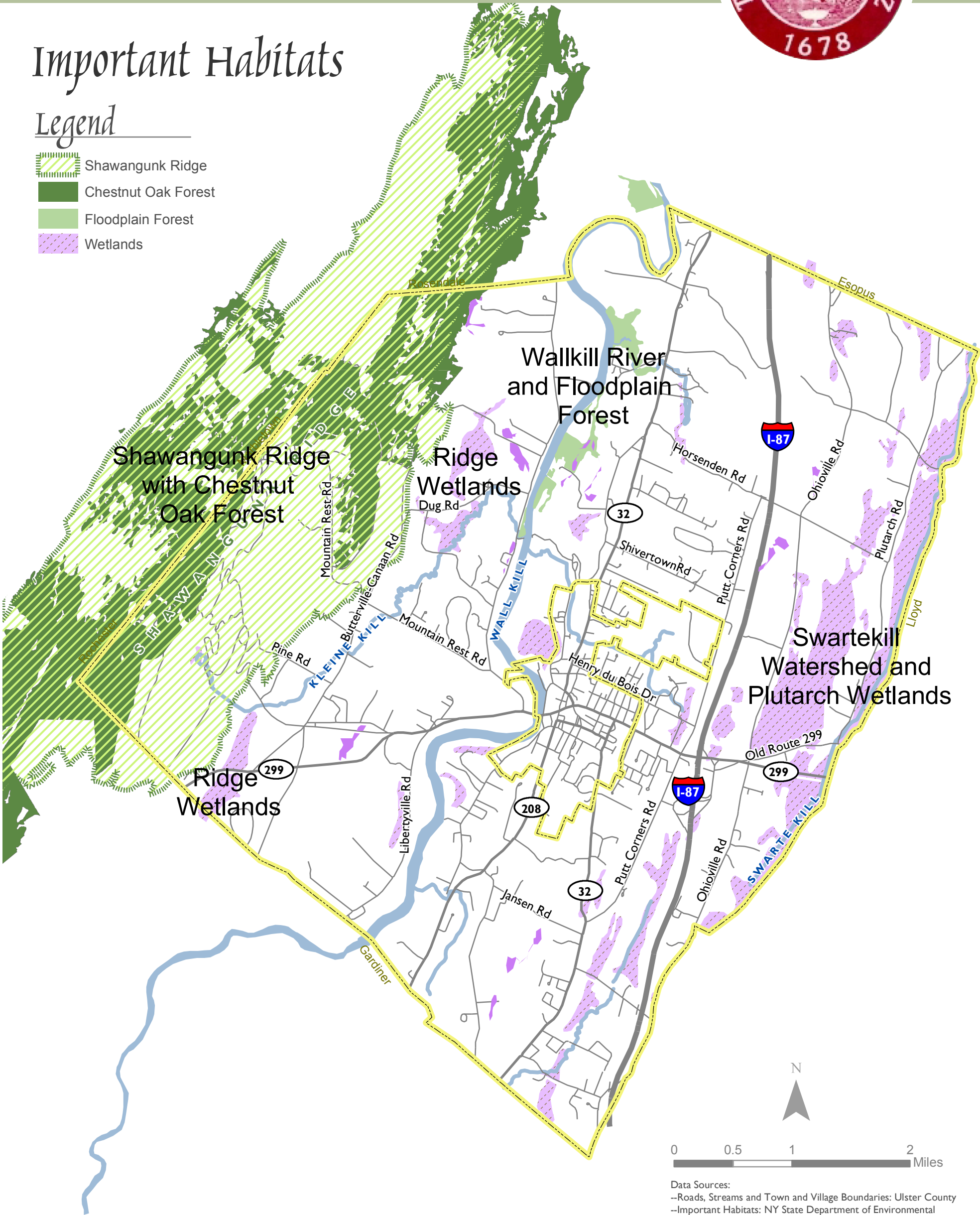
Town of New Paltz Open Space Plan



Important Habitats

Legend

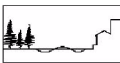
- Shawangunk Ridge
- Chestnut Oak Forest
- Floodplain Forest
- Wetlands



Data Sources:
--Roads, Streams and Town and Village Boundaries: Ulster County
--Important Habitats: NY State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC)
--Wetlands: DEC, Town of New Paltz

Data intended for planning purposes only.
February 2006

Map produced by:



Behan Planning Associates, LLC
Planning Community Futures

Appendix B: Proposed Resource Criteria and Rating System

Town of New Paltz—Open Space Resource Evaluation—Initial Screening System

For use in initial evaluation and rating of parcels for potential open space resources. Rating system may be refined/modified after initial application. More detailed, site-specific analysis may be required to further refine the evaluation of resources.

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Property location in relation to open space vision map

Select one of the following places that best describes the location of the property pursuant to the resource character areas as defined on the “open space vision map:”

- ☐ Protection of the Shawangunk Ridge
- ☐ Wallkill River Greenbelt
- ☐ Butternut-Canaan Forested Foothills
- ☐ Open Farmlands: Orchards, Farms & Ridgeviews
- ☐ North Woods & Eastern Wetlands
- ☐ Greenways & Connections
- ☐ Scenic Landscapes: Rural, Historic, Traditional Character

1. Project Viability

Landowner and Project Readiness—up to 35 points

(Note: May be determined after initial screening process for parcels is complete.)

- ☐ Landowner offers donation or bargain sale of property/easement for conservation – 10 points, or;
- ☐ Landowner signs letter of intent to conserve property for open space conservation – 8 points, or;
- ☐ Landowner documents high interest in open space conservation for property – 6 points, or
- ☐ Grant funding opportunity immediately available for project – 10 points
- ☐ Future conservation of property is in imminent threat of being lost – 6 points
- ☐ Strong expression of community support for project – 5 points
- ☐ Project sponsored by partner conservation organization (e.g., land trust) – 4 points

2. Natural Resources and Working Landscapes

Water Resources – up to 40 points

- ☐ Frontage on Wallkill minimum of 1000 or more feet - 15 points, or;
- ☐ Frontage on Wallkill between 500 and 1,000 feet - 10 points, or;
- ☐ Frontage on Wallkill between 100 and 500 feet – 8 points
- ☐ Frontage on permanent stream (minimum of 200 feet)-- 6 points
- ☐ Large frontage on permanent stream (more than 1,000 feet)—4 additional points
- ☐ Large pond (more than 3 acres) - 10 points, or;
- ☐ Small pond (between ¼ and 3 acres) - 5 points
- ☐ Large, state-regulated wetland present 5 points; or
- ☐ Significant area (more than 20 percent) of site within FEMA 100-year floodplain and/or federal or local wetlands present - 3 points

Biodiversity /Ecological Resources – up to 25 points

- ☐ Provides large, unfragmented natural habitat (parcel greater than 60 acres and is part of adjacent unfragmented forest/natural area exceeding 400 acres total) – 20 points, or;
- ☐ Provides for wildlife corridors/edge habitat – 10 points
- ☐ Documented habitat of special concern species, rare species habitat – 10 points, or;

- ___Known fragile or unique ecological community – 8 points
- ___Unique/important geological features present (cliffs, esker, bog, etc.) - 5 points

Active Farmlands and Orchards – up to 50 points

Note: parcel must be predominantly in agricultural land use (per published data sources/observation)

- ___Parcel includes a Century Farm (farm in operation by the same family for more than 100 years) – 10 points
- ___Agricultural exemption or within agricultural district (or to be included upon district revision) – 10 points
- ___70 % or more prime farmland soils or soils of statewide importance – 10 points, or;
- ___50 % or more prime farmland soils or soils of statewide importance – 7 points
- ___Parcel size 60 or more acres – 10 points, or;
- ___Parcel size 40 or more acres – 6 points, or;
- ___Parcel size 20 or more acres – 4 points, or;
- ___Parcel size less than 20 acres – 3 points
- ___Part of farmland “core” (adjacent to another parcel in agricultural production) – 5 points
- ___Community ties and/or visibility (CSA, farm stand, or similar) – 5 points

Steep Slopes and Hillsides – up to 35 points

- ___Within Shawangunk Ridge protection area (defined by “break in slope”) -- 15 points
- ___Adjacent (contiguous to) Shawangunk Ridge protection area -- 7 points
- Visibility (no more than 2 of the following)
 - ___parcel located above x-foot USGS elevation – 10 Points
 - ___parcel located on state highway -- 10 points, or;
 - ___parcel located on county highway – 8 points, or;
 - ___parcel located on town road – 6 points

Woodlands and Forests – up to 25 points

- ___Significant forest cover (70 percent or more) – 10 points, or;
- ___Sizeable forest cover (50 percent or more) – 6 points
- ___Significant area of contiguous forest lands (60 or more acres) – 10 points, or;
- ___Large area of contiguous forest lands (40 or more acres) – 6 points, or;
- ___Sizeable area of contiguous forest lands (20 or more acres) – 4 points
- ___Enrolled in forest use tax exemption – 5 points

3. Cultural Resources, Trails and Community Connections

Scenic Roadways, Viewsheds and Landscapes – up to 35 points

- ___Viewshed – parcel provides significant view to or from Shawangunk Mts. – 10 points
- ___Parcel has more than 1000 feet of frontage along scenic roadways (Rt. 299, Rt. 208, Mtn. Rest Rd., Butterville-Cannan Road, Springtown Road, Huguenot St., Shivertown Rd., Ohioville Rd., Plutarch Rd., Plains Rd.)-- 15 points, or;
- ___Parcel has more than 800 feet of frontage along scenic roadways – 12 points, or;
- ___Parcel has more than 600 feet of frontage along scenic roadways – 8 points, or;
- ___Parcel has more than 400 feet of frontage along scenic roadways – 6 points, or;
- ___Identified scenic vistas (per AKRF inventory maps) – 6 points

___Aesthetics (protects or enhances visual quality to abutting sensitive receptor—e.g., larger residential neighborhood (more than 12 homes) – 4 points

Historic and Cultural Resources – up to 35 points

___Parcel is part of national register historic district – 10 points

___Historic district or building on parcel – 10 points

___Parcel is in or abutting village boundary – 8 points

___Parcel comprises significant portion of cultural landscape districts (per current study defining districts) and/or in or immediately abutting historic rural hamlets: Ohioville, Springtown, Plutarch – 7 points

Community Connections – up to 35 points

___Parcel abuts/can provide expanded connections to Wallkill River Rail Trail – 10 points

___Provides trail connections from the village “heart of town” to natural resources – 8 points, or;

___Provides new/expanded trail connections in country side (i.e., not in village or direct to rail trail) – 6 points

___Potential for active or passive recreation use of parcel – 10 points

___Property provides environmental/cultural/historical education opportunities – 4 points

___Economic development opportunities (eg. agritourism, etc.) – 3 points

Project Significance - up to 25 points

___Project/related abutting ownership includes parcels totaling more than 200 acres - 10 points

___Parcel identified for conservation in state or regional plan – 8 points

___Contributes to diversity of types of landscapes (historic, working landscapes, forest preserves, parklands, etc.) and experiences (recreational, educational, etc.) – 7 points

Appendix C: Community Open Space Survey Results

Town of New Paltz Open Space Committee

Open Space Plan Community Survey Results

1600 surveys mailed; 556 responded = 35% responded

NOTE: Some surveys were returned with no questions answered; in this case nothing was entered and they were calculated as “null”. Any other survey where items were left blank or questions were unanswered, those items were considered “null”.

All percentages are calculated on total surveys returned (556)).

Property values coded by Open Space Committee prior to mailing:

H = High 152 = 27%

M = Medium 244 = 44%

L = Low 122 = 22%

Null 38 = 7%

The null value here is a result of those surveys where the code was not readable, not present, or blacked out.

SURVEY QUESTIONS:

Q1. Municipality where you live:

T = Town 396 = 71%

V = Village 119 = 21%

O = Other 19 = 3%

Null 22 = 4%

Q2. How long have you lived.....

A = 1-5 years 90 = 16%

B = 5-10 years 72 = 13%

C = 10+ years 375 = 67%

Null 19 = 3%

Q5. ...concentrate growth in, or near village.....preserve open space in outlying areas....

Y = Yes 366 = 66%

N = No 103 = 19%

X = No Opinion 54 = 10%

Null 33 = 6%

Q6. ...help retain agricultural activity...

Y = Yes 458 = 82%

N = No 46 = 8%

X = No Opinion 29 = 5%

Null 23 = 4%

Q8. ...pursue innovative strategies to protect open space?

Y = Yes 430 = 77%

N = No 55 = 10%

X = No Opinion 34 = 6%

Null 37 = 7%

Q9. ...pursue protecting open space as an “investment”...

Y = Yes	426 = 77%
N = No	62 = 11%
X = No Opinion	36 = 6%
Null	32 = 6%

Q10. ...what level of tax increase would you accept...

A = None	166 = 30%
B = \$10-50	106 = 19%
C = \$50-100	106 = 19%
D = \$100-200	63 = 11%
E = \$200-300	64 = 12%
Null	51 = 9%

Additional Comments:

P = generally Positive regarding open space	100 = 18%
N = generally Negative regarding open space	11 = 2%
NR = Comment not relevant to open space	151 = 27%
Null = No additional comment	294 = 53%

The following are general topics of concern in the additional comments that were not relevant to open space; includes the number of comments on that subject and % based on total not relevant (NR) responses (151):

Taxes too high: 72 = 48%

Need light industrial/commercial development to create tax base & ease tax burden: 14 = 9%

Address traffic problems: 13 = 9%

Need department store: 11 = 7%

Poorly designed survey (biased, loaded questions, slanted): 9 = 6%

For senior citizens: affordable housing; tax breaks; senior center: 5 = 3%

Receiving few services for taxes: 5 = 3%

No health insurance for supervisor's position: 5 = 3%

Consider building moratorium: 4 = 3%

NOTE: These were the topics MOST mentioned.

New Paltz Open Space Survey

Summary of Results

Why did we do a survey? In 2003 The New Paltz Open Space Committee decided that it would be helpful to conduct a survey to measure community interest in open space protection. The survey was intended to tell us what types of resources were most important to people and whether people in New Paltz would be willing to support expenditures to protect open space resources. In addition, the survey was intended to gauge interest in where growth should occur.

How did we do it? In April 2004, the New Paltz Open Space Committee mailed a survey to 1600 sample households of the town and village of New Paltz. An attempt was made to obtain responses from households in a range of property values. 1600 surveys were mailed to a random sample of New Paltz property owners and renters. A newspaper survey was provided but the responses were counted separately. 556 people responded to the mailed survey – a response rate of 35%.

What did we learn? The survey indicated that:

- 77% said the town and village should actively pursue protecting open space as a strategy to keep New Paltz fiscally healthy and affordable;
- 66% supported concentrating development in or near the village center of New Paltz, and preserving open space in outlying areas;
- an overwhelming number (82%) supported policies to retain agricultural activity in our community;
- Over 2/3 of respondents (67%) favored some level of a tax increase to support open space protection;
- Of those who would accept a tax increase for open space, 2/3rd supported a range of \$10 - \$100 per year. Another third supported a range of \$100 - \$300.
- over ¾ of the people believed the community should pursue innovative strategies to protect open space.

Additional thoughts: Our survey came out in April, the cruelest month for questions about tax increases. Despite that, the majority of respondents supported expenditures for open space protection. The survey was intended to explore this question, and generated many write-in responds that gave us lots of material to consider as we develop recommendations regarding open space planning. The survey assumed that open space is an important component of our community – the purpose was to assess the level of support for this assumption. People felt most strongly about protecting our nature preserves, scenic resources, agricultural lands, wildlife habitat and water resources.

People took time to respond thoughtfully and with depth of knowledge and eloquence about our community. We want to thank people for taking time to share their thoughts about the qualities that make New Paltz special.

Comments from Open Space Survey:

Positive –

- Protecting the wetlands protects wildlife habitats, water resources and scenic vistas. Then environmental and historic character of New Paltz is threatened by commercial and residential developers who invest in urban sprawl, against the interest of local residents.
- The Shawangunk Ridge and the open meadowland below it must be preserved as is; it is the heart of New Paltz.
- Wetlands need to be preserved; they are essential to a healthy environment.
- If the scenic vistas and nature preserves are not maintained the entire feel of the town is lost. It would be the beginning of “anywhere USA” and strips of commercialism.
- Wetlands are valuable biodiverse resources and support all and many forms of life with water quality, habitat enrichments and flood controls. They need (above all) protection.
- The charm of New Paltz is/was its, “country” atmosphere. Traffic, sub-divisions, commercialism detract from its appeal. Open space is paramount to preserving our community.
- Without working farms the impetus becomes commercial & residential development, thereby degrading the landscape, village life, and the overall quality of life in and around New Paltz.
- Open space provides relief from congestion. One type of open space is visual where you can see the landscape in its natural form. The other type of open space is a preserve or park or other open, unrestricted area where you can physically enjoy the openness.
- The preserves offer a true “escape route”, 2nd they are first-rate.
- Trees help to purify the air, are beautiful and provide wood, which has many uses. If the farms, which are very fertile, are taken over by developments, they can never be reclaimed. Around the world millions of people would be glad to have the water resources we have.
- I think the access to hiking areas and natural settings is a great appeal to New Paltz. Areas of wildlife, bucolic and pastoral settings and majestic views of this area are what I grew up seeing and wish to continue to live around.
- Having the space for people to recreate and unwind is very important. The Minn and Mohonk areas are an inherent treasure that we should always protect at any cost.
- Open space is very soothing in our stressful lives. It’s important to strive for a balance between development, enhancing the well-being of the residents, and retaining the natural character of the land.
- Open space is important for the environment and for people. Some compromises and innovative strategies are necessary so that environmentalist fundamentalists & fanatics can be made to understand how & where New Paltz can provide a better quality of life. It cannot remain “forever wild”, unless people move out of New Paltz. We need to be reasonable & sensitive & intelligent about all decisions at this point and consider the best use for all available land.

Negative –

- The town should follow the Constitution instead of their personal opinions.
- Service is awful - not worth what we pay in taxes. This is a slanted survey – complete nonsense. Ask the right question – you’ll get the answer you want.
- Regarding threats (Q4): New Paltz representatives who have personal agendas and not the public’s greater good in mind.
- I believe our taxes are insane compared to other states, and there should be no reasons for further increases in the foreseeable future.
- We need affordable housing – not subsidized housing or 5 acre zoning. 5-acre zoning and high taxes have destroyed our agricultural and farming. The Ag activities you are talking about are a shadow of what was once here.

I am sick of people who live on postage stamp lots in the village trespassing on my land. I am sick of being taxed for the potential development of my land. I am sick of protecting the land then being denied the ability to use it myself in a responsible way by people who just moved here. I am angry that my children & my parents cannot afford to live here and I can’t even add on to my own house for them to live with me in an apartment. I am angry that New Paltz chases away business services we need like clothing stores and department stores. If you want “open space” then buy it! Don’t tax me out of it.

- People that have lived here their entire life must sell and move because taxes have become unbearable. Our entire town has changed drastically because of the influx of new/more wealthy people. We have an abundance of open space for people to use.
- I believe the most expensive open space we have is between the ears of our elected officials.
- RE: Tax increase to purchase/protect open space. Won’t the recent high assessments help to produce additional funds? If we keep the rate the same and school taxes in control, we should have extra funds.
- You have made it abundantly clear why the founding fathers allowed only landowners to vote. You’ve structured the survey questions to support your view and are then going to use the results as justification for your direction. You make vague statements like “should we implement strategies” and then expect a yes or no answer. What are these strategies, what do you allude to when you say, “if it could be demonstrated...”?
- Let’s work with what we have before we spend what we do not have!
- You are taxing us out of the area, so what if it is a nice place to live, if you cannot afford the taxes what good is it. We need businesses to increase the tax revenue not more houses and schools.

**Appendix D: Biodiversity
Summary – Memo dated 4-22-05,
provided by New York State
Department of Environmental
Conservation**

April 22, 2005

To: Melissa Barry and Jennifer Viggiani, Behan Planning Associates, LLC
From: Karen Strong and Sarah Shute, NYS DEC Hudson River Estuary Program
Re: Important Habitat for New Paltz Open Space Plan

The following is a summary of natural resources and important habitats in the town of New Paltz. Data from the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation, US Geological Survey, New York State Reptile and Amphibian Atlas, and the New York Natural Heritage Program was used to identify these areas. After examining the information, four main areas of ecological importance emerge: The Wallkill River and associated riparian areas, wetlands near the Shawangunk Ridge, The Black Creek Swartekill Watersheds, and the Shawangunk Ridge. These areas may be useful for open space planning in the Town of New Paltz.

The New York Natural Heritage Program

The New York Natural Heritage Program is a joint program of the Nature Conservancy and NYS DEC. They are also part of a continent-wide network of natural heritage programs called NatureServe. NY Natural Heritage works throughout New York State to identify rare plants and animals as well as significant ecological communities, which might be rare or of exceptionally high quality when compared to other examples in the state. Inventory by Heritage biologists is ongoing statewide. For more information about this program, visit www.nynhp.org.

The New York Reptile and Amphibian Atlas

The New York Reptile and Amphibian Atlas was a statewide survey conducted from 1990-1999. The Atlas project relied on volunteers to submit records of reptiles and amphibians. Species information was included in descriptions of other areas where it added information about habitat quality. For more information about the Atlas, visit <http://www.dec.state.ny.us/website/dfwmr/wildlife/herp/index.html>.

Important Habitats in the Town of New Paltz

The Wallkill River (and associated riparian areas)

The 87-mile long Wallkill River begins as a spring-fed lake in Sussex County, New Jersey. From there, the Wallkill River flows north through Orange and Ulster Counties, meets the Rondout Creek in Rosendale and empties into the Hudson River Estuary at Kingston.

The river itself is an important natural feature in New Paltz, but the health and quality of the river depends on the condition of the area bordering the river. These adjacent lands, riparian areas, provide important benefits to a variety of plants and animals, as well as

humans. Riparian areas provide habitat for aquatic and terrestrial flora and fauna; they stabilize stream banks thereby preventing erosion and siltation; they improve water quality by serving as a natural filtration system; they absorb excess water during times of melting and high precipitation to reduce the risk of flooding; and they afford us with recreational opportunities and scenic vistas. It is important for the lands along a river's corridor to remain natural and intact wherever possible so that the system can continue to function properly and provide those services we rely on.

In the northern part of New Paltz, along the banks of the Wallkill is a high quality floodplain forest. Although the overall area of this forest is relatively small, there are two core areas of the floodplain (with adjacent abandoned farmland and secondary growth forest) that can serve to regenerate and restore the forest if protected (New York Natural Heritage Program 2005).

The Wallkill Valley Task Force in Ulster County worked with one of DEC's partners, Hudsonia, Ltd., to look for potentially significant sites along the Wallkill River. Contact Laura Heady at Hudsonia (845/758-0600) for a report and more information.

Ridge Wetlands

A linear series of wetlands exists at the eastern base of the Shawangunk Ridge. Wetlands in New York State that are greater than 12.4 acres are regulated in by the Department of Environmental Conservation. Although an associated buffer of 100 feet is included in the regulations, linkages between wetlands are often not considered. Protecting open space in the lands between these wetlands can create an important corridor for wildlife.

Records from the New York State Reptile and Amphibian Atlas indicate a diversity of herpetofauna in this area. Species documented from this location the wood turtle (*Clemmys insculpta*), eastern box turtle (*Terrapene c. carolina*), spotted turtle (*Clemmys guttata*), Jefferson salamander (*Ambystoma jeffersonianum*), and spotted salamander (*Ambystoma maculatum*), most of the them, NYS species of special concern. All of these species indicate high-quality, connected habitats. The spotted turtle is found in unpolluted waters, and similar to the other aforementioned species, requires both wetland and adjacent upland habitat throughout its life. The presence of the Jefferson and spotted salamanders indicate the presence of high quality vernal pools.

Black Creek Swartekill Watersheds

The Black Creek and Swartekill Basins lie on the eastern edge of New Paltz and extend into the Towns of Lloyd and Esopus and contain a 1300 acre wetland complex. Only the Swarte Kill watershed is in New Paltz.

This area hosts a number of amphibian species requiring high quality, intact habitats. Three species of mole salamanders were documented in the northeast corner of the town; The spotted, Jefferson, and marbled (*Ambystoma opacum*) salamanders, along with the wood frog (*Rana sylvatica*), are species that are dependent on vernal pools for breeding and adjacent uplands for foraging and over-wintering. Other records in the NYS Reptile and Amphibian Atlas for this area are the four-toed salamander (*Hemidactylum*

scutatum) and northern slimy salamander (*Plethodon glutinosus*). Both require moist upland forest with plentiful protective cover, such as decaying logs, leaf-litter, and moss. Also found in the area was the red salamander (*Pseudotriton ruber ruber*), which requires clean, cool running water..

Wetlands in the Black Creek Watershed also contain the state endangered northern cricket frog (*Acris crepitans*). Although there are no known occurrences of the cricket frog within New Paltz, the New York Natural Heritage Program has identified areas within the town that are important to the health of known populations in the neighboring Town of Lloyd.

The Shawangunk Ridge

The Shawangunk Ridge is a unique geologic feature that runs along the western edge of New Paltz, extending through New Jersey and into Pennsylvania. This area harbors a great diversity of rare plants and animals, as well as a number of very high quality ecological communities, and the globally-rare dwarf pitch pine forest. As a linear, forested ridge it is also considered an important wildlife corridor.

The New York Natural Heritage Program database shows that the predominant ecological community on the portion of the Shawangunk Ridge within New Paltz is a high quality chestnut oak forest. A majority of this area is owned by the Mohonk Preserve, however, some of the forest lies outside of the Preserve boundary.

The Green Assets Program has mapped natural communities in New Paltz from the Wallkill River west to the Ridge. The Program has created maps and offers technical assistance in using the maps. Contact Cara Lee, Shawangunk Ridge Coordinator at The Nature Conservancy at (845)255-9051 for further information.

Other Sources of Information

One of DEC's partners, the Metropolitan Conservation Alliance (MCA, a program of the Wildlife Conservation Society at the Bronx Zoo) has been surveying sites for wildlife in New Paltz. MCA has not yet completed the surveys and therefore has not yet analyzed the data, which will help to identify significant habitat areas or corridors. The Wildlife Conservation Society's Metropolitan Conservation Alliance office has moved to 25 Prospect Street, Suite 205, Ridgefield, CT 06877, 203/894-1863.