

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Clifton Park Open Space Plan has been a project of the Town of Clifton Park. This effort has been a collaboration of residents, property owners, community groups, in addition to the following:

TOWN OF CLIFTON PARK TOWN BOARD FUNDING SUPPORT

Philip Barrett, Town Supervisor
Roy A. Speckhard, Deputy Supervisor
Tom Paolucci, Town Board Member
Sanford Roth, Town Board Member
Lynda Walowit, Town Board Member

CLIFTON PARK OPEN SPACE COMMITTEE

Frank Berlin
Kevin Bowman
Margaret Catellier
Jim Chandler
Gil Kortz (former member, 2001-2002)
Bill Mackesey
David J. Miller, co-chair, (Audubon New York)
Kevin O'Brien
Isabell Prescott
Jim Romano, co-chair, (Niagara Mohawk)
Jim Ruhl
Ray Seymour

TOWN OF CLIFTON PARK STAFF

Planning Department
- Jason Kemper, Director of Planning
- Jan Dean
- Lynn Hedger

With contributions by:
Walter Smead, Town Assessor
Michael O'Brien, Environmental Specialist

Photo Contributors

Eric Hamilton
Bill Mackesey
Isabell Prescott

IN-KIND SERVICES

Audubon New York
American Farmland Trust
Friends of Clifton Park Open Space
Niagara Mohawk, a National Grid Company

CONSULTANT

Behan Planning Associates, LLC
- John Behan, AICP, Principal
- Jennifer Clouting Viggiani, Environmental Planner
- Monica Carson, Planner/Landscape Designer
- Lawrence Howard, Land Use Attorney/Planner
- Jason Baum, Planner/GIS Specialist (formerly)
- Arthur Buckley, Community Planner
- Cynthia Behan, RLA, Landscape Architect

Thank you to all who participated in the two community surveys, the public workshop – design charrette, the focus groups, and all of the public meetings! Continued support of the plan's implementation is vital.



Clifton Park Open Space Plan
APPENDIX A:

Public Participation

Public input
gathered from
Fall 2001 – June 2002

TOWN OF CLIFTON PARK OPEN SPACE PLAN

RECORD OF PUBLIC PARTICIPATION INPUT FROM PUBLIC MEETINGS

The Clifton Park Open Space Committee sponsored three focus group meetings in January 2002, and invited stakeholders potentially that would directly involved in or affected by open space protection efforts to discuss the development of an open space plan for the town. In addition, the committee sponsored a public workshop – design charrette in January 19, 2002 that generated substantial detailed input into the development of the open space plan. Below is a written record summary of the input obtained from all three focus group meetings held in January 2002, and from the public workshop – design charrette held on January 19, 2002, as collected and prepared by Behan Planning Associates, LLC on behalf of the committee. The public participation record is critical data drawn upon to inform the tone, direction, emphasis and in many cases – the specifics – in the development of the town’s open space plan. Public comments were carefully reviewed and considered for inclusion by the Clifton Park Open Space Committee and Behan Planning Associates, LLC in the development of the open space plan and map, and incorporated into the plan, as was determined feasible.

1. Focus Group Meetings – January 2002

Key comments summarized and synthesized from all three focus groups:

CURRENT STATE OF OPEN SPACE RESOURCE PROTECTION IN CLIFTON PARK (successes, issues, concerns, and obstacles):

Concerns and obstacles for resource protection identified:

- + Unintended consequences of government actions
- + Aspects of Clifton Park’s land use policies
 - o Not enough planning and zoning decision-making is based upon evaluations of resource values
 - o Zoning districts and code that misses the resource value base
 - o Market acceptance/demand for more townhouses and condos types of housing development, BUT not a lot of zoning ability to create such housing supply
 - o No opportunity to diversify housing without different planning and zoning process
- + Lack of public access to open space resources
 - o Lack of access to Stony Creek Reservoir area (owned by the Town of Colonie for water supply for Latham). However, this is currently public water supply, so limitations are expected.
- + NYS DEC wetlands issue
- + Issues regarding property taxation of open space resources
 - o Unfair agricultural assessment practices
 - o \$10,000 income exemption minimum for agricultural exemptions

- STAR tax program not so helpful
- + Farming economics issues
 - Need to help farmers with the competitiveness of farming
 - Need to assure continued profitability of farming, or else public may need to provide subsidies to support continued existence of local farming
 - Long-term agricultural viability
 - Need to balance private property rights. Families need to maintain options for future use for their land.
 - Farm families' inheritance – is the equity tied into land
 - Farmers need ability to generate income in the present
 - State of today's agricultural markets
 - Larger global state of agricultural economics
- + Scale of trail development in areas of nature preserves (people don't want to see major transportation systems cut through nature preserves)
- + Timing. Clifton Park's open space is running out of time – need to raise public awareness in a timely fashion, before resources are lost
- + Fragmentation/parcelization of resources
- + Cultural issues
 - Need to recognize the realities of the auto-centric setting we live in
 - Lack of cultural support for agricultural/farm culture and landscapes
 - Youth/Next generation and their values for open space (or lack thereof): Estate Issue
 - Perception of separate communities within the town. People identify themselves by hamlets, such as Rexford, or by housing subdivisions. A question is how to create a sense of unity within the town?
 - Lack of mixed ages within the town (due to lack of affordable housing issue)
- + Financial Costs Issues: Private Compensation and Investment Returns
 - Fair compensation for private property owners of open space resources: public needs compensate private landowners for stewardship services
 - People need to see returns on investment in open space
 - Hidden costs for developers trying to donate open space to communities (can cost them large fees) to donate land to a town: so, may need homeowners association or a land trust or government subsidy to pay for and administer the long-term management of open space

- + Management of Open Space Resources
 - Cost of long-term management of open space
 - Need to manage wildlife on land set aside for open space protection, including for fallow farm fields (otherwise contend with wildlife damage)
 - May need some additional infrastructure for landowners to be able to manage their open space
- + Need for Increased Communication and Education
 - Need to address improving information exchange/public communication about farming and open space resource protection issues
 - Lack of public awareness for farming/agricultural realities and economics
- + Residential Development issues
 - Land trust is too often called in too late in the development process – the site planning for open space set-aside and long-term management is an afterthought instead of well-thought out
 - Clifton Park has the housing choices that people want: Maybe not everyone wants or is seeking in Clifton Park, a “sense of community” or “walkability”
 - Some people are looking for size of house, not community feeling
 - Lack of affordability of housing (such as, for people just starting out and for the elderly, and for people of less economic means)
 - Residential developments are islands – developments are not connected
 - Not enough open space is set aside in subdivision developments
 - Open space set asides are too often merely clippings of leftover land and not considered in sound conservation design
- + Environmental and Ecological Issues
 - Permanence of open space “protected”
 - Not enough protection for streams
 - Citizens are frustrated in achieving protection for endangered species located in developable lands.
- + Recreation
 - Not enough playing fields to serve community – that fields do not get a chance to “rest” and recover from high, constant usage
- + Trails
 - Don’t like new trail along Moe Road – would prefer trails set back further away from high-volume, high-speed traffic

IDEAL STATE – WHAT IS THE VISION FOR OPEN SPACE RESOURCES AND PROTECTION EFFORTS IN CLIFTON PARK (Desired attributes of open space resources and related features):

Recommended Approach to Open Space Protection should include:

1. Integrated approach to change and the myriad of resource values and issues
2. Balance of land use/private rights and public needs
3. Incentives and options vs. more regulation of land use
4. Flexible future land use system
5. Have a plan for protected open space
6. Ensure that public areas and public access are defined in town's open space plan and programs
7. People need to retain their property rights (and options for future land use)
8. Voluntary participation/process in any town open space programs
9. That the public will take ownership of the plan; and that the plan and actions for open space resource protection will garner long-term government support.
10. Community Identity
11. Clifton Park as a "destination community." Would like to have people experience and see the town, not just sleep here.
12. Diverse land uses
13. Create an "identity" for the Town of Clifton Park
14. Agriculture
 - All local agriculture is viable
 - That farmers can make a living from farming, and do farming as a full-time job (and not need to hold down other jobs)
 - Farmers will supply many more direct farm products to consumers
 - Increased agri-tourism
 - That people can get experiences of working on a farm
15. Historic. Protect/preserve historic buildings and seek funding
16. Steps for the future: take the idea of mitigation for wetlands with the concept for wetlands mitigation banking, and maybe apply this for open space – set up "open space mitigation banks" Might be most effective for the town or a land conservation organization to own any open space and manage it ...
17. Need to educate taxpayers on the cost for open space protection/conservation
18. Need to assure taxpayers about the permanence of open space that they may pay for.
19. How much open space should there be in the town?
 - More a question of where, not how big, or how much exactly
 - Should infill open space areas be within developed parts of town
20. How much public access will there be?

- Should make sure there is adequate compensation for open space in undeveloped areas of town.... BUT will people pay/be willing to pay to compensate landowners holding open space?
21. New town concept
 - Improve walkability, create a sense of walkability
 22. Create public transit options, so people could drive less
 23. Create type of public walking trails such as prevalent in England
 24. Increase the variety of types of open space [cultural, recreational, trails, visual]
 25. Increase the amount of interconnected open space and trails, particularly between residential developments
 26. Create a “Norman Rockwell-type of character” for the town
 27. Build more playing fields to serve the community
 28. Open space set-asides in subdivisions should be larger areas and better connected open spaces
 29. Create better ways to get around Clifton Park – increase alternatives to transportation by car
 30. Increase connections among living spaces and places of activity
 31. Carefully guide and limit new utilities expansion

Potential Solutions & Ideas: HOW TO ACHIEVE OPEN SPACE VISION FOR CLIFTON PARK:

1. Expand partnerships for open space protection efforts
 - a. Partner with adjoining towns, county and the state on open space efforts
 - b. Increase partnership with private land trusts
 - i. Improve housing development policies
 - ii. More clustering of housing
 - c. Increase residential subdivision densities (right now smallest s.f. is typically 15,000 s.f. lots); could go to 10,000 s.f.
2. Ensure fair and equitable property tax assessment
 - a. Work with town tax assessor to decrease assessment on unusable farmland (wetlands, swamps, etc.)
3. Provide fair compensation
 - a. Give private property owners “credit” somehow for holding undeveloped land that serves to protect water quality (such as wetlands); private landowners holding/protecting public assets
4. Revisit town’s conservation easement policy
 - a. Maybe offer a shorter/more flexible term conservation easement
5. Consider discussing purchase of development rights (PDR) program
6. Help farmers from many different angles:
 - a. with economic development assistance

- b. Town to help as best as possible with marketing: help with marketing/promotion of local agricultural products
 - c. Seek state and federal assistance and funding to help local farmers retool for changing; need to assist with education and investment in changing farm operations
 - d. Utilize farm staff resources of Saratoga County
 - e. Allow farmers total flexibility (no regulations or restrictions on their farms)
 - f. Do something for the few farmers in town (incentives/options or something)
 - g. Work more closely with farmers seeking assistance; then building on and promote these successes
 - h. Help farmers and large landowners retain their rights
7. Perform more education on open space planning; do more public process
 8. Pursue land acquisition
 - a. Target landowners/major players that own high acreage (such as in the western parts of town, Grooms Road, Appleton, Knott Rd.)
 - b. Town should collect properties where large landowners are tax delinquent
 9. Reconsider and revise town's land use policies
 - a. Government should look at and perform future land use decision-making based on resource value; resource value basis for decisions
 - b. Look at successful models from other communities on how they protect open space
 - c. Integrated approach
 - d. Create bonuses and incentives for more open space
 - e. Identify transition zones for higher density (for townhouses/condos) or for more mixed-housing residential development
 - f. Decrease footprints to increase open space
 - g. Simplify planning and zoning to achieve diversity of housing
 10. Add/quantify numbers of acres set aside in recent subdivisions in town
 11. Will residents be willing to pay for open space and deal with the long-term impacts of land off the tax rolls
 12. Town is different developments
 13. Show/tell costs for NOT doing an open space plan...
 14. (John Behan) Consider that sometimes open space not close by to people can also be highly used: consider the Bog Meadow Brook Trail on Route 29 in Saratoga. The trail is located in the middle of nowhere – but it is always in use.
 15. Enhance existing open space areas. Identify the most enticing open space spots (such as Vischer's Ferry Preserve) and enhance use with increased parking and accessibility
 16. Increase tax incentives to support farmers and agriculture
 17. Consider a transfer of development rights program so that subdivision set-asides for open space could be located off-site as an option

18. Increase open space requirements for residential subdivision developments
19. Increase the required amount of open space to be set aside for commercial developments as well
20. Revise town's comprehensive plan to include the importance for and set the direction for open space protection
21. Involve land trusts earlier in the development process. Work out long-term management of open space set-asides earlier in the site planning process.

Considerations for Improving Open Space Protection

- Enhance existing open space areas. Identify the most enticing open space spots (such as Vischer's Ferry Preserve) and enhance use with increased parking and accessibility.
- Increase tax incentives to support farmers and agriculture
- Consider a transfer of development rights (TDR) program so that subdivision set-asides for open space could be located off-site as an option
- Increase open space requirements for residential subdivision developments
- Increase the required amount of open space to be set aside for commercial developments as well
- Revise town's comprehensive plan to include the importance for and set the direction for open space protection
- Involve land trusts earlier in the development process. Work out long-term management of open space set-asides earlier in the site planning process.
- Ensure that the town obtains and includes all the tools available for open space protection

Role of Town

- Will need to convince average taxpayer that the cost of open space protection is worthwhile.
- Need a plan to put in front of voters.

Additional Discussion: How can the open space plan process help create an identity for the Town of Clifton Park? And increase opportunities to connect neighborhoods, connect open spaces and developed places; connect town's commercial center to neighborhoods and other destinations?

2. Public Workshop and Design Charrette, January 19, 2002 – Synthesis

CURRENT STATE:

Concerns, Issues, Obstacles

- Ongoing Development Pressures and Issues:

- Town is becoming highly built up
- Residences/townhouses near commercial district (near Maxwell Road) are being crowded by commercial development
- Proposal for a new bridge over the Mohawk River at/near the hamlet of Vischers Ferry. Opens up potential for primarily agricultural southwest quadrant to become more highly developed.
- Potential for expansion of municipal water system infrastructure to the western part of the town
- Is the creation of an open space plan a “taking” of private property?
- Let’s not make this an issue of East vs. West in town.
- Town Center
 - Lack of town center
- Commercial District at Exit 9
 - Existing commercial district at Exit 9 is unfriendly to pedestrians.
 - Need to create a way to get across 146 without using a car.
- Scenic roads and vistas are vulnerable
 - Concern about the razing of trees along roads
 - Moe Road was cited as an example of bad road design – not to be repeated in town
 - Grooms Road has scenic qualities, but it is a heavy commuter road that is vulnerable to expansion. Concern that expansion would result in the ruination of the scenic qualities.
 - Developers clearing all mature trees on development sites when they were supposed to leave some.
 - Need to protect wooded areas within current subdivisions.
- Concerns about sensitive environmental areas and habitats
 - Protection of wetlands – important
 - Concerns about loss of remaining Dwaaskill watershed lands
- Trails Issues
 - Residential subdivisions have overgrown or non-existent trails and accessible open space. Need to restore these trails.
 - Traffic speed and volume an issue along roadways also used by pedestrians and bicyclists.
 - Need for trail safety and security for trail users, and for adjacent landowners
- Vulnerability of locally-important historic sites and potential historic districts
- Existing Open Space and Recreational Facilities
 - Park districts operating as islands; lack of coordination and connection among separate park districts. Separate park districts cause confusion and issues in terms of park administration and maintenance.
 - Residential subdivisions have overgrown or non-existent trails and accessible open space. Need to restore these trails.
 - Make sure no existing protected open space lands, in particular state lands, are disposed of.
- Stony Creek Reservoir

- Lack of assurance that the open space is permanent. Concern that the Latham Water District may dispose of property some day if it is no longer needed as a public water supply source (or backup source as it is apparently currently used for).
- Lack of public access to Stony Creek Reservoir (also known as Latham Reservoir lands) that are fenced in and inaccessible because it is a back-up surface water supply for Latham Water District.

IDEAL STATE: (big picture ideas at town-wide scale)

- Aim to protect as much of remaining open spaces as possible within the more developed parts of town (northeast and southeast)
- For more rural areas in the western part of town, conserve agricultural lands, protect environmentally sensitive areas and wildlife habitat areas, and create connections/resource linkages
- Create a town center in the vicinity of the YMCA and public library area. Overlap the town center concept with reinvention of the commercial center of town in the vicinity of the Northway's Exit 9.
- Increase connectivity from many angles. Create trail connections and destinations for trail users. (Make sure trails are not like Moe Road.) Connect the community both within the town (east-west, north-south, and all-around). Connect the town's trails to county-wide trails and to neighboring communities' trail systems. Connect open space lands near the Northway (and create pedestrian access under Northway to reach Round Lake.) Build a bridge over Route 146 to connect the shopping on north and south sides of the road.
- Create trail destinations, including but not limited to the following:
 - Clifton Commons
 - Vischer Ferry Preserve
 - YMCA/library area
 - Commercial district at Exit 9
 - Local schools
- Protect areas with multiple open space values – as highest priorities
- Protect rural character and scenic views: roadway views (rural character) and special vistas.
 - Value trees and rural landscapes. Maintain tree-lined streets and roads.
 - Restore impacted roads and streets.
 - Maintain a green buffer along major roadways.
- Increase opportunities for waterway access and transportation
- Protect historic sites and historic districts; promote and maintain cultural and historic sites
- Create design guidelines for hamlets and for commercial areas
- Consider installing utilities underground

Specific, Identified Open Space Opportunities (specific areas or sites to consider)

- Consider creating a town center in the vicinity of the YMCA and the library

- Commercial Area at Exit 9. Improve pedestrian access throughout the town's commercial center at Exit 9. Establish safe pedestrian crossing of Route 146 to enable shoppers to park once and walk to both the north and south of Route 146 shopping areas. Turn the malls inside out: put parking behind buildings, not out in front. Create more shared parking lots. Create interconnections for walking, bike trails, etc. Establish a place for a farmers market.
- Protect the Dwaaskill watershed/natural area. This area may be a potential location for an environmental education center.
- Maintain permanent protection of the Stony Creek Reservoir. Create public access opportunities in the future, if possible, at the reservoir. Create a trail system around reservoir; create viewing points and green buffer around the reservoir; consider the establishment of an educational center such as at Five Rivers Environmental Education Center in Delmar)
- Protect lands in northeast quadrant near Northway (connect both sides along Northway)
- Protect lands in the Van Patten/Pierce Road area
- Protect lands in a north-south swath of open space in the center of the northwest quadrant – this open space could be a buffer between eastern and western developed areas.
- Protect “triangle” of key agricultural lands and environmentally sensitive lands in the southwest quadrant (see Monica’s town-wide map)
- Expand the Vischers Ferry Preserve area and enhance this existing resource (more trails, waterway trails, etc.)
- Establish that the golf courses be maintained permanently as open space (some have blue bird habitat areas)
- “Pumpkin Patch” at Moe Road near 146 intersection, just south of town park
- Increase public access at southern end of Ballston Lake. Reclaim junkyards near Schauber Road. Create fishing and public access here.
- At a potential commercially-zoned area at the intersection of Routes 146, Blue Barns, and Glenridge Road. This is a potential commercial area that backs onto school property.
- 21st Century Park – at Miller, Tanner and Route 146. This area is already congested and development should be capped. Preserve vistas here.
- Creek alongside Tanner Road just off Route 146A – is a great spot for public access, near an existing pull-off area.
- Protect MacElroy Road area near existing park. Park could be expanded and connections could be made to Ballston Lake, such as a bike path.
- Develop trail easements throughout the western part of town
- Public access to the Mohawk River (trail along Mohawk River from Vischers Ferry to Rexford and likewise to Waterford)
- Protect Waite Road woodland area
- Vistas/”the view from the road” - Protect rural character and scenic views.
 - End of Hubbs Road and Schauber Road facing west at Broken Arrow Ranch

- West on Route 146 at a rise in the road, just beyond Miller Road. Great views facing west. Near 21st Century Park.
- Bradt Road looking west toward Glenridge Road.
- Ashdown Road and Route 146a facing west.
- Engelmores Road
- Riverview Road. (Restore trees that were removed.)
- Areas along Grooms Road.
- Opportunities for environmental education
 - Vischer Ferry Preserve
 - Near Shenendehowa school properties
 - Kinns Road Park
 - Round Lake Reservoir
 - Historic Sites Taurusa at Grooms Road
 - Stony Creek Reservoir
- Trail opportunities
 - Restoration/rebuild existing trails
 - In individual neighborhood park districts
 - Expansion/Creation of extensions or altogether new trails
 - Moe Road Trail
 - Vischer Ferry Road Trail (near Van Vranken Road)
 - Shenendehowa Campus trail system
- Improvements/Enhancements of existing recreational/open space areas
 - Collins Road/Kinns Road Park
 - Vischer Ferry Preserve
 - Other existing parks

POTENTIAL SOLUTIONS AND IDEAS: Policy Improvements from Public

- Don't tax open space the same as developed property
- Increase developers' requirement for open space in subdivisions from 5% to 40-50% of the land should be set aside as open space. Make sure that the open space set aside is not just "clippings" or unusable land in development – but that it is a planned open space, designed for as other infrastructure.
- Establish a cluster design requirement along with conventional designs for the development approval process.
- Consider an area-specific moratorium on building.

Clifton Park Open Space Plan
APPENDIX B:

Town of Clifton Park
List of Historic Sites

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Town of Clifton Park
List of Historic Sites

1. Jonesville Methodist Church **1827**.
2. Jonesville Academy **1838**, private co-ed boarding school for classical & scientific education.
3. Delaware and Hudson Railroad station **1882**, Elnora, large freight depot & passenger station.
4. Stone Viaduct underpass of Delaware and Hudson Railroad **1881**.
5. Clifton Park Hotel **1790**, focal point of Clifton Park Village History. Major crossroads in northern route from Albany, stage and mail stop, building used as courthouse, jail and tavern.
6. Clifton Park Methodist Church **1842**.
7. A.K. Frank House **1810**.
8. Frame schoolhouse **1860**.
9. Site of Widow Hawkins House, Tory spy Joe Bettys captured here.
10. L. Jones home **1850**, saltbox style.
11. Nathan Peck home **1812**, later Caldwell farm 1870, many Peck families in Clifton Park Center area.
12. Garnsey Farm **1790**.
13. J. Southard Home **1850**, Greek Revival Style.
14. Rexford House **1850** Federal style home with later Victorian additions, early settling family.
15. Site of Alexander's Bridge **1818**.
16. Erie Canal Aqueduct **1870**, replaced **1825** structure.
17. Locks 21 and 22 of the Erie Canal at Rexford **1840**.
18. Mead Hose **1820**.
19. Clifton Park Center Baptist Church **1850**, replaced original 1795 structure.
20. Moe Schoolhouse, prior **1815**, established by Abraham Moe, judge in Saratoga County Court of Common Pleas.
21. Birch's Tavern **1820**, town meetings alternated between here and Grooms Tavern (#22).
22. Samuel Grooms Tavern and General Store **1828**, site of first town meeting.
23. Site of Groom Corners Methodist Church **1834**, often called White or McIntosh Church.
24. Site of Nanninc Wisscher Home **1770**, Georgian style home, one of the areas earliest homes removed to Loudonville when Stony Creek Reservoir created 1950's.
25. Abner Irish Home **1790s**. Noted area farmer.
26. Nanning Irish Home **1830**.
27. Abram Best Home **1815**.
28. William Shepard Home **1780**, Green revival front added 1832.
29. Site of Stoney Creek Mill, saw mill late **1700s** - 1855, later woolen mill, plaster mill, and cider mill.

30. Nicholas Visscher Homestead **1734** Federal Style addition 1806, founding settler.
31. Site of Fisscher's Ferry **1790**, started by Eldert Visscher, son of Nicholas.
32. Site of Eldert Visschers' grist mill **1730**.
33. Amity Dutch Reformed Church **1888** with Tiffany windows, replaced 1802.
34. Lock 19 of the Erie Canal **1840**, double lock enlarged 1880s.
35. VanVranken Homestead, early **1800s**, settling family.
36. Vandenburg Home **1840**.
37. J.B. Fowler Home **1850**, Greek Revival Style.
38. A. Fowler Home **1850**, Green Revival Style.
39. N.J. Clute's Drydock **1852**, canal boats built and repaired; store, home and barns in the vicinity.
40. Site of Fort's Ferry **1728**, operated by Nicholas Fort of settling family, earliest ferry in town.

Clifton Park Open Space Plan
APPENDIX C:

Town of Clifton Park Open Space
Resource Evaluation Model,
2002

TOWN OF CLIFTON PARK OPEN SPACE PLAN

RESOURCE EVALUATION MODEL

2002

A five-step, open space resource evaluation model was developed by Behan Planning Associates, LLC in collaboration with the Town of Clifton Park Open Space Committee and town planning staff. The primary purpose of the model was to provide a defined, written, logical process for developing the open space protection concept map for the Town of Clifton Park Open Space Plan 2003, and to ensure that the local community's values were comprehensively and carefully reflected in any open space plan or program. The model was also the basis for the resource maps generated by the Town of Clifton Park Planning Department included in the Appendix of the Town of Clifton Park Open Space Plan.

In addition, the resource evaluation model should be utilized in the future to assist in the performance of site-specific evaluation and prioritization of open space resources to be conserved in Clifton Park. The model will be a useful tool for the town to refer to in its open space program implementation efforts with respect to reviewing specific individual parcels for inclusion in an open space program.

STEP 1. IDENTIFICATION OF CLIFTON PARK'S OPEN SPACE RESOURCE VALUES.

Based on committee input and public input from the focus group meetings, charrette and the community survey, the significant open space resources that are valued by the community and that should be considered for inclusion in the development of the town's open space protection plan are:

- 1. Drinking water resources**
 - a. Wetlands, streams, and lakes, and a buffer of adjacent lands
 - b. Water supply surface reservoirs, and a buffer of adjacent lands
 - c. Public water supply wellheads, and wellhead protection areas
 - d. Aquifers and aquifer recharge areas
 - e. Floodplain protection areas

- 2. Significant ecological areas**
 - a. Lands listed in the New York State Open Space Plan – about 500 acres known as the Dwaas Kill Natural Area.
 - b. Unique natural areas and habitats and travel corridors for wildlife, such as mature forests, uncommon plant communities, wetlands, fishing-quality streams, significant shorelines, rock outcroppings, steep slopes, or open fields and meadows. Also, land that supports known endangered or

threatened species, including but not limited to Karner Blue Butterfly habitat and travel corridors.

- c. Soils of statewide importance and prime agricultural soils.
- d. Areas of wildlife observation

3. Working landscape: active farmland.

- a. Agricultural land under town term conservation easement.
- b. Agricultural land enrolled in agricultural assessment program.
- c. Farms that have scenic or historical significance.
- d. Farms that have environmental significance as a buffer or that include ecological or habitat areas.
- e. Farms that employ sound environmental management practices.
- f. Farms under threat of development pressure and conversion.
- g. Contiguous agricultural parcels and operations.

4. Distinctive Character - Cultural Landscape Resources.

- a. **Land with unusual scenic beauty or character, or that is part of a larger scenic viewshed.** Prominent scenic vistas, their viewing points, their viewsheds, and viewshed buffer areas. Include scenic vistas noted identified within the 1998 inventory. Include long or expansive views of Mohawk River and views beyond. Include highly interesting foreground of rolling farmland or old fields, or other interesting foreground landscape combined with an attractive long distance view.
- b. **Rural character corridors.** Corridors along roads where the landscape is predominantly characterized by one or more of the following: narrow roads, no shoulder, trees along roadway close to the road; or a mix of open fields, woods, rural land uses, some housing; or other noteworthy landscape, historic, and architectural features.
- c. **Large, undeveloped parcels – related to the distribution of open space throughout town.** Land that is of sufficient acreage that its development would in and of itself contribute to a loss of character of the town or a section of the town: less than 5 acre sites in denser parts of town; sites of 25 acres or greater in more rural parts of town.
- d. **Institutional landholdings:** public and private schools, libraries, public facilities such as the YMCA, firehouses, town hall, churches and cemeteries, etc. – whose landholdings contribute to the “open spaces” throughout the town.
- e. **Significant historical or archeological resources.** Lands that include properties listed on the state or national register or historic places, or are an area of potential archeological significance. Lands that are recognized as important local historical sites according to the local historical society. An area that is currently under a term historic preservation easement with the town. Historic sites identified in the 1998 inventory.
- f. **Buffer lands in and around residential areas.** Undeveloped lands – open space areas that serve as buffers around residential areas and are

valued for potential passive recreation or simply as desirable undeveloped green space. These areas could be small in size, but valuable for their proximity to dense population areas.

g. **Gateways into town, and in and around hamlets and the town center area.**

5. Recreational, greenway, and trail resource opportunities

- a. Existing parks, trails, recreational areas, and golf courses.
- b. Publicly-owned land.
- c. Developable land for additional recreational opportunities: both passive and active recreational activities. (Lands with flat topography and accessibility to infrastructure for some types of recreational uses.)
- d. Access to areas with water-based recreational opportunities, such as land that is contiguous to the Erie Canal, Mohawk River, or Ballston Lake.

STEP 2. BASIC OPEN SPACE RESOURCE MAPPING CRITERIA.

a.) Create a base map of all available undeveloped land for potential consideration for open space resource conservation. Use a tax parcel map to establish a database for ownership of the undeveloped lands.

b.) Starting with the base map of available undeveloped land, map open space resources valued by the community. The approach for resource evaluation is to map these resources using the most current GIS data layers available through the town's planning department. The purpose of this exercise is to group data layers to evaluate land areas, not specific parcels. A later step will be to look more closely at identified potential open space areas to evaluate them on a parcel-level basis.

Within each of the resource categories identified in Step 1, specific important individual resources contribute to the value base of the land use. Individual resource elements need to be mapped showing approximate locations, and then organized with respect to their respective resource category.

I. Ecological and Water Resources Map

- + Most recently flown aerial photos - for presence of forested lands, potential habitat areas, and hydrology
- + Any existing data from New York State Natural Heritage Program to locate threatened or endangered species habitat
- + Lands in town's open space term conservation easement program
- + All other lands under permanent conservation easements
- + Wetlands
 - State regulated wetlands

- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Services' National Wetland Inventory (NWI) maps of hydric soils, and any known federal jurisdiction wetlands
- + NYS DEC Classified Streams (Ct and higher quality)
- + Land Conservation Zones (town's LC zone along classified streams)
- + Floodplains (FEMA 100-year)
- + Shoreline habitat: undeveloped corridors 100 feet on either side of all mapped streams, wetlands, and lakes
- + Known aquifers and aquifer recharge areas (latest USGS data on this)
- + Location of town's current water supply (where all the public water supply wells are located) and create a 500-foot buffer around these areas
- + Steep Slopes
- + Watershed boundaries
- + NYS DEC Habitat areas and known corridors (such as deer migration, etc., as available)
- + Publicly-owned lands and lands under permanent conservation easement

II. Distinctive Character: Cultural, Scenic, and Historical Resources Map

- + Publicly-Owned Land
 - State-owned land and federal-owned land, if any
 - Saratoga County-owned land, if any
 - Town of Clifton Park-owned land
 - School-owned land
- + Lands under town's historic term conservation easement
- + Existing Focal Points: Waterfront Sites, Architectural Significant Sites, Historic Sites, Cultural Sites
- + Existing Linkages & Connective Areas: Greenways, Trails, & Canals
- + Scenic Resources
 - Scenic vistas from roadways (information from 1998 inventory)
 - Viewsheds – computer generated based on topography

III. Agricultural Resources Map

- + Most recently flown aerial photo – to see orchards and other farmland distinctive features
- + All of the town's farms in county agricultural district
- + Farms under agricultural tax assessment
- + Lands with forest tax assessment
- + Farms under town's term agricultural conservation easement program
- + High quality agricultural soils
 - Prime agricultural soils
 - Soils of Statewide Importance

IV. Recreational, Greenway, and Trail Opportunities Map

- + Open Space Land Donated by Developers to the Town as part of Subdivision Requirements
- + Public & Quasi-Public Parks and Lands
 - Park District Land
 - Town-owned parks and town-owned land/existing recreational areas
 - County-owned land/existing recreational areas
 - State-owned land/existing recreational areas
 - Federal-owned land
 - Existing Trails
 - School district-owned land
- + All Residential Zoned Land and Undeveloped Land “Vacant” for tax purposes at greater than say, 25 acres.
- + Existing trails
- + Planned trails in progress
- + Existing public fishing areas
- + Slopes (0 = 5%)

STEP 3: PERFORM INTERPRETATION AND SYNTHESIS OF GIS MAPS – TO CREATE DRAFT GREENPRINT.

With the conservation priorities in mind, and the maps produced by the application of the mapping criteria, the committee and the consultant should review the maps and identify the lands of conservation interest. The maps from the previous section will be combined into several “overlays” to determine where resources overlap, or co-occur. The greater the number of co-occurrences, the higher is the resource value of the identified area for conservation priority.

The location of existing and proposed water and sewer lines should be reviewed to determine potentially more vulnerable identified open space resources. Some open space resources near water and sewer lines in highly desirable and developable residential and commercially zoned areas may be more difficult to protect, and require more creative protection measures. Not all open space resources in highly vulnerable areas may be possible to fully protect. Need to decide how important it is to protect based on how important an open space resource the vulnerable area is. This will help to determine the area’s priority.

The purpose of the synthesis is also to have an opportunity for a more flexible, subjective inclusion of resources. The resource maps should be reviewed to determine whether additional, unquantified but interpreted, “place value” resources are included, and if not, ensure their inclusion. The following are suggestions for further review, and

are in addition to the analysis and prioritization of the mapping criteria already discussed. This is not intended to be a complete list, but rather, to provide illustrative examples to “jump start” a discussion and free exchange of ideas.

a.) Review and compare public input data

- Review charrette data and charrette mapping, and compare the public data to the resource maps.
- Review other public focus group meeting input, and compare maps to results of community survey.

b.) Review and interpret GIS maps and ask the following types of questions:

Water Resource Protection.

- Are areas identified adequate for protecting or buffering water quality and supply?
- Do areas provide aquatic ecosystem protection?

Significant Ecological Areas.

- Are there areas that town residents know have unique or valuable flora or fauna?
- Are there areas that animals use as part of their daily routine?
- Are there any other areas that the residents value ecologically that have not been included?
- Habitat Corridors. Does the area serve as a viable linkage that potentially increases contiguity and provides opportunities between existing or potential open space and habitat?

Corridors, Connections, Linkages

- Areas for additional trail systems and bike paths. An area that helps to close existing gaps in a developing open space or recreational network, or help to connect population centers with public lands, public parks, or historic sites.
- Which areas serve as connectors that potentially increase contiguity and provide opportunities between existing potential open space and habitat?
- Are there any other areas of existing or potential trails or connections that have not been included?

Distinctive Character - Cultural Landscape Resources.

- Does the area contain any historic, archeological, or cultural resources?
- Identify all the significant hamlets or development centers within the town. Focal points, people-attractors.
- **Areas that are gateways into the community.** Identify significant entry areas where people enter through the town’s boundary or enter a hamlet. Are there open space areas near hamlets and gateways that would be relevant and logical to include for open space conservation?

- **Scenic, rural character (scenic landscapes).** Land with unusual scenic beauty, or that is part of a larger scenic viewshed, and which, if developed, would contribute to a loss of the town's rural character. Does the area hold scenic views, vistas, or character reflective of the town's rural heritage? Does the site exhibit an "outstanding arrangement of natural or man-made features that provide positive stimulation, hold interest, and command attention of the viewing public, and/or contributes to the public enjoyment and appreciation of any established scenic resource?"
- **Are there any other areas that the residents value that have not been included?**

Working landscape: active farmland and viable agricultural lands.

- Are the agricultural resources identified -- viable, vulnerable and visible? Vulnerable farmland is rented land, and land lacking next-generation farmers.
- Has farmland that is highly visible been identified and included?
- Are the areas with an historic tradition of agricultural production?
- Have all the farms with high soil quality, of a significant size and in proximity to other farmland been identified?

Additional recreational, greenway, and additional trail building opportunities.

- **What areas** contain natural, scenic, or open space resources that are unique, rare or of local significance? What areas have potential for public access?
- **What areas** serve to link existing stream rights or are adjacent to a stream or waterway with commercial or sport fishing potential?
- What lands offer potential for environmental education or learning center opportunities, such as land with public access opportunities in and amidst wildlife habitat.
- **Additional land for recreational uses.** Does the area contain relatively flat area for the development of athletic fields and recreational facilities? Is the area within walking distance (5 to 10 minutes) of a dense residential area?
- **Water-based recreation.** Does the land contain the potential for public waterfront access – for swimming or for boating?
- **Trail Corridors.** Do areas identified offer connections between open space areas and open space destinations within town?
- **Areas for additional trail systems and bike paths.** An area that helps to close existing gaps in a developing open space or recreational network, or help to connect population centers with public lands, public parks or historic sites. Areas that have potential feasibility for development as a trail or path system. Areas that have multiple co-occurrences – intermix of ecological, recreational, and cultural resources along potential corridor areas – increases the potential variety of activities for these areas.
- **Distribution of recreational space within town.** Does the site support the equitable distribution of recreational opportunities within town?

- **Buffer lands in and around residential areas. Are there key undeveloped parcels, or portions thereof** – of open space areas that could serve as buffers around residential areas?
- **Large, undeveloped parcels, and distribution of open space throughout town.** Land that is of sufficient acreage that its development would in and of itself contribute to a loss of character of the town or a section of the town.

STEP 5: DEVELOP PROTECTION RECOMMENDATIONS AND DRAFT GREENPRINT MAP.

- A. Create draft Greenprint map synthesizing the results of the above four steps to create a map of the most important valued open space resources to conserve.
 - i. Show areas of existing, permanently protected community open space resources
 - ii. Show proposed areas for open space resource conservation.
- B. Calculate acreages recommended for full protection and partial protection measures.
 - i. Areas recommended for full protection
 - ii. Areas recommended for partial protection
 - iii. Areas recommended remaining as open space/using other management techniques.

Clifton Park Open Space Plan
APPENDIX D:

Resource Maps
prepared by the
Town of Clifton Park
Planning Department,
June 2002

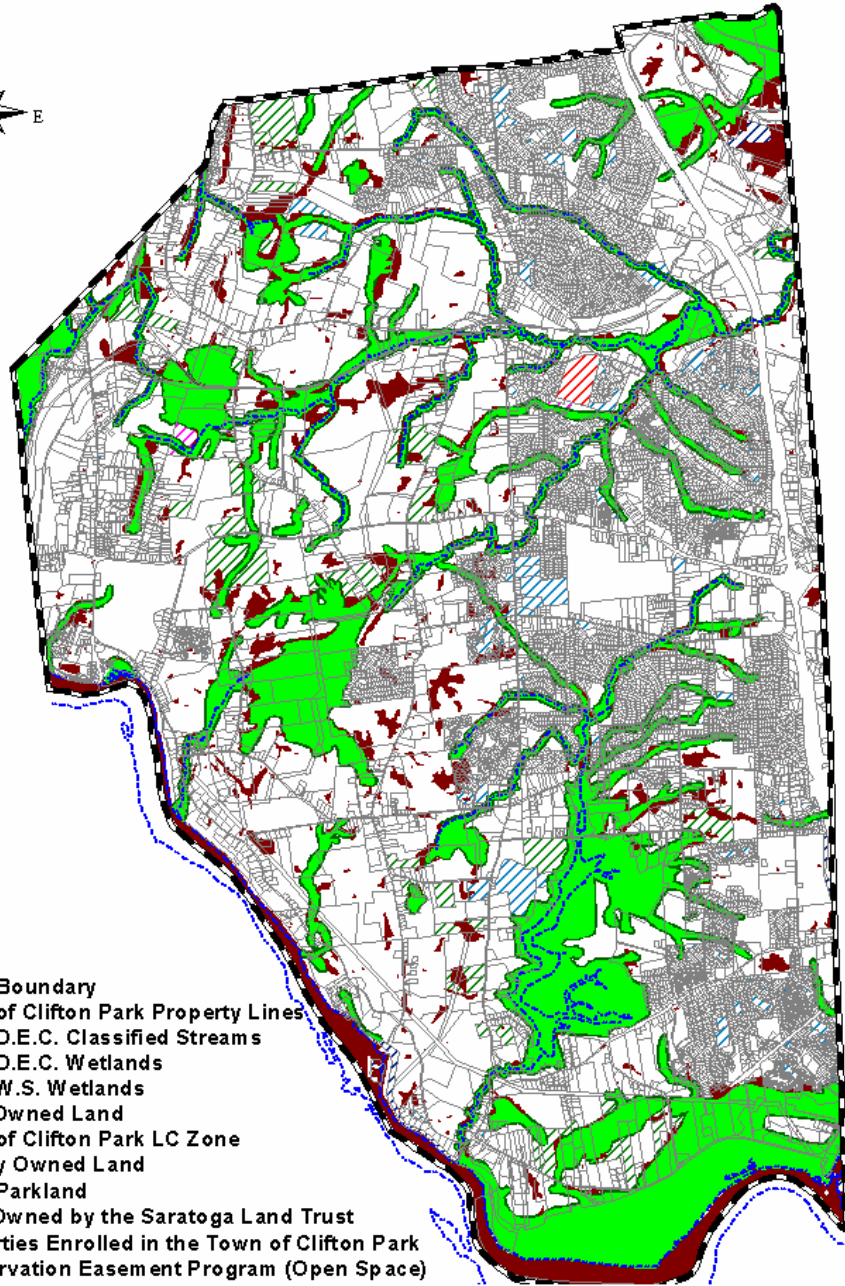
Item 1: Ecological and Water Resources Map

Item 2: Recreational, Greenway, and Trails Map

Item 3: Cultural, Scenic, and Historic Resources Map

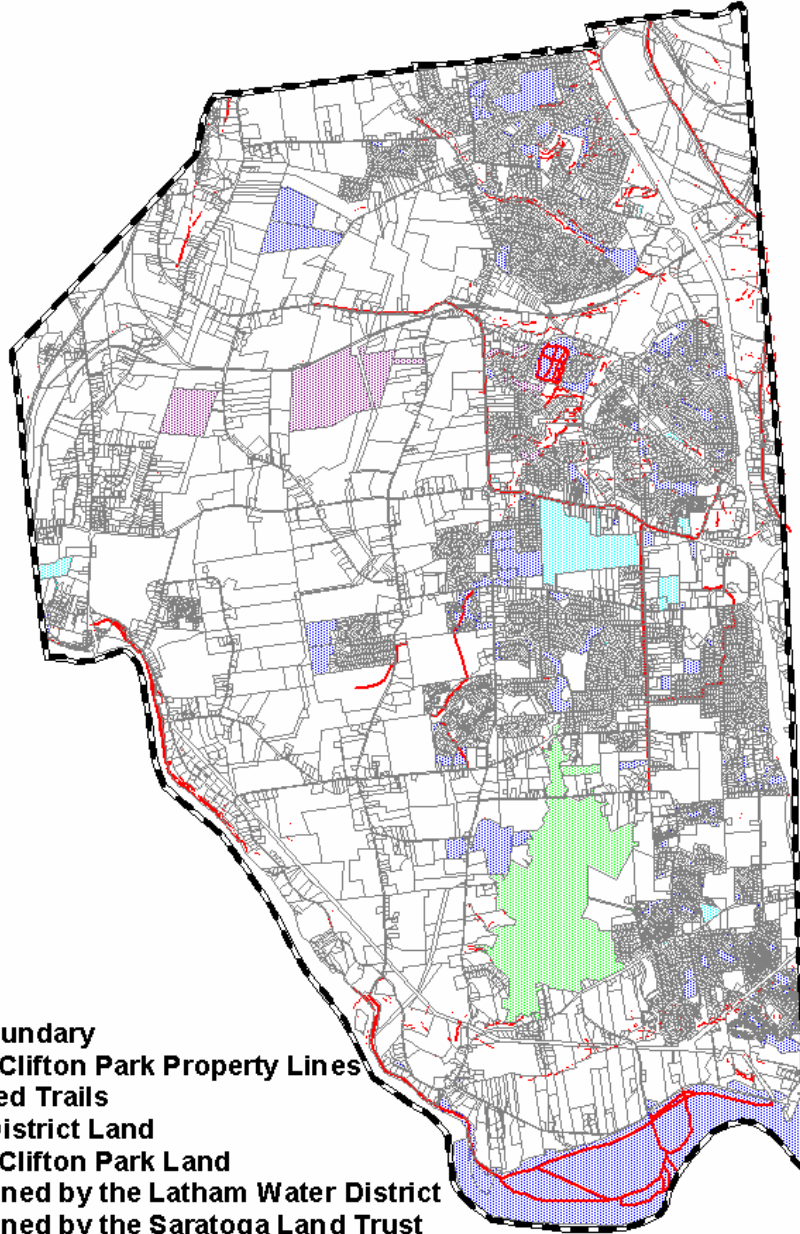
Item 4: Agricultural Resources Map

Ecological and Water Resources Map



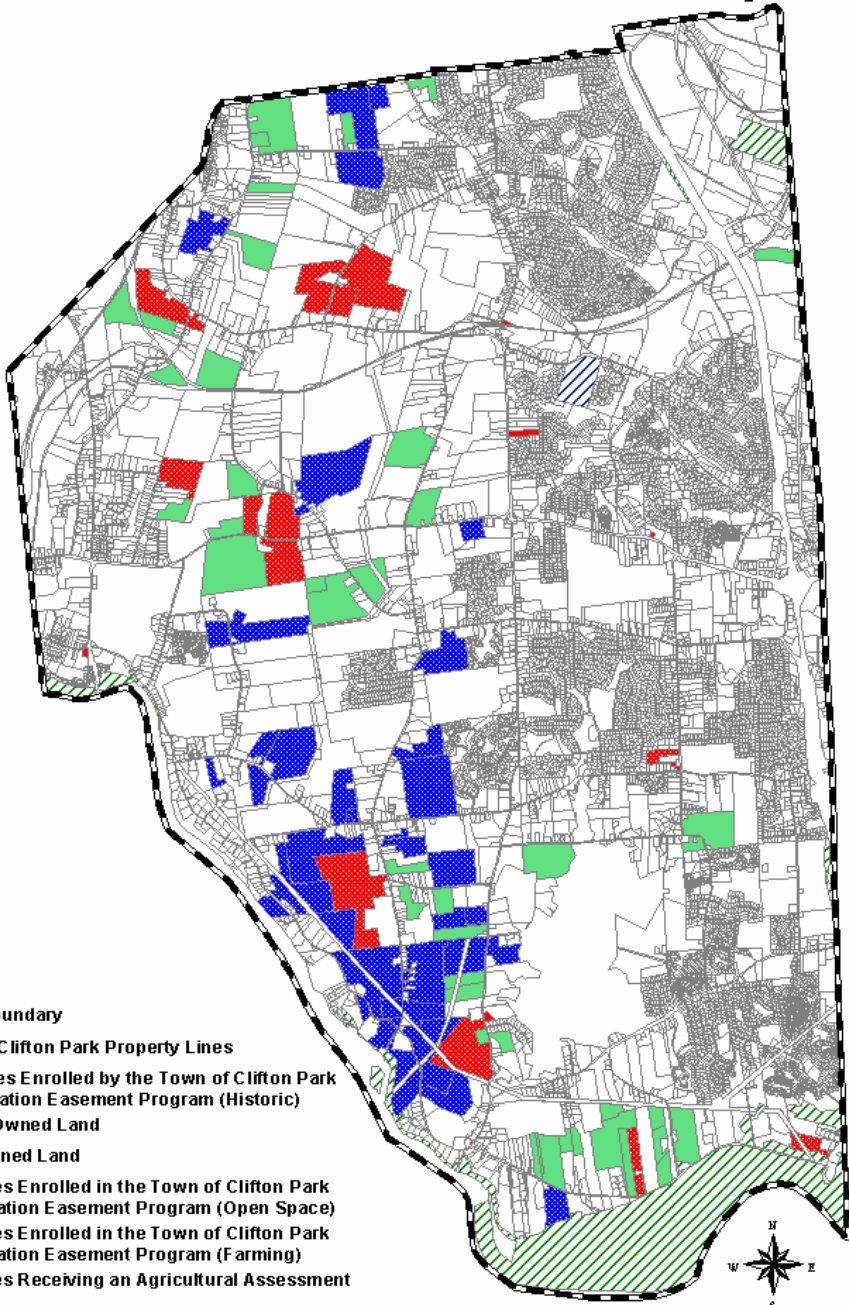
- Town Boundary
- Town of Clifton Park Property Lines
- N.Y.S.D.E.C. Classified Streams
- N.Y.S.D.E.C. Wetlands
- U.S.F.W.S. Wetlands
- State Owned Land
- Town of Clifton Park LC Zone
- County Owned Land
- Town Parkland
- Land Owned by the Saratoga Land Trust
- Properties Enrolled in the Town of Clifton Park Conservation Easement Program (Open Space)

Recreational, Greenway, and Trails Map

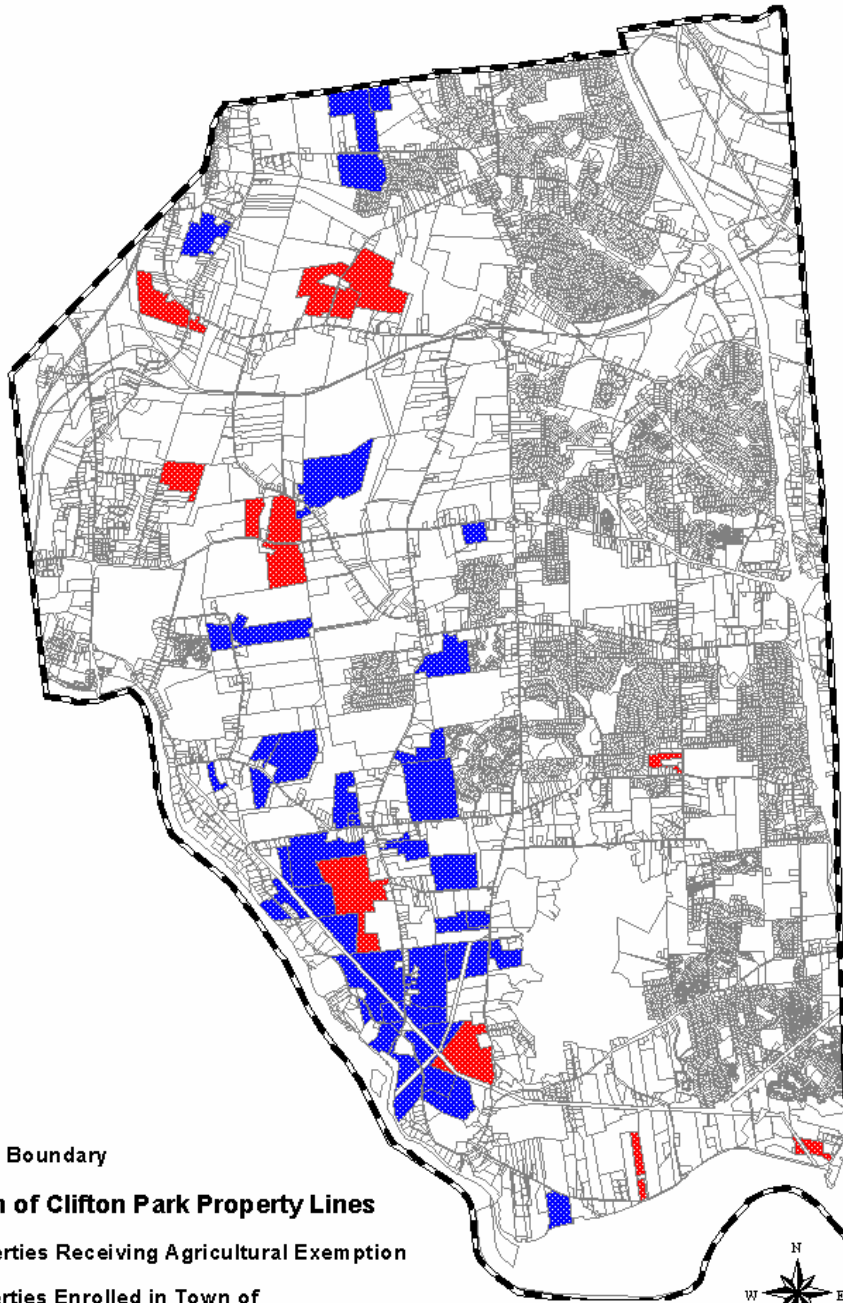


- Town Boundary
- Town of Clifton Park Property Lines
- Completed Trails
- School District Land
- Town of Clifton Park Land
- Land Owned by the Latham Water District
- Land Owned by the Saratoga Land Trust
- Slopes > 15%

Cultural, Scenic, and Historic Resources Map




Agricultural Resources Map



 Town Boundary

 Town of Clifton Park Property Lines

 Properties Receiving Agricultural Exemption

 Properties Enrolled in Town of Clifton Park Cons. Easement Program

Clifton Park Open Space Plan
APPENDIX E:

Fiscal Analysis

Item 1: “Fiscal Findings & Plan Implementation Strategy,” digital presentation prepared by Behan Planning Associates, LLC, December 2002.

Item 2: “Town of Clifton Park Fiscal Analysis: Summary of Findings,” report prepared by Behan Planning Associates, LLC, December 2002

Cost of Community Services Studies: Review and Summary

Introduction

A Cost of Community Services (COCS) study is a tool used to assess the net fiscal contribution of current land uses to local governments. It provides a snapshot of costs versus revenues based on existing land use patterns. In contrast to a traditional fiscal impact analysis, it does not predict the future impact of a specific proposed development. Rather, COCS studies give public officials and residents the benefit of a look back at the effects of past land use actions on local finances. The results of these studies provide local leaders with information they can use to make more informed decisions about development patterns in their communities.

The methodology used for conducting COCS studies evolved from a 1986 report, *Density Related Public Costs*, in which the American Farmland Trust reorganized community records to trace the flow of revenues and expenditures generated by specific land uses. COCS studies involve five basic steps: defining the scope of the project and identifying land use categories to study (typically residential, commercial/industrial, and farmland/open space); collecting data on local revenues and expenditures; allocating revenues by land use category; allocating expenditures by land use; and computing revenue-to-expenditure ratios for each land use category. The studies rely on recent financial records and extensive interviews with local officials and service providers to determine how revenues were generated and how appropriations were spent.

V. Findings of COCS Studies

According to the American Farmland Trust, at least 70 COCS studies have been conducted in the United States since the mid-1980s¹. With some exceptions (e.g., Agawam, MA; Skagit County, WA; Freehold, NJ), the majority of the communities studied have had fewer than 25,000 residents. COCS analyses have been conducted in states including New York, Connecticut, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, New Hampshire, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Maryland, Virginia, Minnesota, Ohio, Michigan, Utah, and Washington. 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.

The table below lists the results of selected COCS studies in the northeastern United States. The ratios show how much each land use cost the town in services for every dollar generated in an

Endnotes

¹ American Farmland Trust (2000). *Cost of Community Services Studies Fact Sheet*. www.farmlandinfo.org/fisc/tas/tafs-cocs.html.

individual year. 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 required only \$0.48 in public service costs².

A summary of 58 COCS studies by the American Farmland Trust calculated the median cost per dollar of revenue raised to provide public services to each of the three different land uses. For every dollar these communities received from residential uses, the median amount the communities had to expend to service them was \$1.15. 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 \$0.29 and \$0.37 respectively³.

Impact of Residential Development. The main conclusion of the COCS study findings is that, as a rule, 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. In Agawam, MA, for instance, the residential sector accounted for 75% of property tax revenues and 81% of total revenues, but required 92% of expenditures⁴. Similarly, in Greenwich, NY, residential uses were responsible for 72% of property taxes and 73% of total revenues, but accounted for 91% of expenditures⁵.

Educational spending plays a major role in the residential property deficits. In many states, the state subsidy provided to a school district declines as assessed valuations increase. Therefore, increasing the tax base may exacerbate the disparity by reducing the amount of state assistance, forcing the school district to raise taxes to help pay for services.

Larger communities experiencing rapid growth seem to experience greater net deficits on their residential land than smaller, more stable communities. Bedroom communities are most prone to this trend because they have a limited commercial and industrial tax base to mitigate the cost of servicing new residential development.

Communities experiencing low-density residential development are further impacted due to the increased costs associated with extending roads, infrastructure, and school bus routes when

² 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.

³ Cited in 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.

⁴ American Farmland Trust (1992). *Does Farmland Protection Pay? The Cost of Community Services in Three Massachusetts Towns*. Northampton, MA: American Farmland Trust.

⁵ Washington County Agriculture and Farmland Protection Board (1996). *Cost of Community Services Study, Washington County Agriculture & Farmland Protection Plan: Supporting Studies*.

homes are more spread out. A study of Loudoun County, Virginia, for example, found that public service costs per dwelling unit were approximately three times higher when the density was one unit per five acres than when it was 4-5 units per acre⁶.

FARM, FOREST AND OPEN SPACE IMPLICATIONS. AN IMPORTANT RESULT OF THE COCS STUDIES IS THE POSITIVE FISCAL IMPACT OF FARM AND FOREST LANDS AND OPEN SPACE ON COMMUNITIES. ALTHOUGH FARM AND OPEN LANDS GENERATE LESS REVENUE OVERALL THAN RESIDENTIAL, COMMERCIAL OR INDUSTRIAL PROPERTIES, THEY HAVE MODEST REQUIREMENTS FOR PUBLIC SERVICES, PROVIDING A FISCAL SURPLUS TO OFFSET THE SHORTFALL IN REVENUES FOR RESIDENTIAL SERVICES. IN SKAGIT COUNTY, WASHINGTON, FOR INSTANCE, OPEN LANDS PROVIDED ALMOST \$19 MILLION IN REVENUE, BUT ONLY COST \$9.7 MILLION TO SERVICE. APPROXIMATELY HALF OF THE REVENUES GENERATED BY OPEN LANDS WERE THUS AVAILABLE FOR OTHER USES⁷.

Advocates of unplanned growth often present farmland and other undeveloped lands as awaiting a “higher and better use,” such as new residential development. However, the COCS findings clearly demonstrate that keeping farm and forest land productive is a viable economic use of the land. Farmland offers communities a reasonable alternative to development that more than pays for itself. In addition to the property tax benefits, these lands provide numerous economic and environmental benefits; they provide jobs, support local businesses, sustain wetlands and wildlife habitat, and protect open space. While the COCS methodology does not take these additional contributions into account, the study findings help support land conservation as an integral part of a community’s economic health.

⁶ American Farmland Trust (1986). *Density Related Public Costs*. Northampton, MA: American Farmland Trust.

⁷ American Farmland Trust (1999). *Cost of Community Services: Skagit County, Washington*. Northampton, MA: American Farmland Trust.

Impact of Commercial/Industrial Development. The COCS study results show that commercial/industrial lands, like farm and open lands, are a positive contributor to municipal budgets, requiring far less in services per dollar received in property tax revenue. Commercial and industrial development are not necessarily pure revenue generators, however. A study by the Vermont League of Cities and Towns and the Vermont Natural Resources Council found that towns with the most commercial and industrial development also had the highest property taxes. One explanation suggested by the study's authors is that the job creation spurred by new commercial and industrial development often leads to residential growth and greater demand for public services. This may affect the balance of revenues to expenditures in the long run⁸. Ultimately, unplanned commercial and industrial development may result in additional costs including traffic congestion, noise, crime, pollution and changes to community character that far outweigh the economic benefits.

VI. Conclusion

In summary, the COCS study findings refute the popular misconception that residential development lowers property taxes by increasing the tax base. On the contrary, the studies indicate that increasing a community's tax base through residential growth will not bring an increase in net revenue, because residential uses require additional public services. The findings also show that communities receive more in revenues from the agriculture/open space and commercial/industrial sectors than is returned to these sectors in services.

It should be noted that the findings of the COCS studies are not intended to make any qualitative judgments on the benefits, fiscal or otherwise, of one land use versus another. Each of the three land uses considered generates some level of income for the communities studied. The results do suggest, however, that communities need to consider the associated costs of growth as well as the potential tax revenue in evaluating development options. By understanding the impacts of growth, communities can be better prepared in planning for the future.

⁸ Vermont League of Cities and Towns and Vermont Natural Resources Council (1990). *The Tax Base and the Tax Bill: Tax Implications of Development, An Overview*. Montpelier, VT: Vermont League of Cities and Towns and Vermont Natural Resources Council. Cited in American Farmland Trust, *Does Farmland Protection Pay?*, op. cit.

**Sample Cost of Community Services Studies in Northeastern U.S.
Revenue -to-Expenditure Ratios in Dollars**

	Residential including Farm Houses	Combined Commercial & Industrial	Farm/Forest Open Land
VII. Connecticut			
Bolton (1)	1: 1.05	1: 0.23	1: 0.50
Durham (2)	1: 1.07	1: 0.27	1: 0.23
Farmington (2)	1: 1.33	1: 0.32	1: 0.31
Hebron (3)	1: 1.06	1: 0.47	1: 0.43
Litchfield (2)	1: 1.11	1: 0.34	1: 0.34
Pomfret (2)	1: 1.06	1: 0.27	1: 0.86
Massachusetts			
Agawam (4)	1: 1.05	1: 0.44	1: 0.31
Becket (2)	1: 1.02	1: 0.83	1: 0.72
Deerfield (4)	1: 1.16	1: 0.38	1: 0.29
Franklin (2)	1: 1.02	1: 0.58	1: 0.40
Gill (4)	1: 1.15	1: 0.43	1: 0.38
Leverett (2)	1: 1.15	1: 0.29	1: 0.25
Southborough (5)	1: 1.03	1: 0.26	1: 0.45
Westford (2)	1: 1.15	1: 0.53	1: 0.39
Williamstown (6)	1: 1.11	1: 0.34	1: 0.40
New Jersey			
Freehold Township (7)	1: 1.51	1: 0.17	1: 0.33
Holmdel Township (7)	1: 1.38	1: 0.21	1: 0.66
Middletown Township (7)	1: 1.14	1: 0.34	1: 0.36
Upper Freehold Twp. (7)	1: 1.18	1: 0.20	1: 0.35
Wall Township (7)	1: 1.28	1: 0.30	1: 0.54
New York			
Amenia (8)	1: 1.23	1: 0.25	1: 0.17
Beekman (9)	1: 1.12	1: 0.18	1: 0.48
Dix (10)	1: 1.51	1: 0.27	1: 0.31
Farmington (11)	1: 1.22	1: 0.27	1: 0.72
Fishkill (8)	1: 1.23	1: 0.31	1: 0.74
Greenwich (15)	1: 1.40	1: 0.12	1: 0.16
Hector (10)	1: 1.30	1: 0.15	1: 0.28
Ithaca (town) (14)	1: 1.09	1: 0.27	1: 0.27
Kinderhook (12)	1: 1.05	1: 0.21	1: 0.17
Montour (13)	1: 1.50	1: 0.28	1: 0.29
Northeast (9)	1: 1.36	1: 0.29	1: 0.21
Reading (13)	1: 1.88	1: 0.26	1: 0.32
Red Hook (8)	1: 1.11	1: 0.20	1: 0.22

VIII. Summary Data			
58 communities (median)	1: 1.15	1: 0.29	1: 0.37
New York towns	1: 1.27	NA	1: 0.29

Source: Adapted from American Farmland Trust, Farmland Information Center, Technical

Assistance Division, with additions by Camoin Associates, Inc.

Table References

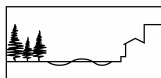
- (1) Geisler, K. (1999). *Cost of Community Services Study: Bolton, Connecticut*. Unpublished paper. Keene, NH: Antioch New England Graduate School.
- (2) Commonwealth Research Group, Inc. (1995). *Cost of Community Services in Southern New England*. Chepachet, RI: Southern New England Forest Consortium, Inc.
- (3) American Farmland Trust (1986). *The Cost of Community Services in Hebron, Connecticut*. Northampton, MA: American Farmland Trust.
- (4) American Farmland Trust (1992). *Does Farmland Protection Pay? The Cost of Community Services in Three Massachusetts Towns*. Northampton, MA: American Farmland Trust.
- (5) Adams, M. and T. Hines (1997). *Assessing Land-Use Costs: A Cost of Community Services Study in Southborough, Massachusetts*. Northampton, MA: American Farmland Trust.
- (6) Hazler, K., J. Kinabrew and W. Sullivan (1992). *The Cost of Community Services in Williamstown, Massachusetts*. Williamstown, MA: Williams College, Department of Environmental Planning.
- (7) American Farmland Trust (1998). *The Cost of Community Services in Monmouth County, New Jersey*. Northampton, MA: American Farmland Trust.
- (8) Bucknall, C. (1989). *The Real Cost of Development*. Poughkeepsie, NY: Scenic Hudson, Inc.
- (9) 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.

- (10) Schuyler County League of Women Voters (1993). *Fiscal Impact of Residential, Commercial and Agricultural Land Use in the Towns of Hector and Dix*. Schuyler County, NY: League of Women Voters.
- (11) Kinsman, C., L. Garrison and J. Sloan (1991). *Farmington Cost of Community Services Study*. Milbrook, NY: Cornell Cooperative Extension and American Farmland Trust.
- (12) Concerned Citizens of Kinderhook (1996). Cited by American Farmland Trust, Technical Assistance Division, on website, www.farmlandinfo.org, July 2001.
- (13) Schuyler County League of Women Voters (1992). *Fiscal Impact of Residential, Commercial and Agricultural Land Use in the Towns of Montour and Reading*. Schuyler County, NY: League of Women Voters.
- (14) Tompkins County Agriculture and Farmland Protection Board (1996). *Study of Tompkins County Agriculture, Tompkins County Agriculture & Farmland Protection Plan*.
- (15) Washington County Agriculture and Farmland Protection Board (1996). *Cost of Community Services Study, Washington County Agriculture & Farmland Protection Plan: Supporting Studies*.

Town of Clifton Park Fiscal Analysis:
Summary of Findings

December 2002

**Prepared on behalf
of the Clifton Park Open Space Committee
for the Town of Clifton Park Town Board**



Behan Planning Associates, LLC
Planning Community Futures

Table of Contents

Town of Clifton Park Fiscal Analysis

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Clifton Park’s Fiscal Analysis	5
Findings	7
Conclusions	9
Recommended Strategies	10

Appendix A: Cost of Community Services Studies Summary

Appendix B: Clifton Park Fiscal Model Summary

Appendix C: Clifton Park Fiscal Model: Field Definitions

Summary

Clifton Park has an opportunity to plan the future of its remaining significant acreage of open lands so that it will become an asset, not a burden, to its citizens. The Town of Clifton Park, comprised of 43,372 acres in total, is facing ongoing development pressures and decisions about proceeding with local investment in land conservation. According to town data, about 2,000 acres of town are considered permanently protected: town-owned park & recreation lands; state-owned (but town-managed) Vischer Ferry Nature & Historic Preserve and other state forest lands; the county-owned Kinns Road Park; lands set aside as part of development and subdivision requirements, and lands with permanent conservation easements. Lands under term conservation easements are not considered permanently protected. The permanently protected open space lands in Clifton Park are approximately five percent of the town's total acreage¹.

The Clifton Park Open Space Concept Draft Plan estimated that approximately 12,000² acres of land of large-size parcels were remaining open lands in town. Thus, about 35% of the total town acreage remains to be utilized for some future scenario of development and conservation.

As part of the Town of Clifton Park's 2002 Open Space Plan process, the Town of Clifton Park requested the preparation of a fiscal analysis. A fiscal analysis compares the public cost and revenues associated with residential growth, commercial growth, and land conservation, and predicts the relative impact on future property taxes for different future land use scenarios. The purpose of this fiscal analysis was to look at the impacts of increasing conservation land uses at different levels on the fiscal stability of the town.

This fiscal analysis utilized the Clifton Park Open Space Concept Plan Protection Targets set forth in the "Town of Clifton Park Open Space Concept Plan – Discussion Draft, June 17, 2002." Draft protection targets were established for the five conservation categories of wildlife nature preserves and watersheds; farmland protection; parkland and ballfields; town-wide paths and trails; and scenic roads, cultural resources, and historic preservation. The total near-term targets (for the next two to five years) are to protect the following: 900 to 1,800 acres of open space lands; establish six to 10 miles of town-wide paths and trails; and protect four to six scenic/historic sites and/or roads.

From these protection targets, a fiscal model assessed the three future land use scenarios selected for applicability for the town's five-year action plan:

- A Low Conservation Scenario that allocates 900 acres for purchase or other protection.**

- ❑ **A Moderate Conservation Scenario that allocates 1350 acres for purchase or other protection.**
- ❑ **A High Conservation Scenario that allocates 1800 acres for purchase or other protection.**

In developing the data for the fiscal model the conclusion was reached that at current growth rates, even with the addition of a high conservation scenario, Clifton Park will not be built out for more than 20 years. Based on a long history of cost of community study surveys, running a fiscal model typically confirms that fewer homes mean fewer associated costs over the run of the model. However, since there is ample land still available for development, open space protection both over the short term of about five (5) years, or over a 20-year timeline, will *not* exclude additional future development.

Findings

At the onset of the fiscal analysis, there was a perception that there was not much open land left in town for future development or conservation uses. However, it was found that an ample land supply is remaining in town to serve community needs for both conservation and development land uses. Because there is an ample land supply remaining and the fact that development will be able to continue, the community would not necessarily avoid short term development costs associated with the rate of additional future development as was anticipated at the commencement of this fiscal analysis project. However, the community would realize other benefits associated with investment in open space conservation lands:

- ❑ Enhanced quality of life – as residents would have increased visual and physical access to more open space resources;
- ❑ Increased property values for Clifton Park landowners due to attractive open space amenities. Open space is an amenity that has proven to increase property values, especially residential values; and,
- ❑ Environmental and ecological benefits for fish and wildlife habitat, clean water – water quality, air quality, historic resource, scenic resource, and recreational benefits associated with open space investment.

Economic Benefits of Open Space

According to research presented by the Trust for Public Land [<http://www.tpl.org>], the following citation supports that economic benefits accrue to communities that invest in open space conservation:

- + **“A three-mile greenbelt around Lake Merritt, near the city center, was found to add \$41 million to surrounding property values”**
(Oakland, CA), – cited from *“The Economic Benefits of Open Space”*
report by *The Trust for Public Land*.

Recommended Investment

Based on the fiscal analysis, selecting a moderate land protection scenario of protecting about 1,350 acres of land in about five years would be an approximate investment of \$6 million. This level of funding closely corresponds to the community survey results where respondents supported an average level of investment of about \$29.00 per year per household. The \$6.0 million investment works out to be approximately \$25 per year per average household. A recommended guideline for allocating annual investment in the open space program needs to be established by the town board. Several tools and successful local financing examples are available for consideration by the board to accomplish this objective.

Reasons for Investing in Clifton Park’s Open Space

1. As investment in open space increases, quality of life and economic benefits will increase proportionately.
2. The benefit for the Town of Clifton Park investing today is the immediate reward of obtaining valuable open space for the community, together with saving resources that otherwise would be lost and avoiding increased costs for investing in open space later.
3. In the long run when there is significantly less land available in roughly the 25-40 year estimated build-out range, the costs for conservation would pay for itself, based on fiscal impact studies and findings from other communities similar to Clifton Park that were observed close to reaching full build-out.
4. The significant amount of available land in town offers the opportunity for a possible increase in investment in conservation at a rate that “catches up” to the rate of development over the past three decades.
5. Land conservation initiatives would likely spur more cost-efficient development.

Introduction

The Town of Clifton Park will continue to grow and develop. Like many communities faced with ongoing development pressures in its land use decisions, Clifton Park has existing land use and zoning tools and policies, and is developing additional tools and initiatives to help it guide both future growth and conservation land uses. Notably, the character of future growth and the types and amounts of land use allocated in town, will determine, to a large extent, the future tax burdens that town residents face, as well as determine the future economic conditions and quality of life for the community.

However, the town does not currently utilize specific fiscal analysis tools on a town-wide basis to help guide decision-making about future land use. Yet, obtaining and having an understanding of the fiscal impact of different decisions provides valuable information both to policy-makers as well as private individuals in communities. Currently the two most popular tools that provide this type of information are a cost of community services study and a fiscal analysis.

Cost of Community Services Studies

Because of its relative simplicity, a cost of community services study is the most popular fiscal analysis tool. This type of study provides a snapshot of the revenue to expenditure ratio for different types of land uses at a particular time. The results are typically presented as a set of ratios for particular broad categories of land use. Typical categories might include residential, commercial/industrial, and open land/farmland. For each land use, the study compares the revenues generated to the cost of providing services to the land use.

Cost of community services studies have been conducted across New York, the Northeast, and the nation. In nearly every case, the results have shown that for every dollar of tax revenue collected from residential land uses, the cost of providing community services is higher than a dollar; and for every dollar of tax revenue generated from open land / farmland or from commercial development, the cost of providing community services is substantially less than a dollar. While commercial and industrial development may offset the costs of residential land uses, increasingly, this type of growth can also spur additional residential growth. It is the farmland and open space uses that stand apart in generating net positive revenue effects for the community. See Appendix A for: ***Cost of Community Service Studies: Review and Summary***, as prepared by Camoin Associates, Inc. on behalf of Behan Planning Associates, LLC.

A Fiscal Analysis

Beyond a cost of community service study, a fiscal analysis takes an evaluation of a specific land use scenario a step further. After determining the current state of a community's fiscal conditions or "status quo," a fiscal analysis uses a model to make predictions of the relative impact of changes to the status quo. Once the community's revenues and expenditures are established, additional information about the community, such as the capacity of existing infrastructure and facilities, planned extensions and/or improvements, and historical data about population and housing, must be collected and analyzed. Once the model is created for the particular community's existing conditions using all available information, it allows the community to test different scenarios of development to determine the impact on future taxes of each scenario.

When towns get closer to full build-out there are short-term fiscal benefits. For example, in the mid-1990s, the Town of Pittsford, New York decided to create a Purchase of Development Rights (PDR) program as part of its *Greenprint for the Future* (the *Greenprint* was an implementation item from the town's comprehensive plan). However, a key difference from the current situation in Clifton Park was that Pittsford had less than 3,600 acres remaining for either open space or development. Build-out was expected in the short-term. Under the PDR program, the town would permanently protect 1,200 acres on seven farms. The average cost to a homeowner of this program was estimated at about \$50 per year additional on his or her tax bill. The town used its fiscal analysis model to compare this tax increase to the tax increase generated by a future land use scenario in which the 1,200 acres were developed as housing (a reasonable assumption in that fast-growing town).

Pittsford's fiscal analysis model demonstrated that the average cost to a homeowner of not implementing the PDR program (that is, allowing the lands to be developed) would be approximately \$250 per year. Tax increases would be needed to pay for additional services -- especially schools -- for the new residents in these hypothetical future housing units. The model showed that the savings from avoiding these tax costs would total \$5,000 for the average homeowner over the life of the PDR bond.

Clifton Park's Fiscal Analysis

Both fiscal analysis and cost of community service studies typically show that residential growth does not necessarily enhance a community's finances and that a balance of residential, commercial, and open lands is necessary to stabilize the rising costs of municipal services. For Clifton Park, the more detailed fiscal analysis was chosen as the evaluation tool. While the fiscal analysis could have looked at the fiscal impacts of development, such as increasing commercial acreage in town, this study focused selectively on the impacts of increasing open space acreage town-wide. The analysis looked at the potential for stemming the costs of 100% build-out, not at any individual parcel. To get there, the build-out of the town was modeled. A summary of the fiscal

model analysis is included in Appendix B. Field definitions for all model calculations are included in Appendix C.

This fiscal analysis utilized the Clifton Park Open Space Concept Plan Protection Targets set forth in the “Town of Clifton Park Open Space Concept Plan – Discussion Draft, June 17, 2002.” Draft protection targets were established for the five conservation categories of wildlife nature preserves and watersheds; farmland protection; parkland and ballfields; town-wide paths and trails; and scenic roads, cultural resources, and historic preservation. The total near-term targets (for the next two to five years) are to protect the following: 900 to 1,800 acres of open space lands; establish six to 10 miles of town-wide paths and trails; and protect four to six scenic/historic sites and/or roads.

From these protection targets, a fiscal model assessed the three future land use scenarios selected for applicability for the town’s five-year action plan:

- A Low Conservation Scenario that allocates 900 acres for purchase or other protection.**
- A Moderate Conservation Scenario that allocates 1350 acres for purchase or other protection.**
- A High Conservation Scenario that allocates 1800 acres for purchase or other protection.**

Data was collected about the town’s development trends, town budget, school district budget and future plans, demographics, information from the town assessor, and other relevant factors. The town’s tax assessor and town’s planning department were consulted, as well as the Clifton Park Open Space Committee in the preparation of the fiscal analysis.

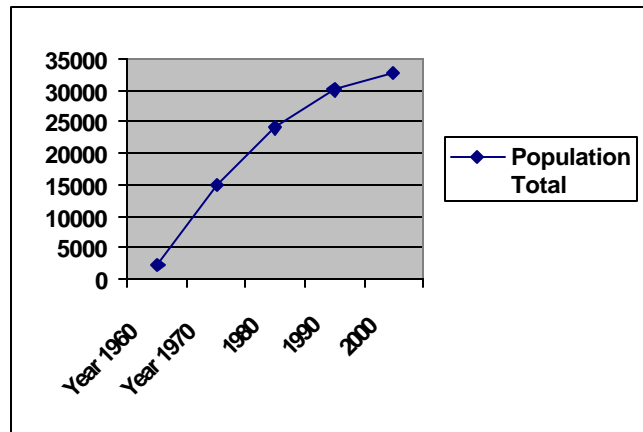
For the purposes of this fiscal analysis, a conservative estimate is that approximately 12,000 acres remain in town that may be useable for development.

Historical Growth Rates

Population, housing and school age children are all critical growth indicators that influence the fiscal analysis. The Town of Clifton Park has experienced a remarkable increase in population since 1960, and the upward trend has continued over the last decade. (See Figure 1 below.) Average residential building permits per year for the past four years, from 1998 to 2001, for single family homes were 225 permits per year. Over the past 22 years, from 1980 to 2001, the number of single-family home permits

averaged 203 permits/year. The Shenendehowa School District enrollment over the last 40 years on average has increased by 200 students per year.

Figure 1. Town population since 1960.



Land Acreage Consumption Rates

A conservative approach based on the historic data provided above is that an estimated 200 new housing units per year spread over our three housing categories will provide 130 units at 2 dwelling units per acre (0.5-acre zoning), 60 dwelling units at half a unit per acre (2-acre zoning) and 10 units in planned unit developments at one quarter of a dwelling unit per acre (4-acre zoning). These figures translate into 65 acres of moderate density residential development, 120 acres of low density residential, and 40 acres of planned unit development. Added together, land is consumed at an average rate of about 225 acres of residential development per year. If we assume an average of about 100 acres⁹ of combined commercial development per year broken down as 35 acres of lower density, 15 acres higher density and about 50 acres of light industrial, an estimated total rate of about 325 acres of development occurs per year.

Findings

Build-out with No Significant Land Protection Actions

⁹ The 100 acres estimate is very conservative after considering that town planning data indicates high variability in new commercial land consumption on an annual basis. Recent trends have shown higher acreage, but the rate may slow to 50-75 acres a year on average, as already developed commercial property is redeveloped/recycled. For the purposes of this analysis, the higher rate was utilized.

Currently in Clifton Park there are only 2,000 protected acres and over 26,000 developed acres. Without any open space initiative and assuming an estimated 12,000 developable acres currently remaining, it will take nearly 37 years to reach build-out in Clifton Park.

Build-out with a High Level Land Protection Initiative

Pursuing a high level open space conservation of 1,800 acres in five years, would translate into a protection rate of about 360 acres per year. If open space is protected at this suggested five-year rate and if total development continues at about 325 acres a year, the town would be consuming a total of 685 acres a year for all future land uses. At that rate it will still take over 20 years for the town to reach full build-out.³

The open space plan does not suggest that the short term open space protection plan continues beyond its five-year term. But the preceding analysis demonstrated that even if it did, it would still be over 20 years until Clifton Park approaches build-out. If the program was repeated once at the high level of protection (protecting 3,600 acres over 10 years), the projected build-out of the town jumps back out into the 30-year build-out range.

Impacts per Scenario

	Scenario 1	Scenario 2	Scenario 3
Open Space Investment (assuming 50% private and outside funding match)	\$3,800,000	\$5,700,000	\$7,600,000
Open Space Protection (acres)	900	1350	1800
Cost per Thousand dollars of Assessed Value (cents)	.11	.17	.23

For Scenario 1, protecting 900 acres over five years is estimated to be a \$3.8 million local investment, to be matched by outside funding and private partners. An investment of \$3.8 million would cost \$0.11 cents per thousand dollars of assessed value. This would cost the average homeowner about \$16.50, based on a home with assessed value of \$150,000.

For Scenario 2, protecting 1,350 acres of land is estimated to be a \$5.7 million local investment, to be matched by outside funding and private partners. An investment of \$5.7 million would cost \$0.17 cents per thousand of assessed value. This would cost the average homeowner about \$25 per household, based on a home with assessed value of \$150,000.

For Scenario 3, protecting about 1,800 acres of land is estimated to be a \$7.6 million local investment, to be matched by outside funding and private partners. An investment of \$7.6 million would cost \$0.23 cents per thousand of assessed value. This would cost

the average homeowner about \$34.50 per household, based on a home with assessed value of \$150,000.

This fiscal analysis illustrates that acting to invest in land conservation is a near-term, cost-benefit issue. The costs are the expenses associated with capitalizing the program. The benefits to the community are economic, quality of life, and ecological and environmental. The fiscal tax-saving benefits to the town and the community will be more long-term in nature to realize.

Over the long term, costs and thus taxes are likely to continue to rise (in real dollars) for the town and school district despite this growth. Advocates for open space conservation point to the benefits of land conservation in keeping community services costs down, and thus taxes down, while maintaining a high level of community character and community value.

Since Clifton Park has chosen to look at the issue of open space conservation before there is an imminent build-out crisis, the tax benefits would not be felt for sometime. However, the economic benefits and quality of life benefits will immediately accrue for individual property owners and the town as a whole. Property values will increase with the addition of open space amenities that add value to a community. If open space is not protected as the town builds out, these opportunities will be lost as the land becomes consumed with residential subdivisions, offices, commercial districts, and other forms of development.

Conclusions

The land use data on the available open lands for the fiscal analysis illustrated that currently, with approximately one-third of its land remaining as open lands, there is an adequate available supply of land for the Town of Clifton Park.

For the three protection target scenarios it was found that there would not be any difference in the fiscal impact to Clifton Park in the short-term of five years, even after accounting for the high conservation rate, because there would be no change in the development output. Development would be expected to continue at its assumed rate of acreage utilization. Growth would continue, but be redirected within town to accommodate for some planned conservation lands. The only fiscal change or fiscal difference to taxpayers among the three scenarios is the level of investment in open space conservation. Depending on the desired level of investment and the level of land protection, the costs to the average taxpayer would range from \$16.50 to \$25 to \$34.50, corresponding respectively to the three levels of investment of \$3.8 million local match (to protect 900 acres) to \$5.7 million local match (to protect 1,350 acres) to \$7.6 million local match (to protect 1,800 acres).

Another conclusion of Clifton Park's fiscal analysis is that notably, increasing the rate of conserving lands in conjunction with the continuing rate of development will increase the rate of land consumption. Thus, increasing the rate and magnitude of land conservation will shorten the time it takes to "build-out" the town. At the current rate of development, without any significant land conservation efforts, the town will likely "build-out" between 25 to 40 years from now depending on actual future development rates. The variety and magnitude of assumptions and variables contribute to the difficulty in predicting the exact "build-out" year – and depending on the range of assumptions, one could obtain vastly varied results.

Currently, Clifton Park is in a fortunate land conservation position – by taking action now and continuing through the next several years, the town can conserve open space without competing with the development community. Conserving up to 1,800 acres of land will be a great step towards achieving the community's desired results to protect valued open space lands, while not restricting the rate or quality of development, nor restricting the ability of landowners to develop their land.

Therefore, the most critical decision for the Town of Clifton Park is determining the appropriate level of investment in securing open space lands through conservation easements or purchase. With the town's taxable assessed value currently at more than \$2 billion total for all types of property, a significant town-wide open space conservation program could result in an increase of 1% of return for the increased amenity value – which could mean a \$20 million return. Thus a town investment in an open space program that adds significantly to open space amenities to the community would be a positive investment.

By acting now, Clifton Park will be able to choose lands with the highest ecological, scenic or recreational values before scarcity increases the price dramatically and/or key parcels remaining available to the town for conservation. However, the timing of land conservation efforts is critical. The sooner the land conservation occurs, the more relatively affordable the costs will be for the community.

Recommended Strategies

1. Determine investment level and rate of land protection.

To determine the appropriate level of investment and the rate of land protection, the Clifton Park Town Board must gauge public support and consider their fiscal responsibilities to taxpayers. The town board may use the three scenarios provided in this study to decide on its level of investment in a conservation program. Now that the town has a fiscal model, after five years, the model could be re-run to forecast impacts for a subsequent phase of investment.

2. Involve the development community.

Not all land protection “gains” have to be achieved by public investment. The development community may be interested in continuing to strengthen its partnership with the town, as evidenced by recent cluster subdivision designs, with more meaningful open space set-asides and trail amenities. The town board could provide stronger open space incentives as part of development projects, as well as seek outside funding of grants and donations as key opportunities to leverage any future level of local public, up-front investment in land conservation.

3. Promote a voluntary land protection program.

Another key recommendation is for the Town of Clifton Park to approach its land protection program strategy as foremost a voluntary program. In essence, the approach is to pursue protection opportunities that arise out of landowners initiating or approaching the town with potential land conservation projects. The town would decide if the parcel meets its protection goals and whether or not to continue a dialogue with the landowner-of-interest. However, in an ongoing, concurrent effort, the town would cultivate interest from landowners by approaching owners with the most environmentally sensitive and desirable conservation properties.

Preliminary Open Space Conservation Program Five-Year Budget Options

Below are the draft protection targets outlined in the open space plan.

Clifton Park Open Space Plan: Draft Protection Targets

CONSERVATION CATEGORY	NEAR TERM (NEXT 1-5 YEARS)	➤ COOP AGREEMENT (LAND TRUST &	TOWN INVESTMENT
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	CONSERVATION TARGETS			INTERMUNICIPAL) AND STATE AND FEDERAL GRANTS DEVELOPMENT SET ASIDES	(PURCHASE/ PERMANENT EASEMENT/ FINANCIAL SUPPORT)
WILDLIFE NATURE PRESERVES & WATERSHEDS	500 - 1,000			250 – 500	250 - 500
FARMLAND PROTECTION	300 - 600			150 – 300	150 - 300
PARKLAND & BALLFIELDS	100 - 200			50 – 100	50 - 100
TOWN-WIDE PATHS & TRAILS	6 - 10 miles			3 - 5 miles	3 - 5 miles
SCENIC ROADS, CULTURAL RESOURCES, HISTORIC PRESERVATION &	4 - 6 sites/roads designated and interpreted			2 - 3 sites/roads	2 - 3 sites/roads
PHASE I - 2-to-5-YEAR ACTION PLAN SUMMARY	Acres	Miles	Sites/Roads	450 – 900	450 - 900
	900 - 1800	6 - 10	4 - 6		

Recommended Investment

Based on the fiscal analysis, selecting a low to moderate land protection scenario of protecting about 1,350 acres of land in about five years would be an approximate investment of \$6 million over five years. This level of funding closely corresponds to the community survey results where respondents supported an average level of investment of about \$29.00 per year per household. The \$6.0 million investment works out to be approximately \$25 per year per average household. A recommended guideline for allocating annual investment in the open space program needs to be established by the town board. Several tools and successful local financing examples are available for consideration by the board to accomplish this objective.

Potential Immediate Year 1 Tasks/Projects (some tasks/projects may also continue forward throughout the program)

1. **Establish the Program Team.** Establish an open space program advisory Committee. Secure staffing for program design and start-up. An open space program advisory committee could help guide dedicated staff in administering the program on behalf of the town board – particularly in selecting parcels for conservation easements or in fee acquisition. Future staffing should be planned and budgeted in for years 2 to 5 in order to oversee the long-term management of the open space program.
2. **Design and Initiate the Open Space Protection Program (with its five components).** In order to proceed with a successful open space protection program, implementation will require more detailed program design to carve out roles and responsibilities for involved parties, and for tapping into partnerships. Securing good advice and providing hands-on assistance with designing and administering the program is critical to its success.
3. **Create and advance projects per each of the protection target elements, such as the following examples of initial (years 1 to 2) projects (not a comprehensive list, and subject to revision):**
 - a. For the Wildlife Nature Preserves & Watersheds: advance the Dwaaskill Nature Preserve
 - b. For the Parkland & Ballfields: select a park project; and/or consider preparing a town-wide park & recreation master plan (perhaps by year 2).
 - c. For the Farmland Protection component: find a willing farm landowner to initiate a farm protection project.
 - d. For the Scenic Roads, Cultural Resources, & Historic Preservation: select a scenic road or historic site, such as the Mohawk Valley Scenic Byway along Riverview; and/or perform detailed study and rating of scenic corridors
 - e. Town-Wide Paths & Trails: be available to help the town's trails committee as needed.
4. **Perform Dedicated Outreach to Landowners to Gauge what are the Likely Parcels & Projects.**
 - a. **Initial Step:** The next step (ideally once funding stream is secured) would be to undertake a targeted public outreach effort to ensure that every landowner is contacted and informed about the benefits of participating in an open space protection program opportunity. This step is critical in

educating the public and interested landowners in what the reasons are for the open space protection program (the five program components) and the benefits of such a program, the basic concepts of conservation easements and development rights and other protection tools, and program scheduling. The desired outcome of this step would be to compile a list of interested property owners.

- b. **Next Step:** Following initial outreach, it will be necessary to work with individual landowners interested in conservation easements or “in fee” acquisition. The landowner outreach process will continue from negotiations to closing on conservation easements and outright land purchases where appropriate. Staff will also need to work with landowners interested in other types of conservation tools. Another task will be to provide assistance for open space projects developed by non-profit partners, community groups, and school groups, as well as to perform ongoing education and outreach about the program.

5. **Select Parcels & Projects to Fund in the Program.**

Parcels for the Clifton Park’s Open Space Program will be selected based both on the parcel’s characteristics meeting the town’s resource protection criteria, as well as on the owner’s willingness to voluntarily participate in an easement program. The resource criteria model developed through the open space planning process would be utilized for more detailed parcel-specific evaluation as parcels come up in discussions with landowners, and for decision-making about potential parcels of interest. Using this resource value criteria model will enable the creation of a list of properties of interest for resource protection – that can be matched with a list of interested property owners.

In addition, other types of projects (in addition to conservation easements and in fee purchase) would be proposed and begin to be planned for, and/or developed, such as scenic corridor design guidelines, hamlet design guidelines, trails design guidelines, historic preservation site projects, educational programs, etc.

These initial guidelines for open space investment are provided as a convenience to the town board. Final determinations of the level of investment and level of land protection would be established by the town board, as well as the approach and methods for funding local investment.

Endnotes

1. Approximately five parcels in town comprised of 3,926 acres are designated Land Conservation as their primary zoning district designation, which includes Vischer Ferry Nature & Historic Preserve, and most of the lands that are part of the Stony Creek Reservoir. Additional acreage in town is within the LC zoning overlay designation – including DEC wetlands and streams and stream buffers, however, the remaining parcels have the LC zoning designation as a secondary overlay, with a primary overlay of another zoning district. The vacant land analysis was based on the primary zoning designation. Notably, the Stony Creek Reservoir is not considered permanently protected because it is owned and controlled by the Town of Colonie for its water supply and thus the Town of Clifton Park does not control future land use options of this property at this time. It is a desired goal of the open space plan to find a way to ensure long-term permanent protection of the Stony Creek Reservoir land holdings. Thus for the above reasons described, the Stony Creek Reservoir acreage is not included in the vacant land count.
2. About 15,267 acres are undeveloped vacant lands in the Town of Clifton Park, according to tax parcel analysis of all acreage in the town as performed by the Town of Clifton Park Planning Department in 2002. See table on following page, “Town of Clifton Park’s Land Status: Acreage per Zoning District.” Some of that land is currently farmed, some is open fields, some is woodlands, and some is wetland – and the western, undeveloped areas of town experience significant wetlands. Likely, a significant amount of this acreage has environmental conditions of steep slopes, poor soils, wetlands and floodplains all of which are regulated to some degree – allowing for some inherent protection of these sensitive lands. However, permits to build on regulated lands remain a possibility through landowner and developer negotiation with permitting agencies, and thus protection of the “undevelopable” environmentally sensitive lands is not a given, nor a guarantee. In addition, the extension of sewer and water infrastructure across town will make previously undeveloped land more possible to develop once developers no longer have to rely on poor on-site soils. Thus a very rough estimate of the total land with constraints out of the remaining acreage in town is about 20% or approximately 3,000 acres, resulting in our rough estimate of about 12,000 acres of open lands that may be desirable for development or conservation in the future.
3. Note: the entire open space number of over 15,000 acres is used in this case, instead of just the 12,000 that are developable.

Table: Town of Clifton Park’s Land Status: Acreage per Zoning District

Zoning District Categories	Number of Parcels per Zoning District	Total Acreage Per Zoning District, 7-29-02	Total Acreage of Vacant Land per Zoning District as of 6-3-02, for all size parcels
	1	1.73	0
B-1	90	224.03	98.77
B-2	19	231.97	191.79
B-3	238	613.23	183.88
B-4	86	265.80	27.06
B-5	21	671.96	627.9
Cluster Subdivisions	794	1054.66	1.69
EXEMPT	38	2782.24	0
L-1	63	968.55	774.46
L-1-1	51	833.44	641.81
LC	5	3926.3501	0
PIR	24	512.63	75.75
PUD	3518	2235.84	226.55
R-1	7066	16005.4899	4051.37
R-2	147	1345.66	899.33
R-3	1366	11699.23	7466.92
TOTALS =	13527	43372.81	15267.28

(Source: GIS Property Tax Data, 2002, Town of Clifton Park Planning Department. Subject to verification.)

APPENDIX A:

COST OF COMMUNITY SERVICES STUDIES:
REVIEW AND SUMMARY

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APPENDIX B:

CLIFTON PARK FISCAL MODEL:
SUMMARY

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CLIFTON PARK FISCAL MODEL SUMMARY 2002

For the Town of Clifton Park Town Board

Prepared by Behan Planning Associates, LLC
October 2002

Model Description, Methodology and Limitations

This fiscal analysis is designed to predict the relative impact of three future land use scenarios on the taxes paid by Clifton Park's residents. However, the actual impact of continued residential development on the fiscal condition of the town depends on a number of factors that are inherently difficult to predict. Changes in real estate markets can be substantial, altering the revenue impact of new construction. State aid to municipalities and schools is a substantial component of revenue for some jurisdictions, yet the process by which aid is distributed changes frequently and by significant amounts. On the cost side, estimates of the impact of additional school children on school districts are driven by the specific composition of new students, the location of new residential construction, the specific response of the district to changes in the number, and location of new enrollees.

The model is based on data from the town and school district budgets. The baseline information for the Town of Clifton Park is obtained from the 2001 Town budget and the 2001-2002 Shenendehowa School District budget, and the Clifton Park Planning Department. The base year information is summarized in the following paragraphs.

Base Year Information

Town Base Year Data

Town Data Categories	Total
Population	32,995
Taxable Assessed Value	\$2,071,206,000

School Base Year Data

School Data Categories	Total	Total per student
School Enrollment	9,117	
Total Operating Expenditures	\$96,077,865	
School Operating Cost, Less 13% for Fixed Administration Expenses & Debt Service	\$77,216,983.55	\$8,469.56
School Taxable Assessed Value	\$1,825,988,145	
School Tax Rate per Thousand	\$21.99	
School Tax Levy	\$40,145,591	
School Other Income	\$1,671,104	
Total State Aid (Operations)	\$30,750,330	\$3,372.86
School Building Aid Percentage	65%	
Existing Debt Service	\$6,370,759	
State Aid Revenue Share	40%	

Expenses and Revenues

The expense side and the non-tax revenue in the model uses a per-capita method to translate the population/new construction growth into the projected expenses and revenues to the town and the school district. The per-capita cost is the average current cost per person to the town and per pupil for the school district. The average cost for each is then multiplied by the expected population increase caused by the proposed land use scenario. The per capita costs¹⁰ and non-tax revenue are then adjusted by the municipal service area to account for fixed costs and existing excess or inadequate capacity (See Expense and Revenue Worksheets below).

Current costs are not identified as pertaining to either residential or commercial; they are taken as a whole that is then divided by the current population. Because these costs are not specific to each type of land use, the ratios of commercial uses to residential uses in each of the scenarios evaluated by the model are held relatively constant to those ratios currently in existence.

The revenue side of the model¹¹ is primarily based on increased property taxes that are generated by the proposed land use scenario. When the number of acres for each land

¹⁰Per Capita costs are determined by dividing the existing town expenditures by the existing number of people, and dividing the existing school expenditures by the existing number of pupils.

¹¹Increased property assessment is based on the newly added market value per year x assessment factor = new assessed value. Total new assessed value*property tax rate=property tax revenue. The school revenue operates in the same manner.

use are changed in the model, the assessed value from which the town generates its revenue increases or decreases. Each of the different scenarios generates a different number of housing units per acre, density of commercial development and acres of open space maintained by each of two different purchase options. The number of housing units for each housing type is then multiplied by a value for that respective type of new housing in Clifton Park. The resulting sum is then added to the total assessed value. Commercial development adds value to the tax base, but not the corresponding costs typically associated with residential development, most notably school costs. However, the results concerning commercial development ignore that such development brings with it additional residential development (the new workers will need places to live). Additionally, often some of the costs are borne by the developer (such as roads) but the residual costs that fall to the municipality remain undocumented. In this analysis, those costs are documented as part of the cost of residential development.

Low, moderate and high density scenarios are examined. Each scenario includes varying levels of eight different land use categories. The commercial and residential categories are a consolidation of the Town of Clifton Park's 16 different zoning districts and are defined as having the following values:

		Average Values
Residential	Low Density	\$325,000
	Moderate Density	\$250,000
	Planned Unit Development (PUD)	\$175,000
Commercial	Low Value/Intensity	\$160,000
	Moderate Value/Intensity	\$340,000
	High Value/Intensity	\$800,000
Open Space	Fee Simple Purchase	\$10,000
	Easement Purchase	\$7,000

In addition to the increased assessment, other local and school revenues are generated using the per capita method described above in the expense side of the model. Other revenues include local fees and charges such as interest, rents, licenses, permits and service charges, fines, and inter-governmental aid, perhaps most relevant to the school district.

There are several assumptions built into this model that may cause the results to be an imprecise representation of the actual future tax rates. However, as long as those assumptions remain the same for each evaluated scenario, the results of a comparison of the different scenarios will provide valuable information to the town.

The per capita method of fiscal analysis is based on the built-in assumption that for each new person introduced into the population there will be a corresponding increase in expenses. The revenue and expense worksheet shown below illustrates how the revenues and expenses are adjusted to overcome the assumption of a lock-step increase in revenues and expenses with increases in population. Under each category, the model allows for a percentage of those revenues and expenses to be fixed. The percentage that is fixed is then removed preventing the unrealistic increase in revenues and expenses. The percentages shown below are estimates based typical figures established for similar communities. These can be adjusted as appropriate to reflect expected fixed expenditure percentages for the town.

Expense Work Sheet Base Year –2001

	General Administration, Boards, Commissions, Committees & Community Development.	Culture and Recreation, General	Community Services	Public Health, Safety & Transportation	Tax Collection and Stabilization	Highway
Expenditures	\$2,785,842	\$1 611,144	\$843,053	\$1,405,161	\$2,692,349	\$3,153,183
% Fixed Expenditures	80%	20%	50%	20%	10%	75%
Expense per capita	\$16.89	\$39.06	\$12.78	\$34.07	\$73.44	\$23.89

Revenue Work Sheet Base Year –2001

	General Administration		Highway
Revenues	\$2,842,428		\$3,153,183
% Fixed Revenues	75%		25%
Revenue per capita	\$21.54		\$71.67

Multipliers and Assumptions

In addition to the baseline information and fixing a percentage of the revenue and expenses, it is necessary to make several critical assumptions. Some of the more sensitive assumptions include: growth rates, the future population of school-aged children, value of new construction, costs of acquiring land for conservation, and the proportion of future land uses in residential, commercial, and land conservation uses. These multipliers are shown in the chart below.

The first multiplier deals with population assumptions - that is, the number of new residents per housing unit and the number of those residents who are school-aged children. The number of residents per new housing unit is set at 2.6 - a number derived from the 2000 United States Census data for Clifton Park. Generally, smaller and more densely-built housing units have fewer children than larger, less densely-built housing units. The calculated assumption for the school age children per new housing unit for Clifton Park is 1.0 new student per housing unit for high density and 1.3 new students per housing unit for moderate density¹² and .5 new students per housing unit for planned unit developments.

The next assumption is the bond interest rate, set at 5%, used for all of the debt service calculations. The new construction values used in the scenarios below are reduced by 15% to account for the value of land already on the tax rolls.

Multipliers and Assumptions

Multipliers	
Persons per household	2.6
School Age Person Per Housing Unit Low Density	1.3
School Age Person Per Housing Unit Moderate Density	1.0
School Age Person Per Housing Unit Planned Unit Development	.5
School building aid %	65%
Interest Rate on Bonds - 20 year	5.0
School Building Cost per Student	\$23, 250
Market Values	
Low Density Residential per unit	\$325,000
Moderate Density Residential per unit	\$250,000
Planned Unit Development	\$175,000
Low Density Commercial per Acre	\$160,000
Moderate Density Commercial per Acre	\$340,000
Commercial Light Industrial per Acre	\$800,000

¹²The number of school-aged children per housing unit is calculated using 2000 United States Census Data; Development Impact Assessment Handbook, Washington, D.C.: ULI-The Urban Land Institute, American Housing Survey, 1987, Burchell, Robert W., David Listokin, et al.; and data provided by the school district.

Average Per Acre Cost of Open Space Protection Purchase	\$10,000*
Average Per Acre Cost of Open Space Protection Easement	\$7,000*
Assessment Reduction for Existing Land	15%

The average per acre cost of open space protection utilized in the model is \$10,000 for fee purchase and \$7,000 for easement and is actual assessed value, as supplied by the town’s assessor. However, the actual costs will vary and likely be higher for the land most desirable for competing development use.

Fiscal Model Scenario Definitions

The following three scenarios are based on options put forth in the open space plan. The Clifton Park Open Space Plan’s protection targets call for a shared partnership in future investments to achieve the desired level of land protection results. All three scenarios would allow for continued development on remaining vacant lands in concert with a land conservation program sponsored by the town and its citizens. Contributions to the future land conservation program estimated as split between the town’s taxpayers, and outside funding sources (cash) and private development community (land). The three scenarios assume that 50% of the investment in each case for land to be conserved would be leveraged from some combination of cooperative agreements; private development “set-aside” contributions; and state and federal grants. Thus the local town share of open space land conservation is only 50% for each scenario, and thus for any level of future investment. (This 50 percent figure can be adjusted in future years after review of additional open space project experience.)

In addition to these structural assumptions, the following three scenarios represent the future land use options modeled in this Fiscal Model.

Scenario One: Low Conservation Scenario

Definition: allocates 900 acres for purchase or other protection.

DEVELOPMENT	Acres
Residential (low density)	175
Residential (moderate density)	405
Residential (PUD)	20
Office/Retail Lower Density	185
Office/Retail Higher Density	75
Commercial/Light Industrial	240
OPEN SPACE	
Purchase conservation easements; some full purchase	450
Conservation based development, grants, donations	450
TOTAL	2000

Investment in up to 900 acres over a five-year period is the most conservative level of investment proposed by in the Clifton Park Open Space Plan 2002 as a land protection target.

Scenario Two: Moderate Conservation

Definition: allocates 1350 acres for purchase or other protection.

DEVELOPMENT	Acres
Residential (low density)	175
Residential (moderate density)	405
Residential (PUD)	20
Office/Retail Lower Density	185
Office/Retail Higher Density	75
Commercial/Light Industrial	240
Residential (low density)	175
OPEN SPACE	
Purchase conservation easements; some full purchase	675
Conservation based development, grants, donations	675
TOTAL	2450

This scenario reflects a moderate level of investment in a town-wide open space program. Here open space protection would slightly outpace the amount of land that is put into development uses.

Scenario Three: High Conservation

Definition: allocates 1800 acres for purchase or other protection

DEVELOPMENT	Acres
Residential (low density)	175
Residential (moderate density)	405
Residential (PUD)	20
Office/Retail Lower Density	185
Office/Retail Higher Density	75
Commercial/Light Industrial	240
Residential (low density)	175
OPEN SPACE	
Purchase conservation easements; some full purchase	900
Conservation based development, grants, donations	900
TOTAL	2900

Scenario 3 would provide the highest level of land conservation. This level of investment would provide the town with the greatest amount of protected open space. A significant amount of the existing open land would be acquired (purchase of conservation easement of land in fee i.e., full purchase) for conservation purposes. This would result in a ratio of about 2 acres of new open space protected for one acre converted to new development.

Findings from the Three Scenarios

As can be seen in the three scenarios above, the key variable that changes is the open space acreage (and of course the corresponding cost). As discussed earlier given the available land and the realistic growth rates in the Town of Clifton Park, purchasing open space, even in the largest acreage scenario, in the 20- year run of the fiscal model will not affect the amount of future development in the 20-year time horizon. As a result, there will not be a measurable immediate fiscal impact from the program (other than the costs of financing the program, and therefore, there will not be any short-term avoided costs.

Nonetheless, this does not mean that the open space program is not a good investment for the community, as there are significant benefits that outweigh the costs of a reasonably-framed open space program. These benefits include increased property values (studies have shown that open space is a valuable amenity that can contribute significantly to property values), improved quality of life for residents, and protection of environmental resources including drinking water supplies and fish and wildlife habitats—valuable economic resources to the long-term health and vitality of the community.

APPENDIX C:

CLIFTON PARK FISCAL MODEL:
FIELD DEFINITIONS

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Space Plan\Wpdocs\Plan\Drafts\Fiscal Study\Clifton Park-
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Clifton Park Open Space
Plan
APPENDIX F:

Public Comments
on the
***“Town of Clifton Park
Open Space Concept
Plan,
Discussion Draft, June
17, 2002”***

**Public Comments
on the
“Town of Clifton Park Open
Space Concept Plan,
Discussion Draft, June 17,
2002”**

support. The public is invited to continue to participate, to get involved, and to comment upon the ongoing implementation efforts within the Town of Clifton Park community.

On the following pages are the public comments obtained from a series of focus group meetings and public meetings held throughout September 2002. The notes were prepared by Behan Planning Associates, LLC on behalf of the Clifton Park Open Space Committee and are included for the public record. The committee reviewed these public comments with Behan Planning Associates at a committee meeting held on November 6, 2002.

Many comments were considered to be already addressed within the plan – with some clarification needed – and this has been provided in the January 2003 plan. Responses to other key comments below have been incorporated as revisions to the open space plan. Finally, a few of the comments will be addressed later – in the development of the details of the open space program and implementation activities, in close collaboration with the town board.

As an overall response to public concerns, the successful development of any future, new individual locations for open space access, trails, parks, and public access to land in the Town of Clifton Park will require site-specific planning, design and public input processes for working with all applicable involved and adjacent landowners and the community to ensure project

FOCUS GROUP MEETING NOTES

IX. Farmers and Large Land Owners

**September 12, 2002 at 7:00 pm
Clifton Park Town Hall**

Questions on concepts for trail connections

- Significance of corridors
- Type of trail - will match setting (concern over Moe Road Path)
- Process is important in planning – involve residents up front

Farmland Protection Program

- Contact person: Jason Kemper, Open Space Committee (for now)
- Concerns over administration
- Rexford Bridge – FYI -- a trail element is being discussed in conjunction with this improvement
- Nice job – including focus group input
- Nice place to live and nice place to visit

X.

XI. FOCUS GROUP MEETING NOTES

XII. Developers

**September 17, 2002 at 8:00 am
Clifton Park Town Hall**

- Partnership
- Amenity
- Celebrate community's sense of place

Concern

- Identified areas
- Realistic funding
- Don't leave landowners "in limbo"

- Don't want exclusive "cluster" pattern
- Identify people not responsive to surveys to actively get their input
- Build on planning open space into sites up front
- Simplify approval process for developers – most developers willing to "work with" town

XIII. FOCUS GROUP MEETING NOTES

XIV. Environmental/Cultural/Civic/Recreation

**September 19, 2002 at 7:00 pm
Clifton Park Town Hall**

What is cluster development?

- How different in future?
- Better explain conservation design

Comment

- Leave more land "forever wild"
- Town should put foot down – no more development...
- Missing: village green in downtown
- Developers should pay for what open space they "take"
- Park near Ballston Lake – model for how to develop
- Are the golf courses really permanently protected open space?
- How to "guarantee" these are really protected (maybe an easement?)
- Pursue green space at shopping area as an attractive amenity

- How to achieve better “green design” for commercial

XV. PUBLIC MEETING NOTES
XVI. Public Comments on
Clifton Park Open Space
Draft Plan
September 24, 2002 at 7:30 pm
Jonesville Fire House #1

Preserve rural landscape

- Consider transfer of development rights
- Current open space requirement – does not set objective for meaningful open space
- Keep urban as urban (maybe allow more density)
- Focus open space protection where it still exists
- Example: new planned community – Celebration, FL
- Include discussion of how to maintain "open space park and funding investments and amenities" (pay for maintenance)

Security

- Need to "think it through" – considerations of security at parks and open space
- Make sure there are resources to address security for current and additional park land.

Be sure to mention that there is public interest in increasing access to the Mohawk River

- Map does not include a specific idea for a waterfront park - 17 acres Jacobsen parcel
- Rowing facility for Shenendehowa crew

- Idea for future consideration: Public access at Riverview Orchard above and below canal lock (Mike O'Brien has crew program material)

Resource evaluation model

- Appendix C: question - what is it? Explain purpose and use of the resource evaluation model.

Existing parks and trails

- Remember "pocket parks" and trails in park district (e.g. Country Knolls)
- Consider bringing into plan

Farmland protection

- increase connectivity of open space in western portion

Trails

- Consider widening shoulders for biking and alternative transportation
- Address biking needs - balanced with scenic corridors
- Link bike paths to greater regional network
- Other opportunities for trails
 - Seek easements with railroad and along sewer lines and other pipelines
- Repaving/repainting and redesign of existing roads

Be sensitive to what the plan implies for private landowners whose land is shown on the concept plan (if plan is about voluntary participation – be very clear)

- Want to respect and retain property rights for homeowners and landowners

- Connectivity/trails through private land
- Concerns
 - Security
 - Privacy
 - Maintenance (funding for trail maintenance)
 - Trespassing
 - Trash
- Would like to see map of everything - existing pocket park and trails
- Subdivision trails - often blocked
 - where are these trails
- Signage for existing parks and park districts
- Include map in report

Website

- Address glitch
- Make 11"x17" color copies of plan map available to public

Access

- In future, a process will be needed for individual site access to any new open space – to enable adjacent landowners to have concerns heard...
- Recommend an improved design and public process for developing all future trails and paths to be located in town
- Need better funding support for design, construction and maintenance of trails
- Make sure town keeps its objectives with trails and open space and enforces developers to set aside designed open space.
- Continue to pursue pedestrian connections in subdivisions

- Maintain community efforts to enforce rules with use of open space and trails
- In future, keep trailhead parking away from residences
- Set aside a dedicated area for ATVs or snow mobiles
- Concern for loss of natural place
 - topography
- Limit soil/topography changes
- Support increased density in urban areas
- Build vertical to preserve greenspace

XVII. PUBLIC MEETING NOTES

XVIII. Public Comments on Clifton Park Open Space Draft Plan

**September 25, 2002 at 7:30 pm
Clifton Park Town Hall**

- Overall support for additional protection at Vischer Ferry
 - wildlife
 - water quality
- Overall support for increased "smart growth" planning for town
- Suggestions
 - tap/link ASAP into education programs at high school
 - want to see financial numbers on fiscal/open space
 - support what locals can do to improve transit options and community design (local efforts prevent global warming)
 - support EMC (Environmental Management Committee) as way to manage open space programs

- Developers should carry greater weight in paying for open space protection
 - Developers have too much free reign
 - Move forward with support for plan efforts
 - What does "adopt" plan mean?
 - Need more publicity
 - 6-10 miles of bike paths - goals seem too little
 - Who pays for plan and program? (this is important)
 - tax payers are willing to pay some amount, but costs should be shared
 - use SEQR
 - idea for developers to pay mitigation fees
 - impacts to open space
 - tax relief in perpetuity for open space
 - Regulate and enforce plan's visions and concepts
 - Maintain existing trails and open space as well as new trails and open space
 - Support working with neighbors and community on joint open space protection efforts
 - Idea – perform a large-area GEIS study for the western part of town
 - At Route 146A and Emerson
 - concern that park size is not increasing for new development
 - use open space money and create multi-use paths
 - When to take project to the "parcel" level of open space designation?
 - How to protect 146 and Glenridge parcel (plan to develop here already)
 - When will the plan be adopted?
- Taxpayers end up paying for long-term road maintenance – so why not tax developers more to help...
 - Make sure open space is meaningful, not just scraps of land
 - Some parklands are underutilized
 - Make sure to give public up-to-date accessibility map of parkland
 - "Thanks" for optimistic plan
 - Fiscal - how to incorporate?
 - Consider having the public present at meeting on fiscal results
 - Make sure to get word out on fiscal results

XIX.

XX. PUBLIC MEETING NOTES

XXI. Public Comments on Clifton Park Open Space Draft Plan

**September 26, 2002 at 7:30 pm
Vischer Ferry Fire House #1**

- Good process for town
- Missing - long-term goal
 - it is a good time while we have people's attention to get consensus on long-term goal
- Good to pursue "easy" protection of Dwaaskill and Vischer Ferry (what about tougher nuggets?)
- Where to depict other areas besides agricultural lands and big features of Dwaaskill and Vischer Ferry
- What agriculture shown is off table? None is off table
- What does "preserve scenic roads" mean?

- Be careful with trail design along scenic ways
 - Funding local share looks low - town should commit more money towards open space
 - Too many committees not talking to each other
 - Need an ongoing champion
 - Good process
 - What about "developed" space:
 - address town center
 - recommend pursuit of redeveloping and re-planning town center
 - need tools to achieve desired vision for an improved town center
 - editorial on town center not necessary - physically could be where activity and spirit is
 - Historic Preservation
 - LL-208 - rewrite process
 - opportunity to solidify historic districts
 - please review recommendations
 - Give examples of resource conservation design guidelines
 - Use SEQR mitigation fees as tool?
 - long-range impact of development on permanent loss of open space
 - What will be process to prioritize projects and funding?
 - Maps of trails and parks
 - Make Shenendehowa a more pedestrian and bike-friendly campus
 - internal network
 - is concept from '99 campus center for kids
- current state of wooded trails not quite kid-safe (yet)



Town of Clifton Park Open Space Concept Plan



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Now is the time for the Town of Clifton Park to take focused steps to conserve selected open space resources in order to “keep the balance right” between attractive, valuable new development and important local open space resources that in turn add value to development and enhance the community’s quality of life.

Background & Purpose

There has been a shared sentiment for some time in Clifton Park that lands are being developed faster than remaining important open spaces are being protected.

Notably, the town has taken initiatives in the past to conserve open space and farmland, such as term conservation easements for open space, agricultural and historic properties, and has recently acquired some new open space – the Round Lake Reservoir property and an addition to Veteran’s Memorial Park.

The town maintains excellent recreational facilities for all ages. The town’s trails committee has been successful in developing needed pedestrian and bicyclist connections by securing transportation funding. Plus, local private developers have been contributing “green space” set asides and some internal trails and paths as part of the requirements for subdivisions.



The Mohawk River and Erie Canal are resources of local, regional, and national significance.

However, the town board and the community have been recognizing that while residential and commercial growth and new infrastructure investment has its immense positive benefits for the town and its individuals, the concern have heightened that the special natural and cultural resources that make Clifton Park an attractive, valuable community to live, work and play in, are at risk.

Thus with community support, in February 2001 the Town of Clifton Park Town Board embarked upon a focused, open space planning process in earnest by appointing an Open Space Committee to strategize the best concepts and approaches for future conservation efforts.

This Clifton Park Open Space Plan is the culmination not only of about two years of hard work by the committee and an intensive public participation process, but also, years of interest and efforts in a town-sponsored open space plan by citizens groups and individuals in the community for which the committee is grateful.

Overwhelming Public Support

The committee received an overwhelming response – a more than 30% return rate – to the first town-wide survey conducted in Fall 2002 mailed to all property owners. A total of 80% of the respondents said they would support the town making an additional investment to protect lands with open space resources. The second community survey enjoyed similar results: a 25% response rate. Further, respondents noted a willingness to increase local annual investment in open space protection by a median amount of \$29.00 per average household.

Concepts for Community Discussion



Town residents produced maps like this as part of the design charrette – the open space planning workshop held in early 2002.

This document can be used by citizens to learn more about the major elements of the plan. Further, citizens can show their support to the town board to take actions to implement the plan. It is recognized that as projects move forward, the ideas presented in the plan will become refined.

As a preface to all discussion regarding land conservation for Clifton Park, the community should know that the town's philosophy is to work with property owners to find the best way to protect the resources on any particular property. It is the plan's intent that a balanced set of techniques be used to conserve the open space resources with values important to the community.

In fact, the plan concepts rely a great deal on continued stewardship of resources by private property owners. The development community has been a partner in open space conservation. Private and nonprofit conservation organizations have played key roles in the process. Public ownership of land, if required, will be recommended to further enhance the quality of life in the town and expand the utilization, in a sensitive manner, of the town's open space resources. If public ownership is sought, it will be based on a "willing buyer—willing seller" basis.

In all, the partnership approach is the most cost-effective, fair, and prudent way to achieve an open space conservation program.

Plan Concepts

Overall, a five-year goal of securing an approximately 1,350 acres of additional permanently-protected land has been established. The plan outlines five major concepts with enhanced protection for ***drinking water resources*** proposed. The plan concepts include:

1. Protection of ***wildlife nature preserves and watersheds***;
2. ***Farmland protection*** program;
3. Enhanced ***recreational parkland and ballfields***;
4. A town-wide, comprehensive ***trails and pathways*** system; and,
5. A ***scenic roads, cultural resources and historic preservation*** program.

Special Note on Drinking Water Resources

- a. Protect key well sites (acquire land around well heads for municipal water supply).
- b. Protect secondary water supply sources.
- c. Protect Stony Creek Reservoir.



Stony Creek Reservoir is a water supply for neighboring Colonie.

1. Wildlife Nature Preserves

- a. Create a “Dwaas Kill Natural Area” and stream corridor greenways.
- b. Obtain additional lands near the Vischer Ferry Nature & Historic Preserve near water supplies. Aim to protect 50 to 100 acres in the next 2 to 5 years.
- c. Protect Stony Creek Reservoir and its watershed.
- d. Obtain smaller nature preserves accessible to all neighborhoods.
- e. Overall, aim to protect about 500-1,000 acres as nature preserves.



Wooded nature preserves protect wildlife and offer quality of life benefits to visitors and neighbors.

2. Farmland Protection Program

- a. Focus on active farmlands currently in agricultural programs, such as the agricultural district.
- b. Support and enhance the town-sponsored term conservation easement programs.
- c. Partner with state and federal grant programs to obtain permanent conservation easements.
- d. Protect the most valuable working farms – aiming for 300 to 600 acres in the next 2 to 5 years.



The town should prioritize helping farmers already enrolled in an existing farm program with permanent protection assistance.

3. Parkland and Ballfields

- a. Update the town's park and recreation master plan.
- b. Obtain one large new town recreation park (+/- 150 acres).
- c. Obtain 1 to 2 small-moderate sized town parks (10 to 20 acres)
- d. Access to water-based recreation at Mohawk River and Ballston Lake.



New parkland for ballfields will be needed in the future for the town's growing population.

4. Town-wide Trails and Pathways

- a. Develop various types of town connections such as multi-purpose paths and nature trails.
- b. Provide access across communities (neighborhoods) for walkers, hikers, and bicyclists.
- c. Create a trails and recreational map and signage system.
- d. Update trail master plan.
- e. Goal of 6 to 10 miles over next 2 to 5 years.



As an alternative to motorized vehicle travel, pedestrians and bicyclists need additional paths and trails to connect across town.

5. Scenic Roads, Cultural Resources, and Historic Preservation

- a. Recognize and celebrate bounty of scenic country roads.
- b. Help preserve historic sites, hamlets, and landscapes
- c. Create "Scenic Roads of Clifton Park" system of interpretive signs and roadside conservation design guidelines.
- d. Goal of identifying 4 to 6 roads/historic sites in the near term.



This scenic view is of Whipple Bridge and the Erie Canal at Vischer Ferry Nature & Historic Preserve.

Implementation

In order for the Town of Clifton Park to meet the initial open space conservation program targets in the next 2 to 5 years, the major specific actions to implement are:

- 1. Make a local financial commitment.**
- 2. Hire project coordinator.**
- 3. Actively seek all available, additional outside state, federal and private grants.**
- 4. Strengthen public and private partnerships and agreements.**
- 5. Partner with developers to promote enhanced resource conservation-based design incentives for new development.**

Potential local funding sources in the short-term for the town to evaluate are:

- a) Direct budget appropriations in the annual town budget;
- b) An open space capital reserve fund;
- c) Municipal bonds; and,
- d) The creation of a town-wide open space district.

By coordinating the implementation of the plan as described herein, the town's open space conservation goals can be achieved in an efficient and cost-effective manner.



Participants discuss the location of important open space resources during the public charrette workshop in early 2002.

Conclusion

Each of the different types of open space resources identified is a critical element of the community's comprehensive natural and cultural heritage. With this plan as a guide, coupled with community action and local investment, many of these resources will be conserved and passed on to the next generation. With continued and strengthened community

support, Clifton Park's open space resource legacy will enrich the lives of the town's current and future generations.

GLOSSARY

Amenity Zoning. Amenity zoning is another term for incentive zoning. It is a technique that allows communities to gain desired amenities (such as open space, public works improvements, etc.) through offering development incentives or bonuses. Incentives may permit developers to exceed the dimensional, density, or other limitations of zoning regulations in return for providing certain other benefits or amenities to the municipality. A classic example of amenity or incentive zoning would be the provision of public open space or recreational amenities in exchange for the authorization to develop a parcel more intensively by a specified amount.

Buffer. A buffer is an area and/or a physical or visual feature that separates different land uses. The buffer may incorporate natural features such as woodlands, attractive fencing, stone walls, and hedgerows wherever feasible, or requires the creation of a planted landscape buffer where no natural features exists.

Certified Agricultural District. Article 25-AA of the Agriculture and Markets Law is intended to conserve and protect agricultural land for agricultural production and as a valued natural and ecological resource. Under this statute, territory can be designated as an agricultural district. To be eligible for designation, an agricultural district must be certified at the county level for participation in the state program. Once a district is designated, participating farmers and farmland owners within it can receive reduced property assessments and relief from local nuisance claims and certain forms of local regulation. Farm operations within agricultural districts also enjoy a measure of protection from proposals by municipalities to construct infrastructure such as water and sewer systems, which are generally intended to serve non-farm structures and developments.

Charrette. A charrette is an organized planning and design process employed as a tool to accomplish a focused brainstorming session on the issues surrounding land use concepts. The process is generally an interactive session among planning professionals, government officials, planning committee members, and interested members of the public or special interest groups to meet, discuss, and graphically illustrate planning and design options and alternatives.

Cluster Development. Cluster development (or conservation-based development) is a technique that allows flexibility in the design and subdivision of land. The basic idea is to cluster buildings on a portion of a site to preserve open space. Cluster development allows a municipality to maintain its traditional open space character, while at the same time

providing (and encouraging) new development. The active use of clustering provisions help a municipality to achieve planning goals that may call for protection of open space, protection of scenic views, protection of agricultural lands, protection of woodlands and other open landscapes, and placing of development away from environmentally sensitive areas and focusing in less sensitive areas.

Conservation. The use of a resource while not diminishing or damaging its natural resource value. This implies knowing the particular values that the resource possesses and having a specific plan in place to ensure the balance of its use and protection.

Conservation-Based Land Use. A concept for land development in which the design and layout process for the project is based on identifying and prioritizing resource conservation. Often the density on each development parcel is arranged so that fewer natural features are consumed by development lots and streets. For example, a result of conservation-based planning and design is that the same number of homes can be built on a parcel using less land and less of the natural resources, allowing natural features to be permanently protected, and leaving room for green spaces and green corridors to connect within the development and link to the surrounding community. The conservation design concept provides communities with a planning tool to accommodate newcomers and new development without unduly impacting remaining natural areas and cultural resources.

Conservation Easement. A conservation easement is a voluntary legal agreement between the landowner and the municipality, or a third party such as a land trust, to protect land from development by permanently restricting the use and development of the property, thereby preserving its natural or manmade features. The legally binding agreement is filed in the office of the county clerk in the same manner as a deed. The landowner retains ownership of the land, and all of the rights of ownership except the ability to develop the land. The specific restrictions are detailed in the easement agreement.

Cultural Resources. The cultural features of a community reflects the ways in which the people who have lived there have used their natural environment to suit their economic needs and social patterns, and may include such types of resources described as agricultural, institutional, historic, and archeological, among others.

Density Bonus. A density bonus allows developers who take advantage of clustering and amenity (incentive) zoning provisions, to increase the amount of development (e.g., number of dwelling units) on a certain property beyond what the underlying zoning would allow in exchange for open space.

Design Guidelines. Design guidelines are usually illustrated and describe the natural resource, site and architecture patterns that a community values and what it seeks to protect. Design guidelines complement the increased design flexibility allowed by conservation (clustered) subdivisions and traditional neighborhood developments. Design guidelines are generally informational and collaborative in nature, creating an opportunity for project sponsors to review the guidelines prior to designing a project with the advantage of understanding the goals of the community and the planning board.

Enhancement. The physical modification of an area in order to increase its utility or make it more accessible. This may be in accordance with statutory regulations (i.e., the Americans with Disabilities Act), an environmental enhancement (i.e., creating wetlands as a mitigation for filling wetlands), or the development of a recreational trail.

Gateway. A gateway is an area that signals entrance to a place. A gateway is an entranceway area along a roadway that serves to determine a visitor's first response to the community, such as a town hamlet, a village or a city neighborhood. A gateway may be indicated by visual features such as welcome signs or other neighborhood or place names, landscaping, a grouping of streetscape amenities such as plantings, lighting, benches, or a building or group of buildings that give a visual clue that a person has entered a distinctive place. Gateways highlight the open spaces, the historic development patterns, and the general character of an area.

Incentive Zoning. See the definition for amenity zoning.

Open Space. Open space consists of farmland, woodland, and other ecological, recreational, and scenic land that helps to define the character of a community, and buffers residential and other land uses. Open space may be public or privately owned. Some open space is **permanently protected** from development such as parks, nature preserves, and wetlands while other parcels are subject to development. What land is defined as open space depends upon the surrounding area. Even a narrow pathway or a cemetery surrounded by development can constitute an open space resource in a community.

PDR. A purchase of development-rights (PDR) program involves the purchase by a municipal or other government agency or private land conservation organization of development rights from private landowners whose land it seeks to preserve in its current state without further development. The PDR system can protect farmland as well as ecologically important lands or scenic parcels essential to rural character of the community. Under PDR, the land remains in private ownership and the government acquires non-agricultural development rights. These

development rights once purchased by government (typically) or a land trust, are usually extinguished. Landowners who participate receive payment equal to the development value of the property. In return, the property owner agrees to keep the land forever in forest, agriculture or other conservation-type use. The owner typically files property covenants similar to a conservation easement limiting the use of the property to conservation-based activities.

Preservation. An active process of stewardship with the goal of protection of a resource in its existing, natural or original state. An example is historic preservation of a building.

Recreational Resources. Recreational resources may be described as areas in which the following types of leisure activities may occur: existing or planned hiking, biking, and canoeing; ball fields, tennis courts, basketball courts, golf courses, skating rinks, ski slopes, and swimming pools; and waterfront activities such as boating and fishing. Recreational resources also include nature preserves, community gardens, and other outdoor areas for quiet public enjoyment.

Right-to-farm ordinance. A local law that is intended to complement the right-to-farm provisions of the state's Agricultural Districts Law and demonstrates local support for agriculture. The local law protects the rights of farmers to undertake agricultural practices that are reasonably necessary to conduct the business of farming and require notice to prospective neighbors who may apply for building permits and subdivision approval.

Right-to-farm laws, include provisions such as notifying *buyers* on or near farms of normal farm practices that could be perceived as nuisances. Notification is either made at time of closing sale or ideally at the time of contract. Some right to farm laws also include provisions encouraging mediation strategies as an alternative to litigation, which can be helpful due to the high cost of litigation.

Right-to-farm is a term which has gained widespread recognition in the state's rural areas within the past several decades. Section 308 of the New York State Agriculture and Markets Law grants protection from nuisance lawsuits to farm operators within agricultural districts or on land outside a district that is subject to an agricultural assessment under section 306 of the Law. The protection is granted to the operator for any farm activity which the commissioner of agriculture has determined to be a sound agricultural practice. Locally, many rural municipalities have used their home rule power to adopt local right-to-farm laws. These local laws commonly grant particular land-use rights to farm owners and restrict activities on neighboring non-farm land that might interfere with agricultural practices.

Scenic Corridors. A scenic corridor is a viewshed that contains scenic vistas linking natural and cultural resources. Scenic corridors are passive recreational resources that add character to communities.

Sprawl. Ever-expanding metropolitan strip and suburban areas consuming huge amounts of farmland, forestlands and natural resources that wastes lands and resources while often abandoning people, places and private investments at the center, in the hearts of towns and villages. It is very expensive to provide roads, sewers, water, and services like police and fire protection, to low-density urban development, a consequence felt by the taxpayers.

Term Conservation Easement. A term conservation easement is a voluntary legal agreement between a landowner and the municipality that is written to last for a period of years, most commonly for 5 to 20 years. A term conservation easement is not a permanent easement, and thus does not guarantee long-term protection of resources.

Utility Master Plan. A utility master plan is a community-wide plan for the extension of services like, water and sewer that shape and drive development patterns and densities.

Viewshed. A particular panorama that is valued for its aesthetic or cultural attributes. Buildings, structures, places, or natural features may be considered to contribute to, or detract from the quality of viewshed experience.

Wetland Protection. Wetlands are areas that are saturated by either fresh or salt water for at least a period of time during the growing season. In state regulations, they are defined chiefly by the forms of vegetation present. Wetlands provide a number of benefits to a community. Besides providing wildlife habitat, wetlands also provide habitat protection, recreational opportunities, water supply protection, and provide open space and scenic beauty that can enhance local property values. Wetlands also serve as storage for storm water runoff, thus reducing flood damage and filtering pollutants. In coastal communities, they also serve as a buffer against shoreline erosion. The preservation of wetlands can go a long way toward protecting water quality; increasing flood protection; supporting hunting, fishing and shell fishing; providing opportunities for recreation, tourism and education; and enhancing scenic beauty, open space and property values.

Zoning Overlay Districts. The overlay zoning technique is a modification of the system of conventionally mapped zoning districts. An overlay zone applies a common set of standards to a designated area that may cut across several different conventional or "underlying" zoning

districts. The standards of the overlay zone apply in addition to those of the underlying zoning district. Some common examples of overlay zones are the flood zones administered by many communities under the national flood insurance program, historic district overlay zones, areas of very severe slopes, waterfront zones, and environmentally sensitive areas.

PART 1 INTRODUCTION & VISION

INTRODUCTION

THE TOWN OF CLIFTON PARK OPEN SPACE PLAN IS THE OUTCOME OF A COMMUNITY-BASED EFFORT AND STRONG PUBLIC MANDATE TO GUIDE OPEN SPACE PROTECTION GOALS WITH BALANCED GROWTH TO STRENGTHEN THE QUALITY OF LIFE FOR THE TOWN'S RESIDENTS. CLIFTON PARK ENJOYS ABUNDANT OPEN SPACE RESOURCES THAT CONTRIBUTE SIGNIFICANTLY TO THE COMMUNITY'S QUALITY OF LIFE AND ALSO OFFER OPPORTUNITIES FOR NEW GROWTH BALANCED WITH APPROPRIATE RESOURCE CONSERVATION.

GIVEN CURRENT TRENDS OF LAND CONSUMPTION ASSOCIATED WITH NEW DEVELOPMENT, THE TOWN MAY BE "BUILT OUT" AS SOON AS WITHIN THE NEXT 20 YEARS. THE ADOPTION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF AN OPEN SPACE PLAN WILL REDUCE DEVELOPMENT'S IMPACT ON NATURAL ACRES AND HABITATS, WORKING FARMLAND, AND OTHER NATURAL AND CULTURAL RESOURCES.

Prior to the formation of this plan, several key organizations, including the Friends of Clifton Park Open Space, Audubon New York, and the Land Trust of the Saratoga Region, among others, have been working to bring the open space protection issue to the fore. In 1996 the Friends of Clifton Park Open Space and the Land Trust of the Saratoga Region, assisted by Audubon New York and Behan Planning Associates, LLC, obtained funding to start a natural resources inventory of Clifton Park. In addition, over the past 25 years, the Town of Clifton Park also has shown leadership in its efforts to protect open space:

1. Recently, the town successfully acquired property at the Round Lake Reservoir, and doubled the acreage at the Veteran's Memorial Park.
2. Clifton Park offers term conservation easements to property owners granting tax relief for conserving agricultural, historic, and open space resources.
3. An agricultural district was established in town in addition to an existing agricultural assessment program.
4. The town supports an annual Farm Fest.
5. New trails are continuously being planned, with the town funding the majority of the trails. More recently the town has started tapping into New York State Department of Transportation funding.

6. Developers are required to set aside a small portion of subdivision lands for green space and must avoid developing along streams and floodplains, and in regulated wetlands in Land Conservation (LC) zones.

However, as significant as the community's many open space efforts have been, development continues to pressure remaining lands in town, including lands with open space resources important to the community.

To address this continuing pressure on open space resources, the Town of Clifton Park appointed a Clifton Park Open Space Committee in 2001 to prepare a local plan for action. The town launched one of the most comprehensive campaigns ever in the region to involve the public in open space protection planning. An overwhelming majority – 80% of the town's open space survey respondents in 2001 – said "yes" in support of the Town of Clifton Park's investing in future open space protection projects.

THE OPEN SPACE COMMITTEE LED AN EXTENSIVE OUTREACH PROGRAM TO GATHER INPUT FROM THE PUBLIC TOWARDS THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE PLAN'S CONCEPTS, RECOMMENDATIONS, AND STRATEGIES. THE COMMITTEE SPONSORED THREE FOCUS GROUP MEETINGS IN THE FALL 2001 AND A SPECIAL "HANDS-ON" PUBLIC CHARRETTE (DESIGN WORKSHOP) IN JANUARY 2002. THE COMMITTEE CREATED A DIGITAL PRESENTATION AND A VIDEO WITH ASSISTANCE FROM AUDUBON NEW YORK TO USE IN EDUCATIONAL PRESENTATIONS ABOUT OPEN SPACE PLANNING TO COMMUNITY GROUPS. THROUGH ALL OF ITS OUTREACH, THE COMMITTEE SOUGHT PUBLIC COMMENTS FOR A TOWN OPEN SPACE PROTECTION VISION, PLAN CONCEPTS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS.

The public message from meetings held early in 2002 was clear – "we want more open space – but don't add more layers of regulations." Developers, landowners and local government are calling for greater choice and selection of future options for growth and resource conservation. Builders would like the flexibility and incentives to serve markets for homes in conservation subdivisions. Community groups seek protection for sensitive ecological areas, historic features, and vital farmlands.

Guiding the development of plan concepts and recommendations, the town's open space committee comprises a broad spectrum of representatives. The committee makeup is designed to ensure a balanced open space conservation plan is prepared. Citizens' advocacy groups, the farming community, environmental

community, the planning and zoning boards, recreational leagues, the parks and recreation advisory board, the trails committee, and the business and development community, as well as advisory representatives from Audubon New York and American Farmland Trust are all part of the town's open space committee. The town's planning department has performed an integral role with project management, planning director time, staff support, and technical GIS mapping services in support of the committee's efforts. Also, the town board retained an open space planning advisor, Behan Planning Associates, LLC, to collaborate with the committee and the town with elements of the planning process and plan development including: developing the two community surveys, performing the public participation outreach, developing the plan concepts, preparing a concept map, drafting recommendations and implementation strategies, and preparing the final report.

TO HELP GUIDE THE TOWN IN ITS BUDGETING FOR AN OPEN SPACE PROGRAM, BEHAN PLANNING ASSOCIATES, LLC PERFORMED A FISCAL STUDY IN 2002. THE RESULTS OF THE FISCAL MODEL AND ANALYSIS ARE INCLUDED IN APPENDIX E.

ALTHOUGH THE TOWN WILL PURSUE ALL POSSIBLE SOURCES OF OUTSIDE FUNDING AND MAXIMIZE ALL EXISTING PLANNING TOOLS, ADDITIONAL NEW DOLLARS WILL BE REQUIRED TO DEDICATE TO AN OPEN SPACE PROGRAM. HOW MUCH REVENUE WILL BE NEEDED TO IMPLEMENT AN OPEN SPACE PROGRAM, AND HOW THAT REVENUE WILL BE RAISED BY THE CLIFTON PARK TOWN BOARD IS STILL TO BE DETERMINED – BUT THE LEAST BURDENSOME APPROACH TO PROPERTY OWNERS WILL BE THE MOST IMPORTANT DETERMINANT IN HOW ANY LEVEL OF FUTURE OPEN SPACE PROGRAM WOULD BE FUNDED.

Successful development of future, new individual locations for open space access, trails, parks, and public access to land will require the following approach: site-specific planning, design and public input processes for working with all applicable involved and adjacent landowners and the community to ensure project support.

Plan Purpose

Overall, the main purpose of this Clifton Park's Open Space Plan – text and map – is to:

1. Define the open space resources and assets, set resource conservation goals, and build consensus for resource conservation actions;
2. Encourage partnerships with stakeholders advocating open space initiatives;
3. Develop resource conservation acreage targets;
4. Recommend an action plan for conserving priority resources in the next two to five years; and,
5. Guide the town's prioritization and budgeting for open space conservation initiatives.

Clifton Park's Open Space Vision Statement

BASED ON PUBLIC COMMENTS FROM THE SURVEY, A DESIGN CHARRETTE WORKSHOP AND FOCUS GROUP MEETINGS, THE TOWN OF CLIFTON PARK OPEN SPACE COMMITTEE DEVELOPED THE FOLLOWING STATEMENT TO REFLECT THE COMMUNITY'S VISION FOR OPEN SPACE PROTECTION:

"CLIFTON PARK IS A HEALTHY, DESIRABLE PLACE TO LIVE, WORK AND PLAY WITH NEW GROWTH RESPECTING THE COMMUNITY'S VALUED OPEN SPACE ASSETS. CURRENT AND FUTURE GENERATIONS ENJOY A DIVERSE MIX OF RESOURCES: RURAL SCENERY AND UNIQUE SPACES; LAND THAT SUSTAINS DRINKING WATER RESOURCES; FARMS, FIELDS, FORESTS, AND WILDLIFE DIVERSITY; RIVERFRONT AND STREAM

Clifton Park's Open Space Goals and Objectives

Based upon the public input received, the Clifton Park Open Space Committee developed the following open space planning goals and objectives:

Goal 1: Ensure that resource protection priorities reflect the community's values.

- Objective: By creating a unified, comprehensive definition and identification of the priority list of important open space features and components valued by and agreed upon by the majority of the local community.

Goal 2: Establish an interconnected system of open spaces.

- Objective: By establishing a successful, ongoing community-based dialogue and process for evaluating and making decisions about future land use choices in Clifton Park that balance community conservation and development goals, and consider land that is inbuilt and built upon to date.
- Objective: By improving the consultation process for private and public development early in the planning process
- Objective: By increasing the number of real economic choices for landowners and the community for achieving the desired future land use scenario.

Goal 3: Strengthen the sense of community in Clifton Park.

- **Objective: By increasing community connections and building upon existing linkages.**
- **Objective: By linking land preservation with correlated development, and linking development with land preservation.**
- **Objective: By continuing with a program of installing planned, coordinated community trails and bike paths.**

Goal 4: Inspire new development and re-development that coexists with and respects the community's valued resources.

- Objective: By providing community-based design guidelines for new development.
- Objective: By adopting additional incentives for open space conservation and new developments.

Goal 5: Use affordable means and efficient mechanisms and policies to preserve the priority resources.

- Objective: By tailoring the investment approaches for long-term, permanent protection of priority resources through the best means appropriate the types of resources.

- Objective: By creating public access and level of opportunities that relate appropriately to the types of resources and resource protection strategies.

Plan Organization

The plan document identifies the important open space resources, demonstrates the public support for open space protection in Clifton Park, and provides strategies for the successful implementation of open space program and projects.

Key sections for the reader are: Part 5 - which identifies the open space conservation plan concepts and recommended actions; and Part 7 - which outlines the town's existing open space protection initiatives, and itemizes the priority future actions for the town to take towards implementing the open space program.

PART 2 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION IN THE PLAN

Overview of Extensive Public Outreach Efforts

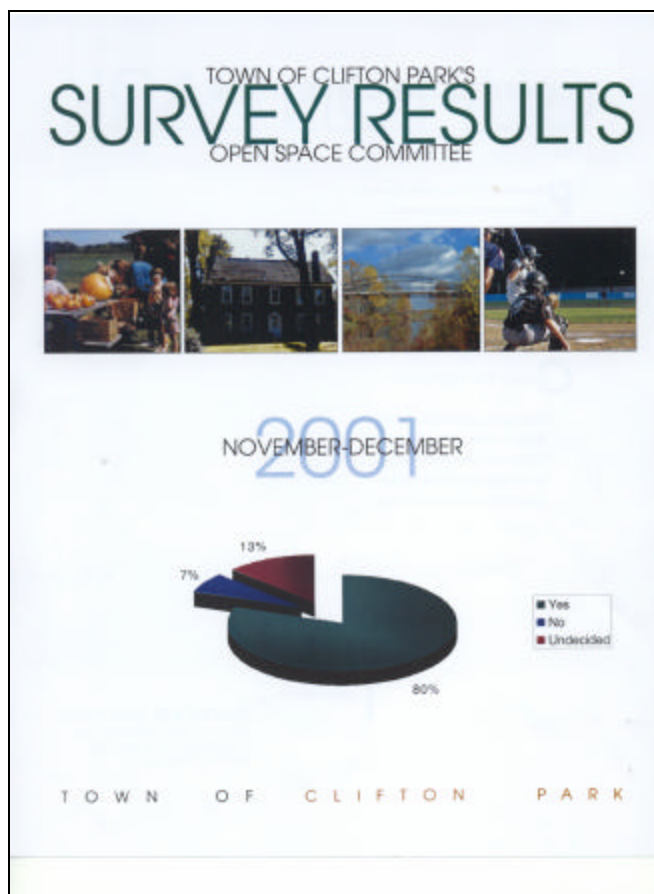
As mentioned earlier, the Town of Clifton Park's Open Space Committee has launched one of the most comprehensive campaigns ever done in the region to involve the public in open space protection planning. The public participation process will continue during plan implementation as specific open space resource protection projects ripen for community review.

The extensive community outreach on Clifton Park's open space conservation issues included the following efforts:

- An informational table at Farm Fest 2001 about the open space planning project;
- A community-wide open space survey #1 for all property owners and residents [mailed in November 2001];
- A customized-for-Clifton Park, "hands-on," public charrette (design workshop) that directly involved community participants in defining potential open space conservation concepts and identifying valued open space areas of town for protection considerations [January 2002];
- Three focus group meetings with stakeholder groups (specifically, agricultural and large landowners; developers and builders; and environmental, civic, cultural and parks and recreation groups) [January 2002];
- A community-wide survey #2 [mailed in June 2002] that asked about prioritizing, and supporting funding future levels of investment in a town open space program;
- A second series of three focus group meetings with stakeholder groups (same groups of stakeholders invited as in January 2002) to solicit comments and feedback on the draft plan [September 2002];
- An additional three (3) general public meetings were held in September 2002 at three different locations throughout town, to obtain public comments on the draft plan;
- Presentations on the open space planning project status to the town board in April 2002 and July 2002.
- Production of an informational video about conservation of open space; and,
- Committee member presentations as invited by civic groups; and,
- Press conferences and media coverage.

Open Space Survey #1

In November 2001, the Open Space Committee mailed questionnaires to all landowners in town including residents, farmers, and commercial and industrial owners – for about 8,000 parcels. A copy of the “Town of Clifton Park Open Space Conservation Survey 2001” is included in Appendix A. Typically, mailed questionnaire surveys get a 1 to 3% rate of return; but Clifton Park’s survey had about a 30% rate of return with a total of 3,043 questionnaires completed. This overwhelming positive response indicates that the public is interested in how the community grows, and that open space is protected and used wisely.



The 2001 Open Space Survey enjoyed a more than 30% response rate.

The town’s planning director coordinated the intake and tracking of the questionnaire’s responses, and the performance of data entry and analysis. Computer specialists from Niagara Mohawk contributed services to set up the data entry and processing system. Under the oversight of the town’s planning director, staff members of Audubon New York contributed services for data entry and analysis. The open space committee, with assistance from Audubon New York, assessed and

interpreted the survey results. The co-chairs of the open space committee formally presented the survey findings to the town board in April 2002.

The survey consisted of ascertaining the relative importance of seven different aspects of open space protection – open space and rural character, farmland, recreational parks and playgrounds, unique natural areas and wildlife habitats, trails and bike paths, drinking water quality, and cultural resources such as historic sites. Response choices ranged from “*highly important*,” “*somewhat important*,” “*somewhat unimportant*,” “*highly unimportant*,” and “*undecided*.” The final question determined the level of public support for the Town to invest in open space protection.

For each question, responses clearly indicated strong public support (at least 75% in favor) for all aspects of open space protection in Clifton Park. The survey instrument is provided in Appendix A: Public Participation. When ‘highly important’ and ‘somewhat important’ responses for each question were combined and then compared, the relative ranking of overall importance was determined, as follows:

1. **Securing additional land conservation in order to protect drinking water quality is overwhelming important to 94% of those responding to question #6. Of those, it is highly important to 83%, somewhat important to 11%, somewhat unimportant to 2%, and highly unimportant to 2%.**
2. **An overwhelming 92% of those responding to question #1 indicated that the conservation of rural character and open space resources is important. Of the total, 70% believed it was highly important; and 22% somewhat important. Only 7% found this issue to be unimportant.**
3. **Securing additional conservation of unique natural areas and wildlife habitats is important to 87% of those responding to question #4. A clear majority of 65% felt said it was highly important; 24% somewhat important; 7% somewhat unimportant; and 5% highly unimportant.**
4. **Securing additional conservation of farmland and viable agriculture is important to 85% of those responding to question #2. Of those, 54% said it was highly important, 31% somewhat important, 9 % somewhat unimportant, and 4% highly unimportant.**

5. Securing accessible trail systems and bike paths is important to 77% of those responding to question #5. Of those, it is highly important to 44%, somewhat important to 33%, somewhat unimportant to 12%, and highly unimportant to 10%.
6. Securing additional conservation of cultural resources such as historic sites is important to 77% of those responding to question #7. Of those, it is highly important to 41%, somewhat important to 36%, somewhat unimportant to 15%, and highly unimportant to 7%.
7. Securing additional local recreational parks, ball fields and playgrounds is important to 72% of those responding to question #3. It was highly important to 34%, somewhat important to 38%, somewhat unimportant to 17% and highly unimportant to 9%.

Question on Public Investment

The last question of the survey asked if the respondents would support the Town of Clifton Park's investing in open space projects in the future to conserve important open space resources. **An overwhelming majority of 80% answered 'yes' in support of public investment while 13% remained undecided. Only 7% of respondents indicated opposition.**

Overall, the vast majority of the surveys revealed unequivocal support for all aspects of land conservation and for the public investment to make it happen.

"Hands-on" Public Charrette (Design Workshop) – January 2002

More than 75 people participated in a town-wide, half-day public workshop and design charrette held at the Gowana Middle School on the Shenendehowa Central School District campus in Clifton Park, on Saturday, January 19, 2002. Behan Planning Associates, LLC presented a project overview, and a presentation on "Envisioning Open Space." Participants selected an area of the town to study and discuss as part of one of six separate groups.

Under the guidance and direction of a team of professionals from Behan Planning Associates, LLC, staff from the town planning department and open space committee members, the individual groups worked through a series of questions to process and evaluate the resources in their study area. Two groups evaluated town-wide landscape scale open space issues, while the remaining four groups evaluated separate quadrants of the town – northeast, southeast, southwest, and northwest. The goal of the charrette exercise was to develop concept bubble maps for each study area to show proposed open space areas to protect. All participants

reconvened in the auditorium for presentations of individual group's ideas and findings, followed by a wrap-up discussion.

A summary of findings from the charrette is included in Appendix A: Public Participation.



Participants mark maps to express open space resource conservation concepts at the public workshop (design charrette) in January 2002.

Focus Group Meetings – January 2002

The open space committee organized three focus group meetings in January 2002 to reach individuals and entities within the town that would be most impacted and involved with any future open space planning initiatives. The committee invited the following entities to focus group meetings: agricultural and large-parcel landowners; developers and design professionals involved in land use development in town; and other potentially interested community organizations and civic groups. The town's open space planning consultant, Behan Planning Associates, LLC, led the presentations and facilitated discussions at each focus group meeting.

The first focus group meeting was held on January 7, 2002, at the Vischer Ferry Fire Station #1 for agricultural and large parcel landowners. A second focus group meeting was held on January 10, 2002 at the Town of Clifton Park Town Hall for developers and design professionals. The third and final focus group meeting was held on January 16, 2002 at the Town of Clifton Park Town Hall for community organizations and civic groups.

A summary of findings from the focus group meetings is in Appendix A: Public Participation.

General Informational Meetings held with Civic Groups

Audubon New York developed a public presentation that was also converted to a video for use in outreach meetings to civic groups throughout the town. Members of the Clifton Park Open Space Committee presented the video and introduced the open space project to interested civic groups upon request. Presentations were made to community groups including:

- + Southern Saratoga Chamber of Commerce,
- + Friends of Clifton Park Open Space,
- + Clifton Knolls Civic Association.



Residents identified valued open space at the design charrette in January 2002.

Summary of Public Participation Findings for Plan Development

Collectively, these efforts have raised the public's awareness and interest in open space protection in Clifton Park to a level far surpassing the committee's own expectations. The findings from the focus group

meetings, the design charrette, and the community survey results are located in Appendix A: Public Participation.

In summary, the public comments to guide the open space committee on the community's values, direction and ideas for approaching open space conservation are best reflected in the following statements:

1. Protect drinking water resources.
2. Protect scenic rural landscapes and vistas, and important environmentally sensitive areas.
3. Work with agricultural landowners to develop a program for permanent protection of working farms. Give farmers more real options with the valuable equity in their farmland, and/or fair compensation.
4. Create well-designed pedestrian/biking/open space connections among the town's individual residential neighborhoods and to destinations of town-wide appeal. Enhance existing trails, and plan the creation of interconnections among neighborhoods and parks, building upon existing trail systems. Enhance residents' quality of life by increasing pedestrian enhancements and accessibility to the town's commercial and civic centers, as well as to historic hamlets.
5. Work with developers at the earliest stages of site planning and design for lands that will still be developed to ensure important resources are conserved. Seek voluntary solutions over new additional regulations.
6. Make sure there is enough room in the future to meet growing needs for active recreation parks.

Another topic that was raised at the design charrette related to public interest in land use issues specific to the "commercial town center" of Clifton Park, namely the area of town that has experienced significant development in the vicinity of Exit 9 of the Northway. The complexity of issues of potentially increasing density in this area, and redeveloping it into a more attractive, pedestrian-friendly center over time is part of a larger town comprehensive plan issue, and warrants further public conversation. Any future planning and zoning analysis of this commercial town center should also include for consideration the future build-out development of the neighboring Shenendehowa School District campus properties located west of this commercial center.

Public comments on the draft plan – Fall 2002

The Clifton Park Open Space Committee presented a draft plan, the ***“Town of Clifton Park Open Space Concept Plan, Discussion Draft, June 17, 2002,”*** published separately, to the town board for public review and comments. A copy of the draft plan is on file with the Town of Clifton Park Planning Department. Copies were made available to the public upon request.

To obtain feedback from the public, the committee held three additional focus group meetings and three general public meetings in September 2002. Notes from each meeting were prepared by Behan Planning Associates, LLC on behalf of the Clifton Park Open Space Committee and are included for the public record in Appendix F. The committee reviewed these public comments with Behan Planning Associates at a committee meeting held on November 6, 2002.

Many comments were considered to be already addressed within the plan – with some clarification needed – and this has been provided in the January 2003 plan. Responses to other key comments have been incorporated as revisions to the open space plan. Finally, a few of the comments will be addressed later – in the development of the details of the open space program and implementation activities, in close collaboration with the town board.

As an overall response to public concerns, the successful development of any future, new individual locations for open space access, trails, parks, and public access to land in the Town of Clifton Park will require site-specific planning, design and public input processes for working with all applicable involved and adjacent landowners and the community to ensure project support. The public is invited to continue to participate, to get involved, and to comment upon the ongoing implementation efforts within the Town of Clifton Park community.

A detailed summary of the public comments obtained from public meetings is located in the Appendix F. Additional individual, written statements presented at the public meetings, as well as e-mail correspondence received on the draft plan are on file with the Town of Clifton Park Planning Department.

Town-Wide Survey #2 – July 2002

The committee sponsored a second community-wide questionnaire mailed to all property owners in town. The primary focus of the second survey was to evaluate public interest in paying for local open space protection

program efforts. The town received about 2,983 responses, which is a rate of return of about 25%. Audubon New York again provided in-kind services to tabulate the responses in coordination with the Town of Clifton Park Planning Department. The survey indicated community support for moderate investment in a five-year program to achieve moderate open space goals. Below are the questions and a summary of the responses.

Question one was: “In order to help the town prioritize any future projects, select two open space protection categories.” Wildlife nature preserves and watersheds received the highest number of responses of those responding, with farmland and trails tied for second.

Wildlife Nature Preserves – 67%
Farmland protection – 40%
Town-wide paths and trails – 40%
Scenic roads – 25%
Parkland and ball fields – 21% selected this choice.

Question Two was: “Would you support the Town of Clifton Park establishing a dedicated open space account to implement a future open space program?” About 73% of those responding indicated that they would support a dedicated open space account to implement a future open space program. About 10% said “no,” and another 16% indicated that they were “unsure.”

Question Three was: “What amount do you feel comfortable with spending, such as a portion of the county tax, to initiate and implement an open space program?” (Based on approximately 10,000 households.)

The responses received on the amount people would feel comfortable spending are the following:

- ❑ About 24% of respondents selected “\$5 to \$10;”
- ❑ About 27% of respondents selected “\$15 to \$25;”
- ❑ About 20% of respondents selected “\$35 to \$50;”
- ❑ About 6% of respondents selected “\$60 to \$75;”
- ❑ About 8% of respondents selected “\$100+;” and,
- ❑ About 13% of respondents selected “None.”

The mean household investment would be about \$29.00 per household.

Question Four was: “What should the town do about an open space program for the next 20 to 30 years?” After the first five years of funding an open space conservation program, the majority of those who responded recommended evaluation of the program to determine future funding needs.

- About 68% of respondents selected “evaluate;”
- About 17% of respondents selected “maintain;” and
- About 10% of respondents selected “increase.”

Conclusion

In conclusion, the diverse public involvement processes for the Clifton Park Open Space Plan have enriched and informed the preparation and the refinement of the open space plan. The public input received to date, as well as ongoing public input as individual open space projects proceed, provides meaningful direction and guidance to this plan and to future open space protection projects occurring throughout the Town of Clifton Park.

PART 3 CLIFTON PARK'S SETTING

THE TOWN OF CLIFTON PARK ENCOMPASSES APPROXIMATELY A 50-SQUARE MILE AREA AND LIES IN THE HEART OF THE CAPITAL DISTRICT REGION OF NEW YORK. CLIFTON PARK'S PROXIMITY TO ALBANY, SCHENECTADY AND OTHER URBAN AREAS, A WELL-DEVELOPED NETWORK OF ROADS, AND EASY HIGHWAY ACCESS HAS CONTRIBUTED TO ITS TREMENDOUS GROWTH—MAKING IT ONE OF THE FASTEST GROWING TOWNS IN THE CAPITAL DISTRICT. IN ADDITION TO OFFERING CONVENIENT COMMUTING DISTANCES TO SURROUNDING CITIES, THE TOWN ALSO PROVIDES EASY ACCESS TO DIVERSE RECREATIONAL AND CULTURAL CENTERS INCLUDING THE ADIRONDACK PARK REGION, SARATOGA, LAKE GEORGE, AND THE SKI AREAS OF NEW ENGLAND. THE MOHAWK RIVER THAT BOUNDS THE TOWN'S SOUTHERN BORDER NOT ONLY PLAYED A SIGNIFICANT ROLE IN THE TOWN'S EARLY DEVELOPMENT BUT ALSO SERVES AS A MODERN- DAY RECREATIONAL RESOURCE.

CLIFTON PARK CONTINUES TO ATTRACT MORE RESIDENTS EACH YEAR. THEY REALIZE THE NATURAL AND CULTURAL ASSETS THE COMMUNITY ENJOYS. UNIQUE ECOLOGICAL SETTING, AGRICULTURAL HERITAGE AND THE PRESENCE OF THE MOHAWK RIVER AND OTHER TRANSPORTATION OPPORTUNITIES ARE A FEW EXAMPLES OF THE NATURAL RESOURCES THAT ENRICH AND BRING VALUE TO THE GROWING TOWN.

LONG-TIME RESIDENTS AND NEWCOMERS ARE NOTICING THAT SOME OF THE RAPID CHANGES MAY BE HAPPENING WITHOUT ACCOUNTING FOR COMMUNITY IMPACTS AND COSTS. A DIFFERENT APPROACH MAY BE NECESSARY TO BALANCE ECONOMIC GROWTH WITH THE COMMUNITY'S NATURAL AND CULTURAL ASSETS.

MAINTAIN MORE OPEN SPACE WITH FUTURE DEVELOPMENTS

THE VISION OF WELCOMING GROWTH WITH CONCERN FOR RETAINING THE BEAUTY AND UNIQUE CHARACTER OF THE TOWN'S LANDSCAPE IS THE CHALLENGE. CONSEQUENTLY, CLIFTON PARK'S TOWN BOARD AND ITS OPEN SPACE COMMITTEE ARE IMPLEMENTING AN OPEN SPACE PLANNING PROCESS.

CLIFTON PARK IS NOT ALONE IN FACING THE CHALLENGE OF ALLOWING FOR CONTINUED, HEALTHY GROWTH WHILE SEEKING WAYS TO SAVE THE KEY FEATURES AND ASSETS THAT MAKE THE COMMUNITY “A GREAT PLACE TO LIVE, WORK AND PLAY” – (THE TOWN’S MOTTO). NEIGHBORING COMMUNITIES IN SARATOGA COUNTY – MALTA, SARATOGA SPRINGS, WILTON, AND MILTON ARE STRIVING TO FIND THE BEST PATH TO BALANCE GROWTH WITH OPEN SPACE PROTECTION. THIS DOCUMENT PROVIDES APPROACHES AND ACTIONS FOR CLIFTON PARK TO ENCOURAGE PARTICIPATION IN THE PROTECTION OF COMMUNITY OPEN SPACE RESOURCES.

A. Ongoing Development and Growth Pressures

NUMEROUS SUBDIVISIONS DOMINATE THE EASTERN HALF OF THE TOWN NEXT TO RETAIL BUSINESSES, SERVICE INDUSTRIES, AND MAJOR HIGHWAYS. THE WESTERN PORTION OF TOWN MAINTAINS A MORE “RURAL” FEEL WITH AGRICULTURAL TRACTS AND 100,000 SQUARE-FOOT LOT REQUIREMENTS. SUBDIVISION EXPANSION HAS FOLLOWED THE INSTALLATION OF WATER AND SEWER INFRASTRUCTURE. IN ADDITION TO SINGLE-FAMILY DEVELOPMENTS, THE TOWN’S ZONING CODE HAS PROVISIONS FOR PLANNED UNIT DEVELOPMENTS (PUD) FOR THE CONSTRUCTION OF APARTMENT COMPLEXES, TOWNHOUSE DEVELOPMENTS, AND MIXED-USE INDUSTRIAL PARKS.

PRIOR TO 1995, RECOGNIZING THE NEED TO ESTABLISH A SET OF GOALS AND POLICIES FOR FUTURE GROWTH, THE TOWN BOARD FORMED A COMMITTEE TO CREATE A LAND USE PLAN - A "MASTER PLAN." A COMPREHENSIVE PLAN 1995 WAS ADOPTED BY THE TOWN OF CLIFTON PARK TOWN BOARD (AMENDED IN 1997), THAT IS RE-AMENDED EVERY TWO YEARS. THE PURPOSE OF THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN WAS TO ENCOURAGE RESIDENTIAL, COMMERCIAL, AND INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT TO PROVIDE LONG-TERM MUNICIPAL FINANCIAL STABILITY, ENHANCE THE TAX BASE, AND PROVIDE FOR NECESSARY SERVICES. THE AMENDED MASTER PLAN IDENTIFIED AND EXAMINED SUCH ELEMENTS AS LAND USE, PUBLIC UTILITIES, TRANSPORTATION, THE ECONOMY, ENVIRONMENT, HOUSING, AND COMMUNITY SERVICES. THIS PLAN OFFERS CONSISTENCY TO DECISION-MAKING BY BOARDS AND OFFICIALS AND PROVIDES FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF ZONING LEGISLATION.

THE BASIC STRATEGIES FOR GROWTH HAVE REMAINED RELATIVELY UNCHANGED SINCE THE 1995 COMPREHENSIVE PLAN. IN 1997, THE TOWN BOARD APPROVED SUBSTANTIAL REVISIONS TO THE ZONING CODE. TO DATE, IT APPEARS THAT THE TOWN OF CLIFTON PARK COMPREHENSIVE PLAN HAS PROVIDED FOR REASONABLE AND CONTROLLED GROWTH. RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT HAS OCCURRED IN ACCORDANCE WITH BULK AND SPACE REQUIREMENTS SET FORTH IN SECTION 208 OF THE TOWN CODE. LIGHT INDUSTRIAL GROWTH HAS BEEN ENCOURAGED ALONG THE NORTHWAY CORRIDOR AT EXIT 10 AND RETAIL ACTIVITY HAS GROWN IN B-3 AREAS AT EXITS 8 AND 9. PLANNED UNIT DEVELOPMENTS HAVE BEEN APPROVED IN "TRANSITION AREAS" TO CREATE A SMOOTH FLOW FROM MORE INTENSIVE LAND USE TO RESIDENTIAL AREAS.

IN ADDITION, ANOTHER TOOL TO GAUGE THE POTENTIAL IMPACTS OF GROWTH, GENERIC ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENTS (PURSUANT TO THE STATE ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY REVIEW ACT) HAVE BEEN ADOPTED BY THE CLIFTON PARK TOWN BOARD AND EMPLOYED TO EVALUATE ENVIRONMENTAL AREAS AND PROVIDE MITIGATION RECOMMENDATIONS FOR MAJOR DEVELOPMENT IN THE VISCHER FERRY ROAD AND WOOD ROAD AREAS. A GENERIC ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT WAS PREPARED FOR THE EXIT 9 AREA THAT THE TOWN HAS CONSIDERED FOR SOME ASPECTS THAT OUTLINED MITIGATION COMPONENTS. THESE STUDIES HAVE PROVED USEFUL TO THE PLANNING BOARD FOR PROTECTING SOME OPEN SPACE RESOURCES AND FOR EVALUATING FUNDING FOR INFRASTRUCTURE EXPANSION.

THE CHARACTERISTICS THAT MAKE CLIFTON PARK SO APPEALING – ITS ACCESSIBILITY TO MAJOR HIGHWAYS, SHOPPING CENTERS, AWARD-WINNING SCHOOLS, NATIONALLY RECOGNIZED SPORTS TEAMS, AND FAMILY-FRIENDLY NEIGHBORHOODS – CONTINUE TO DRAW NEW RESIDENTS. AS THE COMMUNITY EVOLVES, HOWEVER, THERE IS GROWING PRESSURE TO ADDRESS THE IMPACT OF CONTINUED GROWTH ON SUCH COMMUNITY FACILITIES AS RECREATION AREAS, SCHOOLS, AND EMERGENCY SERVICES AND TO EVALUATE THE BENEFITS OF PROTECTING AND PRESERVING SUCH NON-RENEWABLE RESOURCES AS DRINKING WATER, WETLANDS, HISTORIC PROPERTIES, AND VISUALLY AESTHETIC PROPERTIES. TO THIS END, THE OPEN SPACE COMMITTEE, WITH THE

ENDORSEMENT OF THE TOWN BOARD, IS COMMITTED TO PRESERVING OPEN SPACE – AN ACKNOWLEDGED NON-RENEWABLE RESOURCE THAT IS CONSIDERED ESSENTIAL FOR MAINTAINING RESIDENTS' CURRENT “QUALITY OF LIFE”.

B. GROWTH PATTERNS

MUCH OF CLIFTON PARK’S GROWTH HAS OCCURRED IN THE EASTERN HALF OF THE TOWN WHERE THE PRESENCE OF SEWER AND WATER LINES AND HIGHWAY ACCESS MAKE THIS AREA DESIRABLE FOR DEVELOPMENT. BETWEEN 1984 AND 1989 MORE THAN 2,000 HOUSES WERE BUILT. IN A ONE-YEAR PERIOD ALONE, 1994 -1995, RESIDENTIAL BUILDING PERMITS INCREASED BY ABOUT 20%. AS A RESULT OF THIS TREND, 90% OF CLIFTON PARK’S POPULATION RESIDES ON HALF OF ALL THE DEVELOPABLE LAND WITHIN THE TOWN.

WHILE MOST OF CLIFTON PARK’S GROWTH HAS OCCURRED IN THE EASTERN HALF OF THE TOWN, THE WESTERN HALF, PREDOMINANTLY A RURAL AREA, HAS ALSO BEGUN TO SEE INCREASED DEVELOPMENT PRESSURE. DEVELOPMENT THROUGHOUT THE WESTERN EDGE OF THE TOWN HAS BEEN SLOWER DUE TO ITS DISTANCE FROM MAJOR HIGHWAYS AND THE ABSENCE OF CENTRAL SEWER AND WATER SYSTEMS. THE PROPOSED EXTENSION OF WATER AND SEWER LINES INTO THE WESTERN HALF OF TOWN ALONG ROUTE 146A WILL PROVIDE NEW DEVELOPMENT AND OPEN SPACE RESOURCE CONSERVATION CHALLENGES.



Modern-day development patterns are largely attributable to advances in transportation technologies. The completion of the federal Interstate 87 (the Northway) linking Albany and the Capital District to Montreal and Canada spurred extensive development in Clifton Park. Housing development first started on agricultural lands nearest the

exits to the Northway in such subdivisions as Clifton Knolls; Clifton Gardens; Calico Colony; Country Knolls; Country Knolls West; and Crescent Estates.

Commercial development is concentrated at Exit 9 in and around the Route 146 corridor and its intersection with Route 9, and at smaller commercial areas at Exits 8 and 8a. The intersection of 146 and 146A is also a significant commercial area. Today, the land nearest the Northway has become built-out. The future trend in residential and commercial development is to reach into the more rural, western areas of town, thereby increasing the potential for traffic, environmental, and loss of agricultural land conflicts.

C. DEMOGRAPHICS

THE TOWN OF CLIFTON PARK IS THE THIRD FASTEST-GROWING MUNICIPALITY IN THE CAPITAL DISTRICT REGION, ACCORDING TO THE 2000 U.S. CENSUS. ITS RESIDENTS ARE WELL EDUCATED, WITH NEARLY 50% OF ALL ADULTS OVER THE AGE OF 25 HOLDING AT LEAST A BACHELOR'S DEGREE. ACCORDING TO SALES & MARKETING MANAGEMENT MAGAZINE, THE 2000 ESTIMATE FOR HOUSEHOLD EFFECTIVE BUYING INCOME (EBI) FOR SARATOGA COUNTY RESIDENTS WAS \$45,186, SIGNIFICANTLY HIGHER THAN THE NATIONAL AVERAGE.

SINCE ITS INCORPORATION IN 1828, THE TOWN OF CLIFTON PARK HAS BEEN COMMITTED TO MAINTAINING THE HEALTH, SAFETY, AND WELFARE OF ALL ITS RESIDENTS. THOUGH POPULATION REMAINED STEADY DURING THE LATE 19TH CENTURY WHEN AGRICULTURE WAS THE MAIN INDUSTRY, IMPROVED TRANSPORTATION ROUTES DURING THE 20TH CENTURY GENERATED DEVELOPMENT PRESSURES. IN RESPONSE TO THESE GROWTH PRESSURES, ELECTED OFFICIALS RESPONDED WITH COMPREHENSIVE PLANS, ZONING ORDINANCES, AND POLICIES THAT ENCOURAGE A BALANCE BETWEEN INDUSTRY, RETAIL OUTLETS, RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT, HISTORIC PRESERVATION, AND OPEN SPACE.

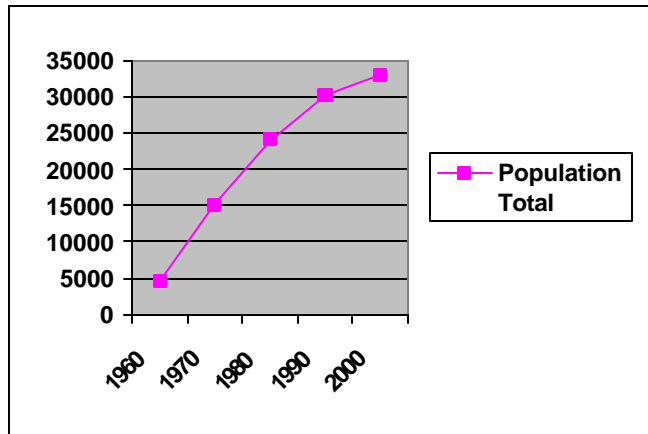


Figure 3-1. Clifton Park Population, 1960-2000.
Town population increased significantly since 1960.

Throughout the Capital District, cities and villages no longer function as purely separate entities. Automobiles permit the region to function together; people often live in one municipality and work, shop, and spend their leisure time in another. According to the 1990 Census, 96% of the working population of Clifton Park works in the Metropolitan Statistical Area of the Capital District, but only 25% work within Clifton Park. The vast majority commute to other parts of the region (1990 US Census). As a result, the population of Clifton Park is contiguous with that of the other towns in the Capital District; they work together, play together, and make consumer choices together. Such a shift in dynamics from earlier times is important to understand the forces shaping the town; decisions cannot be made purely within the isolation of town boundaries, but must be simultaneously viewed from the context of the entire Capital District.

Consequently, Clifton Park is a fast-growing, popular residential community. Its expansive residential fabric is interrupted by the commercial strips that have developed primarily along Route 9 and Route 146; Crescent, Grooms, and Ushers Roads - the roads leading directly to exits 8-10 of the Northway.

The town's population on the whole is well-educated, with 95% of the adult (over 25 years old) population holding high school diplomas and 49% having obtained at least a bachelor's degree.

It is financially well-off, as the median household income was \$55,700 in 1989, well above that of surrounding communities.

It is also quite mobile; 47% of the population had moved house within the last 5 years, and 21% were new to the Capital District

(1990 Census), meaning that much of the population has little or no tie to the recent history of the area.

As such, the pressures on the town's land are extremely high.

Conclusion

The Town of Clifton Park is well-positioned to carry out an open space program. Its significant tax base and residential population can help provide the means to secure important open space resources. There are several tremendous opportunities, if action is taken soon, to set aside natural areas, protect working farmlands, and build a network of trails and open spaces - - a "greenprintTM" for the future.

TM GREENPRINT IS A TRADEMARK OF BEHAN PLANNING ASSOCIATES, LLC

PART 4 OVERVIEW OF CLIFTON PARK'S OPEN SPACE RESOURCES

THERE ARE APPROXIMATELY 12,000 ACRES OF OPEN LANDS REMAINING IN THE TOWN OF CLIFTON PARK. THESE LANDS INCLUDE PARCELS THAT ARE COMPLETELY VACANT AND UNIMPROVED, LANDS THAT ARE PREDOMINANTLY VACANT, PRIVATE LAND CLASSIFIED AS FOREST FOR REAL PROPERTY TAX PURPOSES, AND ALL AGRICULTURAL LAND.

PROVIDED IN THIS PART 4 IS A SUMMARY OF THE MAJOR OPEN SPACE RESOURCES IN THE TOWN OF CLIFTON PARK:

- + **DRINKING WATER RESOURCES;**
- + **WILDLIFE HABITATS, FORESTS, AND WETLANDS;**
- + **AGRICULTURAL HERITAGE: FARMS, AND FARMLAND RESOURCES (LAND AND SOIL RESOURCES);**
- + **HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL RESOURCES;**
- + **RURAL VISTAS AND SCENIC ROADWAYS;**
- + **RECREATIONAL RESOURCES; AND, A**
- + **TRAILS AND PATHWAYS NETWORK.**

DRINKING WATER RESOURCES

Watersheds, waterbodies, streams, rivers

The Mohawk River is the most significant water feature at the town's southern-southwestern boundary. A major surface water body, the Stony Creek in the southern half of Clifton Park is a tributary to the Mohawk River.

The Stony Creek Reservoir (also known as the Latham Reservoir) is a major surface water resource, owned by the Town of Colonie, currently off limits to the public. The area adjacent to the reservoir is heavily forested and has many wetlands and is an ideal wildlife habitat. The reservoir and its watershed present opportunities for creating a management plan in conjunction with the Town of Colonie for environmentally sensitive public access. Alternatively, future management could include the reservoir as an emergency water supply for Clifton Park.

The Town of Colonie is planning a new \$14 million plant to purify water drawn from the Stony Creek Reservoir at the Mohawk River crossing, located at the end of Ferry Drive. This level of investment by the Town of Colonie may be a factor in determining future public access for Clifton Park residents to the Stony Creek Reservoir.

Other major surface waters in Clifton Park are the Dwaas Kill in the central and northeast area of town; the Long Kill, a tributary to the Dwaas Kill, in the northern reach of town; the Cooley Kill and the Anthony Kill, both in the northern half of town, Alplaus Creek in the western edge of town, and Ballston Lake in the northwest corner of the town.

Floodplains

Clifton Park has extensive floodplain areas along its streams and the Mohawk River. Clifton Park's current town code includes a Land Conservation (LC) District to delineate, preserve, protect and conserve wetlands and streams. Included are New York State Department of Environmental Conservation-regulated wetlands and adjacent areas and floodplains defined by the official flood boundary and floodway map published by the Federal Emergency Management Agency. State-regulated wetlands include their 100-foot buffer, classified streams include a 50-foot to 100-foot buffer at the high-water mark.

Aquifers and drinking water supply

Clean water is a basic requirement for all living things. Aquifer recharge areas allow rain or runoff to return to its underground source (the water table) – filtering it in the process.

Water supply is available to Clifton Park from the municipal systems of the Clifton Park Water Authority, the Rexford Water District #2, and the Rivercrest Water Department #2, as well as through individual privately-operated wells.

Both the Rexford Water District #2 and the Rivercrest Water District #2 obtain ground water pumped from the "Great Flats Aquifer" that lies below the Mohawk River-bed channel.

Ground water wells are the source of all water pumped to the Clifton Park Water Authority's (CPWA) system. Other wells are located throughout the town at 12 different sites listed in Table 4-1 on the following page. Water from the Vischer Ferry Preserve wells and the Boyack Road wells is treated at the new Boyack Road Treatment Plant for removal of iron and manganese. Four primary sources provide the highest quality water with

the lowest hardness available. Eight secondary sources are used during the summer months to meet higher demand created by outdoor uses [<http://cpwa.org/CCR.html>].

Table 4-1: Clifton Park Water Authority's System Water Sources and Capacity

Location	Number of wells	Capacity [gallons per minute (GPM)]
PRIMARY SOURCES (PUMPED YEAR-ROUND)		
Vischer Ferry Preserve	9	2300
Boyack Road	2	600
Berry Farm	2	300
Park Lane	4	100
Plank Road	2	600
Kinns Road	1	150
SECONDARY SOURCES		
Lapp Road	2	600
Oakwood	2	200
Barney Golf Course	1	100
Meadows	1	50
Roosevelt Court	1	200
Moe Road	1	135

Large aquifer, groundwater recharge areas are located proximate to all these wells.

WILDLIFE HABITATS, FORESTS & WETLANDS

Clifton Park is home to a number of important ecological areas: the Dwaas Kill Natural Area (DKNA); the Vischer Ferry Nature and Historic Preserve and the Mohawk River; the Stony Creek Reservoir area; critical migratory bird areas and bird breeding area; the Wood Road - Karner Blue Habitat, MacElroy Road Park beaver pond and wetlands, as well as other forested areas, wetlands, trout streams. Other smaller ponds and streams, vernal pools and intermittent drainage channels are also important contributors the ecological well-being of the area.

Area of Statewide Significance: Dwaaskill Natural Area

New York State's designated Dwaaskill Natural Area as an area of statewide significance in the 1998 Open Space Plan and the 2001 revision. As such, the Dwaaskill Natural Area, located just north of the eastern half of Route 146, is the single most important, unprotected natural area in the Town of Clifton Park. The Dwaaskill Natural Area is located between Exits 9 and 10 of the Northway, and primarily north of Route 146. The Long Kill is a tributary to the Dwaaskill and an important ecological feature in the Dwaaskill Watershed.

Specifically located in the center portion of Clifton Park, in the vicinity of Van Patten Road, Pierce Road, Ushers Road and Kinns Road, Dwaas Kill Natural Area is a complex ecosystem of aquatic, wetland, and upland habitat associated with the middle reaches of the Dwaas Kill stream system and its tributaries. The Dwaas Kill Natural Area contains:

- Streams, upland and lowland forests, open lands, and extensive wetlands
- Two plant species that are rare in New York State; beaver, otter, and mink; at least 16 different species of butterfly
- 14 or more indigenous bird species with a similar number of neo-tropical migrating bird species that nest in the area
- Herons and other wetlands birds, many different types of amphibians including two species of turtle listed by the New York State with "special concern" and two species of salamander with the same designation
- At least eight species of fish have been documented at this natural area¹³.

About 500 acres of this natural area has already been proposed as a nature preserve by the State of New York. The Dwaaskill Natural Area is a priority project on New York's list of the most important open spaces to protect. The proposed preserve will protect approximately five (5) miles of stream corridor along the middle of the Dwaas Kill, assist in water quality preservation, and protect one of the town's major aquifers. The area is unique for its hemlock-laden ravines, a large wetlands complex, and relatively undisturbed riparian habitat that provides a diversity of native flora and fauna. Important wildlife habitat and travel corridors also exist in the area, according to the New York State Open Space Plan. [To view the plan summary on the web go to, <http://www.dec.state.ny.us/website/opensp/2001/summary.pdf>.]

¹³ In 1996, the Land Trust of the Saratoga Region (LTSR), in concert with the Town of Clifton Park, contracted with a private consulting firm to assess the plant and animal life in the 500-acre Dwaas Kill Natural Area (DKNA).

In addition, within the vicinity of the Dwaaskill Natural Area is the location of drinking water resources for the town.

A majority of the 500 acres is currently under private ownership; but the proposed preserve is under development pressure due to its close proximity to Interstate 87 (the Northway). The Town of Clifton Park needs to work with private landowners and the state to ensure that this important natural area is preserved.

Vischer Ferry Nature and Historic Preserve

Located along the shoreline of the Mohawk River, the Vischer Ferry Nature & Historic Preserve is the largest existing open space resource in the Town of Clifton Park. Management of the more than 450-acre site is a joint venture among the State of New York, the New York State Department of Transportation, the New York State Canal Corporation, and the Town of Clifton Park. Additional state lands not officially part of the preserve are adjacent, including lands used for canal dredge spoils. The site contains a segment of the former Erie Canal, the remains of the town's first settlement (dating from 1672), as well as a large freshwater non-tidal wetland – an important wetland bird habitat, deciduous woods, riparian habitat and coniferous woods.

The Vischer Ferry Nature & Historic Preserve is designated by the National Audubon Society as an Important Bird Area (IBA), recognized as one out of 127 Important Bird Areas in New York.¹⁴ The site is popular for bird-watching, with its easily observed marshes and ponds, and the remains of the Erie Canal waterway. Important bird species supported by the wetland habitat at the site include Least Bitterns, American Bitterns, Common Moorhens, Virginia Rails, and Marsh Wrens. Ospreys and Pied-billed Grebes use the area during migration. The site is important for Great Blue Herons, Great Egrets, and the Black-crowned Night Heron. The preserve is also an important wetland habitat for water-loving animals such as muskrats.¹⁵

A major trail system exists at the Vischer Ferry Nature & Historic Preserve along the former Erie Canal (1840), from the base of Sugar Hill Road and the dam at the power plant, past Ferry Drive, past Old Lock 19 of the Erie Canal, past the Old Whipple Bridge, to the site of N.J. Clute's Dry Dock (1852) parallel to Riverview Road. Additional trail segments and loops exist within the site.

¹⁴ Source: National Audubon Society Website.

¹⁵ Source: "Natural Areas of Saratoga County, New York," published by the Environmental Clearinghouse of Schenectady.

A number of term conservation easements of farmland and open space are located near the Vischer Ferry Preserve. The preserve also is the primary drinking water supply source for the Clifton Park Water Authority with several wells developed onsite. In addition, lands that protect aquifers are also in the vicinity of the existing preserve.

Stony Creek Reservoir and Watershed

A significant fisheries wildlife habitat is associated with the Stony Creek Reservoir and Stony Kill (stream - Class A). Land Conservation Zones which are town-protected 100-foot buffers are located along the Stony Kill downstream from the Stony Creek Reservoir.

Additional Forest & Wetlands Habitat Areas

Smaller, but important wildlife habitat areas are located at the Round Lake Reservoir and in undeveloped areas and ravines in the vicinity of this reservoir; in the Ballston Lake watershed area, including the Ballston Lake Road drainage system; a large wetlands complex in the vicinity of Woods Road; and in the “green space” set-asides in residential subdivisions.

AGRICULTURAL HERITAGE: FARMS, AND FARMLAND RESOURCES (LAND AND SOIL RESOURCES)

Much of the scenic, rural landscapes in Clifton Park are orchards or smaller, diverse working farms. In a transformation from its past as a primarily dairy farming community, Clifton Park’s “farmscape” includes farmlands used for small fruits, vegetables, and other special farm commodities. Smaller farm animals such as goats and sheep also thrive. Larger animals are observed on horse and beef farms. Nurseries supply local landscaping businesses and homeowners with flowering plants, shrubs and trees for homes, institutions and business properties.

Several farm families have seasonal “pick-your-own” operations for fruits and vegetables. In addition, community members can visit the public farmers’ market sponsored by the Saratoga Farmers Market Association, held Wednesdays 3 to 6 p.m., May through October. Previously, a satellite farmers’ market of the same association was held at St. George’s Church in Clifton Park. Farms such as Bowman Orchards and Riverview Orchards sell produce directly to the public at on-site farmstands where community members experience a glimpse of farm life.



People enjoy the farm market at Bowman Orchards on Sugar Hill Road in Fall 2001.

Today, about 35 farms operate in the Town of Clifton Park utilizing about 2600 acres or about 8.5% of the town. These farms are located primarily in the western half of town, west of Route 146A and Vischer Ferry Road where some of the most productive agricultural soils are located. Since 1950, Clifton Park has permanently lost to residential and commercial development about 80% of the farms and about 85% of farmland acreage. In 1950 about 170 farms used approximately 17,000 acres (about 56.5% of the town) in Clifton Park for agriculture.

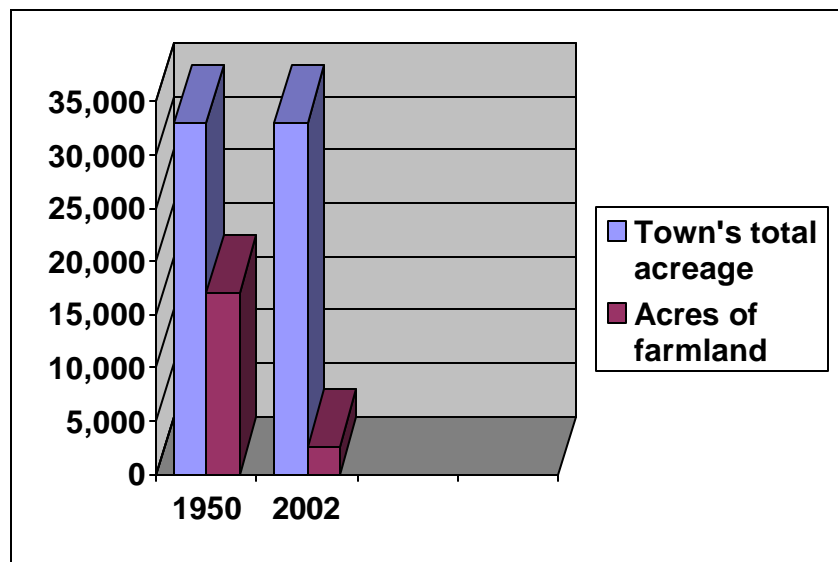


Figure 4-1. Farmland in town has declined significantly since 1950.

Agricultural land is critical to the quality of life in town. Scenic, historic, cultural and economic identities are embodied in the town's remaining farmland. Farms and farmers are a local food source. Farmers are managers and stewards of significant tracts of soil, land, water and habitat resources in the community. Agriculture is an industry and economic resource in town that plays a major part in the town's culture and history.

In 1994 Clifton Park landowners formed a new agricultural district, known as District #6 of Saratoga County. The district was originally comprised of 146 parcels of land and including slightly over 3,186 acres.¹⁶ The establishment of this new district shows the support and unity for local farming – and has helped raise awareness of the development pressures facing local farmers.

The enrolled properties are primarily located in the Mohawk River Drainage Basin, in the southwest sector of town. A few agricultural properties are located in the Ballston Lake watershed in the northwest sector of town. No agricultural district properties are in the northeast sector of town.

The town board followed the creation of Agricultural District #6 with additional initiatives to support its local farmers. The town enacted a local "right-to-farm" ordinance; created an exemption from special district tax levies for active farmers with the agricultural district; adopted a term conservation easements law to provide tax-abatements to encourage farmers to keep rural lands in farming production. However, agricultural districts and term conservation easements are voluntary, temporary measures that do not assure the permanent protection of farmlands in Clifton Park.

Both active and dormant farms have gained temporary protections through the establishment of a designated agricultural district that recognizes the substantial contribution of farming and fruit-production to the local economy and its pastoral ambiance. Reduced assessments and conservation easement programs have also helped farmers retain their lands. The Town of Clifton Park helps sponsor an annual Farm Fest to promote agricultural awareness in the community. During Farm Fest, the public is offered the opportunity to visit the few remaining active farms first-hand.

¹⁶ "Keeping Agriculture in Saratoga County: Everyone Has a Stake in Agriculture's Future: Farmers, Consumers and Communities!" An Agricultural & Farmland Protection Plan for Saratoga County. Final Draft, December 1997.



Horse-drawn wagon rides are an attraction at the Clifton Park Farm Fest held each fall.

Through its agricultural resources, residents enjoy unspoiled vistas, the bounty of the harvest season, the benefits of privately funded stewardship of environmental and aquifer resources, and the “country” atmosphere. Protection and preservation of agricultural lands should be important component of open space conservation initiatives in Clifton Park.

HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL RESOURCES

Historic Hamlets of Clifton Park

**Vischer Ferry
Rexford
Ballston Lake
Grooms Corners
Jonesville
Clifton Park Center
Elnora**

FIGURE 4-2. HISTORIC HAMLETS OF CLIFTON PARK.

Clifton Park has developed due to its relationship to transportation routes.¹⁷ Starting in about 1672, the first Europeans settled along the main route of early transportation, the Mohawk River, at Fort’s Ferry and Vischer Ferry (near the Vischer Ferry Nature & Historic Preserve), and

¹⁷ Historical background highlights summarized from the Town of Clifton Park Comprehensive Plan that was adopted by the Town of Clifton Park by resolution on April 17, 1995.

Rexford Flats. These hamlets were the town's focal points with the establishment of ferry docks and systems. Former trails and footpaths established by Native Americans evolved into roads and turnpikes used by the newest inhabitants. Villages, taverns, and hotels grew around stagecoach stops for roadway travelers leading to the initial establishment and growth of such hamlets as Grooms Corners, Clifton Park, and Jonesville. The township of Clifton Park in its current municipal boundaries was formed in 1828 as a subdivision from the Town of Halfmoon located to the east.

Completed in 1825, the Erie Canal provided an economic boost of industry and activity to the area, particularly to Vischer Ferry and Rexford. The remnants of the Erie Canal are preserved at the state-owned Vischer Ferry Nature & Historic Preserve maintained by an arrangement with the Town of Clifton Park.

Clifton Park is home to historic hamlets, homes and farms, scenic vistas, and other historic sites. About 40 sites of local historic and cultural significance are located throughout town. Some of these sites are the original settlement hamlets of Clifton Park Center, Elnora, Grooms Corners, Jonesville, Rexford and Vischer Ferry. Others are individual homes and historic farms located on various rural roads.

Resources for more detailed accounts of these cultural sites are found in the following books: History of Clifton Park, by John Scherer (town historian); Saratoga Communities: An Historic Perspective, by Johnstone; Crossroads and Canals: The History of Clifton Park by William Washington and Patricia Smith; and a paper entitled: "Historic Preservation in Clifton Park" by an anonymous author. Various citizens are also invaluable sources of information about the community: such as Doris J. Cole (archivist of the Clifton Park Historic Society); Clark Wilson, president of the Rexford Historic Association; Kathleen Briaddy, historian for the Town of Bethlehem; and Frank Berlin, volunteer cemetery preservationist.

CURRENT LOCAL MEASURES TO PROTECT HISTORIC RESOURCES:

"A GUIDE TO HISTORIC CLIFTON PARK, SARATOGA COUNTY, NEW YORK," 2002, IS AVAILABLE AT TOWN HALL AND OTHER LOCAL SOURCES, THAT PROVIDES A MAP OF HISTORIC SITES, DISTRICTS, AND HAMLETS WITHIN TOWN, AND A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE TOWN. THE BROCHURE ALSO CONTAINS A LIST OF OTHER REFERENCES ON THE HISTORY OF TOWN.

THE TOWN OF CLIFTON PARK OFFERS INCENTIVES TO LANDOWNERS TO PROTECT THEIR HISTORIC PROPERTIES WITH CONSERVATION EASEMENTS. THE TOWN HAS A TOWN HISTORIAN POSITION, CURRENTLY HELD BY JOHN L. SCHERER. THE TOWN'S CLIFTON PARK HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION OVERSEES HISTORIC PROPERTIES TERM CONSERVATION EASEMENT APPLICATIONS. THE COMMISSION ALSO IS INVOLVED IN TAX ABATEMENT FOR STRUCTURES HAVING HISTORIC VALUE, IDENTIFIES AND MAPS HISTORICALLY SIGNIFICANT AREAS AND PROPERTIES WITHIN THE TOWN, AND PROVIDES COMMENT ON APPLICATIONS INVOLVING HISTORIC PROPERTIES. IN ADDITION, THE REXFORD HISTORICAL SOCIETY AND THE FRIENDS OF GROOMS TAVERN EXIST AS ADDITIONAL ORGANIZATIONS CONCERNED ABOUT HISTORIC CLIFTON PARK.

GROOMS CORNERS



GROOMS TAVERN AT SUGAR HILL ROAD AND GROOMS RD. WAS RECENTLY ACQUIRED BY THE TOWN FOR RESTORATION.

THE TOWN OF CLIFTON PARK PURCHASED THE GROOMS TAVERN COMPLEX FOR PERMANENT PROTECTION. THE TOWN OF CLIFTON PARK AND THE FRIENDS OF GROOMS TAVERN CITIZENS' GRO UP IS COMMITTED TO THE RESTORATION OF THE FORMER RESIDENCE AND STORE AT GROOMS CORNERS AND EDUCATING THE COMMUNITY ABOUT THIS HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL RESOURCE. IN NOVEMBER 2002, NEW YORK STATE AWARDED \$80,000.00 FROM THE STATE'S ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION FUND FOR THE HISTORIC GROOMS TAVERN RESTORATION PROJECT.

SUCH COMMITMENTS TO MAINTAINING THE HISTORICAL INTEGRITY OF CULTURAL TREASURES ARE ENCOURAGED AS PART OF THE TOWN'S OPEN SPACE PLAN.

RURAL VISTAS AND SCENIC ROADWAYS

Many of the earliest paths through town developed into modern-day transportation routes. Roads once primarily used for farm-to-market transportation in rural areas have now become commuter roads for residents seeking fast, easy access to the Northway and to employment centers dispersed throughout the Capital District. Some of the farm roads, now town and county roads that have scenic qualities for their visual access to the rural, countryside and undeveloped natural areas of Clifton Park should be designated as "scenic roadways."

In addition, the Mohawk Towpath Scenic Byway is a scenic and recreational corridor that includes Clifton Park's entire waterfront along the Mohawk River and the Vischer Ferry Natural and Historic Preserve. The scenic byway plan is to connect Clifton Park's scenic waterfront along the Mohawk River to the regional river corridor.

Many other scenic views are present throughout Clifton Park. Individual roadways recognized in the Town of Clifton Park for their scenic qualities¹⁸ are: Riverview Road, Sugar Hill Road, Vischer Ferry Road south of Grooms Road, Grooms Road west of Moe Road, Moe Road from Grooms Road to Englemore Road; Englemore Road; Crescent Road from Van Vranken Road to Vischer Ferry Road, Van Vranken Road, the southern half of Male Drive, Ray Road, Miller Road, Waite Road both north and south of Clifton Park Road, Clifton Park Road (Route 146) from Miller Road to Nott Road, Nott Road, Appleton Road, Main Street and vicinity in Rexford, Ballston Lake Road, Ashdown Road, Eastside Drive, and Schauber Road.

In 1995 the Land Trust of the Saratoga Region (LTSR) sponsored a project for community members to identify what they thought were the "Special Places" in the Town of Clifton Park. Several residents submitted nominations. A high percentage of properties nominated to the LTSR as special places by citizens of Clifton Park identified "rural" sections and the roads that service them. According to the voluntary nominations for

¹⁸ A preliminary scenic roadway inventory and analysis was performed as part of "An Open Space Inventory for the Town of Clifton Park" prepared by the Friends of Clifton Park Open Space and the University at Albany, SUNY Department of Geography and Planning, September 1998. In addition, public participants at the January 19, 2002 design charrette identified significant town scenic vistas and roadways.

special places, at least four geographic areas could be grouped as significant scenic resources:

1. The area along Riverview Road as it overlooks the Mohawk River.
2. The area in the southwestern section of the town that includes: Sugarhill Road, Miller Road, Grooms Road, and Nott Road.
3. The Wood Road corridor in the Northeast corner of the town. A significant part of this area is seen from the Adirondack Northway.
4. The section along Route 146A starting at and including the western end of McElroy Road to Ashdown Road.

RECREATIONAL RESOURCES

As in many rural-to-suburban towns, the Town of Clifton Park enjoys many neighborhood park areas, tot lots, and small segments of green space/open space. During the past 20 years, in response to rapid population growth, the town has purchased several large tracts of land suitable for the development of ball fields, basketball courts and facilities for other sporting events. Members of the Clifton Park Trails Committee meet regularly to create a cohesive multi-use pathway network that connects schools, shopping, recreation, and residential areas.

Development of the Mohawk River Scenic Byway regional plan has been well-received by surrounding communities, re-dedication of the Mohawk River-Erie Canal corridor and other former transportation routes as recreational lands continues. The purchase of acreage in the northern part of town has allowed for the development of picnic areas and walking trails providing a more passive use of open land. Though proactive approaches have been implemented to protect and add-to existing parklands, the time is at hand to secure lands for recreation needs of this growing community and to assure long-term benefits for all.

In the course of development, lands are often conveyed to the town or homeowners associations for recreation areas, such as playgrounds, baseball, softball, football or soccer fields. Most of this dedicated land is used for active recreation with structures, groomed fields, and sports activities. The town will continue to need more parkland acreage to accommodate growth, and will most likely have to purchase another tract of land to enlarge or duplicate Clifton Common.

TRAILS AND PATHWAYS NETWORK

In 1999, the Town of Clifton Park adopted a Trails Master Plan that included various concepts of trail design. The Trails Master Plan's purpose is to use various trail designs to meet the following objectives:

1. Connect communities within the town
2. Explore natural resources within the communities and nature preserves.

The town's connective trail network represents a less structured mode of recreation usually dedicated to walking or bicycling. The town's trails committee, which has been working on this system since 1987 has completed the mapping of major segments, but additional corridors for trails will be needed as the town continues to grow.

Providing trails for residents to explore natural resources is more passive. It affords individuals opportunities to appreciate nature and open space with a minimum of human intervention. These trails consist of nature trails in forested areas, through open fields, in or around wetlands, and to scenic overlooks.

Route 146 Corridor

From Route 9 at the easternmost border of Clifton Park shared with the Town of Halfmoon, and westward towards Rexford is a central, busy commercial corridor with important institutions such as the Shenendehowa Central School District. To the north/northeast of the Route 146 corridor is the Dwaas Kill Natural Area. Just south of the corridor is the headwaters of the Stony Creek and adjacent wetlands in the vicinity of Clifton Knolls.

The Shenendehowa School District has undeveloped lands that have potential for enhancing trail connections through this part of the community.

Currently, sidewalks extend along the south side of Route 146 from the shopping at Exit 9 westward to the Shenendehowa Central School District campus.

Local Recreational Parks, Ballfields, and Playgrounds

The introduction of parks in the Town of Clifton Park was first initiated by the town when acquiring the land for Collins Park on Moe Road.

Parks and Recreation came to the forefront in October of 1975 when the Clifton Park Town Board commissioned a master plan that was completed by the Rist-Frost Associates Consulting Engineers. This plan included an inventory and description of the town, recreation areas and facilities and their operation. The study looked at the need and demand for future recreational needs of the town.

The purpose of parks in the Town of Clifton Park is to provide recreational, organized athletic competition and social gathering places. Other purposes for parks are to preserve open space and promote the quality of the environment.

At present, the acquisition of lands from subdivisions which provides for dedication of park and recreation land is based on regulations established by the Town of Clifton Park. The regulations state that the developer shall dedicate to the town, "usable land" equal to 10% of the subdivider's tract. The Planning Board determines the use of the land for parks, playground, or other specific public recreational use. Depending on the size of the developer's tract, the subdivider through the town board will make a monetary payment to the town in lieu of land. This money can be used only for the purchase of land for current or future neighborhood public recreational uses.

There are scenic areas and those areas bordering the various streams, lakes and other water courses in the town that have been given special consideration by the Planning Board as desirable for public open spaces. Examples of this are the ponds in Clifton Knolls and the Dwaaskill Basin.

There five distinct designations of parks in the Town of Clifton Park: state-owned land, one county park, town parks, state preserve land, and park district association lands.

State Land for Town Preserve Use

Vischer Ferry Nature & Historic Preserve was discussed earlier under significant wildlife resources.

County Park

Kinns Road Park is a Saratoga County-owned park that is managed by the Town of Clifton Park and its Parks & Recreation Department. The site is unique in that it is a piece of Saratoga County forest which includes a pine plantation as well as a "naturally-occurring" hardwoods forest. This is

a 63+ acre wooded park with an established system of trails for walking, cross-country skiing, a picnic area, and a site for nature study.

Town Parks

Town parks include the 80+ acre "Common" on Vischer's Ferry Road, the 130-acre Veteran's Memorial Park, the 8-acre Collins Park located on Moe Road just south of the Route 146 intersection, and the Mary Jane Rowe Dog Park. Town parks are administered through the Town Board by the Parks, Recreation, and Community Affairs Office.

Individual Park Districts

Individual park districts are concentrated in the eastern part of the town. Presently, there are a total of 11 park districts in the town associated with residential developments. These park districts range from active parkland that requires maintenance, to 30 acres of parks, recreational and natural "open space." These individual park districts are also individual tax districts where the properties within the district are taxed for the maintenance of the parks. Each district is unique to its residents' needs. They are represented by residents of the district. The residents establish the recreational needs and budgets, and submit their requests to the town board for approval.

These individual residential neighborhood-based park districts are:

1. Wyncrest Park District
2. Stony Creek Park District # 1
3. Stony Creek Park District # 2
4. Calico Colony Park District
5. Clifton Gardens Park District
6. Clifton Knolls Park District
7. Longkill Park District # 1
8. Longkill Park District # 2
9. Sherwood Forest Park District
10. Riverview Park District
11. Dwaaskill Park District

Also, several **private golf courses** are located in town, protecting for now, a significant acreage of open space primarily in the western part of the town. However, these golf course lands should not be assumed to be permanently protected open space.

Active Recreational Resources and Facilities

Clifton Park has a strong tradition of recreational opportunities and quality programs for its youth. Soccer, softball, baseball, hockey or other recreational sports and leagues occupy thousands of children from five years old to college age. The Clifton Park Baseball League involves 1,000 children annually, and hosts numerous state, regional and national Babe Ruth/Cal Ripken championships including the 14-year-old 2002 World Series. In soccer, the town hosts an annual international weekend tournament every July with over a hundred teams competing.

PARTICIPATION IN COMMUNITY ACTIVITIES HAS GROWN OVER THE PAST FIVE YEARS WITH 2,500 PARTICIPANTS IN THE RECREATIONAL SOCCER LEAGUE, 7,000 ATTENDING THE SUMMER RECREATION PROGRAMS, ABOUT 5,000 PARTICIPANTS JOINING BASEBALL AND SOFTBALL TEAMS, AND 200 DOG OWNERS REGISTERING TO USE THE MARY JANE ROWE DOG PARK. INTEREST IN THE COMMUNITY IS REFLECTED IN A VARIETY OF OTHER WAYS AS WELL FROM ADOPT-A-HIGHWAY PROGRAMS AND ATTENDANCE AT THE PLAY-IN-THE-PARK SERIES TO INVOLVEMENT IN THE OPEN SPACE SURVEY AND CHARRETTE.

To service the community's varied recreational needs, the town operates a central recreational facility, "the Commons." Several other fields exist in town, but in most cases, the town's facilities do not have the needed space for expanded league play. Other than the large field at Longkill Park for baseball, and some fields at McGregor Park, the town's existing ballfields are mainly suitable for practices at this time.

Overall Parks Analysis

Parks are the essential part of Clifton Park's recreation system. The benefits of the parks include fostering personal health, strengthening community values, preventing crime, protecting the environment and contributing to a healthy economy.

An integrated park system is proposed to accomplish the following objectives:

- Improve parks¹⁹, recreational services, open spaces, waterways, wildlife habitat and historical/cultural sites which are crucial to the quality of life for all residents of Clifton Park.
- Promote physical fitness and health for a variety of users including disabled persons.
- Encourage social interaction and community pride.
- Provide opportunities for the rest and relaxation within natural setting through park-related recreation.
- Provide 'outdoor classroom' opportunities for environmental education.

Clifton Park's recreation parks benefit the residents of the entire town. As the demand for town-wide park land grows, additional park lands will be necessary to keep up with the demand and alleviate the stress on the present facilities.

The town's ballfield facilities are not adequate to meet the long-term needs of the town residents and their families. The increasing number of participants and the continued demographics of Clifton Park as a family-oriented community, indicate the need for additional recreational facilities in the future. While the Commons may satisfy the current demand, it is only a matter of time before a new recreational complex is needed for Clifton Park. This could be another large facility or several small- to medium-size facilities based on individual sports. In order to meet this need, a parcel of adequate size and convenient location will need to be purchased by the town for a new town park. The town will further need to invest in these facilities and to work with recreational leagues to attract funding and support.

There are many different scenarios that can be created in terms of numbers of new fields, type of fields or future changes at the Commons itself. The most important need is a Clifton Park recreational facilities master plan for the next 25 years. This is an action by the town to help recreational leagues to meet long-term recreational needs of the communities children and adults alike. To evaluate a

¹⁹ Current Initiatives for Recreational Improvements

In spring of 2002, the Clifton Park Baseball League launched a capital campaign to enhance and expand lights at upper quad field as well as make improvements to local quad fields and dugouts. The lights are to mainly allow the league to meet its obligations, providing more game slots for older age groups. The soccer league has also looks to lights to increase available games slots as well as looking to expand to fields off the commons.

specific new parks program, the town should create a task force of the presidents of the different recreational leagues, the head coaches of those sports in high school, and the designees from the planning and parks boards to map out the recreational sports needs of community over the next 25 years. This exercise would help prioritize open space acquisition for these fields and ensure that they are done with support and involvement of community participants.

PART 5 PLAN CONCEPTS

A. Introduction

The open space plan concepts can be easily understood by recognizing basic open space resources and land use patterns. In considering the existing and proposed open space resources, the physical landscape of the town was evaluated first as individual areas, then as larger sections.

The natural landscape—the Mohawk River, Stony Creek Reservoir, the various streams and wetlands throughout town, and the hemlock-covered ravines and sand plains in the northeast part of town are distinguishing features that shape Clifton Park – and in turn have shaped how the town has developed to date. The productive soils have sustained agriculture for generations. The man-made environment has also been influential in shaping the land use patterns in the town. The railroad system that runs throughout the northwest and into the northeast areas of town is a barrier of sorts for trail connections, with limited sites for railroad crossings. Likewise, Interstate 87 (the Northway) is a significant physical barrier along the eastern border of town cutting off people and wildlife from the Town of Half Moon and Round Lake except for the rail underpass, four exits off the Northway, and a few other local roads that overpass the interstate highway.

Each of the open space resources of the town reflects human and natural values. Certain areas contain multiple resources that are important to the community. When a large number of important open space resources co-occur in an area, that area is of highest value for protection. As a result, the plan identifies key areas where resource values are greatest for future conservation efforts.

Five major plan concepts are developed herein. Special recognition is also given to the enhanced protection for **drinking water resources** as an overall theme. The five major elements of the open space concept plan include:

1. Protection of **wildlife nature preserves & watersheds**;
2. A **farmland protection** program;
3. Enhanced **recreational parklands and ballfields**;
4. A town-wide, comprehensive **trails and pathways system**, and;
5. A **scenic roads, cultural resources and historic preservation** program.

The plan concepts—narrative and map (both detailed within this section)—reflect areas in town with resource values important to the community. The community should know that the general philosophy of the open space program proposed is for the town to work with property owners to find the best way to protect the open space resources on any

particular property. It is the plan's intent that a balanced set of techniques be used to conserve and protect the natural resources with values important to the community. In fact, the plan concepts rely a great deal on continued stewardship of resources by private property owners.

The development community has been a partner in open space conservation, as well as private and nonprofit conservation organizations. Public ownership of land, if required, will be recommended to further enhance the quality of life in the town and expand the utilization, in a sensitive manner, of the town's open space resources. If public ownership is sought, it will be based on a "willing buyer—willing seller basis." In all, this partnership approach is the most cost-effective, fair, and prudent way to achieve the open space plan envisioned herein. An overview of key conservation tools and general strategies is provided in Part 6 of this plan, while Part 7 is the recommended specific strategies for the Town of Clifton Park.

B. Special Note on Drinking Water Resources

Notably, in developing the major plan concepts, it was recognized that the community's interest in protecting drinking water supplies is a major priority for residents. Water quality and quantity protection is an issue that touches many lands throughout town – and is not limited to one site. Water resources cross property lines and even town boundaries. Lands that contribute to the protection of aquifers are lands immediately above aquifers, as well as lands that contain wetlands that filter surface water – part of the water cycling that contributes to aquifer supplies. The town has a number of sites that currently supply drinking water through wells and underground aquifer sources. It is these current supplies that the town seeks to continue to protect as well as to conserve future water supply sources in town.¹



Stony Creek Reservoir is a source of drinking water for the Town of Colonie.

In Clifton Park, aquifer resources are located in some instances on lands with potential for nature preserves. Some aquifers are located among agricultural properties. Thus the means to protect aquifer resources may also address natural area conservation or farmland protection. For example, Vischer Ferry Nature & Historic Preserve contains not only significant wildlife habitat and historic landmarks such as the Erie Canal, but the existing preserve and additional adjacent property also contains significant town drinking water supply resources. Hence this is an area with multiple resources of importance to the community. Goals to protect nature preserve lands and agricultural heritage lands will also help to protect lands that hold aquifer recharge areas as well as drinking water supplies.

Recommendations:

1. The town should protect its key, year-round well sites. Acquire the lands around the key well fields as wellhead protection areas in the areas that are not permanently protected already.²
2. Protect the secondary water supply sources used during times of drought including well systems.³
3. As a long-term goal, protect Stony Creek Reservoir as a future, emergency water supply source for the town and/or public open space area.⁴

C. Five Major Plan Concepts

All of the following plan concepts are proposed as short term goals for the Town of Clifton Park to pursue within approximately a suggested two-to-five-year time frame.

1. Wildlife Nature Preserves & Watersheds

As the town grows with new roads and development, contiguous areas of natural land become fragmented. Increasing development is fragmenting vital ecological areas and habitats that rely upon large, contiguous natural areas and smaller areas that provide connectivity. To protect such areas, the nature preserve concept is proposed for key sections of largely undeveloped areas. These areas possess significant environmental and geological features, water resources and wildlife habitat. While some natural areas such as stream corridors and wetlands have some level of existing regulatory protection, others, such as significant uplands areas and smaller wetlands need more protection solutions from the community. The existing Vischer Ferry Nature & Historic Preserve on the Mohawk River exemplifies the best attributes of an existing large-scale nature preserve in town.

Protection Goals for Nature Preserves

- A. Potential large nature preserve areas to protect:
 - i. Create a Dwaas Kill Natural Area and tributary stream corridor greenways to supplement the limited existing protected area in this ecological area. This proposed nature preserve would supply residents in the northern half town with a significant sized resource that would complement the Vischer Ferry Nature & Historic Preserve at the most southern edge of town.

The proposed nature area would include lands listed in the New York State Open Space Plan – known as the Dwaas Kill Natural Area, and watershed lands including lands in the Van Patten/Pierce Road area. The proposed unique habitat area includes trout stream corridor protection & riparian habitat along three tributaries out to tributary headwaters (see open space concepts map); trout fishing opportunities; environmental education opportunities; active recreation (hiking and canoeing) opportunities; and hemlock forest and steep ravines. The unique

area would be an ideal location for an environmental education center. **Protection goal for the next 2 to 5 years, 300 to 600 acres.**

ii. Additional lands in the vicinity of the existing Vischer Ferry Nature & Historic Preserve may be warranted; particularly lands that protect a major town drinking water supply aquifer. **Goal for next 2 to 5 years: 50 – 100 acres.**

iii. Stony Creek Reservoir and its watershed is an open space opportunity in the developed eastern part of town (area between Crescent Road and Englemore Road). The area's special features include a large waterbody and wetlands; aquifer recharge lands; fish and wildlife habitat; and opportunities for passive recreation. Some temporary easements and opportunities for open space connections exist in the vicinity. Stony Creek's headwaters are west of Village Plaza to Moe Road north of Wall Street to Route 146. Clifton Park's protection of Stony Creek Reservoir itself is a long-term goal, however, some adjacent lands not owned by the Town of Colonie may be available sooner for conservation by the Town of Clifton Park. **Goal for protecting adjacent lands for the next 2 to 5 years: 50 to 100 acres.**

B. Acquire/obtain smaller nature preserves accessible to all neighborhoods:

i. A small preserve within roughly a one-mile radius of the intersection of Moe Road and Grooms Road.

ii. Unique natural areas and habitats and travel corridors for wildlife, such as mature forests, uncommon plant communities, wetlands, fishing-quality streams, significant shorelines, rock outcroppings, steep slopes, or open fields and meadows. Also protect lands that support known endangered or threatened species, including but not limited to the Karner Blue Butterfly habitat or travel corridors.

iii. Small areas of wildlife observation, that may help connect to larger open space resources.⁵

Town-wide goal for smaller nature preserves, located throughout town at various locations: Next 2 to 5 years; 100 to 200 acres.

Nature Preserve Implementation:

1. Secure landowner interest in voluntary participation in an acquisition program. Partner with the State of New York and others for potential funding of acquisitions. Secure local financing as necessary and appropriate. Acquire key, selected, critical parcels that are valuable for wildlife, and for public access and educational opportunities, starting with the priority areas.
2. Develop and implement open space incentive zoning to create increased opportunities for the development community to provide additional nature preserves in new projects. This code would be best accomplished with a town-sponsored set of “Design Guidelines for Protecting Open Space in New Development” in collaboration with the builders and environmental community for their use in designing conservation-friendly development.
3. Pursue a long-term intermunicipal agreement with the Town of Colonie for the future disposition of Stony Creek Reservoir, such as an agreement regarding first refusal. In the short term, seek willing sellers to protect the lands adjacent to the Stony Creek Reservoir.

2. Farmland Protection Program

Fortunately, Clifton Park still enjoys strong working farmlands and a sense of rural agricultural heritage along many of its rural roads. These working farm properties often include other environmental resources such as wetlands and aquifer recharge areas, and are thus worthy of a higher level of consideration for open space resource protection. However, as agricultural land prices and carrying costs continue to increase it is becoming difficult to maintain economic viability of farmland under these conditions.

Difficulties in passing land onto the next generation becomes a key factor is farmland conversions. There is tremendous pressure on farmers and farm families to convert the equity in their farmland by selling their land for development. Losing the remaining active farmland and working farmland, losing the remaining farm economy, plus losing the scenic rural agricultural heritage would be a loss for not only the farm families, but the entire town—in particular when there are more suitable areas in town to build new housing and commercial developments.

The primary reason that beautiful, productive farms will convert to residential and commercial developments is because the community currently does not have permanent protection options to offer farmers. Using grants and local funding, the town's purchase of agricultural conservation easements will be a fair method for town residents, property owners and farmers to secure all of the benefits of protecting these important resources for current and future generations.

Plan Concepts:

- A. Focus initial efforts on active farmlands with some type of existing temporary protection (such as farms with temporary term easements, agricultural assessment, and/or participation in the agricultural district program).
- B. Offer willing farmland owners options for permanent farmland protection, working out with each owner a fair appraisal, and individual family's estate planning needs.
- C. Partner with state and federal programs for permanent easements. One such permanent farmland protection option that has been used successfully across New York State and the nation is the purchase of agricultural conservation easements (PACE). (See the Glossary and Part 6 for more information on PACE.)
- D. Protect the most valuable working landscapes and active farmland most valuable for the community.⁶

Core Farming Areas to Consider for Permanent Protection:

Core farms and orchards are found in the "west to southwest quadrant" of town:

- From the Mohawk River to Vischer Ferry Road;
- Farm parcels along the western half of Grooms Road;
- Sugar Hill Road including from Kings Farm to Bowman's Orchard,
- Ray Road;
- Farms and orchards along the length of Riverview Road;
- Farms along the western end of Route 146, including Beck Farm; and,
- Farms along MacElroy Road (both sides) and Hubbs Road.

Any future action related to farm protection will depend upon the voluntary interest and participation by property owners and their families, and the opportunities set forth by the town with other partners.

Implementation:

1. Evaluate and include farmers' priorities and interest in a voluntary program for permanent agricultural conservation easements. Perform a farmer-specific survey and other

- individualized outreach. Scale funding to balance landowner interest with community resources.
2. Offer farmers the opportunity to participate in a voluntary purchase of permanent agricultural conservation easements (PACE) program and provide incentives for participation.
 3. Encourage participation in Saratoga County's agricultural economic development assistance programs, including with marketing, training, and strategies.
 - a. Continue support of, and expand programs such as Farm Fest
 - b. Add a Farm Tour concept – that could link to and be co-sponsored by neighboring towns, or link to a county-wide farm tour.
 - c. Tap into county, state and federal programs and resources.
 4. Review the term conservation easements law to make sure its enforcement policy is clear and the administration mechanisms are in place.

Goal for the next 2 to 5 years: Set up permanent easement program in partnership with the New York State Department of Agriculture & Markets and American Farmland Trust; secure participation by several farmers and farmland owners. Approximately 300 to 600 acres near term.

3. Parkland and Ballfields

Existing park facilities for active recreation are highly utilized and reaching maximum use levels. As population continues to increase, the need for new large areas for active recreation is becoming more apparent, as well as to ensure smaller parks are close to dense residential neighborhoods. This plan concept addresses the need for new parks serving town-wide, and neighborhood-wide needs.

Plan Concepts:

The major plan concepts related to parks are to:

1. Obtain one large area of significant acreage (approximately 150+/- acres) for a new townwide park. The general location would be roughly within 1.5 mile radius of the intersection of Nott Road and Appleton Road. (Actual site should be selected as part of a separate siting study.)
2. Obtain one to two small-to-moderate sized active park areas (approximately 10-20 acres) in underserved developed areas of town.

Recreational, greenway, and trail resource opportunities valued by the community for future park expansion consideration are:

- Existing parks, trails, recreational areas, and golf courses;
- Access to areas for water-based recreational opportunities such as land contiguous to the Erie Canal, Mohawk River, Ballston Lake or along creeks and streams, including additional canoe boat access and other public boat access at the Mohawk River.
- Expanding the Vischer Ferry Nature & Historic Preserve.
- Public access to the Stony Creek Reservoir.

Implementation:

1. The town should establish a task force of the presidents of the different recreational leagues, the head coaches of those sports in high school and the designees from the planning and parks boards to map out the recreational sports needs of the community for the next 20 years. This task force can help prioritize open space acquisition for ball fields and other recreational facilities needs, and ensure that they are done with the support and involvement of community leaders.
2. Update the Town Parks and Recreation Master Plan.
3. Conduct a siting study and recreation needs assessment.
4. Secure options for future park sites.
5. Secure funding for land acquisition and facility development; both state and federal grants and local resources.

4. Town-Wide Trails & Pathways

A town-wide path system will help knit the community together by allowing people a safe, alternative transportation system to reach activity centers as well as quieter nature preserves. The idea is for residents to leave their homes and safely travel to most places in town along a pedestrian/bicyclist trail system.

A Clifton Park Pathways System is envisioned as a comprehensive network of various types of paved and unpaved trails for pedestrians and non-motorized use. This system will enhance existing town-wide connections through appropriate multi-purpose trails, designed to fit the different types of roads and corridors. The major plan concept is to ensure that pedestrians and bicyclists (non-motorized vehicles) can access the community's neighborhoods, schools, and parks, open spaces and other activity centers by walking or biking—a safe alternative to cars. The Clifton Park Pathways System would build upon and further coordinate with the existing town and neighborhood trails and proposed trails per town's existing trails master plan.

Pathways through sensitive natural areas may require special design considerations and be constructed with materials appropriate for the site. In other settings, the path systems may include marked, road shoulders for pedestrians and bicyclists to use "Class I" paved, off-road paths, and all types of trails in between. New projects would be designed and discussed through a public process in order to address neighborhood concerns.⁷



Clifton Park needs additional, safe, well-designed and attractive multi-purpose trails protected from vehicular traffic. (Photo credit: Eric J. Hamilton)

Plan Concepts:

- A. To continue to achieve success with new trails and parks development, develop an improved approach for additional public process with potential adjacent landowners.
- B. Identify priority trail corridors in town and pursue funding for acquisition of necessary rights-of-way and trail improvements.
- C. Consider working more closely with individual willing park districts on a voluntary basis to share parks and trails resources. Develop an improved dialogue and process for any desired connections, arrangements, or shared services with individual park districts.

Implementation:

- 1. Obtain grants and local funding for design of priority trail corridors.
- 2. Involve landowners and neighbors in trail layout and design.

3. Obtain grants and capital funds for trail construction.
4. Working closely with the Clifton Park Trails and Recreation Committees, create a highly graphic, user-friendly, up-to-date community trails and recreation map that is widely published and distributed for community members. Make such a map available at a broad number of locations and within schools. Develop a signage system and a "you are here" orientation sign map for trails and destinations throughout town – coordinated with historic and cultural resources.
5. Update the existing trails master plan.

5. Scenic Roads, Cultural Resources, and Historic Preservation

Clifton Park has a bounty of scenic roads. These roads offer travelers wonderful glimpses of the history and beauty of the town. They pass historic hamlets, attractive farmsteads and fields, meadows and orchards, the Mohawk River, streams, ponds and marshlands. These roadsides tell a story of the community's agricultural beginnings--and that give the community its unique look. Historically, canal and train transportation that shaped the community brought opportunities for commerce. These are important stories to recognize and share. These resources seem at times lost in the shadow of the new commerce near Exit 9.



The community needs to cherish and protect its unique qualities – its historic and cultural resources that give the community its sense of place. It is well-recognized that communities that preserve their historic hamlets, buildings, farms, taverns and hotels, train depots, schoolhouses, churches, cemeteries, and other historic sites as

landmarks are also those that have high property values and can support strong local economies. Preservation is an economic development tool as well as a resource conservation tool.

Awareness of the town's cultural setting and community traditions of the history and agricultural community in town can continue to be strengthened. For example, by building on the town's accomplishment of acquiring Grooms Tavern Complex at Sugar Hill Road and Grooms Road, this one site serves as a spring board for other similar efforts. The historic hamlets of Rexford, Vischer Ferry and Jonesville are readily accessible to the eye, while the history of Elnora, a former train depot, and other farm homesteads may not be as obvious to residents.



Historic Grooms Tavern at Sugar Hill Road and Grooms Road, is pictured on the left, and the scenic, historic hamlet of Vischer Ferry is shown on the right.

Cultural landscape resources that help give Clifton Park its distinctive character include:

- Land with unusual scenic beauty or character, or that is part of a larger scenic viewshed.
- Rural character corridors.
- Large, undeveloped parcels – related to the distribution of open space throughout the town.
- Institutional landholdings.
- Significant historical or archeological resources.
- Buffer lands in and around residential areas.
- Gateways into town, and in and around hamlets and the town center area.

Scenic, historic and cultural resources should be enjoyed by the community by various means of conveyance or arrangements with private landowners. Selected key open scenic roads, cultural and

historical resources and sites to consider for conservation and protection are:

- Historic sites (approximately 40 total) including:
 - The red school house at the intersection of Moe Road and Grooms Road;
 - Clifton Park Center/Miller Road area.
- The community-identified “Pumpkin Patch” area at Moe Road near the Route 146 intersection, just south of Collins Park.
- Scenic roads (or portions of these roads) and vistas to consider protecting are:
 - West on Route 146 at the rise in the road at Miller Road facing west;
 - Riverview Road;
 - Englemore Road;
 - Grooms Road;
 - Ashdown Road and Route 146A facing west;
 - Bradt Road west towards Glenridge Road;
 - End of Hubbs Road and Schauber Road facing west at Broken Arrow Ranch;
 - Moe Road.

Plan Concepts:

- A. Recognize and celebrate Clifton Park’s bounty of scenic roadways.
- B. Help preserve locally important historic sites and working landscapes.
- C. Create a “Scenic Roads of Clifton Park” system of interpretive signs and roadside conservation design guidelines.
- D. Goal to identify and protect 4 to 6 roads/historic sites in the next 2 to 5 years.

Implementation:

1. Expand educational opportunities for residents to learn the town’s history and cultural resources. Develop and implement a town-wide historical and cultural interpretation program, including the mapping of historic places, and design and installation of wayfaring interpretive signage throughout town. Coordinate with the existing or potential new programs at the school districts.
2. Seek out grants to secure project funding to help conserve important structures and scenic landscapes in the area. Support the designation of Riverview Road as a state-designated scenic byway.

3. Develop a voluntary program for the purchase of conservation easements for landowners of important open space areas that offer special cultural resources, historic resources and scenic views.
4. New growth in the vicinity of historic hamlets should reflect the community's heritage of settlement patterns. Therefore, the town's several historic hamlets of Vischer Ferry, Rexford, Jonesville, Grooms Corners, Clifton Park Center, and Elnora, should receive special recognition so that developers building in and around the hamlets have guidelines and real incentives for designing and constructing new buildings that complement the historic context. (Note, this is more about fostering sensitive site planning and contextual design—not about dictating architectural standards.)
5. Develop design guidelines for managing change along Clifton Park's country roads. These guidelines should address the roadside character comprehensively—from highway design and improvement recommendations, to roadside character resource conservation.

Town of Clifton Park Open Space Concept Plan

The open space plan concepts addressed above are graphically summarized in the plan shown separately on the following page. The plan is intended to show the ideas for open space protection, but not all the specific, finally determined sites that may comprise the future Town of Clifton Park Open Space Protection Program. In the development of the open space plan concepts, the open space committee wanted to be sensitive to property owners as this program is intended to be one of voluntary participation in nature. Thus, additional conversations and solicitation of interest from willing property owners is a critical part of implementing this open space plan, and is inherently necessary prior to the defining of any and all individually involved parcels.

Plan's Depiction of Open Space Concepts

This map identifies general areas which have open space resources that may be part of a future land conservation program. This map is intended to show potential areas for open space protection, trail development, etc. However, importantly, the map is not intended to represent a definitive proposal for any particular property. It is intended that the plan should serve as a general guide to establishing priorities for the open space program.

Open space land protection would be carried out in partnership with property owners based on a willingness to participate.

Plan Orientation

To orient the reader in reading the open space plan graphic, a description of the plan's legend is found below.

Overall, what is shown is the entire town. Notably, the town enjoys a southern border with the Mohawk River, and although no specific location is depicted, there is a public desire for improvements to public access to the Mohawk River for diverse recreational use, as well as for different types of boating access. The historic Erie Canal is located in town along the northern shore of the Mohawk River, and is depicted as a pink dashed line.

The plan shows some of the key existing, permanently protected open space areas and parks in a dark olive green color with criss-crossed lines, such as the Vischer Ferry Nature and Historic Preserve, Kinns Road Park, Veterans Memorial Park, Round Lake Reservoir property – the rectangular area directly north of Ushers Road, state forest land at Route 9 in the northeast corner of town, Clifton Common, and parcels under conservation easement held by the Land Trust of the Saratoga Region. In addition, for this map, the golf courses in town are depicted as existing open space with the dark olive green color – but it should be noted that these would not be considered permanently protected open space.

A light blue color enhanced with black dots shows existing school and educational institution properties as a reference. School lands often include recreational facilities and open space.

The light green color with black diagonal slanted lines depicts generalized areas of potential farmland protection areas – and again, is not intended to define final site-specific parcels.

A medium green color with thick wavy black edge treatment shows potential proposed, desired nature preserve areas. The “green fingers” of the Dwaas Kill show the desired Dwaas Kill Natural Area of 500+ acres plus convey the idea of protection along the stream banks as a greenway connection across town. Notably, the Vischer Ferry Nature and Historic Preserve currently exists – but there is an interest in some expansion of this preserve area, hence the black wavy lines around this preserve area. The Stony Creek Reservoir is a desired area for permanent protection – although it is anticipated to be only reachable in the long term. The idea of creating a “small-size” preserve is indicated by a roughly circular shape green area with a black wavy line around it and a red asterisk – to show a preserve could land roughly in a one-mile area in the vicinity of the

asterisk shown. The idea was to give a sense for a rough area of likely where a small preserve would be desirable – and where there is some small, limited remaining opportunities.

Key destinations (different types of activity centers where people are attracted) are noted with a black asterisk symbol. In general, residents want to reach commercial areas, schools, park facilities as key activity centers. Proposed key destinations indicated by a red asterisk are recognized as future destinations – such as future office park development at Tanner Road and Route 146, and a future new, large-size park in the western part of town.

Selected, key historic hamlets are shown as red-broken line circles, open in the middle. A plan concept is to protect the historic hamlets using for example, historic hamlet design guidelines for new development and rehabilitation.

The plan concept of proposed scenic road corridors is shown as a thick black, dash line effect. It is not meant to be all inclusive or definitive of all potentially scenic roads, but does mean to show key, major scenic roadways. Again, the designation of scenic roadways and any guidelines for scenic corridor development would need to be developed as part of plan implementation.

The concept for a new, larger size park is depicted as a thick, black, broken line circle symbol, with a thick, red asterisk symbol in the middle. This symbol combination is meant to convey the need for siting a park area in the western area of town, roughly within 1 ½ miles of the symbol shown. The final siting of a large park anywhere in town would require willing landowners and additional site-level planning and public process, including processing with adjacent landowners.

Finally, the idea that pedestrians and bicyclists should be able to connect east and west across town, north and south throughout town, and connect to key destinations, including parks, preserves and historic hamlets, spread out throughout town, is shown by the yellow circles outlined in black on the plan. Some on-road paths, and some off-road trails exist, and the idea is to continue to support the linking the parts of town for pedestrians and bicyclists. As particular segments of trails, paths and links are proposed, these pedestrian features will require site-specific public planning and design processes, with particular, sensitive concern to landowners and neighbors.

Summary of Conservation Targets

The table on the page following provides a summary of each of these conservation categories, near term (next five year) conservation targets,

and an a partnership goal that suggests target acreage levels for protection by private developers, non-profit, state and federal agencies, and the Town of Clifton Park.

Next Step: Mapping & Analysis for Parcel-Level Resource Rating

A five-step process resource evaluation model was developed by the consultant for the committee, town staff and consultant to use and collaborate upon to evaluate and prioritize potential open space resources to be conserved in Clifton Park. The Clifton Park Resource Evaluation Model is located in Appendix C.

This resource model was set up to establish priorities for action by the Town of Clifton Park Town Board. These types of criteria and understanding will be used to identify the places of highest resource value on and to finalize a future priority parcel list for resource conservation. For example, a working farm with historic farm buildings along a scenic road with a trout-fishing stream that runs on the property would likely be evaluated as a highly important property. For more information on the priority ranking system to be used for future parcel identification and priority, please refer to Appendix C.

Conclusion

The Clifton Park Open Space Concept Plan will help protect critical elements of the community's natural and cultural heritage. With a plan and its shared investment, we will be able to pass these resources on to future generations. With community support and partnership, this open space legacy of natural resources for the future will benefit the lives of current and future generations. All of this may be achieved within a context of also ensuring that an adequate base is available for continued growth of the town. Given this balance, the community is enriched.

¹Water resources recognized as valuable for protection include:

- Wetlands, streams, lakes and a buffer of adjacent lands
- Water supply surface reservoirs, and a buffer of adjacent lands
- Public water supply wellheads and wellhead protection areas
- Aquifers and aquifer recharge areas
- Floodplain protection areas

Wetlands floodplains, and streams for example, benefit from some regulatory protection. While other resources, such as aquifers are not necessarily protected.

² Year-round well sites to ensure that adequate protection is in place for are the following:

- a. Vischer Ferry Preserve
- b. Boyack Road Well system

-
- c. Berry Farm
 - d. Park Lane
 - e. Plank Road
 - f. Kinns Road

³ These secondary systems are located at:

- a. Lapp Road
- b. Park Lane
- c. Oakwood
- d. Barney GC
- e. Meadows
- f. Roosevelt Ct
- g. Moe Road

⁴ Continue dialogue to find an arrangement with the Town of Colonie (Latham Water District) for the Town of Clifton Park to gain interest in or outright acquire the Stony Creek Reservoir lands in the event that Colonie no longer has a need for the reservoir. In addition, protect land parcels at the headwaters and along the Stony Creek for water quality protection. Protect areas immediately adjacent to the Stony Creek Reservoir for future public access and water quality protection.

⁵ Additional Areas to Consider for Future Conservation / Additional Potential Open Space Opportunities for Nature Preserves (large to small):

- "Triangle" of key agricultural lands and environmentally sensitive (wetlands) lands in the southwest quadrant of town.
- Waite Road woodlands area (north and south woodlands). Could link this open space corridor to Rexford.
- Increased public access opportunities on the Mohawk River
- Create increased public access opportunities in Clifton Park along the shores of Ballston Lake.
- Public access at creekside along Tanner Road just off of Route 146A.
- Opportunities for environmental education:
 - Vischer Ferry Preserve
 - At a location in the Dwaas Kill Natural Area
 - Kinns Road Park
 - Round Lake Reservoir lands
 - Historic site Taurusa at Grooms Road

⁶ . Farmland protection priorities would include:

- i. Farms with soils of statewide significance, and agricultural importance.
- ii. Farms that have scenic or historical significance.
- iii. Farms that have environmental significance as a buffer or that include ecological or habitat areas.
- iv. Farms that use sound environmental management practices.
- v. Farms under threat of development pressure and conversion.
- vi. Contiguous agricultural parcels and operations.

⁷ Activity Centers identified on the Open Space Concepts Map (June 2002) (desirable destinations for residents) include:

- 1. Historic Hamlets
 - a. Jonesville
 - b. Clifton Park Center
 - c. Elnora
 - d. Rexford

-
- e. Vischer Ferry
 - f. Grooms Corners
 - 2. Large-scale activity centers:
 - a. Clifton Commons
 - b. Shenendehowa Central School District properties
 - c. Commercial center – shopping mall area west of Exit 9 along both sides of Route 146.
 - 3. Small-scale activity centers:
 - a. Glencliff School
 - b. Okte School
 - c. Intersection of Schauber Road (Route 80) and Ballston Lake Road where it becomes Main Street
 - d. Intersection of Blue Barns Road and Route 146 (small commercial area)
 - e. Intersection of Route 146 and Vischer Ferry Road (small commercial area)
 - f. Intersection of Vischer Ferry Road and Grooms Road (small commercial center)
 - g. Small commercial area east of Lapp Road along Crescent Road up to Exit 8.

CLIFTON PARK OPEN SPACE PROTECTON TARGETS
January 2003

CONSERVATION CATEGORY	NEAR TERM (NEXT 1-5 YEARS) CONSERVATION TARGETS			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ COOP AGREEMENT (LAND TRUST & INTERMUNICIPAL) ➤ STATE AND FEDERAL GRANTS ➤ DEVELOPMENT SET ASIDES 	TOWN INVESTMENT (PURCHASE/ PERMANENT EASEMENT/ FINANCIAL SUPPORT)
	Acres	Miles	Sites/ Roads		
WILDLIFE NATURE PRESERVES & WATERSHEDS	500 -1,000			250 - 500	250 - 500
FARMLAND PROTECTION	300 - 600			150 - 300	150 - 300
PARKLAND & BALLFIELDS	100 - 200			50 - 100	50 - 100
TOWN-WIDE PATHS & TRAILS	6 - 10 miles			3 - 5 miles	3 - 5 miles
SCENIC ROADS, CULTURAL RESOURCES, & HISTORIC PRESERVATION	4 - 6 sites/roads designated and interpreted			2 - 3 sites/roads	2 - 3 sites/roads
PHASE I - 2-to-5-YEAR ACTION PLAN SUMMARY	Acres	Miles	Sites/ Roads	450 - 900	450 - 900
	900 - 1800	6 - 10	4 - 6		

End Notes

PART 6 KEY CONSERVATION TOOLS

XXII.

Multiple practical options, tools, techniques, and strategies for conserving open space and rural character are available to the Town of Clifton Park. To realize long-term conservation goals, Clifton Park may need to take a combination of approaches based on the following mix of incentives, regulations, education, agricultural development, and tourism development ideas. Within this part are listed a selection of the key conservation tools that may be most applicable to Clifton Park's unique situation for the community to consider.

A. STRATEGIES RELATED TO PURCHASE OF LAND OR RIGHTS

Land Acquisition [Purchase of Land in "Fee" (outright purchase)]

CLIFTON PARK HAS ACTIVELY PURSUED SPECIFIC PARCELS OF OPEN SPACE RESOURCES FOR OUTRIGHT ACQUISITION OF THE PROPERTY. THE TOWN COULD PURCHASE LAND OUTRIGHT, OR A LAND TRUST, OR OTHER GOVERNMENTAL ENTITY COULD PURCHASE PARCELS IN ORDER FOR THE LAND TO BE FULLY CONSERVED. A RECENT EXAMPLE IS THE TOWN'S PURCHASE OF THE FORMER ROUND LAKE RESERVOIR, LOCATED IN THE VICINITY OF COUNTRY KNOLLS.

Purchase of Agricultural Conservation Easements (PACE) [Also known as Purchase of Conservation Easements or Purchase of Development Rights]

Another cost-effective way for the Town of Clifton Park to protect scenic resources, open farmlands, and other resources of value to the community would be to encourage the use of permanent conservation easements to protect open land. Currently, Clifton Park has a program for term conservation easements that assist property owners with tax relief. However, these easements are temporary in nature, and do not offer the assurance of permanent resource conservation. It is a helpful temporary measure for landowners to evaluate their long term options. But landowners and the community would benefit alike if the option for permanent conservation easements could be offered.

Permanent conservation easements can be obtained to ensure that open lands remain undeveloped. A conservation easement is a voluntary legal agreement between a landowner and a municipality, or between a landowner and a private conservation organization that is capable of owning land (such as the Land Trust of the Saratoga Region), to protect land from development by permanently restricting the use and development of the property, thereby preserving its natural or constructed

features. The legally binding agreement is filed in the office of the county clerk in the same manner as a deed. The landowner retains ownership of the land, and all of the rights of ownership except the ability to develop the land. The specific restrictions are detailed in the easement agreement.

THERE ARE SEVERAL TYPES OF PERMANENT CONSERVATION EASEMENTS THAT CAN BE DEVELOPED, AMONG OTHERS:

- Agricultural conservation easements
- Open space conservation easements
- Trail easements

A purchase of development rights program approach can be afforded through a combination of means, including: municipal bonds, community preservation fund, private conservation groups' grants, private landowners' and private developers' donations to the community.

Initiate a Purchase of Development Rights Program

The community can take an active role in protecting open space and farmland using conservation easements. The development value of specific parcels of land can be purchased by the town or a land trust. When development rights are purchased, the process is called Purchase of Development Rights (PDR). The cost of PDR depends on the specific parcel. It is calculated by determining the current appraised value of the property and its appraised value as open or agricultural land without development potential. The difference between these two numbers is the value (the cost) of the development rights that will be purchased. Conservation easements are the legally binding document that ensures that once the development rights are purchased, the land remains undeveloped in perpetuity.

GENERALLY SPEAKING, PDR PROGRAMS ARE REGARDED AS BEING FAIR TO LANDOWNERS BECAUSE THE LANDOWNERS ARE COMPENSATED DIRECTLY FOR THEIR CONTRIBUTION TO SOMETHING THE PUBLIC DESIRES. IN OTHER WORDS THE COMMUNITY MUST "PUT ITS MONEY WHERE ITS MOUTH IS." THE LAND REMAINS ON THE TAX ROLLS AND IS TAXED AT AN ASSESSED VALUE THAT REFLECTS ITS RESTRICTED USE. THESE PROGRAMS ARE ALSO POPULAR WITH RESIDENTS BECAUSE THEY ACHIEVE PERMANENT LAND PROTECTION.

In some cases, it is possible for the community and individual landowners to combine the PDR and donation approaches. Under a "bargain sale," the landowner agrees to sell his/her development rights at a cost below their appraised value. Under such an arrangement, the community

benefits by paying less than the full value of the development rights (saving money in the process). The landowner, who still receives cash, may agree to this for altruistic reasons, but he/she may also be able to benefit through reduced capital gains taxes and/or by using this charitable contribution for tax deduction purposes.

Communities have paid for PDR programs in various ways including bonding for the money to spread the cost over a period of years. The Town of Pittsford, in Monroe County, and several communities in the Hudson River Valley have done this in recent years. In some parts of the state, counties are assisting the efforts of municipalities by setting aside general funds for open space protection, and in some cases creating on-going, dedicated sources of funding through a portion of the sales tax or real estate transfer tax. There are also state and federal grants available to assist communities in permanently protecting farmland and open space in this manner.

Table 6-1: Recent Examples of Open Space Protection Initiatives in the Northeast

	Year of Vote Passage	Type of Protection sought.	Value of bonding
Town of Pittsford, in Monroe County, NY	1996	Purchase of Development Rights.	\$ 9.9 million
Town of Penfield, NY	2002	Purchase of Development Rights and Fee Purchase.	\$10 million
Town of Red Hook, in Dutchess County, NY	NA	Scenic Hudson protected 1,000 acres for contiguous farmland acreage through its own funding of a PDR program. Town adopted an Open Space Plan.	NA
Dutchess County, NY	1999	Open Space and Agricultural Protection Fund – to provide matching grants for PDR for private and public funding.	\$1 million
Rockland County, NY	1999	In 1999, the Rockland County Legislature dedicated funding outright for land acquisition.	\$10 million
Town of Warwick, in Orange County, NY	2000	Purchase of development rights ballot initiative for town’s own farmland protection program (aim for 3,000 acres).	\$9.5 million
Village of Ardsley, in Westchester County, NY	2001	Bond for open space and park land acquisition.	\$1.75 million
Dobbs Ferry, in Westchester County, NY	2001	Bond for acquisition and preservation of open space and parks.	\$3 million

Easthampton, NY	2001	Bond for open space acquisition.	\$5 million
Southold, NY	2001	Bond for open space and agricultural lands.	\$2 million

Pursue the state's PDR funds

The New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets has a modest program, competitive among communities across the state, for purchasing conservation easements (development rights) from agricultural lands. The state program is a useful potential source of matching grant funding towards farmland protection projects. A state grant for farmland protection would need to be matched with local funding.

Donation

Landowners can decide to donate a conservation easement to a municipality or, more commonly, to a private conservation organization such as a land trust. The motivation for doing so may be simply to ensure that their land remains undeveloped in the future. Additionally, there can be income and estate tax benefits for the landowner associated with such a donation.

B. KEY TOOLS RELATED TO LOCAL REVENUE AND TAX POLICIES

Term Easement / Tax Abatement Programs

Several communities in New York State provide tax abatements for term easements on particular parcels of open space or farmland. As the name implies, a term easement is a voluntary legal agreement between a landowner and the town that is written to last for a period of years, most commonly for 5 to 20 years. Tax abatements are usually calculated on a sliding scale with larger tax abatement for a longer term easement. If these protected lands are converted to development prior to the expiration of the term, the tax benefit must be returned and a significant penalty paid. While these programs are effective in addressing the loss of open space and farmland in the short term, they simply place these lands on hold. Long-term solutions must still be developed for the future of these spaces.

Clifton Park currently offers landowners a variety of term conservation easement programs. As noted, term conservation easements do not permanently protect open space, but do provide options for landowners. Clifton Park should consider strengthening its term conservation easement program to assist landowners and to conserve open space.

Proposed Open Space District

A bill allowing municipalities to create open space districts is currently under review and discussion among the New York State Legislature. The passage of this bill into state law would enable Clifton Park to consider creating a town-wide open space district as another approach for funding an open space conservation program.

C. STRATEGIES CONCERNING LOCAL LAND USE PLANNING POLICIES AND ZONING REGULATIONS

Traditional Neighborhood Development (TND) - A Town and Country Approach

To stem the tide of large lot suburban development, and to increase the potential for development and open space preservation, some communities are rewriting their plans and land use regulations to allow traditional neighborhood development. In the past, rural patterns of development consisted of small community centers (hamlets, villages, and towns) surrounded by farmland, woodlots, and other open spaces. The “town and country” approach to community development seeks to replicate this traditional settlement pattern.

In designated areas, TND design principles are used to create new, or enhance existing community centers with an emphasis on building placement and design, interconnected streets, the importance of the human (not automobile) scale, integration of transit, and other components of traditional neighborhoods. Within these compact settlements, the creation or enhancement of vibrant, attractive, mixed use neighborhoods is encouraged. These may include single-family homes on small, medium and large lots, multi-family dwellings, apartments, and town homes, as well as commercial and light industrial buildings. These small community centers could be located in appropriate areas or zones in the town. By concentrating well-designed, higher density development in community centers, peripheral areas of open space and farmland can remain rural.

Comprehensive Land Use Planning

An important place for the community to articulate the importance of open space and agricultural land is within the community’s comprehensive plan, also known as a general or master plan, developed to create a long-term vision for the future. Open space and agriculture and all the important resources of the community should be detailed within the current comprehensive plan. If this topic is not covered in depth in the comprehensive plan, it is time for the plan to be updated to explain the importance and value of these resources for the community. Likewise the plan needs to be up-to-date prior to making significant changes to the town’s zoning code.

Infrastructure Policy: Make Sure Utilities/Infrastructure Planning is linked to Community’s Land Use Plan and Open Space Conservation Plan

Any new extension of water and sewer lines through agricultural lands and districts should be evaluated carefully for the development impacts. To limit the types of development impacts on important open space resources, a municipality could restrict

the installation of lateral connections and other options for infrastructure expansion in areas with significant open space resources.

Amenity (Incentive) Zoning

Amenity zoning allows the community to obtain important amenities (e.g. open space lands) by offering developers the flexibility to vary the dimensional, density, or other limitations of zoning regulations. An amenity zoning program would generally function as follows: in return for the provision of specified (in advance by legislation) public benefits, the town could permit some increase in allowed density or other modification in zoning (also specified by legislation). An example of a public benefit that the town might desire would be public access through open lands set aside as part of a conservation subdivision. This access might be used for the development of walking, bicycle, or horse riding trail systems linking different parts of the community. Examples of other public benefits might be the donation of public open space for a park, the donation of public lake access, or the provision of low- and moderate-income housing. The amenities are given to the town at no financial cost in exchange for the incentive. The town would ensure that the amenities gained are “worth” the incentives provided as part of the incentive zoning review process.

Resource Evaluation: Identifying and Prioritizing Open Space Resources. It is important to know what type of resources are located in town, and how these resources are valued. Likewise it is valuable to demonstrate what these resources are. It is necessary to identify resources and assign values for the purposes of further types of designation or priority for protection.

- Environmental Features
- Agricultural Land

Critical Environmental Areas

Local governments have the statutory authority to designate resources as critical environmental areas (CEA). By designating community-valued resources as CEAs, a locality is required to perform a closer analysis of potential environmental impacts under the State Environmental Quality Review Act (SEQRA) environmental review process. This CEA designation is applicable for environmental resources, including agricultural land resources.

Conservation Design

Conservation subdivision design is a form of designing with resource conservation as the primary design consideration. Often, a conservation design results in the effect of clustering the buildings, but the focus is to design with sensitivity to the resource(s). Usually, under a conservation subdivision design ordinance, there is a fairly substantial minimum open space requirement (this might range from 50% to as much as 75% of the original parcel in some places). The most important distinction between clustering and

conservation subdivision is that the quality of the open space created under a conservation subdivision approach is usually much better than what is typically found under a simple clustering ordinance. The main reason for this is that the emphasis of the conservation subdivision approach is on design, and the design begins with the open space resources.

To be most efficient, this simple design process can be managed jointly by the applicant, their design professional, and the reviewing board to ensure that there is general agreement about the design prior to investment in detailed engineering for the subdivision.

Illustrated Design Guidelines

Illustrated design guidelines complement the increased design flexibility allowed by conservation subdivisions (that can result in cluster-type of design) and traditional neighborhood developments. No longer restricted to maximizing the number of X-acre boxes allowed by zoning's minimum lot size requirements, the designer of a subdivision can be more conscious of the natural features of the parcel(s) and the surrounding landscape. It is best for the community to provide guidance in this regard by describing what it values and what it seeks to protect. All types of items can be incorporated into a community's design guidelines depending upon what the community values. Design guidelines are generally informational and collaborative in nature. They provide another opportunity for applicants to understand the community's goals prior to designing a project. Illustrations make these guidelines easier for developers, review boards, and the public to comprehend.

Rural Road Standards

Existing Town of Clifton Park road standards are available for review and consideration to ensure that the desired character of rural areas is maintained. Over-engineered local roads can greatly diminish the rural character of even sparsely developed areas. Yet, standards that were originally created for much higher function streets have found their way into many local street standards even in rural and suburbanizing communities. The creation of a rural road standard does not sacrifice accepted engineering practice but, rather, takes into consideration the actual function and expected volume of local streets.

The Dutchess County Department of Planning, in a publication entitled *Alternative Road Standards* (February 1992), states that, "Smaller, well designed roads have less of everything: less pavement, fewer and smaller drainage structures, and fewer curbs, and as such are less expensive to construct and maintain." Later it notes that, "In addition to cost benefits, more flexible standards can also improve aesthetics. Wide roads with deep bases require extensive grading and cutting of vegetation. Frequently the construction of standard roads leaves the landscape barren, robbing it of its more rural and scenic qualities." Another benefit of a rural road standard is that narrower streets deter speeding. The development of rural road standards is a good complement to the design emphasis of conservation site design.

PART 7 OPEN SPACE PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION

A. Overview

Building on the many community accomplishments to date in open space conservation, this open space plan advances an even broader agenda. As discussed in the previous chapter, this comprehensive approach to town-wide open space planning is a necessary and appropriate response to secure community resources for the future.

Continued and expanded support for open space investment by the community is the key to the success of this program. In the final analysis, conservation of open space is essentially an economic opportunity in the broadest sense of the word. The community's economic, cultural and environmental base depends on sustaining the kind of community character that drew and continues to draw residents and businesses to Clifton Park.

B. Proposed Initiatives to Implement the Open Space Program

As discussed earlier within the plan, in order for the Town of Clifton Park to meet the initial open space conservation program goals in the next two to five years, additional town efforts will be required to protect open space resources. The implementation program is organized into the following five categories of action:

1. Strengthen local financial commitment.
2. Oversight and administration of the open space program.
3. Actively seek all available grants.
4. Strengthen public and private partnerships and agreements.
5. Foster enhanced resource conservation-based design and site layout.

1. Strengthen local financial commitment.

The two town surveys completed for this project demonstrated a broad base of support among residents for increased investment in open space lands by the town. This support is reflective of a broader state-wide support for open space conservation as evidenced by voters support for the \$1.9 billion Clean Water/Clean Air Bond Act. At the local level, communities that have stepped forward with significant local funding have found their investments leverage significant contributions by others. For example, the Town of Pittsford's investment in its open space program of about \$9 million dollars has leveraged \$3.5 million dollars in grants, \$3.5 million dollars in bargain sale donations by participating land owners, and several hundred acres of open space set-asides valued at several millions of dollars provided by developers as part of projects. Clifton Park is well positioned to achieve similar results by advancing its program.

There are several options available to the town to secure the necessary funding for the program. This plan recognizes that the town will establish the actual budget amount for the program as part of its overall financial planning process. As part of the early action

items, a funding strategy will be developed to fine-tune the sources and uses of funds for the program, and to establish a working budget. The following discussion highlights the recommended approach to advancing the goals of the plan.

To accomplish the acreage conservation targets established as part of this planning process, an overall five-year funding target of approximately \$6 million has been estimated for the town's share of open space project costs. Other sources of matching contributions, estimated also at \$6 million in value (though not necessarily all in cash), would come from grants, bargain sale donations (i.e., sale of land at less than full value), and open space acreage set asides provided as part of development projects. The local share of \$6 million would be used for example: to provide cash needed to match grants, etc.; to purchase lands—either outright, as in the case of the Round Lake Reservoir; and/or, to purchase conservation easements—an appropriate tool for the protection of working farmland.

2. Administration and oversight of the open space program.

To implement the Clifton Park Open Space Plan, the open space conservation program will need to be designed and established for plan administration on behalf of the town board and the community. The program will also require an entity being responsible for coordinating all open space program implementation actions on behalf of the town board and open space committee, and be accountable for measuring program accomplishments and informing the town board likewise of any obstacles to program success. Specialized tasks that will need to be accomplished include:

- a) Future Open Space Committee: The Town of Clifton Park must establish a future ongoing open space committee of either existing or new members to provide oversight for the implementation of the open space program in collaboration with town staff, the town board, and others involved in the process.
- b) Staff Support: Implementation of the plan is a substantial task and will require additional human and technical resources to effectively and efficiently deliver the services needed. The town will need to secure additional staff support, either by expanding in-house staffing, engaging outside professional services, or a combination of the two.
- c) Prioritization and Administration: Using the open space concepts in the open space plan, the open space program staff, working with the open space committee and the town board, will further prioritize open space strategies and protection efforts on an ongoing basis in the future. Administration of the open space program will require ongoing coordination with the open space committee, the town board, the planning and zoning boards, and the rest of the town administration.
- d) Working with Landowners: An extremely important process that will require a dedicated local effort for implementing and tracking is the performance of building relationships and negotiating with potential willing sellers and willing

stewards of open space resources and lands in town. This type of outreach can be accomplished through partnership with private, not-for-profit organizations and with assistance from outside programs and agencies – but will benefit from a local commitment to ensure success. This task too, as necessary to advise and support town staff, may require outside consulting and its related costs.

- e) Public Education and Outreach: An important ongoing role for the town will be to continue with its public education efforts and public communications about the town's open space resources, the open space plan itself, and the future implementation efforts. One possible program-related project, an environmental education center, could be sponsored by the town or developed in partnership with other organizations. A local environmental education center for children, town residents and visitors would be an excellent way to make an ongoing commitment to protecting open space resources in the community.
- f) Stewardship: The town will need to establish a land stewardship monitoring program for all current and future town-owned open space resources (land or easements) and link to and coordinate with existing oversight efforts provided by town staff.

3. Actively seek additional outside grant funding.

Funding is available from a variety of sources to assist the community in developing its open space system. The Town of Clifton Park will pursue public and private sources of grants, matching funding, and donations, and professional and technical assistance in working with landowners and the public.

Primary Sources: State and Federal Programs

The primary source of any outside funding can be expected to be from state and federal public sources, such as public grants, funding assistance, and technical assistance. For example, the new Farm Bill is a promising source of potential farmland protection funding, while the New York State Department of Agriculture & Markets' Farmland Protection Program includes partial grant funding towards the purchase of agricultural conservation easements (development rights for farmland). The Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) is a federal program that would be a potential source of funding for parkland and recreation programs and projects.

State Agencies

New York State has one of the most comprehensive open space plans in the country. The state has protected more than 350,000 acres of land over the past eight years. Projects have been funded through the state's Clean Water/Clean Air Bond Act, as well as through the state's Environmental Protection Fund (EPF). The state's EPF is an average of \$40 million per year for open space projects. Clifton Park is in an excellent

position to obtain funding from the state, in particular for lands in the proposed Dwaas Kill Natural Area, listed on the state's current Open Space Conservation Plan.

The **New York State Department of Environmental Conservation** (DEC) will be a key player in protecting such open space as the Dwaas Kill Natural Area, a site listed on the New York State Open Space Conservation Plan, as well as with funding and technical assistance for other preserves and open space initiatives. The DEC administers the Environmental Protection Fund, Clean Water/Clean Air Bond Act on behalf of the State of New York, in addition to other funding programs that may be applicable for implementing land acquisition and improvements for new parks, aquifer protection, waterfront access, and other open space initiatives.

Clifton Park should partner with the **New York State Office of Parks, Recreation, & Historic Preservation** and seek funding through the Clean Water/Clean Air Bond Act monies to implement scenic and historic conservation initiatives, new park development, recreational and nature trails, and other recreation initiatives.

The **New York State Department of Transportation** (DOT) is an existing and future partner in funding and supporting alternative transportation and trail planning, design and construction, and should be a future partner in meeting town-wide trail goals. In addition, DOT is a partner with the proposed Mohawk Towpath Scenic Byway, and may be a key player in trails development with its Transportation and Community System Preservation Program, as DOT is now starting to engage in more public process and input, and define trail design standards most appropriate for the different types of trail projects.

The **New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets** is an existing and future partner in farmland protection efforts, particularly with its matching grant program for purchase of agricultural conservation easements (also known as purchase of development rights), among many other types of funding, benefits, and technical assistance. New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets administers New York's Agriculture and Farmland Protection Program and New York State's Purchase of Development Rights Program (a competitive matching grant program to purchase development rights on farmland).

Future improvements at Vischer Ferry Nature & Historic Preserve should be coordinated in partnership with the **New York State Canal Corporation** and the **New York State Department of State** (Clifton Park is on the navigable waterway of the Mohawk River.) The New York State Department of State (DOS) sponsors Local Waterfront Revitalization Programs, and a Waterfront Rediscovery Program that may be applicable for improving public access along the Mohawk River. In addition, DOS may be a useful partner in trying to forge an intermunicipal agreement between the Town of Clifton Park and the Town of Colonie related to obtaining public access to Stony Creek Reservoir lands and using the resource as an emergency water supply.

The **New York State Department of Health** should be a partner in implementing incentives and initiatives to protect aquifer lands in town in conjunction with the county health department.

Clifton Park should coordinate its planning and implementation of its new Economic Development Zone along a western stretch of Route 146 with the **Empire State Development** for planning, resource management and design funding assistance – and to promote incentives for its resource conservation site design.

Clifton Park has an ongoing relationship with the **New York State Office of Technology** for obtaining the latest state-flown aerial photography in order to perform open space planning for the community.

Federal Programs

For farmers, the **United States Department of Agriculture** (USDA) has a presence in Saratoga County and Clifton Park through the **Natural Resource Conservation Service** (NRCS) and the **Farmer Services Administration** (FSA). NRCS provides financial and technical assistance on farmland protection and conservation, including assistance with grant applications for securing funding for agricultural management practices. The FSA lends money to farmers and provides credit counseling.

- Additional federal open space and agricultural preservation programs:
 - Farm Bill 2002
 - Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) program
 - Federal Forest Legacy Program
 - Federal Wetlands Reserve Program
 - Federal Farmland Protection Program administered by the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service and the Commodity Credit Corporation (CCC).

The U.S. Department of Interior's Fish and Wildlife Service, has reviewed the draft plan (letter dated October 7, 2002) and noted two opportunities for collaboration. One is the potential to provide technical assistance with funding proposals to benefit the Karner Blue butterfly or other protected species. In addition, the agency has expressed willingness to help identify other funding sources for open space planning and protection as well as other assistance through their Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program. (A larger look at funding opportunities from the federal government is available from the Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance at www.cfda.gov and for grants from the Fish and Wildlife Service at [http://grants.fws.gov/.](http://grants.fws.gov/))

County Programs

Recently, Saratoga County announced an open space grant program which is a timely addition to the mix of funding opportunities for the town to partner with.

Private Conservation Groups

In addition to public sources of funding and technical assistance, the town should work with private conservation groups for their help in finding willing sellers for land protection acquisition and easement deals, and to help advocate for state and federal matching

funds. Continue and start relationships with the following groups, including but not limited to: Audubon New York, the Land Trust of the Saratoga Region, American Farmland Trust, The Nature Conservancy, Land Trust Alliance, the Trust for Public Lands, and other environmental and farmland conservation, preservation, and cultural organizations.

Private Donors

Finally, the town should seek private gifts and tax-deductible donations from individual benefactors in the form of cash, open space lands or services.

4. Strengthen Partnerships and Agreements to Protect Open Space Resources

Partnerships are critical to implementing the recommended open space conservation action program. The town should increase consultation and collaboration as necessary to achieve its open space goals. Town government, the open space committee, the planning board, the parks and recreation advisory board, the trails committee, and the environmental conservation commission, will need to communicate and coordinate actively with the dedicated town staff and town board, in an ongoing manner to promote the implementation of the open space program. Amidst the continuing booming real estate market in Clifton Park, the town should work closely to build and maintain relationships with community groups and conservation-minded organizations, and enlist their support and efforts to help develop relationships with potential sellers of conservation easements and lands outright.

a. Town Government

Key players in implementing the Clifton Park Open Space Plan are the town's planning department, open space committee, town board, planning board, environmental conservation commission, parks & recreation advisory board, trails committee, and individual park districts, as well as town departments and special commissions and committees. In addition, as discussed earlier in this Part 7, the town will need dedicated staff to administer its open space program.

b. County Government

Saratoga County Department of Planning and the county's Agricultural Economic Development Staff person should be partners in moving Clifton Park's farmland protection program forward. In addition, relating to farmland protection, the Saratoga County Department of Planning, Saratoga County Agricultural Farmland Protection Board, the Saratoga Farmers Association, Inc., and American Farmland Trust are some of the other key local partners.

c. State Government

The State of New York should be a key partner in assisting the town with the protection of drinking water resources and wildlife nature preserves, particularly the proposed Dwaas Kill Natural Area on the state's open space list.

d. Private Landowners of Open Space Resources, including Farmers

Some of the most important local decision-makers in the future of Clifton Park's open space conservation program are farmers and large-parcel landowners. Farmers and farmland owners deserve a great deal of outreach and partnership discussions in order for the community to attain its desired agricultural heritage conservation goals, while meeting the needs of farmers with working farms to realize their equity and have flexible options. Farmers are currently key stewards of a great deal of multi-valued open space in town and, thus are critical decision-makers in the future of open space conservation in town.

The town should build upon existing incentives and voluntary programs to conserve Clifton Park's most important open space resources. An initial focus should be to improve the town's tax abatement and term easement programs. For example, the procedures for granting an easement should be evaluated and strengthened to include references to the open space plan. The language in the conservation easement local law should be revisited and the penalty section should be reviewed.

e. Business and Industry

Developers, construction businesses, large-parcel and commercial landowners, and local businesses all are potential partners in open space protection, and as discussed below under Item #5 of this section.

f. Land Trusts

Land trusts can be key players in helping with implementation of open space plans regarding developing relationships with property owners and pursuing property owner negotiations, stewardship, funding leverage, and monitoring of protected lands. The Land Trust of the Saratoga Region (LTSR) has been an ongoing partner with the town in land acquisition and construction monitoring projects. The Town of Clifton Park's existing agreement with the LTSR for construction monitoring at specific residential construction sites should continue. In addition, the LTSR owns permanently protected open space, and thus would be an excellent partner in future negotiations for acquiring lands or rights for additional property. Further, the LTSR could also be a partner in future stewardship monitoring as necessary.

g. Tourism Partnerships

Developing tourism partnerships will support and help justify paying for the conservation of local resources. For example, the Southern Saratoga County Chamber of Commerce should be a partner in promoting the unique scenic,

historic, waterfront, hamlets and agricultural heritage that Clifton Park has to offer.

h. Citizens Groups and Not-for-Profits

Citizens groups, civic groups, historic societies, park district associations, local homeowners' associations, the Saratoga Farmers Market Association, Inc., Mohawk River Scenic Byway, Inc., cycling clubs, recreational leagues of all types of sports and age groups, scouting organizations, etc., are also vital to the success of Clifton Park's future open space program. Discussions and dialogue should be held with citizens groups and not-for-profits to obtain further information on locally important open space resources, and to evaluate future decision-making and priorities for protection.

The Friends of Clifton Park Open Space (FCPOS) has been pursuing open space resource conservation goals since about 1996 when FCPOS, the Land Trust of the Saratoga Region, and Audubon New York came together with funding assistance from the Open Space Institute, to develop a natural resources inventory of the town. The FCPOS continues to be an excellent resource on details about lands of conservation values. The grassroots of support and ongoing assistance by such groups as the FCPOS will be helpful in future outreach to property owners, and in developing and supporting educational efforts regarding the town's open space resources.

i. Local School Districts and Institutions

For the pursuit of historic, cultural and scenic resource conservation, the local historical society, local churches and cemetery associations, and the local school district would be excellent partners in developing educational materials, interpretative mapping and signage and site-specific projects.

The Shenendehowa School District owns key properties in the center of town, and thus the future development of these properties for institutional or other use should incorporate conservation-based design. In addition, both Shenendehowa School District and Niskayuna School District (with its Glenclyff School in Rexford) are also excellent bases for promoting locally-based environmental education. The school districts are excellent potential partners in the future development of nature trails at proposed preserves, as well as any future environmental education centers or information programs.

j. Partnering with Neighboring Communities and Regions

The town should also evaluate partnering with local towns and the county for open space protection mutual support. For example:

- Develop new agreements, such as an intermunicipal agreement with the Town of Colonie regarding the disposition of the Stony Creek Reservoir.
- Utilize the Department of State for assistance with intermunicipal agreements and negotiation.
- Negotiate an offer of first refusal with the Town of Colonie for the Stony Creek Reservoir land holdings, in case this land is ever considered for disposal by Colonie.

In particular for trails development, the town should continue to link its town-wide trails to county and regional trails, as well as to neighboring communities' trails, paths and bikeways. Saratoga County's Zim Smith Trail and its Route 9 bike path are examples of county-wide trail systems for Clifton Park to consider as models. The Saratoga County Heritage Trails Committee is a coordinating entity for intermunicipal trails in the county. In addition, a statewide scenic byway is proposed in Clifton Park along Riverview Road – the Mohawk Towpath Scenic Byway – providing an excellent opportunity for a regional, connection from Clifton Park along the Erie Canal both to the east and west.

5. Partner with private landowners and developers to promote enhanced resource conservation-based design for all types of new development

Developers, large-parcel and commercial landowners, and local businesses are other important partners in future open space conservation initiatives. Developers currently are finding market success with applying the current level of “green space” protection in the existing zoning code. Thus working closely with local developers to fine-tune their approaches to subdivision and site design for comprehensive conservation resource design will be a reasonable goal – that may be possible to achieve with supplemental design guidelines, rather than additional regulations. The town should take an “incentive-based” approach for invoking any desired fine-tuning of subdivision and site planning and design, so that developers will voluntarily participate in the enhancement of open space conservation with attractive, valuable new development. Further, the success with which new off-road trails are being constructed as part of new residential developments should be continued and refined – again based on discussions with developers to attain mutual goals.

Develop and introduce supplemental design standards and guidelines for all new development, whether residential single-family or cluster subdivisions, or new or renovation-type of commercial development – to improve and expand the current cluster provision into a more comprehensive “resource conservation” design and site layout emphasis. Understanding that certain percentage requirements are already in place for green space set-asides, the concept for a proposed design standard and guidelines is to ensure a more comprehensive, sensitive site design is employed to maximize the open space resources, while enabling the maximum density for builders and developers.

Thus the issue to be worked out and potentially resolved by site design standards and guidelines is not just the amount of open space set-asides, but the enhanced character of the overall site layout and landscape design. Potentially, with discussion and

evaluation of impacts, development incentives could be exchanged for ensuring the most-sensitive community resource conservation site design is implemented for each new development project.

Corporations with local ties may be very interested in partnering with the town to advance the development of the town's open space system. The opportunities for partnership are tremendous and can be an ideal way for local business enterprises to contribute in a tangible way to the long-term sustainability of the community's natural inheritance.

In addition, the town could develop and introduce the concept for historic hamlet design guidelines, again to guide new development that is sensitive to unique local historic resources – not to dictate, but rather to enhance existing historic features in the community that give the town its character.

Conclusion

The open space plan for Clifton Park has been a positive example of collaboration and community involvement. Contributors to the plan, too numerous to mention here, have come forward from a wide variety of interests to advance a common cause; securing the natural and cultural legacy for future generations. The plan sets forth a clear vision that balances future needs for resource conservation and smart growth. By continuing to work together, this open space vision for the Town of Clifton Park can move off the drawing board and root itself firmly into the landscape of the town.

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APPENDICES

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- Item 1. "Town of Clifton Park Open Space Conservation Survey 2001"
- Item 2. Record of Public Participation Input from Public Meetings

- Appendix B. Town of Clifton Park List of Historic Sites**
- Appendix C. Town of Clifton Park Open Space Resource Evaluation Model 2002**
- Appendix D. Resource Maps, Prepared by the Town of Clifton Park Planning Department, June 2002**

- Item 1. Ecological and Water Resources Map
- Item 2. Recreational, Greenway, and Trails Map
- Item 3. Cultural, Scenic, and Historic Resources Map
- Item 4. Agricultural Resources Map

Appendix E. Fiscal Analysis

- Item 1: “Fiscal Findings & Plan Implementation Strategy,” digital presentation prepared by Behan Planning Associates, LLC.
- Item 2: ***“Town of Clifton Park Fiscal Analysis: Summary of Findings,”*** prepared by Behan Planning Associates, LLC, December 2002.

Appendix F. Public Comments on the Town of Clifton Park Draft Open Space Concept Plan, June 17, 2002.

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