

Friends of Clifton Park Open Space
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Letters to the Editor
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Friends of Clifton Park Open Space (FCPOS) have been involved in lobbying for Open Space Planning and Protection in Clifton Park since 1992. Our organization fully supports the findings and recommendations of the Town's Open Space Concept Plan as presented in the summer of 2002. We urge citizens to attend the Town's public hearings scheduled for first quarter, 2003 and support the acceptance of the Plan by the Town Board.

The Open Space Plan has been a long-standing element of the Town's Comprehensive Land Use Development Plan, i.e. Master Plan. Several sections of the Master Plan (reviewed and updated every 2 years) refer to open space protection, which, until now, has not existed except in this rather vague, conceptual form. Indeed, the Master Plan itself, which contains many laudatory philosophical guidelines, cannot feature prominently in the planning process of the town without the passage of supporting ordinances/legislation.

Now the Open Space Plan has been developed with more specific definitions, tools, and implementation steps. A well-orchestrated public participation effort to incorporate surveys, public hearings, and focus groups continues to unfold. For this reason FCPOS believes it is appropriate that the Open Space Plan become more than an adjunct to the Comprehensive Plan. Ultimately, it is vital that the Open Space Plan be legally integrated into the town's present Master Plan and any subsequent development plans and processes.

The Open Space Plan should represent the core of the Town's Land Use Master Plan. Lands should be identified by priority and what is to be protected needs to be given the same priority as what needs to be developed. With the Open Space Plan as an integral component of the Town's Land Use Master Plan, lands protected from development should be identified along with methods and programs to assure they remain as such. In developing the Open Space Plan, the Open Space Committee has incorporated significant implementation recommendations into the plan. Consequently, it contains methods and procedures for qualifying and quantifying specific parcels in its Resource Evaluation Model.

It is critical to keep this momentum going and insure that the good work done for Open Space Planning is not diluted or "shelved" now. The town's Open Space Committee has done a wonderful job bringing this plan to fruition, and those who participated in its creation should be commended for their efforts. It is now the responsibility of the Town Board to approve the plan and then insist that it be implemented.

The Town Planning Board is a critical player in the continuing development of the town, but it must follow the laws/ordinances enacted by the State and the Town Board. The identification of

open spaces has been done, but the laws are not in place to codify that status. The months and months of work contributed generously by citizens from every interest group in the town must be transformed into a realistic roadmap that can be followed on a daily basis by town staff and applicants seeking to develop new businesses and homes. All groups benefit from knowing ahead of time what their expectations should be regarding land within the town. More importantly, development that accommodates open space requirements invariably increases the value of this development and the quality of life of the town's citizens.

For more information on FCPOS, please visit us as our website: www.cpopenspace.org

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