
FRIENDS OF CLIFTON PARK OPEN SPACE

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December, 2003

Open Space Plan Approved May, 2003

Two Year Extensive Process Bears Fruit

After two years in the planning stages and three public hearings, a new plan for preserving open space received unanimous approval Monday, May 19th, 2003 from the Town Board.

The Plan calls for buying and protecting properties at a cost of \$6M over the next five years, including sensitive parcels of open space, working farms, watersheds and historic landmarks. The Board's vote followed the final public hearing on the proposal. That public hearing in March led to several language changes to the plan, including clarification that participation by property owners would be on a voluntary basis only.

David Miller, co-chairman of the town's Open Space Committee, called the plan a "living document" that would change over time. "This is a good plan. It sets the course for the future while balancing different interests," he said. He also would like to organize two projects for submission to the county, which would offer matching funds if the projects met the guidelines.

The Plan suggests that over a five-year span, the town protect the Stony Creek reservoir, acquire 50 to 100 acres near the Vischer Ferry Preserve, protect 600 acres of working farms, and acquire three parks and 10 miles of trails.

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STEERING COMMITTEE

Frank Berlin, Friends of Veteran's Park

Margaret Catellier, Citizens Assn. for Reasonable Expansion

Gil Kortz, Clifton Park Zoning Bd, past Chair Clifton Park ECC

Ray Seymour, Land Trust of the Saratoga Region

Clark Wilson, Rexford Civic Association

Susan Burton, League of Women Voters of Saratoga County



Now What?....

FCPOS urges implementation of the Plan Goals

After the passage of the Town's Open Space, its hard-working co-chairman, David Miller, said, "It's great news. It came together after two years of hard work by a diverse group." The various interests involved creating the plan will help in the next step: **Implementation.**

Phil Barrett, Town Supervisor, said residents are asking, "Is this the law now? That's not the case," he said. It is important to remember that the Open Space Plan is an advisory document, Barrett said.

The Open Space Plan committee co-chairmen David Miller and Jim Romano will stay on the committee, working with the town to put the Plan to work. In fact, a smaller working group has already started to meet this fall.

Some of the overall goals of the Plan include:

- Creating a Dwaas Kill Nature Area and stream corridor greenway, protecting 300 to 600 acres in the next 2 to 5 years.
- Adding land to the Vischer Ferry Nature and Historic Preserve, 50 to 100 acres in the next 2 to 5 years.
- Working with farmers to preserve 300 to 600 acres of the town's most valuable working farmland.
- Obtaining land for one large (150 acres) and one or two small to moderate-sized (10 to 20 acres) town parks
- Promoting design guidelines for historic hamlets
- Hiring an Open Space Plan Coordinator to apply for grants and seek out important properties.

Town Supervisor, Phil Barrett, said it was the consensus of the Town Board to wait to hire an Open Space Plan Coordinator until January, 2004. Councilman Roy Speckhard said the Board needs to take time to determine what this position will be charged with and whether to consider a current employee for this position or to hire new talent.

FCPOS urges the Town to take action quickly on hiring permanent, professional staff to make the implementation of this Plan both proactive and persistently applied to town development and acquisitions.

Comprehensive Plan Incorporates Open Space Plan Goals

Master Plan calls for an Open Space Overlay Zone

During the July, 2003 meeting to review and pass the Master Plan, wording changes added several reference to the town's Open Space Plan. Additions to the Master Plan call for an Open Space Overlay Zone over the entire town. It lists the five goals outlined in the Open Space Plan: wildlife and nature preserves, a farmland protection program, parks and ball fields, townwide trails and paths and scenic roads, and cultural resources. Strategies for open space preservation were also included.

The Master Plan includes no mandates and does not carry legal weight

A call for the town to pursue waterfront access at the Mohawk River was added to the Plan, as was the need to protect historic resources and promote arts and entertainment that add to the town's quality of life.

Several references to development were altered to include a commitment by the town to quality of life. For example, a portion that calls on the town to "address issues essential to existing development and to encourage future managed growth," was change to "address issues essential to support existing development while encouraging community diversity."

Another passage was changed to support development "as needed". At the same time, the revised plan calls for the

town to encourage growth in the Route 146 Corporate Commerce Zone and to support the Empire Zone Program.

The changes made in the document erase references to plans that provide for cost-sharing by developers for infrastructure improvements. A passage that read, "continue establishment of a formal Capital Improvement Program to budget for infrastructure improvements," was deleted.

Portions of the 30-page Comprehensive Plan that called for the town to consider a regional police force were also deleted.

A townwide sewer district appears to be moved further into the future by the proposed changes which delete a goal to "ensure adequate and affordable sewer facilities to all regions of the town." The new Comprehensive Plan continues to encourage the purchase of privately owned sewer systems by the town, and calls for a future development of a townwide sewer system.

The Plan was also revised to hold off on future review until 2006. It would have been re-evaluated in 2005, but the Comprehensive Plan Review Committee wanted to move the review out of an election year.

By Jennifer Mapes, Reprinted in part from the Community News

FRIENDS OF CLIFTON PARK OPEN SPACE would like your **financial help** in sustaining our research and outreach efforts. If you would like to help in this way, please detach, complete and mail the form below with your check made out to: **FCPOS, P.O. Box 821, Clifton Park, New York 12065**

Thank you very much for your support!

Yes, I want to help Friends of Clifton Park Open Space in their work to preserve the "Park" in Clifton Park

I would like to contribute: \$10 \$20 \$30 \$40 \$50 \$75 \$100

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Please make checks payable to: Friends of Clifton Park Open Space—or—FCPOS

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A Dream of Growth Without Sprawl

By Stephanie Earls, reprinted in part from Times Union
Capitaland Report, 2003

Winter sunset comes to Malta's upscale Autumn Run housing development with blasts of color and distant blares of horn. The northbound cars on the interstate creep along. Commuters lean on horns as they head for points in Saratoga County, which is experiencing some of the fastest growth in the state. This development has the look of many more springing up in the Capital Region.

And why not? The homes are well cared for, the communities safe, the schools good, the taxes comparatively low. There is room to park and breathe. Recreation is a manageable car ride away and the commute won't drive you crazy—yet. The American Dream, right?

It depends on whom you ask.

The reasons for migrating to suburbia have changed. "What initially drove people to Clifton Park was the house. You could get more for less," said Rick Steiner who was among the early waves of people to locate there in the late 1970's. "Now my kids are gone, and I could live anyplace, but I still live here. It's about quality of life, availability of recreation and green space."

An influx of residents concerns some community members though. "If this brings in the number of people they're saying, then we're in trouble," said Todd Fabozzi, a planner with the Capital District Regional Planning Commission.

Sprawl, where commercial and residential development leapfrog over existing communities and into Open Space, can worsen smog & traffic, and create sequestered communities with skyrocketing prices.

He and others who advocate an array of planning strategies that encourage "smart growth" worry that the continued outward expansion could inflict unwanted environmental and social repercussions. Sprawl, where commercial and residential development leapfrog over existing communities and into open spaces, can worsen smog and traffic, and create sequestered communities with skyrocketing prices. If people and political leaders aren't prepared, boom times can send sprawl into overdrive.

Tech Valley, as boosters want this area to be known, eventually could see thousands of new jobs. In Austin, Texas, where Capital Region leaders are looking for a role model, planners say they didn't have the structure in place to handle the growth that companies brought more than a decade ago.

"Having a current, comprehensive plan in place and following that plan are desirable things, but I don't think we've done a good job at either one of these," said George Adams, principal planner for Austin. The Austin metro area doubled in population to 1.2M in the 1990's. "Ideally, you want to get it right the first time,...." he said.

Even if the anticipated boom here doesn't materialize, the Capital Region is already ill-prepared to combat sprawl, Fabozzi said. Despite the appointment by Gov. George Pataki of a "quality communities" task force in 2001, smart growth isn't a top priority for local leaders. "We need to address in this region how we grow, regardless of whether Sematech affects the rate of growth," Fabozzi said. "The state needs to step up to the plate with some serious proposals."

So far, he said, little has been done to change zoning outside the cities, where regulations can keep commercial and residential areas separated and create isolated subdivisions and the "golden mile" shopping meccas of big-box stores, restaurants and malls such as those along Wolf Road in Colonie, Washington Avenue Extension in Albany and Route 146 in Clifton Park.

Fabozzi argues that those restrictions need to change for the growth of more organic, health communities.

"The Capital District has an opportunity to deal with it now before problems come, but there aren't a lot of indicators we're going to do that," he said. "Of course, human nature is that you're got to have the problems first."

"Development tends to want to find the path of least resistance when it's time to go, so a community needs to be ready to accept that growth when it comes knocking,"

Not everyone predicts such dire consequences. "The idea that new growth is coming is a good thing," said George Leveille, former head of Albany's economic development efforts. "The key to the issue is preparation. Those communities that prepare themselves and begin to plan, asking, 'What's our vision for the future?' will do well."

A regional response would be the best way to avoid more sprawl, but that is a hard thing to do, Leveille conceded. "Development tends to want to find the path of least resistance when it's time to go, so a community needs to be ready to accept that growth when it comes knocking," he said. ♦

CALENDAR OF EVENTS.....

FCPOS GENERAL MONTHLY MEETING

Place: Shenendehowa United Methodist Church

Date: Thursday, December 18th, 2003

Time: 7:30 PM

Speaker: **Eric Hamilton, Chairperson of the Town's Trails Committee will be speaking about the present and future town trails.**

CLIFTON PARK TOWN BOARD MEETINGS

Place: Clifton Park Town Hall, 1 Town Hall

Date: Every Monday Night

Time: 7:00 PM

CLIFTON PARK PLANNING BOARD MEETINGS

Place: Clifton Park Town Hall, 1 Town Hall

Date: 2nd & 4th Tuesday Nights

Time: 7:00 PM

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Friends of Clifton Park Open space

P.O. Box 821

Clifton Park, New York 12065

www.cpopenspace.org

ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED

Approval, cont....

Results from surveys conducted by the town indicated residents would be willing to devote a mean of \$29.28 a year per household, or a total of \$322,080 to initiate the programs.

Taxes would not be affected because the money would come from Clifton Park's share of county sales-tax revenues, officials said. Clifton Park does not have a town property tax, which means the funds would come from a combination of budget surplus and interest earnings.

The Plan's critics say it does not do enough to protect sensitive environmental areas, and that the added costs of maintaining the properties would be passed on to taxpayers.



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