

Open Space Plan and Open Space Program: An explanation

Quite often the terms **Open Space Plan** and **Open Space Program** are used interchangeably. This document describes them specifically as components of a comprehensive approach towards open space preservation. An Open Space Plan is a document based on geographic realities and public input and should result in an ongoing Open Space Program, which consists of people and money to put the plan into action.

What is an Open Space Plan?

An **Open Space Plan** geographically identifies open space preservation values and priorities for preserving community-valued open space, usually involving mapping. The plan should include the following elements:

- A Natural Resource Inventory (NRI): compiles, describes, and maps important natural resources within the community. Resources can include woodlands, grasslands, wildlife habitat, farmland, water resources, wetlands, greenways, areas of historical and/or cultural significance, etc.
- Open Space Preservation map: uses the NRI to prioritize the community's most important areas for preservation, so that the Town can take action on preservation opportunities, working with willing landowners.
- Goals and Strategies to be implemented via the community's open space program.

What is an Open Space Program?

Once an Open Space Plan is fully developed and approved by the Town Board, an **Open Space Program** is needed to administer the plan, including people and funding to fulfill the goals. A complete Open Space Program should include the following elements:

- An Open Space Plan (as above) to be used to guide the Program's priorities and actions.
- Administration of funding mechanisms, in order to make purchases of land or land interests, such as Purchase of Development Rights.
- Working partnerships with conservation-minded public and private entities that can assist with Plan implementation, such as land trusts, etc.
- An Open Space Preservation Committee or Board consisting of community members with conservation, agricultural or natural resource backgrounds to help implement the Plan and recommend preservation opportunities to the Town Board as they become available.
- Continuing review and revision of the Plan over time to keep the maps, priorities and goals of the Plan relevant and consistent with public desires for the community going forward.