

TOWN OF BETHLEHEM Farmland and Open Space Protection Plan



Public Meeting: October 23, 2008

Tonight's Agenda

- Background on town planning efforts
- ***Existing Conditions of Resources***
 - *Recreation/Pathways, Natural Systems, Agriculture/Farmland*
- Small discussion groups
 - *Goal Development*
- Reconvene and share results

Note: Space available for comments on back of agenda

Planning Process

- Farmland and Open Space Protection Plan
 - 2005 Comprehensive Plan recommendation
 - Open Space Plan
 - Citizens Advisory Committee on Conservation (CACC)
 - Agriculture and Farmland Protection Plan
 - Agriculture and Farmland Study Advisory Committee

Guiding Principles

- *Work with willing landowners*
- *Bottom-up Process*
- *Coordinate with other Planning Initiatives*
- *Define the term “Open Space”*
- *Town Staff, CACC as Advisory Committee and consultants with regional expertise*
- *Environmental Sustainability, Fiscal Responsibility, and Respect of Property Owner’s Rights*
- *Utilize existing mapping resources*

Draft Open Space Definition

- CACC working definition:

“Land that is not intensively developed for residential, commercial, industrial or institutional use. It serves many purposes, whether it is publicly or privately owned. It includes agricultural and forest land, community gardens, undeveloped shorelines, undeveloped lands that provide scenic value, public/private parks and recreation fields, walking and bicycling pathways or corridors, and nature/wildlife areas. It also includes water bodies such as rivers and streams. Its occurrence enhances the community character and quality of life for the Town of Bethlehem.”

Public Orientation Meeting - May 15, 2008

- Goal was to listen/learn about the community's perception of open space
- Break-out Groups
 - Guiding Principles
 - Issues/Needs
 - Definition Terms
 - Vision Statement Terms

Public Orientation Meeting - May 15, 2008

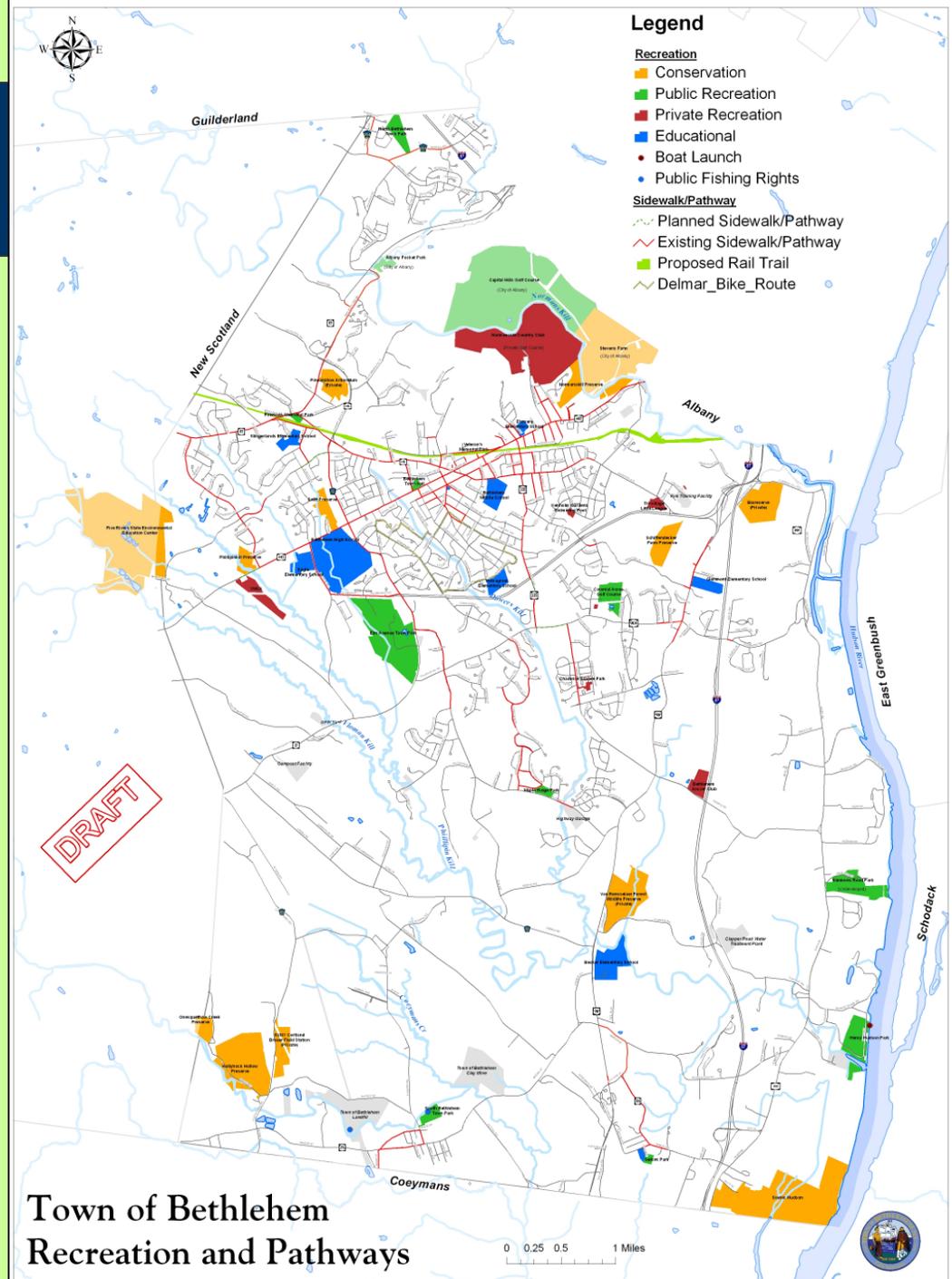
- Issues/Needs
 - Mix of Parks to walk to
 - Connect current open space – walk/bike
 - Safe routes for bikers and walkers
 - Trails and recreation areas are liability issues
 - Manage stormwater runoff to protect undeveloped lands
 - Protect river valley, stream corridors and Hudson River waterfront
 - Economic resources that allow farmers to continue farming
 - Need to balance growth and open space
 - Support local farmers and businesses
 - Provide network of natural spaces

Public Orientation Meeting - May 15, 2008

- Issues/Needs results in 3 Topics:
 - Recreation and Pathways
 - Natural Systems
 - Agriculture and Farmland
- Issues/Needs results in:
 - Liability
 - Trespassing
 - Encroachment
 - To be addressed through CACC
 - Discussed in Report

Recreation and Pathways

- Recreation
 - Public & Private
- Conservation
- Education
- Pathways



Recreation and Pathways

- Public Recreation
 - 426 acres (1.38% of TOB land area)
 - Elm Ave, Henry Hudson, Maple Ridge, S. Bethlehem, N. Bethlehem, Selkirk, Firefighters Memorial Park
 - Colonial Acres Golf Course
 - Schools also provide recreation facilities
 - Fishing access along Onesquethaw Creek



Recreation and Pathways

	Elm Avenue Park	Henry Hudson Park	Maple Ridge Park	S. Bethlehem Park	N. Bethlehem Park	Selkirk Park	Firefighters Memorial Park	Town Hall	Colonial Acres
Area (acres)	221.50	63.35	7.00	10.84	22.70	4.1	4.14	1	32.00
Swimming Pool	YES								
Pavilion	YES	YES	YES						
Tennis Courts	YES					YES			
Basketball Courts	YES		YES	YES	YES	YES			
Baseball Fields	YES								
Softball Fields	YES	YES		YES		YES			
Soccer Fields	YES			YES					
Lacrosse Fields	YES								
Playground	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES		YES	
Volleyball Courts	YES	YES							
Golf Course									YES
Gazebo	YES	YES							
Boat Launch		YES							
Fishing		YES		YES					
Horseshoe Pit	YES	YES							
Shuffleboard	YES	YES							
Picnic Area	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES			
Grassy Play Area	YES	YES	YES	YES		YES	YES	YES	
Trails	YES		YES		YES				
Dog Park	YES								
Restrooms	YES	YES							
Portable Toilet	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES			YES

Recreation and Pathways

- Private Recreation
 - 341 acres (1.10% of TOB land area)
 - Normanside Country Club, Tri-Village Little League, Bethlehem Soccer Club



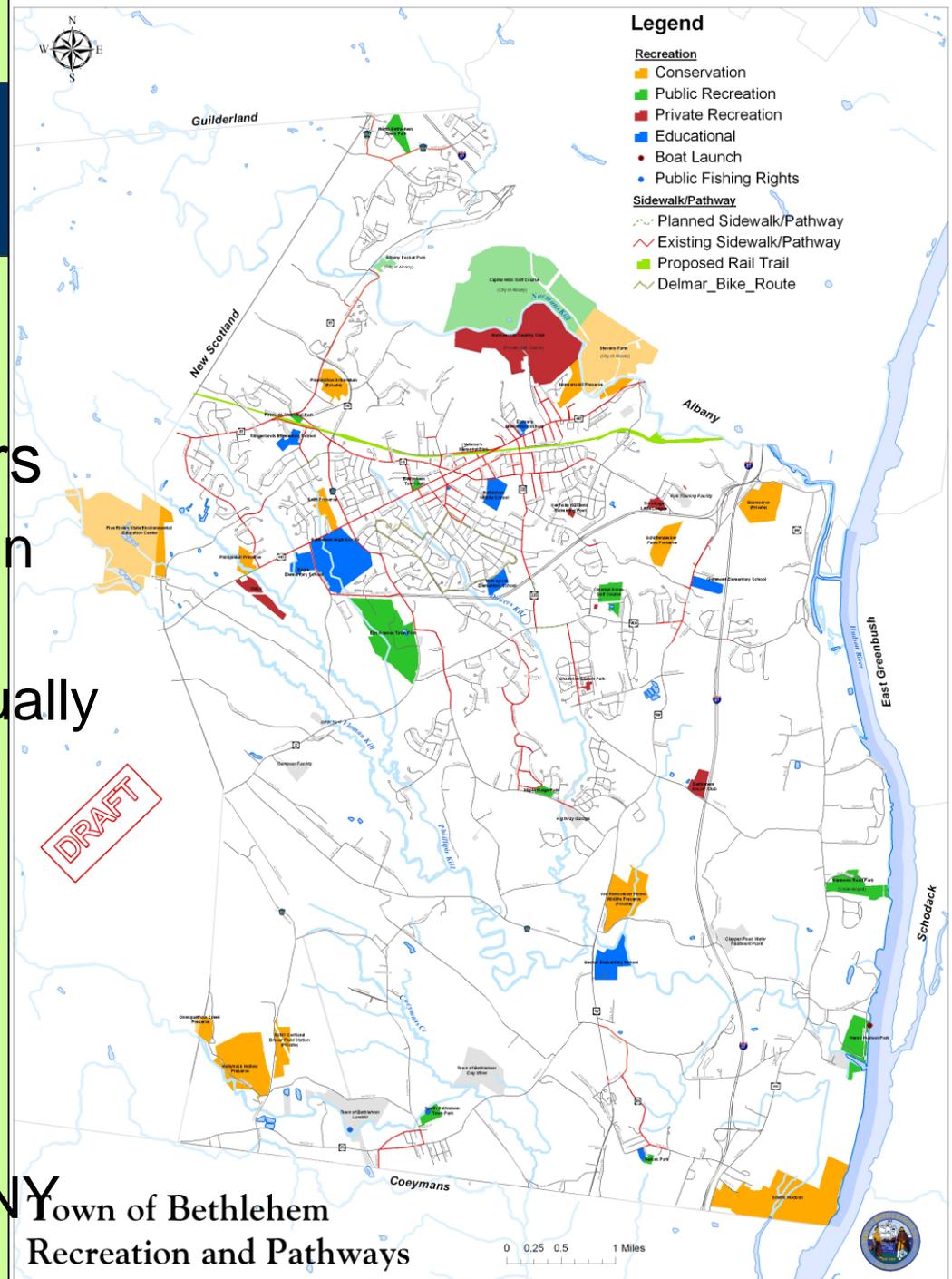
Recreation and Pathways

- Conservation
 - Lands set aside by private, not-for-profit, and State entities for protection from future development not specifically intended for recreation purposes, although passive recreational opportunities may be available
 - 788 acres of conservation lands (2.55% of TOB)



Recreation and Pathways

- Conservation
 - NYS DEC Five Rivers
 - 445 acres (35 acres in TOB)
 - 100,000 visitors annually
 - Wildlife preserve and popular birding area
 - Land Trusts
 - MHLC
 - Scenic Hudson
 - Audubon Society of NY



Recreation and Pathways

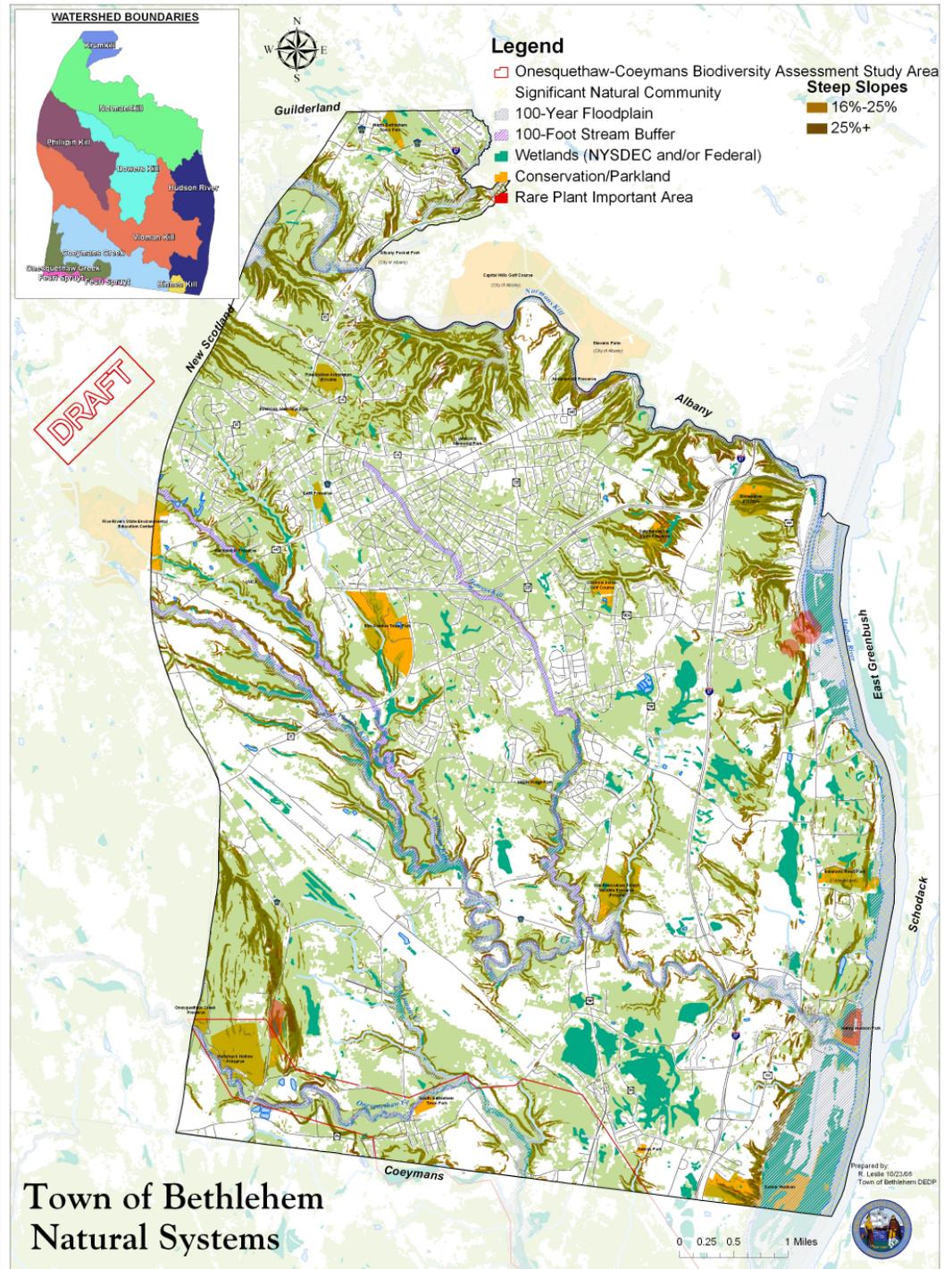
- Pathways

- Sidewalks, multi-use paths, bicycle lanes, widened shoulders
- 50 miles
- Proposed Rail-Trail - 9 miles (5-Miles in TOB)



Natural Systems

- Forest Cover
- Wetlands
- Waterbodies
- Steep Slopes



Natural Systems

- Forest Cover

- Ability of wildlife to travel, find food and mates, and conduct daily activities
- Urban forest matrix in the developed areas of town

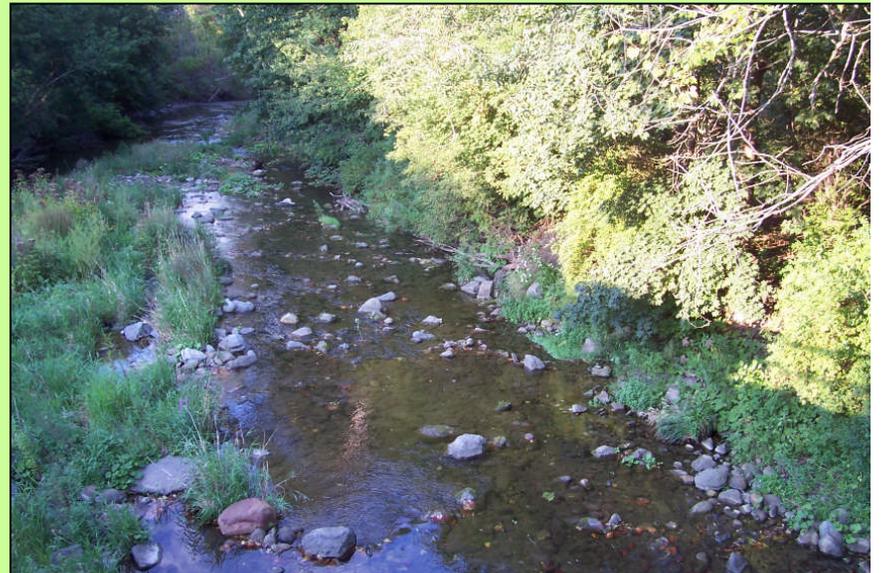
- Wetlands

- 3380 acres of mapped wetlands
 - NYS DEC (State) – 680 acres
 - ACOE (Federal) – 2700 acres
- Moderate stream flows during storms
- Maintain water quality by absorbing pollutants
- Valuable habitat for birds, fish, and other wildlife



Natural Systems

- Streams and Waterbodies
 - 10-miles Hudson River waterfront
 - 106 miles of streams associated with 6 watersheds
 - Regulations prohibit development within 100-feet of banks of streams
 - Vegetated forest lands adjacent to streams help to maintain water quality, reduce erosion, and flooding



Natural Systems

- Natural Features

- Hudson River Estuary and Tidal Wetlands



- Extensive freshwater tidal river systems in the northeast
 - Nursery grounds for fish and shellfish species
 - Nesting sites and migration stops for birds
 - Sources of nutrients to the food chain



- Rare Plant Species

- Six species found (Two species found in Henry Hudson Park)
 - Nine species lost

- Rare Animal Species

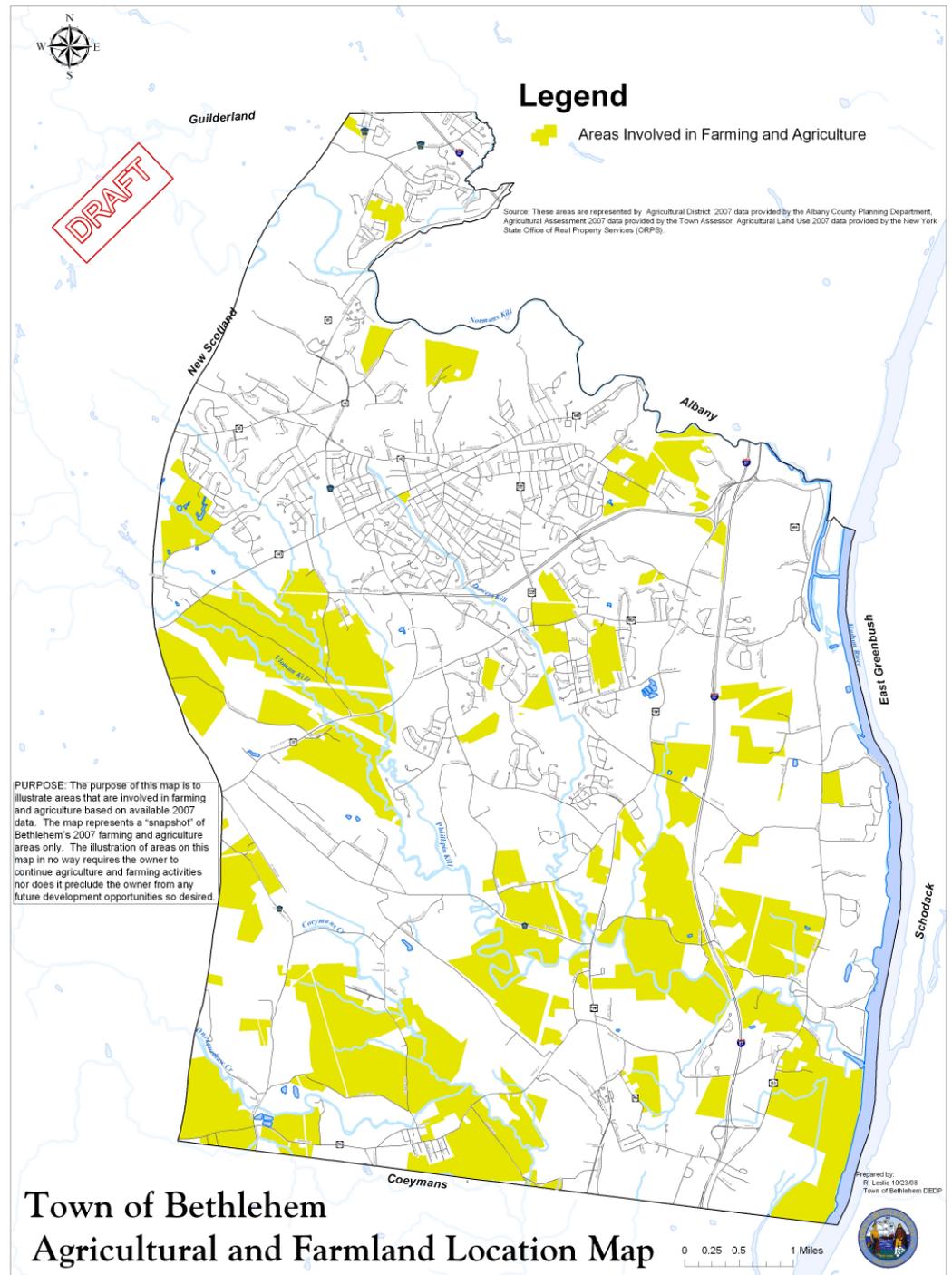
- Karner blue butterfly and Henslow's sparrow lost since 1980

Natural Systems

- Why are Natural Systems important:
 - Forests, wetlands, and stream corridors work together to keep water supply clean and abundant
 - Natural areas can provide economic benefit through increased tourism and reduced cost of town services
 - Plant and animals and the intact landscapes that support them are an important part of community character and quality of life
 - Nature keeps your family healthy – by cleaning air, cleaning water, lowering stress

Agriculture and Farmland

- Land Use
- Agricultural District
- Agricultural Assessment

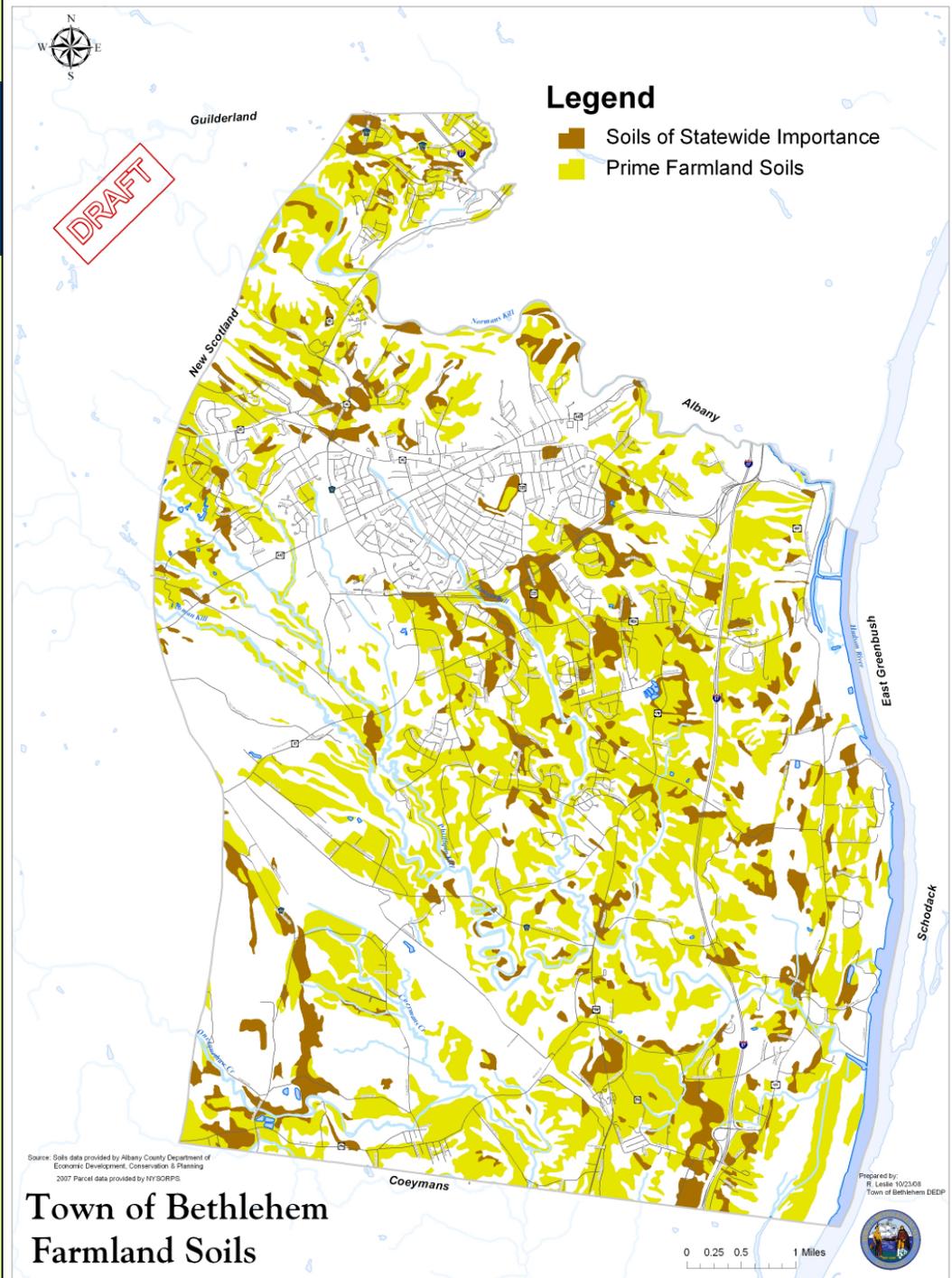


Agriculture and Farmland

- 2007 Data
 - 6000 acres involved in agriculture and farming
 - 60 farms
 - ½ of all farms are rented
 - Crops – mainly hay and corn, some vegetable
 - Raising livestock
 - Greenhouse operations
 - 90 properties receive agriculture assessment
 - 160 properties in the Agricultural District
 - Farming does not reflect primary mean of income

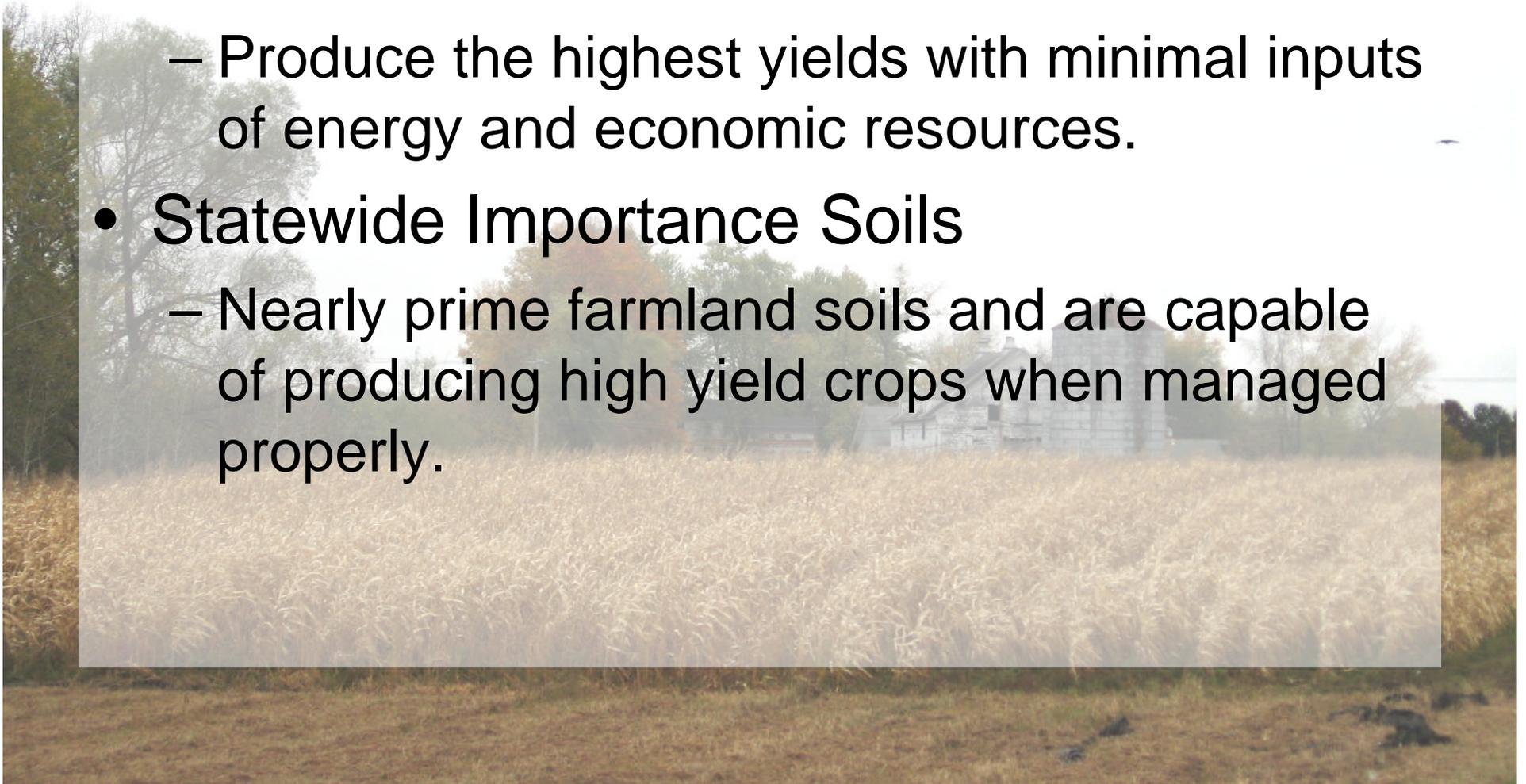
Agriculture and Farmland

- Soils
 - Statewide Importance
 - Prime Farmland



Agriculture and Farmland

- Prime Farmland Soils
 - Produce the highest yields with minimal inputs of energy and economic resources.
- Statewide Importance Soils
 - Nearly prime farmland soils and are capable of producing high yield crops when managed properly.



What is a GOAL?

“Broad statements of where we want to be
- an end state”.



Goal Examples

- Recreation/Pathways
 - Provide access to parks and conservation areas from neighborhoods
 - Increase the amount of pocket parks/neighborhood scale parks
 - Provide access opportunities for fishing, boating and other types of outdoor recreation



Goal Examples

- Natural Systems
 - Minimize fragmentation of large areas of forest, wetlands and other natural communities
 - Preserve links between natural communities
 - Increase public understanding of the values of natural systems



Goal Examples

- Agriculture and Farmland
 - Increased opportunities to purchase locally grown produce
 - Provide incentives for landowners to continue farming and agriculture activities



Group Discussion (1 hour)

Group No. on bottom of agenda

- Group 1 (Room 101)
- Group 2 (Room107)
- Group 3 (Auditorium Rear Right)
- Group 4 (Auditorium Rear Left)
- Group 5 (Auditorium Front Left)
- Group 6 (Auditorium Front Right)

Some Ground Rules

- Give everyone a chance to speak
- Give brief answers – a few words
- Respect everyone's opinion
- Listen when people are talking

Next Steps and Conclusions

- Conclusions
- Summary of meeting available on town website
- Next Steps
 - CACC develop recommendations
 - Present to public and Town Board – 1st quarter 2009
- Leave comments in comment box
- Feel free to contact us with questions or comments

Thank You!

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