

Recommendations on Open Space Needs and Opportunities



PUBLIC MEETING

JULY 1, 2009

TONIGHT'S AGENDA



- Planning Process
- Public Input
- Goals
- Recommendations/Implementation
- Questions and Comments



PLANNING PROCESS



- Introduction

- Tier 2 recommendation of 2005 Comprehensive Plan
- Farmland and Open Space Protection planning effort initiated February 2008
- Town Board tasks DEDP with preparing Open Space Issues, Needs and Opportunities Assessment
- Two components:
 - ✦ Open Space Protection
 - ✦ Agricultural and Farmland Protection
- Farmland component funded with grant from NYS Dept. of Agriculture and Markets



PLANNING PROCESS



- **Study Purpose**
 - First phase in Town open space planning effort
 - Conduct assessment of issues, needs and opportunities
 - Establish a framework for open space planning

- **Participants**
 - Department of Economic Development and Planning
 - Citizens Advisory Committee on Conservation
 - Behan Planning and Design
 - Town Residents



PLANNING PROCESS



- **Guiding Principles**

- Process guided by Comp Plan framework for open space protection
 - ✦ “Work with willing landowners to conserve quality open spaces ... and create a network of open lands”
- Bottom up process that emanates from public input
- Define “open space” in context of TOB wants/needs/priorities
- Coordinate with and consider other Town planning initiatives
- Utilize existing mapping resources to document conditions
- Implementation to consider guiding principles of Comp Plan
- Process led by Town staff with CACC as advisory committee



PLANNING PROCESS



- **Key Definition**

- *Willing Landowner* – a property owner who voluntarily decides to participate in a program related to open space protection or preservation and/or one who gives approval for his/her property to be included in the implementation of such a program or to have action taken thereon.

- **Key Points**

- Voluntary participation
- Willing landowners



PLANNING PROCESS



- **Inputs to Process**
 - Inventory existing conditions / open space resources
 - Three public meetings
 - Monthly CACC meetings
 - Public input at CACC meetings
- **Outcomes**
 - Definition of open space
 - Identification of issues, needs and opportunities
 - Development of goals
 - Development of recommendations



PUBLIC INPUT



- **May 2008 Orientation Meeting**
 - Define open space
 - Develop vision for open space
 - Identify needs and opportunities
- **October 2008 Landowner Meeting**
 - Meet with large acreage landowners
 - Provide overview of conservation tools and land management options
 - Solicit concerns / landowner issues
 - Identify potential opportunities for open space and farmland protection
- **October 2008 Topics Meeting**
 - Existing conditions presentation
 - Develop open space goals



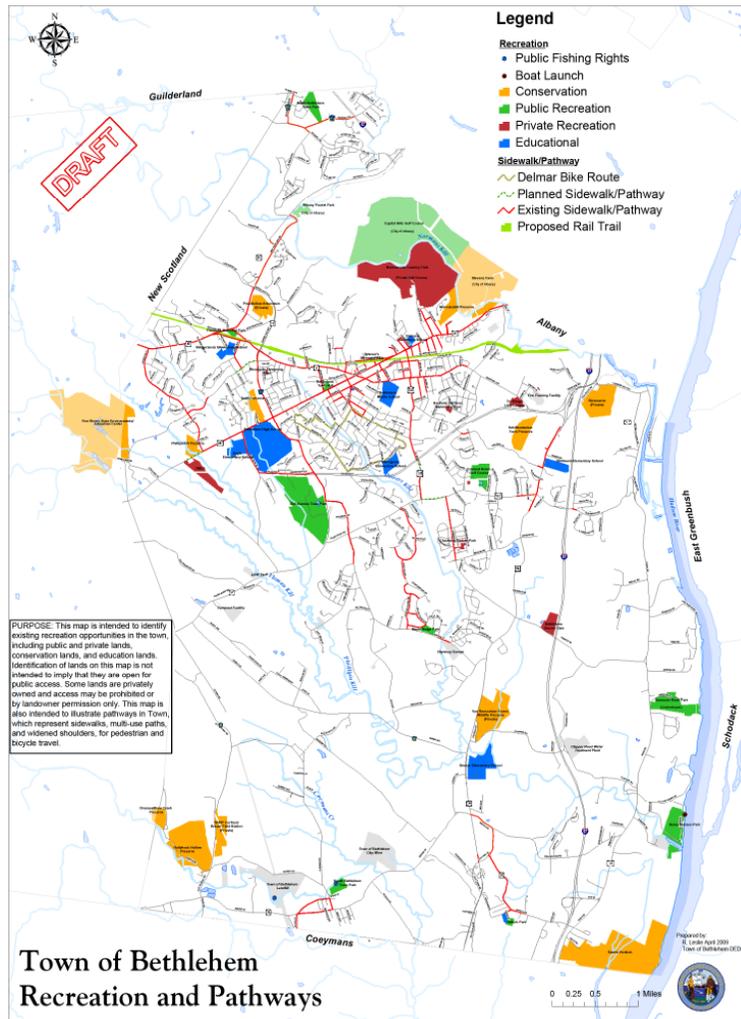
PUBLIC INPUT



- **May 2008 Orientation Meeting**
 - Recreation and Pathways
 - Natural Systems
 - Agriculture and Farmland
 - Land Stewardship
- **October 2008 Landowner Meeting**
 - Respect for Private Property
 - Affordability of Large Acreages
 - Land Asset/Estate Planning
- **October 2008 Topics Meeting**
 - Development of Goals



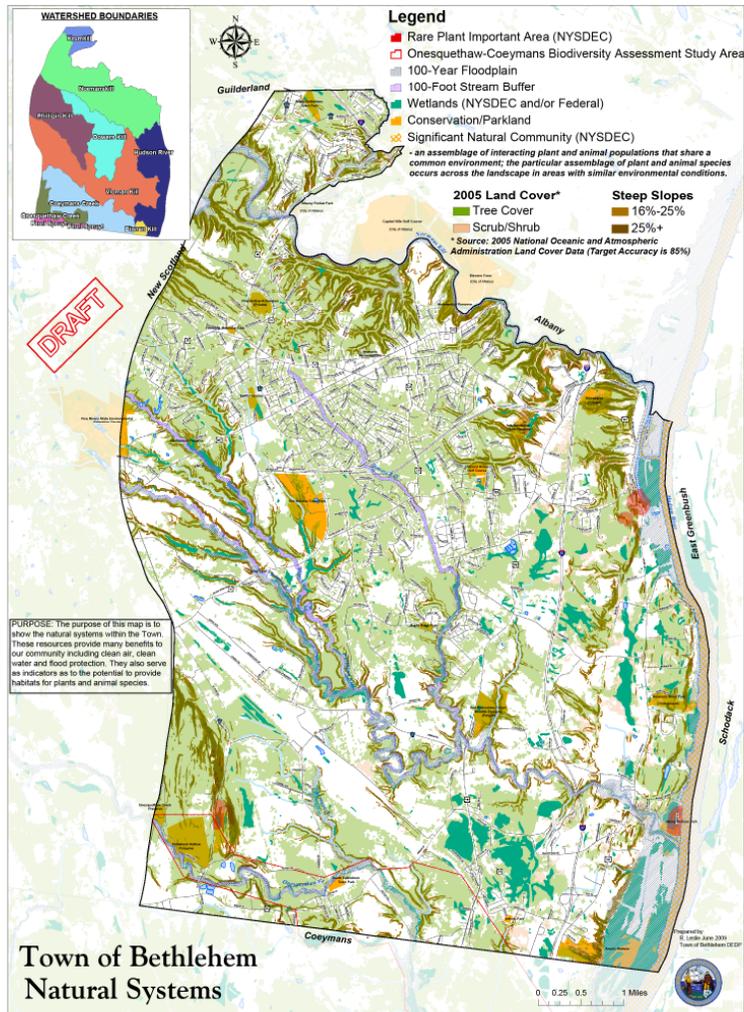
BETHLEHEM OPEN SPACE RESOURCES



- Recreation and Pathways
 - Public and Private Recreation
 - Conservation Lands
 - Education Lands
 - Pathways
 - ✦ Sidewalk
 - ✦ Shared-use path
 - ✦ Bicycle Lane
 - ✦ Striped/widened shoulder



BETHLEHEM OPEN SPACE RESOURCES



• Natural Systems

Forest Cover

Wetlands

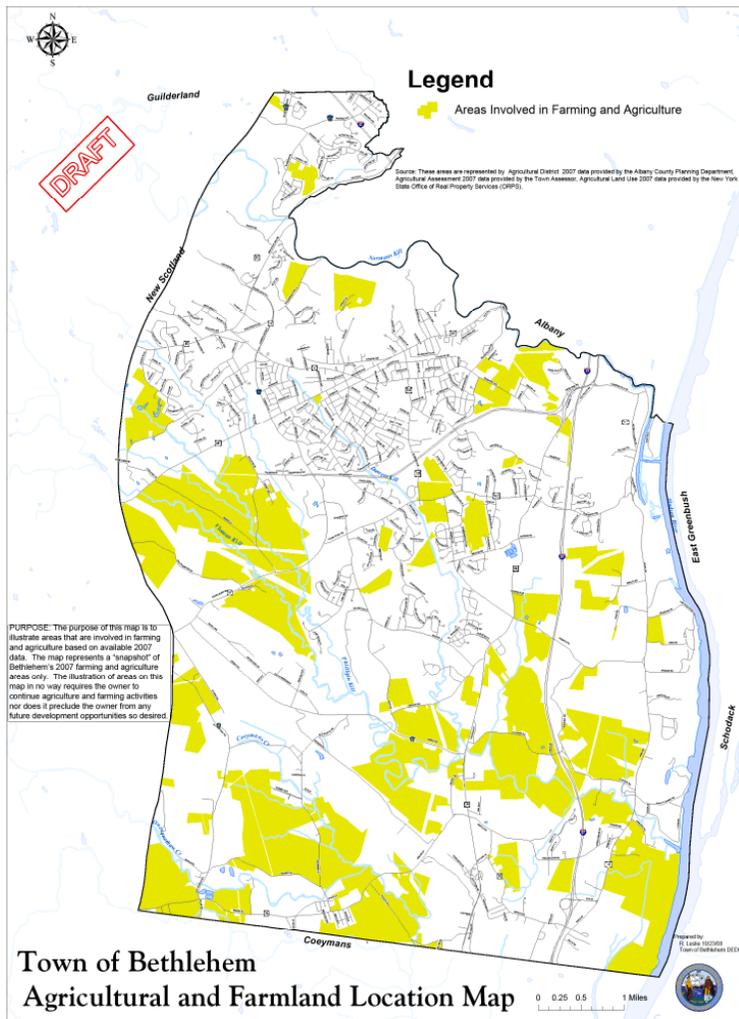
Surface water

Floodplains

Topography



BETHLEHEM OPEN SPACE RESOURCES



- Agriculture and Farmland
Agricultural Districts
Agricultural Assessment
NYS ORPS Parcel Data



OPEN SPACE ISSUES AND NEEDS



Town of Bethlehem

Comprehensive Plan Implementation Program

Farmland and Open Space Protection Plan

**OCTOBER 23, 2008
PUBLIC MEETING
"TOPICS" WORKBOOK**

ISSUES AND NEEDS RESULTS (May 15 Public Meeting)

GOAL DEVELOPMENT



OPEN SPACE ISSUES AND NEEDS

RECREATION AND PATHWAYS

Recreation and Pathways is a topic area that was identified through the issues and needs exercises conducted during the May 15 Public Meeting. The responses received from the public indicated this is an area of interest that should be further explored during the development of the Plan. The responses related to recreation and pathways are listed below.

Issues/Needs

- Parks/recreation opportunities (soccer field/golf course)
- Lack of parks you can walk to
- Need for small pocket parks - walk-able
- Connecting existing open space - walk/bike
- Mix of parks you can walk to; some open space
- Balance between growth and parks
- Public access, public biking paths
- Bike-friendly infrastructure
- Off-road trails and transportation options
- Safe routes for bikers and walkers
- Trails and recreation areas are liability issues
- Protect and use ravines for recreation, as appropriate



OPEN SPACE GOALS



- **Recreation and Pathways**
 - ✦ Create an interconnected transportation network that is safe for non-vehicular travel
 - ✦ Increase public understanding regarding the “share the road” concept for bicyclists, pedestrians, and motorists
 - ✦ Encourage the construction of pathways that are context sensitive to their surroundings and compatible with adjacent lands



OPEN SPACE GOALS



- **Recreation and Pathways**
 - ✦ Increase opportunities for residents to access passive and active recreational opportunities offered by Town's natural resources
 - ✦ Support the development of new pocket parks, neighborhood scale parks and community gardens where they are needed
 - ✦ Maintain existing Town park facilities
 - ✦ Monitor future growth for its impact on park needs



OPEN SPACE ISSUES AND NEEDS

NATURAL SYSTEMS

Natural Systems is a topic area that was identified through the issues and needs exercises conducted during the May 15 Public Meeting. The responses received from the public indicated this is an area of interest that should be further explored during the development of the Plan. The responses related to natural systems are listed below.

Issues/Needs

- Conserve wildlife/natural habitat/native species
- Protect water - Lakes/streams/rivers
- Manage stormwater runoff to protect undeveloped lands
- Identify what we have (i.e. soils, species, plants, animals)
- Protect natural resources (including geologic)
- Expand size of current lands (Buffer Five Rivers)
- Maintain ecological benefits - watershed, habitat
- Protect animal and plant diversity
- Network of natural spaces
- Protected river valleys and waterfront natural areas
- Green lungs - clustered development set in undeveloped spaces
- Preserve land that is beneficial for wildlife and people
- Provide access to water bodies
- Preserve scenic views
- Protect ravines; use for recreation as appropriate



OPEN SPACE GOALS



- **Natural Systems**

- ✦ Maintain and improve the quality and quantity of the town's surface and ground waters
- ✦ Working with willing landowners, create and preserve linkages (interconnectivity) between natural areas
- ✦ Encourage low impact development
- ✦ Be good stewards of our natural resources
- ✦ Maintain and improve the Town's "urban forest"



OPEN SPACE ISSUES AND NEEDS

AGRICULTURE AND FARMLAND

Agriculture and Farmland is a topic area that was identified through the issues and needs exercises conducted during the May 15 Public Meeting. The responses received from the public indicated this is an area of interest that should be further explored during the development of the Plan. The responses related to agriculture and farmland are listed below.

Issues/Needs

- Year round farmers market
- Flexible tax structure for small farmers
- Farmers can't afford to keep doing what they are doing
- Economic resources that allow farmers to continue
- Need to support farmers
- Agri-tourism opportunities
- Future generations don't want to farm
- Support local farmers and businesses/future value of farmland



OPEN SPACE GOALS



- **Agriculture and Farmland**

- Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan**

- ✦ Agricultural and Farmland Study Advisory Committee
 - ✦ August 5, 2009 Public Meeting



OPEN SPACE GOALS



- Land Stewardship

- ✦ Educate and inform Town residents about respect for private property
- ✦ Increase prosecution of illegal activities such as dumping of trash/debris, trespassing, ATV use, and encroachment on private lands
- ✦ To the extent possible, consider, avoid, and mitigate impacts to landowners when undertaking new infrastructure and development projects; consider retrofit of problem areas, where feasible and appropriate



OPEN SPACE GOALS



- **Land Stewardship**

- ✦ Provide information and incentives to landowners to sustain ownership of undeveloped/open land within the Town and on options available for land management
- ✦ Promote educational activities geared towards respect of natural systems by all residents



RECOMMENDATIONS



Four Major Actions

- Open Space in Development
- Connections to Nature and Other Places
- Land Conservation
- Open Space Financing



RECOMMENDATIONS – SHORT TERM



- **Pathways Committee**

PaTHs 4 Bethlehem (Pathways to Hamlets, Homes, and Healthy Hearts)

- **Develop Land Feature Criteria to Rate Preservation Opportunities**

- **Survey Residents**



RECOMMENDATIONS – SHORT TERM

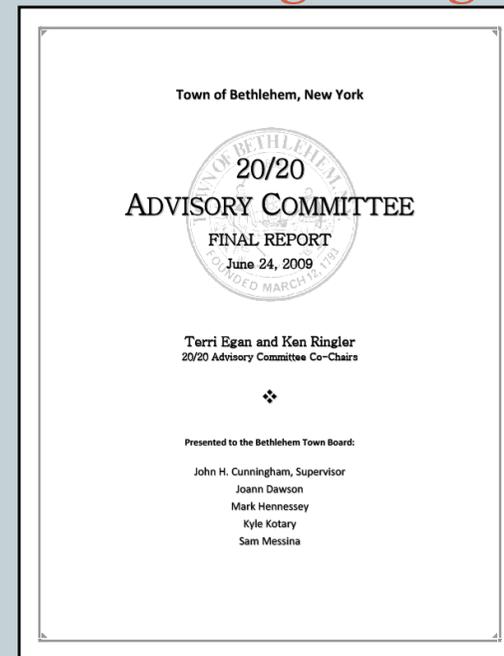
- **Strengthen Town Code**

Consult Town Police Department

Explore ways to provide assistance with property encroachment

Prepare informational brochures and articles regarding trespassing and encroachment

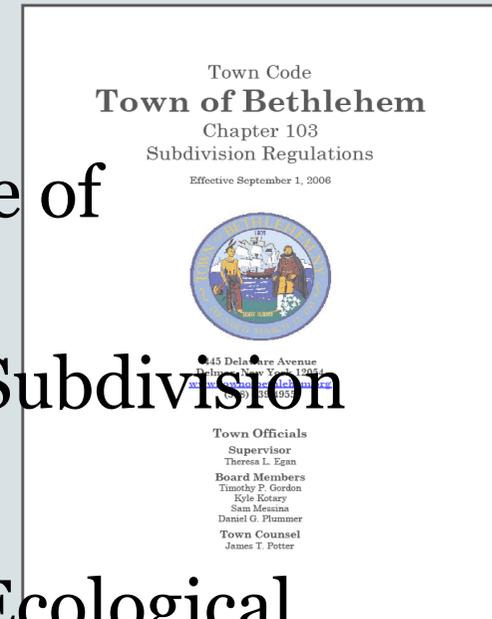
- **Consider Open Space Benefits of Tax Sharing**



RECOMMENDATIONS – MEDIUM TERM



- Develop Amenity Zoning for Open Space
- Research and Explore the Development of a Term Conservation Easement Program
- Explore the Development of a Purchase of Development Rights Program
- Update Town Code and Conservation Subdivision Regulations
- Prioritize Study Areas and Document Ecological Resources



RECOMMENDATIONS – LONG TERM



- Consider Developing a Community Gardens Program
- Sponsor/Support a Landowner Forum
- Explore the Development of an Open Space Education series
- Enhanced Tree Planting Along Public Rights-of-Way



RECOMMENDATIONS - ONGOING

- Consider Green with Grey
 - Leverage Town Investment
 - Work with Land Trusts



QUESTIONS/COMMENTS



NEXT STEPS



- Written Comments by Thursday, July 9 to:
Email: cacc@townofbethlehem.org
Mail: 445 Delaware Avenue, Delmar NY 12054
- July 13 CACC Meeting
 - Discuss Comments from Public Meeting
 - Update Report
- Present Report to Town Board (late summer/early Fall)

