

Executive Summary

Time for Action

The Town of Glenville, encompassing 50 square miles, has a number of distinct personalities but it is the Town's pleasant mix of pastoral lands, hilly terrain, parks, preserves, forests and streams that appeal to a great many residents. Unfortunately, the open spaces that we hold in such high regard are being seriously threatened by suburban and rural sprawl. Large lot suburban development is pushing into the rural hills of western Glenville even as the woodlots and high value agricultural lands in the developed eastern portion of town disappear to in-fill and expansion of existing neighborhoods.

Not only is sprawl unsightly and environmentally harmful, it is costly. Fiscal impact studies in nearby Clifton Park, in the lower Hudson Valley and elsewhere conclude that sprawl constitutes a property tax drain. It costs more money for schools and municipalities to provide services to residential sprawl areas than is derived in tax revenue from these growth areas. Conversely, these studies have demonstrated that maintaining open space and farmland results in a property tax *gain*. This occurs because more tax revenue is derived from open space properties than is spent on provided services for these properties.

The Town of Glenville needs to act now if it hopes to retain its distinct and appealing character, and if it wishes to reduce the fiscal impacts of low density residential growth. The Town must establish a clear and focused plan of action to preserve its valuable open spaces, yet it must also be conscious of the desire to provide for properly scaled and located commercial growth. Adoption of an open space plan is a critical first step in this plan of action.

Public Support

The *Open Space Questionnaire* results indicate strong support for open space preservation, but both the survey results and comments raised at the three public information meetings reveal that there is reluctance to preserve open space through the levy of property taxes for bonding, or through eminent domain. The challenge, then, is to craft an open space preservation program that is both effective and fiscally frugal.

Protection of our aquifer was cited by an overwhelming majority of residents as the most important open space goal. Other features that were deemed highly worthy of preservation include stream corridors, wildlife and ecological resources, forests/woodlands, wetlands, and historical resources, to name a few.

Further, to achieve open space preservation, the public strongly supports the use of voluntary land donations and easements, tax incentives and land use regulations. There is also support for partnerships between landowners and the Town and/or land trusts. Support is also evident for open space acquisition, provided there is a clear policy for acquisition and property taxes are not increased to fund acquisition.

Where do we want Open Space?

Chapter IV (Open Space Inventory and Mapping) provides a table identifying existing publicly-owned open spaces in addition to offering several maps that identify various environmental, natural, scenic, cultural and historic features in Glenville. This chapter culminates with a description and depiction of the “Open Space Areas Map” (Map 4), arguably the most important graphic in the Open Space Plan.

The Open Space Areas Map is a very valuable tool in that it identifies regions of Glenville where open space preservation should be a priority due to environmental sensitivity, the clustering of natural resources and amenities and/or the presence of already existing parks, preserves and cultural or historic features, etc. The 10 open space areas that have been identified include:

- Hoffman’s Fault/Wolf Hollow
- Western Glenville
- Sanders Preserve
- Aquifer Protection Zones
- Mohawk River
- Indian Meadows
- Van Vorst Road
- Horstman Creek
- Indian Kill Greenway
- Alplaus Kill

The above areas are “ripe” for open space preservation. The Glenville Environmental Conservation Commission (GECC) and Planning & Zoning Commission (PZC) should consult the Open Space Areas Map whenever a site plan or subdivision application comes before them to determine if the property being targeted for development is located within these open space areas. If the property is located in one of these areas, the GECC and PZC needs to consider the potential open space impacts of the proposed development to a higher degree than would normally be considered. If warranted, the GECC and PZC should then mandate that the applicant incorporate open space preservation into the development plan and/or require the applicant to pursue a layout and design that best protects open space features both on and near the project site.

Recommended Actions

Without a commitment to establishing a large funding source for the acquisition of conservation easements, development rights and open space properties, the Town must approach the topic of open space preservation through a multitude of strategies. This Open Space Plan calls for a comprehensive approach to open space preservation by citing 12 different actions to foster conservation. This list of actions below represent a mix of primarily regulatory and passive approaches, that if pursued earnestly, can result in meaningful open space preservation.

The 12 recommended actions are as follows:

- Adoption of this Open Space Plan by the Glenville Town Board
- Accept donations of property that have merit as open space
- Revise the Town's Zoning Ordinance and Subdivision Regulations so that open space preservation is integrated into the planning/zoning review process
- Grant the Planning & Zoning Commission the authority to mandate clustered subdivisions
- Revise the Town's Subdivision Regulations to mandate conservation subdivision design
- Educate landowners on and promote the use of conservation easements
- Continue development of the Town's pending transfer of development rights (TDR) program
- Designate Glenville and Scotia's well fields as Critical Environmental Areas
- Promote enrollment in the Agricultural District Program
- Revise the Town of Glenville Comprehensive Plan
- Adopt a Capital Plan
- Tap the subdivision recreation impact fee account for extension of existing parks and preserves and for the acquisition of critical open space properties

It should be noted that the actions outlined above, as well as the goals and objectives, are not necessarily in conflict with the Town Board's desire to attract new commercial and industrial development to the Town. New commercial and industrial development is going to occur in and around existing built-up areas, such as Route 50, Freemans Bridge Road and Route 5, where open space preservation is not of particularly high importance.

It is actually residential sprawl that poses the greatest threat to the Town's open spaces. Consequently, most of the recommended actions of this plan are tailored to the residential development sector in an attempt to confine new housing development to areas where appropriate infrastructure is already in place, and to ensure that residential development in rural areas is more compact and complementary of existing natural features.

Financing Options for Implementation

The financing piece of the Open Space Plan would apply only in those instances when the Town is considering the purchase of open space properties, development rights or conservation easements. Below is a list of local, state and federal funding sources that can be used for the broad purpose of open space preservation. Each of the funding sources is targeted for a specific application, with the parameters of the each program being unique. Consequently, should Glenville be presented with an opportunity to acquire property, development rights or conservation easements, care must be taken in selecting the funding source(s) that gives the Town the best opportunity for funding success.

Local Funding Programs

- Town of Glenville Subdivision Recreation Fee Account
- Dedicated Revenue Source (budgeted line item)
- Local Bond Act
- Real Estate Transfer Fee

State Funding Programs

- Environmental Protection Fund
- Clean Water State Revolving Fund
- Habitat/Access Stamp Program

Federal Funding Programs

- Land and Water Conservation Fund
- Pittman-Robertson Program (Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration Act)
- Landowner Incentive Program
- Federal Farm Bill

In determining if a property or development rights has merit for purchase (or donation) by the Town of Glenville, the Town is to be guided, in part, by the open space scoring system that has been prepared in order to assess and prioritize the public value of open space properties. Outlined in Chapter V and Appendix C, the open space scoring system will take some of the subjectivity out of determining if properties are worthy of acquisition by the Town.

Conclusion

Open space and “quality of life” are intrinsically linked terms. When open space is lost to development, it is typically lost forever, and our collective quality of life suffers as a result. This Open Space Plan gives the Town of Glenville a variety of recommendations and tools to ensure that valuable open spaces are preserved for future generations. The time to act is now, however, while the natural, environmental, cultural and historic features that make Glenville unique still exist.

