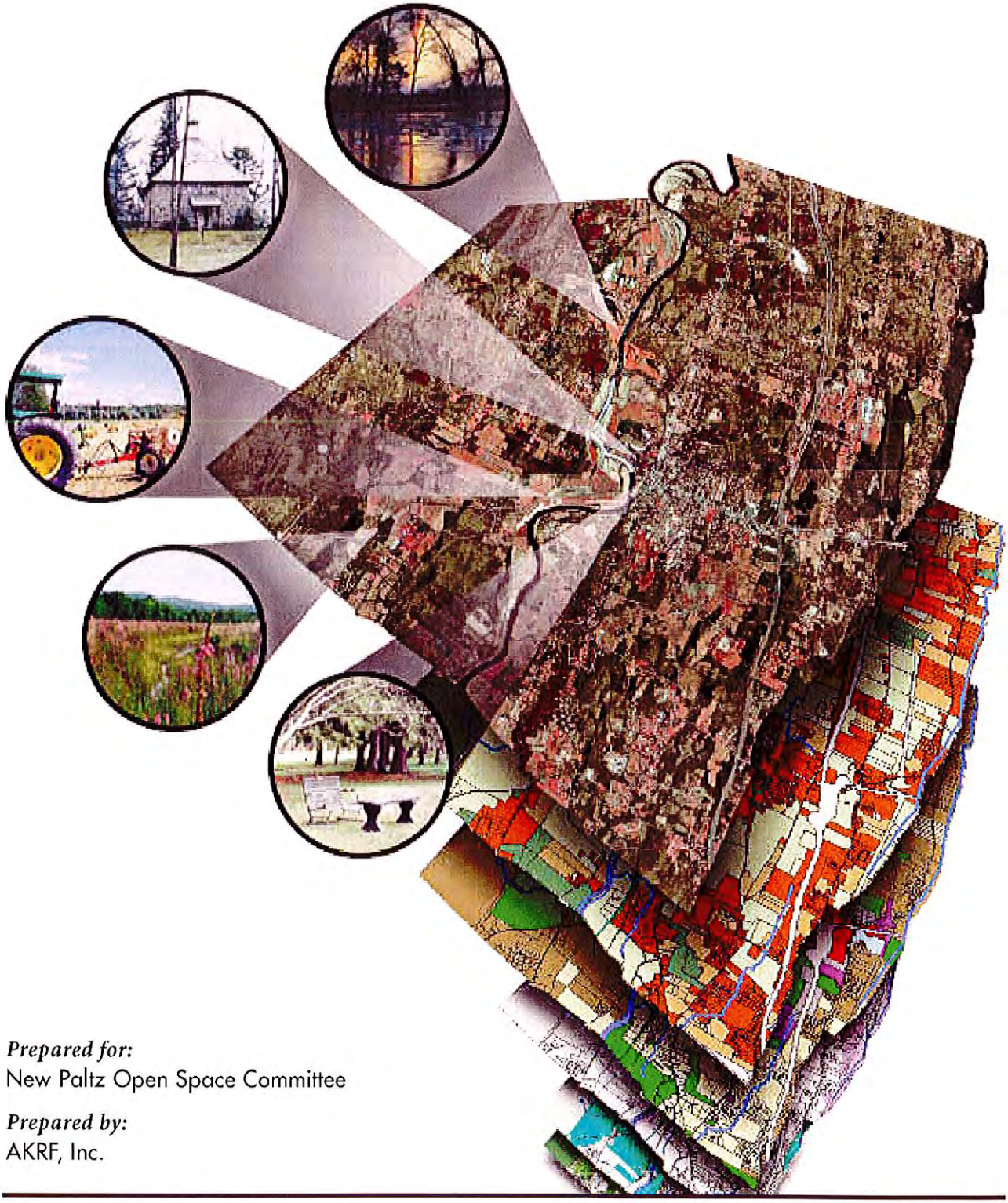
Cara Lee

New Paltz
Inventory of Open Spaces



Prepared for:
New Paltz Open Space Committee

Prepared by:
AKRF, Inc.

December 2003

New Paltz

Inventory of Open Spaces

Prepared for:
New Paltz Open Space Committee

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Table of Contents

Section 4: Open Space Patterns

Figures and Maps

INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

The residents of New Paltz value their out-of-doors environment, comprised of expansive views, wooded stream corridors, open farm fields, and wildlife-rich wetlands. Recognizing the importance of pro-actively and cooperatively working to protect and enhance New Paltz's open space character, the Town of New Paltz, in 2000, established an Open Space Committee.

The Committee's mission statement is as follows:

> *New Paltz is fortunate to possess a diversity of natural resources, small-town quality of life and a vibrant tourist economy nurtured by the aesthetic beauty of its countryside. The New Paltz Community Comprehensive Plan, adopted in 1995, cited the need to retain and protect the Town's unique environmental features and natural resources. In recognition of this, the Town Board created the New Paltz Open Space Committee in 2000. The mission of the Committee is to define, inventory, and evaluate our priority open space resources and work with the New Paltz community to recommend and promote a plan for the protection of these resources.*

One of the first tasks of the Committee is the creation of an inventory of open space resources as a first step in the creation of a community open space plan. The Committee's intent in creating the open space inventory is to gather information from federal, state and local maps of natural resources, wetlands, agricultural districts, and floodplains, as well as from a local scenic inventory. The Committee intended to create a compendium of information at a macro-level, as a first cut analysis of the Community's open space fabric.

The Village of New Paltz, while not formally sponsoring the Committee's work, has been an active participant in its meetings, through the attendance of a Village Board member. The membership of the Committee is discussed in Section 3. However, Committee membership wishes to acknowledge following elected officials for their leadership and support:

Town Supervisor Don Wilen
Village Mayor Jason West
Former Village Mayor Thomas Nyquist
Former Town Supervisor Carol Roper

The Village and Town of New Paltz – together called New Paltz in this report – intend to take the products of the inventory and use them as they see fit. The Village sees the products as useful tools for the Planning and Village Boards to make sound land use planning decisions. The Town may expand upon this "first cut" inventory by carrying out a survey of community interest in and opinions on protecting open space; an ecological inventory involving field work in selected areas; and ultimately, creating a plan for the protection of open space in the Town.

This open space inventory takes maximum advantage of existing data and puts it into a usable format. It is intended as a guide to future decision-making and work by the Town and the Village. It is viewed as a building block for other open space protection efforts in the community. This inventory is intended to jump start the Open Space Committee's efforts, and to be a vehicle for inter-municipal collaboration in planning.

NEW PALTZ TODAY

New Paltz has long enjoyed a deserved reputation as a small village set in a magnificent rural landscape against a mountain backdrop. Its well-defined business district with surrounding neighborhoods sits at the core of a larger bucolic countryside defined by open farmland, orchards, woods, and streams. Ample opportunities to access the countryside exist – its residents and visitors bicycle, hike, canoe, kayak, hunt, and fish the open lands, waters, and trails, and its roadways provide views of the spectacular scenery at its doorstep. Combine these features with economic and cultural vibrancy, and New Paltz has a quality of life worth celebrating.

New Paltz lies nearly equidistant—about an hour and one-half in either direction—from New York City and Albany. It is 85 miles from Times Square. New Paltz is easily accessed from the New York State Thruway (I-87) and by State Routes 299, 32, and 208. Stewart Airport, increasingly providing passenger service, is about 25 miles to the south. Its western edge is defined by the Shawangunk Mountains, and it is bisected by the Walkill River; to its immediate northeast is the Catskill Mountain region, and several miles to its east is the Hudson River.

The fact that New Paltz is a desirable place to settle is demonstrated by the increasing numbers of people residing there. As shown in Table 1-1, below, since 1980, the combined population of the Town and Village has increased by 2,647 persons, representing a 26 percent increase in population. The bulk of this increase, 1,551 persons, has been absorbed by the Town of New Paltz, which experienced an increase of 20 percent, whereas the Village has accommodated 1,096 new full-time residents since 1980, an increase of 22 percent. Paralleling this increase in population, the New Paltz Central School District reports a 24.9 percent increase in enrollment during this same 20 year period.

On a broader scale, Ulster County as a whole increased its population by 19,591 persons, representing an 11 percent increase since 1980. In comparison, New Paltz grew at twice the rate of the County during this period. It can be seen that New Paltz absorbed about 20 percent of the County's entire population growth during this period.

Table 1-1
Population Trends

	1980	1990	2000	percent Change 1980-2000
Village of New Paltz	4,938	5,470	6,034	+22 percent
Town of New Paltz	5,245	5,918	6,796	+20 percent
Total	10,183	11,388	12,830	+26 percent
Ulster County	158,158	165,304	177,749	+12 percent

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1980, 1990, and 2000 Census of Population and Housing, Ulster County Planning Department, Town of New Paltz

The population increases experienced by the Town and Village reflect not only the desirability of New Paltz as a place to settle, but are an indicator of the availability of places within the community to settle. The Village of New Paltz, at 1.7 square miles is relatively built-out, with relatively little room for the establishment of new housing units. The Town, however, with a land area of 34 square miles has more ability to offer new home sites. As shown in Table 1-2, between 1980 and 2000, the Town issued 1,046 building permits for single-family houses, whereas the Village issued 225 during the same period. While many of these permits represent remodeling or reconstruction of residential structures, many can be assumed to represent the construction of new homes to accommodate the increase in population during this period.

The number of building permits and the fact that more were issued for construction activity in the Town indicates that the Village has fewer opportunities for new home construction, whereas the population increase and construction of single-family homes is occurring in the Town, where more land area exists to accommodate new growth. In real estate development terms, open space often equates with the accommodation of new growth and building construction activity.

Table 1-2

Building and Household Size Trends

	Residential Building Permits		Average number of people in each household	
	1980-1989	1990-2000	1990	2000
Village of New Paltz	116	109	2.21	2.03
Town of New Paltz	640	406	2.52	2.36
Total	756	515		
Ulster County	8,637	8,371	2.58	2.47

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, Building Permits Annual Survey; 1990 and 2000 Census of Population and Housing, Ulster County Planning Department

During the period of 1990 and 2000, the Census data also indicate that the average household size in New Paltz has decreased. This could indicate that the number of new housing units has increased at a rate slightly greater than the rate of increase in the population of New Paltz.

NEW PALTZ TOMMORROW

Clearly, New Paltz is an attractive place to live and visit. The population and housing trends of the past 20 years reflect this. But it is also important to recognize that these data reflect a period in which the economy has been in transition, and was a period during which there have been unusual circumstances. How the future looks is not necessarily an extension of the past.

First, the past 20 years have experienced an economic expansion and degree of individual and corporate prosperity unmatched since the 1920s. During the past 20 years, new housing starts in attractive communities across America hit unprecedented highs, as the explosion experienced by the Town of New Paltz shows.

Just as there has been remarkable expansion, the Mid-Hudson region has experienced devastating economic contraction. The region has felt the elimination of thousands of jobs as IBM and General Motors and other major employers have left the Hudson Valley. The growth of

New Paltz during this period of contradictory economic changes attests to its desirability as a place to live and work.

It is also apparent that during this period New Yorkers became increasingly mobile. Census data show that New Yorkers increased the distances between their places of work and their homes. Longer commutes result from necessity (local jobs no longer exist) and from choice (desire to live in a nice place). An indicator of this increased mobility is shown in data collected by the New York State Thruway Authority. According to data available through the Thruway Authority, the annual average daily traffic counts of cars entering the Thruway at Exit 18 (New Paltz) increased from 4,107 in 1989 to 5,891 in 1999, an increase of over 30 percent. This represents to some degree an increase in population, but also indicates New Paltz residents traveling to jobs in regional employment centers like Albany, Newburgh, and Kingston, as well as south to the New York City metropolitan area.

Another set of factors that may affect attractive communities like New Paltz are changes to the workplace made possible initially by fax machines, and later in the 1990s by the internet. These innovations enable new forms of commerce to exist without conventional offices, permit companies to decentralize, and allow business transactions to occur over long distances without face-to-face communication. These trends result in more people working at home for greater periods of time, and what better place to work from than New Paltz?

The trends affecting growth in New Paltz have been steady, and barring catastrophic economic change, the migration of the metropolitan New York population outward toward geographically accessible exurbia is expected to continue. Communities at the edge of the 100-mile radius from New York City have experienced similar growth trends as New Paltz. These have included towns and villages in attractive locations in eastern Long Island, Dutchess, Putnam, and Columbia Counties, and in Southern New Jersey's Pinelands region.

What is unclear, however, is the rate at which these trends will continue. The New York Metropolitan Region is a transformed place after the attacks of September 11, 2001. The migration of people and businesses out of New York City and the immediately surrounding area is seen in decreasing office vacancy rates in Hudson Valley cities. The dispersion of people and jobs made possible by mobility and advances in communication technology is being accelerated by post-September 11 sentiments, despite economic indicators that might otherwise suggest a retrenchment.

The attractiveness of New Paltz and the many attributes that have contributed to its success are the building blocks on which its continuing success and a quality community depend. And chief among them is its open space setting, and the myriad opportunities to access, see, and enjoy it.

This inventory, then, is an effort to identify with broad brush strokes the major patterns of open space resources that contribute to and define New Paltz. Based on this overview, the Village and Town leaders can proceed with initiatives geared toward maintaining and enhancing the quality of their community while preparing for and accommodating the future.

CREATING A DATA BASE

In order gain an overview of the locations and to develop a picture of the generalized patterns of the key open space resources in New Paltz, it was necessary to assemble a set of maps in a consistent format to display the key open space elements and other relevant features. To do so, information pertinent to the identification of open space resources in New Paltz was gathered and compiled from a wide variety of sources. This data has been examined and processed using geographic information system (GIS). A GIS is a computerized system that can analyze, manipulate, visualize, and display information that is tied to geographic locations. Most importantly, a GIS can combine data from many sources so that it can be compared, analyzed, and displayed in ways that might otherwise be impossible.

The GIS software used for this effort was produced by ESRI. The actual software used for this inventory was ArcGIS version 8.2, the latest available at the time of completion. The GIS system allows for both mapping and analysis of various forms of digital data and is compatible with every relevant GIS system in New York State, including those of the Town of New Paltz and Ulster County.

The GIS and the maps that have been – and can be – produced are only as good as the data behind them. Painstaking attempts were made during the course of this open space inventory to obtain and incorporate the best possible data sets, and the providers of that data have proved terrifically helpful. Although the data represent the most current and best available at the time of acquisition, it is important that users of the maps and data understand the limitations of the GIS, as it reflects the accuracy and quality of the data provided. Wetland boundaries, for example, are generalized, and the actual extent of wetlands and their boundaries may differ when surveyed on the ground. Therefore, these data and maps should not be relied upon as substitutes for detailed site plans. Nonetheless, the overall patterns of features are accurate for the level of detail needed for a first-cut inventory, and it is hoped that over time New Paltz will continue the open space inventory process and refine the GIS with newer, more specific data on each of the resource areas.

DATA GATHERING

The first phase of map creation concentrated on obtaining data from existing sources and incorporating this data into a digital format compatible with ArcGIS. Data was gathered from various sources, including Ulster County, the Town and Village of New Paltz, the National Wetlands Inventory (NWI), the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), Cornell University Geospatial Information Repository (CUGIR), and various generous individuals. An invaluable source of digital data was SUNY geography professor Dr. Jo Mano. Dr. Mano had produced a series of natural resource maps for the Town with the assistance of SUNY students

during the late 1980s and 1990s. Included among these maps were slopes and wetlands. Dr. Mano generously provided complete access to her digital and hard-copy data.

At various points during the data gathering process, the inventory included "windshield" surveys during which GIS data was checked in the field. Although these surveys were cursory, they provided a chance to fine-tune the mapped data derived from remote sources.

DATA PREPARATION AND MODIFICATION

The second phase involved the preparation of the GIS data and its integration into ArcGIS. While ArcGIS is a versatile program that is able to make use of various forms of data, certain limitations and impediments exist, as discussed below.

Each individual data file (referred to as a "layer" or "data set") is loaded into ArcGIS and can be viewed individually or in conjunction with any other data set. Data sets can be stored as either image files (like CAD files or other data formats) or as more complex GIS files (such as Shapefiles, Coverage files, or Geodatabases). These more complex files are comprised of an image component as well as a data table that links each feature in the data set with additional information. For example, the data set received from Ulster County that outlines parcel boundaries comes with an attached table that allows each feature (in this case, each parcel) to be queried and labeled according to a number of variables, including address, street, zoning code, and parcel number. Each data set is only as useful as its attached table is comprehensive and accurate; those data sets without attached tables have limited applications in analytical queries and studies.

Every file used in this analysis has also come with or been assigned a real-world coordinate system. This coordinate reference tells the data set where to go geographically, and helps each distinct data layer line up one on top of one another. Because the data sets included in this study come from a variety of sources, they do not all share a common coordinate system. ArcGIS is able to re-project files with defined coordinate systems in such a way that they will line up with data sets of other projections. However, many data sets obtained did not come with defined coordinate systems, and had to be geographically referenced manually, a labor-intensive process.

Aside from the issues associated with incompatible projections and coordinate systems, the very method of data creation often causes alignment problems in ArcGIS. The scale at which data is recorded affects the accuracy of the data. For example, data created at the State level might be more comprehensive but less spatially accurate than data created at the town level, which would have been recorded at a larger scale. When viewed at a small scale (zoomed out), these layers might appear to line up perfectly. However, when examined at a larger scale (zoomed in), the town data would be most accurate, and the state data might be off by a significant number of feet or yards.

Certain data sets also required correction. Correcting data sets to incorporate them into a GIS data base is required to align spatial data and ensure that each data set or layer is compatible with the other, thereby enabling analysis, comparison, and display (e.g., mapping). In this inventory, correction was needed for several data sets since they came from different sources, were mapped using different techniques at different scales, or had other characteristics that needed adjusting. The sorts of corrections that were applied included re-projecting them, re-drawing them, or 'stretching' the layers to fit on top of another data set, or through a combination of these methods. When data sets had to be re-drawn by hand, the New York State

aerials were used as the base map. For example, the hydrology file provided by Ulster County was re-drawn based on the aerials in order to line up with other data layers.

The individual data sets and files have been combined and analyzed in numerous ways, and are depicted on the maps in this report to illustrate the data and the analyses. Below is a discussion of the major data sets—representing major open space resource categories—that the open space inventory concentrated on. Several of the data sets are not illustrated with individual maps, but are contributing data layers to several maps. The "Parcel File," for example, is an important component, of layer, of several maps, and it can be seen on "Wetlands and Hydrology" and "Zoning," among others. Similarly, the "Agricultural District" layer does not stand alone as a separate map, but is an important contributing data layer to, for example, "Publicly Important Open Space."

AERIAL PHOTOGRAPHY

(See map titled: "Aerial Map: Color Infrared")

Two sets of aerial photographs were used in this inventory. The first, obtained from the United States Geological Survey (USGS), was flown from 1995-1997. These images are color infrared photographs, and appear to have a distorted color spectrum. This coloring actually represents reflected infrared wavelengths rather than regular reflected light, as in standard photography. This type of aerial photography allows for a greater ability to interpret land use and vegetation cover. The other set of aerial photographs are the New York State aerial photographs, flown in 2002. Although these photographs are more recent, they were shot on regular color film. These show the land cover in true-to-life color, which is more familiar to the eye but less useful for interpretive purposes.

PARCEL FILE

The current parcel file, supplied by Ulster County, comes with a complete attached table that links each parcel to zoning data, address, and ownership information. This data set lines up perfectly with the USGS aerial photographs, and acts as a standard according to which other data sets are drawn.

ROAD FILE

Over the course of conducting this inventory, several road files were obtained from various sources. The county road file has been the main source of information regarding New Paltz roads, however, this county data set does not line up correctly with the parcel file or the aerial photograph. This data file was manually adjusted to spatially align with the parcel file. Fundamental errors also needed correction, such as deleting 'paper roads', which exist on the map but do not exist in the landscape, and re-mapping roads that do not follow their correct paths on the map (for example, Kleinekill Road). These corrections and adjustments were made according to the aerial photograph, as well as from the Official Town Map (in raster format), tracing roads and joining them to the existing GIS road file.

0 2,500 5,000 10,000
Feet

New Paltz Open Space Committee

AKRF

Aerial Map
Color Infrared

HYDROLOGY AND WETLANDS

(See map titled: "Wetlands and Hydrology")

The surface hydrology file, originally obtained from Ulster County, represents rivers and streams in the Town of New Paltz. This data set was re-drawn manually by a labor-intensive process based on the USGS aerials. Rivers and streams were manually traced from the aerial photographs at various scales. This new hydrology file is the current standard in the open space survey.

Two wetland inventories are represented in the open space survey. The NYS Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) maps wetlands of 12.5 acres or more. The data layer showing DEC Wetlands was downloaded directly from Ulster County, and did not require modifications.

Smaller wetlands (greater than 5 acres but smaller than 12.5 acres in size) have been mapped by Dr. Jo Mano, and are included as a separate data set. Dr. Mano used aerial photo interpretation to identify the wetlands of 5 to 12.5 acres in size. Both wetland files are geographically accurate to the extent possible and are included in the Open Space Inventory analyses.

FLOODPLAINS

(See map titled: "Floodplains")

The U.S. Government's Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) provided the data for the mapping of the floodplain of the Wallkill River. This data layer is the standard floodplain mapping used for planning and other purposes.

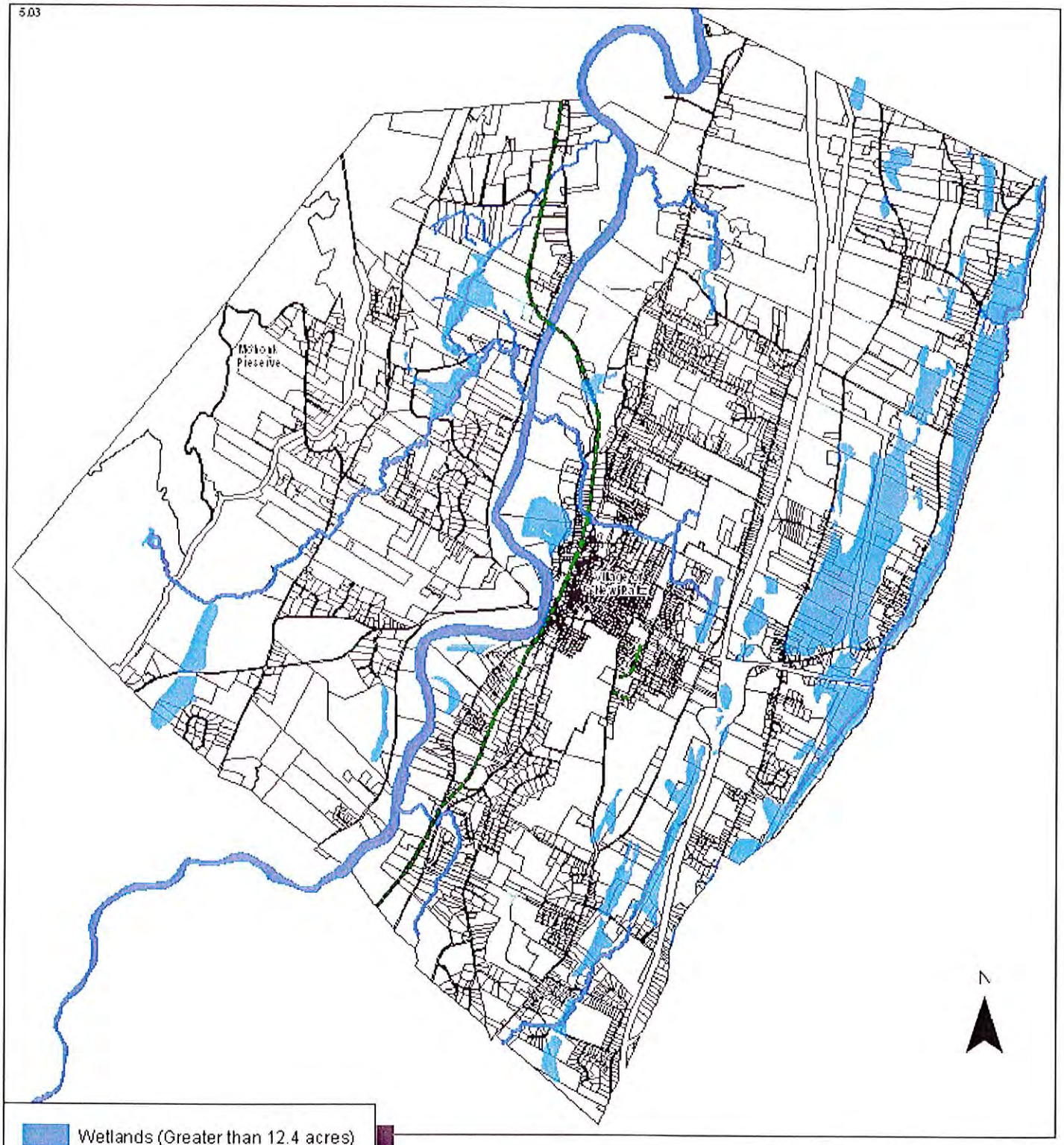
PROTECTED OPEN LAND

(See map titled: "Protected Open Land")

A file that identifies open and protected land in the Town of New Paltz was created based on Comprehensive Plan data that was updated to reflect current protection status of Town, Village, and land trust properties.

AGRICULTURAL DISTRICTS

New York State Agricultural District Boundaries, drafted at a scale of 1:24,000. This data was downloaded from the CUGIR website and manually re-projected to align with other data sets. This data set outlines land within the New York State Agricultural Districts. Although this data set is accurate for the purpose of outlining the Agricultural District, it does exclude certain parcels that are currently used as agricultural land (as evidenced by their obtaining agricultural tax exemptions), as well as include certain parcels that are not used for agricultural purposes.



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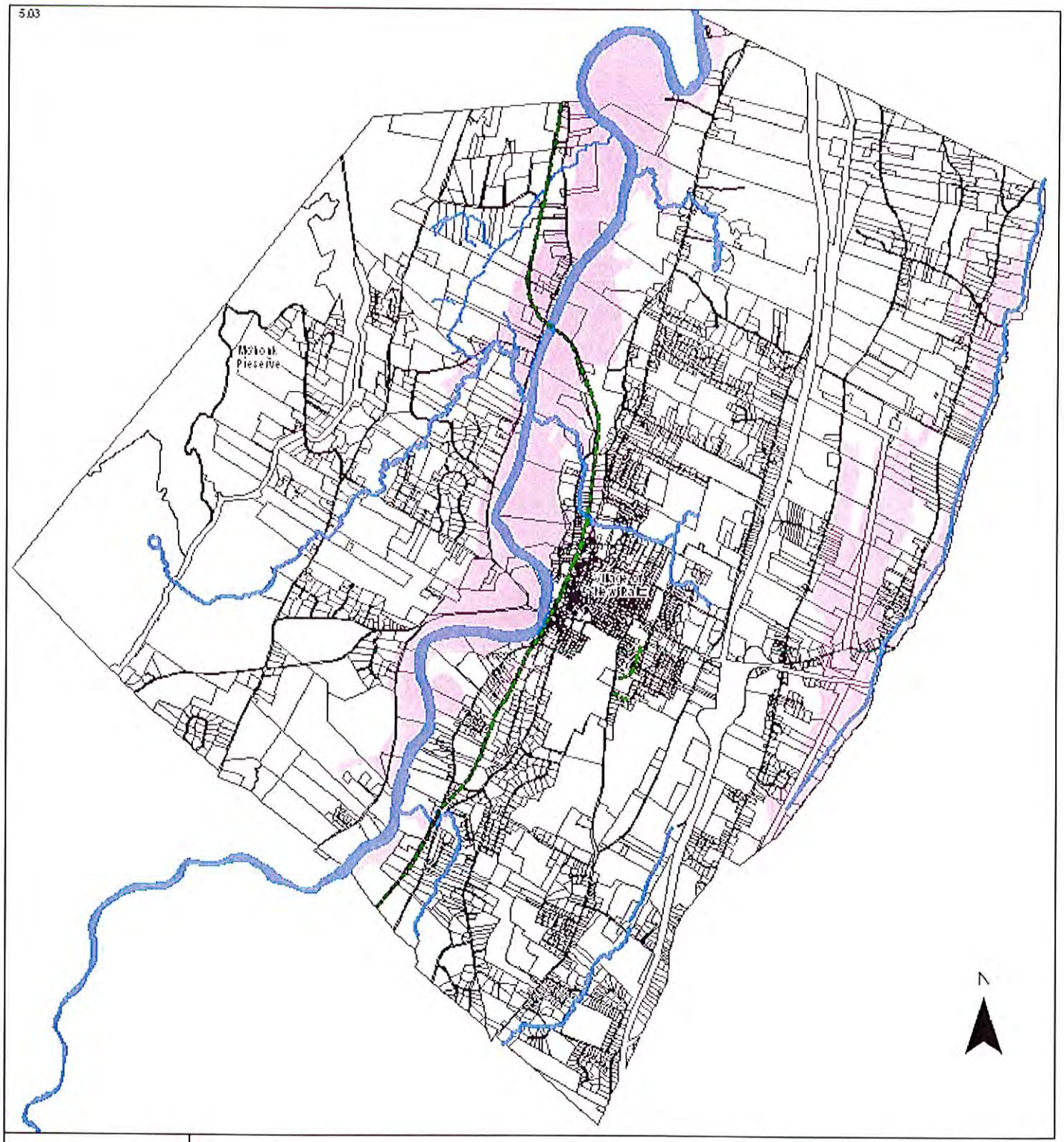
Wetlands and Hydrology



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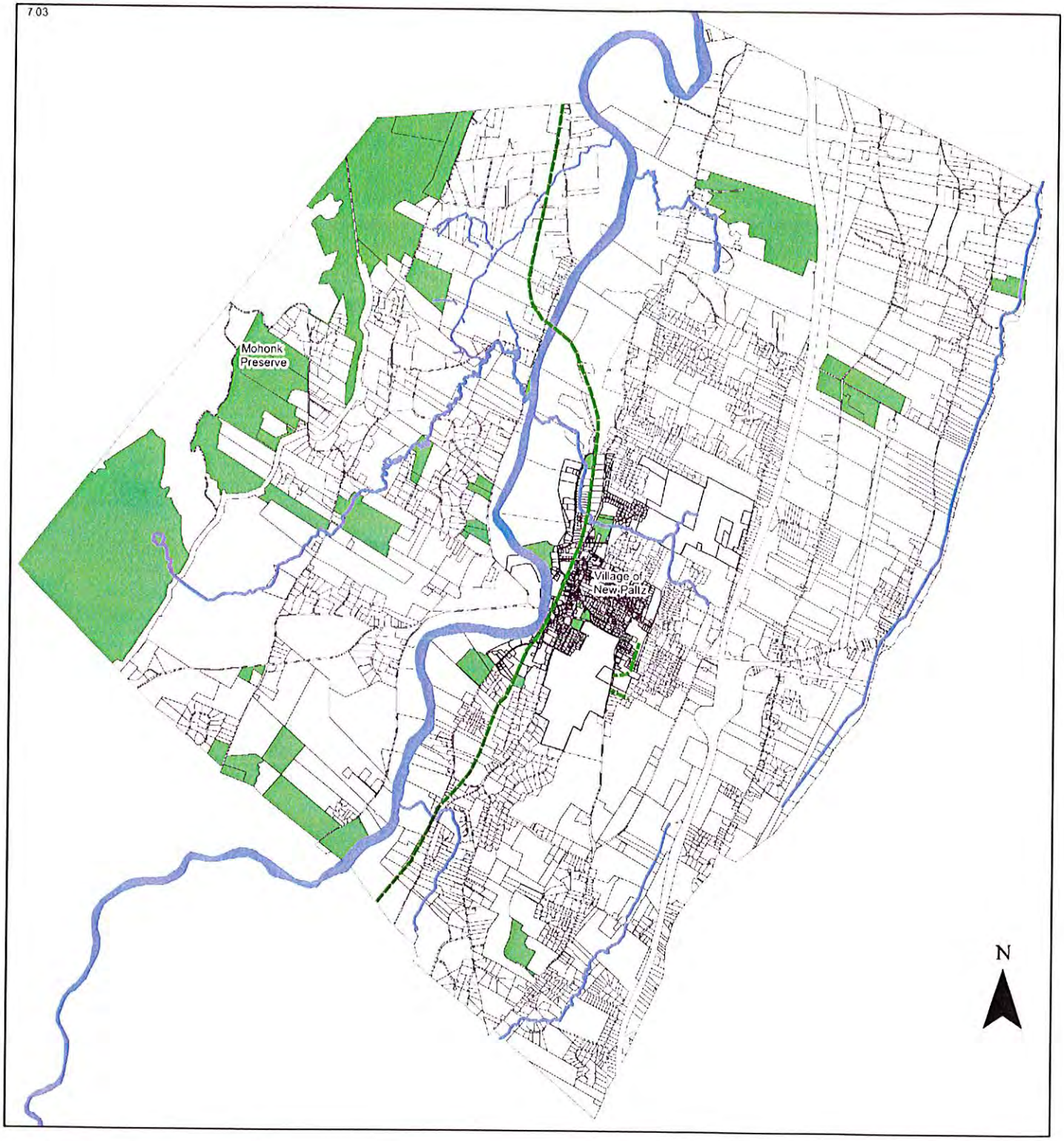
Floodplains (Federal emergency Management Agency)



Rail Trail
Hydrology
Protected Open Land

0 2,500 5,000 10,000
Feet

New Paltz Open Space Committee

AKRF

Protected Open Land

SLOPES AND CONTOURS

(See map titled: "Slope")

Dr. Jo Mano contributed these data sets to the open space inventory. While this data is useful, its applications in the open space inventory are limited due to discrepancies in scale and projection with existing GIS data.

SCENIC VIEWS

(See map titled: "Scenic Views/Scenic Roads")

Members of the Open Space Committee led by Al Wegener, along with others, generously compiled an exhaustive inventory of scenic views in New Paltz. This data set is extremely useful in the open space inventory as a tool to identify valuable open space resources. This data set is a point file with a directional component that "points" to the direction of the scenic view. This data set was manually mapped in-house at various scales.

NEW PALTZ RESOURCES

Resources such as the Wallkill Valley Rail Trail and other New Paltz landmarks have been manually added to base mapping data sets. These data sets serve to reference map viewers and identify areas of significance to New Paltz.

AREAS OF IMPORTANCE AS DESIGNATED BY THE NEW PALTZ PUBLIC

(See map titled: "Publicly Identified Land")

This data layer has been compiled by the New Paltz Open Space Committee based on areas identified during the January 15, 2003 public participation meeting. Parcels included in this layer have been identified by the people of New Paltz as including areas with significant open space resources. This data set was manually mapped based on the County parcel file.

ZONING MAP

(See map titled: "Zoning")

In addition, the zoning maps were obtained to enable an identification of the zoning districts affecting the various open space resources contained in other data layers. The Town of New Paltz and Ulster County were the primary sources of the zoning maps that were ultimately incorporated into the GIS data base. The map titled "zoning" presented in this report must not to be construed as or used as the official zoning map adopted by the Town or the Village of New Paltz, and is included in this report for illustrative purposes only.

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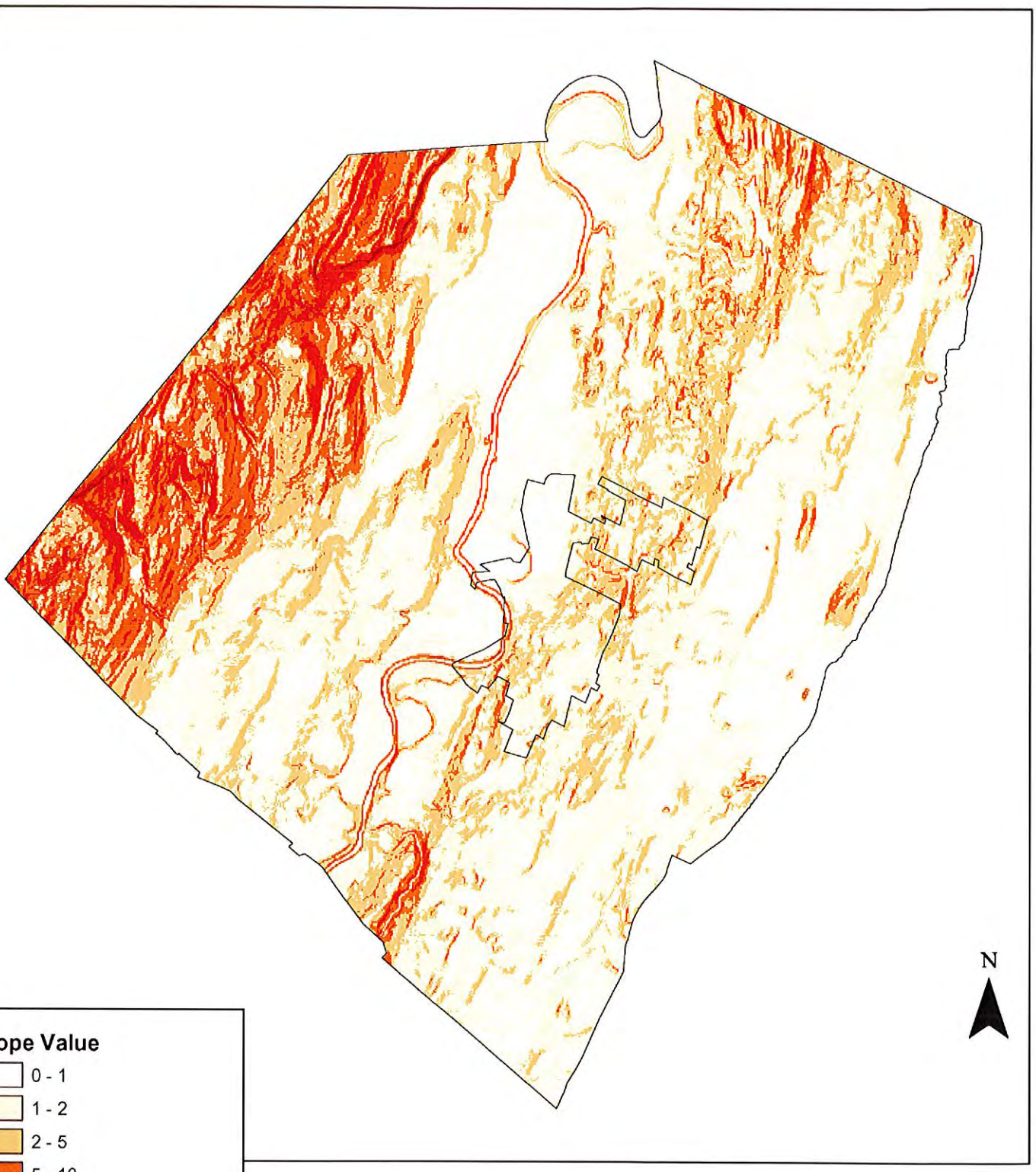

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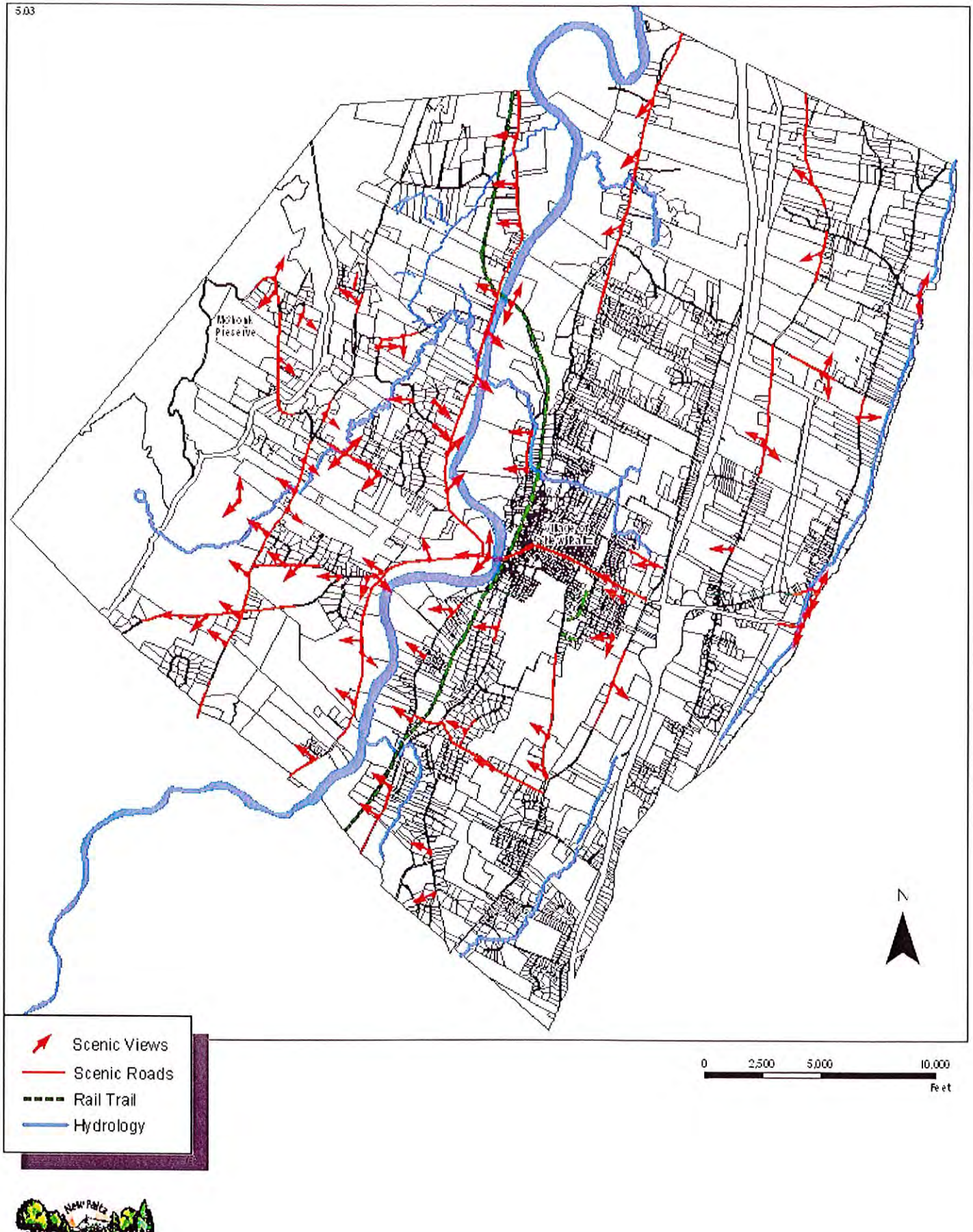
Slope



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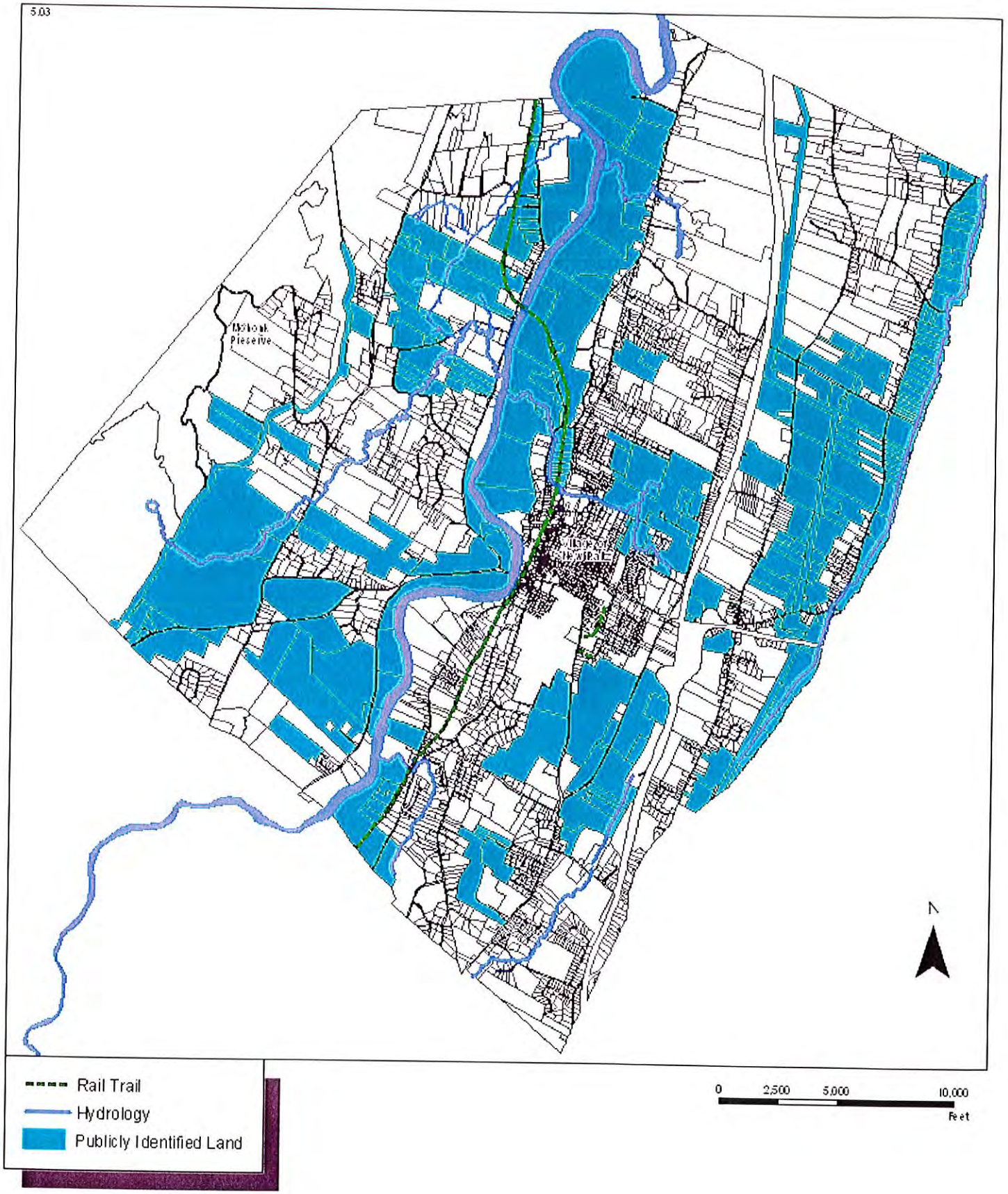
Scenic Views



New Paltz Open Space Committee

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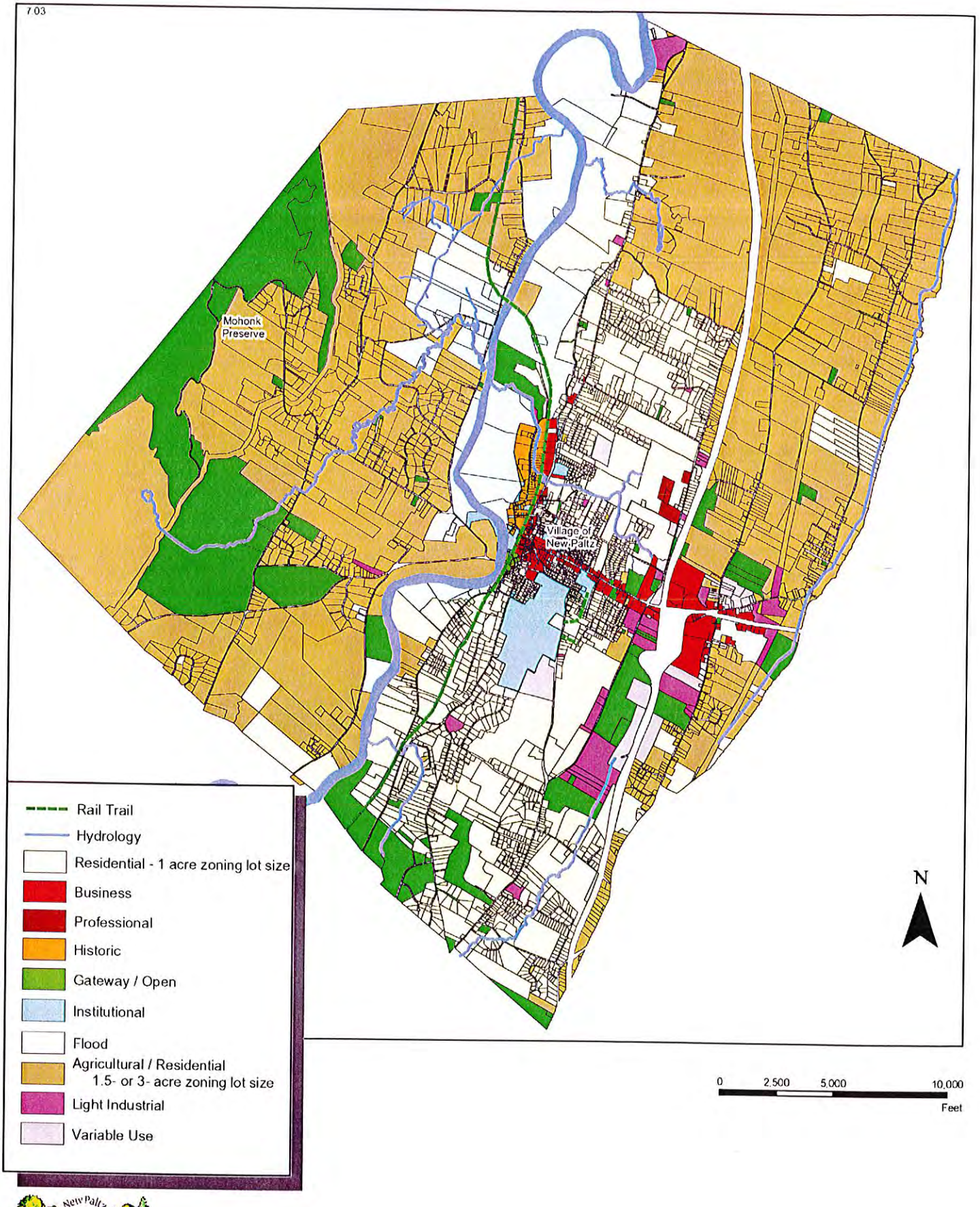
Publicly Identified Land



New Paltz Open Space Committee

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Zoning

LAND USE/DEVELOPMENT STATUS

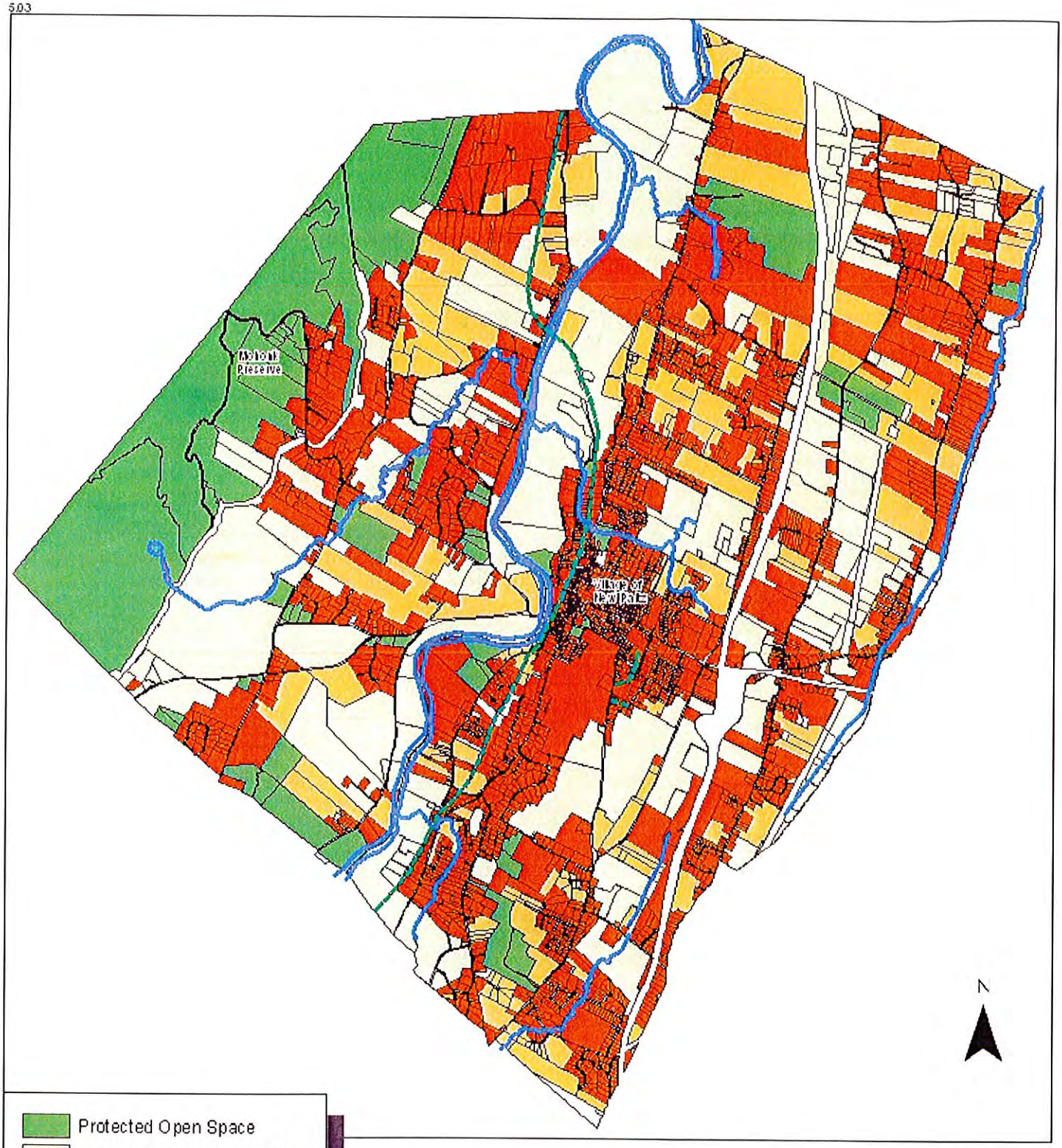
(See map titled: "Land Use")

This data set is the result of a combined effort of AKRF, Town of New Paltz intern Sean Uhl, Open Space Committee member Steven Michalski, Dr. Jo Mano, and others. The origin of the data set derives from the land use maps published in the Town and the Village Comprehensive Plans. The land use categories indicated on those maps were combined and classified into several general categories, including "developed" land, "protected" land, and "institutional" land. Included within the developed land category were those parcels whose present land use was classified by the plans as residential, commercial, or other developed land uses. Protected lands were those indicated as protected parkland or protected conservation land. Institutional lands were those that were able to be identified as belonging to nonprofit or governmental entities that are not of a conservation orientation. These included certain religious organization lands and the SUNY lands.

The next step in creating this data set was updating and refining these data derived from the land use maps in the comprehensive plans. Sean Uhl and Steve Michalski conducted extensive research in the Planning Board and Town Assessor's files to update the land use maps. This update included adding newly subdivided or newly developed lands, as well as new conservation lands. The new conservation lands included new parklands, as well as open space set-asides in newly subdivided lands. In addition, the Assessor's files provided further updates on protected lands through the identification of conservation easements that do not show on other maps. Finally, Sean Uhl conducted a thorough review of the developing data set to further classify the "developed" lands according to the further subdividability of oversized residential parcels. To do so, he identified the parcels previously classified as developed and determined at a cursory level whether they appeared (from aerial photo interpretation) to possess the potential for further development. In these cases, the parcel was manually removed from the "developed" category.

The above compilation enabled the creation of a data set in which parcels could be roughly identified as "Developed" and "Protected Open Space." The parcels that were neither "Developed" nor "Protected Open Space" appear to be those where either conservation or development might be possible in the future.

To aid in analysis, AKRF assigned each parcel a value along a continuum, with the values of "Protected Open Space" and "Developed" the extreme values on either end, ranking "1" and "4", respectively. Intermediate values of "2" and "3" are based on a variety of factors. See Section 4, "Open Space Patterns" for further discussion.



New Hartford Open Space Committee

OAKRF

Land Use

THE PUBLIC'S INPUT

This open space inventory includes not only the incorporation of existing published sources of data, such as maps and reports discussed in the previous sections, but it reflects a substantial amount of public participation. From the outset, the New Paltz Open Space Committee understood that no overview of the open space resources would be complete without including the wealth of information available through peoples' direct experience and knowledge of the New Paltz landscape.

In addition to the public being a terrific source of information, the Committee was committed to obtaining public input in order to engage New Paltz residents in a community-wide dialogue about the importance of open space resources. A long-term open space program, which might require difficult decisions and choices, requires that the affected citizens have a common understanding of the issues they are facing. To begin this education process and to tap the well of knowledge residing in New Paltz, the Committee undertook a public participation program that reached into nearly every corner of the Town and Village.

The public involvement program involved four prime elements:

- New Paltz Open Space Committee
- Presentations to the Town and Village Boards
- "Land Use Experts Meeting;" and
- Community Open Space Inventory Workshop.

This section provides an overview of the public involvement processes undertaken during the compilation of open space resource information, and in engaging the New Paltz community in a discussion about their open space resources.

THE NEW PALTZ OPEN SPACE COMMITTEE

As discussed in Section 1, the Town Board of the Town of New Paltz established an Open Space Committee in 2000. The mission of the Committee is to define, inventory, and evaluate priority open space resources, and to work with the New Paltz community to recommend and promote a plan for the protection of these resources. Although not formally sponsoring the Committee's work, the Village of New Paltz has been participating in its meetings throughout the preparation of this open space inventory.

In assembling the Committee, the Town endeavored to include among its members individuals representing the boards and commissions involved in open space issues, including the Planning Board, Shawangunk Ridge Scenic Byways Committee, and the Environmental Conservation Commission. In addition, the Committee included members representing the Town Board, and several members selected from the public-at-large. As noted above, the Committee included members from the Village Board, as well. Further, the Committee was open to any interested citizen expressing an interest in open space, of which several have been participating.

Throughout the preparation of the open space inventory, the Committee met on a monthly basis. The meetings of the Committee were held in the Town or Village Halls, and were open to the public.

The Open Space Committee provided hands-on guidance of the inventory process, and provided important oversight to the inventory as it moved forward. A very important aspect of the Committee's work was the role it played as liaison with other committees, boards, groups, and the general public. In addition, the Committee ensured that the open space inventory had available to it all of the relevant resources, reports, studies, maps, and individuals.

The Committee membership included the following individuals:

Seth McKee, Co-Chairman
Michael Zierler, Co-Chairman
Brad Barclay
Kitty Brown
Martha Cheo
Ray Curran
Marion Dubois
Jillian Duffield
Ruth Elwell
Mary Ford
Kathleen Healey
Guy Kempe
Ron Khosla
Cara Lee
Thomas Lewis
Matt Maley
Anne McClellan
Steve Michalski
Richard Miller
Chris Neighbors
Steve Ruelke
Karen Schneller-McDonald
Bob Taylor
Nicola Tyson
Sean Uhl
Julia Walsh
Al Wegener

Jeff Bagg, Secretary
Kathy Preston, Former Secretary

PRESENTATIONS TO THE TOWN AND VILLAGE BOARDS

The Committee, on three occasions during the inventory process, arranged progress presentations and discussions with joint meetings of the New Paltz Town Board and Village Board of Trustees. These sessions enabled the Committee to update the boards, and to solicit their input during the inventory process in order to gain insight as well as to fine-tune the directions of the study as it progressed. Two presentations were made early in the process, and the third presentation occurred at the conclusion of the inventory, as the point when the material contained in this report was in its final draft stage.

The Board meetings were videotaped and later televised on cable television, and numerous members of the public attended and participated in these meetings.

A "LAND USE EXPERTS" MEETING

The Open Space Committee felt that it was important to identify the individuals in the community who are most involved in land use decision making and to include them in a focused meeting at which information could be shared and input gained. The "land use experts" the Committee wanted to involve included members of the Town and Village Planning Boards, Zoning Boards of Appeal, Environmental Conservation Commissions, elected officials, and long-standing community residents with a wealth of knowledge of the geography and special places within New Paltz. In addition, the Committee reached out to local lawyers and developers who are integral players in how land and open space is used in and around New Paltz.

In December 2002, the Committee hosted nearly two dozen "land use experts" at an evening meeting to review the work of the Committee and to review preliminary GIS mapping products. Guidance provided by the participants proved valuable in fine-tuning the maps and strengthening an understanding of how an open space inventory can constructively be used by all parties to enhance and maintain open space qualities through the land use decision making and development processes.

The list of attendees at this meeting is as follows. Advance apologies are extended to omitted attendees, since there was no sign-in sheet.

Linda Donovan
Virginia Craft
Karen Schneller-McDonald
Dave Porter
George Danskin
Vici Danskin
Lynn Bowdery
Allen Bowdery
Dr. Jo Mano
Mike Moriello
Glenn Hoagland
Roland Bahret
Karen Strong
Chris Duncan
Mark Masseo

A COMMUNITY OPEN SPACE INVENTORY WORKSHOP

The centerpiece of the public involvement initiative was a Community Open Space Inventory Workshop that was held on the evening of January 15, 2003. This particular meeting was designed to involve a wide cross-section of the community, and to engage them in an intensive discussion about New Paltz's open space resources and places where these resources occur.

The public involvement session was designed as a workshop in which attendees were asked to work in small facilitated groups concentrating on a select set of open space topics. This unique and highly effective process is discussed below.

Overall Workshop Design

A workshop format in which those attending would be divided into small (10-12 person) focus groups) was selected for the public participation session as it was viewed as a means to actively involve every attending person in a hands-on discussion of open space resources. This format was favored over the more traditional lecture/audience approach because the Committee felt that this method of public involvement did not enable a meaningful exchange of ideas and information, and that it favored those individuals who are more comfortable speaking before a large gathering or those with a particular issue to put forth. Dividing the participants into smaller

groups was viewed as a means to balance discussion, and as a way to ensure that every participant had a comfortable setting in which to present his or her ideas or views.

The January 15th meeting was designed to accommodate as many members of the public as wished to participate, and an anticipated 120-150 people were expected to attend. An auditorium at the BOCES facility in New Paltz was selected for the meeting.

Stakeholder Identification, Outreach, and Attendance

One of the most important aspects of the meeting preparations included the identification and outreach to interested individuals and other stakeholders – people or organizations with a particular interest in open space resources. The Open Space Committee provided the primary means of stakeholder identification. Key stakeholders included those invited to the "land use experts" meeting, local officials, and members of the public-at-large. A particular effort was made to invite owners of larger parcels of land and members of the farming and agricultural community.

The Committee also took the lead on a major stakeholder recruitment effort, and a public outreach campaign, which was conducted through newspaper articles, announcements at public meetings, such as Town and Village Board meetings, posters, word-of-mouth, and direct telephone contacts to individuals and groups.

On the evening of January 15th, approximately 120 members of the public participated in the Community Open Space Workshop. The attendees represented all walks of life, a wide range of open space-related concerns, and were geographically dispersed throughout the Town and Village. In addition, the participants included long-time and multigenerational residents, as well as newcomers to the New Paltz community.

Workshop Agenda and Structure

The Committee ensured that the auditorium was set up with approximately 12 large tables with 10-12 chairs at each. Participants signed-in upon entering and were identified with name tags.

At each table, the Committee provided two GIS maps, one showing the developed lands and the other indicating the key open space resource areas that had been identified and mapped at that point in time.

Stationed at each table was a member of the Open Space Committee, who had been briefed in facilitation techniques, and served as moderators and facilitators among table members during the hands-on workshop session.

The Agenda for the evening included a Welcome and an Introduction, followed by an overview of the Open Space Committee and a discussion of its mission. A brief discussion of what open space is and why it is important was given. This was followed by an overview of the open space inventory process, including a discussion of the elements comprising open space, the data sources and means contributing to the Inventory of Open Space Resources, and a discussion of the GIS system and the generation of the open space resource inventory maps.

This general session was then followed by a hands-on workshop, which was the most important and unique aspect of the public participation program. During the hands-on workshop, the participants at each table were led by their facilitator through a series of steps and addressed several specific questions. An individual at each table was asked to volunteer to record the discussion occurring at each table, and report the findings and conclusions back to the assembled group at the conclusion of the hands-on workshop segment.

The Workshop

What **and** ***Where*** **are the Most Important Open Space Resources?**

- **Break into groups**
- **Meet your Facilitator**
- **Introduce yourselves to one another**
- **Select a person to be the "Recorder & Reporter"**
- **Hands-on Time:**
  - ***What*** **are the Most Important Open Space Resources?**
  - ***Where*** **are these Resources Located?**

The agenda for the hands-on workshop is shown on the left. The key elements of the exercise, which lasted approximately one hour, included a facilitated discussion of several questions: What are the Most Important Open Space Resources? Where are these Resources Located?

To address these questions, the facilitators were given specific instructions to ensure that each group covered the same set of topics. The several questions that the facilitators were asked to cover included the following:

a) What are the most pressing open space issues?

b) What are the most important open space resources?

c) What are the places where these resources are?

Following a discussion of these questions, the facilitators were asked to summarize the discussion at their table. This effort aimed to focus on identifying which of the resources were the most important, and which places where these resources occur are the most important places.

Following this discussion, the reporters from each table were asked to summarize the findings and conclusions reached by their particular group. These reports were made to the entire group so the participants could hear a summary of what the other tables discussed. In addition, each reporter was asked to tape their table's map onto the wall and point out the specific places their group felt were the most important open space resource areas.

Summary of Results and Conclusions of the Public Participation Process

The hands-on workshop session produced two essential public participation inputs that have guided the Committee in the completion and fine-tuning of the open space inventory, a set of maps and a set of issues and priorities generated by each break-out group table.

First, the session produced tangible maps marked upon by over 120 New Paltz residents. These maps represent the participants' views on the resources and locations of open space resources they felt are important. The maps generated by each table were summarized into a single map

integrating the open space resource areas identified by each group. This map in its refined format is reflected in the GIS analysis of open space resources presented in Section 4 of this report.

Second, in response to the questions listed above, each table's group produced a discrete list of key resource types and areas that they felt were important. A summary of the results of this process was compiled by the Open Space Committee members. The summary reflects common themes that were repeated several times by individual group reporters ("The Top Ten"), as well as resources, places, or topics that recurred more than once in group reports ("Popular resources, scenic roads, etc.").This summary follows.

As the Town and Village move forward in their individual and joint efforts to prepare an open space plan, these comments and inputs should be recalled and revisited as reflections of a wide cross-section of the New Paltz community.

"The Top Ten": Specific Places Mentioned Repeatedly

- Scenic view from Route 299 west of the Wallkill River
- Wallkill River and its floodplain
- Swaartekill/Plutarch wetlands complex and aquifer
- Village woodlands between Shivertown Road and Henry Dubois Road
- Tributary 13
- Kleinekill and Humpo Marsh
- Woodland in the Shawangunk foothills
- Lands between Huguenot Street and the Wallkill River
- Open land between Route 299 and Libertyville Road
- Open land between the Thruway, South Putt Corners Road, and Route 32 South

Popular overall resources

- Active farmland, both in and outside of agricultural districts
- Scenic roads
- Linkages between open spaces
- Our water: aquifers, streams and wetlands
- Contiguous forested land
- Opportunities for public access to open space resources

Popular scenic roads

- Route 299 west of the Wallkill and in the Village
- Route 32 North of village
- Route 208 South of village
- Mountain Rest Road
- Albany Post Road
- Butterville Road
- Springtown Road
- Huguenot Street
- Shivertown Road

- Ohioville Road (historic role and character)
- Plutarch Road (historic role and character)
- Wallkill Valley Rail Trail

Other popular views

- Plattekill Brook from the Rail Trail
- The Catskills from Route 299 (corner of Putt Corners Road; Ames Plaza)
- The Swaartekill from New Paltz Road and Old Route 299
- The Swaartekill from Black Creek Road and Hawleys Corners Roads

Popular streams and wetlands

- Wallkill River and "Harcourt oxbow"
- Kleinekill and Humpo Marsh
- Tributary 13
- Swaartekill/Plutarch wetlands complex
- Plattekill Brook
- Wetlands along Rail Trail north of Locust Tree golf course
- Wetlands north of the Thruway entrance
- Smaller wetlands complexes and vernal pools

Potential pedestrian linkages and wildlife corridors

- Rail Trail to Ulster County Fairgrounds (bridge across Wallkill)
- Tributary 13 Greenway
- High School to the Village (South Putt to Route 32 South to SUNY)
- Rail Trail to Cedar Ridge Road
- Cicero Court to Orchard Street
- New Paltz to Highland via Hudson Valley Rail Trail and abandoned railroad right-of-way
- Central Hudson powerline

Potential bike routes

- Elliott Road to Horsenden Road to Old Kingston Road
- Jansen Road to Cedar Lane to Plains Road
- Springtown Road/Dug Road/Canaan Road

Frequent general comments

- The need for local funding to purchase land and development rights
- The need to support local farms to keep them viable
- Concern about not violating landowner rights
- The need for affordable housing

Miscellaneous good ideas

- Secure the lands north of the High School, east of South Putt Corners Road:
    - for future school expansion;
    - for recreational fields;
    - for a buffer from the Thruway; and
    - to safeguard the wetlands there.

- Important wildlife habitat behind Lenape Elementary School and Robins Market
- Open lands off Paradies Lane
- Need greater commercial tax base to support public purchase of open space
- The need for commercial and residential development along Route 32 North and 208 South to be sensitively done, to keep the views intact
- Need collaboration with surrounding municipalities
- Need for cluster development requirement
- Need for open "pockets" and linkages within developed neighborhoods
- Need to reduce light pollution of nighttime sky

Meeting Participants

Among the people who attended the public meeting on January 15, those who signed in are:

Fawn Buchell
Ann Guenther
Dan Guenther
Heidi Jewett
Rod Dressel, Sr.
Jim Dodd
Richard Schwark
Sal Cinquemani
Jo Mano
Dave Lent
Ray Curran
Floyd Kniffen
David Smith
Roberta Clements
Richard Miller
Rachel Lagodka
Judy Joffee
Richard Johnson
Lynn Orcutt
John Orcutt
Chris Cook
Karen Hendrickson
Kira Kinney
Ellen James
Joe Devine
Dennis Douglas
Alison Shestakofsky
Jack Hayes
Kelly Gibbons
Tom Nyquist
Patricia Flanagan
Nicola Tyson
Joyce Minard
Lynn Bowdery
Allan Bowdery
Nadine Lemmon
Susan Mischo
Mary Ford
Jason West
Colin Apse
Sarah Charlop-Powers
Don Lipton
Natalie Jones
David Jones
John Johnson
Karen Johnson
Chris Robins
Scott Cuppett
John Evans
Daniel Rice
Jeff Noel
Kurt Lueken

PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

The culmination of the first-cut inventory is not a parcel-by-parcel evaluation, but rather an identification of the patterns of existing open space in New Paltz. How do the key open space resources array themselves on the landscape? How does the developed world interweave through the fabric of open lands?

Bearing in mind that the definition of "open space" includes a wide variety of variables, this inventory takes a broad-brush approach to outlining the open space patterns in New Paltz. The purpose of this section is not to identify on a parcel-by-parcel basis the location of features or open spaces. Nor is it to recommend specific actions regarding the use of any piece of land. The inventory seeks to synthesize the information provided by the public and the data comprising the GIS system into a coherent vision of the New Paltz open space network so that further inquiries and discussions about planning, land use, and conservation can occur in an informed manner.

PATTERNS OF OPEN SPACE – PUBLIC VOICES

The patterns emerging from this open space analysis result from the combination of two data streams: the actual spatial relationships between natural resources on the landscape depicted in the GIS system, as discussed in some detail in Section 2; and the more qualitative opinions or preferences expressed by the public through the public input process discussed in Section 3. The combination of these inputs and the mapping of them allows for the establishment of a "patterns" map that reveals where the factual resources overlap with the priorities of the public.

As noted in Section 3, the public was asked to map open space resource areas they thought were important. The resultant maps created by the participants have been digitized as a new data layer for the GIS system. This data layer includes a large number of parcels that have been identified as sites of important open space resources.

Although the preceding section discussed the public input in some detail, three key open space resources cited by the public have particular geographic importance and are further discussed below. These are scenic views, active farmland, and water resources. The public's emphasis of these resources and their frequent co-occurrence with other open space resources reinforces their value in establishing open space patterns and potential priorities for the future.

Scenic Views

Perhaps the most frequently mentioned issue regarding open space resources in New Paltz has been the importance of scenic views in and around the Town and Village of New Paltz. As New Paltz continues to grow into a thriving, diverse community, it is increasingly important to the residents of New Paltz to maintain the traditional character and identity of the Town and Village: that of a picturesque town situated among breathtaking views of and opportunities to enjoy

mountains, rivers, trees, and fields. Of great importance to this identity is the preservation of scenic views on both sides of the Wallkill River, facing the mountains to the West as well as the town to the East. The Scenic Views/Scenic Roads map shows that these views are clustered along highly frequented roads, State Routes 299 and 32, Mountain Rest, Springtown, and Butterville Roads in particular. The public identified several potential bicycle routes that would offer many outstanding and varied scenic views.

Active Farmland

Residents of New Paltz clearly recognize the value in having active farmland in their community. Farms of large landowners are New Paltz landmarks, and are highly valued. Although agricultural land is privately owned and not accessible to the public without express landowner permission, the people of New Paltz see the presence of this agricultural land as an important contributing factor to the community's open character and economic base. Residents of New Paltz clearly consider the identity of New Paltz as being an agricultural community.

In examining the extent and locale of the Town's agricultural land, it is seen that it is scattered throughout the Town of New Paltz. The farmland is often is in close proximity to "protected" open land, allowing for continuous stretches of undeveloped or low development land. In addition, many natural resource values are on or adjacent to farmland, such as streams, wildlife corridors, wetlands, and forests. Further, the varied habitat provided by the farmland complements the wildlife and habitat values of the more "natural" (e.g., wetlands, forests) habitat lands adjacent to them. This mix is visually pleasing (scenic and community character), but is also vital for maintaining the viability and diversity of New Paltz's abundant wildlife populations.

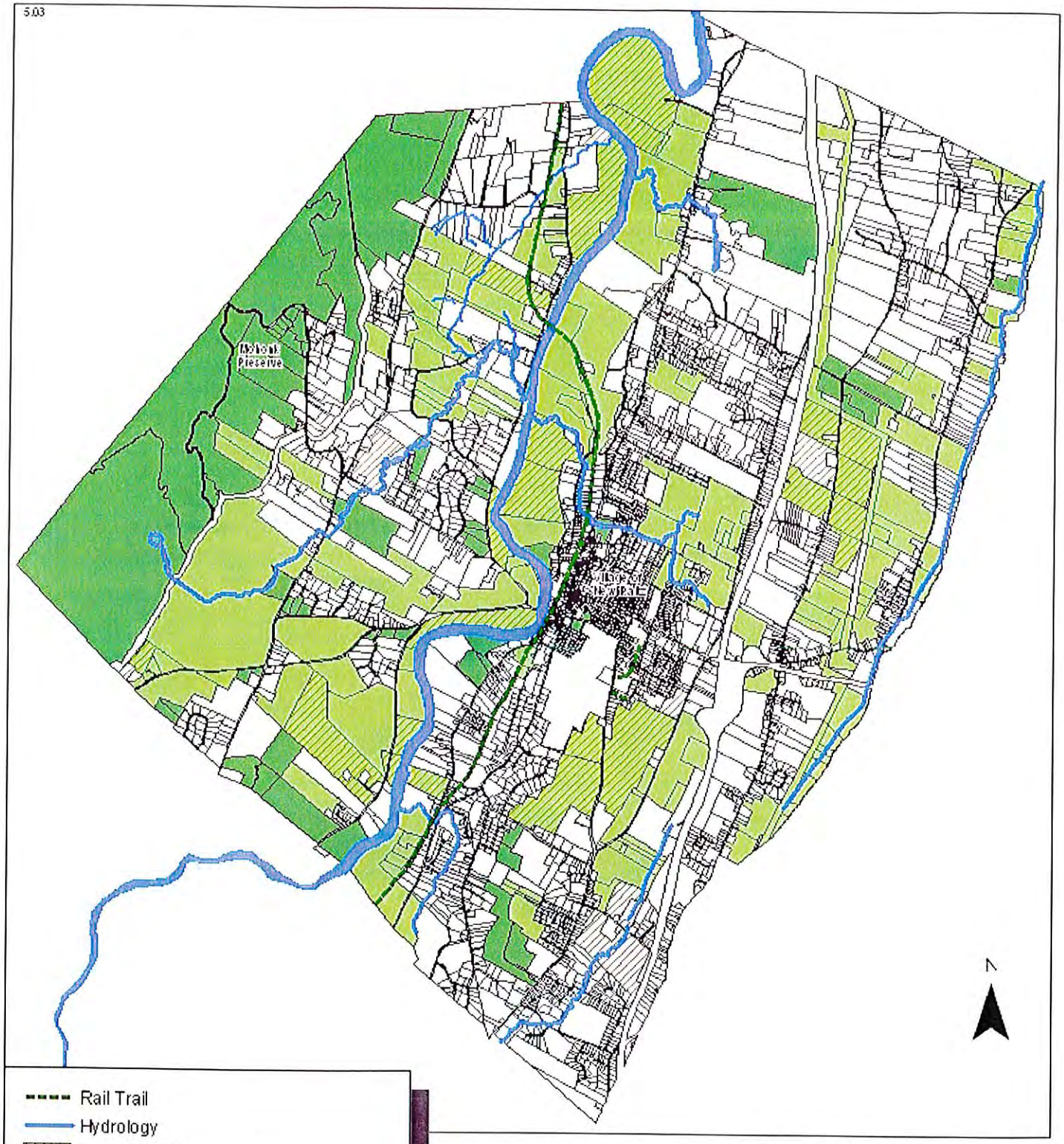
Water Resources

Water resources in all of their forms have been identified by the residents of New Paltz as having great value in the open space inventory. Rivers, streams, tributaries, wetlands, floodplains and aquifers are each recognized for their importance in maintaining a healthy environment for both people and wildlife. These water resources are recognized as critical environmental infrastructure, in that they collectively provide drinking water, habitat, and scenic beauty.

Water resources are located in many of the same areas as the areas identified by the public as important open space resources. In fact, parcels near water resources are likely to have low development, and are often located near agricultural lands. The close proximity of water resources to other open spaces underscores the importance of wetlands, streams, and other hydrology in the maintenance of healthy open space resources. Additionally, the Wallkill River itself is the source of many scenic views and is a cornerstone of New Paltz's identity.

OPEN SPACE PATTERNS – CONCURRENCE OF RESOURCES

In order to make assessments regarding open space resources, it is first important to determine where open spaces are located; that is, locating those places where open space resources occur and those places where there is no current development that impedes open space values. By establishing a range of values according to which each piece of land can be roughly grouped, parcels of land with no to low development can be identified and studied in connection with other open space resources.



New Paltz Open Space Committee

AKRF

Open Space Analysis

The land categorization system was a simple 1-through-4 system. Land identified as "Protected Open Land" was assigned a value of "1". This category would include town or village parks or land protected by conservation easements. Land identified as "Developed" was assigned a value of "4", and would include fully built-out residential or commercial properties. Partially developed (e.g. oversize residential lots that could be further subdivided), undeveloped (e.g., land that could be built upon, especially if it could be subdivided into more than one residential lot) and agricultural land was assigned the intermediate values of "2" and "3" according to the land's level of development.

Intermediate values include land designated agricultural (according to both the agricultural tax exemption as well as open farmland identified using aerial photographs), open, and very low development (land with no visible development as seen in aerial photographs). These parcels are identified as being open but not protected, i.e. close to the "Protected Open Space" layer in value along the continuum, with a value of "2". The final classification, closer to "Developed" land along the continuum, are parcels that are partially developed, but still offer potentially valuable open space. These parcels were assigned a value of "3".

Although this exercise of identifying parcels based on their current development status is valuable in identifying broad-brush land use patterns, it is not meant to be a definitive inventory of development or of open space potential on a parcel-by-parcel basis. Parcels have been assigned values in groups, in an effort to better identify macro-scale patterns in land development and open space potential.

Land that is identified as either protected, open, agricultural, or as having extremely low development is shown in green on the Open Space Analysis map. Among these parcels, we can assume that development is sufficiently low as to allow land to be studied further as valuable open space resources.

CONCLUSIONS

When all is said and done, the image that emerges from this inventory is that New Paltz is a place in a treasured setting. This setting is defined by what this inventory has called "open space" resources: scenic views, farms, wetlands, streams, forested land, and the Wallkill River.

This is not news to anybody; the maps, plans, reports, studies, and participants in the public workshops did not reveal anything that New Paltz residents did not already know. This inventory, however, assembles data and knowledge in a manner and format that can now provide direction and impetus to initiatives and efforts to ensure that the treasured surroundings and characteristics of New Paltz are retained, enhanced, and passed on to future generations.

Facing New Paltz is the opportunity to move this inventory to the next step, and that step can lead in a variety of different directions. Among the possible next steps to consider are the following:

Create a Conservation Board

Once this inventory is adopted as an official "open space index", the current Environmental Conservation Commissions (EnCC) of the Town and Village could be redesignated as Conservation Advisory Boards. As such, the Boards would be legally required to review proposals and applications made to other Town or Village boards to determine whether

applications would affect resources identified in the inventory. The Conservation Boards could function as the permanent municipal entities charged with providing advice on the protection and planning for open space.

Conduct Informed Environmental Reviews

This open space inventory can be a guide to assist the Planning Board, the Zoning Board of Appeals, and other municipal boards involved in land use decisions. Projects and proposals that come before municipal boards that affect land could be screened against this inventory to identify whether open spaces might be affected. An early screening might provide the opportunity to alter or refine site plans or designs to avoid possible negative impacts. Doing so in consultation with the project applicants can ensure a smoother and less costly development process, as well as help protect open space by steering development to other, less sensitive areas.

Formally adopting the open space inventory would mean that projects falling under the jurisdiction of the State Environmental Quality Review Act (SEQRA) would have to consider the effects on inventoried open space resources. This could result in the submission of project proposals that are increasingly respectful of open space, and are consequently less environmentally damaging and less controversial.

Update and Refine Land Use Regulations

New Paltz zoning could be fine-tuned to guide future growth in a fashion that ensures the perpetuation of open space resources and values. Height limitations or building location guidelines could be instituted to protect scenic viewsheds from being degraded; allowable residential lot density could be adjusted to reduce encroachments on wetlands or steeply sloped areas; incentives could be established that encouraged developers to cluster new housing in ways that preserve open space; and conservation overlay districts that offer tailored protections to specific resources could be instituted. (In fact, while this report was in preparation, the Town of new Paltz passed a new cluster subdivision ordinance.) The Town and the Village have many land use tools at their disposal to encourage appropriate growth and simultaneously preserve open space; this inventory establishes the basis upon which these tools can be enacted.

The Pace Law School at Pace University, in White Plains, offers important advice to municipalities wishing to improve their land use programs. The Pace Land Use Law Center is a resource through which the approaches and tools for protecting open space can be obtained – the web site for the Land Use Law Center is http://www.law.pace.edu/landuse/index.html.

Institute a Land Preservation Program

Acquiring interests in real property is an approach to open space protection that could be considered. In fact, the Town and Village have successfully acquired park and open space parcels in the past, and this inventory could serve as a guide for the expansion of existing protected open spaces and for the acquisition of new ones. Municipalities throughout New York State have successfully followed the lead of their open space inventories and established programs that have protected thousands of acres of open space lands.

Acquiring interests in open space means more than simple land acquisition, although this method ("fee simple acquisition") is the most common means of protecting open space as parks, nature preserves, greenways, etc. The other major acquisition-based technique is through the acquisition of conservation easements. Land acquisition normally entails a landowner selling (or

giving) a piece of property to a municipality or a conservation organization. This results in the passage of ownership from one party to another.

In contrast, a conservation easement is a method whereby a landowner conveys certain specific ownership rights to the municipality or organization. With a conservation easement, the landowner, by a deed-like document, permanently conveys certain ownership rights (for example, the landowner's right to develop houses or cut trees, etc.) that effectively protect specific open space qualities of the land. The land, however, stays in private ownership, so the land owner continues to enjoy and pay taxes on it, although they cannot, for example, further develop it or impair its open space or conservation values. The recipient of the easement – the Town or Village, or a conservation organization – does not "own" the land, nor can they exercise the rights that the landowner conveyed to them.

A mechanism for instituting a conservation easement program is for the Town to establish a purchase of development rights (PDR) program. With a PDR program, the Town could target specific sorts of open space, such as farmland, and cooperatively develop easement acquisitions designed to meet the needs of farmers and to preserve the key attributes of farm properties. These attributes, as this inventory has discovered, could include scenic quality, water resources, and, of course, productive agricultural soils. Acquiring land outright or acquiring conservation easements generally requires a payment of some sort, but not always. Particularly charitable landowners can donate land or even donate easements. In some cases the value of the donation can create tax benefits to the donor. Landowners can also choose to sell their land or their easements at less than market value, and in some cases the difference between the sale price and the appraised market value could be used as the basis for certain tax benefits. Understanding how these benefits work for an individual landowner depends on dozens of factors. The Town and Village attorneys and professionals associated with nonprofit conservation groups such as The Nature Conservancy, Trust for Public Land, Scenic Hudson, the Open Space Institute, and the Wallkill Valley Land Trust and others could potentially assist in discussing these matters with landowners.

Traditional municipal open space acquisition programs rely on paying for land, and there are many ways to raise municipal funds for acquisitions . Among the methods in place in New York State include general obligation bonds; devoting budget surpluses to dedicated open space acquisition funds; special capital appropriations; and increasing property taxes by a set percentage (e.g., one-half of one percent) as a revenue source for a dedicated capital fund. Another way is to levy a fee on real estate transactions -- a real estate transfer tax – through which funds are generated solely by the purchasers of real estate. The Trust for Public Land specializes in municipal open space finance programs, and their web site contains several documents and studies that provide case studies and ideas for creative and successful open space programs. See www.tpl.org.

Expand and Update this Inventory

By design, this inventory is a rough-cut look at the open space patterns in New Paltz. This inventory could serve as a guide to more detailed studies into each of the resource areas covered, as well as others. Farmland, wetlands, wildlife corridors, specific species and habitat locations, groundwater recharge areas, geological features, trail linkages, bikeways, scenic vistas and viewsheds are all areas that are deserving of further investigation and documentation. But it is important that New Paltz not delay acting to conserve and enhance the open space resources it has now – even if they are not yet studied in detail – because delay could result in a further

diminishment of the open space base on which New Paltz's beauty, quality of life, and environmental and human health depend.

A benefit of having established a GIS data base is that the maps and data layers that comprise the GIS system can be continuously updated and refined as new information is obtained. The GIS and this inventory are, therefore, not static, and should not be viewed as such. Information is dynamic, changing, growing, and the inventory is designed to accommodate more and better data as it is generated. New Paltz would be well served to continue to refine and develop this data, to learn more about its open spaces, and to continuously engage the community in a discussion about what open space means to it and how its open space can be enhanced and conserved.