

The Open Space Plan also established a Top 10 list of Important Open Spaces. These were developed through a public workshop attended by over 100 residents in 2003. The number on the following list refers to the relative popularity of specific open spaces in New Paltz expressed by the workshop participants and included:

1. Scenic view from Route 299 west of the Wallkill River
2. Wallkill River and its floodplain
3. Swaartekill/Plutarch wetlands complex and aquifer
4. Village woodlands between Shivertown Road and Henry Dubois Road
5. Tributary 13 (desired to be renamed as the Mill Brook)
6. Kleinekill and Humpo Marsh
7. Woodland in the Shawangunk foothills
8. Lands between Huguenot Street and the Wallkill River
9. Open land between Route 299 and Libertyville Road

10. Open land between the Thruway, South Putt Corners Road, and Route 32 South

The proposed Mill Brook Preserve is a concept that meets the stated needs and desires of the community.

The Open Space Plan describes the proposed Mill Brook Preserve as a “Model Cooperative Planning Process.” As described in that Plan:

When four applications for several contiguous developments concurrently came before the Village and Town planning boards, members of the Open Space Committee envisioned the potential for cooperation amongst landowners, the Town, and Village to protect the important natural features, including wetlands surrounding Tributary 13 (historically known as the Mill Brook). A member of the Village planning board translated the idea into a concept plan for a preserve of up to 125 acres, featuring the Mill Brook and its associated wetlands as the primary natural feature.

In addition to establishing community support for preservation of the Mill Brook area, the Open Space Plan also outlines general land-use planning conservation thresholds² that are relevant to the long-term management of the Preserve. These are:

- Protect habitat patches of 55 hectares (138 acres) or greater;
- Preserve 20-60% of the total landscape for wildlife habitat;
- Have landscape buffers of 230-300 meters (755-985 feet) to protect large habitat patches;
- Have minimum riparian buffer of 100-meters (328 feet).
- Use habitat corridors and stepping stones to reduce fragmentation and increase connectivity.

The Open Space Committee adopted the Mill Brook Preserve concept as part of its open space strategy and conducted meetings with landowners, Village and Town officials to determine whether there was interest and support for the project. All parties agree there are many benefits of the concept - to protect the most important features of the landscape as well as create development that enhances and respects the surrounding open space. Landowners have recognized the financial benefits of the proposed preserve in an area where open space and natural landscapes are highly valued, and understand there are marketing opportunities when the open space features of their proposed developments are used as key selling points. With this knowledge, the Open Space Committee began a more concerted effort to identify potential preserve boundaries, involve landowners and the public, and outline a long-term protection and management strategy.

² Excerpt from the 2006 New Paltz Open Space Plan which adapted: *Conservation Thresholds for Land Use Planners*, Environmental Law Institute