

1. Project Overview



The Open Space and Farmland Plan creates a vision for Pleasant Valley, which encourages residents to act as partners in conservation and remain active and engaged in determining the future of our Town. The purpose of this Plan is to assist in protecting Pleasant Valley’s most significant open space and farmland resources by providing information regarding the importance of those resources, offering a guide through the various voluntary land protection and financing options, and providing short term and long term recommendations that will contribute to the protection of the environmental and economic health of our community.

The Open Space Committee operated with the following goal in mind:

“To preserve and protect the open space in Pleasant Valley, through voluntary efforts, in order to enhance the quality of life for its residents and preserve the rural character of the community. When we speak of open space we are referring to land with minimum or no development, the protection of which would conserve important natural resources, farmland, cultural resources, wildlife habitat, and recreational uses, resulting in the creation of conservation develop-

ment patterns that provide fiscal and economic benefits to our community.”

A. Purpose of the Open Space and Farmland Plan

The Open Space and Farmland Plan inventories existing open space and agricultural resources in the Town of Pleasant Valley and presents a vision for the future of these valuable resources. The Plan also provides a snapshot of data on the land and soil resources, topographical considerations, wetlands, floodplains, lakes, streams and watersheds. The goal of the Plan is to identify the key issues facing open space and agricultural resources in the Town, highlight the importance of these resources – both environmentally and economically – and provide collaborative support for preserving and conserving the open space resources in the Town.

The Open Space and Farmland Plan is a Plan of action, designed to encourage resource protection on a voluntary basis. The Plan recommends specific groups within the Town responsible for implementing these recommendations and identifies funding sources available to help realize the Plan’s goals. Adoption of the Plan by the Town Board does not affect the zoning law with respect to the use of the land as regulated by the Town. It does not, in any way, restrict existing private

property rights. The Plan is a document subject to periodic review and modification as goals are achieved and conditions with the Town of Pleasant Valley change.

B. Defining Open Space and Farmland

The term “Open Space” can have broad and varied definitions. For purposes of this Plan, the following definition should act as a guide when the term “Open Space” is used:

“Open Space is land with minimal or no development, the protection of which would conserve important natural resources, farmland, cultural resources, wildlife habitat, passive and active recreational uses, resulting in the creation of conservation development patterns that provide fiscal and economic benefits to our community.”

The Open Space Committee defines “agriculture” as it is defined in the Town of Pleasant Valley Zoning Code as follows:

“The utilization of land and structures for the production, preservation, non industrial processing, storage, and sale of agricultural products, not including agricultural industry or farms primarily for the disposal of offal or garbage, commercial horse operations, as defined herein, and the raising and breeding of horses are agricultural uses, distinguished from the business use of teaching or training people to ride a horse (see “Riding Academy”). Preservation, processing and storage are limited to those products produced on the farm where located. See definition for “Farm Stand” regarding retail sales of agricultural products.”



“Businesses that use land to produce a marketable product that the farmer can sell at a profit”
 Hudson Valley Almanac Weekly – “The State of Farming in the Hudson Valley”



C. Conservation Vision for the Town of Pleasant Valley

The residents of Pleasant Valley understand the need to protect the rural character of the community and enhance the quality of life for residents through the conservation of important resources such as biodiversity, ground water recharge, and carbon absorption and other ecological functions, farmland, scenic viewsheds, cultural resources, wildlife habitat, woodlands, steep slopes and ridgelines, and recreational parks and trails. This Plan shapes a future for our residents, which will balance open space preservation with development needs and provide the Town with responsible growth and planning.

This Plan accepts as some of its goals to ensure that:

- ▶ Water quality is maintained. The Wappinger Creek remains clean and healthy so residents will always be able to cast their rods and catch a fish;
- ▶ Active farms and agricultural lands/soils are preserved so we will always have cows grazing

in the fields, fresh vegetables for sale in the summer and apples to pick in the fall;

- ▶ Adequate parks and recreational facilities are provided. Veterans will be able to stand proud for many years on Memorial Day at the Mill Park and parks will be available so that our children can enjoy playgrounds and participate in recreational programs; and
- ▶ Growth is directed to developed areas and balanced to conserve open space. Our downtown and local businesses will continue to grow and prosper while respecting and protecting access to the abundant natural habitats so that all can spot a turtle by a pond or hear the call of a barred owl.

D. Plan Development and Public Participation Process

1. Town of Pleasant Valley Open Space Committee

The Pleasant Valley Open Space Committee was created by the Town Board in 2006. This volunteer Committee is comprised of Pleasant Valley residents appointed by the Town Board and charged with the following tasks:

- Inventory and map the Town's open space and farmland resources;
- Form an open space and farmland stakeholders group who would serve as advisors to and participants in the preparation of an Open Space and Farmland Plan;
- Conduct a comprehensive public outreach campaign to involve residents, businesses and other interested agencies and group in the Plan preparation process;
- Investigate open space and farmland preservation policies at the State, County and local level, specifically including the Greenway Compact and the Dutchess County Partnership for Manageable Growth;
- Obtain copies of local laws and resolutions from relevant Dutchess County communities including: the Towns of Red Hook, Beekman, Lagrange that have established open space and farmland preservation programs and successfully secured funding for these programs;
- Prepare a Plan that includes policy and funding recommendations for the Town Board to consider for open space and farmland protection.

2. Preparation of the Plan

The Town of Pleasant Valley Open Space and Farmland Plan is the result of seven years of hard work by the Pleasant Valley Open Space Committee (OSC). At that time, the OSC began the task of drafting an Open Space Plan for the Town of Pleasant Valley, which was to coincide with the updates to the Town of Pleasant Valley Comprehensive Plan and Zoning Code to ensure consistency and uniformity between the documents. The Comprehensive Plan and Zoning Code were

adopted unanimously by the Town Board on December 16, 2009. Subsequently, as recommended in the Comprehensive Plan, the Town prepared a Recreation Master Plan, which includes an inventory of existing Town of Pleasant Valley recreation resources, facilities and programs, and provides recommendations for upgrades to existing facilities and programs as well as potential acquisition for new resources. This Plan builds on the recommendations of the Comprehensive Plan and the Recreation Master Plan.

As the Open Space Committee worked through the drafting process, it became clear that farmland protection is vital to preserving the rural character of Pleasant Valley. Therefore, the Committee decided that the Open Space Plan should be expanded to include farmland resources.

In 2008, the Town was awarded a grant from the New York State Department of Conservation Hudson River Estuaries program to help fund the preparation of this Plan. This document is a result of that effort.

3. Schedule

Although the Open Space Committee began work on the Open Space and Farmland Plan in 2006, work on the preparation of this final plan began in earnest in January 2013, when the Town retained AKRF, Inc. and Taconic Site Design & Landscape Architecture to facilitate the planning process and conduct a public outreach process to engage the Pleasant Valley community in the project. The Plan was developed over approximately eight months structured around monthly meetings with the Open Space Committee, discussion with stakeholders, the community and the Town's representatives.

4. Stakeholder Meetings

One of the first tasks for the project was to identify and prepare a list of key Pleasant Valley stakeholders, including large landowners (75 acres or more) and owners/operators of working farms. Engaging stakeholders in the process is mutually beneficial to the stakeholder group and to the Town, because it provides the opportunity to identify specific issues facing these landowners and develop recommendations to address these issues. This information is relayed to the Town Board and other officials so they can better understand the challenges facing their residents and business owners and undertake initiatives to assist them in the land preservation efforts.

The Open Space Committee prepared a list of approximately 120 key stakeholders who were invited to participate in a focused meeting on Saturday May 4, 2013. Also invited were the members of the Pleasant Valley Town Board, the

NYSDEC, Dutchess County Planning and various other interested agencies. The presentation materials from that meeting are included in the Appendix to this Plan.

Attendees at the stakeholder meeting expressed concerns about the struggles that farmers face from development pressure, the need to sell pieces of their farms to developers and to reinvest the proceeds of that sale into the farm just to keep it going and the lack of funding and policies offered by the Town to support and incentivize agricultural activities. The discussion focused largely on the reality that open space and farms generally pay the same taxes as developed properties, but cost the Town significantly less in maintenance services. Some attendees suggested that the Town consider taxing properties at a rate commensurate with the demand they create in Town services.

Other discussion focused on large land-owner's desire to protect their land from development, but concern that selling or otherwise restricting development on their properties would eliminate a potential revenue stream for retirement or for inheritance to their children. Rebecca Thornton, President of the Dutchess Land Conservancy, who attended the Stakeholder Meeting, described the various options available to land owners interested in protecting their lands via conservation easement, and the financial mechanisms and benefits available to them.

The feedback from attendees at the Stakeholder Meeting was summarized and helped form the basis for policy recommendations included in this Plan.

THE TOWN OF PLEASANT VALLEY
OPEN SPACE COMMITTEE

You are invited as a stakeholder...
to participate in the preparation of the
Open Space and Farmland Plan



The goals of the stakeholder meetings are to identify challenges facing farmers and large landowners in Pleasant Valley, and discuss opportunities to help address these challenges.

Two invite-only stakeholder meetings will be held.
Please RSVP no later than April 20th to Margi Licchiello at (845) 596-7592

Location: Town of Pleasant Valley Town Hall
1554 Main Street, Pleasant Valley, NY 12569

Please select the date that you prefer:

Friday, April 26, 2013 7 PM to 9 PM	Saturday, May 4, 2013 10 AM to 12 PM
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This project has been funded in part by a grant from the New York State Environmental Protection Fund through the Hudson River Estuary Program of the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation



5. Community Meeting

On June 25, 2013, the Open Space Committee sponsored a Public Engagement Meeting on the proposed Plan at the Pleasant Valley Town Hall. The purpose of the meeting was to invite the community to provide comment on the proposed Significant Resource Area and Policy Recommendations. The presentation materials from that meeting are included in the Appendix to this Plan.

Attendees at the meeting were primarily interested in the economic benefits of open space and farmland preservation particularly when compared with the costs to the Town for maintaining development. Discussion focused on the common misconception that development generates more tax revenue to the Town than does open space and farmland. The reality is that for every dollar the Town receives in property taxes from residential development, it spends more in services. Conversely, open space and farmland don't generally require maintenance or services from the Town and therefore for every dollar the Town

receives in property taxes from open space and farmland, the Town spends less for services. From the perspective of fiscal benefit to the Town, open space and farmland preservation efforts are a financial winner and should therefore be supported by Town policies and initiatives.

6. On-Line Survey

In addition to the Stakeholder and Community Engagement meetings held during the planning process, an online preferences survey was conducted from May 1, 2013 to July 15, 2015. The survey was open to all Pleasant Valley residents and access instructions were emailed to the project email list, posted on the Town's website and blasted several times on the Town's unofficial Facebook page. Announcements about the survey were provided at the Stakeholder Meeting, the Community Engagement Meeting and the Town Board meeting.

Approximately 126 responses to the survey were analyzed to help further inform the recommendations included in this Plan. Questions ranged from asking the responders how they would characterize the Pleasant Valley community (urban, suburban, rural, etc.) to whether they would be willing to support a bond measure for open space preservation. Due to the limited number of responses to the on-line survey, it is not considered a statistically significant sample. However, it should be noted that many of the responses revealed identical preferences to those expressed in the Comprehensive Plan Community Survey (2006) and the survey conducted with the Recreation Master Plan (2011). Such similarities included the fact that residents consider Pleasant Valley to be rural in character (72 percent); believe it's important to preserve open space and farmland in Pleasant Valley (83 percent) and believe the Town should focus their

THE TOWN OF PLEASANT VALLEY
OPEN SPACE COMMITTEE

You are invited to a
Community Engagement Meeting



The goal of the Community Engagement Meeting is to invite residents of the Town of Pleasant Valley to participate in the...

Open Space and Farmland Plan

Date/Time: Tuesday, June 25, 2013/ 7 PM to 9 PM

Location: Town of Pleasant Valley Town Hall
1554 Main Street, Pleasant Valley, NY 12569

This project has been funded in part by a grant from the New York State Environmental Protection Fund through the Hudson River Estuary Program of the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation





preservation efforts on active farming (dairy, cattle, pig, poultry, fruit, vegetable and equestrian). A summary of the results of the survey are included in the Appendix to this Plan.

7. Preparation of the Open Space and Farmland Plan

All of the mapping, research and community input gathered at the various outreach sessions was incorporated into the draft Open Space and Farmland Plan prepared by the Open Space Committee, and synthesized into this Open Space and Farmland Plan.

The Plan is organized in six Chapters.

Chapter 1 presents the project overview and a summary of the public participation process. Chapter 2 presents Local and Regional Planning for Open Space and Agriculture providing a description of the regulatory framework governing open space and farmland preservation in the Town, County, Region and State. Chapter 2 also provides a summary of the various land protection tools available to individuals and municipalities for open space and farmland support and protection. Chapter 3 presents the existing Town natural resources including recreation areas, cultural resources, conserved and protected lands, farmlands with agricultural exemptions, water resources, ecological systems, forested areas and important habitats. Understanding these resource patterns and how they relate to larger regional resource areas is integral to forming conservation priorities and policies. Chapter 4 presents the process for determining and mapping of priority conservation areas within the Town and the proposed Conservation Significant Resource Area. Chapter 5 provides various options for financing open space and conservation efforts and funding

mechanisms available to farmers and landowners with property in active agriculture. Chapter 6 presents policy recommendations, and an implementation plan to ensure that the momentum created in the preparation of this Plan continues through action by various responsible parties and initiatives.

The Open Space and Farmland Plan is meant to be a living document, the policies and goals of which will be revisited and adjusted based on initiatives being accomplished and new tools revealed. It is with this intention that this Plan was prepared.

E. Consistency with Pleasant Valley Planning and Policy Documents

The Open Space and Farmland Plan builds upon the goals of the Pleasant Valley Comprehensive Plan adopted on December 16, 2009 and the Recreation Master Plan adopted November 9, 2011. The Comprehensive Plan identifies specific goals to be addressed in this Plan and other conservation tasks that are to be undertaken in part by the Open Space Committee after the adoption of this Plan.

The Comprehensive Plan encourages “agricultural operations including farm-related businesses, the on-site sale of farm products, lower taxation of active farmlands, and the protection of right-to-farm from constraints associated with adjacent non-agricultural development.” Further, the Comprehensive Plan suggests that updated Zoning regulations implement strategies that would: promote the conservation of agricultural lands and prime soils, placing importance on connectivity of adjacent resources; promote agricultural uses and direct marketing of

agricultural operations; and include right-to-farm provisions.

Specific Pleasant Valley Comprehensive Plan initiatives that relate to the preparation of the Open Space Plan and Farmland Plan include

the following short and long-term goals and the status of accomplishing these goals as of the writing of this document.

Pleasant Valley Comprehensive Plan Recommendation		Current Status (2013)
Implementation Strategies: Environment, Open Space, and Farmland Protection - Short-term		
1.7	Create a list of parcels that could be protected and set a goal for the number of acres to be preserved within the next five years. Actively seek commitment from the landowners of those parcels to participate in preservation.	General preservation areas and goals included in this Plan
1.8	Contact landowners who indicated ... that they might be interest in placing a conservation easement on their property.	Recommendation in this Plan: Open Space and Farmland Plan Stakeholder Group
1.9	Conduct informational sessions within the community, with input from land conservancies such as the Dutchess Land Conservancy, to educate the public on farmland protection, purchase of development rights, tax incentives, and the easement process.	Completed - as part of the Open Space and Farmland Plan process
1.10	Establish a Farmland Protection Plan for the Town.	Completed with adoption of this Plan
1.11	Once a landowner has given a verbal commitment to preservation, actively seek the funds to preserve the land through the New York State Agricultural and Farmland Protection Program and other funding sources.	Recommendations included in this Plan
1.12	With the help of outside sources such as The Trust for Public Land, the Pleasant Valley Open Space Committee should work with the Town to prepare a municipal bond vote to raise funds for open space conservation	Roadmap for accomplishing this goal included in this Plan
1.13	Encourage land use decision-makers to actively use the Comprehensive Plan maps for creating and maintaining trails, bikeways, park facilities, scenic roadway segments, water access, and for understanding important natural resources and development constraints.	Policy initiatives to codify this process included in this Plan

Pleasant Valley Comprehensive Plan Recommendation		Current Status (2013)
1.14	Create a listing of parks, trails and recreation facilities for distribution via the website or other means.	Inventory completed in the Pleasant Valley Recreation Master Plan and the Open Space and Farmland Plan and roadmap for marketing included in this Plan.
1.16	Consider a program that requires payment to an open space fund for the right to increase the development potential within the hamlets.	Roadmap for accomplishing the goal included in this Plan
Implementation Strategies: Environment, Open Space, and Farmland Protection - Long-term		
1.17	Passage of a municipal Greenspace fund which can be then be used to leverage State, Federal and County funds for the protection of important land.	Recommendations included in this Plan
1.18	Complete a biodiversity assessment of the Town and use the resulting map in land use decisions.	Underway under the guidance of the CAC and Hudsonia
Implementation Strategies: Population, Economic Base, and Growth of Centers - Short-term		
2.2	Consider a program for the Hamlet Residential districts that requires payment to an open space fund in order to increase the development potential.	Recommendations included in this Plan
2.7	Work with Dutchess County Tourism to create a brochure that includes a listing of agricultural related business and local establishments for dining, shopping and recreational opportunities.	Roadmap for marketing included in this Plan.