

TOWN OF CORTLANDT MASTER PLAN

CHAPTER 1: OPEN SPACE AND RECREATION

LAND USE ELEMENT - OPEN SPACE SECTION

A. INTRODUCTION

*GOAL: Continue to preserve,
protect and acquire
open space.*

The open space section of the Master plan discusses the land use related objectives and implementation measures that are intended to achieve the Town's goal of preserving open space. This section focuses primarily on passive recreation and open space objectives, while the active recreational needs of the community are addressed in the recreation section of the community facilities element.



Oscawana Island in Grugers

Open space, simply defined, is land that is “open and green”, i.e., it is relatively free of structures, buildings and other elements of the man-made environment and is largely in a natural or vegetated state. Generally, open space is not used intensively. For planning purposes, the Master Plan Committee has defined the land use category “open space” as actually representing three distinct subcategories:

- ❖ Dedicated open space areas that are largely vacant and are formally restricted from being developed, e.g., public passive parkland such as the Hudson Highlands Gateway Park. Privately-owned undeveloped areas that are restricted from development by conservation easements or similar restrictions would also fall within this subcategory.
- ❖ Properties that are not explicitly dedicated to open space, but the use and character of the properties are essentially the same as dedicated open space. While man-made structures may be present, the overall property maintains a significant percentage of land area that is undisturbed or green, e.g., a cemetery. Another type of open space would be certain types of recreational facilities such as a park (Blue Mountain or Georges Island, for example), a playfield or a golf course – while it may be more intensively used, a golf course’s design results in significant expanses of land being retained in a vegetated, open state.
- ❖ Undeveloped or underutilized privately-owned land. While the land may currently provide open space benefits, there is no guarantee in the future that these benefits will be preserved since this land could be subject to development in the future. Properties such as Teatown Reservation (Cliffdale Farm), Valeria, and the DeMaria Farm fall into this category.



Hudson Highlands Gateway Park - Annsville

In defining and categorizing open space, the Committee was also advised by the New York State Land Use Classification System. Using the NYS system as a basis for our discussion and presentation, allows the statistics we developed to be reasonably compared to other Towns across the County and the State.

Based on the results of the Master Plan Public Opinion Survey, open space was one of the most important issues on which the Town should take action. Open space is intended to achieve the following objectives:

- Preserve the Town's biodiversity by protecting significant expanses of land or corridors in their natural ecological habitat.
- Protect environmentally sensitive land, e.g., wetlands and steep slopes.
- Protect scenic views considered important to the community.
- Provide passive recreational opportunities, including but not limited to hiking and bird watching.
- Preserve historic and archeological resources.
- Protect surface and ground water resources by buffering these resources from the pollutants generated by development.
- Generate economic benefits generated by the tourists who may visit the open space amenities that are open to the public.
- Preserve community character and quality of life by buffering more intensive areas of development from residential neighborhoods, stabilizing property values.
- Limit the impacts associated with man-made development, including increases in pollutants, traffic, and noise levels.

The proposals included in the Plan are directed to the furtherance of these objectives. The most fundamental step to be taken is the proposed development of a Comprehensive Open Space Plan, to identify open space patterns and linkages, critical properties and environmental concerns and to create a prioritized list of properties to be considered for protection and/or acquisition. As the Master Plan is being prepared for presentation to the Town Board, this work is underway.

B. BASE STUDIES SUMMARY

Existing PROS and Cluster Open Space Zoning

Parks, Recreation and Open Space parcels in public ownership as of 1994 are located within a Parks, Recreation and Open Space (PROS) district as shown on the Town Zoning Map. The Zoning Map shows 13 PROS districts in the Town containing 2,336 acres. Since 1994, when the last comprehensive zoning map of the town was adopted, additional public open space lands have been acquired and should be zoned as a PROS district. PROS districts identifies parks and recreation areas as open space for passive and active recreational uses

Also shown as PROS on the Zoning Map are cluster open space developments containing residential development and protected open space land such as Valeria, Cortlandt Chase, Cortlandt Estates, Valley View among others.

Open Space Trends Update

In 2002, approximately 4,502 acres, or 21 percent, of the Town of Cortlandt is considered “dedicated open space”, representing a 64 percent increase in open space since 1990 (open space in 1990 was 2,729 acres).

Dedicated open space acreage in the Town of Cortlandt can be broken down into the following categories: state parkland (11%), county parkland (46%), town recreational facilities and parks (4%), and open space within cluster subdivisions (5%), conservation lands including New York City watershed property (32%), private homeowner association recreation lands (1%) and recreational facilities on public school lands (1%). The largest area of growth in open space is represented by acquisitions of conservation land by the State of New York, the County of Westchester, New York City and the Town of Cortlandt.

Other public and private lands in the Cortlandt which serve some of the functions of open space are undeveloped lands associated with Camp Smith, the FDR VA Hospital grounds, Teatown Reservation (Cliffdale Farm), as well as cemeteries, utility rights-of-way, large estate properties, and farms and riding stables. However, these properties are not protected from development and are not included in the estimate of “dedicated open space”.

In 2002, approximately 3,803 acres (17% of Town land area) was classified as vacant and undeveloped. In 2002, development applications pending before the Planning Board represent approximately 1,544 acres of the Town’s undeveloped and vacant land. It is anticipated that a portion of the land area affected by these development applications will result in open space preservation although the total acreage is unknown at this time. Approximately 100 acres of dedicated open space was created from subdivisions approved in the past ten years. Since 1990, undeveloped and vacant land decreased by approximately 2,500 acres, with approximately 800 acres converted to residential and nonresidential development and approximately 1,773 acres converted to dedicated open space. New open space lands include, among others; the Hudson Highland Gateway Park, Harbour Landing, Blue Lakes and the transfer of land in Camp Smith to parkland.

C. OBJECTIVES AND POLICIES

OBJECTIVE: Complete and adopt a comprehensive Open Space Plan.

The creation of an Open Space Plan was first recommended in the 1991 Plan and some initial work to inventory significant open space parcels was accomplished. Work on a Comprehensive Open Space Plan began in 1995 with the Conservation Advisory Council (CAC) preparing an Open Space Index of all vacant parcels over five (5) acres in size. While this effort resulted in an identification of important properties that should be protected, there were some concerns those properties smaller than five (5) acres in size were not inventoried.

These smaller (less than 5 acres parcels) may offer strategic connections to link open space areas. In the past, it proved time-consuming and cumbersome to analyze the open space potential of all parcels in the Town. However, this effort is now more manageable with the availability of detailed land use and environmental maps and databases as part of Cortlandt's Geographic Information System (GIS).

It is recommended that the Town proactively identify properties that are essential to creating a well-planned and meaningful system of open space. Currently, there is a concern that isolated areas of open space are being preserved, but without beneficial linkages to other open space.

It is recommended that the Town prepare a comprehensive Open Space Plan and Open Space Map, which would specifically identify areas recommended for open space preservation. The Plan should illustrate existing designated open spaces as well as lands targeted for future preservation, maximizing open space benefits, such as protection of sensitive environmental areas, scenic views, or wildlife habitat.

Policy 1: Complete and adopt an updated Comprehensive Open Space Plan.

In order to prioritize properties that should be designated open space, the comprehensive Open Space Plan should be guided by criteria used to evaluate the importance of parcels for open space preservation. These criteria include.

- Unique habitats or habitat which supports rare, threatened and/or endangered wildlife and plant species and ecosystems.
- Scenic views of the Hudson River or the Hudson Highlands, or other significant scenic and cultural areas identified by the Comprehensive Open Space Plan.
- Historic and archeological resources that protect and perpetuate the historic character of the Town.
- Adjacency to or location within a Critical Environmental Area
- Prevalence of significant natural features such as prominent ridgelines, steep topography, and water features including lakes, ponds, streams, wetlands, coastlines, river habitats, or other features that are sensitive to development.
- Adjacency to private or public parks, wildlife and nature preserves sanctuaries or other open space in order to connect, expand and enhance the value of these important conservation areas.
- Natural buffer between and within residential neighborhoods to protect and enhance quality of life and neighborhood character.

- Other parcels that exhibit exceptional open space qualities or provide links to other open space areas.
- Lands identified as providing important recreational opportunities for the Town.
- Lands and/or buffer areas associated with protecting a public water supply or aquifer.
- Lands which promote tourism.
- Lands necessary for the acquisition of new and expansion of existing active recreation facilities.

Based on Local Law No. 2 of 2000 the Town Board by Resolution No. 68-03 established an Open Space Committee to make recommendations to the Board regarding the acquisition of open space.

The Planning Board should consult the Open Space Plan when reviewing development applications, and when appropriate, should recommend conservation easements, cluster development, or open space acquisition in order to protect an area recommended for open space preservation. Likewise, future applicants should recognize the recommendations of the Open Space plan as part of their Site Development and Subdivision plans that are to be submitted to the Planning Board.

It is recommended that when the Open Space Plan is adopted by the Town Board that it be incorporated into the Town Master Plan. In addition, the Open Space Plan should be updated biennially to reflect open space acquisitions and recent development.

The Open Space Plan will strengthen the Town's position in its advocacy of the protection of open space. By identifying specific properties recommended for open space preservation, it can negotiate for limited or full interest in a property before a development is proposed. In such cases, the importance of the parcel in the Town's Comprehensive Open Space Plan would be evaluated and appropriate measures would be required if development is to proceed (e.g. mandatory clustering, conservation easements, public access easements, etc.)

OBJECTIVE: Acquire open space throughout the Town through a variety of mechanisms, including: land donations, partnerships, support of land trust efforts, fee simple acquisition, conservation easements and cluster development.

Policy 2: Target specific properties for open space acquisition in the Town's Capital Improvement Plan and leverage the Town's funding to obtain additional financing.

Based on the Open Space Plan being prepared by the Open Space Committee, and as adopted by the Town Board, specific properties will be identified for open space preservation and acquisition.

In the past, the Town of Cortlandt Town Board has proactively partnered with other governmental agencies such as New York State, Westchester County, private land preservation organizations such as Scenic Hudson Inc. and neighboring property owners to acquire property for open space.

Recent examples of these types of partnerships include the acquisition of the 352 acre Hillpoint property to create the Hudson Highlands Gateway Park and the New York State acquisition of the Harbour Landing property.



The Hudson River from Hudson Highlands Gateway Park

By Local Law No. 2 of 2000 the Cortlandt Town Board created a capital reserve fund for the future acquisition of open space. The Town is also working with Westchester County and the New York City Department of Environmental Protection to acquire and protect the sensitive watershed lands in the Croton Watershed.

The Town is encouraged to work with the City of Peekskill to acquire and protect sensitive watershed areas in the Peekskill Hollowbrook Watershed. The Town is also encouraged to continue to include funding for recreation facilities in the Town's Capital Improvement Program and to use its funds to leverage additional financing from other organizations with an interest in open space preservation and recreation.

These partnerships and shared funding reduce the cost of open space and recreation land acquisition. In Rem property lists should be monitored and reviewed for potential public ownership of likely open space parcels.

Policy 3: Support open space preservation efforts of land trusts working with the Town to acquire and maintain open space property consistent with Town Policy.

Continue to work with land trusts to preserve remaining farm land (e.g., the DeMaria property) and large estate properties. When appropriate, the Town should partner with land trusts to obtain the preservation of valuable land. Land trusts can also play an important role in the acquisition of land or conservation easements to protect other sensitive environmental or aesthetic features.

Policy 4: Encourage private property owners to provide for conservation easements to protect environmentally sensitive lands and open space.

Encourage property owners to establish new conservation easements. Inventory, map and monitor existing and new conservation easements and open space lands on a regular basis. Organize programs to train staff, board members and the public on how to document and maintain conservation easements and public open space land.

Programs should be created to advise and educate the public on the tax benefits of providing conservation easements to protect environmentally sensitive land and open space. Such public awareness programs on the benefits of conservation easements could involve a television program on the town's local cable channel, conducting public forums and providing informational brochures. Public information should include what types of open space are available, what activities (like bird watching or hiking) may be pursued and where parking and access points are for these areas.

Policy 5: Seek the right of first refusal for parcels of land as identified in the open space plan.

The town should seek the right of first refusal for acquisition and preservation of parcels of land identified in the Open Space Plan. This can be accomplished by contacting and encouraging property owners to agree to notify the Town at the time they intend to sell their property. The right of first refusal would not obligate the Town to purchase the property, but it may allow the Town to identify a prospective buyer at a very early stage.

The Town may be able to either convince a prospective buyer to provide for environmental protection measures or acquire the property as open space. In some cases, a right of first refusal has prompted the original property owner or new buyer to donate sensitive portions of the property to either the Town or land trust organizations.

Policy 6: Continue to support the efforts of the Open Space Committee.

On February 11, 2003 by Resolution No. 68-03, the Town Board appointed the Open Space Committee to evaluate potential open space parcels for preservation and acquisition. In order to make recommendations to the Town Board, the Committee is preparing an Open Space Plan that will identify, evaluate and prioritize potential open space parcels to be protected and/or acquired.

As recommended by the Master Plan, the Open Space Plan should be updated biennially to reflect open space acquisitions or development that may have occurred. A Preliminary Open Space Map has been prepared as part of the Master Plan process. It is envisioned that the Open Space Committee will produce additional open space maps which will supercede this Preliminary Open Space map.

Policy 7: The Town Board should consider bonding for the purpose of acquiring major open space parcels throughout the Town.

As mentioned in the base studies for Open Space, Cortlandt has long been a leader in creating partnerships with the State, County and preservation organization such as Scenic Hudson, to acquire open space throughout the Town. Recent acquisitions include, among others; the Hudson Highland Gateway Park (352 acres), Harbour Landing (approximately 50 acres) Blue Lakes (approximately 269 acres) and the designation of land in the Camp Smith Military Reservation to parkland. The Town should continue to lead the way in acquiring more open space to retain the unique character of the Town of Cortlandt.

It is recommended that in order to facilitate more open space acquisition in the future, the Town Board consider bonding as a funding mechanism for large acquisitions of open space land throughout the Town. In the past, many open space acquisitions have been reactive to proposed development applications. Bonding would allow a more proactive approach to open space acquisition.

This proposed bonding should only be done with the approval of the Town residents through a referendum. The bonding will result in an increase in taxes to residents and everyone should be given an opportunity to express either their support or opposition to such a proposal.

The referendum should be as specific as possible with respect to identifying specific properties for acquisition and the total cost. The prioritized acquisition list being prepared by the Open Space Committee should be used in identifying parcels to be negotiated for and included in a proposed bond issue.

OBJECTIVE: Protect open space with appropriate land use regulations.

Policy 8: Designate recent public acquisitions and dedications as "Parks, Recreation and Open Space (PROS)" District on the Town's Zoning Map

As recommended in the 1991 Master Plan, the PROS zoning district was created and includes all existing public parkland and open space in the Town. The zoning map should be updated to rezone newly acquired (since 1994) parkland and open space parcels, such as Harbour Landing, Hudson Highlands Gateway Park (formerly identified as the "Hillpoint" property) and other public open space and parkland properties.

Policy 9: Designate privately owned open space lands such as watershed lands, designated open space/conservation lands and homeowner association park lands, golf courses, as "Conservation, Recreation and Open Space (CROS)" District on the Town's Zoning Map.

The CROS district would be different from the PROS district in that the PROS district is intended to apply solely to public recreation facilities and land. The CROS district would apply to private land that is used for conservation, recreation and open space.

There are a number of properties that would be designated CROS including cemeteries, golf courses, NYC Watershed properties as well as Clifftdale Farm and Teatown. Other properties which may also be CROS are dedicated open space and conservation lands and development – restricted homeowner association lands.

These properties should be placed on the Zoning Map in a newly created Conservation Recreation and Open Space (CROS) district for privately-owned properties that are limited to open space, conservation and/or recreational use. Such a designation on the Town Zoning Map will implement the town's policy to protect private open space land from future development and maintain conservation and recreation areas as open space.

Policy 10: Create a cemetery district and designate cemeteries such as the 3 located along Oregon Road and St. Patricks Cemetary on Broadway as a "cemetery zoning district".

The Town currently has several parcels of land which are designated cemeteries – most of which are located on Oregon Road and one of which is located on Broadway. There are a number of other cemeteries which are located on church property throughout the Town, these will remain zoned residential.

Policy 11: Encourage Cluster Open Space Design, where appropriate to further protect environmentally sensitive areas and preserve open space.

Pursuant to Section 278 of the NYS Town law and subject to Planning Board and Town Board approval, promote "conservation" subdivision design and protect environmentally sensitive areas. The cluster subdivision section of the Zoning Code should contain specific development standards to protect wetlands, water-bodies, watercourses, steep slopes and sensitive habitats over and above the protections required by existing environmental protection legislation.

Cluster subdivision, also known as open space or conservation subdivision, permits the arrangement of residential buildings or lots on a smaller amount of land by reducing the minimum lot size and/or building setback regulations to establish the remaining undeveloped portion of the property as open space.

Cluster subdivisions afford no increase in the density of lots or dwelling units that would ordinarily be permitted by the zoning district in which the subject property is located. In some instances, conservation easements may be used to preserve and protect environmentally sensitive areas on an individual parcel. However, if the conservation easements are employed, the Town is encouraged to educate the property owner that the area is not to be disturbed and to have the area clearly demarcated and monitored by the Town.

Sometimes it may be appropriate for the Planning Board to approve a smaller lot, and allow an area intended for open space to be held in a homeowner's association or dedicated to the Town or other conservation association to avoid property rights issues in the future. The Planning Board should require consideration of a cluster open space alternative in addition to a conventional design in applications which require the preparation of a DEIS per SEQRA.

If the land to be preserved is not privately owned, there is more opportunity to use the open space land for other purposes, e.g., passive recreation. The Master Plan proposes the following additional standards:

- a. A requirement that a certain percentage of the land be reserved as open space. For example, no more than 50% of the property can be consumed by lots, streets and any designated active recreation areas.
- b. Future development and/or subdivision of any reserved open space land are prohibited.
- c. Locate homes within the subdivision in areas where they would be least likely to block scenic views and disturb sensitive environmental features of the land.
- d. Prohibit (as opposed to restrict or discourage in other areas) the location of homes on scenic ridgelines.
- e. Preserve roadside wooded buffers to a minimum width of 30 feet.
- f. Provide for proper maintenance of reserved open space areas, when such open space areas are in the ownership of a homeowner's association. This would include proof that such responsibility is written into the homeowner's association agreement, which runs with the land.
- g. Strictly prohibit (as opposed to restrict in other areas) the wide spread cutting and clearing of trees.

Policy 12: Amend the Zoning Ordinance to restrict future land use in the Camp Smith Reuse A zone to open space and recreation uses.

While the Town of Cortlandt does not currently have zoning authority over the New York State owned Camp Smith Military Reservation facility, in 1993 the Town established the Camp Smith Reuse Zoning District to encourage beneficial reuse of the Camp Smith Military Reservation site in the event that the site is no longer used as a military reservation.

The current Camp Smith Reuse A and B Zoning Districts are intended to preserve open space and channel development into areas where development and infrastructure already exists. Given Camp Smith's prominent location in the scenic Hudson Valley and its adjacency to state parkland, the town should limit future land use in the Camp Smith Reuse A zone to parks, recreation and open space.

OBJECTIVE: Improve access and monitoring for Open Space areas.

Policy 13: Improve and expand access to designated open space by using existing road and utility rights-of-way and other properties to connect them to each other.

Many of the designated open space areas in Cortlandt are used for passive recreation, e.g., hiking, bird watching or non-motorized cycling. A larger proportion of Town residents may be encouraged to use open space for passive recreational purposes if accessibility to them was improved. Wherever possible, open space areas should be linked.

In particular, the Town should explore vacant parcels and linear utility rights-of-way for their potential to connect open space areas via existing and proposed trails. It is however, recognized that maximizing public access to open space parcels will be limited by the necessary protection of sensitive environmental features and the legitimate security and liability concerns in some utility rights-of-way.

For example, the Town should meet with representatives of Con Edison or AT&T to discuss the possibility of obtaining an easement for public trails along their rights-of-way. The Con Edison right-of-way, which encompasses roughly 160 acres, connects the Teatown Reservation in southeast Cortlandt to Croton Gorge Park and Montrose to the north. A linear park along this right-of-way was previously proposed in the 1974 and 1991 Master Plans

Other potential locations for trails would be along highway corridor rights-of-way such as Route 9, Route 202/35 and the Bear Mountain Parkway. Trail construction should be a part of proposed highway improvements or proposed development applications to the Planning Board.

GIS technology should be used to map proposed connections between various open space parcels, parkland, neighborhoods and existing trail systems (including the Peekskill Briarcliff Trailway and the Hudson Valley Greenway Trail).

Policy 14: Create village greens in existing hamlet areas and in other areas, where appropriate.

A basic feature of a traditional hamlet is a village green, which may be used as a passive recreational area or community meeting place for special or neighborhood events. Cortlandt's hamlets, including, but not limited to, Verplanck, Montrose, Toddville, Oregon Corners and Van Cortlandtville would benefit from such village green or commons.

A green contributes greatly to a neighborhood's sense of community and place, and also provides an important visual and recreational amenity. Suitable properties should be mapped to determine if any excess right-of-way land or a vacant parcel of property could serve as greens for hamlet areas.

Policy 15: Adopt Integrated Pest Management Practices

The Town is encouraged to adopt an Integrated Pest Management Ordinance to establish standards that will be consistent with manufacturer's recommendations and sound environmental practices.

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RECREATION SECTION: COMMUNITY FACILITIES

A. INTRODUCTION

***GOAL: Expand, maintain
& improve recreational
facilities.***

This section of the Master Plan relies on the Town of Cortlandt Parks, Recreation and Conservation Advisory Board's report entitled Long Range Plan for the Development of Recreational Facilities in the Town of Cortlandt, New York, March 2000 (referred to herein as the "Long Range Plan"), which addresses Cortlandt's needs for recreational space, facilities and programs. This section focuses primarily on the active recreational facilities needs of the community. Such facilities include ball fields, playgrounds or basketball courts. Passive recreational and open space objectives are addressed in the open space section of the land use element.



Charles Cook Pool in Furnace Dock Area.

B. BASE STUDIES SUMMARY

Based on generally accepted recreational planning standards, there is a deficiency and uneven distribution of municipal or neighborhood-oriented parks and active recreation facilities in Cortlandt. Town, school district, and private recreational space and facilities total approximately 275 acres land. In 2000, this equated to approximately 9.5 acres of active recreational space per 1,000 residents. If private recreational facilities are omitted from the inventory, the amount of active recreational space drops to 7.8 acres per 1,000 residents.

Recreational planning standards (National Recreation and Parks standards) recommend that a core park system for a community should include between 6.25 to 10.5 acres of “developed open space” per 1,000 residents.

Actively used Open Space consists of land available for active recreation as well as undeveloped land that are often associated with the active facilities. Based on the standard range noted above, and using the town's population of 28,672, approximately 179-301 acres of Town parkland should be available. The amount of recreational land within the Town is in the lower end of this range. However, it is also important that not only an adequate amount of acreage be provided but that the parks are located in a manner that is readily accessible to all Town residents.

The Town should continue to plan, develop, and maintain adequate recreational services and facilities to meet the needs of the existing population as well as to tailor its programs to the demands of a changing user population. Where land for town recreation purposes cannot be provided at a particular development, the Town collects a fee in lieu of land that is currently \$6,000 per residential lot or unit for new applications. The Master Plan Committee emphasizes the objective of ensuring that adequate budgets are established to maintain the Town’s park system. In establishing new parks, there should be substantial dialogue with other recreational providers to determine whether maintenance could be accomplished with the assistance of other community, county, regional or state organizations.



Steamboat Dock & Overlook, Verplanck

C. OBJECTIVES AND POLICIES

The following objectives and policies are intended to implement the Town’s recreation goals:

OBJECTIVE: Maintain the existing inventory of local, county and state recreational facilities throughout the Town and continuously improve and expand facilities to reflect the needs of the Town's population.

Policy 16: Develop additional Town operated active and passive recreational facilities and regularly maintain existing facilities.

As indicated in the Long Range Plan, the Town should continue to develop additional recreational space, facilities and programs to satisfy the changing needs of the Town's population. The creation of new active recreational facilities should consider the potential adverse impacts on natural resources, adjacent homes, traffic flow and parking.

General recommendations contained in the Long Range Plan include:

- Search for space for community use.
- All non-accessible, (land-locked) Town-owned parkland should be re-evaluated for possible gift/sale to the neighborhood within which it is located. These facilities are not used by all Town residents.
- Re-visit all undeveloped parkland to evaluate for potential passive or recreational use.
- Look to developers to provide active recreation space in their development site or provide a fee in lieu to construct facilities on other Town property.
- Protect prior investments in recreational facilities by stepping up current practices in the repair, replacement and maintenance of these facilities.
- Expand existing recreational facilities as it is considered a more efficient, desirable alternative of providing new recreation possibilities to residents.
- Motivate schools to become more active and involved in providing space for programs that benefit Town residents and partner in facility development.

Recommendations contained in the Long Range Plan have been followed to fund recreation improvements in the Capital Improvement Program. Projects that have been recently completed include two skate parks, a pavilion at Steamboat Dock, and the Bear Mountain Bridge Road Toll House Restoration. Other recreational improvements recently completed have included the launch facilities for kayaks and canoes at Oscawana Park and the Paddlesport Center at Annsville.

Other opportunities to be considered to develop new recreation facilities are in general:

- Provide for more intensive use and for a greater variety of recreation uses at existing recreation facilities.
- In Rem parcels should be reviewed for possible recreation uses.
- Acquire land either through outright purchase or land donation in neighborhoods where appropriate pursuant to the Long Range Plan for Development of Recreational Facilities.
- Work collaboratively with the school systems and the County and the State to develop recreation facilities.

- Evaluate on a regular basis possible increases in the recreation fee in lieu of land that is paid to the Town in connection with new residential development.

Some specific suggestions are as follows:

- a. Work with the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation for passive recreational use of the Montrose Point Park (Harbour Landing).
- b. Provide for passive recreational use of the Hudson Highlands Gateway Park.
- c. Rezone and develop for recreational use the Con Ed property in Verplanck, should it ever become available. It should be noted that this property is not associated with the Entergy Nuclear Power Plant at Indian Point in Buchanan, NY.
- d. Plan for the eventual recreational re-use of the existing Cortlandt Highway garage located at 8th Street in Verplanck, which is anticipated to be re-located to a central DES garage facility.

Policy 17: Monitor and maintain existing facilities to ensure they continue to address the recreational needs of the community.

Encourage the Parks, Recreation and Conservation Advisory Board to conduct reviews of the existing facilities every 2 years. In addition, the Town should provide adequate funding, staffing and support to maintain existing facilities.

Policy 18: Assess active recreational needs according to geographic location.

The Parks, Recreation and Conservation Advisory Board and the Department of Environmental Facilities/Recreation Division staff are encouraged to annually assess active recreational needs on a local and regional basis to ensure an appropriate distribution of these facilities throughout the Town.

Facilities should also be designed with the particular user population in mind. For example, a neighborhood with a high proportion of active seniors may demand different facilities than a neighborhood with a high percentage of pre-school age children. In addition, the need for additional active recreational facilities should be re-evaluated as the Town's population grows.

Policy 19: Continue the Role of the Parks, Recreation, And Conservation Advisory Board in recreation facility planning.

The Master Plan recommends that the Parks, Recreation, Conservation Advisory Board continue to advise the various boards on facility planning and development in connection with active and passive recreation issues.

This includes advising the Planning Board on all major subdivision applications and whether appropriate land should be set-aside for recreational purposes or if funds in lieu should be provided from the applicant to satisfy the recreation demand created by the new population.

Policy 20: Include in the Town's Zoning Regulations recreational standards and requirements

Recreation requirements should be included in the Site Development Plan and Special Permit regulations for all new residential development, similar to those contained in the subdivision regulations. The ordinance should also require that the ownership, use and maintenance of the active recreational lands be specified at the time of final site plan/special permit/subdivision approval and that the active recreation areas be fully improved by the developer.

Policy 21: Encourage the State and County to continue to improve and maintain existing State and County Parks located within the Town.

Lobby the County and State to improve their existing parkland and upgrade them in ways to better serve Town residents. The Town should encourage the County and State to obtain assistance from private conservation and recreation groups such as the Appalachian Mountain Club, the Adirondack Trail Club or the New York/New Jersey Trail Conference to make improvements, such as trail clearing. Examples of needed improvements include:

- ❖ Improve signage and public access to parks, including the Peekskill-Briarcliff Trailway.
- ❖ Remedial action to correct the persistent dumping problem along roads providing access to various parks.
- ❖ Develop adequate off-street parking areas at all recreational sites, where possible (e.g. Oscawana Island.)

Policy 22: Create new bikeways/trails and pedestrian walkways. (See also Traffic and Transportation)

Encourage the development of bicycle paths and pedestrian walkways along selected routes throughout the Town. Parking facilities should be provided in conjunction with these linear bikeways and trails. The Town should lobby the County and the State to include bikeways and bicycle parking when improvements are made to roadways or parks.

Cortlandt supports and is participating in the development of the Hudson River Greenway Trail proposed by the Greenway Council and the development of bikeways along the Bear Mountain Parkway and the Peekskill-Briarcliff Trail Way. Westchester County is developing a Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan for the Mid-Hudson South Region that would include the Bear Mountain Parkway/Routes 6/35/202 corridors in which the Town is participating. Along with creating new bikeways and trails, the Town should also promote bicycle rentals and tourism organizations, such as bed and breakfast inns and others.

Policy 23: Continue to fund recreation facilities through the Town's Capital Improvement Program, the "money in lieu of land" fund and leverage funds through grants obtained from New York State and other organizations and the CDBG Program.

The Cortlandt Town Board encourages partnerships with New York State, Westchester County, private land preservation organizations such as Scenic Hudson Inc., and private property owners. This partnership approach was used to secure funds and acquire land for the Hudson Highlands Gateway Park (the former Hillpoint property) and Harbour Landing.

The Town should continue to work collaboratively with other agencies to acquire or develop land for recreational facilities. The town should continue to accept “money in lieu of land” from developers only when there is no appropriate land available for recreation use, and pursue grants from the federal, state and county governments, whenever possible.

**OBJECTIVE: Improve public access to, and recreational use
of the Hudson River waterfront.**

Policy 24: Continue to provide additional public access to the Hudson River waterfront and promote water-oriented recreational activities and tourism.

The Hudson River is a tremendous scenic and recreational resource that is underutilized because of restricted public access. Improved public access to the Hudson River in the Town and the entire Hudson Valley is a priority of the Town, Hudson River Greenway Council, Scenic Hudson, Westchester County, New York State and other organizations. The Town supports the ongoing development of Steamboat Riverfront Park, the Hudson Valley Greenway Pedestrian Trail, the Hudson River Shoreline Trail and proposals by Metro-North, Westchester County and New York State to enhance public access to waterfront areas.

Efforts to increase public access and recreational opportunities for the Hudson River should be coordinated with the government or institutional agencies that control significant expanses of the waterfront. The Town should focus its efforts and pursue public access easements or acquisition of land at FDR VA Hospital, Camp Smith, George’s Island, Oscawana Island and Con Edison and Metro North facilities as well as at yacht clubs, marinas, and other privately-owned properties.

Specific recommendations for improved recreation and public access along the waterfront include:

- Develop public boat launching facilities at the Steamboat Waterfront Park at the former Martin site.

- Complete the planned recreation improvements for the Steamboat Riverfront Park when the Martin property acquisition is complete. Other planned Steamboat Riverfront Park improvements include extending connections along Broadway and Kings Ferry Road and possible additional land acquisitions in the area.
- Require public access to and along the River as part of any development or expansion project proposed along the Hudson River. The Town should include specific requirements for public access to any approvals for proposed rezoning, special permits or certain types of variances along the waterfront.
- Continue to work with the FDR VA Hospital on their reuse plans to provide for a waterfront trail connection across the VA property near the Hudson River.
- Acquire easements along the waterfront to create a linear park and Hudson River Shoreline Trail to provide walking and biking opportunities along the Town's entire shoreline.
- Promote events and programs at Steamboat Riverfront Park, George's Island and Oscawana Island. Subject to obtaining the required approvals, activities could include crafts fairs, children's sporting events, community picnics, etc.
- Link the Town's waterfront with the waterfront in Croton, Buchanan and Peekskill.
- Develop a detailed waterfront map that identifies land use and improvements within the Town's waterfront area to guide long range planning and future development.
- Provide tourist information for visitors in the form of signage, brochures and maps.
- Support Riverkeeper and Greenway programs and objectives as they relate to the Hudson River and public access to it.
- Seek opportunities to acquire riverfront property that would provide docking facilities for Hudson River passenger and tour boats and historical ships for educational purposes

Policy 25: Continue to explore funding opportunities which may be available through the National Heritage Program.

The U.S. Congress designated the Hudson River Valley as a National Heritage Area in 1996 recognizing the importance of the river and its resources to the nation's founding and development. This designation allows the federal governmental agencies to assist New York and Hudson River Valley communities in preserving, protecting and interpreting these resources for the benefit of the nation, and to authorize federal financial and technical assistance to serve these purposes. Therefore, this designation will benefit the Town in applying for grants for open space acquisition and park and recreation improvements.

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For specific recommendations on Biodiversity – please see the Natural Resources Chapter 4 and the Biodiversity Addendum located at Section 10.

