



AN OPEN SPACE VISION FOR THE TOWN OF QUEENSBURY

*~Prepared By~
the
Town of Queensbury Open Space Plan Committee,
Town Planning Staff, and
Behan Planning Associates, LLC*

~With Assistance From~

*The Chazen Companies
and
Michael Batcher, AICP*

Adopted by the Queensbury Town Board

Town of Queensbury Open Space Vision

Final

June 2003

LEGEND

-  Agricultural Heritage
-  Existing Open Space (Parks, etc)
-  Open Space "Friendly" (Ski area, golf course)
-  Existing Trail/Path
-  Potential Trail/Path
-  Existing Snowmobile Trail
-  Scenic Road
-  Water Body
-  Water Access
-  Mountain
-  Historic
-  Historic Hamlet Area
-  Potential Nature Preserve
-  Schools



Notes:

1. The information shown on this map is a sample representation and not meant to be inclusive.
2. Lands shown may not be publicly accessible. Access to private property is at the sole discretion of the property owner.
3. This map shows areas that the public has identified as desirable. For Future conservation efforts/public use. Any land purchase will be based on a willing buyer and willing seller basis.



Scale 2 1 0 2 Miles

Rehan Planning Associates, LLC
Planning Community Partners

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We would like to thank all of the people who participated in the creation of this Open Space Vision Plan and Map. Hundreds of people in our area have participated in some manner; by taking part in our focus group sessions, the public or student design workshops (charettes), the Queensbury Land Conservancy, Inc. (QLC) mail survey, reading our website and offering comments, and attending public informational meetings and public hearings.

In addition, we would like to acknowledge the support of the Town Board to make this planning process possible, and the efforts of the Community Development staff. Coordination of the many activities to make this a true community plan, reflective of the needs and desires of local residents, property owners, community organizations and businesses, has been a massive task.

Adoption of this vision is the first step. Next steps are outlined within the Open Space Vision Plan and Map and Action Plan. We hope you enjoy reading through this plan, and that you will continue your support for it by continuing to participate in its implementation. Please contact the Community Development staff should you wish to work on any aspects outlined.

Town of Queensbury Town Board

Dennis R. Brower, Supervisor
Roger Boor, Ward 1
Ted Turner, Ward 2
Dan Stec, Ward 3
Tim Brewer, Ward 4

Open Space Plan Committee

Barbara Sweet, Chairperson
Lincoln Cathers
Larry Eichler
Alex M. Hall
Catherine LaBombard*
Charles Maine
Deborah Roberts**
Leon Steves, Ex Officio**
John Strough*
James Underwood

Community Development Staff

Chris Round, Executive Director
Marilyn Ryba, AICP, Senior Planner
George Hilton, Planner/GIS Specialist
Pam Whiting, Office Specialist

To reach any staff member phone 518-761-8220

* Town of Queensbury Planning Board

** Queensbury Land Conservancy, Inc. (QLC)

TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | PAGE |
|--|-------|
| Preamble | 1 |
| Chapter 1 - Introduction | 2-3 |
| General Note on Approach | 4 |
| Chapter 2 - Overview of the Visioning Process | |
| Reasons for Creating the Open Space Plan | 5 |
| Public Participation | 5 |
| Town Tour | 6 |
| Focus Group Sessions | 6 |
| Charette | 6-7 |
| Survey | 7 |
| Community Presentations/Discussions | 7 |
| Educational and Informational Materials | 8 |
| Chapter 3 - An Open Space Vision for Queensbury's Future | 9-10 |
| Existing Open Space Resources | 10-11 |
| Recommended Actions for Existing Open Space Resources | 12 |
| Open Space Opportunities | 12 |
| Nature Preserves and Multi-Use Areas | 12-16 |
| Land and Water Trails | 17-19 |
| Gateway to the Adirondacks | 20 |
| Historic, Scenic and Cultural Resources | 21-25 |
| Agricultural and Forest Resources | 25-26 |
| Chapter 4 - Moving the Vision Forward | 27 |
| Chapter 5 - Conclusion | 27 |
| End Notes | 28-30 |
| Appendices | |
| Appendix A - Action Plan | A1-21 |
| Appendix B - Open Space Plan (OSP) Committee Members And Affiliations | B1 |
| Appendix C - Glossary | C1-10 |
| Appendix D - Historic, Scenic and Cultural Resources Pilot Project | D1-4 |
| Appendix E - Trail Classifications | E1 |
| Appendix F - Focus Group Meetings Summary | F1-10 |
| Appendix G - Open Space Plan Design Workshop / Charette Summary | G1-10 |
| Appendix H - A Report on the Open Space Survey | H1-12 |

AN OPEN SPACE VISION FOR THE TOWN OF QUEENSBURY

PREAMBLE

What is open space? Before beginning a dialogue about open space with people of the Queensbury community, the Open Space Plan Committee members struggled with a definition. The one definition that appeared broad enough to cover what most people were thinking is from the New York State Open Space Conservation Plan, recently adopted by the State in September 2002, and noted as follows:

For purposes of this Plan, open space is defined as land, which is not intensively developed for residential, commercial, industrial, or institutional use. Open space can be publicly or privately owned. It includes agricultural and forest land, undeveloped shorelines, undeveloped scenic lands, public parks and preserves. It also includes water bodies such as lakes and bays. What land is defined as open space depends in part on its surroundings. A vacant lot or a small marsh can be open space in a big city. A narrow corridor pathway for walking or bicycling is open space even though it is surrounded by developed areas. And while not strictly open space, this Plan also discusses cultural and historic resources, which, along with open space, are part of the heritage of New York State.¹

Open space can mean many things to different people, as was quickly demonstrated in this planning process. The definition noted provides the essence of what open space means. In the end, the definition of open space for Queensbury is this Vision Plan and Map.

We are thrilled and truly grateful for the time contributed by so many people in Queensbury and the surrounding area in putting together this Open Space Vision Plan and Map. Our work is only now beginning. Preserving the characteristics of Queensbury outlined in this Vision Plan and Map, will help maintain our community, as our Town motto describes, *Queensbury Home of Natural Beauty...A Good Place to Live.*

Town of Queensbury Open Space Plan Committee

AN OPEN SPACE VISION FOR THE TOWN OF QUEENSBURY

CHAPTER 1 - INTRODUCTION

This document offers a community-based vision for the long-term conservation of the varied and beautiful open space resources found within Queensbury's borders. The ideas and concepts presented herein were synthesized from an extensive public outreach process that was used to develop this vision. Ideas were gleaned from focus group meetings, a community-wide survey conducted by the Queensbury Land Conservancy, Inc., the open space planning design workshop (also known as a charette) held at Adirondack Community College, input from the public in letters and e-mails, students in local schools, and ideas generated by the members of the Town's Open Space Plan Committee. Many ideas summarized herein surfaced repeatedly in the several forums held to garner community input.

Growing communities like Queensbury that have faced similar pressures have found that public-spirited actions are required to ensure that open spaces can be maintained from



This vision plan comes from the community.

Vision Statement:

From the mountains, to the lakes, the river and streams, we are a community that cherishes our natural and cultural heritage. As Queensbury grows, we will work together to protect important land and water resources, and make these accessible to our residents, visitors, and those who work here.

generation to generation. Growing communities that do not act to address open space needs find—all too quickly—that the open spaces are gone, forever. We have all seen examples of rapid suburbanization and the ways in which communities are impacted. The "visioning" exercise we employed, resulting in this plan, enables guidance to promote growth without impairing community character or rural ambience.

Open spaces enrich our lives and add value to our community—economically, socially, and spiritually. Having these open space resources makes our existing neighborhoods more valuable.² These resources make the town more attractive for new residents and employers as well. Open space is a key ingredient to quality of life. This report highlights some of the important opportunities to protect open space resources of the community.

Queensbury is a town of many distinct places and character. Open spaces are an important part of the history, culture, and character of the town. Queensbury has an industrial, woodlands, and agricultural heritage that remain visible, to varying degrees, on the landscape. It is the gateway to the Adirondacks, as the mountain ridges tumble down into Lake George and the Hudson River. The sand plains, unique ecological areas found in the western part of Queensbury, are home to many of the town's families, as well as important habitat for the endangered Karner Blue Butterfly. Historic hamlets, once the centers of social life in this varied townscape, are now somewhat lost amidst all of the change that the town has witnessed. The town also has a strong connection with the City of Glens Falls, the historic development and cultural center of the area.

The Adirondack Northway has perhaps had the largest influence on settlement patterns and growth rates in Queensbury for the past several decades. The Northway is an international trade route, a major interstate commerce corridor, and a commuter highway, linking the town to the greater Albany-Saratoga-and northern markets.³



The Adirondack Northway is one of the many scenic roadways which transverse this area.

The town has changed a great deal in the past half century after the Second World War. It has grown from a rural, relatively sparsely settled township to a well-populated, bustling community. There is now an active development community creating attractive new residential neighborhoods and retail, office, and light manufacturing centers, where an increasing number of town and area residents find employment. Queensbury also has a quiet side—this is a significant part of the town character. One can easily find a peaceful spot in the town; whether it is a spring walk on the Warren County bike trail, taking a rest after a downhill ski run on a quiet section of one of West Mountain's many ski trails, or paddling a canoe on Dunham's Bay Marsh on a warm summer afternoon.

General Note on Approach

This Vision Plan describes the major ideas for open space conservation for Queensbury's future. It is intended to broadly describe concepts and is not intended to apply to particular parcels at this time. However, recommendations regarding particular open space opportunities are a part of this plan.

These are noted in the action plan section of this document.

The concepts introduced here will be refined and accomplished with the full cooperation of landowners working in partnership with the community. Using this report as a guide, future refinements can occur. This is purely intended as a voluntary program. There are no mandates. There are no requirements.

Vision Plan Intent

The intent of this Vision Plan is to move concepts and recommendations forward.

Willing Partners:

Where willing landowners—public or private—are interested in helping to accomplish the public goals of this open space vision for Queensbury; then additional conversation can take place on how to best accomplish these goals.

Many of the concepts described herein can be accomplished without purchasing lands. In some instances, purchase of land or purchase of an easement will be needed. Any land purchase will be based on a willing buyer, willing seller basis. Funding for purchases will be done in a financially prudent way. Grants and partnerships with land conservation

organizations and others will be sought. Consideration should be given to options for real property tax relief to advance the goals described in the Open Space Vision Plan and Map. Local funding, if needed, will be part of a full public dialogue and will receive the required review and approval processes. Once general community support for this Vision Plan is confirmed, a financial strategy will be developed as part of subsequent phases of this open space planning effort.

It is important to note that, as in many rural communities, informal public access to some private land areas has occurred. Any mention in this report concerning access to private lands is not intended to promote that the lands are publicly accessible. Access to private property is always at the sole determination of the property owner. An objective of this report is to document areas that the public has identified as desirable. Formalizing public access to open space resources must take place in collaboration with willing property owners.

CHAPTER 2 - OVERVIEW OF THE VISIONING PROCESS

Reasons for Creating the Open Space Plan

Development of a "Greenway Plan," or Open Space Plan, is noted as a priority for action in the Town of Queensbury 1998 Comprehensive Land Use Plan (CLUP). Given this goal, an Open Space Plan Committee was formed, and authorized to develop such plan and recommendations as visualized by the community, to fulfill the legislative purpose.⁴

The Open Space Plan Committee represents a broad cross-section of the community including development, recreation, scientific, and financial interests. The committee is charged with helping to identify and inventory open spaces and natural resources, focusing on those areas that are threatened, or require preservation or protection, such as scenic views, valuable ecological areas, and areas of special cultural or historical interest. Another purpose of the committee is to establish appropriate conservation proposals and develop a course of action to implement the plan.

Public Participation

Extensive research by Town community development staff of open space planning efforts in other communities indicated time and again the best practices to follow. In all instances, the essential ingredient to a successful plan is support from the community.

Support in Queensbury involved a broad cross-section of the community to cover all stakeholders. Assistance was obtained from diverse organizations, such as, members of local municipal boards, trails associations, hunting and fishing clubs, and business groups. Public education and input to the design of the plan, where people could work with and edit maps was also emphasized.

An overview of the citizen participation events is presented below.

Town Tour

On a beautiful fall Saturday, a trolley full of Town Board members, Planning Board members, community development, recreation, and historic department Town staff, Environmental Committee members, Smart Growth Committee members, and other interested persons, traveled the entire Town.⁵ From the Hudson River to Lake George, and from the Washington County line to West Mountain the places and character that make Queensbury special were viewed. Participants observed that the Town contains so many places and vistas that contribute to the quality of life for residents and others in the area, that it would be a difficult job to highlight those most important to the community.

Focus Group Sessions

Over 200 persons representing a wide variety of community businesses, organizations, and citizens were invited to a succession of Focus Group Sessions. Almost one-half of this number participated. Those targeted were:

- Builders, Contractors and Developers,
- Utilities, Business & Industry Owners,
- Forest, Agricultural & Other Land Owners, & Real Estate Representatives,
- Civic, Cultural, Parks & Recreation, & Environmental Groups, and
- Citizen Groups & Service Groups.

Focus Group Sessions were held to listen and to solicit opinions and concerns of participants. A series of questions concerning open space and associated aspects were asked, and answers and comments recorded. Written responses from persons unable to attend were also received. These same persons were also invited to a follow-up meeting in the Fall of 2002, where the Discussion Draft Vision Map and Plan was presented for additional thoughts and affirmation.

Charette

In May, 2002, a charrette (see page 1) was held at Adirondack Community College to identify Queensbury's most important existing resources. Almost 70 persons actively participated in this Saturday workshop. A similar session was held at the Queensbury High School, with approximately 60 students from Government classes.

A series of Geographic Information System (GIS) overlay maps were used, showing:

- Aerial Photos,
- Ecological Habitat Areas,
- Hydrography and Steep Slopes,
- Forests/Farms and Agricultural Soils,
- Scenic, Cultural, and Historic Resources,
- Recreational Facilities,
- Vacant Parcels, and
- Real Property Classifications.

Workshop contributors were asked to identify, and then draw on these maps the most important areas for preservation. From this activity, the start of a Vision Map was created.

Survey

A parallel effort by the Queensbury Land Conservancy, Inc. (QLC), was made to distribute surveys to all 17,160 residential mailing addresses in the Town of Queensbury and City of Glens Falls.⁶ A purpose of the survey was to identify priorities and attitudes of local residents concerning the need for open space in the area. The results of this survey confirmed the direction of the Open Space Plan and future actions. Almost 7% of the mail-in response surveys were returned, a healthy and credible direct mail return rate.

Based on the survey results, preserving the region's rural character was listed as the top priority of these residents, while protection of endangered species and wildlife habitats ranked second. Over 90% of the survey respondents supported the development of an open space plan.⁷

Community Presentations/Discussions

Town community development staff and Open Space Plan Committee members met with an array of community groups from mid-summer through the winter of 2002/2003. Input was sought from organizations such as the Builder's Association of Northeastern New York, the Adirondack Regional Chambers of Commerce, local Kiwanis groups, and the Town of Queensbury Recreation Commission.

In addition, the community at-large was informed through partnership efforts with the local media and through attendance at several large group meetings.

Educational and Informational Materials

Education and public input is a critical part of the visioning process. The Town of Queensbury website displays results of the Open Space Plan process. Complete summaries, in addition to Open Space Plan and Vision Map, can be found by linking to www.queensbury.net.

The Fall 2002/Winter 2003 Queensbury Town Report highlights Open Space Plan concepts produced as a result of all prior meetings. The Open Space Plan Committee also put together a brochure to provide background on the planning efforts to date.

Certainly the best practices used in other communities have been applied to Queensbury's planning process, and will serve to strengthen the final plan.

CHAPTER 3 - AN OPEN SPACE VISION FOR QUEENSBURY'S FUTURE

This Vision Plan describes some of the major existing resources and opportunities for action to improve access and protect open space resources for the future. Through the community involvement process, residents and local organizations made it clear that they want to see a commitment for executing this community-based vision. Therefore, we recommended that the Open Space Plan Committee become a permanent committee of the town, and that it be charged with overseeing the adoption and implementation of this open space vision. An important role will be the coordination of activities between the various partners and providing policy guidance to staff, consultants, and the Town Board as each project moves forward.

Further, we recommended that priority parcels for protection be identified based on resource quality and landowner interest in partnering with the community in land conservation. Not all open spaces are of equal value. Hence, those resources of highest value to the community should be first considered for protection. A more detailed analysis of open space resources is recommended as a subsequent task. A draft resource inventory and evaluation system has been developed as part of this open space visioning project, which will provide a solid "point of departure" for the recommended task

Depending on the scope of an open space preservation project, a fiscal analysis should be performed to assure taxpayers that those open spaces resources are appropriate and reflect the fiduciary responsibility of the town to the taxpayers. Some projects may be accomplished fairly quickly, for example, a brochure highlighting the existing access points along the Hudson River for land or water trails. Larger, more complex projects such as extensions of a trail system, requiring the purchase of private lands, should be evaluated using a cost-revenue study to justify or deny the expense. A reasonable balance of development and open space translates into economic prosperity and environmental health.



By looking ahead to future patterns of development and open space options, the town can set the correct course for controlling future tax burdens.

Existing Open Space Resources

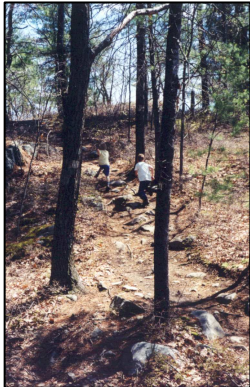
The community has been blessed with a colorful palette of existing open space resources. Only a few of the more significant ones are mentioned here. The Vision Map shows additional areas upon which the Vision Plan is based.

The largest publicly-owned designated open space and recreation area is the Dunham Bay Marsh and forest area at the northern end of town. It is State owned and managed by the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation as part of the holdings in the Lake George Wild Forest.⁸ This area includes a regionally significant “marl fen” near Harris Bay.⁹

There are a number of town-owned parks and open space areas, which include passive, natural areas such as the lands along Halfway Brook near Haviland Road, the nature preserve at Hudson Pointe, and active recreational facilities such as Jenkinsville Park in the north part of town and Hudson River Park off Big Boom Road.

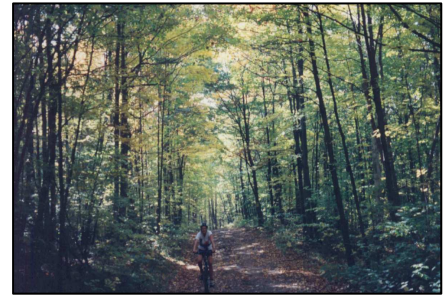


The community has had great success in transforming certain transportation and utility corridors into multi-use recreation facilities. The Feeder Canal is now a linear historic park and bike-hike-paddle trail that connects the Hudson River at the Feeder Dam to the Champlain Canal in Fort Edward and points north and south. The Warren County Bike Path makes use of electric transmission right-of-way and former rail corridor to connect the community to the Village of Lake George to the north, and the City of Glens Falls and beyond to the south and east.



**Youthful hikers
enjoy a public
trail.**

Lake George is an open space resource of national significance. Its crystal clear waters and dramatic views draw people from around the northeast and further to enjoy the many activities the area has to offer.

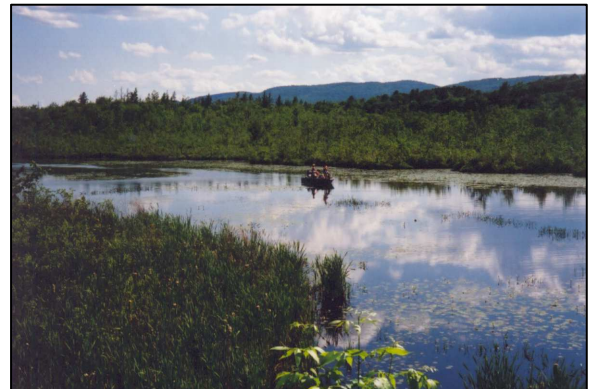


**Bike/hike off Beartown Mountain
Road near Wilkie Reservoir.**

West Mountain Ski Area, a private recreational development, is open to the public, and is a major open space and recreational resource. This facility not only offers scenic vistas and access to skiing, snowboarding, tubing and mountain biking, but it is also an important economic and tourism magnet for the community.

Queensbury benefits from several beautiful golf courses that provide open space benefits to the community as private and semi-public recreation areas in addition to the scenic views they offer. The Glens Falls region was recently ranked by *Golf Digest* as second in the nation out of 314 metropolitan areas for the total golf experience.¹⁰

The City of Glens Falls watershed and water supply lands comprise several thousand acres in the western part of town. These areas, which have been managed for decades by the city, could be enjoyed by residents for passive recreation. These significant watershed holdings offer tremendous opportunity to continue to provide open space values to the community for current and future generations. At this time watershed lands remain off limits to the public. The challenge will be finding recreational opportunities consistent with the health mandates required for protection of the water supply.



Recommended Actions for Existing Open Space Resources

Working with the owners of these resources to ensure that the existing open space values enjoyed can continue is a priority. Certain public resources can benefit from ongoing improvements. Such benefits include access improvements, interpretive signage, and outreach to publicize to the community how to take advantage of these places. Identification of these needs for each of the open space resources (e.g., Feeder Canal Trail, expanded walking trails along Halfway Brook, etc.) with property managers and collaboration on ways to accomplish mutual goals is needed. Of prime importance is the need to explore additional incentives for private property owners to maintain open space. Tax incentives should be considered. The action plan in this document suggests ways to advance these recommendations.

Open Space Opportunities

For a view of the opportunities listed here, follow the Vision Map in this document.

Nature Preserves and Multi-Use Areas¹¹. Wildlife and natural areas enrich our everyday lives. These woodlands, wetlands, fields and forests are home to deer and rabbit, wild turkey and chickadee, turtles, salamander, butterfly and honeybee—and thousands of species in between. These natural areas keep the waters clean by acting as natural bio-filters, they clean our air by absorbing pollutants, and they offer us a place to hike, fish and enjoy the outdoors. There are several areas highlighted in this Vision Plan as potential nature preserves and multi-use areas. Each is unique in terms of resources, ownership, and current and potential uses. These are therefore not listed in any priority manner.

Big Cedar Swamp - This 900-acre contiguous Northern White Cedar swamp area is bounded by Quaker Road to the south, Queensbury Avenue to the east, Ridge Road to the west, and the Warren County Airport to the north. This regionally significant wetland complex

Big Cedar Swamp

As recommended in the town's 1998 Comprehensive Land Use Plan (CLUP), a management plan should be developed for the Big Cedar Swamp as a collaborative project by the town and county. Other willing partners such as adjoining land owners and conservation organizations (such as the Queensbury Land Conservancy, Inc. and The Nature Conservancy) should be asked to participate in the development of this plan. Secure funding for the development of the management plan through grants and/or town and county budgeting.

supports a unique mix of more than 149 species of plants and animals, five of which are designated species of special concern (NYSDEC, 1998).¹² Primarily owned by Warren County, we envision that this natural area would remain undisturbed and be recognized for its value as a passive open space resource. Limited public access is envisioned, except perhaps for a possible future nature trail and boardwalk to serve as a passage way for learning opportunities. An interpretive center for this area was suggested in the Town of Queensbury 1998 CLUP.

Rush Pond and Glen Lake Fen - The Rush Pond natural area is composed of two ponds; Rush Pond proper and an upper pond. The area includes both public (town) and privately owned properties. Rush Pond, part of which is visible from the Northway, is a unique natural area. There are several existing trails throughout. Its location near the Queensbury schools and relative proximity to major existing and planned bike trail corridors present an excellent opportunity for Queensbury residents to enjoy its natural beauty. Opportunities to allow more formalized public access to these unique areas should be explored with the property owners.



Rush Pond (looking south).



Glen Lake Fen (looking toward French Mountain).

Rush Pond forms the headwaters of the Glen Lake Fen and is critical to the future water quality of Glen Lake. The Rush Pond complex of ponds, stream, and bordering vegetated wetlands (fen) presents a wonderful outdoor education and passive recreation opportunity for the community. The possibility of connecting the pond via an interpretive hiking path from the Queensbury School campus to the south, with a trail link north around the pond to link up to a potential trail head at West Mountain Road near the Northway overpass at Warren County Municipal Center, should be explored.¹³



Pitcher Plants at Glen Lake Fen.

The Glen Lake Fen, which is located on the east side of Route 9 downstream of the Great Escape is a large wetland complex that can currently be accessed by kayak or canoe from the town boat launch on Glen Lake Road. This area provides an opportunity for the public to gain an appreciation of a unique natural area.

The mile and a half paddle adventure follows the sinuous path to the vicinity of the maintenance outbuildings of Premier Parks. There are numerous great blue herons to spot, and during the summer months hundreds of tree swallows, purple martins, and numerous nesting red-winged black birds rearing their young. A large population of muskrats is usually encountered, along with plenty of sunning turtles and, if truly lucky, perhaps a view of the great snapping turtle (Jim Underwood, 2002).¹⁴

Rush Pond Area

Discussions with property owners should be held to determine interest in the various options for more formalized arrangements for public access to some of the holdings identified as important to the community. The town should explore with the Queensbury School District and the landowners the opportunity to create an interpretive trail system and informal (or formal) "outdoor classroom" here.

These areas offer outdoor recreation opportunities and can also serve as wonderful "outdoor classrooms" to teach ecology, geology, biology, archaeology, and natural resources management to students of all ages. A system of land and water trails can provide enhanced public access to learn and explore these beauties of nature, right in the heart of town.

Halfway Brook–City of Glens Falls Watershed Lands - Glens Falls, which was a part of the Town of Queensbury until 1908, owns approximately 4,000 acres in the Luzerne Mountain ridges and around its reservoirs. These properties serve as a protective buffer for the water bodies that are part of the city's water supply system. Since protection of the water supply has precluded residential development, public ownership has been a major factor in the development history

City of Glens Falls Watershed

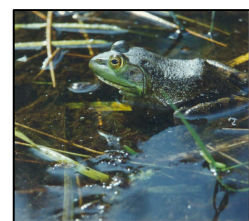
Discussions between the city, town, and other interested parties should continue to focus not only on water supply needs and watershed protection, but also on determining future land use management and public access options for these valuable natural areas. The town along with the Queensbury Land Conservancy, Inc., should explore the possibility of securing some type of joint ownership interest in these lands with the city to allow for expanded public access and to help secure the long term conservation of these natural resources.

of this area. City ownership of this area of great natural beauty has protected an aesthetic amenity for area residents, which is visible from most areas of the town. The upper watershed area includes several ponds/impoundments surrounded by forests. These natural resources have been managed to protect water quality and provide water supply for almost a century. A secondary benefit of that water resources management mission is that these lands have become a *de facto* nature preserve. The watershed land owned by Glens Falls is an important natural resource because of its role in protecting the drinking water supply for Glens Falls, the maintenance of open space, and protection of the visual amenity of West Mountain.

Halfway Brook and Clendon Brook Corridors- Western Queensbury

The Halfway Brook and Clendon Brook corridors, and surrounding lands, are ecologically unique and worthy of recognition. Concentrated between Halfway Brook towards Clendon Brook and the Hudson River, from east to west by the Northway and West Mountain Road, and north to the Aviation Road, these lands of western Queensbury contain several plant and wildlife species of concern.

The Pitch Pine-Scrub Oak Barrens, a plant community that occurs on well-drained, sandy soils is one of these areas. Pitch Pine is dominant, with 20 to 60% cover.¹⁵ Portions of this area can be populated by the endangered Karner Blue butterfly, since the area provides the necessary plant types and physical characteristics.¹⁶ The Frosted Elfin butterfly, is another butterfly often found coincidentally with the Karner Blue. The Frosted Elfin has State threatened status and is afforded similar protections as the endangered Karner Blue.



**Future ecologist
studying amphibians.**

Recovery efforts for the Karner Blue are paramount in the recently adopted New York State Open Space Plan. A management, conservation, and recovery plan for this endangered species should be developed by the town.

The Barrens Buck Moth is found along Halfway Brook and in other areas where Pitch Pine and sandy soils exist.¹⁷ The New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) Endangered Species Unit considers this moth to be a species of special concern.

Two other important ecological areas are the Pine Plantation, and the Hemlock-Hardwood Swamp.¹⁸ The Pine Plantation is a stand of pines planted for cultivation and harvest of timber products, with more than 90% of the canopy cover of one species. It occurs in much of the area surrounding Halfway Brook. Found northwest of Crandall Park the Hemlock-Hardwood Swamp is a perennial wetland forest with at least 50% canopy cover of trees.

Western Queensbury also contains much of the town's residential growth. Protecting the important wildlife species and habitat, while accommodating residential growth, can be accomplished. Thoughtful planning incentives, such as zoning density bonuses for varying levels of open space provided, should be promoted.

Other Natural Areas (not highlighted on map) - There are a number of important sites in the town that offer wildlife conservation and other values. These sites are noted in the 1998 Comprehensive Land Use Plan (CLUP) and should be evaluated using the resource inventory and evaluation system referred to above. For example, there are existing and potential Karner Blue Butterfly habitat areas in the western part of town that should be considered for protection. These individual sites should be explored and evaluated as part of a more detailed phase of this open space initiative in 2003. A coordinated approach for impact mitigation could be explored, including the potential for preparation of a generic environmental impact statement (GEIS). A GEIS is an excellent tool to devise a fair and efficient method of determining cumulative impacts and identifying solutions for sharing impact mitigation costs.

Land and Water Trails

Land Trails - We envision that residents and visitors will be able to access all of the major activity centers and open space resources in the community via an interconnected system of bike-hike paths. This system will build upon existing resources such as the Warren County Bike Trail and the Feeder Canal Trail. New neighborhood pathway systems can be put in place as part of subdivision approvals.



Family enjoying a well-marked hiking trail.

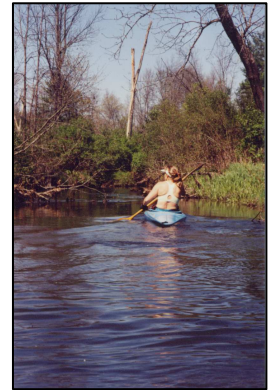
Depending on location and use of the trail, there could be several different types and styles of trail arrangements. Refer to the Appendices section of this report for more details on how the trail system would work.

Land and Water Trails

An initial prioritization of trail needs should be undertaken and funding secured for system improvements as part of the town's capital improvement program (e.g., highway and/or recreation programs). Consider developing a town trails master plan in 2003 or 2004. Continue to secure matching grants and partnerships with other trail development and management entities (Warren County, Feeder Canal Alliance, NYS Canal Corporation, Adirondack Mountain Club, etc.) to advance the implementation of desired trail system improvements.

Halfway Brook Trail - The lower reach of Halfway Brook (named in reference to the halfway point on the old military road between Fort William Henry and Fort Edward) offers an opportunity to provide dedicated public access to Halfway Brook for fishing, nature trails, and pedestrian paths.

The Town of Queensbury owns several parcels along the Halfway Brook stream corridor. Several areas of important habitat exist in lands located along Halfway Brook that are worthy of consideration for protection. Decent trout fishing possibilities exist (the stream is classified as suitable for treated drinking water and supporting a trout fishery), and the trout habitat can be enhanced with shade tree plantings in the open areas.¹⁹ This would be a relatively straightforward project to implement.



**Exploring
Halfway Brook**

Hudson River Water Trail - The Hudson River is a resource of great significance to the town, the region and the nation. It is the current and future source of much of the greater area's drinking water supply, and also was instrumental to the industrial development of Glens Falls.

A seven-mile stretch of the river is navigable from below the Sherman Island Dam to the Feeder Canal Dam located at the bottom of Richardson Street. This stretch of river has tremendous potential to provide water access to residents. There is a boat launch facility at the Hudson River Park off Big Boom Road, which allows access to this stretch of the river.

In addition, the river's reach from the Sherman Island Dam upstream to the high dam at Spier Falls offers paddlers a chance to escape into a forested notch between West Mountain to the north and Palmerton Mountain to the south. Much of this landscape is part of the recently protected open space acquired by the Open Space Institute from Niagara Mohawk Power Corporation as part of that company's "Middle Hudson Greenway" comprehensive land management program.²⁰ Most of those lands have now been purchased by the State of New York and added to the Moreau Lake State Park.

With portages around the dams at Spier Falls and Corinth, one can paddle the entire river up to the “Upper Hudson Greenway.” That 17-mile long open space system, also set aside by Niagara Mohawk Power Corporation and now managed by Warren County in collaboration with the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation runs along the east shore of the river between the Village of Lake Luzerne up to the Hudson’s confluence with the Schroon River in Warrensburg.

Hudson River Water Trail

Identify a task force to continue to develop the water trail concept, building off the existing resources and the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) relicensing plans submitted by the owners and operators of the dam and power plant facilities.

Any efforts made to continue to develop the Hudson River water trail concept in Queensbury, should be done in association with those private and public organizations managing land use along the Hudson River. Communication is also needed with groups working in Queensbury and in other municipalities that tie in with Hudson River water trails efforts both upstream and downstream.

Currently, the only State program that provides permanent technical assistance and funding, is the Hudson River Valley Greenways Council. Communities eligible to participate in this compact are those along the Hudson River from New York City to the Troy dam in Waterford, near Albany. Limited, short-term funding for waterfront planning for other municipalities along the Hudson River is available on a competitive basis through the Department of State Local Waterfront Revitalization Program under Title 11 of the Environmental Protection Fund. The Town of Queensbury, in cooperation with the Towns of Moreau, Fort Edward, and the City of Glens Falls and Village of South Glens Falls, is anticipating a grant award to develop a comprehensive plan for the Hudson River waterfront in these communities.



Gateway to the Adirondacks

Environmental Education Center on Natural Resources Management, Woodlands, Papermaking, and Water Power - An idea that has been discussed over the years is that of documenting the region's rich history in woodlands management, paper-making and waterpower development. For instance, Finch, Pruyn & Company, Inc. is one of the oldest paper making companies in the country and is widely recognized for their woodlands management. Papermaking is an ancient art that lends itself well to hands-on educational exhibits. The forests and community's role as gateway to the Adirondacks make this theme particularly compelling.

The mighty Hudson River has been harnessed for waterpower here for nearly 200 years. The Spier Falls project, just upstream, is one of the oldest hydroelectric facilities in the nation, having initially come on line in the early 1900's. The construction of each of the other plants on the river have wonderful stories behind them of ingenuity, investment, and daring construction.

Environmental Education Center

A feasibility study should be initiated to explore this idea further. This idea should be discussed among the appropriate stakeholders to determine whether there is sufficient interest in pursuing such a project.

A museum celebrating the region's unique role in these industries would be a major attraction—in particular given the potential for creating exciting hands on exhibits. A welcome center focusing on these themes, perhaps in combination with such a museum, would emphasize the distinctive aspects of this area and provide an important link to local community and regional efforts to increase heritage tourism.

Historic, Scenic and Cultural Resources

Queensbury's history is told in many ways. In this open space vision for the town, history plays an important role. Historic resources are part of the town's cultural resources. They connect us as a community and as a nation to our past. History can give us wisdom for the future. One component that explains the town's rich history is its location as a land carry between water routes; a major north-south route that has been used for thousands of years, first by Native Americans, then followed by fur traders and explorers. This explains why so many of the French and Indian War skirmishes were battled here. Even today Queensbury maintains significance because it is midway between the Atlantic and the Canadian interior.



Heritage Hamlet of Oneida.

This open space vision includes recognition of historic sites, settlements (hamlets), and other historic features including the farmsteads and working landscapes and the linear features such as the old military roads and the Feeder Canal. The town has a number of historic areas that are worthy of recognition in this vision plan—and potential places to link with the town-wide trail system envisioned. The open space Vision Map (end of this chapter) highlights just a few of the town's more important historic settlements, industrial sites, and battlefield sites, as recently identified by local citizens.

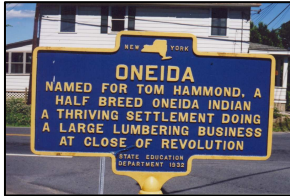
Heritage Hamlets - For example, Harrisena, a late 18th Century settlement located along Ridge Road north of present NYS Route 149, was settled and named after the Harris family, who founded it and owned several thousand acres. There is evidence of very early occupation and later transient use of the area. Armed conflict between a variety of factions had precluded earlier permanent settlement in the area until after the Revolutionary War. Farming was the major occupation, on the soil reputed to be some of the best in Warren County. A small community developed, including a school, church, and some commercial and service businesses.

Heritage Hamlets

The hamlets of Queensbury that are of historic significance are worthy of local designation as heritage hamlets. The next step is to complete the town's inventory of historic sites and structures in these hamlets and to develop incentives for property owners to conserve these treasures. Local incentives may include real property tax relief for owners who agree to maintain the historic integrity of their property, or to research and design assistance to determine historically appropriate architectural preservation. Other incentives include State, federal, and nonprofit grant and other similar programs. The town should look at grant funding and other opportunities to help advance its historic preservation goals. Providing an historic barns tax exemption is a local incentive that can easily and inexpensively be done right away.

Oneida Corners, at the intersection of Ridge Road and Sunnyside Road, was particularly prominent in the early settlement of this part of Queensbury. During the Revolutionary War period, this was an important place, with two inns, three stores, a large lumber business, mechanic shops, and a Baptist church. Court was conducted here at least one day a week. The name "Oneida Corners" refers to Thomas Hammond, who was half-Oneida Indian, and ran a store here beginning shortly before the Revolutionary War.

Several ideas for increasing the recognition and prominence of these settlement areas are provided in a sample pilot project that can be found in the Appendices section of this open space plan.



Historic Sites - These are unique places where historic events occurred that are important to the growth and development of the town, the State, and the nation. There are many wonderful and interesting

historic sites, a few of which are noted on the open space vision map. For example, at the end of Big Boom Road along the river, is the site of the “Big Boom” where the river was cordoned off by a large log boom. Here, logs were sorted after their trip down the Hudson. After sorting, the logs would be sent down the Feeder Canal to the many mills located downstream. These booms were set up at lumber mill towns, which became so hectic and busy that the expression “boom town” was derived from these communities.

Historic Sites The town should increase funding for its historic marker programs so these sites can be interpreted and shared with residents and visitors alike. Further investigation and evaluation of the appropriate use of historic programs is needed. An official advisory committee for this purpose should be appointed by the Town Board. The Committee should be made up of representatives from historic advocates, development businesses, citizen groups, and local government to reflect the broad-based interests of the community.

Scenic Roads

Development of a scenic roads program, as defined by the community, is strongly encouraged. The Open Space Vision Map depicts roads that were noted by the public for their scenic quality. The town should develop a scenic roads management plan with the assistance of partner highway agencies (WCDPW, NYSDOT) and with the help of a professional planning consultant. With the management plan in place, roads could be designated as "scenic" by the town and special attention be given to protecting those qualities.

Scenic Roads - A scenic road offers beautiful views of the countryside in a relatively unspoiled manner. Fortunately, Queensbury's landscape heritage of fields and barns, of woods and mountains, of homesteads and shade trees is a well-respected element of the community.

To preserve this heritage and celebrate the history and beauty of the community, the town should look toward the formal recognition of several of its scenic roads. By this recognition, the town can create an inventory of the scenic and cultural

resources along the roads, expand the historic and interpretive signage program, create scenic touring routes, and help property owners share in the stewardship of these scenic resources.

These scenic roads range in scale from the Adirondack Northway to Gurney Lane. Each has its own character that contributes to the town's sense of place. It is only proper that these essential elements—the forested edge of the Northway for example—be recognized and protected. All too many communities south of Queensbury are losing or have lost that unique character, that sense of place. And, that is not only an aesthetic loss, it is also often represents a loss of economic value. For example, the U.S. Travel Data Center estimates that \$30,000 to \$35,000 in tourist dollars are spent for each mile of scenic highway.²¹

Investigation of the different State and federal scenic byway programs is also needed. Ways in which the town can work with the sponsoring agencies, prevent duplicative efforts, obtain funding for projects, and evaluate these programs, need to be determined.

Mountain Ridges–West Mountain, French Mountain - A large part of Queensbury's diverse beauty comes from the dramatic scenic backdrop provided by the mountain ranges that frame vistas throughout the town. West Mountain (part of the Luzerne Mountains, with the entire ridge commonly referred to as West Mountain) frames the western horizon of the town. French Mountain rises up in the north-central part of town, and the foot of Sugarloaf Mountain lies along the town's northeastern border with the Town of Fort Ann. As scenic resources, it is only fitting to recognize these mountain ridgelines as important elements of the town's landscape. Care should always be given to changes to the character of the mountain ridge.

Mountain Ridges

The town should explore ways to provide incentives to property owners for protecting the mountain ridges from the blighting influence of adverse changes. Recognizing that change will occur, it is appropriate for the town to work with landowners to mutually develop guidelines for change that will responsibly direct home construction and other activities in a way that will complement the mountain landscape (and not become a blight).

The general public has voiced strong support for preservation of the French Mt. area. Containing over 5,400 acres, it is an important area for preservation regarding scenic, forest resource, and watershed issues.

Agricultural Heritage

Several farm parcels are currently enrolled in agricultural assessment programs that help provide real property tax relief. There are several State and federal programs established to protect valuable farmland. The town should discuss these types of opportunities with the agricultural community and explore an expanded role for farmland protection in Queensbury as part of a larger opportunity to conserve farmland in this reach of the upper Hudson - Lake Champlain Valley.

Agricultural and Forest Resources

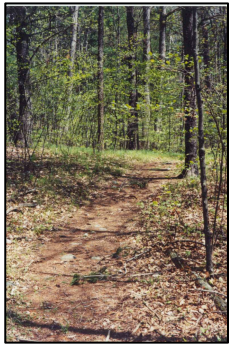
Farmlands - While once a thriving agricultural community, Queensbury today has a limited quantity of working farmlands. Nonetheless, these working farmlands, along with remaining historic farmsteads and barns are important to the agricultural heritage of the community. Several active agricultural areas in the town, located primarily in the east part of Town around Ridge and Bay Roads and their crossroads, are used mostly to grow corn and hay. Agricultural soils cover

a large area of the town, in particular along the Halfway Brook watershed in the eastern part of Queensbury.

These farmlands provide many benefits to the community; scenic vistas across rolling fields to distant mountain views and a living example of community heritage. Further, research by the American Farmland Trust has shown that agricultural uses in general provide more in tax revenues than they demand in services from the community.²²



Ridge Road farmscapes.



Forestlands - Woodland management has historically held a prominent position in Queensbury's history. Several properties in Queensbury are currently taking advantage of real property tax abatement through a forest exemption provision. These holdings are taxed at a rate that recognizes the reduced costs to the community of servicing forestland (versus servicing residential or commercial property).



Forest Parcels

The town should expand and promote ways to help landowners keep forest parcels from becoming subdivided and fragmented. These include expanded use of forest exemptions and looking for ways to secure longer-term protection through the negotiation of conservation easements on parcels that offer multi-use benefits to the community and forest land owner.

Forests provide many benefits to the community. A managed forest provides a renewable resource and supports local employment in the wood products and paper industries. Forestlands also are ideal land uses for water quality protection. Forests support a wide variety of wildlife and offer opportunities for many types of outdoor recreation. It is envisioned that forests will continue to be a part of the future landscape of the town.

CHAPTER 4 - MOVING THE VISION FORWARD

The open space vision provides a framework for achieving the mutual goals expressed by its collective authors. The process continues with collaborative efforts in moving the vision forward. To achieve the vision requires a continued partnership with property owners, residents, municipal governments, and private and nonprofit organizations such as the Queensbury Land Conservancy, Inc. The objectives of the community are outlined in an action plan, which also outlines how those partnerships may be realized.

Appendix A of this report provides the reader with such an action plan. The action plan itself was compiled from recommendations provided by the community throughout this process. In the plan, specific elements and locations are highlighted for attention and immediate, short term and long term “reachable” steps. Actions as assigned will keep the vision moving forward, and contribute to the success of the Open Space Vision Plan and Map mission.

CHAPTER 5 - CONCLUSION

Open spaces are an important part of the Queensbury community. These natural resources enrich our lives on a daily basis. Maintaining and protecting open space resources is not a passive task. It takes commitment, hard work, and human and financial resources. In today’s world, the pressure to build and develop needs to be balanced with efforts to preserve and protect our natural and cultural heritage. So, by working in partnership, both building and conservation goals can progress. This open space vision helps provide a framework for those mutual goals to be achieved.

The public participation in putting together this vision for open space has been exceptional. The community will continue to be invited to provide their ideas on additional open space opportunities as this plan evolves. The citizens of Queensbury, and the surrounding areas, are ready to support the recommendations, as demonstrated by their support in and for this planning process.

We believe that the Queensbury Town Board will see evidence of this during the public hearing proceedings, which is the next step in putting forward this plan for action.

End Notes

¹ *New York State Open Space Conservation Plan 2002*, Department of Environmental Conservation & Office of Parks, Recreation & Historic Preservation, Albany, NY, September 18, 2002, p. 7, Definition of Open Space. See also, www.dec.state.ny.us/opensp/index.html.

² For more information on the increasing values of open space, see *The Economic Benefits of Parks and Open Space: How Land Conservation Helps Communities Grow Smart and Protect the Bottom Line*, by Steve Lerner and William Poole, The Trust for Public Land, San Francisco, CA, 1999. The Trust for Public Land also provides a significant amount of economic information on its website, www.tpl.org. Much of the information provided is based on research that shows the costs of supporting development would not be met by anticipated property revenues. Other economic benefits are realized through increased tourism business, timber harvesting, pollution reduction, environmental protection such as watershed protection, increased property values, and increased quality of life values. See also the *New York State Open Space Conservation Plan 2002*, Department of Environmental Conservation & Office of Parks, Recreation & Historic Preservation, Albany, NY, September 18, 2002, Chapter 2 Evaluating the Benefits of Open Space.

³ A Warren County section was judged as America's Most Scenic Highway in 1966 in a nationwide competition held by Parade Magazine.

⁴ The Open Space Plan Committee was officially appointed by the Queensbury Town Board via Resolution No. 420, 2001 and was re-appointed by the Town Board on January 6, 2003 via Resolution 49,2003.

⁵ Special thanks go to the staff of Glens Falls Transit for donating the trolley and driver services for this day.

⁶ The Queensbury Land Conservancy, Inc. (QLC) is a private, nonprofit, tax exempt local organization begun in autumn of 2000. According to the QLC brochure, the QLC “was created by local residents who share a commitment to preserving and enhancing the natural and recreational resources of the area for the benefit of current residents and future generations. Our mission is to work with all sectors of the community to conserve land resources in a manner that is consistent with responsible development.”

⁷ The QLC presented survey results to the Town Board on August 12, 2002.

⁸ The Lake George Wild Forest is managed by the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC). Development of a Unit Management Plan by the DEC for this area is in progress. According to the DEC website www.dec.state.ny.us/website/df/publands/ump/reg5/1gltr.html, *Letter Announcing Start of Lake George Wild Forest Management Plan Development*, the goal of the DEC is, “By developing a unit management plan for this area, the DEC can balance recreational use with the protection of natural resources in this area, ensuring that all people will be able to enjoy the beauty and wonders of nature in the Adirondack/Lake George region.” Adirondack Park State Land Classifications defines Wild Forest as, “A wild forest is an area where the resources permit a

somewhat higher degree of human use than in wilderness, primitive or canoe areas, while retaining an essentially wild character. A wild forest area is further defined as an area that frequently lacks the sense of remoteness of wilderness, primitive or canoe areas and that permits a wide variety of outdoor recreation.” See *Land Classification in the Forest Preserve* at www.dec.state.ny.us/website/df/publands/forestpreservelands.html.

⁹ A marl fen is a peat accumulating wetland with marshlike vegetation (less than 50 percent cover of trees).

¹⁰ *The Best Little Golf Town in America*, Mathew Rudy, Golf Digest, Nov. 2002, Trumbull, CT. Items such as the quality of the golf course, the number of private and public golf courses per capita, greens fees, weather, and other factors were measured.

¹¹ A note of appreciation to Jim Underwood for providing a synopsis of some of the open space resources and potential opportunities which were helpful to the formation and refinement of some of these open space concepts.

¹² As per 6 NYCRR, Part 182 Endangered and Threatened Species of Fish and Wildlife; Species of Special Concern, 182.2 Definitions (i) Species of special concern are species of fish and wildlife found by the department to be at risk of becoming either endangered or threatened in New York. A list can be found by accessing: www.dec.state.ny.us/website/dfwmr/wildlife/endspec/etsclist.html.

¹³ Certain trail improvement efforts have been initiated as part of a Queensbury School and Washington-Saratoga-Warren-Hamilton-Essex BOCES project.

¹⁴ This well-written account was excerpted in notes provided by Jim Underwood to the Open Space Plan Committee in early 2002.

¹⁵ Ecological communities statewide have been inventoried and rated by the New York State Natural Heritage Program, and used by the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation. The Pitch Pine - Scrub Oak Barrens, a shrub-savanna community, is globally ranked as rare, with few remaining examples in its range. It is especially vulnerable to extirpation in New York State.

¹⁶ The Town of Queensbury is in the process of developing a recovery plan to promote conservation of Karner Blue Butterfly habitat. This plan will build upon work done by Michael S. Batcher, AICP for the Town of Queensbury and the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC), "Report on 1997 Surveys for Lupine (*Lupinus perennis*) Sites and Karner Blue Butterfly (*Lycaeides melissa samuelis*) Populations in the Town of Queensbury, Warren County, New York." Karner blue butterfly habitat can be established anywhere there is sandy soil where lupine and other nectar species can be grown.

¹⁷ The Barrens Buck Moth is co-existent with Pitch Pine habitat. See endnote above.

¹⁸ The Pine Plantation and the Hemlock – Hardwood Swamp areas are also part of the New York State Natural Heritage Program ranking system noted above. Although more secure in their respective ranges, their occurrence in Queensbury is significant.

¹⁹ The New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) notes that the best use of water classified as Aat is for "drinking, culinary or food processing purposes; primary and secondary contact recreation; and fishing. These waters shall be suitable for fish propagation and survival." (NYSDEC, 1992)

²⁰ The "Middle" Hudson River Greenway concept is from a study by University of Massachusetts at Amherst and State University of New York at Albany graduate students, "Continuing the Greenway: A Comprehensive Vision," done in the Fall of 1993. Potential of the river corridor from north of Albany/Troy to the south of the Adirondack Park, a 75 mile stretch, for consideration as a greenway, was the focus of the study. The study highlighted historical, cultural, recreational, and development opportunities from Waterford, NY to Hadley/Lake Luzerne, NY. The goal was to provide a link between the Lower Hudson River Valley Greenway and the Adirondack Park, and perhaps further to the Montreal International Heritage Corridor.

²¹ From "Balancing Nature and Commerce in Gateway Communities," by Jim Howe, Ed McMahon, and Luther Propst, 1997, p. 27.

²² The American Farmland Trust has prepared more than 80 Cost of Community Services (COCS) studies nationwide to measure the net fiscal contribution of different land uses. "Making the Case for Conservation," published in 2002, is their most recent publication. See www.farmland.org for additional information.