

PART 4 OVERVIEW OF CLIFTON PARK'S OPEN SPACE RESOURCES

There are approximately 12,000 acres of open lands remaining in the Town of Clifton Park. These lands include parcels that are completely vacant and unimproved, lands that are predominantly vacant, private land classified as forest for real property tax purposes, and all agricultural land.

Provided in this Part 4 is a summary of the major open space resources in the Town of Clifton Park:

- ' Drinking water resources;
- ' Wildlife habitats, forests, and wetlands;
- ' Agricultural heritage: farms, and farmland resources (land and soil resources);
- ' Historical and cultural resources;
- ' Rural vistas and scenic roadways;
- ' Recreational resources; and, a
- ' Trails and pathways network.

DRINKING WATER RESOURCES

Watersheds, waterbodies, streams, rivers

The Mohawk River is the most significant water feature at the town's southern-southwestern boundary. A major surface water body, the Stony Creek in the southern half of Clifton Park is a tributary to the Mohawk River.

The Stony Creek Reservoir (also known as the Latham Reservoir) is a major surface water resource, owned by the Town of Colonie, currently off limits to the public. The area adjacent to the reservoir is heavily forested and has many wetlands and is an ideal wildlife habitat. The reservoir and its watershed present opportunities for creating a management plan in conjunction with the Town of Colonie for environmentally sensitive public access. Alternatively, future management could include the reservoir as an emergency water supply for Clifton Park.

The Town of Colonie is planning a new \$14 million plant to purify water drawn from the Stony Creek Reservoir at the Mohawk River crossing, located at the end of Ferry Drive. This level of investment by the Town of Colonie may be a factor in determining future public access for Clifton Park residents to the Stony Creek Reservoir.

Other major surface waters in Clifton Park are the Dwaas Kill in the central and northeast area of town; the Long Kill, a tributary to the Dwaas Kill, in the northern reach of town; the Cooley Kill and the Anthony Kill, both in the northern half of town, Alplaus Creek in the western edge of town, and Ballston Lake in the northwest corner of the town.

Floodplains

Clifton Park has extensive floodplain areas along its streams and the Mohawk River. Clifton Park's current town code includes a Land Conservation (LC) District to delineate, preserve, protect and conserve wetlands and streams. Included are New York State Department of Environmental Conservation-regulated wetlands and adjacent areas and floodplains defined by the official flood boundary and floodway map published by the Federal Emergency Management Agency. State-regulated wetlands include their 100-foot buffer, classified streams include a 50-foot to 100-foot buffer at the high-water mark.

Aquifers and drinking water supply

Clean water is a basic requirement for all living things. Aquifer recharge areas allow rain or runoff to return to its underground source (the water table) – filtering it in the process.

Water supply is available to Clifton Park from the municipal systems of the Clifton Park Water Authority, the Rexford Water District #2, and the Rivercrest Water Department #2, as well as through individual privately-operated wells.

Both the Rexford Water District #2 and the Rivercrest Water District #2 obtain ground water pumped from the "Great Flats Aquifer" that lies below the Mohawk River-bed channel.

Ground water wells are the source of all water pumped to the Clifton Park Water Authority's (CPWA) system. Other wells are located throughout the town at 12 different sites listed in Table 4-1 on the following page. Water from the Vischer Ferry Preserve wells and the Boyack Road wells is treated at the new Boyack Road Treatment Plant for removal of iron and manganese. Four primary sources provide the highest quality water with the lowest hardness available. Eight secondary sources are used during the summer months to meet higher demand created by outdoor uses [<http://cpwa.org/CCR.html>].

Table 4-1: Clifton Park Water Authority's System Water Sources and Capacity

Location	Number of wells	Capacity [gallons per minute (GPM)]
PRIMARY SOURCES (PUMPED YEAR-ROUND)		
Vischer Ferry Preserve	9	2300
Boyack Road	2	600
Berry Farm	2	300
Park Lane	4	100
Plank Road	2	600
Kinns Road	1	150
SECONDARY SOURCES		
Lapp Road	2	600
Oakwood	2	200
Barney Golf Course	1	100
Meadows	1	50
Roosevelt Court	1	200
Moe Road	1	135

Large aquifer, groundwater recharge areas are located proximate to all these wells.

WILDLIFE HABITATS, FORESTS & WETLANDS

Clifton Park is home to a number of important ecological areas: the Dwaas Kill Natural Area (DKNA); the Vischer Ferry Nature and Historic Preserve and the Mohawk River; the Stony Creek Reservoir area; critical migratory bird areas and bird breeding area; the Wood Road - Karner Blue Habitat, MacElroy Road Park beaver pond and wetlands, as well as other forested areas, wetlands, trout streams. Other smaller ponds and streams, vernal pools and intermittent drainage channels are also important contributors the ecological well-being of the area.

Area of Statewide Significance: Dwaaskill Natural Area

New York State's designated Dwaaskill Natural Area as an area of statewide significance in the 1998 Open Space Plan and the 2001 revision. As such, the Dwaaskill Natural Area, located just north of the eastern half of Route 146, is the single most important, unprotected natural area in the Town of Clifton Park. The Dwaaskill Natural Area is located between Exits 9 and 10 of the Northway, and primarily north of Route 146. The Long Kill is a tributary to the Dwaaskill and an important ecological feature in the Dwaaskill Watershed.

Specifically located in the center portion of Clifton Park, in the vicinity of Van Patten Road, Pierce Road, Ushers Road and Kinns Road, Dwaas Kill Natural Area is a complex ecosystem of aquatic, wetland, and upland habitat associated with the middle reaches of the Dwaas Kill stream system and its tributaries. The Dwaas Kill Natural Area contains:

- Streams, upland and lowland forests, open lands, and extensive wetlands
- Two plant species that are rare in New York State; beaver, otter, and mink; at least 16 different species of butterfly
- 14 or more indigenous bird species with a similar number of neo-tropical migrating bird species that nest in the area
- Herons and other wetlands birds, many different types of amphibians including two species of turtle listed by the New York State with "special concern" and two species of salamander with the same designation
- At least eight species of fish have been documented at this natural area¹.

About 500 acres of this natural area has already been proposed as a nature preserve by the State of New York. The Dwaaskill Natural Area is a priority project on New York's list of the most important open spaces to protect. The proposed preserve will protect approximately five (5) miles of stream corridor along the middle of the Dwaas Kill, assist in water quality preservation, and protect one of the town's major aquifers. The area is unique for its hemlock-laden ravines, a large wetlands complex, and relatively undisturbed riparian habitat that provides a diversity of native flora and fauna. Important wildlife habitat and travel corridors also exist in the area, according to the New York State Open Space Plan. [To view the plan summary on the web go to,

<http://www.dec.state.ny.us/website/opensp/2001/summary.pdf>.]

¹ In 1996, the Land Trust of the Saratoga Region (LTSR), in concert with the Town of Clifton Park, contracted with a private consulting firm to assess the plant and animal life in the 500-acre Dwaas Kill Natural Area (DKNA).

In addition, within the vicinity of the Dwaaskill Natural Area is the location of drinking water resources for the town.

A majority of the 500 acres is currently under private ownership; but the proposed preserve is under development pressure due to its close proximity to Interstate 87 (the Northway). The Town of Clifton Park needs to work with private landowners and the state to ensure that this important natural area is preserved.

Vischer Ferry Nature and Historic Preserve

Located along the shoreline of the Mohawk River, the Vischer Ferry Nature & Historic Preserve is the largest existing open space resource in the Town of Clifton Park. Management of the more than 450-acre site is a joint venture among the State of New York, the New York State Department of Transportation, the New York State Canal Corporation, and the Town of Clifton Park. Additional state lands not officially part of the preserve are adjacent, including lands used for canal dredge spoils. The site contains a segment of the former Erie Canal, the remains of the town's first settlement (dating from 1672), as well as a large freshwater non-tidal wetland – an important wetland bird habitat, deciduous woods, riparian habitat and coniferous woods.

The Vischer Ferry Nature & Historic Preserve is designated by the National Audubon Society as an Important Bird Area (IBA), recognized as one out of 127 Important Bird Areas in New York.² The site is popular for bird-watching, with its easily observed marshes and ponds, and the remains of the Erie Canal waterway. Important bird species supported by the wetland habitat at the site include Least Bitterns, American Bitterns, Common Moorhens, Virginia Rails, and Marsh Wrens. Ospreys and Pied-billed Grebes use the area during migration. The site is important for Great Blue Herons, Great Egrets, and the Black-crowned Night Heron. The preserve is also an important wetland habitat for water-loving animals such as muskrats.³

A major trail system exists at the Vischer Ferry Nature & Historic Preserve along the former Erie Canal (1840), from the base of Sugar Hill Road and the dam at the power plant, past Ferry Drive, past Old Lock 19 of the Erie Canal, past the Old Whipple Bridge, to the site of N.J. Clute's Dry Dock (1852) parallel to Riverview Road. Additional trail segments and loops exist within the site.

² Source: National Audubon Society Website.

³ Source: "Natural Areas of Saratoga County, New York," published by the Environmental Clearinghouse of Schenectady.

A number of term conservation easements of farmland and open space are located near the Vischer Ferry Preserve. The preserve also is the primary drinking water supply source for the Clifton Park Water Authority with several wells developed onsite. In addition, lands that protect aquifers are also in the vicinity of the existing preserve.

Stony Creek Reservoir and Watershed

A significant fisheries wildlife habitat is associated with the Stony Creek Reservoir and Stony Kill (stream - Class A). Land Conservation Zones which are town-protected 100-foot buffers are located along the Stony Kill downstream from the Stony Creek Reservoir.

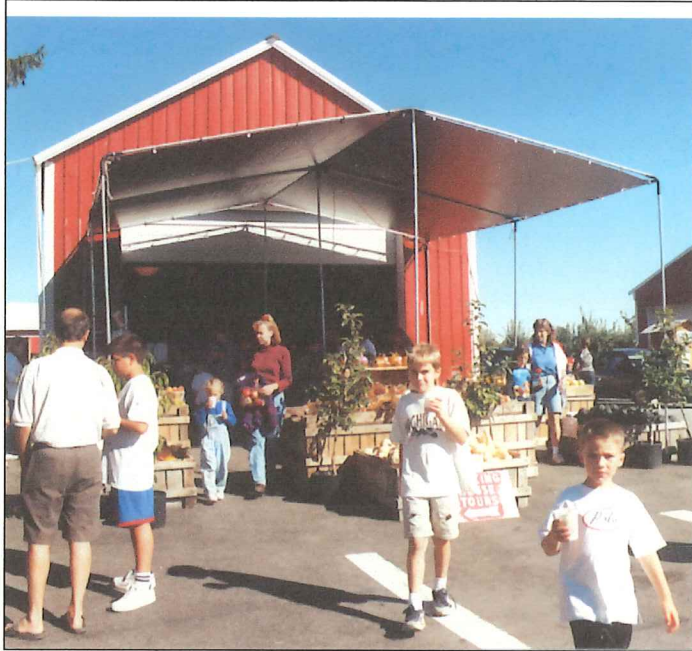
Additional Forest & Wetlands Habitat Areas

Smaller, but important wildlife habitat areas are located at the Round Lake Reservoir and in undeveloped areas and ravines in the vicinity of this reservoir; in the Ballston Lake watershed area, including the Ballston Lake Road drainage system; a large wetlands complex in the vicinity of Woods Road; and in the "green space" set-asides in residential subdivisions.

AGRICULTURAL HERITAGE: FARMS, AND FARMLAND RESOURCES (LAND AND SOIL RESOURCES)

Much of the scenic, rural landscapes in Clifton Park are orchards or smaller, diverse working farms. In a transformation from its past as a primarily dairy farming community, Clifton Park's "farmscape" includes farmlands used for small fruits, vegetables, and other special farm commodities. Smaller farm animals such as goats and sheep also thrive. Larger animals are observed on horse and beef farms. Nurseries supply local landscaping businesses and homeowners with flowering plants, shrubs and trees for homes, institutions and business properties.

Several farm families have seasonal "pick-your-own" operations for fruits and vegetables. In addition, community members can visit the public farmers' market sponsored by the Saratoga Farmers Market Association, held Wednesdays 3 to 6 p.m., May through October. Previously, a satellite farmers' market of the same association was held at St. George's Church in Clifton Park. Farms such as Bowman Orchards and Riverview Orchards sell produce directly to the public at on-site farmstands where community members experience a glimpse of farm life.



People enjoy the farm market at Bowman Orchards on Sugar Hill Road in Fall 2001.

Today, about 35 farms operate in the Town of Clifton Park utilizing about 2600 acres or about 8.5% of the town. These farms are located primarily in the western half of town, west of Route 146A and Vischer Ferry Road where some of the most productive agricultural soils are located. Since 1950, Clifton Park has permanently lost to residential and commercial development about 80% of the farms and about 85% of farmland acreage. In 1950 about 170 farms used approximately 17,000 acres (about 56.5% of the town) in Clifton Park for agriculture.

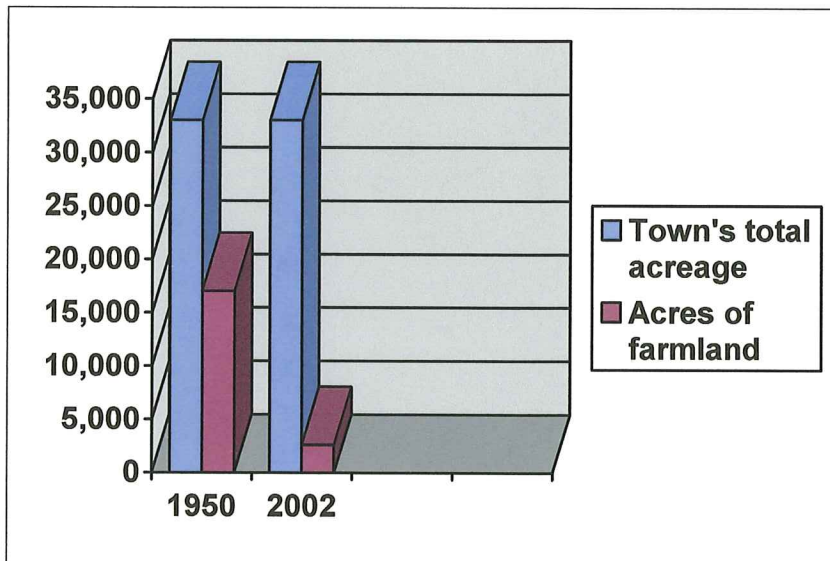


Figure 4-1. Farmland in town has declined significantly since 1950.

Agricultural land is critical to the quality of life in town. Scenic, historic, cultural and economic identities are embodied in the town's remaining farmland. Farms and farmers are a local food source. Farmers are managers and stewards of significant tracts of soil, land, water and habitat resources in the community. Agriculture is an industry and economic resource in town that plays a major part in the town's culture and history.

In 1994 Clifton Park landowners formed a new agricultural district, known as District #6 of Saratoga County. The district was originally comprised of 146 parcels of land and including slightly over 3,186 acres.⁴ The establishment of this new district shows the support and unity for local farming – and has helped raise awareness of the development pressures facing local farmers.

The enrolled properties are primarily located in the Mohawk River Drainage Basin, in the southwest sector of town. A few agricultural properties are located in the Ballston Lake watershed in the northwest sector of town. No agricultural district properties are in the northeast sector of town.

The town board followed the creation of Agricultural District #6 with additional initiatives to support its local farmers. The town enacted a local "right-to-farm" ordinance; created an exemption from special district tax levies for active farmers with the agricultural district; adopted a term conservation easements law to provide tax-abatements to encourage farmers to keep rural lands in farming production. However, agricultural districts and term conservation easements are voluntary, temporary measures that do not assure the permanent protection of farmlands in Clifton Park.

Both active and dormant farms have gained temporary protections through the establishment of a designated agricultural district that recognizes the substantial contribution of farming and fruit-production to the local economy and its pastoral ambiance. Reduced assessments and conservation easement programs have also helped farmers retain their lands. The Town of Clifton Park helps sponsor an annual Farm Fest to promote agricultural awareness in the community. During Farm Fest, the public is offered the opportunity to visit the few remaining active farms first-hand.

⁴ "Keeping Agriculture in Saratoga County: Everyone Has a Stake in Agriculture's Future: Farmers, Consumers and Communities!" An Agricultural & Farmland Protection Plan for Saratoga County. Final Draft, December 1997.



Horse-drawn wagon rides are an attraction at the Clifton Park Farm Fest held each fall.

Through its agricultural resources, residents enjoy unspoiled vistas, the bounty of the harvest season, the benefits of privately funded stewardship of environmental and aquifer resources, and the “country” atmosphere. Protection and preservation of agricultural lands should be important component of open space conservation initiatives in Clifton Park.

HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL RESOURCES

Historic Hamlets of Clifton Park

**Vischer Ferry
Rexford
Ballston Lake
Grooms Corners
Jonesville
Clifton Park Center
Elnora**

Figure 4-2. Historic Hamlets of Clifton Park.

Clifton Park has developed due to its relationship to transportation routes.⁵ Starting in about 1672, the first Europeans settled along the main route of early transportation, the Mohawk River, at Fort’s Ferry and Vischer Ferry (near the Vischer Ferry Nature & Historic Preserve), and Rexford Flats. These hamlets were the town’s focal points with the establishment of ferry docks and systems. Former trails and footpaths established by Native Americans evolved into roads and turnpikes used by the newest

⁵ Historical background highlights summarized from the Town of Clifton Park Comprehensive Plan that was adopted by the Town of Clifton Park by resolution on April 17, 1995.

inhabitants. Villages, taverns, and hotels grew around stagecoach stops for roadway travelers leading to the initial establishment and growth of such hamlets as Grooms Corners, Clifton Park, and Jonesville. The township of Clifton Park in its current municipal boundaries was formed in 1828 as a subdivision from the Town of Halfmoon located to the east.

Completed in 1825, the Erie Canal provided an economic boost of industry and activity to the area, particularly to Vischer Ferry and Rexford. The remnants of the Erie Canal are preserved at the state-owned Vischer Ferry Nature & Historic Preserve maintained by an arrangement with the Town of Clifton Park.

Clifton Park is home to historic hamlets, homes and farms, scenic vistas, and other historic sites. About 40 sites of local historic and cultural significance are located throughout town. Some of these sites are the original settlement hamlets of Clifton Park Center, Elnora, Grooms Corners, Jonesville, Rexford and Vischer Ferry. Others are individual homes and historic farms located on various rural roads.

Resources for more detailed accounts of these cultural sites are found in the following books: History of Clifton Park, by John Scherer (town historian); Saratoga Communities: An Historic Perspective, by Johnstone; Crossroads and Canals: The History of Clifton Park by William Washington and Patricia Smith; and a paper entitled: "Historic Preservation in Clifton Park" by an anonymous author. Various citizens are also invaluable sources of information about the community: such as Doris J. Cole (archivist of the Clifton Park Historic Society); Clark Wilson, president of the Rexford Historic Association; Kathleen Briaddy, historian for the Town of Bethlehem; and Frank Berlin, volunteer cemetery preservationist.

Current Local Measures to Protect Historic Resources:

"A Guide to Historic Clifton Park, Saratoga County, New York," 2002, is available at town hall and other local sources, that provides a map of historic sites, districts, and hamlets within town, and a brief history of the town. The brochure also contains a list of other references on the history of town.

The Town of Clifton Park offers incentives to landowners to protect their historic properties with conservation easements. The town has a town historian position, currently held by John L. Scherer. The town's Clifton Park Historic Preservation Commission oversees historic properties term conservation easement applications. The commission also is involved in tax abatement for structures having historic value, identifies and maps historically significant areas and

properties within the town, and provides comment on applications involving historic properties. In addition, the Rexford Historical Society and the Friends of Grooms Tavern exist as additional organizations concerned about historic Clifton Park.

Grooms Corners



Grooms Tavern at Sugar Hill Road and Grooms Rd. was recently acquired by the town for restoration.

The Town of Clifton Park purchased the Grooms Tavern complex for permanent protection. The Town of Clifton Park and the Friends of Grooms Tavern citizens' group is committed to the restoration of the former residence and store at Grooms Corners and educating the community about this historical and cultural resource. In November 2002, New York State awarded \$80,000.00 from the State's Environmental Protection Fund for the Historic Grooms Tavern Restoration Project.

Such commitments to maintaining the historical integrity of cultural treasures are encouraged as part of the town's open space plan.

RURAL VISTAS AND SCENIC ROADWAYS

Many of the earliest paths through town developed into modern-day transportation routes. Roads once primarily used for farm-to-market transportation in rural areas have now become commuter roads for residents seeking fast, easy access to the Northway and to employment centers dispersed throughout the Capital District. Some of the farm roads, now town and county roads that have scenic qualities for their visual access to the rural, countryside and undeveloped natural areas of Clifton Park should be designated as "scenic roadways."

In addition, the Mohawk Towpath Scenic Byway is a scenic and recreational corridor that includes Clifton Park's entire waterfront along the

Mohawk River and the Vischer Ferry Natural and Historic Preserve. The scenic byway plan is to connect Clifton Park's scenic waterfront along the Mohawk River to the regional river corridor.

Many other scenic views are present throughout Clifton Park. Individual roadways recognized in the Town of Clifton Park for their scenic qualities⁶ are: Riverview Road, Sugar Hill Road, Vischer Ferry Road south of Grooms Road, Grooms Road west of Moe Road, Moe Road from Grooms Road to Englemore Road; Englemore Road; Crescent Road from Van Vranken Road to Vischer Ferry Road, Van Vranken Road, the southern half of Male Drive, Ray Road, Miller Road, Waite Road both north and south of Clifton Park Road, Clifton Park Road (Route 146) from Miller Road to Nott Road, Nott Road, Appleton Road, Main Street and vicinity in Rexford, Ballston Lake Road, Ashdown Road, Eastside Drive, and Schauber Road.

In 1995 the Land Trust of the Saratoga Region (LTSR) sponsored a project for community members to identify what they thought were the "Special Places" in the Town of Clifton Park. Several residents submitted nominations. A high percentage of properties nominated to the LTSR as special places by citizens of Clifton Park identified "rural" sections and the roads that service them. According to the voluntary nominations for special places, at least four geographic areas could be grouped as significant scenic resources:

1. The area along Riverview Road as it overlooks the Mohawk River.
2. The area in the southwestern section of the town that includes: Sugarhill Road, Miller Road, Grooms Road, and Nott Road.
3. The Wood Road corridor in the Northeast corner of the town. A significant part of this area is seen from the Adirondack Northway.
4. The section along Route 146A starting at and including the western end of McElroy Road to Ashdown Road.

RECREATIONAL RESOURCES

As in many rural-to-suburban towns, the Town of Clifton Park enjoys many neighborhood park areas, tot lots, and small segments of green space/open space. During the past 20 years, in response to rapid

⁶ A preliminary scenic roadway inventory and analysis was performed as part of "An Open Space Inventory for the Town of Clifton Park" prepared by the Friends of Clifton Park Open Space and the University at Albany, SUNY Department of Geography and Planning, September 1998. In addition, public participants at the January 19, 2002 design charrette identified significant town scenic vistas and roadways.

population growth, the town has purchased several large tracts of land suitable for the development of ball fields, basketball courts and facilities for other sporting events. Members of the Clifton Park Trails Committee meet regularly to create a cohesive multi-use pathway network that connects schools, shopping, recreation, and residential areas.

Development of the Mohawk River Scenic Byway regional plan has been well-received by surrounding communities, re-dedication of the Mohawk River-Erie Canal corridor and other former transportation routes as recreational lands continues. The purchase of acreage in the northern part of town has allowed for the development of picnic areas and walking trails providing a more passive use of open land. Though proactive approaches have been implemented to protect and add-to existing parklands, the time is at hand to secure lands for recreation needs of this growing community and to assure long-term benefits for all.

In the course of development, lands are often conveyed to the town or homeowners associations for recreation areas, such as playgrounds, baseball, softball, football or soccer fields. Most of this dedicated land is used for active recreation with structures, groomed fields, and sports activities. The town will continue to need more parkland acreage to accommodate growth, and will most likely have to purchase another tract of land to enlarge or duplicate Clifton Common.

TRAILS AND PATHWAYS NETWORK

In 1999, the Town of Clifton Park adopted a Trails Master Plan that included various concepts of trail design. The Trails Master Plan's purpose is to use various trail designs to meet the following objectives:

1. Connect communities within the town
2. Explore natural resources within the communities and nature preserves.

The town's connective trail network represents a less structured mode of recreation usually dedicated to walking or bicycling. The town's trails committee, which has been working on this system since 1987 has completed the mapping of major segments, but additional corridors for trails will be needed as the town continues to grow.

Providing trails for residents to explore natural resources is more passive. It affords individuals opportunities to appreciate nature and open space with a minimum of human intervention. These trails consist of nature trails in forested areas, through open fields, in or around wetlands, and to scenic overlooks.

Route 146 Corridor

From Route 9 at the easternmost border of Clifton Park shared with the Town of Halfmoon, and westward towards Rexford is a central, busy commercial corridor with important institutions such as the Shenendehowa Central School District. To the north/northeast of the Route 146 corridor is the Dwaas Kill Natural Area. Just south of the corridor is the headwaters of the Stony Creek and adjacent wetlands in the vicinity of Clifton Knolls.

The Shenendehowa School District has undeveloped lands that have potential for enhancing trail connections through this part of the community.

Currently, sidewalks extend along the south side of Route 146 from the shopping at Exit 9 westward to the Shenendehowa Central School District campus.

Local Recreational Parks, Ballfields, and Playgrounds

The introduction of parks in the Town of Clifton Park was first initiated by the town when acquiring the land for Collins Park on Moe Road.

Parks and Recreation came to the forefront in October of 1975 when the Clifton Park Town Board commissioned a master plan that was completed by the Rist-Frost Associates Consulting Engineers. This plan included an inventory and description of the town, recreation areas and facilities and their operation. The study looked at the need and demand for future recreational needs of the town.

The purpose of parks in the Town of Clifton Park is to provide recreational, organized athletic competition and social gathering places. Other purposes for parks are to preserve open space and promote the quality of the environment.

At present, the acquisition of lands from subdivisions which provides for dedication of park and recreation land is based on regulations established by the Town of Clifton Park. The regulations state that the developer shall dedicate to the town, "usable land" equal to 10% of the subdivider's tract. The Planning Board determines the use of the land for parks, playground, or other specific public recreational use. Depending on the size of the developer's tract, the subdivider through the town board will make a monetary payment to the town in lieu of land. This money can be used only for the purchase of land for current or future neighborhood public recreational uses.

There are scenic areas and those areas bordering the various streams, lakes and other water courses in the town that have been given special

consideration by the Planning Board as desirable for public open spaces. Examples of this are the ponds in Clifton Knolls and the Dwaaskill Basin.

There five distinct designations of parks in the Town of Clifton Park: state-owned land, one county park, town parks, state preserve land, and park district association lands.

State Land for Town Preserve Use

Vischer Ferry Nature & Historic Preserve was discussed earlier under significant wildlife resources.

County Park

Kinns Road Park is a Saratoga County-owned park that is managed by the Town of Clifton Park and its Parks & Recreation Department. The site is unique in that it is a piece of Saratoga County forest which includes a pine plantation as well as a "naturally-occurring" hardwoods forest. This is a 63+ acre wooded park with an established system of trails for walking, cross-country skiing, a picnic area, and a site for nature study.

Town Parks

Town parks include the 80+ acre "Common" on Vischer's Ferry Road, the 130-acre Veteran's Memorial Park, the 8-acre Collins Park located on Moe Road just south of the Route 146 intersection, and the Mary Jane Rowe Dog Park. Town parks are administered through the Town Board by the Parks, Recreation, and Community Affairs Office.

Individual Park Districts

Individual park districts are concentrated in the eastern part of the town. Presently, there are a total of 11 park districts in the town associated with residential developments. These park districts range from active parkland that requires maintenance, to 30 acres of parks, recreational and natural "open space." These individual park districts are also individual tax districts where the properties within the district are taxed for the maintenance of the parks. Each district is unique to its residents' needs. They are represented by residents of the district. The residents establish the recreational needs and budgets, and submit their requests to the town board for approval.

These individual residential neighborhood-based park districts are:

1. Wyncrest Park District
2. Stony Creek Park District # 1
3. Stony Creek Park District # 2

4. Calico Colony Park District
5. Clifton Gardens Park District
6. Clifton Knolls Park District
7. Longkill Park District # 1
8. Longkill Park District # 2
9. Sherwood Forest Park District
10. Riverview Park District
11. Dwaaskill Park District

Also, several **private golf courses** are located in town, protecting for now, a significant acreage of open space primarily in the western part of the town. However, these golf course lands should not be assumed to be permanently protected open space.

Active Recreational Resources and Facilities

Clifton Park has a strong tradition of recreational opportunities and quality programs for its youth. Soccer, softball, baseball, hockey or other recreational sports and leagues occupy thousands of children from five years old to college age. The Clifton Park Baseball League involves 1,000 children annually, and hosts numerous state, regional and national Babe Ruth/Cal Ripken championships including the 14-year-old 2002 World Series. In soccer, the town hosts an annual international weekend tournament every July with over a hundred teams competing.

Participation in community activities has grown over the past five years with 2,500 participants in the recreational soccer league, 7,000 attending the summer recreation programs, about 5,000 participants joining baseball and softball teams, and 200 dog owners registering to use the Mary Jane Rowe Dog Park. Interest in the community is reflected in a variety of other ways as well from adopt-a-highway programs and attendance at the play-in-the-park series to involvement in the open space survey and charrette.

To service the community's varied recreational needs, the town operates a central recreational facility, "the Commons." Several other fields exist in town, but in most cases, the town's facilities do not have the needed space for expanded league play. Other than the large field at Longkill Park for baseball, and some fields at McGregor Park, the town's existing ballfields are mainly suitable for practices at this time.

Overall Parks Analysis

Parks are the essential part of Clifton Park's recreation system. The benefits of the parks include fostering personal health, strengthening community values, preventing crime, protecting the environment and contributing to a healthy economy.

An integrated park system is proposed to accomplish the following objectives:

- Improve parks¹, recreational services, open spaces, waterways, wildlife habitat and historical/cultural sites which are crucial to the quality of life for all residents of Clifton Park.
- Promote physical fitness and health for a variety of users including disabled persons.
- Encourage social interaction and community pride.
- Provide opportunities for the rest and relaxation within natural setting through park-related recreation.
- Provide 'outdoor classroom' opportunities for environmental education.

Clifton Park's recreation parks benefit the residents of the entire town. As the demand for town-wide park land grows, additional park lands will be necessary to keep up with the demand and alleviate the stress on the present facilities.

The town's ballfield facilities are not adequate to meet the long-term needs of the town residents and their families. The increasing number of participants and the continued demographics of Clifton Park as a family-oriented community, indicate the need for additional recreational facilities in the future. While the Commons may satisfy the current demand, it is only a matter of time before a new recreational complex is needed for Clifton Park. This could be another large facility or several small- to medium-size facilities based on individual sports. In order to meet this need, a parcel of adequate size and convenient location will need to be purchased by the town for a new town park. The town will further need to invest in these facilities and to work with recreational leagues to attract funding and support.

There are many different scenarios that can be created in terms of numbers of new fields, type of fields or future changes at the Commons itself. The most important need is a Clifton Park recreational facilities master plan for the next 25 years. This is an action by the town to help recreational leagues to meet long-term recreational needs of the communities children and adults alike. To evaluate a specific new parks

program, the town should create a task force of the presidents of the different recreational leagues, the head coaches of those sports in high school, and the designees from the planning and parks boards to map out the recreational sports needs of community over the next 25 years. This exercise would help prioritize open space acquisition for these fields and ensure that they are done with support and involvement of community participants.

¹ Current Initiatives for Recreational Improvements

In spring of 2002, the Clifton Park Baseball League launched a capital campaign to enhance and expand lights at upper quad field as well as make improvements to local quad fields and dugouts. The lights are to mainly allow the league to meet its obligations, providing more game slots for older age groups. The soccer league has also looks to lights to increase available games slots as well as looking to expand to fields off the commons.