

Town of Wilton Open Space, Recreation and Pathways Plan 2020 Update



Town of Wilton
Saratoga County, New York
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Town of Wilton

Open Space, Recreation and Pathways Plan 2020 Update

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***In every walk with nature one receives far more than he seeks.
- John Muir***

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



Scenic vistas, exceptional habitats for threatened and endangered species (including the Northeast's largest population of the Karner Blue butterfly), many miles of established trails and significant opportunity for increased pathway connectivity, and vibrant outdoor recreational spaces provide a rich natural environment for the Town of Wilton's residents and visitors.

The Town of Wilton continues to grow, a trend that has fluctuated but remained positive each decade since 1930. The Capital District Regional Planning Commission (CDRPC) projects the population of the Town will continue its growth from 16,173 in 2010 to 19,652 in 2030, a change of nearly 22 percent. This population change gives the Town of Wilton the largest projected growth in the next decade of any municipality in the county.

This prediction indicates that the large demand for additional housing will likely continue and result in the conversion of open space lands to residential uses unless there are more effective strategies in place to protect these areas. The town's natural landscapes are an attractive resource for the increasing number of young adults and families as well as the populations nearing retirement age.

With the projected population changes in both overall numbers and makeup, it is vital that the Town of Wilton moves forward this plan's recommendations to not only ensure that open space and agriculture land are protected, but that the changing recreational needs of the town are met as well. This plan is broken up into three main concerns for the town: Open Space, Recreation, and Pathways.

This Action Plan summarizes findings, goals and necessary action steps to accomplish the goals detailed in the 2020 Update to the Town of Wilton Open Space, Recreation and Pathways Plan (OSRPP). The OSRPP update is the fulfillment of one of the priority recommendations from the Town of Wilton Comprehensive Plan adopted in 2004 and updated in 2015. With many changes occurring in the Town since the 2007 adoption of the OSRPP, an update was warranted and commissioned by the Town Board. The purpose of the OSRPP update is to establish a strategy for the preservation of the diverse agricultural, historical, recreational, and scenic open space lands that strongly influence the quality of living in the Town of Wilton. The residents of the community, through expression in the adopted Comprehensive Plan, have acknowledged and endorsed the role of open space and the contributions these resources make to daily life in the Town. A balanced approach to future use of land in the Town is

important and proper and appropriate measures implemented now will allow for managed growth and preservation of the Town's natural resources in the future.

The intent of the OSRPP update is to provide a means of connecting open space areas, residential areas, recreation areas, service providers, Town services, and commercial areas with a town-wide system of pathways that allow for multiple forms of transportation to move effectively throughout the Town. The system will also have public health and quality of life benefits by providing opportunities for exercise, recreation, and connections with the natural world.

Through public outreach efforts, the OSRPP update incorporates the concerns and hopes of this community to establish a vision to guide future planning and development in the town. The plan reflects a history of commitments to protect open space and historic resources and expand upon a variety of active and passive recreation opportunities through building upon the successes of previous planning initiatives at the local, regional, and statewide levels.

A Commitment to Open Space, Connectivity and Recreation

Since its formation in 1818, the Town of Wilton has shown strong commitment to enhancing and preserving open space, recreational venues and pathways. Significant efforts to identify and protect open space, recreational venues and pathways over the past several decades demonstrates the Town's commitment to its open space and recreational resources and the connections between them. The most significant efforts include:

- Improvements to the Subdivision and Zoning Regulations and inclusion into the Town Code, including adoption of a Conservation Subdivision Design Ordinance (CSD);
- Continued Implementation of the Master Plan for Gavin Park;
- Continued updates of the town-wide multi-use trail system; and
- Continued financial support for WWPP.

The OSRPP is directly supported by public comments made during the development of the 2015 Town Comprehensive Plan and is closely associated with other recent open space preservation and recreation planning efforts. To oversee the 2018 update, the Town appointed an advisory committee consisting of Town Board members, town officials and residents. They were instrumental in the plan development process including formulating strategic actions to achieve the desired results of permanent preservation of natural resources and unique features.

Goals for Open Space

Open space is a broad and complex consideration. Within the context of the preservation goals for Wilton, open space refers to natural terrestrial features such as meadows, steep slopes, forested areas; aquatic features including lakes, streams, ponds, and wetlands; heritage areas including historic landmarks and buildings; geological features including hydric soils and aquifer recharge areas, vernal pools; and consideration of scenic views. The values of open space are as diverse as the types of open space listed above.

Preservation of open space is especially important considering the presence of the Saratoga Sand Plains ecosystem in the Town of Wilton. This unique ecosystem supports the largest population of the endangered Karner blue butterfly in the Northeast. Management efforts also benefit other species including the state threatened Frosted Elfin butterfly and Blanding's Turtle, state endangered Persius duskywing butterfly, hog nose snake, spade foot toad, blue spotted salamander, and other species

identified by the NYS Department of Environmental conservation (DEC) as being Species of Greatest Conservation Need.

Open space conservation is addressed through the Town's environmental and land use regulations. The Town's conservation subdivision law requires developers to utilize a conservation approach when subdividing lands of 10 or more lots. Open space on either along the Adirondack Northway is protected from development through the Northway Corridor Overlay District (NCOD). Natural areas and their timber, soil and streams are managed and protected by the Town's Timber, Soil and Stream Regulations.

Goals for Recreation

The Town has a significant number of pre-school and school-aged children. According to the 2010 Census, approximately 27 percent of the Town's population is 19 years of age or younger. This statistic indicates a strong need for recreation facilities of both an active and passive nature. Furthermore, it is a stated goal of the Town's Comprehensive Plan "to provide sufficient opportunities and facilities for both active and passive recreation activities." Active recreation includes types that require support equipment and facilities such as fields, courts, or tracks for the conduct of an organized game or match. Passive types are activities that are less reliant on structured facilities or competitions and include walking, jogging, trail running, dog walking, on and off-road cycling, hiking, snowshoeing, skating, cross country skiing, fishing, hunting, and bird watching.

Goals for Pathways

OSRPP envisions a town-wide system of pathways that effectively links open space areas, residential areas, recreation areas, points of interest, service providers and commercial areas. The strategy relies on a long-term, phased approach to piecing the links together through timely consideration during the development review process and optimal use of relevant state and federal transportation and funding programs. When complete, the Town's trail system will have meaningful connections to residential and commercial areas via multiple and alternative transportation routes affording seasonal access and movement for walkers and bicyclists.

Recommendations and Action Steps

The Town of Wilton Comprehensive Plan 2015 Update established a general town-wide goal "to conserve, improve, and protect our Town's natural resources, viewsheds and open space including wildlife habitat, that contribute to the diversity, character, aesthetics, environmental quality, economy, and general health, safety and welfare of the community." The OSRPP update outlines actions for the Town to implement to accomplish this goal. The Town worked with the community and its partners to identify the highest priority actions for open space, recreation and pathways in Wilton. The Town of Wilton Comprehensive Plan 2015 Update also provided a set of recommendations for specific planning areas throughout the community. The 2015 update was adopted by the Open Space Committee and incorporated into the following recommendations and action steps.

Open Spaces

1. Continue to identify areas of the Town landscape that are suitable for open space preservation. The areas identified should be based on prioritized considerations that reflect the public's enjoyment and ecological function of the space preserved.
2. Review and update existing Town regulations (i.e. zoning, site plan, subdivision) as necessary to achieve a balance between the adequate protection of resources and the fiscal and social needs of

the Town and its residents. Evaluate potential land preservation mechanisms such as easements, land acquisition, purchase of development rights, and the use of incentive zoning to achieve the transfer of development rights. Utilize incentive-based tools for open space preservation coupled with regulatory measures implemented through zoning, development guidelines, and a conservation development subdivision review process.

3. Develop a management strategy to inventory and catalogue all open space parcels for the Town. Develop a single form to inventory the existing open space parcels for their recreation and environmental education potential. Consider the required investment, desired uses and activities for open space lands, specific attributes and constraints of existing open space areas, appropriate management techniques, funding available, and human resources available to undertake management of the parcels inventoried and catalogued.
4. The Town should accept open space parcels that are being offered for donation, based on a thorough review by the Planning Board and Town Board. The Town should have the first refusal for land donation throughout the Town. Should the Town reject a parcel offered for donation, New York State, Saratoga PLAN, the Open Space Institute, or some other entity should consider it.
5. Consideration of fee simple purchase of lands or easements should be made on a case-by-case basis. Once a determination has been made that the parcel under consideration meets the criteria for priority open space, a method for owning, managing and financing the acquisition must be established prior to the final decision on acquisition. Factors to consider include cost, method of funding, means of ownership, the cost of upkeep, the approach to maintenance, and the long-term source of funding to cover maintenance and management costs.
6. Ensure enough funds are budgeted for existing and continuing program and land management. Furthermore, it is recommended that multiple funding sources be prioritized and pursued. Priority should be given to applying for available federal, County and State programs as listed in this trail plan. As a next priority, private donations to fund preservation efforts would be possible.
7. Implement protection options as easements, tax abatements, transfer of development rights, and purchase of development rights programs, incentive programs, outright purchase, and other funding mechanisms.
8. Encourage existing farms to take part in agricultural protection programs in Saratoga County through the Purchase of Development Rights (PDR) Program and other opportunities.

Water Resources

9. Adjust the stream corridor buffer standard to be measured from the shoreline, rather than the center of the waterway. This will add a more defining measuring point and increase the amount of protected areas. Standards should focus on the quality of the stream corridor, steepness of the slope, conditions which may contribute to erosion, and habitat value. Buffers and lot clearing restrictions around areas with physical constraints may be warranted and should be established on a case-by-case basis.
10. Review the Stream Corridor Overlay District requirements and update as necessary to work toward protecting the integrity of natural stream systems to the maximum extent possible. Incorporate these protections as necessary into site plan and subdivision regulations.

11. Minimize the potential impacts of erosion and sedimentation through strict compliance with the most recent State Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (SPDES) General Construction Permit requirements for stormwater management and pollution prevention.

Scenic Resources

12. Identify, map and protect high-quality scenic resources.
13. Utilize Visual Overlay Districts for highly sensitive areas to address road setbacks, cut and fill, lighting, reflective glass, height, structures that could be considered intrusive such as billboards or cellular towers, and site layout/design.
14. Require through site plan review and SEQR that all projects describe the potential impact on any locally significant visual resources that are identified in this document. During the site plan review procedure for review of commercial and industrial projects the Planning Board should utilize best practices to lessen the visual impact including screening, relocation on site, disguise, low profile, and sensitive lighting. The Zoning Board of Appeals should utilize similar standards in the review of variances, particularly variances relating to signs.
15. Improve compliance with the Northway Corridor Overlay District. The intent is to protect natural areas on either side of the Northway from development. A set of compliance guidelines should be compiled and imposed during subdivision and/or site plan review by the Planning Board. These guidelines should include realistic enforcement and penalties with requirements for rehabilitation, reclamation, and restoration of said lands.

Recreation

16. Support ongoing projects at Gavin Park. Consider additional locations for recreation.
17. Establish minimum recreation facility standards for active and passive recreation related to the size of individual development projects.
18. Complete a long-range plan for a compatible but diverse set of outdoor recreational uses at Camp Saratoga.
19. Consider implementing and supporting bike parks and multi-use areas.

Pathways

20. Invest in a clear and simple comprehensive all-season trail map for visitors. Identify all Town parks, LGLC trail preserves, state land trails, and county trails. Include length of time for the hike, the level of difficulty, and appropriateness of the trail for different ages and abilities. Illustrate the extent of the trail system, rules and regulations, and the location of different types of trails and attractions.
21. Create a standardized informational, wayfinding and interpretive signage plan that makes it simple for people to find and navigate local trails.
22. Develop standards for the design of trailheads. Incorporate parking and trail registers where appropriate.

23. Negotiate access agreements with property owners at key connectivity points, and to trail destinations such as open space, park, and recreation lands with future connections to destinations such as schools, shopping areas and employment centers.
24. Negotiate rights to use Saratoga County forestlands for the development of special purpose trails such as cross-country skiing.
25. Develop use and safety guidelines and regulations for trails throughout the Town and conduct a public outreach and education program to advise Town residents.
26. Adopt a trail management strategy for off-road trails. A *trail use ordinance* could help the trail managing agency protect trails. The ordinance should contain the rules and regulations of the trail system and should be posted at trailheads. It is recommended that the standards for municipal trailheads be compatible with the standards of the State Department of Environmental Conservation.
27. Consider and prioritize paving projects to improve on-road connections to trail.
28. Establish and adopt a detailed plan for on- and off-road connections adjacent to Northway crossings.
29. Consider use of park and recreation fees for maintenance of Town trails.
30. Require private developers to connect future subdivision and residential development plans to trails.

Wilton Wildlife Preserve & Park

31. Support the WWPP and its mission. Ensure that actions relating to land use at the local and regional levels are consistent with the program's identified goals.
32. Continue compliance with NYS DEC and other state and federal standards, regulations and requirements for projects located within the WWPP study area to ensure protection of critical habitats and resources.

SECTION 1 OVERVIEW



1.1 Open Space, Connectivity and Recreation for Future Generations

The Town of Wilton Open Space, Recreation and Pathways Plan Bicentennial Update (OSRPP) is the fulfillment of one of the priority recommendations from the Town of Wilton Comprehensive Plan adopted in 2004 and updated in 2015. With many changes occurring in the Town since the 2007 adoption of the OSRPP, an update was warranted and commissioned by the Town Board.

The purpose is to establish a strategy for the preservation of the diverse agricultural, historical, recreational, and scenic open space lands that strongly influence the quality of life in the Town of Wilton. The residents of the community, through expression in the adopted Comprehensive Plan, have acknowledged and endorsed the role of open space and the contributions these resources make to daily life in the Town. A balanced approach to future use of land in the Town is important and proper and appropriate measures implemented now will allow for managed growth and preservation of the Town's natural resources in the future.

The intent of the OSRPP is to provide a means of connecting open space areas, residential areas, recreation areas, service providers, Town services, and commercial areas with a town-wide system of pathways that allow for multiple forms of transportation to move effectively throughout the Town. The system will also have public health and quality of life benefits by providing opportunities for exercise, recreation and connections with the natural world.

Wilton's Physical and Organizational Landscape

Although most of the town has flat or gently sloped terrain, the approximately 36 square miles of the Town includes Palmertown Ridge in the northwest part of town as well as mountain views to the east and northwest. Two small lakes, several ponds, and a proliferation of streams highlight the town's water resources. While the southern and western portions of the town are notable for their extensive housing and business development, there are large areas of open space in the eastern and northern sections.



Palmertown Ridge

Town-hosted recreational venues in Wilton are held at the two major parks. Gavin Park offers fields and facilities for community events, organized group sports and other active recreation. Camp Saratoga is a former Boy Scout camp now used for passive recreation and environmental education and serves as the main entry to the Wilton Wildlife Preserve and Park, Inc (WWPP) study area. Land parcels owned by the Town of Wilton, the County of Saratoga, The Nature Conservancy, and the State of New York are included in the geographical area of the WWPP study area, which extends thousands of acres east of Interstate 87 (the Northway). These protected lands are part of the geologically significant Saratoga Sandplains, an area of ancient sand dunes, important wetlands, and diverse ecological communities encompassing several endangered and threatened species. The existing town trail system and adjoining municipal trails feature many miles of walking, running, biking, horse-riding, snowshoeing, and cross-country skiing access to many of these notable natural features.



Held annually at Gavin Park, more than 10,000 visitors attend Wilton's ParkFest to enjoy entertainment, free activities, amusement park-type rides, and fireworks in the evening.

Wilton's Unique Environment for Open Space, Pathways, and Recreation

Scenic vistas, exceptional habitats for threatened and endangered species (including the Northeast's largest population of the Karner blue butterfly), many miles of established trails and significant opportunity for increased pathway connectivity, and vibrant outdoor recreational spaces provide a rich natural environment for the Town of Wilton's residents and visitors.

Open Space

Open space is a broad and complex consideration. Within the context of the preservation goals for Wilton, open space refers to natural terrestrial features such as meadows, steep slopes, forested areas; aquatic features including lakes, streams, ponds, and wetlands; heritage areas including historic landmarks and buildings; geological features including hydric soils and aquifer recharge areas, vernal pools; and consideration of scenic views. The values of open space are as diverse as the types of open space listed above.

Open spaces, while enjoyed for their characteristics of serenity, airiness, and tranquility also serve as habitat for a variety of wildlife and vegetation. The physical setting and climate are supportive of a varied mix of amphibians, reptiles, birds, fish, trees, shrubs, and groundcover. The recommended strategy identifies areas that meet these criteria as well as methods for preserving these lands and features over the long-term. Preservation of open space is especially important considering the presence of the Saratoga Sand Plains ecosystem in the Town of Wilton. This unique ecosystem supports the largest population of the endangered Karner Blue butterfly in the Northeast. Management efforts also benefit other species including



Farmland and open spaces: Multiple benefits because they protect scenic views, arable land, and important ecosystems.

the state threatened Frosted Elfin butterfly and Blanding's Turtle, the hog nosed snake, state endangered Persius Duskywing butterfly, and other species identified by the NYS Department of Environmental conservation (DEC) as being Species of Greatest Conservation Need.

Recreational Opportunities

The Town has experienced a considerable increase in population. This is true both in comparison to past trends in population increases in the Town as well as comparison to similar towns in the region. As a result, the Town has a significant number of pre-school and school-aged children. According to the 2010 Census, approximately 27 percent of the Town's population is 19 years of age or younger. This statistic indicates a strong need for recreation facilities of both an active and passive nature. Furthermore, it is a stated goal of the Town's Comprehensive Plan, "to provide sufficient opportunities and facilities for both active and passive recreation activities."

Active recreation includes types that require support equipment and facilities such as fields, courts, or tracks for the conduct of an organized game or match. Passive types are activities that are less reliant on structured facilities or competitions and include walking, jogging, trail running, dog walking, on and off-road cycling, hiking, snowshoeing, skating, cross country skiing, fishing, hunting, and bird watching. The OSRPP provides a

comprehensive and cohesive set of activities that will fulfill the general goal to enhance opportunities for active and passive recreation.



Multi-use trails and recreation areas: Cross-country skiing is a popular recreational activity in Wilton.

Pathways

OSRPP envisions a town-wide system of pathways that effectively links open space areas, residential areas, recreation areas, points of interest, service providers and commercial areas. The strategy relies on a long-term, phased approach to piecing the links together through timely consideration during the development review process and optimal use of relevant state and federal transportation and funding programs. When complete, the Town's trail system will have meaningful connections to residential and commercial areas via multiple and alternative transportation routes affording seasonal access and movement for walkers and bicyclists.



Land conservation and pathways: Linking together forest and open space resources in a town-wide system of pathways.

1.2 Wilton's Commitment

Since its formation in 1818, the Town of Wilton has shown strong commitment to enhancing and preserving the qualities of life made possible by its unique setting. Formal efforts to identify and protect open space, recreational venues and pathways have been recognized over the past several decades.

The Town of Wilton has developed and implemented significant initiatives to preserve open space, protect natural resources, and provide its citizens with ample and diverse recreational opportunities. The most significant efforts are as follows:

- Improvements to the Subdivision and Zoning Regulations and inclusion into the Town Code, including:
 - Adoption of a Conservation Subdivision Design Ordinance (CSD) for all subdivisions involving ten or more lots in 2005. The Town has reviewed and accepted open space from subdivisions developed under CSD since its adoption;
 - Adoption of Article IIIA. Historic Preservation which provides for the process of designating landmarks and historic districts in the town;
 - Integration of the NYS Municipal Separate Storm Sewer Systems (MS4s) permit system as required for stormwater discharges;
 - Development and implementation of hydro-geological standards of subdivision development;
 - Implementation of a construction checklist for subdivision development;
 - Creation of the Stream Resource Management District; and
 - Development of the Northway Corridor Conservation District.

- Continued Implementation of the Master Plan for Gavin Park, including:
 - Development of volleyball courts, shuffleboard, and horseshoes.

- Update the town-wide non-motorized multi-use trail system, including:
 - Purchase of the Bullard Road Parcel;
 - Completion of the Bicentennial Trail; and
 - Development of new connections between trail sections.

- Continued support for WWPP, including:
 - Contract partnership with WWPP; and
 - Working with New York State and conservation organizations to assess parcels around existing endangered species habitats.



Aerial view of Gavin Park.

1.3 Relationship to Other Plans

The OSRPP is a planned implementation measure referenced in the Town-sponsored efforts and county and statewide initiatives listed below.

Local Plans

2015 Comprehensive Plan Update

The 2015 Comprehensive Plan Update maintains the sound direction set forth in the previous Comprehensive Plan (2004) and addresses potential new or emerging issues in a proactive, balanced manner. This Plan identifies the needs of the community and presents an action program that benefits the Town and its residents over the long term. The 2015 Comprehensive Plan Update was adopted by the Wilton Town Board on November 5, 2015.

2011 Wilton Exit 16 Linkage Study

The Wilton Exit 16 Linkage Study was proposed by the Town of Wilton to the Capital District Transportation Committee (CDTC) to evaluate the study area around Northway Exit 16 and develop recommendations that can be implemented to ensure a true center of the community is created, capitalizing on the existing zoning within this area, with a strong sense of identity and adequately provides for the multi-modal needs of residents, businesses and property owners.

2009 Wilton Global Job Development Corporation - Blueprint for Economic and Job Growth

The areas around the Exit 15 and Exit 16 interchanges of the Adirondack Northway have been integral to the local economy as host sites for businesses that provide employment and generate sales and income. The intent of this report is to identify future growth potential within each of these areas and forecast the impact in terms of additional employment in the Town. Since that time, dramatic changes in the retail sales industry will have an impact on development and redevelopment at Exit 15.

2007 Wilton Open Space, Recreation and Pathways Plan

The Wilton OSRPP represents an important implementation step from the Town Comprehensive Plan. During the development process for the comprehensive plan, residents expressed strong interest in open space, recreation, and expansion of pedestrian and bicycle trails as a key element to the rural character of the community. Therefore, the OSRPP is intended to provide a specific strategy for preservation of open space, expansion of recreational opportunities, both passive and active, and development of a trails network that provides meaningful connections and linkages to key destinations throughout the Town through alternative means of seasonal transportation. This planning effort represents an update to the 2007 Plan.

Multi-Year Town of Wilton Traffic Planning Study and Update

This study outlines a five-year plan to prioritize and generate estimate costs for potential short-term improvements recommended for 2005-2015. Fees for traffic mitigation, as outlined in the report, are projected to adequately cover identified improvement projects.

2005 Gavin Park Master Plan and 2015 Update

This plan has been continually updated and is primarily a design project that illustrates a full build-out of the remaining sections of Gavin Park. The suggested fields, courts and other improvements were based directly on input from Town residents. The Town updates the Master Plan on a continual basis.

2001 Wilton Wildlife and Open Space Plan

This document introduced the concept of open space protection and was focused on the fiscal implications and advantages of long-term preservation of land. The Plan went on to suggest optional methods for the general preservation of open space.

1998 Town of Wilton Multi-use Trail System Master Plan

The Master Plan provided an inventory and analysis of land use and circulation data, identified the opportunities and constraints for construction, outlined goals and objectives for a trail system, and mapped conceptual locations for trails, trailheads, parking areas, picnic areas, and signage. This document serves as the foundation for the trails section of this document.

Regional Plans

2006 Saratoga County Green Infrastructure Plan

Saratoga County completed and adopted a countywide open space plan that identifies and prioritizes an intact network of open space resources, trails, and natural resources linked together by conservation greenways.

2005 Open Space for Tomorrow: A Capital District Sprawl and Open Space Action Strategy

This document, prepared by the Open Space Institute (OSI), supports the open space preservation goals of Wilton. WWPP cites Wilton as a “high priority environment.” The priority habitat area also extends to the Saratoga Sand Plains Wildlife Management Area’s Karner Blue Butterfly Unit which overlaps part of the WWPP study area. The document also highlights the west side of Route 9 as a “high priority trail corridor” linked to the Saratoga Greenbelt Trail.

Statewide Plans

2014-2019 Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan

The Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP) is prepared periodically by the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation (OPRHP) to provide statewide policy direction and to fulfill the agency’s recreation and preservation mandate. The document is also used to guide the allocation of state and federal funds for recreation and open space projects. The direction for recreation in the state is guided by three overarching statewide initiatives, with associated goals and recommendations. These together respond to the current issues impacting the state’s natural, cultural and recreational resources. Initiatives include enhance and revitalize the state outdoor recreation system; improve connections between recreation, economics, sustainability, and healthy lifestyles; and strengthen the link between people, nature, recreation, and resource stewardship.

2014 New York State Open Space Conservation Plan

The Plan is an update and revision of the 2009 Plan, which identifies the types and locations of open space resources and provides various open space conservation tools and methods. The priorities of the Plan include promoting outdoor recreation; addressing climate change; ensuring clean water, air and land for a healthy public and vibrant economy; and protecting, using and conserving our natural resources and cultural heritage.

1.4 Public Outreach

The OSRPP is directly supported by public comments made during the development of the 2015 Town Comprehensive Plan and is closely associated with other recent open space preservation and recreation planning efforts. To oversee the 2020 update, the Town appointed an advisory committee consisting of

Town Board members, town officials and residents. They were instrumental in the plan development process including formulating strategic actions to achieve the desired results of permanent preservation of natural resources and unique features. The process for adoption of the updated OSRPP requires a pre-adoption public hearing to gather remaining comments regarding the actions suggested in the OSRPP.

1.5 Project Goals and Objectives

Goal 1 - Preserve Natural Resources

Objectives

Consistently and effectively utilize SEQRA, site plan, subdivision, zoning, the conservation subdivision process, and comply with the most recent State Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (SPDES) General Construction Permit requirements for stormwater management and pollution prevention to minimize impacts to sensitive natural resources

Goal 2 - Protect Open Spaces

Objective

Consistently and effectively utilize tools such as easements, tax abatements, transfer of development rights, purchase of development rights, incentives, and land purchases to preserve special open spaces.

Goal 3 - Balance Development and the Protection of Resources

Objectives

Review the Stream Corridor requirements and update as necessary to work toward protecting the integrity of natural stream systems to the maximum extent possible. Evaluate and identify methods of protecting the Town's watersheds and well fields through an overlay district or performance standards. Explore the feasibility of an improved application protocol for road salt and sand as well as alternatives. Encourage Best Management Practices for fertilizers and pesticides and waste removal associated with all types of property maintenance. Integrate trail considerations into site plan review process.

Goal 4 - Protect Scenic Vistas

Objectives

Identify and map significant scenic vistas from public corridors. Utilize visual overlay districts for highly sensitive areas such as the Palmerton Range. Adopt standards to address site layout/design, road setbacks, cut and fill, lighting, reflective glass, height, and billboards or cellular towers.

Goal 5 - Support Wilton Wildlife Preserve & Park and Its Mission

Objectives

Ensure that actions relating to land use at the local and regional levels are consistent with the goals of the Town and WWPP. Continue to coordinate with the WWPP regarding proposed projects in the vicinity of the park.

Goal 6 – Protect Wetlands

Objective

Evaluate potential methods to identify and protect unregulated wetlands, including vernal pools.

Goal 7 - Meet the Active and Passive Recreational Facility Needs of All Members of the Community

Objectives

Utilize input from the residents and accepted standards for the Town's population profile to identify areas that would be suitable as site for future recreational facilities. Monitor the finding of the acquisition, installation, and maintenance of identified facilities to ensure that public demand is met. Maximize the potential for recreation on county forest lands. Promote the development of open space and recreational opportunities for all age groups. Encourage development activities popular with young generations.

Goal 8 - Expand Trails Linkages and Connectivity

Objective

Use a variety of tools, incentives and regulations to acquire land for trails and to provide a greater connectivity throughout the town and Palmertown Range. Encourage the use of "greenways" wherever possible. Be active with partners to pursue the Palmertown Range Trail project. Approach the Town of Northumberland for information about how to potentially connect to the Champlain Canalway Trail at Hudson Crossing Park. Participate in future partnerships that look to develop a trail above the Saratoga County waterline.



Looking east from the Grant Cottage Scenic Overlook.

SECTION 2 COMMUNITY SETTING



2.1 Regional Context

The Town of Wilton is conveniently located in the north central area of Saratoga County between the Capital District and the Adirondack Park (see Figure 1, “Regional Location Map”). Sharing of a municipal border with the City of Saratoga Springs, Wilton is a highly desirable place to live. The geographic location affords convenient access to recreational opportunities, community services, employment centers and shopping.

One of the distinctive characteristics of Wilton is its relationship with the Saratoga Sand Plains Wildlife Management Area, a matrix of 700-acres of state lands on several separate parcels in the Towns of Wilton and Northumberland. Most of the acreage is in two contiguous parcels – Camp Saratoga and the Old Gick Farm – that lie east of the Northway, west of State Route 50 and south of Ballard Road.

2.2 Physical Characteristics

The Town of Wilton is comprised of 22,066 acres approximately 36 square miles in area. The landscape consists of generally flat to moderately sloping and rolling topography. The Palmertown Ridge, located to the northwest, is steeper in slope and provides vertical backdrop to flatlands in the central and southern sections of the Town (see Figure 2, “Land Use Map”). The rural, pastoral nature of the northern half of Wilton is a characteristic that many residents credit for the Town’s celebrated quality of life.

Surface water features include lakes, ponds, and streams, many of which originate in the Palmertown Ridge. Two of the largest surface area water bodies in Wilton are Loughberry Lake (partially), which is a public water supply for the city of Saratoga Springs in the southwest, and Lake Elizabeth in the central portion of the Town. Scout Pond, also known as Deegan Pond, is a popular fishing location at Camp Saratoga. The prominent streams include the Snook Kill, Little Snook Kill, Deegan Brook, Bog Meadow Brook, the Little Snook Kill tributary, and various tributaries and sub-tributaries to Loughberry Lake. Except for the Little Snook Kill tributary, all the streams listed above are classified trout streams by the NYS DEC. Fishing is allowed in the Snook Kill due to NYS DEC Fishing Rights Easements. Loughberry Lake cannot be utilized for recreation because of its use as a water supply. The privately owned McGregor Links golf course is a valued recreation resource within the center of Town. It is worth noting that the lands on which the golf course is located will remain open space in perpetuity under an agreement related to the Greens at McGregor Planned Unit Development District.

With a four-season climate and relatively uniform soil types which range from well-drained sandy soils to silt loam, the terrestrial areas support a varied range of wildlife and vegetation. The terrestrial environmental is comprised of forested and open meadows and grasslands.

Saratoga County manages four forest areas and the State of New York owns several larger parcels in the northern section of the Town. The WWPP, located in the central eastern area of the Town with the Saratoga Sand Plains Wildlife Management Area and State Forest, has an ecology consisting of oak-pine savannah with occasional pine barren vernal ponds. It encompasses regionally significant wetland complexes with many vernal ponds. This area provides habitat for the federally and state endangered Karner Blue butterfly, the state-threatened Frosted Elfin butterfly and Blanding's Turtle, and special concern species eastern hognose snake, eastern Spadefoot toad, and blue-spotted salamander.

This physical setting provides the basis for a keen interest in an open space and recreation strategy that balances development and continued growth with long-term preservation of these natural features and settings.

Natural Resources

Scenic Vistas

Many of Wilton's corridors offer expansive views of the Town's natural resources. Wide views of the Town's open space, woodlands, and former farmlands can be seen along parts of US Route 9, Wilton-Gansevoort Road, Ballard Road, Northern Pines Road, Dimmick Road, and other rural roads. The Palmertown Range is visible to the west and views to the east display Vermont's Green Mountains. The rural nature of the Town is highly visible from these vistas and differentiates it from the denser residential and commercial centers of the town.

Ecosystems and Biodiversity

It is important to identify and understand the diversity of biological communities or "biodiversity" in the Town of Wilton as a basis for preservation and protection of the native species, and not allow new development to have a negative impact on the habitat of endangered or threatened species. Much of the ecologically sensitive habitat plant and animal species are found in the area east of the Northway in the Saratoga Sand Plains ecosystem where significant large and undisturbed parcels remain. Development of this land could alter existing wildlife habitat areas and their travel corridors without the inclusion of open space subdivisions in development proposals.

Existing within the framework of this open space is a diverse population of varying wildlife and vegetative species that complete a generally open and serene natural setting. The Town is home to a wide variety of plants, mammals, birds, reptiles, insects, and amphibians. Mammals include white-tailed deer, red fox, raccoons, woodchucks, red and gray squirrels, chipmunks, fisher, beavers, otters, muskrats, and porcupine that have been found primarily in the undeveloped and rural areas of the town. Birds include wild turkey, ruffed grouse, a variety of songbirds, hawks, owls, and the northern mockingbird. In marshes, wetlands or other water areas, wood ducks, mallards, black ducks, geese, herons, kingfishers, and osprey are plentiful. Reptiles and amphibians include spotted salamanders, gray tree frogs, spring peepers, garter snakes, and painted and snapping turtles. Insects of note are the endangered Karner Blue butterfly, the threatened Frosted Elfin butterfly, and Perseus Duskywing.

A search of the New York Natural Heritage database identifies three (3) wildlife species with sensitive status may be found within the Town. These include the Blanding's Turtle, listed as threatened; the

Frosted Elfin, listed as threatened; and the Karner blue butterfly, listed as endangered. One classification of forest was noted as unlisted, the Hemlock-northern hardwood forest. The US Fish and Wildlife has also identified the presence of the Karner Blue butterfly as an endangered species and the federally listed endangered Indiana bat may be present as well.



Karner Blue Butterfly

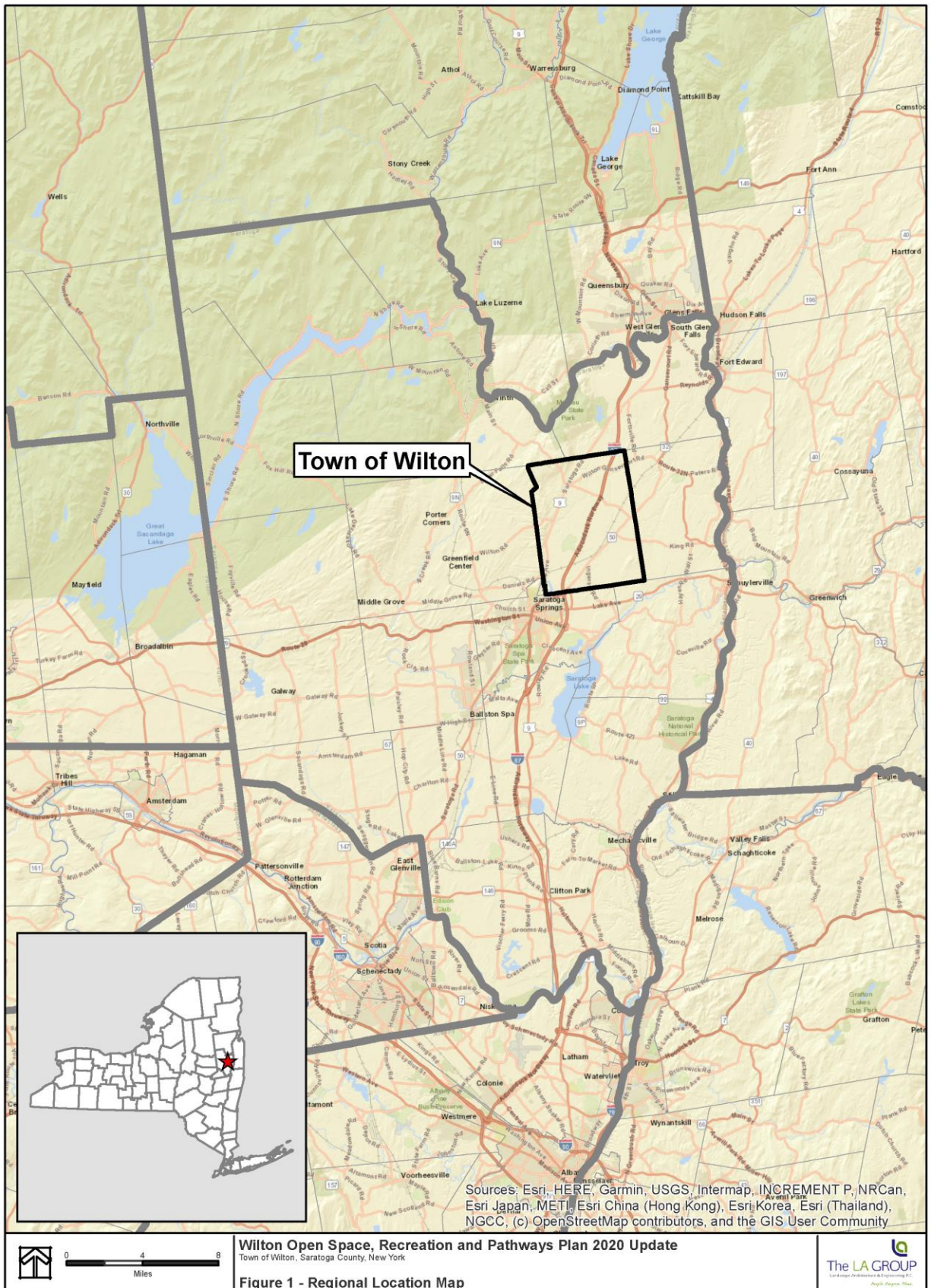


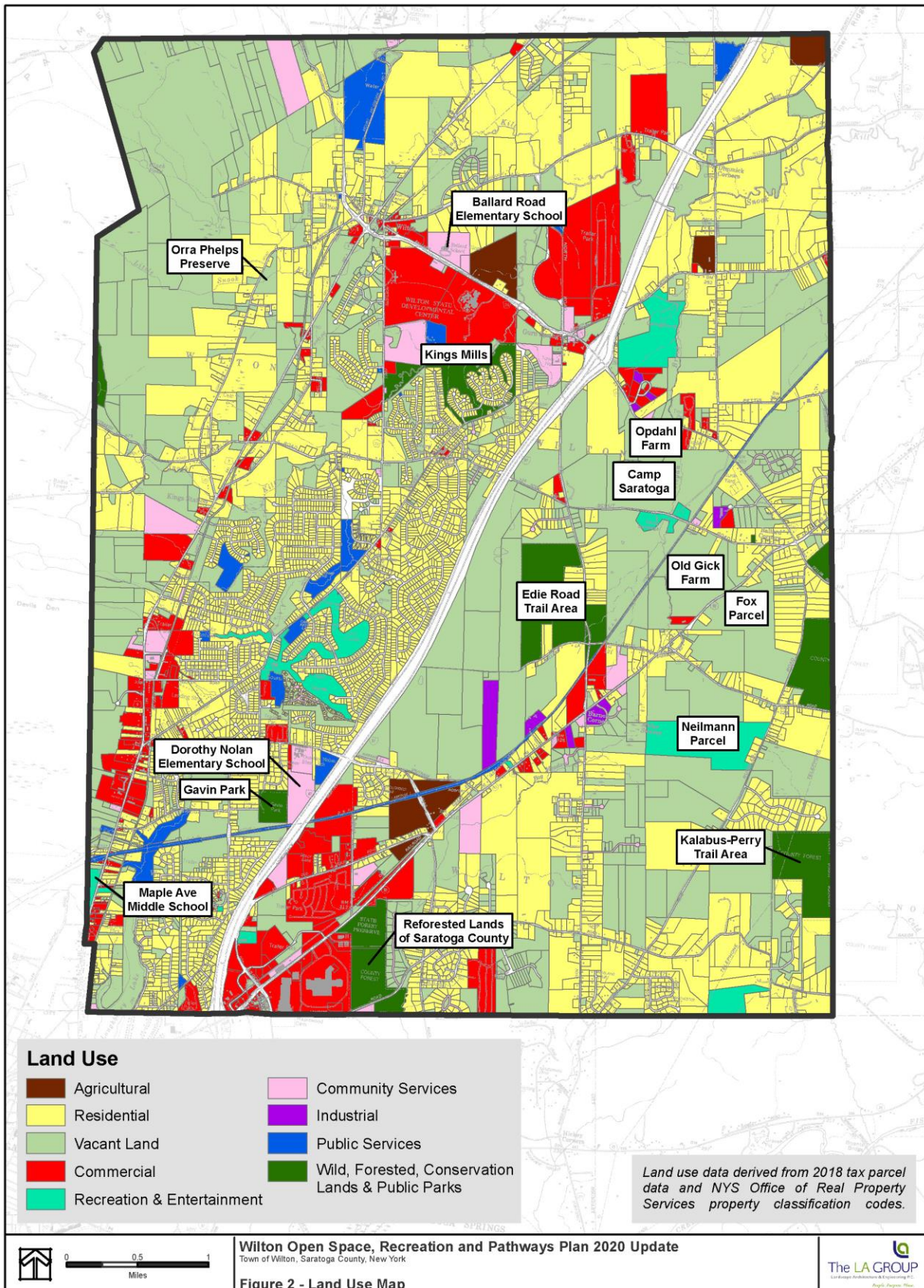
Blanding's Turtle

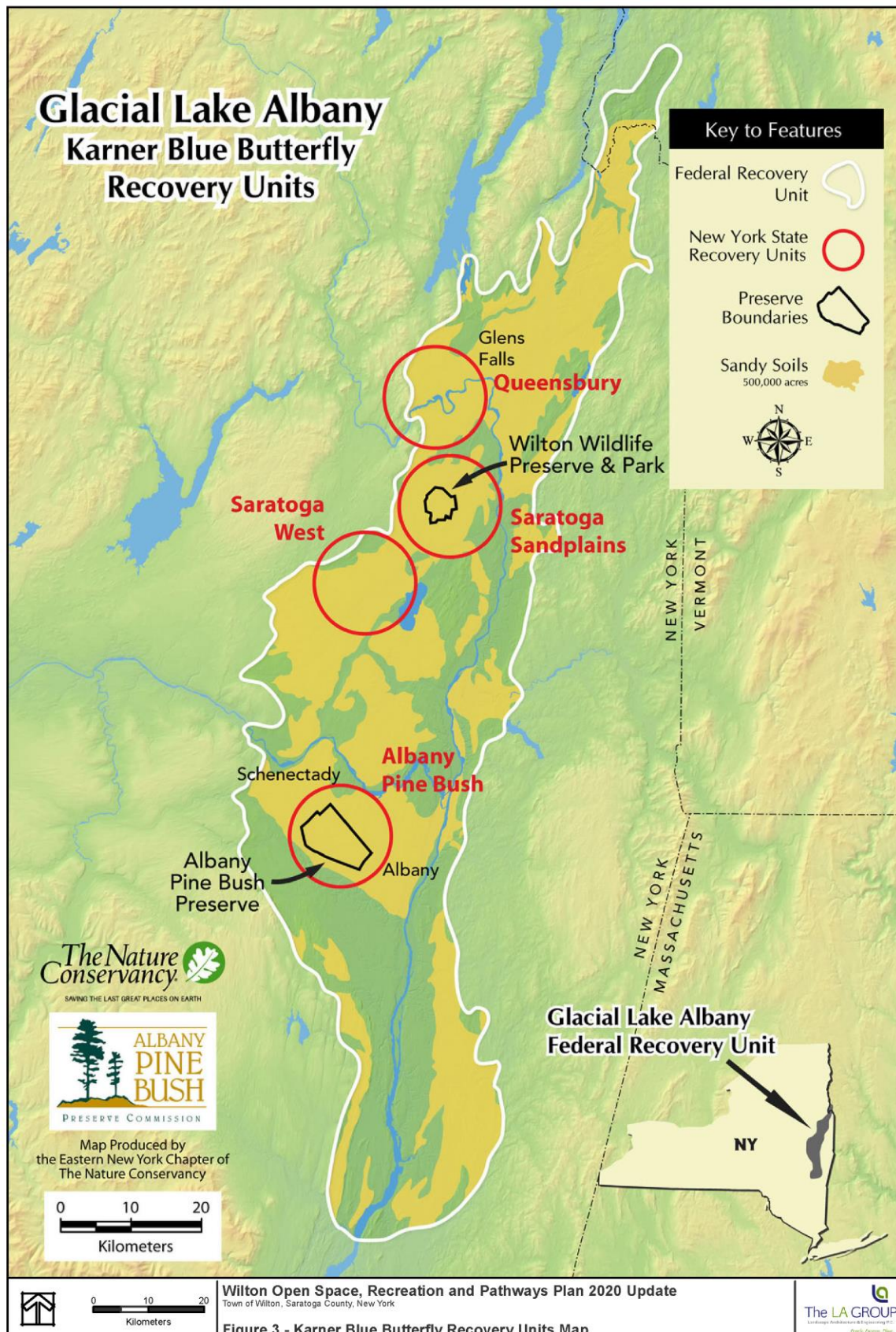
The vegetation of the Town of Wilton is typical of most communities in Saratoga County, featuring a combination of farmed areas, fields, wetlands, and forested or re-forested areas, and residential areas dominated by lawns. In the Saratoga Sand Plains, there is an on-going habitat restoration program that is focused on expanding meadow habitats that have a significant amount of wild blue lupine and little blue stem grass as a prominent vegetation type. Protecting these habitats and the associated wildlife are basic contributors to the value of preserving open space.

Another successful planning initiative has been setting aside valuable habitat and ecological areas in a large expanse of land to the east of the Northway. Through a cooperative effort among the State of New York, Saratoga County, the Town of Wilton, and The Nature Conservancy, a goal was established to preserve up to 3,000 acres of land. WWPP is a non-profit [501(c)(3)] organization that partners with these government landowners. Some of the more important are the oak-pine savannah and the pine barren vernal pools. It encompasses regionally and ecologically significant wetland complexes with many vernal ponds, some of which are critically important to the threatened Blanding's Turtle. The Saratoga Sandplains provides habitat for the federally and state endangered Karner Blue butterfly, the state-threatened Frosted Elfin butterfly and Blanding's Turtle, and special concern species Eastern hognose snake, Eastern spadefoot toad, and blue-spotted salamander. Over 2,400 acres are currently protected within the Saratoga Sandplains. The Nature Conservancy no longer has an active presence in Wilton.

The primary objective of the WWPP is to cooperate with the state in their protection of the habitat of the endangered Karner Blue butterfly and to provide recreational and educational experiences. The WWPP is situated on an area that was once the basin of a large glacial lake, evident by the very sandy soils and dunes. As such, this area presents geologic qualities different from the western part of the town. These plants and trees include pitch pine, little bluestem grass, and wild blue lupine. The WWPP consists of public and private lands designed to manage and sustain the proper ecosystem of the Karner Blue butterfly, and encourage the growth of wild blue lupine, an important food species for the Karner Blue caterpillar. Blue lupine requires specific conditions to grow especially open field areas.

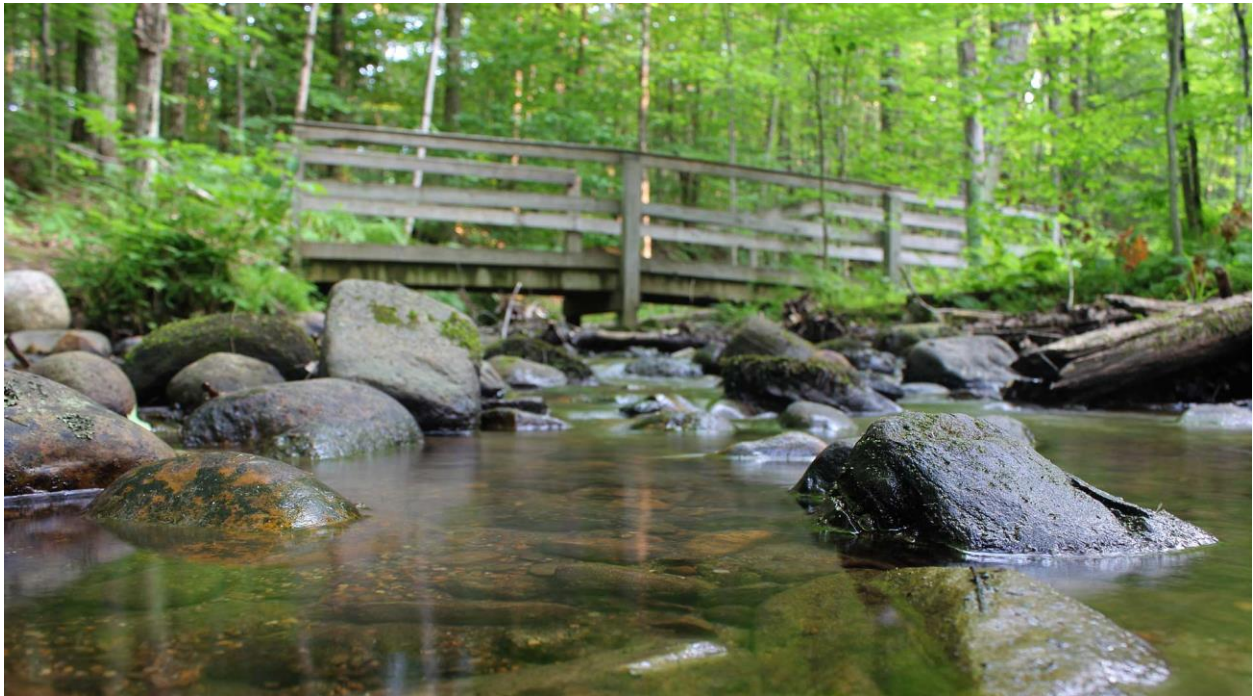






Water Resources

The most notable water resource in the Town of Wilton is the Snook Kill. The Snook Kill originates at Perry's Pond near Northern Pines Road in the Town of Greenfield and flows in a northeasterly direction through the Town of Moreau where it flows into the Hudson River. The terrain around the Snook Kill features deep ravines that have served as a natural barrier for the waterway. Several small streams flow into the Snook Kill, including the Little Snook Kill and Delegan Brook. Other open surface waters in the Town include Lake Elizabeth, located adjacent to Worth Road, and Loughberry Lake located near the southwestern border of the Town of Saratoga and City of Saratoga Springs. Several ponds and designated wetlands areas exist throughout the Town especially in the area east of the Northway. There are approximately 2,910 acres of wetlands representing nearly 7.5 percent of the Town. Both federally listed, and New York State wetlands exist with many located along stream corridors and waterways. Refer to Figure 4, "Sensitive Environmental Areas Map," for locations of water resources in the Town.



One of the many feeder streams to the Snook Kill in Wilton.

Loughberry Lake is a critical resource since it serves as the primary water supply and as a visual gateway feature for the City of Saratoga Springs along the Route 50 corridor. Although approximately two-thirds of Loughberry Lake is in the Town, Saratoga Springs owns the lands on the bottom of the lake as well as the entire shoreline. The Town protects the lake by requiring a critical environmental review of any development along the shoreline. It abides by the City of Saratoga Springs's Watershed Rules and Regulations, which do not permit recreational use of the lake or its shoreline. In the future, should the City change these requirements, there may be an opportunity to utilize portions of the buffer area or a part of the lake for swimming, fishing and other non-motorized recreational uses.

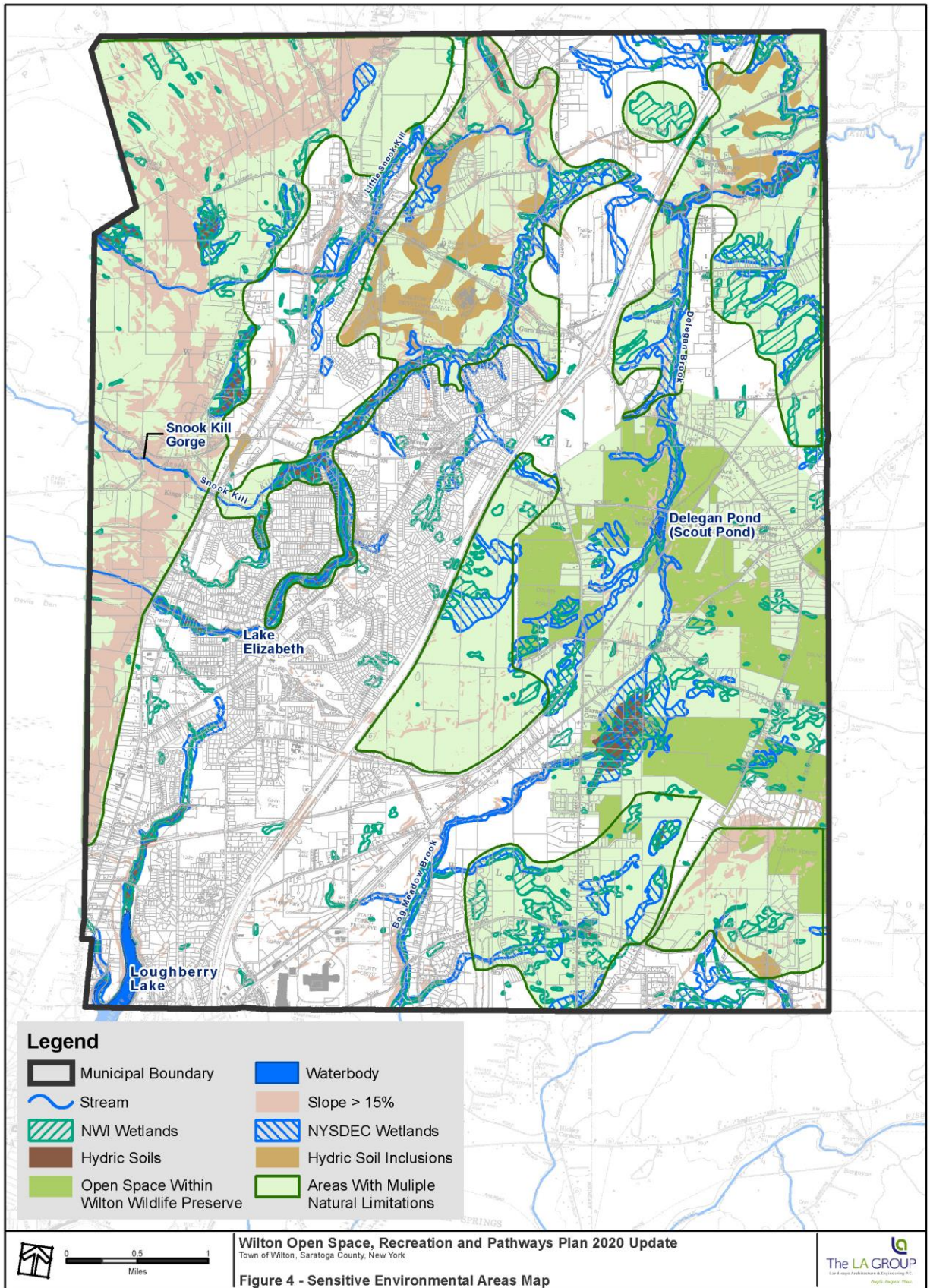
To protect the stream courses and waterways, the existing Town Zoning Code requires a buffer of non-disturbance of various widths depending on grade and measured from the center of the stream course or water body. This standard applies to the Snook Kill, Little Snook Kill, Delegan Brook, Bog Meadow

Brook, and the tributaries leading to Lake Elizabeth and Loughberry Lake, as well as the water bodies themselves.

Another water resource of ecological importance are vernal pools. A vernal pool is a confined basin with no outlet stream where water stands on average for several weeks, usually in the spring and early summer. During periods when water collects, these small, intermittent pools serve as breeding and feeding sites for several amphibian species such as salamanders and frogs. Vernal pools are difficult to identify during their drier seasons of the year and are therefore difficult to protect. Because they may be visible only during the spring months, they are often not taken into consideration during the review and permitting process. However, the data relating to areas of terrain with 15 percent or greater slope reveals “pockets” of steep slopes throughout Wilton, especially in the southeast quadrant of the Town (see Figure 4). The presence of these pockets may be indicators of potential sites for vernal pools and may require further review during a subdivision or site plan review process. Land use decisions that permit the laying of roads, tree cutting, and building construction in these areas may have a significant adverse impact on the biological integrity of vernal pools.



Dock at Delegan Pond in Camp Saratoga.



Historic and Cultural Resources

The Town of Wilton was founded in 1818. The area where the Wilton-Gansevoort Road meets Ballard Road and near the intersection of Parkhurst and Woodard Roads is the original settlement area of Palmertown. It also forms the original hamlet of Wilton and still features many of the original buildings. The Town features over one hundred buildings that are still intact and were homes to some of the Town's early founders, as well as its residents during the 19th century. According to "Saratoga County Communities: An Historic Perspective," the Town of Wilton was settled between the French and Indian War and Revolutionary War when the area was known as Palmertown.

Prior to European settlers, Indians farmed the land and hunted in the vast forests, especially in the western part of the Town, along the Palmertown Range. After the Revolutionary War, the families of Stiles, King, Phillip, Laing, Perry, Dimmick, Johnson and McGregor moved into the area, and many of their original homesteads are still intact. Also, many of the small hamlets in the Town still feature the names of the founders, such as King's Station, Stiles Corners, Dimmicks Corners, Emerson's Corners, and Mount McGregor.

From the original Native American settlements to modern times, the Town of Wilton has developed primarily around its travel corridors. The north-south passageway from Saratoga Springs to Glens Falls slowly began to develop and the Wilton Hamlet featured many businesses such as the Wilton hotel, stores, a blacksmith, wagon shop, Wilton Academy, and several homes. The completion of the Adirondack Northway had a profound impact on the businesses along Route 9, and today commercial growth is centered on the two Northway exits within the Town, Exits 15 and 16. Although some of the buildings have been identified and are still intact, many other buildings and sites have been burned, torn down, or are in disrepair. Future consideration of the historic value of the remaining significant buildings and sites as catalogued by the Town Historian is recommended during development review.



Grant Cottage

State Historic Site: Final home of Ulysses S. Grant, Commanding General of the Union Army during the Civil War and 18th President of the United States.

Wilton recently enacted Zoning Provision 129-173 Historic Provisions. This new law states that in cases where the Town Historian has identified a building or site as a historically significant feature, the Town Historian be given a 30-day notice for the opportunity to review and catalogue the site for inventory purposes. This will ensure that historic sites and buildings are appropriately evaluated and photographed before a building permit is granted, and, if plausible, the building be preserved in some fashion, or portions of the building preserved for possible display by the Wilton Heritage Museum. Consideration should be given to strengthening Wilton's code to preserve the community's historic structures and places.

Agricultural Spaces

Historically, rural, open space was the dominant land use in the Town of Wilton. However, there are now only a few active farming areas and land development has significantly impacted the extent of open space in the town. Most of the active farms are scattered throughout the Town with some concentration in the northeast corner of the Town.

The 2015 Inventory and Analysis performed by the Town of Wilton determined that agricultural lands and farms in the Town of Wilton totaled 220 acres, or 1 percent of the total Town acreage. This represents a substantial change from 2007 statistics that reported 5% of the land as agricultural. Currently, Saratoga PLAN, a land trust operating in Saratoga County, is conducting a field analysis to clarify the amount and types of active agricultural uses in the Town of Wilton. Although the results are incomplete, they provide some insight on the existing stock of agricultural lands and farms.



The Tooker Farm: 89 acres Protected by Purchase of Development Rights through Saratoga PLAN

Saratoga PLAN has preliminarily identified 43 parcels totaling over 1,916 acres with agricultural lands or farms in the Town. The average acreage per parcel is nearly 45 acres. Acreage calculations included the entirety of the parcels considered despite the uses being contained to only a portion of each property. Further site assessments are recommended to determine the scale of agricultural activities and verify the formal nature of the use.

The agricultural uses and farms listed consist of poultry farms, horse farms and stables, hobby farms, farm-raised meats, dairy farms, and field crop areas. These places represent an important component to the economy of Saratoga County, offer scenic farm landscapes and provide a sense of place.

Due to the mixed rural and suburban character of the Town, it may be valuable for the Town and its partners to divide existing agricultural activities between formal and informal uses. Formal uses include commercial businesses activities which are considered part of the formal economy. Informal uses involve properties whose primary uses are private residential or recreational but also include unofficial agricultural activities considered part of the informal economy. For informal uses, the scale of agricultural activities and infrastructure is a significant determinant in whether the property owner is producing enough goods and services to be defined as a business enterprise.

Unless specific protections and alternative opportunities for landowners are presented, continued loss of farmland, especially formal uses, is anticipated.

2.3 Growth and Development Patterns

The Town of Wilton continues to grow steadily. From its roots as a rural farming community in 1950 with a population of less than 1,500 people prior to the construction of the Adirondack Northway, Wilton has grown to its present status as a dynamic, suburban community with numerous business operations and an estimated population of nearly 17,000. Recent population trends indicate that Wilton will continue to attract new residents and businesses. The population more than doubled in the 30-year

period between 1980-2010 and is estimated to have increased by 650 people between 2010-2017 (3.8%) (See Table 1)

Table 1 Total Population – Town of Wilton & Saratoga County (1980-2017)									
Town of Wilton					Saratoga County				
1980	1990	2000	2010	2020*	1980	1990	2000	2010	2020*
7,221	10,623	12,511	16,173	17,909	153,759	181,276	200,626	217,264	235,358

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

*CDRPC Projections

According to population statistics from the 2010 Census, the percentage of persons under 20 years old (school-aged children) shifted slightly lower between 2000 and 2010. This change reflects a higher percentage of residents who are 65 or older (see Tables 2 and 3).

Table 2 Population Percentage by Age – Town of Wilton & Saratoga County (2000-2017)								
Town of Wilton					Saratoga County			
	Under 20 Years	20-35 Years	35-65 Years	65+ Years	Under 20 Years	20-35 Years	35-65 Years	65+ Years
2000	31.3%	16.6%	44.2%	7.9%	27.6%	19.1%	41.9%	11.5%
2010	27.0%	14.5%	46.2%	12.3%	25.8%	16.7%	44.4%	13.1%
2017	25.4%	16.8%	43.6%	14.3%	23.4%	17.7%	42.5%	16.5%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

Table 3 Projected Population Percentage by Age – Town of Wilton & Saratoga County (2020-2050)								
Town of Wilton					Saratoga County			
	Under 25 Years	25-44 Years	45-64 Years	65+ Years	Under 24 Years	25-44 Years	45-64 Years	65+ Years
2020	28.8%	23.1%	29.6%	18.4%	28.4%	23.9%	29.3%	18.5%
2030	27.2%	23.2%	25.5%	24.2%	27.1%	24.3%	25.2%	23.4%
2040	26.7%	22.5%	25.4%	25.3%	26.8%	24.0%	25.0%	24.2%
2050	26.0%	23.1%	27.0%	23.9%	27.0%	23.9%	26.6%	22.5%

Source: U.S. Dept. of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, & CDRPC Projections

One outgrowth of this population dynamic is an increased demand for recreation facilities to accommodate active and passive forms of recreation for all age groups. Examples include opportunities for on-road and off-road bicycling, trail hiking, additional playing fields and courts, and additional playgrounds and unstructured open space.

According to the 2015 Town of Wilton Comprehensive Plan, the largest single active land use in the Town is residential (more land identified as vacant or unused). The most intense area of residential development lies between US Route 9 and the Northway south of Ballard Road with some recent developments shifting the line of development northward a bit. This area consists of suburban style development in subdivisions of varying sizes. Less intense residential development is scattered throughout the remainder of the town. This development consists of small subdivisions and individual lots.

2.4 Environmental and Land Use Regulations

Open space conservation is addressed in the adopted conservation subdivision law. This provision makes it required for developers to utilize a conservation approach when subdividing lands of ten (10) or more lots. The new subdivision regulatory process will provide a set aside for open space lands, water bodies, wetlands, sensitive habitat areas, unique environmental settings, steep slopes, and other components of subdivision review. Open space along either side of the Northway is protected from development through the Northway Corridor Overlay District (NCOD). Another mechanism for preservation is through Timber, Soil and Stream Regulations. These regulations require site plan approval and standards for timber harvesting, vegetation cutting, soil disturbance, and stream resource protection. While existing standards for drainage, wetlands, and stream protection are adequate, land clearing and timber harvesting regulations should be updated.

SECTION 3 OPEN SPACE, RECREATION AND PATHWAYS



3.1 Open Space Resources

Open space is defined by the Zoning Code as “an area of land not developed with residential, industrial or commercial structures and used for recreation, agriculture, forestry or left in its natural state”.

Lands within Wilton Wildlife Preserve and Park, Inc (WWPP)

Over 2,400 acres of protected lands within the Saratoga Sand Plains Wildlife Management Area are an important part of the Town’s open spaces. In 2003 the Town of Wilton, The Nature Conservancy, NYS DEC and the WWPP became partners in conservation with the protection of less than 5 acres of Karner Blue butterfly habitat in the Saratoga Sand Plains Wildlife Management Area. This area is also part of the Glacial Lake Albany Recovery Unit and now supports the largest Karner Blue butterfly population in the eastern United States. The success of increasing this federally endangered species from 1,000 butterflies to 20,000 in roughly 10 years is directly due to the restoration of over 125 acres of habitat and the permanent protection of over 700 acres. The unique partnership worked towards a common goal to protect and manage these lands. A description of the partners and their roles is found in section 4.2.2.



Wild blue lupine (*Lupinus perennis*): A native plant to the Saratoga Sand Plains. Karner Blue butterflies are dependent on these plants for food. Scenes like this can be found throughout the Wilton Wildlife Preserve & Park.

WWPP is now a not-for-profit organization comprised of partner representatives and interested citizens. WWPP became established in 1996, incorporated in 1998, and a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization in 2001, in response to the work of The Nature Conservancy and the NYS DEC to identify and monitor populations of the endangered Karner Blue butterfly in the towns of Wilton and Northumberland. WWPP does not purchase and hold lands and utilized its partner, the Town of Wilton, to take an active role of land ownership with the initial purchase of a 1.1-acre parcel.

The Town's overall goal is to create a 3,000-acre preserve for the Karner Blue butterfly and a park for people. This is a community-based program with a focus on conservation, education and recreation. Saratoga County joined the partnership a few years later.

WWPP's role in the partnership is to:

- Protect and conserve significant lands of ecological and recreational value to the Karner Blue butterfly and other flora and fauna;
- Support DEC efforts to maintain and recover imperiled wildlife species like the state-threatened Frosted Elfin butterfly and Blanding's Turtle;
- Educate the general public, children, groups through programs and guided interpretive walks; and
- Offer and sponsor recreational opportunities.



Wilton Wildlife Preserve & Park: Visitors at a meadow overlook where Karner Blue butterfly can be seen. This is an example of how WWPP combines conservation, recreation and education.

WWPP's objectives are to protect open space resources, work with DEC on the protection and restoration of the endangered Karner Blue butterfly and provide members of the community with opportunities for outdoor recreation and environmental education.

WWPP and partners offer the following recreational elements within the study area:

- Nearly 20 miles of hiking trails for bird watching, nature photography, nature appreciation, trail running, dog walking and mountain biking;
- Winter groomed and ungroomed trails for cross-country skiing and snowshoeing;
- Public programs fostering nature and wildlife appreciation and environmental learning;
- Fishing at Deegan Pond and nearby streams;
- Hunting and trapping on state and county-owned lands;
- Public access to the historic Cornell Hill Fire Tower;
- Nearly 50-years of BOCES programs.

County Forests

There are approximately 1,132 acres of County Forest in the Town of Wilton. Five of the seven parcels exist inside the Saratoga Sand Plains Wildlife Management Area, and the other two are located just west of Wilton Mall and in the southeast corner of the Town. Saratoga County manages much of these lands for reforestation and public trails. These wide expanses of land provide important wildlife habitat and act as critical buffers to other environmentally sensitive lands.

Saratoga County owns 696.83 acres of County Forest on 10 parcels in three areas in the vicinity of Camp Saratoga (see Figure 7). The first area consists of 7 parcels on 497 acres. Two of these parcels (119.85 acres) are in the Town of Wilton. These are reforestation lands with numerous informal unmaintained trails throughout.

The second area is comprised of approximately 200 acres on 3 parcels. Saratoga County maintains a trail system off the west side of Edie Road. The "Edie Road Trail" contains approximately 2.4 miles along a

trail loop with several Habitat Conservation Zones and a small pond. These trails link Camp Saratoga to Bullard Lane and the new 38-acre town-owned parcel on the south side of Bullard Lane.

The third area trailhead is located off State Route 50 and the Northumberland trailhead is located at the end of Gailor Lane. This “Kalabus-Perry Trail” consists of two trail loops totaling approximately 3.5 miles on 246 acres. It straddles the Northumberland border and connects to the trail system in the Town of Wilton’s Neilmann parcel.



Kalabus-Perry Trail

There are several new trails on County Forest land along Edie Road and Bullard Lane (see Figure 8). There is public access from a parking lot on Edie Road just south of Scout Road and from Bullard Lane. As on other County parcels non-motorized vehicles are allowed and hunting is allowed in season. Long-term plans include a trail linkage from these trails to the Camp Saratoga parcel south of Scout Road. The Rotary Club of Wilton developed an interactive walking trail to promote opportunities for environmental education and outdoor recreation. This one-mile trail marks trees species and special natural features and manmade elements at Camp Saratoga.

There is no written policy regarding recreational use of County Forests, however, County Law Section 219 County Reforestation sets some parameters in this regard. Recreational uses permitted include "kindred" recreational uses. Hunting is permitted, however snowmobiling, 4-wheel vehicles and overnight camping are not permitted. Under agreements with the town of Wilton in 2003, no pre-existing uses may be extinguished on County Forests that were already part of the Saratoga Sand Plains Wildlife Management Area. County Forest parcels may be sold only through an act of the State Legislature. Present regulations call for DEC to exercise first refusal on any of these lands proposed for divestiture.

County Forests are selectively harvested approximately every 15 to 20 years and are accessed via existing logging roads. Individual sites have timber management plans that were developed in the mid-1980s. Wilton recently renewed a contract with Saratoga County to undertake habitat protection, plan and manage trail construction, and establish recreational uses on County Forests. Numerous opportunities for trail connections are possible through county forest, particularly the parcel along State Route 50 near the Wilton Mall.

Other Open Spaces

Open space preservation initiatives ensure that development in the remaining areas of the town vulnerable to development is sensitive to the scenic and unique character of the area.

Critical land known as the Fox Parcel was purchased by the State of New York in 2018. This was accomplished through a partnership by the WWPP, The Nature Conservancy and the Town of Wilton with a grant from the Saratoga County Open Space Protection Program. This parcel, located at Ruggles Road to the south east and Route 50 to the north west, has strategic importance for the management of Karner Blue butterfly habitats and a combination of sandy uplands and pine barren vernal ponds. The Fox Parcel represents a total of 157 acres – 89-acre original parcel purchased by The Nature

Conservancy plus a 68-acre parcel from the Frawley family purchased with a second County Open Space grant which extended the protected area to Ruggles Road.

Implementation of the conservation subdivision design process and attention to viewshed protection during site plan review is aiding the town in preserving locally important views such as the McGregor Fault, Palmertown Range, Pine Barrens, Snook Kill Gorge, and Kendrick Hill. This process has yielded numerous private, common areas of open space. Most of these lands is held in common by residents and is managed by a conservation easement, deed restriction, or homeowner's association. While these lands are not available to the public, they represent important preserved open space in private ownership.

There are many conservation easements that are held by various interest groups. Saratoga PLAN holds two of these easements including the Orra Phelps Preserve, an eighteen-acre preserve with a trailhead off Parkhurst Road. Saratoga PLAN also holds conservation easements to lands associated within the Mulberry Estates and Kings Mills open space subdivisions. These easements protect approximately twenty-five acres and ninety-seven acres, respectively.

Northway Corridor Overlay District, a 100-foot no-build area, provides a continuous linear green buffer between all development and the Northway. This natural corridor not only protects neighborhoods visually and from vehicle noise by providing a natural barrier from the Northway. The regulation does not allow for any activity within the buffer area.

3.2 Recreation Resources

Public Interest in Active and Passive Recreation

In recent years, the Town of Wilton has experienced significant growth primarily from families with young children. Consequently, the Town has come under increased demand for quality recreational facilities and playing fields, particularly for youth athletics. The Town responded accordingly by funding the development of a Master Plan for Gavin Park, the Town's active recreational park facility and by improving passive opportunities at Camp Saratoga. See Appendix B for a complete recreational inventory of Camp Saratoga.

Existing Resources

Wilton presently has two major town parks offering recreational opportunities. Gavin Park is designed for organized group sports and other active recreation. Camp Saratoga is used for passive recreation and environmental education and various programs provided by WWPP. The Town's resources are augmented by an estimated 2,400 acres of land owned by Saratoga County, and NYS DEC. Complementing these resources are the facilities owned by the Saratoga Springs School District at Dorothy Nolan Elementary School, Maple Avenue Middle School, and the Ballard Road Elementary School in the South Glens Falls School District.

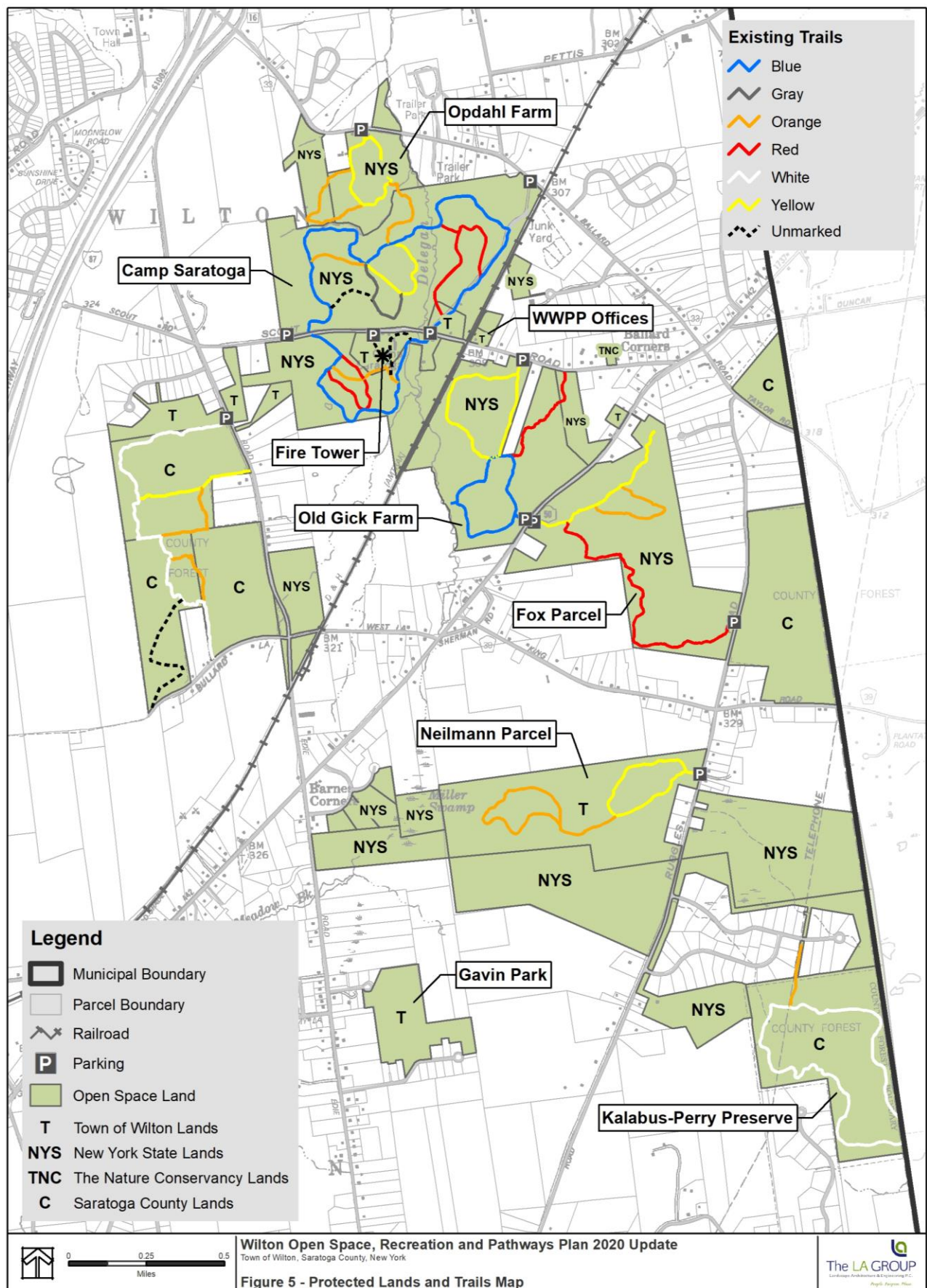
Ongoing Recreational Improvements

The Town of Wilton is continually exploring ways of incorporating new parklands at little or no direct cost to the residents. It is anticipated that some of the new lands devoted to public parklands will occur through negotiating with private developers. Future conservation design subdivisions and Planned Development District's will all have open space components that will lend themselves to the development of public elements such as trails and trail connections, playgrounds for common use, and

sports fields. A priority recommendation is the development of a set of forms, one of which can be used to inventory existing open space parcels for their recreation and environmental education potential, and the other to review potential open space lands using a fair and equal set of criteria.

A new contract with the Dorothy Nolan School for additional land recently annexed to Gavin Park for the shared use of all residents was approved. A master plan for the site was developed and the construction of new playing fields and satellite parking was completed.

The privately owned McGregor Links golf course is a valued recreation resource within the center of Town. It is worth noting that the lands on which the golf course is located will remain open space in perpetuity under an agreement related to the Greens at McGregor Planned Unit Development District.



3.3 Pathway and Trail Resources

Existing Conditions

The trail system envisions a town-wide series of trails to link open space areas, residential areas, points of interest, service providers, and commercial areas. The strategy relies on a long-term phased approach to piecing the links together through timely consideration during the development review process and efficient use of relevant state and federal transportation and funding programs.

There are many benefits to be gained from the development of trails throughout the Town. Bicycling, walking, and other non-motorized means of transportation are healthy, non-polluting and energy conserving forms of transportation, recreation, and physical fitness, and they do not require costly infrastructure to construct and maintain. Trails also facilitate use of alternative transportation, such as walking and biking. Encouraging alternative transportation use improves a community's overall transportation system by reducing the use of energy, reducing automobile traffic and congestion. In addition, roadway improvements to accommodate bikes, such as the addition of wider paved shoulders promotes additional safety for all users.



Sidewalks connect important places and provide an alternative means to move around Wilton.

A trail system can incorporate a combination of trails and linear parklands, on-road paths, sidewalks, and subdivision walkways. Natural corridors and systems, such as stream banks, can also be used to develop trails. Greenways along rail lines, public rights-of-way, power easements, and waterways produce educational, environmental, aesthetic, and recreational benefits.

The Town of Wilton continues to be in a “growth” mode. It is an appropriate time to incorporate natural corridors and trail systems into future development. Town officials continue to put trails and open spaces as priority planning initiatives as evident in the plans listed below:

- 1998 Town of Wilton Multi-Use Trail System Master Plan;
- 2001 Wilton Wildlife and Open Space Plan; and
- 2007, Wilton Open Space, Recreation and Trails Plan.

Table 4 indicates the type of ownership and acreages with trails throughout the Town. Refer to the Figure 8, “Existing and Future Pathways Map” for the types and locations of existing and proposed trails and trails.

Linkage and Connectivity

Linkages are connections to other trail systems, key transportation routes, and origins and destinations within or adjacent to the Town. Both natural and manmade linear features, such as stream corridors, abandoned rail lines, or on-road bike paths, can be used to connect open spaces. Opportunities to link Town trails to neighboring communities, such as Saratoga Springs, and nearby destinations, such as Moreau Lake State Park should be identified, and discussion among Wilton officials and the officials of

adjacent municipalities should be encouraged to facilitate development of links to other local trail systems.

Table 4 Open Space and Trails by Ownership				
<i>Landowner</i>	<i>Locations</i>	<i>Amount of Protected Lands (acres)</i>	<i>Recreational Trails (miles)</i>	<i>Trail Name</i>
The Nature Conservancy	Ballard Road	1	-	Opdahl Farm
NYS DEC	Camp Saratoga State Route 50	1,126	1.90 1.00 0.25	Old Gick Farm Fox Acres Farm Ingersoll Trail
Town of Wilton	Camp Saratoga Bullard Lane Traver Road	236	0.25 0.50 2.00 1.50 1.50 1.00	Delegan Pond Trail Bullard Lane Trail Witt Trails Kings Mill Trails Neilmann Trail Centennial Trail
School District	Gavin Park	-	1.00	Perimeter Trail
Saratoga County	County Forests	1,132	3.50 2.40 0.80	Kalabus-Perry Trail Edie Road Trail Louden Road Trail
Saratoga PLAN	Parkhurst Road	18	0.38	Orra Phelps Preserve
TOTALS		2,513	18.18	

Future Connection to Moreau State Park and Saratoga Spa State Park

Representatives of Wilton are members of the Palmertown Trail Committee, which is exploring how to connect Town trails to Moreau Lake State Park and historical resources, such as Grant Cottage State Historic Site on Mount McGregor. The State Park can be accessed from Wilton by way of the US Route 9 NYS Bike Route, and by Old Saratoga Road. The Palmertown Ridge Trail will connect Moreau Lake State Park with Saratoga Spa State Park and provide an important open space and recreational link.

The Palmertown Mountain Management Plan was prepared in January 2016 as an addendum to the Moreau Lake State Park Master Plan developed by OPRHP in 2006. Management recommendations include the recently acquired adjacent parcels of 1,031 acres which collectively form the Palmertown Range Addition to Moreau State Park: McGregor parcel (763 acres), Clothier parcel (60 acres), and Mackenzie parcel (208 acres). Goal #4 of the Recreation Goals and Strategies states, “Implement a system of non-motorized multi-use, sustainably designed trails that will connect to the trail system in the rest of the Moreau Lake State Park, to Grant Cottage, and to planned regional trails outside the park.”



View overlooking Moreau Lake.

The official Master Plan for the Palmertown Range addition completed in November 2015 and included in the Management Plan illustrates the State's intentions for the site. These include:

- Completion of the Main Connection Loop which connects Lake Bonita, Grant Cottage, Lake Ann, and the Ridge Trail;
- Connecting the Main Connection Loop to existing rock outcrops for views along Lake Bonita;
- Completion of the Waterfall Trail which will extend south along a tributary of Stony Brook and connect the Main Connection Loop to Lake Bonita;
- Completion of the Lake Bonita Loop trail around the western portion of Lake Bonita with a connection to the Palmertown Range Trail, Main Connection Loop, the Waterfall Trail, and an existing dock on Lake Bonita;
- Addition of a Maintenance Access at Wilton Mountain Road to the Lake Bonita Loop;
- Continuing the Lake Anne trail to connect to Lake Bonita;
- Completion of an access trail between Grant Cottage to Lake Ann; and
- Connecting the Eastern Ridge Trail to the Lake Ann Trail with a new trail through the Mackenzie parcel.

With additional partners, a trail is envisioned to run 13 miles south along the top of the Palmertown Ridge, through the Mount McGregor parcel and connect with Wilton trails. Ultimately this trail system would connect to the Saratoga Greenbelt Trail, Railroad Run, Saratoga Spa State Park, and the Zim Smith Trail.

Future Trail Connections

Champlain Canalway Trail

The actual connection to the Champlain Canalway Trail is east through Northumberland to Hudson Crossing Park and the Dix Bridge where it crosses into Washington County, continues north on the east side of the Hudson River until reaching the Village of Fort Edward where it crosses again and continues north on the west side of the river.

Town of Greenfield

Although there are no known trails from Greenfield that could potentially connect with Wilton trails at this time, there are some roads and rights-of-way that could serve that purpose. These are: Daniels Road; Cohen Road; Clothier Road; Bloomfield Road; Woodard Road; and The Delaware & Hudson railroad right-of-way.

The 2018 Southern Palmertown Conservation & Recreation Plan completed by Saratoga PLAN and OSI in with assistance from a consultant team, recommends the development of hiking trails connecting Moreau Lake State Park to Lincoln Mountain State Forest and the Daniels Road State Forest in Greenfield. The addition of the former site of Mount McGregor prison to Moreau State Park in 2015 has increased the feasibility of this proposal. The Town has indicated that he is interested in pursuing this and other conservation efforts but will only proceed with significant local support and input throughout the process.

Saratoga Greenbelt

The Saratoga Greenbelt Trail is a 24-mile network of trails that upon completion will form a continuous loop throughout the City of Saratoga Springs. A key consideration in the design of the trail is compatibility and linkage to existing trails to connect the city's neighborhoods with the downtown business district and key destinations. A small portion of the trail is envisioned to come north up Maple

Avenue to Daniels Road where it turns west. Additional connections are proposed with the City of Saratoga Springs at the Exit 15 area.

Saratoga County Waterline

The County waterline from the Hudson River in the Town of Moreau provides a potential future opportunity for an off-road trail along Route 9 that would connect Moreau State Park with the Town of Wilton and all trail points south. Presently the rights above the water line have not been purchased and there is no ability to utilize the corridor for trail purposes.