

Audubon pilot program in Clifton Park moves forward

By Alison Heaphy

The open space planning process in the Town of Clifton Park in Saratoga County continues to progress. Audubon is assisting Clifton Park in the development and implementation of an open space plan as part of their smart growth pilot program (see Fall 2000 Audubon Advocate.)

According to town supervisor Phil Barrett, "The Town of Clifton Park welcomes the assistance of Audubon New York and we look forward to an open space plan that preserves the quality of life, which makes our community attractive to residents."

On February 5, 2001, at the invitation of supervisor Barrett, Alison Heaphy, Audubon's director of land use policy, gave a presentation to the town board. Ms. Heaphy highlighted the benefits of open space planning and the process for developing an open space plan that will have support from the community.

Heaphy emphasized the importance of community and stakeholder participation in the process, and the need to evaluate the economic consequences of different open space preservation and development scenarios. She used the example of the Town of Pittsford in Monroe County, which recently underwent a similar open space process. This resulted in community support for selling nearly \$10 million in bonds to buy development rights to preserve seven farms.

In addition to Ms. Heaphy's presentation, supervisor Barrett announced the formation of an open space committee, which includes a broad representation of community stakeholders. Interests represented include farm owners, conservation and open space advocates, recreation and trail supporters,



Town of Clifton Park

The Vischer Ferry Preserve in Clifton Park is an Important Bird Area.

homebuilders, business leaders, neighborhood associations and school and town officials. David Miller, town resident and executive director of Audubon New York, and James Ramono, former

Planning Board member were named co-chairs. Audubon will help staff this committee, as well as continue to work with the town planner on open space mapping and inventory issues.

Governor highlights Quality Communities in State of the State

By Alison Heaphy

Governor Pataki's recent annual State of the State message gave hints at major elements to be included in his Quality Communities Report, which is scheduled for release by January 31, 2001. Brownfields, superfund, farmland and open space issues were all mentioned by Governor Pataki as part of the Quality Communities initiative, to foster economic and community development and at the same time protecting the environment.

This year, in his State of the State Address, Governor Pataki said, "At every one of the regional roundtables convened by the Lieutenant Governor, local officials and business leaders spoke passionately about the lost opportunities that burden their communities in the form of abandoned brownfields." In order to reclaim these brownfields, Governor Pataki announced a package of initiatives to give state tax credits for brownfields redevelopment and to give local assistance for redevelopment.

In addition to incentives for brownfields redevelopment, Governor Pataki highlighted the need to reauthorize and reform the state's superfund program, which cleans up the most seriously contaminated, abandoned sites. The brownfields program as well

as the superfund initiative are key elements to removing development pressure from our farms and open spaces, as well as to returning valuable property back to the tax rolls of older communities.

To help preserve valuable farmland, which in some areas in New York state is being rapidly lost to development, Governor Pataki announced a series of tax credits for farmers and his continued commitment to include New York in the Dairy Compact. As well, he announced record funding for open space protection, the details of which can be found on page 11.

Third annual Smart Growth Conference set for April 2001

By Alison Heaphy

Audubon New York recently announced that their third annual Smart Growth Conference will take place April 23, 2001, at the Empire State Plaza in Albany

Following up on the successes of previous conferences, this conference will highlight Governor Pataki's Quality Communities Report. Audubon will invite speakers from New York State's Administration, Assembly and Senate, as well as local elected officials to comment on the report.

Workshops based on the major

categories in the report will also give conference attendees the opportunity to directly participate in reviewing the report's recommendations and future steps.

In addition, the conference will focus on private sector efforts to promote smart growth development and the importance of collaborative community planning and regional perspectives.

For up-to-date information on the conference agenda and speakers, please visit our website at <http://ny.audubon.org> or contact Alison Heaphy at (518) 869-9731.

Second Annual Smart Growth Conference Proceedings now available...

To order, call (518) 869-9731 and send \$5 for postage and handling to: Audubon New York, 200 Trillium Lane, Albany, NY 12203, Attn.: Smart growth proceedings.

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