

Creating A Town Vision In Clifton Park: Clifton Park Landowners Respond To An Open Space Survey In Record Numbers!

By Carole Nemore

THE TOWN OF CLIFTON PARK'S Open Space Committee, one of Audubon's Smart Growth pilot projects, has launched one of the most comprehensive public involvement programs in the region. The committee, in addition to completing a natural resources inventory, made public presentations on the plan, hosted focus group meetings and organized an all-day design charrette (an open space planning workshop) to get people involved. Audubon New York produced a video for the project and local news conferences were held to spread the work on the goals of the program. Apparently, these efforts have successfully increased the public's awareness and interest to a level far surpassing the committee's own expectations.

Last November the Open Space Committee sent questionnaires to approximately 12,000 landowners including residents, farmers, and commercial and industrial owners. About 3,000 responses were returned or more than a 25 percent rate of return overall. Typically, questionnaires have 3 to 5 percent rates of return.

"The overwhelming response indicates that the public really cares about how their community grows and that they want to see open space protected and used

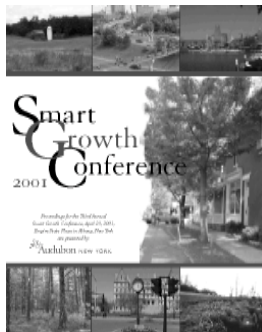
wisely," said an elated David J. Miller, executive director of Audubon New York and as a resident of the town, co-chair of the Open Space Committee. Audubon New York is currently tallying the survey data for analysis and presentation to the town board in March.

In January, the town convened three separate focused discussion workshops with special interest groups—agricultural and large landowners; developers and builders; and environmental, civic, cultural, and parks and recreation groups.

"After extensive community outreach, including informational meetings, printed and video materials, editorials and news articles, the survey and workshops; the public was well prepared to participate in community design charrette on January 19th," said Miller.

Based on all the input from the community, the committee will draft an open space plan and then hold public hearings on it in May and June. Results from these activities will be reviewed over the summer and a final draft will be presented to the Town Board in fall 2002 for adoption. For more information, contact Jason Kemper at the Town of Clifton Park Planning Department at (518) 371-6651.

Conference Proceedings Now Available



THE PROCEEDINGS of the 2001 Smart Growth conference held in Albany last Spring is now available to the public from Audubon New York. This conference focused on the collaborative nature of Smart Growth.

Lt. Governor Mary Donohue began by recognizing the collaboration of the

members of the Quality Communities Task Force and the Smart Growth working group, a consortium of non-governmental organizations. Many of the Quality Communities recommendations focus on improving the collaboration among state programs, and for state agencies to strengthen their relationships and coordination with local governments. The Department of Transportation (DOT) for example, has created a "context sensitive solutions team" to help them develop design options in conjunction with the community.

Tony Nelessen, the luncheon keynote speaker, urged communities to try an "envisioning process" based on the axiom that a picture is worth a thousand words. During the process people are asked to describe the present, then they are asked to describe or visually imagine their community in the future in five year intervals out to

sixty years. Using an extensive library of photographic images and photo simulations of alternative designs, people can develop a heightened awareness and ability to articulate how they want their communities to look.

The Task Force found that communities were not aware of their own internal such as local experts and local resources that could be utilized to build on community Smart Growth efforts. The proceedings provide information on innovative planning ideas and collaboration techniques for any community embarking on a Smart Growth plan or project.

To order the 2001 report send \$5 for postage and handling to: Audubon New York, 200 Trillium Lane, Albany, NY 12203; attn: Smart Growth proceedings. Proceedings are also available online at <http://ny.audubon.org>.

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DID YOU KNOW?

By Jane E.S. Sokolow

ANTS can carry 10 times their body weight.

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RUFFED GROUSE survive cold winter nights by diving into snow banks to keep warm. The air trapped in the snow acts like insulation to keep the birds warm.

The trunk of an **ELEPHANT** has no bone but 40,000 muscles.

The plant with the largest leaves is a kind of **PALM TREE** called raffia (RAF-ee-uh). It has leaves that are up to 65 feet long. That's about as long as two school buses parked end to end!

OWLS can turn their heads 180 degrees.

RACCOONS are found only in North America.

Jane E.S. Sokolow is a science writing consultant. She currently works with the New York City Parks and Recreation Department and has worked with American Museum of Natural History, Audubon New York and the National Audubon Society.

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