

Room Enough for Both:

Planning for Affordable Housing and Conservation *Together*

Special summary meeting | March 26, 2026



Hudson Valley Alliance for Housing & Conservation

Healthy communities need abundant, affordable housing **and** protected land for clean water, food production, and climate resilience...

But, too often they're seen as mutually exclusive or opposed.

- Collaborative Projects
- Municipal Engagement
- Policy Solutions
- Communicating Differently



About the project

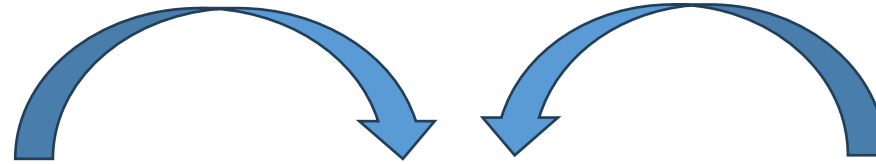
- Why New Lebanon?
- Scope and timeline
 - Establish a project committee and kick-off – **DONE!**
 - Review existing documents – **DONE!**
 - Create a housing profile and review natural resource data – **DONE!**
 - Community Conversation No. 1 – **DONE!** (May – Video online)
 - Strategy development and site-specific analysis for housing and conservation – June to October – **DONE!**
 - Housing developers forum – **DONE!** (Video online)
 - Community Conversation No. 2 – **DONE!** (Video online)
 - Write and deliver final report to committee – **DONE!**
 - **Present findings to the town – TONIGHT!**
- Excellent transition into New Lebanon's next comprehensive plan update
- Entire process driven by the community to self-determine the future of its housing and conservation strategies



Planning for both: Priorities, strategies and sites

A broad view to support housing...

- Unused space on religious properties
- Unused space at hospitals, schools or nonprofit owners
- Excess land in office or industrial parks
- Tax foreclosed properties
- Privately owned land that could be purchased for land trust conservation and affordable housing
- Unused buildings
- Underutilized buildings
- Brownfields and greyfields
- Small infill sites in hamlets and downtowns
- Conversion of space over street-front stores
- Small parcels of vacant land suitable for two-family or small multifamily
- Accessory apartments



A broad view of conservation...

- Farmland protection
- Trail projects that connect conserved areas to residential areas
- Riparian easements to protect streamside areas
- Watershed protection acquisitions
- Fee or easement conservation of key parcels to connect forests and existing conservation areas, or to preserve other sensitive habitats and scenic lands
- Pocket parks that provide open space in hamlets and can be used for pavilions, farm markets, and more.
- Municipal parks

How can we integrate plans for both in New Lebanon?

Are there potentially sites where both could be done together?

What are the opportunities and strategies that are more appropriate for New Lebanon?

Who are the stakeholders and property owners?

Discuss!

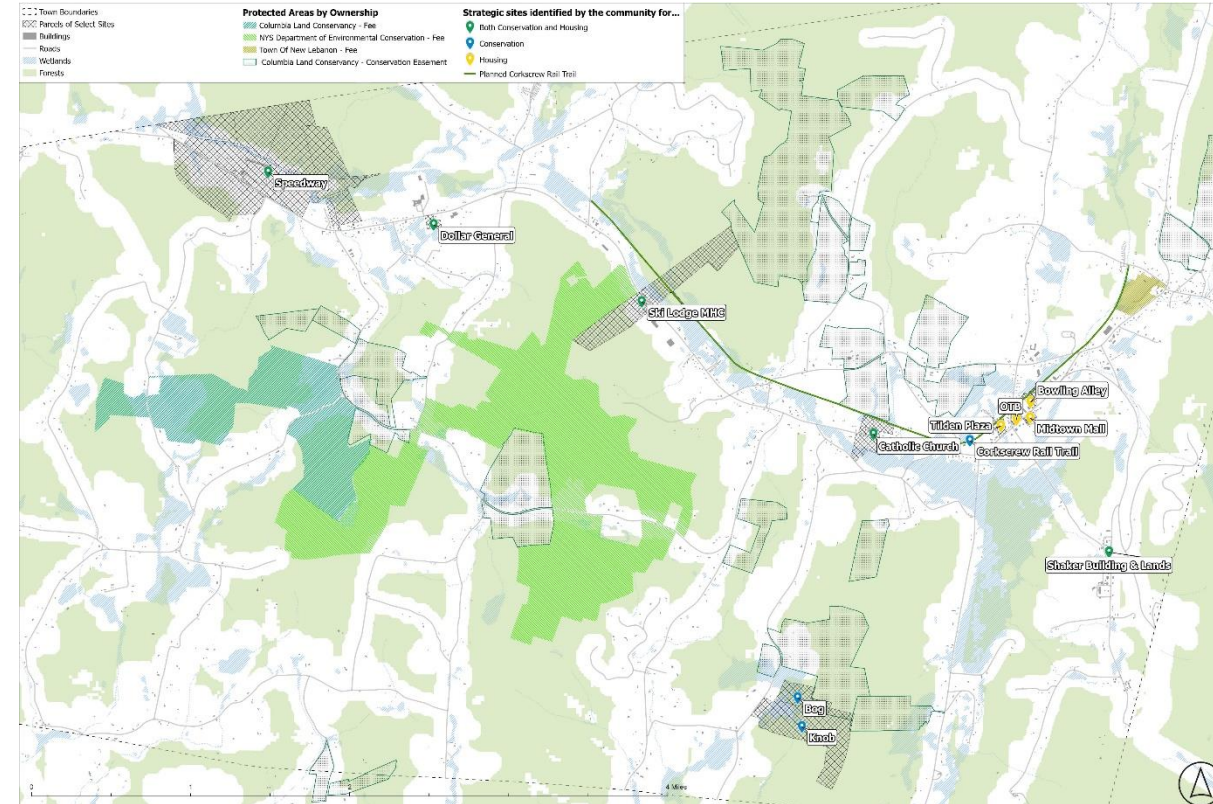
Recent work

- May – Community conversation build consensus around beloved places to preserve, places to build future housing, and places to do both
- 35 sites were identified as conservation or housing priorities
- Those sites were screened by the project committee during the summer → whittled down to 12 total
- Consulting team developed strategies to help New Lebanon integrate planning for housing and conservation at these sites
 - Also developed town-wide strategies that were consistent with community input and goals
- Profiles for each site → zoning, natural resources, slopes, connectivity, ownership patterns, and more
- Only focused on the sites the community ID'd as priorities
- Recognition that these are privately owned sites → nothing is going to happen without action by the owners
- Work was vetted by the community in December
- A good jumping off point for your comprehensive plan update



Town-wide ideas

- Potential for Community Preservation Fund / Community Housing Fund
- Community Septic Systems for gentle density (examples: Chichester, Bovina)
- Extend design standards for future construction to create quality buildings with a cohesive aesthetic
- Local-option tax exemptions for homes sold by nonprofits to first-time buyers; those who want to turn commercial buildings into mixed use
- Floating zones
- Creating a comprehensive planning process that ensures housing and conservation leaders participate in each other's visioning sessions



Two zoning tools: Floating Zones and PUD

Floating Zones

- A zoning district that is not mapped to a specific location until a landowner applies and the municipality approves its placement
- Used to allow specialized or mixed-use developments that might not fit neatly into existing districts → offering flexibility while maintaining legislative
- Take care to define the size, type, and general locations or parcels that would be eligible for floating zone
- Use standards, density limits, and other rules that guide what the floating zone allows
- Must be consistent with the comprehensive plan, reviewed and adopted under SEQRA, etc.

Planned Unit Development (PUD)

- Permit large lots to be developed in a more flexible manner
- More mixed uses and density than otherwise allowed
- Require developers to compensate for their impacts through open space preservation and/or infrastructure
- PUD ordinances typically leave underlying zoning in place and offer an alternative to develop large lots in accordance with certain PUD provisions
- PUD law can designate particular sites or criteria for future designations
- Must state purpose, standards for development, community objectives

DISCUSSION

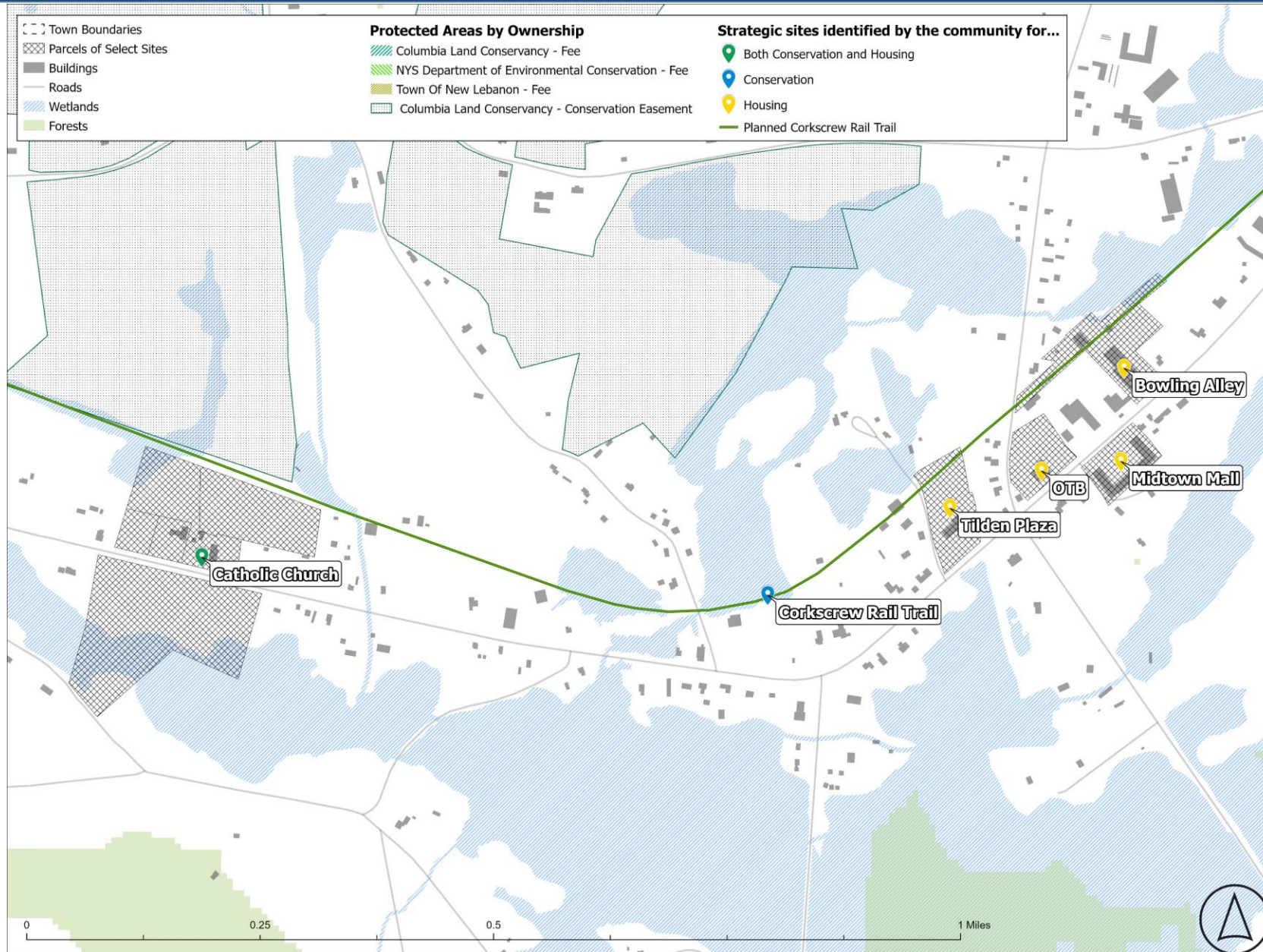
BREAK



Site-specific Strategies to Integrate Housing & Conservation

- Split the town into four districts based on New Lebanon community ideas
 - New Lebanon downtown sites
 - West Lebanon sites
 - Shaker Swamp and properties
 - The Knob & The Bog
- Each district has comparable information in the report
 - What New Lebanon said...
 - Existing conditions
 - Strategies for consideration
- There is no plan for any site
- Should inform some of your comprehensive planning actions and future community collaborations
- The implementation of anything in the future is up to you, your neighbors, owners of each property, and your elected leaders

New Lebanon Downtown Sites



New Lebanon Downtown Sites

Corkscrew Rail Trail

- Town / CRTA bi-annual meeting with all property owners along the rail corridor
- Comprehensive plan may consider tools to ensure the corridor is preserved from development
- Comprehensive plan should consider hop on / hop off locations that connect to local business, future housing, etc.
- CRTA should collaborate with Columbia Land Conservancy or others with experience in easements and rights of way
- Meet with Wallkill Valley Land Trust, Harlem Valley Rail Trail Association, and others with experience
- Consider easements that do not take effect until multiple contiguous neighbors sign on

Church of the Immaculate Conception

- Town committees should continue discussions with the parish about potential for housing on church lands
- Change the zoning or utilize new zoning tools to allow for more housing at the site in the future
- Help the church explore partnerships with the Trillium Land Trust or others to promote community ownership and revenue sharing
- Design criteria that matches downtown
- Ensure linkages to rail trail
- Preserve wetland and stream corridors

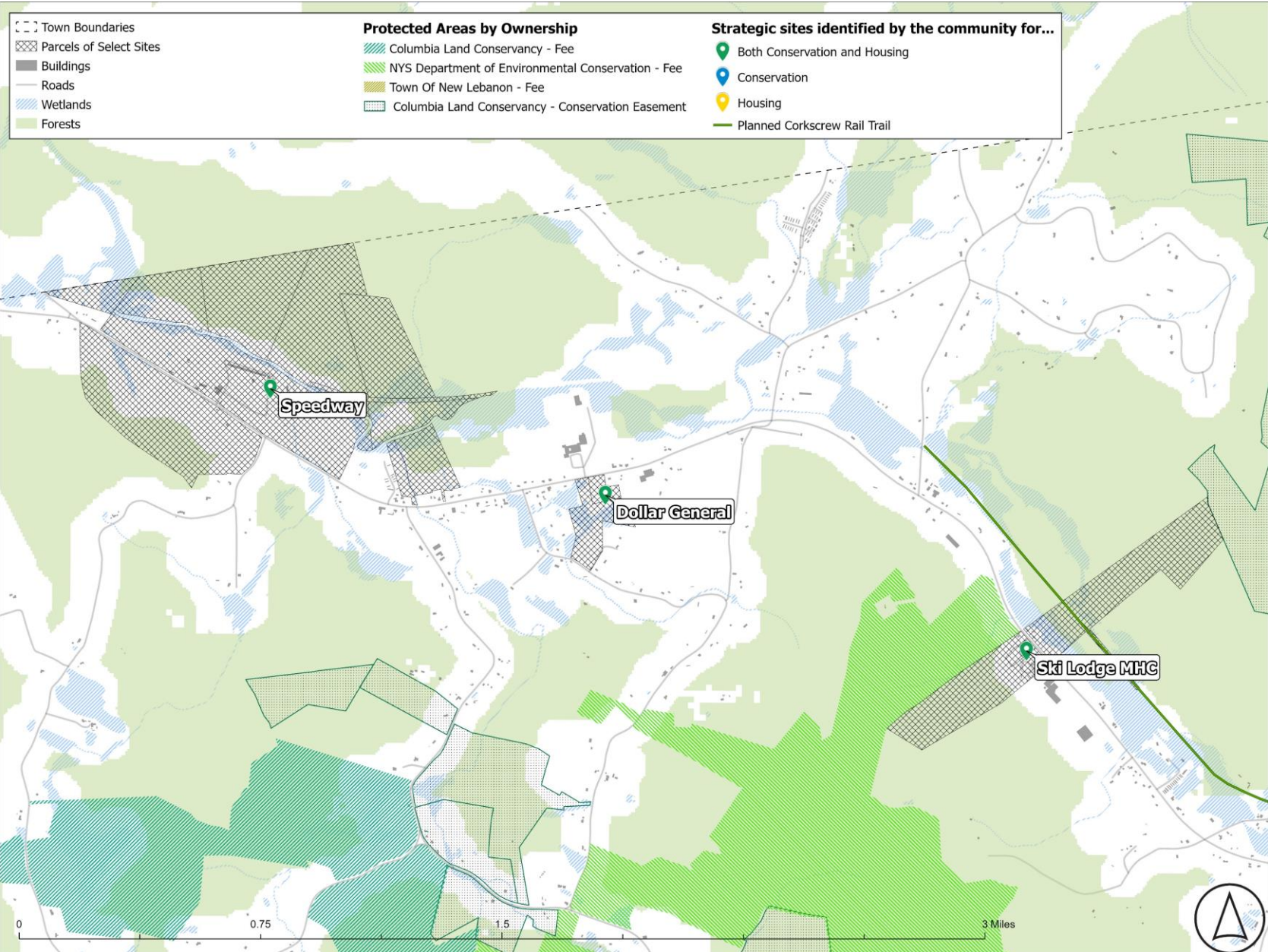
New Lebanon Downtown Sites

Downtown parcels

- Concentrate on form more than building use
 - Building height
 - Design of facades and roofs
 - Building materials
 - Architectural elements
 - Lot coverage and orientation to the street / sidewalk
 - Signage and lighting standards
- Ordinances to cover noise, polluting, and quality of life
- Ensure compliance with downtown design standards
- Eliminate minimum lot sizes and rely on health and safety
- 485-a and other tax credits for conversions
- Work with partners such as CEDC on three options:
 - Matchmaker meetings with existing owners
 - Public philanthropy
 - Trillium Land Trust
- 18) Restore NY to create a blank slate
- 19) Building inspection and enforcement



West Lebanon Sites



West Lebanon Sites

Ski Lodge

- As part of the comprehensive plan, consider rezoning the developable portion from commercial and industrial to reflect its current residential use
- Work with the private landowner to consider MOVE-IN NY
 - NYS HCR program for affordable homeownership
 - CrossMods
 - More than 24 pads exist at the site
 - Entry point to homeownership
- Help the Ski Lodge Land Corp. explore the long-term conservation of its steep forests and wetlands that abut the Hand Hollow State Forest
 - Open discussions with DEC and others
 - Use proceeds from Conservation to build out the remainder of the housing

Dollar General sites

- Facilitate a discussion with Columbia-Greene Habitat about Rural Starter Home Initiative for undeveloped sites
- Consider zoning that would allow mixed-use for a small hamlet at the store, across from the school
- Design guidelines similar to those for downtown
- Protect the significant wetland habitats through a cluster development that includes robust buffer zones and native plantings to maintain habitat protection and connectivity

West Lebanon Sites

Lebanon Valley Speedway

- Comp plan should include zoning tools for large-site development
 - Mixed-use development district
 - Planned unit development district
 - Any large-site tools should require a mix of housing
- Utilize conservation zoning or a TDR process to concentrate development on the racetrack site in exchange for permanent conservation of natural areas
- Overlay district for protection of forests, creek, habitats
- Land trust or regional conservation organization to preserve the key properties
 - Proceeds to help with developable areas
- Apply downtown design guidelines
- Require high standards for stormwater management because of creek and aquatic habitats
- Examine potential for a 2.25-mile rail trail extension to connect West Lebanon with the downtown sites



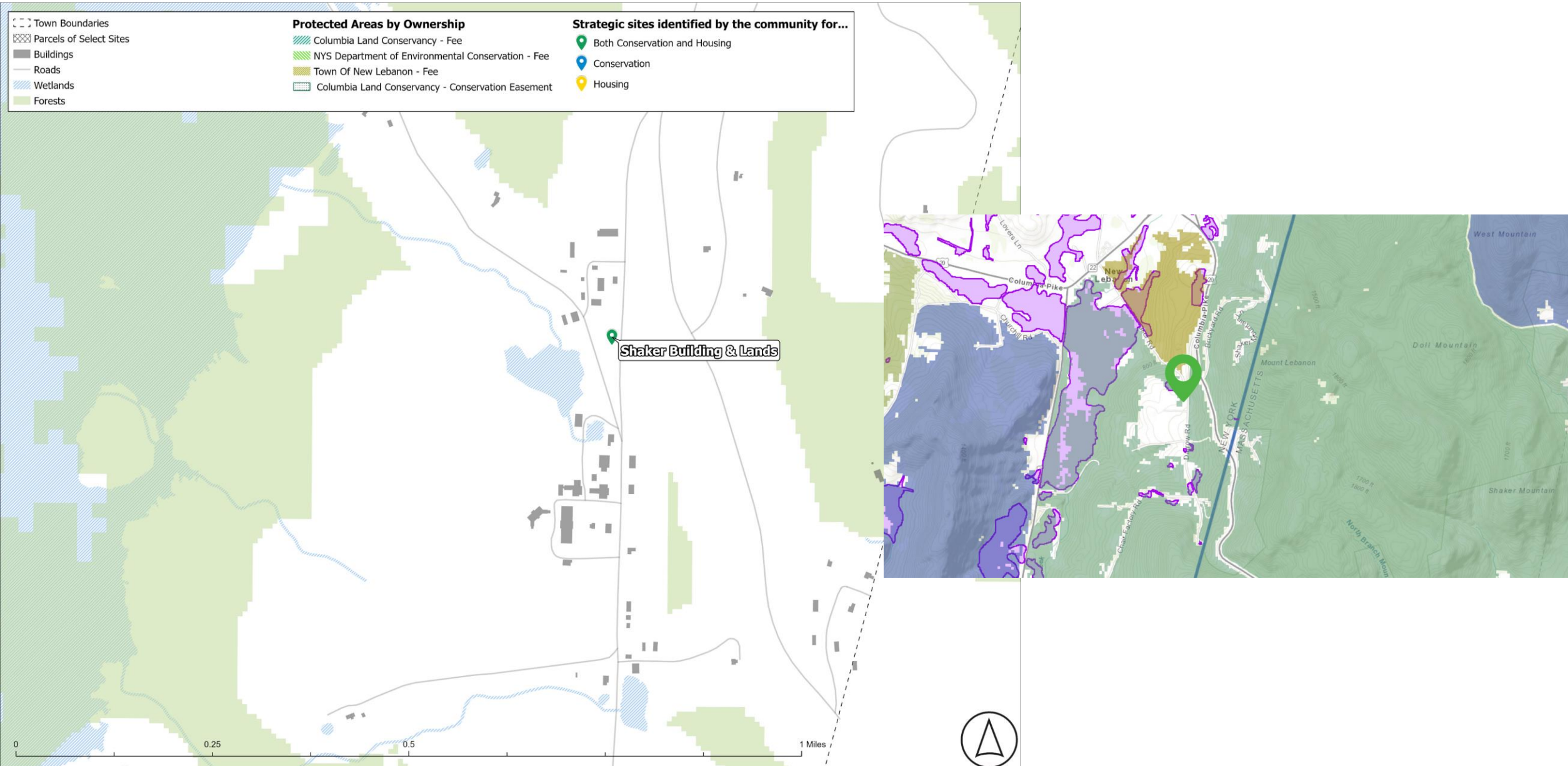
Example of a CrossMod, which could be applicable to the Ski Lodge site.

DISCUSSION

BREAK



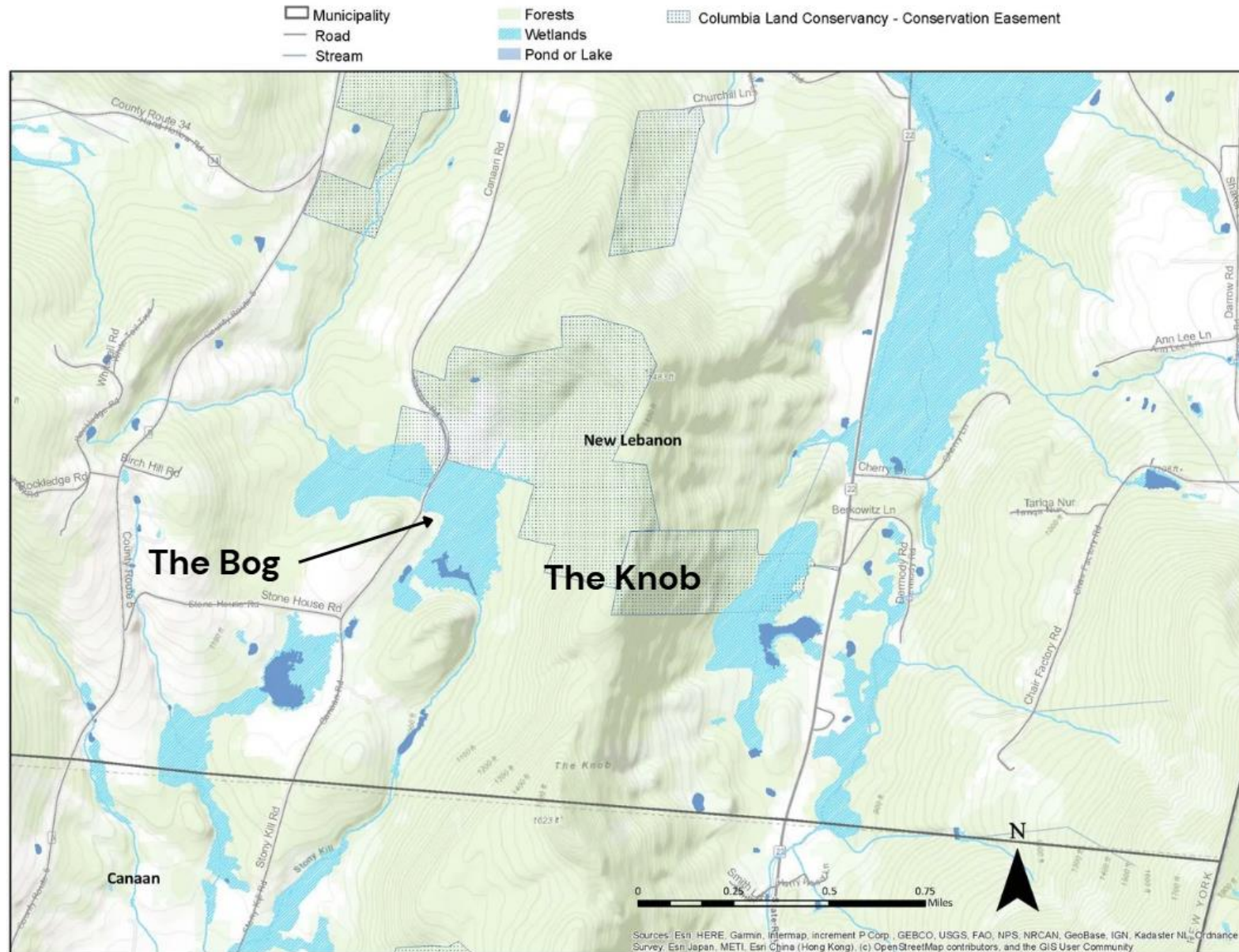
Shaker Swamp and properties



Shaker Swamp and properties

- Continue work with Shaker Preservation Committee on zoning, policies, historic district
- Continue discussions with DEC about Shaker Swamp trail → Bashakill Wildlife Management Area
- Consider the Shaker Swamp a critical environmental area → strengthens scrutiny under SEQRA
- Conservation overlay zone → a conservation design process for parcels of a certain size to minimize the risk that development would impair or fragment resources
- Evaluate potential for Open Space Incentive Zoning (Red Hook)
- TDR program density away from conservation areas to preferred receiving areas such as the downtown
- Encourage land trusts and the owners of larger parcels to work together to preserve the existing open space
 - Create a mechanism for proceeds of conservation easements to restore or expand existing housing within designated zones
 - Strategy would achieve natural preservation and the rehab of housing

The Knob and The Bog



The Knob and The Bog

Private Landowner Stewardship Opportunities

- **Stewardship** – Learn about the biodiversity values of their land, educate neighbors, and pursue stewardship activities to preserve the integrity of well-connected forest and wetland habitats. Owners of forested land can engage with the NYSDEC's Forest Stewardship Program to learn about programs and assistance available to help them manage their property.
- **Land protection** – Work with a local or regional land trust (Columbia Land Conservancy, Open Space Institute, Scenic Hudson) to protect land through fee or easement.
- **Municipal Policy Opportunities**
- Critical Environmental Area and Conservation Overlay Zoning to provide stronger regulatory control and direct development away from environmentally sensitive areas → prevent fragmentation (Canaan)
- Pursue conservation tools such as the Community Preservation Fund (Chatham)
- Consider tax incentives for landowners with significant forests or wetlands on their properties (Town of Nassau Grassland Law)

What happens next?

Keep the civic energy going! Here are some ideas for implementation...

- Town Supervisor could meet with reps from all the town committees
 - Identify 5-10 actions that are most important and feasible
 - Make sure conservation and housing leaders are working together with *Room Enough for Both* ethos
- Create a plan to be in touch with public and private entities who play a role
 - Land Bank and Trillium to discuss their role in certain spots (i.e. Ski Lodge)
 - Invite owners of downtown buildings for annual meeting on town actions
 - Annual calendar alarms, standing item on board agenda, assign tasks and deadlines
- Incorporate ideas from *Room Enough for Both* into comp plan update
 - Do not establish separate committees for housing and land conservation → integrate
 - Highlight recommendations from this report that are appropriate for comp plan
 - Seek sources of funding for technical assistance

Sources of funding for technical assistance

- **NYS DOS Smart Growth Community Planning and Zoning Grant Program** - This source of funding is very competitive, with some communities waiting several years before they receive an award. However, funds are meant for updates to comprehensive plans and zoning codes.
- **NYS Local Waterfront Revitalization Program (LWRP)** - Because New Lebanon is home to two state-designated inland waterways, it is eligible for planning grants through the LWRP.
- **Hudson River Valley Greenway Communities Grant** - As a Greenway community, New Lebanon is eligible for an annual grant that will help with economic development and conservation planning.
- **ESD Strategic Planning and Feasibility Studies** - Although these studies generally have to be related to economic development, New Lebanon could apply to the program for funding for comprehensive planning if the update will include demonstrable strategies for economic stimulation in the town.
- **HCR Technical Assistance to Grow Pro-Housing Communities** - By demonstrating that a considerable portion of its comp plan will focus on housing, New Lebanon could qualify for dollars to receive technical assistance through this new program.
- **Berkshire Taconic Community Foundation** - Fund for Columbia County makes grants to create a positive and lasting impact in communities.

Appendices in the report

- Mini housing-need assessment
- Initial outreach report
- Feedback from forum with housing developers
- Links to other relevant plans
- Map of Corkscrew Rail Trail with parcel owners



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Thank you!