



2025-2026

TOWN OF NEW LEBANON

Room Enough For Both

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**Hudson Valley Alliance
for Housing and
Conservation**



Room Enough for Both is a community-driven project designed to help the Town of New Lebanon integrate its planning for affordable housing and land conservation. It is also a pilot project of the Hudson Valley Alliance for Housing and Conservation (HVAHC), an innovative collaboration between 16 nonprofit land trusts and affordable housing organizations that are working together to conserve critical landscapes and respond to the region's housing crisis. Working with experts at other regional organizations in the Hudson Valley, HVAHC is supporting communities that seek to plan for housing and conservation in an integrated way.

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1 Introduction

Room Enough for Both is a community-driven project designed to help the Town of New Lebanon integrate its planning for affordable housing and land conservation in anticipation of the town's upcoming comprehensive plan update.

Healthy communities need an ample supply of both housing and conserved land. Towns thrive when they encourage a diverse mix of housing that includes affordable options for residents of all income levels, allowing young families to put down roots and seniors to age in place, while fostering well-connected communities. Housing also strengthens the local economy by sustaining the workforce and customer base that local businesses rely on. Conserved land is essential for communities to support clean water, food production, recreation, climate resilience, and the protection of unique habitats and scenic vistas. Strong, well-planned communities recognize that these goals are not in competition and deliberately plan for housing and land conservation together, ensuring that social, economic, and environmental outcomes are achieved in a balanced and lasting way.

Although affordable housing and conservation are well-aligned, they are too often seen as mutually exclusive or opposed to one another. Municipal planning efforts typically separate housing and land conservation, each with its own committees, objectives, and priorities. This siloed structure can undermine trust, restrict collaboration, and set the stage for conflict when significant projects are brought to a community.

Through extensive outreach and collaboration with community members in New Lebanon, *Room Enough for Both* establishes a roadmap to achieve affordable housing and conservation goals in tandem, building a consensus for both.

Throughout 2025, the New Lebanon community worked with a technical assistance team from Hudson Valley Pattern for Progress; the Pace University Land Use Law Center; the NYSDEC Hudson River Estuary Program; and the Hudson Valley Alliance for Housing and Conservation. The goals, strategies, and tactics outlined in this report were developed through community conversations with more than 100 New Lebanon residents; discussions with a steering committee of local civic leaders; an in-depth review of housing and natural resource data; analysis of town zoning codes, inventories, plans, and policies; and interviews with elected leaders, housing developers, and landowners.

The planning process for *Room Enough for Both* was driven by four key tasks.



Through these actions and analyses, New Lebanon built consensus around a set of housing and conservation goals that are outlined in this report. This roadmap – which includes townwide and site-specific ideas – will inform New Lebanon’s comprehensive plan update.



Above: New Lebanon residents participate in a community meeting May 22, 2025.

2 Glossary of Key Terms

A number of technical terms are used throughout this report. Many of them are related to zoning tools, planning techniques, or legal considerations. To ensure this report is digestible for all members of the public, we have defined several technical terms in the section below.

Affordable housing – Affordable housing is housing for which a household pays no more than 30% of its gross income on housing costs, including rent or mortgage payments, utilities, taxes, and basic housing-related expenses. Affordable housing is not a housing type, rather it is defined by what a household can afford. A single-family home, apartment, townhome, duplex, or an accessory dwelling unit can all be affordable to one household or another. This means that affordable housing looks different across income levels, household sizes, and communities. Towns that allow and encourage a diverse mix of housing types and sizes are, therefore, creating affordable housing for a broader spectrum of their neighbors and the local workforce.

Community septic system – A community septic system is a shared wastewater treatment system that serves multiple homes or buildings rather than each property having its own individual septic system. Wastewater is collected through a small network of pipes and treated at a central or clustered treatment area, which can be more efficient and environmentally protective than numerous separate systems. These systems are often used in rural or low-density areas to support development while protecting groundwater and surface water quality and reducing long-term maintenance costs.

Conservation easement – Conservation easements are voluntary legal agreements that permanently protect land by limiting certain types of development or use while keeping the property in private ownership. A landowner grants the easement to a qualified organization or government entity, which then has the responsibility to ensure the land's conservation values—such as farmland, wildlife habitat, scenic views, or water resources—are preserved over time. In exchange, landowners may receive financial compensation, tax benefits, or both, making conservation easements a flexible tool that balances private property rights with long-term community and environmental goals. More information about conservation easements can be found on the Columbia Land Conservancy website here: <https://columbialand.org/get-involved/conservation-options/>

Conservation zoning – Conservation zoning is a land-use strategy that protects environmentally sensitive or culturally valuable areas by limiting how the land can be developed or altered. Under this approach, local regulations designate specific zones—such as wetlands, forests, watersheds, wildlife habitats, or scenic landscapes—where activities that could harm ecological integrity are restricted or closely managed. Permitted uses typically emphasize preservation, low-impact recreation, or sustainable resource management, while higher-intensity development requires special review or is outright prohibited. By guiding growth away from vulnerable places and setting clear standards for stewardship, conservation zoning helps communities balance environmental protection with responsible land use over the long term. New Lebanon already has conservation zoning within its zoning code. Its conservation zone allows New Lebanon to cluster development onto a smaller portion of a parcel to preserve environmental assets that are located on another section of the parcel or parcels.

Form-based zoning – Form-based zoning codes regulate development primarily by the physical form of buildings and the way they relate to streets and public spaces, rather than by separating land uses. They focus on elements such as building height, massing, frontage, building materials and architectural features, and placement to create predictable, walkable, and visually coherent environments, often allowing a mix of residential and commercial uses within the same area. In contrast, traditional use-based codes emphasize what activities are permitted on a site, which can lead to segregated land uses and less attention to overall design and public realm quality. By focusing on clear, predictable standards for how buildings look – and less on the uses within them – form-based codes often streamline development approvals and open downtowns to a wider variety of revitalization projects.

Floating zone – Floating zones are flexible zoning tools that allow a municipality to permit certain types of uses—often higher-density or mixed-use projects—without predetermining exactly where they must go on the zoning map. Instead of being tied to a fixed geographic area, the floating zone can be affixed to a qualifying parcel of land upon application of the parcel's owner. Upon approval, the parcel is rezoned to reflect the new use and the development is governed by the use, dimensional, and other provisions in the floating zone. Normally, for a parcel to be eligible for rezoning under a floating zone, it must be of a sufficient size to ensure that the development can be fit properly into its surroundings. In determining whether to affix a floating zone to a parcel, the governing body evaluates whether the proposed location is appropriate based on planning goals, standards established by the town board, infrastructure capacity, and community impacts. This process lets municipalities steer density to places where it is most desirable—such as near transit, town centers, or redevelopment areas—while preventing it in locations that may not be suitable. In this way, floating zones provide both regulatory flexibility and strategic control over where growth occurs. To use floating zones effectively, towns such as New Lebanon should specifically identify in their comprehensive plans areas of town where development should be more densely concentrated.

Local-option tax credits – In New York, a local option tax credit is a state-authorized tax incentive that a municipality may choose to adopt, allowing eligible taxpayers to receive a credit against certain state or local taxes based on criteria set in state law. These credits are “local option” because they only apply if a county, city, town, or village affirmatively opts in through local legislation, and they are typically used to advance local policy goals such as affordable housing production, historic preservation, economic development, or conservation. School districts must also opt into location-option tax credits. While the framework and eligibility rules are established by the state, the decision to implement the credit—and sometimes the specific parameters within that framework—rests with the local government. Local residents are likely families with local-option credits that give tax breaks to veterans or volunteer firefighters. But approximately 50 such credits – including those for downtown redevelopment and first-time homebuying – can be considered by local taxing authorities.

Planned-unit development – A planned-unit development (PUD) is a land-use mechanism that allows large or complex projects to be designed and reviewed holistically rather than parcel by parcel under conventional zoning rules. PUD ordinances may allow developers to mix land uses and to develop the parcel at greater densities and with more design flexibility than is otherwise allowed by the underlying zoning district. PUD provisions often require developers to compensate for the impacts of their projects by setting aside open space, providing infrastructure needed to service the development or offering other community services. The community and its civic leaders will often be active participants in creating and vetting the plan for a complex project that seeks to use a PUD. Standards such as setbacks, density, and lot sizes can be modified as long as the overall plan provides public benefits like enhanced open space, improved connectivity, or high-quality design. From a land-use perspective, a PUD functions as a negotiated zoning tool: it tailors development regulations to the specific site while allowing the municipality to ensure cohesive layout, efficient infrastructure, and alignment with comprehensive planning goals.

Transfer of development rights – Transfer of development rights (TDR) is a land-use tool that shifts development potential from places a community wants to protect to areas better suited for growth. Under a TDR program, landowners in designated “sending areas,” such as farmland or sensitive natural lands, can sell their unused development rights to developers who apply them in designated “receiving areas,” where higher density is encouraged. This allows conservation goals to be met without prohibiting development outright, while directing growth to locations with adequate infrastructure and services. In this way, TDR programs align private market incentives with long-term community planning objectives. A town can establish a transfer of development rights program by identifying and mapping sending areas to be conserved and receiving areas where additional density is appropriate, and then defining how development rights are calculated and transferred between them. Clear zoning amendments, administrative procedures, and market mechanisms—such as a TDR bank or standardized certificates—help ensure the program functions predictably and aligns with the community’s planning goals.

Townwide Strategies for Housing and Conservation

The technical team identified several townwide policies, actions, and strategies that could help New Lebanon advance goals that were identified by the community. In the section below, we have organized these goals based on the level of action. Some require an action by the state, for example, while others are fully within New Lebanon’s authority to act.

Concepts that require assistance from the State of New York

1. Pursue a Community Preservation Fund (CPF) and a Community Housing Fund (CHF) – These funds are locally-established financing mechanisms that create dedicated revenue sources for protecting priority lands and waters (CPF) and supporting the creation of affordable housing (CHF) that meets local needs. To establish a CPF and/or CHF in New York, municipalities need authorization from the state legislature and a successful local ballot referendum. Both funds are financed by a real estate transfer tax – a modest (usually 0.5% to 2%) one-time tax on property sales. The real estate transfer tax is often levied only on property sales that are above the area median price. Proceeds from the tax are spent in accordance with a Community Preservation Plan and/or a Community Housing Plan that is established by the municipality. For preservation, these funds are typically spent on open space, farmland, natural resources, scenic areas, parks, and other lands valued by the community. For housing, funds can go toward affordable development subsidies, enhanced downpayment assistance, housing rehabilitation projects, land acquisition for affordable housing, or other projects that improve access to affordable housing.

These tools are still emerging in New York. State legislation (specifically the Hudson Valley Community Preservation Act) has allowed communities in Westchester, Putnam, and Ulster counties to establish a CPF. Some individual towns, including Chatham in Columbia County, have also received independent state legislative authority to pursue a CPF. Currently, six Hudson Valley towns have established CPF.

CHF is more rare. The Peconic Bay Region Community Housing Act authorized four towns on Long Island to establish a CHF in their communities. No other portion of New York has received the authority to establish a CHF.

Community Preservation Funds and Community Housing Funds could be especially valuable tools for a rural community like New Lebanon, where funding opportunities are limited. By creating dedicated, locally controlled sources of revenue, these tools allow towns with modest tax bases to invest strategically in land conservation and housing affordability. With several bills currently under consideration in Albany that would extend CPF and CHF authority to additional municipalities, New Lebanon could evaluate the potential benefits of these mechanisms and engage with state lawmakers about legislation that would enable the town to hold a referendum and adopt them locally.

2. Work with New York State authorities on wastewater solutions –

There is broad consensus within the New Lebanon community for more significant development along the Route 20 / Route 22 corridor, especially the area starting at the Church of the Immaculate Conception and stretching westward to approximately the location of Town Hall. However, the goal of concentrating development in this area of town is not likely to be realized without solutions for wastewater collection and treatment. Working with the New York State departments of Environmental Conservation and Health, New Lebanon should pursue two options:

- a. A wastewater district and treatment plant – A feasibility study is already underway for a district that would fund wastewater and/or drinking water infrastructure in the heart of New Lebanon. This portion of town – where development has already occurred – is constrained for future development by health department regulations that require setbacks between groundwater wells and septic systems. We recommend the town continue its pursuit, based on sound engineering, or solutions that would maximize the development potential in this part of town while protecting public health and environmental quality.
- b. Community septic systems – The New Lebanon community expressed its support for gentle density in several parts of town, including the already-established downtown, the current Lebanon Valley Speedway, and several smaller sites. Even this gentle density cannot occur without a well-engineered, approved wastewater solution. The town should talk with DEC and DOH about the potential for community septic systems. These systems have already been approved by the state in several towns throughout the Catskills including Chichester (Ulster County) and South Kortright (Delaware County). Community septic systems could be an important tool to help New Lebanon achieve some of its future housing and conservation goals.



Concepts that can be pursued by New Lebanon

- 1. Cross-pollinate conservation and housing leaders for New Lebanon's comprehensive plan** – The town's comprehensive plan update could incorporate the Room Enough for Both principles. This would involve at least one housing expert on the open space and conservation committees, and at least one member of the Conservation Advisory Committee in discussions about affordable housing development. We encourage New Lebanon to continue to break down these silos as it updates the comprehensive plan.

- 2. Consider floating districts** – New Lebanon should consider floating districts in its land use regulations because they provide a way to guide growth thoughtfully without committing specific sites to higher-intensity development before conditions are right. By establishing clear standards in advance but allowing the district to be mapped only after a case-by-case review, floating districts give the town control over where and when added density occurs, ensuring it aligns with infrastructure capacity, environmental constraints, and community character. This flexibility might be especially useful for a site like the Lebanon Valley Speedway. Its large parcels include vital conservation priorities, and the potential for a large-site redevelopment if the speedway ceases to operate someday. There is no project, proposal, or plans for the Speedway now. But a floating zone would be a useful tool to thoughtfully guide growth at a location like that in the future.

- 3. Examine and adopt local-option tax credits** – New York allows municipalities to adopt more than 50 local-option tax credits that serve a wide variety of purposes. These credits must be adopted by each town and school district individually for their targets to receive the benefit. A full list of the credits can be found here:
https://www.tax.ny.gov/research/property/assess/manuals/vol4/pt1/section2/sec2_02.htm
Several of them would help New Lebanon achieve its goals for housing and conservation. For example:
 - a. Passed in 2025, the affordable homebuyer property tax incentive gives local governments the option to provide property tax breaks for homes built or rehabilitated with assistance from nonprofits, land banks, or community land trusts and sold to low- and moderate-income homebuyers. This incentive helps reduce the cost of homeownership for first-time buyers and it helps nonprofits, like Habitat for Humanity, build more homes.
 - b. Real Property Tax Law 485-a allows towns to grant a partial property tax break for up to 12 years on the increased assessed value resulting from the conversion of non-residential property into mixed residential and commercial property. This incentive could help with the conversion of certain properties in New Lebanon's downtown area, while keeping development pressure away from priority conservation areas.
 - c. Real Property Tax Law 444-a allows local governments to grant a partial property tax exemption for historic properties that are altered or rehabilitated in accordance with local historic preservation laws. Under the exemption, the increase in assessed value attributable to the approved rehabilitation is exempt from most property taxes for up to 10 years on a defined schedule (100 % in years 1–5, then phased down through year 9) if the work meets local preservation standards and is approved by the local preservation commission. This could help with the revitalization of historic Shaker buildings and others throughout town.

4. Refine or expand downtown building design standards – New Lebanon recently adopted design standards for buildings that are constructed or refurbished in the heart of town. The comprehensive planning committee should ensure that these are adequately adopted in the zoning code, and that they apply to all the sections of town where relatively dense development – at a scale appropriate for New Lebanon – is likely to occur in the future. Sites like the Lebanon Valley Speedway, and the lands behind Dollar General and the Church of the Immaculate Conception, might also benefit from these design standards so that all new development in town has a consistent look and feel, architectural features, and quality materials.

TOWN OF NEW LEBANON, NY
DOWNTOWN DESIGN GUIDE
PROJECT SAMPLES

A New York Main Street Technical Assistance grant was awarded to New Lebanon to develop a downtown design guidelines. This document was created to outline best practices for creating attractive, thriving commercial spaces within the downtown of New Lebanon. To better illustrate the ideas and concepts within the Downtown Design Guide, several properties were selected to be studied as examples of the many principles and concepts within the document.

A Vision for New Lebanon:
"A downtown of modest, attractive commercial buildings that activate their exteriors and lots in pedestrian focused ways to attract customers and enhance local quality of life."



5. Utilize the Columbia County Land Bank and Trillium Community Land Trust – Columbia County has two relatively new tools that can help with housing development and the long-term preservation of affordability. The Land Bank can help New Lebanon acquire, manage, and return vacant, abandoned, or tax-delinquent properties to productive use. It can also collaborate with New Lebanon to pursue grants for the construction, rehabilitation, or preservation of affordable housing, as outlined in one of the site-specific sections in this report. Trillium Community Land Trust provides another tool. It can hold land to create and steward permanently affordable housing for low- and moderate-income households throughout Columbia County. It acquires land and holds it in trust so that homeowners or renters can occupy homes at prices they can afford, with land leased long-term to keep housing costs lower and preserve affordability over time. We recommend that New Lebanon meet regularly with both organizations to look for opportunities to collaborate on grants, foreclosed properties, or potential land donations.

6. **Facilitate land donations and bequests** – Throughout the planning process, the technical team encountered several people who were interested in donating their land at some point in the future. These prospective land donations were for housing, conservation, and for both. Working with the Land Bank and Trillium, New Lebanon can take several steps to facilitate these potential donations:

- a. Establish a formal land donation and bequest program in partnership with Trillium. Create a confidential database or registry of interested landowners that allows the town and land trust to track offers, understand timing, and coordinate evaluations without committing to immediate acceptance. This program should come with an annual public call for donations or legacy gifts through town communications and newsletters, estate planners, and other networks. This will help to normalize land donation as a civic option.
- b. New Lebanon should consider integrating land donations into its comprehensive plan and open space plan, signaling priority areas and uses so landowners understand how their gift would advance community goals.
- c. Some residents said that donating their land or selling conservation easements was not feasible because they could not afford the stewardship fee required by conservation groups responsible for stewarding the land or managing the conservation easement. The town could begin conversations with Columbia Land Conservancy, Berkshire Taconic Community Foundation, and other organizations to see what can be done to overcome these necessary, but sometimes burdensome fees and assist owners of priority conservation areas to help the community accomplish important conservation goals.

4 Site-Specific Strategies to Integrate Housing and Conservation

The New Lebanon community participated in several planning exercises organized by the technical team to choose priority sites for land conservation and future housing development, along with some locations where affordable housing and conservation could happen in tandem at a single location.

In May 2025, more than 60 town residents participated in small-group discussions, led by a team of facilitators, to identify sites throughout the town. The groups began by identifying community assets, beloved places, farms, natural areas, and public spaces that they wanted to maintain and preserve for future generations. Each resident identified up to three community assets with a green dot on a map. The group then discussed why these locations were community assets worth preserving. The conversation then turned to housing needs. Facilitators led a discussion about housing challenges, housing needs, and the types and styles of housing that were most needed. Residents then placed three blue dots at map locations where they believed future housing could be developed. The small groups then discussed strategies to balance conservation and housing, and they reported their ideas back to the larger group.



Above: The New Lebanon community participates in a mapping exercise to identify priority preservation and housing sites.

This mapping exercise established a clear consensus for conservation and affordable housing priorities, as many of the small groups identified the same locations for both. More than 30 priority locations for conservation, affordable housing, or both were identified throughout New Lebanon.

In August 2025, these 30 locations were screened by the technical team with help from the project committee. Members of the project committee informed the discussion by bringing their knowledge of the history and current use of the properties. The technical team screened each location for constraints and opportunities, including orientation relative to other parcels, conservation value, and development potential. This screening process reduced the large group of locations to the final 12 that are analyzed in the following pages.

The technical team then developed a series of zoning and policy recommendations along with tactical strategies that could help New Lebanon realize its vision for each of the sites. These recommendations and strategies were shared at the New Lebanon Community Center in December 2025 with approximately 50 people who participated in a second community conversation. After learning about the strategies for each site, community members used a ballot to vote on the extent to which they liked or disliked the ideas, and they were given an opportunity to add their own ideas or make comments about the strategies that were presented. The concepts and strategies contained in this final report received broad community support in December, and many of them were refined through public feedback.

That public process – paired with in-depth interviews and research by the technical team – yielded the site-specific recommendations that are found in the following section of the report. The sites are split into four groups based on their geographic location. These groups include:

- New Lebanon downtown sites
- West Lebanon sites
- The Shaker Swamp and neighboring properties
- The Knob and The Bog

As residents consider the recommendations in this section of the report, two facts are important to keep in mind. First, all the sites written about in this section were identified by the New Lebanon community as priorities for conservation and preferred sites for housing. The locations and recommendations were 100% chosen and refined by the community itself. Second, all the sites except one are owned by private landowners. As of now, only two of the locations – the Corkscrew Rail Trail and the Tilden Plaza – are actively being considered for conservation or development projects. Nothing in this report should be interpreted as suggesting that projects are planned for the other sites, nor does it propose limiting or infringing on private property rights in pursuit of the development and conservation goals described.

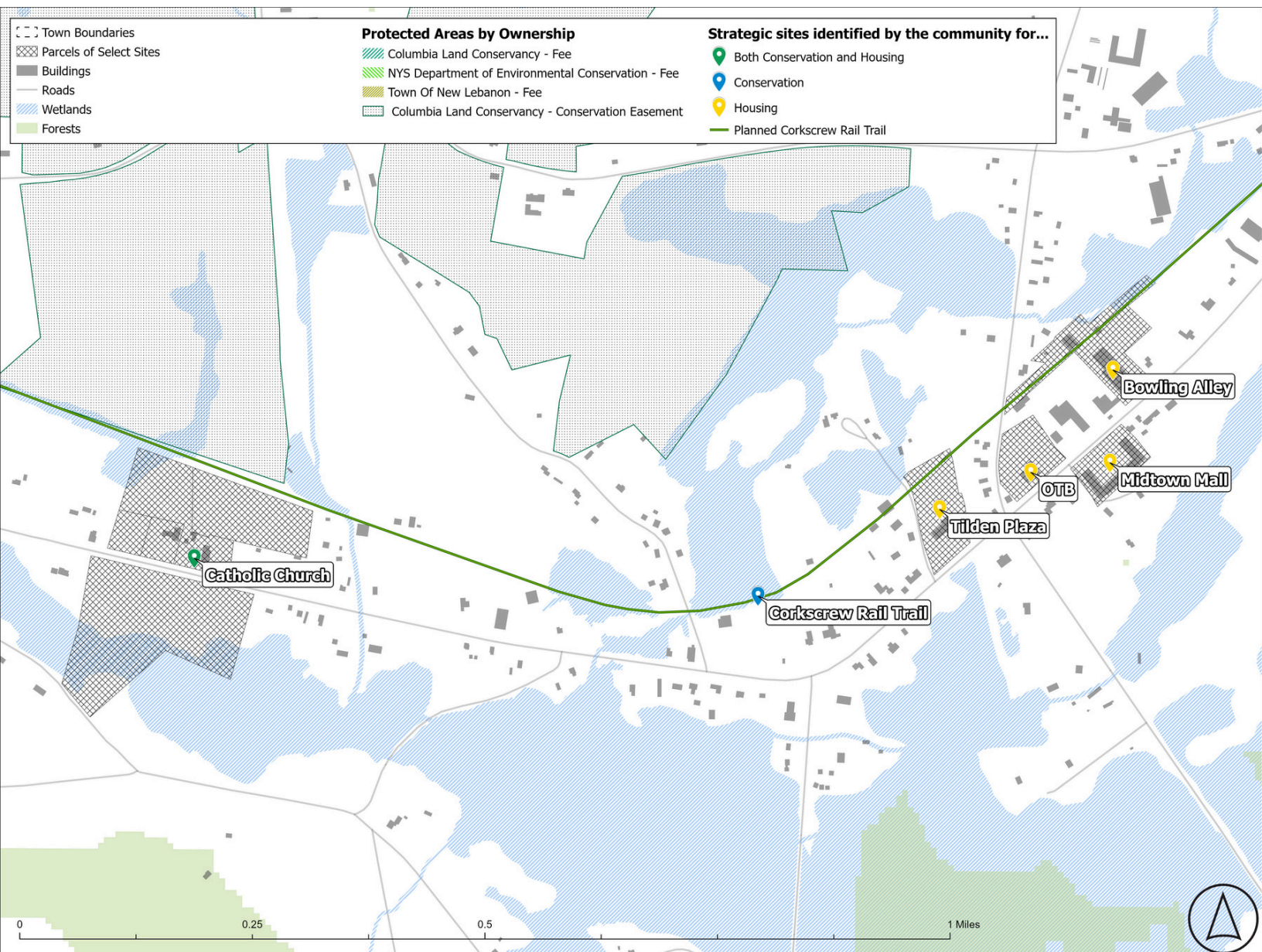
Like most planning projects, Room Enough for Both establishes a community-driven vision for the future, and it challenges public and private actors to collaborate toward that vision over the course of years or decades. In New Lebanon – like most towns – implementation of these ideas will require support and cooperation from those who own the properties now and in the future.



Above: The New Lebanon community provided feedback on draft concepts in December 2025.

4-1 New Lebanon Downtown Sites

The New Lebanon downtown sites include six locations. Four locations – Tilden Plaza, Midtown Mall, the former OTB site, and the former bowling alley – were identified as priority locations for the future development of affordable housing. Lands owned by the Church of the Immaculate Conception were identified as locations for their housing potential and the conservation of property near wetlands, streams, and the rail trail corridor. Lastly, the Corkscrew Rail Trail was identified as a townwide preservation priority, as the old rail corridor incidentally connects many of the sites where the New Lebanon community said housing should be built in the future. All six locations are explored in more depth below.



1. Tilden Plaza, Midtown Mall, former OTB site, and former Bowling Alley

What New Lebanon said...

The New Lebanon community reached a broad consensus identifying these parcels as priority locations for future housing development that would serve the needs of senior citizens, young families, and future town residents who want to live within walking distance of key amenities. Through the community planning process, town residents understood that allowing more housing development in these locations would also allow the town to conserve other parts of New Lebanon that include uninterrupted forests, agriculture lands, or other significant natural features. Neighbors also supported development concepts for “gentle density” that would allow the clustered construction of more affordable houses, condos and apartments in this part of town to maximize its potential for housing. Community members expressed support for condos and other attached multi-family options, apartments in buildings up to three stories tall, 2-4 family homes, and other arrangements that would allow clustered housing that met intergenerational needs. Community members also expressed support for small-scale downtown development with businesses on the ground floor and affordable homes on upper floors, transforming this corridor into more of a traditional Main Street. Town residents hoped that well-designed housing and mixed-use would create a walkable downtown, provide new customers for local businesses, and beautify this part of New Lebanon.

Existing conditions

Property: These four properties are owned by a variety of private entities. Together they comprise approximately 8.5 acres of land. Three of the properties (bowling alley, OTB, Midtown Mall) are partially occupied by local businesses. The Tilden Plaza is not occupied. However, the Tilden Plaza is also the only site that currently has a project before New Lebanon’s land-use board, as its owners have proposed a development that would include 41 affordable homes for seniors, families, and other households, along with a grocery store on the bottom floor.

Zoning: New Lebanon recently updated the zoning for this area of town to become a “C” Zone. This town center zoning allows the densest concentration of businesses, homes, and community facilities. It also allows 75% of the lots to be covered by the building footprint. To support businesses in this area, the town’s zoning also allows a variety of multi-family housing by special permit.



Right: The former bowling alley building, which was identified as a priority site for future housing by New Lebanon residents.

Connectivity and infrastructure: These downtown parcels—combined with the broader strategies outlined in this report—offer a rare opportunity to strengthen connectivity, walkability, and recreation in the heart of New Lebanon. The Tilden Plaza and bowling alley sites directly border privately owned segments of the Corkscrew Rail Trail, positioning them as key links within a larger network. Extending outward from this downtown hub, the former rail bed also reaches the New Lebanon Junior/Senior High School and Shatford Park to the east, and to the west meets several parcels including the Church of the Immaculate Conception and the Lebanon Valley Speedway. As the town collaborates with private landowners to secure trail rights-of-way and encourage downtown development, it is important to recognize that these efforts together create a powerful opportunity to support local businesses, expand walkable housing options for residents of all ages, and strengthen overall community connectivity.

The town is also pursuing two public works projects that will be critical to the future success of these downtown opportunities. Engineering consultants are finishing a final survey to install sidewalks through this part of New Lebanon, which would also advance goals for connectivity and walkability. The sidewalks could be constructed within the next two calendar years. New Lebanon is also advancing the engineering analysis—and exploring potential funding sources—for a water and/or wastewater district to serve this area. Although the project remained in conceptual development at the time of this report, such infrastructure will be essential for achieving the level of density permitted by local zoning and for meeting the goals identified by community members throughout the planning process.

Wetlands: None of the downtown parcels is directly constrained by the presence of wetlands, but some of their back property lines might be within riparian wetland buffers. The town should carefully consider the protection of these natural resources in site plans to comply with state and federal law.

Below: Tilden Plaza



..... Strategies for Consideration

We recommend that New Lebanon pursue strategies that advance the community vision for more housing that supports affordable living, walkability, and a year-round customer base for local businesses in this part of town.

The most relevant strategies to achieve this long-term goal are related to zoning, infrastructure, and putting more detail to the community's vision for its downtown.

- The Town of New Lebanon adopted design standards for this part of town in 2024. During its comprehensive plan update, the town should consider whether these design standards provide the basis to adopt a form-based zoning code for this part of town. A form-based code would create a more cohesive look to new developments and revitalization projects, promote walkability and connectivity, and expedite the land-use approval process. A form-based code for this area might include guidelines for the following:
 - Building height
 - Building materials (i.e. wood, brick, fiber-cement)
 - Architectural features (i.e. cornices, trim, roof forms, window proportions)
 - Roof design
 - Façade transparency
 - Building orientation related to the street, sidewalks, or public spaces
 - Setbacks and build-to lines
 - Lot coverage
 - Landscaping
 - Business signage
 - Lighting standards
 - Connectivity to sidewalks, trails, bike parking, etc.
- If the town adopts a form-based code for its downtown area, we recommend it be accompanied by ordinances that protect the type of life desired New Lebanon. These might include ordinances for noise, polluting, lighting, and more.
- After consulting with state health authorities, New Lebanon is not currently in a position to reduce or eliminate the minimum lot size of 0.7 acres that is required in this part of town. However, that standard might be changed by the future establishment of water or sewer infrastructure. New Lebanon should revisit this issue if the water or sewer infrastructure is completed.
- The town should consider certain local-option tax credits that would allow the owners of existing buildings to rehabilitate and upgrade their structures to meet the downtown vision. For example, RPTL 485-a provides a tax exemption to the owners of properties who update their buildings to allow mixed use. For those buildings in New Lebanon that now only include business space, this local-option tax incentive would help them fund the cost of adding housing to the buildings. [A complete list of these exemptions can be found by clicking here.](#)

- The community should recognize that it is very difficult – and costly – to redevelop properties where buildings are already located. To facilitate this process, we recommend that New Lebanon partner with Columbia Economic Development Corporation (CEDC) to pursue some of the following three options:
 - Act as a matchmaker. New Lebanon could invite building owners, rural developers, mission-driven investors, the countywide land trust, and others to an annual discussion. This discussion could include zoning and public works updates from the town, a review of the vision for downtown, a presentation on rural development projects, and the status of key parcels in the New Lebanon downtown corridor. Importantly, these meetings would provide existing building owners with an opportunity to meet developers and mission-driven investors who might be interested in partnerships that would develop affordable housing and provide long-term public benefit in the downtown area.
 - Stitch together public philanthropy. Throughout our work on this report, the planning team met many benevolently minded people who were interested in donating their time, money, or land. New Lebanon might pursue a model of citizen philanthropy that is happening in the Ulster County town of Shandaken, where a group of citizens formed their own company, Wellington Blueberry LLC, to purchase a distressed historic hotel at the heart of their downtown. The community members all contributed their own money to purchase the property, and then they partnered with a reputable developer to access funds and incentives to rehabilitate the hotel as housing and a grocery store. More information on this project can be found here. [The Wellington – RUPCO](#)
 - Partner with Trillium. Introduce key building owners to Trillium Community Land Trust, which serves all of Columbia County. Trillium can access certain funds to purchase properties, own the land in perpetuity to preserve affordability, and work with reputable developers to develop the properties for housing, local business space, medical facilities, and other defined community needs. The property would be developed through a 99-year lease agreement with Trillium.
- New Lebanon should work with CEDC and other partners to monitor the potential return of Restore NY to the state’s Consolidated Funding Application process. Restore NY can provide critical funding to demolish deteriorated buildings, removing safety hazards and eliminating a major barrier to reinvestment. By offsetting the high costs of demolition and site preparation, the program makes it financially feasible to redevelop properties in ways that align with a community’s downtown vision. Once cleared, the site can be repositioned for new housing or mixed-use development that strengthens the walkable, vibrant character of New Lebanon’s town center. Working with private building owners, this fund might be suitable to remove some unutilized structures and make way for desired growth downtown.
- We recommend that New Lebanon keep a regular schedule for building inspection and enforcement. Adequate building inspection and enforcement ensures that new and existing structures are safe, well-maintained, and aligned with local codes—creating a reliable foundation for reinvestment. When property owners know that standards are consistently enforced, it levels the playing field and encourages quality renovation rather than deferred maintenance or substandard work. Strong inspection practices will also help to protect New Lebanon’s long-term vision for a vibrant, walkable downtown by ensuring that every parcel in the heart of town contributes positively to the overall character and economic health of the area.

2. Church of the Immaculate Conception

What New Lebanon said...

The residents of New Lebanon discussed the Church of Immaculate Conception as a location for both conservation and affordable housing, although most of the discussion was focused on housing. The church owns a significant amount of land on both sides of Route 20, about three-quarters of a mile away from the town's hamlet area. Residents identified these properties as preferred sites for future housing development. Neighbors also hoped that housing development on some of these lands would support the parish. It might provide income for the parish or homes for older parishioners who want to downsize and stay in New Lebanon. Discussions also focused on conserving the 1928 Shrine of Our Lady of Lourdes, a prominent grotto that includes a statue of the Blessed Virgin Mary that can be visited and seen from Route 20.

Existing conditions

Property: The properties owned by the Church of the Immaculate Conception total nearly 20 acres. This includes four parcels – including the church – that comprise about 12 acres on the north side of Route 20, and one parcel of about 8 acres on the south side of the highway. The parcels on the north side of Route 20 share a property line with the Corkscrew Rail Trail, and they abut a conservation easement owned by the Columbia Land Conservancy.

Zoning: The property is currently in the C-R zone, which allows mixed use. In the C-R Zone residential uses are subject to the area and bulk regulations applicable to the RA-1 District, including a minimum lot size of 1- acre. The commercial uses are subject to area and bulk regulations applicable to the Commercial District. Multifamily dwellings are permitted by Special Permit in the C-R.

Wetlands: The portion of the church's property on the south side of Route 20 is less suitable for development because it abuts the Wyomanock Creek. This parcel includes riparian wetlands and their legally required buffers.

Below: Church of the Immaculate Conception



..... Strategies for Consideration

The use of Catholic Church properties is subject to a decision-making process that involves local parish leaders and the regional archdiocese, in this case the Roman Catholic Diocese of Albany. This process is outlined in Canon Law.

Any request to use church property must originate from the parish of the Church of the Immaculate Conception. Parish leaders would bring that request to the diocese, which would vet the idea through its chancellor, bishop, finance committee, and a College of Consultors that advises the bishop on issues of administration and governance.

The entire process usually takes about 6-12 months. Any land that is transferred must be sold based on appraised values.

Given the process outlined by the Catholic Church, here are some strategies that New Lebanon could employ to explore the potential for a partnership with parishioners at Church of the Immaculate Conception:

- Open discussions with the parish leadership about the potential for housing on some of its properties. This conversation could happen with the Comprehensive Planning Committee, the Quality of Life Committee, or some other town-appointed group.
- Consider whether the current zoning, which requires 1-acre minimum lots, would maximize the opportunity of building housing on the church property. Given its proximity to local businesses, the rail trail corridor, and the center of town, allowances for additional housing might be appropriate. The Conservation Subdivision and Incentive zoning provisions should be considered to cluster the development and maximize the density and protection of important resources.
- Work with the church to explore partnerships – potentially with the local land trust – that could allow community ownership of the property with a revenue-sharing agreement that would help to support the parish in the decades ahead.
- Ensure that the Town of New Lebanon’s comprehensive plan includes design criteria that requires any housing to fit with the aesthetic of the church. This might include certain criteria about building size, materials, or design.
- If housing is eventually built on church property, ensure that the site plan includes a linkage to the Corkscrew Rail Trail corridor, which shares a back property line with some of the church-owned parcels. This would allow people living on the property to walk or bike to the center of town, access an important recreational amenity, and connect the church-owned lands to other key sites in New Lebanon.

3. Corkscrew Rail Trail

What New Lebanon said...

Residents in New Lebanon said they love the small sections of the Corkscrew Rail Trail that are currently open to the public. They expressed a desire to see a greater length of the former rail bed preserved and opened to the public. Many noted that a longer, more complete trail would be an asset for recreation, public health, and connectivity between the heart of town, established parks, and sites that might have additional housing in the future.

Existing conditions

The Corkscrew Rail Trail is located on the bed of the former Rutland Railroad, which ran approximately 57 miles from Chatham, New York to Bennington, Vermont. Freight and passenger service on the rail line ended in the early 1950s, and the ownership of the property eventually reverted to the owners of each parcel through which the rail bed traverses.

The section in New Lebanon stretches nearly 4 miles, running nearly parallel to Route 20 and Route 22. The western terminus is near County Route 9 and the eastern terminus is near Knapps Road.

A total of 20 different people, companies, nonprofits, and public entities own pieces of the rail bed as it passes through New Lebanon. The majority of the rail bed is privately owned. Some of those private owners do not allow access to the trail, while others allow access except during hunting season. Three segments of the trail – none of them contiguous – are owned by public entities or nonprofits. These segments total about 1.5 miles in length.

Trail advocates formed the Corkscrew Rail Trail Association (CRTA) in 2014 to establish and maintain the trail. The group owns a 0.5-mile section of the trail in New Lebanon near the Tilden Plaza. The volunteers aim to negotiate with the private landowners for additional permissions and easements to extend access to more of the trail.

Strategies for Consideration

Greater accessibility to the Corkscrew Rail Trail would provide many strategic benefits to the Town of New Lebanon. The trail connects the downtown area, the public school, Shatford Memorial Park, and several strategic sites that were identified during Room Enough for Both sessions as being important for future housing development or conservation. These include the Ski Lodge, the Church of the Immaculate Conception, Tilden Plaza, OTB, Midtown Mall, and the bowling alley. The trail would also connect easily to the future sidewalk district that is currently in the planning stages.

The town and the CRTA have been careful to respect private property rights. However, the public also has an interest in realizing the goal of a fully connected rail trail because of all the benefits it will provide for connectivity and walkability, recreation, public health, and integrating the goals of housing and conservation within the downtown area.

In light of that, the New Lebanon community should pursue the following actions:

- The town and the CRTA should host a bi-annual meeting with all the entities and people who own pieces of the rail trail. These meetings should focus on building a consensus for preservation, expanding permissions and easements for access, proactively addressing any challenges related to public use, and shared goals for the benefit of the public.
- The town, through its comprehensive plan and zoning, should take steps to ensure that no structures can be constructed on the former rail bed. This will preserve the potential of a contiguous, uninterrupted trail in the future.
- The comprehensive plan should also consider entry points to the trail that would help users access local business, future housing development sites, and improve access to existing conserved lands.
- The CRTA should collaborate with the Columbia Land Conservancy (CLC), or other experienced organizations, to regularly solicit easements that would establish community ownership and public access to more of the trail. An organization like CLC could also help the community pursue funds to purchase those easements and make upgrades to the trail.
- CRTA should meet with the Wallkill Valley Land Trust based in Ulster County to learn from its experience with expanding public trail access to a former rail bed. The land trust manages the Wallkill Valley Rail Trail which runs for more than 22 uninterrupted miles through the heart of Ulster County. Over the past 20 years, the land trust successfully filled many gaps in the trail through successful negotiations with private landowners and other strategies. The Wallkill Valley Land Trust dealt successfully with many of the challenges facing the CRTA, including private concerns about property values, trespassing, and other ramifications of establishing an easement. Learning from their experience would be valuable to the CRTA and the New Lebanon community. The CRTA could seek similar advice from the Harlem Valley Rail Trail Association in Columbia and Dutchess counties.
 - The CRTA could rent a bus and arrange for a field trip that would bring current owners of the rail corridor in New Lebanon to meet with the managers and neighbors at the Wallkill Valley Rail Trail or the Harlem Valley Rail Trail. This would give owners of the rail corridor a chance to learn about how their concerns have been mitigated in other communities, and how rights of way have been negotiated and secured.
- The CRTA should consider easement agreements that do not take effect until a certain number of contiguous owners agree to convey an easement. Private landowners are often concerned about being “the first one in.” Ensuring buy-in from a group of neighbors can help overcome these concerns.
- New Lebanon should consider whether a Community Preservation Fund, outlined in the glossary of terms, could help it raise the funds necessary to purchase easements, connect additional segments of the trail, and make upgrades that would connect the trail to local businesses and future housing developments.



Right: An entrance to the Cork Screw Rail Trail

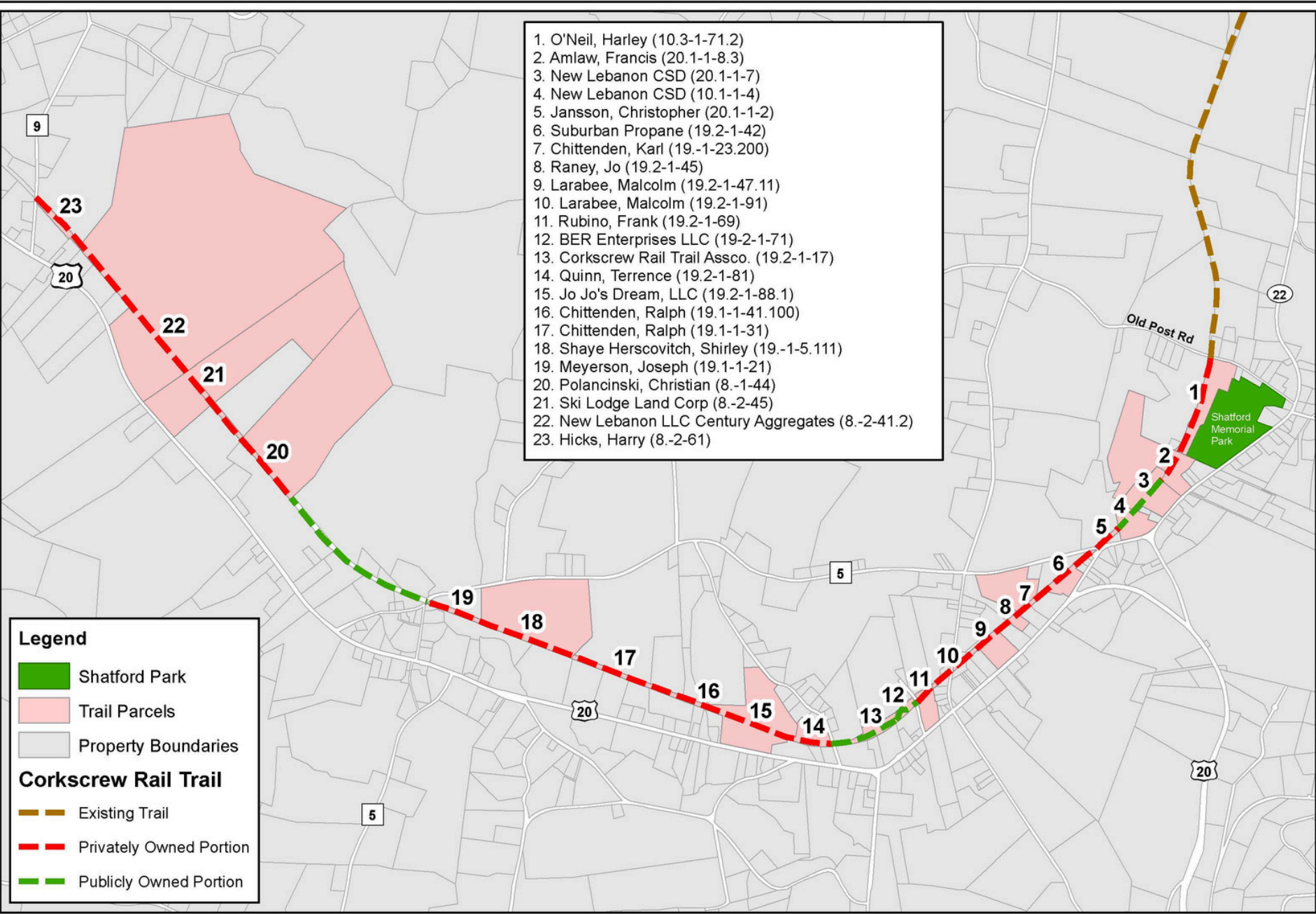
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3. New Lebanon CSD (20.1-1-7)
4. New Lebanon CSD (10.1-1-4)
5. Jansson, Christopher (20.1-1-2)
6. Suburban Propane (19.2-1-42)
7. Chittenden, Karl (19.-1-23.200)
8. Raney, Jo (19.2-1-45)
9. Larabee, Malcolm (19.2-1-47.11)
10. Larabee, Malcolm (19.2-1-91)
11. Rubino, Frank (19.2-1-69)
12. BER Enterprises LLC (19-2-1-71)
13. Corkscrew Rail Trail Assco. (19.2-1-17)
14. Quinn, Terrence (19.2-1-81)
15. Jo Jo's Dream, LLC (19.2-1-88.1)
16. Chittenden, Ralph (19.1-1-41.100)
17. Chittenden, Ralph (19.1-1-31)
18. Shaye Herscovitch, Shirley (19.-1-5.111)
19. Meyerson, Joseph (19.1-1-21)
20. Polancinski, Christian (8.-1-44)
21. Ski Lodge Land Corp (8.-2-45)
22. New Lebanon LLC Century Aggregates (8.-2-41.2)
23. Hicks, Harry (8.-2-61)

Legend

- Shatford Park
- Trail Parcels
- Property Boundaries

Corkscrew Rail Trail

- Existing Trail
- Privately Owned Portion
- Publicly Owned Portion




 1 inch = 2,600 feet

Town of New Lebanon
**Corkscrew Rail Trail
 Property Ownership**
 Columbia County March 10, 2022 New York

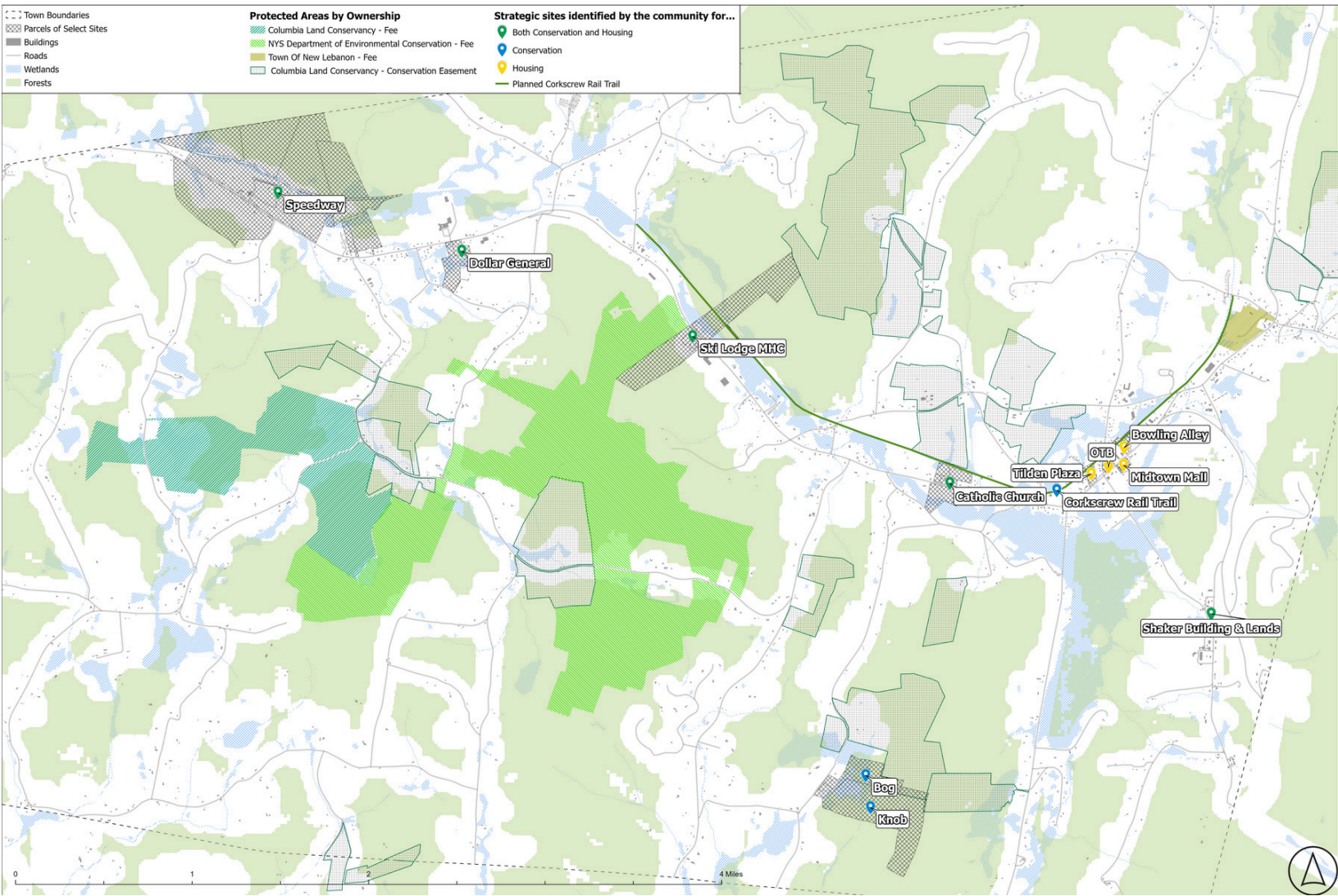
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4-2 West Lebanon Sites

West Lebanon Sites

The West Lebanon sites include three locations that were identified by the community. The Ski Lodge site was identified as a location for both affordable housing and conservation. It has the potential for the development of affordable homeownership options while preserving steep, forested lands that abut the Hand Hollow State Forest. The lands behind Dollar General were also identified as a place where housing could be constructed among a network of carefully preserved wetlands. The Lebanon Valley Speedway was also identified as a priority for both housing and conservation. Members of the community recognized that the developed portions of the speedway might one day be redeveloped as a small community or hamlet in West Lebanon, while its forests along the Kinderhook Creek are some of the highest value conservation lands in the entire town. These ideas are explored in more depth below.



1. Ski Lodge Parcels

What New Lebanon said...

The New Lebanon community identified the “Ski Lodge” property as a location that could support both affordable housing and land conservation. A relatively small portion of the 97-acre site is suitable for housing; it is currently occupied by a small number of apartments and manufactured homes. As noted later in this section, the developable portion of this property is underutilized and could support additional homes. Town residents also noted conservation priorities on the property. These include a steep and densely forested area adjacent to state-owned forest lands, and a riparian area along the Wyomanack Creek.

Existing conditions

Property: The property owned by the Ski Lodge Land Corp. comprises two parcels along Route 20. A 2-acre parcel on the south side of Route 20 includes two apartment buildings. A second parcel, measuring approximately 95 acres, spans both sides of the highway. The south side of this parcel includes a 1920s lodge-style structure and more than two dozen pad sites for manufactured homes. Because of steep slopes, streams, wetlands, and other natural features, only the property south of Route 20 is reasonably developable – and only the first 500 feet off the highway is flat enough for development without significant site-civil engineering.

Zoning: The smaller parcel is zoned C-I, which is designated for manufacturing, industrial, and commercial use with access to the highway. The larger lot is zoned C-R along the highway for a mix of commercial uses and residential uses that comply with the town’s RA-1 zone. The portions of the 95-acre parcel that are farthest away from the highway are zoned RA-5.

Natural resources: On the north side of Route 20, the Wyomanack Creek runs at the bottom of a steep ridge. This area includes significant stretches of freshwater wetlands, along with habitats for rare aquatic species and coldwater fish. The parcels on the southern side of Route 20 are immediately adjacent to DEC’s Hand Hollow State Forest, which includes a small tributary and habitat for rare aquatic animals.



Above: The Ski Lodge property as seen from Route 20.

..... Strategies for Consideration

The Ski Lodge Land Corp. properties are suitable for both affordable housing and conservation. From a housing perspective, this property has central water and sewer and more than two dozen permitted pad sites that could accommodate manufactured homes. This makes the property suitable for modern manufactured homes that could provide an entry point to homeownership in New Lebanon.

- As part of the comprehensive plan update, New Lebanon should consider rezoning the developable portion of the southern parcel along Route 20 to ensure that a mix of housing uses are permitted by right. This would allow the existing housing to be supplemented by additional manufactured homes, apartments, or other forms of affordable housing that could take advantage of the centralized water and sewer. The current uses are likely grandfathered in, as they do not match the industrial/commercial zoning.
- Working with the private landowner, the town and its partners should consider whether the developable portion would be suitable for MOVE-IN NY, a program administered by NYS Homes & Community Renewal. This program provides funding to municipalities, land banks, or nonprofits for the development of CrossMods, a new form of manufactured home that is built modularly. This program could establish new, modern, entry-level homebuyer opportunities for people in New Lebanon. Approximately 24 additional homes could be sited on the property, according to current property inventory records. The Columbia County Land Bank Corporation would be a helpful partner in this effort. More about MOVE-IN NY can be found by going here: <https://hcr.ny.gov/MoveInNY>



Left: A modular home in Syracuse built through the MOVE-IN NY program. Photo courtesy of the State of New York.

- The Ski Lodge Land Corp. could also explore the long-term conservation of its undevelopable lands. Working with the Town of New Lebanon, the owners could start discussions with DEC or the Columbia Land Conservancy to gauge interest in acquiring the lands that would effectively expand the Hand Hollow State Forest by approximately 70 acres. Revenue from this acquisition could be used to upgrade and expand the housing on the south parcel. An access point to the Hand Hollow State Forest could be created for those living in the new and existing homes. Although it is separated from the state forest by the highway, the north property would also be suitable for conservation because of its frontage along the Wyomanack Creek, its steep slopes, and its forests.

2. Dollar General Subdivision Parcels

What New Lebanon said...

When the Dollar General was built along Route 20, the driveway to the store was extended to the back of the property line because the town hoped that several parcels behind the store might one day be developed as a mixed-use community or as housing alone. The New Lebanon community said those goals are still worth pursuing, especially because the site is strategically located across the highway from the Walter B. Howard Elementary School. The public shared several different visions for these parcels during the planning sessions. Some thought the site might be suitable for affordable homes to be constructed by Columbia-Greene Habitat for Humanity. Others believed the properties could be developed as a small hamlet-style community, with a mix of business and housing space, creating a walkable neighborhood to the school and the Dollar General.

Existing conditions

Property: The Dollar General was built on a property that was subdivided. The store sits on a 3.6-acre lot, and a second lot behind the store comprises 18.2 acres. The driveway to the store was extended to the back property line to one day facilitate the development of the back lot as a small community of homes or mixed uses. with the idea that the back lot could be developed as a small community of homes or mixed uses.

Zoning: The front portion of the property is located in the C-I District, which allows for manufacturing, industrial and large commercial development in an area having adequate access to highways. The back portion is mostly in the RA-1 district, although a small wedge of the land is in the RA-5.

Natural resources: Compared to other parcels that were identified for future affordable housing in New Lebanon, the properties behind Dollar General are more constrained by natural features that should be protected. These lands include a tributary to the Wyomanack Creek, significant wetlands and wetland soils that cover about 50% of the total parcel areas, and the lands are known to have habitat for rare aquatic animals, according to the state's natural resource database. These natural features and habitats would need to be considered by the town as part of any action to develop the property.



Above: The Dollar General and an extended driveway that leads to a vacant lot behind the store.

..... Strategies for Consideration

- The town could facilitate a discussion between the property owner and Columbia-Greene Habitat for Humanity to understand whether the land could be purchased at a reasonable cost and developed through Habitat’s new Rural Starter Home Initiative (RSHI). The RSHI is using simple forms and green technology to build homeownership opportunities for people making 50–75% of the area median income. Housing data show that this is a key market in New Lebanon.
- Through the comprehensive planning process, consider new zoning that would allow mixed-use development on the parcels, with an eye toward a hamlet-style development that would complement the store and the school.
 - Explore the potential for a community septic system, a shared wastewater treatment system that collects and treats sewage from multiple homes or buildings using a centralized leach field or treatment facility instead of individual septic tanks on each property. This small-scale solution might allow greater density at the site while being protective of the adjacent wetlands.
- If design guidelines are developed for the downtown area in New Lebanon, consider whether they should also apply to these properties so that a consistent look and feel is encouraged in all the walkable sections of town.
- The town should consider an approach that allows development while protecting the significant wetlands and aquatic habitats that are located at the site. This might include allowing a cluster development through the Conservation Subdivision provisions to minimize disturbance and a robust wetland buffer zone that utilizes native vegetation to maintain habitat protection and connectivity.

3. Lebanon Valley Speedway

..... What New Lebanon said... ..

New Lebanon residents expressed their appreciation for the Lebanon Valley Speedway as a local employer, a fun place to watch dirt-track racing and other events, and an important tradition in their town. The community also acknowledged that the Speedway would be a viable location for both housing and preservation in the future if the track could not stay open or the owner chose to sell the property. Many believed the already-developed portions of the property would be suitable for affordable housing or mixed-use development in West Lebanon. And the community also recognized that the Speedway land holdings include areas of forested steep slopes and a portion of the Kinderhook Creek that would be suitable for preservation.

..... Existing conditions

Property: The Lebanon Valley Speedway and its surrounding forest lands comprise approximately 423 acres. The developed portions of the property total about 93 acres for facilities associated with the speedway and parking.

Zoning: The bulk of the property is currently zoned C-R or C-Rec. The racetrack itself is zone C-Rec, which allows for retail and non-residential uses that meet the needs of the community and add to the economic base. This zone allows 50% lot coverage by buildings, and it allows zero housing. The 85-acre parcel across Route 20 from the speedway is zoned C-R, which allows mixed-use development. Housing in the C-R zone must be consistent with the RA-1 zone, which requires 1-acre minimum lots. Commercial activities in the C-R zone must be consistent with the C Zoning District, which allows for smaller lots and 75% parcel coverage by buildings. Two of the parcels adjacent to the speedway are zoned for residential uses only. The 70-acre parcel immediately east of the speedway requires 5-acre minimum zoning for homes; the 15-acre parcel immediately to the southeast allows housing development on 1-acre minimum lots. If the town and private landowners envision a cohesive development plan for the future of the Speedway properties, we recommend that New Lebanon update the zoning in this part of the town for better alignment. The current zoning, which includes a patchwork of uses and densities, would not allow a cohesive development without significant variances or special use permits.

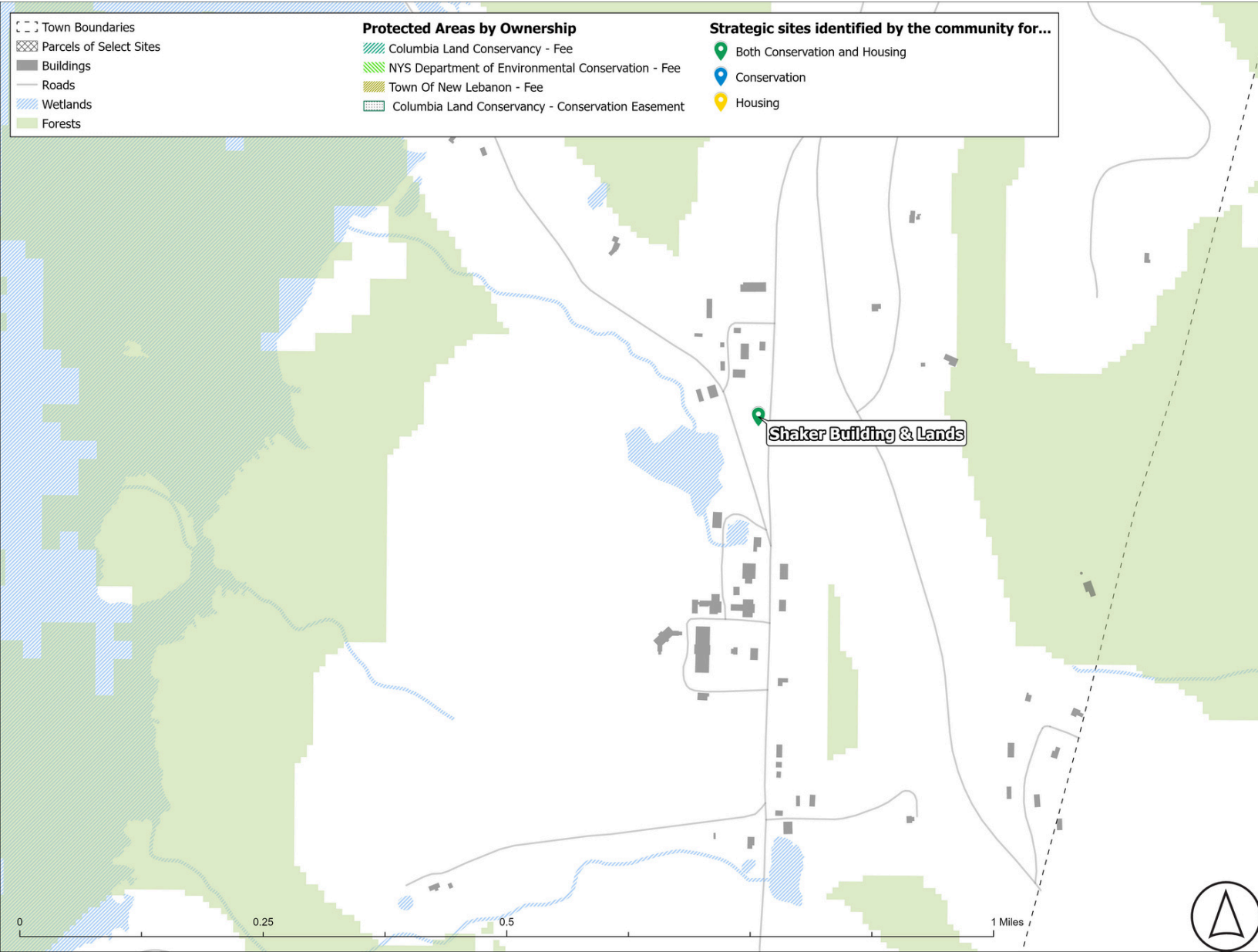
Natural resources: The Speedway is bracketed by significant slopes and forested land to the north and south. Some of the forest lands to the north, along the Rensselaer County border, score among the highest in the region for forest condition and the connect to regionally significant forests that stretch into Massachusetts and Vermont. The Kinderhook Creek flows along the northern edge of the Speedway property. This area is also home to important aquatic animals, migratory fish, and cold water habitats, according to the state's natural resource database.

..... Strategies for Consideration

- Through its comprehensive planning process, New Lebanon should explore zoning tools that would allow for both the future large-site development of the Speedway and the preservation of the forests, wetlands and other natural areas that surround the developed parcels. These might include:
 - Creation of a special mixed-use or planned unit development district that is tailored for large-site redevelopment; allows for a mix of uses, housing types, and community facilities; requires the submittal of a master plan showing building locations, preserved open space, and other key elements.
 - Because of the uniquely large scale of this site, we recommend the town require a mix of affordable housing types that match the feedback provided by the community during the Room Enough for Both planning process. This would include some single-family and multi-family ownership models, townhomes and cottages, senior apartments, and other homes that meet the full spectrum of need for people in New Lebanon.
 - Sharpening the town’s conservation subdivision process so that homes could be clustered on the racetrack site in exchange for permanent preservation of the forests and Kinderhook Creek corridor.
 - Explore overlay districts that would apply heightened protections to the forests, mountains and the creek regardless of ownership, thereby limiting the disturbance of key habitats and natural areas.
 - Encourage application of the existing incentive zoning provisions. The Planning Board is authorized to adjust the maximum density requirements of the zoning district in exchange for the permanent preservation of not less than 50% of the gross land area of the proposed subdivision.
- As it considers a density bonus, New Lebanon could calculate the total density by using a model similar to a transfer of development rights (TDR). This would allow the property owner to sell, or in this case transfer, the unused development potential from conservation areas into a designated “receiving area” (the track and parking lots) to allow higher density development where it is most appropriate. This would shift development away from the protected lands and concentrate it on those that have already been developed as part of the Speedway.
- The town could encourage the current owner of the Speedway to work with a land trust or regional conservation organization to secure conservation easements for the mountain and forest areas, preserving forest connectivity in this important interstate corridor.
- New Lebanon should consider applying its downtown design guidelines to the Speedway site. If a large-site development was ever proposed at the Speedway, the design guidelines would ensure it has an aesthetic and architectural qualities that are consistent with other portions of the town where housing and businesses are concentrated more densely.

- Because of its proximity to the creek, coldwater habitat, and rare aquatic species, the town might require any development at the site to meet high standards for stormwater management to reduce turbid or nutrient-laden runoff. This might include the use of bioswales, retention ponds, permeable pavement, and the maintenance of vegetated corridors to reduce runoff and protect wildlife habitats.
 - Because the Kinderhook Creek and Wyomanock Creek have been designated as “Coastal and Designated Inland Waterways” by the State of New York, New Lebanon would be eligible for planning and implementation funds for such projects. More information about that program can be found here: <https://dos.ny.gov/RFA-24-OPDBA-22>
- The town should consider an approach that allows development while protecting the significant wetlands and aquatic habitats that are located at the site. This might include allowing a cluster development to minimize disturbance and a robust wetland buffer zone that utilizes native vegetation to maintain habitat protection and connectivity.
- The Corkscrew Rail Trail terminus is located at Route 9 (S. Stephentown Road), about 2.25 miles away from the Speedway properties. As part of any development plans, the town should consider whether a feasible right-of-way could be mapped to connect the Speedway to the main body of the rail trail. Although it might take decades, if the Speedway were developed as a hamlet-style development in West Lebanon and the current heart of New Lebanon was improved with sidewalks, wastewater, and drinking water, the trail would be a unique connection between the two population centers in a vibrant rural town.

4-3 Shaker Swamp and Neighboring Properties



1. Shaker Swamp

What New Lebanon said...

New Lebanon residents expressed strong interest in preserving the essential natural, historic and cultural qualities of the sites, including its history of communal living, agriculture, and support of people looking to live as one with nature in an affordable way. Many noted it as an architectural treasure and cultural asset that is relatively well-preserved, though some of the buildings were removed long ago and others are not in good condition. The site and history brought a sense of community and natural ability to congregate. Other residents noted the importance in its open space, views of the valley, aquifer/water supply, land and wildlife, open trails to the public, and unique life-healing plants. Many members of the community expressed their desire to preserve this special place – which creates a special identity within New Lebanon – while also restoring or expanding some of the historic structures that historically served as housing.

Existing conditions

Property: The Shaker properties and Shaker Swamp are a collection of properties that are generally situated between Routes 20 and 22, the Massachusetts border, and the Canaan town line. This is a unique part of New Lebanon, given its mix of important historic and conservation resources. The Shakers in New Lebanon, NY established their Mount Lebanon community in the 1780s, which became the central and most influential Shaker village in the United States. Known for their innovations, craftsmanship, and communal living, the New Lebanon Shakers helped shape Shaker religious, architectural, and agricultural practices nationwide. Many structures and artifacts remain in this portion of town, including the meeting house and great stone barn. Although there is no official district or boundary that denotes the historic Shaker areas, they generally comprise about 750 acres of land that are now owned by the Mount Lebanon Heritage Foundation, the Darrow School, the Shaker Museum & Library, and the Abode of the Message Inc. The Scenic Hudson Land Trust has secured a New York State New York State Forest Conservation for Land Trusts grant to purchase a conservation easement on a large portion of a parcel that includes land in New Lebanon and Canaan, with the remaining portions of the site containing existing and proposed residences and farm-related infrastructure. The Shaker area also is home to the Shaker Swamp, a nearly 500-acre freshwater wetland, part of which is already subject to a conservation easement, along with agricultural lands and a highly visible and steeply sloped hillside. The area abuts the Bates Memorial State Park in neighboring Massachusetts.

Zoning: The Shaker lands outside the Shaker Swamp area are generally zoned RA-2 and RA-5, which allow homes on a minimum of 2-acre or 5-acre lots respectively. Other housing is allowed through special permit, including multifamily dwellings. The Planning Board may require in some instances or request that the applicant propose a Conservation Subdivision arranged to protect important resources. The Planning Board is also authorized to adjust the maximum density requirements of the zoning district in exchange for the permanent preservation of not less than 50% of the gross land area of the proposed subdivision.

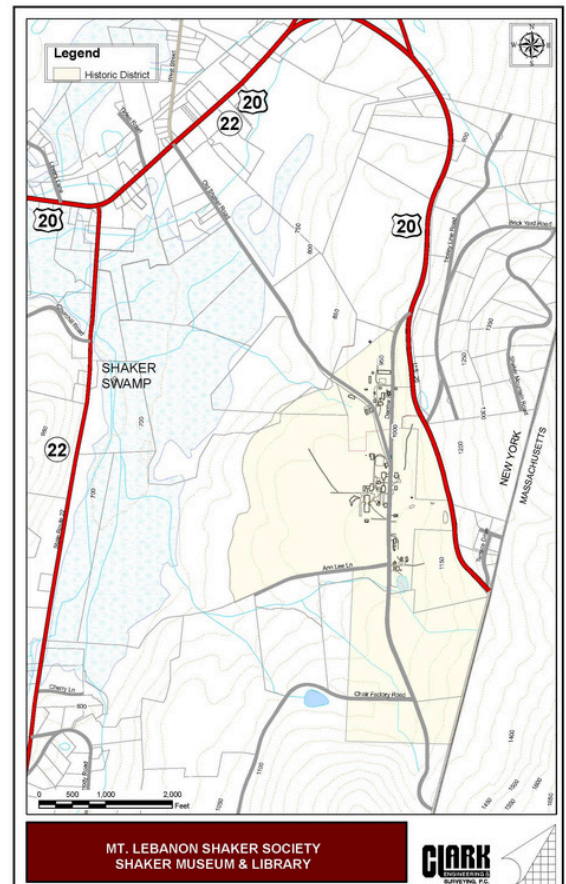
Natural Resources: This section of New Lebanon is home to some of the most unique and important natural features in Columbia County and the wider region. In addition to the Shaker Swamp, which is explained above, this easternmost portion of New Lebanon is home to a significant biodiversity area and significant natural communities, according to state inventories. The Wyomanack Creek and its tributaries also provide important coldwater fish habitat in this portion of New Lebanon. The lands along the New Lebanon / Massachusetts border area are also part of an uninterrupted forest that spans from central Dutchess County, into Columbia County and Massachusetts, and as far north as Rutland, Vermont. While the nearly 500 acres of wetlands and wetland soils associated with the Shaker Swamp stand out as the most identifying resource in this part of New Lebanon, many of the other habitats and forest are also uniquely connected, making them a high priority for conservation.

..... **Strategies for Consideration**

The area presents opportunity to conserve its significant historic, cultural, and conservation resources, while encouraging the reuse of existing structures and incentivizing targeted concentration of new affordable housing in and immediately surrounding the existing pockets of development.

We recommend that the community consider several strategies to achieve the compatible goals of housing preservation and development, and the conservation of the significant natural resources that make this portion of New Lebanon so unique.

- Continue to work with the Shaker Preservation Committee on policies that balance conservation and housing. The committee is already discussing the creation of a formal historic district and modified zoning that would permit overnight lodging to help property owners generate revenue to maintain their historic structures. These strategies and others should be balanced with the community’s desire to protect the Shaker Swamp and the open space that surrounds it.
- The Shaker Swamp Conservancy recently completed a feasibility study for a trail that would create opportunities for outdoor recreation and experiential learning around the Shaker Swamp. The study can be found here: <https://shakerswamp.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/07/2023r-Shaker-Swamp-Feasibility-Study.pdf> We recommend that New Lebanon and the conservancy continue discussions with New York State DEC about the potential to fund such a project while adequately protecting natural resources. The state’s Bashakill Wildlife Management Area, also located amid a large wetland complex, provides a working example of how this kind of trail can coexist with sensitive habitats.



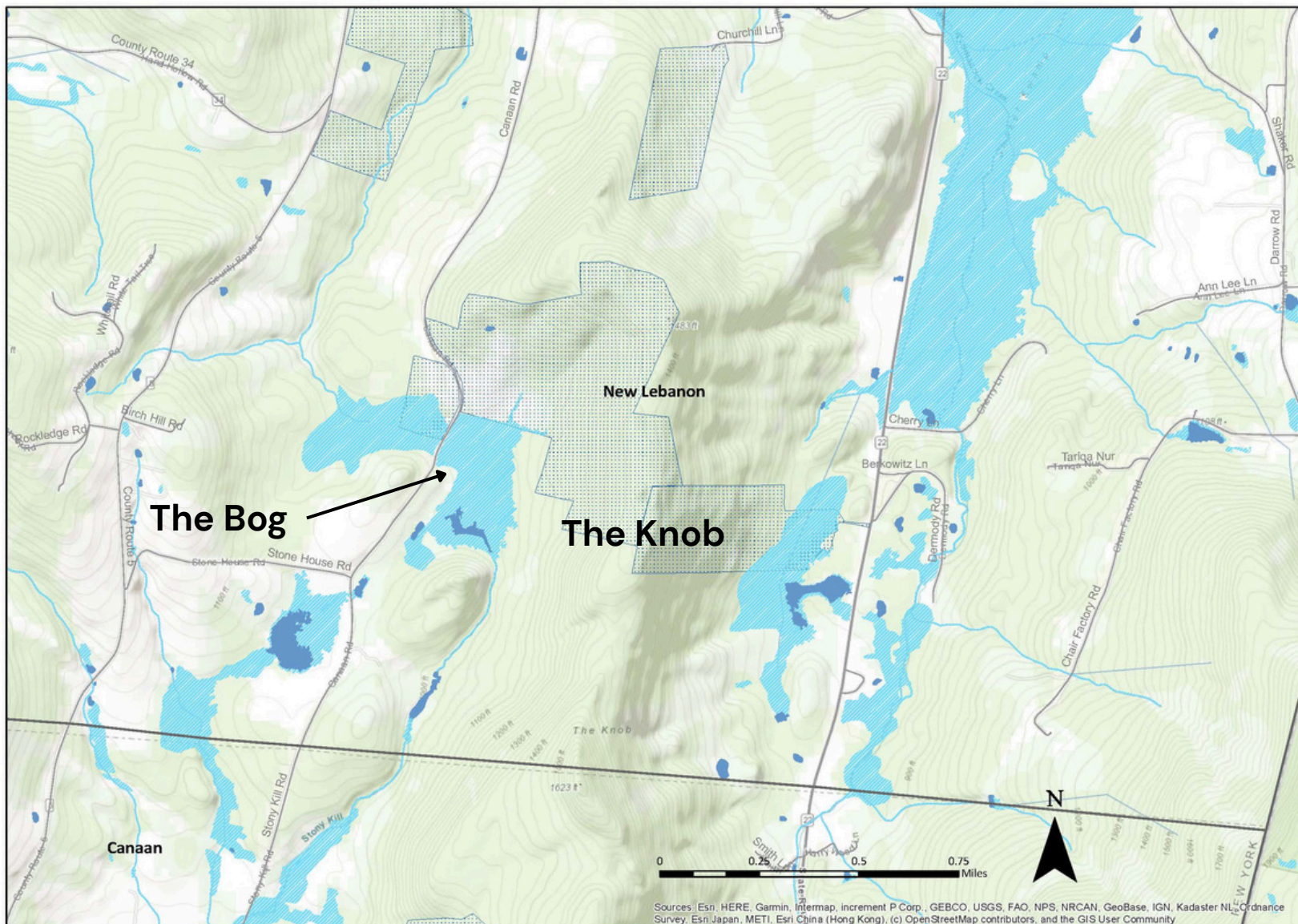
- Consider a requirement for conservation subdivisions for all developments greater than a certain number of housing units, with a clear delineation of important contiguous conservation resources to be set aside, so that if over time there are multiple conservation subdivisions, the conservation resources remain ecologically viable and connected.
- Consider designating Shaker Swamp a Critical Environmental Area (CEA) pursuant to State Environmental Quality Review regulations.
- Related to the above, the town could also consider creating a conservation overlay zone that would lay out a conservation design process for parcels of a certain size to minimize the risk that new development could impair significant conservation resources.
- Evaluate the Town of Red Hook (Dutchess County) § 143-49.2 Open Space Incentive Zoning provisions and consider expanding current town incentive zoning to allow for cash payment to a dedicated incentive zoning reserve fund for utilization by the town for the permanent protection of open space and for affordable housing projects in the town. The municipal attorney should be consulted to ensure new legislation is drafted and implemented appropriately.
- Institute a TDR program to transfer density away from conservation areas and into the already developed places in the Shaker area and the "town center" where new sidewalks and water and sewer infrastructure are anticipated. In the Shaker Swamp area, a TDR would allow landowners in environmentally sensitive areas and the associated open space – or "sending areas" – to sell their unused development potential to developers in designated "receiving areas" where higher-density development is more appropriate. This would shift development away from the Shaker Swamp, critical habitats, and connected forests, and concentrate it in locations with infrastructure and community support for growth.
- Encourage conservation land trusts and the owners of larger parcels to work together to preserve the open land. Create a mechanism by which proceeds from the sale of conservation easements could be used for new housing or the restoration of existing housing within the designated area. This strategy would achieve both the preservation of critical natural areas and the rehabilitation of housing that supports affordable, communal living within New Lebanon.

Below: Shaker Swamp



4-4 The Knob and The Bog

- Municipality
- Road
- Stream
- Forests
- Wetlands
- Pond or Lake
- Columbia Land Conservancy - Conservation Easement



What New Lebanon said...

Residents noted the natural features in the southeast corner of New Lebanon, especially “The Knob,” a high-elevation, steep-sided ridge, and “The Bog,” a circumneutral bog lake. They cited the biodiversity values of this relatively undeveloped area, including forests, streams, and unusual wetlands such as vernal pools and the circumneutral bog lake, and the wildlife and plants they encounter there. They also enjoy the recreational opportunities provided by the Knob and Bog area—hiking, birdwatching, and cross-country skiing. Residents described The Bog as a “magical, special environment” and appreciate the beautiful views from the top of The Knob.

4-4 The Knob and The Bog

Existing conditions

Property: There is varied private ownership of The Knob, which extends south into the Town of Canaan, with most parcels sharing a boundary along the ridgeline and extending east to Route 22 or west to Canaan Road. A large parcel (180 acres) containing the summit, an adjacent parcel (64 acres) on the eastern slope, and another on the northern slope (40 acres) are under private easement through the Columbia Land Conservancy. The parcels containing The Bog are privately owned by two landowners.

Zoning: The Knob and Bog lands are primarily in RA-5 zoning, with road corridors to the east and west zoned RA-2 and to the north, RA-1. RA-5 requires minimum of 5-acre lots and encourages agricultural operations and open space preservation and allows very-low-density residential development and protection of open spaces and natural resources.

Natural resources: The Knob reaches 1,214 ft and is situated on a rocky, forested ridge that extends south into the Town of Canaan. There is also an adjacent knoll, the “Little Knob,” with a limestone ledge with occurrences of calcium-loving plants that are rare or uncommon in Columbia County. The large, contiguous forest patch that spans the Knob ridge has been identified for its ecological significance, scoring in the top 2% of Hudson Valley forests due in particular to the interior forest core habitat that is important for area-sensitive wildlife. The Knob supports an especially high-quality beech-maple forest mapped by the New York Natural Heritage Program (NYNHP) and is in one of the linkage zones identified by The Nature Conservancy and NYNHP for providing important landscape connectivity for wildlife to move between habitats. These kinds of large, unfragmented forests are also critical for maintaining clean water and adapting to climate change.

The Bog is part of a wetland complex between Canaan Road and the western slope of The Knob, and is part of the Stony Kill watershed. The wetland is a circumneutral bog lake, an uncommon habitat type in the region. They are spring-fed, calcareous waterbodies that support vegetation of both acidic bogs and calcareous marshes, and provide habitat for a number of rare plants and animals.

Strategies for Consideration

From a conservation standpoint, the Knob and Bog area can be considered a complex of connected natural areas that would benefit from similar or coordinated approaches that account for the broader landscape. Opportunities can include private land stewardship and land protection, as well as municipal policy. It is recommended that the town revisit and implement appropriate recommendations for the “Rocky Foothills” conservation area identified in the Town of New Lebanon Natural Resource Conservation Plan (2017).

Private Landowner Stewardship Opportunities

Willing property owners can consider how to manage or protect their land to contribute to the larger ecological function of the Knob and Bog area. Opportunities for landowners include:

- **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

Municipalities have broad authority for pursuing policy actions to protect their conservation priorities. New Lebanon can build on its track record to advance conservation in the Knob and Bog area. Opportunities to apply local policy include:

- **Critical Environmental Areas (CEA) and Conservation Overlay Zoning** – Adopts tools that will enable consideration of the Knob and Bog area as a cohesive area; these can include designation of CEAs or conservation overlay zoning, which provides a stronger regulatory control than a CEA. Because The Knob extends south into the Town of Canaan, intermunicipal approaches can be pursued to ensure conservation strategies that consider the entirety of the natural feature. An example of this is Stissing Mountain, which spans the border between Pine Plains and Stanford in Dutchess County; there are CEAs designated in both towns to protect the mountain, adjacent habitats, water quality, and scenic views. New Lebanon has successfully adopted CEAs to protect local priorities in the past.

Conservation overlay zoning adds new standards to the existing, underlying zoning and can help to direct development away from environmentally sensitive areas. Like CEAs, overlay district boundaries can be drawn around natural features or resource areas of value; however, unlike CEAs, the overlay zone provides greater regulatory authority over density, use, and other factors that might impact the quality of the area. Given the 5-acre zoning that exists in the Knob and Bog area, the possibility of fragmentation is a threat to the ecological integrity and values expressed by the community; an overlay zone could be designed to avoid the impacts of unintended sprawl.

- **Conservation Financing** – Pursue local financing mechanisms to acquire and manage open space lands. Options include seeking authorization from the state to adopt a CPF. In Columbia County, the Town of Chatham approved a local CPF in 2023. Additional local financing models include the Town of Bethlehem (Albany County) Conservation Easement Exemption Program and Farms & Forests Fund.
- **Tax Incentives** – Consider a tax incentive for owners of lands with significant habitats that are priorities for New Lebanon, such as forest or wetlands, to help support their conservation and stewardship (see Town of Nassau’s Grassland Law, June 2025 as a model).

5 How to Create *Room Enough for Both* – Next Steps

Throughout the work on Room Enough for Both, the technical team was grateful to have experienced the amazing civic energy that pervades New Lebanon. It is a place where neighbors actively participate in discussions and decisions about the future of their community. That same civic energy, combined with a focus on prioritizing and sequencing actions, will help the community move forward with the recommendations in this report.

Here are some ideas for implementing the recommendations contained in the report:

- The Town Supervisor should review the report with the leaders of the town’s land use boards, Business & Economic Development Committee, Climate Smart Committee, Quality of Life Committee, Conservation Advisory Committee, Recreation Committee, Shaker Preservation Committee, and the Zoning Re-Write Committee.
 - The leaders of these groups should identify 5–10 actions from this report that are the most important and feasible to start working on now.
 - New Lebanon should make sure that conservation and affordable housing leaders are working on each item together to maintain the *Room Enough for Both* ethos.
- Create a plan to be in touch with public and private entities who play a role in achieving the goals in this report.
 - Meet with the Land Bank and Trillium to discuss their role in certain actions (i.e. administering funds to build CrossMods at the Ski Lodge site).
 - Invite owners of the downtown buildings to an annual meeting with developers and investors to learn about upcoming actions by the town (i.e. sidewalks, water/wastewater district, upcoming comprehensive plan update).
 - Create recurring, annual calendar alarms with the Supervisor, Town Clerk and other key staff to pursue certain actions at regular intervals. For many of these recommendations, periodic follow-up will be one of the keys to success.
- Incorporate the recommendations from Room Enough for Both into New Lebanon’s comprehensive planning update.
 - Make sure that community leaders related to conservation and affordable housing are integrated in all discussions. Do not establish separate planning processes or committees for these community-wide imperatives.
 - Highlight recommendations from this report that belong in the discussions about the comprehensive planning update.
 - Seek sources of funding that would allow you to have the technical assistance to incorporate these ideas into your comprehensive plan and zoning code. The following are funding sources that New Lebanon could pursue to support its comprehensive plan update:

1. **The NYS Department of State Smart Growth Community Planning and Zoning Grant Program** - <https://dos.ny.gov/smart-growth-community-planning-and-zoning-grant-program-24-opdsg-5> - This source of funding is very competitive, with some communities waiting several years before they receive an award. However, the funds are meant for updates to comprehensive plans and zoning codes.
2. **NYS Local Waterfront Revitalization Program (LWRP)** - <https://dos.ny.gov/local-waterfront-revitalization-program> - Because New Lebanon is home to two state-designated inland waterways, it is eligible for planning grants through the LWRP.
3. **Hudson River Valley Greenway Communities Grant** - [Grants & Funding | Hudson River Valley Greenway](#) - As a Greenway community, New Lebanon is eligible for an annual grant that will help with economic development and conservation planning.
4. **ESD Strategic Planning and Feasibility Studies** - <https://esd.ny.gov/strategic-planning-and-feasibility-studies-program> - Although these studies generally have to 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.
5. **HCR Technical Assistance to Grow Pro-Housing Communities** - <https://hcr.ny.gov/tagphc> - By demonstrating that a considerable portion of its comprehensive planning update will focus on housing, New Lebanon could qualify for dollars to receive technical assistance through this new program.
6. **Berkshire Taconic Community Foundation** - <https://www.berkshiretaconic.org/> - The foundation manages the Fund for Columbia County, which makes grants to create a positive and lasting impact in communities. These funds could help match those from smaller grant programs, such as the Hudson River Valley Greenway.

6 Appendices

Appendix A – Housing Needs Report

Appendix B– Summary of Housing Developers Forum

Appendix C – Summary of Community Conversation No. 1, held May 22, 2025

Appendix D – Other New Lebanon Plans Referenced in this Report



**TOWN OF NEW LEBANON
HOUSING PROFILE**

TOWN OF NEW LEBANON

POPULATION AND HOUSING COST CHANGE

POPULATION CHANGE

	2013	2023	Change 2013 - 2023	Percent Change 2013 - 2023
<20	585	337	-248	-42%
20-29	224	400	176	79%
30-44	254	323	69	27%
45-64	895	775	-120	-13%
65-74	260	238	-22	-8%
75-84	135	215	80	59%
85+	49	53	4	8%
Total	2,402	2,341	-61	-3%

MEDIAN MONTHLY RENT

	2013	2023	Change 2013 - 2023	Percent Change 2013 - 2023
Town of New Lebanon	\$854	\$1,143	\$289	34%
Columbia County	\$851	\$1,199	\$348	41%

MEDIAN HOUSING COSTS FOR HOMEOWNERS

	2013	2023	Change 2013 - 2023	Percent Change 2013 - 2023
Town of New Lebanon	\$1,206	\$1,435	\$229	19%
Columbia County	\$1,200	\$1,354	\$154	13%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau - American Community Survey 5-year Estimates, 2013 and 2023

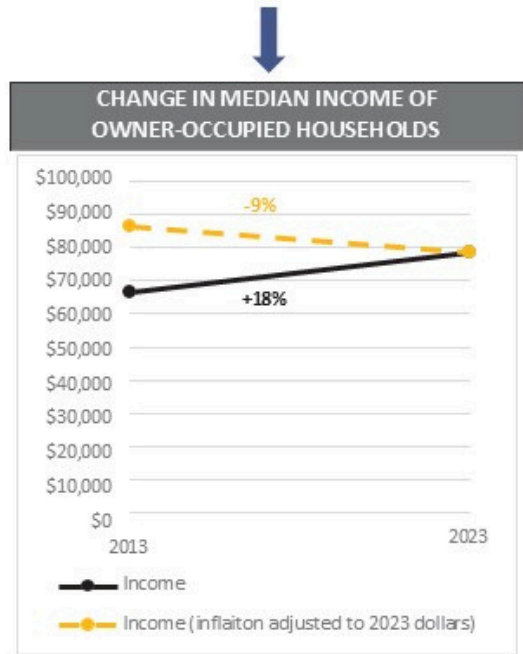
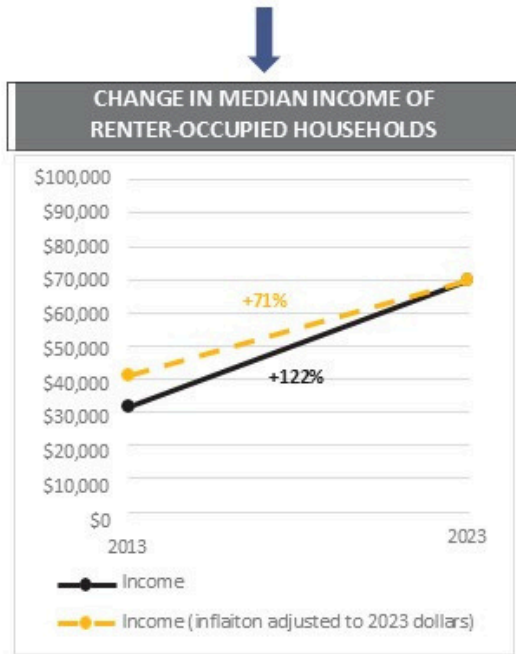
TOWN OF NEW LEBANON

RENTERS AND OWNERS

TOTAL HOUSING UNITS	
1,219	

OCCUPIED HOUSING UNITS		VACANT HOUSING UNITS	
Occupied (count)	Occupied (%)	Vacant (count)	Vacant (%)
944	77%	275 <small>* see data note</small>	23%

RENTER-OCCUPIED HOUSING UNITS		OWNER-OCCUPIED HOUSING UNITS	
Renter-Occupied (count)	Renter-Occupied (%)	Owner-Occupied (count)	Owner-Occupied (%)
146	15%	798	85%



Source: Decennial Census, 2000; American Community Survey 5-year Estimates, 2013 and 2023
 *Data Note: Vacancy figure includes 168 units categorized as "For seasonal, recreational, or occasional use"

TOWN OF NEW LEBANON

HOME SALES TRENDS

Residential Sales Trends									
	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Median Sale Price	\$170,000	\$191,000	\$197,950	\$270,750	\$222,500	\$249,500	\$215,000	\$287,000	\$270,000
Number of Sales	17	10	18	12	26	16	25	23	14

Source: NYS Department of Real Property Tax Services

HOMEOWNERSHIP AFFORDABILITY MATRIX

Underwriting Scenario Single Family Homes	2023 HUD County Area Median Income (AMI)		New Lebanon Median Income (2023 ACS)
	80%	100%	
Annual Household Income	\$75,100	\$103,000	\$77,000
Monthly Household Income	\$6,258	\$8,583	\$6,417
Affordable Housing Payment (28% of Income)	\$1,752	\$2,403	\$1,797
Affordable Home Price based on Income	\$181,000	\$275,000	\$202,000
Estimated Insurance and Private Mortgage Insurance	\$226	\$292	\$241
Estimated Average Real Estate Taxes per Month	\$263	\$263	\$294
Affordable Mortgage Payment (30 yrs @ 6.87%)	\$1,129	\$1,715	\$1,260
5% Down Payment	\$9,050	\$13,750	\$10,100
Affordable Home Mortgage	\$171,950	\$261,250	\$191,900
Median Home Price in Municipality	\$270,000	\$270,000	\$270,000
Gap Between Median Sale Price and Affordable Price	-\$89,000	\$5,000	-\$68,000

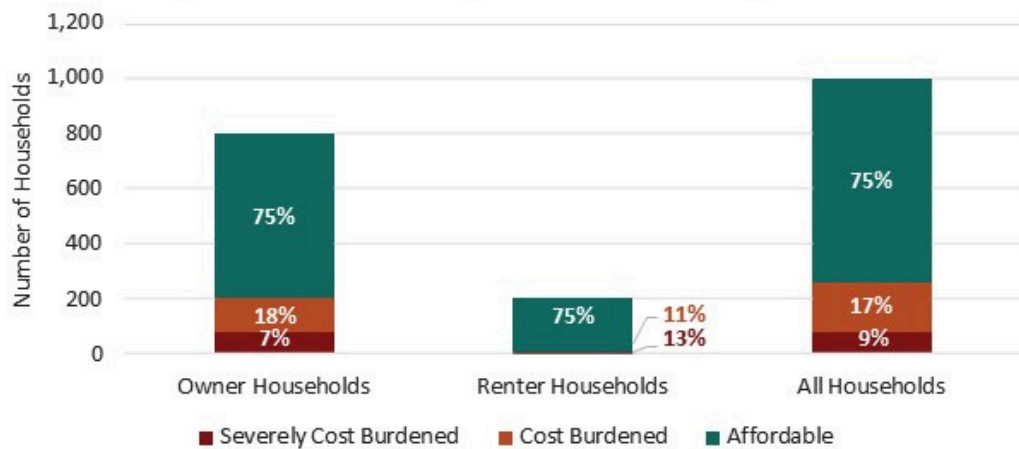
Source: NYS Department of Real Property Tax Services; American Community Survey 5-year Estimates, 2023;
Freddie Mac; NYS Department of Taxation and Finance

TOWN OF NEW LEBANON HOUSING COST BURDEN

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) publishes an annual dataset known as “CHAS” (Comprehensive Housing Affordability Strategy). CHAS includes metrics about housing affordability, housing problems, household income, and more. Housing affordability expressed as the percentage of total household income spent on housing costs. Household Incomes are expressed as a percentage of the Area Median Income (AMI) in Westchester County.

Households spending **no more than 30%** of their total income on housing costs are considered to be in an **affordable** situation. Households spending **more than 30% but no more than 50%** of total income on housing costs are considered **cost burdened**. Households spending **more than 50%** of total income on housing costs are considered **severely cost burdened**.

	Owner Households		Renter Households		All Households	
	count	percent	count	percent	count	percent
Affordable	600	75%	164	75%	764	75%
Cost Burdened	145	18%	25	11%	170	17%
Severely Cost Burdened	60	7%	29	13%	89	9%
Total	805	-	218	-	1,023	-



Owners	Renters	All Households
25%	25%	25%
of owner households are cost burdened or severely cost burdened	of renter households are cost burdened or severely cost burdened	of all households are cost burdened or severely cost burdened

Source: HUD, Comprehensive Housing Affordability Strategy (CHAS), 2017-2021

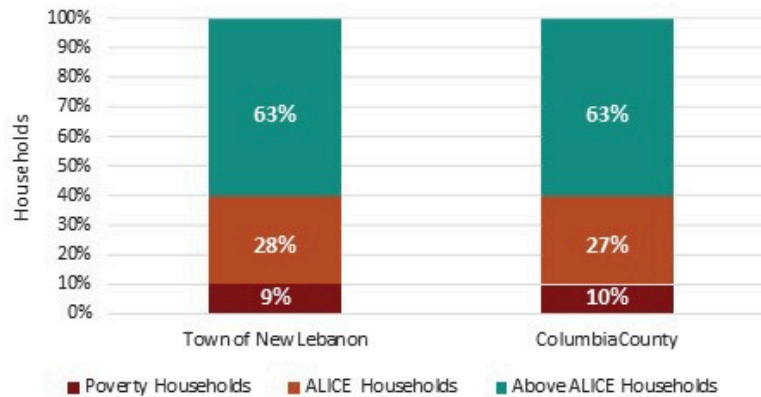
TOWN OF NEW LEBANON COLUMBIA COUNTY RENTAL HOUSING – OUT OF

	2023 Fair Market Rent (FMR)	Annual Income to Rent Apartment at ≤ 30% of Income	Hourly Wage to Afford Apartment	Actual Hourly Wage of Renters	Hourly Wage Gap	Gap in Affordable Monthly Rent and FMR
1 Bedroom Apartment	\$952	\$38,080	\$18.31	\$13.80	-\$4.51	-\$234.40
2 Bedroom Apartment	\$1,107	\$44,280	\$21.29	\$13.80	-\$7.49	-\$389.40

Source: HUD Fair Market Rents, 2023; National Low Income Housing Coalition

ALICE HOUSEHOLDS

The Asset-Limited, Income-Constrained, Employed (ALICE) project is a dataset developed by United Way to identify households that do not fit the official definition of poverty, but still struggle to make ends meet financially. “ALICE Households” are households that earn an annual income above the federal poverty threshold, but also don’t earn enough to meet basic minimum living costs as estimate by United Way.



Source: United Way ALICE Project, 2024 (data year 2022)

TOWN OF NEW LEBANON

TENURE BY HOUSEHOLD INCOME

Household Income as a % of County Area Median Income (AMI)	≤30%		>30% to ≤50%		>50% to ≤80%		>80% to ≤100%		>100%	
	count	percent	count	percent	count	percent	count	percent	count	percent
Owners	55	69%	115	64%	110	96%	80	76%	470	82%
Renters	25	31%	65	36%	4	4%	25	24%	100	18%
All Households	80	-	180	-	114	-	105	-	570	-

HOUSING AFFORDABILITY BY HOUSEHOLD INCOME FOR OWNER HOUSEHOLDS

Household Income as a % of County Area Median Income (AMI)	≤30%		>30% to ≤50%		>50% to ≤80%		>80% to ≤100%		>100%	
	count	percent	count	percent	count	percent	count	percent	count	percent
Affordable	25	45%	55	48%	30	27%	80	100%	435	93%
Cost Burdened	20	36%	35	30%	55	50%	0	0%	35	7%
Severely Cost Burdened	10	18%	25	22%	25	23%	0	0%	0	0%
Total	55	-	115	-	110	-	80	-	470	-

HOUSING AFFORDABILITY BY HOUSEHOLD INCOME FOR RENTER HOUSEHOLDS

Household Income as a % of County Area Median Income (AMI)	≤30%		>30% to ≤50%		>50% to ≤80%		>80% to ≤100%		>100%	
	count	percent	count	percent	count	percent	count	percent	count	percent
Affordable	0	0%	36	55%	4	100%	25	100%	100	100%
Cost Burdened	0	0%	25	38%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
Severely Cost Burdened	25	100%	4	6%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
Total	25	-	65	-	4	-	25	-	100	-

Source: HUD, Comprehensive Housing Affordability Strategy (CHAS), 2017-2021

TOWN OF NEW LEBANON

SOURCES AND DATA NOTES

POPULATION CHANGE

- Source: U.S. Census Bureau - American Community Survey 5-year Estimates, 2013 and 2023

MEDIAN MONTHLY GROSS RENT & MEDIAN MONTHLY HOMEOWNER COSTS

- Source: U.S. Census Bureau - American Community Survey 5-year Estimates, 2013 and 2023

RENTER-OCCUPIED HOUSING / OWNER OCCUPIED HOUSING

- Source: U.S. Census Bureau - American Community Survey 5-year Estimates, 2023
- Data Note: Vacancy figure includes 168 units categorized as "For seasonal, recreational, or occasional use"

MEDIAN INCOME OF RENTERS AND OWNERS

- Source: U.S. Census Bureau - American Community Survey 5-year Estimates, 2013 and 2023
- Data Note: Inflation adjustments calculated using the Bureau of Labor Statistics CPI Inflation Calculator.

RESIDENTIAL SALES TRENDS

- Source: NYS Office of Real Property Tax Services

HOMEOWNER AFFORDABILITY MATRIX

- Data Note: Assumption of a 30-year, fixed rate mortgage at 6.87% interest rate, 28% front-end ratio with a maximum of 43% back-end ratio and a 5% down payment with Private Mortgage Insurance.
- Source: NYS Department of Real Property Tax Services; American Community Survey 5-year Estimates, 2023; Freddie Mac; NYS Department of Taxation and Finance

RENTAL HOUSING – Out of Reach

- Source: HUD Fair Market Rents, 2023; National Low Income Housing Coalition

ALICE HOUSEHOLDS

- Source: United Way ALICE Project, 2024 (data year 2022)

HOUSING COST BURDEN ANALYSIS

- Data Note: "Severely Cost Burdened" = more than 50% of gross household income towards housing costs.
"Unaffordable" = More than 30% but less than 50% of gross household income towards housing costs.
"Affordable" = 30% or less of gross household income towards housing costs.
- Source: HUD, Comprehensive Housing Affordability Strategy (CHAS), 2017-2021

6-B Appendix B- Summary of Housing Developers Forum

The Room Enough for Both project committee participated in a forum with affordable housing developers on November 20 to learn about actions that can attract affordable housing development at the right scale for New Lebanon, helping to meet well-defined needs for seniors, young families, and other segments of the committee. Throughout the community conversations for Room Enough for Both, participants repeatedly voiced their support for senior housing, workforce housing, housing for young families and teachers, affordable homeownership options, and those working in the trades.

The purpose of the forum was to help New Lebanon understand certain actions that can help rural towns attract and support development at the right scale to meet the needs that were expressed by the community. Conversely, developers also talked about common mistakes or impediments that can dissuade them from building or preserving housing in a particular town.

The question-and-answer forum included Al Bellenchia, executive director of Columbia-Greene Habitat for Humanity; Faith Moore, senior vice president of housing programs and solutions at RUPCO; and Sean Kearney, vice president of Kearney Realty & Development Group.

A full video of the developers forum can be found at the following link:
<https://youtu.be/iwYVQoQnt7k?si=w5rcTHewJtINHxal>

A summary of the discussion is included below.

Question 1: When developers are looking to build affordable housing, what do they consider when choosing to build in one town over another.

- Developers want to be invited in by the town as a partner to see that there is real, genuine interest in housing development.
- Infrastructure, particularly centralized water and sewer, is important to build at a scale that can make development budgets work. Proximity to key amenities, such as groceries or health centers, is also a factor in the decision-making process.
- Developers look for towns that have a reputation for not needlessly extending their land-use approval process over and over again. Predictability in the process and a reputation for fairness in the land-use review process are important.
- Developers encouraged by rural towns who allow development in small clusters with gentle density, which is practically necessary to obtain the loans, grants, and other funds necessary to build.
- Many communities issue RFPs or RFEIs on properties that they own. If the local municipality controls the land, developers are encouraged by seeing them utilize community consensus to ask for development proactively.

Question 2: How can community show their support for affordable housing?

- Make sure the support is well articulated in the comprehensive plan, along with being a Pro-Housing Community as designated by the state.
- If a municipality owns land that is suitable for housing, issuing an RFP for its use is a good way to demonstrate support and become an active partner with developers.
- Communities should show a willingness to learn about the housing crisis, recraft their zoning to allow modern patterns of home construction, and demonstrate that they have educated their community about their needs and housing plans.

Question 3: What can communities do through the comprehensive planning process to support affordable housing and attract development that is appropriate to the evolving context of their towns?

- The comprehensive plan should carefully articulate future land-use patterns that reflect the economic realities of construction costs while also supporting a mix of housing types that support different kinds of households. (Size, age, income, etc.)
- The plan should encourage flexible zoning that allows clustering to improve economies of scale while protecting natural resources on undeveloped/preserved portions of the parcel.
- Make sure that flexibility or local-option tax incentives are included for adaptive re-use projects.
- Do not be too prescriptive. For example, older zoning codes used to ban residential uses on the first floor of multi-story buildings in downtown areas. Now first-floor housing is being allowed and supported. Housing is also being built at former schools, defunct churches, and in other zones that didn't typically allow it.
- Make sure the comprehensive plan reflects/allows modern types of development. The next generation of households do not want to live in environments that are necessarily the same as their parents or grandparents.
- Clearly state the housing and development goals in the comprehensive plan so that zoning can be adjusted based on whether a project fits New Lebanon goals, allowing the zoning to be adjusted if necessary.
- Consider a form-based code for certain parts of town. Helping developers understand the setbacks, lot coverage, building materials, and aesthetic you want will speed up the review and create a predictable process. It will also save developers huge amount of money on soft costs (architects, engineers, etc.) if they do not have to go back to them to redesign the project multiple times.

Question 4: Are design standards helpful?

- Yes. They are helpful because they help developers understand how they need to design and eventually construct a building. This avoids a big disconnect between a developer's initial application and what aesthetic and arrangement of development leaders want to see in their town.
- It helps developers save money on architectural, engineering, and other costs.
- Towns with design standards need to be careful that they are not including certain criteria that would make development cost prohibitive, or they might accidentally freeze out development from their towns. Bringing developers into the comprehensive planning process to discuss design standards is one way to avoid this potential pitfall.

Question 5: Have rural communities made mistakes that drove development away? What are they and how can New Lebanon avoid them?

- Developers are often turned away by long land-use review processes that are not well outlined or predictable. They want to know what the rules are up front so they can understand and follow them.
- If an approval process is going to take years, inflation and other factors will affect construction budgets to a point where projects are now longer viable.
- Community support cannot waver. If the community changes its mind repeatedly, or shifts direction due to multiple rounds of unpredictable community feedback, this will cost the developer hundreds of thousands of dollars. Communities who have messy processes also gain a reputation in the development community as places to avoid.

Question 6: Have you seen any good ideas from rural communities that New Lebanon might replicate?

- Focus on infrastructure first. Communities that have sewer and water infrastructure are preferred locations for development in the current environment.
- Promote light density and clustering to build housing while preserving land at the same time.
- Use New Lebanon's Pro-Housing designation to pursue state funds with developers as partners.
- Density bonus banks and other tools can help provide a source of funding to cover capital gaps and make certain projects financially feasible to build.

Question 7: Do you have any tips or insight on how to build community consensus on the need for affordable housing?

- People will always be afraid of uncertainty. They don't know how a development will affect their drive to work, or their local school, or other things they care about. Make sure community members are aware of what the town wants and needs, and how housing might make their lives better.
- Make sure the comprehensive planning process has a huge amount of public outreach. Talk about housing at all outreach events. Collect and document huge amounts of public feedback. This will help you push back against housing opposition when you can point to a consensus-building process that was exhaustive, inclusive, and well documented.
- Over communicate about the importance of housing and focus on how specific projects will meet well documented community needs. Everyone is entitled to speak, but not everyone is entitled to derail well-established community consensus around zoning, planning, and development.
- Most people come to planning board and zoning board meetings because they are against a project. Make sure the town can rally an equally influential group of people who are in favor of housing projects that meet the spirit and intent of the comprehensive plan and zoning code.
- Make an economic argument for housing. Help neighbors understand that additional housing is necessary to maintain a local workforce and a year-round customer base for local business. Housing can slow the rapid decline in public school populations, help seniors age in place, and support young families who might want to stay in the town where they grew up.

6-C Appendix C – Summary of Community Conversation No. 1, held May 22, 2025



NEW LEBANON

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT SESSION RECAP

Room Enough For Both

May 22, 2025

Background

Healthy communities need ample housing affordable to people across the income spectrum *and* conserved land that supports clean water, food production, climate resilience, and recreation. These two goals are well-aligned, but too often are seen as mutually exclusive or pitted against each other.

The *Room Enough for Both* technical assistance project brings a team of experts from Hudson Valley Pattern for Progress; the Pace University Land Use Law Center; the NYSDEC Hudson River Estuary Program; and the Hudson Valley Alliance for Housing and Conservation to work with the New Lebanon community to create a roadmap to achieve affordable housing and conservation goals *in tandem*, while building consensus for both. New Lebanon was chosen to receive this free assistance based on the community's interest in participation and its past track record in local planning to address housing and conservation goals. The town assembled a steering committee to work with the technical staff on the project team.

As part of this initiative, the project team will complete four key project components:



New Lebanon will then be able to use the roadmap to inform its upcoming comprehensive plan update and ultimately advance affordable housing and conservation objectives through concrete projects that were identified by the community and earned support through the process.

Summary

The first **Room Enough for Both: Planning for Affordable Housing and Conservation Together** community workshop was held on May 22, 2025 from 6:00 – 8:00 pm at the Community Center. To promote attendance at the meetings, town staff, including the town’s steering committee, solicited participation using several advertisement methods, including flyers, online outreach, and social media.

At the meeting, following introductory remarks by town supervisor Tistrya Houghtling, the project team presented a summary of New Lebanon’s current Comprehensive Plan goals and land use regulations regarding housing and conservation; open space and natural resource assets and protection efforts; and housing challenges and needs for both the region and locally. A trained facilitator then led six groups of 10-12 residents in small discussions. The facilitator asked participants to map the areas in New Lebanon that they identified as community assets; these included any places that people enjoy in the town, such as attractive places to visit, recreational opportunities, natural areas and wildlife habitat, productive farms, public/civic spaces, open spaces, economic centers, etc. Each resident identified three community assets with a green dot on the map. They then described the areas and brainstormed about why these locations were community assets.

Discussion then turned to the topic of housing. Facilitators asked residents about housing challenges, housing needs, and housing typologies that they were interested in seeing in New Lebanon (e.g., multifamily housing, tiny homes, etc.). Residents were asked to place a blue dot on three locations in New Lebanon where they could imagine housing being located, and were asked to think creatively about all possibilities. The small groups then discussed strategies for balancing both conservation and development.



Community Assets

Residents discussed a variety of locations and areas that they felt were community assets to New Lebanon (see green headings, below). The following list is not in order of priority; however, it should be noted that Hand Hollow, the Shaker Property/Swamp, and the Warm Springs were most frequently noted by all groups.

The Knob/Bog

“The Knob” is a high-elevation topographic feature in New Lebanon. “The Bog” is a wetlands area.

Residents noted its natural features, such as vernal pools, plants, wildlife, flowers, beautiful views, wetlands, and watercourses. Additionally, its recreation assets were discussed, including hiking, bird watching, and cross-country skiing. Residents noted that the bog was magical and a special environment, noting its unique biodiversity.

Lebanon Warm Springs

Lebanon Springs was a well-known, water-cure establishment, attracting visitors for its natural springs.

Residents noted that they were the only municipality to have such a natural asset and as such it helped define the Town, which designated the spring as a critical environmental area (CEA). Others noted its beauty and fabulous views year-round. Some residents noted that it was the largest aquifer with cool ravines and warm springs and that such a site draws many people to New Lebanon for its healing energy.

Shaker Property/Shaker Swamp

The Shaker Swamp is a 400-acre freshwater wetland. The Mount Lebanon Shaker property was the spiritual center of Shaker society in the United States.

Residents noted the historical importance and preservation of the site, including its history of communal living and support for people looking to live as one with nature in an affordable way. Many noted it as an architectural treasure and cultural asset that is relatively well-preserved. The site and history brought a sense of community and natural ability to congregate. Other residents noted the importance in its open space, views of the valley, aquifer/water supply, land and wildlife, open trails to the public, and unique life-healing plants.

Hand Hollow

Hand Hollow Conservation Area is a protected area that provides critical wildlife habitat and includes ponds, a lake, wetlands, marshes, hardwood swamp, streams, fields, meadows, and vernal pools.

Residents noted its various natural features, such as vernal pools, plants, flowers, ponds, natural beauty, and wildlife. Others noted its recreational assets in hiking, cross country skiing, trails, snow shoeing, bird watching, and hunting.

Community Assets

Mountain Views/West Street

Residents noted the beautiful viewsheds and geological assets and features in this area.

Kinderhook Creek

Running for 45 miles before feeding the east side of the Hudson River south of Albany.

Residents noted the importance of water quality and watershed protection for this site and noted its importance to recreation in New Lebanon.

Corkscrew Rail Trail

It begins at Knapp Road in Stephentown and heads south under a shady tree canopy towards New Lebanon.

Residents noted its historic value, ties to Charles Dickens, beauty and recreation, and a way to walk in sections of town without concern of vehicle encounters.

Woodlife Farmers Market

Resident discussed its value in good food, community dinners, and Christmas tree farm importance during the holiday season.

Shatford Park

Residents noted its importance in recreational value for the Town, including its new walking path and future playground.

Immaculate Conception Shrine

The Immaculate Conception Shrine is a devotional site.

Residents noted its historical significance.

Downtown

Along the Route 20 and 22 crossroads in New Lebanon.

Residents noted the commerce, restaurants, brewery, farm stand and its potential for much more.

Wyomanock Creek Viewshed

Wyomanock Creek is situated near the hamlet West Lebanon.

Residents noted its amazing views of the valley and use of the Rail Trail.

Cemetery of Evergreens

Community Assets

Scenic Views

Residents discussed the valley and hills that can be seen throughout the Town, including being able to see the Catskill mountains.

West Hill

Residents noted this undeveloped area, as being beautiful with expansive viewsheds.

New Lebanon Town Library

Noted as a place for community and education.

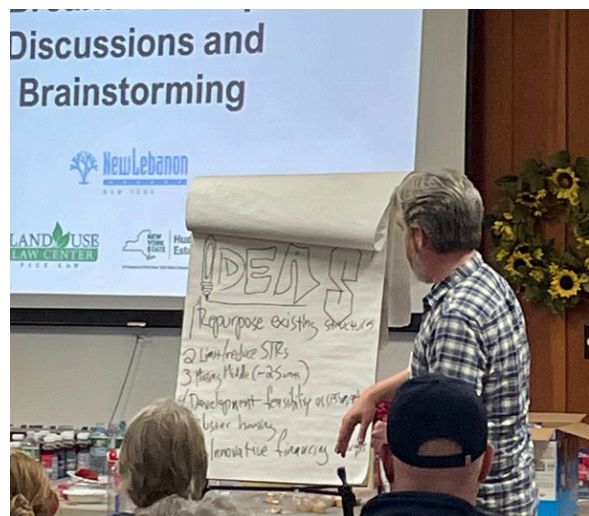
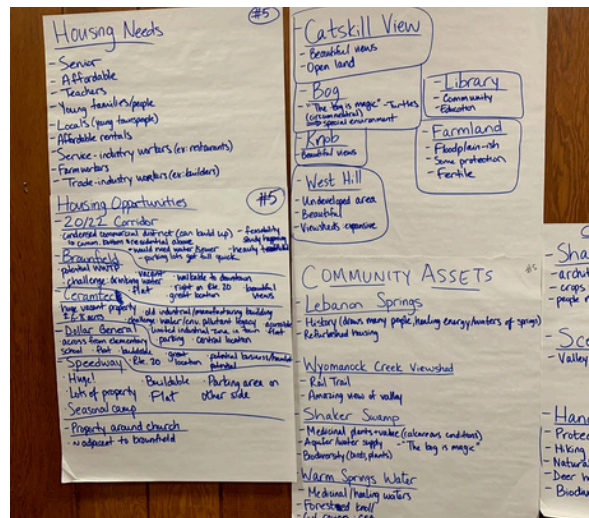
Farmlands

Residents noted the fertile grounds that can function as floodplains and the need to protect such lands.

New Lebanon Speedway

Lebanon Valley Speedway is a dirt track for racing, Monster Trucks, and Speedway events.

Residents noted it as a local employer, a fun past time, and tradition in the Town.



Housing Discussion

Residents discussed housing needs and housing types to meet New Lebanon's needs. They also considered the relative lack of services in New Lebanon, including food and medical services, that would be needed if additional housing were provided.

Housing Needs

- Senior housing
- Fixed income
- Workforce housing
- Affordable homeownership
- Anything affordable
- Families
- Teachers
- Farmworkers
- Trade-industry workers (e.g., construction and hospitality industries)

Housing Types

- Small scale housing
- Apartments
- Cluster housing
- Walkable housing/planned unit development
- Affordable rental
- Starter homes for families
- ADUs
- Intergenerational
- Tiny homes
- Assisted living facilities
- Resident-owned trailer parks
- Co-housing – intentional cooperative communities
- Multifamily
- Condo
- Townhomes
- The Missing Middle (e.g., duplexes)
- Co-ops
- Potential demand for hotels/motels instead of housing stock being taken up by short-term rentals



Housing Discussion

Potential housing locations identified by the community

- **Downtown**
 - Bowling alley and on the other side of the bowling alley next to Napa
 - Congregational Church
 - Self-Storage
 - Abandoned Buildings
 - Off-Track Betting
 - Tilden Plaza
 - Midtown Mall
 - Infill
 - Past the old dump
 - Condensed commercial district (can build up)
 - Commercial bottom and residential above
 - Would need water and sewer
- **Shaker Building**
- **The Speedway**
- **West Lebanon**
- **Near Dollar General Store and school**
- **Abandoned factory/Ceramaseal**
- **Ski Lodge**
- **Brainard**
- **Old Springs hotel**
- **French Hill Road – autobody shop**
- **Near Shafford Park**
- **Woodlife has 100 acres open to the public**
- **Catholic Church**
- **Beacon Hill**
- **Salls Road**
- **Old Gale Hill Road**
- **Brickyard Road**
- **West Street (1 & 2)**
- **Gregg's Hill**
- **Brownfields**

Opportunities for New Lebanon

Each resident gave one idea regarding a strategy for balancing both conservation and development. Again, the below ideas are not placed in any priority.

Development Ideas

- Redevelop the ski lodge for intergenerational living
- Redevelop the bowling alley area for low-moderate housing/workforce housing
- Add sewer/wastewater treatment in downtown for population density
- Intergenerational cluster housing with shared space
- 2-3 story building height
- Housing along downtown to keep areas preserved. Adds walkability and economic development. Beautification of the area for future housing.
- Condos or small homes clustered for sewer/water
- Housing within walking distance of some amenities
- Housing focused downtown
- Preserve the shaker area as a whole while establish living area
- Missing middle (2-5 units)
- Development feasibility assessments
- Repurpose existing structures
- Limit or reduce short term rentals
- Innovative financing concepts
- Cluster housing
- 2 hamlets with commercial and residential on Route 20/22 corridor and West Lebanon
- Well-designed and built starter homes
- Garden apartments around the park

Conservation Ideas

- Ridgeline protection ordinance
- Preserve the spring – water available again

Room Enough for Both

- Identification of tax foreclosed properties and abandoned buildings to use for both conservation and housing
- Rehab existing buildings or rebuild which limit environmental impacts
- Development / conservation subdivisions
- Route 20/22 corridor for housing; leave outlying open space and look to walkable downtown with sewer and water and senior housing
- Significant outreach regarding housing and affordability – solicit input from impacted residents (in need of affordable housing)
- Support local commerce, historic and natural resources
- Better cell service so people can work from home
- Career-type (better paying) jobs
- Complete walkable downtown project
- Build on already-used sites, downtown/foreclosed properties to preserve other spaces

We thank you for your
time and input!

The consultant team and the project committee will host a second community conversation in the fall to discuss draft strategies that would integrate New Lebanon's ideas for conservation and housing.

Acknowledgements

Consultation and facilitation services for this pilot project in New Lebanon are being provided by the following organizations:



**Hudson Valley Alliance
for Housing and
Conservation**



6-D Appendix D – Other New Lebanon Plans Referenced in this Report

- [2005 Comprehensive plan and 2021 update](#)
- [Natural Resource Conservation Plan](#)
- Corkscrew Rail Trail map and parcels (below and included in the report)
- [Shaker Swamp Trail Feasibility Study](#)
- [New Lebanon downtown design guidelines](#)
- [Walkable downtown and sidewalk plan](#)
- [New Lebanon Drinking Water Source Protection Program Plan](#)

