

New Greenway Guide: Centers & Greenspaces

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Greenway Connections, which initially included 18 Greenway Guides, was completed in 2000 and has since been adopted as a voluntary compact program of land use policies and guidelines by the County and 29 out of 30 Dutchess County communities. Designed as a three-ring binder, *Greenway Connections* was always intended to be a living document with additional guides adopted in response to changing circumstances and needs. The Greenway Compact is entirely voluntary, respects local home rule, and relies on incentives and guidelines rather than any requirements.

This eNewsletter introduces the third of several draft Greenway Guides for public review, comments, and eventual adoption by local municipalities. The proposed “Centers and Greenspaces” guide promotes a regional smart growth pattern in Dutchess County that combines economic development, transportation, energy, and ecological concerns. An integrated Centers and Greenspaces plan acts as a counter to the current commercial strip and random residential sprawl development patterns, which are fragmenting both communities and nature. The overall goal is to encourage municipalities to identify in local plans both walkable, mixed-use centers with positive development potential and natural and agricultural greenspaces for possible protection measures.

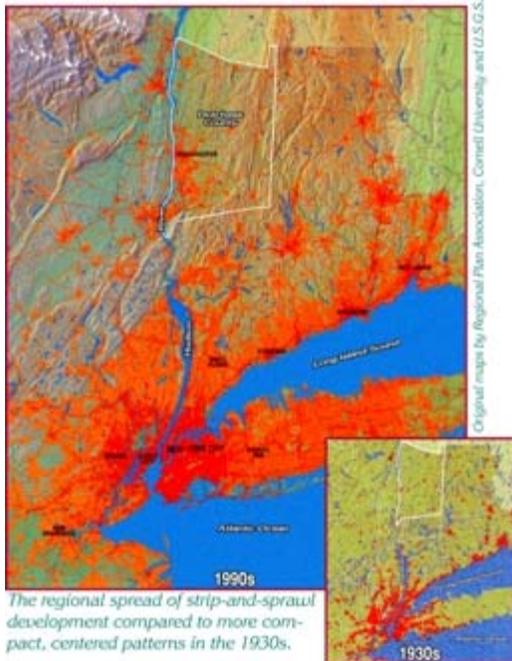
Using a build-from-the-bottom-up Greenway approach, the guide and map are based on recent Centers and Greenspaces plans for seven different communities, from farm protection planning in Red Hook to transit-oriented development in the City of Beacon. The Centers and Greenspaces map is intended as a landscape vision map for future local and intermunicipal planning initiatives, highlighting existing and emerging centers, continuous greenspaces over 1,000 acres, and Greenway connecting systems. It will eventually be linked to an interactive website, featuring the most up-to-date digital mapping layers and our best local planning examples where centers have been designed to save greenspaces.

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Define smart growth within a traditional and ecological pattern of Centers and Greenspaces, where new development should either:

- *strengthen an existing city, village, hamlet, or town center;*
- *transform a suburban strip or subdivision(s) into a center in the form of a walkable, mixed-use neighborhood; or*
- *fit gently into the rural countryside as a background element, preserving continuous natural and agricultural greenspaces.*



Most development before 1950 focused around walkable centers, surrounded by expansive rural and natural landscapes. Forming a combined ecosystem, cities and smaller centers concentrated diversity and innovation in commerce and culture, while large areas of farms, woods, and wetlands generated a wide diversity of natural species.

This interconnected pattern of central places and surrounding greenspaces, evolved over centuries and embedded in nature, has now segmented into suburban forms that mandate driving for every major movement. Commercial strips line most highways and residential sprawl spreads far into the countryside, fragmenting both communities and nature. Auto-dependency also fuels a basic contradiction: low-density sprawl creates high levels of traffic congestion.

Limited land, unlimited traffic aggravation, and escalating local taxes to service all those scattered subdivisions make the continued strip-and-sprawl conversion of outlying areas unsustainable. Global energy and climate concerns make policy changes even more urgent. A Greenway-inspired Centers and Greenspaces approach that re-centers most new development into walkable, mixed-use forms can protect our natural and agricultural heritage, end wasteful land, energy, and pollution practices, and provide a wider range of transportation choices, from walking, biking, and cars to transit alternatives.

Build close-knit, connected centers.....to protect our landscape legacy



**Centers
Save
Greenspaces**

- Reinforce existing centers and main streets with new infill buildings and redevelopment;
- Mix uses to promote walking from housing to stores, jobs, parks, schools and civic uses;
- Integrate major centers with transit services;
- Locally identify **priority growth areas** for close-in expansion and conversion of strip districts or subdivisions into new centers.
- Employ a range of protection measures for farmland and natural wildlife areas;
- Adopt rural and agricultural zoning, not suburban residential standards;
- Plan for continuous greenspace systems, rather than just parcel-based solutions;
- Locally identify **priority greenspaces** for future public or private conservation.

**Settlement
Patterns:**

2009

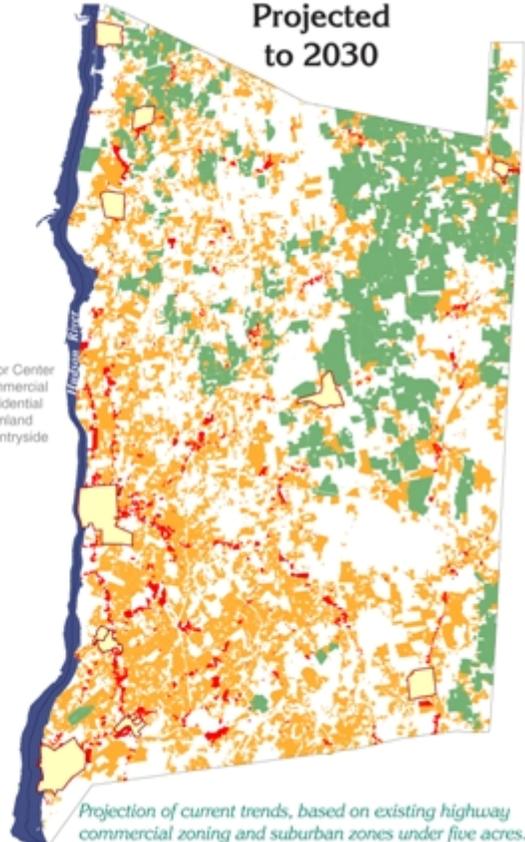
Projected
to 2030

Expanding
Strip-and-
Sprawl
Patterns
or the
Hudson
Valley
Green
Way.



Land use map shows outlying roadside strips and residential sprawl replacing farmland.

LEGEND:
Major Center
Commercial
Residential
Farmland
Countryside



Projection of current trends, based on existing highway commercial zoning and suburban zones under five acres.

"Greenway principles support reinforcing centers as primary growth areas, fitting any outlying development into the natural landscape to preserve farmland and open spaces, and providing strategies to pull together separated subdivisions and commercial districts into more connected neighborhoods or mixed use centers."

The **Centers and Greenspaces** initiative integrates land use, transportation, and ecological planning to implement Greenway principles and prevent strip-and-sprawl patterns. The goal is to encourage municipalities to identify natural and agricultural greenspaces for possible protection and priority growth centers with positive development potential. The Centers and Greenspaces approach was first applied in the Rhinebeck Town Plan and a Red Hook intermunicipal plan, then with the Towns of Poughkeepsie and Pleasant Valley and the City of Beacon. These plans not only identified growth centers and greenspaces, but also illustrated what new close-in development might look like. The Centers and Greenspaces map builds on these local examples and will evolve on the interactive website as municipal plans and projects are completed.*

The **Centers and Greenspaces** map is based on existing conditions in Dutchess County, but is designed as a future Greenway vision map, highlighting four indispensable patterns for an interconnected natural and human ecosystem:

Centers – Concentrated places of community life, cultural history, and commercial exchange, including cities, villages, and hamlets, and historically organized within a 1/4- to 1/2-mile walking radius. Priority locations for growth, including infill, redevelopment, extensions, and emerging mixed-use centers by primarily retrofitting existing strips and subdivisions.

Greenspaces – Outlying natural areas and working farms, combined into a continuous countryside and essential for food production, water quality, and diversity of habitats. Priority for protection measures, especially the large, continuous "biodiversity blocks" necessary for area-sensitive species (over 1,000 acres and undivided by roads over 25 vehicles per hour).

Greenway Corridors – Floodplains, waterway and wetland systems, hedgerows, stepping stone patches, and other critical connections between greenspaces for natural species, wildlife movement, and water protection.

Greenway Routes – Transportation linkages between centers, forming a landscaped Greenway network from trails to sidewalk systems and from regional rail lines and parkways to boulevards and tree-lined main streets.

***This guide will be linked to an interactive web-based planning tool at dutchessny.gov featuring a full range of digital map layers at the county, town, and village levels, as well as our best local examples where Centers are designed to save Greenspaces.**

Centers and Greenspaces

Dutchess County, NY

A Greenway vision map for local planning initiatives, featuring four indispensable patterns for an interconnected ecosystem:

- variety of walkable, mixed-use **Centers**;
- large natural and agricultural **Greenspaces**;
- naturally connecting **Greenway Corridors**;
- transportation network of **Greenway Routes**.

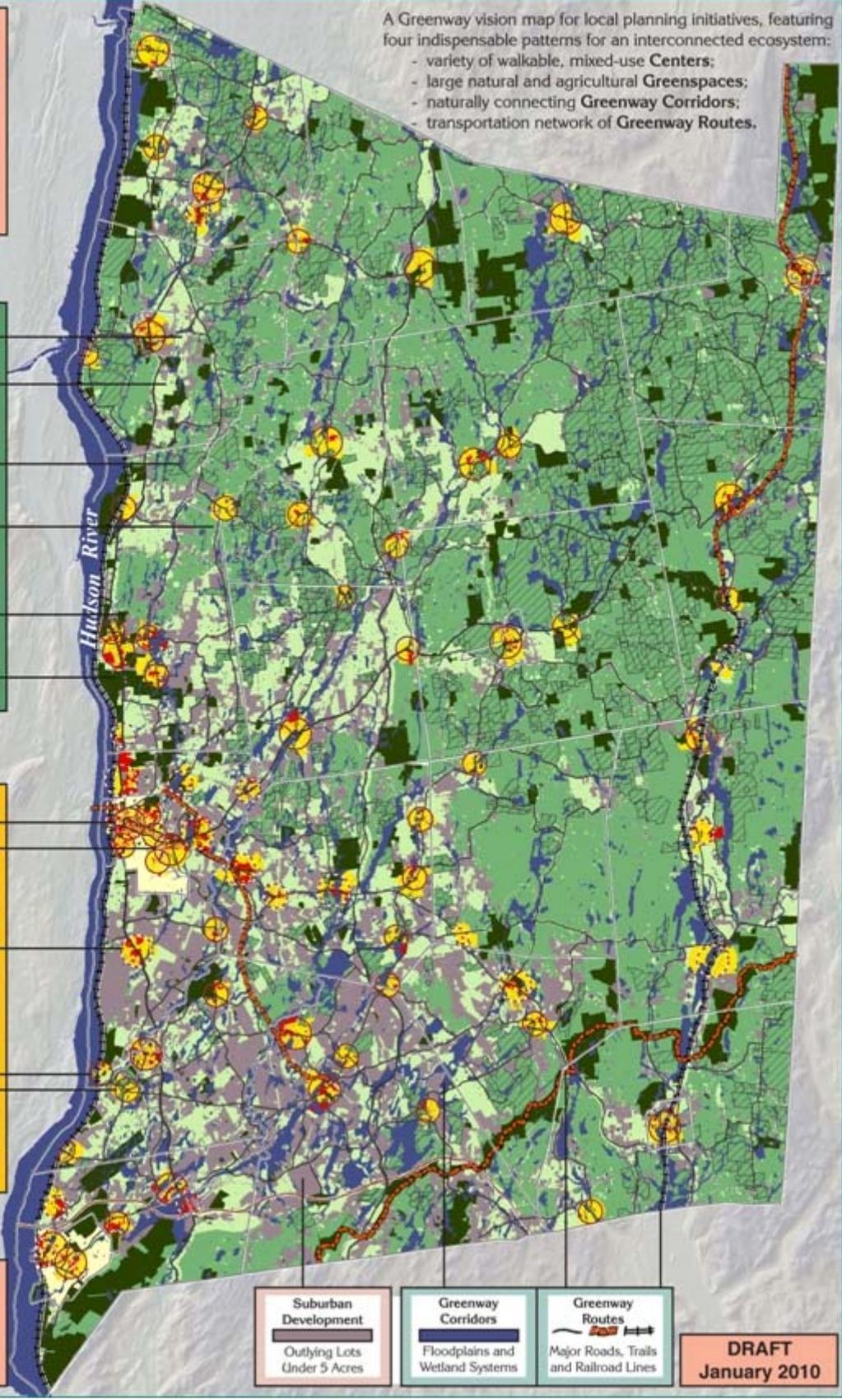
GREENSPACES

- Contained Greenspaces**
Outlying Lots Over 5 Acres
- Continuous Greenspaces**
Active Farms & 1000-Acre+ Habitat
- Conserved Greenspaces**
Public & Private Protected Land

CENTERS

- City, Village, & Town Centers**
1/2-Mile Walking Radius
- Emerging Centers**
Potential or Planned Centers
- Hamlet Centers**
1/4-Mile Walking Radius

Landscape Patterns



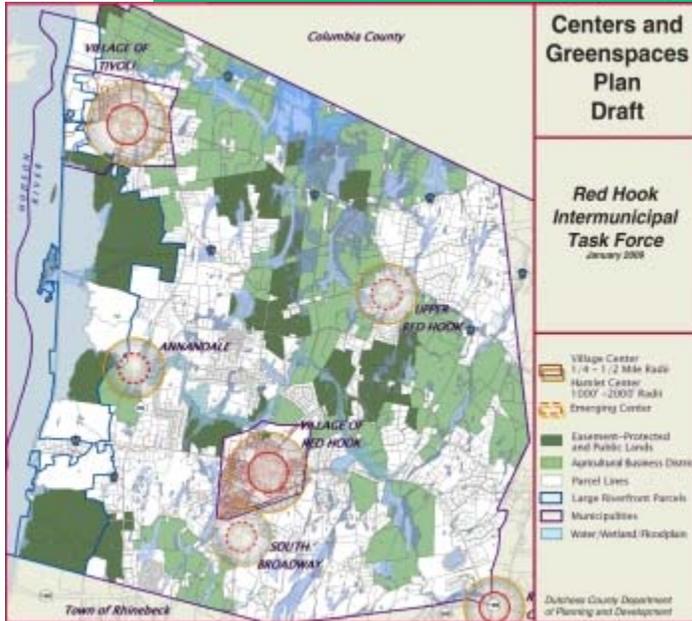
Suburban Development
Outlying Lots Under 5 Acres

Greenway Corridors
Floodplains and Wetland Systems

Greenway Routes
Major Roads, Trails and Railroad Lines

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January 2010

Centers and Greenspaces: Priority Planning at the Local Level



Major goals:

- Permanently protect farming, important farmland, and the rural countryside;
- Strengthen the residential and commercial base of the existing villages and hamlets;
- Transform the South Broadway strip into a traditional village entrance-extension;
- Use close-in smart growth development to help finance much-needed sewer systems.

Red Hook Centers and Greenspaces Plan

In January 2009, an Intermunicipal Task Force from the Town and Villages of Red Hook and Tivoli proposed zoning changes to save farms, protect rural character, reinforce traditional village centers, and promote economic development. The Centers and Greenspaces plan identified over 50 farms to be included in an Agricultural Business District, designed to replace the current mostly 3-acre suburban-scale zoning and permit greater business opportunities for farmers. The Town's existing purchase of development rights program would receive funds through incentive zoning for development located close to the Village. The zoning package included detailed Illustrative Plans and standards for walkable, mixed-use neighborhoods to ensure compatibility with existing centers and to provide design guidance for future development proposals.

Instead of reacting to random development locations, the plan offers a positive vision for where growth is mutually beneficial, acting as an advertisement for new economic investment and streamlining the review process. A Fiscal Impact Study showed that the Centers and Greenspaces strategy could increase the commercial tax base and reduce the potential for town-wide residential development, limiting both sprawl and school tax impacts.



Suburban Development	Traditional Neighborhood Centers
Spread out, disconnected patterns	Compact extension of existing centers
Segregated by use and income	Mix of uses, variety of housing types
Entirely automobile-dependent	Walkable scale, 1/4- to 1/2-mile radius
More exclusive and expensive lots	More moderate housing alternatives
Fewer choices for singles and seniors	Starter housing and downsizing options
Spreads sprawl/dissipates community	Reverses sprawl/concentrates community

Sources:

Andres Duany, Elizabeth Plater-Zyberk and Jeff Speck, *Suburban Nation*, 2000

Richard T. T. Forman, *Land Mosaics, The Ecology of Landscapes and Regions*, 1995

Elizabeth A. Johnson, Michael W. Klemens, *Nature in Fragments, The Legacy of Sprawl*, 2005

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www.dutchessny.gov

Share Your Feedback

The Dutchess County Department of Planning and Development is accepting public comments on this draft Greenway Guide. Please email your thoughts by February 5th to: DCPlanningFederation@co.dutchess.ny.us

Visit the [Planning Department's website](#) for information on the Greenway program.

[CLICK HERE](#) to view past issues of the DCPF's newsletter, *Plan On It*.

This newsletter was developed by the Dutchess County Department of Planning and Development, in conjunction with the Dutchess County Planning Federation.

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