

I. Introduction

What is open space?

Open space is land that has not been exhaustively developed for residential, commercial, industrial or institutional purposes. Open space comes in many forms. It can be land that is either privately or publicly owned. It can consist of agricultural land, forest land, scenic landscapes, public parks, nature preserves, historic sites, undeveloped waterfront, wildlife habitat, lakes, bays and other natural and cultural landscapes. Open space can even be land that has been cleared of former development. The size of open space can range from a small pocket park in an urbanized area, to a large nature preserve spread over hundreds or thousands of acres. Regardless of size however, open space is meant to protect our natural and cultural resources and to help connect people to their natural environment.

In the Town of Glenville, there are several examples of open space that are easily recognizable. These include Sanders Preserve, Maalwyck Park, Indian Meadows Town Park, the Indian Kill Nature Preserve, the Alplaus Kill Natural Area and Berkley Square, to name a few. Less obvious but still important open spaces include open fields and pastures, the playgrounds and ball fields of school properties, wooded areas between neighborhoods, agricultural land and cemeteries.

In addition to the obvious parks, preserves and agricultural properties, Glenville possesses open lands and sites that define much of its character (i.e. streams, ponds, forests, wetlands, ravines, flood plains, hills, historic sites, etc.). These landscapes are finite and vulnerable and once gone, it is not just a location lost but a compromise of the greater whole. Without the implementation of safeguarding strategies through an effective open space plan, these distinctive landscapes slip away, and Glenville becomes less unique.



Pastoral setting along Touareuna Road

Why do we want to preserve open space?

Open space is one of a community's most important qualities, be it the Town of Glenville or any other municipality. As communities grow, the increased development puts pressure and strain on the natural environment: wildlife is forced from its natural habitats; streams and rivers become contaminated from human activity; hillsides and wooded parcels get leveled for new, look-alike buildings and parking; scenic views become compromised or are destroyed entirely; historic structures get buried under contemporary expansions or get torn down altogether. The end result is that residents have fewer places to go to enjoy and appreciate their natural surroundings. An important component of "quality of life" is eroded. The natural features that made the community attractive to its residents are lost.

Preserving open space allows wildlife to thrive in an undisturbed environment. It gives communities an opportunity to protect their environmentally sensitive areas and cultural resources from the impact of development. Open space conservation results in the preservation of the community's special qualities that contribute to livability ... those locational attributes that contribute to quality of life.

More simply, open space allows a place for residents to just “get away” from the stresses of everyday life. The desire to escape becomes even more important as population increases and the built environment continues to overrun what was once open land.

Open space is an important factor in determining people’s quality of life within a community. A healthy natural environment that is free from pollutants, promotes outdoor activities, and provides retreat from man’s built environment all contribute to the mental and physical well-being of its inhabitants. Mountains, streams, rivers, lakes, forests, wetlands and seashores all provide a diversity of plant and animal life that help to serve human needs. The presence and preservation of cultural and historic resources also adds to one’s quality of life. These assets affect how and where a community develops, and they define a community’s perception of itself as well as other communities’ perceptions of it.

While Glenville is certainly not a vacation destination, it does possess many of the quality of life virtues that make a community a desirable place to live, work and visit. Most Glenville residents would tell you that they enjoy the open spaces of our town, which include a pleasant blend of woods, hills, streams, parks, preserves and working landscapes. Glenville also has a colorful history that has left us with a number of historic buildings and sites. Several interesting cemeteries and numerous public school buildings and properties add to the quality and quantity of our open space.

What are the benefits of open space?

The advantages of open space are numerous and diverse. Open space provides short and long-term social, environmental and economic benefits. By preserving open space, a community protects its natural landscapes, cultural resources, water quality, wildlife habitat and air quality. Preserving open space encourages the connection between a community and its history by protecting the natural environment in which its settlers and ancestors once inhabited. Economically, open space attracts quality businesses that prioritize environmental amenities for its employees. These businesses foster local economic growth and quality communities. Socially, the preservation of open space allows “third places” to be created. These places represent social settings, aside from work and home, where community residents can meet, converse, and take part in recreational activities together. Overall, the preservation of open space helps to create high quality, well-balanced, thriving communities.