

SOUTHERN PALMERTOWN

CONSERVATION & RECREATION STRATEGY

OCTOBER 2018



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BERNUTH & WILLIAMSON

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

ORGANIZATIONS PROTECTING THE SOUTHERN PALMERTOWN REGION

- Open Space Institute
- Saratoga PLAN
- New York State Office of Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation
- New York State Department of Environmental Conservation
- City of Saratoga Springs
- Town of Wilton
- Town of Corinth
- Town of Moreau
- Town of Greenfield
- Adirondack Mountain Club
- Audubon Society
- Friends of Moreau Lake State Park
- Saratoga Backcountry Horsemen's Association
- Saratoga Mountain Bike Club

OPEN SPACE INSTITUTE

The Open Space Institute (OSI) protects scenic, natural, and historic landscapes to provide public enjoyment, conserve habitat and working lands, and sustain communities. Founded in 1974 to protect significant landscapes in New York State, OSI is a leader in environmental conservation, having partnered in the protection of nearly 2.2 million acres in North America, from Alabama up the spine of the Appalachians to southeastern Canada.

SARATOGA PLAN

Saratoga PLAN is dedicated to preserving the rural character, natural habitats, and scenic beauty of Saratoga County so that these irreplaceable assets are accessible to all and survive for future generations. Saratoga PLAN helps communities create plans that balance growth with conservation to sustain the Saratoga Region as a great place to live, work, visit and farm. Since formation in 2003, Saratoga PLAN has conserved more than 7,000 acres of land to date.

SOUTHERN PALMERTOWN CONSERVATION & RECREATION STRATEGY

The Southern Palmertown Conservation & Recreation Strategy was completed in 2018 by Alta Planning + Design and Bernuth & Williamson, for OSI and Saratoga PLAN. Funding for this project came from the New York State Conservation Partnership Program administered by the Land Trust Alliance, in

partnership with the State Department of Environmental Conservation. Additional support was provided by the Cloudsplitter Foundation.

For more information about conservation in the area, please visit www.saratogaplan.org/explore/public-preserves-trails/palmertown-conservation-area/



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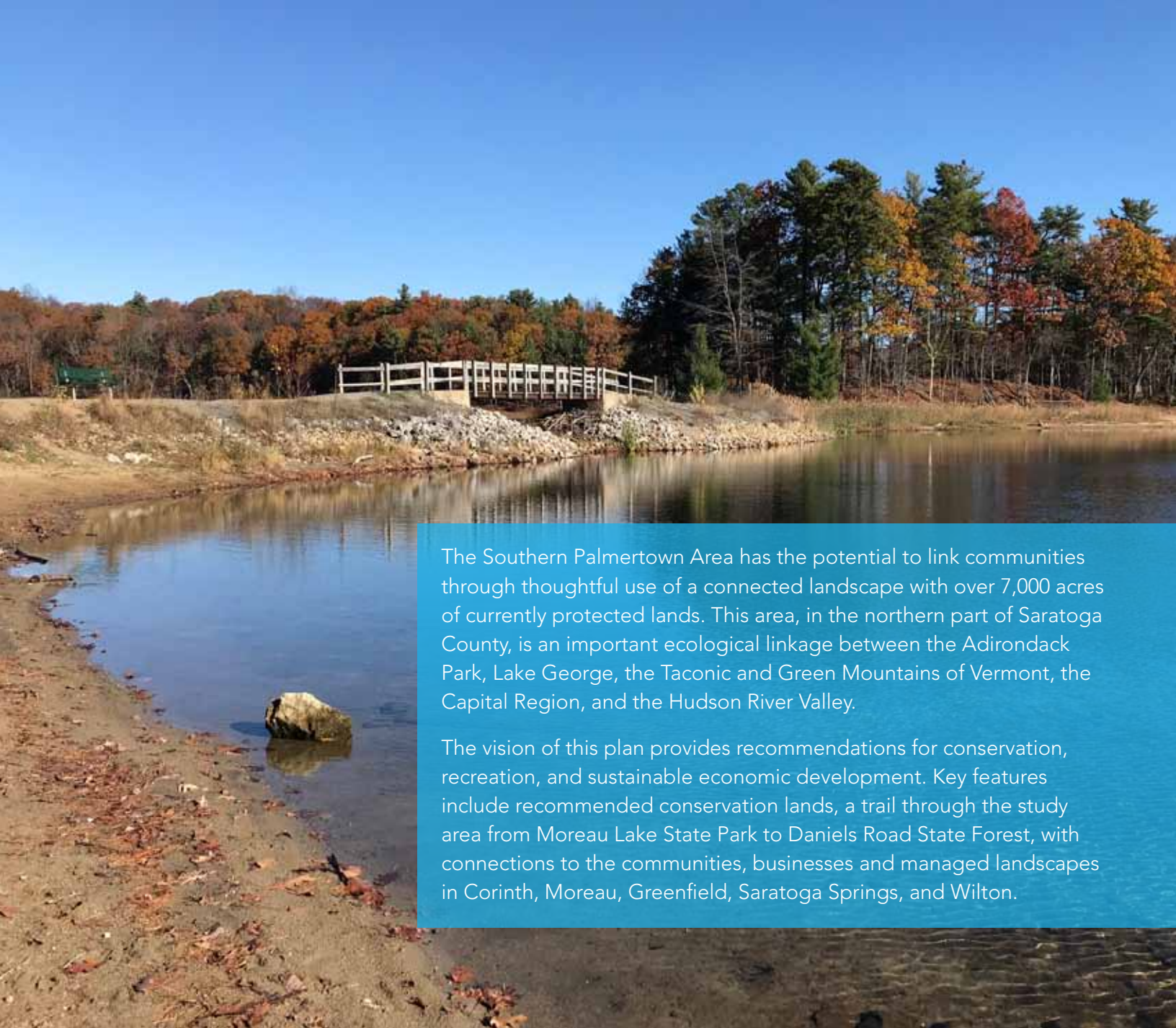
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The Southern Palmertown Area has the potential to link communities through thoughtful use of a connected landscape with over 7,000 acres of currently protected lands. This area, in the northern part of Saratoga County, is an important ecological linkage between the Adirondack Park, Lake George, the Taconic and Green Mountains of Vermont, the Capital Region, and the Hudson River Valley.

The vision of this plan provides recommendations for conservation, recreation, and sustainable economic development. Key features include recommended conservation lands, a trail through the study area from Moreau Lake State Park to Daniels Road State Forest, with connections to the communities, businesses and managed landscapes in Corinth, Moreau, Greenfield, Saratoga Springs, and Wilton.

Moreau Lake State Park

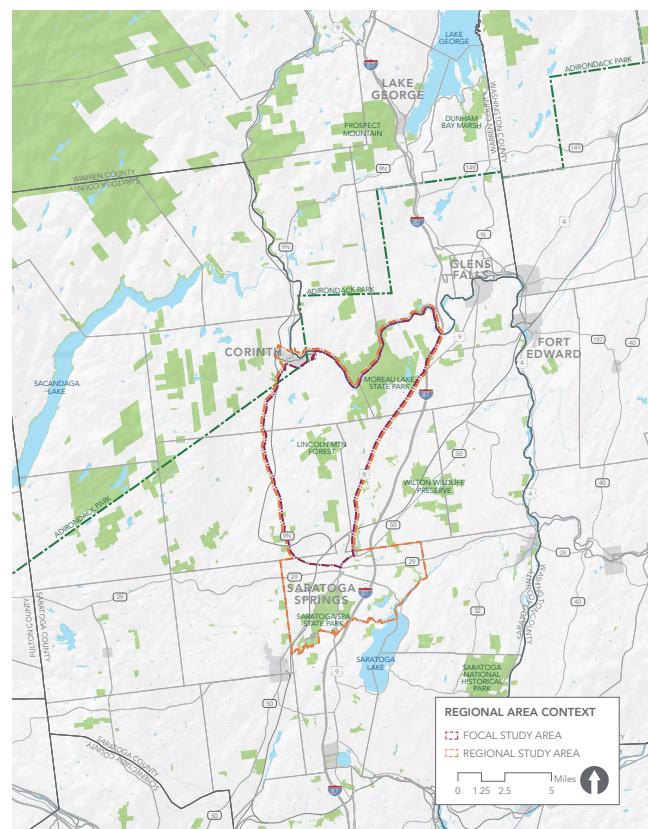
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Southern Palmertown Range is an ecologically intact landscape with extensive, unfragmented, diverse forests and wetlands. Furthermore, the area is in close proximity to growing population centers in Saratoga Springs, Glens Falls, and Wilton.

This plan suggests steps that can be taken by local communities working together with thoughtful, cooperative planning and action that will result in retention of the landscape, its environmental services, and natural resources while simultaneously stimulating compatible economic development activities. As a first step, a Guidance Committee composed of representatives from local municipalities, nonprofit organizations, and businesses should be established to oversee collaborative implementation of the recommendations contained in this Plan.

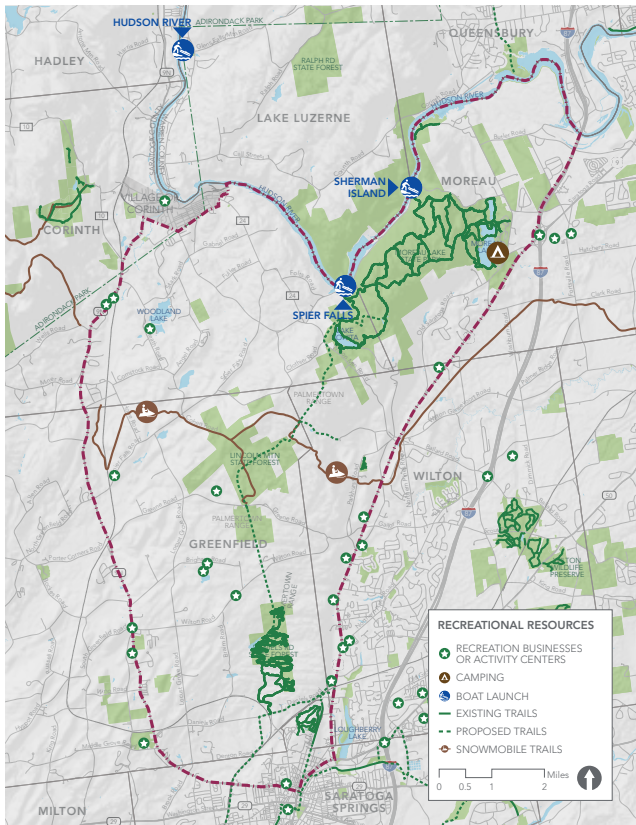
The Southern Palmertown area is located in Saratoga County and is bounded to the north by the Hudson River, to the east by Route 9, to the west by Route 9N, and to the south by Route 50 and Route 9N in Saratoga Springs. This area contains a diversity of ecological and recreational resources, and its adjacency to the Capital District and major transportation infrastructure makes it an attractive area for future development.

The Executive Summary describes the various chapters, analyses, and information included in this document. While important information and findings are highlighted in this section, more detailed background information, methodologies, results, and recommendations can be found throughout Chapters 1 through 5.



EXISTING CONDITIONS

The Existing Conditions Chapter provides a comprehensive look at the features within Southern Palmertown. This includes text and maps related to existing land uses, natural resources, conservation priorities, groundwater recharge, terrestrial resilience, agricultural lands and working forests, recreational resources, transportation infrastructure, conservation lands, historical and cultural resources, and key destinations. These existing conditions features are used throughout the report for various analyses and were considered when making recommendations for conservation, recreation, and economic development.



PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

The project team used three strategies to gather input from the public: a public workshop, written surveys, and stakeholder interviews.

Public Workshop: A public workshop was held on December 13th, 2017 to present existing conditions information and solicit feedback about existing facilities and future opportunities in Southern Palmertown. There were 34 people in attendance who contributed to the consensus of the following goals:

- Conserve habitat because Southern Palmertown is a critical area for wildlife.
- Preserve open space and small compatible economic uses within the study area.
- Concentrate intensive commercial/residential uses outside of the study area and limit sprawl and large developments.
- Preserve Native American heritage and culture.

Surveys: Two surveys were conducted within the project timeline. The first survey was taken by workshop participants as well as supporters of Saratoga PLAN from December 2017 to January 2018. A total of 175 people responded to the first survey. The second survey was distributed by Saratoga PLAN and OSI in the Spring and Summer of 2018 and collected responses from 23 additional participants. Results from the second survey were consistent with the results from the first survey. Chapter 2 summarizes the results from the initial survey. An Appendix with more detailed results from both surveys was created as part of this project effort.

Stakeholder Interviews: Twelve key stakeholders were identified by Saratoga PLAN and OSI and were invited to do in-depth confidential interviews to more fully share their local knowledge about the study area and further illuminate the priorities and needs of stakeholders in the region.



Public Workshop - December 13th 2017

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT RECOMMENDATIONS

- Consider altering or augmenting the name to better resonate with local residents, noting the future need for marketing.
- Emphasize the creation of a network of connected trails, that is likely to be more easily understood and more widely supported than the concept of a comprehensive plan for a connected landscape.
- Leverage existing support for conservation and recreation, and tout the accepted benefits to local quality of life, while making the case for the impact on the local economy.
- Prioritize muscle-powered pursuits, and consider ways to accommodate different user groups, as well as different abilities, while improving access points throughout the study area.
- Ensure that vocal interests are not overrepresented, nor quiet interests underrepresented, by consulting demographic data and reaching out to others with an interest in the outdoors but no direct connection to PLAN.
- Continue to engage stakeholder groups, as well as local landowners, with a focus on going to them, rather than expecting them to come to you.
- Be prepared to lead not only the development but the implementation of the plan.



OPPORTUNITIES

The Opportunities Chapter identifies opportunities for enhancing existing conservation and recreation assets and for supporting sustainable economic development. This was accomplished using three analyses:

Conservation Priority Analysis: Using existing ecological-focused data such as water and wetlands, working landscapes, significant natural communities, the capacity for groundwater recharge, and the ability to adapt to climate change, the Conservation Priority Analysis identifies priority lands for conservation. Conserving these lands will ultimately improve the quality of life for Southern Palmertown residents. The results of this analysis revealed that future conservation efforts should focus on all hotspot areas, with an emphasis on high priority areas directly adjacent to existing conservation land, such as:

- Land adjacent to Moreau Lake State Park
- Land to the west of Lincoln Mountain State Forest
- Land along the Hudson River between the Village of Corinth and Moreau Lake State Park
- Land adjacent to the Hudson River in the northeast corner of the focal study area

Recreation Demand Analysis: Identify existing demand for recreation in Southern Palmertown and inform recommendations based on data identifying where people live, work play, shop, learn, and access transit. The results of the Recreation Demand Analysis indicates that future recommendations should create opportunities to connect high-demand recreation hotspots while avoiding priority conservation areas, ultimately creating a connected recreation network within Southern Palmertown.

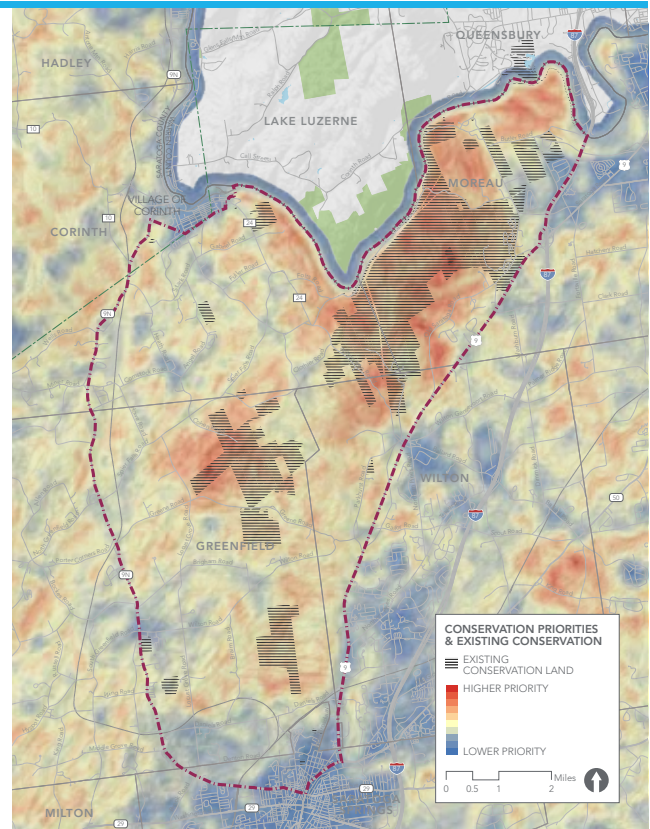
Case Studies Analysis: This section includes case studies of outdoor recreation and conservation networks and innovative economic development initiatives that leverage existing recreation and/or conservation uses. These case studies identify a range of different approaches for establishing and maintaining a connected network of recreational and conservation lands in the Southern Palmertown Area and identify discrete economic development opportunities that promote ecotourism, leverage recreational uses, and/or advance conservation priorities. Each of the seven case studies presented offer “Lessons for Southern Palmertown” which are outlined in Chapter 3.

Forest-Based Economic Activities: The Forest-Based Economic Development section lists various types of forest-based economies typical in New York State. These forest-based economies may be implemented in Southern Palmertown to boost the economic health of the area.

CONSERVATION PRIORITY ANALYSIS

Conservation Priorities:

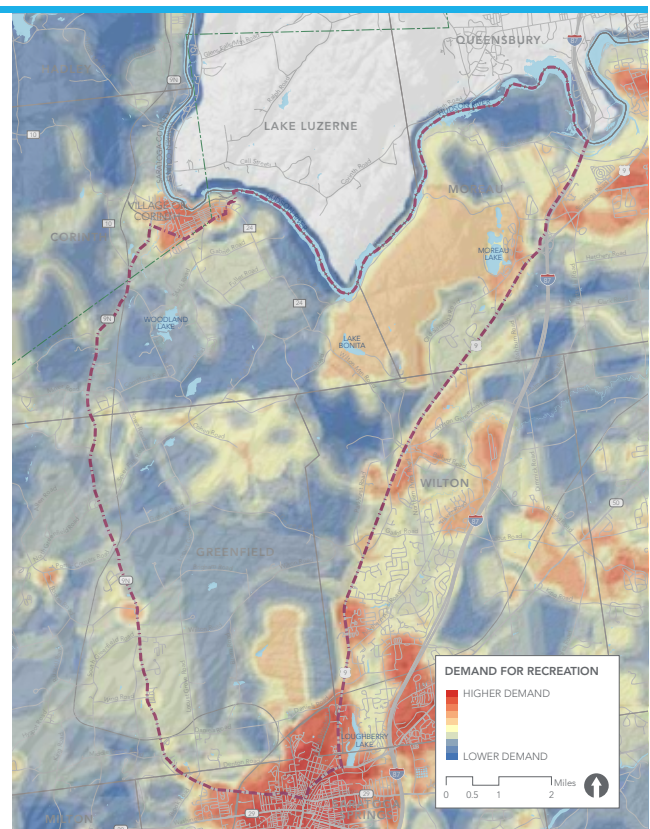
- Moreau Lake State Park (including Lake Bonita)
- Along the Hudson River
- Lincoln Mountain State Forest
- Along the east side of the Palmertown Ridge
- Along Old Saratoga Road
- Along Locust Grove Road



RECREATION DEMAND ANALYSIS

High Demand for Recreation in:

- Moreau Lake State Park (including Lake Bonita)
- Daniels Road State Forest
- Skidmore's North Woods
- City of Saratoga Springs
- Village of Corinth



LAND USE SCENARIOS

Three land use scenarios were developed that illustrate how the effects of varying degrees of land development versus conservation strategies may impact the landscape within Southern Palmertown.



SCENARIO 1: SUBURBAN SPRAWL GROWTH PATTERN

Scenario 1: The Suburban Sprawl Growth Pattern Land Use Scenario was created to show the effect continued suburban growth, with few conservation strategies, could have on the landscape within Southern Palmertown. This land use scenario resulted in the following changes to land use types:

- **Agricultural Land:** 90% Decrease
- **Upland Natural Habitat:** 60% Decrease
- **Low Density Developed Land:** 365% Increase
- **Densely Developed Land:** No Change



SCENARIO 2: CONSERVATION/DEVELOPMENT BALANCE

Scenario 2: The Conservation/Development Balance Land Use Scenario was created to show the effect of light development patterns and moderate conservation strategies on the landscape within Southern Palmertown. This land use scenario resulted in the following changes to land use types:

- **Agricultural Land:** No Change
- **Upland Natural Habitat:** 6% Decrease
- **Low Density Developed Land:** No Change
- **Densely Developed Land:** 73% Increase

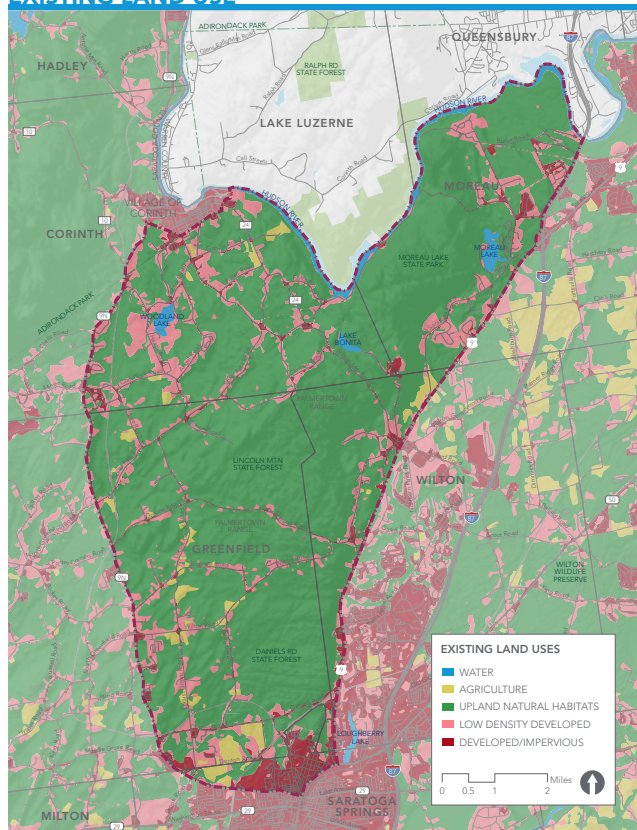


SCENARIO 3: STRONG CONSERVATION EMPHASIS

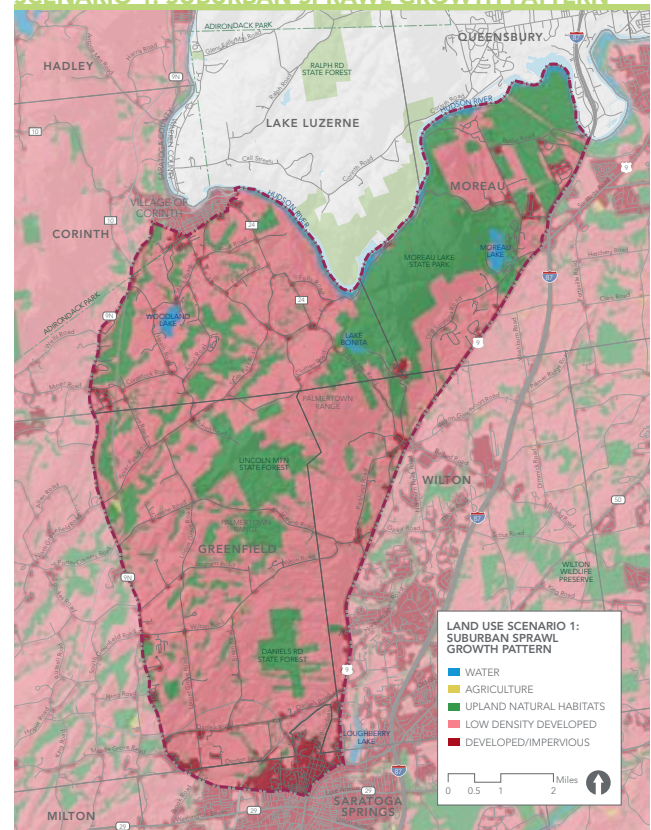
Scenario 3: The Strong Conservation Emphasis Land Use Scenario was created to show the effect conservation- and recreation-oriented economic development and strong conservation strategies may have on the landscape within Southern Palmertown. This land use scenario resulted in the following changes to land use types:

- **Agricultural Land:** No Change
- **Upland Natural Habitat:** No Change
- **Low Density Developed Land:** 27% Decrease
- **Densely Developed Land:** 60% Increase

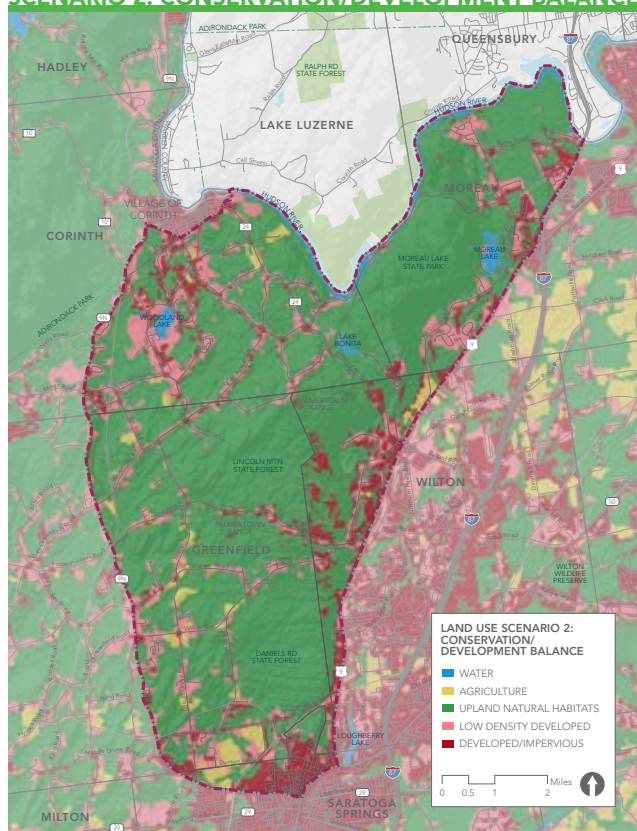
EXISTING LAND USE



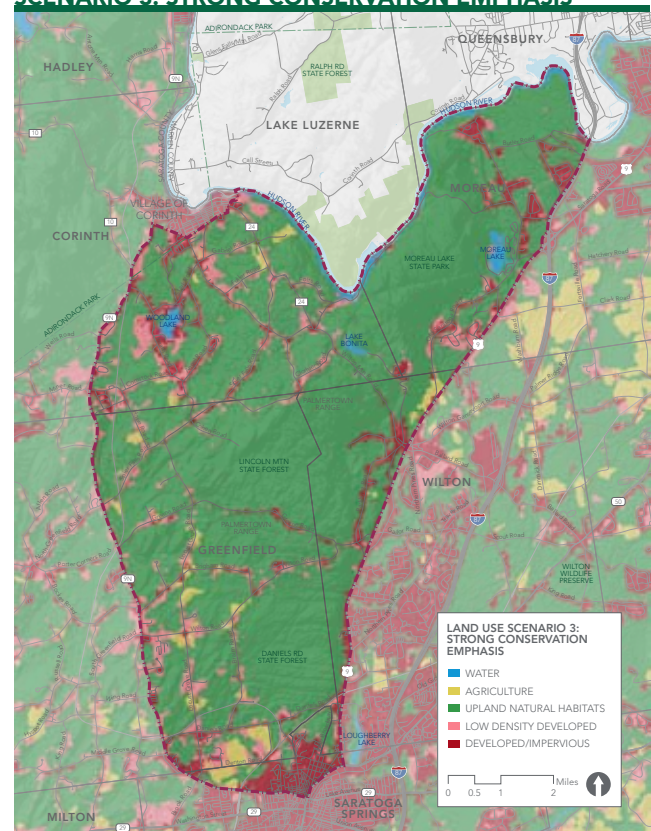
SCENARIO 1: SUBURBAN SPRAWL GROWTH PATTERN



SCENARIO 2: CONSERVATION/DEVELOPMENT BALANCE



SCENARIO 3: STRONG CONSERVATION EMPHASIS

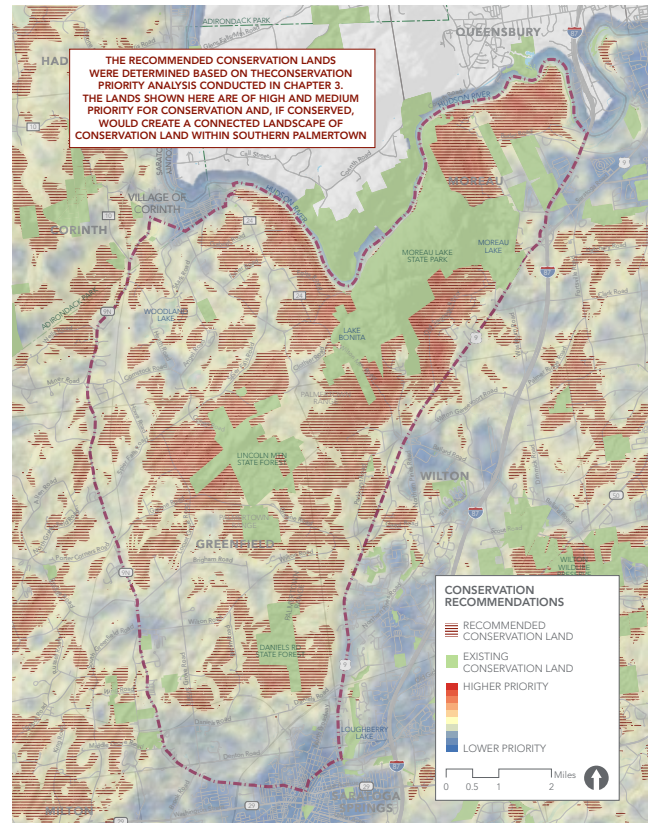


MAKING THE CONNECTION

Three recommendations sections and maps were developed to highlight specific recommendations as well as best practices and policies related to Conservation, Recreation, and Economic Development. The recommendations made for each category are as follows:

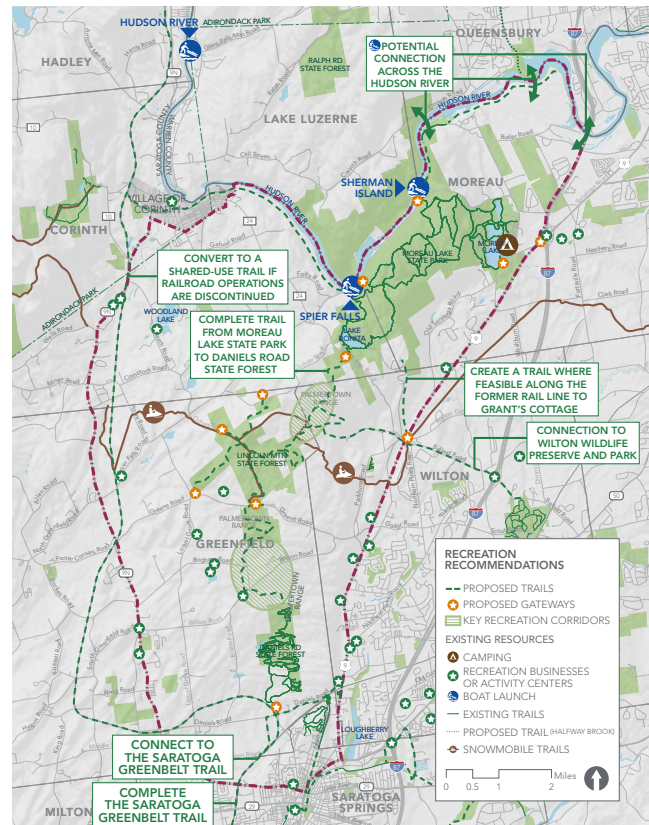
CONSERVATION RECOMMENDATIONS

- Acquire Land or secure Conservation Easements Based on the Priorities Identified in This Plan.
- Establish and Maintain a Community Forest Within the Study Area.
- Ongoing Conservation Education, Programming, and/or Advocacy.
- Collaborate with local schools, academic institutions, and service organizations to develop a stewardship program for the local landscape.
- A graphically linked comprehensive interpretive plan should be completed to tell the story of this place.



RECREATION RECOMMENDATIONS

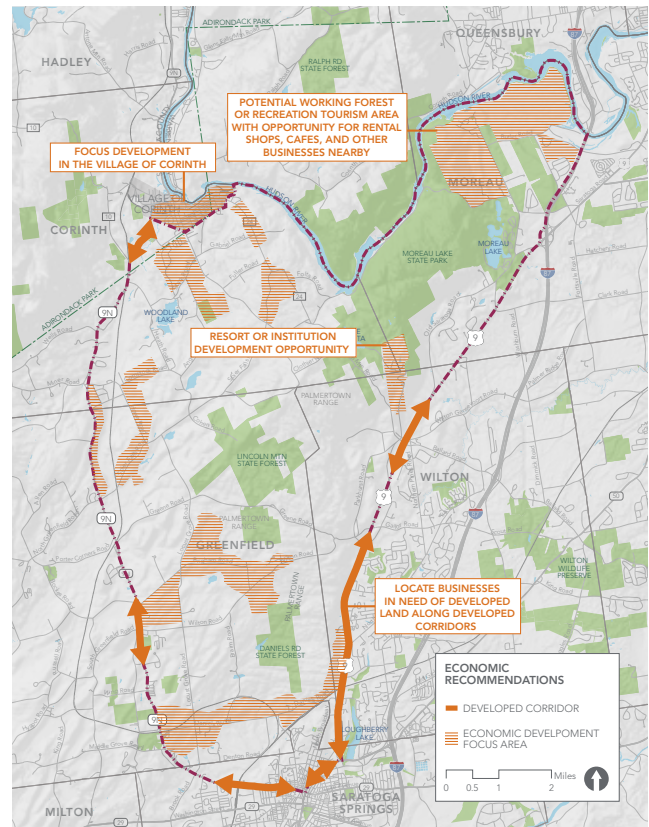
- Develop a 'Friends' organization, separate from the Southern Palmertown Guidance Committee, to support ongoing trail and outdoor recreation such as trail construction and maintenance.
- Complete land acquisitions/easements for a trail from Moreau Lake State Park to the Saratoga Greenbelt Trail, complete construction of this trail, and put a trail stewardship plan in place.
- Identify and implement facilities for specific uses to accommodate all abilities in key destinations such as Moreau Lake State Park, Daniels Road State Forest, and Lincoln Mountain State Forest as appropriate.
- Develop and Implement a comprehensive wayfinding plan for Southern Palmertown.
- Construct gateways at major recreation hubs such as Moreau Lake and Saratoga Spa State Parks and Daniels Road and Lincoln Mountain State Forests.
- Provide limited trail access with an educational or interpretive focus in Lincoln Mountain State Forest and other locations with significant conservation values.
- Complete the Saratoga Greenbelt Trail.



- Convert the Saratoga and North Creek Railway and historic trolley line to Grant's Cottage into shared-use trails.
- Provide a connection for trail users between the Town of Moreau and the Town of Queensbury.
- Maintain and enhance the scenic quality of roads within the study area for all users.

ECONOMIC RECOMMENDATIONS

- Engage in a branding exercise for the study area to determine an identity for the region, including a final name, graphic representation and Marketing Strategy.
- Facilitate trail-oriented development, eco-tourism, and recreation-based tourism businesses, including lodging, restaurants and cafes, rental shops, environmental education and guide services, camping, geocaching, and related businesses at appropriate locations along the trail system.
- Continue to support sustainable redevelopment of the Balmoral Hotel (Mt. McGregor Correctional Facility) and consider conservation of priority lands within the property.
- Collaborate with local tourism organizations, municipalities, and the local Chamber of Commerce to encourage visitors to utilize the area's recreation opportunities.
- Encourage and support appropriate working landscapes and forest-based economic activities such as forestry, wood and paper manufacturing, woodworking artisan products, Christmas tree harvesting, maple syrup and mushroom production, and forest recreation.



NEXT STEPS

This Plan is the beginning of a new vision for this unique area. It is clearly a place with significant conservation, recreation, and economic development potential - and realizing that vision will require new partnerships. With a shared understanding of how significant this landscape is, the region's stakeholders now have the potential to create a lasting legacy for future generations.



Moreau Lake State Park



Conserved Land on Greene Rd in Greenfield



Lincoln Mountain State Forest



Grant Cottage Historic Site



Lake Bonita