

ALTAMONT TRAILS MASTER PLAN

January 2026

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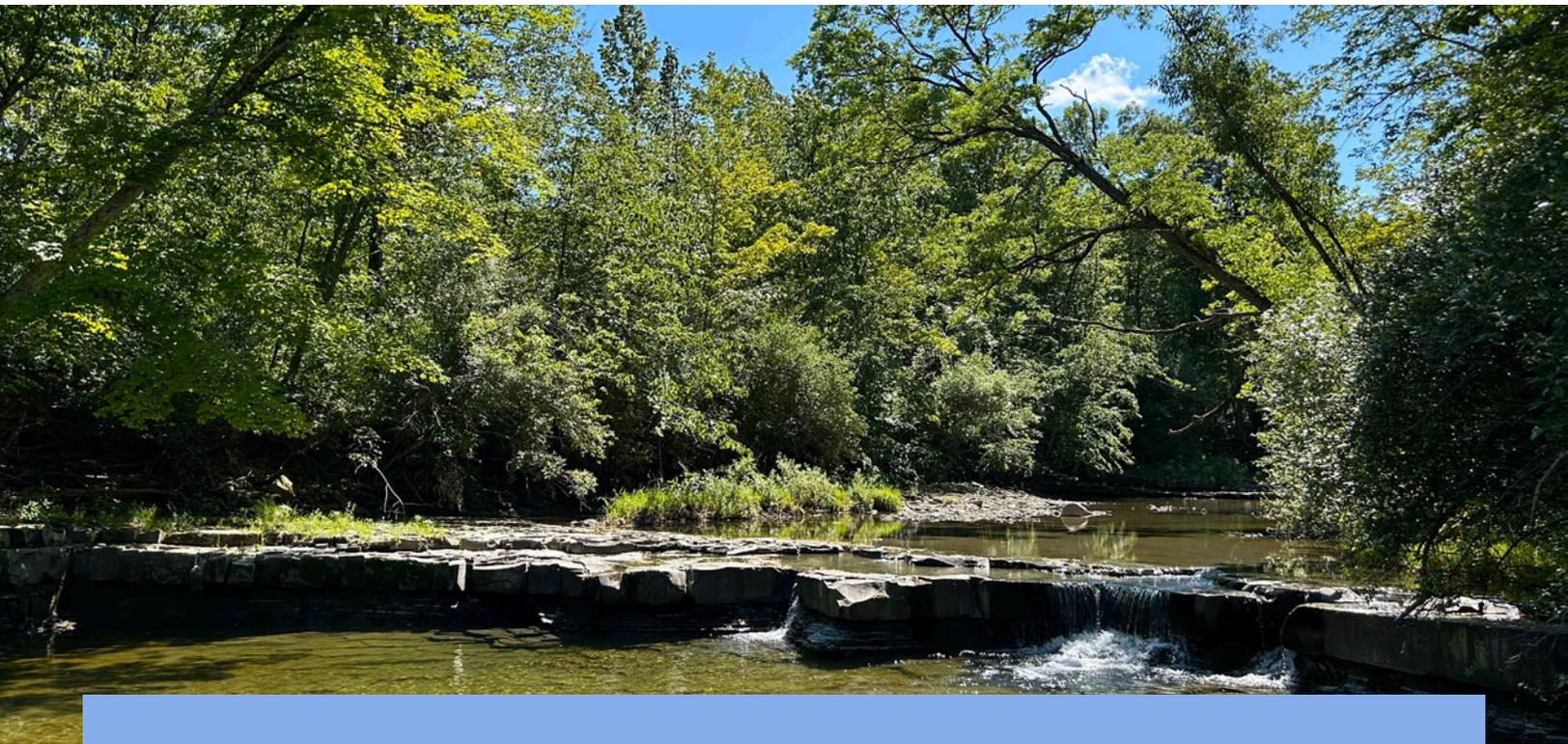
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INTRODUCTION

Historic Altamont Inc., a not-for-profit organization, was awarded funding by Albany County to develop a trail master plan for the Village of Altamont and the Town of Guilderland. The study focused on identifying trail segments and connections with hopes of creating a cohesive trail network serving the village and its environs. To the greatest extent practical, Historic Altamont compiled and reviewed current information and previous planning studies and identified eight priority segments or connections. LaBella Associates, as a consultant to Historic Altamont, has mapped these projects and identified various challenges and opportunities associated with their realization.



ALTAMONT TRAILS MASTER PLAN OVERVIEW

The overall purpose of this project is to study current conditions and assess feasible opportunities for trails in and around the Village of Altamont. The study aims to identify numerous trail routes, segments, and conceptual alignments that can be advanced further into detailed design and permitting. It will also require funding to achieve phased implementation. Additionally, alignments have been identified for focused outreach which will be required to gain trail access and to strengthen support of the overall initiative. Various trail types have been identified to achieve a broad network of routes and alternate corridors which are needed to connect potential existing open space and to create larger county-wide connections.

The objectives of the process are to identify and establish a list of actionable recommendations and priorities that will advance the projects in various locations and alignments. A broad strategy will be needed to connect trails throughout the study area from north to south, east to west. Each proposed location and alignment may be realized or abandoned given various factors. Routes on roadways are also considered as a way to create local and regional connectors if off-road routes are not achievable. Above all, this phase of the project attempts to achieve a framework of findings that advance the trail system in the Village of Altamont, Town of Guilderland, and Albany County. It also attempts to address valid community needs and respond to recreational demands in the urban centers and region. Moreover, it addresses these challenges in a manner that creates opportunity and capitalizes on the project areas assets. Success will only be realized if the trail elements are positioned to leverage existing social, cultural, natural, historical, economic, and recreational resources.

CREATING A VISION

This project provides a framework for two increasingly valuable community attributes in this era of rapid development and concurrent infrastructure improvement with each attribute cited in prior related studies and plans: linkage and connectivity. In the case of this project, Altamont plays an invaluable role as a key node, center, and fulcrum for three linkages:

1. *The Long Path, linking its trail sections through the Catskill Mountains (originating in Manhattan) to its planned continuance through portions of the Capital Region and its terminus in the Adirondacks.*
2. *The communities of Voorheesville – Altamont – Guilderland, extending the Helderberg Rail Trail from its origination in the City of Albany into the Town of Guilderland.*
3. *Public preserves and popular natural resource areas including Thacher State Park, Mohawk Hudson Land Conservancy's (MHLC) Bozen Kill Preserve, Black Creek Marsh, Indian Ladder Farms, Keenholts Park, Vosburgh Trails, and Tawasentha Park.*

Connectivity is created when these linkages are formally recognized as mapped trails, codified in zoning and other land-use regulations, and improved use by pedestrians and vehicles, both motorized and non-motorized.

The proposed projects outlined herein specifically build upon prior and related studies and plans aimed to provide connectivity, linkage, and enhanced trail experiences for residents and visitors by connecting them to both a local and regional network.

One goal of this *Altamont Trails Master Plan* is to coalesce, leverage, and ultimately realize the collective visions of these current and prior goals, recommendations, and plans.



EXISTING PLANS

The proposed initiatives in this plan specifically build upon prior and related studies. These plans exist at the local and regional levels and include:

VILLAGE OF ALTAMONT

Final Comprehensive Plan (2006) and *Pedestrian and Bicycle Master Plan* (2009) which made a recommendation to "establish and expand the bicycle and pedestrian linkages between the village's primary destinations and neighborhoods" including improvements that are part of Initiatives 3, 4, 6, and 8 of this Master Plan.

HELDERBERG ESCARPMENT PLANNING GUIDE

The Helderberg Escarpment Planning Committee prepared the *Helderberg Escarpment Planning Guide* in 2002. It was prepared by an inter-municipal committee including Altamont, Knox, Guilderland, Berne, New Scotland, and Albany County. The guide offers land use guidelines and recommendations.

TOWN OF GUILDERLAND

The Guilderland 2025 Comprehensive Plan, the *Bicycle and Pedestrian Connectivity Study* (2020), and the *Pathways Master Plan* (2005) which included as Recommendation E-5, "Develop a network of multi-use trails in Guilderland to link neighborhoods, public transportation nodes, town park/open space areas, commercial and entertainment centers, and regional trail systems" including improvements that are part of Initiatives 2, 4, and 6 of this Master Plan.

FEDERAL PROGRAMS

The Capital Region Transportation Council, which is the MPO designated under federal law and administered by the U.S. Department of Transportation and the Federal Transit Administration, covering a region that includes the counties of Albany, Rensselaer, Saratoga, and Schenectady, and who in their *Capital District Trails Plan* (2019) recommended Initiative 6 of this Master Plan – the extension of the Albany County Helderberg-Hudson Rail Trail from Voorheesville to Altamont – as a "core trail."

STATE OF NEW YORK

Final Statewide Greenway Trails Plan & Final Generic Environmental Impact Statement (2021) which defined how regional and local planning for greenway trails across the state are led by Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs).

UNITED NATIONS

The United Nations, who in their *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* adopted by all United Nations Member States in 2015, identified seventeen Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of which trail networks support SDGs 11 Sustainable Cities and Communities, 13 Climate Action, and 15 Life on Land.



Stewardship

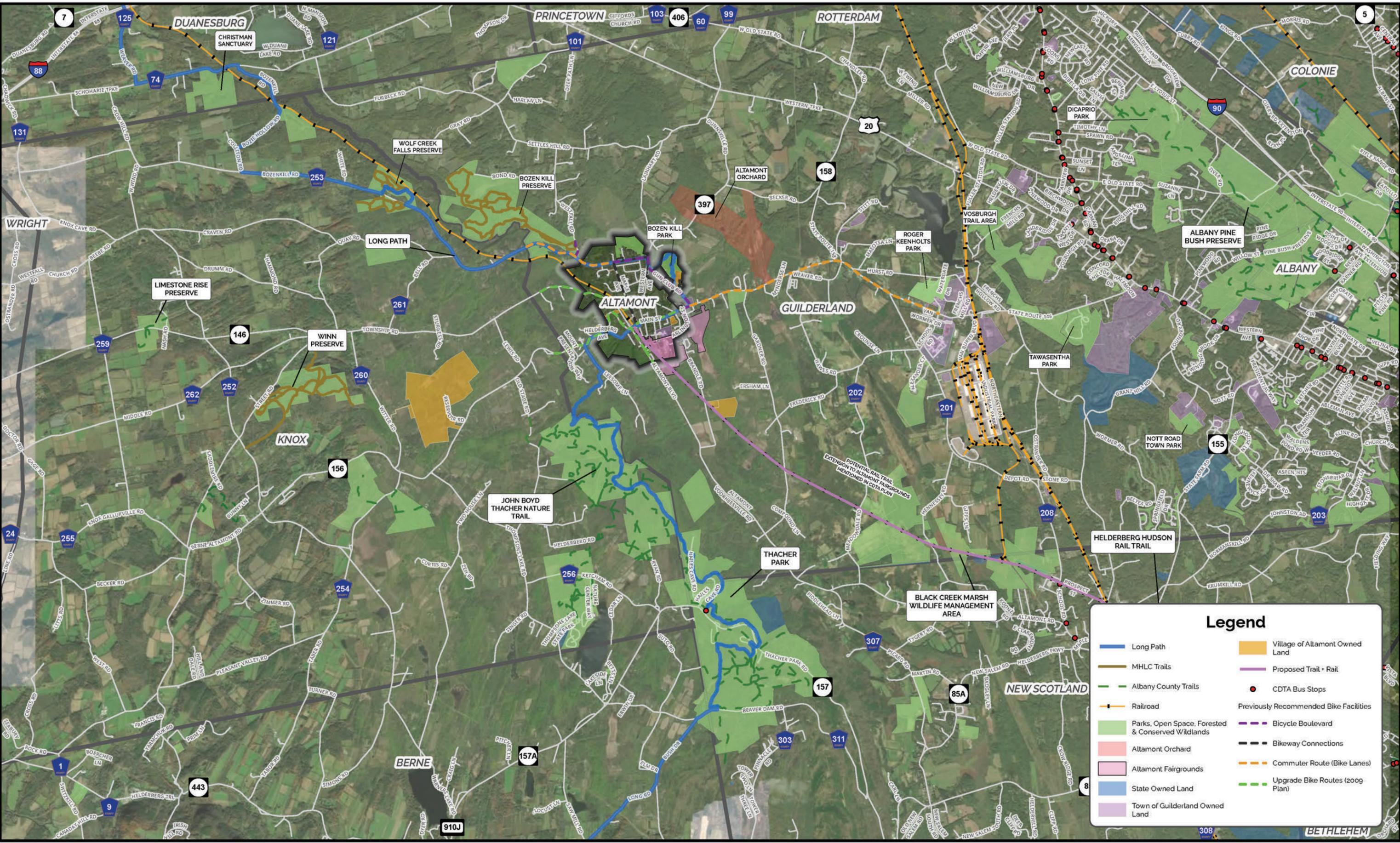
This project establishes a vision for regional access to protected natural, agricultural, cultural, historical, and open space resources. Numerous scenic landscapes and view-sheds can be further connected through the implementation of the trails proposed within this study.

These public landscapes and conservation easements can be combined to create a broad network of landscapes and corridors that will contribute to the protection of our cherished natural resources. These highly valued, land-based resources can be utilized for recreation, education, interpretation, and non-motorized connectivity. Each segment can enrich the residents' quality of life, promote healthy living, and foster social interaction.

As importantly, these landscapes and corridors serve to create a so-called *greenbelt* or *emerald necklace* surrounding the involved communities that act to buffer the well-known effects of suburban sprawl. Such greenbelts have served as administrative land-use controls for cities such as London, Los Angeles, and Jacksonville, as well as more proximate communities such as Saratoga Springs.

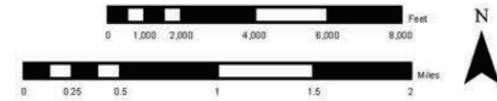


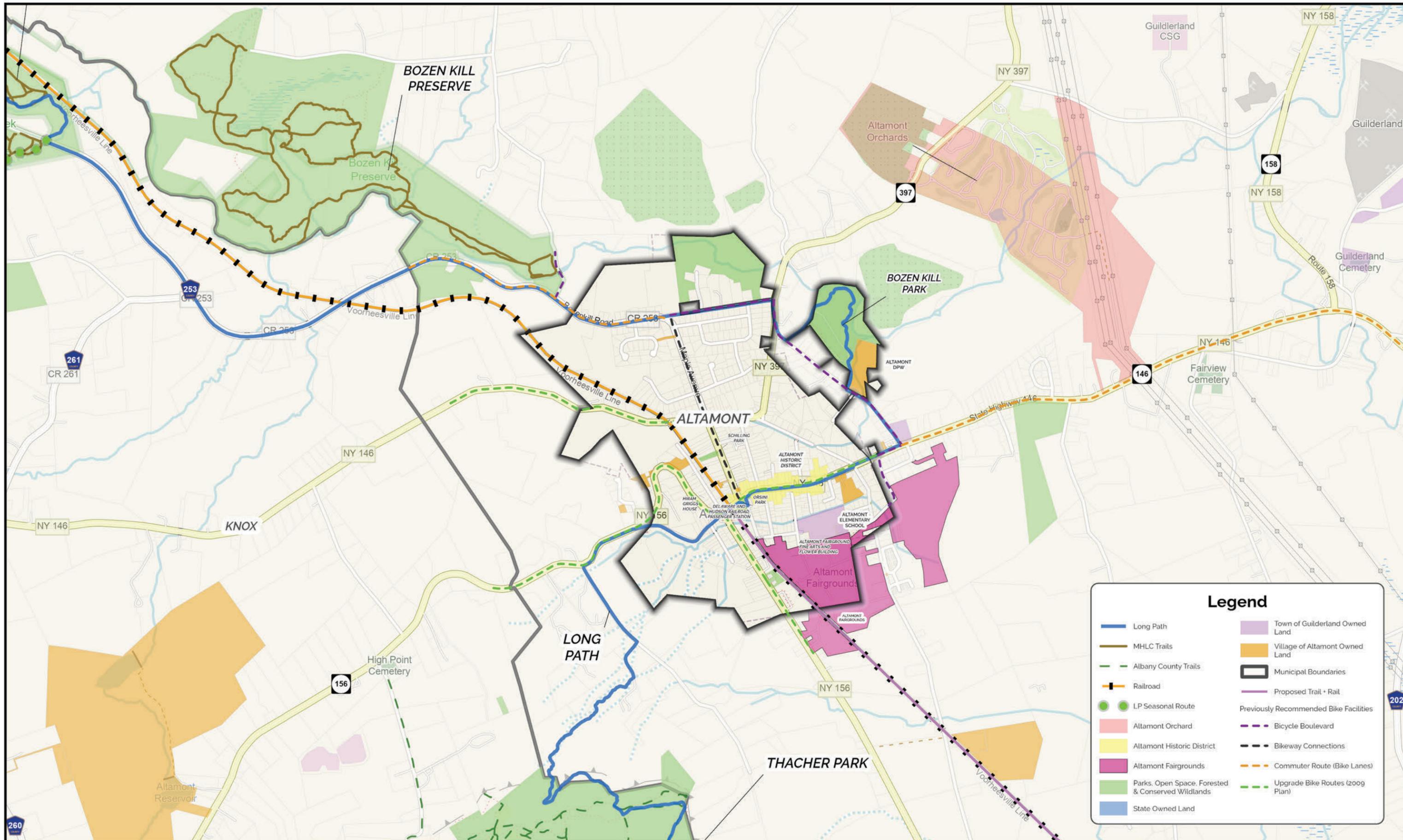
REGIONAL CONTEXT



EXISTING CONDITIONS - AERIAL IMAGERY

FOR CONCEPTUAL PLANNING PURPOSES

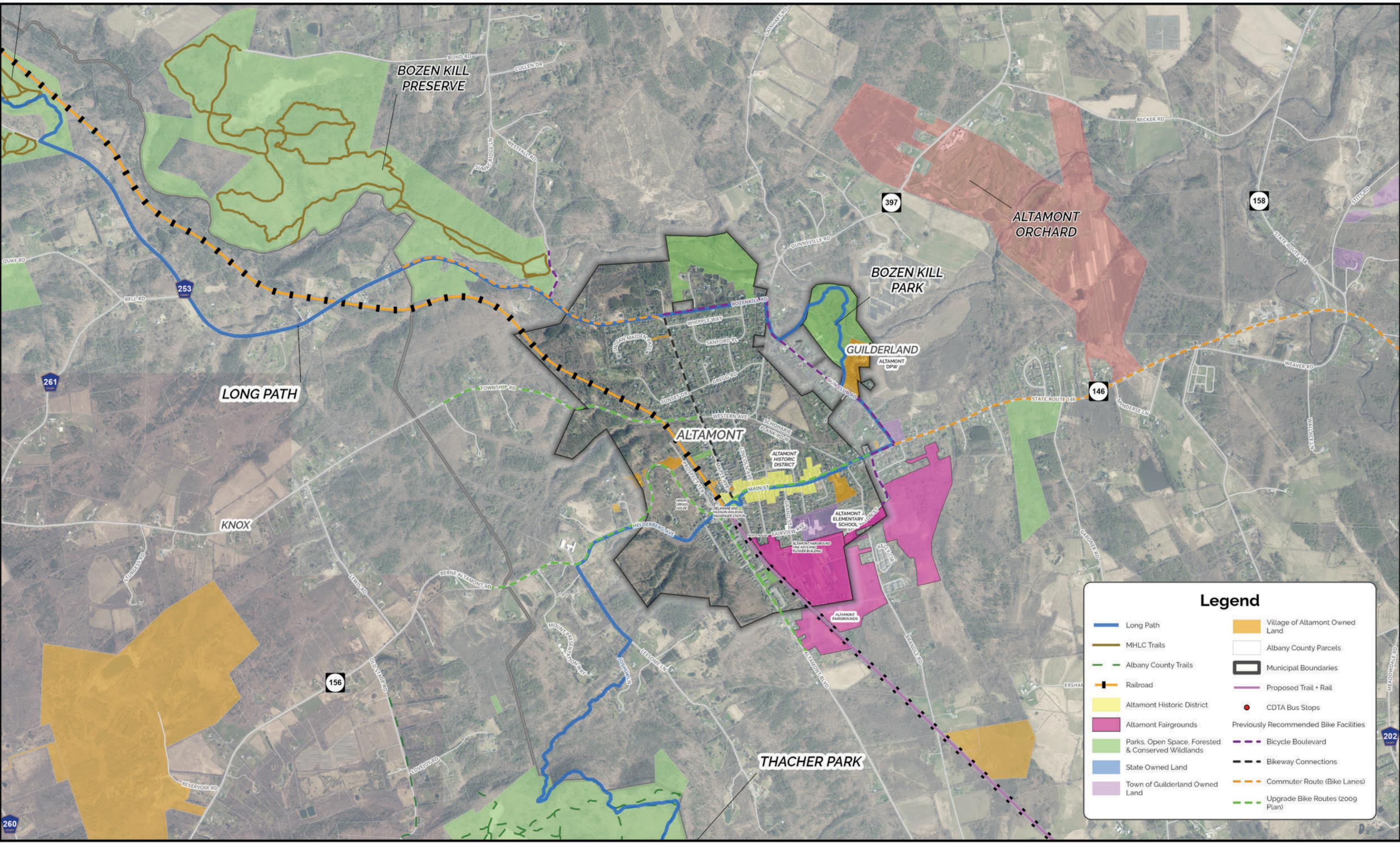




EXISTING CONDITIONS - OPEN STREET MAP

VILLAGE OF ALTAMONT
FOR CONCEPTUAL PLANNING PURPOSES

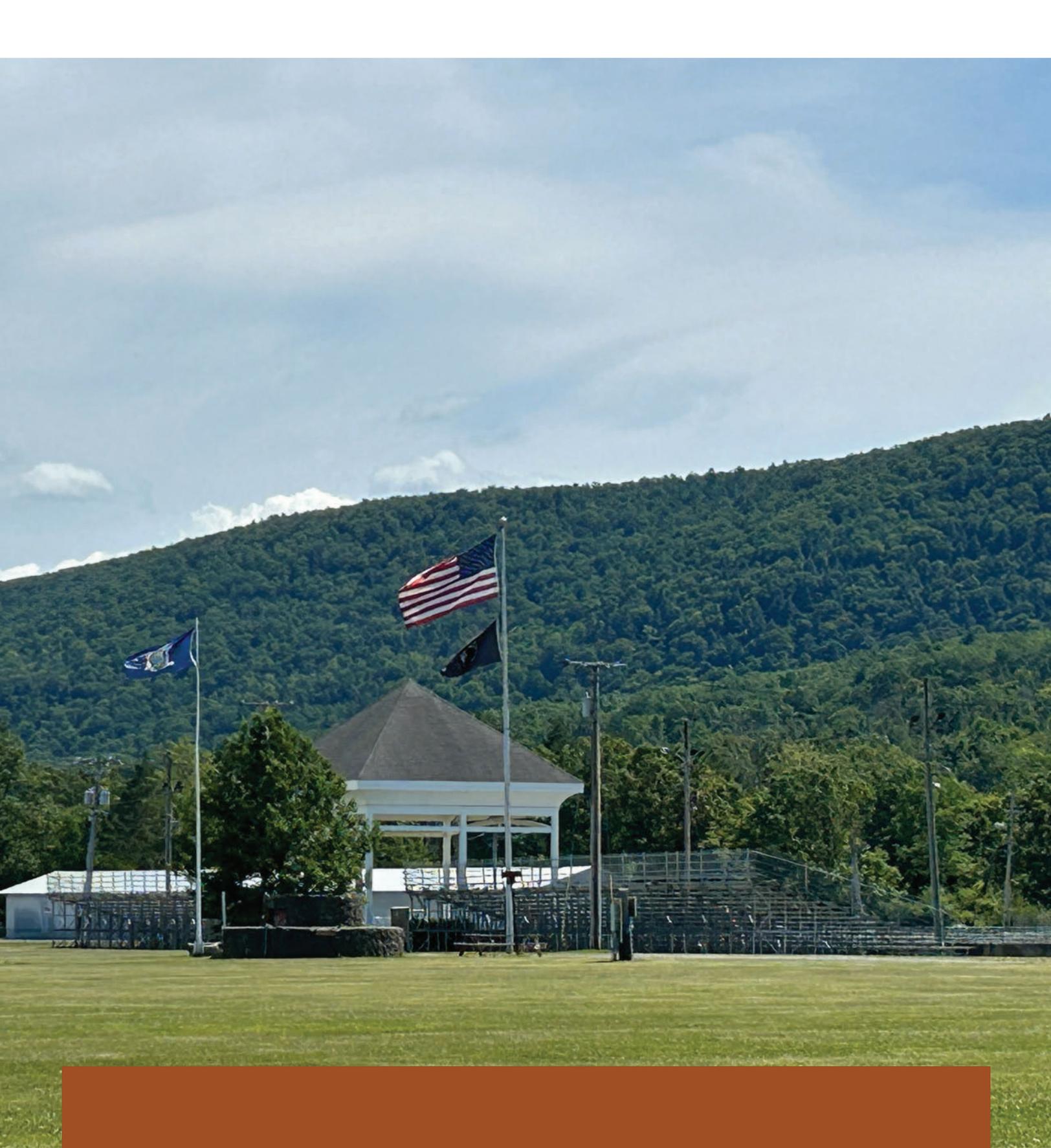




Legend

Long Path	Village of Altamont Owned Land
MHLC Trails	Albany County Parcels
Albany County Trails	Municipal Boundaries
Railroad	Proposed Trail + Rail
Altamont Historic District	CDTA Bus Stops
Altamont Fairgrounds	Previously Recommended Bike Facilities
Parks, Open Space, Forested & Conserved Wildlands	Bicycle Boulevard
State Owned Land	Bikeway Connections
Town of Guilderland Owned Land	Commuter Route (Bike Lanes)
	Upgrade Bike Routes (2009 Plan)

EXISTING CONDITIONS - AERIAL IMAGERY
 VILLAGE OF ALTAMONT
 FOR CONCEPTUAL PLANNING PURPOSES



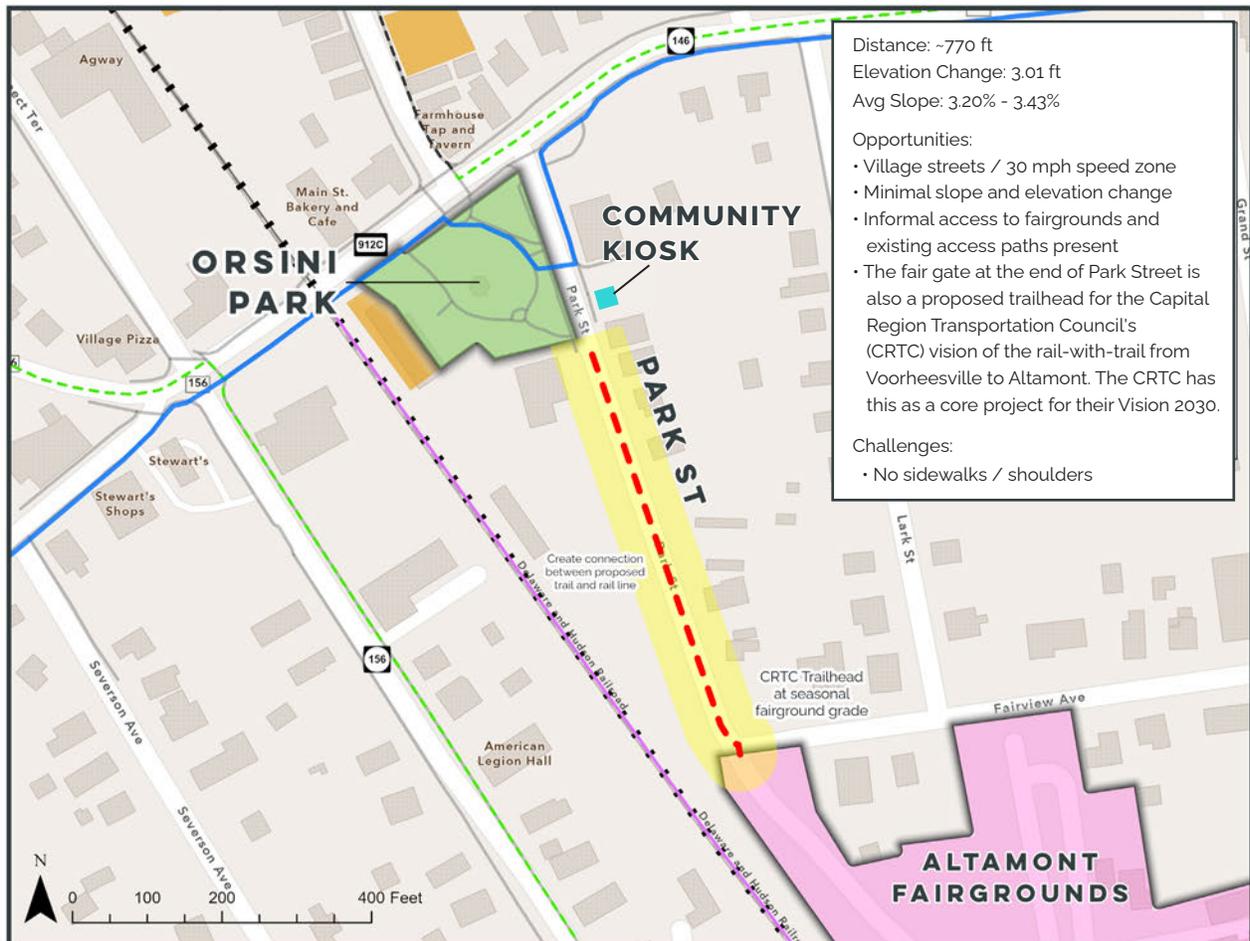
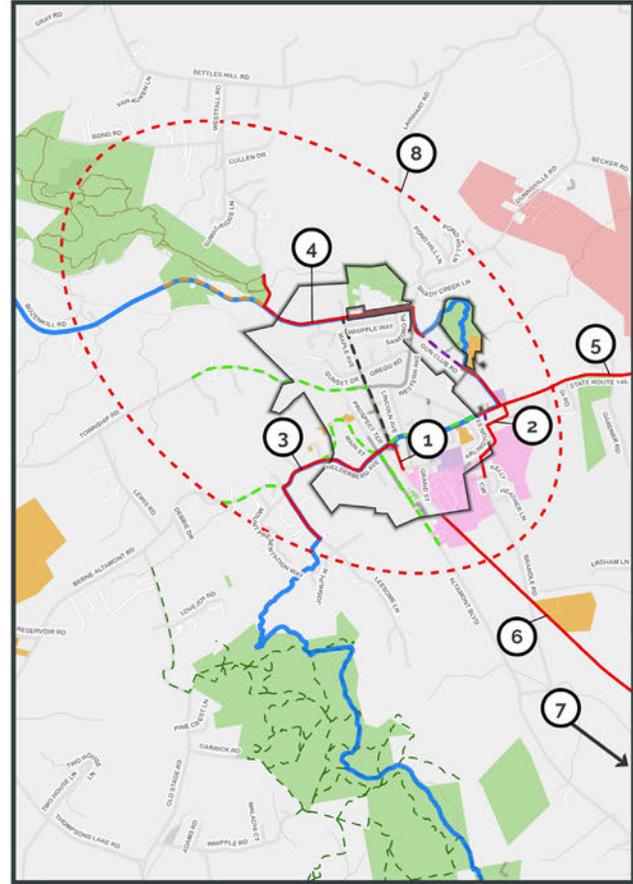
INITIATIVES

INITIATIVE 1

ALTAMONT FAIRGROUNDS TO ORSINI PARK

DESCRIPTION:

Create a connection between the Altamont Fairgrounds and the Altamont Central Business District including Orsini Park and the community kiosk. This connection could be a future part of the Long Path and could also link to a trail that encircles the village.

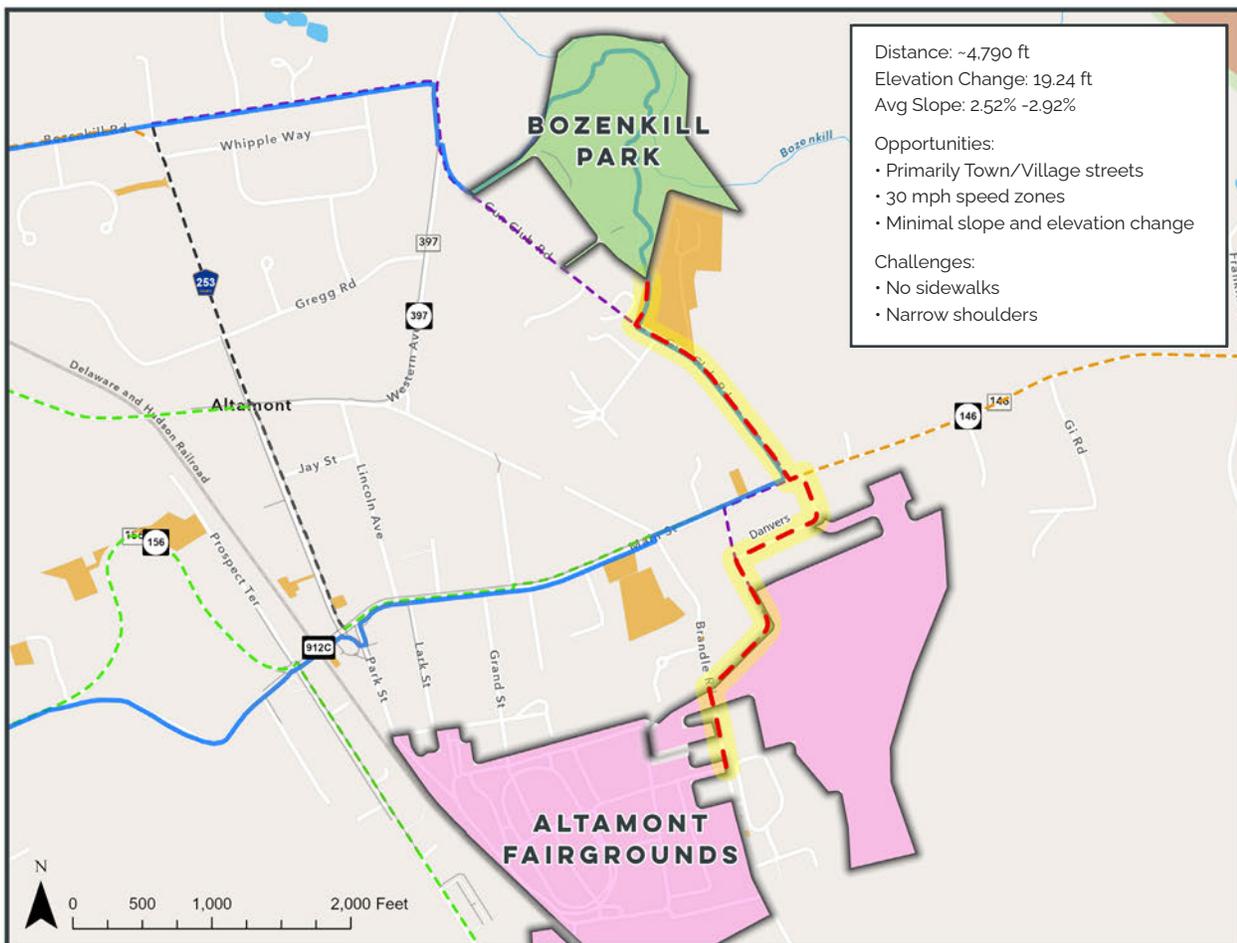
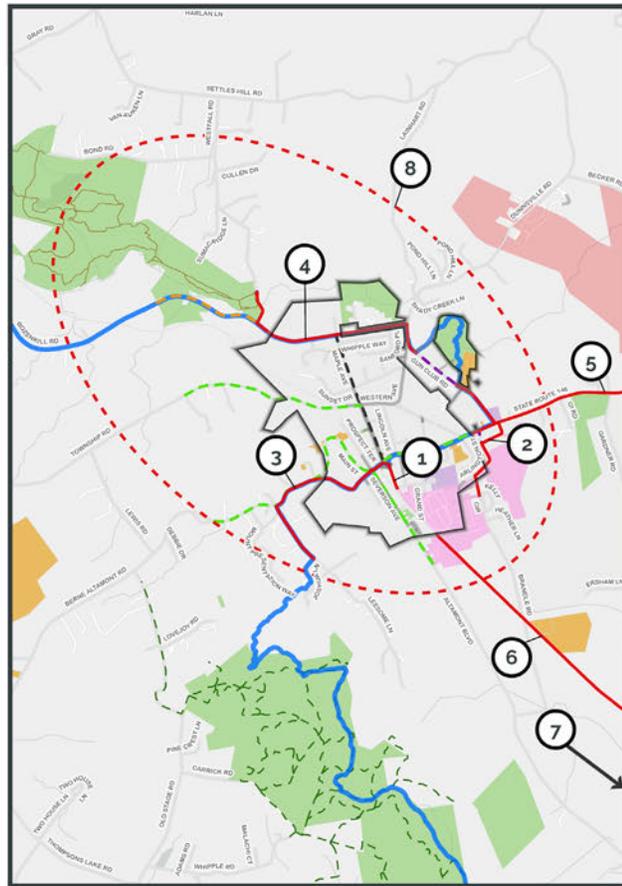


INITIATIVE 2

ALTAMONT FAIRGROUNDS TO BOZENKILL PARK ON GUN CLUB ROAD

DESCRIPTION:

The Altamont Fairgrounds is a multi-parcel 70+ acre area within the Village of Altamont. The Altamont Bozenkill Park is an approximately 32-acre area with multiple recreational opportunities (pool, tennis, playground) and an established trail which encircles the park. The distance between the two areas is less than a mile. A safe, walkable connection between these two areas creates multiple opportunities. The *Guilderland Bicycle & Pedestrian Connectivity Study* (2020) recommended linking Bozenkill Park and Bozen Kill Preserve via "paved shoulders" along Gun Club and Bozen Kill roads. The *Altamont NY Pedestrian and Bicycle Master Plan* (2009), commissioned by and consistent with the *Village of Altamont 2006 Comprehensive Plan* intends to "establish and expand the bicycle and pedestrian linkages between the Village's primary destinations and neighborhoods," recommend "new construction," and "upgrade bike route" along Gun Club Road. The *Guilderland Pathways Master Plan* (2005) recommends improvements linking the Altamont Fairgrounds with Bozenkill Park.



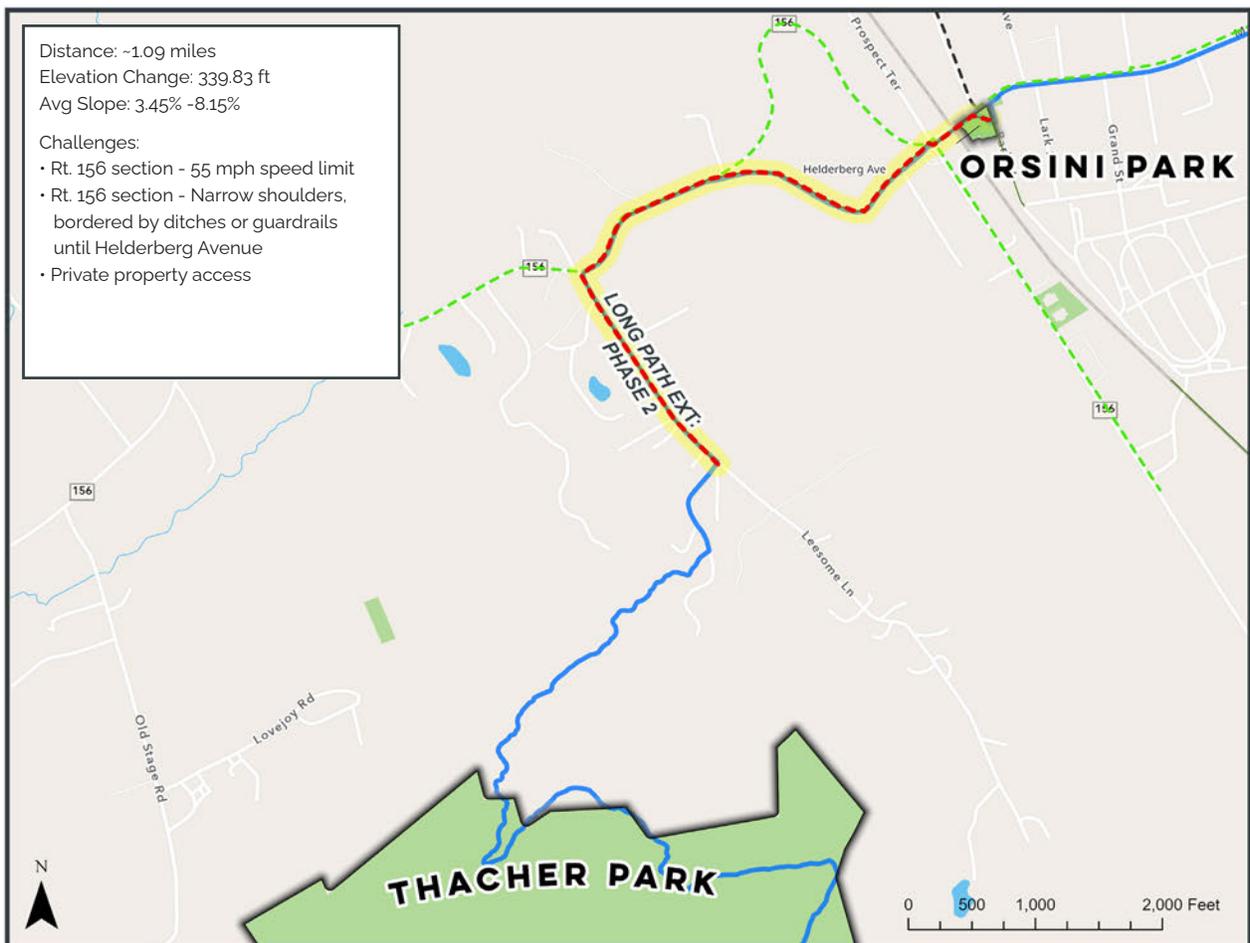
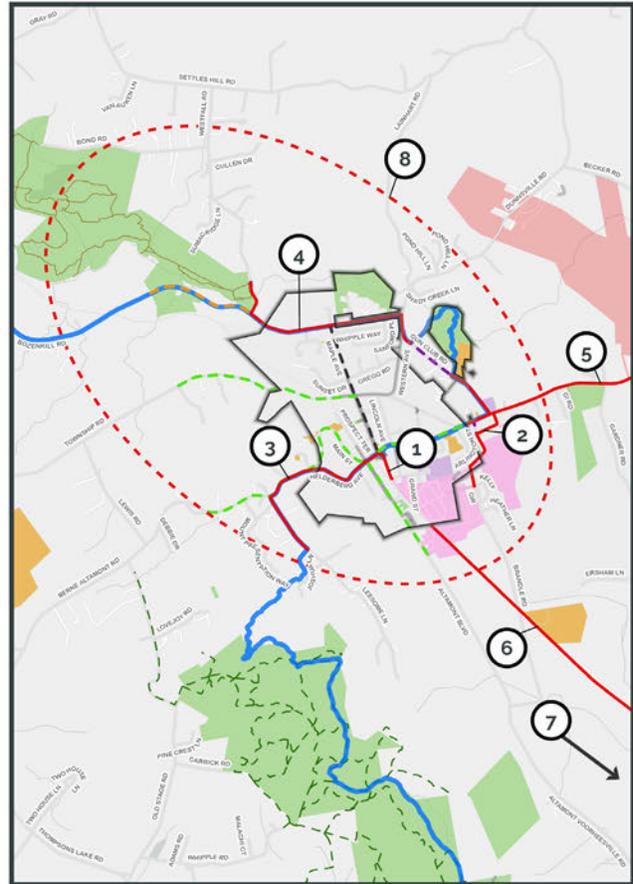
INITIATIVE 3

LONG PATH EXTENSION FROM THACHER PARK TO ORSINI PARK, ALTAMONT

DESCRIPTION:

The Long Path is completed from Thacher Park to Leesome Lane, which was considered Phase 1.

Phase 2 is completing the trail from Leesome Lane to Orsini Park. Currently, there is a work-around with blazes by road for 1.25 miles down Leesome Lane to Rt. 156, down Helderberg Avenue and to Orsini Park. Discussions continue with private land owners for off-road routes into the village.

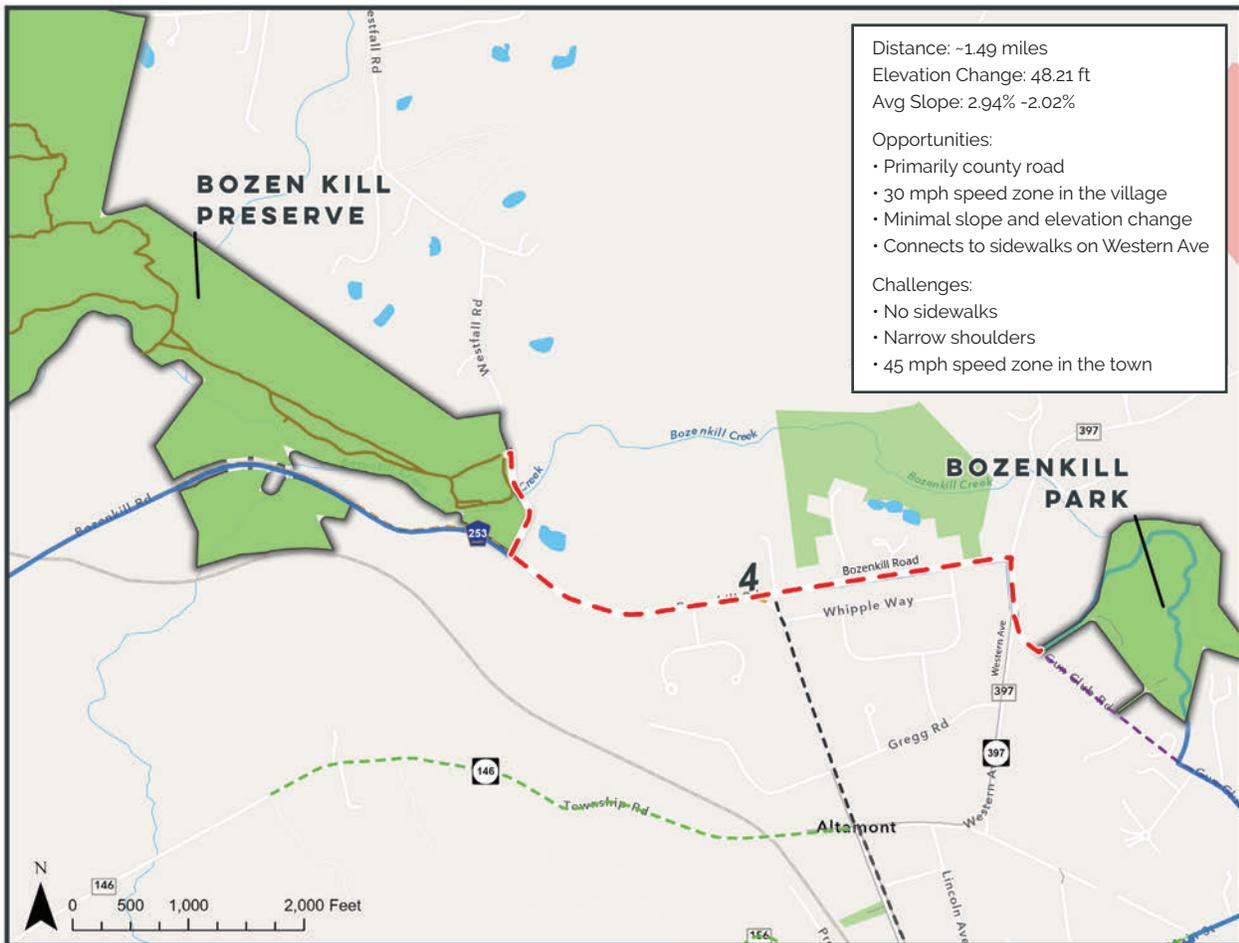


INITIATIVE 4

VILLAGE OF ALTAMONT BOZENKILL PARK TO THE MHLC BOZEN KILL PRESERVE

DESCRIPTION:

The Helderberg Greenway is conceived to wrap around the Village of Altamont, joining public green spaces. This vision is a walking corridor between the Village of Altamont's Bozenkill Park, located in the northeast corner of the village, to the Mohawk Hudson Land Conservancy's (MHLC) Bozen Kill Preserve. This would coincide with and provide a route for extending the Long Path hiking trail to the northwest side of the village. We continue to seek an off-road route from the Altamont Village park to the MHLC Bozen Kill Preserve. The *Altamont NY Pedestrian and Bicycle Master Plan* (2009) depicted improvements connecting Bozenkill Park to Rt. 397 / Dunnsville Road and the riparian link of the Bozenkill to Bozen Kill Preserve.

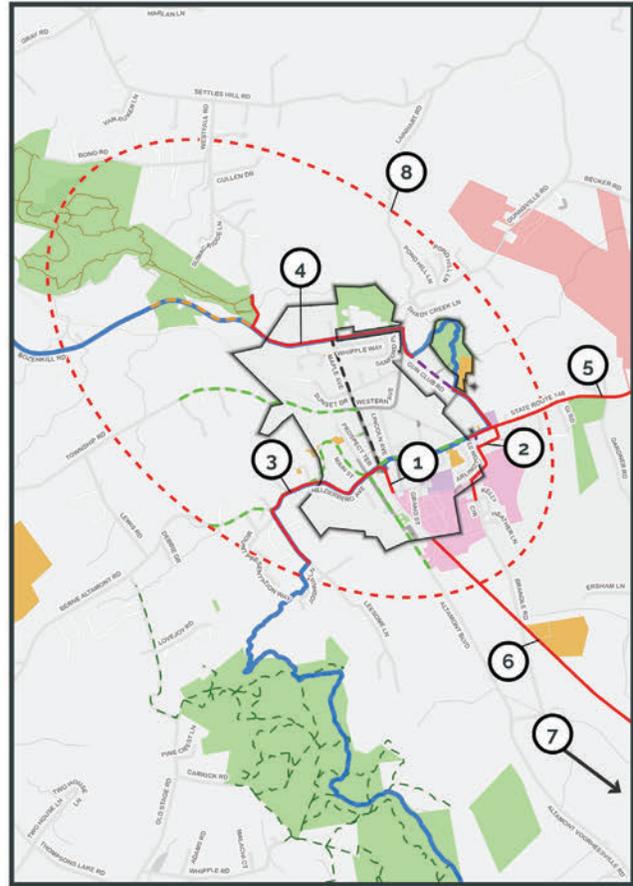


INITIATIVE 5

GUILDERLAND CENTER CONNECTION TRAIL

DESCRIPTION:

No trail system currently exists linking the Village of Altamont to neighboring Guilderland Center. Discussions have been underway between the Village of Altamont and the Town of Guilderland regarding the water security of the village. As stated in the recently published *Guilderland 2025 Comprehensive Plan*, the town supports efforts to implement an interconnection between the village and town water districts. The Comprehensive Plan further outlines the option of providing easement rights for emergency use. Determining the physical route of the planned back-up water extension with concurrent planning of a public use trail may serve as a proactive strategy to encourage preservation of this natural corridor. The *Guilderland Bicycle & Pedestrian Connectivity Study (2020)* recommended a "side path (multi-use, off-road, paved)" along various sections of Rt. 146 connecting Altamont to Guilderland Center.

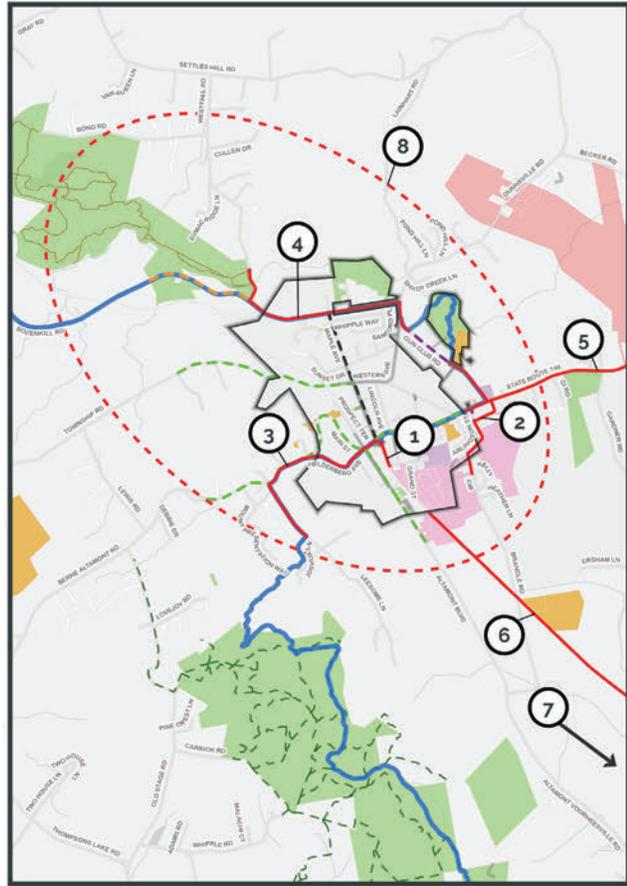


INITIATIVE 6

VOORHEESVILLE TO ALTAMONT RAIL-WITH-TRAIL

DESCRIPTION:

This project is an extension of the Helderberg-Hudson Rail Trail from Voorheesville to the Village of Altamont immediately adjacent to the Altamont Fairgrounds. This would be a 6.3 mile rail-with-trail and is a core trail proposed by the Capital Region Transportation Council (CRTC). The project could preserve a large parcel of the land south of the Village of Altamont. A large acreage of densely wooded property ascends the Helderberg Escarpment up to Thacher State Park and would provide a desirable expansion of the park. This could be an extremely beneficial addition to a protected wildlife corridor between the Catskills and Adirondacks. The hoped-for addition of 300 acres would include Revolutionary War-era farmland located below the escarpment. Many of the qualities and benefits of protecting the Helderberg Escarpment have been documented and recommended in *The Helderberg Escarpment Planning Guide*, edited by Daniel A. Driscoll and Lindsay Childs (2002).



Distance: ~5.84 miles
 Elevation Change: 111.76 ft
 Avg Slope: 1.07% -0.88%

Opportunities:

- Potential connection to Black Creek Marsh
- Gentle slopes
- Existing corridor can easily accommodate a trail of hard-packed dirt, hardened surface, or asphalt
- Preserve and expand protected dense woodland and open fields below and along the escarpment, adding to Thacher State Park and contributing to a protected wildlife corridor between the Catskills and the Adirondacks
- Provide vital protection to the viewshed of the Helderberg Escarpment
- Protect the unique geological cross-section that the Helderberg Escarpment demonstrates, which is studied by geologists worldwide
- Reestablish a connection from Thacher Park to the valley floor
- Preserve historic Revolutionary War-era fields and farmland and provide access to other nearby Revolutionary War historic sites
- Connect to the expanding extension of the Albany County Rail Trail leading to Altamont, linking to Revolutionary War historic sites and Thacher Park
- Protect Brandle Road to continue as a well-used, safe walking road with a scenic viewshed

Challenges:

- Parallel to active rail
- Norfolk Southern permission
- Liability and insurance

INITIATIVE 7

BLACK CREEK MARSH CONNECTOR

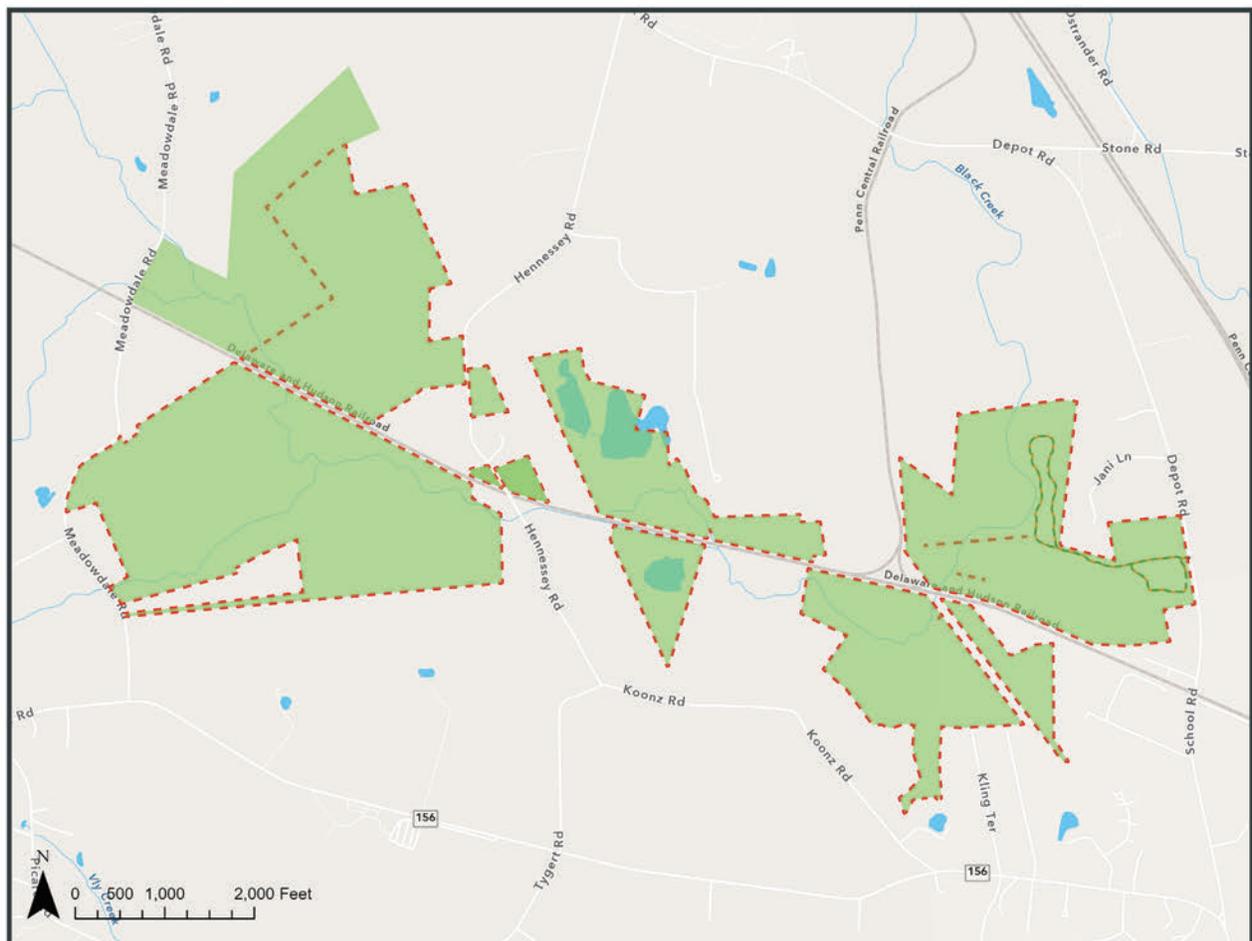
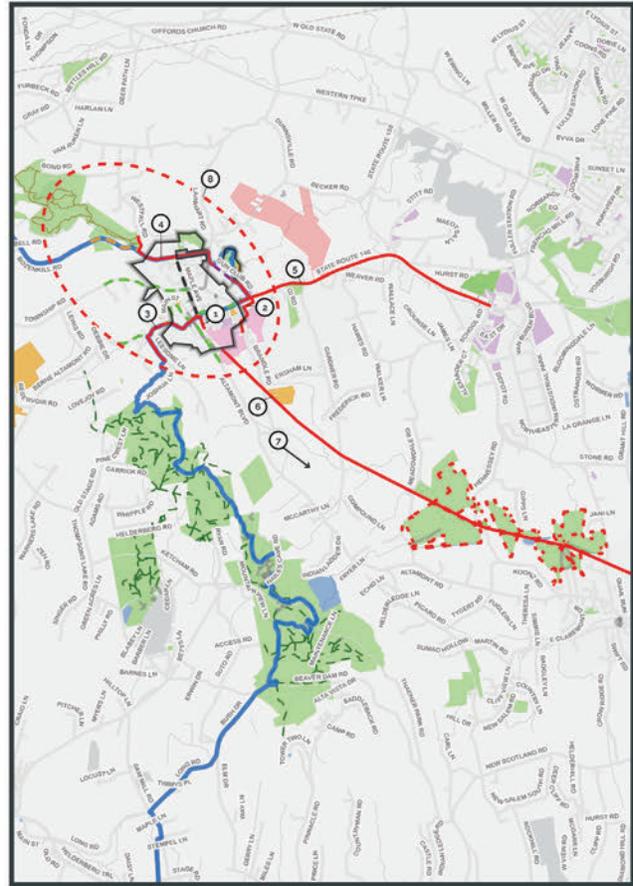
DESCRIPTION:

New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC) maintains four trailheads and a small amount of trail through the marsh, but it is not well known to the public. There is a National Grid corridor from the marsh to Meadowdale, Gardner, Becker, and Dunnsville Roads, and to Rt. 146. Parking areas providing access can be found on Meadowdale Road, School Road, Hennessey Road, and at the end of Kling Terrace.

Identify potential routes from the existing trails in the NYSDEC lands that could be connected to the village as part of a circle of trails around Altamont.

Opportunity:

- Link to Indian Ladder Farms trail system
- Link to the proposed Voorheesville to Altamont rail-with-trail connection

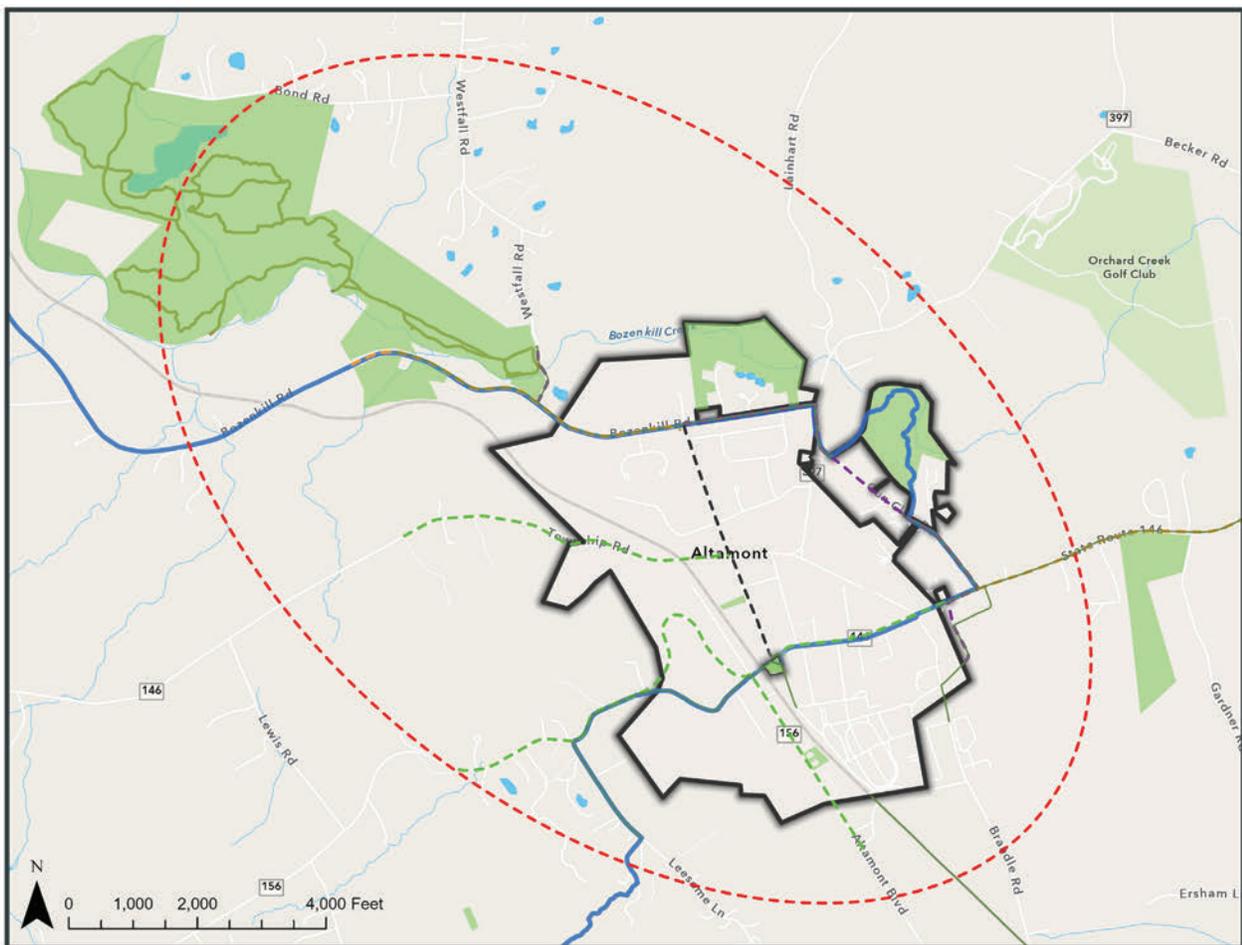
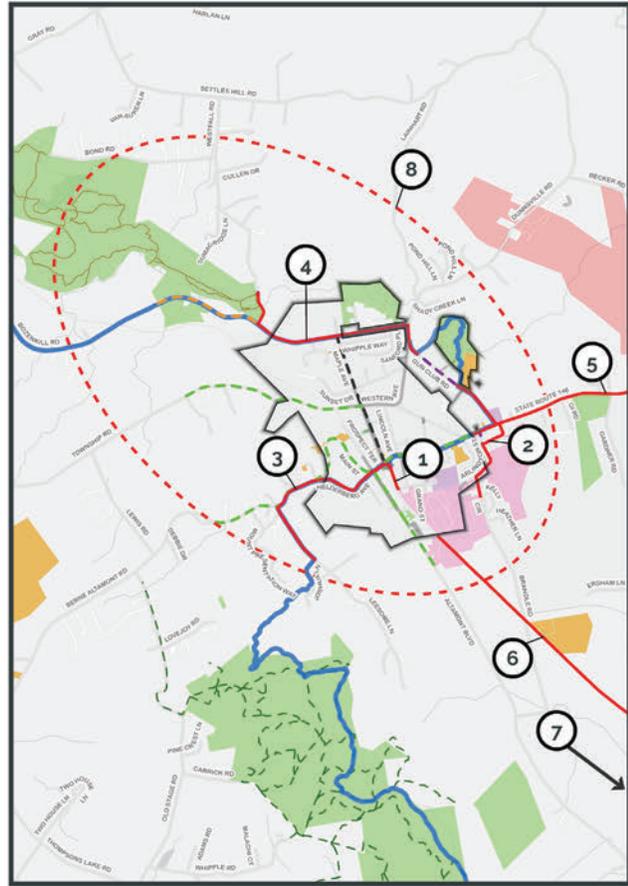


INITIATIVE 8

ALTAMONT VILLAGE LOOP

DESCRIPTION:

The new Long Path route created a "horseshoe" around the Village of Altamont. Starting near High Point, it loops around the village and then heads west. The Bozen Kill Creek corridor is a potential off-road route for the Long Path. This project would be to close the loop with a connector trail to the west of Altamont. This north-south route would roughly connect Thacher Park to the Bozen Kill Preserve. This overview is within the *Final Statewide Greenway Trails Plan*.



NEXT STEPS

There are a variety of actions required to advance the findings of this study including the following:

- Stakeholder, Landowner, and Public Outreach
- Focusing on the Priority Projects and Phased Implementation
- Regional Planning Initiatives and Coordination Efforts
- Design Development and Permitting
- Operation, Management and Promotional Strategies
- Funding

All of these elements require extensive collaboration and careful coordination over time to achieve successful results. Each activity is required for the trail segments and includes a comprehensive planning process to continually assess the developing trail network and the region. Success will occur in steps, one project at a time, as trails are developed within the study area.

STAKEHOLDER, LANDOWNER, AND PUBLIC OUTREACH

Outreach and consensus building is perhaps the most important effort required to advance the project beyond this planning phase. Stakeholder support will foster coordinated outreach and consensus building among its various constituents and will be helpful in rolling out the various projects to local and regional residents. Because some of

the trail segments may require permission and easements from landowners, invested stakeholders should work collaboratively to develop strategies to make these trail projects appealing to individual parcel owners, including public organizations and other preservation-oriented land trusts.

FOCUSING ON THE PRIORITY PROJECTS AND PHASED IMPLEMENTATION

This process has successfully identified numerous trail segments and eight priority projects. However, only a few trail segments will likely be constructed within short time spans as funding and charitable donations are secured. Altamont and its regional and statewide partners will work jointly to select projects that can be realistically implemented, perhaps as phased sections of an individual route. Other longer-term projects may require several years to execute, and planning will undoubtedly occur as an ongoing effort until success is achieved. The key element to the successful momentum of this process is that easy projects will be implemented in a short time frame and will provide an immediate benefit to the local and regional residents.

REGIONAL PLANNING INITIATIVES AND COORDINATION EFFORTS

During the process of developing the Altamont Trails Master Plan, Historic Altamont determined that planning and regulatory actions should occur to help strengthen the recommendations and to provide a broader framework to implement the various proposed segments. Historic Altamont recommends the adoption of the plan by the Village of Altamont, the Town of Guilderland, and Albany County and consideration in relevant regional planning initiatives. As community and regional-based planning studies are initiated, this plan should be referenced in coordination with future planning efforts.



NEXT STEPS

DESIGN DEVELOPMENT AND PERMITTING

In order to advance the individual projects outlined within this study, environmental assessment, detailed engineering and construction drawings, and project permitting will be required for each construction project. Coordination with state and federal agencies will likely be required given the existing conditions associated with each trail segment. Conformance of the work for the construction projects will be completed with the consideration of relevant federal, state, and local laws, as well as regulations and guidelines, including but not limited to:

- The New York State Environmental Quality Review Act (SEQRA)
- The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA)
- The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)
- The National Historic Preservation Act (Section 106)
- The Transportation Act of 1996
- The American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO) Design Guidelines
- The Federal Highway Administration Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices
- The New York State Department of Transportation Highway Design Manual
- The New York State Manual for Uniform Traffic Controls

OPERATION, MANAGEMENT AND PROMOTIONAL STRATEGIES

There are a variety of comprehensive components that must be addressed as trail projects are implemented. The on-going care and management of these facilities incorporates a wide variety of innovative public-private partnerships to ensure long-term success of the trail network. A few of these topics include:

- Security, safety, liability and assessing risk management
- Conformance with regulatory and performance standards
- Ongoing outreach, access to information and marketing strategies
- Annual assessment and prioritized funding strategies for projects and maintenance
- Continued landowner and stakeholder coordination and collaboration

FUNDING

There are a variety of funding sources to advance trails in the village including local municipal budgets, county agencies, state agencies, and federal resources. Private donations and non-profit institutions also serve as technical and financial support to implement various aspects of trail related projects. A general list of potential funding resources includes the following:

FUNDING SOURCES

- American Hiking Society: National Trails Endowment and Trails for Tomorrow
- Bikes Belong Foundation
- Community Development Block Grant
- Conservation Alliance Grants
- Division of Housing and Community Renewal
- Great Places Grants
- Federal Transportation Funding
- Highway Safety Program
- Land Trust Alliance
- National Park Service Rivers and Trails Conservation Assistance Program
- National Recreational Trails Program
- New York State Consolidated Funding Application (REDC CFA)
- NYSDEC
- New York State Department of State Coastal Resources and Waterfronts
- NYSDOT Multi-Modal Program and CHIPS
- New York State Environmental Protection Fund
- New York State Governor's Traffic Safety Program
- NYS Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation (OPRHP)
- Parks & Trails New York
- Safe Routes to School
- Surface Transportation Block Grant Program (STBGP)
- US DOT's Federal -Aid Highway Program



THANK YOU

