

RECOMMENDATION FOR ACQUISITION

THE OSTERHOUDT FLATS
MARBLETOWN PARK & PRESERVE

prepared by the

MARBLETOWN
Community Preservation Fund Advisory Board

APRIL 2023

BOARD MEMBERS:

Dale Robbins, *Chairman*
Dan Shuster, *Vice Chairman*
Bill Merchant, *Secretary*
Jonathan Bergman
Bryn Roshong
Adam Liebowitz
Celia Lewis

TOWN BOARD LIAISONS:
Daisy Foote, Tim Hunt

CONTACT: mpic@marbletown.net



OVERVIEW

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY *page 3*

THE IMPORTANCE OF OPEN SPACE *page 7*

- Comprehensive Town Plan
- Community Preservation Plan
- Real Estate Transfer Tax
- Community Preservation Fund Advisory Board

OBJECTIVES & EVALUATION OF OPEN SPACE CONSERVATION *page 8*

- Site Evaluation
- How does the Osterhoudt property measure up?
- Parcel Rating

HISTORY & FEATURES OF THE OSTERHOUDT FLATS *page 12*

- Description of the Land & History
- Property Features
- African American Burial Ground

EVALUATION & RECOMMENDATION OF OSTERHOUDT PROPERTY *page 20*

PROJECTED REVENUE FROM THE REAL ESTATE TRANSFER TAX *page 25*



View of Marbletown and the Catskills from Spring Farm

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The mission of the Marbletown Community Preservation Fund Advisory Board is to advise the Town Board regarding the acquisition of land and easements for the preservation of community character and conservation of natural resources. The following study, prepared for the Town Board, is a recommendation to purchase the Osterhoudt Flats property on Atwood/Cooper Road for use as a recreational park and nature preserve.

The recommendation is informed by the Comprehensive Town Plan of 2005, as well as data from the Community Preservation Plan, which consolidates the town's history of environmental planning, natural resource analysis and also catalogues and scores the attributes of all the parcels in Marbletown. This report looks at the research and data supporting the recommendation and considers the recreational and environmental value of the subject property to the Town as well. For example, the property is underlain by a large, unconsolidated aquifer (the School Aquifer). If protected, the site would not only help conserve the character of the town and provide recreational space but preserve a precious groundwater resource.

The recent adoption, by the Town, of a Real Estate Transfer Tax to support community preservation provides a viable means of funding for this project without raising taxes. In addition, the Town will seek to collaborate with conservation organizations, private donors and state agencies to expand financial resources for acquisition and preservation of open space and natural resources.

It is consistent with Marbletown's long history of support for community preservation and current affirmation of this goal that we, the Community Preservation Fund Advisory Board, recommend that the Town acquire of the Osterhoudt Flats to be used as a park and preserve.



The Osterhoudt Flats

The Osterhoudt Flats

Marbletown Elementary

Burial Ground

Wetlands

Highway 213

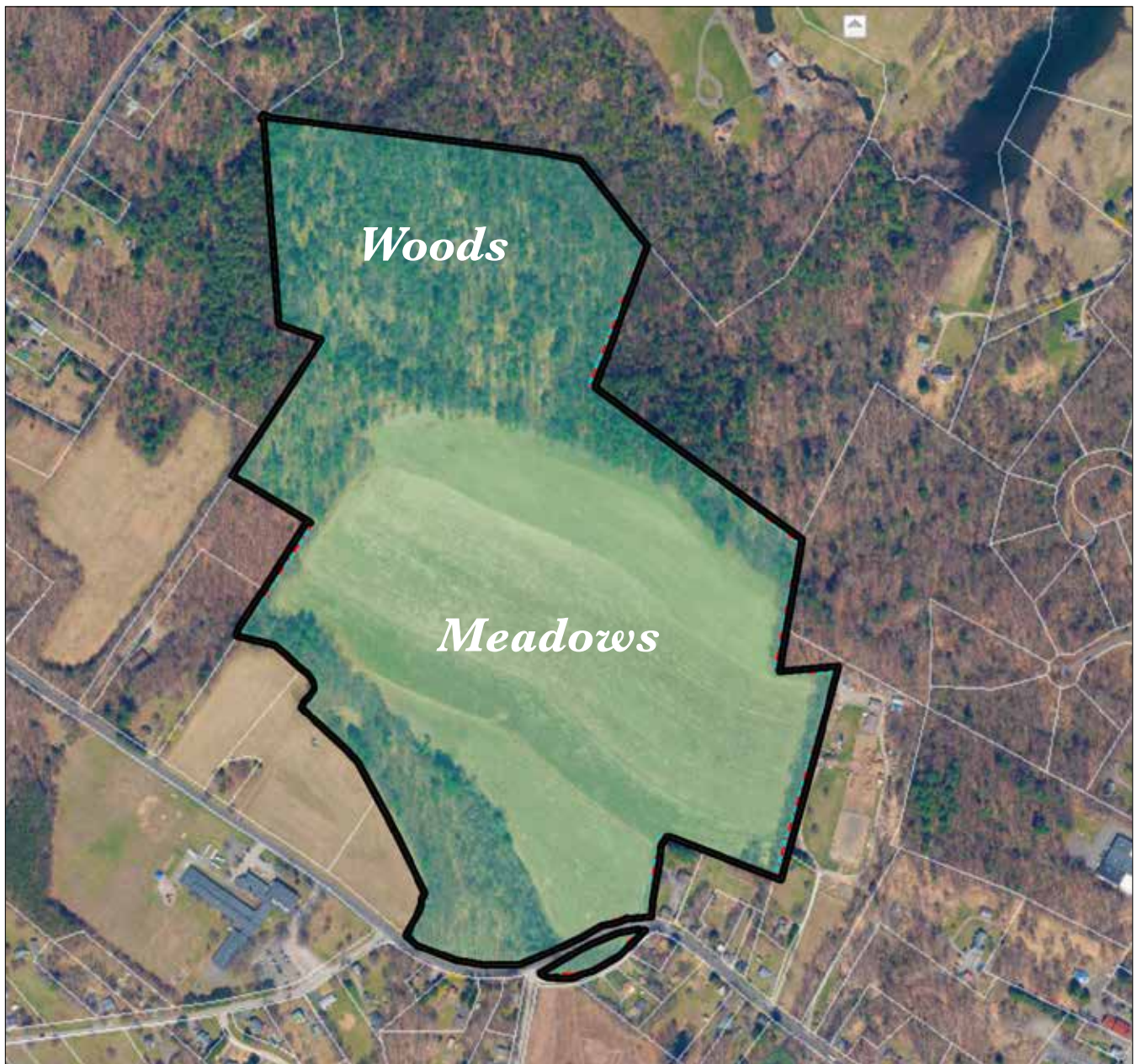
Highway 209

Owner: **Claude Osterhoudt**

Zoning District: **R3**

4

THE OSTERHOUDT FLATS

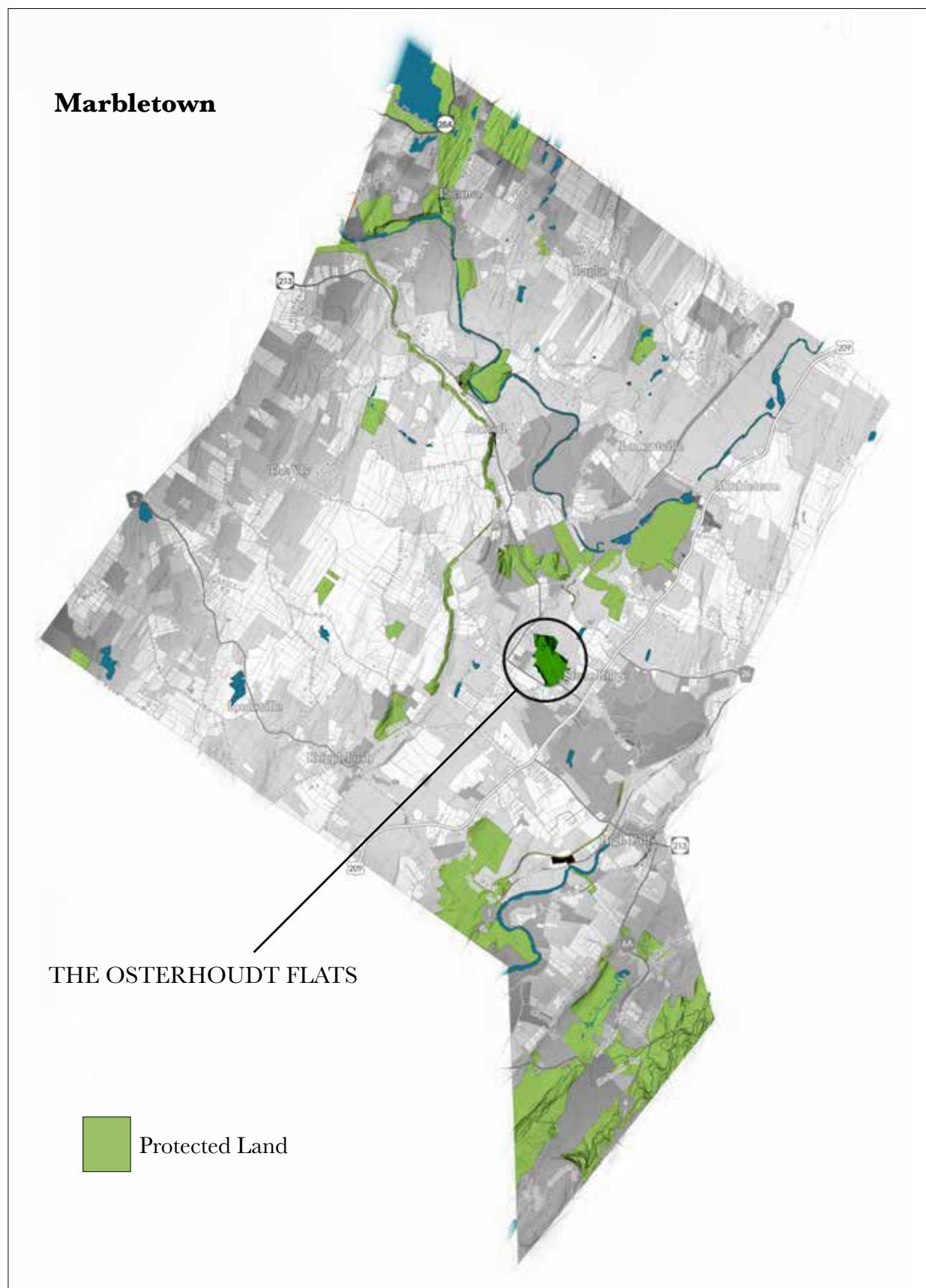


Woods 47 acres

Meadows 50 acres

Currently used for hay and feed corn

THE OSTERHOUDT FLATS



THE IMPORTANCE OF OPEN SPACE

Open space and sensitive environmental resources have long been recognized as essential components of the town of Marbletown. Magnificent views of the Shawangunk Ridge and Catskill Mountains, open fields along the Esopus Creek and the Rondout Creek and fertile farmlands, all reflect the historic and agricultural origins of the town. These features, many visible from major road corridors such as Routes 209 and 213, provide prominent gateways to and buffers around the hamlets.

In keeping with the vision and values of our community, The Comprehensive Town Plan of 2005 embraces sound planning as a tool to balance growth and conservation:

“Marbletown possesses an abundance and wide variety of scenic areas and features. These give the town a unique character, an incomparable beauty and constitute a non-renewable resource. They include scenic roads and road segments, scenic entrances to hamlets, prominent hilltops, ridgelines and mountain views, pastoral landscapes or landscape elements (farm fields, stone walls), and spectacular features (waterfalls, gorges, cliffs). The beauty and character of the Town’s landscape is dependent on these cultural and historical resources, and the integrity and health of the Town’s woodland, wetland, stream and old field ecosystems. Measures will be taken to conserve and maintain these historic and cultural features and promote biodiversity and ecosystem health.”

In early 2022, the Marbletown Community Preservation Task Force was appointed to oversee the development of a Community Preservation Plan (in accord with state law) consolidating previous planning and environmental studies. The Plan includes an analysis of all parcels in Marbletown excluding protected property:

<https://www.marbletown.net/community-preservation-advisory-board/pages/community-preservation-plan>

A scoring system was designed to catalogue assets of properties including such criteria as drinking water resources, wildlife habitat, forest and woodland quality, agricultural use, recreation and trails, scenic areas and historic and cultural attributes. The scores were then grouped into ratings since a scoring system is required by state law in order to implement a Real Estate Transfer Tax.

In June 2022, the Town Board adopted the Community Preservation Plan, established a Community Preservation Fund and formed a Community Preservation Fund Advisory Board. They also approved placement of a ballot initiative in the November election to enact a Real Estate Transfer Tax (RETT), to provide revenue exclusively for an open space preservation fund. In the November general election, the citizens of Marbletown approved this initiative by a margin of three to one in favor. This tax will not affect current homeowners. It is a one-time tax that will apply to property sales which take place after January 3, 2023. It will be paid by the buyer and computed at one percent of that portion of the sale price which exceeds the amount above the median cost of a home in Ulster County, currently \$350,000. The Town will seek to collaborate with conservation organizations, private donors and state agencies to increase funding sources for acquisition and conservation.

OBJECTIVES & EVALUATION OF OPEN SPACE CONSERVATION

Following are the primary site attributes considered by the Advisory Board when establishing priorities for acquisition of a property:

Water Protection

Protection of assets and features that provide Marbletown's residents with water that is clean, plentiful and sustainable: Drinking Water, Aquifers, Water Bodies and Rivers

Scenic Area & Community Character

Prominent Views, Spectacular Features, Ridgelines and Pastoral Landscapes which enhance the viewshed from places open to the public such as roads, municipal buildings, parks and trails and navigable waterways. Features which preserve the historic qualities of the town and generate economic benefits from low impact tourism by people attracted by its beauty and rural character

Public Use

Protect and provide recreational opportunities that are in harmony with the land's natural state. Walking trails, Parks, Community Gatherings

Prominent Gateway or Buffer Area

Open Space on a major corridor that identifies the entrance to Marbletown or defines the limits of one of the Town's hamlets or establishes a buffer between hamlets

Accessibility

Proximity to population centers and other trail networks and easy access to sites for active uses

Agricultural Land

Orchards, cropland, dairy and cattle farms, particularly that which achieves other open space objectives

Historic, Cultural or Archeologically Sensitive Site

Conserve the historical, agricultural and scenic character of the Town. Historical Significance, Cemeteries, Colonial Farmsteads, Mill Sites, Native American Settlement or Encampment Sites

Environmentally Sensitive Areas

Protect habitats and ecosystems for diverse plants and animals. Wildlife Habitat, Wetlands Buffers, Rare Plant and Animal Communities, Animal Corridors

Availability

A property can only be acquired if the owner intends to sell. Timely consideration of a property when it is on the market is essential.

HOW DOES THE OSTERHOUDT PROPERTY MEASURE UP?

- ☒ **Water Protection**
Significant portion underlain by the School Aquifer, Protection would allow for Recharge
- ☒ **Scenic Area and Community Character**
View of Mohonk Mountain and Ashokan High Point in Olive.
Viewshed from Rte. 213/Cooper/Atwood
- ☒ **Public Use**
Walking, Biking, Horseback Riding, Community Gatherings
- ☒ **Prominent Gateway or Buffer Area**
Provides Open Space upon Entry to Stone Ridge Town Center
- ☒ **Accessibility**
Proximity to Town, Rte. 213/Cooper/Atwood, proposed trail to Rte 209 (*see map on pages 12*)
- ☒ **Agricultural Land**
High quality agricultural land though the intent is not to lease it for farming but make available for public use, Educational Use, Community Gardens, Pollinator Gardens, Bird Habitat
- ☒ **Historic, Cultural or Archeologically Sensitive Site**
African American Burial Ground adjacent and accessible from Main Meadow or Atwood Road
- ☒ **Environmentally Sensitive Areas**
Wildlife Habitat, adjacent to wetlands
- ☒ **Availability**
On the market



The Osterhoudt Meadows

HOW DID THE COMMUNITY PRESERVATION PLAN/PARCEL SURVEY RATE THE OSTERHOUDT PROPERTY?

The Total Priority Score is in the **highest** category. The property rated **15 points**, the highest score was 21 points.



The parcel ratings and priorities are not decisions as to the proposed order of properties to be selected for conservation, but rather, a useful tool to assist in decision making. In addition, this rating system cannot address other factors to be considered in this process, such as the following:

- Significant property is being offered for immediate sale and development
- Benefit of connecting adjacent properties
- Effect some kinds of development might have on nearby significant properties and natural resources
- Benefit of expanding publically accessible property

RESOURCE CATEGORY DATA & SOURCES USED IN PARCEL ANALYSIS

Drinking Water

EPA Principal Aquifers
Bedrock Aquifers (Vly, School, Rondout)
Ashokan Watershed
DEC Class A Streams outside of Ashokan Watershed

Wildlife Habitat

DEC SBAs
NYNHP Important Areas for Rare Animals
Audubon IBAs
NYNHP Significant Communities
TNC Resilient Sites
NYNHP Modeled Rare Species
Ulster County Habitat Cores
Vernal Pool with 750' buffer
Wetland (Hudsonia, DEC or NWI) w/300' buffer
Hudsonia Mapped Crest/ledge/talus w/600' buffer

EPA	Environmental Protection Agency
DEC	Dept. of Environmental Conservation
IBA	Important Bird Areas
SBA	Significant Bird Areas
NYNHP	New York Natural Heritage Program
TNC	The Nature Conservancy
NWI	National Wetlands Inventory
FEMA	Federal Emergency Management Agency
NRCS	Natural resources Conservation Service

Forests and Woodlands

TNC Matrix Forest Blocks or Linkage Zones
NYNHP Core Forests
NYNHP High Ranking Forests (60+ percentile)
NYNHP Roadless Blocks (100+ acres)
NYNHP Important Areas for Rare Plants
Adjacent to protected land

Streams and Wetlands

FEMA Flood Hazard Areas
NYNHP Riparian Buffers or w/in 160' of stream or 650' of Rondout Creek and tribs
Wetland (Hudsonia, DEC or NWI) w/100' buffer
NRCS Hydric Soils
NYNHP Important Areas for Fish
Recreation and Trails
Adjacent to protected lands
Adjacent to Existing Trails
Areas visible from SMSB and local scenic roads
Areas visible from-to Sky Top
Gateway areas

Historic and Cultural

Designated Historic Sites and Districts OR Houses built prior to 1900
Historic Marker sites
Adjacent to D&H Canal
Adjacent to Special Properties
Cemeteries

Agricultural

Prime Soils if Drained
Agricultural District
Coded as an Active farm and/or Receiving an Ag Tax exemption
Adjacent to protected land
Century Farms

HISTORY & FEATURES OF THE OSTERHOUDT FLATS

THE LAND

The property hosts a spectacular open meadow ringed by forest and woodlands. The Osterhoudts have used the land to grow feed crops for their Black Angus cattle down the road at their farm. According to Claude, there are three meadows. Two of the meadows are “cobbly” i.e. full of stone and are used to grow hay, the third has a higher water table and is used to grow feed corn. The property affords views of the Mohonk Ridge and Ashokan High Point in the Catskills. The wooded area is largely hardwoods and provides a delightful walk in the woods. It abuts several other forested properties creating a designated wildlife habitat.

HISTORY

The Osterhoudt family settled in Stone Ridge in 1778 and have continuously resided on the beautiful original farmstead flanking both sides of Atwood Road further north. In 2008, Open Space Institute, valuing the agricultural precedents of our community and significant character of the farm, purchased the development easement to preserve the 70 acre farm in perpetuity.

In 1982, Claude and his father Earl Osterhoudt purchased the “flats”, the property under consideration, from the Huguenot Historical Society of New Paltz, who had purchased the property from Sarah Chipp Lounsbery. Sarah, a life member of the Huguenot Historical Society, died at the age of 96 in 1988. She had previously lived in the Wynkoop Lounsbery House on Main Street, a historic home where George Washington spent the night on his way to Kingston on November 15, 1782. A lifelong resident of Stone Ridge, Miss Lounsbery was a past president and lifetime member of the Stone Ridge Library and a former Postmaster of the Stone Ridge Post Office, having been appointed by President Franklin Roosevelt.

The “flats” were in the Lounsbery family for over a century and were previously owned by the Van Leuven and Hardenburgh families. Another Lounsbery stone house was donated to the town to become the Stone Ridge Library. In 1775, when Marbletown was the New York State capital for 30 days, Richard and Edward Lounsbery signed the Articles of Association, ten days after the battle of Lexington and Concord. The Articles, written by the Continental Congress “sought the salvation of the rights and liberties of Americans”. It was New York State’s official opposition of British rule and thus the beginning of the American Revolutionary War.



Skytop visible on Mohonk Mountain from the Flats

THE OSTERHOUDT FLATS PROPERTY FEATURES

Water Protection: The Osterhoudt property is underlain by a large aquifer. Protecting the property would allow the School Aquifer to recharge and replenish.

Scenic Area & Community Character: Views of Skytop on Mohonk Mountain and the Ridge are visible from the fields. Ashokan High Point in the Catskills is visible to the north. The property provides a bucolic viewshed along Atwood/Cooper/213 road frontage as you approach town.

Public Use: Recreational Park – Walking, Cross Country Skiing, Horseback Riding, Biking

Prominent Gateway or Buffer Area: Preserving the Osterhoudt Flats would protect a sizable property in the heart of Stone Ridge with great accessibility to town and would maintain a scenic gateway to the center of Stone Ridge.

Accessibility: Access on Cooper/Atwood is minutes from Stone Ridge Center. A right of way through the Hardenburgh/Nevelhaus property would provide safe access from the Osterhoudt property to Route 209. Walkable two mile Farm Road on property and Farm trail in woods.

Agricultural Land: High quality agricultural soils though the intent is not to lease for farming but make available for Community and Educational use, continue to mow hay in the meadows, transform into bird habitat

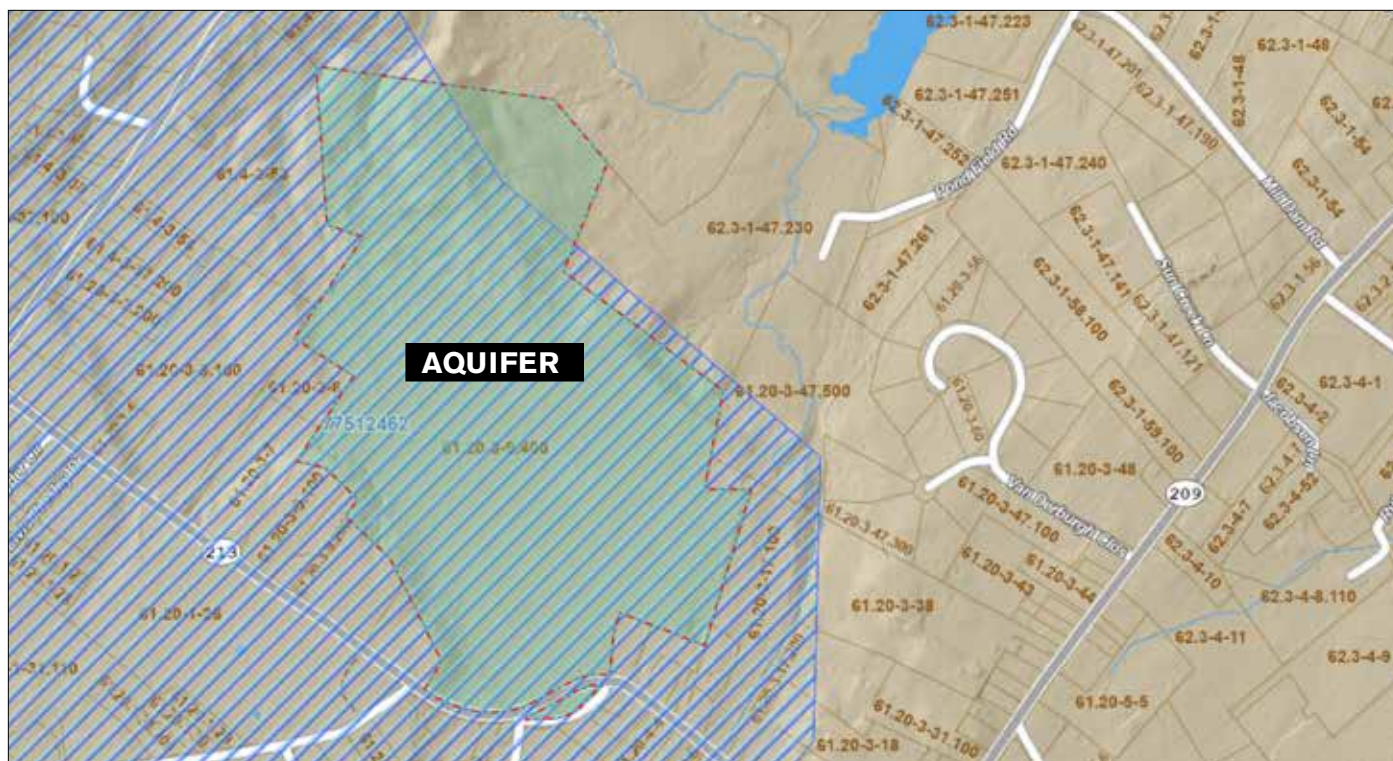
Historic, Cultural or Archeologically Sensitive Site: An African American burial ground (in need of preservation) is located adjacent to the property, a separate section of the Winchell Cemetery on Rte 213. Local historical significance. Civil War and American history.

Environmentally Sensitive: The large section of woods behind the open field is considered a wildlife habitat. This 47 acre wooded area of the parcel abuts another 40 acres or so of forest on adjoining properties to create a larger wildlife habitat and forested area. Adjacent to wetlands.

Availability for Purchase: The Osterhoudt property has been for sale twice in the last five years. A 10 acre portion of the property directly across from the school was sold in 2020. It is on the market now and would likely become the site of development for private luxury homes. The zoning allows for one acre lots on the 97 acre property. A Community Preservation Fund acquisition would ensure protection of open space for public use.



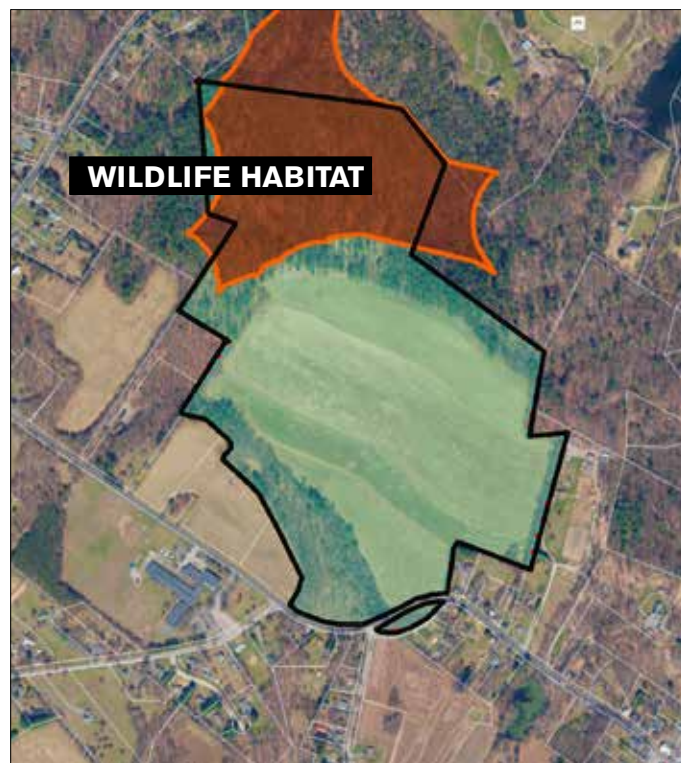
THE OSTERHOUDT FLATS PROPERTY FEATURES



Largely underlain by the School Aquifer



Woods and Meadows



Wildlife habitat adjacent to other forested areas

THE OSTERHOUDT FLATS PROPERTY FEATURES



The Woods



THE OSTERHOUDT FLATS PROPERTY FEATURES



Viewshed from Cooper



Field Road

THE OSTERHOUDT FLATS PROPERTY FEATURES



Hay Field



Corn Field

THE OSTERHOUDT FLATS PROPERTY FEATURES



Meadows



Adjacent Horse Farm visible from Farm Road

ADJACENT AFRICAN AMERICAN BURIAL GROUND

Given the notable historical lineage of the Osterhoudt property, it is not surprising that it lies directly adjacent to an African American burial ground.* The burial ground is not part of the land under consideration for acquisition. Its proximity provides an important historical and cultural element to the property.

**The Marbletown Historic Preservation Commission is considering best practices for the restoration and preservation of the site. Subjects under consideration include an archaeological survey and ground radar of the site, interpretive signage and town maintenance of the grounds.*



Civil War Veteran
Thomas B. Wynkoop
81st Regiment Colored troops



This stone reads:

Peter Rosencranse

born Nov 13, 1802

died April 8, 1880

his wife

Jane DeWitt

born Jan 7, 1811

died Aug 15, 1855

with the inscription from their children:

Father and Mother, sweet they rest.
Weary with years and worn with pain.
Farewell till in some happy place
We shall behold thy face again.

EVALUATION & RECOMMENDATION OF OSTERHOUDT PROPERTY

VISION RECREATIONAL PARK & NATURE PRESERVE

It is with Marbletown's long history of support for preservation of open space and natural resources as well as affirmation of this goal that we, the Community Preservation Fund Advisory Board, recommend that the Town acquire the Osterhoudt Flats. This property is consistent with and satisfies the goals and objectives of the Community Preservation Plan adopted by the Town Board in 2022.

The proposed park would add a significant recreational resource to the Town. Although Marbletown has a well-loved and well-used stretch of the Rail Trail, it is but one of the few public places to take a walk off road without vehicles. The 97.2 acre parcel hosts a large meadow with a two mile farm road looped around it as well as a 47 acre wooded section with a lovely farm road passing through it. The land is well situated to connect to Rte. 209 and a broader network of rail trails.

This property satisfies the majority of the criteria for open space preservation – recreational, environmental, historical – and currently is listed for sale. The fact that the property meets so many relevant measures and is on the market increases the importance of its acquisition. The property has long been considered conservation worthy by the Open Space Institute (OSI) and the previous Preservation Committee. This December, Open Space Institute negotiated a nine month option to purchase the property and is currently conducting the title work and engineering and environmental surveys. Their expertise in acquiring land for the public use, history with the Osterhoudts and commitment to conserving the beauty of our area have been invaluable to this endeavor. OSI's support combined with the nascent Community Preservation Fund allows the Town to respond to opportunities like this before it is too late.

The Community Preservation Fund Advisory Board will continue to research state grant opportunities, apply for grants from foundations as well as solicit private donations to supplement the Fund. We are currently looking into the NYS Environmental Protection Fund Grant Program for Parks, Preservation and Heritage, to be awarded in 2024 as well as a federally funded Recreational Trails Program.

OSI has afforded us the window of opportunity to act. The Community Preservation Fund Advisory Board heartily recommends the acquisition of the Osterhoudt Flats for use as a recreational park and nature preserve.



DEVELOPMENT OF A CONCEPTUAL PLAN

The Community Preservation Fund Advisory Board recognizes that more detailed planning is necessary to guide the transformation of an old farm into a safe and accessible public space. We are prepared to work closely with the Town Board to develop a Conceptual Plan. A variety of options should be considered including the following:

- The mostly passable two-mile farm road around the meadows is in rugged condition. Another road through the woods is in good shape. We are considering two options for upgrade of the two mile loop, one would be crusher fines surfacing – a finely-crushed stone mix that is often the byproduct of gravel operations. Crushed stone trails provide a user-friendly, all-season surface for all types and ages of visitors, including strollers, wheelchairs, and road bikes. An example of this kind of path is at River to Ridge in New Paltz. Another option would be a graded path with item 4 gravel, a rougher stone like the carriage paths in Mohonk Preserve, which are also extremely accessible to the public.
- The Fund can appropriate a percentage of its resources towards the maintenance and upkeep of the property. A volunteer committee to maintain trails could be formed to collaborate with Town grounds personnel.
- The open meadows could continue to be mowed for hay, as the ones at River to Ridge in New Paltz are. The possibilities of creating a wild bird habitat, pollinator gardens or community gardens are also interesting options.
- The park has the potential to serve as a Town Center for outdoor gatherings and festivities. An outdoor pavilion, not unlike the Slingerland Pavilion at Spring Farm in Mohonk Preserve could be a beautiful gathering spot.

Other elements of the Conceptual Plan should consider the following:

- Mapping of Trails and Features
- Parking Area, Handicapped Parking Spot, and Safe Accessibility from Cooper St.
- Signage for the road and inside the park
- Adaptation of a farm meadow for a public park: landscape design
- Trail expansion and upgrade in the woods and meadow
- Trail from Meadow to Burial Grounds through woods
- Connecting to 209: Proposed right-of-way to Rail Trail connector
- Broader Trail Network: Connecting Stone Ridge and High Falls
- Outdoor Pavilion
- Rest Area

The Park development could happen in phases:

Phase I

Trail Upgrade: Make the park as accessible as possible.

Parking Area, Handicapped Parking Spot, and Safe Accessibility from the Cooper St.

Signage for the road and inside the park

Phase II

Pavilion and Rest Area

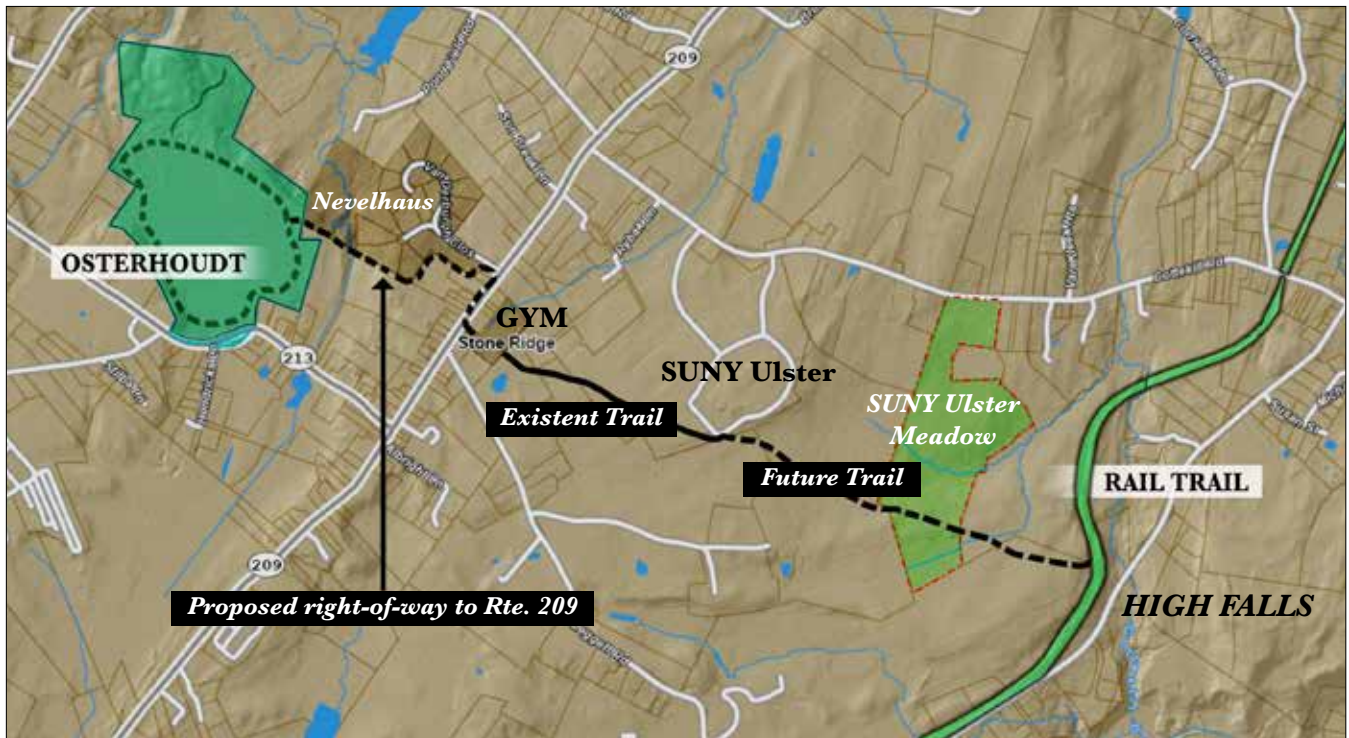
DEVELOPMENT OF A CONCEPTUAL PLAN



Adirondack style Pavilion

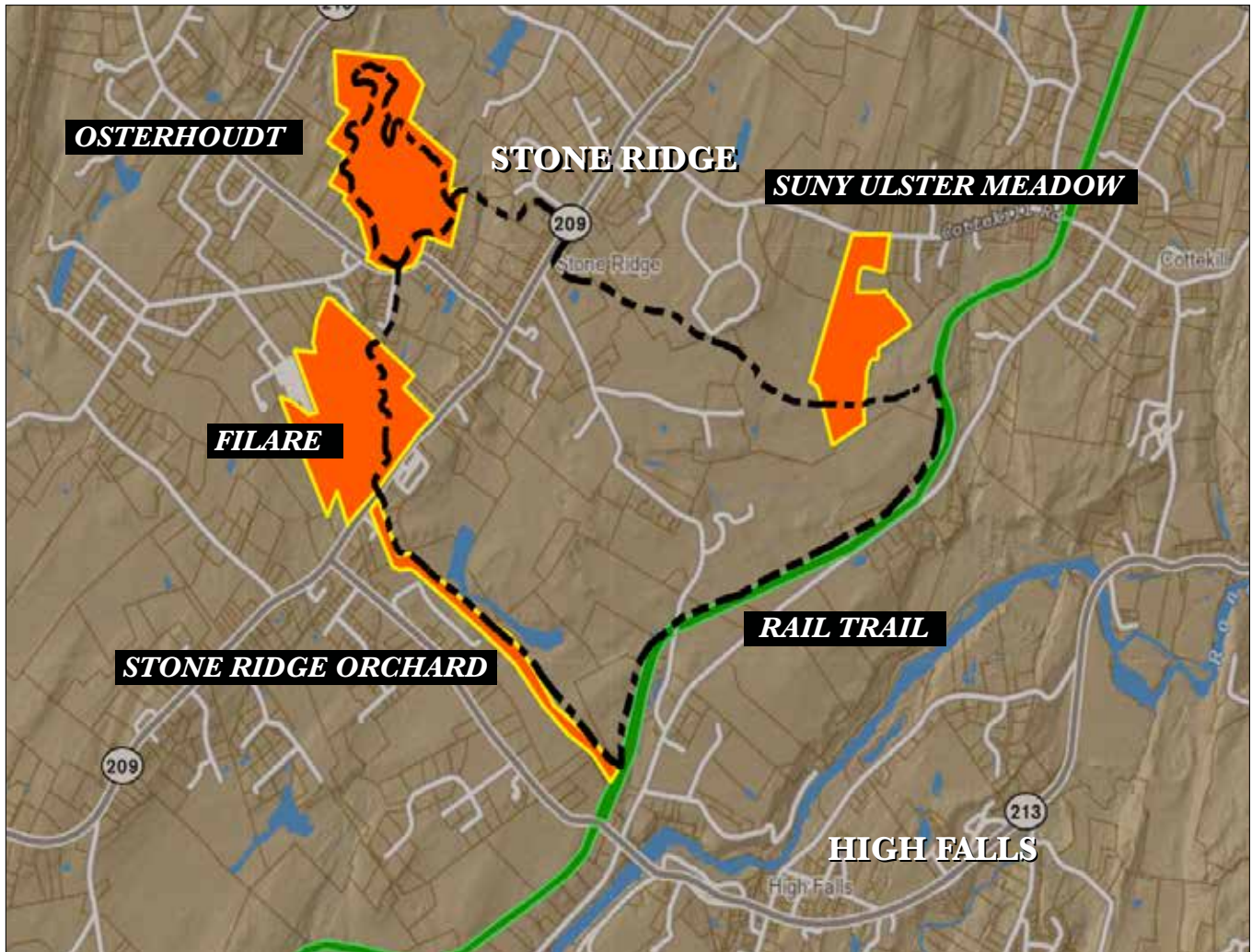
TRAIL CONNECTIVITY BETWEEN OSTERHOUDT PROPERTY & RAIL TRAIL

A proposal to connect the property to Rte. 209 and the Rail Trail. Right-of-way through Hardenburgh/Nevelhaus property to Rte. 209, pick up trail behind the Ridgewell Gym to SUNY Ulster. Planned continuation of trail through the SUNY Ulster Meadow to the Rail Trail between Cottekill and Leggett.



VISION FOR BROADER TRAIL NETWORK

The Board envisions a potential network of trails connecting Stone Ridge, High Falls and the Rail Trail including access through the Stone Ridge Orchard.



PROJECTED REVENUE FROM THE REAL ESTATE TRANSFER TAX (RETT)

In order to project the potential revenue for the Community Preservation Fund, we've reviewed residential and commercial sales data in Marbletown from 2016 - 2022 as well as Ulster County real estate trends. We've accounted for the fact that the years 2021 and 2022 are considered an anomaly.

A conservative estimate for income over time to the Community Preservation Fund from the Real Estate Transfer Tax would be **\$250,000 per year on average**.

PROJECTED RETT REVENUE 2023-2032									
2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030	2031	2032
\$204,787	\$264,063	\$272,036	\$280,276	\$288,793	\$297,597	\$306,698	\$316,107	\$325,836	\$335,895
5 Year Sum					\$1,309,955				
10 Year Sum									
					\$2,892,088				

Note: Most of the sales that closed in the first two months of 2023 went into contract in 2022 before RETT went into effect and were not subject to the tax.

The Real Estate Transfer Tax, a rate determined by the Town, is set at
1% on the cost of a home above the median sale price in Ulster County.

The median sale price, currently \$350,000, is exempt from the tax, and is announced each April by the State.

Residential Median Sale Price in Ulster County			
Exempt from RETT			
YEAR	JANUARY 1 - APRIL 8	APRIL 9 - DECEMBER 31	INCREASE
2018	\$200,000	\$215,000	8%
2019	\$215,000	\$230,000	7%
2020	\$230,000	\$245,000	7%
2021	\$245,000	\$280,000	14%
2022	\$280,000	\$320,000	14%
2023	\$320,000	\$350,000	9%

TAX.NY.GOV