

the same standards over the long term.

- **Increases transparency and public trust:** When the acquisition process is clearly documented, the public can better understand how decisions are made and how funds are spent. This builds community trust in the program's fairness and effectiveness.
- **Enhances credibility for grant applications:** Many state and federal grant programs require municipalities to demonstrate a clear and consistent strategy for land conservation. Codified policies and plans

show that the town has a serious, long-term commitment to open space protection, which can improve its chances of receiving funding.

- **Allows for proactive, strategic planning:** Codified programs enable a town to define acquisition priorities in advance, rather than acquiring land opportunistically as it becomes available. This allows the town to focus its efforts on conserving ecologically sensitive lands, preserving connected corridors, or purchasing land for future recreational use.

**Recommendation E-20: The Town of Guilderland should endeavor to support the efforts of the Village of Altamont and Historic Altamont, Inc., where practicable, in implementing the goals and recommendations of the Altamont Trails Master Plan.**

The Altamont Trails Master Plan is an initiative to create a connected trail network throughout the Village of Altamont, the Town of Guilderland, and Albany County, with the primary goal of enhancing recreational opportunities, connecting communities and natural resources, and promoting outdoor activity.

The Town of Guilderland can support the Altamont Trails Master Plan through inter-municipal collaboration, integration into its own comprehensive plan and zoning laws, resource allocation (including grant applications), and community engagement. Key actions for support may include:

- **Connectivity:** Explicitly planning for the linking of the Altamont trails with existing or planned Guilderland pathways, bike routes, and sidewalks to create a seamless network connecting various parks and open spaces.
  - **Grant Applications:** Actively supporting and collaborating on grant applications (state, federal, and county) that benefit the trail system. Guilderland has a track record of successfully obtaining grant money for infrastructure projects, which can be leveraged for the trails.
  - **Land Acquisition/Easements:** Exploring opportunities for land acquisition or conservation easements to secure the trail corridors from future development.
  - **Development Policies:** The Town can use its reviewing boards to negotiate with developers of new subdivisions to include trail linkages or set aside open space as part of the approval process.
- **Inter-Municipal Cooperation:** The plan is a collaborative effort, and the Town can formally acknowledge and work with the Village of Altamont and organizations like Historic Altamont and the Mohawk Hudson Land Conservancy. This collaboration can include shared resources, joint grant applications, and a shared vision for connected green spaces that extend beyond municipal boundaries.
  - **Zoning Amendments:** Reviewing and amending zoning ordinances to align with the trail plan's goals, such as preserving open spaces, viewsheds, and farmland that the trails traverse.