



NEW LEBANON

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT SESSION RECAP

Room Enough For Both

May 22, 2025

Background

Healthy communities need ample housing affordable to people across the income spectrum *and* conserved land that supports clean water, food production, climate resilience, and recreation. These two goals are well-aligned, but too often are seen as mutually exclusive or pitted against each other.

The *Room Enough for Both* technical assistance project brings a team of experts from Hudson Valley Pattern for Progress; the Pace University Land Use Law Center; the NYSDEC Hudson River Estuary Program; and the Hudson Valley Alliance for Housing and Conservation to work with the New Lebanon community to create a roadmap to achieve affordable housing and conservation goals *in tandem*, while building consensus for both. New Lebanon was chosen to receive this free assistance based on the community's interest in participation and its past track record in local planning to address housing and conservation goals. The town assembled a steering committee to work with the technical staff on the project team.

As part of this initiative, the project team will complete four key project components:



New Lebanon will then be able to use the roadmap to inform its upcoming comprehensive plan update and ultimately advance affordable housing and conservation objectives through concrete projects that were identified by the community and earned support through the process.

Summary

The first **Room Enough for Both: Planning for Affordable Housing and Conservation Together** community workshop was held on May 22, 2025 from 6:00 – 8:00 pm at the Community Center. To promote attendance at the meetings, town staff, including the town’s steering committee, solicited participation using several advertisement methods, including flyers, online outreach, and social media.

At the meeting, following introductory remarks by town supervisor Tistrya Houghtling, the project team presented a summary of New Lebanon’s current Comprehensive Plan goals and land use regulations regarding housing and conservation; open space and natural resource assets and protection efforts; and housing challenges and needs for both the region and locally. A trained facilitator then led six groups of 10-12 residents in small discussions. The facilitator asked participants to map the areas in New Lebanon that they identified as community assets; these included any places that people enjoy in the town, such as attractive places to visit, recreational opportunities, natural areas and wildlife habitat, productive farms, public/civic spaces, open spaces, economic centers, etc. Each resident identified three community assets with a green dot on the map. They then described the areas and brainstormed about why these locations were community assets.

Discussion then turned to the topic of housing. Facilitators asked residents about housing challenges, housing needs, and housing typologies that they were interested in seeing in New Lebanon (e.g., multifamily housing, tiny homes, etc.). Residents were asked to place a blue dot on three locations in New Lebanon where they could imagine housing being located, and were asked to think creatively about all possibilities. The small groups then discussed strategies for balancing both conservation and development.



Community Assets

Residents discussed a variety of locations and areas that they felt were community assets to New Lebanon (see green headings, below). The following list is not in order of priority; however, it should be noted that Hand Hollow, the Shaker Property/Swamp, and the Warm Springs were most frequently noted by all groups.

The Knob/Bog

"The Knob" is a high-elevation topographic feature in New Lebanon. "The Bog" is a wetlands area.

Residents noted its natural features, such as vernal pools, plants, wildlife, flowers, beautiful views, wetlands, and watercourses. Additionally, its recreation assets were discussed, including hiking, bird watching, and cross-country skiing. Residents noted that the bog was magical and a special environment, noting its unique biodiversity.

Lebanon Warm Springs

Lebanon Springs was a well-known, water-cure establishment, attracting visitors for its natural springs.

Residents noted that they were the only municipality to have such a natural asset and as such it helped define the Town, which designated the spring as a critical environmental area (CEA). Others noted its beauty and fabulous views year-round. Some residents noted that it was the largest aquifer with cool ravines and warm springs and that such a site draws many people to New Lebanon for its healing energy.

Shaker Property/Shaker Swamp

The Shaker Swamp is a 400-acre freshwater wetland. The Mount Lebanon Shaker property was the spiritual center of Shaker society in the United States.

Residents noted the historical importance and preservation of the site, including its history of communal living and support for people looking to live as one with nature in an affordable way. Many noted it as an architectural treasure and cultural asset that is relatively well-preserved. The site and history brought a sense of community and natural ability to congregate. Other residents noted the importance in its open space, views of the valley, aquifer/water supply, land and wildlife, open trails to the public, and unique life-healing plants.

Hand Hollow

Hand Hollow Conservation Area is a protected area that provides critical wildlife habitat and includes ponds, a lake, wetlands, marshes, hardwood swamp, streams, fields, meadows, and vernal pools.

Residents noted its various natural features, such as vernal pools, plants, flowers, ponds, natural beauty, and wildlife. Others noted its recreational assets in hiking, cross country skiing, trails, snow shoeing, bird watching, and hunting.

Community Assets

Mountain Views/West Street

Residents noted the beautiful viewsheds and geological assets and features in this area.

Kinderhook Creek

Running for 45 miles before feeding the east side of the Hudson River south of Albany.

Residents noted the importance of water quality and watershed protection for this site and noted its importance to recreation in New Lebanon.

Corkscrew Rail Trail

It begins at Knapp Road in Stephentown and heads south under a shady tree canopy towards New Lebanon.

Residents noted its historic value, ties to Charles Dickens, beauty and recreation, and a way to walk in sections of town without concern of vehicle encounters.

Woodlife Farmers Market

Resident discussed its value in good food, community dinners, and Christmas tree farm importance during the holiday season.

Shatford Park

Residents noted its importance in recreational value for the Town, including its new walking path and future playground.

Immaculate Conception Shrine

The Immaculate Conception Shrine is a devotional site.

Residents noted its historical significance.

Downtown

Along the Route 20 and 22 crossroads in New Lebanon.

Residents noted the commerce, restaurants, brewery, farm stand and its potential for much more.

Wyomanock Creek Viewshed

Wyomanock Creek is situated near the hamlet West Lebanon.

Residents noted its amazing views of the valley and use of the Rail Trail.

Cemetery of Evergreens

Community Assets

Scenic Views

Residents discussed the valley and hills that can be seen throughout the Town, including being able to see the Catskill mountains.

West Hill

Residents noted this undeveloped area, as being beautiful with expansive viewsheds.

New Lebanon Town Library

Noted as a place for community and education.

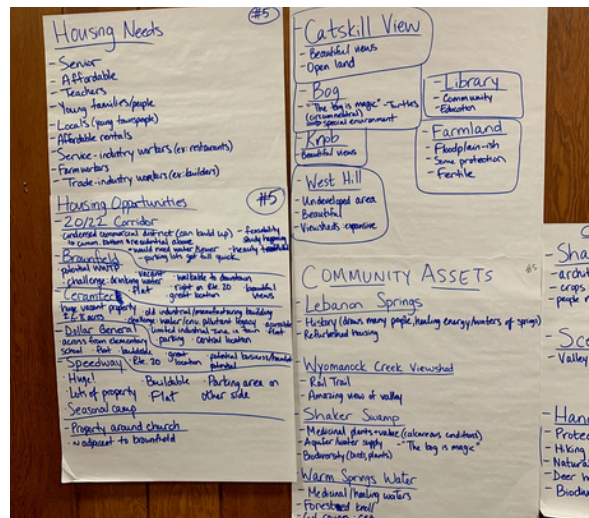
Farmlands

Residents noted the fertile grounds that can function as floodplains and the need to protect such lands.

New Lebanon Speedway

Lebanon Valley Speedway is a dirt track for racing, Monster Trucks, and Speedway events.

Residents noted it as a local employer, a fun past time, and tradition in the Town.



Housing Discussion

Residents discussed housing needs and housing types to meet New Lebanon's needs. They also considered the relative lack of services in New Lebanon, including food and medical services, that would be needed if additional housing were provided.

Housing Needs

- Senior housing
- Fixed income
- Workforce housing
- Affordable homeownership
- Anything affordable
- Families
- Teachers
- Farmworkers
- Trade-industry workers (e.g., construction and hospitality industries)

Housing Types

- Small scale housing
- Apartments
- Cluster housing
- Walkable housing/planned unit development
- Affordable rental
- Starter homes for families
- ADUs
- Intergenerational
- Tiny homes
- Assisted living facilities
- Resident-owned trailer parks
- Co-housing – intentional cooperative communities
- Multifamily
- Condo
- Townhomes
- The Missing Middle (e.g., duplexes)
- Co-ops
- Potential demand for hotels/motels instead of housing stock being taken up by short-term rentals



Housing Discussion

Potential housing locations identified by the community

- **Downtown**
 - Bowling alley and on the other side of the bowling alley next to Napa
 - Congregational Church
 - Self-Storage
 - Abandoned Buildings
 - Off-Track Betting
 - Tilden Plaza
 - Midtown Mall
 - Infill
 - Past the old dump
 - Condensed commercial district (can build up)
 - Commercial bottom and residential above
 - Would need water and sewer
- **Shaker Building**
- **The Speedway**
- **West Lebanon**
- **Near Dollar General Store and school**
- **Abandoned factory/Ceramaseal**
- **Ski Lodge**
- **Brainard**
- **Old Springs hotel**
- **French Hill Road – autobody shop**
- **Near Shafford Park**
- **Woodlife has 100 acres open to the public**
- **Catholic Church**
- **Beacon Hill**
- **Salls Road**
- **Old Gale Hill Road**
- **Brickyard Road**
- **West Street (1 & 2)**
- **Gregg's Hill**
- **Brownfields**

Opportunities for New Lebanon

Each resident gave one idea regarding a strategy for balancing both conservation and development. Again, the below ideas are not placed in any priority.

Development Ideas

- Redevelop the ski lodge for intergenerational living
- Redevelop the bowling alley area for low-moderate housing/workforce housing
- Add sewer/wastewater treatment in downtown for population density
- Intergenerational cluster housing with shared space
- 2-3 story building height
- Housing along downtown to keep areas preserved. Adds walkability and economic development. Beautification of the area for future housing.
- Condos or small homes clustered for sewer/water
- Housing within walking distance of some amenities
- Housing focused downtown
- Preserve the shaker area as a whole while establish living area
- Missing middle (2-5 units)
- Development feasibility assessments
- Repurpose existing structures
- Limit or reduce short term rentals
- Innovative financing concepts
- Cluster housing
- 2 hamlets with commercial and residential on Route 20/22 corridor and West Lebanon
- Well-designed and built starter homes
- Garden apartments around the park

Conservation Ideas

- Ridgeline protection ordinance
- Preserve the spring – water available again

Room Enough for Both

- Identification of tax foreclosed properties and abandoned buildings to use for both conservation and housing
- Rehab existing buildings or rebuild which limit environmental impacts
- Development / conservation subdivisions
- Route 20/22 corridor for housing; leave outlying open space and look to walkable downtown with sewer and water and senior housing
- Significant outreach regarding housing and affordability – solicit input from impacted residents (in need of affordable housing)
- Support local commerce, historic and natural resources
- Better cell service so people can work from home
- Career-type (better paying) jobs
- Complete walkable downtown project
- Build on already-used sites, downtown/foreclosed properties to preserve other spaces

We thank you for your
time and input!

The consultant team and the project committee will host a second community conversation in the fall to discuss draft strategies that would integrate New Lebanon's ideas for conservation and housing.

Acknowledgements

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