



ATTACHMENT i. Project Narrative

PURPOSE of the PROJECT

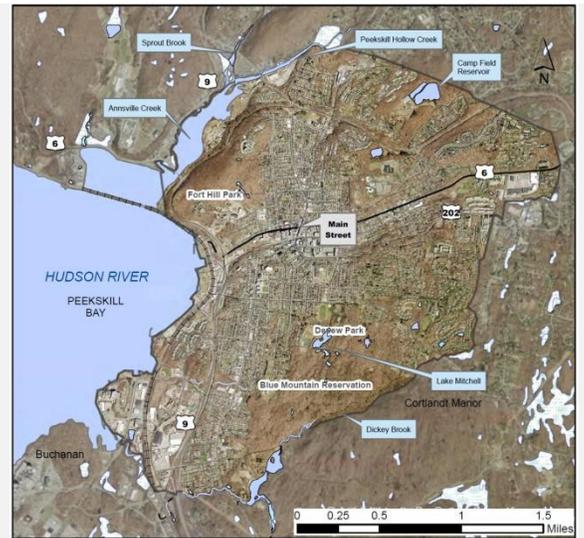
The City of Peekskill’s Conservation Advisory Council (CAC), on behalf of the City of Peekskill, requests a Greenway Compact Grant in the amount of \$157,000 for the purpose of creating a Natural Resources Inventory (NRI) inclusive of supportive text and GIS maps. NRIs “compile and describe important, naturally occurring resources within a given locality,” as well as historic, scenic, and recreational resources.¹ Once completed, the Peekskill NRI will be adopted into local law by the city’s Common Council. A grant will support the hiring of an environmental consultant to supplement our own volunteer efforts in the research, writing, and distribution of the NRI. The NRI is purposed to **a) assist policymakers, developers, and other stakeholders in making informed and responsible land use and conservation decisions**, and **b) serve as an educational resource for community members**. It is our intention that the NRI will be a living document, periodically revised to reflect the evolving natural and urban conditions of the city.

Location

The NRI will cover the entire city of Peekskill, a community of approximately 24,000 residents situated on the eastern shore of the Hudson River in northern Westchester County. At 4.3 square miles in size, Peekskill has a diverse mix of single and multifamily residential units, a vibrant downtown, an industrial and recreational waterfront, and a significant amount of public open space such as public parks and nature preserves (21.54% of the city’s total acreage). Peekskill is a Greenway Compact Community committed to regional cooperation in the advancement of the Greenway Criteria.

Need

To meet State and local regulations, the Peekskill CAC was established in order “to advise in the development, management, and protection of [the city’s] natural resources.”² This includes the inventorying and mapping of open space and wetlands, as well as the dissemination of information to the public regarding conservation and environmental issues. A Natural Resources Inventory will compile, in one accessible



Maps of Peekskill, such as this one, will be created in-kind by CAC members as part of the grant’s matching funds requirement.

location, comprehensive information regarding the city’s geology, water resources, habitats and wildlife, climate conditions and projections, cultural resources, and land use. Peekskill will greatly benefit from an NRI document available to elected officials, planners, developers, and residents to help ensure that decisions affecting the long-term sustainability and environmental health of our city are made in an informed and responsible manner.

Deliverable

The requested grant funds will result in the creation of a 50 to 70 page **City of Peekskill Natural Resources Inventory** containing GIS maps, photographs, tables, and written summaries on a range of topics including geology, soils and topography, groundwater and surface water resources, biological communities, land uses, and

¹ Haeckel, Ingrid and Laura Heady. *Creating a Natural Resources Inventory: A Guide for Communities in the Hudson River Estuary Watershed*. Cornell University Department of Natural Resources, 2014, p. 1.

² New York State General Municipal Law, Article 12-F Section 239-x

historical, cultural, and recreational resources. The NRI will be made publicly available and in digital format on the City of Peekskill's website; copies will also be printed and bound for use by city personnel. The project will also consist of a public outreach period in which Peekskill residents will be invited to participate in "ground-proofing" excursions (field surveys and public hikes) throughout the City with the CAC, the city planner and our hired consultant, as well as to provide feedback at a public meeting. At the close of the project, the NRI will be presented to the City Council for adoption by local law.

HOW the PROJECT ADVANCES the GREENWAY CRITERIA

The City of Peekskill became a Greenway Compact Community in 2008 and is still committed to advancing each of the five Greenway Criteria. A Natural Resources Inventory will help us do so in the following ways:



Natural and Cultural Resource Protection: Peekskill is home to a wealth of natural and cultural resources, from the beauty of its parks and riverfront to its historically important downtown. The city is dotted with wetlands and riparian buffer zones (providing critical habitat for local wildlife), and crisscrossed with scenic roads connecting us to the larger Hudson Valley region. It is also home to one local historic district and two national historic districts. Protecting, preserving, and enhancing these resources is critical to the preservation of both our local ecosystems as well as our cultural identity. The development of an NRI will provide a baseline for the protection of these resources, as well as a guiding framework for future efforts such as wetlands, steep slope, and tree ordinances. The Peekskill CAC has already begun exploring some of these initiatives; an NRI will support our efforts as we engage with elected officials, employees, homeowners and developers. It will also enhance the goals of the city's Local Waterfront Revitalization Program.



Regional Planning: Peekskill's natural resources don't stop at the city limits; Depew Park melds seamlessly into Westchester County's Blue Mountain Reservation, the city's northern boundary serves as a gateway to the globally important Hudson Highlands, and the Hudson River connects us to the rest of the Greenway's various communities. In our efforts to preserve and protect these resources and promote local sustainability we have undertaken comprehensive, collaborative partnerships with regional organizations such as the Town of Cortlandt, the Hudson Highlands Land Trust, the Westchester Land Trust, Riverkeeper, and Hudson Valley Pattern for Progress. Our NRI will be available to all interested parties in our region and will serve as a starting point for potential future collaborative planning and conservation efforts. It will also align the City of Peekskill with the natural resource protection goals of the Mid-Hudson Regional Sustainability Plan.



Economic Development: Peekskill is the successful recipient of a \$10 million 2019 Downtown Revitalization Initiative (DRI) grant from New York State, a development set to bring considerable investment, growth, and change to our established downtown and riverfront areas. Throughout this process, the CAC will advocate on behalf of policies and initiatives that enhance the sustainability and resiliency of our downtown for all its residents and visitors, such as green infrastructure, complete streets, transit-oriented development, etc. An NRI will complement the DRI by identifying and highlighting the economic benefits of the city's natural assets and promoting a balance between preservation and development. It will also serve as a resource for developers and business owners, as well as city employees who will be referred to the NRI as a standard resource guide in local decision-making.



Public Access: Peekskill's award-winning riverfront and sculpture garden is the largest contiguous length of publicly accessible waterfront trail in the Hudson Valley, and a destination for locals and tourists alike. It has received more funding for expanded accessibility than nearly any other municipality in Westchester (\$14 million in grants). Spanning three miles, the riverfront hosts a public

marina and boat launch, Paddle Sports Center, and various popular public fishing spots. Annesville Creek Preserve at the city's northern edge contains interpretive signage detailing the early history of the area, while Fleischmann's Pier to the south is under consideration for \$2 million in funding to rehabilitate and expand opportunity for uses such as fishing and kayaking. The Peekskill section of the RiverWalk Trail provides direct linkage to the Town of Cortlandt's Shoreline Trail, and a half-mile section currently under construction will soon connect to the Greenway Trail in Cortlandt and Buchanan. These public assets annually attract visitors to Peekskill from throughout the region, who in turn support our nearby local businesses. As a prized public feature and environmental asset, developing an NRI will protect the natural living shoreline and encourage future preservation efforts along the Hudson River.



Heritage and Environmental Education: Peekskill has played an outsize role in the country's early history, from early Dutch settlement to being a headquarters of the Continental Army during the Revolutionary War, and then an important stopping point on the Underground Railroad. The NRI will have a section dedicated to the city's historic, cultural, and recreational sites such as the Lincoln Depot and Peekskill Museums in an effort to promote and conserve this impressive heritage and educate our residents and visitors. The Peekskill CAC will also use the NRI in its continued outreach to local public schools and resident's organizations, efforts we have undertaken to increase awareness of our city's natural resources and to promote sustainable practices, such as creating rain gardens and adopting renewable energy.

REGIONAL PLANNING & COOPERATION

As noted above, our city's natural resources extend beyond manmade boundaries and contribute to the collective natural wealth and quality of life of the entire Hudson Valley region. A completed Natural Resources Inventory will be available for use by all interested parties, from planners to policymakers, students, developers, residents, conservationists, and others. When used in collaboration with other Hudson River Valley NRIs and the city's adopted Local Waterfront Revitalization Program (LWRP) – as well as in complement to the Mid-Hudson Regional Sustainability Plan and Cortlandt-Peekskill Resilience Plan – it will contribute to the environmental knowledge of our larger ecosystem and support planning and conservation efforts at that scale.

Thank you very much for your consideration of this request. If we can provide any additional information to support this proposal, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Respectfully,

The Peekskill Conservation Advisory Council on behalf of the City of Peekskill