

Outdoor Recreation Community Event Parks & Open Space Committee January 22, 2026

Transcript of presentation by
Town of Jay Councilor and Parks & Open Space Committee Chair Olivia Dwyer.

Agenda

1. Who We Are
2. What We Do
3. Parks & Open Space
4. Planning Initiatives
5. Projects
6. How to Volunteer

1. Who We Are

The Town of Jay Parks & Open Space Committee is made up of town employees, community volunteers, and elected officials.

Town of Jay: Parks Employees

Paul Benway
Brook Paries

Parks & Open Space Committee

Olivia Dwyer, Chair, Town Councilor
Sarah Duheme
Andrew Hamlin
Larry Hartson
Frank Krueger
Tim Rowland
Knut Sauer, Town Councilman

The committee meets monthly, typically for two hours, on a weekday evening, with a hybrid meeting format of in-person at the Community Center in Au Sable Forks with a virtual option. Those interested in joining the committee can email Olivia Dwyer at o.dwyer@townofjayny.gov for more information.

2. What We Do

The Parks & Open Space Committee supports town employees and serves the community by working on long-term planning projects and engaging volunteers to support community enjoyment of our town parks, outdoor recreation on public lands, and conservation of nature.

3. Parks & Open Space

Parks

The Town of Jay owns land and facilities that offer recreation, preserve nature, and build community to support our community's health, well-being, and quality of life. Our parks include playgrounds, sports fields, a community garden, pavilions, trails for walking, and event spaces and places to gather.

Town of Jay Parks include:

Au Sable Forks

- Community Center
- The Grove (Community Garden, ball fields, basketball court, Henry's Trail, pavilion)
- Riverside Park
- Veterans Memorial

Jay

- Village Green
- Douglas Memorial Park
- Covered Bridge
- Children's Playground

Upper Jay

- Route 9N & Springfield Road
- Route 9N Parking Lot & EV Chargers

Open Space

Open space is a term for public or private land that is not developed for residential or commercial use, such as scenic vistas, forests, rivers, parks, and farms. In Jay, open space can also mean land owned by the town, Essex County, and New York State.

4. What is a Comprehensive Plan?

A comprehensive plan is a written document that describes a community's vision for the future and includes recommendations and steps to implement to work toward this vision.

The Town of Jay's comprehensive plan was first written and adopted in 1980, then updated in 1998. In fall 2023, the Town of Jay created a Comprehensive Plan Special Board of community volunteers and elected officials, to facilitate another update to the comprehensive plan. Funding for this process was secured in summer 2024, when the town received a DEC Smart Growth grant. So far, community outreach has included an open house event in October 2024, two community surveys (fall 2024 and summer 2025), working groups, a community vision workshop in summer 2023, tabling at community events in summer 2023, and community stakeholder interviews.

The comprehensive plan update is currently in the draft stage. There will be opportunities for public review and feedback, then the Town of Jay Town Board will vote to adopt the final version of the plan.

Visit planjay.com for more information about the Town of Jay's current process to update the comprehensive plan.

Why have a comprehensive plan?

- To plan for population changes and future generations.
- To plan for economic growth and schools, parks, roads, water, and sewer needed for the community.
- To plan for housing, land use, property values, tax bases, outdoor recreation, and community character.
- To plan to protect natural resources like rivers, forests, and open spaces.
- Visit planjay.com for more information.

5. Recreation Economy for Rural Communities (RERC)

RERC helps rural communities leverage outdoor recreation to revitalize their main streets, leading to economic growth, improved environmental protection and public health outcomes. Communities are encouraged to pursue activities that foster development and revitalization and support conservation efforts.

The Recreation Economy for Rural Communities (RERC) program supports small towns and rural communities in developing strategies to grow their outdoor recreation economies and revitalize main streets. The program encourages economic diversification, job creation, and conservation of natural resources, while improving

public health and access to outdoor spaces.

The program is administered by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), U.S. Department of Agriculture Forest Service, the Appalachian Regional Commission, the Denali Commission, and the Northern Border Regional Commission. For more about the RERC program and the 25 small and rural communities selected to participate in 2025, visit: <https://www.epa.gov/smartgrowth/recreation-economy-rural-communities>

RERC: Town of Jay

The Town of Jay and partners will create a Community Action Plan with steps for Main Street revitalization through sustainable growth in their outdoor recreation economy.

The project will plan for the building and management of new trails with town, county, state, and other partners; strategies to implement promotion, branding, and wayfinding to encourage resident and visitor use; and ensuring that outdoor amenities are accessible for a wide range of ages and abilities.

The RERC technical assistance program includes three phases over the next 12 months:

1. *Assess*: The Steering Committee of community stakeholders, elected officials, and volunteers will complete a self-assessment of the town's current outdoor recreation and economic opportunities to prepare for the planning process.
2. *Convene*: A two-day event will include a community tour for the technical assistance team to better understand community needs and a community workshop where residents can voice their ideas, feedback, questions, and concerns and be part of the planning process.
3. *Implement*: Complete the action plan and mobilize volunteers, resources, and planning initiatives to carry out the plan.

6. Projects

Project: Four Peaks

In 2024, a 595-acre parcel between Jay and Upper Jay was added to the Adirondack Forest Preserve. This is now "forever wild" land that will be managed for recreation and conservation. This was the result of a collaborative effort between:

- Private landowners
- Adirondack Land Trust
- Town of Jay
- Barkeater Trails Alliance
- Adirondack Park Agency

- NYS Department of Conservation

Background:

Four Peaks is a 600-acre forested property located between Route 9N and Hardy Road in the towns of both Wilmington and Jay, with access from Jay via Stonehouse Road.

The collaborative effort to protect this land began in 2014. That's when Martin Schwalbaum, who acquired this 595-acre parcel between Jay and Upper Jay in the 1960s and operated a cabin rental business there for about 50 years, contacted the Adirondack Land Trust, a land and water conservation nonprofit, to share his intent to conserve the forests on his property. The land trust acquired the property from Martin's estate in 2018 and transferred the land to New York State in 2024.

Four Peaks is now part of the Adirondack Forest Preserve. It is "forever wild" land that will be managed for recreation and conservation. Because Four Peaks connects to the Hard Roady trails—which are used for mountain biking, hiking, trail running, and bird watching, among other activities—there is an opportunity to create a multiuse trail network and expand outdoor recreation opportunities in the Town of Jay.

The NYS Department of Conservation has worked on similar projects with the Barkeater Trails Alliance, or BETA. BETA is a nonprofit that builds, maintains, and advocates for a system of community and backcountry trails for ski touring and mountain biking in the great High Peaks region of the Adirondack Park. Glenn Glover is the executive director of BETA. Glenn attended a Town of Jay Town Board meeting in September 2024 to express BETA's interest in collaborating with the town on outreach and engagement to identify the community's interests, ideas, and needs related to Four Peaks.

BETA's priority is to support conservation and outdoor recreation plans for Four Peaks that are made with the community, not done to the community. He offered BETA's support to town officials as a partner in gathering community input to share with the DEC as that agency updates the Unit Management Plan (UMP) for the Wilmington Wild Forest to include the Four Peaks Tract.

The Town of Jay and BETA would work together to identify what types of trails the Town of Jay community would like to see at Four Peaks and develop a trails master plan which would be provided to the New York State Department of Conservation as a recommendation for inclusion in their UMP amendment.

Four Peaks, Today:

- Public land open for public access
- No marked or maintained trails
- Drive slow on Stonehouse Road
- No motorized activities allowed on Four Peaks
- Rattlesnake Knob is the only summit with public access—please respect the neighbors!

Project: Dog Park

- The ADK Civics Club is partnering with the Town of Jay to plan a dog park. For more information about the ADK Civics Club, visit:
<https://www.facebook.com/p/ADK-Civics-Club-Au-Sable-Valley-Chapter-61570290891921/>
- The goal is to provide a beautiful, fun, and welcoming outdoor enclosure where we can meet and gather with our neighbors and canines close to downtown Au Sable Forks.

6. How to Volunteer

Town of Jay Parks & Trails Volunteer Day

Saturday, April 25, from 10 a.m. to 12 p.m.

Sites in Au Sable Forks, Jay, and Upper Jay

Free Lunch!

Volunteer activities: Trail maintenance, weeding, mulching, raking, clearing blowdown.