4. **PARKS AND OPEN SPACE**

*The Neighborhood Model proposes making open space integral to overall community design. This should result in residents having convenient access to parks, public gathering places, and natural views whether they are at home, work, or play. The open space system should provide an important framework for the organization of development. It should serve as a connective element to join different development areas, in addition to preserving important aspects of the natural environment.*

Open space includes recreational areas, public gathering places, and natural and landscaped areas. Communities need open space of various size and functions. In conventional development, however, many areas, particularly of low-density single-family housing, contain no open space or recreational areas. Even when open space is required as a ratio of housing units to land area, often the open areas are poorly sited afterthoughts.

Treating open space as integral to the design of the community opens the opportunity for providing all of these types of open space efficiently and well. Relating park areas to larger open space systems, for example, or extending preserved areas to adjacent parcels can result in better-sited and more productive open space. Similarly, locating parks or gathering places adjacent to major destinations can enhance safety and usage.

Size and location of open space should reflect its purpose. To provide recreation areas within walking distance of all residents, for example, small mini-parks should be frequently spaced in residential areas. Similarly in core areas, many small gathering places are appropriate, such as plazas or small courtyards. These plazas and courtyards, in addition to a major focal point, such as a “main street,” might serve as the heart of the community. Landscaped areas can be spots of beauty and of quiet enjoyment. Important natural areas like stream corridors can be set aside to protect environmentally sensitive areas and provide places for recreation and enjoying the outdoors.

On a community level, green space can relate to the underlying natural systems. This approach provides the opportunity for simultaneously meeting diverse goals such as stormwater management, groundwater recharge, and habitat protection.

The design and location of open space determines how fully it will be used. For example, a public space framed by building fronts, surrounded by neighborhood thoroughfares, and accessible to nearby residents is inviting and safe. Such principles of Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) can improve siting decisions, as can such criteria as locating parks near paths or major destinations like schools and other public facilities.

*Figure 2:12 Town Square, New Bedford, New York.*

*Figure 2:13 Residential Square at the head of a stream valley park.*