

# AGRICULTURAL AND FARMLAND PROTECTION PLAN

## TOWN OF ITHACA



FINAL  
NOVEMBER 2011

“Cultivators of the earth are the most valuable citizens. They are the most vigorous, the most independent, the most virtuous, and they are tied to their country and wedded to its liberty and interests by the most lasting bands.”  
Thomas Jefferson, Letter to John Jay, August 23, 1785

## **TOWN OF ITHACA AGRICULTURAL AND FARMLAND PROTECTION PLAN**

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All photographs in this Plan were taken within the Town of Ithaca.



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AFPB	Tompkins County Agriculture and Farmland Protection Board
AFPP	Town of Ithaca Agriculture and Farmland Protection Plan
ARFA	Tompkins Country Agricultural Resource Focus Area
CCETC	Cornell Cooperative Extension of Tompkins County
CSA	Community-Supported Agriculture
CWA	Clean Water Act
DEC	(NYS) Department of Environmental Conservation
FSA	Farm Service Agency
LDR	Lease of Development Rights
NRCS	Natural Resources Conservation Service
NWI	National Wetland Inventory
NYS	New York State
PDR	Purchase of Development Rights
SWCD	Soil and Water Conservation District
TC3	Tompkins Cortland Community College
UNA	Unique Natural Area
USDA	US Department of Agriculture

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### VISION STATEMENT

**The Town of Ithaca recognizes that agriculture is an integral part of the Town's economy and environment, provides locally grown food and other agricultural products, and enhances the quality of life for Town residents. The Town proactively promotes a diversity of farm types, seeks the long-term preservation of the Town's agricultural-land resources, supports the economic viability of the farming community and the profitability of each farm, values the local public agricultural research and educational resources, and encourages the general public to understand and support local agriculture.**

The Town's 24 farms represent a diversity of enterprises ranging from small-scale fruit and vegetable producers, livestock farmers, and ornamental-horticultural businesses to a few farmers engaged in larger-scale dairy and commodity field-crop production. These farms generate more than \$4.4 million in annual sales, and employ at least 27 full-time, 39 part-time, and another 25 seasonal workers. Farm operations in the Town own and operate a total of 3,412 acres. Although agriculture is the main land use in several portions of the Town, the total agricultural acreage has declined from the 4,920 acres reported in 1992.

The positive backdrop for agriculture in the Town includes the Town Agricultural Zones (with right-to-farm laws), the Town's program for the purchase of development rights, the strong and expanding local-food movement, and public awareness of the value of open space (including farmlands). Specific growth potential is seen for local-food sales, niche crops, and value-added production systems.

The goals of this Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan are:

- 1 – Promote the availability of locally grown foods and other agricultural products for all residents including limited income families***
- 2 – Retain and encourage a diversity of economically viable farm types***
- 3 – Ensure long-term protection of agricultural-land resources for agriculture, open space, and scenic resources***
- 4 – Encourage public understanding and involvement***
- 5 – Promote wise land use and waste management on agricultural land***

Some of the key recommendations of the Plan are:

Revitalize the Town Agriculture Committee and designate a staff member as the agriculture-contact person in Town Hall.

Revise local zoning and building laws to decrease: development pressure, conflict between farm and non-farming neighbors, and restrictions on farm construction projects.

## INTRODUCTION

### **TOMPKINS COUNTY / TOWN OF ITHACA**

Tompkins County is located at the southern end of Cayuga Lake in the Eastern Finger Lakes region of central New York. In 2007, the 588 farms in the County owned and operated 108,739 acres (36%) of the County's total of 303,779 acres—averaging 185 acres per farm. According to the 2007 US Census of Agriculture, the market value of all agricultural products sold from County farms was \$60.1 million (average: \$102,356 per farm). The leading products sold were dairy (61%), grains and dry beans (9%), cattle and calves (7%), nursery and floriculture (7%), and vegetables and potatoes (6%). The average value of land and buildings per farm in 2007 was \$418,353; machinery and equipment was valued at \$94,081 per farm. Farming was the principal occupation reported by 46% of the farm operators; the average age of the operator was 55.4 years.

The Town of Ithaca (which includes the Village of Cayuga Heights) is located in the center of Tompkins County. The Town surrounds the City of Ithaca and is bordered by six other municipalities of Tompkins County: the Village and Town of Lansing and the Towns of Dryden, Danby, Newfield, Enfield, and Ulysses.

Prior to World War II, agriculture was a major economic sector and the predominant land use in the Town of Ithaca. Despite the formidable barriers to farming presented by terrain, soils, and climate, the Town produced and exported significant amounts of wheat and other agriculture products beginning around 1800. Throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, potatoes, hay, tobacco, grain, fruit, and dairy and meat products were sent to market from the numerous farms dotting East Hill, South Hill, Inlet Valley, and West Hill.

Although agriculture in the Town has declined since the end of World War II, it is still the predominant land use in several portions of the Town. Farming areas are concentrated in the western part of the Town along the borders of Enfield and Ulysses and extend in places into these other towns. Portions of South Hill also are actively farmed, and Cornell University uses areas of East Hill for agricultural research and teaching.



Farmland, and the farmers who work the land, contribute to the well-being of all Town residents. In addition to the direct contribution to the local economy through production and employment, local farmers also make significant indirect



contributions to the local economy through the purchase of equipment and supplies and through their relatively low demands on costly public infrastructure. The rural character of the Town—enjoyed by Town residents and essential to the local tourist industry—is provided largely by local farmers and State Parks. Perhaps most importantly, farmers in the Town of Ithaca have established a tradition of stewardship of the land and its resources.

The 24 farms in the Town represent a diversity of enterprises ranging from small-scale fruit and vegetable producers, livestock farmers, and ornamental horticultural businesses to a few farmers engaged in larger-scale dairy and



commodity field-crop production. Farm operations in the Town own and operate a total of 3,412 acres (approximately 18% of the Town's total land area), and generate \$4.431 million in sales (7% of the total value of agriculture sales in the County). Relative to other towns in the County, the Town of Ithaca ranks second lowest in terms of land in farms, but it is also the most developed town.

Town-level agricultural statistics are not tracked in the US Census of Agriculture or by the NYS Department of Agriculture. Agricultural data at the Town level were gathered as part of several studies conducted by the Town in preparation of the Town's Comprehensive Plan and Agriculture Plan in 1992 and 1993 and by Cornell Cooperative Extension of Tompkins County (CCETC) as part of a review of County Agricultural Districts. Most farmers in the Town were interviewed in developing this 2011 plan, and summaries of findings can be found in the "Farming in the Town of Ithaca" section.

## **OVERVIEW OF THE PLANNING PROCESS AND PUBLIC OUTREACH**

The agricultural-planning process in the Town of Ithaca was initiated in February 2008 when a grant proposal was submitted to NYS Department of Agriculture and Markets for funding to develop a Town Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan (AFPP). In August 2008, the Town was awarded funding (with the State agreement finalized in February 2009).

As part of the Town's Comprehensive Plan update, a random-dialed resident phone survey was conducted in January 2009. In total, 359 surveys were completed; parts of two of the questions related to Town agriculture. Residents were asked, "How important are these aspects to your quality of life?" Out of a maximum score of 4, "scenic views" received a score of 3.4, the "ability to buy locally produced farm products" received a score of 3.2, while "farmland" received a score of 2.9. Residents also were asked, "How do you feel about the Town spending money on the following activities?" Out of a maximum score of 4, "protecting farmland from development" was supported with a score of 3.2

(second highest out of the nine choices). Summary tables from these two questions are included in Appendix A. These responses indicate that Town residents are supportive of local agriculture and appreciate the need to protect farmland.

In March 2009, the Town conducted a joint agricultural focus-group meeting for both the Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan and for updating the Town's Comprehensive Plan. Four farmers attended, as did representatives from the Town's Comprehensive Plan Committee, the Town of Ithaca Planning and Conservation Boards, CCETC, the Tompkins County Planning Department, and the Tompkins County Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD). The discussion included: the current status of farming in the Town, issues and opportunities farmers are facing in the Town, and where the Town would like to see agriculture in the future.

In June 2009, the Town signed an agreement with CCETC to provide data and guidance for the development of the AFPP. Representatives from the Town of Ithaca and CCETC started to meet regularly and collected various types of background data and other information for the Plan. In July 2009, a meeting was held at CCETC between agricultural-committee members from the Towns of Ithaca, Lansing, and Ulysses and David Haight (New York Director of the American Farmland Trust) to discuss approaches in developing the Towns' agriculture plans.

CCETC and the Town of Ithaca identified all landowners in the Town who have some type of agricultural use on their property. An interview form (see Appendix B for sample form) guided the conversations with farmers; starting the summer of 2009, we held one-on-one interviews with 16 agricultural operations in the Town. (A summary of the interviews is located in "Farming in the Town of Ithaca" section.)



In November 2009, a farmer meeting was held at Town Hall with approximately 16 persons (including several farmers) in attendance. The purpose of the meeting was to review the farmer-interview process, provide a summary of interviews, and outline the major points from the interviews. Farmers added additional ideas and collectively discussed common issues and opportunities.

In April 2010, a presentation was given to the Town's Comprehensive Plan Committee regarding the status of the AFPP. The Committee discussed the draft Vision Statement and Goals; several of the key recommendations were highlighted.

On May 1, 2010, a second farmers' meeting was held at Town Hall to obtain feedback on the draft Vision Statement, Goals, and Recommendations.

Approximately 15 people attended, including nine Town farmers. The meeting also provided a brief overview of what had been completed, and there was discussion of farmer interest in Purchase of Development Rights (PDR) and Lease of Development Rights (LDR).

The Town of Ithaca participated in Tompkins County's Farm City Day held on August 14, 2010 at Sweyolakan Farms in the Town of Ithaca. Farm City Day is a



free educational event that offers the public a first-hand look at how farms operate. The Town displayed several of the draft plan maps and distributed copies of the draft Vision Statement, Goals, and Recommendations. Planning staff and members of the Agricultural Plan Steering Committee were available throughout the day to answer questions and discuss the draft plan.

On March 22, 2011, a third farmers' meeting was held at Town Hall with 12 in attendance. Prior to the meeting, copies of the draft plan (dated March 10, 2011) were distributed to all farmers in the Town, with additional copies available at the meeting. The meeting provided an overview of the plan and obtained feedback on parts of the plan. Discussion focused on the farm-operation definition, the Goals and Recommendation Section, and the proposed draft Agriculture Committee Charter.

In March 2011, copies of the draft plan were provided to the Tompkins County Agricultural and Farmland Protection Board (AFPB) with a brief overview of the Plan provided by Town Planning Staff and CCETC. In April 2011, the AFBP returned with various questions and comments on the Plan, with a couple of members providing comments separately. Also in April, copies of the draft were provided to the Finger Lakes Land Trust (FLLT) and representatives for Cornell University; Andrew Zepp (Executive Director of the FLLT) provided comments.

On September 26, 2011, the Town of Ithaca Town Board reviewed and discussed the draft AFPP and offered a few minor edits and suggestions. They continued their discussion at the October 17, 2011 meeting and scheduled the public hearing for November 7, 2011. On November 7<sup>th</sup>, the Town of Ithaca Town Board made a negative determination of environmental significance, held a public hearing, and adopted the Town of Ithaca Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan. On November 16, 2011, the Tompkins County AFBP reviewed the AFPP and passed a resolution approving the Town of Ithaca's Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan.

## **TOWN OF ITHACA COMPREHENSIVE PLAN UPDATE**

In 2008, the Town of Ithaca began updating its 1993 Comprehensive Plan. As part of this update, a resident phone survey was conducted, focus-group

meetings and two public-information meetings were held, and the Comprehensive Plan Committee met regularly. All of these activities have had an agricultural component, and relevant information was incorporated in the AFPP. It is anticipated that the recommendations from this AFPP will be incorporated into the updated Comprehensive Plan and that the entire AFPP will be included as an appendix to the Comprehensive Plan. The adoption of the Comprehensive Plan will include additional public meetings and public hearings, which will provide additional feedback relating to agriculture and the AFPP.

## **DEFINITION OF AGRICULTURE**

Agriculture and farming can be defined and interpreted in different ways for different purposes. The Town needs one consistent definition to help identify what is “farming” and to determine what farm operations are appropriate for the various policies, funding, or other programs outlined in this AFPP.

The Town of Ithaca Zoning Ordinance defines a farm as “any parcel of land containing at least three acres which is used in the raising of agricultural products, such as crops, livestock, poultry, and dairy goods. It includes structures necessary to the production and storage of agricultural products and equipment and on-farm buildings used for preparation or marketing of products produced, or derived from products produced, predominately on the farm property on which the building is located subject to the limitations regarding roadside stands set forth in this chapter” (Town Code Section 270-5).

Based largely on definitions in NYS Agriculture and Markets Law (See Appendix C), for the purposes of this plan the Town of Ithaca defines a “farm operation” as

involving the production, preparation and marketing of fruit, vegetables, field crops, nursery stock and flowers, livestock and livestock products as a commercial enterprise, including horse boarding and breeding operations, Christmas trees, timber processing, compost, mulch, or other biomass crops, and the management and harvesting of farm woodlands. Such farm operations include the land and on-farm buildings, equipment, and manure processing and handling facilities and may consist of one or more parcels of owned or rented land, where parcels may be contiguous or noncontiguous.

The Town of Ithaca recognizes that there is a wide range of sizes and types of farms in the Town, from the small hobby farmer (interested in farming for personal benefit and with minimal sales) to the large commercial farms that operate with the intent to make a profit as a business. Farming can occur on as little as 1 acre to as much as 500 acres depending on the enterprise.

For the purposes of this plan, the term “farmer” includes other landowners who rent or lease agricultural lands to a farmer. Any programs, funding opportunities, or other items mentioned in this plan would apply to any agricultural-land owners with land actively used for farming.



## FARMING IN THE TOWN OF ITHACA

Much of the information used to develop this agricultural profile was obtained through interviews with individual farmers in the Town. A questionnaire was used to guide the interview process and to ensure consistency for a baseline of information gathered. During the interviews, farmers were asked about their operations, plans for the future, and thoughts about agriculture in the Town. A complete list of all farm operations that were interviewed and/or researched is available in Appendix D.

Additional information was provided by the Tompkins County Assessment Department and collected from previous research for some farms whose owners were not available to be interviewed.

### HISTORICAL SUMMARY

A review of the historical information regarding the Town of Ithaca's agricultural land has tracked farmland from generation to generation or owner to owner. Much of the agricultural land identified in the late 1970s has remained in farming, been left open for agriculture, or been consolidated into much larger agricultural holdings. There are some notable exceptions where residential development has occurred: Saponi Meadows in Inlet Valley, Perry farm on West Hill, and Babcock and Eddy land on West Hill.

While some parcels have been consolidated into or absorbed by one larger operation, other farms have seen a shrinking land base due to division of land at the time of generational transfers. Opportunities for farm expansion are limited by both a lack of available land and the cost of land. However, there is a landowner commitment to agriculture, even if the owner is not farming full time (or even at all).

Comparing the list of farmland identified in the late 1970s to the current inventory, there are 1260 acres of land currently farmed that were not mentioned in the documentation from 30+ years ago. Some of it was farmed at that time but wasn't included in the inventory. Other (often, smaller) parcels, if not farmed at the time, were at least kept open for agriculture.

There has been a diversification of agriculture and a transition from dairy farming to cropping in the Town over the last 30 years. There are now equine, vegetable, beef, viticulture, and horticulture operations; farm markets and roadside stands; and several smaller-scale niche and hobby operations.



### GENERAL DESCRIPTION

Agriculture in the Town of Ithaca reflects agriculture in the region. Even though the number of farms is relatively small, agriculture in the Town is surprisingly diverse—in both types of operations and their longevity. Enterprises include

dairies, vineyards and wineries, direct-marketed produce (via area farmers markets, U-pick tree-fruit and berry crops, farm markets, or roadside stands), field crops, forest crops, landscaping and nursery stock, Christmas trees, greenhouses, horses, beef, chickens, fiber products, and even a “corn maze sound garden.” There are newly developing farm operations, farms that have been operating 20-50 years, and several multigenerational farms.

Town agriculture is not isolated within the Town’s boundaries; several operations cross borders into neighboring towns (Danby, Dryden, Enfield, and Ulysses). In one case, Town of Ithaca land supports a landscaping business in Lansing. This illustrates the need to consider a regional approach to farm and agricultural-land preservation and to work with adjacent municipalities whenever possible. On the east side of the Town, agriculture is dominated by research fields owned by the Cornell University Experiment Station and thus requires the Town to be cognizant of the University’s long-range plans for agricultural lands.

Overall, farmers’ commitment to keeping their land in agriculture was a constant. A few farmers were concerned about their family’s ability to keep farming but expected their land to stay in agriculture or to be placed under a conservation easement. This is likely attributable to the family nature of farming in the Town. All private farms are family-owned and operated. Within the past 12 years, seven multigenerational farms have transitioned or are transitioning from



one generation to the next, with two or three generations actively involved in the operation. The one corporate farming enterprise in the Town (a dairy-cattle Young Sire Complex) is operated on West Hill by Genex Cooperative of Shawano, WI. It employs 55 people.

Farmers generally agreed that sound agricultural practices protect the environment, though farmers also acknowledged that there is the potential for negative impacts (such as occasional fertilizer runoff or manure spills, erosion, and problems associated with livestock in or near waterways). Several farmers mentioned concern about depleted farmland in the area due to the high price of lime (resulting in lime not being used when it should be). There was also mention that the scale/magnitude of farming in this region is much different from that in the Midwest. Positive conservation practices specifically mentioned included strip cropping, crop rotation, permanent vegetation, no-till, organic production, woodlot management, reduced pesticide use, cultural practices to control weeds, and preservation of rural landscapes for aesthetics and tourism. Farmers mentioned that they must take care of the land to stay in business.

Several farmers also offered perspectives on agriculture’s impact on the environment compared to residential and commercial development. One example was that farms have very few impervious surfaces: cropland encourages water absorption, and therefore farms (as opposed to driveways and parking lots) benefit the water table and reduce runoff. Also, Town farmers don’t have to drive far to go to work.



## FARM-TOWN RELATIONS

While many farmers expressed feelings of mistrust of and frustration with the Town in the past, there was an almost universal desire and hope that the problems raised could and would be addressed. Because farmers' means of production are the lands they own and the buildings on it, Town of Ithaca farmers are committed to staying here. Problems working with Town offices and regulations were mentioned by several farmers as the biggest hurdle to their ability to remain in farming or to become more profitable.

Farmers want to stay in Ithaca, and they think the Town should encourage and support agriculture (depending on what that might mean and what related consequences there might be). They want the Town to be proactive and to have a “can-do” approach to keeping agriculture viable. Farmers are willing to trade some forms of land-use restrictions for assistance that makes business improvements possible and feasible.

Farmers think the Town is suitable for many types of agriculture, most specifically small-scale and niche operations—especially those that cater to local residents. Such types of agriculture include farm stands, CSAs (community-supported agriculture operations where consumers pay at the beginning of the season for a weekly share of the harvest), poultry, and small ruminants. Large-scale livestock operations were not considered realistic or feasible in the Town due to the lack of land-base availability and proximity of residences.



Some farmers were interested in PDR or LDR (conservation easements), while others were not. Nearly everyone wanted to know more about both concepts. When asked about the future, farmers generally didn't expect a lot of change in the next 10 years, but thought much could happen in the next 20 years (including both more agriculture and less agriculture).

Several farmers mentioned the need or desire for a “go-to” person in Town government who could answer questions and help navigate Town requirements. Farmers also appreciate having an agriculture committee available (even if it doesn't meet very often) as a conduit for providing agricultural information when the Town needs it and to serve as a forum for getting concerns addressed.

Farming in and near suburban and urban centers presents unique (or at least concentrated) problems—some of which the Town can directly work to address (although others would require the Town to work with other entities). Farmers universally mentioned problems with traffic. This is a concern for farmers in all parts of the Town, but the further down the transportation funnel into Ithaca a

farm is located, the more intense the problems can be. Many of the main travel routes are County or State Roads; the Town would need to work with County and State agencies to address traffic concerns. Other problems (such as trespassing, vandalism, and neighbor complaints) can be tackled through the Right-to-Farm law and consumer/community education.

### **FARM OPERATIONS (NOT INCLUDING CORNELL UNIVERSITY)**

There are approximately 3,412 acres of agricultural land in the Town of Ithaca (including Cornell University agricultural lands); 2,832 actively farmed acres and 580 fallow acres. Approximately 2,533 acres receive an agricultural property-tax assessment. Of the 2,533 acres receiving agricultural assessment, 1,058 acres (42%) are rented to farmers. This is evidence that rural landowners value the opportunity to keep land in agriculture and enjoy the tax benefit of agricultural assessment, but in some cases the owner farms some of the land and another farmer uses the rest. However, this also points out that should landowners decide not to rent land to farmers, it could have a significant impact on the farm operation specifically and on the amount of farming in general in the Town.



Farms in the Town fall generally into either small (50 acres or less) or medium (150-200 acres) size categories (with nothing between 50 and 150 acres). Larger holdings exist, and three farmers rent additional land; one rents 1000 tillable acres (310 acres in the Town of Ithaca and 690 acres in the Town of Enfield), another rents 100 acres (all in Ithaca), and a third rents 4 acres (in Ithaca).

Agricultural operations range from start-ups, to family-run only, to farm businesses employing seasonal and/or year-around help. Most of the farms among those whose owners were interviewed employ many farm-family members, including 14 full-time and 30 part-time positions in all. These farms also have paid non-family staff providing a total of 13 full-time and nine part-time year-around jobs and 15 full-time and 10 part-time seasonal jobs (seasons range from a few to 9 months).

Farm size is not an indicator of economic viability; some of the medium-sized farms are being worked just enough to keep the land open, meet the criteria for agricultural assessment, pay the taxes, and provide some money for reinvestment. Some of the smaller operations have the highest sales and employ the most people. Six farms report six-figure annual gross incomes; two gross close to or over \$1 million annually. As reported during the interviews in 2009

(using the high sides of ranges given) the total value of agricultural products is approximately \$4,431,000.



Farmers tend to re-invest in their operations commensurate with their income; start-ups invest as well, but tend to re-use materials and look for low-cost alternatives. Two new operations in particular (a sustainable chicken project and a vegetable cash-crop farm) talked about “creative reuse” to keep costs down. Recent investments

in larger operations include new outbuildings, equipment, and increased plant material and livestock inventory.

Owners of larger, more traditional operations (dairy, livestock) were familiar with existing agricultural programs (FSA, NRCS, SWCD); newer and/or niche operators were not, or weren’t sure there were any programs for which they were eligible. Several farmers reported taking advantage of these programs for things like livestock fencing, well drilling for livestock-watering systems, barnyard drainage, and crop insurance.

Farmers reported the following crops and land uses on their farms (this represents rented as well as owned land but excludes Genex and Cornell):

Hay	717-787 acres
Woods	668 acres
Corn	363 acres
Vegetables	203 acres
Pasture	185 acres
Small Grains (winter wheat, rye, oats, buckwheat)	183 acres
Landscaping	91 acres
Tillable fallow	51 acres
Orchard	25 acres
Vineyard	5 acres
Corn maze	3 acres
Greenhouses	40,000 sq. ft.

Notes:

- Genex has 127 acres on Sheffield Rd. in the Town of Ithaca which are often in hay but sometimes in corn; Genex has an additional 491 acres (one contiguous block of six parcels running through the block to North Van Dorn Road) across Sheffield Road in the Town of Enfield.
- Cornell has approximately 870 acres located in the Town of Ithaca in vegetable and field crops, orchards, pasture, dairy, and greenhouses.

Farms reported the following combined livestock numbers (this includes Genex but excludes Cornell):

Dairy bulls	300
Dairy heifers	247
Dairy cows	200
Chickens (layers)	148
Goats, sheep, alpacas	47
Beef	30
Horses	12
Hogs	6

## **CORNELL UNIVERSITY**

Cornell University, through many of its colleges and departments, has a large agricultural presence on East Hill in the Town of Ithaca. Cornell has various teaching and research facilities related to agriculture, provides services to local farmers (veterinary care, research, resource for questions, etc.), and supports local agriculture through purchasing and selling agricultural products (hay, fruits, compost, etc.) and purchasing materials and equipment locally.

The College of Veterinary Medicine (part of the State University of New York) is primarily located within the Town of Ithaca. The College of Veterinary Medicine employs approximately 310 faculty and 700 staff members and has 445 students enrolled in its programs. The College includes the Animal Health Diagnostic Center, the Cornell University Hospital for Animals (including the Companion Animal Hospital



and the Equine and Farm Animal Hospitals), the Baker Institute for Animal Health, and the Sprecher Institute for Comparative Cancer Research.

The Farm Animal Hospital provides health and medical care for approximately 1,000 farm animals each year. Additionally, nearly 40,000 farm animals are visited each year by the Ambulatory and Production Medicine Service, whose staff travels to area (including Town of Ithaca) farms to provide health care on-site. The Farm Animal Hospital and the Animal Health Diagnostic Center also investigate herd outbreaks for diagnosis, treatment, and prevention of disease. With all these services provided locally, Town farmers have direct, convenient access to high-quality care for their farm animals.

The Cornell University Agricultural Experiment Station links Cornell's research facilities and the statewide Cooperative Extension system. The station is involved with crops on approximately 500 acres within the Town of Ithaca; many facilities



are located or based in the Town near the main campus. Some of these agricultural facilities (or “operations”) located in the Town include the Dilmun Hill Student Farm, Greenhouse Operations, Farm Services, Campus Area Farms, and the Sarkaria Arthropod Research Laboratory. The Station employs approximately 50 staff on the farms and in the greenhouses, with additional direct on-the-farm employees. The Station also provides many public opportunities related to agriculture (including classes and field days), and many of the research fields are open to the public. The Station and the Cooperative Extension system field inquiries from the public, meet with start-up operations, and provide education, expertise, and supplemental knowledge. While these services are available to anyone, it is a benefit to the Town of Ithaca farmers having these services and facilities available so nearby.



The Dilmun Hill Student Farm (a 12-acre student-run farm located near the Cornell Orchards), provides a working farm for students to learn hands-on organic practices and farm management. Dilmun distributes organic produce to Cornell Dining and Manndible Café, and through direct market sales on the “Ag Quad” (on the central campus).

Greenhouse Operations includes a 163-compartment greenhouse complex, which combines teaching and research facilities and public observatories with more than 500 species of plants. The various greenhouses cover approximately 4 acres and can house 200 to 300 research projects at any given time with approximately 350 users of the facilities (including faculty, students, and researchers). Farm Services provides both research and production farming with as many as 20



research projects underway at any one time. Farm Services crops hay, corn, barley, and wheat and maintains a college “land bank” that keeps land in agricultural production as the need for research acreage changes. Farm Services also operates the University’s compost facility, which currently handles about 5,000 tons of waste annually from campus dining

facilities. Cereal grains and forages grown on Farm Services land are either used within Cornell or sold to the public. Farm Services is based in the Town of Ithaca, and a portion of the cropland is located in the Town.

Campus Area Farms manages 325 acres on 11 small farms; some of these operations are in the Town of Ithaca. The farms provide easily accessible research plots for faculty and students. Research includes breeding research on popular food crops such as corn, small grains, potatoes, and pumpkins. Researchers investigate possible genetic improvements that would make these crops more suitable for growing in New York. One current project includes a trial of different grasses dedicated to biofuels to see which are most adaptable to New York.

The Sarkaria Arthropod Research Laboratory is a special quarantine facility providing research capacity for arthropods for experimentation on their biology and control. The facility is located in the Town of Ithaca and houses exotic-pest species as well as non-indigenous arthropods that might serve as biological-control agents of pests.

Cornell Orchards is a working orchard, vineyard, and fruit farm managed by the Department of Horticulture. The Ithaca site includes storage and packing facilities, a cider press and research lab, a student winery, and 37 acres of fruit plantings for teaching and research programs. Cornell Orchards also sells fruit from the research and teaching plantings at the retail outlet located on NYS Route 366.





## AGRICULTURAL RESOURCES (EXISTING CONDITIONS / INVENTORY)

### NATURAL RESOURCES

**Topography:** The Town was sculpted by retreating glaciers thousands of years ago, and is bisected by the deep valley of the southern end of Cayuga Lake and its major tributary (the Cayuga Inlet). Flanked by numerous gorges incised along the steep hillsides, the valley steadily rises up to a hilly mid-plateau that continues gradually to rise beyond the Town's borders. The Town varies from a topographic low point of approximately 390 feet above mean sea level along the valley floor of the Cayuga Inlet to a topographic high point of approximately 1420 feet above mean sea level on South Hill near Ridgecrest and Troy Roads (where the Towns of Ithaca and Danby meet).

**Lakes & Streams:** Cayuga Lake—the longest of the Finger Lakes—is a treasured resource enjoyed for its scenic and recreational amenities by residents and visitors alike. Approximately 680 acres of the southern end of the Lake is located within the Town of Ithaca (including approximately 2.9 miles of shoreline). Cayuga Lake is the source of drinking water for most residents in the Town of Ithaca and for many residents of surrounding municipalities.

Seven major streams and innumerable smaller tributaries traverse the Town. All of these streams are within the Cayuga Lake watershed.

**Wetlands:** Wetlands are important components of our landscape. Wetlands are amongst the most productive ecosystems—providing food and habitat to a wide variety of plants, insects, amphibians, reptiles, birds, fish, and mammals. Wetlands lessen the magnitude of flood events by acting as natural sponges that trap and slowly release flood waters; wetlands protect water quality by serving as filters that remove pollutants and nutrients and trap sediment from surface water and stormwater. Wetlands also provide important recreational opportunities (such as bird watching, hunting, and fishing).

Under the New York State Freshwater Wetlands Act of 1975, the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) maps and regulates wetlands encompassing at least 12.4 acres and those smaller wetlands judged to be of unusual importance. DEC also regulates a 100-foot adjacent area (buffer zone)



surrounding each protected wetland. There are four NYS regulated wetlands in the Town.

The US Army Corps of Engineers also protects wetland—regardless of size—under Section 404 of the Clean Water Act (CWA). Some of the wetlands regulated by the Corps of Engineers are noted on maps prepared by the US Fish and Wildlife Service as part of its National Wetland Inventory (NWI). However, unlike DEC, the Corps of Engineers regulates all “waters of the United States” whether they were mapped or not.

The only way to be certain of the existence of a wetland is with on-site surveys conducted by qualified professionals. The three essential characteristics of wetlands are hydrophytic vegetation, hydric soils, and wetland hydrology; all these characteristics must be present for an area to be identified as a wetland.

**Geology:** The Town of Ithaca is located within the glaciated portion of the Allegheny Plateau. The Allegheny Plateau is characterized by layers of rock that have been gently folded and tilted slightly to the south during the final mountain-building event of 290 to 248 million years ago.

“Bedrock geology” describes the basic rock formations that underlie the soils and unconsolidated materials (surficial geology). The bedrock underlying Ithaca and in the exposed rock formations seen in area gorges and stream beds had its origin during the Devonian period (approximately 415 to 360 million years ago). These formations consist of sedimentary rocks of marine origin including shale, fine-grained sandstone, and thin beds of limestone. Depth to bedrock is relatively shallow in areas of Ithaca.

“Surficial geology” describes the rocks and unconsolidated material that lie between bedrock and the surface of the land. While “soil” refers to the organic component of these materials, “surficial geology” refers to the rock and mineral component of these materials. When glaciers receded 12,000 to 25,000 years ago, they deposited the rocks and debris frozen within the ice. These formations are classified by the shape of the formation, its thickness, and the type and size of the various particles found. Because it is these deposits that commonly determine soil composition, their characteristics can affect agricultural viability.

“Till” (a heterogeneous unsorted mix of silt, sand, clay, and rock) is the most abundant glacial deposit in the Town. Because tills contain many different grain sizes, the empty spaces between coarser grains tend to become filled with finer-grained materials (resulting in a very low porosity). Till can be very difficult to excavate and generally has poor qualities for farming. Lacustrine (i.e., lake) silt and clay deposits are also common in Ithaca. These laminated silts and clays were deposited in lakes formed during the melting of the glaciers. They are high in calcite, have low permeability, and form potentially unstable land.

**Soils:** As in most of Tompkins County, soils in the Town of Ithaca vary considerably from place-to-place in terms of their physical properties and suitability for various uses. Ninety-one different soil types (mapping units) have been identified in the Town, with a wide variety of soil characteristics. The most common soil type is BgC (Bath and Valois gravelly silt loam with 5 to 15% slopes) and represents 9.7% of all known soil types within the town; other soil types each represent less than 2% of Town soils. This variability of the soil properties

can equate to variability in the suitability of the land to support agricultural uses or development. (Additional information regarding agricultural soils can be found below.)

**Plants & Wildlife:** The Town contains many diverse habitat types. Woodlands, brush lands, meadows, wetlands, streams and gorges, agricultural lands, and transitional areas support a wide variety of plant species as well as dwelling and feeding areas for mammals, birds, reptiles, and amphibians.

The Town of Ithaca falls within the regional forest formation designated as the “Allegheny Section” of the Northern Appalachian Highland Division of the Hemlock-White Pine Northern Hardwood Region. The Allegheny Section is a broad forest type that begins at the northern edge of the Finger Lakes and continues south, covering most of the northern half of Pennsylvania and the southern half of New York.



According to Tompkins County Land Use Land Cover Mapping Project (updated in 2007 by the Tompkins County Planning Department), approximately 6,800 acres (36% of the land area of the Town including the Village of Cayuga Heights but excluding Cayuga Lake), is forested and composed of either deciduous, conifer, or mixed woodlands or forest plantations. Brush or grassland accounts for another approximately 2,757 acres (15%) of the land area.

There has been no comprehensive fish or wildlife survey completed for the Town; however, predictions based on habitat types can be made. As described above, the Town contains a mosaic of land use and vegetation types. This variety translates to different habitat types that can support a wide variety of mammals, birds, reptiles, and amphibians.

## **AGRICULTURAL SOILS**

“Prime farmland,” as designated in 1992 by the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), is land that has the best combination of physical and chemical characteristics for producing food, feed, forage, fiber, and oilseed crops and is available for these uses. (The land could be cropland, pastureland, rangeland, forestland, and other land, but not urban built-up land or water.) It has the soil quality, growing season, and moisture supply needed to produce sustained high yields of crops economically when treated and managed (including water management) according to acceptable farming methods. In general, prime farmlands have an adequate and dependable water supply from precipitation or irrigation, a favorable temperature and growing season, acceptable acidity or alkalinity, acceptable salt and sodium content, and few or no rocks (Prime Farmland, Section II-III-A).

Approximately 2,633 acres of soils meet the requirements for prime farmland in the Town. Unfortunately, much of that prime farmland is not located where most of the active farming is currently taking place or within the current Agricultural Zone. As shown on Map 5, Agricultural Soils (Appendix E), much of the prime farmland has been developed for housing or other non-agricultural activities.

Beyond prime farmland in the Town, there is a significant amount of land classified as “farmland of statewide importance” for the production of food, feed, fiber, forage, and oilseed crops. Such lands generally include those that are nearly prime farmland and that produce high yields of crops in an economic manner when treated and managed according to acceptable farming methods. Some may produce yields as high as those of prime farmlands if conditions are favorable. In the Town of Ithaca, approximately 5,369 acres meet the above requirements and are designated by New York State as “important” farmland. This represents a significant amount of the active farmland in the Town—especially farmland on West Hill.

As in the case in other parts of the County, there are good agricultural soils in Ithaca—but in many cases, they have a slope that is not ideal for many agricultural operations. Both the prime farmlands and the farmlands of statewide importance are shown on Map 5, Agricultural Soils (Appendix E).

## **MARKETS & SUPPORT SERVICES**

### **Markets**

Town of Ithaca farmers use a variety of market channels depending on the products they produce and the size of their businesses. The one remaining dairy farm (which is also the largest farming operation) in the Town sells its milk to an independent processor owned by Kraft Foods and located in Steuben County, NY.



Other livestock operations are small, and most rely on direct sales or auctions to move their animals. One farm with laying hens has an interesting compost-trade-for-eggs operation, where City and Town residents save food scraps to feed chickens and in turn get weekly egg deliveries. Direct marketing is an excellent channel for locally produced foods (produce and meats) given the proximity of farms to consumers in the Town (and City) of Ithaca.

One challenge for all livestock producers is finding nearby USDA- or NYS-certified slaughter facilities. USDA inspection is required for meat sales to restaurants and retailers (NYS inspection is acceptable when whole animals are sold as freezer trade direct to the consumer). Producers may need to schedule processing with a slaughter plant a year in advance. Poultry farmers with meat chickens do enjoy a 1,000-bird exemption (the exemption for turkeys, geese and ducks is 250 birds) which allows them to process on the farm. Given the



proximity of the combined populations of the Town and City of Ithaca, there is good potential in the Town for more small-scale livestock and poultry production. Better access to slaughter facilities could accelerate this opportunity.

Field crops such as corn, hay, and small grains are major land uses that provide animal feed for both on-farm use and for sale to other local farmers or brokers. Field-crop producers depend on having land available to rent. The level of production is strongly influenced by market prices. Horse farms are a good market for hay. There is good potential for horse operations to expand given the availability of hay, the proximity to the City, and the expertise available at the Cornell Veterinary College.

Fruit and vegetables produced in the Town are marketed to area consumers. Three farms in the Town operate roadside stands, a few sell at the Ithaca Farmers' Market, and there are two CSAs operating in the town. Most of these farms are located on the west side of the Town. Potential exists for more direct marketing on the east side of Ithaca. Currently, Cornell Orchards is the predominant outlet for fruits and some vegetables on the east side of Ithaca. Some interest has been expressed for a farmers market on the Cornell campus or at East Hill Plaza, and it is anticipated that in the near future, CCETC staff will investigate these opportunities.

The Town is home to the only two wineries in the County. These wineries were established to take advantage of the consumer base and high volume of visitors—especially families coming to the campuses. Six Mile Creek winery has been operating for almost 30 years on East Hill; the other (on the west side of the Town) is just coming into production. These operations, along with the sound maze, the farm stands, Westhaven Farm at Ecovillage, Laughing Goat Fiber Farm, and several others provide a strong base for promoting agritourism in the Town. Cooperative Extension has partnered on several occasions with these farms to offer successful farm tours.

The Town is also home to the Ithaca Beer Company which is currently building a new brewery and restaurant/pub (expected to open in 2012). The new facility is located on a large parcel where hops will be grown for use in the brewery production and used as part of facility tours. The owners also anticipate growing various fruits and vegetables on the property that would be used in the restaurant. This project will provide an excellent agritourism opportunity in the Town and will show the connection between farming and local foods.

Greenhouse and nursery production is a viable economic sector of agriculture that depends largely on direct local sales. Producing and selling bedding plants, perennials, and nursery stock features prominently at area farm stands; it allows them to open early and



offer a larger variety of products into the fall. Christmas-tree farms also depend on U-cut customers for sales. Two producers specialize in spring plant sales from greenhouses open to the public from May to July. Two tree-nursery operations in the Town include a national distributor of grafted fruit trees and a landscape company that raises trees for both retail and wholesale nursery sales.

Marketing opportunities exist in the Town for organic livestock production (especially poultry), organic field crops for animal feed, organic compost, horse boarding and riding, Christmas trees, specialized fruit and vegetable farming, and specialized ornamental production. More farmers could also be taking advantage of demand from restaurants and food retailers for local foods; however, pricing, packing, storage, and distribution pose cost deterrents to expansion into these outlets.

### **Support Services**

Farmers rely on a huge variety of businesses for inputs and sale of products. Farmers seek services and supplies locally and from throughout the region. Business services such as banking and accounting are generally locally sourced, but supplies may be purchased regionally or in many cases via mail order. Ithaca Agway and Tractor Supply Company are the closest general farm-supply stores. Farm tractors and other specialized equipment often are purchased used at auctions or from regional dealers in Newfield, Cortland, and Geneva. Animal feed is trucked in (if not grown here). Organic feed often comes from a mill in Penn Yan, NY.

Crop, herd, and veterinary services are common in the large dairy, but the small crop and livestock farms generally are self-sufficient (other than requiring veterinary assistance from time-to-time). Farmers are also often self-sufficient when it comes to equipment repairs—through parts may come from a distance and it does hamper production efficiency when farmers



have to wait days for a part needed for equipment repair. Fertilizer sources include on-farm manure or purchased supplies delivered in bulk from a variety of sources to field-crop farms. Seed dealers work directly with crop farmers, and most fruit and vegetable farmers order seeds via mail catalogs.

Energy is a big input on farms and some is locally supplied from propane suppliers. Alternative energy sources (including solar, wind, biogas, and biomass) provide opportunities for use of on-farm resources and offer potential savings for farms. More work is needed to expose farms to energy alternatives and cost savings that might be realized.

Infrastructure for processing is lacking. In addition to slaughter facilities as mentioned above, it could be useful if farms had access to common storage



facilities and to packing, grading, and processing facilities. This would open market-channel opportunities and reduce the need for individual farms to invest in needed infrastructure. For example, a common cold-storage and packing facility might allow farmers to expand their marketing season. Farmers in the Town are fortunate to have access to excellent distribution resources. Regional Access (located just north of the Town's border on NYS Route 96) distributes local farm and food products locally and throughout the State. The company specializes in regional and NY products and negotiates transportation assessments for farmers who need the company's services to expand their farming operations.

Opportunities to develop supply, business, and marketing services for farmers should be investigated as part of a plan for strengthening agriculture in the Town. Some services that could be offered include: specialized animal feeds; nutrition counseling; soil testing; organic-materials processing and compost sale; coordination of farm marketing and processing; and business assistance. These enterprises need to expand as farms expand and will probably need to work with additional farmers beyond the Town's borders to be economically viable.

Training of future farmers is actively pursued locally. Beginning-farmer training is offered by CCETC; recently, additional training for beginning farmers became available through a project via Ecovillage and Groundswell. Groundswell is a new entity organizing farm internships, has offered a summer hands-on practicum on food and farming at TC3, and has received a USDA grant to do more training and develop an incubator farm at Ecovillage. In addition, there is more focus on farming opportunities via Cornell; these include the new Enology and Viticulture undergraduate program, and the efforts of the Cornell Small Farms Program-Beginning Farmer Project. Dilmun Hill (a Cornell student-run farm; see above), also offers a hands-on opportunity for aspiring farmers. Anyone interested in farming has access to these training resources, along with business assistance from CCETC and the Alternatives Federal Credit Union.



## **LOCAL FOODS**

Local-food production is growing among the Town's farmers. Beyond the three long-operating farm stands, there are two CSA farms and several new farmers interested in meat and vegetable production for direct sales. Given the population of the Town and City of Ithaca combined, there is opportunity to expand local-food production if demand remains strong. A key challenge is to offer affordable local foods.

Local foods can be produced on smaller plots (as little as 1 acre) as intensive culture or in greenhouses. Intensive production provides the opportunity to situate farms on small parcels that may be more widely scattered throughout the Town and in closer proximity to developed areas (and their residents). A flexible

definition of farming that accommodates some types of small-scale agriculture and homesteading could enhance opportunities for local-food production.

Opportunities for marketing to larger institutional buyers are being explored by CCETC, including direct sales at higher residential density (senior facilities, low income housing, etc.) and to businesses (such as Cayuga Medical Center, area schools, and other similar outlets). Often, policy barriers and purchasing requirements must be addressed to open these venues to local sales. Fortunately, public demand is driving this opportunity; therefore, institutional buyers are open to exploring options for purchasing directly from local farms.

Local foods are also grown in home and community gardens. While there is no census of home gardening, CCETC has experienced significant interest in home-gardening classes and information. Additionally, there is interest in homesteading beyond gardens. Many residents are eager to become more food self-sufficient. This includes keeping bees, backyard poultry and small livestock, making maple syrup, etc. Town laws should be reviewed to ensure that self-sufficiency (and also more modest home production) is practiced on appropriately sized parcels and in appropriate settings. Laws could be created to permit some of these enterprises in areas other than the agricultural zone.

The Town has invested in community gardens on West Hill next to Linderman Creek. Similar initiatives could be undertaken in other parts of the Town where land is available adjacent to group residences or in Town parks. This makes it possible for people who do not have access to land to grow and eat fresh food.



Cornell has made land available to community residents for gardening on Freese Road on the east side of the Town. There are approximately 80 plots at that site. Several other group-housing facilities in the Town have established food gardens for residents, including the Ellis Hollow Senior Apartments and Cornell's Maplewood Apartments and Hasbrouck Apartments on East Hill near Cornell. Interest exists for gardening at the Overlook Apartments on West Hill.

## **AGRICULTURAL DISTRICTS**

Article 25-AA of the New York State Agricultural and Markets Law authorizes the creation of county agricultural districts. The purpose of agricultural districts is to encourage the continued use of farmland for agricultural production. The program is based on a combination of landowner incentives and protections—all designed to prevent the conversion of farmland to non-agricultural uses. Included in these benefits are: preferential real property-tax treatment

(agricultural assessment and special-benefit assessment); protections against overly restrictive local laws, government-funded acquisition, or construction projects that would adversely affect agricultural operations; and protection against private nuisance suits involving agricultural practices. The Agricultural Assessment program is voluntary, and not all farms can qualify (e.g., do not have the minimum annual income of \$10,000 from the farm operation).

Currently, portions of both of Tompkins County's Agricultural Districts (Agricultural Districts 1 & 2) extend into the Town of Ithaca covering approximately 4,580 acres of active and inactive agricultural lands, wooded areas, and residential development (See Map No. 6, Agricultural Districts). Within the Town's Agricultural Districts, there are approximately 1,474 acres of farmer-owned lands and farmers rent another 1,098 acres that receive agricultural assessment.

### **AGRICULTURE IN ADJOINING TOWNS**

Agriculture in the Town of Ithaca is generally located around the Town's perimeter and often crosses into adjoining Towns. Development pressure from the Town is outward against farm and other rural land. If development "leapfrogs" over Town of Ithaca agriculture into adjoining towns, Town farmers could be pressured by development from both sides. Additionally, increased residential development in adjoining towns creates traffic-related problems for Town of Ithaca farmers.

**Enfield;** The Town of Ithaca's entire western border (including much of the agricultural land) is contiguous with the Town of Enfield. To the west/southwest, fairly contiguous blocks of farmland (both owned and rented) extend into the Town of Enfield. Moving north from Robert H. Treman State Park, A. J. Teeter Farm borders the Park and crosses into Enfield, where it meets the Arnold Farm and agricultural land rented by Sweyolakan Farm and Eddy Hill Farm on both sides of Cole Grove Road to Bostwick Road. Sweyolakan, Eddy Hill, and Eddydale farms own land up to Sheffield Road and beyond into Enfield; Sweyolakan Farm owns to Poole Road and rents land east to Culver Road. Both Sheffield and Bostwick Roads have increasing residential development.

To the west/northwest along Sheffield Road to Hayts Road, Laughing Goat Fiber Farm, Drake Farm, Suwinski Farm, Cayuga Landscape, and Genex all farm in proximity and in some cases contiguously. Only Genex owns land across Sheffield into the Town of Enfield; they own west to Van Dorn Road. The Drake Farm owns along both sides of Mecklenburg Road (NYS Route 79). There is roadside residential development throughout the area, but there are large blocks of open land between Mecklenburg, Bundy, Hayts, and Iradell Roads (moving from south to north between the Town's western boundary and NYS Route 96).

The Town of Enfield has no zoning, but it does have both a Site Plan Review Law and Subdivision Regulation. Enfield has a history of strong, community-wide rejection of zoning whenever the subject is broached. Enfield is rural residential, with about 40% of the land in agriculture. Agriculture occurs throughout Enfield, but is most heavily concentrated on Enfield's western border (i.e., not the border with Ithaca). Residential growth in Enfield has been steady but might be increasing; building permits in mid-year 2010 already exceed those from all of

the previous year (2009). The straight east-west roads in Enfield leading directly into Ithaca offer quick access to rural living. Significant roadside development along these roads could occur in Enfield with little impact on that town's agriculture, but the resulting traffic into Ithaca would exacerbate the problems Ithaca farmers are already experiencing.

**Ulysses:** The Town of Ulysses shares a small section of the Town of Ithaca's northern border to the west of Cayuga Lake. Trumansburg Road (NYS Route 96) is a major transit route from the north through the Town of Ulysses into Ithaca. Although agricultural land is found along and near Route 96, major residential development around this route continues in both Ithaca and Ulysses. Ulysses' agricultural land near this boundary provides a buffer for agricultural land in the Town of Ithaca only in the context of adjoining land in the western part of Ulysses and in the Town of Enfield. However, agricultural operations along Route 96 (both in Ulysses and Ithaca) are well-suited to high traffic. The Indian Creek Fruit Farm, Jackman Vineyards, and the Wedemeyer equestrian facility (under construction) benefit from the exposure and customer base provided by locations on busy thoroughfares. These three direct-marketing operations form a combined total of 280 contiguous or nearby acres.

Ulysses recently updated their Comprehensive Plan and is developing an Agricultural Protection Plan. Indications are that the agricultural area they will target for protection will be in the western part of Ulysses (i.e., not adjacent to the Town of Ithaca). Their Comprehensive Plan also identified areas for conservation protection (particularly on the lake-facing slopes in the Town). Additional residential growth can be expected in the hamlet of Jacksonville (within Ulysses).

Additional development along and to the west of NYS Route 96 in Ulysses and in the northeast corner of Enfield could eventually isolate the direct-marketing enterprises along NYS Route 96 (in the towns of both Ithaca and Ulysses). Ithaca and Ulysses might work together to strengthen and encourage direct-marketing enterprises along this route to the benefit of both towns' agricultural base.

**Danby:** Most of the Town's southern border is shared with the Town of Danby. The major agricultural operation on this border is the Voss property, with 480 acres in Ithaca and 380 acres in Danby. A combination of topography and residential development separates this agricultural land from other agricultural property in both towns. Although there is no agricultural buffer for this property, there is significant NYS park land and some Finger Lakes Land Trust Land nearby. However, this might actually increase the development value of this land—although access to the land is somewhat awkward given the roads that reach it.

The Town of Danby has zoning and their Comprehensive Plan promotes the conservation of agricultural land. It encourages cluster subdivision and growth focused near the two hamlets of Central and West Danby. Several years ago, Danby developed a Sustainable Hamlets Revitalization Plan through funding from a Small Cities Grant. Danby also recently appointed a Conservation Advisory Board.

Growth in Danby is stable, averaging just under 20 units per year. There are no "hot spots"; new residential housing occurs throughout Danby. Danby affords

easy access to Ithaca via NYS Route 96B and (from West Danby) NYS Route 13. Coddington Road is also a transit route into the City of Ithaca.

Danby's focus on hamlet development will increase traffic into Ithaca along Routes 96B and 13. This traffic is unlikely to affect farming negatively on the Voss property, and will likely benefit the direct-marketing operations on NYS Route 13 just inside Ithaca's southern border (Eddydale Farm Market, Earlybird Farms, and Steep Hollow Farm Sound Garden and Corn Maze).

**Dryden:** Ithaca's eastern border with the Town of Dryden includes residential development, wetlands, Cornell University, and a small area of agricultural land (Cornell and privately-owned parcels) from the Game Farm Road area to the Turkey Hill Road area. The agricultural land in this area is geographically isolated (primarily due to topography) from the primary agricultural land in Dryden's north-northeast area. However, there is a band of agricultural land that runs along the hilltops from Mt. Pleasant Road to Ringwood Road—some of which has only recently been returned to production. All of this land is recognized as agricultural by Dryden, and is proposed for Agricultural Zoning in Dryden's Draft Comprehensive Plan. Their Draft Plan states that:

The primary emphasis of future land use policies in the town as they affect agriculture must recognize agriculture as a legitimate, long term land use on par with residential, commercial, industrial and other traditional land use, and not as merely a temporary state pending development for a "higher" use.

The Plan also mentions PDR as an agricultural protection tool; applications to the NYS program have targeted the Dryden's larger, contiguous band of agricultural land just east and west of the Village of Dryden and continuing north and northeast to The Town of Groton and Cortland County.





## **OTHER EXISTING PLANS AND REGULATIONS**

Several documents and other regulations adopted by the Town of Ithaca Town Board in the past have included information, recommendations, and policies regarding agriculture in the Town. Tompkins County has also addressed agriculture—including specific references to agriculture in the Town of Ithaca in three documents over the past several years.

### **TOWN OF ITHACA**

#### **Planning for Agriculture in the Town of Ithaca (1992)**

The Planning for Agriculture document was adopted in 1992 and provided an overview of agriculture in the Town along with some of the protections that were in place in 1992. The plan discussed some of the concerns of Town farmers and then provided recommended policies and implementation measures for the Town to consider for the future. Recommendations implemented by the Town include revising the agricultural zoning, adopting a PDR program, and establishing a Town Agriculture Committee.

#### **Town of Ithaca Comprehensive Plan (1993)**

The current Comprehensive Plan for the Town of Ithaca was adopted by the Town Board in September 1993. The Plan was developed in response to changes in the physical environment, perceived development pressure, and a desire to protect and improve natural resources and neighborhood character. The 1993 Plan included a detailed inventory of agriculture in the Town; maps showing the agricultural land use, agricultural districts, and soils; a goal specific to agriculture (“To enhance agricultural viability and preserve agricultural land resources”); and multiple objectives and recommendations. Most recommendations have been implemented, including enacting a right-to-farm law, allowing farm stands, and adopting a voluntary PDR program for agricultural-land resources.

As mentioned earlier, the Town is in the process of updating the Comprehensive Plan; portions of the AFPP are expected to be incorporated into the new Plan.

#### **Town of Ithaca Park, Recreation and Open Space Plan (1997)**

The 1997 Town of Ithaca Park, Recreation and Open Space Plan identified approximately 3,440 acres of active agricultural land, approximately 1,480 acres of inactive agricultural land, and approximately 1,050 acres of mature woodlots owned by farmers. The Plan addressed the open-space contribution that agricultural lands make to the Town and recommended revision of the Agricultural Zoning District, the use of cluster subdivision design, and development of a PDR program. The Plan identified approximately 2,800 acres of agricultural lands to include in a PDR program and discussed criteria for selecting properties. It specifically stated:

For agricultural land a parcel should contribute to creation of a critical mass of contiguous agricultural land to ensure optimum efficiency and

thus economic viability from the standpoint of farmers, and to protect farmers from intruding residential development.

The Plan also discussed the costs and potential sources of funding for a PDR program.

**Policies and Procedures Manual–Town of Ithaca Agricultural Land Preservation Program (1999, updated 2008)**

In 1999, the Town of Ithaca adopted a Policies and Procedures Manual for its new Agricultural Land Preservation (PDR) Program. This program was designed to protect the agricultural-land resources for future generations by purchasing development rights on key parcels in the Town. It is a voluntary program through which the Town Board (on behalf of all Town residents) purchases from willing seller the development rights on their parcels (i.e., by establishing conservation easements)—thereby limiting the uses and development potential of the parcels. Participation in the PDR Program enables farmers to continue farming their land; it relieves development pressures by ensuring that development will not encroach onto participating farm parcels.

The Town adopted the voluntary PDR Program as a long-term commitment. Approximately 3,500 acres of farmland in the Town of Ithaca are recommended for PDR. A copy of the Map “Purchase of Agricultural Conservation Easements Target Areas” is included in Appendix E. Since the start of this Program, the Town has been setting aside funds in an Open Space Reserve account for PDR. As of September 2011, the Town has accumulated approximately \$651,800 of reserve funds.

In 2003, the Town obtained its first agricultural conservation easement through PDR on a 40-acre parcel of active farmland on Sheffield Road, which is currently operated as the Laughing Goat Fiber Farm. The property contains approximately 30 acres of active farmland and 10 acres of mixed woods and shrub growth. The owners rent a portion of the property to another local farmer for hay and themselves use the northern portion of the property for their goats, alpacas, and sheep. Scenic views over the property are visible from Sheffield Road looking east toward East Hill areas of the Town of Ithaca and beyond.



In 2009, the Town was notified that it will receive funding from NYS’s Farmland Protection Implementation Grants program for PDR conservation on the 42-acre Indian Creek Farm on Trumansburg Road. The Farm consists of U-pick fruits and vegetables, a roadside stand, and original nursery sales. The farm is located only 2 miles from downtown Ithaca, contains terrific views to the east, and is open from spring to late fall (from dawn to dusk). In addition to the fruits and



vegetables grown, Indian Creek Farm also grafts and grows over 500 varieties of fruit trees (Cummins Nursery) and is home to Eve's Cidery.

### **Town of Ithaca Agricultural Zoning (2004)**

In 2004, the Town of Ithaca adopted an updated zoning ordinance which included significant changes to both the language and boundary of the Agricultural Zone. The new zone contains approximately 4,235 acres (24% of the total zoning); the text was enhanced and expanded to help preserve and promote agriculture. New permitted uses (e.g., equestrian facilities, forest management, and roadside stands) were added while some inappropriate uses were eliminated. Many other uses related to or compatible with agriculture (e.g., retail sales of machinery, products, or supplies related to or derived from agricultural operations; golf courses; veterinary offices; composting facilities; farm retreats) were also added through the Special Permit process.

A fixed-ratio subdivision system was added which included a 2-acre minimum (except for non-farm lots), clustering requirements, and density limitations of 7 acres (original tract acreage divided by 7 to determine the number of lots available).

The other significant addition to the new Agricultural Zone was the specific "right-to-farm" provision. This warned landowners that the primary intention of the zone is to permit usual acceptable farming practices.

All the revisions to the Agricultural Zone were designed to: assure a proper economic and physical environment for continued agricultural use of the land and other non-extractive natural-resource land uses; maintain an open rural character in viable agricultural areas; assure compatible types and densities of development on lands that are usable for agricultural pursuits; and minimize other land uses incompatible with farming. A copy of the current Zoning Map is included in Appendix E.

## **TOMPKINS COUNTY**

### **Tompkins County Agriculture and Farmland Protection Plan (1996)**

The Tompkins County Agriculture and Farmland Protection Plan provides an overview of existing agriculture in Tompkins County and identifies specific strategies and actions for supporting agriculture and protecting farmland. The Tompkins County Agriculture and Farmland Protection Board (AFPB) has applied for a New York State Grant to update the existing County Agriculture and Farmland Protection Plan (which was written in 1996). The AFPB did some preliminary work to update the Plan a couple of years ago and identified several primary goals, including Economic Development, Agricultural Awareness, Government Policies, Environmental Issues, and Agricultural Plan Implementation. Many of the Strategies identified to meet these Goals mirror (and none is in conflict with) those identified in the Town of Ithaca's plan.

### **Tompkins County Comprehensive Plan (2004)**

The Tompkins County Comprehensive Plan (adopted in the 2004) contains principles, policies, and actions that will help guide the County in decisions that influence regional development, involve inter-governmental cooperation, and

affect the quality of life in neighborhoods and communities. Agriculture is discussed within the Rural Resources section, which includes the principle that “A diversified rural economy centered around the working rural landscapes of farms and forests, and the livelihoods of those who depend upon them, should be preserved and enhanced.” The plan discusses the agricultural economy, the loss of farmland, and existing protection efforts, and it includes a strategy for the future which includes specific policies and action items.

**Tompkins County Conservation Plan–Part II: A Strategic Approach to Agricultural Resource Stewardship (draft, 2010)**

The Tompkins County Comprehensive Plan identifies a need for establishing “a program to protect and manage land for agricultural and forestry use in the focus areas using tools appropriate to the functions of those resources.” The Agricultural Resource Focus Area Plan is being developed to meet this need—highlighting the critical agricultural-resource areas in the County where there is a significant concentration of high-quality soils, actively farmed parcels, and land within an agricultural district. There are six identified agricultural resource focus areas (ARFAs) in the County; a small portion of one of the ARFAs extends into the northwest corner of the Town of Ithaca. This plan presents existing conditions of the agricultural resource base in each ARFA; identifies impediments, opportunities, and resources for the farming community; and develops conservation and management tools to ensure the future viability of these important agricultural resources and to help farming prosper in these areas.



## AGRICULTURAL LANDS TO BE PROTECTED

Most of the Town of Ithaca's active farmland is in the Town's current Agricultural Zoning district or in one of the Tompkins County Agricultural Districts (see Maps 7 and 6, Appendix E). In addition to the Agricultural Zone, the Town has further identified agricultural properties that are a priority to protect through its Agricultural Land Preservation Program PDR (see Map 8, Appendix E). These existing designations define the land most important to protect with the various tools identified in the recommendation section of this Plan. All of these areas are privately owned-and-operated farmland and are suitable for long-term protection.

It also is important to preserve the agricultural research lands identified on Map 9 that are owned by Cornell University and NYS. To ensure long-term agricultural use, these lands will most likely require tools and strategies different from those used for private farmland. Most of these Cornell or State lands are not located within the existing designations mentioned above (agricultural districts or zones, or PDR-targeted areas). These lands are actively used for research and educational agriculture, contain large amounts of prime soils and soils of statewide significance, and make a significant contribution to agriculture and open space in the Town.



Although continued agricultural use is encouraged throughout the Town, this Plan designates certain areas important to protect for agricultural uses. There are also lands outside of the priority areas that should be protected. These include some additional lands with soils rated prime or of statewide importance, as shown on Map 5. Other criteria include: the history of farming; the quality of farm management; the type of farm operation; development pressure; specific location within the Town; and buffering of natural resources.



Based on this information and previous agricultural prioritization by the Town (through zoning and the PDR program), two general agricultural priority areas have been identified for protection in the Town. These areas are shown on Map 9 in Appendix E; the areas identified on this map are approximate.

## VALUE OF AGRICULTURE TO THE TOWN ECONOMY

Farms are local businesses. They create jobs and support many other businesses by purchasing local goods and services. Additionally, there are secondary economic benefits from farms—including open vistas and working landscapes that enhance tourism. Local consumers benefit from having a source of locally produced foods and thereby increased community food security. Farms in the Town generate a combined value of agricultural sales of \$4,431,000 (figure based on the 16 interviewed farms).

Development imposes costs on communities in the form of increased demand for schools, roads, water, sewer, and other community services. Numerous “cost of community services” studies and other research have shown that farmlands and forestlands generate more local tax revenue than they cost in services. By comparison, residential development typically fails to make up for local costs with property-tax revenue.

In 1995, CCETC and the Tompkins County AFPB prepared a “Cost of Community Services Study” for all Towns in Tompkins County. The results for the Town of Ithaca are consistent with the other towns in Tompkins County and other similar surveys around the country, and show that farmland pays more in taxes than it requires in services. As shown in Table 1 below, for every dollar paid in taxes in the Town of Ithaca, residential land usage requires \$1.09 in services, whereas agricultural and open lands only receive \$0.27 in services.

**Table 1**  
**Summary of Revenues and Expenditures by Land Use Category**  
**for the Town of Ithaca – 1995**

	Revenues (\$)	Expenditures (\$)	Ratio	Ratio Excluding School Budgets
Residential	17,357,468	18,901,479	1/1.09	1/1.00
Agricultural / Open Land	248,422	67,290	1/0.27	1/0.98
Commercial / Industrial	1,868,220	505,611	1/0.27	1/0.98

From "Cost of Community Services Study, Tompkins County, New York"  
Prepared by Cornell Cooperative Extension of Tompkins County and  
Tompkins County Agricultural and Farmland Protection Board, August  
1995

Agriculture in the Town of Ithaca is a vital business sector that supports food manufacturers and processors, garden centers, veterinarians, farm-equipment dealers, farm-supply stores, machinery-repair shops, and fuel suppliers. Most support services are not available in the Town; if they were, the agricultural industry could expand and become more integrated. Studies on the multiplier effects of farming range from 1.3 to 2.1 (i.e., every dollar of agricultural output

generates \$1.30 to \$2.10 additional economic activity). Dairy has the highest multiplier of all agricultural sectors given the numbers of services that are employed by dairy farmers from veterinarians, feed and equipment dealers, etc.

There are 27 year-round full-time jobs on farms in the Town, plus an additional 39 year-round part-time jobs (on 15 of the interviewed farms). During the growing season, another 25 people are employed on those 15 Town farms. Additionally, 55 employees work at Genex year-round, and Cornell also employs many year-round and full-time workers at their various facilities in the town (see Cornell University section on page 20). While the actual numbers of farmers is not high, there is significant human capital and expertise in agriculture given the proximity of farming and the Colleges of Agriculture and Life Sciences and of Veterinary Medicine at Cornell. Cornell agritechology incubation presents a further asset for expanding the agricultural businesses located in the town.

We acknowledge that only 2 of 15 responding farmers indicated that their families had income only from their farm; farming in Ithaca tends to be a small, niche, part-time occupation (as is often true regionally and statewide). Preserving farms within the Town specifically is desirable because it provides “bilateral” benefits. The Town’s residents and visitors gain access to local foods and benefit from the open space and longer-term place-holding for agriculture that the farms offer. In return, closeness to the Town (and City) populations provides the farmers with access to local markets and to the off-farm employment that supplements their families’ farm-generated income.



## VALUE TO FOOD SECURITY

Direct marketing is a key marketing channel used by Town farmers. It allows Town consumers to buy foods locally (including meats, eggs, fruits, vegetables, and wine). Opportunities exist to expand production to serve more of the residents in the County. Maple sugar, honey, mushrooms, greenhouse-grown vegetables and fruit, and more poultry and small livestock are enterprises that would meet additional consumer needs. While dairy regulations make local milk sales more costly to develop, there would be consumer interest in raw milk. Organic grains could also be used for human food instead of animal feed.

Currently, the two CSA farms serve approximately 300 county families. The Town’s four farm markets also serve the needs of many customers each year. Additionally, U-pick farms operating from June (strawberries) into the fall (apples) provide outlets for bulk purchases.

To become food self-sufficient is not a realistic Town-level goal. Given the population of the Town and typical USDA *per capita* consumption for vegetables and fruit, the Town’s farmers produce about 25% of the vegetables and fruit that would be eaten in a year (assuming that all of the acreage is being actively



farmed and its produce sold locally). For beef, there is a much bigger gap between consumption and production. Only 1.7% of the total beef produced in the Town could be from local sources (again assuming that all beef produced in the Town is consumed by Town residents). While it might be possible to achieve a higher level of self-sufficiency in fruits and vegetables, it becomes challenging to become self-sufficient in meat production, given that significantly more land resources for grazing and feed would be needed to increase livestock production to meet local consumption. This would likewise be true for poultry and other meat species. Nevertheless, there is considerable opportunity for household production and consumption of eggs and poultry, rabbits, and similar small livestock.



It is very important that agriculture be maintained at the urban fringe and that urban-edge agriculture focus on providing food to nearby residents. In addition to making local food accessible to urban residents, urban-edge agriculture reduces the cost of transporting food over large distances (thereby reducing the carbon footprint of food), maintains societal and

community connections to how food is produced, and helps to maintain open space in proximity to urban areas. Studies of urban-edge agriculture also reveal that direct-market farmers who focus on meeting the needs of nearby consumers can be more profitable than those in rural areas with fewer consumers to attract.

Home food production and self-sufficiency should also be considered as part of a goal of food security. Changes that make it possible to keep a few livestock or to have access to public lands for growing gardens, community orchards, or greenhouses could add to the food security and health of Town residents.

## VALUE OF OPEN SPACE

The 2009 NYS Open Space Conservation Plan defines open space as

land which is not intensively developed for residential, commercial, industrial or institutional use. Open space can be publicly or privately owned. It includes *agricultural and forest land*, undeveloped coastal and estuarine lands, undeveloped scenic lands, public parks and preserves. It also includes water bodies such as lakes and bays.

Using this definition, the agricultural and forestlands in the Town of Ithaca can be considered “open space.”

Within the Town of Ithaca there are approximately 13,899 acres of open-space lands (based on the land-use information from Tompkins County which derived it

from aerial photos in 2007). Using the above State definition of open space, this would include active and inactive agricultural lands, public and private recreation lands, undeveloped forest, meadow, and brush lands, and wetlands. The active (2,832 acres) and inactive (580 acres) agricultural lands together make up approximately 25 % of the open space in the Town. These existing open-space categories can be seen on the Existing Land Use / Land Cover map (Map 4 in Appendix E).

Town of Ithaca residents value the open space of Town agricultural lands and forestlands. In 2009, the Town of Ithaca conducted a survey of residents as part of Town's Comprehensive Plan update process. One of the questions in the survey asked "how important are these aspects to your quality of life?" The results show that Town residents highly support various open-space elements, and Town farmland contributes much to these elements. Natural areas, nearby state parks, Town parks and trails, and scenic views were four out of the top five items listed by Town residents as important to the quality of life in the Town. Scenic views were rated as either "important" or "very important" by 91 % of the respondents. "Farmland" was also included in this question, with 70 % of the respondents rating it as either "important" or "very important". Additional information regarding these results can be found in Appendix A.

Working farms help to define the Town's rural landscape. The Town's natural features (along with its agricultural cropland, pastures, woodlands, barns, and animals) contribute to the community's identity and character and provide an important link to the Town's history and culture. These lands enhance the quality of life for all residents. The protection of agricultural and farmlands serves the greater community goal of preserving open space. Some farms also serve as buffers to Town or State park lands.

An agricultural landowner's stewardship of the land—whether for business or open space—serves the greater Ithaca community. As natural resource-based businesses, farms depend on adequate land, good soils, favorable climatic conditions, and clean water. In turn, farmers and the land they steward confer a variety of environmental benefits: maintaining or increasing biodiversity; providing wildlife habitat; improving surface and groundwater quality by filtering water; reducing flooding by slowing runoff and providing recharge areas; improving air quality by filtering air and producing oxygen; reducing carbon emissions by reducing reliance on foods, feeds, and horticulture products that need to be shipped from long distances; and retaining soil for plant growth.

The open space provided by farms offers valuable opportunities for recreation. Although most farms do not provide public access, some farmers allow their land to be used by the public for walking, hunting, snowmobiling, or horseback riding. Local roads near farms offer scenic views for biking, running, walking, and driving. Ithacans who enjoy the long views across our valleys are typically viewing the farms on opposite hills.

In addition to making the Town of Ithaca an attractive place to live, working farms help make the Town a desirable place to visit. Wineries, U-picks, corn mazes, and other agritourism businesses are direct draws for tourists.

In 1999, the Town of Ithaca adopted a Policies and Procedures Manual for its new Agricultural Land Preservation Program. This PDR program was designed to

protect the agricultural-land resources in the Town. Although the primary purpose of the program is to protect farmland, as farmland is protected, so also are open-space resources—including the scenic views around Town everyone enjoys and the natural areas on farm properties.

The Tompkins County Environmental Management Council has created a Unique Natural Areas (UNA) inventory which identifies areas in the County that have been determined to contain significant ecological, biological, geological, or aesthetic characteristics. Within the Town of Ithaca, small portions of 12 of these UNAs are present on parts of active farms. In many of these cases, the UNAs follow streams or forest boundaries and are protected through ownership by the farm and not being otherwise developed. Preserving the UNAs located on Town agricultural lands protects the environment.



## **CONVERSION PRESSURE**

### **Population Trends**

According to the 2010 Census, the Town of Ithaca (including the Village of Cayuga Heights) has a current population of approximately 19,930 persons. The Town's population grew steadily in a 40-year period between 1970 and 2010, with an average increase of 6.75% each decade, or a growth rate of approximately 0.7% per year. The Town experienced the largest 10-year increase between 1980 and 1990, where the population grew 11% in that decade (a rate of slightly more than 1% per year). The Town's 1993 Comprehensive Plan used 1980-1990 data to project a population growth rate for the 20-year period between 1990 and 2010. Recent Census population information estimated that the Town grew another 6.5% between 2000 and 2010—consistent with past trends.

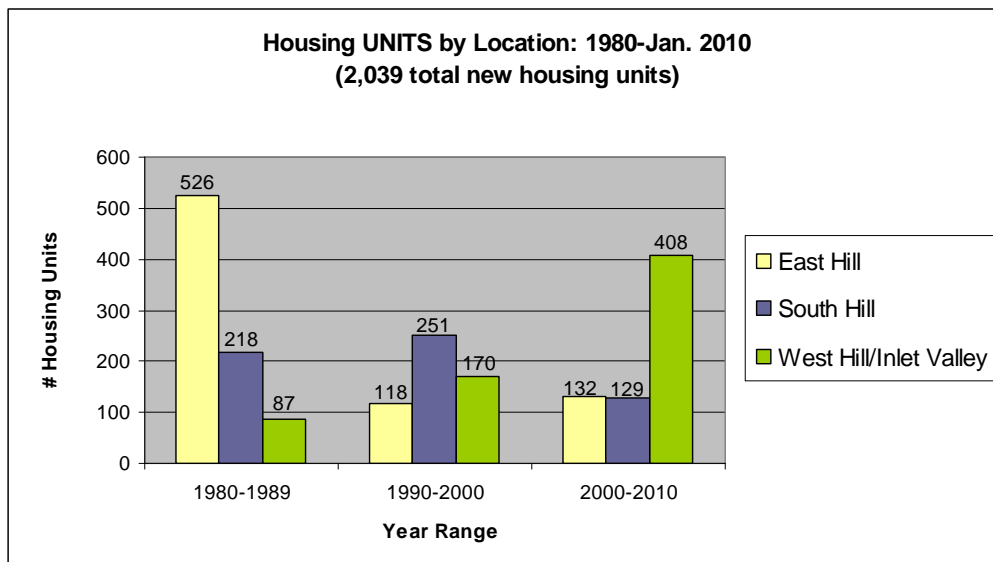
The Town's population historically has been concentrated on East Hill, although development has occurred in recent years in other areas of the Town. The population in the South Hill area of the Town grew 11.2% and the West Hill area experienced a 22% population increase between 2000 and 2010. According to the 2010 Census information, around 51% of the Town's population was concentrated on East Hill (including the Village of Cayuga Heights), while approximately 35% resided on South Hill and 14% lived on West Hill (including Inlet Valley).

## Development Trends

According to the 1993 Town of Ithaca Comprehensive Plan, there was a dramatic growth in the number of housing units in the Town between 1960 and 1990; the number of housing units increased from 2,770 units to a total of 6,197 units in that 30-year period. The 2000 Census reported 7,526 total housing units in the Town—nearly 18% of all housing units in Tompkins County and a 9% increase from the 2000 figure. The most recent American Communities Survey data estimated that the Town had a total of 7,420 housing units.

Town of Ithaca building-permit records in the last 30 years show a total of 2,039 new housing units constructed between January 1980 and January 2010 (including independent senior units but not student housing or assisted-living, nursing-home, or hospice units). Specifically, 831 new housing units were added in the Town between 1980 and December 1989, 539 between 1990 and December 1999, and 669 between 2000 and January 2010. This amounts to an increase of approximately 68 new housing units in the Town every year since 1980.

Like the population distribution, East Hill historically contained most new housing units (64% of the new housing units between 1980 and 1989, followed by South Hill at 25% and West Hill at 11%). However, the 1993 Comprehensive Plan also noted that since the 1960s, residential development had been shifting from East Hill to South Hill. Town building-permit records show that between 1980 and January 2010, East Hill contained 38% of the total new housing units in that 30-year period, West Hill 33%, and South Hill 29%. This is a significant—but not surprising—shift in housing distribution, because South and West Hills have much more available vacant land (including agricultural lands) and development potential than East Hill, which is mostly built-out on lands available for residential development. The chart below shows the total number of housing units from the Town building permit records for each location, by 10-year segments.





### **Consequences of Possible Farmland Conversion**

The Town of Ithaca surrounds the City of Ithaca on all sides and includes Ithaca College, portions of Cornell University, and the Cayuga Medical Center. Its location bordering the City and its proximity to the large educational institutions and the hospital (which together are the major employers in the County) has encouraged much growth spreading out into the Town. Housing is encroaching on all farmland; as a result, farmers are affected by more traffic and more neighborhood issues, and there is less incentive to keep farming as property values and taxes continue to rise. Along with the increase in the number of housing units as discussed above, according to the Tompkins County Comprehensive Plan (December 2004):

The sale price of a single-family home in Tompkins County has soared in the last few years, from a median of \$100,000 in 2000 to \$134,000 in 2003. The median sales price here in Tompkins County is 50 to 75 percent higher than it is across the County line in any direction.

With the presence of the educational institutions in the Town of Ithaca, there is a large demand for rental housing. With limited room for expansion adjacent to the colleges, many of the developments on West Hill will attract students and create more development pressure on the Town's farmland.

Development is a major concern for agriculture in the Town of Ithaca. Farmland provides many benefits that could be lost if the land is converted to other uses. The farmland provides the scenic backdrop and attractions that tourists enjoy. For residents, farmland provides local-food options (through CSAs, U-pick operations, farmers markets, and farm stands), recreational opportunities, open space, and a significant economic value. Farmland also provides important environmental benefits for people and wildlife.

Several consequences would occur if current agricultural lands were converted to development. More homes and other non-agricultural-related development means an increase in demand for schools, roads, water, sewer, and other community services, which can lead to increases in local taxes—which puts a burden on everyone (especially farmers). Development also comes at the expense of some of the best agricultural land in the Town. As development is continually



extending out in the Town from the City, more pressure is being applied to development of the Town's productive agricultural lands. The pattern of development is also a concern, because it only takes a few housing lots to be laid out in such a way as to render a once-productive field unusable.

New commercial and residential development affects the amount of farmland available for agricultural use in the Town. The development has the potential to make it more difficult for farmers to travel from field-to-field with their farm equipment along local roads. Another concern is that even though the Town has a right-to-farm law, residential development in close proximity to farm operations often leads to conflicts and complaints.



## VISION STATEMENT, GOALS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### VISION STATEMENT

**The Town of Ithaca recognizes that agriculture is an integral part of the Town's economy and environment, provides locally grown food and other agricultural products, and enhances the quality of life for Town residents. The Town proactively promotes a diversity of farm types, seeks the long-term preservation of the Town's agricultural-land resources, supports the economic viability of the farming community and the profitability of each farm, values the local public agricultural research and educational resources, and encourages the general public to understand and support local agriculture.**

**Goal 1: *Promote the availability of locally grown foods and other agricultural products for all residents including limited income families***

- a) List active growers on the Town's website and through the development of a guide to local farms
- b) Facilitate GPS registration of the locations of agritourism and retail sales of local farm products
- c) Identify any additional land-based agriculture products that are available for local consumption, including biomass products, firewood, local lumber and other agriforestry products
- d) Explore revisions to Zoning and other Town Laws (e.g., Sign Law) to accommodate farm stands, year-round farm markets, greenhouses, value-added product operations, home food production, U-picks, CSA, and agritourism sites
- e) Explore revisions to Subdivision and Site Plan requirements to require or encourage community gardens in larger new housing developments and provide community gardens (including raised beds, irrigation water, and other facilities to encourage participation of all residents) on Town lands and elsewhere
- f) Plant appropriate low-growing perennial herbs and fruits in public spaces for public consumption—possibly associated with community gardens
- g) Identify locations for and facilitate additional small-scale farmers' markets, including "mobile markets" and CSA distribution sites



**Goal 2: Retain and encourage a diversity of economically viable farm types**

- a) Work with other organizations to promote short-term property-tax abatements for new startup farming operations and for the initial plantings of crops that take multiple years until first harvest
- b) On the Town's website, include links to educational resources, services, business loans, and programs that support farmers
- c) Review and revise regulations pertaining to structures to accommodate farm operations (e.g. Sprinkler Law, use of rough-cut timber, property-maintenance law)
- d) Work with towns that have adjoining agriculture lands to write consistent zoning and other regulations
- e) Explore mechanisms for listing agricultural lands available for lease or purchase for agricultural uses
- f) Connect farmers with existing funding programs, or pursue the development of programs, for subsidizing fencing (including deer fencing), lime, drainage tile, and the restoration of barns and other old agricultural buildings
- g) Assist farmers in exploring new farming and marketing ideas and opportunities
- h) Identify under-utilized farming and forestry resources in the Town
- i) Participate in regional efforts promoting sustainable biomass for energy production
- j) Revise Zoning and other Town Laws to encourage on-farm sustainable energy production
- k) Encourage shared farm infrastructure development (storage and processing facilities, slaughter and processing facilities, mobile markets, locations for CSA drop-off and pick-up, etc.)
- l) Work with State, Tompkins County, and Town highway officials regarding speeding, safe movement of domestic animals across roads, and other traffic issues
- m) Encourage and support the intergenerational transfer through inheritance, sale, or lease of agricultural properties to future generations of farmers. Educate farmers (e.g., through the sponsoring of seminars) about farm-transition issues, estate planning, and related issues



- n) Implement, or advocate at the State or County level, a grant or revolving-loan program to assist farmers who are putting land back into active agriculture
- o) Review and revise the Town's Commercial, Light Industrial and Agricultural Zones to ensure that the necessary agriculture-related businesses would be permitted, and to encourage those types of businesses to locate in the Town of Ithaca

**Goal 3: *Ensure long-term protection of agricultural-land resources for agriculture, open space, and scenic resources***

- a) Enhance zoning as a tool to control non-agricultural development on or adjacent to agricultural land
  - o Consider enlarging setbacks for non-farm residential dwellings in the agricultural zone to provide spatial and vegetative buffers between the houses and agricultural activities (such as crop production, animal pasturage, and hunting)
  - o Require vegetative buffers on the non-agricultural land, so that farm lands have maximum space and so that e.g., trespassing prevention, residential pesticide movement onto the farm lands, and dust control are enhanced
- b) Investigate an agricultural Lease of Development Rights program and/or a program to allow the Town the right of first refusal for outright purchase of agricultural properties
- c) Continue implementation of the Town's current agricultural conservation-easement acquisition (PDR) program for appropriate agricultural parcels that have been targeted in the Policies and Procedures Manual for the Agricultural Land Preservation Program
- d) Limit extension of municipal sewer and water in agricultural areas
- e) Cooperate with Tompkins County on Agricultural District designations
- f) Explore alternative methods to deed restrictions for monitoring the subdivision of farm properties in the Town's Agricultural Zone
- g) Reactivate and support the Town of Ithaca's Agriculture Committee
- h) Advocate at the State level for increased funds to be allocated for farmland protection initiatives
- i) Educate individual landowners who rent (or could rent) land to farmers about the importance of that land to the overall farming landscape in the



Town of Ithaca and the importance of keeping that land in active agricultural use

- j) Identify lands owned by local colleges or New York State that are of high priority to retain in agricultural/open space designation and work with those institutions to locate development in a way that minimizes the loss of agricultural land
- k) Work with Tompkins County and CCETC to recruit farmers actively to the Town
- l) Review the Town Agricultural Zoning, the Town's Agricultural Easements Target Areas, and the boundaries of the Tompkins County Agricultural Districts for inconsistencies; address inconsistencies as is deemed appropriate
- m) Promote practices that slow runoff and enhance absorption of pollutants when constructing and maintaining roadside ditches

**Goal 4: *Encourage public understanding and involvement***

- a) Continue support for agricultural and gardening programs for youth (e.g., community gardens, 4-H Clubs, Dairy Princess)
- b) Encourage the Tompkins County AFPB to send information on agricultural districts and protected agriculture activities to real-estate agents and mortgage writers annually
- c) Encourage farmers to communicate with their neighbors on changes in their operations
- d) Feature a variety of farm profiles and other agricultural topics in the Town newsletter and on the Town's website
- e) Have the Town (or Tompkins County or the Town Agriculture Committee) sponsor an award to farmers or others who actively support local agriculture, awarding, e.g., a "Farmer of the Year" or "Farmer Appreciation Award" to highlight agriculture
- f) Provide maps that show the coincidence of the prized scenic views and natural areas with agricultural lands
- g) Encourage Cornell University to host more tours of farm-research facilities in the Town
- h) Heighten public awareness regarding speeding and other traffic issues affecting farmers (e.g., domestic-animal and equipment movements) through the use of the Town's website, newsletter, and signage
- i) Provide a copy of the Town's right-to-farm law to applicants for building permits on land in and adjacent to the Town's Agricultural Zone





- j) Explore mechanisms to require real-estate agents and mortgage writers to notify prospective buyers of their adjacency to or location within the Town's Agricultural Zone and the County's Agricultural Districts and provide them with a copy of the right-to-farm law
- k) Develop and place signs to recognize farms (e.g., this farm is protected) or to provide interesting facts or details about the farm

**Goal 5: *Promote wise land use and waste management on agricultural land***

- a) Connect farmers with SWCD, Natural NRCS, and FSA for funding for buffers, etc.
- b) Encourage ongoing relationships between farmers and resources such as Cooperative Extension and Soil and Water Conservation District for farm management and sound farming practices
- c) Connect farmers to resources for forest and woodlot management
- d) Advocate at the State and Federal level for increased funds to be allocated for farm conservation practices, farm management and sound farming practices, and forest and woodlot management





## IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

This section prioritizes the recommendations for short-term, medium-term, long-term, and ongoing activities and identifies the responsible parties to assist with implementation. Town agencies (including the Planning Department, existing Boards and Committees, and a re-established Town Agriculture Committee) will play a vital role in the implementation and success of the Plan. A critical and primary implementation step for the Town Board is to authorize and encourage the Agriculture Committee to take an active role in implementing the Plan on behalf of the Town Board. So that the ideas presented in this Plan can become a reality, it is recommended that the Town Board commit to the following strategies immediately after adoption:

### *1. Strengthen the relationship between Town farmers and Town staff*


- Encourage farmer representation on the Town Board, Planning Board, Zoning Board of Appeals, and Conservation Board
- Designate a Town staff person to be a farmer contact
- Educate Town of Ithaca staff and decision makers regarding the needs, benefits, and operational aspects of agriculture and how these are affected by the Town's permitting processes
- Ensure that Town staff is respectful and courteous in dealing with the agricultural community

### *2. Support the implementation of the Town of Ithaca Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan*

- Adopt the Town of Ithaca AFPP as part of the Town of Ithaca's current Comprehensive Plan update
- Encourage the Town's Agriculture Committee to take an active role in the implementation of the AFPP
- Actively seek State, Federal, private, or other sources of funding to assist in implementing the recommendations in this AFPP
- Use the Implementation Chart below as a list of implementation activities and to establish time frames and expectations for implementation

This AFPP calls for a variety of policy decisions, program initiation, regulatory changes, coordination with other organizations and agencies, and the provision of educational resources. Short-term recommendations (highlighted in orange) are those that could be implemented immediately, within the first year. Medium-term recommendations (highlighted in blue) are those that could be implemented following the completion of short term items (1 to 5 years). Long-term recommendations (highlighted in green) are those that would take considerably more time to research and implement, perhaps 5 to 7 years following plan adoption. Ongoing recommendations (highlighted in red) are actions that are to be incorporated into the ongoing activities of the Town Departments, Boards, and

Committees. The prioritization of these recommendations may change based on the availability of Town staff and grant opportunities.



Within the Implementation Chart, several of the recommendations are especially critical to supporting agriculture in the Town. These are recommendations that can be addressed solely by the Town without depending on other organizations and would have the most impact on agriculture in the Town of Ithaca. Although it would be ideal for all of these recommendations to be classified as “short-term” and be done immediately, many of these involve significant time to prepare and could be related to other updates to Town laws. These recommendations are identified with a “” in the Chart.

The recommendations provided in the Implementation Chart have been organized by each goal and then by implementation timeframe. The table lists the individual recommendations, the proposed timeframe for implementation, and the responsible organization or agency. The initials of the primary responsible organizations or agencies involved in the recommendations are listed below and at the end of the Chart.

**Responsible Organization / Agency:**

AC	= Town of Ithaca Agriculture Committee
CCETC	= Cornell Cooperative Extension of Tompkins County
DEC	= New York State Department of Conservation
NYS	= New York State
SWCD	= Soil and Water Conservation District
TC	= Tompkins County / Tompkins County Farmland Protection Board
TCCOG	= Tompkins County Council of Governments
TOI	= Town of Ithaca

## Town of Ithaca Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan Implementation Chart

	Recommendation	Implementation	Responsibility
<b>Goal 1: <i>Promote the availability of locally grown foods and other agricultural products for all residents including limited income families</i></b>			
1-a	List active growers on the Town's website and through the development of a guide to local farms	Short / Ongoing	TOI, AC, CCETC
1-b	Facilitate GPS registration of the locations of agritourism and retail sales of local farm products	Medium / Ongoing	TOI, TC, CCETC
1-c	Identify any additional land-based agriculture products that are available for local consumption, including biomass products, firewood, local lumber and other agriforestry products	Medium	CCETC, TOI, TC
1-d	 Explore revisions to Zoning and other Town Laws (e.g., Sign Law) to accommodate farm stands, year-round farm markets, greenhouses, value-added product operations, home food production, U-picks, Community Supported Agriculture (CSA), and agritourism sites	Medium	TOI, AC
1-e	Explore revisions to Subdivision and Site Plan requirements to require or encourage community gardens in larger new housing developments and provide community gardens (including raised beds, irrigation water, and other facilities to encourage participation of all residents) on Town lands and elsewhere	Medium	TOI
1-g	Identify locations for and facilitate additional small-scale farmers' markets, including "mobile markets" and CSA distribution sites	Medium / Ongoing	TOI, CCETC, AC
1-f	Plant appropriate low-growing perennial herbs and fruits in public spaces for public consumption-possibly associated with community gardens	Ongoing	TOI
<b>Goal 2: <i>Retain and encourage a diversity of viable farm types</i></b>			
2-b	On the Town's website, include links to educational resources, services, business loans, and programs that support farmers	Short / Ongoing	TOI
2-c	 Review and revise regulations pertaining to structures to accommodate farm operations (e.g. Sprinkler Law, use of rough-cut timber, property-maintenance law)	Medium	TOI, AC
2-e	Explore mechanisms for listing agricultural lands available for lease or purchase for agricultural uses	Medium	TOI, TC, CCETC
2-j	Revise Zoning and other Town Laws to encourage on-farm sustainable energy production	Medium	TOI, AC
2-k	Encourage shared farm infrastructure development (storage and processing facilities, slaughter and processing facilities, mobile market, locations for CSA drop-off and pick-up, etc.)	Medium / Ongoing	TOI, TC, CCETC, AC
2-o	Review and revise the Town's Commercial, Light Industrial, and Agricultural Zones to ensure that the necessary agriculture-related businesses would be permitted, and to encourage those types of businesses to locate in the Town of Ithaca	Medium / Ongoing	TOI, AC

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	<b>Recommendation</b>	<b>Implementation</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>
2-a	Work with other organizations to promote short-term property-tax abatements for new startup farming operations and for the initial plantings of crops that take multiple years until first harvest	Long	TOI, TC, NYS
2-f	Connect farmers with existing funding programs, or pursue the development of programs, for subsidizing fencing (including deer fencing), lime, drainage tile, and the restoration of barns and other old agricultural buildings	Long	TOI, TC, NYS, CCETC, SWCD
2-n	Implement or advocate at the State or County level, a grant or revolving loan program to assist farmers who are putting land back into active agriculture	Long / Ongoing	TOI, TC, NYS
2-d	Work with towns that have adjoining agriculture lands to write consistent zoning and other regulations	Ongoing	TOI, CCETC, TCCOG
2-g	Assist farmers in exploring new farming and marketing ideas and opportunities	Ongoing	TOI, CCETC, AC, TC, NYS, SWCD
2-h	Identify under-utilized farming and forestry resources in the Town	Ongoing	TOI, TC, CCETC, DEC
2-i	Participate in regional efforts promoting sustainable biomass for energy production	Ongoing	TOI, TC, NYS, CCETC, AC
2-l	Work with State, Tompkins County, and Town highway officials regarding speeding, safe movement of domestic animals across roads, and other traffic issues	Ongoing	TOI, TC, NYS
2-m	Encourage and support intergenerational transfer through inheritance, sale, or lease of agricultural properties to future generations of farmers. Educate farmers (e.g., through the sponsoring of seminars) about farm transition issues, estate planning, and related issues	Ongoing	TOI, TC, CCETC, AC
<b>Goal 3: <i>Ensure long-term protection of agricultural-land resources for agriculture, open space, and scenic resources</i></b>			
3-g	 Reactivate and support the Town of Ithaca's Agriculture Committee	Short / Ongoing	TOI, AC
3-l	Review the Town Agricultural Zoning, the Town's Agricultural Easements Target Areas, and the boundaries of the Tompkins County Agricultural Districts for inconsistencies; address inconsistencies as is deemed appropriate	Short	TOI, CCETC, TC
3-a	 Enhance zoning as a tool to control non-agricultural development on or adjacent to agricultural land	Medium	TOI, AC
3-f	Explore alternative methods to deed restrictions for monitoring the subdivision of farm properties in the Town's Agricultural Zone	Medium	TOI, AC
3-j	Identify lands owned by local colleges or New York State that are of high priority to retain in agricultural/open space designation and work with those institutions to locate development in a way that minimizes the loss of agricultural land	Medium / Ongoing	TOI
3-b	Investigate an agricultural Lease of Development Rights program and/or a program to allow the Town the right of first refusal for outright purchase of agricultural properties	Long	TOI, TC, AC
3-c	 Continue implementation of the Town's current agricultural conservation easement acquisition (PDR) program for appropriate agricultural parcels that have been targeted in the Policies and Procedures Manual for the Agricultural Land Preservation Program	Ongoing	TOI, TC, AC

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	<b>Recommendation</b>	<b>Implementation</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>
3-d	Limit extension of municipal sewer and water in agricultural areas	Ongoing	TOI
3-e	Cooperate with Tompkins County on Agricultural District designations	Ongoing	TOI, TC
3-h	Advocate at the State level for increased funds to be allocated for farmland protection initiatives	Ongoing	TOI, NYS
3-i	Educate individual landowners who rent (or could rent) land to farmers about the importance of that land to the overall farming landscape in the Town of Ithaca and the importance of keeping that land in active agricultural use	Ongoing	TOI, TC, CCETC, AC
3-k	Work with Tompkins County and Cornell Cooperative Extension of Tompkins County (CCETC) to recruit farmers actively to the Town	Ongoing	TOI, TC, CCETC, AC, SWCD
3-m	Promote practices that slow runoff and enhance absorption of pollutants when constructing and maintaining roadside ditches	Ongoing	TOI, CCETC, TC, NYS, SWCD
<b>Goal 4: <i>Encourage public understanding and involvement</i></b>			
4-d	Feature a variety of farm profiles and other agricultural topics in the Town newsletter and on the Town's website	Short / Ongoing	TOI, AC
4-e	Have the Town (or Tompkins County or the Town Agriculture Committee) sponsor an award to farmers or others who actively support local agriculture awarding e.g. a "Farmer of the Year" or "Farmer Appreciation Award" to highlight agriculture	Short / Ongoing	TOI, TC, AC, SWCD
4-f	Provide maps that show the coincidence of the prized scenic views and natural areas with agricultural lands	Short	TOI
4-g	Encourage Cornell University to host more tours of farm-research facilities in the Town	Short / Ongoing	TOI, CCETC
4-j	Explore mechanisms to require real-estate agents and mortgage writers to notify prospective buyers of their adjacency to or location within the Town's Agricultural Zone and the County's Agricultural Districts and provide them with a copy of the right-to-farm law	Short / Ongoing	TOI, TC, CCETC
4-k	Develop and place signs to recognize farms (e.g., this farm is protected) or to provide interesting facts or details about the farm	Medium	TOI, AC
4-a	Continue support for agricultural and gardening programs for youth (e.g., community gardens, 4-H Clubs, Dairy Princess)	Ongoing	TOI, TC, CCETC, AC
4-b	Encourage the Tompkins County Agricultural and Farmland Protection Board to send information on agricultural districts and protected agriculture activities to real-estate agents and mortgage writers annually	Ongoing	TOI, TC
4-c	Encourage farmers to communicate with their neighbors on changes in their operations	Ongoing	TOI, CCETC, AC
4-h	Heighten public awareness regarding speeding and other traffic issues affecting farmers (e.g., domestic-animal and equipment movements) through the use of the Town's website, newsletter, and signage	Ongoing	TOI, TC, NYS, CCETC, AC
4-i	Provide a copy of the Town's right-to-farm law to applicants for building permits on land in and adjacent to the Town's Agricultural Zone	Ongoing	TOI



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	Recommendation	Implementation	Responsibility
<b>Goal 5: <i>Promote wise land use and waste management on agricultural land</i></b>			
5-a	Connect farmers with Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD), Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), and Farm Service Agency (FSA) for funding for buffers, etc.	Ongoing	TOI, TC, CCETC
5-b	Encourage ongoing relationships between farmers and resources such as Cooperative Extension and Soil and Water Conservation District for farm management and sound farming practices	Ongoing	TOI, TC, CCETC, SWCD
5-c	Connect farmers to resources for forest and woodlot management	Ongoing	TOI, TC, CCETC, DEC
5-d	Advocate at the State and Federal level for increased funds to be allocated for farm conservation practices, farm management and sound farming practices and for forest and woodlot management	Ongoing	TOI, NYS


**Implementation Legend:**

Short-Term (0 - 1 years): Recommendations that could be implemented immediately, within the first year.

Medium-Term (1 - 5 years): Recommendations that could be implemented following the completion of short term items.

Long-Term (5 - 7 years): Important recommendations that would take considerably more time to research and implement.

Ongoing: Recommendations to be incorporated into the ongoing activities of the Town Departments, Boards and Committees.

: Identifies recommendations that are critical to supporting agriculture in the Town.

**Responsible Organization / Agency:**

AC = Town of Ithaca Agriculture Committee  
CCE = Cornell Cooperative Extension  
DEC = New York State Department of Conservation  
NYS = New York State  
SWCD = Soil and Water Conservation District  
TC = Tompkins County / Tompkins County Farmland Protection Board  
TCCOG = Tompkins County Council of Governments  
TOI = Town of Ithaca

## **ADOPTION AND MAINTENANCE**

The Town of Ithaca Town Board is responsible for adopting and maintaining the Town's AFPP. The Town Board will hold a public hearing, make a determination of environmental significance, and take steps to adopt the AFPP. As part of this adoption process, the Town Board may request that the Town of Ithaca Planning Board, Conservation Board, and Agriculture Committee review the AFPP and provide comments. The AFPP will also be submitted to both the Tompkins County Agricultural and Farmland Protection Board and the Commissioner for the NYS Department of Agriculture and Markets for approval.

The Town of Ithaca is currently working on an update to its 1993 Comprehensive Plan. It is anticipated that the goals and recommendations from the AFPP will be incorporated into the Comprehensive Plan update and that this document in its entirety will be included as an appendix to the Comprehensive Plan. The updated Comprehensive Plan also is expected to be adopted by the Town of Ithaca Town Board.

As agriculture in the Town continues to change, new concerns or opportunities might be discovered that will need to be addressed through revisions to the AFPP. The AFPP should be reviewed by the Agriculture Committee and the Town Board at least every 5 years to ensure its relevancy. As part of this regular review, the Agriculture Committee and the Town Board will need to determine when revisions to the AFPP are necessary and appropriate. The Town Board shall determine and authorize all changes to be made to the AFPP, including changes to text, maps, figures, etc.



“If you tickle the earth with a hoe, she laughs with a harvest.”

Douglas William Jerrold

## **APPENDICES**

Appendix A  
Comprehensive Plan Town Residents Survey Summary (selected questions)

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Sample of Farmer Interview Form

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Definitions from NYS Agriculture & Markets Laws

Appendix D  
List of farm operations that were interviewed and/or researched

Appendix E  
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Appendix F  
March 4, 2009 Agricultural Focus Group Meeting (Agenda & Notes)  
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(Agendas & Notes)

Appendix G  
Proposed Charter of the Town of Ithaca Agriculture Committee

Appendix H  
Farming on the Edge – Sprawling Development Threatens  
America's Best Farmland – Map of New York State

Appendix I  
Agricultural and farmland Protection Plan Approvals

“Life on the farm is a school of patience; you can’t hurry the  
crops or make an ox in two days.”  
Henri Fournier Alain



## **APPENDIX A**

### Comprehensive Plan Town Residents Survey Summary (selected questions)



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## **TOWN OF ITHACA RESIDENT SURVEY RESULTS**

### **INTRODUCTION**

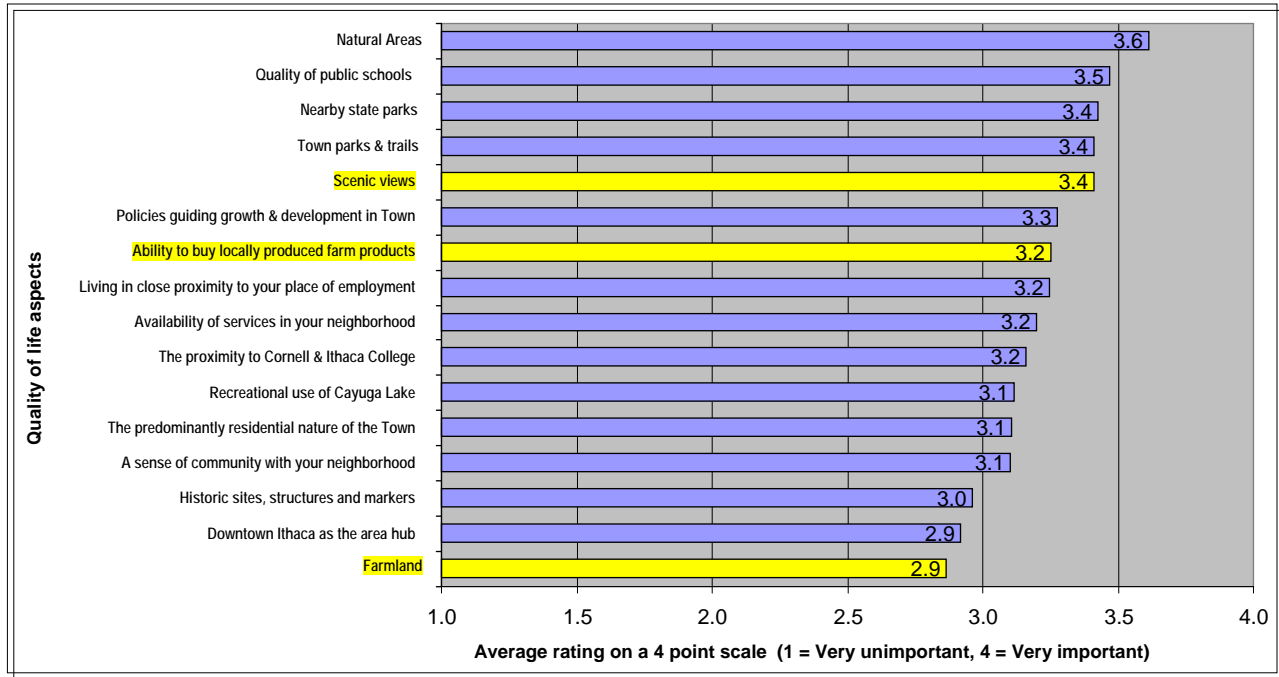
The Town of Ithaca hired Cornell University's Survey Research Institute to conduct a telephone survey of town residents. The goal of the survey was to determine how residents feel about the town, its character, municipal services offered, and its future goals and spending. The results of the survey, along with other public input, will help to inform and assist the town as it proceeds in the update of its Comprehensive Plan.

Residents were selected to participate in the survey based on their telephone number. Telephone numbers for the survey were randomly selected using a "random-digit dial" sample of telephone exchanges covering the Town of Ithaca including the Village of Cayuga Heights. This method of selecting phone numbers was chosen because of the ability to obtain unlisted and cell phone numbers that would be missed had the numbers been selected from a phone book. Excluded from the project were residents of dormitories on the Cornell University and Ithaca College campuses. The telephone survey was conducted over a 3.5 week period in January of 2009. In total, 359 surveys were completed.

The survey questionnaire was divided into five topic areas, including: quality of life, growth and development, quality of municipal services, spending priorities, and laws and policies.

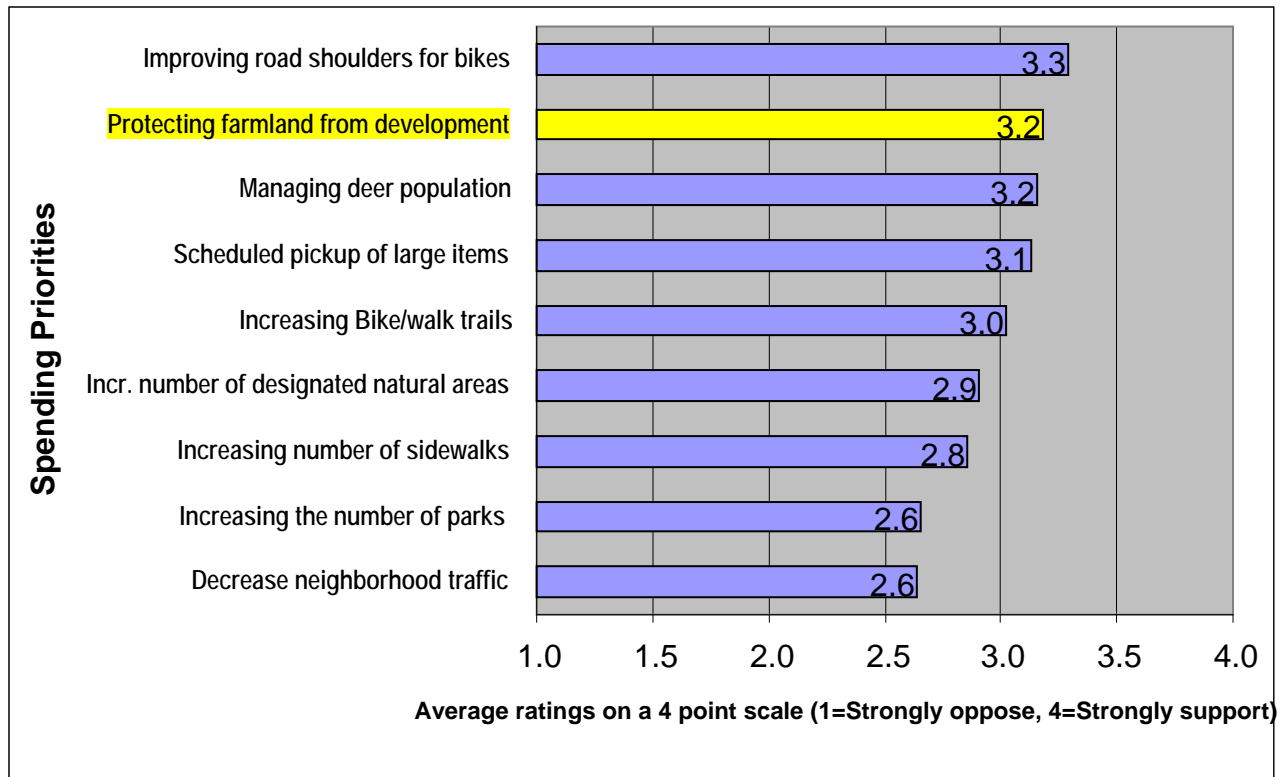
What follows is a summary of data from two questions that specifically included references to Town agriculture.

## 1. Quality of Life: How important are these aspects to your quality of life?



Quality of Life Aspect	Very Unimportant %	Unimportant %	Important %	Very Important %
Natural areas	1	4	28	67
Quality of public schools	2	11	25	62
Nearby state parks	1	8	39	52
Town parks & trails	2	7	39	52
Scenic views	1	8	40	51
Policies guiding growth & development policies in Town	2	10	47	41
Ability to buy locally produced farm products	3	14	36	46
Living in close proximity of your place of employment	3	14	40	44
Availability of services near your neighborhood	2	14	47	38
Proximity of CU and IC	2	19	40	39
Recreational use of Cayuga Lake	4	18	41	37
Predominantly residential nature of Town	2	17	49	32
Sense of community with your neighborhood	3	19	43	35
Historic sites, structures and markers	2	25	48	25
Downtown Ithaca as the hub of the area	6	22	45	26
Farmland	8	21	46	24
Sense of community with the Town	5	30	49	16

**4. Spending Priorities: How do you feel about the Town spending money on the following activities?**



Spending Priorities	Strongly Oppose %	Oppose %	Support %	Strongly Support %
Improving road shoulders for bikes	4	8	43	44
Protecting farmland from development	3	15	43	39
Managing deer populations	7	14	35	44
Scheduling pickup of large items	3	15	49	34
Increasing bike/walk trails	5	20	43	32
Increase the number of designated natural areas	5	24	47	24
Increasing the number of sidewalks	6	26	45	23
Increasing the number of parks	8	32	46	13
Decrease neighborhood traffic	8	34	43	14



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## **APPENDIX B**

### Sample of Farmer Interview Form



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Interviewer(s): \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Farm Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

**I. The Farm and Farmers**

Family members involved in the operation; relationships and roles (note those participating in interview):

_____		_____
_____		_____
_____		_____
_____		_____

What is the current operational structure of your farm? (ex. family owned and operated, multi-generational, transitioning, land rented to someone who farms it, etc.)

How are decisions about your operation made? Who makes them?

Describe the farm's operation (primary as well as supporting or additional activities):

Crops (acres, what, how used):

Livestock (number, what):

Other:

Other products:

Farm land base:

Acres owned:

Town of Ithaca                      Total: \_\_\_\_\_      Tillable: \_\_\_\_\_      Pasture: \_\_\_\_\_      Wooded: \_\_\_\_\_

Elsewhere: \_\_\_\_\_      Total: \_\_\_\_\_      Tillable: \_\_\_\_\_      Pasture: \_\_\_\_\_      Wooded: \_\_\_\_\_

Elsewhere: \_\_\_\_\_      Total: \_\_\_\_\_      Tillable: \_\_\_\_\_      Pasture: \_\_\_\_\_      Wooded: \_\_\_\_\_

Acres rented, total: \_\_\_\_\_

Owner	#Acres	Ag Assess?	Town	Owner	#Acres	Ag Assess?	Town
_____				_____			
_____				_____			
_____				_____			
_____				_____			
_____				_____			

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Farm Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Do you rent farm land from others? If so, do you have trouble finding land to rent? Or, do you have requests to rent more land than you can work?

Farm Infrastructure: what farm structures do you have and how are they used?

What is the farm's gross annual income?

Do you consider your self a full time or part time farmer?

Do you or other family members work off farm? If so, who and how many hours are worked off farm? What is the importance of this income to your livelihood?

What is the annual investment in the operation?

Describe the most recent investments:

Not counting family members listed above, how many, if any, employees do you have? Are they full or part time, and what do they do?

Employee	FT/PT	Salary Range	Area(s) of Responsibility
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What is the annual farm payroll?

What agriculture programs do you participate in? (AEM, CRP, EQUIP, CAFO, Forest Planning, etc.)

What are your thoughts on agriculture's impact on the environment (ex. erosion and impacts on streams, use of fertilizers and pesticides, crop rotations, general water-quality issues, sustainable ground cover).



Farm Name: \_\_\_\_\_

In the foreseeable future what, if any, changes do you see in the farm's operation and/or management or ownership? (ex. will you get bigger or smaller, install more infrastructure, transfer the farm to the next generation, sell out, etc.) Why?

Do you anticipate any stumbling blocks for your future farm plans?

Are there any parts of your land you think could, or you expect to, be developed without impacting your operation or agriculture in the Town, and if so, why? (ex. poor soils, hard to farm, too much development-related pressure, etc.) If yes, when do you think this might happen?

What is your farm's history of buying and selling land? Has additional land ever been purchased? When and how much? Has land ever been sold? When, how much, and for what purpose?

## **II. Agriculture in the Town**

What do you think are the most significant issues with farming in general? In the Town, specifically?

Do you think development pressure on farmland is an issue in the Town? If so, in what ways?

How would you characterize development around or near your farm? (ex. not much, steady, scary fast, etc.)

What, if any, problems do you experience as a result of nearby or other rural development (ex. trouble accessing land, traffic, neighbor complaints, etc.)?

Should the Town encourage continuation of farming in the Town? If so, what could or should the Town do to ensure it does?

Should the Town encourage or limit the conversion of farmland to residential or other development?

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Farm Name: \_\_\_\_\_

What should be the criteria for maintaining land in agriculture?

What types of farming are best suited in the Town? Should the Town encourage specific types of agricultural enterprises? If so, how?

In 10 or 20 years, how will agriculture and farming in the Town be different from today?

If the Town wants to maintain farmland for open space benefits to the general population, should there be a payback to those willing to maintain open space for others to enjoy?

Are there protections or incentives not currently provided that would be appropriate and helpful to farming in the Town?

If public investments are made in agriculture (subsidies, grants, loans, tax relief, etc.), should farmers accept some restrictions on land use (erosion control, restrictions on size of feed lot operations, sale of lots for development, etc.)?

What are your interests in the purchase or lease of your development rights?

Are there any town infrastructure improvements that would help your operation?

What are your impressions of:

The Town's Agricultural Land Preservation Program (PDR)

Agricultural Zoning

The Agriculture Committee

Would you willing to serve on a sub committee to help with the development of the Town's plan for agriculture? This would mostly likely involve a bit of reading and a few meetings.

## **APPENDIX C**

### Definitions from NYS Agriculture & Markets Laws



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Selected definitions taken from various New York State Agriculture & Markets Laws (as of October 28, 2011).

**"Agricultural product"** shall mean any agricultural or aquacultural product of the soil or water, including but not limited to fruits, vegetables, eggs, dairy products, meat and meat products, poultry and poultry products, fish and fish products, grain and grain products, honey, nuts, preserves, maple sap products, apple cider, and fruit juice.

**"Agricultural tourism"** means activities conducted by a farmer on-farm for the enjoyment or education of the public, which primarily promote the sale, marketing, production, harvesting or use of the products of the farm and enhance the public's understanding and awareness of farming and farm life.

**"Community garden"** shall mean public or private lands upon which citizens of the state have the opportunity to garden on lands which they do not individually own.

**"Crops, livestock and livestock products"** shall include but not be limited to the following:

- a. Field crops, including corn, wheat, oats, rye, barley, hay, potatoes and dry beans.
- b. Fruits, including apples, peaches, grapes, cherries and berries.
- c. Vegetables, including tomatoes, snap beans, cabbage, carrots, beets and onions.
- d. Horticultural specialties, including nursery stock, ornamental shrubs, ornamental trees and flowers.
- e. Livestock and livestock products, including cattle, sheep, hogs, goats, horses, poultry, ratites, such as ostriches, emus, rheas and kiwis, farmed deer, farmed buffalo, fur bearing animals, wool bearing animals, such as alpacas and llamas, milk, eggs and furs.
- f. Maple sap.
- g. Christmas trees derived from a managed Christmas tree operation whether dug for transplanting or cut from the stump.
- h. Aquaculture products, including fish, fish products, water plants and shellfish.
- i. Woody biomass, which means short rotation woody crops raised for bioenergy, and shall not include farm woodland.
- j. Apiary products, including honey, beeswax, royal jelly, bee pollen, propolis, package bees, nucs and queens. For the purposes of this paragraph, "nucs" shall mean small honey bee colonies created from larger colonies including the nuc box, which is a smaller version of a beehive, designed to hold up to five frames from an existing colony.



**"Farm operation"** means the land and on-farm buildings, equipment, manure processing and handling facilities, and practices which contribute to the production, preparation and marketing of crops, livestock and livestock products as a commercial enterprise, including a "commercial horse boarding operation" as defined in subdivision thirteen of this section, "timber processing" as defined in subdivision fourteen of this section and "compost, mulch or other biomass crops" as defined in subdivision sixteen of this section. For purposes of this section, such farm operation shall also include the production, management and harvesting of "farm woodland", as defined in subdivision three of this section. Such farm operation may consist of one or more parcels of owned or rented land, which parcels may be contiguous or noncontiguous to each other.

**"Farm product"** means any agricultural, dairy or horticultural product, or any product designed for food manufactured or prepared principally from an agricultural, dairy or horticultural product and the commercial raising, shearing, feeding and management of animals on a ranch.

**"Land used in agricultural production"** means not less than seven acres of land used as a single operation in the preceding two years for the production for sale of crops, livestock or livestock products of an average gross sales value of ten thousand dollars or more; or, not less than seven acres of land used in the preceding two years to support a commercial horse boarding operation with annual gross receipts of ten thousand dollars or more. Land used in agricultural production shall not include land or portions thereof used for processing or retail merchandising of such crops, livestock or livestock products. Land used in agricultural production shall also include:

a. Rented land which otherwise satisfies the requirements for eligibility for an agricultural assessment.

a-1. Land used by a not-for-profit institution for the purposes of agricultural research that is intended to improve the quality or quantity of crops, livestock or livestock products. Such land shall qualify for an agricultural assessment upon application made pursuant to paragraph (a) of subdivision one of section three hundred five of this article, except that no minimum gross sales value shall be required.

b. Land of not less than seven acres used as a single operation for the production for sale of crops, livestock or livestock products, exclusive of woodland products, which does not independently satisfy the gross sales value requirement, where such land was used in such production for the preceding two years and currently is being so used under a written rental arrangement of five or more years in conjunction with land which is eligible for an agricultural assessment.

c. Land used in support of a farm operation or land used in agricultural production, constituting a portion of a parcel, as identified on the assessment roll, which also contains land qualified for an agricultural assessment.

d. Farm woodland which is part of land which is qualified for an agricultural assessment, provided, however, that such farm woodland attributable to any separately described and assessed parcel shall not exceed fifty acres.

e. Land set aside through participation in a federal conservation program pursuant to title one of the federal food security act of nineteen hundred eighty-five or any subsequent federal programs established for the purposes of replenishing highly erodible land which has been depleted by continuous tilling or reducing national surpluses of agricultural commodities and such land shall qualify for agricultural assessment upon application made pursuant to paragraph a of subdivision one of section three hundred five of this article, except that no minimum gross sales value shall be required.

f. Land of not less than seven acres used as a single operation in the preceding two years for the production for sale of crops, livestock or livestock products of an average gross sales value of ten thousand dollars or more, or land of less than seven acres used as a single operation in the preceding two years for the production for sale of crops, livestock or livestock products of an average gross sales value of fifty thousand dollars or more.

g. Land under a structure within which crops, livestock or livestock products are produced, provided that the sales of such crops, livestock or livestock products meet the gross sales requirements of paragraph f of this subdivision.

h. Land that is owned or rented by a farm operation in its first or second year of agricultural production, or, in the case of a commercial horse boarding operation in its first or second year of operation, that consists of (1) not less than seven acres used as a single operation for the production for sale of crops, livestock or livestock products of an annual gross sales value of ten thousand dollars or more; or (2) less than seven acres used as a single operation for the production for sale of crops, livestock or livestock products of an annual gross sales value of fifty thousand dollars or more; or (3) land situated under a structure within which crops, livestock or livestock products are produced, provided that such crops, livestock or livestock products have an annual gross sales value of (i) ten thousand dollars or more, if the farm operation uses seven or more acres in agricultural production, or (ii) fifty thousand dollars or more, if the farm operation uses less than seven acres in agricultural production; or (4) not less than seven acres used as a single operation to support a commercial horse boarding operation with annual gross receipts of ten thousand dollars or more.

i. Land of not less than seven acres used as a single operation for the production for sale of orchard or vineyard crops when such land is used solely for the purpose of planting a new orchard or vineyard and when such land is also owned or rented by a newly established farm operation in its first, second, third or fourth year of agricultural production.

j. Land of not less than seven acres used as a single operation for the production and sale of Christmas trees when such land is used solely for the purpose of planting Christmas trees that will be made available for sale, whether dug for transplanting or cut from the stump and when such land is owned or rented by a newly established farm operation in its first, second, third, fourth or fifth year of agricultural production.

k. Land used to support an apiary products operation which is owned by the operation and consists of (i) not less than seven acres nor more than ten acres used as a single operation in the preceding two years for the production for sale of crops, livestock or livestock products of an average gross sales value of ten thousand dollars or more or (ii) less than seven acres used as a single operation in the preceding two years for the production for sale of crops, livestock or

livestock products of an average gross sales value of fifty thousand dollars or more. The land used to support an apiary products operation shall include, but not be limited to, the land under a structure within which apiary products are produced, harvested and stored for sale; and a buffer area maintained by the operation between the operation and adjacent landowners. Notwithstanding any other provision of this subdivision, rented land associated with an apiary products operation is not eligible for an agricultural assessment based on this paragraph.

**"Value added"** shall mean the increase in the fair market value of an agricultural product resulting from the processing of such product.

## **APPENDIX D**

List of farm operations that were interviewed and/or researched



Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan  
Town of Ithaca – November 2011



## **FARMS/FARMER INTERVIEWED/RESEARCH**

Twenty-four agricultural operations were interviewed and/or researched during 2009 and 2010 by Cornell Cooperative Extension of Tompkins County and the Town of Ithaca.

A.J. Teeter Farm/Alan & Debbie Teeter	Hay and beef livestock
Bob Drake Sr. & Jr.	Field crops
Buttermilk Farm/Claire Forest	Orchard and berries
Cayuga Landscape/Dave Fernandez	Landscaping, nursery stock
Cornell University	Research, education
Earlybird Farm/George Sheldrake	Greenhouse, roadside stand
Eddy Hill Farm/Nelson Eddy Sr. & Jr. Jackie Eddy	Hay, dairy heifer boarding
Eddydale Farm/Steve Eddy	Farm stand, greenhouse
Genex Breeders	Bovine semen production
Hilker Haven/Bill Hilker	Hydroponic produce
Indian Creek/Steve Cummins	U-pick tree fruit, farm stand
Jackman Vineyards/Alex Jackman	Vineyard vegetables
Kellogg Christmas Tree Farm/Bob Kellogg	Christmas Trees
Kestral Perch Berries	CSA, U-pick berries
Laughing Goat Fiber Farm/Gary & Lisa Ferguson	Fiber sheep and goats
Little's Greenhouse, Jack Little	Greenhouse
Six Mile Creek/Nancy & Roger Battistella	Vineyard, winery
Steep Hollow Farm/Christianne White & Tom McMillan	Corn maze, chickens
Jan & Sue Suwinski	Equine
Sweyolakan Farm/Jamie Baker	Dairy
Tree Gate Farm/Dean Koyanagi & Sharon Tregaskis	Tree fruit, vegetables
George Voss	Hay
Russ & Paula Wedemeyer	Equine
West Haven/John Bokaer Smith & Todd McLane	CSA, tree fruit, vegetables

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## **APPENDIX E**

### Maps

Map 1: Type of Agricultural Operations

Map 2: Agricultural Lands Owned vs. Rented

Map 3: Existing Protected Properties

Map 4: Existing Land Use / Land Cover

Map 5: Agricultural Soils

Map 6: Agricultural Districts

Map 7: Zoning

Map 8: Agricultural Easement Target Areas

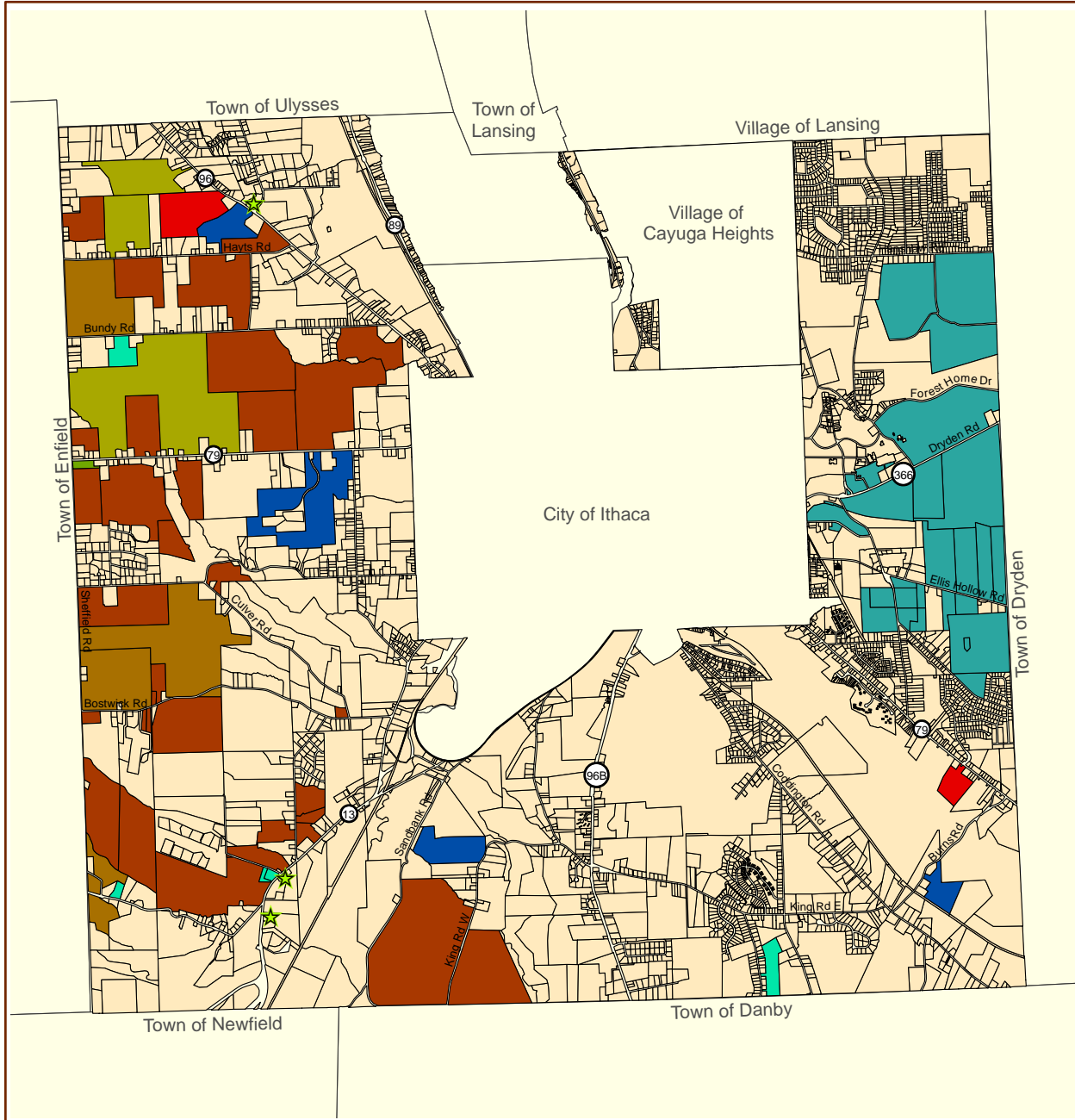
Map 9: Farmland Targeted for Protection



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Town of Ithaca – November 2011

# Type of Agricultural Operations

## Town of Ithaca Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan



**FINAL  
MAP 1**



Map Produced by:  
Town of Ithaca  
Planning Department  
November 2011

- Non - Agricultural
- Cattle Farm
- Goats / Sheep
- Horse
- Large Scale Field Crop
- Nursery and Greenhouse
- Small Scale Field Crop (fruits & vegetables)
- Vineyard
- College Agriculture / Research
- Farm Stand

0 0.5 1 Mile

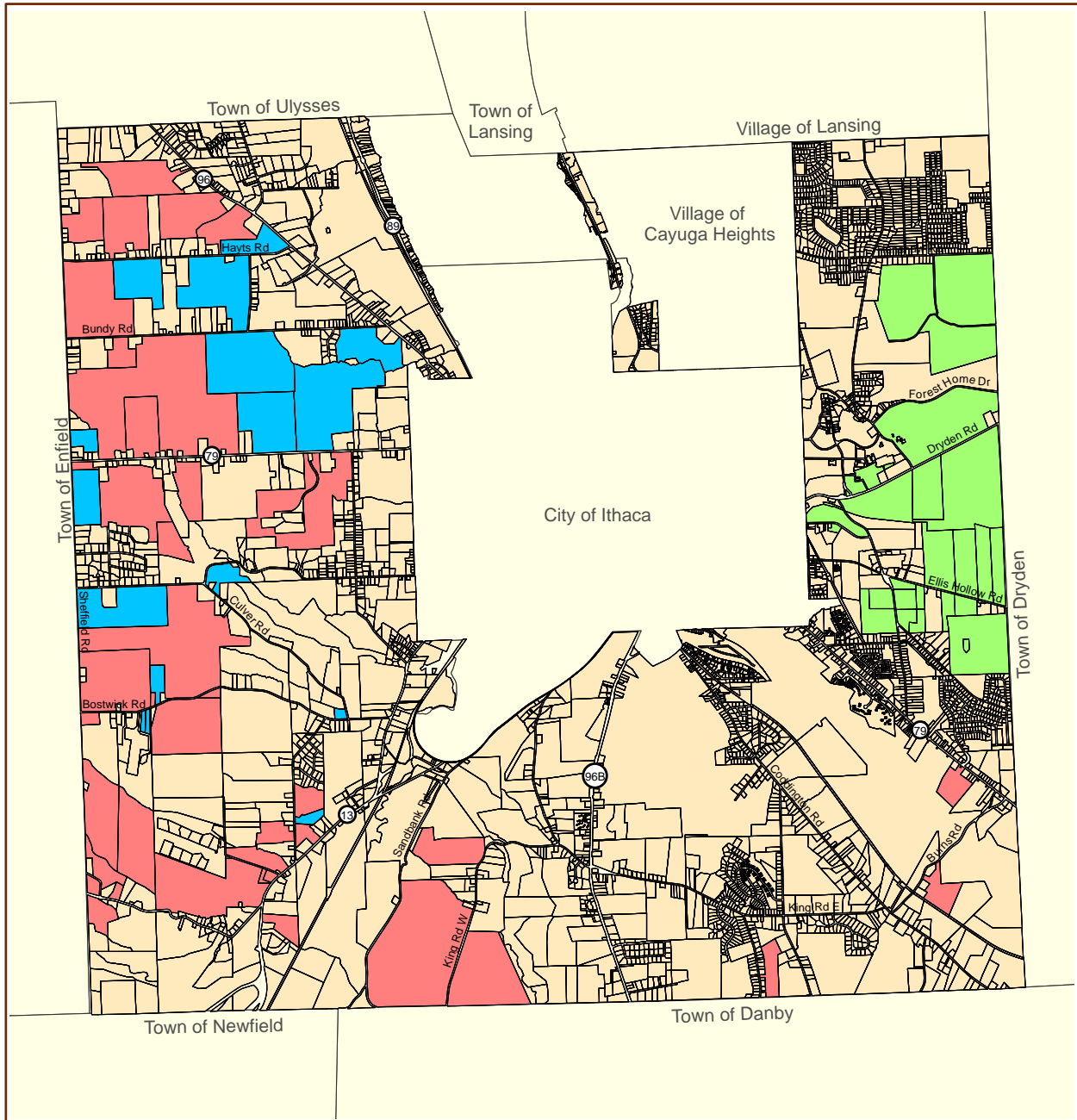
Data Source:  
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Planning Department &  
Tompkins County Information  
Technology Services GIS Division





# Agricultural Lands Owned vs. Rented

## Town of Ithaca Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan



FINAL  
MAP 2



Map Produced by:  
Town of Ithaca  
Planning Department  
November 2011

- Farmer Owned Agricultural Land
- Farmer Rented Agricultural Land
- Cornell University / NYS Owned Agricultural Land

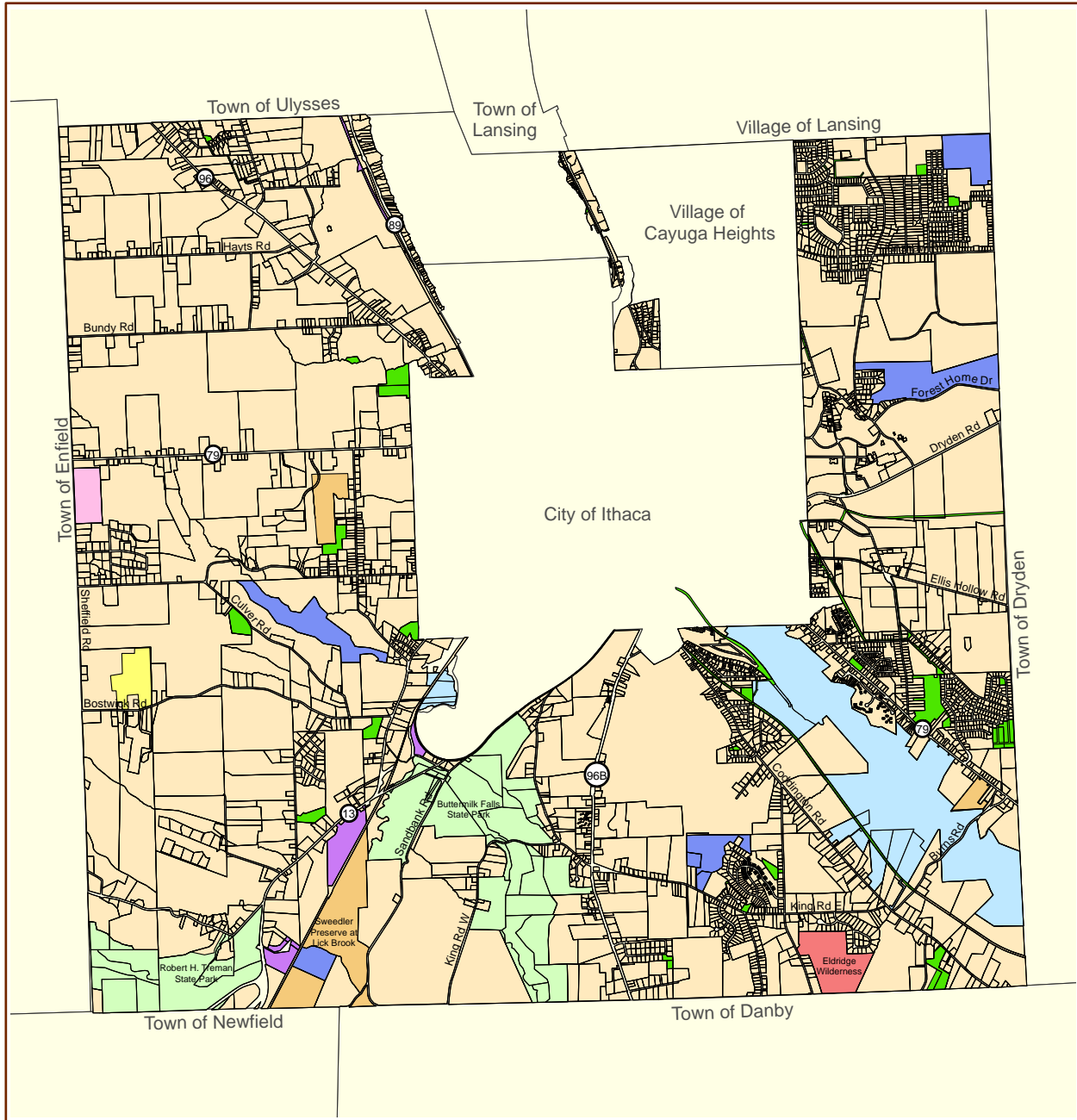
0 0.5 1 Mile

Data Source:  
Town of Ithaca  
Planning Department &  
Tompkins County Information  
Technology Services GIS Division



# Existing Protected Properties

## Town of Ithaca Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan



FINAL  
MAP 3



Map Produced by:  
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- Finger Lakes Land Trust Owned/Easement Property
- The Nature Conservancy Owned Property
- Town of Ithaca Parks & Trails
- City of Ithaca Owned Property
- Cornell University Owned Property
- New York State Owned Property
- New York State Parks
- Town of Ithaca Ag. Conservation Easement
- Natural Resource Conservation Service Ag. Conservation Easement

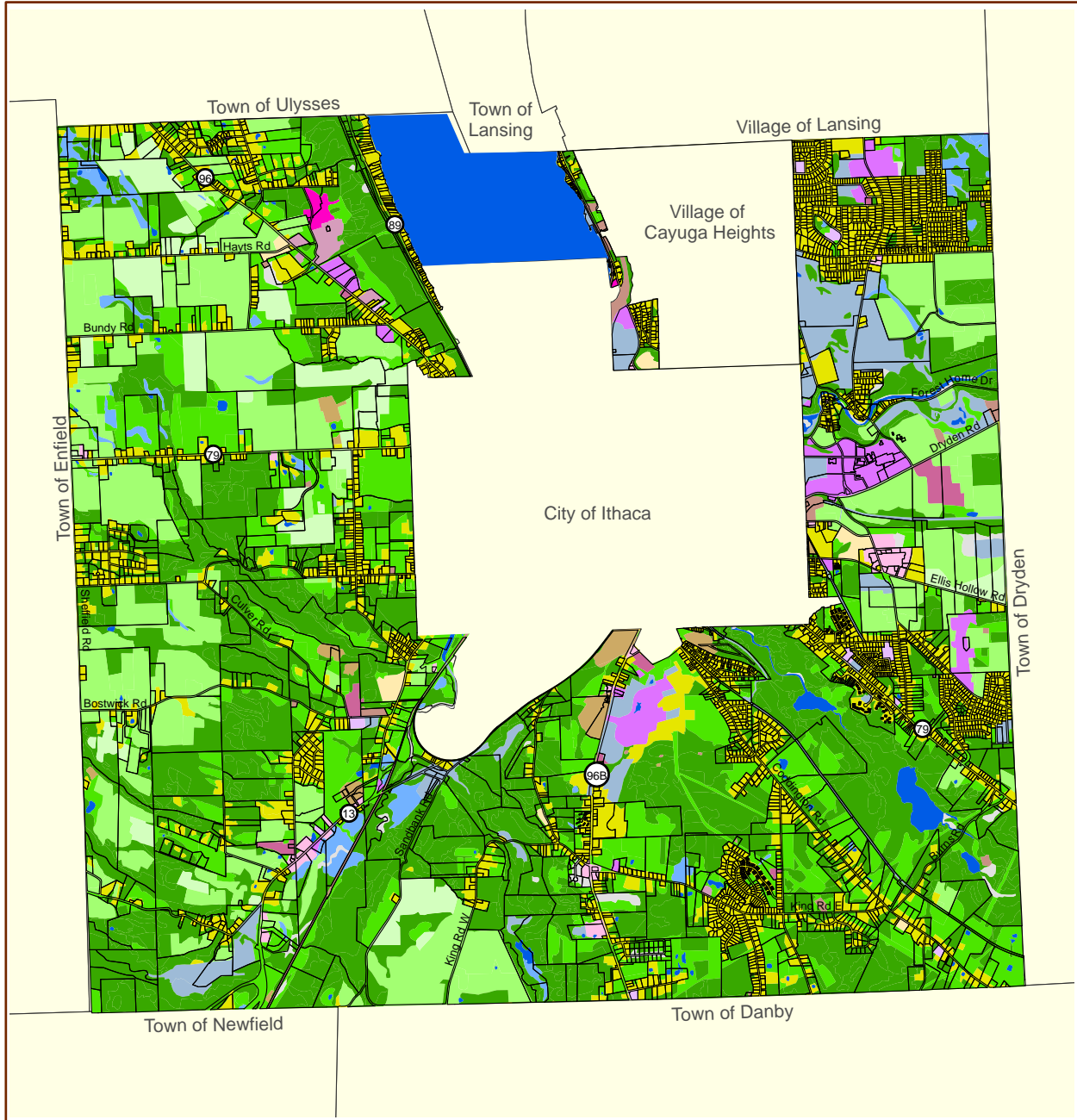
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Data Source:  
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# Existing Land Use / Land Cover

## Town of Ithaca Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan



FINAL  
MAP 4



Map Produced by:  
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November 2011



0 0.5 1 Mile

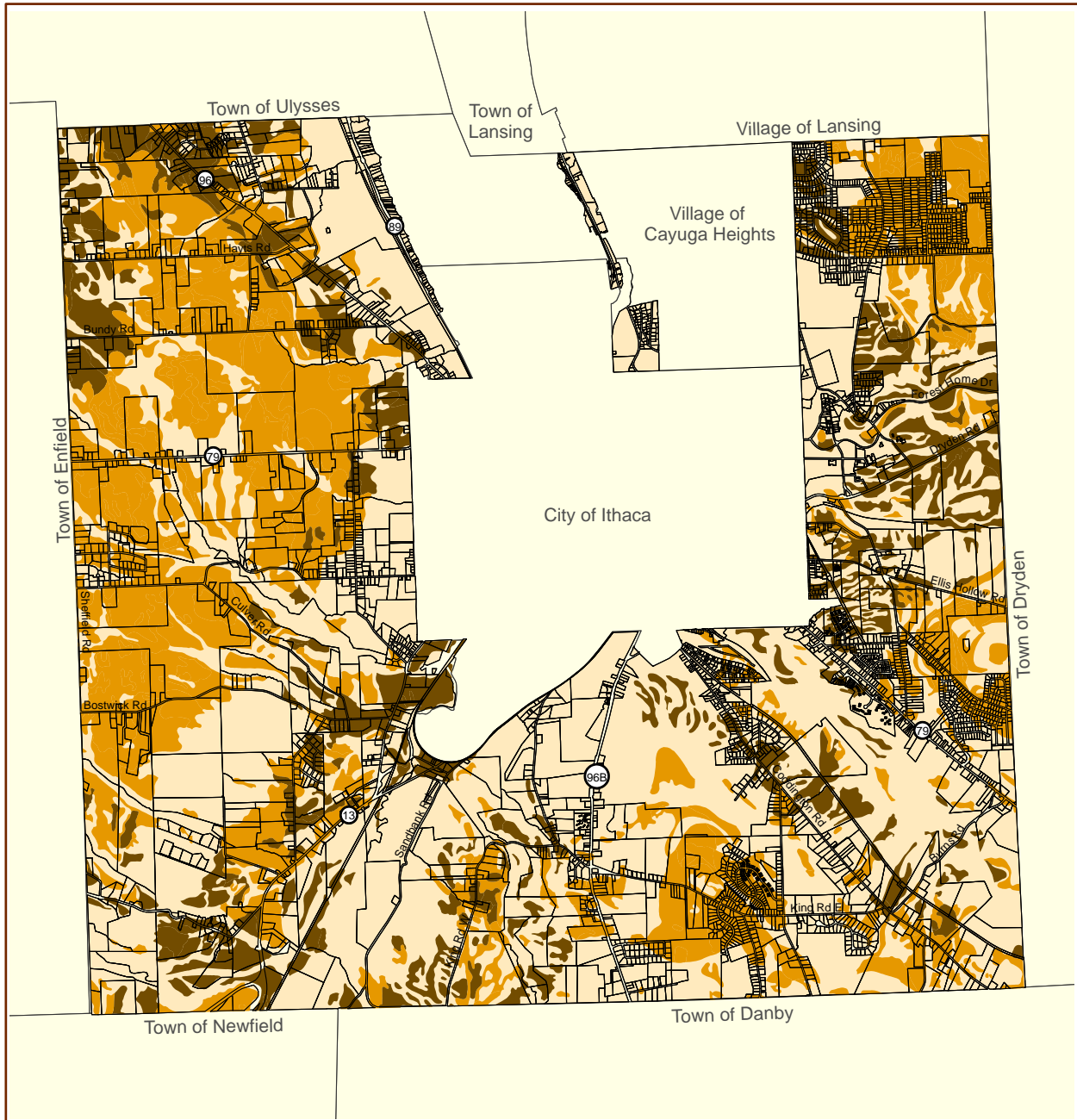
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# Agricultural Soils

## Town of Ithaca Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan



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MAP 5



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November 2011



USDA Prime Farmland

Farmland of Statewide Importance

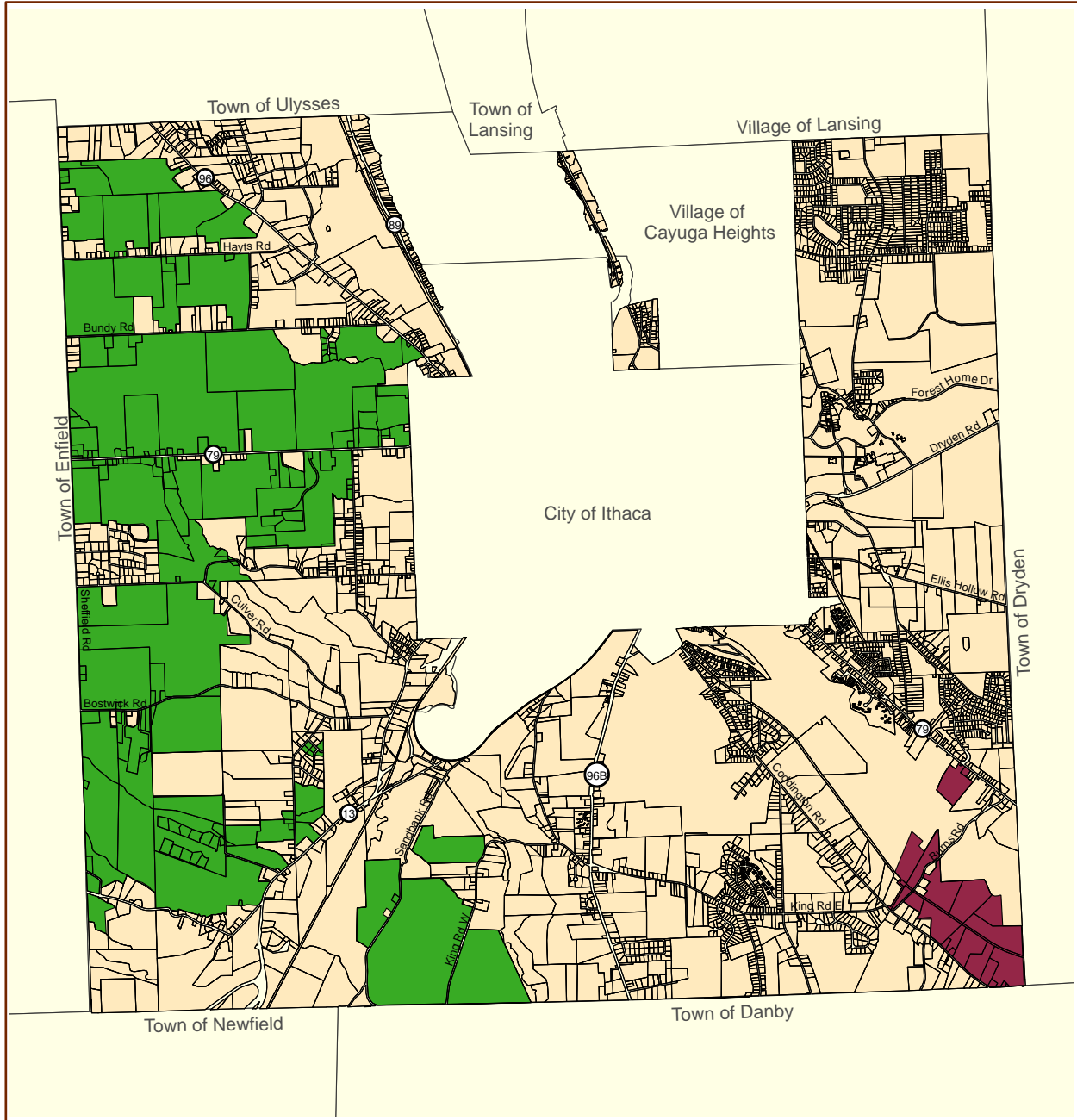
0 0.5 1 Mile

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# Agricultural Districts

## Town of Ithaca Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan





FINAL  
MAP 6



Map Produced by:  
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### Tompkins County Agricultural Districts

-  Agricultural District 1
-  Agricultural District 2

0 0.5 1 Mile

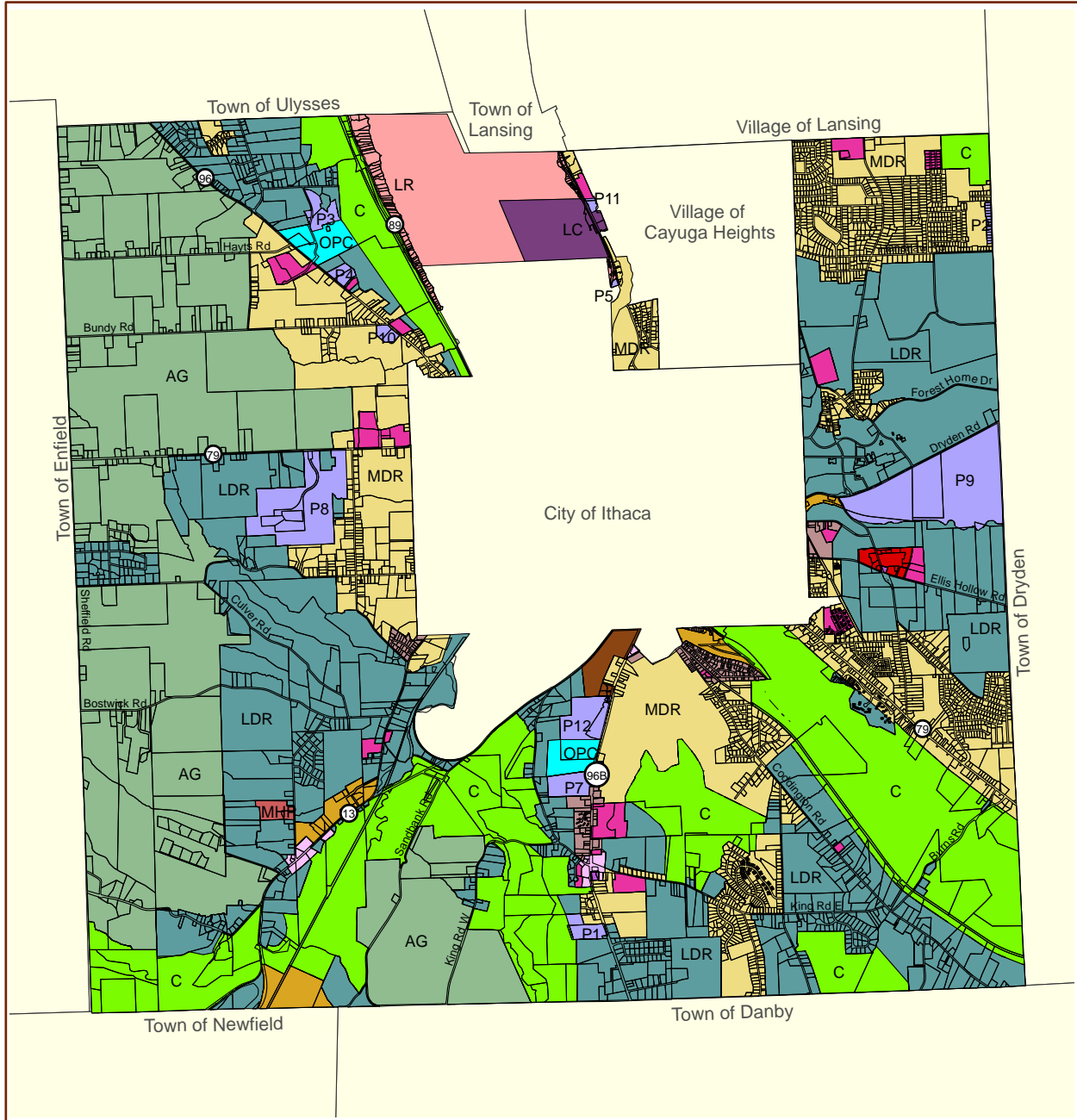
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# Zoning

## Town of Ithaca

### Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan



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MAP 7



Map Produced by:  
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November 2011

- |                                    |                                |
|------------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| ● Lakefront Residential (LR)       | ● Neighborhood Commercial (NC) |
| ● Low Density Residential (LDR)    | ● Community Commercial (CC)    |
| ● Medium Density Residential (MDR) | ● Lakefront Commercial (LC)    |
| ● High Density Residential (HDR)   | ● Agricultural (AG)            |
| ● Mobile Home Park (MHP)           | ● Conservation (C)             |
| ● Multiple Residence (MR)          | ● Planned Development Zone (P) |
| ● Vehicle Fuel and Repair (VFR)    | ● Light Industrial (LI)        |
| ● Office Park Commercial (OPC)     | ● Industrial (I)               |

0 0.5 1 Mile

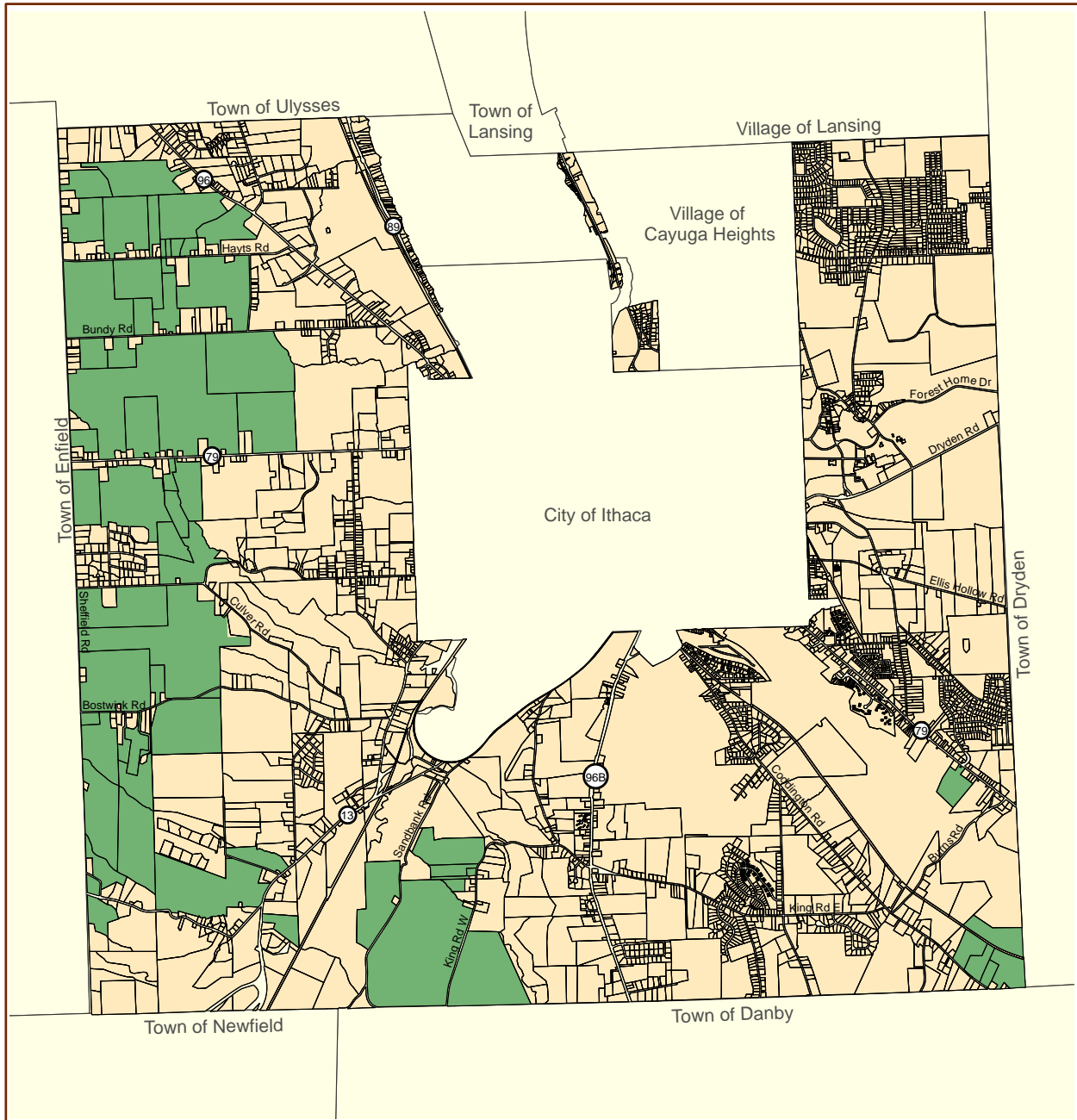
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# Agricultural Easement Target Areas

## Town of Ithaca Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan



FINAL  
MAP 8



Map Produced by:  
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November 2011



Target Areas for  
Purchase of Agricultural  
Conservation Easements

Note: Formal delineation of areas  
to be protected will occur on a  
parcel by parcel basis.

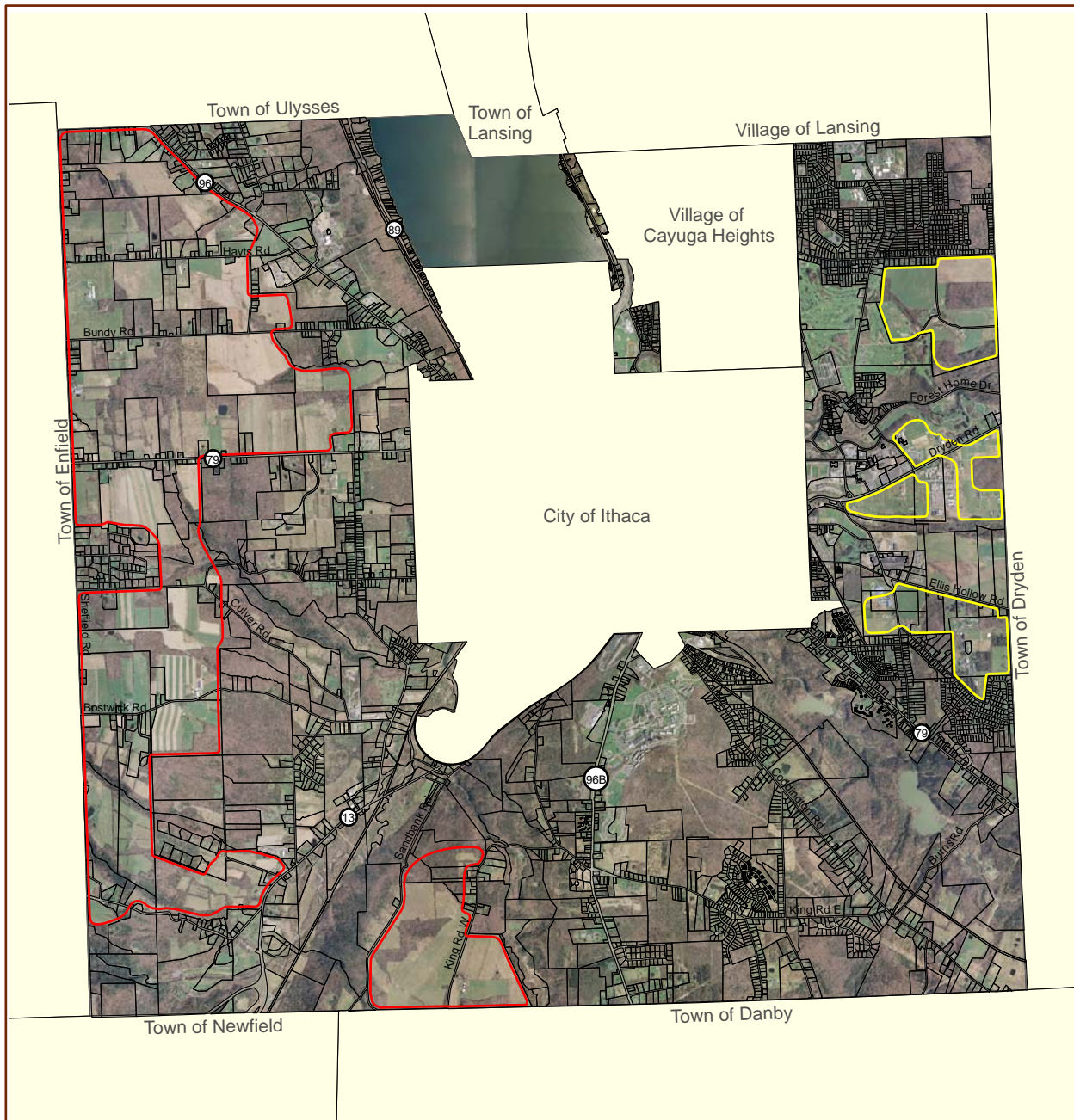
0 0.5 1 Mile

Data Source:  
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# Farmland Targeted for Protection

## Town of Ithaca Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan





## **APPENDIX F**

March 4, 2009 Agricultural Focus Group Meeting (Agenda & Notes)  
November 17, 2009, May 1, 2010, and March 22, 2011 Farmer Meetings  
(Agendas & Notes)



Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan  
Town of Ithaca – November 2011



TOWN OF ITHACA COMPREHENSIVE PLAN UPDATE  
AGENDA FOR AGRICULTURAL FOCUS GROUP

**Date:** Wednesday, March 4, 2009 at 10am

**Location:** Ithaca Town Hall – Aurora Conference Room  
215 North Tioga Street  
Ithaca, NY 14850

**Agenda:** Introductions

Meeting Purpose - Comprehensive Plan Update and Development of an  
Agricultural & Farmland Protection Plan

Review purpose of Plan update, process, and Committee progress to date

Review status of Agricultural Section in 1993 Comprehensive Plan (goal,  
objectives, and recommended actions)

Sample Discussion Questions:

- What are the most significant issues with farming in the Town?  
In 10 or 20 years, how will agriculture and farming be different  
from today?
- Is development pressure on farmland an issue in the Town?
- Should the Town encourage the continuation of farming in the  
Town? What should be the criteria for maintaining land in  
agriculture? What types of farming are best suited for the Town,  
and should the town encourage specific agriculture enterprises?
- Should the Town encourage or limit the conversion of farmland  
to residential or other development?
- If the town wants to maintain farmland for open space benefits  
to the general population, should there be a payback to those  
willing to maintain the open space for others to enjoy?
- What should the Town do to ensure farming continues in the  
Town?
- What is your impressions of the Town's Agricultural Land  
Preservation Program (PDR), Agricultural Zoning and the  
Agriculture Committee?
- Are there protections or incentives not currently provided that  
would be appropriate and helpful to farming in the Town?

Conclusion – future contact and feedback

Comprehensive Plan  
Agricultural Focus Group Meeting  
March 4, 2009

Attendees:

Diane Conneman, Comp Plan Committee, Town Conservation Board Chair  
Debbie Teeter, Town Ag. Committee Chair, CCE-Tompkins, (Town Farmer)  
George Conneman, Town Planning Board  
Jamie Baker, Sweyolakan Farms (Town Farmer - dairy)  
Scott Doyle, Tompkins County Planning  
Rod Howe, Town Planning Board Chair, CCE  
Nirav Patel, Town Conservation Board, Dept. of Natural Resources Cornell  
Jason Engel, Cardinal Design (Farmland Protection Implementation Grant Consultant)  
Craig Schutt, Tompkins County Soil and Water Conservation District  
Hollis Erb, Comp Plan Committee, Town Planning Board  
Steve Cummins, Indian Creek Orchards (Town Farmer)  
Monika Roth, CCE-Tompkins  
Alex Jackman, Jackman Vineyards (Town Farmer)  
Taryn Thompson, Ithaca Times

Meeting Summary:

Town Farmer 1:

- Agricultural district only on west side
- Development pressure is there, but PDR funding from the state is a long shot
- Property tax, more help – more than ag incentive

Town Farmer 2: lease of farming rights – short periods

Town Farmer 1: programs to help put up fences – town program would help (Michigan orchard program)

- Help with other capital projects – town contributions
- Concerned about traffic speed at the Dubois Road / Trumansburg Road (Route 96) intersection, a flashing light is needed and speed limit should be reduced

Town Farmer 3: last dairy in Town – 1000 acres, 200 cows right now

- Need to milk more to stay in business, may purchase another farm but more than 200 cows would put into the CAFO process
- No neighbor complaints about spreading manure – done daily
- Big budget – don't like taxes, but a small issue (one week's income)
- Dealing with people on road is issue – big equipment as farm grows – daily issue – 35 loads of manure a week – decent shoulders are required
- Went fine with building permit for a barn – wasn't aware that one was needed

Agency: traffic is issue throughout County, including Town of Ithaca

- Education campaign
- Mobile sign (that tells you your speed)
- Pamphlets

Town Farmer 2: lots of education needed for the farming/residential areas

- Include pamphlets in some mailing
- Agency: seasonal movement of equipment
- Concentrate education during special times
- Agency: Town welcome bag to include Agricultural information
- Town Farmer 1: taxes, substantial if tax relief could be increase
- Provide open space – a service that benefits residents
- Agency: goal – local food production
- Small scale
  - Need deer fences and water - ponds
  - Infrastructure items
- Town Farmer 4: there are no tax breaks available when one buys farm/ag property, start up is hard without income coming in – long lead time with vineyard to start having money coming in; need to find ways to encourage new farmers
- Agency: transfer between generations – farm link (online program)
- Cornell Cooperative Extension: land link – similar program on small/local scale
- Rural land owners that wants to see it farmed
  - Beginner farmer place to look
- Agency: bigger issue – How does comprehensive plan interact with Agriculture?
- State of agriculture in Ithaca – why are we doing this?
  - Is agriculture integrated into overall comprehensive plan – is it a priority
  - What role does agricultural preservation play in the watershed, ecosystem
  - How is agricultural integrated into neighboring towns
  - PDR can make Town attractive to farmers coming to area
- Agency: Zoning
- Education
  - Policy
  - Technical assistance
  - Would like to see a good mix of farm sites with emphasis on small ones
  - Consumer base – Ithaca is unique to support agricultural, especially small ones
- Many: cost of services – pay more than what the farmers get
- Town Farmer 4: Agriculture is fundamentally valued in Ithaca compared to other communities
- Consumer preference guides small farms with direct sales
  - Preserve current farms/ag land as a placeholder for the future – some other form of agriculture might be viable then
- Agency: energy issues – biofuels – not necessarily farmers, but land that can be used for energy crops; Enfield has an energy collective
- Town Farmer 2: the Town should work hard to be farmer friendly - previous bad experiences
- Farm liaison – one contact at the Town to help work through Town approvals and permits
  - Good sense of what the farmers are about – staff to go talk with each farmer
  - Farmers are not selling best soil for development – but something not worth keeping – wet area / slopes
  - Not intention for farmers to sell land – zoning language

- Zoning not as bad as originally thought – deed restrictions is the real issue - permanent

Agency: very diverse types of farming in Town

- Support existing, but be able to modify as time goes – may be very different in future

Town Farmer 1: draw farmers to land around area is important

- Exchange for tax relief – maybe school tours offered
- Farmers market – need a seven day sales location
- Only one day a week – the Farmers Market sits vacant rest of week – not worth it
- Needs regular store “type” hours – Town influence might help
- Needs more markets – farmers markets
- Designated Town pull-off
- Off site locations for farmers to gather for sales – (ex: Chemung Bank)

Agency: market the farm district as a farmers market

- agricultural tourism
- bring people out of City/Villages, closer to source with sales
- like the wine trail – make a destination – “agriculture clusters”

Agency: tax break for town restaurants to serve food from the Town

Town Farmer 4: appraisals – value of agriculture land is different depending on the uses

Agency: lose very big chunks – gaps are created which make farming tough, enable young buyers – with Town help – help with purchase

Agency: asked opinion about Carrowmoor – conversion of farmland

Town Farmer 2: development has to happen somewhere; concentrate development within close proximity to City is preference – infill, not leapfrogging

Town Farmer 1: no, prefer development to occur in City – fill City first

Agency: transfer of development rights should be explored - Lysander, NY is local example

Agency: this conversation is good start

- PDR program is good
- Keep in mind neighboring towns – farmers cross lines

TC Soil & Water: farming helps with environmental issues – stormwater, lake, erosion

- Part of Agriculture Environmental Management program – Town could encourage participation in plans

Town Farmer 1: Agriculture makes jobs – buy lots of products/services

- General concern - signage for farms

Positive benefits from agriculture in the Town of Ithaca:

(in no particular order)

Demand for local produce/products

Green space

Decreased stormwater runoff compared to residential developments

Placeholders for the future – other land based occupations, including energy production

Provides employment in the community

Less demand on services (water, sewer, schools)

Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan  
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Comment from Kristie Rice after meeting:

- Maybe reduced or no fee for truly farm/agriculture related applications – various building permits
- Encourage farmers to come in for proper approvals

**Town of Ithaca  
Agriculture and Comprehensive Plans Review and Update  
Farmer Meeting**

**November 17, 2009  
7:00-9:00 p.m.**

- |                  |   |
|------------------|---|
| 7:00 - 7:15 p.m. | Coffee and Desert   |
| 7:15 - 7:30 p.m. | Welcome and Introductions   |
| 7:30 - 8:00 p.m. | Overview of farmer interview information (10 minutes each): <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Interview process and summary</li><li>• Ideas from farmers</li><li>• Farmer-identified issues and opportunities</li></ul> |
| 8:00 - 9:00 p.m. | Next Steps (20 minutes each): <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Group discussion: what's missing?</li><li>• Identify priorities</li><li>• Determine strategies</li></ul>  |



Agricultural & Farmland Protection Plan  
Farmer Meeting – November 17, 2009 – 7pm  
Town of Ithaca Board Room

16 attendees (11 Farmers & 5 Town Representatives)

MEETING NOTES:

- for the Town to have open space, need to find a way to make it affordable for the large tract owners (can't have farmland without farmers)
- Town could help with funding for Forest Management Plans
- Educational related items are very important, notice how many items on the lists relate to some type of education, CCE can be an important part of this
- Gas drilling is a hot topic, how is the Town participating
  - o Anti-drilling frequently has anti-farmer feelings (negative stereotype of farms)
- liaison at the Town sounds good, it could be proactive by sending emails out on various topics instead of just waiting and be responsive
  - o the Town's youth employment works well and could be a model for the farmer liaison, good personal touch
  - o farmers don't know who to talk with, they want to do it right, but unsure how and who to see, and when
- use the Town's Ag Committee as a resource
  - o network with others, pull information together
  - o find way to get together with other farmers to share information – mentor, maybe start a email list for help
- create a town general list – email list – list serve – coffee catch – come together with farming being the common interest
- Town to develop a aquifer or water shed map to assist farmers
- make sure the development of the plan relates to other surrounding municipalities (Ulysses and Enfield) and any plans they are putting together – more regional planning
- development issues – how secure is the Ag. District?
- Right to Farm Law – both Town Ag Zoning and County Ag District help farming, but are there farms without one or both of these protections in the Town (should be reviewed), how consistent are the Ag Zoning and Ag Districts?
- farmers need to feel comfortable coming to the Town when there are problems
  - o General Town employee attitude towards farming (code enforcement)
- does the Town know what is happening with Route 13 plans? Town could pass along relevant information to affected farmers when available (liaison activity)
- Danby Biofuels project – some farmers might like to learn more and possibly work with them in the Town of Ithaca
- right now the primary source of information and support comes from Cooperative Extension (Monica Roth) or a close group of farmers – could there be other ways?
- maybe look at rural and urban ties from other communities for possible planning ideas

Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan  
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- agri-tourism is very big – bring urban people out to farms
  - o some are wondering what agri-tourism can be done in the Town with current regulations
  - o maybe plan could look at what should be done or allow for what might be involved with tourism in the future
  - o what might be needed to do certain types of tourism

NEW ITEMS ON THE BOARD TO INCLUDE WITH IDEA LIST:

- Town to assist with Forest Management Plans (funding or guidance)
- Natural Gas Leasing – Town to assist with a landowner coalition
- Networking opportunities that the Town (or others) could assist with
- Possibilities for regional approach to farmland protection
- Town staff liaison person – be proactive as well as responsive
- Ag Tourism guidelines

**Town of Ithaca  
Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan  
Farmer Meeting**

May 1, 2010  
8:00 – 10:00 a.m.  
Ithaca Town Hall

1. Coffee and Snacks
2. Welcome and Introductions
3. Summary of how we got to this point
4. Review vision statement
5. Review goals with key recommendations highlighted  
- anything not understood, something missing, etc.
6. Interest in Purchase of Development Rights (PDR) and Lease of Development Rights (LDR)
7. What's next – how do we finish the Plan?

Town of Ithaca  
Agricultural & Farmland Protection Plan  
Farmer Meeting – May 1, 2010 – 8:00 a.m.  
Town of Ithaca Board Room

15 attendees (9 Farmers & 6 Town/CCE Representatives)

#### MEETING NOTES:

Farmer: Farm types – include Open Space in vision statement.

Farmer: Better land resources – questioned why the word “better” is used.

Farmer: Goals from '92 Plan – not met – tax relief.

Farmer: State school tax works great.  
For agriculture to work you need farmers – there is lots of development in his area.  
He has rental properties in the area which help to support his farming.  
Needs to encourage stewardship of the land and agriculture.

Farmer: What about a mobile vehicle down at Cass Park – sell produce, pumpkins.

Farmer: What is the definition of Agritourism that the Town is using? (Hollis read Ag & Markets definition)  
Education of Town representatives is need.

Farmer: Zoning should protect farmland, but town is not currently protecting agriculture around her place  
Existing regulations are being ignored by the Town.  
Maybe talk with farmers that went out of business – ask them why?

Farmer: How does the hotel affect the farm? (to Farmer)

Farmer: Maybe the Town should publicize how to challenge Town decisions (for Farmer). Farmer responded that she knows how, and did challenge Town.

Town: '93 Comp Plan – growth is following plan. New plan will guide new zoning.

Farmer: Hotel could offer opportunities for Farmer. Provide contacts for different kitchen / restaurants. Could Town help farmers with small crops to get them to the kitchens.

Town: Balancing act – farmers don't want development around them, but farmers also want to be able to build or sell land if needed.

Town: Town was consistent with zoning regarding the Hotel project? (Town – yes)

CCE: Make sure people understand zoning, can work both ways.

Direct marketing, different types of agricultural operations might fit in different zones.

Farmer: In the Town, she has been getting different answers from staff.

Farmer: Where plan recommendations refer to real estate agents, why not also include mortgage writers.

Farmer: Under recommendation 4 (e), add local businesses or Legislatures for awards.

Farmer: Questioning the difference in the two recommendations that related to real estate agents.

Farmer: Economic multiplier – amount that comes out of Ag. Add to plan for public understanding.

Farmer: Contiguous land use is important.

Hydrology, road side ditch maintenance, ditches flowing fast, plant material could slow it down, work with State, County and Town Highway Departments.

Framer: Recommendation 2(e) – the purchase or lease should be “for agricultural use”.

Farmer: Recommendation 3(h) – Add similar language under goal 5.

Farmer: Appreciate work, output. Another Framer agrees.

Town: Asks about the Agriculture Committee – task suggestions from the farmers.

Farmer: Every farm operation should have a representative on the committee, all types.

Town: Ag Committee should have Town staff support, link to other Boards.

Farmer: One problem, can't have meetings without farmers, but Town needs to conduct business, needs quorum (can't wait for several months during summer when farmers are busy).

CCE: Committee should include: rural landowners, landowners that rent to farmers, need staff support.

Farmer: Youth Commission format works, maybe an example of how Ag. Committee could be organized.

Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan  
Town of Ithaca – November 2011

Town: Every farmer involved in Committee, but maybe an executive committee could be formed to act on business as representatives of the full Committee when full Committee can't meet.

CCE: Farmers have limited time. If on Ag Committee, won't participate in other Town Boards.

CCE: Ag Committee ideas, look at County Protection Board format.

Farmer: Concentrate development, preserve Ag.  
Get City people out to see Agriculture and understand it.

PDR vs. LDR:

CCE explained both concepts -

Farmer: Would commitment to only 2-3 years for LDR.

Farmer: PDR – future generations would curse you for placing permanent restrictions on the farm, 25 years seems to long for LDR.

Farmer: What about 5 years?

Farmer: Would be happy with the LDR, even if it just covers the taxes (Another Farmer agrees).

Farmer: Good to pursue PDR, but could create liability for future generations or if an emergency came up and needed to sell.

Farmer: Existing PDR program doesn't require it to be actively farmed, would like that to be for LDR if used here.

Farmer: Disagrees, for LDR the land should be active, the lands needs to produce to be taken off the tax roll.

CCE: Look into existing older PDR programs in the Northeast. What has happened when those properties have sold? Was it difficult to sell, what was the sale value?

Farmer: Soil type should not be only factor in determining what to protect.

Town: Not convinced of LDR yet. In terms of a public investment, he likes PDR. Need to preserve land for future, unsure of future, will LDR be able to preserve.

Farmer: Could PDR offer payment over time?

Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan  
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Farmer: Thank you, interesting document.

CCE: There is a general concern over Town staff and their understanding of Ag regulations.

Farmer: There are issues, and the Town does have a reputation related to agriculture, specifically with the equestrian community.

Farmer: Building Department needs to listen.

Farmer: Understand that Building Department staff is busy, but how staff responds could be different.

Farmer: Ag Committee could be a venue to help Town staff understand farming. Could work both ways though. Maybe a presentation from the Building Department to offer a better understand, inform farming community.

Town: Maybe a statement in Comp Plan could be included - something regarding “being friendly to agriculture / residents, and adopt / update regulations”.



**Town of Ithaca  
Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan  
Farmer Meeting**

March 22, 2011  
7:00 pm  
Ithaca Town Hall

1. Welcome and Introductions
2. Summary of Plan
3. Discuss section on Agricultural Lands to be Protected (pg 30), including Map 9 (Appendix E)
4. Review goals with key recommendations highlighted (pg 37)
5. Summary of proposed Agricultural Committee Charter (Appendix G)
6. Comments / Question on other sections of the draft Plan
7. What's next – additional review/edits and then approved by:
  - Tompkins County Agriculture and Farmland Protection Board
  - Town of Ithaca Town Board
  - NYS Department of Agriculture and Markets

Town of Ithaca  
Agricultural & Farmland Protection Plan  
Farmer Meeting – March 22, 2011 – 7:00 pm  
Town of Ithaca Employee Lounge

12 attendees (8 Farmers & 4 Town / CCE Representatives)

## MEETING NOTES:

### Introductions

The Town gave a quick overview of the draft Plan, highlighting certain pages and headings. Discussed the “Farm Operation” definition, and what if horse operation is not considered “commercial”, but a private operation. Also, one farmer felt that the zoning definition of a farm may exclude some operations with the 3 acre limitation.

The Town provided a summary for the Agricultural Lands to be Protected section and pointed out the proposed boundaries on the map. A farmer asked “protected from what”? What is meant by protection? CCE further explained the section and purpose, how the State requirements fit in, and shouldn’t feel threatened by the “protection” idea.

The Town explained the goals and highlighted several of the recommendations. Some of the questions and discussion include:

Farmer: under Goal 1, it was questioned the term “as practical” in recommendations e and f

Farmer: under Goal 2, emphasized the importance of changing the sprinkler law (recommendation c), need for code enforcement staff to be cooperative and easier to work with

Farmer: under Goal 2, asked for clarification on recommendation g

Farmer: under Goal 3, recommendation d, how to balance where municipal water and sewer already exists and where to limit extension, is already in front of their property

Farmer: there are financial pressures – taxes

Farmer: under Goal 3, recommendation f, emphasized that there had to be something besides the deed restriction, maybe a map at Town Hall to monitor, something more flexible for the future, no objection to the fixed ratio idea though

Farmer: under Goal 4, similar to recommendation e, maybe use signage to recognize farms (ex. this farm is protected) or other details/interesting facts about the farm, if the farm is open to the public (farm stand), something the public can see, try to recognize as many farms as possible – must be something to say about every farm

No comments on Goal 5

Implementation Plan (pg41)

Farmer: add another bullet under the first item – Town staff to be respectful and courteous

Farmer: maybe invite members of Code Enforcement staff to an Agricultural Committee meeting to help understand issues and concerns

CCE started the discussion regarding the proposed new Agriculture Committee Charter. CCE explained previous problems with Ag Committee (lack of attendance, lack of agenda items, little Town support) and also highlighted the positives of the proposal.

Several farmers expressed concern with the idea of sending a representative in their place to a meeting. Several did not have people who understood the business well enough or that they trusted to appreciate the value of the farm. When it was pointed out that no one had to send a replacement, it was thought that it might work on some occasions.

Concern was expressed with losing the right to vote if one missed two meetings when there might be a legitimate reason to miss a meeting and be excused. Options for electronic hook-ups to the meeting or recording a meeting to be listened to at a later time were thought to have some merit as another option for keeping up-to-speed on issues that were discussed.

Farmer: Ag Committee was previously more informal, this will make it more than advisory  
It seems good having the incentive for attendance

Farmer: like it being more formal – more leverage on issues

Town: asked about the liaison's section.

Farmer: may be helpful to liaison's to hear/see how the actions/decisions might affect farmers

Farmer: feel that having a charter like this – interest and attendance will go up, this may inspire farmers to work and provide feedback, having a proactive group is good

Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan  
Town of Ithaca – November 2011

Discussion continued on what the Ag Committee can do and work on

Farmer: asked for clarification of the Towns Ag Zoning and the density restriction

The Town explained the current zoning

The Town encouraged everyone to provide comments on the draft and are available to meet or talk with anyone, if interested.

Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan  
Town of Ithaca – November 2011

## **APPENDIX G**

### Proposed Charter of the Town of Ithaca Agriculture Committee



Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan  
Town of Ithaca – November 2011



# Proposed Charter of the Town of Ithaca Agriculture Committee

## 1. Purpose

The purpose of the Town of Ithaca Agriculture Committee (hereafter “Agriculture Committee”) shall be

To advise the Town of Ithaca Town Board (hereafter “Town Board”) regarding agricultural policy in the Town

To review and suggest updates to the Town's Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan; in particular, to assist with or take the lead in developing recommendations relating to areas assigned to the Agriculture Committee in the Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan

To serve as a clearinghouse for relations between farm operations in the Town of Ithaca and the Town's Town Board, Planning Board, Zoning Board of Appeals, Conservation Board, Planning Department, Code Enforcement, and other agencies of Town Government

To provide a forum for concerns about Town policy, issues with Town staff, or other matters relating to farming in the Town for possible referral to the Town Board

To conduct research into farm-related subjects that may result in policy recommendations to the Town Board

To provide input for annual additions to the County Agricultural Districts and input to the eight-year review of County Agricultural Districts

To provide educational resources for sharing information among farmers and to educate Town residents and officials about farming and farmland

To undertake other appropriate tasks requested by the Town Board.

## 2. Membership

### 2.1 Organizational membership

The member organizations of the Town of Ithaca Agriculture Committee are farm operations in the Town of Ithaca appointed by the Town of Ithaca Town Board. *Farm operation* means a commercial enterprise located in the Town of Ithaca that engages in the production, preparation, or marketing of fruit; vegetables; field crops; nursery stock or flowers; livestock or livestock products, including commercial horse boarding and breeding operations; Christmas tree farming; timber processing; the production of compost, mulch, or other biomass crops; and the management and harvesting of farm woodlands.

### 2.2 Adding or removing member organizations

Following creation of the Agriculture Committee, member organizations shall be added or removed only by resolution of the Town Board or by withdrawal tendered in writing from the designated contact to the chair of the Agriculture Committee.

## **2.3 Designated contacts**

A person from each member organization shall be appointed by the Town Board as the designated contact person for that organization. Following creation of the Agriculture Committee, the designated contact for a member organization shall be reassigned only by resolution of the Town Board.

## **2.4 Member representatives**

Member organizations of the Agriculture Committee shall be represented at meetings by one or more persons designated by the contact person for each member organization. Representatives need not be the same for every meeting. Each member organization shall have no more than one vote regardless of the number of representatives it sends to meetings. No person shall represent more than one organization during any single meeting.

## **2.5 Associate members**

The Town Board may, in addition to the organizational members of the Agriculture Committee, appoint one or two citizens interested in local agriculture or local food production to serve as associate members of the Committee. Associate members may participate fully in the activities of the Committee but shall not have a vote in any decision of the Committee except as specified in Section 3.6, “Quorum.”

## **2.6 Liaisons**

The Town of Ithaca Town Board, the Town of Ithaca Planning Board, the Town of Ithaca Zoning Board of Appeals, and the Town of Ithaca Conservation Board shall each appoint one of their members to serve as a liaison to the Agriculture Committee. The appointment of liaisons shall also be solicited from Cornell University agricultural operations and Cornell Cooperative Extension of Tompkins County. Liaisons shall not have a vote in any decision of the Agriculture Committee except as specified in Section 3.6, “Quorum.”

## **2.7 Staff support**

The Town of Ithaca Planning Department shall assign one or more members of its staff to support the business of the Agriculture Committee. Support shall include, but not be limited to, attending meetings of the Committee; preparation of meeting minutes based upon collation and review of meeting notes; ensuring that meeting minutes and other materials produced by the Committee for public consumption are published on the Town website; and reviewing progress achieved regarding the items delegated to the Committee by the Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan and reporting on the same at the annual community meeting of the Committee and to the Town Board. Assigned staff need not be the same for every meeting, and notwithstanding the requirement for staff support, a meeting of the Committee shall not be considered invalid due to lack of staff attendance.

## **3. Procedure**

### **3.1 Chair and vice-chair**

The chair and vice-chair of the Agriculture Committee shall be elected by the member organizations of the Agriculture Committee at each annual community meeting. Any

person chosen by the Agriculture Committee may serve as chair or vice-chair. The chair and vice-chair shall have no vote independent of their status (if applicable) as a representative of a member organization. If the chair is unable to attend a meeting, the vice-chair shall serve in his or her stead; if both are unable to attend a meeting, a chair pro tem shall be elected by the voting member organizations attending the meeting to serve for the duration of the meeting. The chair shall consult with Town staff in setting agendas but shall not be bound by decisions of the staff in choosing agenda items. The chair or vice-chair may be removed from office by vote of two-thirds of the voting members.

### **3.2 Voting status**

To promote continuity of participation, member organizations shall gain or lose voting status depending upon their meeting attendance as follows:

- a. Every member organization shall attain voting status upon appointment by the Town Board.
- b. A member organization shall lose its voting status following the third consecutive meeting in which it has not participated by sending a representative.
- c. A member organization that has lost its voting status shall regain voting status following the second consecutive meeting in which it has participated by sending a representative.

### **3.3 Committee mail list**

The Town shall provide an electronic mail list for use of the Committee. Subscribers to the mail list shall be the Designated Contacts for the member organizations (one per organization).

### **3.4 Electronic mail ballots**

The chair of the Committee may, at his or her sole option, conduct formal business by email, it being understood that much business can be conducted by common consent. Any proposed action put formally before the membership via email by the chair that meets with no objection from the voting members within a week (default letter ballot) shall at the end of that week be considered adopted by a unanimous vote of the voting members. Votes on other issues conducted by email shall be considered adopted upon reaching the criterion for approval specified for that type of question.

### **3.5 Meetings**

The Agriculture Committee shall regularly meet at least four times in each calendar year. Meetings shall be scheduled in advance by the members and may be conducted face-to-face or via telephone conference. All meetings shall be open to visitors from the public. Meetings shall be governed by *Robert's Rules of Order Revised* regarding the operation of committees, insofar as such rules are not inconsistent with or in conflict with this enabling document, with other policies adopted by the Town Board, or with provisions of law. Except as specified in Section 3.6, "Quorum," a member must have voting rights to make or second a motion.

### **3.6 Annual community meeting**

The Agriculture Committee shall hold at least one meeting a year to which all members of the local farming community are invited to attend as guests.

### **3.7 Sessions**

A session of the Agriculture Committee shall be defined as the period beginning at the start of the annual community meeting and extending to the start of the following annual community meeting.

### **3.8 Quorum**

A quorum of the Agriculture Committee shall consist of representatives from a number of voting member organizations greater than half the total number of voting member organizations. In the absence of a quorum, participants at a meeting may engage in informal discussion, but they may not conduct any formal business with the exception of setting a time and date for the next meeting and adjourning to the date set. For this purpose only, each attending member organization, associate member, and liaison organization shall have one vote. Meetings without quorum shall still count towards attendance for purposes of gaining, maintaining, or losing voting rights.

### **3.9 Proxies**

A voting member organization unable to send a representative to a meeting of the Agriculture Committee may, by certification in writing to the chair of the Agriculture Committee, assign its vote to another voting member organization for the duration of that meeting. Assignment of a proxy shall not persist in effect beyond the end of the meeting at which the certification is received and shall not be considered attendance for purposes of determining voting status or establishing the presence of a quorum.

## **APPENDIX H**

Farming on the Edge – Sprawling Development Threatens America's Best  
Farmland – Map of New York State



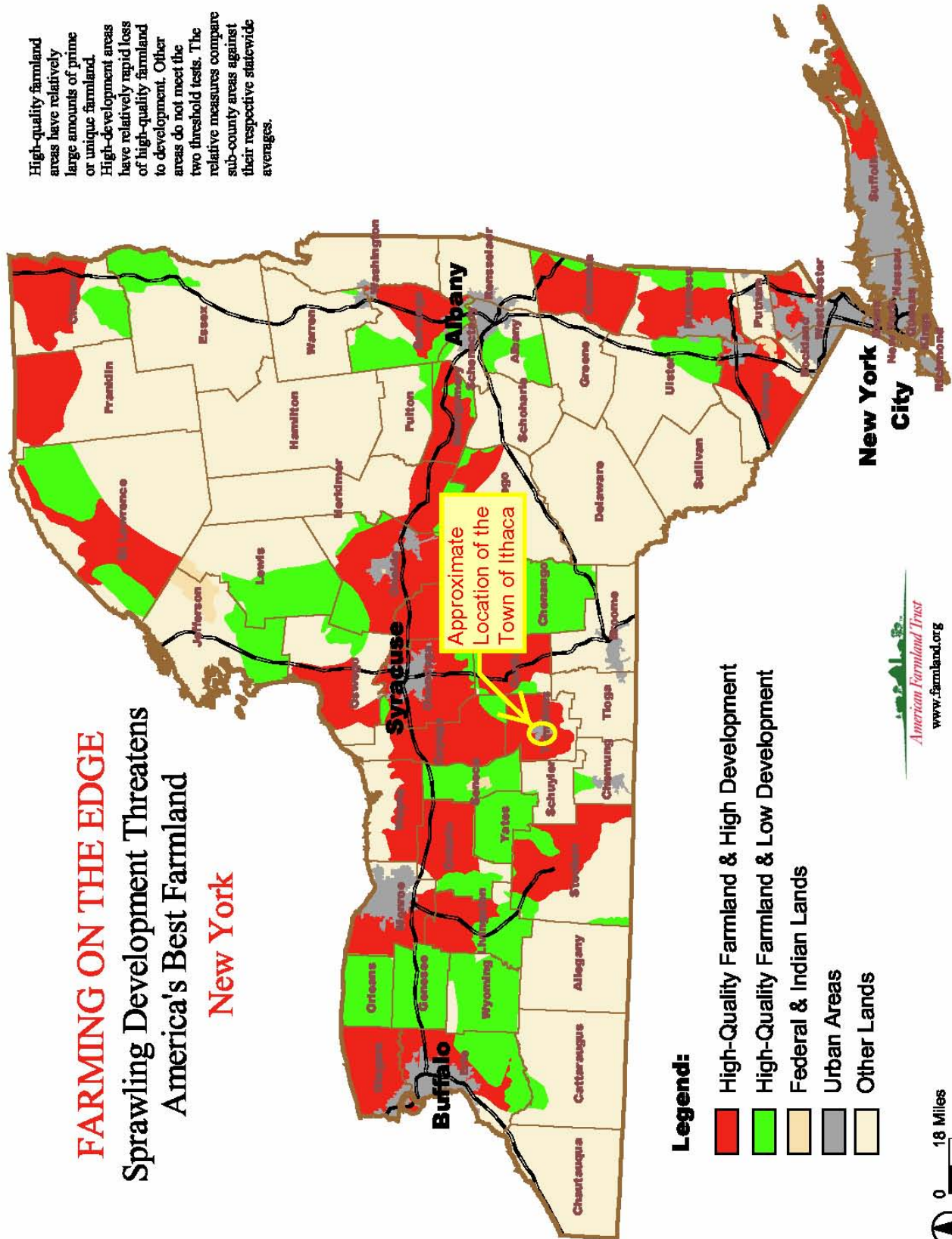
Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan  
Town of Ithaca – November 2011

# FARMING ON THE EDGE

## Sprawling Development Threatens America's Best Farmland

### New York

High-quality farmland areas have relatively large amounts of prime or unique farmland. High-development areas have relatively rapid loss of high-quality farmland to development. Other areas do not meet the two threshold tests. The relative measures compare sub-county areas against their respective statewide averages.





Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan  
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## **APPENDIX I**

### Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan Approvals

Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan  
Town of Ithaca – November 2011

**MEETING OF THE ITHACA TOWN BOARD  
MONDAY, NOVEMBER 7, 2011**

**TB RESOLUTION NO. 2011- 177: SEQR for Proposed adoption of the Town of Ithaca Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan**

WHEREAS, this action is the adoption of the Town of Ithaca Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan; and

WHEREAS, this is being processed as a Type I action pursuant to the New York State Environmental Quality Review Act (SEQR) 6 NYCRR Part 617 and Chapter 148 (Environmental Quality Review) of the Town of Ithaca Code, for which the Town of Ithaca Town Board is acting a Lead Agency and the only involved agency in conducting the environmental review with respect to the adoption of the Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan; and

WHEREAS, the Town Board, at a public hearing held on November 7, 2011, has reviewed and accepted as adequate the Full Environmental Assessment Form (EAF), Parts I and II, for this action, prepared by the Town Planning staff; and

RESOLVED, that the Town of Ithaca Town Board hereby makes a negative determination of environmental significance in accordance with Article 8 of the Environmental Conservation Law and the implementing regulations thereof and Chapter 148 of the Town of Ithaca Code, for the above referenced action as proposed, based on the information in the EAF Part I and for the reasons set forth in the EAF II and, therefore, a Draft Environmental Impact Statement will not be required.

Moved: Tee-Ann Hunter

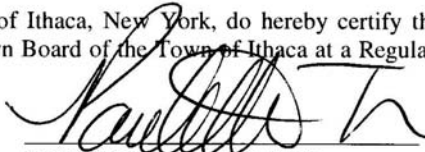
Seconded: Rich DePaolo

VOTE: Ayes: Engman, Goodman, Levine, DePaolo, Leary and Hunter

Absent: Horwitz Motion passed unanimously

STATE OF NEW YORK)  
COUNTY OF TOMPKINS) SS:  
TOWN OF ITHACA:

I, Paulette Terwilliger Town Clerk of the Town of Ithaca, New York, do hereby certify that the above resolution is an exact copy of the same adopted by the Town Board of the Town of Ithaca at a Regular Meeting on the 7<sup>th</sup> day of November, 2011.



Paulette Terwilliger, Town Clerk

Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan  
Town of Ithaca – November 2011

**MEETING OF THE ITHACA TOWN BOARD  
MONDAY, NOVEMBER 7, 2011**

**TB Resolution No. 2011- 178: Resolution adopting the Town of Ithaca Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan**

WHEREAS, the Town of Ithaca was awarded funding from NYS Department of Agriculture and Markets to develop an Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan; and

WHEREAS, an Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan was developed under NYS Agriculture and Markets Law, Article 25-AAA, Section 324-a; and

WHEREAS, the Town Agricultural Plan Steering Committee, which included personnel from Cornell Cooperative Extension of Tompkins County and the Town of Ithaca Planning Department, collected data and prepared the draft Plan; and

WHEREAS, the Town Agricultural Plan Steering Committee conducted individual interviews with approximately 16 agricultural operations and held three farmers meetings (November 17, 2009, May 1, 2010, March 22, 2011) during the development of the plan; and

WHEREAS, the Town Board has proposed the adoption of the Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan; and

WHEREAS, at its meeting on September 26, 2011, the Town Board reviewed and discussed the draft Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan; and

WHEREAS, at its meeting on October 17, 2011, the Town Board of the Town of Ithaca discussed the proposed Plan and adopted a resolution for a public hearing to be held by said Town on November 7, 2011 at 6:00 p.m. to hear all interested parties on the proposed Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan; and

WHEREAS, notice of said public hearing was duly advertised in the Ithaca Journal; and

WHEREAS, said public hearing was duly held on said date and time at the Town Hall of the Town of Ithaca and all parties in attendance were permitted an opportunity to speak on behalf of or in opposition to said Plan, or any part thereof; and

WHEREAS, pursuant to article 8 of the Environmental Conservation Law and its implementing regulations at 6 NYCRR Part 617 (SEQR), and Chapter 148 of the Town of Ithaca Code, adoption of said Plan is a Type I action for which the Town Board of the Town of Ithaca, acting as lead agency in an environmental review with respect to adoption of the Plan, has on November 7, 2011 made a negative determination of environmental

Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan  
Town of Ithaca – November 2011

significance, after having reviewed and accepted as adequate a Full Environmental Assessment Form (EAF) Parts I and II prepared by the Town's Planning staff, for the reasons set forth in the EAF Parts I and II referenced above;

NOW, THEREFORE, be it

RESOLVED, that the Town Board of the Town of Ithaca hereby adopts said Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan; and it is further

RESOLVED, that the Planning Department is hereby directed to forward the Town of Ithaca Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan to the Tompkins County Agriculture and Farmland Protection Board and the New York State Commissioner of Agriculture and Markets for approval.

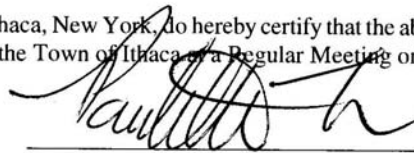
Moved: Rich DePaolo

Seconded: Bill Goodman

VOTE: Ayes: Engman, Goodman, Levine, DePaolo, Leary and Hunter  
Absent: Horwitz Motion passed unanimously

STATE OF NEW YORK)  
COUNTY OF TOMPKINS) SS:  
TOWN OF ITHACA:

I, Paulette Terwilliger Town Clerk of the Town of Ithaca, New York, do hereby certify that the above resolution is an exact copy of the same adopted by the Town Board of the Town of Ithaca at a Regular Meeting on the 7<sup>th</sup> day of November, 2011.



Paulette Terwilliger, Town Clerk



## TOMPKINS COUNTY AGRICULTURE & FARMLAND PROTECTION BOARD

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615 Willow Avenue Ithaca, New York 14850  
Telephone (607) 272-2292 Fax (607) 272-7088

November 16, 2011

### **Tompkins County Agriculture and Farmland Protection Board Resolution approving the Town of Ithaca Agriculture and Farmland Protection Plan**

Whereas, the Tompkins County Agriculture and Farmland Protection Board has reviewed the Town of Ithaca's Agriculture and Farmland Protection Plan and, in summary, it includes the following information:

- The Town of Ithaca has diverse farm enterprises that range from small-scale fruit and vegetable producers, livestock farmers, and ornamental-horticultural businesses to a few farmers engaged in larger-scale dairy and commodity field crop production
- Farm operations in the Town own and operate a total of approximately 3,412 acres
- The goals of the plan are 1) promote the availability of locally grown foods and other agricultural products for all residents including limited income families; 2) retain and encourage a diversity of economically viable farm types; 3) ensure long-term protection of agricultural-land resources for agriculture; 4) encourage public understanding and involvement; 5) promote wise land use and waste management on agricultural land.
- Some key recommendations of the Plan include revitalizing the Town's Agriculture Committee, revise Zoning and other Town Ordinances to address agricultural issues (farmstands, signage, greenhouses, agritourism, value-added product operations, sprinkler law, etc.), develop a agricultural page on the Town's website, and continue implementation of the Town's current agricultural conservation easement acquisition program
- Specific growth potential in the Town is seen for local-food sales, niche crops, and value-added production systems

Be it therefore resolved, that the Tompkins County Agriculture and Farmland Protection Board approves the Town of Ithaca's Agriculture and Farmland Protection Plan and further recommends Town of Ithaca and New York State approval.

Approved without dissent, November 16, 2011  
Tompkins County Agriculture and Farmland Protection Board

*The mission of the Tompkins County Agriculture and Farmland Protection Board shall be to encourage farming in the County through local initiatives which create favorable conditions that allow farmers to operate economically viable enterprises.*

Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan  
Town of Ithaca – November 2011



STATE OF NEW YORK  
DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE AND MARKETS  
10B Airline Drive, Albany, New York 12235  
518-457-8876 Fax 518-457-3087  
[www.agmkt.state.ny.us](http://www.agmkt.state.ny.us)

Andrew M. Cuomo  
Governor

Darrel J. Aubertine  
Commissioner



April 19, 2012

Honorable Herb Engman  
Town Supervisor  
Town of Ithaca  
215 Tioga Street  
Ithaca, New York 14850

**RE: Municipal Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan**

Dear Supervisor Engman:

We have concluded our review of the Town of Ithaca's Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan which was adopted by the Town Board in November 7, 2011 and approved by the Tompkins County Agricultural Protection Board on November 16, 2011. Pursuant to Section 324-a of the Agriculture and Markets Law, and consistent with the legislative intent of Article 25-AAA of the AML to promote local initiatives for agricultural and farmland protection, I approve the plan.

I commend the Town Board for their initiatives and efforts in developing the plan.

The plan contains a number of very good recommendations, including a proposal to revitalize the Town Agriculture Committee to advise the Town Board on Agricultural issues and to help implement key recommendations in the plan. The Department specifically encourages the Town to implement the following recommended actions:

Revise Zoning and other Town Ordinances to accommodate farm stands, year –round farm markets, greenhouses, agri-tourism, value added product operations, home food production, U-pick operations and community supported agricultural activities. (page 52).

Continue to implement the Town's current agricultural conservation easement acquisition program.

Implement the recommendation to establish an agricultural Lease of Development Rights program and to establish a town wide right of first refusal for outright purchase of agricultural properties.

Honorable Herb Engman  
Page 2  
April 19, 2012

Enhance zoning as a tool to control non-agricultural development on or adjacent to agricultural land.

Amend subdivision and Site Plan requirements to encourage the development of community gardens in larger new housing developments. (page 52)

Revise Zoning and other Town Laws to encourage on-farm sustainable energy production.

Review and revise regulations pertaining to structures to accommodate farm operations including the review of Sprinkler Law, use of rough-cut timber operations and property-maintenance laws.

Due to the State's continuing fiscal crisis, the Department is not likely to solicit grant applications in the foreseeable future for its Farmland Protection Implementation Grants Program, which has traditionally funded Purchase of Development Rights (PDR) projects. Therefore, please consider exploring a partnership with the City of Ithaca to create an inter-municipal Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) program. Such a collaborative effort of your two municipalities could effectively demonstrate how a TDR approach (which relies on the infusion of private, not public, monies) could fuel urban economic development and renewal in the City as well as protecting those viable agricultural lands identified in the Town's new plan.

This plan is the third Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan being completed in Tompkins County and represents an important opportunity for the Town's to identify common issues such as "farmers' market expansions" and "buy local programs in your schools" and coordinate a unified effort to make agriculture more profitable in the County. We look forward to working cooperatively with you in furthering the protection and development of farm operations and agricultural resources in the Town of Ithaca.

Thank you for your continued support of New York agriculture.

Sincerely,



Darrel J. Aubertine  
Commissioner  
Department of Agriculture & Markets  
of the State of New York

Cc: Martha Robertson, Chair, Tompkins County Board of Legislators  
Rachel Crispell, Chair, Tompkins County Agricultural Protection Board  
Edward C. Marx, Commissioner of Planning  
Monika Roth, Cornell Cooperative Extension  
Mike Smith, Town Planner

“There are only three things that can kill a farmer: lightning,  
rolling over in a tractor, and old age.”  
Bill Bryson

