

KEEPING AGRICULTURE IN SARATOGA COUNTY

**Everyone Has a Stake in Agriculture's Future:
Farmers, Consumers and Communities**



An Agricultural & Farmland Protection Plan for Saratoga County

December, 1997

**Saratoga County Planning Dept.
Bldg. #5, 50 West High Street
Ballston Spa, New York 12020**



SARATOGA COUNTY AGRICULTURAL AND FARMLAND PROTECTION BOARD

Chairman	Charles Hanehan	Dairy Farmer, Saratoga
	Clinton Barber	Dairy Farmer, Northumberland
	Hume B. Donnan	Dairy Farmer, Galway
	Tom Hicks	Fruit and Dairy Farmer, Clifton Park
	Bill Peck	Dairy Farmer, Schuylerville
	Isabel Prescott	Fruit Grower, Clifton Park
	Carl Seymour	Chair, Soil & Water Conservation District
	Larry DeVoe	Supervisor, Halfmoon
	David Wood	Director, Cornell Cooperative Extension
	Lawrence Benton	Director, County Planning
	Carol Holley	Director, Real Property Tax Services

AGRICULTURAL AND FARMLAND PROTECTION WORKING GROUP

Leanne DuBois	Cornell Cooperative Extension
Michael Welti	County Planning Department
John Hamilton	Soil & Water Conservation District
Judy Feagles	New York Farm Bureau Field Advisor
Lawrence Benton	Agricultural & Farmland Protection Board
Carol Holley	Agricultural & Farmland Protection Board
Isabel Prescott	Agricultural & Farmland Protection Board
David Wood	Agricultural & Farmland Protection Board
Jerry Cosgrove	American Farmland Trust
Teri Ptacek	American Farmland Trust

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In March, 1996, the Saratoga County Board of Supervisors authorized the county Agricultural and Farmland Protection Board to develop an agricultural and farmland protection plan for Saratoga County, earmarking \$10,000 in cash and \$40,000 in staff contributions as the local match for the state grant program. Marvin LeRoy, Chair of the Board of Supervisors, specifically directed the board to develop an "action-oriented" plan that would go beyond mere paper planning efforts. The legislature's action extends its long-term commitment to agriculture in the county, which has been evidenced by its strong support for the county's agricultural districts, Cornell Cooperative Extension and the County Soil and Water Conservation District.

In response, the Agricultural and Farmland Protection Board, chaired by Town of Saratoga dairy farmer Charles Hanehan, developed a plan that assesses the state of agriculture in Saratoga County and proposes recommendations that will promote agriculture and protect farmland. The plan also spurred action throughout the county; over the last 18 months, eight towns have enacted Right to Farm ordinances, Clifton Park has passed a conservation easement law, successful workshops and seminars on land use and agricultural economic development were held, over 4,000 people attended two farm breakfast tours, 10,000 copies of the *Saratoga Farms* resource guide were distributed and approximately 20,000 people learned more about agriculture at the Saratoga County Fair and the Clifton Park Farm Fest.

The Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan, together with its actions and outreach, will spread the word about the importance of agriculture to Saratoga County's economy and quality of life. The 100 million dollars in economic activity generated by agriculture annually, not to mention the open space, recreational opportunities, quality of life and tourism dollars associated with agriculture and farmland, is reason alone for Saratoga County to help move agriculture forward to the 21st century.

The sobering reality, however, is that Saratoga County agriculture exists in an increasingly urban environment and under intense development and market pressure. In the last forty years, Saratoga County has lost 130,000 acres of farmland. By 1992, only 13.5 percent of the county remained in farming. At the same time, Saratoga County has experienced one of the fastest rates of growth in New York State. By the year 2030, the county's population is projected to grow another 29 percent. If no action is taken, the economic and environmental contributions of agriculture will inevitably be diminished. Farmers recognize this reality. In the survey work that was done for this plan, farmers overwhelmingly voiced their support for the Agricultural Districts Law, but indicated that more also needs to be done. Over 65 percent believed that farmland protection components of the Agricultural Districts Law should be strengthened.

The first chapter of the county's agricultural and farmland protection plan stresses the importance of Saratoga County's agricultural resources, identifies several critical resource issues facing Saratoga agriculture and discusses why action should be taken now to protect these valuable economic and environmental assets. Also included are four specific goals of the plan. They are: Demonstrate the value of Saratoga County agriculture; Enhance the viability of Saratoga

County's agricultural industry; Promote protection of farmland as an important economic and environmental resource; and Direct public policy toward promoting and sustaining agriculture.

In addition to the actions and activities already undertaken, the plan provides a framework for local actions and recommends strategies that are voluntary and incentive based. The Agricultural and Farmland Protection Board is committed to working with local governments to implement the recommendations, which are included in Chapter 9. The recommendations are intended to achieve the plan's goals by:

- recognizing the unique attributes of the farming business,
- developing community support for farmers, farming and farmland,
- enhancing the economic development of agriculture,
- promoting local incentives to support agriculture and protect farmland,
- helping local decision makers better understand agricultural land use issues,
- maintaining environmental benefits provided by agriculture and
- advocating continued state support for local agricultural and farmland protection efforts.

As board member and local dairy farmer Charles Hanehan observed recently, "Our vision is to be proactive rather than reactive, acting while there is still a viable core of agriculture left in Saratoga County." As a result, this plan pinpoints actions that local governments in Saratoga County can take now to provide dividends for the next century.

“Our vision is to be proactive rather than reactive, acting while there is still a viable core of agriculture left in Saratoga County.”

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter 1	Introduction	1
Chapter 2	Agricultural Resources	7
Chapter 3	Economic Impact	17
Chapter 4	Conversion Pressure	27
Chapter 5	Challenges	39
Chapter 6	Farmers' Concerns	43
Chapter 7	Strategies and Actions	47
Chapter 8	Celebrating Agriculture	59
Chapter 9	Recommendations	67
Chapter 10	Implementation	77
References	79
Glossary	81
Appendix A	Agricultural & Conservation Organizations	85
Appendix B	Additional Agricultural Data	87
Appendix C	Model Right to Farm Ordinance	89
Maps		
1	Active Agriculture	9
2	Soil Types	10
3	Ag Districts in Relation to Infrastructure	29
4	Population Change 1980-1994	30
5	Northumberland Subdivision Activity	33
Figures		
1	Important Farm Soils	8
2	Farmland Trends 1910-1992	11
3	Farm Acreage and Numbers by Town	12
4	Market Value of Agricultural Products	18
5	Leading Agricultural Products	20
6	Percent of Farms and Value of Sales	23
7	Summary of Cost of Community Services Studies	24
8	Actual Population Growth, 1980-1990	31
9	Estimated Population Growth, 1990-2000	36

Funding for this plan was provided by New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets with a matching grant from Saratoga County. Technical assistance has been provided by Cornell Cooperative Extension, Saratoga County Planning Department, Saratoga County Real Property and Saratoga County Soil and Water Conservation District. The Board was also assisted in developing the plan by its consultants, American Farmland Trust, whose New York Field Office is located in Saratoga Springs.

VISION STATEMENT

The Agricultural and Farmland Protection Board represents a broad-based group of farmers, county agencies and community organizations that have worked together to develop a plan to promote and enhance the economic viability of Saratoga's agricultural sector and protect the natural resource base on which it depends.

The Board envisions an active and viable farm community in the future, one that will continue to be self-sufficient and economically vital while contributing to Saratoga County's scenic diversity and agricultural heritage. Adopting and implementing an agricultural and farmland protection plan will help ensure that farms and farmland in Saratoga County will continue to be productive and that future generations will enjoy their full benefits.

Importance of Saratoga County's Agricultural Resources

The importance of a healthy agricultural sector to Saratoga County's economy and quality of life is indisputable.

The numbers alone illustrate that agriculture is a vital component of Saratoga County's economy. Farms produce around \$39 million each year in sales of agricultural products including milk, horses, eggs, apples, field crops, hay, sod, nursery and greenhouse plants, vegetables and Christmas trees. They support farm-related jobs and income and purchase goods, equipment and services. More than \$100 million is annually pumped into the local economy as a result of the county's agricultural productivity.

Agriculture requires land for production and farms in Saratoga County support over 70,000 acres of farmland, woodland and wetlands. The majority of farmland is used for production; cropland covers 45,000 acres and pastureland another 14,000 acres. Woodlands alone cover 16,000 acres of land in farms. As an industry, farms represent the largest land use in the county.

Agriculture contributes to the county's economic well-being in other ways. As a land use, agriculture generates a tax-base advantage for local communities. Numerous studies show that farmland consistently generates more tax revenue than it imposes on the community in service costs. In contrast, new development increases the overall budget more than it increases the tax base, largely due to the cost of education associated with residences.

The rural character of farming provides an attractive environment for economic investment and serves as a scenic backdrop for the county's tourism industry. The City of Saratoga Springs gains from its pastoral setting by promoting itself as the "city in the country."

Dollar figures alone cannot convey the full value of the county's agricultural resources. Farms provide communities with many additional rewards that are difficult to quantify, but are equally important. Environmental benefits provided by agriculture include open space, scenic vistas, the conservation of productive soils, woodlands, wetlands, and wildlife habitat.

Many people choose to live in Saratoga County because of its quality of life. Access to agricultural landscapes, rural character, locally grown produce and recreational opportunities provided by working farms greatly add to that quality of life.

Agriculture is strongly connected to Saratoga County's heritage. Generations of farmers have made the extensive investment of purchasing, clearing and improving land for farming, and

have helped establish many civic and farm organizations. Maintaining farms will perpetuate this important part of our heritage and preserve farmland for future generations.

Resource Issues

Facing Saratoga Agriculture

Farming in Saratoga County occurs in an increasingly urban environment which places it under intense development and market pressure. In 1950, before the construction of the I-87 Northway, Saratoga County was largely rural with nearly 40 percent of the county devoted to farming. In the four decades which followed, the county lost 130,000 acres of farmland. This was the greatest farmland loss among counties in the Capital District Region. By 1992, the amount of farmland in Saratoga County had decreased to only 13.5 percent.

During the same period, Saratoga County experienced one of the fastest rates of growth in the state. Because of its high rate of growth, coupled with the high rate of farmland loss, it has recently been listed in a study conducted by American Farmland Trust as a portion of one of the ten most threatened agricultural regions in the nation (Sorensen, et al., 1997). By the year 2030, the county's population is expected to grow another 29 percent (Capital District Regional Planning Commission, August 1997). Many of the county's strongest agricultural towns are expected to see more growth as a result (see Chapter 3).

Between 1987 and 1992, cropland in Saratoga County declined by 15 percent over a five year period. If the county continues to lose cropland at the same rate, an additional 20,000 acres will be lost by the year 2012; 10,000 acres more will be lost by the year 2030.

Conversion of cropland to nonagricultural use will contribute to the decline of local agriculture. When less cropland base is available, fewer farms are retained. The loss of cropland also leads to the annual loss of local revenue and sales from agriculture. The 10,300 acres of the county's cropland converted to non-agricultural use from 1982 to 1992 represents a loss of \$3.7 million to \$5.4 million each year in local farm revenue. Continued loss of farmland will limit expansion and discourage capital investment, further weakening the economic potential of agriculture. It will also affect conservation practices which require long-term investments.

Why Act Now

Agriculture is an important component of Saratoga County's diverse economic base. It is also a foundation for community identity, culture and scenic open space. Continuing to enhance the agricultural sector will help sustain past investments, expand the economic potential of farming and maintain the quality of life in Saratoga County. As we all know, the appeal of living and working in Saratoga County hinges on the quality of life the county has to offer.

If we support local agriculture, we can reap long lasting benefits from it. On the other hand, failure to commit to additional investments will cause the economic and environmental value of local agriculture to decline.

The agricultural and farmland protection strategies in this plan serve the interests of all residents and deserve serious attention by Saratoga County leaders. They will help ensure that agriculture

continues to bolster the economic and environmental well-being of the county.

Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan

Article 25AAA of the Agriculture and Markets Law was created in 1992 and amended in 1996. In 1992, agricultural district advisory committees were reorganized and expanded as agricultural and farmland protection boards and a planning grants program was established. In 1996, the state established a matching grants program for farmland protection implementation projects. These programs were intended to assist counties in developing agricultural and farmland protection plans and to assist both county and municipal governments in the implementation of such plans. State assistance payments for eligible projects are authorized under the Clean Water/Clean Air Bond Act and the Environmental Protection Fund.

In 1996, the Agricultural and Farmland Protection Board applied for and was awarded a grant to develop an agricultural and farmland protection plan for Saratoga County. In 1997, the Agricultural and Farmland Protection Board worked with the Town of Saratoga in its application for an implementation grant to protect farmland in the town.

Themes of the Plan

Many comments were solicited and received from the public during the planning process. Several themes emerged that have been woven into the plan:

Farming and Farmland - An Integrated Approach

Too often farming and farmland protection are stated as "either or" propositions. Farmers insist that the best way to protect farmland is to make farming profitable. At the same time, some nonfarmers talk about preserving farmland as if it is something that you can pickle and put in a jar. It seems clear, however, that just as farmland needs farmers to cultivate it, farmers will be out of business if they lose their farmland. Ultimately, farmers, farming and farmland are inextricably intertwined. Therefore, agricultural and farmland protection should be approached in an integrated fashion.

Carrots and Sticks - It's a Matter of Fairness

Finding a balance of regulations and incentives is really a matter of fairness. Since farmland protection benefits the entire community, everyone should share the burden. Likewise, farmers should understand that as stewards of the land, they have an obligation to take care of soil and water resources on behalf of themselves and the wider community. Each community will strike the particular balance differently; whatever the mix of incentives and regulations, they should be fair to all concerned.

Cost and Cost Effectiveness - Look at the Long Term

In the short term, regulations are often less expensive. Over the longer term, however, incentives may prove to be a better investment. The Pittsford example is a case in point. Pittsford chose to invest in purchasing development rights because it was more fair to the landowners than simply taking those development rights. It was also a better investment than

permitting residential development on that farmland because of the accompanying service costs for those homes. Incentive approaches are frequently underutilized because the short term costs appear prohibitive. But like any investment program, the cost and cost effectiveness should be analyzed over the long term to determine whether a particular investment makes sense.

Building Public Support - Everyone Has a Stake in Agriculture

Farming is important to all of us in Saratoga County - farmers, consumers and communities. While urban issues often dominate the spotlight, a significant portion of Saratoga County remains rural. Because most residents have little or no direct contact with local farmers, it is easy to forget just how much we rely on the benefits of farmland and agriculture. We all need to work together to publicize the important economic and environmental benefits of agriculture and farmland.

Goals of the Plan

Goals in developing an Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan for Saratoga County are to:

- Demonstrate the extensive value of agriculture within Saratoga County.
- Enhance the agricultural economy and the viability of the farming industry.
- Promote the protection of farmland as an important environmental and economic resource.
- Direct public policy towards promoting and sustaining agriculture.

Milestones that will be used to assess the achievement of its goals include:

- Economic impact -- Document the impact of the agricultural sector including the number of farms, acres of farmland and productivity.
- Education and awareness -- Survey public support for agriculture and farmland protection initiatives.
- Support by county and town governments -- Monitor right to farm legislation, local incentives, "farmer-friendly" land use policies, economic development of agriculture and farmland protection initiatives.

This plan is targeted towards Saratoga County's agricultural resources, with priority given to farms and farmland located in agricultural districts.

Planning Activities

Agricultural and Farmland Protection planning efforts for Saratoga County encompassed numerous activities over an eighteen month period. These activities included:

Saratoga Farms - Developed and published a 16 page resource guide to agriculture in the county. The guide features 95 farms, photographs, a map and related articles. Ten thousand copies rolled off the press in time for the Saratoga County Fair in July.

1996 Farm Breakfast and Tour - Sponsored and organized this major event held at the Hanehan Family Farm in Saratoga with the support of the Agricultural Promotion Committee and many additional agribusinesses and organizations in the county. Over 1400 people toured the dairy facility. Developed a display and informational flyers.

1997 Farm Breakfast and Tour - This 2nd annual event held at the Kings-Ransom Farm in Northumberland saw attendance more than double to around 3000 people. The volunteer base also doubled. Developed a display and informational brochures.

1997 Saratoga County Fair - Played a key role in reclaiming the Townley Building to showcase the diversity and excellence of agriculture. Worked with Cornell Cooperative Extension and various agricultural groups to assemble the best possible display of agriculture. Developed a display and banner featuring seven large photos of local farm scenes.

Agricultural Land Use Conference - Organized a conference on agricultural land use issues to kick off the agricultural and farmland protection planning efforts in Saratoga County. Topics included local land use strategies and initiatives to protect farmland and open space.

Listening Session - Organized an informal gathering of farmers to report on the progress and direction of planning activities and to gain insight into the needs, concerns and issues facing the future of farming in the county.

Agricultural Land Use Forum - Brought together a diverse group of representatives from the agricultural and planning communities to identify and discuss land use issues that affect agriculture in the county. A report was prepared for the forum which provided the framework for this discussion.

Agriculture and Economic Development Forum - Organized a forum on agriculture and economic development with Saratoga Economic Development Corporation and other organizations. An Agricultural Development Specialist from the Howard County Economic Development Authority in Maryland was the featured speaker.

Mapping of Agricultural Resources - Created maps of the county's agricultural resources that include farms by commodity, important agricultural soils and agricultural districts. The 1997 map shows a total of 330 farms, which does not include all of the smaller farms in the county.

Economic Impact Report - Developed a report on the economics of agriculture in Saratoga County. This report was distributed for the Agriculture and Economic Development Forum. A copy of this report can be obtained from Cornell Cooperative Extension.

Growth Pressure Report - Researched growth pressure in Saratoga County, including a case study of subdivision activity in three agricultural towns. A copy of this report can be obtained from Saratoga County Planning Department.

Surveys of Farmers - Conducted two surveys of farmers. The first survey solicited opinions on policy options and techniques for farmland protection in Saratoga County. The second survey

compiled information on individual farms, included a set of questions regarding regulations that have hindered farming operations and asked for opinions on how farmers and local government can strengthen agriculture.

Agricultural Land Use Discussion Paper - Developed a discussion paper on agricultural land use in Saratoga County that presented an overview of various land use issues and tools as well as some possible recommendations for discussion. A copy of this report can be obtained from Cornell Cooperative Extension and Saratoga County Planning Department.

Agricultural Marketing and Promotion Report - Explored marketing and promotion of agriculture in Saratoga County. This report describes the research and activities that were accomplished by the board. A copy of this report can be obtained from Cornell Cooperative Extension.

Town of Saratoga PDR Demonstration Project - Played a key role in developing a PDR demonstration project in the Town of Saratoga that includes the protection of two farm parcels adjacent to the Saratoga Veterans Cemetery.

Agricultural & Farmland Protection Conference - Organized a county-wide conference slated for the Winter of 1997-98 to publicize the plan and its recommendations as well as the PDR implementation project. This will kick-off the implementation phase of these planning efforts.

AGRICULTURAL RESOURCES

Importance of Farmland

Farmland is an essential component of agriculture. Once farmland is fragmented or converted to other uses, its loss is usually permanent.

In our rapidly developing county, farmland makes up an increasingly important part of the county's open space. It provides an important balance to development and adds diversity to the man-made environment. It contains productive soils, scenic vistas, wetlands and wildlife habitat.

Farms and Farmland in Saratoga County

Agricultural resources in Saratoga County include approximately 433 farms and 70,400 acres of farmland. Map 1 (page 8) shows the location of farms and agricultural districts in the county.* Map 2 shows the general location of agricultural soil resources in the county. An additional map (not included here) identifies farms by commodity and includes the names and addresses of each farm in a database, making it easy to update in the future.

Most farms are concentrated in rural areas of the county on land containing better soils -- in Northumberland, Saratoga, Stillwater, Charlton and Ballston. Many other farms are scattered throughout more urbanized areas such as Clifton Park and Halfmoon.

Small farms make up the bulk of the county's farms but produce only 11.3 percent of all agricultural sales. Larger commercial farms, on the other hand, produce the bulk of the county's agricultural sales but make up only 21 percent of all farms.

Farmland consists of both cropland, pastureland and nontillable land such as woodland and wetlands. Cropland is tillable land used to produce commodities such as corn, hay, vegetables and nursery and greenhouse crops. The majority of farmland in Saratoga County is used for production; cropland covers 45,000 acres and pastureland another 14,000 acres. Woodlands cover 16,000 acres of land in farms.

While the majority of farmland is owned by commercial farms, a sizeable portion of the county's farmland and open space is maintained by small farms, serving as rental land for larger farm operations and also providing a buffer between commercial farm operations and

* These maps were created during 1996 and 1997 and show a total of 330 farms. This figure does not include very small farms and is, therefore, lower than the 433 farms reported by the U.S. Census in 1992.

residential properties.

Soil conditions differ significantly from one part of the county to another, providing opportunities for many types of farming. The USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service classifies important Saratoga County farmland into two categories: Prime Farmland and Farmland of Statewide Importance. Figure 1 lists the specific soil types in Saratoga County which are prime or of statewide importance. More detailed soil information will be available once the soil maps are digitized.

Prime farmland is land that has the soil quality, growing season and moisture supply to produce high yield crops. It tends to be level and well drained. In Saratoga County, prime farmland is concentrated mainly in areas along the Hudson River. These are important lands to protect because they contain the most productive soils while remaining the most desirable land for development.

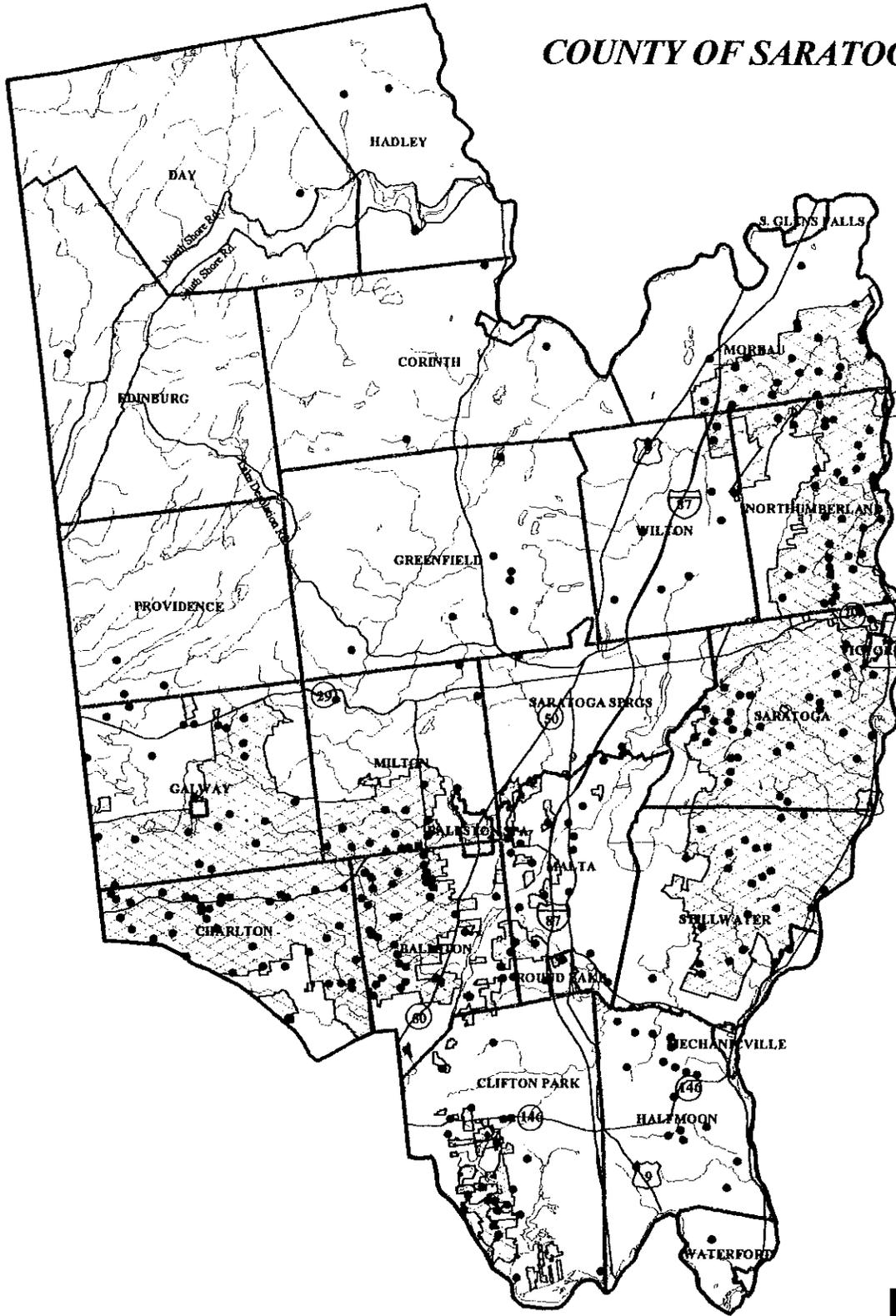
The majority of Saratoga County's 70,400 acres of farmland are classified as soils of statewide importance. These soils are nearly prime farmlands that are capable of producing high yield crops when managed with modern farming practices. Agriculture thrives in Saratoga County utilizing these soils. Farmers rely heavily on soils of statewide importance, making them important lands to protect.

Creating the maps for this plan required working with the staff of Cornell Cooperative Extension, Saratoga County Soil and Water Conservation District, USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service and USDA Farm Service Agency. Digitization of tax parcel maps and detailed soil maps will be useful in town and county planning efforts.

Figure 1: Important Farm Soils in Saratoga County

Prime Farm Soils		
Map Symbol		Slope
CcB	Charlton loam	3-8%
CIA	Claverack loamy fine sand	0-3%
CIB	Claverack loamy fine sand	3-8%
Cs	Cosad fine sandy loam	where drained
EIB	Elmridge very fine sandy loam	3-8%
GaB	Galway loam	3-8%
HuB	Hudson silt loam	3-8%
Ms	Massena silt loam	where drained
Ne	Newstead loam	where drained
NuB	Nunda silt loam	3-8%
OaA	Oakville loamy fine sand	nearly level
PtB	Paxton gravelly sandy loam	3-8%
PwA	Pittstown silt loam	0-3%
PwB	Pittstown silt loam	3-8%
Ra	Raynham silt loam	where drained
SeA	Scio silt loam	0-3%
SeB	Scio silt loam	3-8%
Sh	Shaker very fine sandy loam	where drained
StA	Sutton loam	0-3%
StB	Sutton loam	3-8%
Te	Teel silt loam	
Tg	Tioga fine sandy loam	
UnB	Unadilla very fine sandy loam	3-8%
WrB	Woodbridge loam	3-8%
Farmland of Statewide Importance		
Map Symbol		Slope
As	Allis silt loam	0-3%
BmC	Bernardston silt loam	8-15%
BnB	Bernardston-Manlius-Nassau complex	undulating
BnC	Bernardston-Manlius-Nassau complex	rolling
BtB	Broadalbin silt loam	3-8%
BtC	Broadalbin silt loam	8-15%
BvC	Broadalbin-Manlius-Nassau complex	rolling
BvB	Broadalbin-Manlius-Nassau complex	undulating
BxB	Burdett silt loam	3-8%
CcC	Charlton loam	8-15%
DeA	Deerfield loamy fine sand	0-3%
DeB	Deerfield loamy fine sand	3-8%
FaB	Farmington silt loam	3-8%
GaC	Galway loam	8-15%
HcA	Hinckley gravelly loamy sand	0-3%
HcB	Hinckley gravelly loamy sand	3-8%
MnC	Manlius-Nassau complex	rolling
MnB	Manlius-Nassau complex	undulating
NuB	Nunda silt loam	3-8%
NuC	Nunda silt loam	8-15%
PtC	Paxton gravelly sandy loam	8-15%
RhA	Rhinebeck silt loam	0-3%
RhB	Rhinebeck silt loam	3-8%
Sn	Sun loam	0-3%
Wa	Wareham loamy sand	0-3%
WnA	Windsor loamy sand	0-3%
WnB	Windsor loamy sand	3-8%

COUNTY OF SARATOGA



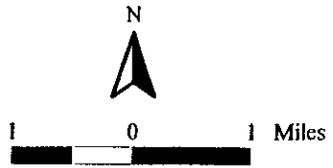
SOURCE:
Saratoga County Cornell Cooperative Extension

The LA Group
Landscape Architecture
and Engineering, P.C.
48 Long Alley
Saratoga Springs
New York 12864
1997

LEGEND

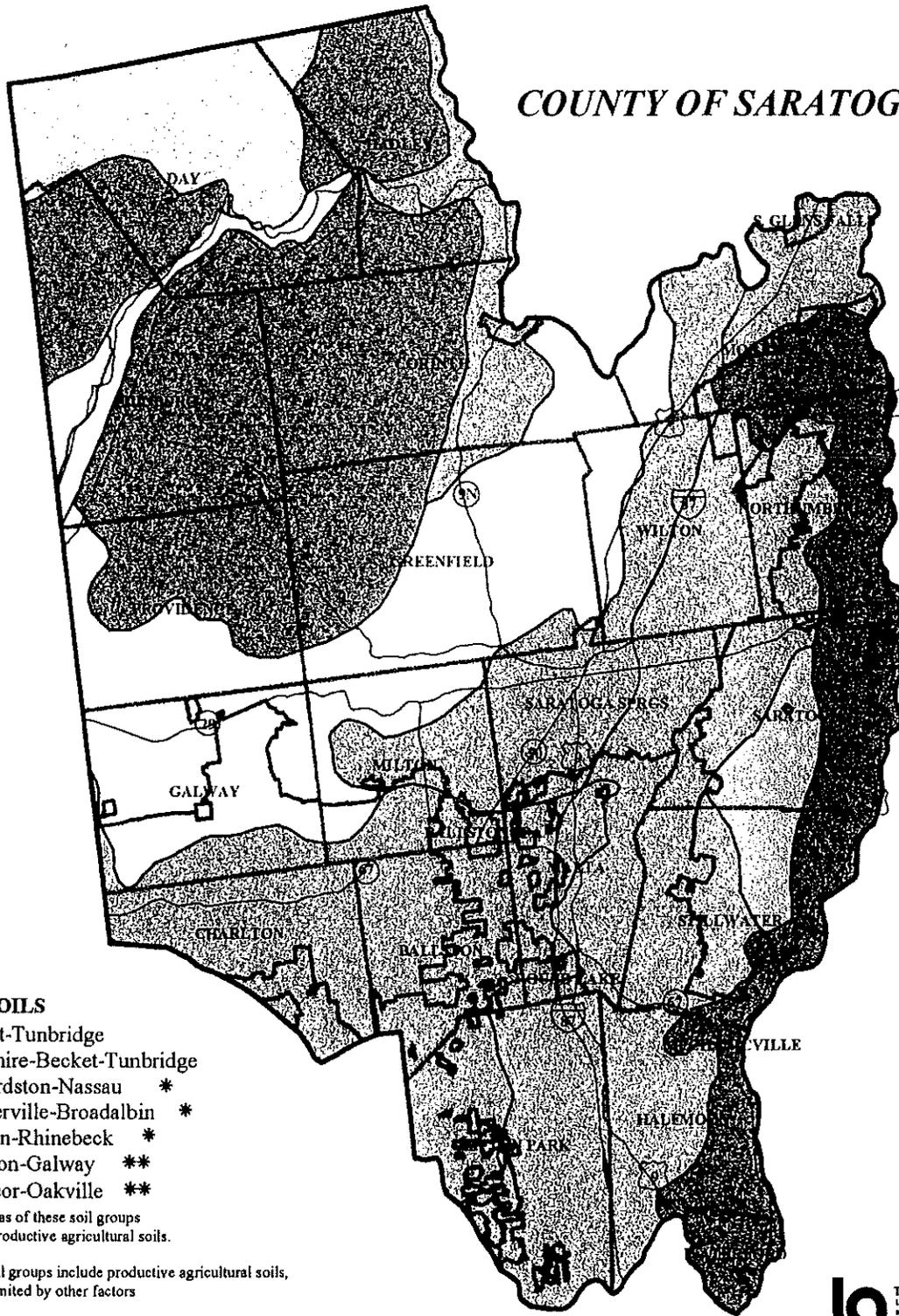
-  Agricultural District
-  Farm Location
-  Town Boundary
-  Hydro

ACTIVE AGRICULTURE





COUNTY OF SARATOGA



SOILS

-  Becket-Tunbridge
-  Berkshire-Becket-Tunbridge
-  Bernardston-Nassau *
-  Mosherville-Broadalbin *
-  Hudson-Rhinebeck *
-  Charlton-Galway **
-  Windsor-Oakville **

* Large areas of these soil groups contain productive agricultural soils.

** These soil groups include productive agricultural soils, but are limited by other factors

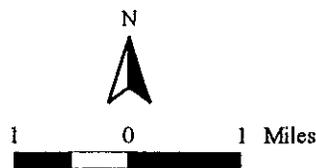
SOURCE: USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service



LEGEND

-  County Boundary
-  Town Boundary
-  Agricultural District Boundary

SOIL TYPES





Trends in Agricultural Land Use

Farmland loss in Saratoga County has been the greatest among counties in the Capital District Region. Only four and a half decades ago, Saratoga County was largely rural and agricultural. The development that followed construction of Interstate-87 in the 1950s and 60s, however, greatly reduced many livestock and cropland operations. Farmland as a percentage of the county's total acreage is currently down 69 percent from what it was in 1950.

At the turn of the century, nearly 75 percent of Saratoga County was actively farmed. All but the more steeply sloped hillsides and mountains of the county had been cleared for farming. In 1910, there were over 3,600 farms in the county and 392,200 acres in farms. Cropland accounted for 62.6 percent of the total land in farms.

The period from 1910 to 1959 saw a dramatic decline both in farmland and farm numbers. Much of what happened in Saratoga County during this period reflected the same trends affecting agriculture throughout most of the nation. Industrialization and technology allowed for increased agricultural productivity on fewer, but larger, farms. During this period the county lost 2,460 farms and 230,500 acres of farmland, which on average equaled 50 farms and 4,700 acres of farmland per year. Many farms reverted to brush and forest land, especially those on poorer soils or on rough and steep land (Stanton and Bills, 1996).

In 1950, Saratoga County had the same amount of farmland as Washington County has today. That meant nearly 40 percent of the county, approximately 200,000 acres, was devoted to farmland. More than half -- 111,000 acres -- was cropland. The 1950 Census of Agriculture gives an indication of where farmland was located within the county by town. (See Figure 3).

At that time, the Town of Saratoga contained the largest amount of farmland with 25,000 acres, followed by Clifton Park with 17,000 acres. Other towns containing substantial amounts of

Figure 2: Farmland Trends in Saratoga County, 1910-1992
Land in Farms

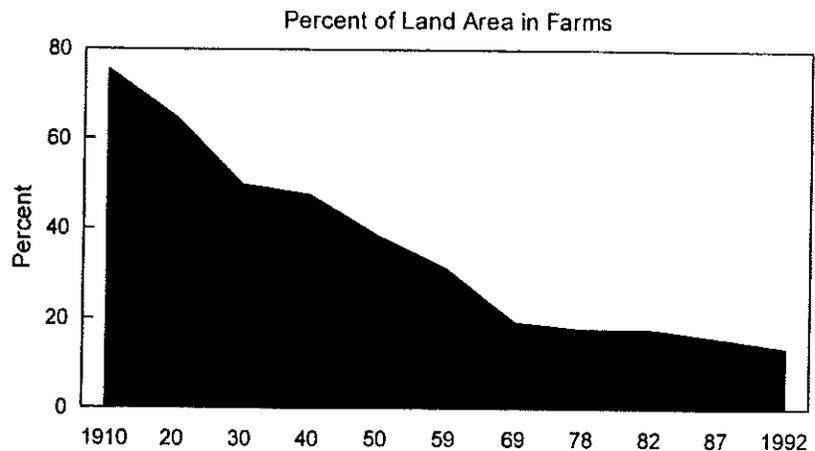
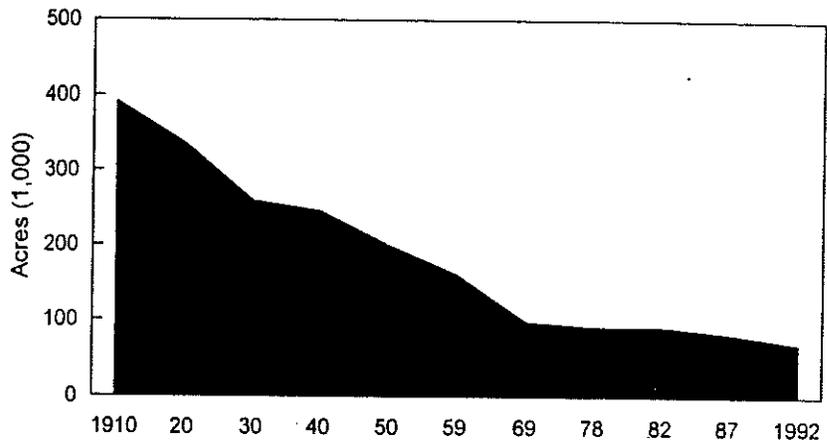
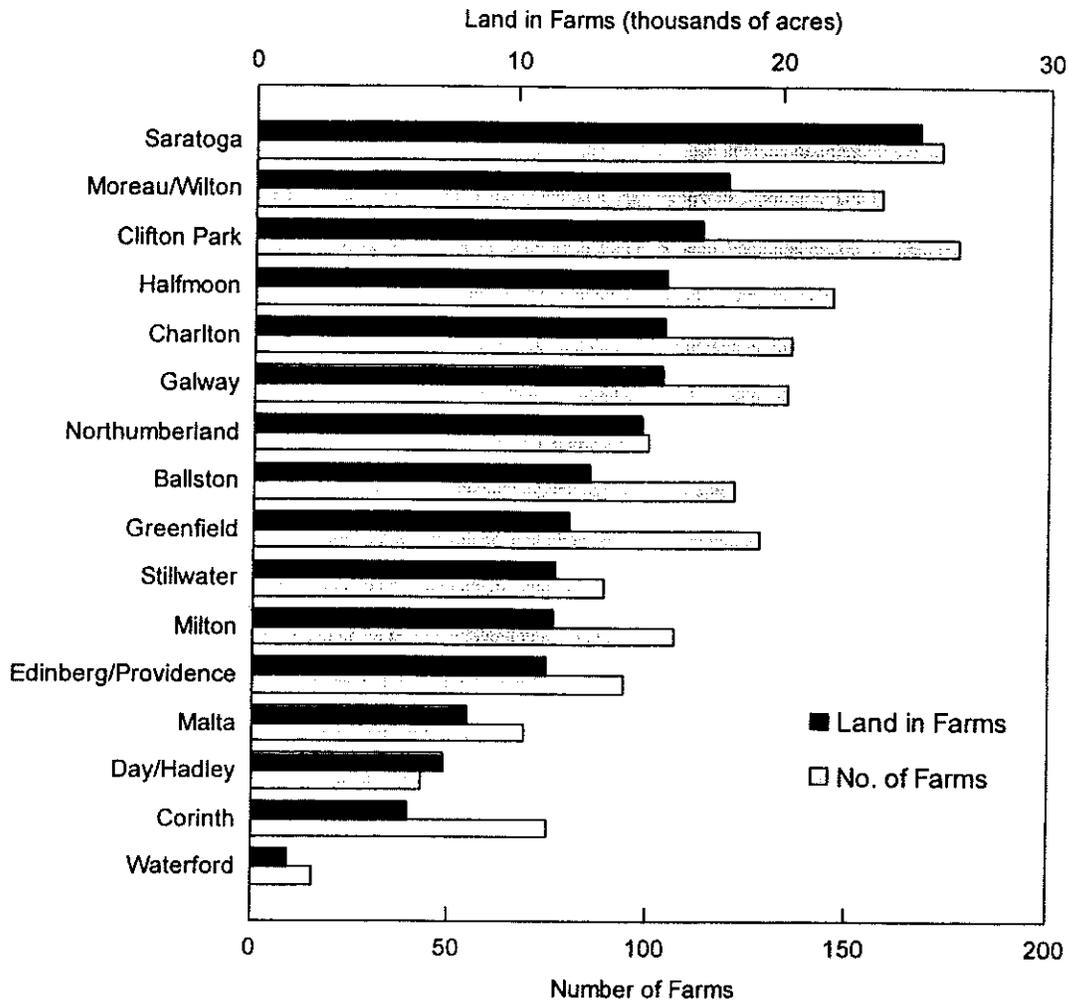


Figure 3: Farm Acreage and Numbers by Town, 1950



farmland included Halfmoon, Charlton, Galway, Northumberland, Ballston, Greenfield, Stillwater and Milton. (See appendix B for farm numbers and acreage.)

Saratoga County experienced major land use changes during the 50s and 60s, largely as a result of the development that occurred following the construction of the interstate highway system. Much of this development occurred in the southern portion of Saratoga County and along the I-87 Northway which cuts across the middle of the county from south to north. Rural land, once agricultural, was converted to residential and commercial use.

By 1969, land in farms was down to 19.1 percent (99,000 acres) of the county's total land base. Cropland had shrunk to 60,400 acres. More than 62,500 acres of farmland, half of which were cropland, went out of production between 1959 and 1969.

During this time, farming became largely consolidated into eastern and western portions of the county, away from the interstate corridor and onto land containing the better soils. The first

agricultural districts were formed during the 1970s and 80s. During this time, the amount of farmland continued to decline but at a much slower rate. That rate accelerated between 1987 and 1992, when land in farms declined by around 12,500 acres, 7,000 of which were cropland. This represents a 15 percent decline in farmland over a five year period. Today, the towns containing the most farmland are Northumberland, Saratoga, Stillwater, Charlton and Halfmoon.

Agricultural Districts

Saratoga County has supported agricultural districts since 1971 when New York State first enacted the Agricultural District Law. Between 1972 and 1994, the County Board of Supervisors, at the request of the agricultural community, established six agricultural districts in Saratoga County. The first agricultural district in the county was formed as early as 1972 by landowners in the towns of Northumberland and Saratoga. Four more districts were formed within the next ten years, followed by a sixth district formed in Clifton Park in 1994.

Agricultural districts make significant contributions to Saratoga County by:

- **Providing protection of its commercial farm operations.**
- **Encouraging investment in agriculture and agricultural productivity.**
- **Enhancing the economic impact of the agricultural sector.**
- **Providing many positive influences on the lifestyle of the county -- most people in the county live within a short distance of an agricultural district.**

Agricultural districts are formed by landowners who voluntarily agree to keep their land in a district for eight-year, renewable time periods. In exchange, agriculture is designated as the primary activity in the district and landowners receive incentives to encourage them to continue farming. These include use-value assessment, exemptions from special district levies, right to farm provisions, and protection from eminent domain, adjacent non-agricultural development and state agency regulations that interfere with farming. Participants must pay roll-back taxes to remove themselves from a district prior to the eight-year period.

Counties and the Department of Agriculture and Markets approve the formation and recertification of agricultural districts. Agricultural District Review Committees (renamed in 1992 as Agricultural and Farmland Protection Boards) are established at the county level to advise the county on agricultural district activity.

The county's agricultural districts include the majority of the county's farms and viable agricultural land. Districted land area in Saratoga County now totals 110,800 acres, reflecting an increase of 8,800 acres since District #5 was formed in 1982. About 58 percent (roughly 61,800 acres) of districted land area is owned or leased by farmers. Slightly more than half of this (32,750 acres) is productive cropland. Interspersed throughout the districts is land used for nonfarm purposes, such as residential and commercial land.

Saratoga's agricultural districts are currently undergoing consolidation. Districts #1, 3 and 4 -- adjoining districts in the eastern part of the county -- have already been consolidated into one district. Consolidated District #1 contains 58,934 acres, which represents an overall decrease of 2,900 acres since the districts were first established. The largest decrease was experienced by District #4 in Stillwater which declined by 3,349 acres. District #3 actually increased by 786 acres, while District #1 decreased slightly by 330 acres.

Agricultural District #2 in Charlton, Ballston, Galway and Milton has greatly expanded since it was first established in 1974, increasing by 31,400 acres. It currently contains 45,639 acres of land. Agricultural District #5, created in 1982, is made up of small detached areas in Ballston, Malta and the City of Saratoga Springs. At its renewal in 1990 it had increased 220 acres to 3,127 acres.

Saratoga County's Agricultural Districts at Formation			
District	Creation Date	Towns	Acres
1	1973	Northumberland, Saratoga	13,861
2	1974	Ballston, Charlton, Galway, Milton	14,200
3	1978	Moreau, Wilton, Northumberland	9,407
4	1979	Saratoga, Wilton, Stillwater	38,400
5	1982	Ballston, Malta	2,907
6	1994	Clifton Park	3,186

Current Agricultural Districts in Saratoga County			
District	Creation Date	Towns	Acres
1*	1997	Moreau, Northumberland, Saratoga, Wilton, Stillwater	58,934
2	1974	Ballston, Charlton, Galway, Milton	45,639
5	1982	Ballston, Malta	3,127
6	1994	Clifton Park	3,186

* *Agricultural Districts 1, 3 and 4 were combined into "Consolidated District 1". Source: Saratoga County Planning Department.*

For the most part, agricultural districts have proved to be popular with farmers in areas of the county where there is a higher concentration of farms, better quality farmland and less development pressure. In areas undergoing intense urban pressure, such as Clifton Park and Halfmoon, where farmland has been sold at high prices for nonfarm development and farmers have felt less secure about their future in farming, landowners have participated in agricultural districts in fewer numbers.

Despite the challenges involved in the formation of agricultural districts in more urban areas, a new agricultural district was created as recently as 1994 in the western portion of Clifton Park, accommodating much of the town's remaining farmland. District #6 is a small district made up of 146 parcels and encompassing slightly over 3,000 acres. The creation of this district is significant because it demonstrates there is a strong commitment to agriculture by the farmers there, as well as by the town -- in one of the fastest growing communities in the state.

Clifton Park's farms and farmland have shrunk considerably since the 1950s due to rapid suburbanization. The creation of District #6 in Clifton Park has provided a show of support and unity for the remaining farmers in the western portion of the town. It has also spurred efforts to promote agriculture and farmland protection in Clifton Park. These activities include: organizing and sponsoring an annual two-day Clifton Park Farm Fest event; enacting a town right to farm ordinance; exemption from special district tax levies within the district; and passing a Conservation Easement Law, which provides tax-abatements for term easements to encourage land to remain in farming. All of these activities have made the community more aware of the needs of agriculture and the important role it plays in Clifton Park.

In a recent eight-year review of Districts #1, 3 and 4, farmers responded to a survey on the benefits of participating in agricultural districts. Their comments echoed some of the same themes discovered in Clifton Park: agricultural districts create an identifiable farm community, provide agricultural use assessment, provide protections from conflicting land use and heighten awareness of farming and land use issues.

While agricultural districts encourage investment in agriculture, they do not represent a permanent measure, mainly because they rely on voluntary enrollment and allow for easy withdrawal, requiring only a payment of deferred property taxes plus interest.

Results from a survey of Saratoga County farmers conducted in 1996 show that most farmers favor strengthening the agricultural district program to make it more effective in farmland protection. More than 88 percent of the respondents indicated there should be additional incentives to help keep farmland in agricultural use. Slightly more than half of the respondents (58 percent) even favored governmental legislation which limits development on prime and important farmland.

Bolstering the agricultural district program with additional farmland protection incentives would encourage farmers within the districts to make additional capital investments as well as long-term stewardship investments. Stronger farmland protection measures would discourage growth within agricultural districts while encouraging growth near existing infrastructure investments, thereby minimizing potential land use conflicts between farmers and nonfarmers. It would also target limited resources to areas where farmers have already made a commitment to continue farming.

Economic Importance of Saratoga County Agriculture

Agriculture in Saratoga County has remained strong and productive, despite losses in numbers of farms, agricultural land harvested, and farm employment over the past 45 years. This is largely because new agricultural technologies have allowed fewer, yet larger, farms to produce nearly 33 percent more than they were producing four and a half decades ago. (Eberts, 1994)

Agriculture as an industry is important to Saratoga County because it generates significant economic activity and adds diversity to the county's industrial mix and economy. Like manufacturing, agriculture is an export-base industry producing goods in the county largely for sale elsewhere. Millions of dollars of new money are imported each year into the county as a result of the economic activity generated by agriculture.

Some of the direct contributions made by agriculture to the economy occur through farm product sales, expenditures, investment in land and buildings, employment and fiscal impact of farmland. Agriculture also makes many indirect contributions to the economy.

Each year farms bring over \$25 million into the county from the sale of agricultural products. (USDA, 1994) Ninety-seven percent of total agricultural sales are produced by its 191 commercial farms. Historically, this amount does not include information on the equine industry, which is a relatively new and growing industry in the county. If an additional \$14 million of sales from the equine sector is included, it brings the total value of agricultural products in Saratoga County to \$39 million. (Cornell Cooperative Extension, 1988) This means that agriculture annually pumps more than \$100 million into the local economy, using a conservative economic multiplier of 2.6.

Agricultural manufacturing industries in Saratoga County add significantly to the \$39 million produced by Saratoga County farms. Manufacturing industries that package and process agricultural products are directly tied to agricultural production. Agricultural manufacturing plants in Saratoga County include Saratoga Dairy which buys and processes milk from local dairy farms for Stewart's Shops. Stewart's Shops has grown to over 260 stores which employ 2,700 and produce sales of \$430 million.

Farms require farm equipment, machinery, seed, fertilizers, fuel, insurance and electricity, and many other supplies and services to produce their products. Saratoga farmers purchased \$20.1 million dollars of services and supplies in 1992. Approximately 45 percent of these expenditures, \$9 million, were spent within Saratoga County.

Saratoga farms provide employment for 1,068 people. As an industry, agriculture ranks seventh in the county in the number of jobs it generates. Employment in packing and processing plants greatly adds to that total. Saratoga Dairy employs approximately 600 people in their processing plants alone.

Agriculture also contributes to the county's economy in other important ways. As mentioned earlier, agricultural land generates a tax-base advantage for local towns because it consistently generates more tax revenue than it requires back in service expenditures. The scenic open space and rural character it offers help make Saratoga County an attractive site for economic investment through corporate relocation and tourism.

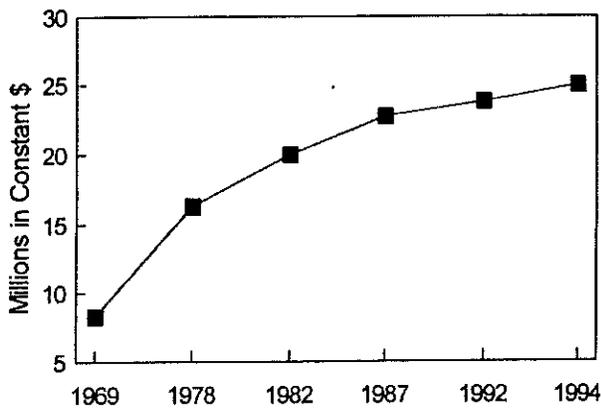
In short, agriculture remains a key economic activity in Saratoga County, one which generates a high volume of overall economic output. Its future growth will contribute greatly to the economic growth of Saratoga County. On the other hand, if agriculture is permitted to deteriorate further, its decline will have an equally large negative impact on the economic well-being of the area.

Economic Overview of Agriculture

Agriculture in Saratoga County represents generations of investments by farmers who cleared and improved land and established farm organizations. It represents extensive investment in infrastructure, machinery, equipment, and livestock. It also represents extensive human investment: years of knowledge and training of farm operators and employees.

Due to this investment, Saratoga farmers have maintained a strong and vigorous industry, one that is ready to respond to increasing demand if dollars in the consuming sector are strong enough to stimulate increased activity. The following information, taken mainly from the Census of Agriculture, gives an overview of the county:

Figure 4: Market Value of Agricultural Sales
Saratoga County, 1969 - 1994



Over the years, Saratoga County's agricultural base has been increasing in constant dollars in terms of total products sold. Output and income per acre have increased as well. The 1992 per acre dollar values were 46 percent higher than in 1982. The county averaged a dollar value of \$525.57 of agricultural products sold per acre in 1992 compared to \$359.66 in 1982.

Ninety-seven percent of Saratoga County's total agricultural sales are produced by its 191 commercial farms. Average sales for commercial farms in the county are \$121,000, compared to an average of \$142,795 for commercial farms statewide. Sales from the largest 57 farms in the county, however, account for 78 percent of the total value of sales, for an average of \$325,000 per farm. Taken as a whole, commercial farms own nearly three-quarters of the farmland in Saratoga County, generate employment and spend nearly \$18.5 million annually on farm production expenses.

Like most counties in the Hudson River Valley, Saratoga County has a higher than average percentage of noncommercial farms earning less than \$10,000. Fifty seven percent of Saratoga County farms fall into this category for a total of 252 farms. Noncommercial farms produce a low value of agricultural sales-- less than 2.9 percent of all sales -- which is reflected in average sales per farm. When noncommercial farms are included, average sales for Saratoga farms drop from \$121,000 to \$53,770.

While larger commercial farms produce the bulk of total agricultural sales in the county, noncommercial farms maintain a sizeable portion of the county's farmland and open space, including 9,600 acres of cropland. This serves as a buffer and as an important source of rental land for larger operations.

Between 1982 and 1992, the number of farms in Saratoga County declined by approximately 24 percent from 580 to 443 farms. Of the 137 farms that were lost in this ten year period, the majority were noncommercial farms. The county did lose 37 commercial farms; all but one were larger operations earning more than \$50,000.

During those years, the estimated market value of land and buildings for all Saratoga farms was nearly \$139 million. For machinery and equipment, it was \$18.3 million. The average per farm value of machinery and equipment increased 15 percent between 1987 and 1992.

Net cash returns for commercial farms averaged \$19,713 in 1992, down 30 percent from 1987. The number of commercial farms in Saratoga County reporting net gains increased by 36 percent to 131 farms. The number reporting net losses was up 47 percent to 56 farms. From 1987 to 1992, the average per farm net gain declined by 28 percent from \$46,095 to \$33,304. The average per farm net loss also declined by 32 percent, from \$17,671 to \$12,081.

Farm Productivity

Farms are, first and foremost, businesses that produce commodities for the market place. Saratoga farms produce various livestock and crop commodities. Livestock commodities include: milk, dairy cows, heifers, horses, beef cattle, poultry, eggs, sheep, hogs, horse breeding, llamas, wool and deer. Crop commodities include: field crops, hay, apples, sod, nursery and greenhouse plants, vegetables, blueberries, honey, maple syrup, Christmas trees, and fuelwood.

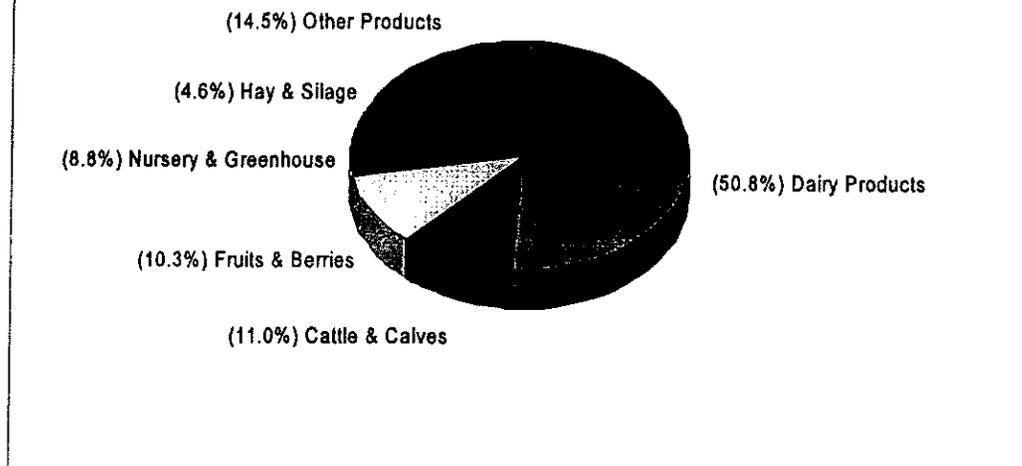
While dairy production remains strong in Saratoga County, diversification into other commodities is occurring. The growth of the horse industry is a prime example of this trend. Sod, horse breeding and "pick your own" operations are just a few of the more successful niche markets that have been developed by Saratoga County farmers. There is a growing interest in developing and expanding niche markets.

For comparison purposes, Census of Agriculture data from 1992 and proceeding years is used in this report because it provides a historical perspective of what has happened on Saratoga County farms over the decades.

Between 1982 and 1992, Saratoga County lost 137 farms. The number of farms producing dairy,

cattle and calves, poultry and grains dropped by nearly 45 percent. The number of farms producing apples and other fruits dropped by 34 percent. The number of farms producing hay and silage and vegetables dropped by approximately 13 percent. There was a slight increase in the number of farms producing horticultural products such as sod, nursery and greenhouse plants.

Figure 5: Leading Agricultural Products in Terms of Sales, 1994



Despite the decrease in the number of farms, the total value of agricultural products in constant dollars increased 19 percent to \$23.8 million between 1982 and 1992. Sales increased for every leading agricultural product except dairy and grain crop products. Commodities with significant increases were nursery and greenhouse, fruits, cattle and calves, and hay and silage. The market value of fruit products more than doubled and the market value of nursery and greenhouse products nearly doubled.

Dairy

Dairying remains one of the strongest sectors of Saratoga County's agricultural industry. In 1992, dairy farms produced \$12.1 million worth of dairy products, accounting for 51 percent of the county's total agricultural sales. This compares to 53 percent in 1945. The majority of dairy products are exported out of the county as fluid milk.

The decline in the number of dairy farms was counterbalanced by the increased productivity, size and value of the remaining farms. In 1992, the number of county dairy farms had declined 43 percent from ten years earlier (down from 133 to 76 farms), yet the market value of dairy products had decreased only 4 percent.

Today there are 60 dairy farms and approximately 6,000 milk cows in Saratoga County. Dairy operations are the most land consumptive agricultural uses in the county, requiring extensive cropland and support land. Much of the cropland in the county is best suited for growing crops

for dairy production.

Many dairy farms in the county invest \$100,000 annually to upgrade their facilities. A new facility requires an investment of at least \$500,000 to \$600,000. Dairy operations also require high levels of inputs and services. This means dairy farming produces a higher economic multiplier and greater economic impact than other industries, especially since many of its inputs are purchased locally in the area.

Dairy farmers in Saratoga, in general, have done a good job of increasing productivity as a means of containing costs. But the decreasing cash flow from farming has placed many farm families under increasing pressure to contain living expenses or increase off-farm income.

Dairy production and processing produces higher economic multipliers than other industries. Producing, processing and retailing dairy products in the county adds value to local dairy production and keeps more of the dairy dollar in the county.

Cattle and Calves

Cattle and calves represent the second largest market value of products sold by Saratoga farms. Between 1982 and 1992, the number of farms producing cattle and calves dropped by 47 percent. At the same time, however, the market value of cattle and calves sold increased 80 percent.

Fruit and Berries

Cash receipts for fruits and berries increased 107 percent to \$2.45 million between 1982 and 1992. During this time, the number of farms producing fruits and berries declined by 34 percent, from 50 to 33 farms. Saratoga County has the highest number of acres devoted to apples in the Capital District Region.

Hay and Silage

Between 1982 and 1992, the market value of hay and silage products increased 54 percent, while the number of farms producing hay and silage declined by only 14 percent.

Nursery and Greenhouse Products

There was a slight increase in the number of farms producing nursery and greenhouse products-- from 53 to 56 farms-- between 1982 to 1992. This includes two farms in Saratoga County that began producing sod. The market value of products sold in this category nearly doubled to approximately \$2.1 million.

Grain Crops

The number of farms producing grains declined significantly by 47 percent, but cash receipts for this category remained the same despite the decline in the number of farms.

Poultry

There was a significant decline of 47 percent in the number of farms producing poultry products between 1982 and 1992, from 38 to 20 farms. Expansion occurred in the county's largest poultry farm which supplies eggs to local stores in the region. Census data on cash receipts of poultry products were withheld to avoid disclosing information on individual farms.

Vegetables

Only a moderate decline of 13 percent occurred in the number of farms producing vegetables. Census data on cash receipts for this commodity were also withheld.

Horses

The equine industry is an important component of agriculture; however, clear data had not been available to document this fact until Cornell Cooperative Extension conducted an informal survey of the horse industry in 1988. The survey revealed that the horse industry is made up of 43 operations which include breeding, boarding and riding horse operations. The county's 1,931 horses on commercial farms produced approximately \$14 million in gross earnings annually, indicating that horses make a significant contribution to agriculture in the county. This is a relatively new industry for the county, one that evolved in the 1970s and early 1980s and made use of idle land.

Markets for Agricultural Products

Most of Saratoga County farm commodities are marketed wholesale. These include dairy products, cattle and calves, and grain crops. Fluid milk, the largest commodity, is sold wholesale for local and northeast markets. Approximately 20 percent of the milk produced in Saratoga County is sold to Saratoga Dairy, a local processor. The remainder is exported out of the county to markets in the northeast.

Per capita income in Saratoga County is one of the highest in the region. This fact, combined with the growing consumer interest in fresh, local products, enhances the potential of direct marketing sales to local consumers. Saratoga farms can provide fresh fruits and vegetables to Albany, Clifton Park, Saratoga Springs and other urban markets. The potential to expand Saratoga direct marketing opportunities is strong.

The Census of Agriculture reported 73 farms in 1992 selling directly to consumers. These farms compare favorably to Schenectady and Rensselaer Counties where the average per farm in sales from direct marketing was lower than in Saratoga County. The average per farm in Albany and Washington Counties, however, was more than double that of Saratoga County.

Some Saratoga farmers have successfully developed "pick your own" and retail markets that attract thousands of customers each season. Farms producing fruits and apples, vegetables, hay, nursery and greenhouse plants or offering horse-riding utilize direct market channels most frequently. Some farms have developed unique products such as birthday parties, baked goods, tours and llamas that bring in additional income.

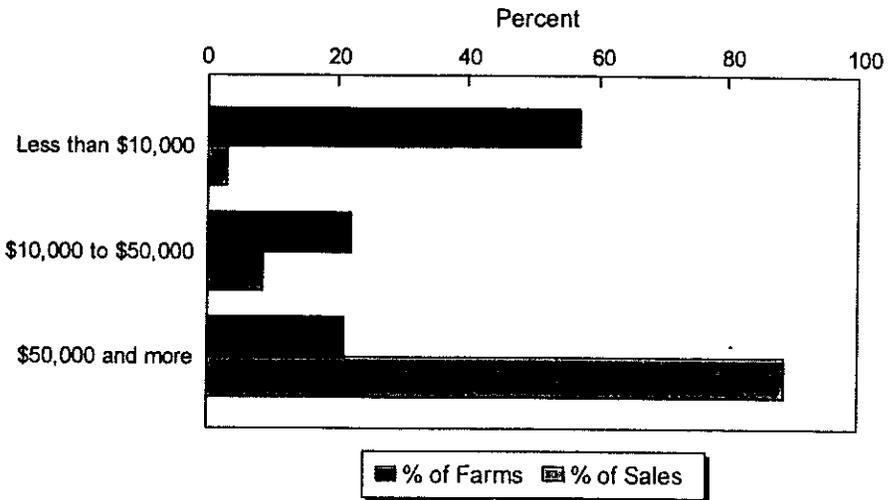
Size of Farms in Terms of Agricultural Sales

Like most counties in the Hudson River Valley, Saratoga County has a high percentage of farms with sales less than \$50,000. A total of 350 of the 443 farms (79 percent) in Saratoga County fall into this category. Together they account for 11.3 percent of all agricultural sales. Washington, Columbia and Orange Counties are the only counties in the Hudson River Valley

that have a high proportion of farms with sales of \$100,000 or more (Knowblauch, 1992).

The largest category of farms in the county have sales less than \$10,000. These farms make up 57 percent of all farms, but account for less than 2.9 percent of all agricultural sales. For these farms, income from farming makes up a very small portion of family income activity. While these smaller farms are largely non-commercial, they control a sizeable amount of farmland in the county -- approximately 27 percent of all farmland (19,000 acres), which includes 9,600 acres of cropland. These smaller farms are a source of rental land and help buffer commercial farm operations.

Figure 6: Percent of Farms and Value of Agricultural Sales
Saratoga County, 1992



Source: U. S. Census of Agriculture

Farms that produce agricultural sales of \$10,000 or more are categorized as commercial farms. Commercial farms produce more than 97 percent of the county's total agricultural sales. The second group of smaller farms, those with agricultural sales from \$10,000 to \$50,000, fits into the commercial farm category even though they are considered small farm operations. This group of farms accounts for 22 percent of all farms and represents sales of about \$2 million, or 8.4 percent of total agricultural sales.

Farms with sales of \$50,000 are responsible for the vast majority (88.7 percent) of agricultural sales in the county even though they make up only 21 percent of all farms. There are 93 farm operations in Saratoga County with sales ranging from \$50,000 to as high as \$2 million. Most of these farm operators receive their primary income from farming. Together they produce more than \$21 million in sales, for an average of \$121,000 per farm. The largest 57 farms produce \$18.5 million in sales, for an average of \$325,000 per farm.

Commercial farms own nearly three-quarters of the farmland in Saratoga County, generate farm employment and spend nearly \$18.5 million on farm production expenses, much of which is spent in the local area.

Fiscal Benefits of Farmland

In an effort to keep property tax bills down, towns will often try to expand their tax bases through residential and commercial development. Such development is promoted because towns can collect more tax dollars from a parcel of land that has been subdivided into one acre residential lots than from a similar sized parcel of farmland. But the cost to the community of

providing services to new residential development is often overlooked when it comes to land use decisions affecting farmland.

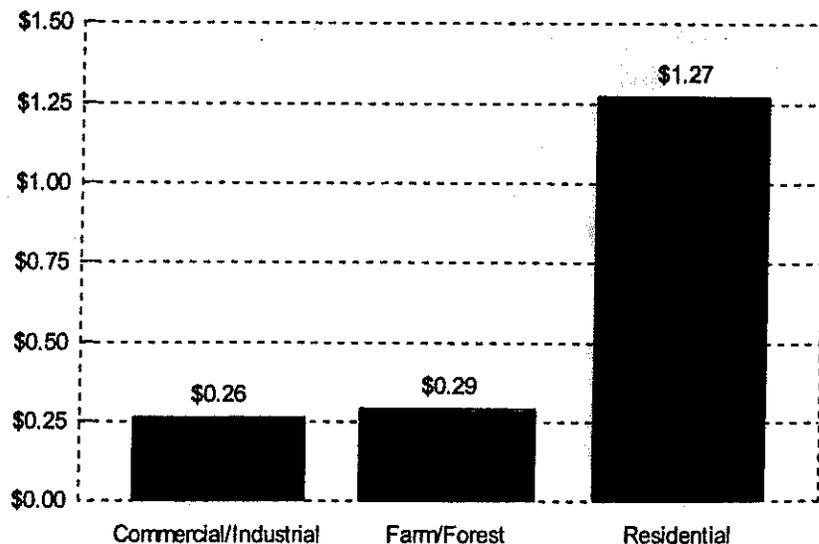
In fact, most residential development actually has the overall effect of increasing taxes. Development draws residents who, due to the need for education, trigger costs that substantially outweigh the tax revenues they generate. If the actual cost to provide services to new residences were taken into account, the assumed tax benefits associated with residential development would be replaced with a net loss in tax revenue.

Lately, many towns are more carefully analyzing the economic consequences that development and other land uses have on town and school budgets. This is due in large part to the findings of numerous studies that scrutinize revenues and expenditures to determine the cost of services in relation to various land uses in a community. These studies demonstrate the fiscal benefits provided by farmland.

Cost of Community Services Studies, pioneered by American Farmland Trust, have been undertaken in more than 40 communities across the country. Every single Cost of Community Services Studies shows the same pattern -- farmland pays more in taxes than it receives in services. And, simultaneously, they show that the reverse is true for residences. While farmland does not raise as much tax revenue as developed land, its need for public services is so minimal that it, in effect, pays for the services it requires, in full, with a large surplus left over (American Farmland Trust, 1997).

Several studies of towns in New York found that an average of only \$0.29 of every farm property tax dollar went to provide services to farm parcels. Residences, on the other hand, created a deficit by requiring \$1.27 in services for every dollar they generated. This means an average of \$0.71 out of every farm property tax dollar can be used to offset the deficit created by residential use. The average expenditures for each land use category are summarized in Figure 7.

Figure 7: Summary of Cost of Community Services Studies
15 New York Towns



Cost of Community Services Studies dispel three common misperceptions about local property tax issues: that residential development lowers taxes; that farmland gets an unfair tax break when it is taxed at its current use value; and that farmland is an interim land use, simply waiting to be used for something else.

Residential includes farm houses.

Other fiscal impact studies reinforce the findings of Cost of Community Services Studies. According to a study by Ad Hoc Associates, New York towns that have the most development also have higher tax bills. While new development increases the tax base, it also increases the budget demands.

A fiscal impact study conducted for the Town of Pittsford found that new homes in the Town of Pittsford must cost \$350,000 or more in order to add more revenue than costs to the town budget. Only expensive homes have a positive impact on the town budget; moderate and low income homes create a deficit (Center for Government Research, 1993).

Another study on the Town of Pittsford, *Greenprint for the Future*, found that allowing the full build-out of the town would be much more costly than protecting its remaining farmland by purchasing the development rights. According to town estimates, full build-out would result in a \$5,000 increase in taxes per household while the PDR program will cost the average household only \$1,300 in increased taxes over the next 20 years. The town subsequently voted to float a \$9.7 million bond to fund a PDR program.

The Suffolk County Planning Department determined that housing built on two-acre zoned land only pays more in school tax than it requires in school expenditures when half of the houses are seasonal and one-fourth are senior citizen. In general, seasonal and retirement homes pay more in taxes than they cost towns to service.

The findings of Cost of Community Services Studies and other fiscal impact studies are changing the way communities value farmland. In addition to the many benefits associated with farmland, these studies demonstrate that farmland is a net tax gain to local governments. Towns that direct development to nonagricultural lands will maintain the positive tax flow and multiple benefits from agriculture, as well as realize the benefits associated with development.

Growth in Saratoga County

In terms of the rate of its population growth, Saratoga County has been the *third* fastest growing county in New York State for many years. Among all of the counties in the state which have populations greater than 100,000, Saratoga has been growing the fastest. It is the second highest commuting county in upstate New York, with more than one-half of its workforce commuting outside the county for employment. (Eberts, 1994)

Communities along the I-87 Northway corridor have witnessed the most growth. In particular, the towns which line the southern portion of the Northway, such as Clifton Park, Halfmoon, and Malta, have rapidly transformed from rural agricultural communities to suburban ones, as the Northway offers residents of those towns a relatively short commute to employment centers to the south.

In addition to access provided by highway infrastructure, the availability of water and the suitability of soils for septic systems, (or proximity to community sewer systems), can have an impact on the location of development. Saratoga County's growth corridor along the Northway combines all of these conditions which are favorable for development.

Saratoga County established a sewer district in the 1970s. This district serves much of the county's urbanized area from Wilton to the south. Development, however, is not restricted to the sewer district's service area. The potential for this county infrastructure to shape and control growth is somewhat limited because much of the land outside of the district, especially the county's primary agricultural lands, is well suited for individual septic systems.

Similarly, the availability of water has not hindered development in most communities. Ground water is fairly abundant, and growth is not restricted to areas where public water systems are available. In fact, most water systems built in the county were constructed by the developers of large subdivisions. Some of these are still operated privately while others were subsequently turned over to municipal water districts. Houses in many subdivisions, especially in outlying areas, are still served by individual wells. In the Town of Halfmoon, the lack of readily available water limited growth even though its location made it an attractive candidate for development. That has changed in the 1990s. The town has invested several million dollars to create and expand water districts throughout previously undeveloped areas. The provision of this water infrastructure will undoubtedly lead to more growth in these areas of the town.

The residential construction accompanying growth in the southern towns has significantly affected the area's agricultural industry. Though a few farmers continue to work their land in these communities, many no longer do. Farming, a precarious business to begin with, often becomes harder to sustain in areas undergoing rapid residential growth. Prime farmland is usually highly developable, and thus can often be sold at prices which far exceed its agricultural value. For a

struggling farmer, the pressure to convert productive farmland to development is often intense.

The loss of farmland to development often takes on a snowball effect. Using an idea originally conceived by Professor Howard Conklin, author Randall Arendt (Rural by Design, 1994) recently explained: "As neighboring farmers sell out, an 'impermanence syndrome' affects those remaining on the land, who tend to reinvest less in their buildings and machinery, feeling they might be the last generation of farmers in their district."

For those farmers struggling to stay active, there are additional pressures as well. Agricultural land in rapidly developing areas is often assessed in relation to its developable value. Meanwhile, the rise of new residents in such an area creates a demand for more services (i.e. schools and road maintenance) which drive up tax rates. Both of these factors place an additional burden on farmers already struggling under high property taxes.

Another threat remains for farmers surrounded by development. New residential neighbors who move to "the country" for its "rural character" are not always familiar with the realities of actual farming. Typical farming practices such as the spreading of manure or application of chemical pesticides, or the operation of farm equipment early in the morning, often draw objections by new neighbors. Complaints, nuisance suits, or the threat of such suits, can be an added aggravation for remaining farmers.

By studying the trends of residential growth in our region, communities can assess the future impact of growth pressure on their remaining agricultural lands. This knowledge can help focus protection efforts on those areas most threatened by the permanent loss of agriculture. Communities that want to protect their farmland can take advantage of the opportunity to develop land use policies which would minimize the loss of critical agricultural lands in the future.

Residential growth is, of course, desirable. It is a result of Saratoga County's many attractive qualities. But the location and form of a community's growth can be guided by local municipalities through comprehensive and community-driven planning efforts.

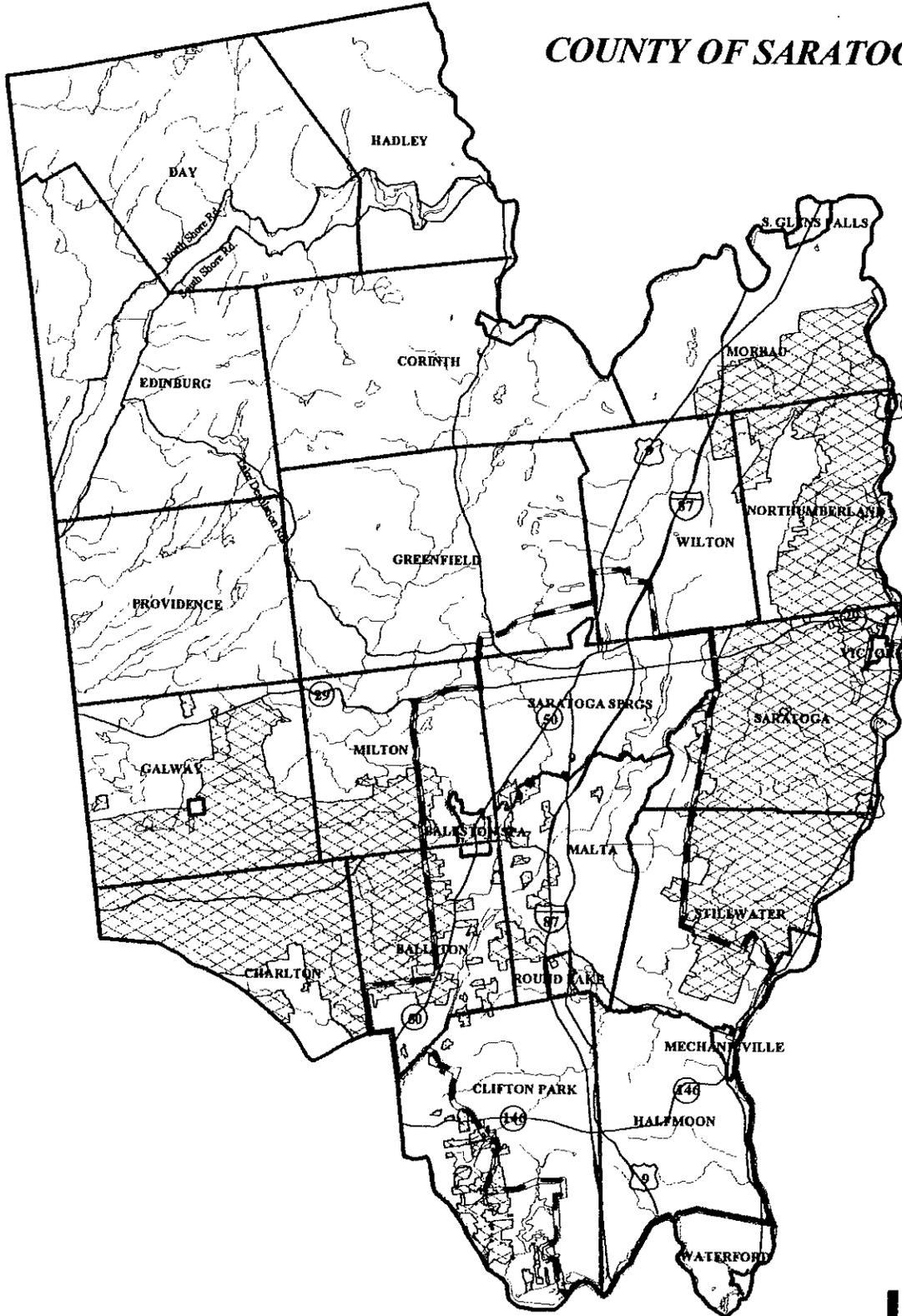
Saratoga County's Agricultural Communities

Agricultural communities, for this study, are simply defined as localities with active agricultural industries. All but two of them contain agricultural districts within their boundaries. Ranked by the number of acres they have devoted to agriculture, Northumberland, Saratoga, Stillwater and Charlton are the strongest agricultural communities in Saratoga County. Agricultural communities include:

Agricultural Community	Farmland Acreage	Agricultural Community	Farmland Acreage
Northumberland*	9569	Ballston*	2689
Saratoga*	8636	Clifton Park*	2141
Stillwater*	7665	Malta*	2060
Charlton*	5475	Milton*	1576
Halfmoon	5178	Greenfield	1090
Moreau*	4929	Wilton*	1076
Galway*	3054	Saratoga Springs*	492

* These municipalities contain Agricultural Districts. Based on Real Property parcel data for 1997.

COUNTY OF SARATOGA



SOURCE:
Saratoga County Planning Department

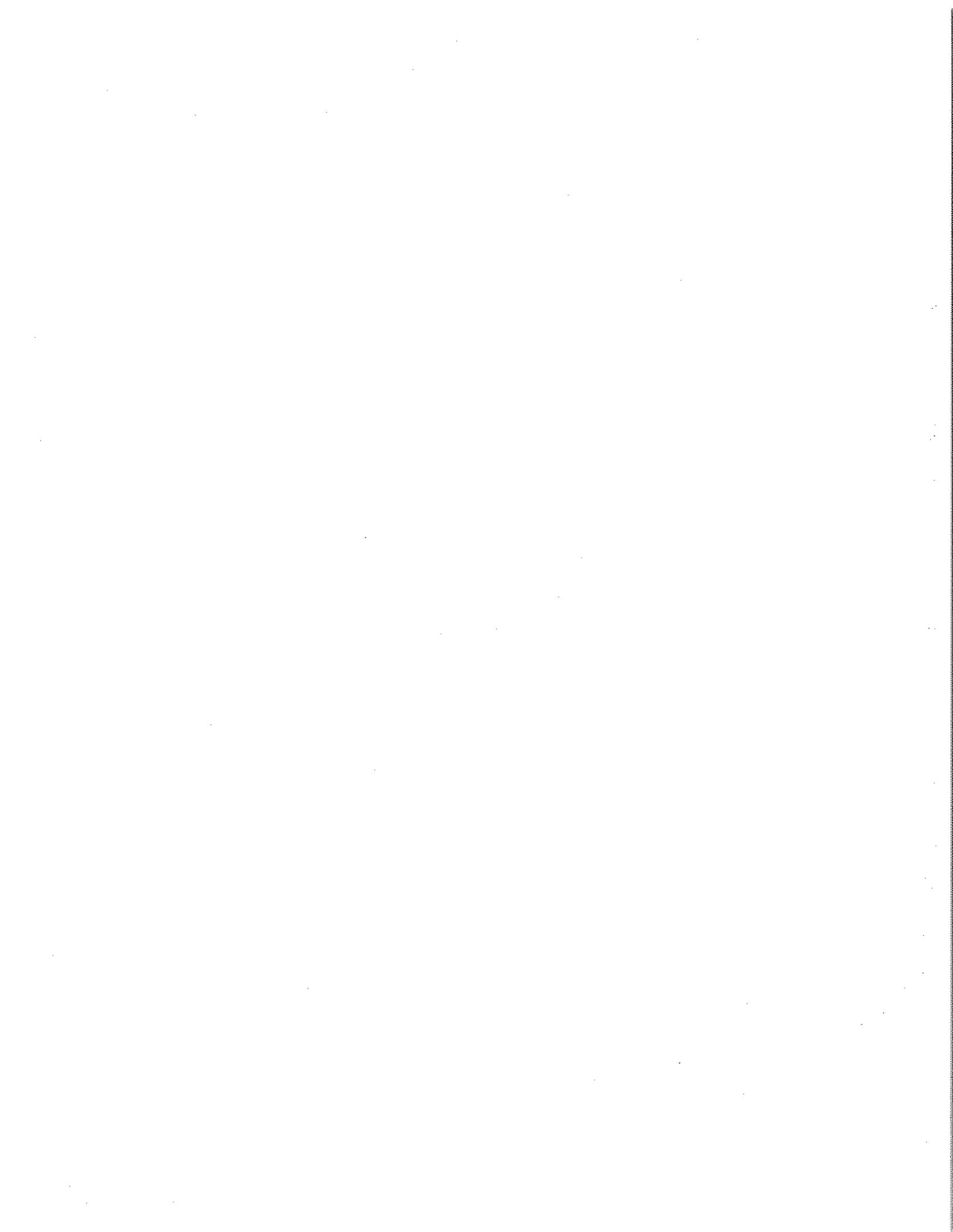
and Engineering, P.C.
60 Long Alley
Saratoga Springs
New York 12866
1997

LEGEND

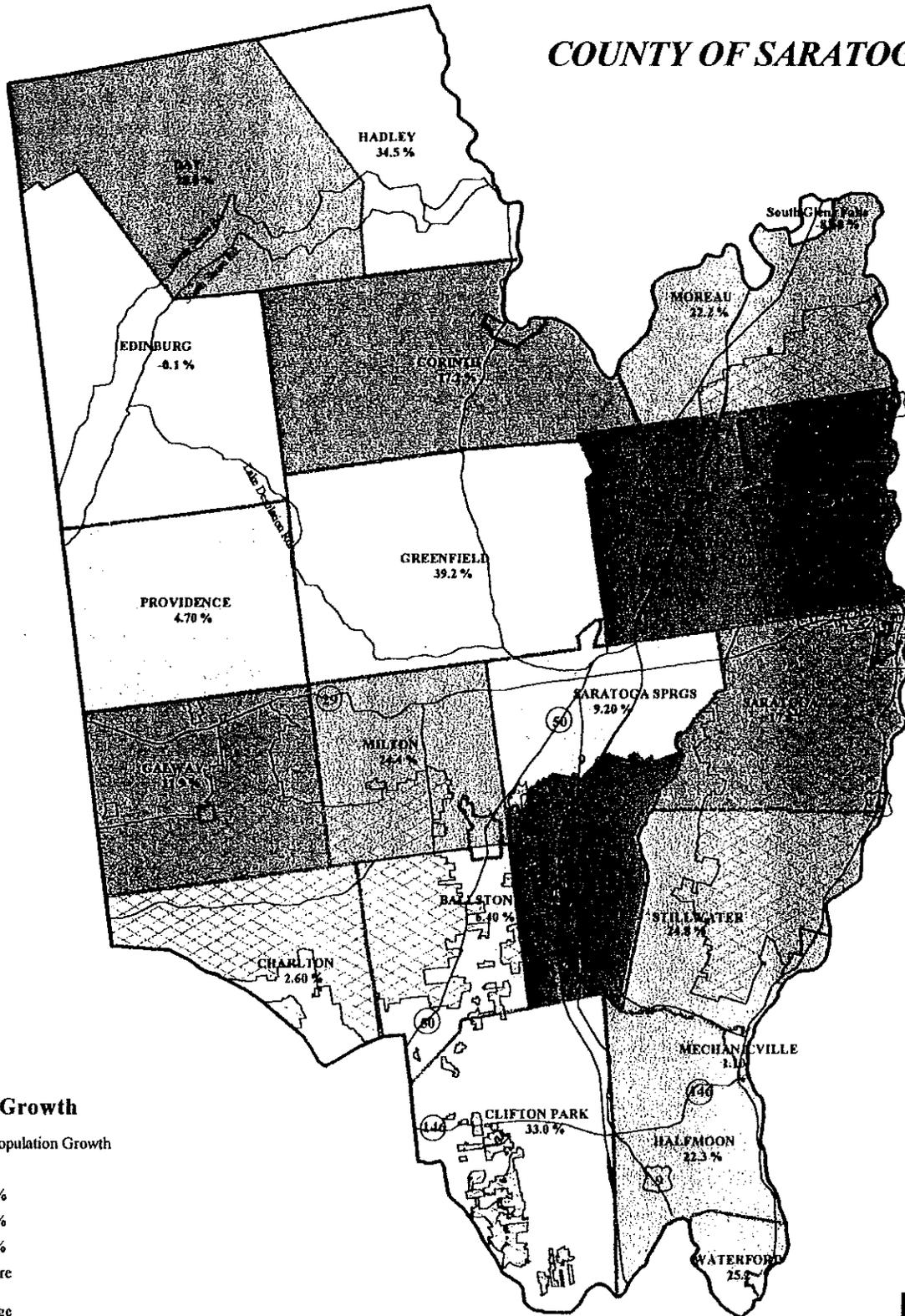
-  Agricultural District
-  Sewer District
-  Town Boundary
-  Hydro

AGRICULTURAL DISTRICTS IN RELATION TO INFRASTRUCTURE

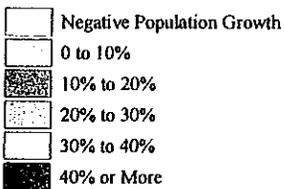




COUNTY OF SARATOGA



Population Growth

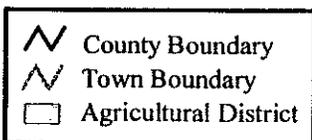


* Percent Change Includes Villages

SOURCE: U.S. Census Bureau

The LA Group
Landscape Architecture
and Engineering, P.C.
68 Long Alley
Saratoga Springs
New York 12866
1997

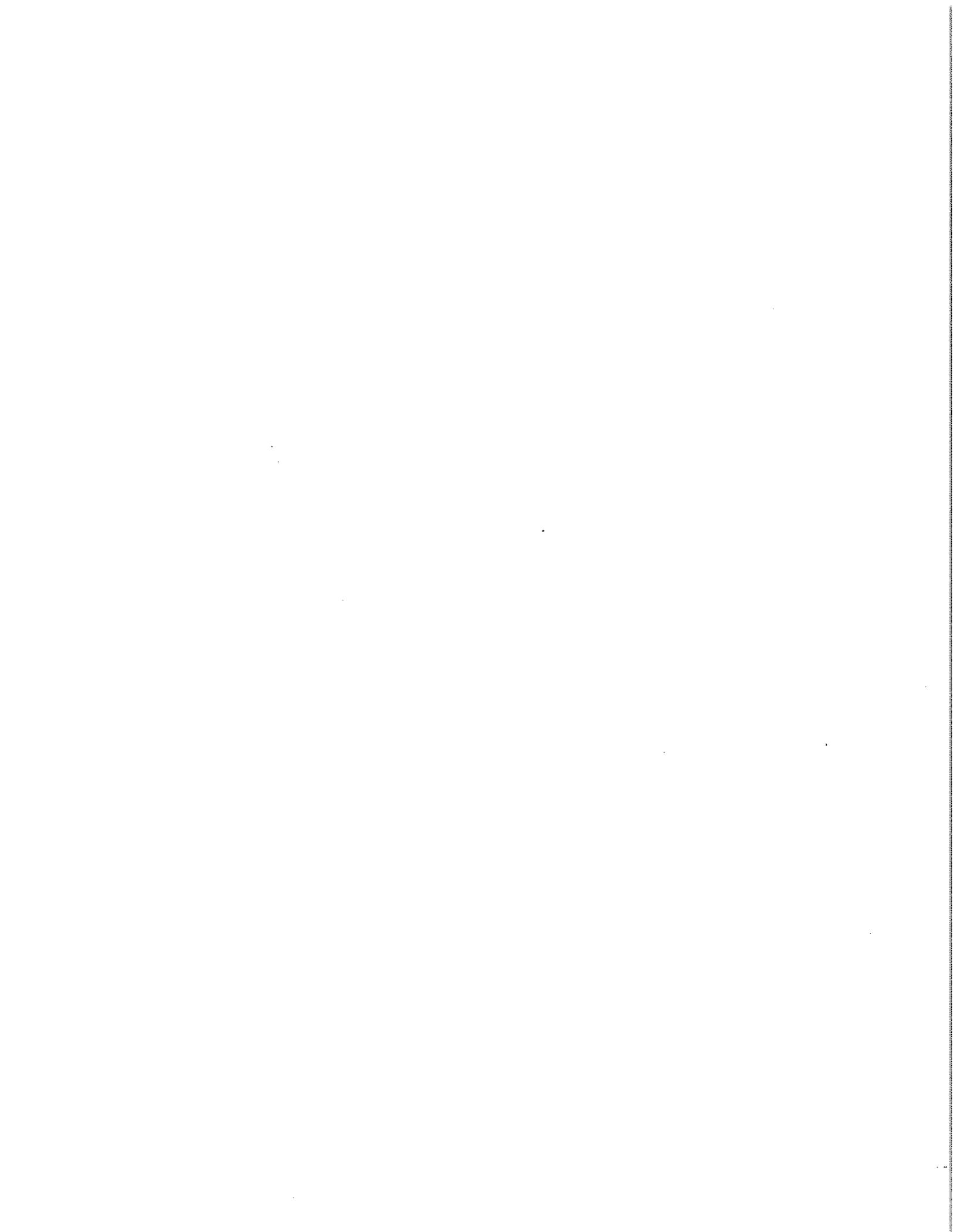
LEGEND



POPULATION CHANGE 1980-1994



1 0 1 Miles

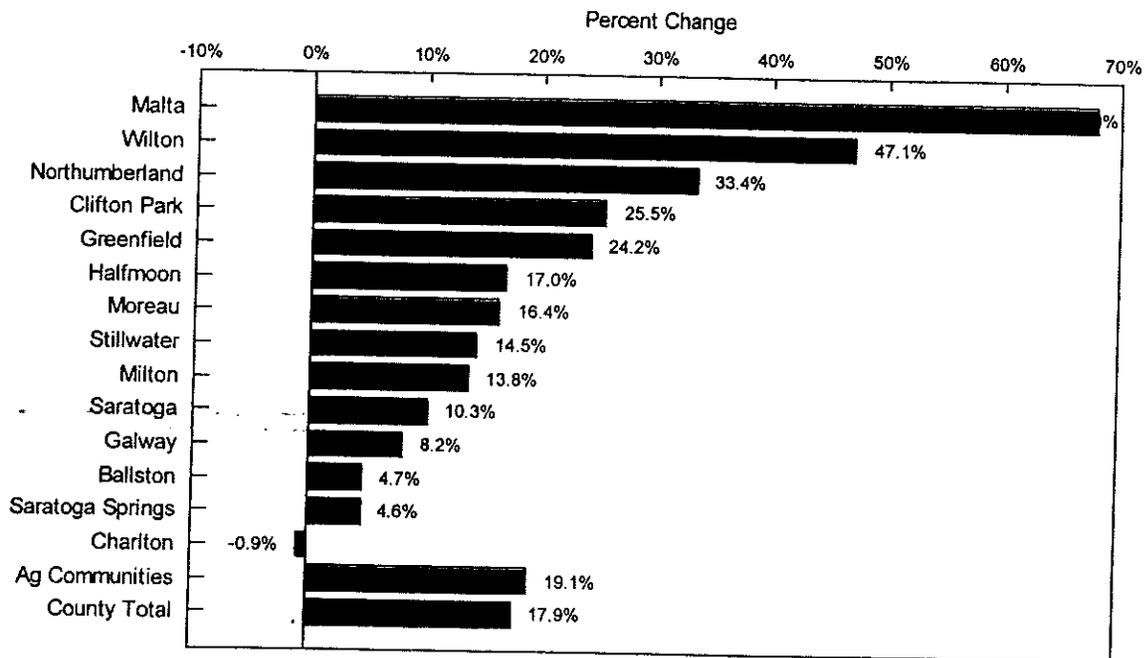


Actual Population Growth - 1980 to 1990

Saratoga County has undergone substantial population growth over the last several decades. Between 1980 and 1990 (the year of the last Census count), the population of the county increased 17.9 percent. Compared to an overall 4.9 percent rate of increase for the Capital District (Albany, Rensselaer, Saratoga, and Schenectady Counties) during this same period, Saratoga County's population growth was quite impressive.

Several of the county's agricultural communities experienced explosive growth during the 1980s. The Town of Charlton was the only agricultural community to experience a small decline in population. In terms of percentage growth, the Town of Malta grew the fastest (68 percent), followed by the towns of Wilton (47.1 percent), Northumberland (33.4 percent), and Clifton Park (25.5 percent). Only the Towns of Ballston, Charlton, Galway, and the City of Saratoga Springs had growth rates less than 10 percent during the decade.

Figure 8: Actual Population Growth in Saratoga County's Agricultural Communities, 1980-1990



Housing Units - 1980 to 1990

The rapid population growth of the 1980s was accompanied by an increase in the number of housing units. In terms of location, housing unit growth mirrors the population growth which has occurred in the county. All of the county's agricultural communities, except Charlton (9.6 percent) and the Town of Saratoga (4.2 percent), experienced changes in the number of housing units greater than 10 percent.

An increase in the number of housing units in an area does not necessarily mean that valuable farmland is lost. However, in Saratoga County, the vast majority of new housing units have been single-family detached structures built on increasingly large plots of land. In addition, these building lots tend to be scattered across the landscape.

Case Study: Subdivision Activity in Three Agricultural Towns

To illustrate this pattern, subdivision activity in the towns of Charlton, Saratoga and Northumberland were analyzed for the previous eleven years (1986-1996). Using information from the Saratoga County Real Property Tax Services Department, the location, number of lots, and lot sizes for each subdivision filed were recorded. The patterns are as follows:

Charlton - Larger lots (2 to 5 acres) and scattered subdivision activity

Subdivision activity in Charlton can only be described as random. In some years, few new residential lots were created, while other years experienced the creation of over 20-30 new lots. For the most part, subdivisions in the town have been small in terms of housing units. However, these "small" subdivisions have been scattered across the town with no discernible pattern. In all cases, the lots created were at least two acres, and frequently were much larger.

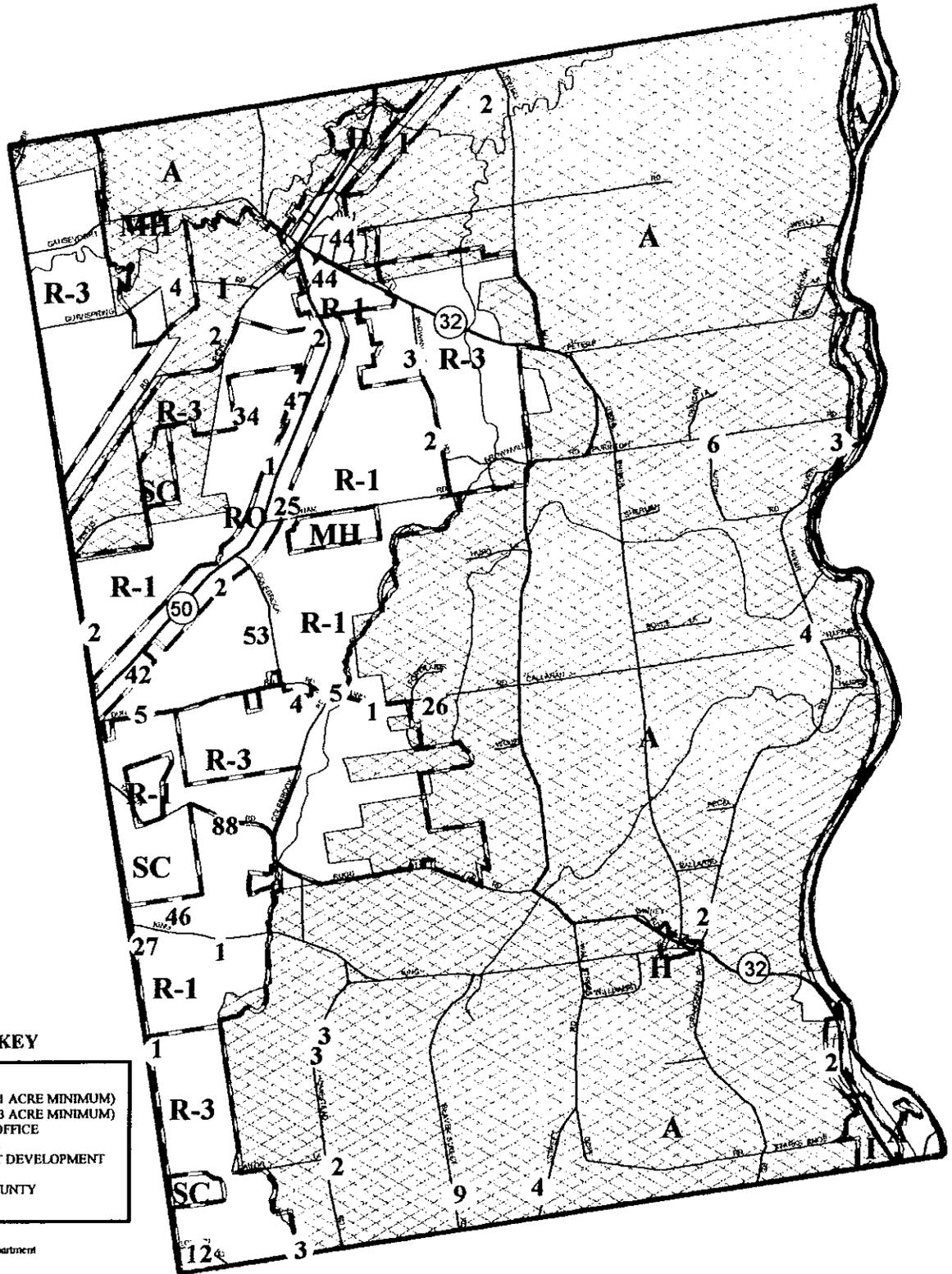
Saratoga - Larger lots (2 to 5 acres) along major routes

Subdivision activity in Saratoga peaked in 1991 when 41 new lots were created in a year. Prior to that, activity had been very slow in the mid-1980s, rising only at the end of the decade. After 1991, there was a slight drop in the number of new lots created per year. From 1994-1996, subdivision activity leveled-off at the creation of 20 and 30 new lots per year. During the eleven year period, only four subdivisions had more than ten lots and none had more than fifteen. However, these "small" subdivisions created very large lots. In almost all cases, new lots were at least two acres in size. Often they were between three and five acres, sometimes larger.

Unlike Charlton, there was some pattern to the location of subdivision activities. Subdivisions tended to follow major roadways such as U.S. Route 4, NYS Route 32, and NYS Route 29. The latter contained the greatest "concentration" of activity, with subdivisions scattered along its length. However, a large area of the town, west of Route 32 nearing Saratoga Lake, and from the Stillwater border north to Fish Creek, experienced almost no subdivision activity. Land use regulations do not appear to be a contributing factor. Instead, certain natural features of the landscape, such as glacial till intermingled with bedrock in the form of rock outcrop-pings, are not conducive to residential construction.

Northumberland - Larger subdivisions with smaller lots (1/2 to 2 acres) outside agricultural district

As the population and housing unit data indicate, Northumberland has experienced a high rate of growth. Two features of Northumberland's subdivision activity are apparent. For one, lot sizes of 1/2 to 2 acres are predominant in their subdivisions, smaller than those in Saratoga or Charlton. Second, the vast majority of subdivisions, including all of the large ones, are situated in the western portion of town. With the exception of one project, which happens to be an excellent example of cluster subdivision, development has occurred outside of agricultural district boundaries in the least agricultural portion of the town (see Map 5).



ZONING KEY

- A - AGRICULTURE
- R1 - RESIDENTIAL (1 ACRE MINIMUM)
- R3 - RESIDENTIAL (3 ACRE MINIMUM)
- RO - RESIDENTIAL OFFICE
- MH - MOBILE HOME
- PUD - PLANNED UNIT DEVELOPMENT
- I - INDUSTRIAL
- SC - SARATOGA COUNTY
- H - HAMLET

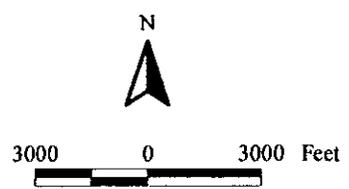
SOURCE:
Saratoga County Planning Department

LEGEND

- Subdivision location (with number of lots)
- Zoning Boundary
- Town Boundary
- Hydro
- Agricultural District Boundary

**TOWN OF NORTHUMBERLAND
SUBDIVISION ACTIVITY**

1986-1996



The LA Group
Landscape Architects
and Engineers, P.C.
60 Long Alley
Saratoga Springs
New York 12864
1997

Case Study Cont.

There are four possible reasons for this trend. First, the western portion of town is closer to the more developed areas in the county and to the highway infrastructure needed by residents to travel to work, shopping and recreation.

Second, soils in the western portion of town are better suited to development. From west to east across the town, soil types gradually change from sand to wetter sand to clay. Without public sewer and water infrastructure, the eastern portion of the town is less able to sustain large scale residential development.

Third, Northumberland's land use regulations make a clear distinction between residential and agricultural areas. The R-1 residential zone in the western part of town is attractive to developers because the minimum lot size is small. However, the minimum lot size is 5 acres in the agricultural zoning district. Further, an R-3 residential zone specifies a minimum lot size of 3 acres. This zone is intended to be a buffer between residential and agricultural portions of the town. The boundaries of these zoning districts correspond to the borders of the county agricultural district, lending further consistency to the town's farmland protection efforts.

Lastly, the climate in Northumberland is one of a strong agricultural community which has many healthy farms. Farmers there are less inclined to convert farmland to non-agricultural uses.

Summary

As we can see from these case studies, large lot sizes of 2 acres or more are common in many of our communities. These large lot sizes are often the minimum allowed under local zoning codes. While large minimum lot sizes, in most cases, were established to protect farmland, they tend to have the opposite effect. Larger lot zoning does not slow the conversion of farmland. Instead, it often contributes to the consumption of open space and the fragmentation of farmland.

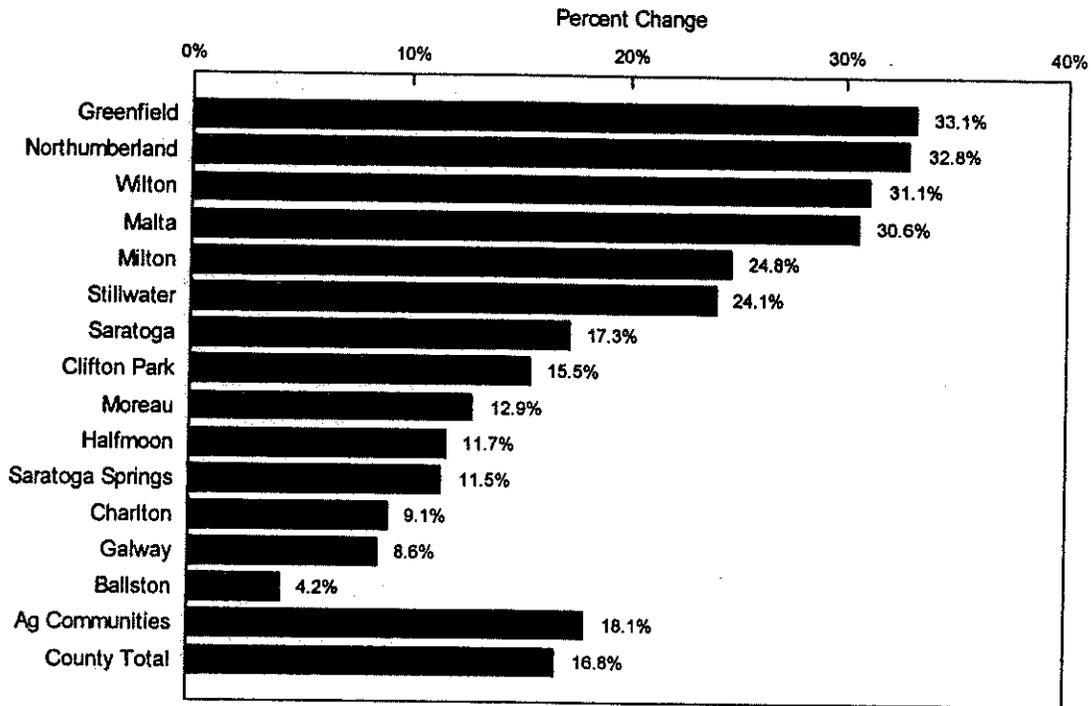
Moreover, we can see from this study that new construction has occurred in a haphazard fashion across the landscape. Such random development tends to consume a great deal of land and place more homes in close proximity to working farms.

In summary, the growth of housing units in our county -- at its rapid pace and in its rather arbitrary form -- has compromised the agricultural resources in many of our communities.

Continued Population Growth - 1990s

Population estimates are prepared by the U.S. Department of Commerce for the years between the decennial census. Projected growth for Saratoga County in the 1990s is quite similar to the rate of population growth experienced during the 1980s. If the population increase estimate for 1990-1994 is extended out over 10 years, the county will increase 16.8 percent, adding 30,434

Figure 9: Estimated Population Growth in Agricultural Communities
 Saratoga County, 1990 - 2000 (Ten Year Rate of Change Based on 1990-94 Estimates)



persons. If we consider population projections prepared by the Capital District Regional Planning Commission instead, the anticipated growth during this decade will be less (an 11.3 percent, 20,571 persons increase).

Regardless of the slight projection differences, both studies conclude that population growth will continue throughout Saratoga County in the 1990s. Several communities that have not experienced much growth pressure in the past can expect more in the future, including many of the county's strongest agricultural communities. The resulting effects on farmland have yet to be determined. However, it is the location and form of accompanying residential construction that may ultimately impact agricultural lands.

Residential Building Permits

Residential Building Permit issuances are another indicator of continued growth in Saratoga County during the 1990s. From 1990 to 1996, Saratoga County municipalities issued building permits for 7,075 residential units. Of these, 5,908 (83.5 percent) were for single family residences.

The location of new construction may be having a greater impact on agriculture during the 1990s. As expected, new construction appears to be taking place in outlying communities as well as the Northway corridor towns. If we assume that all of the building permits issued have led to actual constructed residences, then the Town of Northumberland has built 27.8 percent more housing units over the last seven years.

Northumberland has been adding housing units faster than any other community in the county. More actual new units have been built there than in the other three major agricultural towns. Still, the town arguably remains the county's strongest agricultural community.

In the coming years, however, residential construction close to Northumberland's working farms will place additional pressure on the farmers there. For this reason, Northumberland may be a logical place to focus agricultural protection efforts. Such efforts may include the use of land use tools that have not been explored in Saratoga County before. If implemented quickly, and with meaningful community involvement, these protection efforts (which must also safeguard property rights) could have a reasonable chance of preventing significant farmland loss in Northumberland.

Saratoga County's other three major agricultural communities -- Charlton, Saratoga, and Stillwater -- are also experiencing residential construction that has, or will, outpace the housing unit growth of the 1980s. Geographically, residential construction appears to be more widely distributed than it has been previously. The county's strongest agricultural communities are experiencing equal or greater rates of growth than they did during the 1980s. Considering the vast majority of this new construction (about 84 percent) involves single-family homes, and that the general building trend is toward larger lot sizes, the county's agricultural land base could be significantly impacted.

Future Population Growth - 2000 and Beyond

According to population projections prepared by the Capital District Regional Planning Commission, moderate population growth will continue through the early part of the next century. The same projections show that population growth will be widely distributed around the county in coming years. Although the overall rate of growth for the county is not projected to be as dramatic as witnessed in the last couple of decades, the form and location of this growth still retains the potential to negatively impact the county's agricultural resources.

Consequences of Conversion

The conversion of farms and farmland causes a decline in the economic and environmental value of agriculture in Saratoga County. It induces a combination of forces that make it even more difficult for farmers to remain in business.

Increases the Price of Farmland

Competing land uses have increased the price of land beyond its agricultural value. Areas experiencing the greatest population growth have the highest land values. High land costs make it difficult for existing farmers to buy land to expand their operations and for new farmers to enter farming. They also make it difficult to transfer land from one generation to the next.

As a result, more farmers are now renting land. However, continued development pressure will eventually decrease the availability of rental land. Already, farmers in the county have to travel further to rent land. The renting of land can also affect conservation practices which require long-term investments.

Increases School and Property Taxes

When farmland is converted to residential development, property taxes go up. New residences demand more in services than they pay for in taxes, mainly due to the cost of education. Large landholders such as farmers bear a larger share of rising property taxes, even though they require fewer services. The high cost of school and property taxes affects farm profitability and the ability to maintain farmland.

Increases Potential Conflicts With Neighbors

Conversion brings more residential neighbors into agricultural areas who have little understanding of agriculture as a business. Farmers find it difficult to respond to complaints about manure, noisy machinery, slow-moving vehicles and spraying. Production costs can rise due to the added costs associated with neighbor relations, littering, trespassing and increased traffic.

Weakens Farm Profitability

Farms everywhere must grapple with the issue of profitability. For the past twenty years, farmers have seen production costs rise faster than commodity prices, largely due to the cost of crop needs, feed, utilities and other inputs. Farms in areas experiencing conversion pressure have added costs due to the high cost of land, increasing school and property taxes, competition for labor and other costs related to farming in an urbanizing area. Together these add significant costs to farm operations and weaken farm profitability.

Diminishes the Agricultural Sector

Continued loss of farmland weakens the economic potential of agriculture. The loss of cropland

means the annual loss of local revenue and sales from agriculture. The 10,300 acres of cropland converted to non-agricultural use from 1982 to 1992 in Saratoga County represents a loss of \$3.7 million to \$5.4 million every year in local farm revenue. When less cropland is available, fewer farms are retained. Expansion is also limited, and capital investment is discouraged on existing farms.

Diminishes Environmental Value and Rural Character

Farmland plays an increasingly important role in Saratoga County as a source of scenic open space, wetlands, woodlands, wildlife habitat and historic landscapes. Conversion of farms and farmland diminishes the environmental benefits provided by agriculture and jeopardizes Saratoga County's rural character and quality of life.

Diminishes Farm Influence

Farmers in Saratoga County remain large landholders, but as only 1/10 of 1 percent of the population, they are threatened by the loss of influence in their communities. Through dedication and commitment, the local farm community has been taking the lead in gathering political support and initiating many pro-farm policies.

New Dynamics at Work

Despite the many conversion pressures facing Saratoga agriculture, there are some new dynamics at work that could have a positive influence on its future. These include:

- Better analysis of the fiscal and resource costs of low-density development.
- Stronger alliances among agriculture, rural and suburban communities.
- Growing appreciation for farming.
- Broad support for county agricultural and farmland protection planning activities.
- Greater recognition at the county and state level of the need for farmland protection incentives and fair compensation to landowners.
- Growing direct marketing potential for Saratoga County's agricultural products.

The local agricultural industry faces a multitude of challenges. While some are outside of our influence, many can be addressed effectively by the cooperation of local governments, farmers, the community, and state agencies. Some of the challenges that local communities can address include the following:

Profitability

The bottom line for farmers is profitability. Alleviating the high cost of land, school/property taxes and utilities for farmers should become a priority. Farmers also need increased efforts aimed at providing them with assistance in expansion, increasing efficiency, vertical integration, opening new markets and increasing the share of the food dollar retained on the farm.

In some towns, the posting of signs is a problem for farm retail stands and there is a need to work

on solutions. The State of Connecticut is planning an Agricultural Directional Signage program allowing farmers to post signs to their farms on state roadways. A county program could be part of a marketing campaign that not only promotes local farms but local tourism as well.

Agricultural Development

The same kind of business retention and enhancement efforts that are directed at other sectors of the local economy need to be applied to the agricultural sector. Farmers need assistance with business planning and development, marketing and promotion and access to financing.

Education

The majority of Saratoga County's residents have little or no direct contact with farming. Consequently, there is little understanding of production agriculture and its economic and environmental values. Agriculture and farmland protection planning activities over the past eighteen months have greatly expanded efforts to educate the public about agriculture (Farm Breakfast and Tour, *Saratoga Farms*, Economic Development Forum, participation at County Fair, etc.). The county needs to expand these efforts.

New residents who buy houses near farms also need to know that the sights, smells and sounds of farming are legally protected by the Agricultural Districts Law. Local planning boards and town officials need more education about land use issues related to agriculture.

Land Use Practices

Conventional suburban-style zoning and subdivision regulations are not effective in maintaining farmland and rural character. Current land use practices need to be strengthened to provide incentives for those wishing to remain in farming. There is a need to discuss planning alternatives and options related to farmland protection with planning boards, elected officials and local developers.

Public Policy

Since agriculture and tourism are major industries, the county should carefully examine the effect of policy decisions on these industries. Agriculture needs public policy directives that provide greater support. The county should invite representatives from the agricultural industry to participate at the county's decision making table. Despite the demands of their businesses, farmers need to continue to take the time to participate on local boards and in business organizations.

Public Support

As the public learns more about the value of agriculture and the benefits of farmland, public support will inevitably build for a mix of strategies and a balanced approach. Because the larger community benefits, the community should share the "cost" of these agricultural and farmland protection initiatives.

Farm Transfer

Farmers in Saratoga County, like their counterparts across the country, are getting older. As these farmers contemplate retirement, they need access to better information and more options to help transfer farms from one generation to the next.

Strengths to Draw On

Agriculture in Saratoga County has many strengths and resources to draw on when it comes to meeting these challenges. These include:

- Dedicated and resourceful agricultural community as evidenced by promotional activities and events.
- Adoption of and public support for local right-to-farm laws.
- Successful commercial farms and young commercial farmers.
- Proximity to strong agricultural counties that farmers here can rely on for equipment dealers, veterinarians and other agricultural support businesses.

Saratoga County's urban-edge location presents opportunities for the farm community as well as challenges. There is an availability of off-farm jobs that can provide supplemental income. Escalating land prices can provide impeccable collateral and net worth that can be attractive to lenders. There is also a market for higher value products and an opportunity to sell directly to consumers.

Direct marketing opportunities for our county's agricultural products appear to have a positive future. Farms that have been successful in tapping into this market are experiencing high profit margins, with some reporting 80 to 90 percent better return than wholesale. Farmers have expressed interest in learning more about direct marketing and in trying to find ways to educate the growing consumer base.

Farmers Views

Through two surveys and several forums and workshops, the farm community was asked to comment on a variety of topics related to agriculture and farmland in Saratoga County. Many comments received from the farm community helped guide the Agricultural and Farmland Protection Board in developing its recommendations.

Farmland Protection Survey

In the Spring of 1996, the Agricultural and Farmland Protection Board conducted a survey of farmers in Saratoga County. The survey's primary purpose was to solicit the opinions of the farm community on policy options and techniques for farmland protection in Saratoga County. The survey was mailed to a total of 280 farmers and yielded responses from 95, most of whom were dairy farmers. The highest response rates came from the towns of Saratoga, Ballston, Charlton and Clifton Park.

The questions in the survey related to farmland protection and demographic information, including:

- level of concern regarding the loss of farmland in Saratoga County;
- opinions regarding present farmland protection programs;
- level of interest in other farmland protection options;
- retirement and future plans for farmland;
- information on farm location, type, gross sales, and acreage rented/owned.

The protection of farmland is of great importance to the farmers of Saratoga County. An overwhelming majority of the farmers who responded are concerned about the loss of farmland in the county. They expressed interest in learning more about programs that would help land owners keep their land in agricultural use. An overwhelming majority also believed there should be additional incentives to help keep farmland in agriculture.

This survey also indicated that farmers in Saratoga County are concerned about the ability of New York State's agricultural district program to protect farmland. Most individuals responding to the survey (51 percent) were unsure of its effectiveness, while 20 percent of respondents believed the program is ineffective. Only 28.4 percent of the respondents thought the current agricultural district program is effective.

In fact, most respondents to the survey favor strengthening the farmland protection elements of

the agricultural district program. Slightly more than 65 percent of respondents stated that farmland protection elements should be strengthened, while only 28.4 percent were unsure. Later in the survey, when asked what farmland protection programs they are interested in learning more about, respondents indicated a high interest in programs relating to the agricultural district program. Most farmers seem to feel the agricultural district program is important to farmland protection, but should be strengthened.

A majority of respondents even favored government legislation which limits development on prime and important farmland, with 57.9 percent favoring such legislation. This question, however, received a slightly higher negative response than did previous ones; 21 percent of respondents were not in favor of government legislation. Another 21 percent were uncertain.

When asked if they would support the use of real estate transfer taxes or fees to raise money for farmland protection efforts, only 42 percent of farmers responded affirmatively, while 23 percent responded negatively and 33.7 percent were unsure. The lower level of support received for this farmland protection technique could reflect the negative association made with taxes. It could also reflect the fact that no explanation was given for how the real estate transfer taxes or fees would be used for farmland protection efforts.

Farmers in Saratoga County are willing to make a commitment to stay in farming. When asked if they would support a tax abatement program at the town level which offered reductions in school and land taxes in exchange for a commitment to stay in farming, a vast majority (82 percent) supported this initiative. Only 4.2 percent did not support it, while 11.6 percent were uncertain.

Both the tax abatement program and the use of real estate transfer taxes or fees make use of local funding mechanisms. One respondent in an additional comment wrote: "Protecting farmland is an important state and national value and any programs should be funded at the state or national level, not by local taxpayers."

Property tax relief is a very important issue for farmers in Saratoga County. Respondents in their additional comments expressed concern over property taxes and how they abolish incentives to own farmland. The agricultural district program does not provide enough tax relief. Several people would like to see the eligibility requirements for agricultural use value assessment be extended to include those farmers whose gross farm sales are under \$10,000.

Two questions in the survey focused on farmers who are considering retirement in the next five years. Did they have plans for someone to take over the farm and keep it in agricultural use? A total of eighteen farmers out of the 95 respondents to the survey intend to retire in the next five years. Only seven of these farmers have plans that will keep their farms in agricultural use, while eleven do not. This information suggests that in the next five years Saratoga County will see nearly one in five farmers retire, but only slightly more than a third of them have plans for the farm to be taken over.

This information suggests that in the next five years Saratoga County will see nearly one in five farmers retire, but only slightly more than a third of them have plans for the farm to be taken over.

Saratoga Farms Survey

In the Spring of 1997, the Agricultural and Farmland Protection Board conducted a second survey of farmers in Saratoga County. The primary purpose of this survey was to compile information on individual farms and develop a guide to farms in the county. Farmers were also asked an additional set of questions regarding their marketing efforts, any local and state regulations that might have hindered or helped their farming operations and their opinions on how farmers and local government could strengthen agriculture in the county. The survey was mailed to a total of 450 farms and yielded responses from more than 100 farmers.

When farmers were asked what they, themselves, could do to strengthen agriculture in Saratoga County, the overwhelming response was "Educate the public." As one farmer stated, "We should make ourselves known -- our business is vital to a healthy economy." Producing high quality products, talking with customers about local produce, keeping a neat and attractive farm and displaying farms to nonfarmers were all suggested ways that farmers could increase public awareness of agriculture.

"Better communication among farmers" and "Work together to coordinate efforts" were mentioned by several respondents as important means for farmers to strengthen agriculture. One farmer wrote, "Farmers need to be more proactive with measures to ensure that the agricultural community is treated with the same respect as other major industries." Other important actions farmers said they could take included coordinating with the Chamber of Commerce and developing plans to transfer the farm to future farmers.

When asked what the county could do to strengthen agriculture, the overwhelming response was, "Promote agriculture as a major industry." One farmer said, "Saratoga County should be as well known for its beautiful farms as it is for the race track." Suggestions included promoting farms and roadside stands through a central county organizational effort and by creating greater recognition for the contributions of agriculture. Providing tax incentives and reducing taxes were the next most frequently mentioned responses. Maintaining strong support for Cornell Cooperative Extension and county fair activities were also mentioned as important things the county can do.

*"Saratoga County
should be as well
known for its
beautiful farms as it
is for the race track."*

When asked to describe local regulations that have hindered their farming operations, most of the answers concerned problems with signs. Some farms are not allowed to place signs, or if signs are allowed, they must be too small or remain unlighted. One farmer wrote, "Local government does not understand farming practices nor are they responsive to agricultural needs regarding regulations and legislation."

Many farmers wrote additional comments which expressed their gratitude for the development of a county wide marketing effort; many felt such an effort would facilitate networking among farmers and bring a much needed public awareness and appreciation to the farming community.

Meetings and Forums

During the planning process, several meetings and forums were held to discuss issues related to land use, profitability, economic development and other concerns facing the farm community in Saratoga County. A listening session was held in November 1996, followed by the Agricultural Land Use Discussion Forum in April of 1997 and the Economic Development Forum in June of 1997. In general, the meetings were well attended and provided an opportunity to gain insight into the needs, concerns and issues facing the future of farming in Saratoga County.

Quotes from Farmers

“We support Right to Farm laws and open space initiatives as an avenue to preserve the county’s rural character and promote agriculture as a viable business enterprise for generations to come.”

“The agricultural community should be treated with the same respect as other major industries. Agriculture needs to be a major player at the county’s decision table, which is not always the case because most farmers are totally consumed by the demands of their business with little time for influencing government.”

“Farmers should work hand in hand with the county to promote agricultural education to the general public to help them understand the difficulties of farming in a nonfarming society.”

“Tax abatement and conservation easement programs solve the problem of land sold for retirement money.”

“Farms need a stronger marketing campaign, so that Saratoga County is as well known for its beautiful farms as it is for its race track.”

“Farmers need more recognition for their contributions through actions and consideration.”

It Takes a Combination of Approaches

This chapter provides a brief description of some of the strategies that county and town governments can undertake to enhance agriculture and protect farmland in Saratoga County. These strategies include a mixture of incentives, regulations, education and agricultural development strategies. Some of these strategies are already in place. Communities that use a combination of approaches are often the most effective in their agricultural and farmland protection efforts.

New York Agricultural Districts Law

The New York Agricultural Districts Law, first enacted in 1971, serves as the cornerstone of agricultural and farmland protection efforts in New York State. Recent amendments have strengthened the law and broadened its scope. The Agricultural Districts Law provides incentives for farmers to keep land in active agriculture and shields farmers from unwanted and unwarranted interference with the business of farming.

Notice of Intent

Section 305(4) of the Agricultural Districts Law limits public action affecting farmland in agricultural districts. Known as the Notice of Intent (NOI), it recognizes that public projects can have significant impacts on agricultural resources. The NOI process is intended to minimize or avoid adverse impacts on agriculture, both direct (i.e. loss of farmland) and indirect (potential land use conflicts).

Agricultural Data Statements

This provision was added in 1992 to promote coordination of local planning and land use decision making with the Agricultural Districts Law by soliciting input from owners of farmland affected by local land use decisions. The Agricultural Data Statement (ADS) requires notice to farmers as well as the evaluation and consideration of a proposal's impact on agriculture before a local board makes a land use or planning decision.

Right to Farm Provisions

The Agricultural Districts Law contains three different Right to Farm provisions. These include determinations on sound agricultural practices, disclosure notices and limitations on unreasonably restrictive local ordinances:

1) Sound Agricultural Practices

Section 308 of the Agricultural Districts Law authorizes the Commissioner of Agriculture and Markets to issue opinions about whether particular agricultural practices are sound. The opinions are provided on a case-by-case basis. Sound Agricultural Practices refer to those practices

necessary for the on-farm production, preparation and marketing of agricultural commodities. Examples include the operation of farm equipment, use of agricultural chemicals and other crop protection methods, and the construction and use of farm structures. In evaluating agricultural practices, the Commissioner is expected to consult with Cornell's College of Agriculture and Life Sciences, the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, the New York State Advisory Council on Agriculture and other appropriate agencies. Sound agricultural practices as determined by the Commissioner shall not constitute a private nuisance.

2) Disclosure Notices

Section 310 requires landowners who sell or transfer property located in an agricultural district to provide a disclosure notice that states: "It is the policy of this state and this community to conserve, protect and encourage the development and improvement of agricultural land for the production of food and other products, and also for its natural and ecological value. This notice is to inform prospective residents that the property they are about to acquire lies partially or wholly within an agricultural district and that farming activities occur within the district. Such farming activities may include, but are not limited to, activities that cause noise, dust and odors." Receipt of the disclosure statement must be recorded on a property transfer report (ER-5217) prescribed by the New York State Office of Real Property Services. The disclosure notice is important because it attempts to provide prospective nonfarm neighbors with a description of the realities of modern farming practices (noise, dust and odors) before they buy property in an agricultural district.

3) Restrictive Local Ordinances

Section 305-a protects farmers and farm operations in agricultural districts from "unreasonably restrictive" local laws or regulations. Section 305-a prohibits "enactment" of these types of restrictions and extends the protection to include "administration" of local laws and ordinances as well.

Of course, local laws or regulations that bear a direct relationship to the public health or safety will continue to be valid exercise of the local government's police power.

Local Right to Farm Ordinances

Eleven towns in Saratoga County have enacted local right to farm ordinances. These local laws are intended to complement the right to farm provisions of the Agricultural Districts Law and demonstrate local support for agriculture.

The town of Northumberland enacted the first right to farm law in 1991, followed by Moreau and Saratoga in 1992. Milton, Ballston, Malta, Clifton Park, Wilton, Charlton, Stillwater, Galway and Hadley enacted right to farm laws during 1996 and 1997 when agricultural and farmland protection planning efforts were taking place.

The eleven local laws fall into three categories. Most of the local laws (8) are modeled on a version distributed by the Department of Agricultural and Markets and were reviewed by the NYS Department of Agriculture and Markets legal counsel. These local laws protect the right to undertake agricultural practices which are reasonably necessary to conduct the business of farming and require notice to prospective neighbors who may apply for building permits and subdivision

approval.

Northumberland's law also protects farming practices which are reasonably necessary to conduct the business of farming, prohibits interference with those farming practices and provides for penalties (a fine of \$25 to \$250 for each offense) for such interference.

One of the most recently enacted right to farm laws, in Charlton, similarly protects the right to undertake agricultural practices reasonably necessary to conduct the business of farming. However, in addition, Charlton's law requires notice to prospective buyers and neighbors as an addendum to the purchase and sale contract at the time a purchase offer is made.

The other distinct feature of Charlton's law is a dispute resolution process. Under this provision, the parties in a dispute may submit the controversy to a local dispute resolution committee consisting of a representative of the County Agricultural and Farmland Protection Board, a person from town government selected by the town board and one person mutually agreed upon by both parties.

The clear intent of Charlton's law is to protect the right to farm and help resolve disputes should they occur.

Counties

Counties may enact right to farm ordinances as well. Columbia County passed such a law in 1993. Washington County's agricultural and farmland protection plan recommended passage of a right to farm law similar to Charlton's -- they both include an alternative dispute resolution provision and a real estate purchase contract notice requirement.

Along with the state right to farm legislation which forms a part of the Agricultural Districts Law, and the town legislation which already exists in eleven Saratoga County towns, what are the grounds for a county right to farm law?

Several come to mind. First, a right to farm law would provide a county-wide policy statement about the importance of agriculture in Saratoga County. Second, real estate notice requirements would be easier to administer and more effective at the county level, since land records are kept by the County Clerk's Office. Lastly, the alternative dispute resolution procedure also would be easier to administer at the county level, and would help ensure uniformity of application throughout the county.

Lot Size and Density

One of the rationales behind decreasing the overall density of development is that lower density will protect farmland, or at least will be more compatible with farming. Fewer neighbors means fewer potential conflicts.

Many local governments attempt to control density by increasing minimum lot size. This is the simplest way to limit density -- increase minimum lot sizes from 1 to 2, 5 or 10 acres. But does that protect farmland or farming? On the one hand, larger lots mean fewer residences, but will the 2, 5, or 10 acre lot be farmed? The expression "Too small to farm, too big to mow" highlights the

concern that large lots will fragment land into lots that are too small to farm, and will do so at a much faster rate.

However, lot size is not the only way to limit density. If lot size and overall parcel density are uncoupled and dealt with separately, subdivision may not fragment the land so quickly. For example, if the desired density is one unit per 5 acres and the parcel is 20 acres, you could divide the parcel into four 5 acre parcels or four 1 acre parcels and one 16 acre parcel. Either way, the result is four building lots (the 16 acre parcel would not constitute a separate building lot in this example) and one unit per 5 acre overall parcel density. Yet in the latter example you also end up with a relatively large (and potentially farmable) parcel as well.

Separating lot size and density is more complex from a local administration perspective -- someone has to keep track of parcel density and non-buildable lots -- but it offers an alternative way to reduce density of units without creating large lots.

Buffers

In a rapidly growing county such as Saratoga County, some development will inevitably occur adjacent to active farmland and farm operations. The concept of buffers is based on the theory that "Good fences make good neighbors," and the reality that agricultural and residential land uses do not always mix well.

Buffers are efforts to create physical barriers between potentially incompatible land uses. Usually, buffers are created by space (such as strips of land from 50 to 500 feet wide), by vegetation (existing hedgerows, planted trees or shrubs), or by both. To be effective, buffers must be designed on a site-specific basis and adapted to different types of agricultural operations. In some cases, buffers simply may not be effective.

Other Mitigation Efforts

Recently, two innovative approaches to mitigate the loss of farmland have been enacted. The city of Davis in California, as part of a "Right to Farm and Farmland Preservation" ordinance, established an agricultural land mitigation requirement. Adopting what is essentially a "no net loss of farmland" approach, the Davis ordinance requires a one-to-one mitigation ratio for agricultural land that is converted to a non-agricultural use. The ordinance also permits payment of a fee based upon a one-to-one replacement ratio for a farmland conservation easement as satisfaction of the mitigation requirement. Agricultural mitigation land must meet certain eligibility requirements, such as contain soil of comparable quality and be located in an agricultural zone identified in the city's comprehensive plan.

Here in New York, the state legislature created a mitigation requirement in the Agricultural Districts Law. Section 305(4)(h-1) requires mitigation by funding a farmland conservation easement when land is taken by eminent domain for use as a landfill. This provision will be effective January 1, 1998 and represents the first time that a mitigation requirement has been applied to farmland in New York.

The concepts of mitigation and "no net loss" have been utilized routinely for protection of

wetlands by the Army Corp of Engineers. As public awareness about the importance of agriculture and farmland increases, mitigation provisions may be utilized to balance growth and resource protection.

SEQRA

The State Environmental Quality Review Act is intended to promote thorough review of the potential environmental impacts of proposed projects before they are approved or funded. In practice, most actions responsible for the conversion of farmland, or which indirectly impact farm activities, do not exceed thresholds that would trigger an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) - small to medium sized subdivisions (less than 12 units) and large lot subdivisions. In addition, other Type II actions, which are not subject to completion of an EIS or are otherwise precluded from environmental review under SEQRA, include agricultural farm management practices, including construction, maintenance and repair of farm buildings and structures, and land use changes consistent with generally accepted principles of farming.

Local governments may designate agricultural resources as critical environmental areas (CEA), thus triggering closer analysis of potential environmental impacts in the CEA.

In practice, however, an EIS usually gives no more than a cursory review of the proposed project's agricultural impacts. In most cases, the review is limited to the direct impact -- that is, the number of acres that will actually be converted and taken out of production -- and rarely considers the longer term and wider ranging, yet cumulative, impacts on agricultural resources.

Agricultural Assessment

The Agricultural Districts Law established agricultural assessment. With agricultural assessment, land is valued according to a formula established by the Office of Real Property Services which is based on soil productivity. In most cases, the agricultural assessment is significantly lower than its market value. Owners of farmland are eligible for agricultural assessment if they own at least 10 acres with minimum average gross sales of \$10,000, or less than 10 acres with minimum average gross sales of \$50,000.

Agricultural assessment does not lower tax rates on farmland; it reduces the assessment on which the tax rate is levied. Agricultural assessment does not affect buildings, however. In fact, some farmers have complained that local assessors are not adequately trained to value specialized agricultural buildings and structures, many of which are single use and depreciate very rapidly. Unfortunately, towns and villages by themselves do not have the resources to provide specialized training to their assessors about agricultural buildings.

The Agricultural Districts Law also limits the power of local governments to impose benefit assessments, special ad valorem levies, or other rates or fees in certain areas within an agricultural district. These include improvements for sewer, water, lighting, nonfarm drainage, solid waste disposal or other landfill operations. Local fire or ambulance districts may adopt resolutions providing for the use of agricultural assessments in those districts.

Agricultural Property Tax Credit

The Farm Preservation Act of 1996 established a new refundable tax credit for school district property taxes. Known as the "Farmers' School Tax Credit," it is available for school taxes paid on land, structures and buildings except residences. Farmers are eligible if they earn at least 2/3 of their federal gross income from farming.

Effective for the 1997 tax year, the credit will equal the total school taxes paid on qualified agricultural property that does not exceed the base acreage amount and 50 percent of the taxes paid on acres in excess of the base amount. The base acreage amount is 100 acres for 1997, 175 acres for 1998, and 250 acres for 1999 and beyond. The credit is reduced for net incomes over \$100,000 and phased out completely for incomes over \$150,000.

Local Tax Abatement

Three towns in Monroe County have enacted local tax abatement programs in exchange for term conservation easements. These programs provide a percentage reduction in property taxes as part of the agreement between the municipality and the landowner.

In Saratoga County, the Town of Clifton Park recently enacted a local tax abatement program. Owners of at least 15 acres of farmland or other open space (two adjacent landowners can apply if their acreage meets the 15 acre minimum) are eligible for a substantial reduction in property taxes if they agree to keep their land open or in farming for at least 15 years. (See the table below for the reduction schedule.) Landowners who convert their land before the easement term expires must pay taxes saved as well as penalties.

In Clifton Park, it appears that most of the commercial farmers (who are already eligible for agricultural assessment and the Farmers' School Tax Credit) will not participate in the new local program. The 15 year minimum term, when combined with the already existing benefits of agricultural assessment, may be enough to inhibit participation.

Nevertheless, over 1,437 acres have been approved for participation, including 650 acres of farmland. This farm acreage, much of which is not eligible for agricultural assessment, will continue to be available for agricultural use and may help buffer the remaining commercial farms from additional development, in addition to helping to stabilize the land base in Clifton Park for the near future.

**Percent of Pre-Easement Value Remaining Taxable
Town of Clifton Park**

<u>Years</u>	<u>Conservation</u>	<u>Farming</u>	<u>Historic</u>
15	20	15	15
16	19	14	14
17	18	13	13
18	17	12	12
19	16	11	11
20	15	10	10
21	14	10	10
22	13	10	10
23	12	10	10
24	11	10	10

Other Property Tax Issues

Cost of Community Service Studies have found that annual income raised from farmland exceeds its demand for community services, including schools. These studies disprove three common

misconceptions about local property tax issues: that residential development lowers taxes; that farmland gets an unfair tax break when it is taxed at its current use value; and that farmland is an interim land use, simply waiting to be used for something else. These studies show that farmland protection is a good investment for the entire community because it is a net revenue generator.

Agricultural Conservation Easements

Individuals and communities across the nation are exploring the use of conservation easements to prevent development of farmland. Agricultural conservation easements are legally recorded voluntary agreements that restrict land to agricultural and open space uses. They generally prohibit uses that damage agricultural value or productivity. An agricultural conservation easement usually will permit the construction of new farm buildings or a few carefully located houses for family members. Landowners can donate conservation easements or sell them.

Easements may apply to entire parcels of land or to specific parts of the property. Most are permanent: term easements impose restrictions for a limited number of years. Land protected by conservation easement remains on the tax rolls and is privately owned and managed. Landowners who donate permanent conservation easements may be entitled to income, estate and property tax benefits.

Purchase of Development Rights (PDR)

Some state and county governments, as well as a few private organizations, have established programs to buy agricultural conservation easements. Most commonly called purchase of development rights, this land conservation technique helps communities protect productive farmland from conversion to nonagricultural use. When landowners sell conservation easements or development rights, the agreement is recorded in the land records and limits the future use of the land to agriculture.

Although PDR programs may be structured differently, they have much in common. They are always voluntary, and participants retain full ownership and control of the land. Landowners can sell or transfer their property whenever and to whomever they wish. However, because of the easement, the land is permanently protected from nonfarm development and remains available for agricultural use. Most easements allow for them to be terminated by a court proceeding if conditions on or surrounding the property change so drastically that it becomes impossible to fulfill the agricultural conservation purposes.

Eligibility for most PDR programs is based on a set of established criteria. These usually include: soil quality, agricultural viability, development pressure, proximity to other protected farms or blocks of farmland, and targeted areas of concern, such as agricultural districts.

PDR programs are often funded by bonds issued by state or local governments. Other sources of funding include general appropriation, real estate transfer taxes, other special purpose funds and matching funds from other agencies.

Recently, New York State has authorized municipalities to issue a new kind of municipal obligation to facilitate the purchase of property interests, including conservation easements, for

the protection of open spaces such as farmland. The new legislation establishes a new form of debt called the "land installment purchase obligation." These obligations will be considered municipal debt under the New York State Constitution. This means that payments on the obligation are not conditioned upon annual appropriation by the local municipality and they will be treated like every other bond or note of the municipality. The practical implications for local land protection efforts are that municipalities will be able to make installment payments of principal and pay tax exempt interest to sellers, thus potentially leveraging limited local dollars.

Although PDR provides permanent, effective protection and is popular with landowners, it is expensive and often never even considered by most local governments. The Town of Pittsford, a suburb of Rochester, recently enacted a \$10 million local PDR program. The main objective of the program is to permanently protect over 1200 acres of farmland, but a supporting study by the Center for Governmental Research also demonstrated that the PDR program will save Pittsford taxpayers money in the long run. Interestingly, this research showed that the "break-even" value of a home in Pittsford (the price at which a home will pay for the services it will require) is \$350,000. Based on this information, the town estimated that while the PDR program will cost the average household \$1,300 over the next 20 years, the cost of doing nothing while allowing the full build-out of the town would cost \$5,000 per household. In light of this information, the town decided that the 1.4 percent increase in annual property taxes to pay for the bonds was a good long term investment.

Some communities view PDR as an economic development tool. It stabilizes the land by making farmland affordable for long term investment. It provides liquid capital that farmers can use to reduce their debt and expand their operations. It also protects the quality of life and has improved bond ratings for counties, both factors which make Saratoga County attractive to corporate investment.

Transfer of Development Rights (TDR)

Development rights are purchased and transferred for use in another location in transfer of development rights programs. TDR programs are intended to maintain designated areas in agricultural or open space use while compensating the owners of the protected land for the loss of their right to develop it for nonfarm purposes. In effect, programs concentrate development in existing built-up areas while protecting farmland and compensating landowners. TDR programs involve the private sector as well as government and can be tailored to achieve specific community land protection and development goals.

To be successful, TDR requires at least three pre-conditions. First, a thorough comprehensive planning effort must be utilized to identify sending and receiving areas. Second, there must be enough development pressure in the receiving area to create demand for the transferred rights. Third, the municipality must have access to sufficient technical expertise to set up and implement the details of TDR.

Leasing of Development Rights (LDR)

Under this proposal, a farmer would agree to a term easement on their land (restricting nonfarm development and subdivision for a given time period) in exchange for annual rental payments. The

Local Tax Abatement Programs described above are forms of LDR, but property tax abatement is offered rather than a cash payment. Farmers in Saratoga County have expressed interest in LDR.

One challenge with LDR is determining the value of a term easement. Pennsylvania's farmland protection legislation permits 25-year purchased easements, and arbitrarily values them at 10 percent of the value of an otherwise identical permanent easement. No such easements have been sold. In Routt County, Colorado \$100,000 has been approved for a demonstration term easement. But the project has grappled with the valuation question and has been unable to develop a satisfactory approach.

Cluster or Conservation Subdivision

Cluster or conservation subdivisions are based on the theory that the overall density of development need not always be based on lot size. In other words, you do not necessarily need large lots to achieve low development density. For example, a "clustered" or conservation subdivision might put ten 1 acre lots in one part of a 100 acre parcel rather than divide the parcel up into ten 10 acre lots. Either way, you obtain an overall parcel density of one unit per 10 acres, but in the conservation subdivision you are also left with 90 acres of land that could, in theory, be used for farming. Deferring, for the moment, the inevitable discussion about whether this land would actually be farmed, this example demonstrates that lot size and density can be separated and that large lots are not the only way to limit the overall density of development in a particular area. The fact is that clustering is simply the transfer of development rights on an individual parcel. In contrast, TDR involves transfers among groups of parcels or areas.

However, there has been considerable debate in recent years about what level of development can be considered compatible with farming and farmland protection. This brings us back to the issue deferred above -- if we set aside a substantial amount of farmland, will a farmer want to own it, or at least use it? The answer to that question is likely a function of the size and configuration of the available parcel and the type of agricultural enterprisewhich prevails in a particular area. Notwithstanding the unanswered questions about conservation subdivision, it is clear that such an approach will not effectively protect farmland by itself and will require parcels which are large and efficient enough to encourage local farmers to utilize them.

Economic Development Initiatives

When asked, farmers say the most important issue they face is the struggle to keep farming profitable. If we can help improve the economics of agriculture, we will help farmers keep their land in agriculture. Agriculture and economic development involves the recognition that farms are individual businesses like any others. Accordingly, the application of standard principles of economic development to agriculture can help it to grow, much like any other industry. It makes sound economic sense, then, to suggest that the agricultural industry should be included in municipal economic development initiatives.

In the past, municipalities have failed to support agriculture through economic development. Local governments need to recognize the economic opportunities which are presented by agriculture. One of the tasks of this plan has been to explore ways to expand agricultural development efforts in the county. This has involved working with existing economic

development agencies to educate them on this issue as well as to explore the roles they can take in the future. To this end, various meetings have been held. The culmination of this cooperative work was the staging of the county Agriculture and Economic Development Forum. At this forum, Ken Green, the president of the Saratoga Economic Development Corporation, stated that for the first time in twenty years, agriculture would be included as part of the economic development efforts in Saratoga County.

Several communities around the country have successfully integrated agricultural interests within the economic development activities of their local governments. Montgomery County, Maryland, for example, has incorporated agricultural development into its economic development agency. In New York State, Orange County recently acted on one of the recommendations made in their agriculture and farmland protection plan by creating an Agricultural Economic Development Director position within their county Chamber of Commerce. The director's duties include promoting awareness of agriculture's importance, working to protect the land base, promoting the county to prospective farmers and agribusinesses, seeking innovative financing for agricultural enterprises, and encouraging cooperation among agencies related to agriculture, business, economic development, tourism, and government. The director helped coordinate Orange County's application to the state for the first round of farmland protection implementation funds for its PDR projects. As a result, Orange County was awarded a large chunk of the available state funding.

Following input we received from the Agriculture and Economic Development Forum, and from studying measures that other counties across the country have implemented, we developed a set of recommendations regarding agriculture and economic development.

In a nutshell, improving the economic development of agriculture involves educating the farm community, members of local governments and the business community, and then working to bring all three groups closer together. A number of general strategies and actions are discussed below. These are reinforced as initial recommendations in Chapter 9. Many methods for increasing the economic viability of agriculture remain unexplored. Building on the cooperation that has been established, new ideas will surely emerge to complement those identified here.

Outreach and assistance programs can help farmers develop and implement better business practices. Saratoga County farmers need to be more aware of the opportunities to profit from their proximity to urban areas, rather than just feeling pressure from urban encroachment. Farmers should be offered training in effective marketing and business development. Time constraints and lack of financial flexibility often hinder the growth of many farm enterprises. A program could be developed to work with farmers on an individual, as-needed basis. Such a program could even include a network of retired or volunteer business professionals who would lend their expertise in areas such as production, management, marketing, financial planning, estate planning, and computer technology. In Howard County, Maryland, they have established an Agricultural Marketing Program. This new initiative offers business development, marketing and promotional assistance to county farms and agricultural businesses.

Financial assistance can be used to increase farmers' access to capital for expansion and diversification purposes. As government support for agriculture continues to shrink on a national

basis, local municipalities will need to direct more of their economic development funds to the agricultural industry if they wish to remain viable. Suffolk County, New York, has done this in a unique way. Their county purchase of development rights program (the first of its kind in the nation) provides participating farmers with the liquid capital to invest in their operations while preserving farmland at the same time.

Throughout the last decade, agriculture has been critically influenced by economic changes in the regional, national and global economies. Farmers today have to work harder to maintain their economic viability under these circumstances. Out of necessity, many are expanding their operations to maintain market share. Many others are exploring new markets, direct marketing opportunities, product niches, or diversifying their operations to include tourism and other value added strategies in an effort to remain profitable.

Economic Development efforts should assist in identifying marketing opportunities and strategies for local producers by increasing the scale of direct marketing opportunities. This could be accomplished by working to develop niche retail markets, expanded farmer's markets, and exploring the local food industry including restaurants and gourmet specialty shops. There is more demand than ever for fresh, local, and high quality produce and specialty products. The growing trend in today's society reflects "less is more" and "quality over quantity." The baby boom generation represents the largest aging population in history. The U.S. Census Bureau predicts that by the year 2010, the nation's aging population will account for 40% of the population. Studies have shown that consumer trends are towards a simpler lifestyle focusing on family and community. Local agriculture can tap into that trend.

The proximity of Saratoga County to several urban centers poses both advantages and disadvantages to farmers. The advantage is the potential to expand Saratoga's agricultural markets. Farms that have been able to access the increased customer base have realized a better chance for success, not only in monetary terms, but in building community relations and educating the public on the benefits of local agriculture.

A statistical report from the United States Department of agriculture has determined that farm businesses located on the fringe of urban areas generate a 2.5 times higher return per acre than agriculture located far from urban centers. A commitment to strengthen agriculture through marketing, tourism, and economic development efforts will improve the financial outlook for farm businesses and will establish a partnership between agriculture and other sectors of the county's economy.

In conclusion, the integration of agriculture within county economic development efforts is a winning proposition for all. By doing so, the county's number-one industry can thrive and grow, reaping benefits for many other sectors of the county's diverse economy as well.

Building Public Support

Building public support for agriculture is extremely important in this rapidly urbanizing county. We all need to work together to get the message out about the importance of farming to Saratoga County. There are many different ways to build this support. Promotion and outreach activities that took place during the course of this planning process provide working examples of activities

that help to build support for agriculture. (These activities are described in the following chapter). The projects came to fruition, in large part, due to the resourcefulness of the agricultural community and the leadership of the Saratoga Promotion Committee.

Agritourism

Agriculture should be incorporated into the marketing identity for our region. The Saratoga Region is rich in history and tourism appeal. The working rural landscape, easily accessible from our urban and suburban areas, contributes to this appeal. Saratoga is home to the oldest thoroughbred race track in the nation and is the summer home to the New York City Ballet and the Philadelphia Orchestra. Each summer, these events bring thousands of tourists to our region. As a result, the name "Saratoga" is synonymous with history, health and horse racing. It is known nationally and internationally. Saratoga County could successfully develop a trademark to assist in marketing local products in our region and beyond.

The promotion of agritourism in Saratoga county is a great way to build community relations and educate the public about agriculture. As an industry, it can also encourage cooperation among agencies related to agriculture, business, economic development, tourism, and government.

Agritourism promotion efforts can occur on an individual farm basis as well as through agency, town, or county events. The *Saratoga Farms* resource guide was a successful example of a county wide project which publicized the multitude of goods and services offered by various individual farms; at the same time, it promoted the attractive rural qualities of the county as a whole. As another example, events such as the Clifton Park Farmfest can be scheduled to promote a town's pride in its agricultural heritage; celebrations such as "Our Dairy Best" Farm Breakfast and Tour can help a particular farming industry (in this case, dairy) proudly showcase its appeal.

Farm Transfer and Estate Planning

As Saratoga County farmers age and begin to contemplate retirement, their farmland may, potentially, be at risk for conversion to nonfarm use. Because of the importance of farm transfer and estate planning issues, we must continue efforts to provide farmers and other farmland owners with access to better information and more options regarding the transfer farms from one generation to the next.

CELEBRATING AGRICULTURE

Promotion and Outreach Efforts

In 1996, a group of professionals came together to discuss ways to promote agriculture in the county. The group included members representing the Saratoga County Farm Bureau and American Farmland Trust, as well as a promotion specialist for a local Dairy Store chain, a nutritionist (and wife of a dairy farmer) from Cornell Cooperative Extension, the Agricultural and Farmland Protection program assistant from Cornell Cooperative Extension, a dairy farm business manager and community leader, and an apple orchard farmer who also serves on the Agricultural and Farmland Protection Board. The group, called the Agricultural Promotion Committee, was endorsed and sponsored by the Agricultural and Farmland Protection Board.

The first initiative of the committee was to assess the needs of the local farm community. Members of the group met with local farmers, including the Farmers' Market Association, to develop strategies that would help promote and market local agriculture. Their basic goal was to educate the public about the importance of agriculture. Three specific strategies emerged: 1) stage an event that would help promote the dairy industry and make the public aware of its impact and issues; 2) inventory farm businesses and then publish a resource guide with a map; 3) help promote and expand the Saratoga Farmers' Market.

Farm Breakfast & Tour

Hosting a breakfast and tour at a local dairy farm was the first plan of action to promote the dairy industry. The promotion committee felt a breakfast would be an uplifting way to celebrate Saratoga County dairy farms with the nonfarm public. People could experience first-hand the amount of land that farming supports, the daily work involved in the business, and the contributions of the farm to the local economy. At the same time, visitors would meet the farm family and learn about their heritage, all while enjoying the farm's majestic views and rural character.

The task seemed overwhelming at first. Finding the right farm, and having that farm agree to host the event, were the first hurdles to be cleared. The promotion committee decided to stage the event in June to coincide with the *June is Dairy Month* promotional campaign. The official title became the "Our Dairy Best" Farm Breakfast & Tour. The Hanehan Brothers Dairy farm, in the town of Saratoga, was chosen as the host farm. As the largest dairy in Saratoga County, the Hanehans have a milking herd of 500 cows and maintain 1,671 acres of land, including 1307 acres of cropland and 364 acres of woodlands and wetlands. The farm has been in the Hanehan family since 1946 and was celebrating its 50th anniversary that year. Truly a family farm, the operation supports three Hanehan families and employs five full-time and four part-time employees. The farm proved to be an ideal site because of its close proximity to various urban centers including Saratoga Springs, Schuylerville, Clifton Park, Wilton and Glens Falls.

The Hanehan farm utilizes many modern farming methods such as computerized record keeping and management information, and has a state of the art milking facility and freestall barn. The farm also incorporates many conservation practices into their management style. In addition, it offers beautiful scenic views. The Adirondack Mountain range can be seen in the distance, and the abundance of scenic open space hopefully strengthened the message that local farms enhance our quality of life.

The breakfast menu showcased the bounty of riches produced by Saratoga County farms. Featured were eggs from a poultry farm, homemade applesauce and apple cider from a local orchard, milk, fresh strawberries, sausage, french toast with maple syrup, muffins and honey. The Agricultural Promotion Committee had hoped for a turnout of 300 to 500 people but were thrilled with a crowd of an estimated 1,200 guests for breakfast! In addition to the meal, visitors had the opportunity to take a tour of the dairy, visit agricultural education stations set up throughout the event, or play with their children in the children's area which featured small farm animals, a sand pile with toy tractors, and farm related activities and crafts. A farmers' market was also set up to reinforce, for the nonfarm public, the association between farm-fresh products and local farmers. Putting a face with the feast enabled the public to interact with farmers on a one-to-one basis.

The tour of the dairy facility was also an opportunity for the public to interact with a farmer. The tours of the dairy ran every 20 minutes and the tour guides were all volunteers from local farms, extension agencies, Farm Bureau, agricultural agencies or agribusinesses. Participants saw first-hand the amount of hard work and dedication that goes into farming and learned about the many challenges faced by the agricultural community. Farm machinery was labeled according to its function and replacement value. Displays highlighted the amount of taxes the farm pays and other ways the farm contributes to the local economy. An informational pamphlet on the farm and farm family was distributed to all participants.

The second "Our Dairy Best" Breakfast & Tour, held in June of 1997 at the Kings-Ransom farm in the town of Northumberland, saw attendance nearly double to an estimated 3000 people. The volunteer base also doubled to over 100 people. Volunteers were organized in shifts, and many did not want to leave their posts when the shift was over. The volunteers and participants, who came from all walks of life, age groups and economic backgrounds, contributed greatly to make this event a remarkable success.

The success of the farm breakfast hinged on the tremendous volunteer base, the commitment of the farm family to undertake the work involved, and an aggressive marketing campaign. The target audience was Saratoga County families with small and elementary aged children up to fourth grade. The school districts were very supportive, understanding the value of the mission and helping to publicize the event. The schools mentioned the event in their newsletters and permitted school children to take the promotional materials home with them. The design of the flyer appealed to a broad audience and featured a map with directions to the farm. Press releases were issued as early as six months prior and were featured in tourist brochures, newspapers and newsletters.

The success of the two farm breakfasts revealed an enormous amount of public support and enthusiasm for Saratoga County farms and agriculture. The "Our Dairy Best" Breakfast & Farm

Tour will continue to be an annual tradition, hosted by a different farm each year so participants can gain a well-rounded picture of the county's local dairy industry.

FarmFest

In addition to the annual breakfast and tour, Clifton Park's FarmFest, which occurs annually in September, has been gaining interest. FarmFest allows the public to visit a variety of diverse farm enterprises while celebrating the harvest. The event features hay rides, apple picking, farm animals, educational displays, music, food, dancing and entertainment. Since the inception of the program in 1992, attendance has grown from 2,000 to over 6,000 people a year. Farm product sales soar for participating farms who take advantage of the opportunity to market their wares. Farms featured have included orchards, a goat farm, horse farms, a sheep farm and a perennial farm. The public loves the chance to purchase everything from caramel apples to pony rides. Farm visits are free and open to the public the entire weekend, and additional events are held in the evenings.

FarmFest is organized and supported by the Town of Clifton Park. After the success of the farm breakfast in 1996, the Saratoga County Agricultural and Farmland Protection Board was asked to become involved with FarmFest as a co-sponsor. In doing so, the board helped with the festival's marketing and promotion campaign, and developed literature on the importance of keeping agriculture in Clifton Park. FarmFest has much to offer as an affordable, educational family outing: food, farm related activities, animals, workshops, open space, fresh air, and a scenic drive to farm locations. It also benefits from its close proximity to large suburban populations.

The success of FarmFest is another indicator of growing interest in Saratoga County's agricultural community. It helps confirm that Saratoga farms can play a role in our county's tourism appeal and economic viability.

Saratoga County Fair

Saratoga County Fair, which occurs every year in July, is another vehicle for the promotion of county agriculture. As an agricultural institution for the past 156 years, the fair can showcase the diversity, dedication and excellence represented by the agricultural community. With the close of the 1996 Saratoga County Fair, however, many people -- especially those in agricultural related occupations -- expressed concern over the small amount of space and attention devoted to agricultural exhibits and organizations.

Farmers felt slighted by the small area devoted to their livelihood, thinking it symptomatic of society's current view of agriculture. Stories were told about the "old days" when agriculture consumed a big part of the fair. At that time, visitors could watch a cow being milked, tractors and farm machinery were featured, and hopes were raised about the future of farming.

The Agricultural and Farmland Protection Board took the initiative to change the focus of the fair, intending to promote agriculture as a leading industry in the county. A survey was circulated to various farm related groups to request their opinions about past fairs. These groups were also asked if they would like to see a change and, if so, whether they would be willing to commit to an

increase in agriculture's space for 1997. The response was unanimous, with each group pledging to help change the situation and, once again, make agriculture a feature at the fair.

Meetings with the fair board were arranged, and the approval for an entire building devoted to agriculture became a reality. The first meeting to discuss the "Townley Agri-Center" was called to order, and various sub-groups were created in the areas of children's activities, publicity, workshops, layout and design. The overall goal was the best possible presentation of agriculture.

The Agricultural and Farmland Protection Board also developed a display and banner on Saratoga Agriculture which features seven large photographs with captions outlining the economic and environmental benefits of agriculture.

The 1997 Saratoga County Fair opened with rave reviews. Two areas of the building were devoted to children's activities with farm themes, including a puppet barn with farm animals, an apple tree with fabric apples to pick, and an interactive garden to plant, hoe and harvest. The children's areas enabled parents to spend time viewing exhibits, participate in scheduled workshops or talk with agricultural representatives.

Overall, farmers were pleased with the fair's representation of agriculture and the interest expressed by visitors. The dairy booth, which sold milk and dairy novelties, reported an increase in sales of more than 50percent from previous years. The 1997 fair set the stage for future Saratoga County fairs by promoting the significance of the agricultural industry.

Expanding Promotional Efforts

Although these events occur only once per year, each has contributed greatly to raising public awareness of agriculture. These events have been publicized through newspaper articles, press releases and aggressive marketing campaigns with little or no costs involved and with impressive efforts by the community.

To increase the value of agriculture as a business, marketing efforts needed to be expanded. The public does support agriculture, but needs opportunities to access it year round. Agriculture is a four season operation. There are apples to pick in the fall, Christmas tree farms to visit in the winter, nurseries and greenhouses that beckon in the spring, and a bounty of fresh vegetables and fruits to enjoy in the summer. That message was highlighted in our next promotional endeavor, the farm directory and map.

Saratoga Farms

Helping consumers and retailers locate home-grown agricultural products was the primary focus of our approach to marketing Saratoga County farms. We hoped to help farmers market their products and services by increasing their visibility and profitability. That simple goal took on a new direction as it became increasingly apparent that the public was generally interested in local farms, and that local farms were interesting. Aside from the value of the products they produce, many farms had historical values, stories to tell, scenic views to describe, or unique services to offer that could not be properly conveyed without publishing an in-depth

marketing profile.

To begin our plan, we researched what other counties had developed on behalf of local agriculture. Many counties had published a map directing consumers to retail farm stands that primarily sold produce, flowers, Christmas trees and bedding plants. Many counties charged the farmers for inclusion in the map and many sold advertising space to help offset the cost. Very few maps included anything about the dairy industry.

After reviewing the various marketing materials available, three objectives emerged for us: 1) Dairy should be showcased in any marketing tool developed for Saratoga County since the dairy industry accounts for the largest sector of the county's agricultural industry; 2) Farmers would not be charged a fee for inclusion in the map in order to encourage their involvement; and 3) No advertising would be sold since ads might divert the focus away from the participating farms.

The next step was to ensure that all farmers in the county had an equal opportunity to participate. Various county agricultural agencies, including Cornell Cooperative Extension, the Soil & Water Conservation District and the USDA Farm Service Agency, collaborated to compile as complete a list of farmers as possible. The mailing list grew to almost 450 names and became a topic of much enthusiasm. Such a list had never been compiled, and the agricultural agencies involved realized the potential for future projects.

We proceeded to develop the survey form that would be sent to all farmers in the county. Apart from asking general information regarding their farm operations, we asked questions concerning their marketing efforts, local and state regulations that may have helped or hindered their farming operations, and their opinions on how farmers and the local government could strengthen agriculture in the county. A letter accompanied the form explaining our mission, process and goals.

A press release was also circulated to local papers ensuring that all farmers in the area had an opportunity to respond. We had anticipated a return rate of 10percent but by the deadline had a response rate of over 22percent. Many farmers wrote additional comments expressing their gratitude for the development of a county-wide marketing effort; many felt it would facilitate networking among farmers and bring about a much needed public awareness and appreciation for the farming community.

When farmers were asked what they could do to strengthen agriculture in Saratoga County, the overwhelming response was to "educate the public." As one farmer wrote, "We should make ourselves known, our business is vital to a healthy economy." This statement underscores that public awareness is a critical factor in the health of the agricultural industry. Political support is more likely if the non-farmer understands and is supportive of the benefits of agriculture.

The guide included articles which were written about different farm enterprises and geared toward consumers. Topics included apple orchards, dairies, horses, the farmers' market, wine, honey, horticulture, community supported agriculture, pick-your-own berries, llamas, Christmas tree farms, maple syrup and roadside stands. The primary sources of information were the farmers themselves, since they would have the most experience with the industry and local markets. A

description of each farm was listed in the appropriate commodity section, providing the opportunity for each farmer to market his or her own farm to the public. Additional articles were included on farmland protection, agricultural and conservation organizations, farm festivals and special events.

The marketing directory took form as a 16 page newspaper with a centerfold map of the county. A professional planning company designed the map. The farms were referenced on the map by a circled number, and then were listed numerically by town with a brief description of products and services offered. Symbolic codes were used for quick reference to the farm commodity. For example, an apple symbolized orchards, a tomato indicated a farmstand. When the mapping descriptions were complete, a copy was sent to each participating farm so they could be involved in the process by offering input and editing their own descriptions. Farmers could also read what other farmers had written. This produced a sense of pride and fellowship among the farmers. Some farmers learned of neighbors they did not know. The process helped strengthen the agricultural community.

After numerous edits, revisions and proof readings, the resource guide titled *SARATOGA FARMS, A Resource Guide to Agriculture in Saratoga County, NY.* was ready to be printed. Photographs collected from local sources were added to each page. Those chosen depicted benefits of agriculture such as beautiful landscapes, farmsteads, rural character, natural habitats, and agricultural commodities, along with pictures of the children and faces that round out the vision of our farms. The front, center and back pages were printed in color. Ten thousand copies rolled off the press in time for the Saratoga County Fair in July.

The farmers were extremely supportive of the marketing plan. One of the questions on the form asked what the county could do to strengthen agriculture and many wrote that the resource guide was a "great start." They felt supported and appreciated. Many had little or no marketing experience. Some had advertised in local papers but the cost was always a factor. Most relied on word of mouth. Many indicated that they wanted to diversify their operations and hoped the resource guide would help them test new business ideas.

Saratoga County Farmers' Market

Saratoga Farmers' Market is a vibrant part of both the urban community and the local agricultural community. Hence, the market is another vehicle for the Agricultural and Farmland Protection Board to utilize in the promotion of local agriculture. The board made initial contacts with the Saratoga Farmers' Market Association around the time that the Saratoga Springs market location was called into question. There were concerns that the City of Saratoga Springs was considering making the Spring Street site available for development. The Saratoga Farmers' Market Association thought they should explore their options in the event that the site became unavailable for use. They also felt the need to consider a permanent and larger location to accommodate more market farmers. The opportunity for building a protected structure to extend the season and make shopping more enjoyable in all kinds of weather also warranted consideration.

An introductory meeting was called with members of the Saratoga Farmers' Market Association,

customers, and downtown business merchants. The goal was to develop a contingency plan for the future of the market and to discuss a possible new location. The meetings continued throughout the year with business leaders, local government officials, the Open Space Project, American Farmland Trust and representatives of the Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan. The Agricultural and Farmland Protection Board arranged to have a local business development specialist analyze the current situation and make recommendations. He wrote a report on the farmers' market which has been presented to local officials and community organizations.

Involvement with the farmers' market has been a positive collaboration for the Agriculture and Farmland Protection Board. Members of the farmers' market have been involved with all of the farm breakfast events and plan to be involved with promotional events in the future. This partnership between agricultural related groups, who share a sense of pride and common mission to ensure the viability of agriculture in Saratoga County, has been a positive force for the agricultural community.

Recommended Strategies for Saratoga County

The challenge to communities who want agriculture and farmland in their future is to maintain and enhance agricultural viability. While some communities may decide to preserve farmland for its contribution to rural character and quality of life, this is not enough. The future of Saratoga County agriculture and farmland depends upon improving the financial outlook for farming and the community's appreciation of its economic and environmental values.

Right to Farm - Reaffirm the importance of agriculture and recognize the unique attributes of the farming business.

In a rapidly growing county like Saratoga, development will inevitably occur adjacent to active farmland and farm operations. The concept of a "right to farm" recognizes the importance of farming and farmland and the reality that sometimes farmers and their nonfarm neighbors will not see eye to eye about the inevitable incidental effects of modern agriculture, including noise, dust and odors. Right to Farm laws can help shield farmers from unwanted and unwarranted interference with the business of farming. In addition, neighbors, local governments and other members of local communities need to better understand that, as an extremely competitive business, farming will not survive without local support for this important part of the local economy. Specifically, local land use laws should be more "farmer-friendly;" that is, they should address the needs of production agriculture and treat farmers fairly.

1. Encourage the County to Consider Adopting a County Right to Farm Law

A county right to farm law would demonstrate a county-wide commitment to agriculture and would complement existing state and local right to farm laws. The law could include provisions for county-wide agricultural disclosure notices and a mechanism for alternative dispute resolution of farmer-neighbor land use issues. A proposed discussion draft is attached as Appendix C.

2. Raise Awareness About Commercial Agricultural Activities

- Encourage towns that have adopted right to farm ordinances to post uniform right to farm/agricultural notice signs, such as "Right To Farm Law In Effect."
- Educate local Realtors and attorneys about commercial agricultural activities, right to farm laws and the location of agricultural districts in the county.

- Encourage realtors to include agricultural disclosure notices as part of purchase and sale agreements county wide and as part of multiple listing services for properties in and/or adjacent to agricultural districts. See Section 4 of the proposed County Right to Farm Law (Appendix C) for the agricultural disclosure notice.
- Encourage towns to adopt right to farm ordinances which include the requirement of placing agricultural disclosure notices on subdivision plats and tax maps. Encourage towns to request Saratoga County provide the mechanism to implement these provisions.
- Encourage towns to amend their right to farm ordinances to include dispute resolution provisions similar to Section 5 of the proposed County Right to Farm Law (Appendix C).

3. Encourage Local Governments to Adopt Farmer-Friendly Land Use Laws

The County Planning Department could take a lead role in providing training and technical assistance to local governments on developing, adopting and administering “farmer friendly” land use laws. “Farmer friendly” land use laws would need to be flexible enough to accommodate inevitable changes in agriculture and farm businesses and recognize that farmland is a unique type of open space. Some approaches that these laws could include are:

- Encourage local governments to achieve desired density by clustering lots on the least productive farmland with the minimal impact on existing farm operations. In clustered subdivisions, minimum lot sizes should be reduced to no larger than necessary for health and safety in order to protect larger blocs of open space more useful for farming.
- Encourage local governments to review their zoning and other regulatory requirements for farm stands to ensure that they promote the success of farm stands while protecting the interests of the community.
- Encourage local governments to require buffers for non-farm development adjacent to farmland. Buffers are efforts to create physical barriers between potentially incompatible land uses. Usually, buffers are created by space (Strips of land from 50 to 500 feet wide), or vegetation (existing hedgerows, berms, planted trees or shrubs), or both.

Develop Community Support for Farmers, Farming and Farmland

Agriculture is a key component of the county's diverse economy, character and landscape. The future of agriculture depends in part on community appreciation and support of agriculture and the many benefits it provides. Everyone enjoys the pleasant views and the rural character provided by farms, yet the lack of understanding of the importance of farming and farming practices threatens its existence.

4. Raise Awareness of the Importance of Agriculture to the Local Economy, Quality of Life and Tourism Industry

- Send “agricultural ambassadors” to speak to organizations and agencies about the economic and environmental values of agriculture. One of the goals is to create awareness within the community of the link between agriculture and the scenic landscape of the county.
- Encourage programs that promote agritourism initiatives which attract people out to visit farms and promote better understanding of agriculture. This could include developing scenic agricultural tours which highlight the historical, economic and environmental aspects of the farms along the tour route.
- Encourage educational farm tours for schools and the general public. Continue to organize and promote farm events such as “Our Dairy Best” Farm Breakfast and Tour and Clifton Park FarmFest. These events help build awareness and support for agriculture.
- Periodically update Saratoga Farms Resource Map and Guide which identifies educational and agritourism resources and direct market businesses available to the public throughout the county.
- Develop a media campaign for agriculture informing the public and policy makers of the importance of agriculture as an industry, as a social and historical component of our lives and as the most practical means of maintaining environmental quality and open space in Saratoga County. The includes celebrating the role of agriculture in Saratoga County’s celebrations for the year 2000.
- Explore the feasibility of developing a demonstration farm as a tourism and educational farm center for families and school children. The farm center will feature on-farm tours, activities, a showcase of local farm products and other features that would increase awareness and support for agriculture.

5. Develop Strong Partnerships with Those Who Support Agriculture

There are many residents who already appreciate many of the benefits agriculture has to offer. These residents represent a potential constituency for agriculture. Efforts should be made to gain greater support from owners of small farms and farmland, open space advocates, horse racing fans, conservationists, and customers of farm stands and farmer’s markets.

Economic Development of Agriculture - Economic Development Initiatives Applied to Individual Farm Businesses and the Industry as a Whole Are Essential

Farms, like other businesses, need to be placed on the economic development agenda of the county. The commitment to strengthen agriculture through economic development efforts will help improve the financial outlook for farm businesses as well as develop a partnership between agriculture and other sectors of the county’s diverse economy. See Chapter 7 “Economic Development Initiatives” for additional discussion. Economic development of agriculture could

include the following initiatives:

- 1. Offer enterprise consulting to assist farm-related businesses in business development, marketing and income enhancement potential;*
- 2. Fully utilize existing business development resources to assist farmers and agricultural businesses, including access to capital.*
- 3. Establish a network of business professionals who are willing to provide assistance in marketing, promotion, business plans and development;*
- 4. Explore the feasibility of establishing an agricultural-related incubator to foster marketing and value-added business opportunities.*
- 5. Hold events and release news articles promoting awareness of agriculture and its importance;*
- 6. Seek county support for programs and grants that support agriculture and the land-base associated with it;*
- 7. Promote and market Saratoga County farm products;*
- 8. Periodically conduct studies of the agricultural industry;*
- 9. Provide assistance to encourage and facilitate farm transfers from retiring farmers to other farmers.*

6. Increase resources available for agricultural business development and integrate agricultural marketing efforts at the county level within the existing economic development framework.

This would be a professional marketing and business development effort to implement the economic development initiatives recommended above. The goal is to “grow” the agricultural sector by expanding existing business and creating new business opportunities. The marketing effort would be spearheaded by a board made up of representatives from the agricultural and economic development communities and tap the research-based education resources and expertise of Cornell Cooperative Extension. An agricultural marketing and business development position is crucial to further the development of these efforts.

7. Encourage farm businesses to participate in local economic development efforts.

- Hold focus groups and workshops on business development opportunities and resources for area farmers and farm-related entrepreneurs.
- Encourage farm businesses to become members of Saratoga Economic Development Corporation and the Chamber of Commerce and to provide recommendations as to how to enhance the vitality of the agricultural industry.
- Integrate agritourism efforts with local tourism promotion efforts.

Local Incentives - Promote local incentives, including property tax relief, intended to support agriculture and protect farmland.

The New York Agricultural Districts Law, first enacted in 1971, serves as the cornerstone of agricultural and farmland protection efforts in New York State. The Agricultural Districts Law provides incentives for farmers to keep land in active agriculture as well as protecting farmers from unreasonable restrictions on their farming operations. Property taxes are a major concern for farmers because their businesses usually require them to own large acres of land and invest in specialized buildings and structures. The Agricultural Districts law provides for agricultural assessment which is a current use formula based on the productivity of the soils.

Cost of community services studies have found that annual income raised from farm properties exceeds their demand for community services, including schools. These studies disprove three common misperceptions about local property tax issues: that residential development lowers taxes; that farmland gets an unfair tax break when it is taxed at its current use value; and that farmland is an interim land use, simply waiting to be used for something else. These studies demonstrate that farmland protection is a good investment for the entire community because it is a net revenue generator.

Incentive programs like Purchase of Development Rights ("PDR"), Lease of Development Rights ("LDR"), and Transfer of Development Rights, ("TDR"), are voluntary, incentive programs that protect farmland from conversion to nonagricultural use. Under these programs, landowners retain ownership and control of their land but agree to limit the future use of the land to agriculture in exchange for compensation either in the form of cash, tax abatements or transferable development rights that they can sell.

Eligibility for these programs is based on criteria that usually include: soil quality, agricultural viability, development pressure, proximity to blocs of farmland and targeted areas of concern like agricultural districts. These programs are often funded by bonds, general appropriations, real estate transfer taxes, other special purpose funds and matching funds from other agencies.

Landowners may also donate conservation easements to private conservation organizations or public entities and voluntarily relinquish nonfarm development potential. In those cases, landowners may be eligible for income and estate tax benefits.

8. Support the Agricultural Districts Law

- Encourage local governments to coordinate their land use laws with the Agricultural Districts Law.
- Encourage local governments to promote the use of agricultural assessment.
- Encourage local governments to work with the Agricultural and Farmland Protection Board and the County Planning Department on agricultural land use issues.

- Target agricultural and farmland protection efforts towards existing agricultural districts and important farmland.

9. Support Local Property Tax Relief

- Local governments should be encouraged to follow Clifton Park's example and enact tax abatement/conservation easement programs as an incentive for landowners to keep their land in agriculture.
- The County Real Property Department along with Cornell Cooperative Extension should coordinate training sessions for assessment officials and farmers. These training sessions are for:
 - Landowners who should have access to information about existing tax relief programs including agricultural assessment, farm building exemptions and the farmers' school tax credit. The goal is to increase the participation of farmers in these programs.
 - Local assessors and Board of Assessment Review officials who should receive regular agricultural valuation training.
- Encourage New York State to require Board of Assessment Review officials and assessors in towns which contain agricultural districts or where agriculture makes up ten percent or more of the total acreage to receive farm property valuation training.
- Encourage local assessors to observe state law for assessing farmland based on current use.

10. Support Local PDR Projects

- Encourage partnerships between landowners, local governments, private organizations and the county to leverage access to existing state and federal funds for the purchase of development rights ("PDR"). These funds include the Environmental Protection Fund, Clean Water/Clean Air Bond Act as well as federal funds administered through USDA's Farmland Protection Program (FPP), Conservation Reserve Program (CRP), Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP) and Wildlife Habitat Improvement Program (WHIP).
- Develop selection criteria to help local governments and the county identify their most important farmland and focus limited resources on priority areas.
- Explore ways to raise local funds to match existing state funding, including dedicated revenue sources and land installment purchase obligations. The latter is a new form of financing which New York State has authorized municipalities to issue to facilitate the purchase of property interests, including conservation easements, for the protection of open space and farmland (see Glossary for a more detailed description).

11. Support Agricultural Conservation Easements

Agricultural Conservation Easements are legally recorded voluntary agreements restricting development on farmland. Easements may apply to entire parcels of land or to specific parts of the property. Most are permanent; term easements impose restrictions for a limited number of years. Land protected by conservation easement remains on the tax rolls and is privately owned and managed.

- Encourage landowners to learn more about private conservation options like conservation easements and promote public-private partnerships to expand these efforts.

12. Explore Other Farmland Protection Incentives Including Leasing Development Rights, Transfer of Development Rights and Cluster or Conservation Subdivision

- Study the feasibility and cost effectiveness of leasing development rights ("LDR") for a term of 8 to 25 years. Farmers have expressed interest in leasing development rights as a tool for keeping farmland in agriculture for the near future.
- Examine the potential for transferring development rights within or between towns as a way to manage growth and protect farmland.
- Explore the use of Cluster Development/Conservation Subdivision as a tool to protect farmland. This could include conducting case study analysis of limited development projects which separate project density from lot size and attempt to reconcile resource protection with nonfarm rural development.

Training and Technical Assistance - Ongoing technical assistance, education and outreach are essential to help local decision makers better understand agricultural land use issues.

Because farmers comprise less than one percent of the population, it is inevitable that local decision-makers will not have first hand knowledge of, or familiarity with, farming. Consequently, local officials will need improved access to technical information about agricultural land use issues as well as their practical application.

13. Continue and Expand Training, Technical Assistance and Outreach Efforts on Agricultural Land Use Issues

- County Planning together with Cooperative Extension should provide training and technical assistance on agricultural land use issues as well as project specific coordination. This could be incorporated into a County Planning Department circuit rider program that provides training and technical assistance to local town and planning boards.

- Encourage towns to study the long term fiscal impact of development in comparison with continued use as farmland. Numerous Cost of Community Service and fiscal impact studies show that farmland, unlike most residential development, is a net generator of tax revenue because farmland produces more in tax revenue than it costs the local government in services. Residential development, on the other hand, costs communities more to service than is generated in taxes. For more information on fiscal impact studies, see page 23 of the plan.
- Develop model language for local zoning and subdivision ordinances which will encourage the continued growth of farm stands and farm markets.
- Encourage farmers to remain active in local government to ensure that agricultural concerns are incorporated in local decision making.
- Support and coordinate training and outreach efforts on estate planning.

Maintaining Environmental Benefits Provided by Agriculture - Work with and assist farmers in implementing practices that provide environmental benefits for Saratoga County while maintaining and enhancing the economic viability of the agricultural sector.

Environmental concerns are taking a higher priority as more people place greater demand on existing resources. Farmers recognize the value and irreplaceable nature of these natural resources and are utilizing an increasing number of conservation measures to protect resources on and off the farm.

As development and land use pressure and conflicts increase, farmers find it necessary to increase production on a shrinking land base. Neighbors within the watershed and downstream are more numerous, in closer proximity and make greater use of surface and groundwater resources. Farmer's conservation needs are greater, more urgent and require increasingly high costs.

Many farmers in Saratoga County have voluntarily implemented management practices that help maintain soil and water quality. The farming community needs assistance to meet rapidly changing environmental concerns and protect Saratoga County's natural resources.

14. Expand assistance to the farming community to enable farmers to implement environmental practices.

- Support increased funding for installation and technical assistance toward conservation measures which will reduce soil erosion and non point water quality problems from agricultural operations. The Soil and Water Conservation District and federal agencies will provide technical assistance.
- Solicit farmer input on environmental regulatory initiatives and administration of environmental practices that affect farm operations.

State Policy Issues - State policy decisions affect agriculture and farmland protection initiatives at the local level.

State legislative initiatives have played a major role in supporting agriculture and protecting farmland -- from the passage of the Agricultural Districts Law in 1971, to the enactment of the Agricultural Protection Act in 1992, to the Farm Preservation Act of 1996 as well as the creation of the Environmental Protection Fund and last November's voter approval of the Clean Water/Clean Air Bond Act.

There is no reason to doubt that state government will continue to address the needs of one of the state's largest industries.

15. Advocate Continued State Support for Local Agricultural and Farmland Protection Efforts.

- Explore creation of a statewide farm building assessment program modeled on agricultural assessment for farmland.
- Encourage New York State to require Board of Assessment Review officials and assessors in towns which contain agricultural districts or where agriculture makes up ten percent or more of the total acreage to receive farm property valuation training.
- Support continued and increased funding for local farmland protection initiatives from the Environmental Protection Fund and the Clean Water Clean Air Bond Act funds.
- Support funding for agricultural economic development initiatives from existing economic and industrial development funding sources.
- Advocate for stronger emphasis at NYS Department of Agriculture and Markets for market development and promotion of New York State products.
- Support initiatives to increase reasonable profitability to farmers to ensure the continuation of farming.

Next Steps

In order to ensure that the recommendations contained in this plan are implemented, this section assigns responsibilities and selects priority actions.

Responsibilities

General responsibility and oversight for implementation will rest with the Saratoga County Agricultural and Farmland Protection Board. Cornell Cooperative Extension will continue to provide staff assistance to the board. In addition, the working group which conducted most of the groundwork for this plan, should continue in this role. Renamed the "Implementation Task Force," this group should meet monthly and will provide executive assistance to the Agriculture and Farmland Protection Board. The task force will be comprised of farmer representatives from the board and representatives from county departments and agencies (Cornell Cooperative Extension, County Planning, County Real Property Tax Services and County Soil and Water Conservation District), agricultural organizations (Farm Bureau, American Farmland Trust) and volunteers.

The task force will be action oriented and will coordinate the activities of the various participants. It will also prepare information for and report to the Agricultural and Farmland Protection Board. Cornell Cooperative Extension or another county department should provide staff support for the task force.

Priority Actions

Priority actions, to be initiated immediately and completed in the first year, are identified below. It is hoped that this priority list will help focus efforts once this plan has been adopted.

1. Organize a county-wide conference to publicize the plan as well as the state program that funds purchase of development rights projects. This will kick-off the implementation phase of these planning efforts.
2. Develop selection criteria for farmland protection projects, especially for the state program that funds purchase of development rights projects.
3. Conduct outreach efforts in the farm community to inform farmers about the availability of state funds for purchase of development rights and solicit proposals for projects in Saratoga County.

4. Evaluate project proposals, coordinate and apply for state farmland protection funds.
5. Conduct outreach to local planning and zoning officials. This will include a presentation that will review issues covered in the plan including development alternatives and farmland protection strategies. The presentation will be developed and presented by County Planning, Cornell Cooperative Extension and American Farmland Trust.
6. Coordinate and sponsor an educational program for local assessors and farmers. The program will discuss the new Farmers' School Tax Credit Program and Agricultural Assessment. Real Property Tax Services, Cornell Cooperative Extension and Farm Bureau will develop and organize this program.
7. Continue outreach to the county's nonfarm community. This includes organization of the third annual Farm Breakfast and Tour, and the annual Clifton Park Farm Fest. It will also be necessary to republish *Saratoga Farms: A Resource Guide to Agriculture in Saratoga County*. These efforts will help to strengthen ties between the Saratoga County Agricultural Promotion Committee and the Agricultural and Farmland Protection Board.
8. Coordinate proposed Agriculture and Economic Development focus groups. The Saratoga Economic Development Corporation, County Planning, and Cornell Cooperative Extension will organize these efforts. These efforts will strengthen the institutional ties between Cornell Cooperative Extension and SEDC in the area of agricultural economic development. Explore methods of funding a future agricultural development specialist position.
9. Building on successes in the first year, and in continuation of other recommendations of the plan, identify continuing short, intermediate and long term actions.

References

- Ad Hoc Associates. *Land Conservation, Development and Property Taxes in New York*. Scenic Hudson. 1997.
- American Farmland Trust. *Saving American Farmland: What Works*. 1997.
- Arendt, Randall. *Rural by Design: Maintaining Small Town Character*. APA Planners Press. 1994.
- Capital District Regional Planning Commission.
- Center for Government Research, Inc. *Fiscal Impact of Community Development Alternatives*. December 1993.
- Cornell Cooperative Extension of Saratoga County. *Commercial Horse Farm Survey*. 1988.
- Eberts, Paul R. *Socioeconomic Trends in New York State: 1950-1990*. New York State Legislative Commission on Rural Resources. September 1994.
- Knoblauch, W., L. Putnam, B Stanton and N. Merrill. *Census of Agriculture Highlights, New York State, 1992*. Department of Agricultural, Resource, and Managerial Economics, Cornell University. Ithaca, NY, 1994.
- New York State Agricultural District Law.
- Pittsford Town Board. *Town of Pittsford Greenprint for the Future*, 1996.
- Sorensen, A. Ann, Richard P. Green and Karen Russ. *Farming on the Edge*. American Farmland Trust. Dekalb, Il., 1997.
- Stanton, Bernard F. and Nelson L. Bills. *The Return of Agricultural Lands to Forest, Changing land use in the Twentieth Century*. Cornell University Department of Agricultural Resource, and Managerial Economics. Ithaca, N.Y., 1996
- Tompkins County Agriculture and Farmland Protection Board. *Study of Tompkins County Agriculture*, October 1996.
- Washington County Agriculture and Farmland Protection Board. "Cost of Community Services Study," *Washington County Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan*. May 1996.
- U.S. Bureau of the Census. 1992 Census of Agriculture. Washington, D.C. 1994
- U.S. Department of Agriculture. *Agricultural Statistics 1994*. Washington, D. C. 1996.

Glossary

Agricultural Assessment

Permits land in agricultural use to be valued according to a formula established by the Office of Real Property Services which is based on soil productivity. In most cases, the agricultural assessment is significantly lower than its market value. Owners of agricultural land are eligible for agricultural assessment if they own at least 10 acres with a minimum average gross sales of \$10,000, or less than 10 acres with a minimum average gross sales of \$50,000.

The Agricultural District Law also limits the power of local governments to impose benefit assessments, special ad valorem levies or other rates or fees in certain improvement districts or benefit areas on land used primarily for agricultural production within an agricultural district.

Agricultural District

The New York Agricultural District Law, first enacted in 1971, authorizes the formation of agricultural districts to provide protection of farmland and farm businesses. Agricultural districts are legally recognized geographic areas formed by one or more land owners and approved by the county and the Department of Agriculture and Markets. They are voluntary and created for eight-year time periods.

Landowners who enroll in an agricultural district receive specific protections from various farmland conversion pressures, including use-value assessment, right to farm laws, exemptions from special district levies and protection from eminent domain, adjacent non-agricultural development and state agency regulations that interfere with farming. There are penalties for early withdrawal from an agricultural district.

In Saratoga County, a total of six districts were formed between 1973 and 1994 covering a total of over 110,000 acres and encompassing most of the important farmland in the county. The Agricultural and Farmland Protection Board is currently in the process of consolidating the six districts into two or three districts to streamline the review procedures.

Agricultural Data Statement

Means an identification of farm operations within an agricultural district located within five hundred feet of the boundary of property upon which an action requiring municipal review and approval by planning boards, zoning board of appeals, town board, or village board of trustees.

Appraisal

A systematic method of determining the market value of property interests.

Bargain Sale

The sale of property or an interest in property for less than fair market value. If property is sold to a qualifying public agency or conservation organization, the difference between fair market value and the agreed-upon price can be claimed as a tax-deductible charitable gift for income tax purposes. Bargain sales are also known as conservation sales.

Buffers

Physical barriers that separate farms from land uses that are incompatible with agriculture. Buffers help safeguard farms from vandals and trespassers, and protect homeowners from some of the negative impacts of commercial farming. Vegetated buffers and topographic barriers reduce the potential for conflicts between farmers and their non-farming neighbors.

Conservation Easement

Legally recorded voluntary agreements that limit land to specific uses. Easements may apply to entire parcels of land or to specific parts of the property. Most are permanent; term easements impose restrictions for a limited number of years. Land protected by conservation easement remains on the tax rolls and is privately owned and managed. Landowners who donate permanent conservation easements may be entitled to tax benefits.

Agricultural Conservation Easements are legally recorded voluntary agreements restricting development on farmland. They

generally prohibit uses that damage agricultural value or productivity. An agricultural conservation easement usually will permit the construction of new farm buildings or a few carefully located houses for family members. Landowners can donate conservation easements or sell them.

Cluster Zoning/Conservation Subdivision

A form of zoning that allows houses to be built close together in areas where large minimum lot sizes are generally required. By grouping houses on small sections of a large parcel of land, cluster zoning can be used to protect open space. Also known as conservation subdivision, cluster development, open land subdivision and open space subdivision.

Cost of Community Services (COCS) Studies

A case study method of allocating local revenues and expenditures to different land use categories. COCS studies reveal the net contribution of residential, commercial, industrial, forest and agricultural lands to local budgets.

Disclosure Notice

A notice pursuant to Section 310 of the Agricultural District law that informs prospective residents that farming activities occur and that these activities may cause noise, dust and odors.

Development Rights

Development rights entitle property owners to develop land in accordance with local land use regulations. In some jurisdictions, these rights may be sold to public agencies or qualified nonprofit organizations through a purchase of agricultural conservation easement program. Sale of development rights to a public agency or land trust generally does not pass any affirmative interest in the property.

Land Installment Purchase Obligations

Allows local municipalities to enter into land installment purchase obligations with landowners to buy land or the development rights on land. Obligations could be structured to pay interest only for a period of 30 years and

the bulk of the principle at the end of 30 years.

Farm owners would receive yearly interest income which is tax exempt and deferral of taxes on capital gains until payment of principal. In addition, farm owners can securitize the agreement and sell all or parts of it to others. They can also realize charitable deductions against their operating income by gifting portions of the agreement, or for estate planning can place all or portions of the agreement into trust accounts. In this way, estate heirs can cash out their portion of the agreement instead of dividing up the land itself.

Payments on the obligations are not conditioned upon annual appropriation by the local municipality and they will be treated like every other bond or note of the municipality. The government must pledge a revenue source for 30 years to pay the interest payments and purchase of comparable maturing treasury bonds to pay the principal at the end. The practical implications for local protection efforts are that municipalities will be able to make installment payments of principal and pay tax exemption interest to sellers, thus potentially leveraging limited local dollars.

Land Trust

A private, nonprofit conservation organization formed to protect natural resources such as productive farm and forest land, natural areas, historic structures and recreational areas. Land trusts purchase and accept donations of conservation easements and educate the public about the need to conserve land. The Saratoga Land Conservancy (SLC) is a local land trust working to protect land in Saratoga County.

Leasing Development Rights (LDR)

As an alternative to the sale of development rights on a permanent basis as in PDR, this option allows a farmland owner to make a commitment to protecting their farmland from development for a set time period. Lease payments could be calculated in a similar way as values are determined in PDR programs. This would be based on the difference between the land's agricultural value and its full market value, with farmers receiving interest on the difference between them. Compensation for

farmland owners can also be provided as additional tax relief in exchange for a term easement.

Local Tax Abatement

The Town of Clifton Park and three towns in Monroe County have enacted local tax abatement programs in exchange for term conservation easements. These programs provide a percentage reduction in property taxes as part of the agreement between the municipality and the landowner.

Purchasing Development Rights (PDR) -- or Conservation Easements

This technique helps communities protect important farmland from conversion to non-agricultural use. PDR allows a farmer to voluntarily sell the right to develop farmland in return for accepting a conservation easement on the affected land. Participants retain full ownership and control of their land and can sell or transfer their property whenever and to whomever they please. But because of the conservation easement, the land is permanently protected from non-farm development and remains available for agricultural use. The value of the development right is generally based on the difference between the land's value for nonfarm development and its agricultural value. These values are determined by professional appraisers.

New York State has established an Agricultural and Farmland Protection Implementation Program which provides 75 percent of the cost of eligible PDR projects.

Right to Farm Laws

A state law or local ordinance that protects farmers and farm operations from public and private nuisance lawsuits.

Transferring Development Rights (TDR)

Allows landowners to transfer the right to develop one parcel of land to a different parcel of land. TDR is a local technique used by counties, municipalities and towns. TDR programs are distinct from PDR programs because they involve the private market. They are intended to maintain designated areas in agricultural or open space use while compensating the owners of the protected land for the loss of the right to develop it for nonfarm purposes. TDR programs require at least three pre-conditions. First, a thorough comprehensive planning effort must be utilized to identify sending and receiving areas. Second, there must be enough development pressure in the receiving area to create demand for the transferred rights. Third, the municipality must have access to sufficient technical expertise to set up and implement the details of TDR.

Agricultural and Land Conservation Organizations

American Farmland Trust

Director: Jerry Cosgrove
110 Spring Street
Saratoga Springs, NY 12866
581-0078
Working to prevent the loss of productive farmland.

Saratoga County Agricultural and Farmland Protection Board

Chairman: Charles Hanehan
c/o Cornell Cooperative Extension
50 West High Street
Ballston Spa, NY 12020
885-8995
Developing agricultural and farmland protection options for Saratoga County.

Saratoga County Farm Bureau

President: Bob Czub
Miller Rd.
Rexford, NY 12148
371-8735
Represents farmers at all levels of government to enhance net farm income and ensure a strong future for agriculture.

Saratoga County Agricultural Society

President: Richard Decker
162 Prospect Street
Ballston Spa, NY 12020
885-9701
To promote and educate agricultural interests in Saratoga County including organization and development of the Saratoga County Fair.

Saratoga County Soil & Water Conservation District

Contact: John Hamilton
50 West High Street
Ballston Spa, NY 12020
885-6900
Provides technical assistance and programs related to soil, water and natural resources conservation.

Cornell Cooperative Extension of Saratoga County

50 West High Street
Ballston Spa, NY 12020
885-8995
Educational network with Cornell University linking research based information with programs in horticulture, agriculture, farm management, nutrition, food preservation and safety, water quality and small business start-up.
Programs include:
4-H - Youth development educational program.
Master Gardeners - Trained volunteers providing horticultural knowledge to the public.

Saratoga Springs Open Space Project

Director: Barbara Glaser
110 Spring Street
Saratoga Springs, NY 12866
587-5554
Devoted to the preservation and development of open space for natural, recreational, historical and cultural land uses.

Saratoga Land Conservancy

Director: Suzanna Dwyer
P.O. Box 722
Ballston Spa, NY 12020
371-3243
Promotes preservation and protection of farmland, forestland, wetlands and open space in Saratoga County.

Farm Service Agency

Steven A. Ropitzky, County Executive Director
50 West High Street
Ballston Spa, NY 12020
885-6300
Administers programs for federal farm payments, conservation cost sharing, emergency loans, catastrophic crop insurance and natural disaster assistance programs. Also provides aerial photography of farmland.

Farms and Acreage by Town, Saratoga County, 1950

	<u>Land in Farms</u>	<u>No. of Farms</u>	<u>Average Acres/Farm</u>
Saratoga	25,071	173	145
Moreau/Wilton	17,970	158	114
Clifton Park	17,022	177	96
Halfmoon	15,640	146	107
Charlton	15,578	136	115
Galway	15,552	135	115
Northumberland	14,786	100	148
Ballston	12,795	122	105
Greenfield	12,042	128	94
Stillwater	11,504	89	129
Milton	11,439	107	107
Edinberg/Providence	11,190	94	119
Malta	8,200	69	119
Day/Hadley	7,304	43	170
Corinth	5,953	75	79
Waterford	<u>1,449</u>	<u>16</u>	91
County	203,495	1,768	115

Change in Number of Farms by Product/Sales, 1982 to 1992						
<u>Product</u>	<u>1982</u>		<u>1992</u>		<u>Percent Change</u>	
	<u># Farms</u>	<u>Sales (000)</u>	<u># Farms</u>	<u>Sales (000)</u>	<u># Farms</u>	<u>Sales</u>
Dairy	133	\$12,664	76	\$12,112	-43%	- 4%
Hay, Silage, Field	175	705	151	1,089	14%	+54%
Cattle, Calves	301	1,455	159	2,620	-47%	+80%
Fruits	50	1,180	33	2,451	-34%	+107%
Nursery	53	1,187	56	2,098	+6%	+77%
Poultry	38	*	20	*	-47%	*
Grains	75	988	42	961	-44%	-3%
Vegetables	68	*	59	*	-13%	*
Total	580	\$20,005	443	\$23,820	-24%	+19%

Summary of Cost Community Services Studies Towns in New York				
Town	County	Residential (includes farm houses)	Commercial/ Industrial	Farms/ Forest
Greenwich	Washington	1.40	.13	.16
Hartford	"	1.39	.27	.12
Dryden	Tompkins	1.21	.32	.32
Enfield	"	1.11	.38	.38
Ithaca	"	1.09	.27	.27
Lansing	"	1.56	.16	.16
Amenia	Dutchess	1.23	.17	.25
Beekman	"	1.05	.44	.31
Fishkill	"	1.23	.31	.74
North East	"	1.36	.29	.21
Red Hook	"	1.11	.20	.22
Dix	Schuyler	1.51	.27	.31
Hector	"	1.30	.15	.28
Montour	"	1.50	.28	.29
Reading	"	1.08	.26	.32
Average		1.27	.26	.29

Sources: Washington County Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan, Tompkins County Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan, Cost of Community Services Study Dutchess County, Schuyler County League of Woman Voters Fiscal Impact Study. The methods used in these studies are based on a case study method developed by American Farmland Trust.