

ONONDAGA COUNTY AGRICULTURE & FARMLAND PROTECTION PLAN

Draft Community Engagement Plan

A. Purpose and Approach

The purpose of this public engagement plan is to ensure an open and transparent public engagement process that assures the opportunity for stakeholder involvement in all phases of the process of updating Onondaga County's Agriculture & Farmland Protection Plan. In the interest of meaningful dialogue with both the farming and non-farming communities with respect to the future of Onondaga County's agricultural sector, the Agriculture & Farmland Protection Board (AFPB) as guided by Syracuse-Onondaga County Planning Agency (SOCPA), Cornell Cooperative Extension of Onondaga County (CCE), Onondaga County Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD), and the EDR consultant team have identified a series of outreach events and other opportunities to engage a wide range of public perspectives. These events and opportunities, together with an initial list of critical stakeholders, will help guide the public participation component of the AFPP work plan, considering necessary COVID-19 related public health considerations.

B. Key Project Team Partners

The Project Team consists of the Syracuse-Onondaga County Planning Agency, Cornell Cooperative Extension of Onondaga County (CCE), the AFPB, and project consultants led by Environmental Design & Research, D.P.C. (EDR) with assistance from KK&P and George Frantz and Associates. Each will have responsibilities regarding public outreach, and all will work closely together to achieve the desired outcomes of their respective tasks. All public participation activities will be designed and implemented to carry out the County's contractual responsibilities per the New York State Department of Agriculture & Markets.

Contact information for each of the project team members is provided as follows, as well as a summary of each team member's role. In addition, contact information for the project sponsor and a preliminary list of agricultural stakeholders is provided.

Syracuse-Onondaga County Planning Agency

The Syracuse-Onondaga County Planning Agency is responsible for the day-to-day administration and project management of the Agricultural Protection Planning Grant and will serve as the principal point of contact for all inquiries regarding the project. Planning Agency contacts include:

Dan Kwasnowski, Planning Director
Megan Costa, Assistant Director for County Planning Services
Syracuse-Onondaga County Planning Agency
421 Montgomery Street, 11th Floor
Syracuse, NY 13202
315-435-2611
DanielKwasnowski@ongov.net
MeganCosta@ongov.net

Cornell Cooperative Extension of Onondaga County

Cornell Cooperative Extension of Onondaga County will provide staff resources toward assistance with the planning process in stakeholder engagement and facilitation responsibilities of the public meetings. CCE has a network of contacts in the agricultural community which will be called upon during the planning process. The primary CCE contact is:

David Skeval, Executive Director
Jenny Smith, Agriculture Specialist
Cornell Cooperative Extension of Onondaga County
6505 Collamer Road
East Syracuse, NY 13057
315-424-9485
das543@cornell.edu

Onondaga County Soil and Water Conservation District

The Onondaga County Soil and Water Conservation District will provide in-kind staff resources assistance, natural resource data and knowledge, and ag community outreach. The primary SWCD contact is:

Mark Burger, Executive Director
Onondaga County Soil and Water Conservation District
6680 Onondaga Lake Parkway
Liverpool, NY 13088
315-457-0325
mburger@ocswcd.org

Agriculture & Farmland Protection Board

The Agriculture & Farmland Protection Board (AFPB) will serve as the oversight committee for the plan. The Board anticipates multiple meetings during plan development, on a regular basis or as needed, dependent on project progress and specific needs. The members of the AFPB are listed in Attachment A.

Project Consultant Team

The consultant team will provide professional planning services towards the update process. In terms of public participation, the consultant team will work in partnership with the full project team to prepare engagement materials and will have coordination responsibilities for additional outreach events as described in the project Scope of Services.

The consultant team is led by EDR. Project manager and primary contact during this project is:

Erica Tauzer, Project Manager
Environmental Design & Research, D.P.C. (EDR)
217 Montgomery St., Suite1000
Syracuse, NY 13202
(315)-471-0688
etauzer@edrdpc.com

In addition to EDR, the consultant team also consists of George R. Frantz & Associates and KK&P. Primary contacts for these sub-contracted team members are:

George Frantz, Associate Professor
Cornell University, City and Regional Planning Department
(607) 255-2148
grf4@cornell.edu

Ben Kerrick, Senior Consultant
Karen Karp & Partners (KK&P)
646-321-5952
ben@kkandp.com

New York State Department of Agriculture & Markets

As the sponsor of the Farmland Protection Program, the New York State Department of Agriculture & Markets will provide oversight, direction, and technical assistance throughout this project. The contact for this project is:

Jeff Kehoe, Farmland Protection Specialist
New York State Department of Agriculture & Markets
Farmland Protection Program

10B Airline Drive
Albany, NY 12235
(518)-457-4626
jeffrey.kehoe@agriculture.ny.gov

Community Stakeholders

Stakeholders throughout the community will be invited to take part in the planning process, to inform the Agriculture & Farmland Protection Plan about the various aspects of Onondaga County's agricultural sector. Public notices will be provided through multiple outlets to notify the community of project-related events and to solicit public opinion.

The interest and support of the farming community (including agricultural producers and their employees, related businesses, trade associations, advocacy organizations, and landowners) will be especially important in shaping the Agriculture & Farmland Protection Plan and ensuring its success. In addition to community-wide solicitations intended for the public at large, several specific stakeholders or organizations will be invited to provide their input on the Agriculture & Farmland Protection Plan. These include, but are not necessarily limited to, the following:

- Local farmers
- Municipalities
- Land Trusts
- Economic Development entities (County and Regional)
- Onondaga County Farm Bureau
- Onondaga County Agricultural Council
- Cornell Cooperative Extension of Onondaga County
- Onondaga County Soil and Water Conservation District
- Syracuse-Onondaga Food Systems Alliance (SOFSA)
- U.S. Department of Agriculture (Farm Service Agency, Natural Resource Conservation Service)
- Central New York Regional Planning and Development Board
- Skaneateles Lake Watershed Agricultural Program
- Farmer's market representatives from within the county (CNY Regional Market, Baldwinsville, Liverpool, Camillus, Downtown Syracuse, Fayetteville, Skaneateles)
- Grocers, CSAs and Farm Stores
- Breweries and Locally Sourced Restaurants
- Farm credit estimators and appraisers
- Feed and agricultural support industries

Other stakeholder groups may be formed based on general interest areas, including organic producers, niche operations, large or small operations, new farmers, etc.

C. Public Engagement Principles

The public participation strategy will build upon strong working relationships between the County, AFPB and community stakeholders where they exist, and help to foster new relationships where they may serve the interests of agriculture in Onondaga County. Through each portion of the outreach process, the project team will:

Listen to the ideas, concerns, and recommendations of community stakeholders, organizations, and interested and concerned citizens.

Educate consumers, local decision-makers, and producers themselves of the economic, environmental, and cultural impacts associated with agriculture within the County.

Communicate the implications of policy decisions and consumer behavior to the public at large.

D. Outreach Components and Schedule

This initiative will include a series of outreach events, including stakeholder focus groups and interviews, public meetings, an online survey, and other special events. In addition to these events, the project team will meet as a group throughout the process to discuss progress toward project milestones. The following project schedule is provided to describe these milestones. Dates, times, and meeting platforms/venues are subject to change as the project progresses.

Web/social media platforms: Winter 2021 throughout course of the project

Purpose: To communicate project specific details such as project updates, products/milestones, and related events to the public. Web-based outreach platforms, including social media, will be primarily used in distributing information to stakeholders (i.e., interested individuals and organizations), such as event reminders and links to website information.

Materials: A project website will be created and maintained by the consultant team, with outbound content subject to the oversight of the AFPB, county staff and posted on a regular basis. Following county review and approval of draft content, the county and the project team will distribute the project webpage to partner organizations for distribution (e.g., Onondaga County SWCD, Onondaga Agricultural Council, and other agencies, individual farm business pages). Throughout the lifespan of the project, the project website will be used to post all products for public review and to collect contact information and comments and questions from interested constituents. Interactive content (e.g., comments) will be received by county staff as well as the consultant team.

Virtual Focus Group and Interview Discussions: Fall 2021

Purpose: To engage in direct dialogue with targeted stakeholders for the purpose of discussing opportunities and issues specific to individual portions of the agricultural sector within the County. This information will influence plan recommendations in more specific

subject areas. The focus of these group discussions will be to help identify specific constraints faced by portions of the agricultural sector and generate suggestions for policy decisions that could advance shared goals. Discussions may be formed around general operation types or other similar interests/perspectives. To accommodate busy schedules, the Project Team will be flexible and may engage stakeholders in interviews. Focus groups will include a limited number of invited stakeholders with similar interests. Representatives from the Project Team will conduct up to 16 focus groups or interview discussions. Initial outreach for focus groups will center on focus groups representing agricultural municipalities within Onondaga County.

These events will be facilitated by the Consultant Team with assistance provided by County staff and CCE. Members of the AFPB will be asked to attend focus group discussions that align with their individual interests or background. Group discussions or interviews will be scheduled and formatted to optimize both membership and content for each group.

Materials: Focus group and interview discussions will feature handouts with project background information, meeting agendas featuring several key topics/discussion points, and materials for participants wishing to provide written feedback. with the consultant team will facilitate an interactive exchange of information between participants and facilitators.

Farm-Friendly Assessments: Summer-Fall 2021

A full Farm-Friendly Audit will be performed for up to five municipalities, to offer specific localized feedback and recommendations regarding local land use planning and regulatory frameworks affecting agriculture

Online survey: Summer-Fall 2021

Purpose: To provide an opportunity through which the agricultural community and representatives of Onondaga County municipalities may provide structured input regarding the state of agriculture in the county in an efficient and convenient manner. The content of the online survey will be developed in coordination with county staff. A goal of the online survey will be to gain stakeholder and public input to outline the issues and opportunities facing Onondaga County's agriculture community and prioritize actionable recommendations to tackle immediately and into future years.

Materials: The electronic survey will be developed using virtual survey technology, and invitations will be distributed via email and web-based platforms (see below) to potentially interested parties including agriculture-related businesses and organizations, meeting participants, and other recipients as deemed appropriate by the project team. Email invitations will be distributed through an official Onondaga County email address; w Survey results will be compiled and summarized by the consultant team.

Public meeting (Virtual or In Person): Fall 2021

Purpose: The public meeting will be targeted primarily towards farmers and rural landowners. The focus will be to solicit feedback on the proposed plan vision and goals, and suitability analysis, as well as prioritizing recommendations to assess preliminary farmer support, something that will be particularly useful in the development of the venture proposals. It will be the top priority of the EDR Team to conduct the public meeting in a way that complies with health recommendations to prevent the spread of COVID-19 at the time of the meeting. If meeting in person, New York State and Onondaga County public health protocols, such as mask wearing and social distancing requirements will be mandated. If meeting virtually, the meeting will be held in an easy to navigate platform to provide access and input opportunities to the greatest number of interested individuals. EDR has been conducting large public webinars recently using GoToWebinar, which has options to share documents and for individuals to ask questions in a chat feature, privately, or over the webinar during established question and answer sessions.

Materials: The meeting may include a formal presentation and a question & answer session, along with other interactive activities (e.g., open house style boards, online Survey123), depending on whether the meeting is virtual or in person. The content of handouts and slides will be provided by the project consultant team to county staff, CCE, and the AFPB for review in advance of the meeting.

Pop Up Event at OnFarm Fest: September 2021

Purpose: Engage local community members who are neighbors to the agricultural community or who are actively engaged with the agricultural community. Specifically, outreach will introduce the plan's purpose and basic facts about farming in Onondaga County, solicit written and verbal input, and will encourage web site visits and participation in public meetings.

Materials: Table display materials, including cards with QR code link to website and Story Map, a brief survey (included with the survey CCE will conduct at the OnFarm Fest). The content of the materials will be provided by the project consultant team to county staff, CCE, and AFPB for review in advance of the meeting.

Final Review + Approval (Spring/Summer 2022)

Purpose: The plan must culminate in a concise, interesting, and user-friendly planning document, for review by the AFPB, stakeholders, and the public at the completion of the planning process. A standalone executive summary is also required for wider distribution. The public hearing will meet legislative hearing requirements, while engaging the agricultural community and general population in endorsement of the planning project.

E. Media Contacts

Notice of meeting schedules and other project updates will be provided to local media contacts for distribution by Onondaga County staff. Media contacts will be provided by Onondaga County, CCE and the AFPB and draft materials for distribution (i.e., press releases, social media posts, etc.) will be provided by EDR to Onondaga County staff for review and distribution. In addition, a staff member from Onondaga County and/or CCE will assist in distributing information through County and partner websites.

Preliminary media contacts include Morning Ag Clips website, I Heart Media Radio, Syracuse.com, Eagle News, Lee Publications/Country Folks. All media contract and communications will occur via Onondaga County. . Draft materials will be provided by EDR to SOCPA for distribution to media outlets. SOCPA will coordinate with County Legislature staff regarding public notice of all meetings of the AFPB. All media inquiries should be directed to SOCPA staff.

F. Attachments

Attachment A: AFPB Members

ROLE	FIRST	LAST	E-MAIL
CHAIR - ACTIVE FARMER	Brian	Reeves	brian.reeves56@gmail.com
MEMBER - ACTIVE FARMER	Lee	Hudson	lee@hudsoneggfarms.com
MEMBER - ACTIVE FARMER	Mark	Tucker	marktucker53@gmail.com
MEMBER - ACTIVE FARMER	Kay	Hilsberg	khilsberg@hunterhilsberg.com
MEMBER - AGRIBUSINESS	Edwin	Skeele	ehskeele@gmail.com
MEMBER - COUNTY LEGISLATURE	Brian	May	bfmay6@yahoo.com
MEMBER - AG LAND PRESERVATION	Scott	Winkelman	scotwink@aol.com
MEMBER - SOIL & WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT	Craig	Dennis	dennisfarms@windstream.net
MEMBER - CORNELL COOPERATIVE EXTENSION	David	Skeval	das546@cornell.edu
Ex-OFFICIO - REAL PROPERTY TAX DIRECTOR	Donald	Weber	dweber@ongov.net
Ex-OFFICIO - COUNTY PLANNING DIRECTOR	Dan	Kwasnowski	dkwasnowski@ongov.net
COUNTY LEG STAFF - Clerk of Leg	Jamie	McNamara	jamiemcnamara@ongov.net
COUNTY LEG STAFF - Asst Clerk of Leg	Melanie	Vilardi	melanievilardi@ongov.net
SOCPA STAFF	Megan	Costa	megancosta@ongov.net
SWCD STAFF	Mark	Burger	mburger@ocswd.org