

APPENDIX B: FARM-FRIENDLY ASSESSMENTS

The following contains the results of the farm-friendly assessments for the towns of Onondaga, Lafayette, Manlius, and Cicero.

FARM-FRIENDLY ASSESSMENT TOWN OF CICERO

TO: Town of Cicero
FROM: Onondaga County Agriculture & Farmland Protection Board (AFPB)
with the Syracuse-Onondaga County Planning Agency (SOCPA)
DATE: October 22, 2021
RE: Farm-Friendly Assessment for the Town of Cicero

INTRODUCTION

The state of agriculture in Onondaga County has seen significant changes over the years. Through it all, local agriculture remains a critical part of our economy, food system, and landscape. Our county is gifted with highly productive agricultural soils, a legacy of farming operations and know-how, and an environment that supports a highly diverse array of crops and opportunities to engage with the local food system. The Onondaga County Agriculture and Farmland Protection Plan will report on the state of our agricultural lands and economy, and provide a framework for both protecting our most vital farmland and supporting overall agricultural viability in Onondaga County (For more information go to: agriculture.ongov.net).

The Town of Cicero is one of several communities in Onondaga County that has volunteered to have its planning, zoning, and other land use regulations reviewed for how they may positively or negatively impact the agricultural operations within its borders. This assessment of zoning, subdivision, and Right-To-Farm laws identifies areas within the Town where these regulations could be updated to better reflect current agricultural trends and needs in the 21st century. The purpose of this Farm-friendly Assessment is not to critique, but to educate by identifying potential issues and opportunities for improving -the Town of Cicero's land use regulations as they relate to agriculture.

The assessment involves reviews of existing zoning, subdivision and other local laws governing land use in the Town, including renewable energy uses. The primary objective is to review the local planning documents and laws, and to find areas, if any, where they could be amended to create a more farm-friendly environment. Specific areas of investigation include local regulations regarding:

- Conformance with the limits of local government regulating powers set forth in the New York State Agriculture and Markets Law (AML);
- Ensuring that local land use regulations accommodate the land uses commonly associated with or which support agriculture and agricultural operations with appropriate local controls;
- Identifying agricultural activities that meet the definition of "farm operation" as set forth in AML Sect. 301(11) that may be subject to special permit, site plan review, or other local review standard above ministerial review, or subject to a more intensive level of review than other uses permitted within the same zoning district.

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This assessment informs the development of a **Farm-friendly Toolbox** that other municipalities within Onondaga County can use to assess their existing plans and regulations and then update their local land use tools to better protect farmland and promote agricultural viability. This toolbox is available online at:

<https://agriculture.ongov.net/toolbox>

Agricultural trends of particular focus in this analysis include emerging types of agriculture-related enterprises and renewable energy development. To enhance their farming operations and remain economically viable, farmers in New York have expanded over the past decade beyond conventional agriculture and into direct farm marketing, on-farm wineries, breweries, cideries, distilleries, agri-tourism, bed-and-breakfast inns, and other supplemental farm businesses. These

agriculture-related enterprises, when operated as an accessory use to an ongoing agricultural operation, can provide revenue streams that enhance the economic viability of farm operations while contributing to the overall local economy and quality of life.

Meanwhile, renewable energy in New York today is presenting both opportunities and challenges for municipal governments and farmers. Investment in small-scale solar and wind energy development primarily for generating power for use in on-farm use operations for on-farm use can reduce energy costs for farmers, while reducing reliance on fossil fuel energy sources. However, large scale commercial solar and wind energy development, if left unchecked by siting considerations and local land use regulations, can have major implications in terms of agricultural land resources and impacts to host communities.

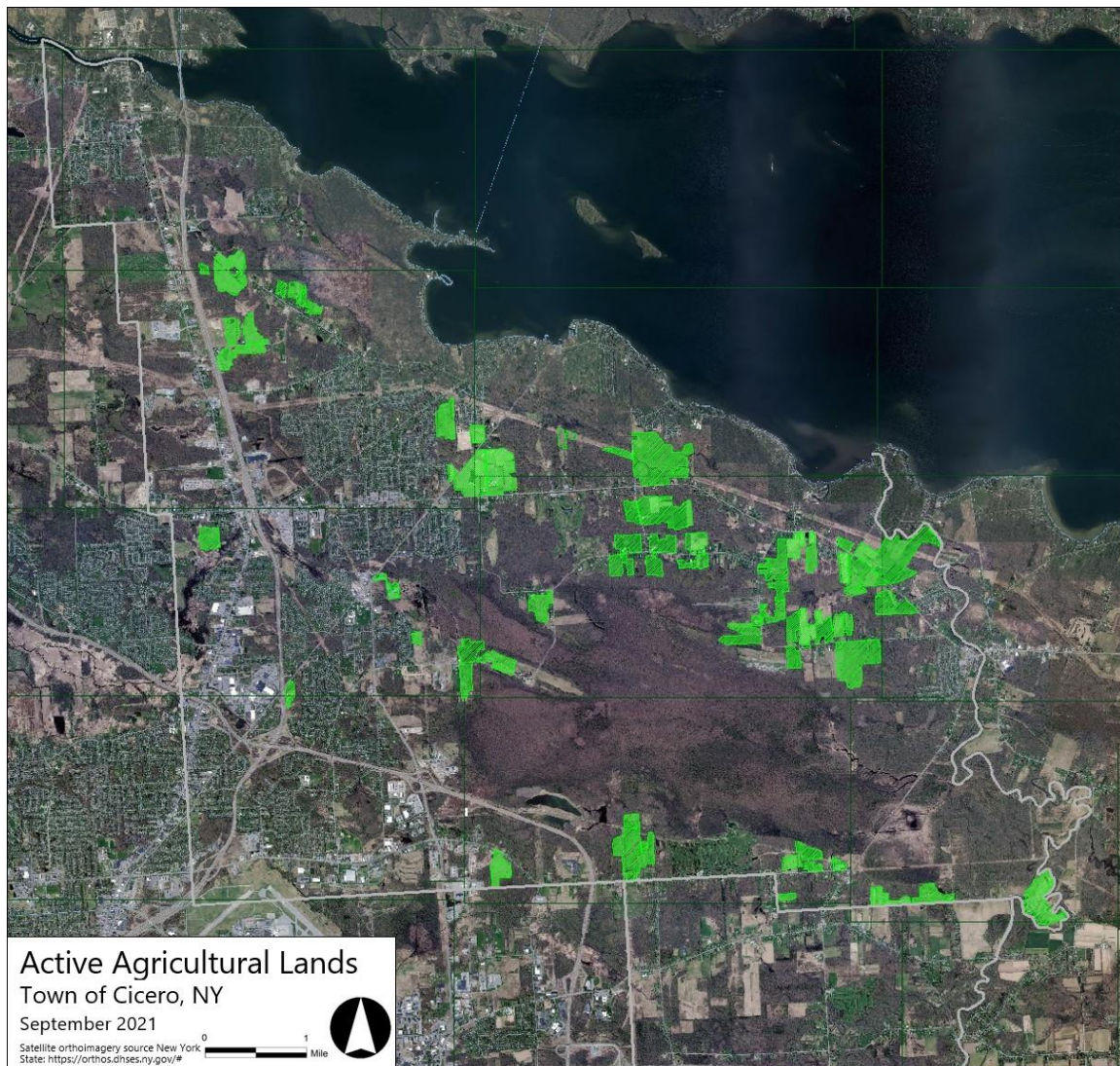
AGRICULTURE IN THE TOWN OF CICERO

The Town of Cicero, despite it being a major suburb of Syracuse, with extensive areas developed for residential, commercial, and industrial uses, still retains almost 2,000 acres of land that is actively farmed. This a relatively small amount of farmland regionally, however about 1,500 acres, or about 75 percent of the agricultural lands in Cicero, are enrolled in the Agricultural Districts program, indicative of a continued commitment to agriculture by its farm community. Agriculture in the Town of Cicero is diverse, including cattle and horse farms, field crops, hay and also large-scale vegetable and floriculture enterprises. In this assessment, six direct farm marketing enterprises, a farm brewery, and an agri-tourism/agri-education venture were identified in the Town.

A major challenge for agriculture in the Town is the fragmentation of agricultural lands primarily due to residential development. Another challenge is competition with residential and other development, due in part to the availability of public water in many areas where agriculture still exists. This increases the attractiveness of the area for residential development making agricultural lands more vulnerable to development.

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AGRICULTURE AND PLANNING

The 2006 Town of Cicero Comprehensive Plan is premised on agriculture being a diminishing activity in the town and focuses instead on development of non-agricultural land uses. The plan does not address issues related to agriculture or proposes any recommended actions to promote its long-term viability. While it calls for maintaining the rural character of the eastern portions of the Town, it does so using large lot zoning, which can lead to cumulative residential development to the detriment of farmland.

The Town however is embarking on the development of a new comprehensive plan. Despite the assumptions of the 2006 Comprehensive Plan, agriculture is still very much present in Cicero. With increasing interest in promoting local food and agriculture, and the opportunities afforded

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by emerging forms of agriculture such as greenhouse production of vegetables, and supplemental business opportunities such as agri-tourism, on-farm wineries, breweries and similar enterprises, there is the opportunity to re-assess the future of agriculture in Cicero.

From South Bay Road eastward to Bridgeport some 90% of the lands between Rte. 31 and Cicero Swamp are classed as prime farmland according to the NRCS Soils Survey. This also coincides with the largest concentration of active farmland in the Town. This area should be considered an opportunity for enhancing the Town's agricultural base. A combination of incentives to preserve the land resource, and agriculture-friendly zoning regulations could enhance the long-term viability of Cicero's agricultural community, and reverse the loss of valuable farmland. This coupled with land use policies that encourage more compact development and infill in the western portions of the Town can accommodate anticipated population growth, while preserving its remaining agricultural base.

AGRICULTURE AND THE LOCAL REGULATORY FRAMEWORK

Agriculture and Markets Law Section 305-a provides farmers and agricultural operations located with County sponsored agricultural districts specific protections against local zoning regulation that may be unreasonably restrictive and cause undue interference with legitimate agricultural practices as defined by State law. Because many of the active farms in the Town of Cicero are located within a County administered agricultural district, they are afforded the protections available through Section 305-a.

In 2002 the New York State Legislature amended Town Law Section 283-a to require local governments to ensure that their laws, ordinances, or other regulations that might apply to agricultural operations located in State certified agricultural districts do not *"...unreasonably restrict or regulate farm operations in contravention of Article 25-AAA of the Agriculture and Markets Law, unless it can be shown that the public health or safety is threatened."* Agriculture and farming are interchangeable terms in this report along with agricultural operations and farms.

The following are recommended actions to revise the Town of Cicero regulations in a manner that both protects the Town and its residents by providing contemporary agricultural operations the flexibility they need to remain viable to compete in a global economy. They address a variety of issues in the existing land use regulations of the Town, including adjustments to the Agricultural AG zoning district, recommendations for additional accessory uses to farm operations, primarily to accommodate direct farm marketing enterprises, and recommendations for revisions to or the addition of new definitions for land uses not currently defined.

In addition, some revisions to the Town's subdivision regulations are recommended as a means of enhancing the use of conservation subdivisions to better protect agricultural lands in the town.

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RIGHT TO FARM LAW

The Town of Cicero appears to have not adopted a Right to Farm Law. While viewed primarily as designed to protect farmers from so-called nuisance suits, local right to farm laws can be useful in other ways. In Cicero, where agriculture is a small part of the community's landscape, the law can be a tool for raising public awareness of local agriculture. Many towns have also utilized local right-to-farm laws of laws to set up a framework for conflict resolution and to for enhancing communication between the farm and non-farm communities in the town. Because only a small number of farms in Cicero participate in the County Agricultural Districts program, the Town should consider applying the protections of the law to all farms located in its Agricultural AG zoning district.

Recommended Actions:

The Town of Cicero should adopt a Right to Farm Law.

ZONING ORDINANCE

The Town of Cicero zoning regulations are set forth in Chapter 210 of the Town of Cicero Code. Agricultural land uses are permitted in the Agricultural (AG) district in the town. Agricultural uses are not permitted in any other zoning districts in the town, however the Agricultural AG zoning district covers just under 50% of the land area of the town. Since there are only approximately 2,000 acres of land in the Town that appear to be in agricultural use, and much of the AG- Agricultural zoning district is located with the Cicero Swamp complex, the Town should consider creating a new zoning district that would be better tailored to protecting the ecological assets of Cicero Swamp and fringe areas, as well as the wetlands closer to Oneida Lake and elsewhere in the Town.

DEFINING AGRICULTURE

For this analysis, "agriculture" is defined by the New York State Agriculture and Markets Law Article (AML) 25-AA, Section 301 as the use of land, buildings, structures, equipment, manure processing and handling facilities, and practices which contribute to the production, preparation, and marketing of crops, livestock, livestock products, and horse boarding operations as a commercial enterprise or a hobby.

Historically agriculture has included a variety of disciplines aside from fruit, vegetable and crop production and livestock raised for food. Animal husbandry, or the breeding of specific animals for use or sale (e.g., racehorses), beekeeping, aquaculture (fish production), horticulture, floriculture, and silviculture are all also considered as agriculture within this definition. Recently,

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the growing of industrial grade hemp (with limits on CBD/TCH content) has been added to the list of activities that fall under the Ag & Markets definition of agriculture.¹ The State's definition of agricultural operation is *"...land and on-farm buildings, equipment, manure processing and handling facilities, and practices which contribute to the production, preparation and marketing of crops, livestock and livestock products as a commercial enterprise" (AML Sect.301(11)).*

Agricultural uses, as defined in the Town Code include:

"Land containing at least two acres which is used for raising livestock or agricultural products, including farm structures and the storage of agricultural equipment; riding and boarding stable, kennels and veterinaries; and, as an accessory use, the sale of agricultural products on the property."

The Town of Cicero definition is comprehensive in covering the types of uses and activities that occur as part of a contemporary agricultural enterprise and is also in line with the NYS Agriculture and Markets Law definitions. It also includes types of businesses may not be considered agriculture or agriculture-related in many communities, such as veterinary offices and *"Agriculture-related sales or service businesses, provided that total business area, including display area, does not exceed 5,000 square feet."* These types of businesses provide critical services to farmers and their farm enterprises. In this context too, products not commonly considered agricultural products, such as horticultural products (Christmas trees and landscape plantings), flowers, honey, maple syrup and other such products of the land are included in the agricultural land use category. The Town's zoning code also permits tourist homes and bed-and-breakfast inns, as well as home occupations in the Agricultural-AG zoning district.

Recommended Actions:

No remedial action is recommended

ACCESSORY USES

In the past decade, farmers in New York have also expanded beyond conventional agriculture and into direct farm marketing, on-farm wineries, breweries, cideries, distilleries, agri-tourism, bed-and-breakfast inns and other supplemental farm businesses. In recent years, renting campsites and "glamping" as side businesses have started to appear. Other businesses that may provide supplemental income are bed and breakfast inns, which are not listed as permitted use in the Town. All of these can be appropriate as accessory uses to the larger agricultural operations. They require clear and concise definitions for each use, however, and controls on

¹ Medical marijuana production and sales are regulated by NYS Dept. of Health. Retail sales should be limited to commercial zoning districts.

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their size and scope that ensure they remain a use that is subordinate to the larger farm operation.

Recommended Actions:

The Town of Cicero should review its zoning regulations and consider adding these uses as permitted accessory uses to an agricultural operation (with appropriate definitions) in the Agricultural AG zoning district. Due their nature some of these uses may warrant site plan review.

On-Farm Breweries, Cideries, Distilleries, Wineries

On-farm wineries, breweries, cideries, distilleries should be listed as accessory uses to an operating farm enterprise. In addition to direct sales to the public, these businesses often include subsidiary cafes, tasting rooms, and gift shops that should also be referenced in any definition. It is important that the size of these subsidiary enterprises be controlled and that they remain contributing sources of revenue for the primary operation. Because these uses involve access to the premises by the public, special consideration needs to be given to public safety, crowd management and traffic. The adoption of site plan approval, with specific design standards for such enterprises, is warranted.

Recommended Actions:

The Town of Cicero should add these agriculture-related enterprises as a permitted accessory uses in the Agricultural AG zoning district, with clear and concise definitions for each. Given their nature, subjecting such activities to site plan approval, with appropriate design standards, is also warranted.

Agri-Tourism

The Town of Cicero should also consider adding agri-tourism as an accessory use to ongoing farm operations. Although recognized by New York as falling under its definition of agriculture or farm operation, agri-tourism can be a gray area in terms of what activities are involved. Agri-tourism consists of activities that bring together tourism and agriculture for the education and enjoyment of the public, and which may include hayrides, corn mazes, hay mazes, petting zoos (farm animals only), farm tours and agriculture-themed festivals and other public or private events. It can also attract large numbers of people to a farm, especially for special on-farm events. Careful attention needs to be given to both the definition of agri-tourism and ensuring that it is permitted only as a use that is supporting and active agricultural operation.

Agri-tourism can also attract large numbers of people to a farm, especially for special on-farm events. Because agri-tourism involves access to the premises by the public, special consideration needs to be given to public safety, crowd management, parking, noise control, water and wastewater infrastructure, and traffic. The adoption of site plan approval, with specific design standards for such enterprises, is warranted.

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Recommended Actions:

The Town of Cicero should add agri-tourism as a permitted accessory uses in the Agricultural AG zoning district, with a clear and concise definition of the use. Given the nature of agri-tourism, such uses should be subject to site plan approval, with appropriate design standards, is also warranted.

Farm Worker Housing

The Town of Cicero zoning code currently does not permit farm worker housing. The term "on-farm buildings" in the Agriculture and Markets Law Sect. 305-a definition of farm operations includes farm labor housing as being an integral element of these operations. Even though there may be no apparent need for farm worker housing at this time in the Town of Cicero, by addressing the issue now, the Town can formulate well-thought-out provisions for future farm worker housing, including appropriate standards.

Recommended Actions:

The Town of Cicero should consider adding farm worker housing as a permitted accessory use in the Agricultural AG zoning district, as well as a definition of farmworker housing that includes manufactured homes, modular homes, and stick-built homes as options.

Farmers' Markets

Although today farmers' markets are found in many communities throughout Onondaga County, they are not found in the Town of Cicero zoning code as a permitted use, nor are they defined. They are not usually associated with an active agricultural operation, but instead functions as separate sales venues off the farm. They are also intermittent land uses, scheduled for specific days of the week, and rely on temporary (pop-up) facilities, or pavilions partitioned into rented booths. Often the farmers' market is managed by a local not-for-profit organization or in some cases operates out of a public facility, such as the CNY Regional Market.

Farmers' markets are recognized as community assets, however they can have impacts that may affect the surround community, such as traffic, noise and odors. They should thus be subject to basic zoning provisions governing location, being restricted to zoning districts or sites in which they will be a compatible use. Also, the use of site plan review, and design standards to mitigate potential impacts of farmers markets are appropriate zoning tools.

The zoning definition for a farmers' market should include details such as being a temporary or intermittent activity that may include temporary or mobile vendor facilities, or a permanent structure with individual booths, and is operated by a public authority or not-for-profit organization.

Recommended Actions:

The Town of Cicero should add farmers' markets as a permitted use in appropriate zoning districts within the town. The use should be carefully defined in a manner that ensures that it

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serves as a public or not-for-profit venue to promote local food and agriculture and brings local farmers and consumers together. Site plan review, and design standards to mitigate potential impacts of farmers markets are appropriate zoning tools

Commercial Food Processing

Small-scale commercial food processing, including baked goods, jams and jellies, pickles, and canning, can be another source of supplemental revenue for an agricultural operation. They can also fill a major gap in the local and regional food systems and promote “buy local” economic development initiatives. Commercial food operations should be listed as a separate accessory use and defined in a manner that ensures they are a subordinate activity to an ongoing agricultural operation, such as limits on square footage or number of non-resident employees working at the business. Site plan approval is appropriate for such uses. Although they usually ship their product in small lots, these small commercial kitchens do generate some van or truck traffic, especially if they engage in internet-based marketing that requires daily pick-up of merchandise. Some also conduct direct sales to the public.

Recommended Actions:

The Town of Cicero should consider adding small commercial kitchens as a permitted accessory use in the Agricultural AG zoning district, with a clear and concise definition of the use. Given the nature of these uses, site plan approval with appropriate design standards, is also warranted.

RENEWABLE ENERGY

The Town of Cicero currently (as of October 4, 2021) has a six-month moratorium on considering applications for solar energy development as the Town considers possible approaches to regulating commercial solar energy development. Non-commercial solar energy systems with appropriate site design standards and setbacks should be added to the list of permitted accessory uses. These types of renewable energy systems are included in the definition of “farm operation” as set forth in AML Sect. 301(11). The Town should thus add as permitted uses non-commercial solar and wind energy systems in the Agricultural AG district.

It is important that these solar energy systems are defined in a manner that distinguishes them from commercial renewable energy systems that are developed for the purpose of exporting power off the property for sale to the larger electrical grid system. A definition for a non-commercial solar system should specifically include language such as “...*primarily for use on the premises...*” to ensure that such systems are scaled to the need of the property owner, but with the option of selling limited amounts of excess electricity.

The Town already permits small scale wind energy systems in the Agricultural AG zoning district under Chapter 207 of the Town Code. Chapter 207 does not explicitly define small scale, non-commercial wind energy systems, or restrict wind energy systems to producing electricity for

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onsite use. The Town's maximum height limitation of 60 feet however effectively precludes larger scale commercial wind energy.

Some basic site design standards for renewable energy systems are appropriate. These include minimum setback requirements from public highways, parks, officially designated historic properties, and sites with sensitive views; standards to control glare and flicker (wind turbines); visual screening, especially for solar arrays, and noise standards for wind energy systems.

One issue that is receiving attention some municipalities is the potential visual impact of the small-scale non-commercial wind energy systems such as permitted in the Town of Cicero. These wind turbines however tend to recede into the surrounding landscape within a short distance from where they are installed, often at distances of 1,000 feet or less. Moreover, existing farm hedgerows and woodland areas in some towns can effectively screen a smaller scale, non-commercial, wind energy system within a few hundred feet.

Should the Town of Cicero also consider permitting commercial scale solar and wind energy systems (systems where the energy is sold offsite into the electric grid), it should take into consideration the potential impacts on agricultural lands, especially those associated with large scale solar development. Construction on farmland designated as Prime or Farmland of Statewide importance should be avoided, especially in that section of the Town where agriculture is currently concentrated.

Other appropriate design standards for the larger solar energy developments include:

- The total surface area of solar collectors, combined with all other buildings and structures on the lot, shall not exceed fifty-percent of total parcel area;
- Removal of trees over 6 inches in trunk diameter shall be minimized, or mitigated by replacement tree plantings elsewhere on the property;
- Roadways to and within the site shall be constructed of gravel or other permeable surfacing and shall be flush with the surrounding land contours;
- A site restoration plan shall be included as part of any decommissioning plan, to include, at a minimum, stockpiling of any topsoil removed during construction, for use in site restoration, removal of all foundations, de-compacting and de-rocking all disturbed areas, and removal of any roadways;
- All on-site utility and transmission lines shall, to the extent feasible, be placed underground.

More information on solar energy development and agricultural lands is available at:

<http://ongov.net/planning/documents/AgBestPractices05112021.pdf>; and
<http://ongov.net/planning/solar101.html>.

Wind energy systems have a much smaller footprint and hence less impact on agricultural lands, and so are considered compatible with agricultural uses. Standards for access roadways and

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onsite utility transmissions such as those for solar development, as well as requirements for site restoration upon completion of construction activities, are appropriate.

The Accelerated Renewable Energy Growth and Community Benefit Act created an Office of Renewable Energy Siting (ORES) and effectively pre-empts the local regulation and review of commercial solar and wind energy development that will generate 25 MW or more of power per year. Section 900-2.25 of Title 19 of NYCRR Part 900, which governs the ORES review process, does, however, require that the location of a proposed renewable energy development conform to all substantive requirements of “local ordinances, laws, resolutions, regulations, [and] standards,” including local zoning. The applicant must also state whether the municipality has adopted a comprehensive plan, and whether the proposed renewable energy development is consistent with the adopted plan.

Under NYS Executive Law Section 94-c, the Office of Renewable Energy Siting may elect to apply, or not apply applicable local zoning and other regulations to the proposed development. To override local regulations, the Office must make a finding that the local regulation is “unreasonably burdensome” in view of the renewable energy development and greenhouse gas emission reduction targets set forth in Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act (CLCPA), and the environmental benefits of the proposed facility.

The Town of Cicero while it may not have a direct role in the ORES review process, can position itself to influence the State’s deliberation through its zoning and other regulations.

Recommended Actions:

The Town of Cicero should amend its zoning regulations to permit non-commercial solar energy systems in the Agricultural AG zoning districts and other districts where there is active agriculture, appropriate site design standards and setbacks.

The Town of Cicero should adopt new zoning standards for large scale renewable energy development that provide strong protections for all Prime- and Farmland of Statewide importance within its boundaries.

FIXED RATIO ZONING

Fixed ratio zoning is another a means of better protecting its agricultural land assets, as well as the rural character of the Agricultural AG district. It was developed in rural agricultural communities in southern Pennsylvania in the 1970s as a way of providing farmers with the option of occasional sales of land for development, without triggering large scale development or farmland fragmentation. Also known as “density averaging,” fixed-ratio zoning can be very effective also in protecting both agricultural lands and ecologically important and scenic lands.

Fixed-ratio zoning differs from the conventional zoning and subdivision practice of setting minimum lot sizes, (i.e., the 1-acre minimum lot size set by the Town of Cicero in the Agricultural AG zoning district). It instead controls the number of lots permitted to be subdivided off a

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parent tract of land, based on the size of the parcel. This “one lot per X acres” approach, – e.g., 5 acres... 10 acres... 20 acres of land – has been proven to be a simple but effective way to control density in rural areas and prevent land fragmentation. It can also reduce the competition for land between farmers and developers that is a challenge to agriculture elsewhere in New York.

In the Town of Cicero, the current minimum lot size of 1 acre in the Agricultural AG district would continue as the minimum lots size for non-agricultural land uses. On a hypothetical 100-acre parcel of land, with the development density set at one lot for each 10 acres of land, up to nine 1-acre lots would be permitted to be subdivided off the parent tract. These lots however would consume as little as 9 or 10 acres of the 100 acres, leaving the remaining acreage as one large, contiguous tract of agricultural lands. Under the fixed ratio approach, the landowner would retain the option of creating a lesser number of larger lots, e.g., 2, 3, 5 acre or larger if they so desire.

Fixed Ratio (Density Averaging) Zoning



Eight conventional 10-acre lots consume entire 87 acre tract (left); 7 +/- 2-ac. lots cover only 16.5 acres of less productive land, leaving a 71.5 acre, farmable parent tract (right).

This fixed-ratio approach can work well because most farmers and other rural landowners are generally not interested in seeing their land developed, but instead want the ability to sell off an occasional lot, as needed or desired. In the Town of Cicero, this fixed-ratio approach can satisfy landowners' desire to sell occasional lots, while protecting the agricultural land resource.

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Recommended Actions:

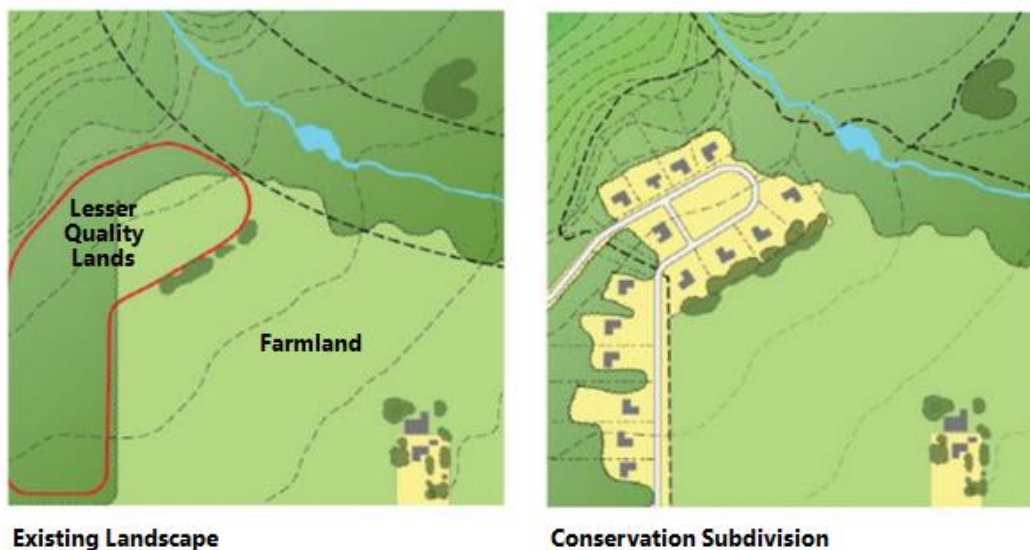
The Town of Cicero should consider the adoption of reduced development densities in the Agricultural (AG) zoning district, coupled with adopting the fixed ratio zoning concept, to better protect agricultural land assets in the Town of Cicero.

SUBDIVISION REGULATIONS

Town of Cicero Land Subdivision Regulations permit cluster subdivisions within the town (Section 185-26). These types of subdivision can be effective means of providing opportunities for residential development, while protecting agricultural lands and ecologically sensitive lands. Cluster subdivision design is often associated with higher density suburban townhouse development. The conservation subdivision however has become a useful growth management tool in rural areas where development often takes the form of smaller scale low density single-family residential development.

A conservation subdivision utilizes the careful placement of individual homes on smaller lots within a site and can be an effective tool for protecting agricultural lands, environmentally sensitive areas and rural character. Through more flexible lot dimensional standards, as well as street design provisions that permit narrower, low speed and low-volume private lanes to access multiple homes, conservation subdivisions can provide development opportunities for farmers and other owners of large tracts of land, while preserving rural character and the agricultural land base.

Conservation Subdivision



Source: Dutchess County NY Greenway Guide.

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The Town should consider adopting specific design standards for conservation subdivisions in agricultural and other areas. These could include requirements to avoid development on prime agricultural soils, or farmland of statewide importance; and minimum setbacks from farm buildings and protection of existing farm infrastructure such as field drainage tile systems.

The Town should consider adopting standards for “flag” or “panhandle” lots. These types of lots consist of narrow strips of land that connect the public street to a lot meeting all the standard lot dimensional requirements of the zoning district within which it is located. They can be very effective in providing for small scale rural development, while preserving road frontage and higher quality farmland. Other design standards for these types of lots should include minimum width of at least 30 feet for the strip of land between the public street and the lot to be developed, minimum driveway widths and all-weather design capable of supporting fire trucks and other emergency access vehicles, and maximum driveway widths.

Recommended Actions:

The Town of Cicero should review its subdivision regulations and consider adopting design standards for conservation subdivisions in agricultural and other areas in order to permit low density residential development, which would also protect the agricultural land asset.

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

The following table summarizes the proposed changes to the Town of Cicero planning initiatives and zoning regulations.

ADD AS PERMITTED ACCESSORY LAND USES	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agri-tourism • Food Processing • Non-commercial solar energy system • Non-commercial wind energy system 	<p>These uses should be accessory uses attached to and subordinated to the larger active farm operation. Specific design standards should be developed for such agri-tourism uses, to ensure safe ingress and egress, adequate parking, the safety of site visitors, site lighting, controls on outdoor displays, signs, and buffers between the site and neighboring properties.</p>

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NEW OR REVISED DEFINITIONS	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agri-tourism • Commercial food processing • On-farm wineries • On-farm breweries • On farm cideries • On-farm distilleries • Non-commercial solar energy system • Non-commercial wind energy system 	<p>Definitions should be clear and concise, and reflect the Town's objectives for the land use, while not conflicting with the limits imposed by the Agriculture and Markets Law.</p>
ADDITIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduce development density/potential within the Agricultural AG zoning district, utilizing fixed-ratio approach to density and land subdivision. • Add farmers' markets to the list of permitted uses in appropriate zoning districts. • Amend the Zoning Code to permit smaller scale non-commercial solar energy systems in the Agricultural AG district 	<p>Fixed ratio zoning can protect large tracts of agricultural lands while providing opportunity for development.</p> <p>Although now a common feature in communities, farmers' markets are not a formalized land use in many zoning codes.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adopt a Right to Farm local law 	

WHY THIS MATTERS?

As stated in the introduction, a challenge for the Town of Cicero and other communities across New York has been keeping pace with the trends in agriculture and agricultural practices within its borders and updating its land use regulations accordingly. Overall, however, the Town's zoning code is well written, and the issues identified in its zoning and subdivision regulations are relatively minor and can be easily corrected through modest amendments to its codes.

As residents of Onondaga County turn away from food imported from throughout the world, and toward locally and regionally produced foods, there is opportunity today for the smaller, specialized agricultural enterprises operating in the Town of Cicero today to expand and for new agricultural enterprises to develop. This paired with pro-active local laws and potential incentives will enable its agricultural community to be a vibrant economic sector well into the coming decades.

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REFERENCES

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FARM-FRIENDLY ASSESSMENT

TOWN OF CICERO

CONTACTS

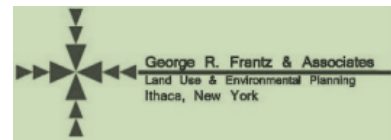
The Onondaga County Agriculture & Farmland Protection Plan Update is being led by the Onondaga County Agriculture & Farmland Protection Board (AFPB), with staff support from the Syracuse-Onondaga County Planning Agency (SOCPA), as well as their consultant team of EDR, DPC, and George R. Frantz & Associates, LLC (primary author).

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FARM-FRIENDLY ASSESSMENT

TOWN OF LAFAYETTE

TO: Town of LaFayette

FROM: Onondaga County Agriculture & Farmland Protection Board (AFPB)
with the Syracuse-Onondaga County Planning Agency (SOCPA)

DATE: October 22, 2021

RE: Farm-Friendly Assessment for the Town of LaFayette

INTRODUCTION

The state of agriculture in Onondaga County has seen significant changes over the years. Through it all, local agriculture remains a critical part of our economy, food system, and landscape. Our county is gifted with highly productive agricultural soils, a legacy of farming operations and know-how, and an environment that supports a highly diverse array of crops and opportunities to engage with the local food system. The Onondaga County Agriculture and Farmland Protection Plan will report on the state of our agricultural lands and economy, and provide a framework for both protecting our most vital farmland and supporting overall agricultural viability in Onondaga County (For more information go to agriculture.ongov.net).

The Town of LaFayette is one of several communities in Onondaga County that has volunteered to have its zoning and other land use regulations reviewed for how they may positively or negatively impact the agricultural operations within its borders. This assessment of zoning, subdivision, and Right-To-Farm laws identifies areas within the Town where these regulations could be updated to better reflect current agricultural trends and needs in the 21st century. The purpose of this Farm-friendly Assessment is not to critique, but to educate by identifying potential issues and opportunities for improving the Town of LaFayette land use regulations as they relate to agriculture.

The assessment involves reviews of existing zoning, subdivision and other local laws governing land use in the Town, including renewable energy uses. The primary objective is to review the local planning documents and laws, and to find areas, if any, where they could be amended to create a more farm-friendly environment. A key area of investigation includes a review of local zoning and subdivision regulations regarding:

- Conformance with the limits of local government regulating powers set forth in the New York State Agriculture and Markets Law (AML);
- Ensuring that local land use regulations accommodate the land uses commonly associated with or which support agriculture and agricultural operations with appropriate local controls;
- Identifying agricultural activities that meet the definition of "farm operation" as set forth in AML Sect. 301(11) that may be subject to special permit, site plan review, or other local

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review standard above ministerial review, or subject to a more intensive level of review than other uses permitted within the same zoning district.

This assessment informs the development of a **Farm-Friendly Toolbox** that other municipalities within Onondaga County can use to assess their existing plans and regulations and then update their local land use tools to better protect farmland and promote agricultural viability. This toolbox is available online at <https://agriculture.ongov.net/toolbox>

Agricultural trends of particular focus in this analysis include emerging types of agriculture-related enterprises, and renewable energy development. To enhance their farming operations and remain economically viable, farmers in New York have expanded over the past decade beyond conventional agriculture and into direct farm marketing, on-farm wineries, breweries, cideries, distilleries, agritourism, bed-and-breakfast inns, and other supplemental farm businesses.

These agriculture-related enterprises, when operated as an accessory use to an ongoing agricultural operation, can provide revenue streams that enhance the economic viability of farm operations while contributing to the overall local economy and quality of life.

Meanwhile, renewable energy in New York today is presenting both opportunities and challenges for municipal governments and farmers. Investment in small-scale solar and wind energy development primarily for generating power for use in farm operations can reduce energy costs for farmers, while reducing reliance on fossil fuel energy sources. However, large scale commercial solar and wind energy development, if left unchecked by siting considerations and local land use regulations, can have major implications in terms of agricultural land resources and impacts to host communities.

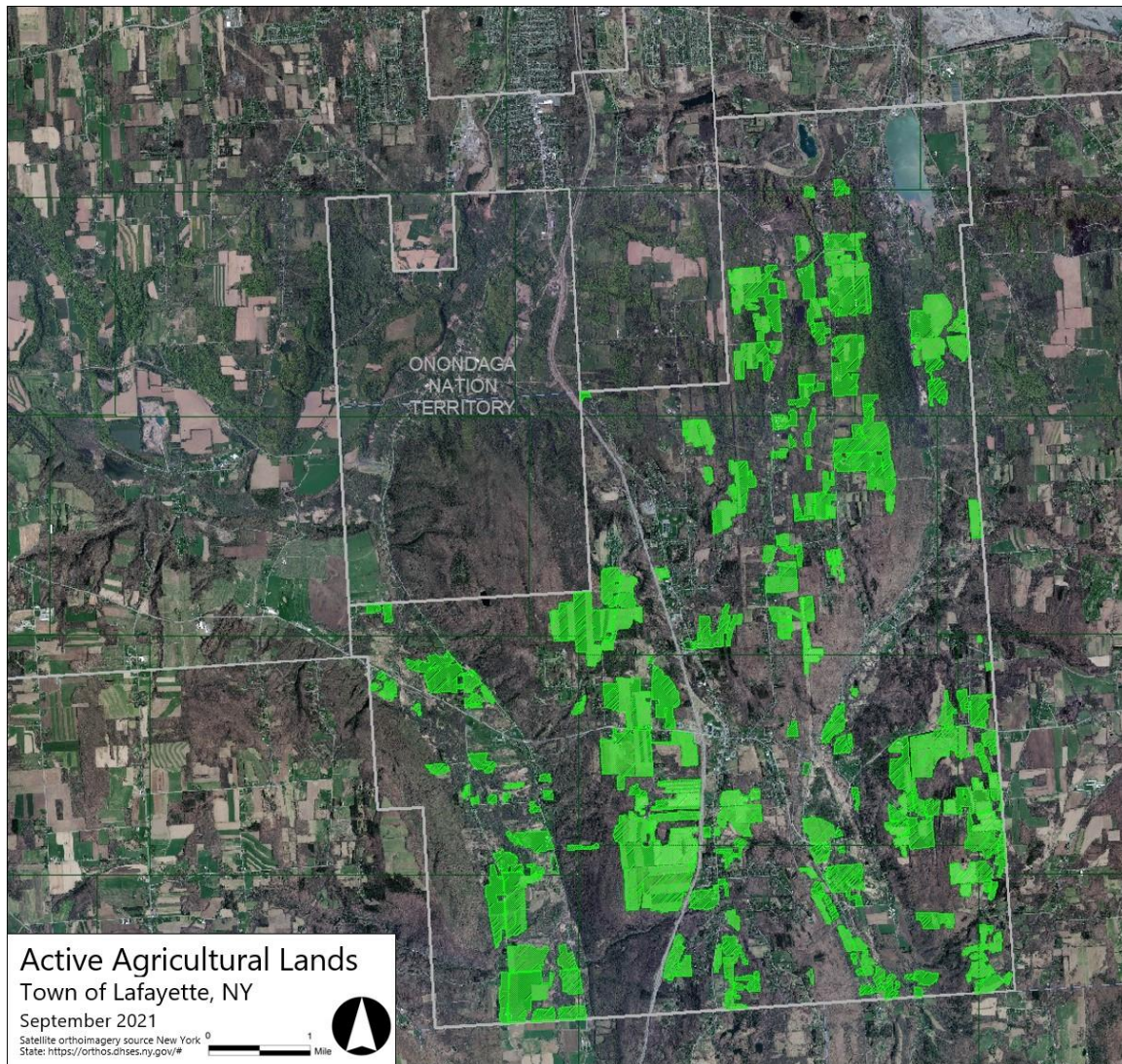
AGRICULTURE IN THE TOWN OF LAFAYETTE

The Town of LaFayette can be characterized as predominantly rural with pockets of more intense residential, commercial, and industrial land uses generally in and around the hamlet of LaFayette and the I-81 corridor. Satellite imagery shows an estimated 4,780 acres of land within its borders are still actively farmed, or about 20% of the land in the town. Agriculture in the Town of LaFayette is diverse, including cattle and horse farms, field crops, hay, and orchard crops, as well as floricultural and horticultural operations.

During this assessment, five farm-direct marketing enterprises consisting of two U-pick farms (apples and Christmas trees), an equestrian center, a wedding venue, and a commercial greenhouse were identified in the Town.

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AGRICULTURE AND PLANNING

The 2012 Comprehensive Plan adopted by the Town of LaFayette identified agriculture as one of the top five strengths of the Town, and agriculture and tourism as an opportunity for the Town to exploit. It noted the critical role that agriculture plays in maintaining the Town's open spaces and its rural character. In 2010 there were 94 parcels identified as agricultural, and some 5,136 acres of land dedicated to agriculture according to tax assessment records.

The plan also discusses the rise of the local food movement, and the adoption of more sustainable agricultural practices and positive trends that are also opportunities for farmers in the Town. But it also notes the challenge posed by increased residential development, including

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conflicts between new residents and farmers over farm operations, trespassing on farmland and damage to crops, increased traffic on rural roads.

Specific recommendations for agriculture in the Town of LaFayette include:

- Replacing the Agricultural-Residential zoning district with a district where residential development is emphasized, and creating an agriculture-focused zoning district that could better protect large contiguous blocks of the Town's farmlands and farms;
- Revise the subdivision regulations to promote subdivision designs that preserve farmland, and a review process that considers the impacts of a new development on nearby farms;
- Adopt a local Right-to-Farm law to promote a supportive environment for agriculture in the Town and assist in limiting conflicts between farmers and non-farm residents;
- Promote the use of purchase of development rights in the Town of LaFayette.

Overall, the 2012 Comprehensive Plan is very supportive of a long-term future for agriculture in the Town of LaFayette.

The Town of LaFayette also adopted an Agriculture and Farmland Protection Plan in 2014. This document inventories the existing agricultural resources in LaFayette, identifies priority areas for farmland protection, and includes recommendations for preserving agricultural land in the Town and activities.

Finally, the newly released Draft Town of LaFayette 2021 Comprehensive Plan includes a number of recommendations to promote the long term viability of agriculture in the community. It calls for:

- Promoting agriculture as a primary land use and an important economic sector in the Town;
- Preserving the rural, agrarian character of the Town;
- Channeling new non-agricultural development into or adjacent to LaFayette hamlet.

Many of the recommendations in these three planning documents are mirrored in the recommendations in this assessment. Hopefully, this will encourage the Town of LaFayette to move forward with implementing the recommendations in the Comprehensive Plan.

AGRICULTURE AND THE LOCAL REGULATORY FRAMEWORK

Agriculture and Markets Law Section 305-a provides farmers and agricultural operations located within County-sponsored agricultural districts specific protections against local zoning regulations that may be unreasonably restrictive and cause undue interference with legitimate agricultural practices as defined by State law. Many of the active farms in the Town of LaFayette are located within a County administered agricultural district and are afforded the protections of Section 305-a.

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In 2002, the New York State Legislature amended Town Law Section 283-a to require local governments to ensure that their laws, ordinances, or other regulations that might apply to agricultural operations located in State certified agricultural districts do not "*...unreasonably restrict or regulate farm operations in contravention of Article 25-AAA of the Agriculture and Markets Law, unless it can be shown that the public health or safety is threatened.*" Agriculture and farming are interchangeable terms in this report, along with agricultural operations and farms.

The Town of LaFayette zoning regulations are set forth in Chapter 290 of the Town of LaFayette Code. Agriculture is a permitted use only within the AG - Agricultural District; however, it is important to note that this district includes approximately 90% of the Town of LaFayette. Approximately 150 acres of actively farmed land on three parcels are in the other zoning districts that do not permit agriculture.

The following are recommended actions to revise the Town of LaFayette land use regulations in a manner that both protects the Town and its residents by providing contemporary agricultural operations the flexibility they need to remain viable to compete in a global economy. They address a variety of issues in the existing land use regulations of the Town, including adjustments to the AG-Agricultural zoning district, recommendations for additional accessory uses to farm operations, primarily to accommodate direct farm marketing enterprises, and recommendations for revisions to or the addition of new definitions for land uses not currently defined. In addition, some revisions to the Town's subdivision regulations are recommended as a means of enhancing the use of conservation subdivisions to better protect agricultural lands in the town.

RIGHT TO FARM LAW

The Town of LaFayette does not appear to have adopted a Right to Farm law. While viewed primarily as designed to protect farmers from so-called nuisance suits, local right to farm laws can be useful in other ways. In LaFayette, where agriculture is a small part of the community's landscape, the law can be a tool for raising public awareness of local agriculture. Many towns have also utilized local right-to-farm laws of laws to set up a framework for conflict resolution and to for enhancing communication between the farm and non-farm communities in the town. Although many farms in LaFayette participate in the County Agricultural Districts program and are afforded protection under the NY Agriculture and Markets Law, the Town should consider applying the protections of the law to all farms located in its AG- Agricultural zoning district.

Recommended Actions:

The Town of LaFayette should adopt a Right to Farm Law.

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DEFINING AGRICULTURE

For this analysis, "agriculture" is defined by the New York State Agriculture and Markets Law Article (AML) 25-AA, Section 301 as the use of land, buildings, structures, equipment, manure processing and handling facilities, and practices which contribute to the production, preparation, and marketing of crops, livestock, livestock products, and horse boarding operations as a commercial enterprise or a hobby.

Historically agriculture has included a variety of disciplines aside from fruit, vegetable and crop production and livestock raised for food. Animal husbandry, or the breeding of specific animals for use or sale (e.g., racehorses), beekeeping, aquaculture (fish production), horticulture, floriculture and silviculture are all also considered by this report. Recently, the growing of industrial grade hemp (with limits on CBD/TCH content) has been added to the list of activities that fall under the Ag & Markets definition of agriculture.¹ The State's definition of agricultural operation is *"...land and on-farm buildings, equipment, manure processing and handling facilities, and practices which contribute to the production, preparation and marketing of crops, livestock and livestock products as a commercial enterprise"* (AML Sect.301(11)).

In the Town of LaFayette zoning regulations, Section 290-3(B) of the Town of LaFayette Code defines "Agriculture" as, *"The science or practice of farming, including cultivation of the soil for the growing of crops and the rearing of animals to provide food, wool and other products."* The zoning regulations also define "Farm" as, *"A farm operation as defined in the New York State Agriculture and Markets Law."* The Town's definitions of "agriculture" and definition of "farm," are essentially the same as each other, although the State Department of Agriculture and Markets definition of farm operation is more comprehensive and clearer as to what constitutes an agricultural operation:

"...land and on-farm buildings, equipment, manure processing and handling facilities, and practices which contribute to the production, preparation and marketing of crops, livestock and livestock products as a commercial enterprise." (AML Sect.301(11)).

The State definition also emphasizes the multi-faceted aspects of agriculture today, recognizes the diversity of agriculture, and the commercial nature of agriculture today. In this context too, products not commonly considered agricultural products, such as horticultural products (Christmas trees and landscape plantings), flowers, honey, maple syrup, and other such products of the land are included in the agricultural land use category. The Town of LaFayette can craft its own definition for agriculture that parallels the State definition but tailored to the Town and its character. An example of a local definition for agriculture that more closely follows the State definition, is:

¹ Medical marijuana production and sales are regulated by NYS Dept. of Health. Retail sales should be limited to commercial zoning districts.

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"The use of land and on-farm buildings, equipment, manure processing and handling facilities, and practices which contribute to the production, preparation and marketing of crops, animal husbandry, livestock and livestock products as a commercial enterprise, including a commercial horse-boarding operation as defined in the Agriculture and Markets Law Article 25-AA, Section 301, and timber processing² as defined in this zoning law." (Town of Geneva NY Zoning Code, 2018)

A benefit of this definition is that it is specific in terms of the permitted land use and ensures adequate control by the Town, but also general enough to permit some flexibility, as agricultural operations continue to evolve in the coming years.

Recommended Actions:

The Town of LaFayette should update its definition of agriculture to better reflect the contemporary nature of the sector, and better align it with the NYS Agriculture and Markets Law.

Defining Commercial Feedlots and Stockyards

The Town of LaFayette in its zoning regulations defines commercial feedlots as "A confined dry lot area for feeding of cattle or other animals whose primary enterprise is to feed cattle and market them for slaughter." and stockyards as "A large yard containing pens and sheds, typically adjacent to a slaughterhouse, in which livestock is kept and sorted." Both operations can function in a manner similar to a concentrated animal feed operation (CAFO), and likely fall within the State's definition of an agricultural operation. Since they are not permitted in any zoning district, including the AG-Agricultural District, the Department of Agriculture and Markets if requested to do so, may find this prohibition in contravention of Article 25-AAA of the Agriculture and Markets Law.

Recommended Actions:

The Town of LaFayette should remove the definitions for commercial feedlots and stockyards from its zoning code, as there does not appear to be any in the town, and prohibiting them as use may likely be a contravention of the Agriculture and Markets Law.

ACCESSORY USES

In the past decade, farmers in New York have also expanded beyond conventional agriculture and into direct farm marketing, on-farm wineries, breweries, cideries, distilleries, agri-tourism,

² For zoning purposes, "timber processing" can be defined as the on-farm production, management, harvesting, processing and marketing of timber grown into woodland products, including but not limited to logs, lumber, posts and firewood, as an accessory use to the agricultural operation.

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bed-and-breakfast inns and other supplemental farm businesses. In recent years, renting campsites and “glamping” as side businesses have started to appear.

In order to enhance the economic viability of agriculture in New York, on-farm wineries, breweries, cideries, distilleries and agri-tourism have been authorized and promoted by the state as “practices which contribute to the production, preparation and marketing of crops, livestock and livestock products as a commercial enterprise.” These types of uses are appropriate as accessory uses to the larger agricultural operations, but they also require clear and concise definitions for each use, and also controls on their size and scope.

Recommended Actions:

The Town of LaFayette should consider adding these uses as permitted uses (with appropriate definitions) in the AG Agricultural zoning district. Due their nature these uses should be subject to site plan review by the Planning Board.

Farm Stands

The definition for a farm stand in the zoning regulations, “A seasonal, temporary structure that is used for a farm producer to sell directly to consumers,” is not clear as to whether sales are limited to agricultural or horticultural products grown on the premises, or if farmers may sell items not grown or produced on their premises. This can lead to confusion for both farm owners and local officials. It is also not necessary, from a land use policy perspective, to limit what can be sold at a farm stand. Nor is it necessary to limit a farm stand to being a temporary structure, and seasonal in its operation.

Permitting farmers to sell fresh produce year-round, as well as to sell baked goods and other agriculture related products, can benefit the farmer by enhancing their revenues and serve the community with convenient fresh produce year-round. A farm stand can also provide outlets to other local farmers that may not be located on a major road, and hence lack the necessary market exposure. With the increase in on-farm commercial kitchens in New York, farm stands can provide outlets for the growing number of small-scale food processors in the region.

More important in terms of overall land use policy than the items that may be sold at a farm stand, is the volume of items sold, and that the farm stand is an accessory use to an active farm operation. Controlling its size in terms of floor area can be an effective way to ensure that a farm stand remains an accessory use to the larger farm operation.

Recommended Actions:

The Town of LaFayette should revise its definition for farm stands to permit permanent structures eliminate restriction on seasonal use only and clarify what is permitted to be sold.

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On-Farm Wineries, Breweries, Cideries, and Distilleries

In response to new State initiatives to enhance the economic viability of agriculture in New York by promoting, on-farm wineries, breweries, cideries and distilleries, the Town has added wineries, breweries and distilleries as permitted uses, with definitions for these uses. This is a very important step, however the Town should consider revising the definitions for breweries, cideries, distilleries and wineries.

As written, the Town of LaFayette definitions may open the door to large-scale industrial operations, not the envisioned small-scale craft producers associated with agriculture or agricultural operations. These uses are only appropriate in the AG-Agricultural zoning district as accessory uses to a larger agricultural operation, as envisioned in the NYS Department of Agriculture and marketing policies for such enterprises. They also require clear and concise definitions for each use, and also controls on their size and scope. In addition to direct sales to the public, these businesses often include subsidiary cafes, tasting rooms and gift shops, that should also be referenced in any definition. Because these uses involve access to the premises by the public, special consideration needs to be given to public safety, crowd management and traffic. The adoption of site plan approval, with specific design standards for such enterprises, is warranted.

Recommended Actions:

The Town of LaFayette should revise its definition for breweries, cideries, distilleries and wineries, to ensure that they are operated as accessory uses to an ongoing farm operation. The revised definition should also include provisions for subsidiary cafes, tasting rooms and gift shops that accompany such enterprises.

Farmers' Markets

Although today farmers' markets are found in many communities throughout Onondaga County, they are not found in zoning codes as a permitted use, nor are they defined. They are not usually associated with an active agricultural operation, but instead functions as separate sales venues off the farm. They are also intermittent land uses, scheduled for specific days of the week, and rely on temporary (pop-up) facilities, or pavilions partitioned into rented booths. Often the farmers' market is managed by a local not-for-profit organization or in some cases operates out of a public facility, such as the CNY Regional Market.

Farmers' markets are recognized as community assets, however they can have impacts that may affect the surround community, such as traffic, noise and odors. They should thus be subject to basic zoning provisions governing location, being restricted to zoning districts or sites in which they will be a compatible use. Also, the use of site plan review, and design standards to mitigate potential impacts of farmers markets are appropriate zoning tools.

The zoning definition for a farmers' market should include details such as being a temporary or intermittent activities that may include temporary or mobile vendor facilities, or a permanent

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structure with individual booths, and is operated by a public authority or not-for-profit organization.

Recommended Actions:

The Town of LaFayette should add farmers' markets as a permitted use in appropriate zoning districts within the town. The use should be carefully defined in a manner that ensures that it serves as a public or not-for-profit venue to promote local food and agriculture and brings local farmers and consumers together. Site plan review, and design standards to mitigate potential impacts of farmers markets are appropriate zoning tools

Agri-Tourism

Currently the Town of LaFayette does not have a definition for agri-tourism, nor does it permit this land use in its zoning code. Although recognized by New York under its definition of agriculture or farm operation, agri-tourism can be a gray area in terms of what activities are involved. Agri-tourism consists of activities that bring together tourism and agriculture for the education and enjoyment of the public, and which may include: hayrides, corn mazes, hay mazes, petting zoos (farm animals only), farm tours and agriculture-themed festivals and other public or private events. Agritourism enterprises should be listed as accessory uses to a larger active agricultural operation. Agri-tourism can also attract large numbers of people to a farm, especially for special on-farm events. Careful attention needs to be given to both the definition of agri-tourism, and ensuring that it is permitted only as a use that is supporting and active agricultural operation.

Because agri-tourism involves access to the premises by the public, special consideration needs to be given to public safety, crowd management, parking, noise control, water and wastewater infrastructure, and traffic. The adoption of site plan approval, with specific design standards for such enterprises, is warranted.

Recommended Actions:

The Town of LaFayette should add agri-tourism as a permitted accessory uses in the AG-Agricultural zoning district, with a clear and concise definition of the use. Given the nature of agri-tourism, such uses should be subject to site plan approval, with appropriate design standards, is also warranted.

Commercial Food Processing

Small-scale commercial food processing, including baked goods, jams and jellies, pickles, and canning, can be another source of supplemental revenue for an agricultural operation. They can also fill a major gap in the local and regional food systems and promote "buy local" economic development initiatives. Commercial food operations could be listed as a separate accessory use and defined in a manner that ensures they are a subordinate activity to an ongoing agricultural operation, such as limits on square footage, or number of non-resident employees

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working at the business. Site plan approval is appropriate for such uses. Although they usually ship their product in small lots, these small commercial kitchens do generate some van or truck traffic, especially if they engage in internet-based marketing that requires daily pick-up of merchandise. Some also conduct direct sales to the public.

Recommended Actions:

The Town of LaFayette should consider adding small commercial kitchens as a permitted accessory use in the AG-Agricultural zoning district, with a clear and concise definition of the use. Given the nature of these uses, site plan approval with appropriate design standards, is also warranted.

Farm Worker Housing

In the current zoning regulations, the only provision that appears to be related to farmworker housing is in Sect. 290(5)(C)(1), which permits "Manufactured home, provided for the purpose of agricultural-related assistance." The Town of LaFayette should add farmworker housing as an accessory use to an active farm operation, and a definition of farmworker housing that includes manufactured homes, modular homes, and stick-built homes as options. In the Agriculture and Markets definition of farm operations, "on-farm buildings" include farm worker housing for use by permanent and seasonal employees of a farm, and therefore is subject to the protections of Agriculture and Markets Law. The Town however can impose reasonable conditions such as occupancy by farm employees and their families, setbacks, parking provisions.

Recommended Actions:

The Town of LaFayette should add farmworker housing as an accessory use to an active farm operation. In addition, it should add a definition of farmworker housing that includes manufactured homes, modular homes and stick-built homes as options.

SETBACK REQUIREMENTS

A potential issue with regards to conformance with the Agriculture and Markets Law is the setback requirement that is required for public stable in the Town. Public stables are defined as "commercial operation(s) consisting of a building(s) and land within which one or more horses, mules or burros are kept for sale, rent, riding or boarding purposes." and are permitted upon grant of site plan approval. There is at least one such public stable in the Town of LaFayette. The Town regulations however require a minimum setback between any lot line and the storage of any "...manure, dust- or odor-producing substance" of at least 200 feet.

This setback requirement is likely to be found excessively restrictive under the Agriculture and Markets Law, which considers commercial horse board operations to fall within the definition of farm operations in New York. It may be considered excessively restrictive because it also only applies to commercial horse boarding operations, and not to other agricultural land uses that

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also generate and store manure and dust- or odors producing substances within 200 feet of any lot line.

Recommended Actions:

The Town of LaFayette should revise its use regulations to eliminate the additional setback requirement for public stables.

RENEWABLE ENERGY

Per Sect. 290-5(C) (17) the Town of LaFayette permits wind energy systems with site plan approval in the AG-Agricultural zoning district. The Town however limits wind energy systems to only one wind energy system per legal lot, and such lot may not be vacant land (Sect. 250-25(B)(3)(a)(1)). The regulations also only permit "up to three wind energy systems...on any farm actively used for agricultural purposes." (Sect. 250-25(B)(3)(a)(2).

Requiring that a wind energy system be limited to parcels of land that include at least one other structure and limiting farm operations to only three wind energy systems, appear to be excessively restrictive, and may be in contravention with the Agriculture and Markets Law. Wind energy systems must be located in a manner where they can make economical use of the wind energy resource, and so farms need some flexibility in locating wind energy systems, potentially on vacant parcels that may be utilized for crops or pasture only. Also farm energy needs may exceed the capacity of three small-scale wind energy systems of the type envisioned.

Another potential issue with the regulations is the Sect.250-25(B)(2)(e) requirement for a visual assessment as part of any application. There is no guidance as to what a visual assessment would include, or the extent of any potential study area. Due to their size, small scale wind energy systems tend to recede into the surrounding landscape within a short distance from where they are installed, often at distances of 1,000 feet or less. Moreover, the extensive network of existing farm hedgerows and woodland areas in the town can effectively screen a smaller scale, non-commercial, wind energy system within a few hundred feet.

Per Sect, 290-32 of the zoning regulations, the Town of LaFayette permits roof mounted solar energy systems by building permit and ground mounted solar energy systems upon approval of a special permit by the Zoning Board of Appeals. Ground-mounted solar energy systems are permitted as accessory uses in all zoning districts in the Town except the Floodplain district.

Solar energy systems are considered by the Department of Agriculture and Markets to be "on-farm" equipment when they are installed for the purpose of supply electricity or hot water to a farm operation. This requirement that ground mount solar energy systems be subject to special permit by the Town is thus likely to be considered an unnecessarily burdensome regulatory requirement on a farm operation, in contravention with the Agriculture and Markets Law.

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In addition, the zoning regulations limit the capacity of any non-residential solar energy systems to 25 kW or less. This is likely to be inadequate for the energy needs of a farm and should be increased to avoid the issue of contravention with the Agriculture and Markets Law.

Per Sect. 290-32(H), large scale commercial solar developments are permitted by special permit and site plan approval in the Agricultural-AG and the Industrial-I zoning districts. Although the standards for approval that include the protection of scenic viewsheds, and plant and wildlife and their critical habitat, there are no provisions for protecting the Town's most productive agricultural soils. These include design standards such as:

- Construction on farmland designated as Prime or Farmland of Statewide importance shall be avoided;
- The total surface area of solar collectors, combined with all other buildings and structures on the lot, shall not exceed fifty-percent of total parcel area;
- Removal of trees over 6 inches in trunk diameter shall be minimized, or mitigated by replacement tree plantings elsewhere on the property;
- Roadways to and within the site shall be constructed of gravel or other permeable surfacing and shall be flush with the surrounding land contours;
- A site restoration plan shall be included as part of any decommissioning plan, to include, at a minimum, stockpiling of any topsoil removed during construction, for use in site restoration, removal of all foundations, de-compacting and de-rocking all disturbed areas, and removal of any roadways;
- All on-site utility and transmission lines shall, to the extent feasible, be placed underground.

More information on solar energy development and agricultural lands is available at:

<http://ongov.net/planning/documents/AgBestPractices05112021.pdf>; and
<http://ongov.net/planning/solar101.html>.

The Accelerated Renewable Energy Growth and Community Benefit Act created an Office of Renewable Energy Siting (ORES) and effectively pre-empts the local regulation and review of commercial solar and wind energy development that will generate 25 MW or more of power per year. Section 900-2.25 of Title 19 of NYCRR Part 900, which governs the ORES review process, does, however, require that the location of a proposed renewable energy development conform to all substantive requirements of "local ordinances, laws, resolutions, regulations, [and] standards," including local zoning. The applicant must also state whether the municipality has adopted a comprehensive plan, and whether the proposed renewable energy development is consistent with the adopted plan.

Under NYS Executive Law Section 94-c, the Office of Renewable Energy Siting may elect to apply, or not apply applicable local zoning and other regulations to the proposed development. To override local regulations, the Office must make a finding that the local regulation is "unreasonably burdensome" in view of the renewable energy development and greenhouse

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gas emission reduction targets set forth in Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act (CLCPA), and the environmental benefits of the proposed facility.

The Town of LaFayette - while it may not have a direct role in the ORES review process - can position itself to influence the State's deliberation through its zoning and other regulations.

Recommended Actions:

The Town of LaFayette should revise Sect. 250-25 of the Town Code governing wind energy development to eliminate the limitation on number of wind energy systems on a parcel. A simpler approach would be to limit the total amount of power generated on a property, for instance 110% of the average energy consume in an average year or month. In addition, the Town should better define what the local visual resources are that might be impacted by a wind energy system, and set a radius around a proposed wind installation site within which the visual impact can be documented. Establishing a minimum setback requirement from public highways, parks, officially designated historic properties, and sites with sensitive views is another appropriate measure.

The Town of LaFayette should revise Sect. 290-32 of the Zoning Code to eliminate the need for special approval. While the requirement for a special permit may be in contravention of the Agriculture and Markets Law, given the anticipated size of a system designed to supply the need of a farm operation – an estimated 1 to 1.5 acres – site plan review should be an adequate level of review. In addition, the Town should consider strengthening its design standards for large scale solar development in Sect. 290-32(H) to better protect its agricultural land resources from the impacts of such developments.

The Town of LaFayette should adopt new zoning standards for large scale renewable energy development that provide strong protections for all Prime- and Farmland of Statewide importance within its boundaries.

FIXED RATIO ZONING

Fixed ratio zoning is another a means of better protecting its agricultural land assets, as well as the rural character of the Agricultural AG district. It was developed in rural agricultural communities in southern Pennsylvania in the 1970s as a way of providing farmers with the option of occasional sales of land for development, without triggering large scale development or farmland fragmentation. Also known as "density averaging," fixed-ratio zoning can be very effective also in protecting both agricultural lands and ecologically important and scenic lands.

Fixed-ratio zoning differs from the conventional zoning and subdivision practice of setting minimum lot sizes. It instead controls the number of lots permitted to be subdivided off a parent tract of land, based on the size of the parcel. This "one lot per X acres" approach, – e.g. five acres... 10 acres... 20 acres of land – has been proven to be a simple but effective way to control density in rural areas and prevent land fragmentation. It can also reduce the

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competition for land between farmers and developers that is a challenge to agriculture elsewhere in New York.

Fixed Ratio (Density Averaging) Zoning



Eight conventional 10-acre lots consume entire 87 acre tract (left); 7 +/- 2-ac. lots cover only 16.5 acres of less productive land, leaving a 71.5 acre, farmable parent tract (right).

In the Town of LaFayette, the current minimum lot size of 60,000 square feet AG Agricultural District would continue as the minimum lots size for non-agricultural land uses. On a hypothetical 100-acre parcel of land, with the development density set at one lot for each 10 acres of land, up to nine 60,000 square-foot lots would be permitted to be subdivided off the parent tract. These lots however would consume as little as 15 acres of the 100 acres, leaving the remaining acreage as one large, contiguous tract of agricultural lands. The landowner would have the option of creating a lesser number of larger lots, e.g., 2, 3, 5 acre or larger if they so desire.

This fixed-ratio approach can work well because most farmers and other rural landowners are generally not interested in seeing their land developed, but instead want the ability to sell off an occasional lot, as needed or desired. In the Town of LaFayette, this fixed-ratio approach can satisfy landowners' desire to sell occasional lots, while protecting the agricultural land resource.

Recommended Actions:

The Town of LaFayette should consider the adoption of reduced development densities in the AG-Agricultural zoning district, coupled with adopting the fixed ratio zoning concept, to better

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protect agricultural land assets in the Town of LaFayette and further the objectives of the 2012 Comprehensive Plan.

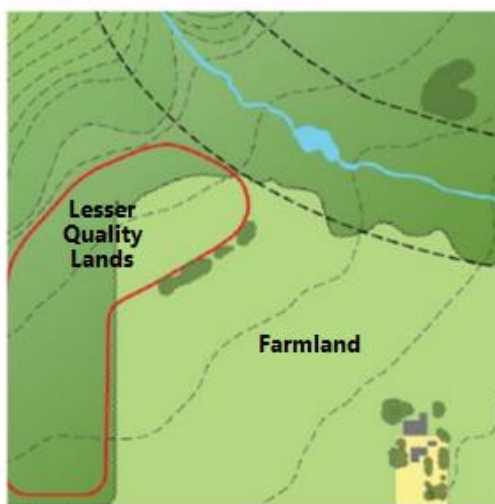
SUBDIVISION REGULATIONS

Chapter 240 of the Town of LaFayette Code, Land Subdivision, does not provide for cluster or conservation subdivision design approaches. The Town instead has created within the zoning regulations the RPC - Residential Planned Cluster District (Sect. 290-10) that permits cluster subdivision through a rezoning process.

Historically, cluster subdivision design has been associated with attached housing (townhouse developments in built-up suburban areas). The conservation subdivision has become a useful growth management tool in rural areas where development often takes the form of smaller scale low density single-family residential development.

A conservation subdivision utilizes the careful placement of individual homes on smaller lots within a site and can be an effective tool for protecting agricultural lands, environmentally sensitive areas, and rural character. Through more flexible lot dimensional standards, as well as street design provisions that permit narrower, low speed and low-volume private lanes to access multiple homes, conservation subdivisions can provide development opportunities for farmers and other owners of large tracts of land, while preserving rural character and the agricultural land base.

Conservation Subdivision



Existing Landscape



Conservation Subdivision

Source: Dutchess County NY Greenway Guide.

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In line with the use of this approach to better protect agricultural land and ecologically sensitive lands, the Town should consider adopting standards for “flag” or “panhandle” lots. These types of lots consist of narrow strips of land that connect the public street to a lot meeting all the standard lot dimensional requirements of the zoning district within which it is located. They can be very effective in providing for small scale rural development, while preserving road frontage and higher quality farmland. Other design standards for these types of lots should include minimum width of at least 30 feet for the strip of land between the public street and the lot to be developed, minimum driveway widths and all-weather design capable of supporting fire trucks and other emergency access vehicles, and maximum driveway widths.

Recommended Actions:

The Town of LaFayette should review its subdivision regulations and consider adopting design standards for conservation subdivisions in agricultural and other areas in order to permit low density residential development, which would also protect the agricultural land asset.

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

The table below summarizes recommendations for the Town of LaFayette planning initiatives and land use regulations.

ADD AS PERMITTED ACCESSORY LAND USES	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agri-tourism, • Commercial Food Processing, • On-farm wineries, • On-farm breweries, • On farm cideries, • On-farm distilleries, • Farmstands, • Farmers’ markets • Farm worker housing 	<p>These uses should be accessory uses attached to and subordinated to the larger active farm operation.</p> <p>Specific design standards should be developed for such agri-tourism uses, to ensure safe ingress and egress, adequate parking, the safety of site visitors, site lighting, controls on outdoor displays, signs, and buffers between the site and neighboring properties.</p>

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NEW OR REVISED DEFINITIONS	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agriculture, • Agri-tourism, • Commercial Food processing, • Wineries – revise to On-farm wineries, • Breweries – revise to On-farm breweries, • Cideries – revise to On-farm cideries, • Distilleries- revise to On-farm distilleries, • Farm stand, • Farm worker housing • Farmers’ market 	<p>Definitions should be clear and concise, and reflect the Town’s objectives for the land use, while not conflicting with the limits imposed by the Agriculture and Markets Law.</p>
ADDITIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS	
Add farmers’ markets to the list of permitted uses in appropriate zoning districts.	Although now a common feature in communities, farmers’ markets are not a formalized land use in many zoning codes.
Review and revise as necessary regulations for renewable energy systems.	Bring the Town of LaFayette zoning regulations in line with Agriculture & Markets Law and provided additional protection for agricultural lands developed for large scale solar energy.
Remove the definitions for commercial feedlots and stockyards from the zoning code	Bring the Town of LaFayette zoning regulations in line with Agriculture & Markets Law
Revise Sect. 290-5(c) to eliminate additional setback requirement for public stables.	Bring the Town of LaFayette zoning regulations in line with Agriculture & Markets Law
Adopt Right to Farm Law	
Review subdivision regulations and consider adopting design standards for conservation subdivisions	Conservation subdivision design plus reduced development densities can be effective in protecting agricultural land resources
Consider adoption of reduced development densities in the AG-Agricultural zoning district, coupled with the fixed ratio zoning concept,	Reductions in development density and fixed ratio zoning can protect large tracts of agricultural lands while providing opportunity for development.

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WHY THIS MATTERS?

As stated in the introduction, the challenge for the Town of LaFayette and other communities across New York has been keeping pace with the trends in agriculture and agricultural practices within its borders and updating its land use regulations accordingly. Overall, however, the Town's zoning code is well written, and the issues identified in its zoning and subdivision regulations are relatively minor and can be corrected through modest amendments to the zoning code.

As residents of Onondaga County turn away from food imported from throughout the world, and toward locally and regionally produced foods, there is opportunity today for smaller, specialized agricultural enterprises to operate in the Town of LaFayette in the coming decades. With up-to-date and agriculture-friendly zoning regulations, agriculture in LaFayette can continue to be a vibrant economic sector well into the coming decades.

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CONTACTS

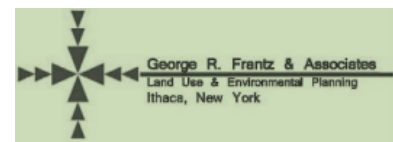
The Onondaga County Agriculture & Farmland Protection Plan Update is being led by the Onondaga County Agriculture & Farmland Protection Board (AFPB), with staff support from the Syracuse-Onondaga County Planning Agency (SOCPA), as well as their consultant team of EDR, DPC, and George R. Frantz & Associates, LLC (primary author).

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FARM-FRIENDLY ASSESSMENT

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TO: Town of Manlius

FROM: Onondaga County Agriculture & Farmland Protection Board (AFPB)
with the Syracuse-Onondaga County Planning Agency (SOCPA)

DATE: October 22, 2021

RE: Farm-Friendly Assessment for the Town of Manlius

INTRODUCTION

The state of agriculture in Onondaga County has seen significant changes over the years. Through it all, local agriculture remains a critical part of our economy, food system, and landscape. Our county is gifted with highly productive agricultural soils, a legacy of farming operations and know-how, and an environment that supports a highly diverse array of crops and opportunities to engage with the local food system. The Onondaga County Agriculture and Farmland Protection Plan, reports on the state of our agriculture and provides a framework for both protecting our most vital farmland and supporting overall agricultural viability in Onondaga County (For more information go to: agriculture.ongov.net).

The Town of Manlius is one of several communities in Onondaga County that has volunteered to have its zoning and other land use regulations reviewed for how they may positively or negatively impact the agricultural operations within its borders. This assessment of zoning, subdivision, and Right-To-Farm laws identifies areas within the Town where these regulations could be updated to better reflect current agricultural trends and needs in the 21st century. The purpose of this Farm-friendly Assessment is not to critique, but to educate by identifying potential issues and opportunities for improving the Town of Manlius' land use regulations as they relate to agriculture.

The assessment involves reviews of existing zoning, subdivision and other local laws governing land use in the Town, including renewable energy uses. The primary objective is to review the local planning documents and laws, and to find areas, if any, where they could be amended to create a more farm-friendly environment. A key area of investigation includes local zoning and subdivision regulations regarding:

- Conformance with the limits of local government regulating powers set forth in the New York State Agriculture and Markets Law (AML);
- Ensuring that local land use regulations accommodate the land uses commonly associated with or which support agriculture and agricultural operations with appropriate local controls;
- Identifying agricultural activities that meet the definition of "farm operation" as set forth in AML Sect. 301(11) that may be subject to special permit, site plan review, or other local review standard above ministerial review, or subject to a more intensive level of review than other uses permitted within the same zoning district.

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Agricultural trends of particular focus in this analysis include emerging types of agriculture-related enterprises, and renewable energy development. To enhance their farming operations and remain economically viable, farmers in New York have expanded over the past decade beyond conventional agriculture and into direct farm marketing, on-farm wineries, breweries, cideries, distilleries, agritourism, bed-and-breakfast inns, and other supplemental farm businesses.

This assessment informs the development of a Farm-friendly Toolbox that other municipalities within Onondaga County can use to assess their existing plans and regulations and then update their local land use tools to better protect farmland and promote agricultural viability. This toolbox is available online at:

<https://agriculture.ongov.net/toolbox>

These agriculture-related enterprises, when operated as an accessory use to an ongoing agricultural operation, can provide revenue streams that enhance the economic viability of farm operations while contributing to the overall local economy and quality of life. Meanwhile, renewable energy in New York today is presenting both opportunities and challenges for municipal governments and farmers. Investment in small-scale solar and wind energy development primarily for generating power for use in farm operations can reduce energy costs for farmers, while reducing reliance on fossil fuel energy sources. However, large scale commercial solar and wind energy development, if left unchecked by siting considerations and local land use regulations, can have major implications in terms of agricultural land resources and impacts to host communities.

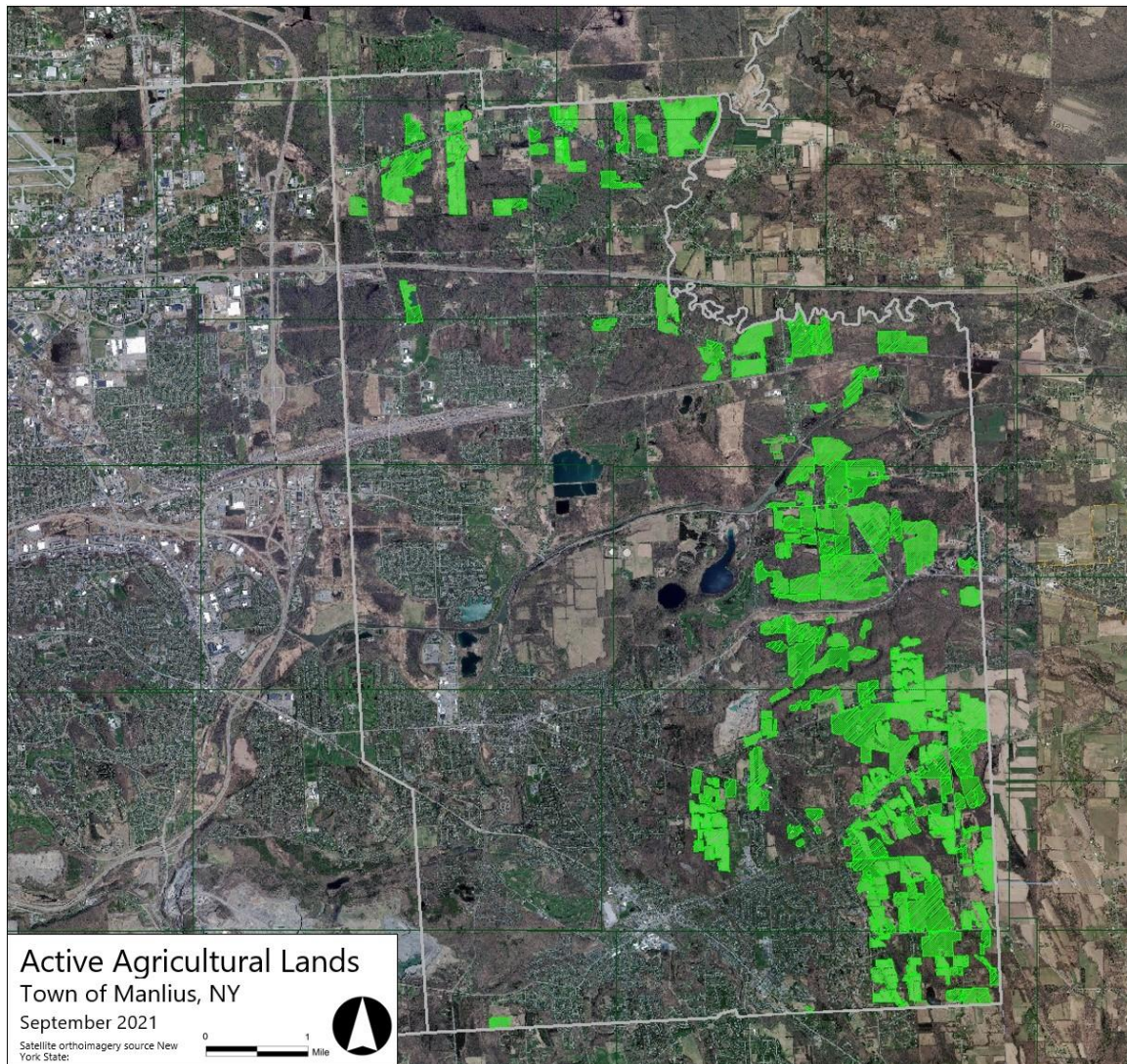
AGRICULTURE IN THE TOWN OF MANLIUS

Despite it being a major suburb of Syracuse, home to three villages, and with extensive areas developed for residential, commercial, and industrial uses, satellite imagery of the Town of Manlius shows an estimated 4,100 acres of land within its borders that is still actively farmed. Agriculture in the Town of Manlius is also diverse, including cattle and horse farms, field crops, hay and vegetable crops and floriculture producers.

During this assessment, five farm direct marketing enterprises were identified in the Town, consisting of two vegetable, fruit or meat producers, two greenhouses selling plants and flowers, and a U-cut Christmas tree farm.

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AGRICULTURE AND PLANNING

The Town of Manlius has commenced drafting a comprehensive plan. This new plan will “define the community's vision, establish goals and policies and set a framework for future public and private investments.” It is also an opportunity for the community to take a close look at its agricultural community and develop policies and actions that will ensure the long term viability of agriculture in the Town.

A combination of incentives to preserve the land resource, and agriculture-friendly zoning regulations could enhance the long-term viability of Manlius’ agricultural community, and reverse the loss of valuable farmland. This coupled with land use policies that encourage more

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compact development and infill in the suburban portions of the Town can accommodate anticipated population growth, while preserving its remaining agricultural base.

AGRICULTURE AND THE LOCAL REGULATORY FRAMEWORK

Agriculture and Markets Law Section 305-a provides farmers and agricultural operations located with County sponsored agricultural districts specific protections against local zoning regulation that may be unreasonably restrictive and cause undue interference with legitimate agricultural practices as defined by State law. Because many of the active farms in the Town of Manlius are located within a County administered agricultural district, they are afforded the protections available through Section 305-a.

In 2002 the New York State Legislature also amended Town Law Section 283-a to require local governments to ensure that their laws, ordinances, or other regulations that might apply to agricultural operations located in State certified agricultural districts do not "*...unreasonably restrict or regulate farm operations in contravention of Article 25-AAA of the Agriculture and Markets Law, unless it can be shown that the public health or safety is threatened.*" Agriculture and farming are considered to be interchangeable terms in this report, along with agricultural operations and farms.

The Town of Manlius zoning regulations are set forth in Chapter 155 of the Town of Manlius Code. Agricultural activities and uses are only permitted in the Restricted Agricultural (RA) zoning district and are not permitted in any other zoning districts, except as legal non-conforming uses. Outside the RA district, non-conforming uses are limited to only those agricultural activities that existed at the time of adoption of the zoning regulations (e.g., a dairy farm at the time of adopting the zoning code in year 1991 or earlier¹ can only be operated as a dairy farm today).

The following sections contain recommended actions to update the Town of Manlius land use regulations in a manner that both protects the Town and its residents, while providing contemporary agricultural operations the flexibility they need to compete in a global economy. They address a variety of issues in the existing land use regulations of the Town, including adjustments to the Restricted Agriculture zoning district, recommendations for additional accessory uses to farm operations, primarily to accommodate direct farm marketing enterprises, and recommendations for revisions to or the addition of new definitions for land uses not currently defined. In addition, some revisions to the Town's subdivision regulations are recommended as a means of enhancing the use of conservation subdivisions to better protect agricultural lands in the town.

¹ Chapter 155 of the Town of Manlius notes adoption of a zoning ordinance on March 13, 1991 as Ch. 30 of the 1991 Code.

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RIGHT TO FARM LAW

The Town of Manlius appears to have not adopted a Right to Farm law. While viewed primarily as designed to protect farmers from so-called nuisance suits, local right to farm laws can be useful in other ways. In Manlius, where agriculture is a small part of the community's landscape, the law can be a tool for raising public awareness of local agriculture. Many towns have also utilized local right-to-farm laws to set up a framework for conflict resolution and to for enhancing communication between the farm and non-farm communities in the town. Although many farms in Manlius participate in the County Agricultural Districts program and are afforded protection under the NY Agriculture and Markets Law, the Town should consider applying the protections of the law to all farms located in its Restricted Agriculture zoning district.

Recommended Actions:

The Town of Manlius should adopt a Right to Farm Law.

ZONING ORDINANCE

New and Revised Zoning Districts

Currently in the Town of Manlius the Restricted Agriculture (RA) zoning district covers almost 2/3 of the land area in the town outside the villages. Except for the Collamer Road/North Manlius Road corridor and the eastern portion of the town, however, the land cover is predominantly former farmland that has reverted to woodland or is developed land. Only about 1/3 of the town continues to have a significant amount of land in agricultural use.

Recommended Actions:

The Town of Manlius should review the current zoning map and land uses within the Restricted Agricultural zoning district, and:

- Reallocate former agricultural land or agricultural lands now surrounded by other land uses, to other zoning districts. This would be an opportunity to channel future residential and other development into more compact and possibly walkable, mixed-use neighborhoods, close to existing services.
- Consider creating a new Agriculture (AG) or Agriculture/Residential (AR) zoning district in those areas where rural and agricultural uses predominate. The current "Restricted Agricultural" zoning designation is an ambiguous term and gives no indication of the extent of or importance of agriculture in the zoning district. In Manlius, as is the case in many suburban communities, agriculture has in recent history has been considered a transitory land use, and "growing new homes" was the future. Renaming the district would raise the public profile of agriculture in the community and recognize the significant role agriculture plays in the local economy, and in preserving the character of the town. In addition, the Town should consider reducing the development density within this new agricultural zoning

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district to decrease development pressure and implement the fix-ratio zoning and subdivision regulation recommendations outlined in the following sections of this analysis.

DEFINING AGRICULTURE

For this analysis, “agriculture” is defined by the New York State Agriculture and Markets Law Article (AML) 25-AA, Section 301 as the use of land, buildings, structures, equipment, manure processing and handling facilities, and practices which contribute to the production, preparation, and marketing of crops, livestock, livestock products, and horse boarding operations as a commercial enterprise or a hobby. Historically agriculture has included a variety of disciplines aside from fruit, vegetable and crop production and livestock raised for food. Animal husbandry, or the breeding of specific animals for use or sale (e.g., racehorses), beekeeping, aquaculture (fish production), horticulture, floriculture and silviculture are all also considered by this report.

Chapter 155 of the Town of Manlius Code defines “Farms, Farming and Farm Use or Occupancy” as

“Includes and means any activity customarily carried on upon a farm, except where the farming is conducted in a residential district as a nonconforming use, in which case the uses to which such property may be put shall be confined to the farm activities and uses for which the property is being used at the time of the effective date of this chapter.”

The Town of Manlius definition should be updated to better reflect and define agriculture today by aligning it with the NYS Agriculture and Markets Law more comprehensive definition of agricultural operations. The State definition is as follows:

“...land and on-farm buildings, equipment, manure processing and handling facilities, and practices which contribute to the production, preparation and marketing of crops, livestock and livestock products as a commercial enterprise” (AML Sect.301(11))

This definition emphasizes the multi-faceted aspects of agriculture today, recognizes the diversity of agriculture, and the commercial nature of agriculture. In this context too, products not commonly considered agricultural products, such as horticultural products (Christmas trees and landscape plantings), flowers, honey, maple syrup and other such products of the land are included in the agricultural land use category.

Recommended Actions:

The Town of Manlius should update its definition of agriculture to better reflect the contemporary nature of the sector, and better align it with the NYS Agriculture and Markets Law.

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Accommodating Greenhouses

Three existing greenhouse complexes are located within the Restricted Agriculture zoning districts. Two of them have direct sales to the general public. Under the current zoning code, greenhouse operations are only permitted in the Neighborhood Shopping (NS) and Regional Shopping (RS) zoning districts. Since greenhouses and the raising and sale of flowers and horticultural products fall under the state's definition of agriculture, greenhouses should be listed as permitted uses in the Restricted Agriculture (RA) district as well. If they offer direct sales to the public, site plan approval and specific design standards for such enterprises is warranted.

Recommended Actions:

The Town of Manlius should revise the RA district regulations to permit greenhouse operations and associated direct sales to the public, subject to site plan approval and appropriate site design standards.

ACCESSORY USES

In the past decade, farmers in New York have also expanded beyond conventional agriculture and into direct farm marketing, on-farm wineries, breweries, cideries, distilleries, agri-tourism, bed-and-breakfast inns and other supplemental farm businesses. In recent years, renting campsites and "glamping" as side businesses have started to appear. All of these can be appropriate as accessory uses to the larger agricultural operations, but they require clear and concise definitions for each use and controls on their size and scope. In addition to defining the above land uses.

In order to enhance the economic viability of agriculture in New York, on-farm wineries, breweries, cideries, distilleries and agri-tourism have been authorized and promoted by the state as "*practices which contribute to the production, preparation and marketing of crops, livestock and livestock products as a commercial enterprise.*" These types of uses are appropriate as accessory uses to the larger agricultural operations, but they also require clear and concise definitions for each use, and also controls on their size and scope.

Recommended Actions:

The Town of Manlius should consider adding these uses as permitted uses (with appropriate definitions) in the Restricted Agricultural AG zoning district. Due their nature these uses should be subject to site plan review by the Planning Board.

Farm Stands

Farm stand should be listed as an accessory use to an operating farm enterprise. The current zoning regulations restrict farm stands to "*...the seasonal retail sale of agricultural or horticultural products.*" They are not clear as to whether or not sales are limited to agricultural or horticultural products grown on the premises. It is important that farm stands be an accessory

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use to an active farm operation, with controls on size. Permitting farmers to sell fresh produce year-round, as well as to sell baked goods and other products can benefit the farmer by enhancing their revenues and serve the community with convenient fresh produce year-round. A farmstand can also provide outlets to other local farmers that may not be located on a major road, and hence lack the necessary market exposure. With the increase in on-farm commercial kitchens in New York, farm stands can provide outlets for the growing number of small scale food processors in the region.

Recommended Actions:

The Town of Manlius should add farm stands as a permitted accessory use in the Restricted Agriculture zoning district, and revise the existing definition to eliminate restrictions such as seasonal only operations, and limits on the sources of the products sold in a farm stand.

Farmers' Markets

Although today farmers' markets are found in many communities throughout Onondaga County, they are not found in zoning codes as a permitted use, nor are they defined. They are not usually associated with an active agricultural operation, but instead functions as separate sales venues off the farm. They are also intermittent land uses, scheduled for specific days of the week, and rely on temporary (pop-up) facilities, or pavilions partitioned into rented booths. Often the farmers' market is managed by a local not-for-profit organization or in some cases operates out of a public facility, such as the CNY Regional Market.

Farmers' markets are recognized as community assets; however they can have impacts that may affect the surround community, such as traffic, noise and odors. They should thus be subject to basic zoning provisions governing location, being restricted to zoning districts or sites in which they will be a compatible use. Also, the use of site plan review, and design standards to mitigate potential impacts of farmers markets are appropriate zoning tools.

The zoning definition for a farmers' market should include details such as being a temporary or intermittent activity that may include temporary or mobile vendor facilities, or a permanent structure with individual booths, and is operated by a public authority or not-for-profit organization.

Recommended Actions:

The Town of Manlius should add farmers' markets as a permitted use in appropriate zoning districts within the town. The use should be carefully defined in a manner that insures that it serves as a public or not-for-profit venue to promote local food and agriculture and brings local farmers and consumers together. Site plan review, and design standards to mitigate potential impacts of farmers markets are appropriate zoning tools

On-Farm Wineries, Breweries, Cideries, and Distilleries

In response to new State initiatives to enhance the economic viability of agriculture in New York by promoting, on-farm wineries, breweries, cideries and distilleries, the Town of Manlius should

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amend its zoning regulations to permit farm wineries, farm breweries farm cideries and farm distilleries as permitted accessory uses to an ongoing farm operation. These uses are appropriate as accessory uses to the larger agricultural operations, as envisioned in the Department of Agriculture and marketing policies for such enterprises, and should be listed as such. They also require clear and concise definitions for each use, and controls on their size and scope to ensure they operate as subsidiary businesses to the overall farm operation.

In addition to direct sales to the public, these often include subsidiary cafes, tasting rooms and gift shops. It is important that the size of these subsidiary enterprises be controlled and that they remain contributing sources of revenue for the primary operation. Because these uses involve access to the premises by the public, special consideration needs to be given to public safety, crowd management and traffic. The adoption of site plan approval, with specific design standards for such enterprises, is warranted.

Recommended Actions:

The Town of Manlius should add these agriculture-related enterprises as a permitted accessory uses in the Restricted Agriculture zoning district, with clear and concise definitions for each. Given their nature, subjecting such activities to site plan approval, with appropriate design standards, is also warranted.

Agri-tourism

Agri-tourism should be listed as an accessory use to an operating farm enterprise. Although recognized by New York under its definition of agriculture or farm operation, agri-tourism can be a gray area in terms of what activities are involved. Agri-tourism consists of activities that bring together tourism and agriculture for the education and enjoyment of the public, and which may include: hayrides, corn mazes, hay mazes, petting zoos (farm animals only), farm tours and agriculture-themed festivals and other public or private events. It can also attract large numbers of people to a farm, especially for special on-farm events. Careful attention needs to be given to both the definition of agri-tourism, and ensuring that it is permitted only as a use that is supporting and active agricultural operation.

Because agri-tourism involves access to the premises by the public, special consideration needs to be given to public safety, crowd management parking, noise control, water and wastewater infrastructure, and traffic. The adoption of site plan approval, with specific design standards for such enterprises, is warranted.

Recommended Actions:

The Town of Manlius should add agri-tourism as a permitted accessory uses in the Restricted Agriculture zoning district, with a clear and concise definition of the use. Given the nature of agri-tourism, such uses should be subject to site plan approval, with appropriate design standards, is also warranted.

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Commercial Food Processing

Commercial food processing should be listed as an accessory use to an operating farm enterprise. Small-scale commercial food processing, including baked goods, jams and jellies, pickles, and canning, can be another source of supplemental revenue for an agricultural operation. They can also fill a major gap in the local and regional food systems and promote “buy local” economic development initiatives. Commercial food operations could be listed as a separate accessory use and defined in a manner that ensures they are a subordinate activity to an ongoing agricultural operation with a size limitation as provided for agriculture-related sales or service businesses. Site plan approval is appropriate for such uses. Although they usually ship their product in small lots, these small commercial kitchens do generate some van or truck traffic, especially if they engage in internet-based marketing that requires daily pick-up of merchandise. Some also conduct direct sales to the public.

Recommended Actions:

The Town of Manlius should consider adding small commercial kitchens as a permitted accessory use in the Restricted Agriculture zoning district, with a clear and concise definition of the use. Given the nature of these uses, site plan approval with appropriate design standards, is also warranted.

Farm Worker Housing

Farm worker housing should be listed as an accessory use to an operating farm enterprise. In the current zoning regulations, the only provision that appears related to farmworker housing is “*Mobile home sites pursuant to the requirements of Article IV, § 155-21, of this chapter*” being permitted in the Restricted Agriculture (RA) district. In the NYS definition of farms, “on-farm buildings” include farm worker housing for use by permanent and seasonal employees of a farm, and therefore is subject to the protections of Agriculture and Markets Law.

Another issue is that the special permit requirement for any farmworker housing is likely to be considered an unnecessarily burdensome regulatory requirement on a farm operation, in contravention with the Agriculture and Markets Law. The Town however can impose reasonable conditions such as occupancy by farm employees and their families, setbacks, parking provisions.

Recommended Actions:

The Town of Manlius should add farmworker housing as an accessory use to an active farm operation, as well as a definition of farmworker housing that includes manufactured homes, modular homes and stick-built homes as options. Given the small scale nature of farmworker housing, the lack of tangible impacts of the use, and the potential for conflict with the Agriculture and Markets Law, the special permit process for farm worker housing should be removed from the zoning code.

FARM-FRIENDLY ASSESSMENT

TOWN OF MANLIUS

RENEWABLE ENERGY

Wind and solar energy systems are permitted in the RA and other zoning districts in the Town of Manlius under Section 155-27.1 and Section 155.27.2 of the zoning code. The zoning code limits wind energy systems to non-commercial systems designed and scaled to provide energy only for on-site use. Solar energy systems are classed as building integrated, roof mounted or ground mounted systems; building integrated and roof mounted systems are permitted accessory uses, with appropriate building permits.

Ground mounted systems are classified as small (up to 25Kw), medium (25Kw to 200Kw) and large systems (200Kw+). These ground mounted solar energy systems are subject to both site plan approval and special permit by the Town of Manlius. Solar energy systems are considered by the Department of Agriculture and Markets to be "on-farm" equipment when they are installed for the purpose of supply electricity or hot water to a farm operation. This requirement that ground mount solar energy systems be subject to special permit by the Town is thus likely to be considered an unnecessarily burdensome regulatory requirement on a farm operation, in contravention with the Agriculture and Markets Law.

The Town's regulations for wind energy systems also require special permit approval, and limit such systems to one per parcel of land (Section 155-27.1(B)). In addition, as a requirement for special permit review, no wind energy system shall "...substantially detract from or block the view(s) of all or a portion of a recognized scenic viewshed, as viewed from any public road, right-of-way or publicly owned land..." This would likely involve preparation of a viewshed analysis at substantial cost to the farmer applicant.

Since wind energy systems are also considered by the Department of Agriculture and Markets to be "on-farm" equipment when they are installed for the purpose of supply electricity to a farm operation, these zoning requirements are likely to be considered an unnecessarily burdensome regulatory requirement on a farm operation, in contravention with the Agriculture and Markets Law.

In the case of large ground mounted solar energy development, the Town does not have any provisions for protecting its most productive agricultural soils. It should consider additional design standards in Section 155-27.2(D)(3) of the Zoning Code for the larger solar energy developments. Construction on farmland designated as Prime or Farmland of Statewide importance should be avoided, especially in the eastern section of the Town where agriculture is currently concentrated. Other appropriate design standards for the larger solar energy developments include:

- The total surface area of solar collectors, combined with all other buildings and structures on the lot, shall not exceed fifty-percent of total parcel area;
- Removal of trees over 6 inches in trunk diameter shall be minimized, or mitigated by replacement tree plantings elsewhere on the property;
- Roadways to and within the site shall be constructed of gravel or other permeable surfacing and shall be flush with the surrounding land contours;

FARM-FRIENDLY ASSESSMENT

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- A site restoration plan shall be included as part of any decommissioning plan, to include, at a minimum, stockpiling of any topsoil removed during construction, for use in site restoration, removal of all foundations, de-compacting and de-rocking all disturbed areas, and removal of any roadways;
- All on-site utility and transmission lines shall, to the extent feasible, be placed underground.

More information on solar energy development and agricultural lands is available at:

<http://ongov.net/planning/documents/AgBestPractices05112021.pdf>; and:

<http://ongov.net/planning/solar101.html>.

The Accelerated Renewable Energy Growth and Community Benefit Act created an Office of Renewable Energy Siting (ORES) and effectively pre-empts the local regulation and review of commercial solar and wind energy development that will generate 25 MW or more of power per year. Section 900-2.25 of Title 19 of NYCRR Part 900, which governs the ORES review process, does, however, require that the location of a proposed renewable energy development conform to all substantive requirements of “local ordinances, laws, resolutions, regulations, [and] standards,” including local zoning. The applicant must also state whether the municipality has adopted a comprehensive plan, and whether the proposed renewable energy development is consistent with the adopted plan.

Under NYS Executive Law Section 94-c, the Office of Renewable Energy Siting may elect to apply, or not apply applicable local zoning and other regulations to the proposed development. To override local regulations, the Office must make a finding that the local regulation is “unreasonably burdensome” in view of the renewable energy development and greenhouse gas emission reduction targets set forth in Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act (CLCPA), and the environmental benefits of the proposed facility.

The Town of Manlius, while it may not have a direct role in the ORES review process, can position itself to influence the State’s deliberation through its zoning and other regulations.

Recommended Actions:

The Town of Manlius should review Sections 155-27.1 and 27.2 and amend them to bring them into conformance with Agriculture and Markets Law for the smaller scale systems designed for on-site use. In addition, the Town should consider strengthening its regulation of large scale solar development to better protect its agricultural land resources.

FIXED-RATIO ZONING

The fixed-ratio zoning concept was developed in agricultural communities in southern Pennsylvania in the 1970s as a way of providing farmers with the option of occasional sales of land for development, without triggering large scale development or farmland fragmentation. Also known as “density averaging,” fixed-ratio zoning can be very effective also in protecting both agricultural lands and ecologically important and scenic lands.

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Fixed-ratio zoning differs from the conventional zoning and subdivision practice of setting minimum lot sizes, (i.e., the 1-acre minimum lot size set by the Town of Manlius in the Restricted Agricultural RA zoning district). It instead controls the number of lots permitted to be subdivided off a parent tract of land, based on the size of the parcel. This “one lot per X acres” approach, – e.g. 5 acres... 10 acres... 20 acres of land – has been proven to be a simple but effective way to control density in rural areas and prevent land fragmentation.

Fixed Ratio (Density Averaging) Zoning



Eight conventional 10-acre lots consume entire 87 acre tract (left); 7 +/- 2-ac. lots cover only 16.5 acres of less productive land, leaving a 71.5 acre, farmable parent tract (right).

In the Town of Manlius, the current minimum lot size of 1 acre would continue as the minimum lot size for non-agricultural land uses. On a hypothetical 100-acre parcel of land, with the development density set at one lot for each 10 acres of land, up to nine 1-acre lots would be permitted to be subdivided off the parent tract. These lots however would consume as little as 9-10 acres of the 100 acres, leaving the remaining acreage as one large, contiguous tract of agricultural lands. The landowner would have the option of creating a lesser number of larger lots, e.g., 2, 3, 5 acre or larger, if they so desire.

This fixed-ratio approach to subdivision can work well because most farmers and other rural landowners are generally not interested in seeing their land developed, but instead want the ability to sell off an occasional lot, as needed or desired. In the Town of Manlius, this fixed-ratio approach can satisfy landowners' desire to sell occasional lots, while protecting the agricultural land resource.

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Recommended Actions:

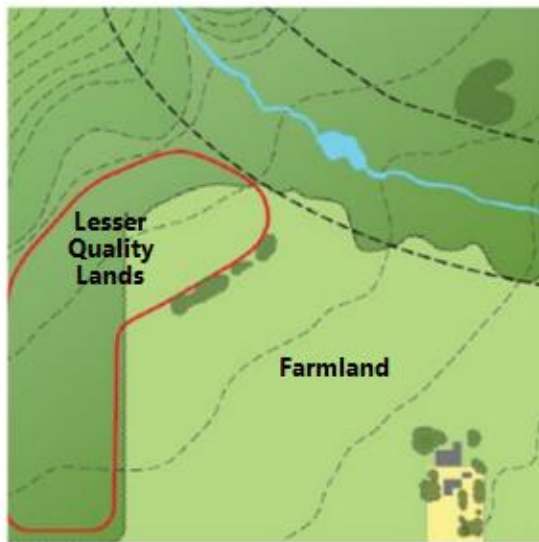
The Town of Manlius should consider the adoption of reduced development densities in the RA zoning district, coupled with adopting the fixed ratio zoning concept, to better protect agricultural land assets in the Town of Manlius

SUBDIVISION REGULATIONS

Section 127-12 of the Town of Manlius land subdivision regulations permits the Planning Board to review and approve cluster or conservation subdivisions. The purpose this authorization is *"...to enable and encourage flexibility of design and development of land in such a manner as to promote the most appropriate use of land."* These types of subdivision can be effective means of providing opportunities for residential development, while protecting agricultural lands and ecologically sensitive lands in the town. Historically, cluster subdivision design has been associated with attached housing - townhouse developments in built-up suburban areas.

The conservation subdivision, on the other hand, has become a useful growth management tool in rural areas where development often takes the form of smaller scale low density single-family residential development. A conservation subdivision utilizes the careful placement of individual homes on smaller lots within a site and can be an effective tool for protecting agricultural lands, environmentally sensitive areas, and rural character.

Conservation Subdivision



Existing Landscape



Conservation Subdivision

Source: Dutchess County NY Greenway Guide.

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Through more flexible lot dimensional standards, as well as street design provisions that permit narrower, low speed and low-volume private lanes to access multiple homes, conservation subdivisions can provide development opportunities for farmers and other owners of large tracts of land, while preserving rural character and the agricultural land base. The conservation subdivision approach coupled with lower density fixed-ratio zoning has proven effective in rural agricultural areas, as it balances development in rural areas with preservation of agricultural land resources.

The Town should consider adopting specific design standards for conservation subdivisions in agricultural and other areas. These could include requirements to avoid development on prime agricultural soils, or farmland of statewide importance; and minimum setbacks from farm buildings and protection of existing farm infrastructure such as field drainage tile systems. In line with the use of conservation subdivision design to better protect agricultural land and ecologically sensitive lands, the Town should consider adopting standards for “flag” or “panhandle” lots.

These types of lots consist of narrow strips of land that connect the public street to a lot meeting all the standard lot dimensional requirements of the zoning district within which it is located. They can be very effective in providing for small scale rural development, while preserving road frontage and higher quality farmland. Other design standards for these types of lots should include minimum width of at least 30 feet between the public street and the lot to be developed, minimum driveway widths and all-weather design capable of supporting fire trucks and other emergency access vehicles, and maximum driveway widths.

Recommended Actions:

The Town of Manlius should review its subdivision regulations and consider adopting design standards for conservation subdivisions in agricultural and other areas in order to permit low density residential development, which would also protect the agricultural land asset.

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SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

The table below summarizes the proposed changes to the Town of Manlius' local planning initiatives and land use regulations.

ADD AS PERMITTED ACCESSORY LAND USES	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agri-tourism, • Commercial Food Processing, • On-farm wineries, • On-farm breweries, • On farm cideries, • On-farm distilleries, • Farm worker housing 	<p>These uses should be accessory uses attached to and subordinated to the larger active farm operation.</p> <p>Specific design standards should be developed for such agri-tourism uses, to ensure safe ingress and egress, adequate parking, the safety of site visitors, site lighting, controls on outdoor displays, signs, and buffers between the site and neighboring properties.</p>
NEW OR REVISED DEFINITIONS	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agri-tourism, • Commercial Food processing, • On-farm wineries, • On-farm breweries, • On farm cideries, • On-farm distilleries, • Farm stand • Farm worker housing • Farmers' market 	<p>Definitions should be clear and concise, and reflect the Town's objectives for the land use, while not conflicting with the limits imposed by the Agriculture and Markets Law.</p>
ADDITIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider creating a new Agricultural (AG) zoning district in eastern portion of Town dominated by agriculture. Reduce development density/potential within the utilizing fixed-ratio approach to density and land subdivision. • Add farmers' markets to the list of permitted uses in appropriate zoning districts. • Review and revise as necessary regulations for renewable energy systems. 	<p>Reductions in development density and fixed ratio zoning can protect large tracts of agricultural lands while providing opportunity for development.</p> <p>Although now a common feature in communities, farmers' markets are not a formalized land use in many zoning codes.</p>
Adopt Right to Farm Law	

FARM-FRIENDLY ASSESSMENT

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WHY THIS MATTERS?

As stated in the introduction, the challenge for the Town of Manlius and other communities across New York has been keeping pace with the trends in agriculture and agricultural practices within its borders and updating its land use regulations accordingly. Overall, however, the Town's zoning code is well written, and the issues identified in its zoning and subdivision regulations are relatively minor and can be corrected through modest amendments to the zoning code.

As residents of Onondaga County turn away from food imported from throughout the world, and toward locally and regionally produced foods, there is opportunity today for smaller, specialized agricultural enterprises to operate in the Town of Manlius in the coming decades. With up-to-date, agriculture friendly zoning regulations that reflect the ongoing evolution of agriculture, it can continue to be a vibrant economic sector well into the coming decades.

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Chapter 155 of the Town of Manlius Code. Zoning. Available at <https://ecode360.com/11049132>. (accessed August 2021)

Section 127-12 of Chapter 127, Town of Manlius Code. Subdivision of Land. Available at: <https://ecode360.com/11048578>. (accessed August 2021)

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FARM-FRIENDLY ASSESSMENT

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Available at: <https://dos.ny.gov/system/files/documents/2021/09/local-laws-and-agricultural-districts.pdf>. (accessed August 2021)

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Chapter 155 of the Town of Manlius Code. Zoning. Available at <https://ecode360.com/11049132>

(accessed August 2021)

CONTACTS

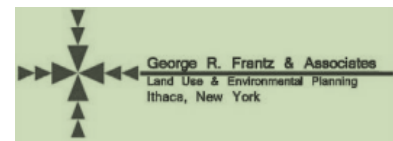
The Onondaga County Agriculture & Farmland Protection Plan Update is being led by the Onondaga County Agriculture & Farmland Protection Board (AFPB), with staff support from the Syracuse-Onondaga County Planning Agency (SOCPA), as well as their consultant team of EDR, DPC, and George R. Frantz & Associates, LLC (primary author).

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FARM-FRIENDLY ASSESSMENT

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TO: Town of Onondaga

FROM: Onondaga County Agriculture & Farmland Protection Board (AFPB)
with the Syracuse-Onondaga County Planning Agency (SOCPA)

DATE: October 22, 2021

RE: Farm-Friendly Assessment for the Town of Onondaga

INTRODUCTION

The state of agriculture in Onondaga County has seen significant changes over the years. Through it all, local agriculture remains a critical part of our economy, food system, and landscape. Our county is gifted with highly productive agricultural soils, a legacy of farming operations and know-how, and an environment that supports a highly diverse array of crops and opportunities to engage with the local food system. The Onondaga County Agriculture and Farmland Protection Plan, will report on the state of our agricultural lands and economy, and provide a framework for both protecting our most vital farmland and supporting overall agricultural viability in Onondaga County (For more information go to: agriculture.ongov.net).

The Town of Onondaga is one of several communities in Onondaga County that has volunteered to have its planning, zoning, and other land use regulations reviewed for how they may positively or negatively impact the agricultural operations within its borders. This assessment of zoning, subdivision, and Right-To-Farm laws identifies areas within the Town where these regulations could be updated to better reflect current agricultural trends and needs in the 21st century. The purpose of this Farm-friendly Assessment is not to critique, to educate by identifying potential issues and opportunities for improving the Town of Onondaga's land use regulations as they relate to agriculture.

The assessment involves reviews of existing zoning, subdivision and other local laws governing land use in the Town, including renewable energy uses. The primary objective is to review the local planning documents and laws, and to find areas, if any, where they could be amended to create a more farm-friendly environment. Specific areas of investigation include local regulations regarding:

- Conformance with the limits of local government regulating powers set forth in the New York State Agriculture and Markets Law (AML);
- Ensuring that local land use regulations accommodate the land uses commonly associated with or which support agriculture and agricultural operations with appropriate local controls;
- Identifying agricultural activities that meet the definition of "farm operation" as set forth in AML Sect. 301(11) that may be subject to special permit, site plan review, or other local

FARM-FRIENDLY ASSESSMENT

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review standard above ministerial review, or subject to a more intensive level of review than other uses permitted within the same zoning district.

Agricultural trends of particular focus in this analysis include emerging types of agriculture-related enterprises and renewable energy development. To enhance their farming operations and remain economically viable, farmers in New York have expanded over the past decade

This assessment informs the development of a Farm-friendly Toolbox that other municipalities within Onondaga County can use to assess their existing plans and regulations and then update their local land use tools to better protect farmland and promote agricultural viability. This toolbox is available online at:

<https://agriculture.ongov.net/toolbox>

beyond conventional agriculture and into direct farm marketing, on-farm wineries, breweries, cideries, distilleries, agri-tourism, bed-and-breakfast inns, and other supplemental farm businesses.

These agriculture-related enterprises, when operated as an accessory use to an ongoing agricultural operation, can provide revenue streams that enhance the economic viability of farm operations while contributing to the overall local economy and quality of life.

Meanwhile, renewable energy in New York today is presenting both opportunities and challenges for municipal governments and farmers. Investment in small scale solar and wind energy development primarily for generating power for use in farm operations can reduce energy costs for farmers, while reducing reliance on fossil fuel energy sources. However, large scale commercial solar and wind energy development, if left unchecked by siting considerations and local land use regulations, can have major implications in terms of agricultural land resources and impacts to host communities.

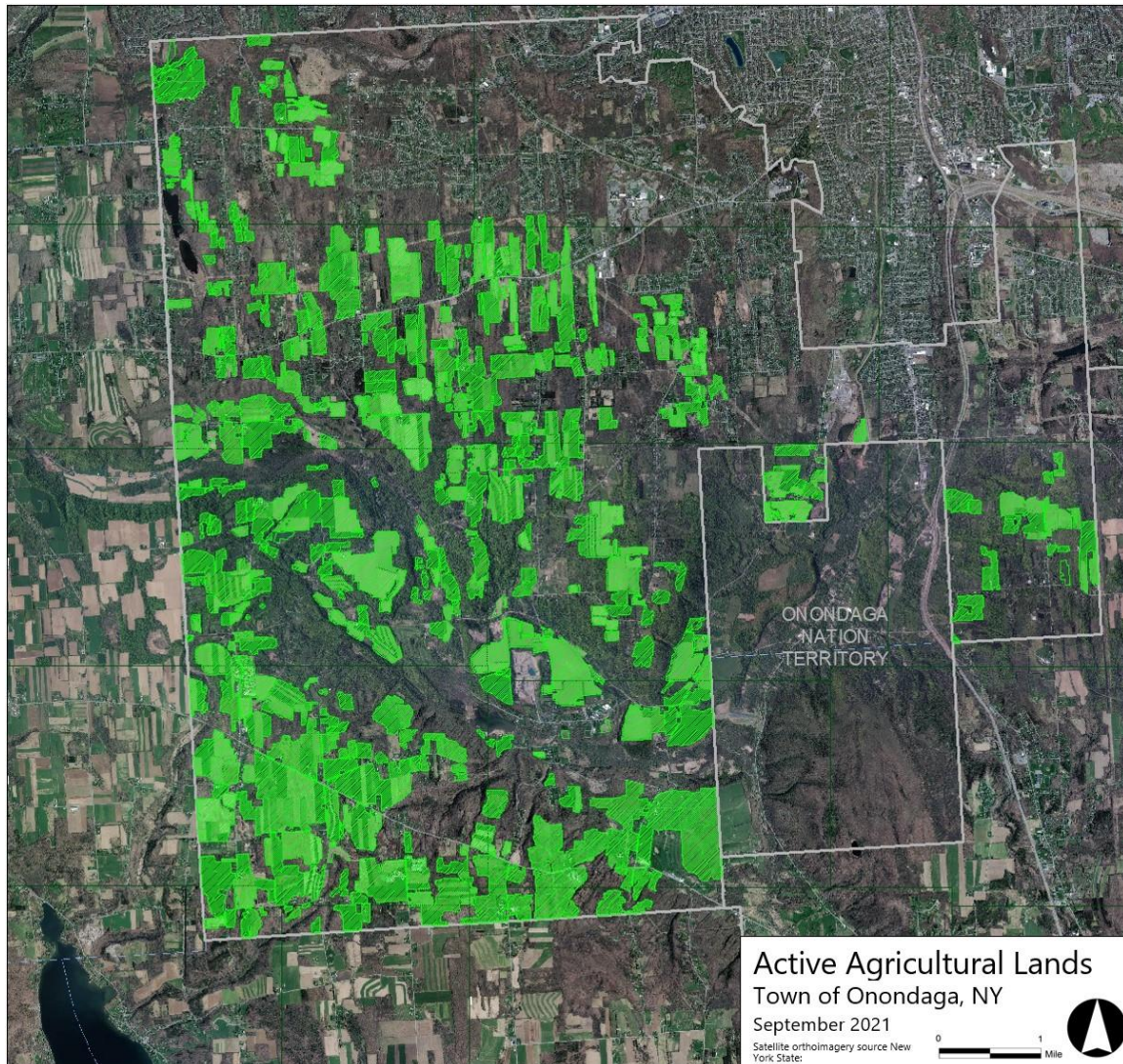
The purpose of this Farm-friendly Assessment is to identify potential issues and opportunities with the Town of Onondaga's land use regulations as they relate to agriculture. The primary objective is to review the local planning documents and laws, and to find areas, if any, where they could be amended to create a more farm-friendly environment and better address the abovementioned land use trends.

AGRICULTURE IN THE TOWN OF ONONDAGA

In the Town of Onondaga, despite it being a major suburb of Syracuse, an estimated 18,000 acres of land, or about 49% of the land in the town, is still actively farmed. Moreover, over 90% of the land being farmed in the Town of Onondaga is enrolled in the Agricultural Districts program administered by Onondaga County. Agriculture in the Town of Onondaga is a diverse economic sector that spans the spectrum from small vegetable, floriculture, horticulture, and maple syrup farm operations to large scale grain, dairy, and orchard operations. In this assessment, nine direct farm marketing enterprises, three farm breweries, cideries or distilleries, and three agri-tourism/agri-education ventures were also identified.

FARM-FRIENDLY ASSESSMENT

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AGRICULTURE AND PLANNING

The Town of Onondaga adopted a Comprehensive Master Plan in November, 2007 which was amended by a Supplement and Addendum approved by the Town Board in March, 2016.

The Comprehensive Plan notes the decline in agricultural land in production, but it also recognizes that agriculture contributes to the rural character and visual openness of the Town, and that conversion of farmland to development is both a national issue, and a local issue. Among the Plan objectives are the protection of valuable natural resources, including viable farmlands, and also, under economic objectives, to protect and preserve viable agricultural activities.

FARM-FRIENDLY ASSESSMENT

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Three key recommendations of the Plan related to the future of agriculture are:

- Assure the continuation of farming on prime agricultural land and limiting non-farm development particularly in the southern part of the Town;
- Take into account the potential for conversion of agricultural lands when evaluating extensions of public water or sewer service;
- Support agricultural and other private sector efforts to protect and minimize impacts on prime agricultural land, as well as streams, drainage ways, wooded areas and wildlife habitat."

As the town moves forward with implementing its Plan the recommendations in this assessment may provide useful guidance.

AGRICULTURE AND THE LOCAL REGULATORY FRAMEWORK

Agriculture and Markets Law Section 305-a provides farmers and agricultural operations located within County-sponsored agricultural districts specific protections against local zoning regulations that may cause undue interference with legitimate agricultural practices as defined by State law. Because many of the active farms in the Town of Onondaga are located within a County administered agricultural district, they are afforded the protections of Section 305-a. In 2002 the New York State Legislature also amended Town Law Section 283-a to require local governments to ensure that their laws, ordinances, or other regulations that might apply to agricultural operations located in State certified agricultural districts do not *"...unreasonably restrict or regulate farm operations in contravention of Article 25-AAA of the Agriculture and Markets Law, unless it can be shown that the public health or safety is threatened."*

Agriculture and farming are interchangeable terms in this report, along with agricultural operations and farms.

The Town of Onondaga zoning regulations are set forth in Chapter 285 of the Town of Onondaga Code. Farms are permitted in the Residential and Country (R-C) and the One-Family Residential (R-1) zoning districts, which together cover an estimated 85% of the town. The bulk of the farms and land in agriculture are in the Residential–Country zoning district.

The following are recommended actions to update the Town of Onondaga land use regulations in a manner that both protects the Town and its residents, while providing contemporary agricultural operations the flexibility they need to compete in a global economy.

RIGHT TO FARM LAW

The Town of Onondaga does not appear to have adopted a Right to Farm law. While viewed primarily as designed to protect farmers from so-called nuisance suits, local right to farm laws

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can be useful in other ways. Many towns have utilized these types of laws to set up a framework for conflict resolution and to for enhancing communication between the farm and non-farm communities in the town. They can be effective tools for educating the general public about agriculture in their communities. Although many farms in Onondaga participate in the County Agricultural Districts program and are afforded protection under the NY Agriculture and Markets Law, the Town should consider applying the protections of the law to all farms located in its AG-Agricultural zoning district.

Recommended Actions:

The Town of Cicero should adopt a Right to Farm Law.

ZONING ORDINANCE

The Town of Onondaga zoning regulations are set forth in Chapter 285 of the Town of Onondaga Code. Farms are permitted in the Residential and Country (R-C) and the One-Family Residential (R-1) zoning districts, which together cover an estimated 85% of the town. The bulk of the farms and land in agriculture is in the Residential–Country (R-C) zoning district.

In both zoning districts, farms are permitted, along with farm stands, by right. In the R-C zoning districts, public stables, defined as *“A commercial operation consisting of building(s) and land within which one or more horses, mules or burros are kept for sale, rent, riding or boarding purposes.”* are permitted with Special Permit approval, provided they are located on a parcel at least 20 acres in area. Private stables, defined as *“building(s) and land on which one or more horses, mules or burros belonging to the owner of the building and land or his (her) immediate family or the resident/tenant of the building or his (her) immediate family are kept...”* are permitted in both zoning districts, however also with Special Permit approval.

Because most of the land in the Residential-Country (R-C) zoning district is in agricultural use, some of the recommended zoning changes may be appropriate for that zoning district, but not the One-Family Residential (R-1) zoning district.

Recommended Actions:

The Town of Onondaga should review its permitted uses in the One-Family Residential (R-1) zoning district to ensure that the agricultural uses that are permitted in that zoning district are appropriate.

ZONING DISTRICT NAMES

The current zoning designation of “Residential and Country” (R-C) gives no indication of the extent of or importance of agriculture in the zoning district. As is the case in many suburban communities, agriculture has in recent history has been considered a transitory land use and

FARM-FRIENDLY ASSESSMENT

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“growing new homes” was the future. While it is a symbolic step, renaming the district to Agricultural-(A) or Agricultural-Residential (A-R) would raise the public profile of agriculture in the community and recognize the significant role agriculture plays in the local economy and the character of the town.

Recommended Actions:

The Town of Onondaga should consider changing the name of the Residential and Country zoning district to one that better reflects the predominantly agricultural character of the district.

DEFINING AGRICULTURE

For this analysis, “agriculture” is defined by the New York State Agriculture and Markets Law Article (AML) 25-AA, Section 301 as the use of land, buildings, structures, equipment, manure processing and handling facilities, and practices which contribute to the production, preparation, and marketing of crops, livestock, livestock products, and horse boarding operations as a commercial enterprise or a hobby. Historically agriculture has included a variety of disciplines aside from fruit, vegetable and crop production and livestock raised for food. Animal husbandry, or the breeding of specific animals for use or sale (e.g., racehorses), beekeeping, aquaculture (fish production), horticulture, floriculture and silviculture are all also considered as agriculture within this definition. Recently, the growing of industrial grade hemp (with limits on CBD/TCH content) has been added to the list of activities that fall under the Ag & Markets definition of agriculture.

The State’s definition of agricultural operation is “...land and on-farm buildings, equipment, manure processing and handling facilities, and practices which contribute to the production, preparation and marketing of crops, livestock and livestock products as a commercial enterprise” (AML Sect.301(11)).

In the Town of Onondaga land use regulations, farms are defined as:

“Any parcel, or multiple contiguous parcels of land in the same ownership, containing at least seven acres of land in the aggregate, which is used in the raising of agricultural products, horses, livestock, poultry and dairy animals, including necessary farm buildings, one one-family dwelling and the storage of equipment used for the farm. A farm may include a farm stand selling agriculturally related goods raised on the property, on a seasonal basis only. The term “farm” does not include the use of land or buildings for a public stable.”

Three major issues relate to this definition: 1) the definition of what constitutes a farm is limited, and 2) the zoning regulations set a 7-acre minimum size for a farm, and 3) under the NYS Agriculture and Markets Law (AML), commercial horse boarding operations are considered to be agricultural operations.

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A solution to this would be to replace the definition of “farm” with a definition of “agriculture” – the actual land use – that will better reflect contemporary agriculture and better conform to the State definition. The State’s definitions are both specific in terms of the permitted land use, and ensures adequate control by the Town, but also general enough to permit flexibility, as agricultural operations continue to evolve. In this context too, “crops” include horticultural products, such as Christmas trees and landscape plantings, flowers, honey, maple syrup and other such products of the land not commonly considered agricultural products.

The elimination of any minimum size threshold for what defines agricultural operations also reflects the increasing number of small-scale vegetable and greenhouse operations in New York, which often encompasses those less than 7 acres or other size thresholds. Additionally, the explicit exclusion of public stables from the definition of a farm is in contravention of the Agriculture and Markets Law, which includes commercial horse-boarding operations in its definition of a farm operation.

Recommended Actions:

The Town of Onondaga should revise its definition of agriculture to better conform to the Agriculture and Markets Law and to better reflect the nature of agriculture in the Town of Onondaga.

ACCESSORY USES

In the past decade, farmers in New York have also expanded beyond conventional agriculture and into direct farm marketing, on-farm wineries, breweries, cideries, distilleries, agri-tourism, bed-and-breakfast inns and other supplemental farm businesses. In recent years, renting campsites and “glamping” as side businesses have started to appear. Other businesses that may provide supplemental income are bed and breakfast inns, which are not listed as permitted use in the Town.

All of these can be appropriate as accessory uses to the larger agricultural operations. They require clear and concise definitions for each use, however, and controls on their size and scope that ensure they remain a use that is subordinate to the larger farm operation.

On-Farm Breweries, Cideries, Distilleries, Wineries

On-farm wineries, breweries, cideries, distilleries should be listed as accessory uses to an operating farm enterprise. In addition to direct sales to the public, these businesses often include subsidiary cafes, tasting rooms, and gift shops that should also be referenced in any definition. It is important that the size of these subsidiary enterprises be controlled and that they remain contributing sources of revenue for the primary operation. Because these uses involve access to the premises by the public, special consideration needs to be given to public

FARM-FRIENDLY ASSESSMENT

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safety, crowd management and traffic. The adoption of site plan approval, with specific design standards for such enterprises, is warranted.

Recommended Actions:

The Town of Onondaga should consider adding on-farm wineries, breweries, cideries, distilleries as permitted accessory uses (with appropriate definitions) in the R-C Residential and Country zoning district. Due their nature these uses should be subject to site plan review by the Planning Board.

Farm Stands

In some cases, more flexibility may be warranted. For instance, currently farm stands in the town of Onondaga are limited to *"...selling agriculturally related goods raised on the property, on a seasonal basis only."* The key attributes of the farm stand that municipal governments should focus on are that the farm stand is an accessory use to an active farm operation, and their size/floor area.

Permitting farmers to sell fresh produce year-round, as well as to sell baked goods and other products can benefit the farmer by enhancing their revenues and serve the community with convenient fresh produce year-round. A farm stand can also provide outlets to other local farmers that may not be located on a major road, and hence lack the necessary market exposure. With the increase in on-farm commercial kitchens in New York, farm stands can provide outlets for the growing number of small-scale food processors in the region.

Recommended Actions:

The Town of Onondaga should revise its definition for farm stands to eliminate restrictions on seasonal use only and clarify what is permitted to be sold.

Farmers' Markets

Although today farmers' markets are found in many communities throughout Onondaga County, they are not found in zoning codes as a permitted use, nor are they defined. They are not usually associated with an active agricultural operation, but instead functions as separate sales venues off the farm. They are also intermittent land uses, scheduled for specific days of the week, and rely on temporary (pop-up) facilities, or pavilions partitioned into rented booths. Often the farmers' market is managed by a local not-for-profit organization or in some cases operates out of a public facility, such as the CNY Regional Market.

Farmers' markets are recognized as community assets; however they can have impacts that may affect the surround community, such as traffic, noise and odors. They should thus be subject to basic zoning provisions governing location, being restricted to zoning districts or sites in which they will be a compatible use. Also, the use of site plan review, and design standards to mitigate potential impacts of farmers markets are appropriate zoning tools.

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The zoning definition for a farmers' market should include details such as being temporary or intermittent activities that may include temporary or mobile vendor facilities, or a permanent structure with individual booths, and is operated by a public authority or not-for-profit organization.

Recommended Actions:

The Town of Onondaga should add farmers' markets as a permitted use in appropriate zoning districts within the town. The use should be carefully defined in a manner that ensures that it serves as a public or not-for-profit venue to promote local food and agriculture and brings local farmers and consumers together. Site plan review, and design standards to mitigate potential impacts of farmers markets are appropriate zoning tools

Home Occupations

Another source of supplemental revenue for agricultural operations in the Town of Onondaga are home occupations, a use which is currently prohibited in the R-C and R-1 zoning districts. Currently the Town of Onondaga has a definition of a home occupation; however the current definition anticipates a much more active type of business, and one not clearly identified as a subordinate, accessory use. A more appropriate definition may be:

"An accessory use of a service character conducted within a dwelling by the residents thereof, which is clearly secondary to the dwelling use for living purposes and does not change the residential character of the building within which the activity occurs..." - Town of Geneva Zoning Code

This definition can permit a variety of no or low-traffic home occupations, including internet-based sales operations, that will promote the long-term viability of the farm business, without impacting the larger community.

Recommended Actions:

The Town of Onondaga should consider revising its definition of home occupation and also adding it to the R-C district as a permitted accessory use.

Farm Worker Housing

As dairy and orchard operations in New York have consolidated into larger enterprises, their workforce needs have also changed. Today they require a well-trained, full-time permanent workforce, which often also requires on-farm housing for their workers. The Town of Onondaga zoning code currently does not permit farm worker housing. The term "on-farm buildings" in the Agriculture and Markets Law Sect. 305-a definition of farm operations includes farm labor housing as being an integral element of these operations. Even though there may be no apparent need for farm worker housing at this time, by addressing the issue now, the Town of Onondaga can formulate well-thought-out provisions for future farm worker housing, including appropriate standards.

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Recommended Actions:

The Town of Onondaga should consider adding farm worker housing as a permitted accessory use in the R-C zoning district, as well as a definition of farmworker housing that includes manufactured homes, modular homes, and stick-built homes as options.

Agri-tourism

Currently the Town of Onondaga does not have a definition for agri-tourism, nor does it permit this land use in its zoning code. Although recognized by New York under its definition of agriculture or farm operation, agri-tourism can be a gray area in terms of what activities are involved. Agri-tourism consists of activities that bring together tourism and agriculture for the education and enjoyment of the public, and which may include: hayrides, corn mazes, hay mazes, petting zoos (farm animals only), farm tours and agriculture-themed festivals and other public or private events. Agritourism enterprises should be listed as accessory uses to a larger active agricultural operation. Agri-tourism can also attract large numbers of people to a farm, especially for special on-farm events. Careful attention needs to be given to both the definition of agri-tourism, and ensuring that it is permitted only as a use that is supporting and active agricultural operation.

Because agri-tourism involves access to the premises by the public, special consideration needs to be given to public safety, crowd management, parking, noise control, water and wastewater infrastructure, and traffic. The adoption of site plan approval, with specific design standards for such enterprises, is warranted.

Recommended Actions:

The Town of Onondaga should add agri-tourism as a permitted accessory uses in the R-C-Residential-Country zoning district, with a clear and concise definition of the use. Given the nature of agri-tourism, such uses should be subject to site plan approval, with appropriate design standards, is also warranted.

SETBACK REQUIREMENTS

There are a number of setback requirements in the zoning regulations that affect agricultural operation, which the Town of Onondaga should review.

Sect. 285(31) of the zoning regulations designates specific streets, roads, and highways as "collector" roads. This list includes several roads in the R-C district and the County agricultural district. This designation triggers a requirement for an additional 15 feet of front yard setback, above and beyond the basic 50 feet under the R-C and R-1 district regulations. This additional 15-ft front yard setback may be appropriate in more developed areas, or developing area of the town, but it may be problematic to farm operations.

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Most roads designated “collectors” are rural highways south of West Seneca Turnpike that carry low traffic volumes – 2,500 or less vehicles per day (NYSDOT 2021). The Town should review this requirement and revise it to exclude roads that do not or are not expected to function as collector roads or are primarily located in more rural areas of the Town.

In Section 285-8, there is a requirement that “No manure or odor or dust-producing substances shall be stored within 200 feet of any lot line.” There is a similar “within 200 feet of a lot line” restriction for residential nurseries and greenhouses, as well as public and private stables. Given that all five of these uses fall under the definition of agriculture in the Agriculture and Markets Law, and the proximity of many barn complexes greenhouses and stables to public roads and highways, these required setbacks may be determined to be excessive and burdensome to the operation of legitimate agricultural operations by the Department of Agriculture and Markets.

Recommended Actions:

The Town of Onondaga should review and revise where necessary setback requirements that may adversely affect farm operations, and bring them in line with the Agriculture and Markets Law.

RENEWABLE ENERGY

Town of Onondaga Code Sections 285(36) (D) and 285(36.1) (E) require Special Permit approval for private wind energy conversion systems and private ground mounted solar energy systems. Private renewable energy systems for farms are recognized by the State as integral to a farm operation and subjecting them to Special Permit is in contravention of Agriculture & Markets Law.

Limiting farm operations to only 3 three wind energy systems (Sect. 285(36(2)(B)(1)) appears to be excessively restrictive, and may be in contravention with the Agriculture and Markets Law. Wind energy systems must be located in a manner where they can make economical use of the wind energy resource, and so farms need some flexibility in locating wind energy systems, potentially on vacant parcels that may be utilized for crops or pasture only.

Also farm energy needs may exceed the capacity of three small-scale wind energy systems of the type envisioned. Setting a limit based on the actual energy needs of the farm is a more practical and flexible solution. One example of this is setting the size and number of wind energy systems using the output of the system. One metric is that a proposed system shall not exceed 110% of electric energy consumption of the farm, regardless of the number of wind turbines.

In addition, the zoning regulations limit the total size of any ground mounted solar energy system to the size of the footprint of the largest building on a lot appears to be arbitrary, and excessive as applied to a farm operation. For instance, a 200 Kw solar array could cover between 1 acre and 1.5 acre of land, or the equivalent of a 43,560 sq. ft. to 65,340 sq. ft. building.

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The Town permits commercial solar development in the R-C Residential Country zoning district. Large scale solar development has major implications for the agricultural land resource. Provisions for protecting the Town of Onondaga's most productive agricultural soils should be included in Sect. 285(36.1). These include design standards such as:

- Construction on farmland designated as Prime or Farmland of Statewide importance shall be avoided;
- The total surface area of solar collectors, combined with all other buildings and structures on the lot, shall not exceed fifty-percent of total parcel area;
- Removal of trees over 6 inches in trunk diameter shall be minimized, or mitigated by replacement tree plantings elsewhere on the property;
- Roadways to and within the site shall be constructed of gravel or other permeable surfacing and shall be flush with the surrounding land contours;
- A site restoration plan shall be included as part of any decommissioning plan, to include, at a minimum, stockpiling of any topsoil removed during construction, for use in site restoration, removal of all foundations, de-compacting and de-rocking all disturbed areas, and removal of any roadways;
- All on-site utility and transmission lines shall, to the extent feasible, be placed underground.

More information on solar energy development and agricultural lands is available at:

<http://ongov.net/planning/documents/AgBestPractices05112021.pdf>; and
<http://ongov.net/planning/solar101.html>.

Wind energy systems have a much smaller footprint and hence less impact on agricultural lands, and so are considered compatible with agricultural uses. Standards for access roadways and onsite utility transmissions such as those for solar development, as well as requirements for site restoration upon completion of construction activities, are appropriate.

The Accelerated Renewable Energy Growth and Community Benefit Act created an Office of Renewable Energy Siting (ORES) and effectively pre-empts the local regulation and review of commercial solar and wind energy development that will generate 25 MW or more of power per year. Section 900-2.25 of Title 19 of NYCRR Part 900, which governs the ORES review process, does, however, require that the location of a proposed renewable energy development conform to all substantive requirements of "local ordinances, laws, resolutions, regulations, [and] standards," including local zoning. The applicant must also state whether the municipality has adopted a comprehensive plan, and whether the proposed renewable energy development is consistent with the adopted plan.

Under NYS Executive Law Section 94-c, the Office of Renewable Energy Siting may elect to apply, or not apply applicable local zoning and other regulations to the proposed development. To override local regulations, the Office must make a finding that the local regulation is "unreasonably burdensome" in view of the renewable energy development and greenhouse gas

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emission reduction targets set forth in Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act (CLCPA), and the environmental benefits of the proposed facility.

The Town of Onondaga while it may not have a direct role in the ORES review process, can position itself to influence the State's deliberation through its zoning and other regulations.

Recommended Actions:

The Town of Onondaga should review Sect. 285(36) and Sect. 285(36.1) and revise these sections of the zoning regulations accordingly.

FIXED RATIO ZONING

Fixed ratio zoning is another a means of better protecting its agricultural land assets, as well as the rural character of the R-C Residential-Country zoning district. It was developed in rural agricultural communities in southern Pennsylvania in the 1970s as a way of providing farmers with the option of occasional sales of land for development, without triggering large scale development or farmland fragmentation. Also known as "density averaging," fixed-ratio zoning can be very effective also in protecting both agricultural lands and ecologically important and scenic lands.

Fixed-ratio zoning differs from the conventional zoning and subdivision practice of setting minimum lot sizes. It instead controls the number of lots permitted to be subdivided off a parent tract of land, based on the size of the parcel. This "one lot per X acres" approach, – e.g. five acres... 10 acres... 20 acres of land – has been proven to be a simple but effective way to control density in rural areas and prevent land fragmentation. It can also reduce the competition for land between farmers and developers that is a challenge to agriculture elsewhere in New York.

Fixed Ratio (Density Averaging) Zoning



Eight conventional 10-acre lots consume entire 87 acre tract (left); 7 +/- 2-ac. lots cover only 16.5 acres of less productive land, leaving a 71.5 acre, farmable parent tract (right).

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In the Town of Onondaga, the current minimum lot size of two acres in the Residential- Country District (outside areas served by public water and sanitary sewer) would continue as the minimum lots size for non-agricultural land uses. On a hypothetical 100-acre parcel of land, with the development density set at one lot for each 10 acres of land, up to nine 2-acre lots would be permitted to be subdivided off the parent tract. These lots however would consume as little as 18 to 20 acres of the 100 acres, leaving the remaining acreage as one large, contiguous tract of agricultural lands. The landowner would have the option of creating a lesser number of larger lots, e.g., 2, 3, 5 acre or larger if they so desire.

This fixed-ratio approach can work well because most farmers and other rural landowners are generally not interested in seeing their land developed, but instead want the ability to sell off an occasional lot, as needed or desired. In the Town of Onondaga, this fixed-ratio approach can satisfy landowners' desire to sell occasional lots, while protecting the agricultural land resource.

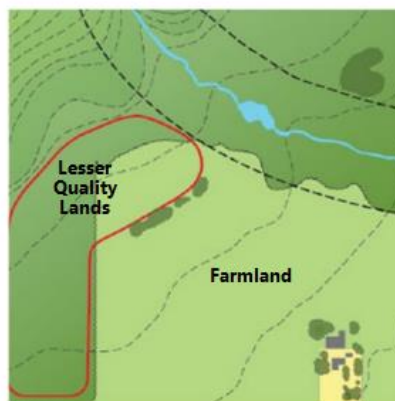
Recommended Actions:

The Town of Onondaga should consider the adoption of reduced development densities in the R-C Residential and Country zoning district, coupled with adopting the fixed ratio zoning concept, to better protect agricultural land assets in the Town.

SUBDIVISION REGULATIONS

As currently written, the Town of Onondaga Land Subdivision Regulations does not permit cluster or conservation subdivisions within the town, outside the Planned Residential District and Planned Residential Community District. These types of subdivision can be effective means of providing opportunities for residential development, while protecting agricultural lands and ecologically sensitive lands in rural areas. Historically, cluster subdivision design has been associated with attached housing (townhouse developments in built-up suburban areas).

The conservation subdivision has become a useful growth management tool that can permit smaller scale low density single-family residential development in rural areas. It utilizes the careful placement of individual homes on smaller lots within a site and can be an effective tool for protecting agricultural lands, environmentally sensitive areas, and rural character. The



Existing Landscape



Conservation Subdivision

Source: Dutchess County NY Greenway Guide.

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Town should consider adopting standards for cluster/conservation subdivisions in agricultural and other areas.

Recommended Actions:

The Town of Onondaga should review its subdivision regulations and consider adopting design standards for conservation subdivisions in agricultural and other areas in order to permit low density residential development, which would also protect the agricultural land asset.

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

The table below summarizes the proposed changes to the Town of Onondaga planning initiatives and land use regulations.

ADD AS PERMITTED ACCESSORY LAND USES	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agri-tourism • Bed-and-breakfast inns • Direct farm marketing (including farm stands) • Farm worker housing • Home Occupations • On-farm wineries • On-farm breweries • On farm cideries • On-farm distilleries • On-farm camping 	<p>These uses should be accessory uses attached to and subordinated to the larger active farm operation. With the exception of Home Occupations, and Farm Worker Housing, these uses should be subject to Site Plan Approval.</p> <p>Specific design standards should be developed for such uses, to ensure safe ingress and egress, adequate parking, the safety of site visitors, site lighting, controls on noise, outdoor displays, signs, and buffers between the site and neighboring properties. Public health provisions such as drinking water and wastewater infrastructure also need to be addressed.</p>
ADD AS STAND-ALONE PERMITTED LAND USES	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Veterinary office or clinic 	Permitted by Special Permit
NEW OR REVISED DEFINITIONS	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agriculture • Agri-tourism • Bed-and-breakfast inns • Direct farm marketing (including farm stands) • Farm worker residence • Home Occupation 	<p>Definitions should be clear and concise, and reflect the Town's objectives for the land use, while not conflicting with the limits imposed by the Agriculture and Markets Law.</p>

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • On-farm wineries • On-farm breweries • On farm cideries • On-farm distilleries • Veterinary office or clinic 	
ADDITIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Amend Sect. 285(31), Arterial and Collector Overlay zones to remove low-volume rural highways from the list of designated roads 	Many of these roads designated as “collector roads” carry low volumes of traffic that do not warrant the additional 15 ft. of setback.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Amend Sect. 285(36) & 285(36.1) remove Special Permit requirement for renewable energy systems for on-farm operations 	Requiring Special Permit approval for on-farm renewable energy systems is considered to be overly burdensome by Dept. of Ag & Markets.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Revise Residential & Country district designation to “Agricultural” or “Agricultural-Residential.” 	The current designation gives no indication of the extent of or importance of agriculture in the zoning district or Town of Onondaga.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adopt a Right to Farm Law 	

WHY THIS MATTERS?

As stated in the introduction, the challenge for the Town of Onondaga and other communities across New York has been keeping pace with the trends in agriculture and agricultural practices within its borders and updating its land use regulations accordingly. Overall, however, the Town’s zoning code is well written, and the issues identified in its zoning and subdivision regulations are relatively minor, and can be easily corrected through modest amendments to its codes.

As residents of Onondaga County turn away from food imported from throughout the world and toward locally and regionally produced foods, there is opportunity today for smaller, specialized agricultural enterprises to develop within the Town of Onondaga. This, paired with pro-active local laws and potential incentives, will enable its agricultural community to be a vibrant economic sector well into the coming decades.

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CONTACTS

The Onondaga County Agriculture & Farmland Protection Plan Update is being led by the Onondaga County Agriculture & Farmland Protection Board (AFPB), with staff support from the Syracuse-Onondaga County Planning Agency (SOCPA), as well as their consultant team of EDR, DPC, and George R. Frantz & Associates, LLC (primary author).

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