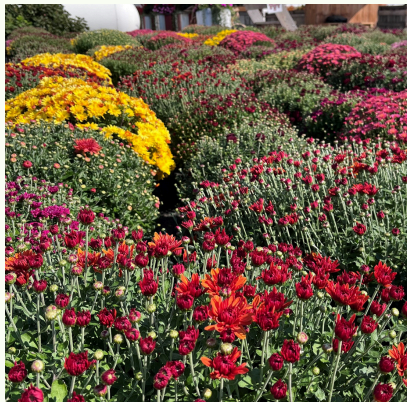


# Town of Clifton Park Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan



PART I

March 2026

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**“We should be encouraging the  
expansion of agriculture in  
Clifton Park, not just supporting what  
we have today.”**

**Greg and Nick Sokolowski**

**(Comment from October 2024 Clifton Park Farmers/  
Producers and Farmland Owners Meeting)**



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## List of Acronyms

<b>AFT</b> – American Farmland Trust
<b>CCE</b> – Cornell Cooperative Extension
<b>CRP</b> – Conservation Reserve Program
<b>CSP</b> – Conservation Stewardship Program
<b>EQIP</b> – Environmental Quality Incentives Program
<b>FCIC</b> – Federal Crop Insurance Corporation
<b>FPIG</b> – Farmland Protection Implementation Grants
<b>FSA</b> – Farm Service Agency
<b>GIS</b> – Geographic Information System
<b>IDA</b> – Industrial Development Agency; Appears in the context of Clifton Park IDA
<b>NOI</b> – Notice of Intent
<b>NRCS</b> – Natural Resources Conservation Service
<b>NYS</b> – New York State
<b>NYSDAM</b> – New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets
<b>NYSERDA</b> – New York State Energy Research and Development Agency
<b>PACE</b> – Purchase of Agricultural Conservation Easements
<b>PDR</b> – Purchase of Development Rights
<b>RCPP</b> – Regional Conservation Partnership Program
<b>RMA</b> – Risk Management Agency
<b>SEQR or SEQRA</b> – State Environmental Quality Review Act
<b>SWCD</b> – Soil and Water Conservation District
<b>USDA</b> – U.S. Department of Agriculture
<b>WCP LCP</b> – Western Clifton Park Land Conservation Plan & GEIS

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# Acknowledgements

## 2026 Town Board

Philip Barrett, Town Supervisor  
Agatha Reid, Deputy Supervisor/Town Board Member  
Nancy Bellamy, Town Board Member  
Mario Fantini, Town Board Member  
Zabed Manir, Town Board Member

## 2024-2025 Town Board

Philip Barrett, Town Supervisor  
Anthony Morelli, Deputy Supervisor/Town Board Member  
Lynda Walowit, Town Board Member  
Agatha Reid, Town Board Member  
Zabed Manir, Town Board Member

## Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan Advisory Committee

Dan Mathias, Co-Chair  
Isabel Prescott, Co-Chair  
Emad Andarawis  
Kevin Bowman  
Kenny Bowman  
Anne Dillenbeck  
George King  
David Miller  
Ruth Olmsted  
Tori Roberts (Saratoga PLAN)  
Kurt Swartz  
Larry Syzdek

## Department of Planning & Zoning Town Staff

John Scavo, Jr., Planning Department Director  
Jennifer Viggiani, Open Space Coordinator

---

## Consulting Team

Community Planning & Environmental Associates

Nan Stolzenburg FAICP

Upstate GIS

Rick Lederer-Barnes

E.M. Pemrick & Co.

Ellen Pemrick

MJ Engineering, Architecture, Landscape Architecture, and Land Surveying, P.C.

Jaclyn Hakes, AICP, Associate / Director of Planning

Jennifer Ceponis, Senior Planner

Melia Hema, Planner

Jacob Landis



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## What Does Clifton Park Consider Agriculture?

Defining agriculture early in this Plan is crucial because it anchors the document, ensures clarity and consistency, and establishes a shared understanding of the diverse farm activities and land uses the Plan seeks to support. It helps ensure that every strategy, recommendation, and public conversation that follows is grounded in a clear and inclusive description of what agriculture truly means in the community.

The definition of “agriculture” is constantly evolving in today’s dynamic environment. There are diverse opportunities to keep agriculture vital and profitable in the Town of Clifton Park. Clifton Park celebrates all its farms – large and small, old and new, and both specialty and traditional farms<sup>1</sup>. These include greenhouses, commercial kitchens, farm markets, mills and breweries, onsite processing and sales, community gardens, agricultural and “agriculinary” tourism, and “agri-tainment” (which includes farm-based activities such as corn mazes, pumpkin patches, haunted hay rides, etc.) as well as traditional farming operations. To simplify our frame of reference for this study, these terms are defined and used in this Plan as follows:

**Small-Scale** – Farms that operate on a relatively small amount of land, generate a limited amount of income, often rely on family labor, and usually concentrate on direct-to-consumer sales.

**Specialty Farm** – An agricultural operation of any size that focuses on producing specialized or non-traditional farm products, uses alternative production practices, and/or serves a particular customer base.

**Traditional Farm** – An agricultural operation in which farming is a main livelihood of the operator/producer and/or the farm operates with the intention to serve as a principal source of income. It is often larger in acreage; produces conventional crops like corn, hay, fruit, vegetables, horses, and other livestock; sells products in various retail, wholesale, and institutional markets; and may include greenhouses and nurseries.

*Note: A farm operation can meet more than one of these farm definitions.*

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<sup>1</sup>This Plan is intended to cover all types and sizes of farms in Clifton Park. Individual farms may have some characteristics of more than one type, as well. Note, however, that some farms may not meet the definition of an eligible farm operation and eligibility for some State programs.

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# Executive Summary

The Town of Clifton Park’s Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan provides a comprehensive, forward-looking roadmap to sustain and strengthen agriculture as a vital component of the Town’s economy, landscape, heritage, and quality of life. Its central purpose is to protect priority farmlands, enhance the long-term economic viability of farm operations, and ensure that agriculture remains an integral and celebrated part of Clifton Park’s identity. The Plan responds to decades of farmland loss, increasing development pressure, and the evolving needs of a diverse and resilient agricultural community. It offers actionable strategies—grounded in data, public input, and best practices—to help the Town balance growth with stewardship while supporting both traditional and emerging farm enterprises.

## Background and Context

For more than two centuries, Clifton Park’s farms have shaped the community’s character and contributed significantly to its economy. Yet suburbanization since the mid-20th century has resulted in the loss of approximately 85% of the Town’s historic farmland. Today, only about four percent of land in Clifton Park is actively farmed, and agricultural operations face mounting pressures from development, increasing costs, limited access to services, and changing market conditions.

In response to these challenges, the Town initiated a series of projects and programs to support open space, agriculture, and outdoor recreation in Clifton Park. The Town has emerged as a statewide leader in proactively planning for the pressures facing agricultural lands and natural resources. To advance these efforts, the Town Board adopted a Local Right-to-Farm Law and later established an initial Term Easement tax relief program for eligible owners of open space, agricultural, and historic properties.

### Clifton Park’s Successes in Conserving Farmland

257 Farmland Acres Preserved to date.

- King Crest Farm on Grooms Road
- Riverview Orchards on Riverview Road
- Heckman Farm on Hubbs Road
- Maple Hill Farm on Ashdown Road

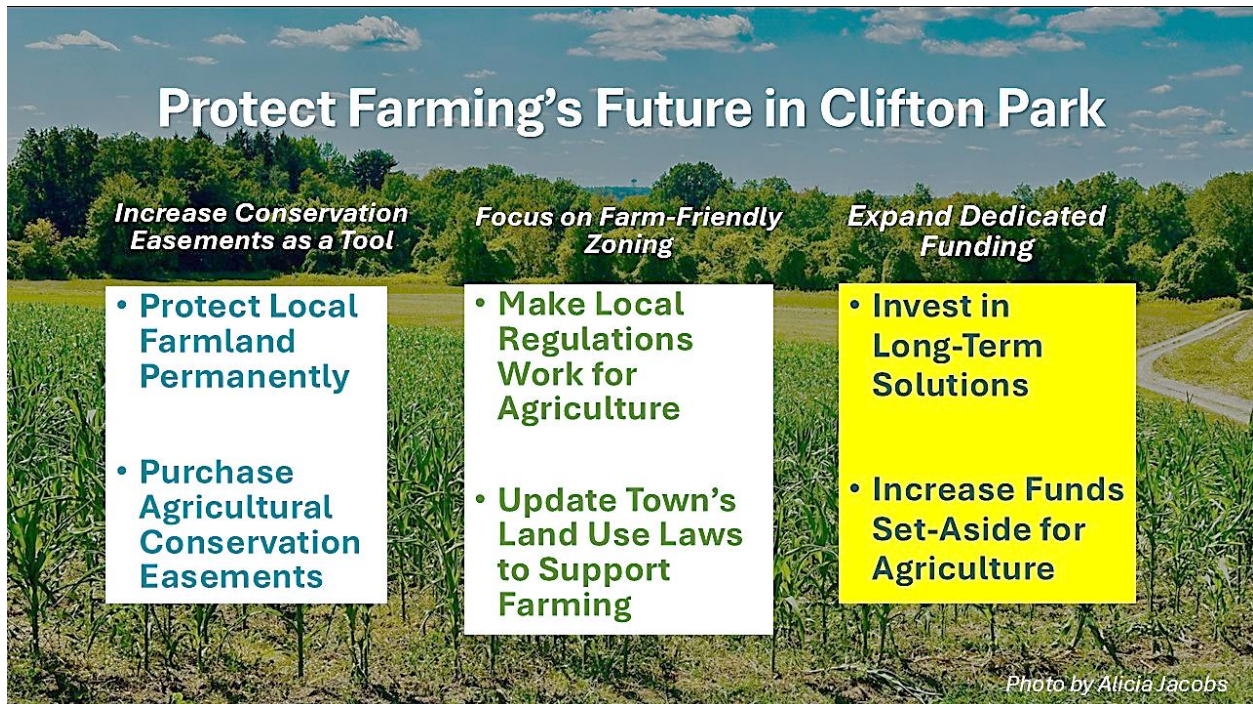
Despite these challenges, agriculture continues to play a meaningful role in the community—providing local food, supporting the Town’s rural character, contributing to environmental sustainability, engaging residents in farm-based activities, and offering economic opportunities. The Town has had a long commitment to preserving farmland and open space, and enhancing outdoor recreation opportunities.

Accomplishments over the past 25 years include:

- Conservation of four farms using Permanent Agricultural Conservation Easements (PACE) with willing farmland owners who have preserved 257 acres to date.
- Increased acreage and improved public access to amenities at more than 12 public parks and nature preserves by permanently protecting over 2000 acres of open space lands through acquisitions and other conservation measures.

- Secured a public golf course and improved recreational amenities and playgrounds
- Created permanent open space through the use of conservation subdivisions.
- Created 20+ miles of new trails and improved existing paths at Vischer Ferry Road, Crescent Road, and Moe Road multi-use trails, and at the Erie Canal Community Connector Trail in Vischer Ferry Nature Preserve.
- Ongoing Town commitment to Farm Fest celebrating the agricultural heritage of Clifton Park.

The Town Board recognized the need for a deliberate, coordinated strategy to support the remaining agricultural base. With funding from the New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets, the Town—guided by a dedicated Advisory Committee—conducted a multi-year public planning process involving farmer interviews, surveys, workshops, public open houses, GIS mapping, farmland prioritization, and a farm-friendly audit of local laws. This plan synthesizes extensive input with technical analysis to outline a path forward for protecting farmland and supporting farming as a long-term land use.



### Plan's Key Strategies and How Goals Will Be Achieved

The Plan organizes its recommended actions into seven strategic themes, each designed to reinforce the overarching goals of protecting farmland and strengthening agricultural viability. The plan's strategies are actionable, measurable, and aligned with state and federal funding programs.

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Here are additional details about each key strategy recommended in this Plan (not listed in priority order):

### **1. Protect Farmland in Clifton Park**

- **Form a Town Agricultural Advisory Committee** to help implement this plan's priority actions, initiatives, and other proactive actions.
- Clifton Park aims to preserve at least half of its remaining farmland (approximately 550 acres) within 5-10 years. The town will use the priority parcel scoring to determine the highest-value land for conservation and focus efforts on the top two parcel tiers, as they contain 75% of the town's active farmland, but will also consider lower-tier parcels to help reach its goal.
- Encourage farmland owner enrollment in the Saratoga County Agricultural District
- Examine expanding the Town's term easement (tax relief) program to help more farmers and farmland owners continue to farm and produce agricultural products. These farmers enrolled in the term easement program may be candidates for permanent conservation easements.
- Utilize the plan's comprehensive farmland prioritization analysis that identified the lands most critical to long-term agricultural success to guide conservation investments, update zoning to reduce conflicts and fragmentation, pursue conservation easements, enhance farm-friendly land use regulations, and ensure development patterns respect agricultural operations.

### **2. Update Zoning and Town Code to Better Reflect the Priorities for Agriculture: Support Diversified Agricultural Crops, Products, and Markets**

- Using the plan's farmer-friendly zoning audit recommendations as a guide, **update zoning and town code** to reduce conflicts and fragmentation; support the ability of farmers to produce a wider range of crops, products, and expanded markets; and support expanded opportunities for direct-to-consumer sales. This includes agritourism, value-added production, small-scale specialty farming, and regenerative practices that build soil health and ecological resilience.
- With farmer-friendly improvements to zoning and the town code, the Town should also improve and streamline the town hall's business development assistance and responsiveness to farmers as contributors to the local economy.
- Nurture farmer networks and partnerships that help farmers access local, regional, and institutional markets.

### **3. Facilitate Agricultural Education and Technical Assistance**

- Expand agricultural education, mentorship programs, youth engagement, and farmer support services by working with Cornell Cooperative Extension, Saratoga County agencies, nonprofit organizations, and local schools.

- 
- Improve access to technical assistance, financing, and business planning resources to ensure farmers have the tools needed to succeed.

#### **4. Enhance Marketing and Public Awareness of Agriculture**

- Implement robust, improved public communications and public outreach to amplify residents' consistently expressed strong support for Clifton Park's farms.
- Develop an "Eat Local" campaign.
- Create a renewed Agricultural Resource Center, reflecting the historic agricultural roots in Clifton Park
- Identify additional farmers' market sites in Clifton Park to support local farmers.
- Enhanced outreach reinforces agriculture's value, reduces farm-neighbor conflicts, and strengthens community relationships.

#### **5. Build Partnerships**

- Foster farmer-to-farmer networking opportunities in Clifton Park and the region.
- Support collaborations among farmers, landowners, non-farm landowners, the Town, Saratoga County, state agencies, federal agencies, conservation organizations, and educational institutions. The Plan intends to involve a wide variety of people in Town in farming and appreciating agriculture, and the Plan offers open arms and ideas for everyone to do so.
- Create and grow various types of partnerships to expand farm viability programs, coordinate conservation efforts, and leverage shared expertise.

#### **6. Improve Agricultural Infrastructure**

- Work with partners to promote investments in infrastructure that supports farming—such as access to processing facilities, small-scale cold storage, shared equipment, farm-to-market distribution systems, and improved access to large-animal veterinary services. These improvements help reduce operational costs and increase competitiveness.

#### **7. Increase Funding Opportunities**

- Continue to Seek Outside Funding Sources: Utilize this publicly-created plan and future advisory committee to assist Clifton Park and Clifton Park farmers in leveraging state grants such as the NYS Department of Agriculture and Markets' Farmland Protection Implementation Grant Program, federal grants such as through USDA, and any philanthropic funding opportunities. The Plan itself strengthens the Town's competitiveness by providing clear priorities, data, mapping, and stakeholder support.
- Increase local investment in the town's permanent agricultural conservation easement program (PACE), which is also known as purchase of development rights (PDR) locally.
- Explore other funding stream mechanisms that may require regional and state-wide support, or even state authorization, to implement, as outlined in the plan's recommendations.

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## High-Level Findings

The planning process revealed several overarching insights that shape the Plan’s recommendations:

- **Agriculture remains highly valued.** More than 85% of residents surveyed believe protecting farmland is “very important,” and farms are strongly linked to the Town’s identity and quality of life.
- **Economic viability is the greatest challenge.** Rising costs, limited services, development pressure, and low farm profitability pose significant threats.
- **Development pressure continues to increase.** Clifton Park is among the most rapidly growing areas of the Capital Region, making farmland protection urgent and time-sensitive.
- **High-quality soils and active farms remain concentrated in the western portion of Town.** These lands form the backbone of Clifton Park’s agricultural landscape and merit priority protection.
- **Farm-neighbor conflicts are common but manageable.** Improved communication, education, and zoning can substantially reduce tensions.
- **The agricultural community is diverse and resilient.** It includes traditional farms, orchards, horse farms, small-scale specialty farms, value-added producers, and agritourism enterprises—all of which contribute to a robust agricultural economy.
- **Clifton Park has a strong foundation for success.** Existing conservation programs, successful PDR projects, engaged community members, and strong Town leadership provide a solid platform for implementing this Plan.

## This Plan Provides the Best Path Forward

This Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan is grounded in extensive public engagement, rigorous analysis, and the collective expertise of farmers, planners, and regional agricultural professionals. It offers a realistic and achievable framework that:

- Aligns with state and federal agricultural and conservation programs.
- Balances development needs with the long-term protection of critical farmland.
- Provides clear, prioritized actions and implementation steps.
- Strengthens the Town’s ability to secure funding.
- Supports economic resilience while protecting the Town’s rural character.
- Reduces regulatory barriers and improves farm-friendly land use policies.
- Responds directly to community values and the expressed needs of farmers.

No single tool can preserve agriculture on its own. This Plan integrates multiple approaches—land conservation, zoning updates, public education, economic development, and partnership building—to create a long-lasting, adaptable strategy that will support both today’s farms and the next generation of farmers.

## Call to Action

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The Town of Clifton Park now has a clear, actionable blueprint to protect its remaining farmland, support its agricultural community, and preserve the character and quality of life that residents cherish. Implementing this Plan will require sustained commitment, strategic investment, and continued collaboration with farmers, landowners, partner organizations, and the public. By moving forward with the recommendations in this Plan, the Town affirms that agriculture is central to its identity and that it is committed to ensuring that farms remain viable, productive, and valued for generations to come.

With thoughtful planning, strong partnerships, and targeted investment, Clifton Park can safeguard its agricultural heritage, strengthen its local economy, and secure a vibrant, resilient future rooted in the land.



*Members speaking at the first Farmland Protection Plan Advisory Committee meeting.*

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# Introduction: An Overview of History & the Planning Process

## Clifton Park's Agricultural Heritage

*By John L. Scherer, Clifton Park Historian*

Until the 1960s, with the opening of the Northway to Clifton Park, followed by the construction of the Clifton Knolls subdivision, Clifton Park was strictly a community of farms. The only other competing industry was the mining of Clifton Park sand and gravel, used to create molds for creating cast iron. Thus, from the days of the first settlers at Fort's Ferry in the 1680s to the era of subdivisions of the 1960s, the farmers in Clifton Park did subsistence farming, grew produce for market, and raised dairy cows and cattle, chickens, and other livestock. They competed with neighbors at the Saratoga County Fair, attended meetings and social events at the Mohawk Valley Grange, and their children attended 4-H sessions. Even with the spread of suburbia, a number of farms and apple orchards still exist. These farms are celebrated with Clifton Park's annual Farm Fest event in September.



*The Mohawk Valley Grange Hall, Sugar Hill Road, now part of the Town of Clifton Park's Heritage Square at Grooms Corners historic properties*

Farming in Clifton Park began with the first settlers at Fort's Ferry in the 1680s. This farmland, now a part of the Vischer Ferry Historic and Nature Preserve, was inundated with water as the Mohawk River was dammed to create the Erie Barge Canal, which opened in 1915. Early farmland owned by the Van Vranken family, descendants of Ryckert Claase Van Vranken, Clifton Park's first settler, is located along both sides of Riverview Road just east of Vischer Ferry. This farm was officially named a double-century farm by New York State in 1938. It had been operated by the same family for over

200 years. George Van Vranken (1872-1954), the 7<sup>th</sup> generation and last member of the family to operate the farm, donated gold medals to the town history collection that his father won at the Panama-Pacific World's Fair for his apples and peaches.



*Idylwilde Orchards, Riverview Road, Vischer Ferry*

In the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, part of this farm was sold to the Fellows family, who operated a large dairy farm. The huge 1880 barn and farmhouse still survive as part of the Vischer Ferry Historic District, a historic district listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1975, with its boundaries increased in 1997. The present owners use the land and barn for horses.

The farmhouse and barns of Richard Van Vranken also still exist on Crescent Road, just west of Van Vranken Road, another major farm that had an apple orchard associated with it. Early tools used on this farm, dating to the early 1800s, have been donated to the town history collection by descendant Lyle Van Vranken and are displayed at the Historic Grooms Tavern, along with detailed models of an early Dutch barn and a later dairy barn owned by the Van Vranken families.



*Model of the VanVranken Early Dutch Barn and later dairy barn with early 18th-century farm tools used on the farm exhibited at Historic Grooms Tavern.*

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Along present-day Route 146, there were a number of early farms whose farmhouses and barns still exist. The earliest farm was that of Nathan Garnsey, who came to Clifton Park from Connecticut in 1786. He built his fine federal brick home in 1791. Although much of the farmland is now a town park known as Garnsey Park, the house and outbuildings are still owned by descendants of the builder. Down the road, another fine brick c. 1830 farmhouse exists that was built by one of Nathan's sons, Levi Garnsey. A large barn with a roof dated 1887 remains on the property. In more recent years, this farm was operated by the Caldwell family.

Further north in Clifton Park was the 138-acre farm of William Hamilton (1805-1858), whose 1835 farmhouse and barns still survive on MacElroy Road. This farm was later owned by Clifton Park's country doctor, John MacElroy (1872-1954), from 1928 to 1949. Besides being the medical doctor for Clifton Park, Dr. MacElroy raised prize livestock and vegetables that he exhibited at the Saratoga County Fair. In fact, for a number of years, he was a judge at the fair. He was very interested in animal husbandry and raised beagle dogs for hunting.



*Dr. MacElroy Farm, MacElroy Road, Jonesville*

The Walthalla Farm on Riverview Road, Rexford, was acquired by Frank and Jessie Zoller in 1928. The couple ran a dairy farm and owned a herd of Brown Swiss cows. In 1932, Frank Zoller was gored to death by one of the bulls. It is said that his ghost can still be seen walking Riverview Road. It was a large dairy farm, later a golf course. Farms were everywhere in Clifton Park. Farming was the way of life, and it seems that everyone in Clifton Park participated.

The Clark Farm on Vischer Ferry Road, now the Summer Hill subdivision, was over 100 acres. It was established by Cyrus Clark (1795-1880), who arrived from Springfield, Massachusetts, about 1820. The farm was operated by several generations of the Clark family. Diaries kept by members of the family describe farm life during the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. Besides raising produce, the farm had calves, pigs, and chickens. Family photo albums document life on the farm, showing wagons loaded with hay, farm machinery pulled by horses, and the family enjoying homegrown watermelon. The early farmhouse built by Cyrus Clark still exists adjacent to Summer Hill. Some of the original furnishings of this farmhouse are on exhibit in the Historic Grooms Tavern.



*Bringing in the Hay on the Clark Farm*

In more recent memory, there was the farm of Harold Kittell (1919-2003) and his wife Helen, just south of the Clark farm on Vischer Ferry Road, now the Oaks subdivision. Among other agricultural pursuits, Harold raised chickens and sold eggs. Ten thousand chickens produced eggs. His self-serve Egg-A-Torium was a landmark in town in the 1960s and 1970s. Harold also sold potatoes and raised sheep. A visitor could also ride horses, get a ride in a hay wagon, and purchase a Christmas tree. Harold was a long-time master of the Mohawk Valley Grange, where farming families attended square dances, oyster suppers, and other forms of entertainment. The Kittells sold their farm in 1986.



*Harold Kittell*



*Helen Kittell*

Across the road from the Clark farm was the Gifford Farm, where you could purchase strawberries, blueberries, peas, corn, and a variety of other farm produce. Kids often had their first jobs at Gifford's Farm picking berries. Now, Vischer Landing and Wyncrest neighborhoods occupy the site.

Other farms along Vischer Ferry Road and Clifton Park Center Road, operated by Heath Peck, Walter Gifford, Irving Peck, and the Vincent Secada farm on Barney Road, were all purchased by Robert Van Patten and are today occupied by Clifton Knolls.



*Heath Peck Farmhouse*

The farm of George and Ella Rioux along Crescent and Boyack Roads was purchased by Rosen and Michels in the late 1960s and became Crescent Estates. The late 1960s and early 1970s were a period of transition for Clifton Park as the town changed from a farming community to a bedroom community for commuters to jobs in Albany and Schenectady.

A large farm operated by Walter Englemore (1892-1962) was close to Exit 9 of the Northway. Englemore operated a truck farm and would take his produce to market in Menands, but in the early 1970s, he was approached by a developer and sold his farm for what would open as Clifton Country Mall in 1975. In a 2009 interview with Walt Englemore's daughter, Ruth Peck, she described life as a child on the farm, picking berries and helping to bring in the hay. They had three cows and two horses, chickens, ducks, a few pigs, a variety of vegetables, and berries.



*Walter Englemore Taking Produce to Market*

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Besides these sprawling farms, there were hamlets where farmers could acquire goods at the general store, pick up their mail, or socialize in the tavern. Each of the hamlets in Clifton Park had a tavern that served both travelers and the community. It was a place where farmers could share information and catch up on the latest news. A public room in the tavern was used for social events and political meetings. The Historic Grooms Tavern, now a historical and cultural center, is located at Grooms Corners, not far from the Mohawk Valley Grange, in the center of a former farming community. It was here in April 1828 that the Town of Clifton Park was formed.



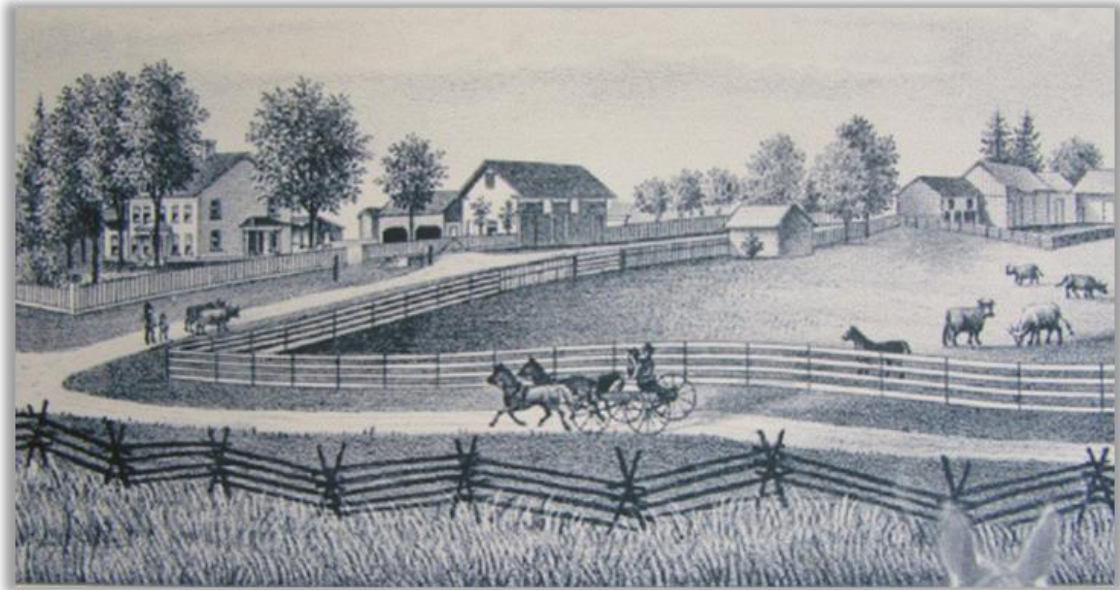
*The Historic Grooms Tavern, at the Sugar Hill Road and Grooms Road intersection*

Such was life in pre-Northway Clifton Park. However, farms and agriculture have not disappeared totally from the Clifton Park stage. A number of working farms have been continuously farmed for decades, primarily in southern Clifton Park along Riverview and Grooms Roads. Shepherd's Hey, a sheep farm on Riverview Road near the Halfmoon town line, is operated by Larry Syzdek and Ruth Olmsted. Riverview Orchards on Riverview Road, which was started by Howard Barrett, is operated by his daughter Isabel Prescott and her son, Kevin Shea. Bowman Orchards on Sugar Hill Road, now operated by Kevin Bowman, is on the same farmland that was owned by William Shephard in the

early 1800s. Shephard had married Margaret MacIntosh, daughter of Alexander and Janet MacIntosh, who owned the adjacent farm on Sugar Hill Road. Margaret's brother John settled in Ontario, Canada, and propagated an apple that now bears his name, an apple that is now grown at Bowman Orchards.

On Grooms Road, across the road from the Historic Grooms Tavern, and just east of what was the Brown Farm, is the historic farm of Nicholas Vischer and Catharine Van Vranken, established in 1802. The farm, now known as King Crest Farm, has been operated by the Eells family and their sons. The lovely 1802 farmhouse and barns still echo their glory years as a working farm. The Town purchased agricultural conservation easements on 41 acres of King Crest Farm from Chuck and Marilyn Eells for its first farmland protection project, and since 2007 now holds a permanent conservation easement on these 41 acres, keeping the land available for farming by private owners.

Until the advent of the Northway, practically everyone in Clifton Park lived on a farm. Although some farm acreage still exists as well as a few remaining farms, much of the farmland has been converted to housing subdivisions. This is then a brief synopsis of the agricultural heritage of Clifton Park, a heritage that we celebrate once a year with Farm Fest and a heritage worth preserving. It is from these roots that Clifton Park has developed.



*The Arnold Family Farm, Northwest Corner of Route 146 and Tanner Road, 1878*

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## Implications of Having an Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan

A well-crafted Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan can provide the Town of Clifton Park with a clear, proactive strategy for sustaining its farming economy, protecting valuable soils, and preserving the Town's rural character that residents value. By identifying priority farmlands, outlining tools to reduce the loss of valuable and productive soil resources, and supporting the economic viability of both traditional and emerging farm operations, this Plan helps ensure that agriculture will remain a thriving, long-term land use that contributes to the local tax base, food security, and community identity. It strengthens the Town's ability to compete for state and federal funding, guides local policy and zoning updates, and fosters stronger partnerships among farmers, municipal leaders, and agricultural organizations. Ultimately, such a plan positions the Town to balance growth with stewardship, enhancing economic resilience while safeguarding farmland for future generations.

The mission of this Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan is to:

- Establish a vision for the long-term economic viability of agriculture and the protection of valuable farmland resources in Clifton Park.
- Evaluate the status of agriculture in the Town and better understand farm characteristics, practices, and needs.
- Outline a roadmap to ensure that the Town of Clifton Park continues to support agriculture.
- Involve local farmers along with the Town and other local, state, and federal agriculture-related agencies and organizations in the development of this plan and empower them to help in implementing the results.
- Identify, prioritize, and promote those agricultural lands in Clifton Park that need protection from development, abandonment, societal pressure, and other challenges.
- Examine what agricultural economic development opportunities should be explored to increase agricultural profitability and the retention of farmland in Clifton Park.
- Determine what national, state, regional, and local financial resources are available that can be used in implementing this Plan.

The new Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan will give the Town:

- A long-term vision and direction to guide policies and programs that enhance agriculture.
- Strategies to maintain agriculture as a critical land use and economic driver.
- A framework for organization and collaboration to promote existing and new farm operations.
- Identification of potential project partners and sources of funding.
- Data, maps, and other information that can be used to support agricultural economic development, public relations, marketing, grant writing, and other programs related to agriculture.

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## The Planning Process, Events, and Milestones

Funded in part by a \$25,000 planning grant from the NYS Department of Agriculture and Markets, the development of this Plan was led by the Town of Clifton Park and guided by an Advisory Committee made up of farmers and representatives of the Town Board, Planning Board, Open Space Committee, and Saratoga PLAN. The Advisory Committee played an instrumental role in the Plan's creation, reviewing draft materials and meeting multiple times over the course of the project. The planning process was facilitated by the Town Planning Department, with assistance provided by consultants from Community Planning & Environmental Associates, Upstate GIS, E.M. Pemrick and Company, and MJ Engineering.

The process included the following activities:

1. **Initiation of the Plan and Planning Process.** Initial steps taken by the Town of Clifton Park included applying for funding and organizing for the development of the plan. These steps included:
  - a. Preparing and submitting a proposal to the New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets for a grant awarded (October 2023).
  - b. Developing a Request for Proposals seeking consultants to help the Town conduct a public planning process, work with the committee, and develop and prepare an agricultural and farmland protection plan for the Town (March 2024).
  - c. Appointing members to serve on the project advisory committee (June 2024).
  - d. Scheduling a kick-off meeting with the Committee, the Town Supervisor, and the consultants (July 2024).
  
2. **Public Engagement.** The process to solicit community input included one-on-one interviews with farmers/producers and agricultural support organizations; surveys of farmers, farmland owners, and residents; outreach at Farm Fest, Winter Fest, and other community events; and a public open house where participants had an opportunity to learn about issues facing local farmers and review ideas for enhancing agriculture in Clifton Park. A website, <https://www.cliftonparkfarms.com/>, was used to keep the public informed and provided additional opportunities for users to submit comments. Specific elements of the public engagement plan were:
  - a. Creating a project website <https://www.cliftonparkfarms.com/> (August 2024).
  - b. Attending Farm Fest to gain feedback from participants (September 2024).
  - c. Developing and analyzing the results of two online surveys: one on perceptions of agriculture, targeted at residents; the other directed to farmers and farmland owners, with questions on their agricultural operations, practices, issues, and opportunities; the town also direct mailed hard copy of the online survey to



- farmers and farmland owners to reach as many farmers as possible who would be interested in responding (September 2024 through February 2025 ).
- d. Conducting interviews with 6 agricultural producers and 5 representatives of agricultural support organizations and Saratoga County Planning Department (September 2024 through January 2025).
  - e. Holding a public open house where participants could learn about the survey results, evaluate maps, comment on the draft vision and goals, and offer community feedback (March 2025).
  - f. Conducting a focused farmer/producer meeting to review the draft vision, goals, and recommendations (October 2025).



**DEAR CLIFTON PARK FARMERS AND FARMLAND OWNERS,**

***We need you*** – Your participation in a Farming Survey helps elevate the importance of this public planning endeavor!

Thank you if you have responded already! If you have not, please fill out the Farming Survey by Friday, February 14, 2025 to provide important input to the Town of Clifton Park Agricultural Farmland Protection Planning process.

To take the Farmer Survey, please visit :  
<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/cpfarmers>  
 or scan the QR code to the right




For project details visit [CliftonParkFarms.com](http://CliftonParkFarms.com)  
 or call the Open Space Coordinator at (518) 371-6054



*Postcard created to promote the Farmer survey to local Farmers and Farmland owners.*

3. **Review of Town and Regional Plans.** The consulting team reviewed existing plans and studies that have helped the Town of Clifton Park and Saratoga County establish land use policies, protect farmland, and preserve open space (Fall 2024).
4. **Data Analysis and Mapping.** Quantitative data from the federal Census of Agriculture and other sources were compiled and analyzed to understand farm characteristics and recent trends in Clifton Park and Saratoga County. In addition, Geographic Information System

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(GIS) mapping was used to inventory and present information on farmland and agricultural land uses in the Town (August 2024 through November 2025).

5. **SWOT Analysis.** Based on the data analysis, mapping, and community input received, a Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) analysis was conducted to identify the key factors influencing agriculture in the Town, serving as a foundation for developing recommendations. (February 2025 through April 2025).
6. **Vision and Goals.** Vision and goal statements were prepared to express the desired future of agriculture in Clifton Park and guide decision-making about the strategies, actions, and programs necessary to sustain and enhance agricultural activity in the Town (May 2025).
7. **Actions and Strategies.** The Committee and consulting team prioritized and recommended strategies and actions to address challenges, protect farmland, and promote agriculture in Clifton Park. These were further refined based on feedback received from farmers/producers at the October 2025 stakeholder meeting (June 2025 through November 2025).
8. **Farm-Friendly Audit.** The consulting team conducted an audit of the comprehensive plan and land use regulations in the Town of Clifton Park to gauge their “farm-friendliness” and determine whether they place any unnecessary barriers on agricultural uses and practices. The audit concluded with a series of recommendations aimed at making zoning and subdivision laws more supportive of agriculture (July 2025).
9. **Draft Plan.** A draft Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan containing all components completed as part of the planning process was developed and released to the public for review. A public meeting about the draft Plan was held to solicit feedback, and refinements to the document were made (November 2025 through January 2026).
10. **Adoption of Plan.** The process of adopting the final Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan will include the following steps:
  - a. Developing an online, user-friendly summary of the Plan that provides maps and narrative for ease of use and understanding of this Plan’s components (To Be Completed).
  - b. Submitting the Final Plan to the Town Board for their consideration, public input, environmental review, and adoption (To Be Completed).
  - c. Referring the Final Plan to the Saratoga County Agricultural and Farmland Protection Board for their review and approval (To Be Completed).
  - d. Referring the Final Plan to the Commissioner of the New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets for their review and final approval (To Be Completed).

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## How is an Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan Used?

This Plan highlights the critical role agriculture plays in Clifton Park. It evaluates current conditions; establishes a desired future where agriculture remains a vital element of the Town's landscape, environment, economy, and quality of life; and offers a range of recommended actions and strategies to help Clifton Park reach its vision.

The actions, strategies, and policies recommended in this Plan aim to solidify and grow the agricultural economy, articulate priority projects, and provide the basis for further protection of critical farmlands in the Town. It is intended to be used by a variety of stakeholders, including farmers, farmland owners, agriculture-related businesses, agricultural service agencies and support organizations, Town staff, and Town decision-makers (including the Town Board, Planning Board, and Zoning Board of Appeals). Equally important, this Plan provides a framework through which local, State, and federal partners can clearly understand the community's vision, priorities, and goals when shaping broader initiatives—ensuring that policies and incentives across all levels of government align with, rather than undermine, local objectives. This is particularly critical given that one of the most significant stressors on farmland today stems from state and federal incentives for Battery Energy Storage Systems, data centers, and community solar utility projects that target large tracts of open space, woodlands, and farmland, often in direct competition with agricultural uses. These issues compound the existing pressures of residential and commercial development with the extension of public infrastructure (water, sewer, energy/electric utilities infrastructure, roads) in active agricultural areas and prime farmland of Clifton Park.

Enhancing agriculture is complex and requires a variety of efforts and initiatives; Multiple stakeholders and partners need to be involved, and multiple actions from zoning to land protection need to take place. Success will come when priority programs are implemented in coordination with the farm community, agricultural service agencies, agricultural support organizations, municipal, County, and New York State governments, and various utilities.

This Plan offers many components that can be used by different stakeholders, decision-makers, and implementers in different ways:

- **Detailed maps.** Town staff along with agencies and organizations such as the Saratoga County Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD), Saratoga County Farm Bureau, Saratoga PLAN, and Saratoga County Cornell Cooperative Extension (CCE) as well as the Planning Board, Zoning Board of Appeals, Open Space Committee, Environmental Conservation Commission, and individual landowners can use the maps to understand where farming is taking place and how it relates to other land uses in the Town. Although the Priority Agricultural Areas Map can guide planning and decision-making, up-to-date Geographic Information Systems should be used whenever possible, and before finalizing decisions involving the conversion of critical farmland. This map is also essential to farmers

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who wish to protect their land through the New York State Farmland Protection Implementation Grants Program or any federal programs.

- **A Farm Friendly Audit.** The Town can use this analysis to enhance its zoning, subdivision, and other land use laws to ensure that barriers to agricultural land uses are minimized.
- **Up-to-date information.** The Plan includes supportive data, charts, tables, and statistics that provide information on agricultural conditions, trends, and issues in Clifton Park/ This information will serve as the factual groundwork for future grant writing, marketing, and promotion of agriculture and agricultural products, in addition to planning, project review, and regulatory decisions.
- **A vision and a set of goals.** These can be used continually as guideposts in decision-making throughout multiple levels of Town government.
- **Actions and strategies.** These are critical components of the Plan that transform the Plan from a descriptive document into a practical roadmap for implementation. While the plan outlines existing conditions, issues, and opportunities, actions and strategies identify the actionable steps that will allow Clifton Park to meaningfully protect its farmland, strengthen its agricultural economy, and respond to the needs of farmers.

Moving forward, the Town of Clifton Park, in collaboration with the many local and regional agricultural organizations and agencies in the region, can take primary leadership to coordinate and implement the Plan. Town staff and officials can use this section to help move priority actions forward into reality. The details offered describe what, how, and who should be involved to successfully launch or expand a program to further agriculture in the Town.

As the Town and its partners implement programs to enhance agriculture, this Plan will be essential in future grant writing and will provide the foundational data, maps, and public input needed to fund and support future programs successfully. This Plan is intended to form the foundational direction, data, and strategies needed to develop new projects, training, and programs, and to seek funding needed to support those actions.

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## Role of Agriculture in Clifton Park

“Agriculture not only creates local jobs, but it also puts food on our tables. We all need to eat, so supporting farms is in essence supporting every other leg of the economy, and I am so proud to be in a community that understands and recognizes this. We will continue to do everything in our power to support farmers.”

Town Council Member Agatha Reid

The importance of agriculture to Clifton Park residents and landowners is enormous. Over 300 Town residents completed a survey about agriculture in the Town, and 89% of them indicated that agriculture was ‘very important,’ with another 11% indicating it is “somewhat important.”

Agriculture has important roles other than economic; it is an important feature of the landscape, contributes to tourism, offers healthy, local food sources, and is valued as a land use that contributes to the quality of life in the Town. Important roles identified by the community were (in order of responses):

- Food and farm products come directly from farms, farmstands, and farmers' markets
- Agriculture retains our community's unique, rural, and historic character
- Farms and agricultural land provide many environmental benefits
- Farmlands provide outdoor and natural areas for recreation
- The community highly values scenic country landscapes
- Farms provide locally sourced, healthy food
- Farms provide job opportunities and support the local economy

The Clifton Park community is concerned about the loss of farmland to development: 85% of survey participants indicated that it is “very important” for farmland to be protected in Town. Among farmers and farmland owners who completed surveys, farmland preservation and protection, education and outreach to the community, and support for farmers related to technical assistance, networking opportunities, and assistance with grants and funding were considered important themes needed to address the challenges in the Town.

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## Clifton Park's Successes in Open Space Conservation & Farmland Protection

Clifton Park has been a leader in the Capital District and the state in planning for and conserving special places and lands in the community in response to public vision and values. The town's Open Space program has realized substantial success in protecting open space, benefiting the rural and natural character of the community

### **Agricultural District Formation.**

In 1994, Clifton Park landowners worked to form an agricultural district, known as District #6 of Saratoga County, which has since been combined into the current Saratoga County Agricultural District #2. The interest in enrolling in the district showed unified support and unity for local farming and helped raise awareness of the development pressures facing farmers, per the 2003 Open Space Plan.

The active farming community in the late 1990s encouraged the Town Board to adopt a Local Right-to-Farm Law and subsequently the initial Term Easement tax relief program for applicable owners of open space, agricultural, and historic properties.

### **Open Space Planning.**

In 2000, the town board and its appointed advisory committee of citizens initiated and conducted a two-year public planning process for a town-wide Open Space Plan adopted in early 2003. The open space plan established the concept for an overall town open space program to be implemented. The open space plan included five major plan concepts and conservation targets:

1. Protect wildlife preserves and watersheds (500 to 1,000 acres)
2. Develop a farmland protection program (project 300 to 600 acres)
3. Conserve scenic landscapes, places, and historic resources (four to six sites/roads designated and interpreted)
4. Create enhanced recreational parkland and ballfields (100 to 200 acres)
5. Create a town-wide, comprehensive trails and pathways system (6 to 10 miles).

In summary, the town's Open Space Plan established a five-year action plan to protect 900 to 1,800 acres.

Upon creating the 2003 Open Space Plan and a strong community conservation vision based on public values, the Town of Clifton Park identified the need for a closer analysis of what is the overall vision for Western Clifton Park, the remaining mostly rural and more undeveloped area of the town. The 2003 open space plan and 2003 comprehensive plan set the stage for a more detailed analysis of the remaining build-out of the Western Part of the Town – culminating in the development of the Western Clifton Park Land Conservation Plan and Generic Environmental Impact Statement (GEIS) adopted in 2005, and in new zoning laws adopted in 2005.

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## **The Western Clifton Park Land Conservation Plan & Generic Environmental Impact Statement study.**

Conducted from October 2003 through March 2005, the Western Clifton Park Land Conservation Plan and Generic EIS examined 13,900 acres of land in the western portion of the Town of Clifton Park, almost half of the total Town land area. The study area was primarily composed of rural lands that include large residential lots, farms, environmentally constrained lands, and undeveloped land, as well as the historic hamlets of Rexford, Vischer Ferry, and Grooms Corners. The Town had attracted relocating residents from nearby urban centers and was facing the prospect of escalating negative impacts from development sprawl in the western portion of the Town (a condition already affecting eastern areas of the Town). In October 2003, the Town imposed a one-year moratorium on large development projects while various growth options were examined. The Western Clifton Park Land Conservation Plan & Generic Environmental Impact Statement includes the following elements:

- A build-out analysis and related fiscal impact analysis of the 14,000 acres of Western Clifton Park to evaluate existing growth capacity and to analyze how this would fit with the newer vision for conserving more open space while allowing for growth.
- A development and conservation approach that would be an acceptable future scenario. This process included the development of the Western Clifton Park Land Conservation Plan and GEIS.
- Zoning recommendations.

Based on the study and GEIS, the Town adopted new zoning amendments for Western Clifton Park in 2005. This new zoning included Conservation Residential zoning with one unit per every three developable acres as the base density (and new requirements for conservation subdivisions requiring a minimum of 50% “permanent open space”) while allowing for flexibilities in layout; a new Hamlet Residential district; and a new Hamlet Mixed Use district.



Guided by the **Open Space Plan** adopted by the Town Board in 2003, and the **Western Clifton Park Land Conservation Plan and GEIS**, Clifton Park acted to permanently protect a range of significant landscapes. The Town has made significant achievements in preserving farmland and open space.

Successes from this program to date include:

- Large protected natural areas are the Dwaas Kill Nature Preserve, North Woods Nature Preserve, Garnsey Park, the southern addition to Veterans Memorial Park known as Mooney Carrese Forest, and 41 acres on Riverview Road - the future Riverview Pond Preserve. The Town also acquired 37 acres from Shenendehowa School District, and after a public planning process, opened Town Center Park in October 2022.
- Adopted the Conservation Residential Zone (CR Zone) oriented to support agriculture and preserve open space in Western Clifton Park while reducing residential density.
- Adopted the **Western Clifton Park Land Conservation Plan Design Guidelines** (included in the Western Clifton Park Land Conservation Plan & GEIS) with emphasis on thoughtful conservation design layout, dark skies emphasis, and maintaining large, uninterrupted open spaces that link to other open space parcels.
- In 2005, the Town Board adopted **the Western Clifton Park Land Conservation Fund and GEIS, and new Zoning Code**, specifically through the Open Space Incentive Zoning (Article VB, adopted 5/9/2005, by Local Law 5-2005) <https://ecode360.com/6715253#6715253> which establishes the mechanism for the Town Board to grant open space incentives in exchange for applicants providing the publicly established community benefits towards the protection of open space, as outlined in the code. It includes the option of payment of \$30,000 per unit of additional density only upon Town Board approval of a potential density increase before the project goes through any Planning Board approval for subdivision review.



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Any funds collected through this Open Space Incentive Zoning tool must be placed in the dedicated open space fund and may be used only for capital projects to permanently protect open space and farmland. A few private development projects applied for and were granted the use of this tool and have paid for additional density. However, there is not currently a pipeline of projects that are utilizing this tool, and thus, this may or may not be a continuing funding stream in the future.

Another source of funding stream to add to the Open Space Capital Fund is penalties paid for violation of the Town's Term Easement Program. The Town has a Term Easement property tax relief program for 15-year to 25-year terms that is available to eligible landowners, and for any substantial violation of the terms and conditions of the term easement program agreement by any landowner, the Town assesses rollback taxes and a penalty, and, subsequently, any penalty funds collected by the Town of Clifton Park as penalties under Section 125, shall be deposited into the Town's dedicated Open Space Capital Reserve Fund. This is not a significant amount, nor a steady stream of ongoing revenue.

Important outside funding streams for the town's land conservation projects are county and state grant programs. The Town has applied for and received grant funding from the Saratoga County Farmland and Open Space Protection Fund for several farmland protection (permanent agricultural conservation easement projects) and fee simple land acquisition projects for properties for parks and nature preserves. The County authorized county grant funding for the Town's permanent agricultural conservation easement on Maple Hill Farm on Ashdown Road, for example.

Another significant funding source for farmland protection projects in Clifton Park is the State of New York through the New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets and its Farmland Protection Implementation Program (FPIG) grant program. The State funded a significant grant for Maple Hill Farm of Ashdown Road. The State had previously worked with the Town on a pilot "lease of development rights" grant program, but these funds were paid back to NYS by the landowners when the landowners made the decision to convert their lands to photovoltaic solar array utilities.

Private funds, as bargain sale/donated value, are another resource that has been utilized as a small portion of value towards the purchase/sale of the permanent conservation easements and fee simple acquisition.

Two conservation subdivision projects applied for and received the new Open Space Incentive Zoning approvals from the Town Board, thus allowing some additional residential density in exchange for the private sector contributing to the Western Clifton Park Open Space Conservation fund, at a rate of \$30,000/per additional unit requested. The two projects were Rolling Meadows Conservation Subdivision, off of MacElroy Road, and the Boel Conservation Subdivision, which was ultimately named Bridlewood Estates, off of Crescent Road. These two projects generated nearly \$1 million in revenue towards town open space protection in Western Clifton Park. Additionally, the developments themselves provided 50% permanent open space and provided a high-quality residential product for the immediate owners as well as for the community's value and benefit.

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## Public Lands Acquired/Secured for Permanent Conservation.

### 1. Parcel Additions to Vischer Ferry Nature & Historic Preserve Management Area:

- Van Vranken Water Quality Protection Parcel, 15 Acres off Riverview Road, (2004)
- Pearse Natural Area Parcel, 25 Acres off Riverview Road (2006)
- Jacobson, 0.32-Acre off Riverview Road (2006)
- Mohawk Valley Grange building 0.3 Acres off Sugar Hill Road (2004)
- Thackery Parcel, now known as Palmer House and Apple Barn (2024)
- Wajtowicz property on Riverview Road

### 2. Garnsey Park (a total of 253 Acres) comprised of:

- Qualtere Parcel, 96 Acres (2005)
- Caldwell Parcel, 57 Acres (2007)
- Waite Rd Parcel, 97 Acres (2018) (Saratoga PLAN )
- Hyde Parcels, 3 Acres (2023)

### 3. Dwaas Kill Natural Area:

- Dwaas Kill Nature Preserve, more than 240 acres, Pierce Road, Kinns Road, and Carlton Rd (2006)
- Bear Brook Corridor Parcels acquired from L. Straney (2017)
- Dwaas Kill Natural Area Parcels donated by Saratoga PLAN (2018)

### 4. Mohawk Landing Nature Preserve, about 6 acres, off Riverview Road (lands acquired in 2006). This property is adjacent to Riverview Orchards, a permanently protected farm, and the Mohawk River Barge Canal.

### 5. Barney Road Golf Course, 39 Acres, Barney Road (2010)

### 6. Riverview Road 41 Acres, also known as the Riverview Pond Preserve (2011). Strategic, public access improvements slated for 2026.

### 7. Mooney Carrese Forest, 79 acres (2013), off of NY Rt 146A, adjacent and connected to Veterans Memorial Park.

### 8. Town Center Park. 39 Acres, between Moe Road and Southside Drive/Maxwell Drive (2018). Public Planning 2019. The town adopted the Town Center Park Master Plan (2020).

## Permanently Protected Farmlands.

Four (4) farms were permanently protected to support farmers and ensure the lands stay in agricultural use and free from non-farm development. The Town purchased agricultural conservation easements (PACE) for a Deed of Conservation Easement on each of these farms:

- King Crest Farm on Grooms Road (2007)
- Riverview Orchards on Riverview Road (2006)
- Heckman Farm on Hubbs Road (2009)

- 
- Maple Hill Farm on Ashdown Road (2023)

The Town Board purchased (and extinguished) the agricultural conservation easements on the four farms and has permanently protected these lands through the legal tool of holding a Deed of Conservation Easement customized for each property and filed with Saratoga County, just as any other real property is filed.

Each of these permanent Conservation Easements held by the Town of Clifton Park is registered with the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation to ensure the permanency of the records for these Conservation Easements, as these CEs remain valid instruments through any ownership changes by the private landowners. The Town's efforts to create these individual conservation easements with willing landowners using a combination of state, county, and local funds have provided the farms with capital to be able to invest in their operations and plan for sustainable futures.

- Creation of Permanent Open Space through Conservation Subdivisions. Many acres of open space have been permanently protected through the Conservation Residential (CR) Zoning application of 50% permanent open space through the conservation subdivision approval process in Western Clifton Park. Major key areas of permanent open space created and protected are:
  - Rolling Meadows Permanent Open Space (41 Acres), off Fieldstone Drive (north of, and adjacent to Veterans Memorial Park and including a nature path interconnection)
  - Bridlewood Estates Permanent Open Space, Saddle Creek Circle
  - Windhover Farm Permanent Open Space (93 Acres) off of Grooms Road. This permanent open space is north of the residential subdivision and west of the permanently protected lands of King Crest Farm
- Planning for the western portion of Town to create a Green Belt and habitat corridor that links existing preserves and open spaces stretching from Veterans Memorial Park & Mooney Carrese Forest in the north to the Mohawk River and the Vischer Ferry Nature and Historic Preserve in the south.
- Identification of farms and open spaces in need of protection.

### **Protected Farmland**

Approximately 1,288 acres of land in Clifton Park are protected by some type of conservation easement, such as the Permanent Conservation Easements (involving purchase/sale/donation of a Deed of Conservation Easement) or Term Easements (tax relief for a 15- to 25-year term). There are distinct differences between the two types of easements, each offering options in the farmland conservation "toolbox." A Deed of Conservation Easement (CE) between a property owner and a qualified conservation easement deedholder (which can be a municipality or an accredited land trust) is a legal instrument created for permanent protection of the property as defined in the CE.

Permanent conservation easements typically involve the purchase/sale of development rights as a means to compensate property owners for the permanent extinguishment of development rights on their property, based on professional real estate appraisals. These projects require capital/funding, and the town has used county and state grants to help leverage local funds, as well as donated value from willing property owners.

Term Easements are not permanent. The tax relief benefits only apply for the duration of the term, and property owners who choose to leave the program (and benefits) must pay a penalty per the code if they end their term early. Notably, when the town’s first round of 15-year Term Easement holders came close to the 15-year mark, the Town Board adopted a code change to allow for a renewal process for property owners, to support keeping lands open.

<b>Table 1. Protected Farmland, Town of Clifton Park</b>			
<b>Agricultural Parcels with Term Easements (not all parcels with Term Easements in Clifton Park)</b>	<b>Parcels</b>	<b>Acres</b>	<b>Farmland Acres</b>
Permanent Conservation Easements (Deed of Conservation Easements Filed with Saratoga County and NYS DEC)	5 (on 4 farms)	257	102
Term Easements (Agriculture)	13	642	130
Term Easements (Open Space)	12	389	80
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>1,288</b>	<b>312</b>

Permanent Conservation Easements

The Town holds the deeds of permanent conservation easements on 257 acres secured through the purchase of development rights with four (4) property owners/farmers. The protected farmland includes 41 acres on Grooms Road at King Crest Farm, 71 acres on Ashdown Road at Maple Hill Farm, 87 acres on Riverview Road at Riverview Orchards, and 59 acres on Hubbs Road at Clover Meadow Farm.

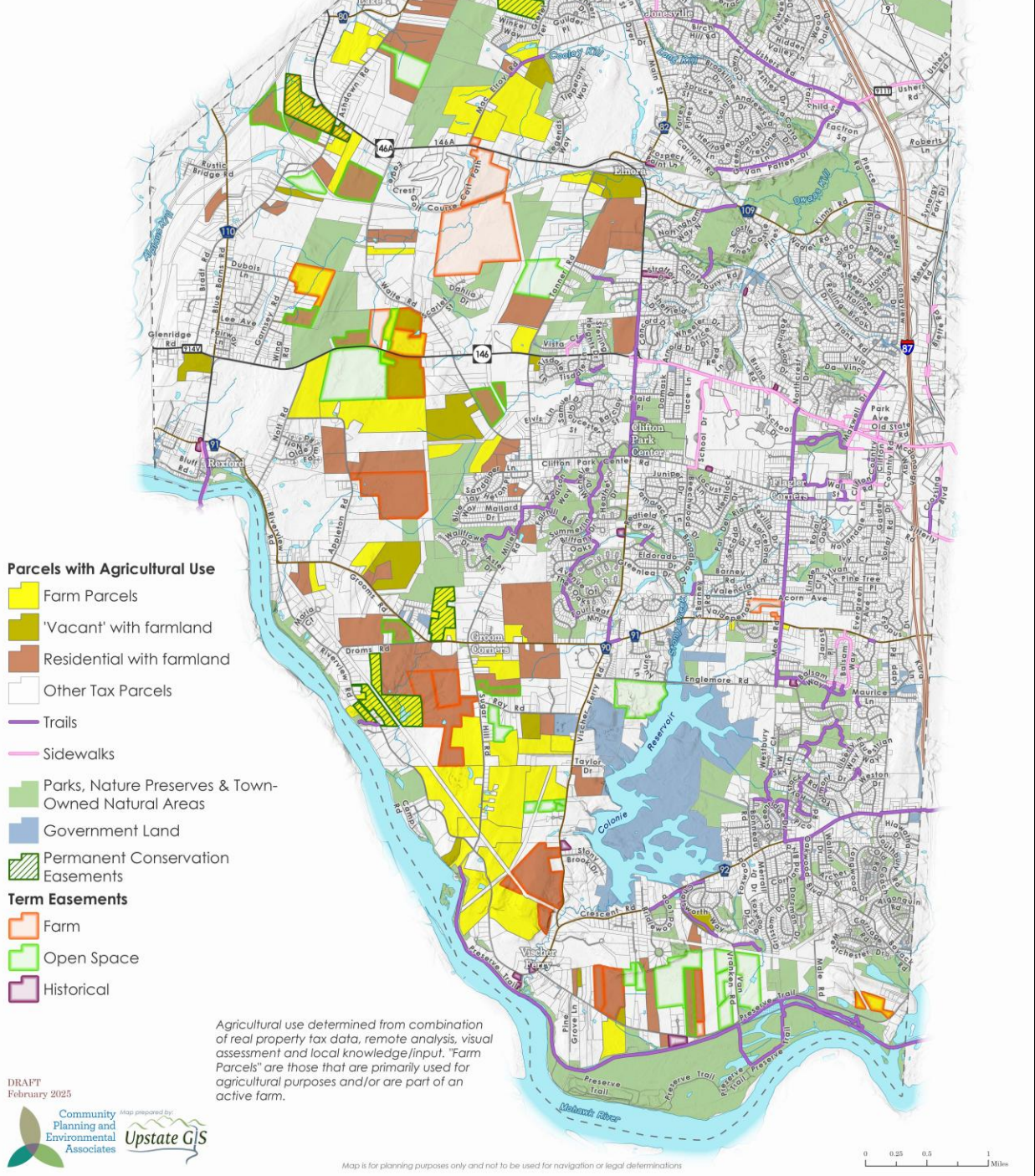
Term Easements

In addition to a permanent conservation easement option for landowners, the Town offers term conservation easements for farmland, open space, and historic preservation properties (with its own special considerations). This study does not account for historic easements. The open space and agricultural easements are subject to a minimum term of 15 years and a maximum of 25 years. Approximately 1,000 acres of land in Clifton Park are protected by term easements.

The map on the following page details those parcels and farms that have been protected with permanent conservation easements or term easements.

# Town of Clifton Park Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan

## Conservation, Recreation and Agriculture



Map 1: Conservation, Recreation and Agriculture

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# Profile of Agriculture

## Agriculture in Saratoga County

According to the Census of Agriculture, Saratoga County had 604 farms on 73,771 acres in 2022. There were 6% fewer farms in the County than there were in 2007, but slightly more than in 2017 (591).

Other highlights from the 2022 Census of Agriculture on farms in Saratoga County are listed below and provide a context for understanding farms in Clifton Park.

### About the Census of Agriculture

The Census of Agriculture is a complete count of farms conducted by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) every five years, with the most recent produced in 2022. Data is available at the national, state, and county levels.

For census purposes, the USDA defines a farm as a place that produces and sells or normally would sell at least \$1,000 of agricultural products. Orchards, nurseries, greenhouses, tree plantations, apiaries, and commercial horse boarding operations are all considered farms if they meet the criteria.

- Land dedicated to agriculture made up 14.2% of the County's total land area, a reduction from 17.6% in 1982. The average farm in Saratoga County was 122 acres, well below the state average of 212 acres.
- The market value of products sold by Saratoga County farms in 2022 was \$115.5 million, with livestock, poultry, and their products accounting for \$77.7 million (about two-thirds of the total) and crops for \$37.8 million. The majority of farms (78%) had annual sales of less than \$50,000, while 9% had sales of at least \$250,000 per year.
- Saratoga County ranked #26 of all New York counties in the total value of agricultural products, up from #27 in 2017. It was the top county in the state in terms of the value of horses, ponies, and donkeys sold, the same rank as in 2017. The County was ranked #9 in the sales of poultry and eggs and #10 in the sales of nursery and greenhouse products, flowers, and sod.
- Classified by principal product – the crop or animal that accounted for at least half of their agricultural production – about 9% of farm operations in the County in 2022 were beef cattle farms, 9% were nurseries and greenhouses, 7% were vegetable farms, and 6% mainly produced oilseeds and grain. More than half of all farms, however, raised a combination of livestock or grew a mix of crops.
- Saratoga County ranked #11 of all New York counties in the sales of fruit. Cash receipts for fruits and berries grew from \$3.1 million in 2007 to \$13.7 million in 2022. In constant (inflation-adjusted) dollars, this was an increase of more than 200%.
- In 2022, 21% of all Saratoga County farms (compared to 17% of farms statewide) sold agricultural products directly to consumers at farmstands, on-farm markets, and farmers'

markets, with average annual sales of about \$95,000. In addition, 7% of farms produced and sold value-added products, 5% sold their products wholesale to retail stores and institutions (such as schools), and 4% earned income through agritourism and recreational services. All of these activities have increased among local farms in the last ten to fifteen years.

## Agriculture in Clifton Park

Maps 1-3 show where agricultural activity is taking place in Clifton Park based on a combination of real property tax data, remote analysis, visual assessment, and local knowledge. As reflected on the maps, most farms (and orchards) are located in the western half of the town, with concentrations along Riverview and Sugar Hill Roads, Appleton Road, Tanner Road, Ashdown Road, and Route 146A, MacElroy Road, and Hubbs Road, and near Grooms Corners.

Land in agricultural use in Clifton Park covers an estimated 4,052 acres. Only 30 parcels are classified in real property assessment records as agricultural; other parcels currently being used for agriculture are classified as vacant land or residential. As illustrated in the table below, field crops and hay account for 2,421 acres or nearly 60% of the acreage. Fruit orchards are on 552 acres, while horse farms cover 415 acres.

Consistent with county trends, many farms in the Town sell products directly to the public at farmstands and farm markets, “u-pick” operations, and farmers’ markets. Some sell their products to other businesses, including small “mom and pop” stores, cooperatives, and on-farm markets operated by other farms. Slightly more than half of the farmers responding to the farmer survey indicated that they do not market or advertise their products, while a third rely on word of mouth and past customers as their primary means of marketing. Relatively few farms in Clifton Park have a website or use social media for promotion.

### Produced in Clifton Park

- Beef
- Corn for grain or feed
- Cultivated plants and flowers
- Eggs
- Grain
- Hay
- Honey
- Horses and ponies
- Maple products
- Milk
- Orchard fruit (e.g., apples, peaches)
- Other fruit (e.g., berries)
- Pigs/hogs/swine
- Poultry
- Pumpkins
- Sheep, goats, and their products
- Sweet corn
- Vegetables

### More About Identification of Agricultural Parcels

Parcels included in the agricultural inventory and maps were determined from a combination of Real Property Tax Data, remote analysis, visual assessment, and local knowledge/ input. “Farm Parcels” are those that are primarily used for agricultural purposes and/or part of an active farm.

# Town of Clifton Park Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan

## Parcel with Agricultural Use and Agricultural District

### Parcels with Agricultural Use

- Farm Parcels
- 'Vacant' primarily farm fields
- 'Vacant' with 7+ acres of farmland
- 'Vacant' with <7 ac farmland
- Residential with likely rented farmland
- Residential with 7+ acres of farmland
- Residential with <7 ac farmland
- Other Tax Parcels
- County Agricultural District
- Structures
- Impervious Surfaces
- Solar Facilities

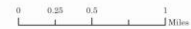
**Darker complementary colors on each parcel indicates open farmland**

Agricultural use determined from combination of real property tax data, remote analysis, visual assessment and local knowledge/input. "Farm Parcels" are those that are primarily used for agricultural purposes and/or are part of an active farm.

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Map 2: Parcel with Agricultural Use and Agriculture District

<b>Table 2. Farm Types in the Town of Clifton Park</b>			
	<b>Parcels</b>	<b>Parcel Acres</b>	<b>Farmland Acres</b>
Field Crops	37	1,558	428
Hay	29	863	325
Horses	22	415	144
Orchard	13	552	191
Livestock	10	334	98
Produce	9	218	36
Undetermined/Non-Active	5	84	7
Greenhouse	2	2	0
Apiary	1	5	0
Nursery	1	21	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>129</b>	<b>4,052</b>	<b>1,229</b>

## Agricultural Districts

The purpose of agricultural districts is to protect and promote the availability of viable land for farming. It protects commercial farming practices from unreasonably restrictive local laws to reduce conversion pressure by increasing on-farm profitability. Agriculture in the district is considered a priority land use, and farm operations are protected from the enactment and administration of restrictive local regulations.

Saratoga County Consolidated Agricultural District #2 comprises approximately 55,000 acres within 12 municipalities, including Clifton Park. It is primarily located in the southwestern portion of the County where the soils are well-suited for farming purposes. About 57% of the acreage in the district countywide is farmed.

The boundaries of Consolidated Agricultural District #2 incorporate 3,580 acres in Clifton Park, as shown on Map 2, including many actively farmed parcels, and also inactive ones. Of this total, 1,576 acres are primarily farming; agriculture is a secondary use on 880 acres, and there are 1,124 acres of non-farm uses. Thus, 69% of the land in the agricultural district in Clifton Park is farmed. These figures are as of 2022, when the County conducted its last eight-year review of the Agricultural District in accordance with Agriculture and Markets Law Article 25-aa, Section 303-a.

Landowners continue to apply for and enroll in the Ag District, including one new farm property in 2025, an active horse farm on Hubbs Road. Property owners/farmers can request to be added to the Ag District every year during October through an application process with Saratoga County Planning and the Saratoga County Agriculture and Farmland Protection Board.

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Clifton Park has two seasonal farmers' markets. The Saratoga Farmers' Market organization operates one that takes place at Shenendehowa United Methodist Church on Route 146; the other is held at Rexford Landing Plaza on Grooms Road. Multiple farmers, from both within and outside the Town, participate in the weekly markets. Farmers' markets in Ballston Spa and Saratoga Springs, as well as the Schenectady Greenmarket, provide additional opportunities for selling farm products.

The majority of businesses that provide equipment, supplies, and services to the agricultural community are located outside Clifton Park – and in many cases, outside Saratoga County. The nearest USDA-certified meat processing facility, for example, is in Washington County, where there are more farming operations. Not all equipment needed in Town may be available locally: farmers may have to travel to Washington County, or west to Montgomery and Fulton Counties, to purchase farm equipment and machinery; there are equipment dealers in Saratoga County, but they tend to serve the residential and industrial markets. Given the importance of the horse industry, Saratoga County has numerous equine veterinarians, but relatively few large animal and livestock vets, all of them outside Clifton Park. The latter is not unique, as there is a shortage of large animal vets nationwide.



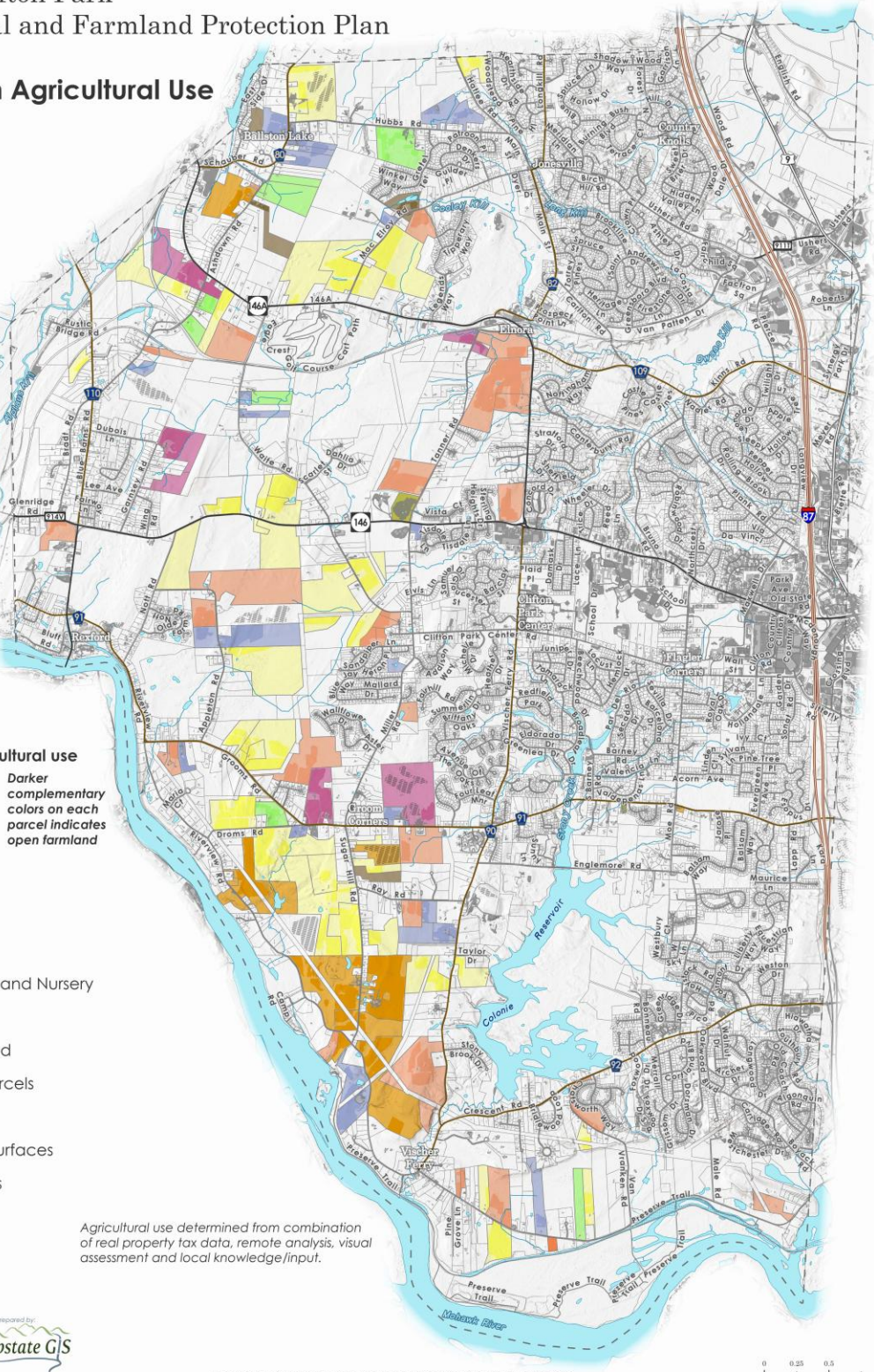
Town of Clifton Park  
Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan



Parcel with Agricultural Use

Parcels with agricultural use

- Field Crops
- Hay
- Horses
- Orchard
- Produce
- Livestock
- Greenhouse and Nursery
- Apiary
- Undetermined
- Other Tax Parcels
- Structures
- Impervious Surfaces
- Solar Facilities



Agricultural use determined from combination of real property tax data, remote analysis, visual assessment and local knowledge/input.

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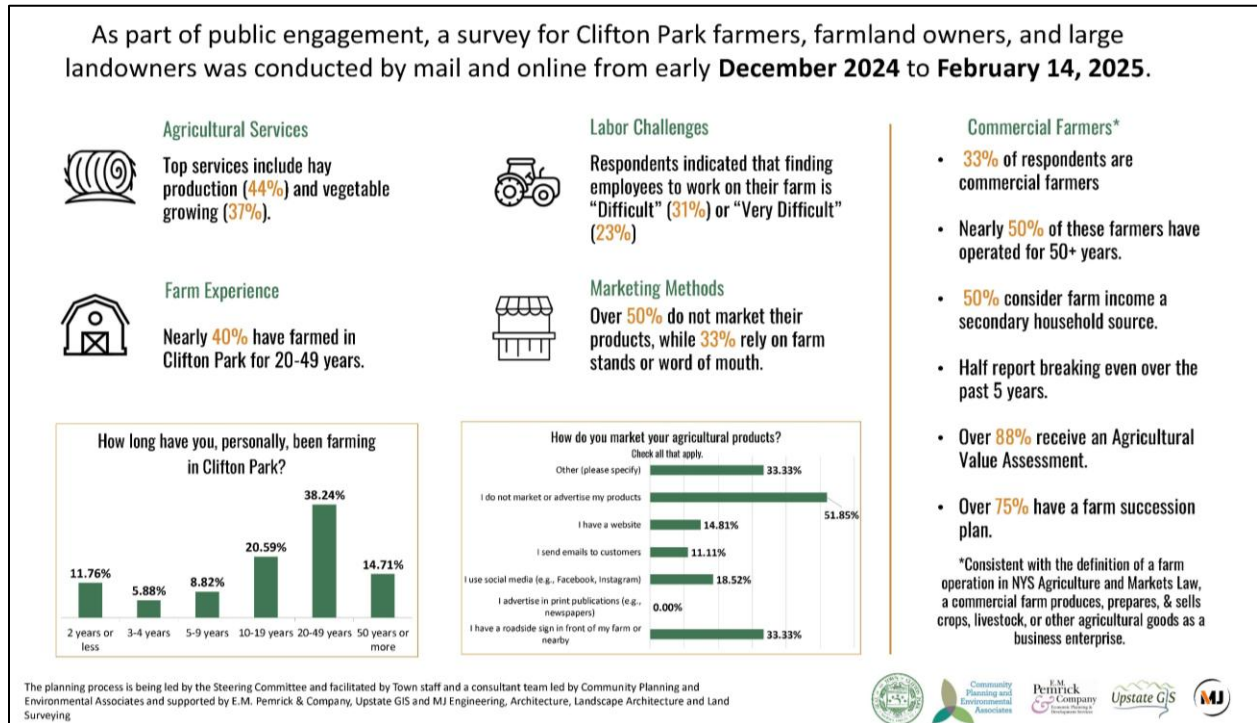
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Map 3: Parcel with Agricultural Use

## Data from the Farmer Survey

As part of the public engagement activities, a survey of Clifton Park farmers and farmland owners was conducted by mail and online from December 2024 to February 2025. Approximately forty responses were received. Although the data are not statistically valid, they provide useful information about farm characteristics, farm-related activities, and issues experienced by farmers in the Town.



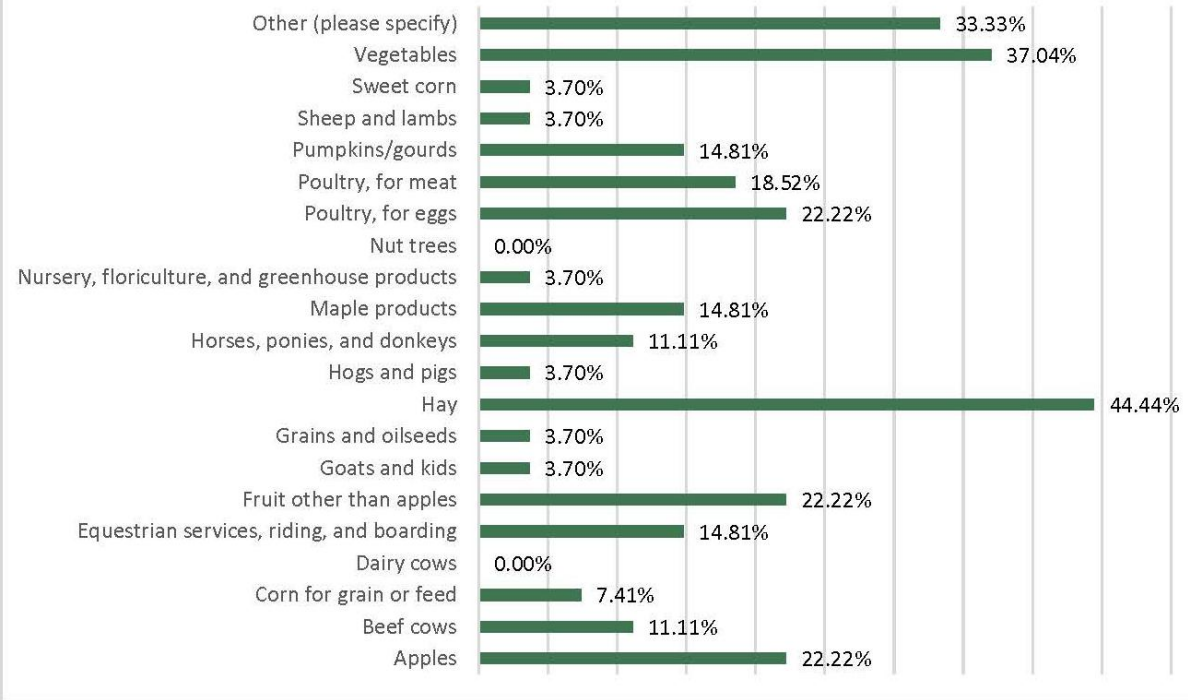
Graphic used to describe Survey Results at the Open House

The following is a summary of survey findings:

- Nearly 40% of the respondents have farmed in Clifton Park for 20-49 years; 21% have farmed in the Town for 10-19 years.
- The size of the average farm operated by the respondents is 32.1 acres.
- Nearly 75% of the respondents have farms that are wholly or partially located in the Agricultural District, and 43% receive an Agricultural Value Assessment to reduce the property taxes on their farmland.
- Asked about the agricultural products they grow or raise, respondents most often selected hay (44%) and vegetables (37%).

- 
- More than 38% of the respondents operate an on-site farm market or farmstand,
  - Over half of all respondents indicated that they do not actively market their products, while 33% rely on word of mouth or roadside signage advertising their farmstand or u-pick operation.
  - Nearly half of the respondents reported that their estimated gross revenues in 2023 were less than \$1,000.
  - Less than 10% of the respondents rely on the income earned by their farm as the primary source of their household income; 22% said that the farm was a secondary source of income.
  - Asked about their priorities for their farm or farmland over the next five years, 58% of the respondents indicated they anticipate no changes, while 50% identified *protecting their farmland* as a priority or high priority. None of the respondents identified selling the entire farm for housing development as a priority. Town Planning Staff, through their experience, note that in the rare instances when farmland has ultimately been sold for residential development, the property owner's intent was typically not disclosed until the formal filing of a subdivision application.
  - Of the respondents who indicated that they did not have a succession plan or were unsure, almost 70% stated that they are not interested in learning more about succession plans.
  - Major issues identified most often by the respondents were farm operation costs (e.g., feed, equipment, fuel), pressure to sell their land for development, and state and federal environmental regulations. In contrast, suitable housing for farmworkers and access to retail, wholesale, and institutional markets were most often identified as not an issue.
  - Nearly 40% of respondents consider finding agriculture-related services and supplies for their farm as very easy, and over a third believe it is easy.
  - On the other hand, respondents indicated that finding employees to work on their farm is difficult (31%) or very difficult (23%).

**(Q10) What agricultural products do you grow or raise, or related services do you provide, at your farm? Check all that apply.**



*Note that this chart represents only those farmers who participated in the survey and should not be interpreted as an absolute characterization of agricultural products grown in Clifton Park. Other agricultural products, such as dairy, are farm operations in Town but are not represented in the survey.*

## Agricultural Soils

The soils in Clifton Park are highly conducive to agriculture. About 90% of the land in the Town is covered by important farmland soils characterized as having high agricultural productivity (see Map 4 - Farmland Soils Map). These soils, however, have qualities that also make them very amenable to development.

Within Clifton Park, 15,564 acres have prime agricultural soils, of which 563 acres (3.6%) are in production. Farmland soils of statewide importance cover 8,268 acres, with 324 acres (3.9%) in production, while soils classified as prime farmland if drained comprise 4,169 acres, of which 338 acres (8.1%) are in production. Based on the data, only 4% of the farmland soils in Clifton Park are currently in production.



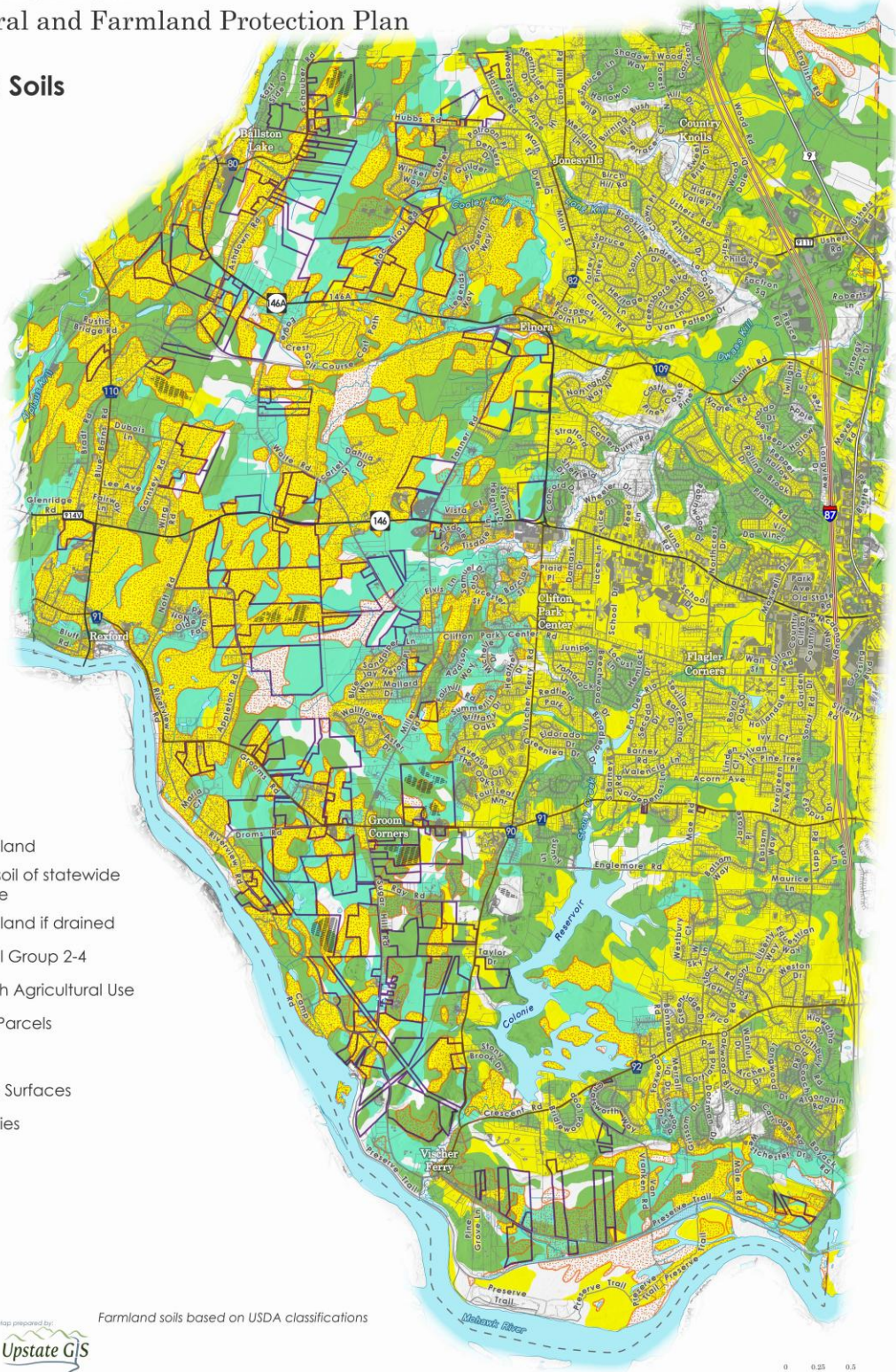
**Table 3. Agricultural Soil Classification, Town of Clifton Park**

	<b>Acres</b>	<b>Acres on Farm Parcels</b>	<b>Acres in Production</b>	<b>Acres on Non-Farm Parcels</b>
Prime Farmland Soils	15,564	1,485	563	14,079
Farmland of Statewide Importance	8,268	1,131	324	7,137
Prime Farmland Soils If Drained	4,169	1,072	338	3,097
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>28,001</b>	<b>3,688</b>	<b>1,225</b>	<b>24,313</b>

# Town of Clifton Park Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan

## Farmland Soils

- Farmland Soils**
-  Prime farmland
  -  Farmland soil of statewide importance
  -  Prime farmland if drained
  -  Mineral Soil Group 2-4
  -  Parcels with Agricultural Use
  -  Other Tax Parcels
  -  Structures
  -  Impervious Surfaces
  -  Solar Facilities



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Farmland soils based on USDA classifications

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0 0.25 0.5 1 Miles

Map 4: Farmland Soils

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## Agricultural Assessments

New York State law allows for a reduction in property taxes on land in agricultural production by limiting the property assessment of the farmland to its prescribed agricultural value assessment. The State's Agricultural Value Assessment is designed to protect the best soils by offsetting carrying costs and limiting development pressure. Owners must apply to the town assessor to receive an agricultural assessment, which is restricted to land used in agricultural production. The land must also meet certain eligibility requirements; in general, it should consist of seven acres or more used in the preceding two years for the production and sale of crops, livestock, or livestock products.

Currently, 48 parcels that total 1,867 acres receive an Agricultural Assessment from the Town of Clifton Park (see Map 3).

## Conversion Pressure

Clifton Park is located in Saratoga County, one of the fastest-growing counties in upstate New York. While New York State's population grew by a moderate 6.5% in the first two decades of the 21st century, the number of residents in Saratoga County increased by 17.4%. The County is known for its high standard of living, robust economy, and strong schools, and it continues to serve as a hub for residential and commercial development. Clifton Park ranks 911 out of 931 towns in New York State for municipal property taxes, indicating it has one of the lowest property tax burdens in the state. The town maintains a status of no General Fund Town Property Tax while managing its budget effectively.

Unfortunately, continuing pressures from residential and commercial development, utilities and infrastructure expansion, and other operational challenges still threaten farms. In addition, study participants clearly understand that state and federal incentives for utility-scale projects, such as community solar, have created economic pressures whereby farmers with long-term agricultural lease agreements can no longer compete against the financial returns offered to large property owners, leading many landholders to forgo farming opportunities in favor of energy development on open space.

Farming in Clifton Park has been heavily impacted by suburbanization. As indicated in the Town's Open Space Plan (2003):

*Since 1950, Clifton Park has permanently lost to residential and commercial development about 80% of the farms and about 85% of the farmland acreage. In 1950, about 170 farms used approximately 17,000 acres (about 56.5% of the town) in Clifton Park for agriculture. [p. 31]*

When the Open Space Plan was completed in 2003, local farms used about 2,600 acres or 8.5% of the Town. Today, farmland accounts for an estimated 4% of Clifton Park's land area, and the Town continues to experience significant development pressure.

With 38,029 residents as of the 2020 Census, Clifton Park is the most populous town in Saratoga County. In the 40 years from 1980 to 2020, Clifton Park's total population increased by 58.5%, with the addition of more than 14,000 residents. The rate of growth was higher in Clifton Park than in comparable suburban towns within the Capital Region, including Niskayuna (14.7%), Bethlehem

(11.9%), Guilderland (8.2%), and East Greenbush (7.6%). The Capital District Regional Planning Commission projects that the number of residents in Clifton Park will reach 42,088 by 2040.

<b>Table 4. Population and Housing Trends, Town of Clifton Park, 1980-2020</b>		
	<b>Population</b>	<b>Housing Units</b>
1980	23,989	7,821
1990	30,117	10,880
2000	32,995	13,069
2010	36,705	14,737
2020	38,029	15,741
<b>Change, 1980-2020</b>		
Number	14,040	7,920
Percent	58.5%	101.3%
<i>Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Decennial Census</i>		

Convenient access to the Adirondack Northway, well-regarded school districts, abundant recreational amenities, and diverse shopping and dining options contribute to Clifton Park’s appeal as a place to live. The growing population and demand for housing are compelling draws for builders. According to the Census Bureau, Clifton Park added nearly 2,700 housing units between 2000 and 2020 alone.

In addition, from 2020 through 2023, the Town issued building permits for the construction of 323 housing units, 96% of which were for single-family residences. Residential development continues to reduce the availability of land for farming and open space. As of October 2025, nine major single-family subdivisions in Clifton Park had been approved and were under construction, with 179 units completed or underway and 116 units remaining. There were also six major multi-family projects with 363 housing units approved.

The Land Use Map (Map 5) and the Development Over Time Map (Map 6) show these development patterns in Clifton Park.

# Town of Clifton Park Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan

## Land Use

- Parcels with Agricultural Use**
- Farm Parcels
  - 'Vacant' with farmland
  - Residential with farmland
- Other Parcels**
- Residential
  - Commercial
  - Golf courses
  - Community Services
  - Public Services
  - Vacant
  - Parks, Nature Preserves & Town-Owned Natural Areas
  - Government Land
  - Solar Facilities

Agricultural use determined from combination of real property tax data, remote analysis, visual assessment and local knowledge/input. "Farm Parcels" are those that are primarily used for agricultural purposes and/or are part of an active farm.

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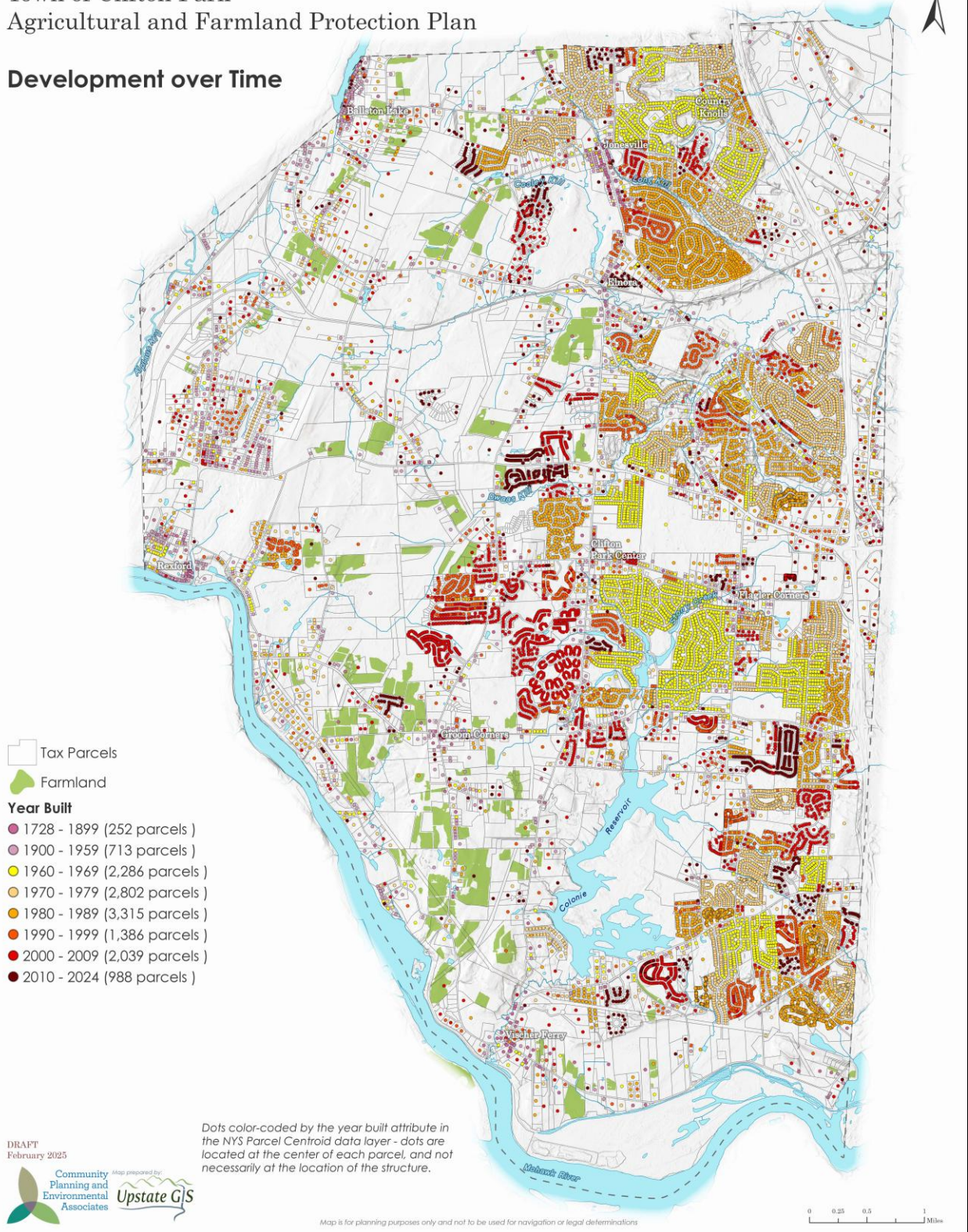
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0 0.25 0.5 1 Miles

Map 5: Land Use

Town of Clifton Park  
Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan

Development over Time



Map 6: Development Over Time

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# Identification of Priority Farmlands in Clifton Park

This section outlines Clifton Park’s effort to define and locate priority farmlands that are key to long-term agricultural viability in the Town. New York State-funded agricultural and farmland protection plans require that the Town work to identify important farmlands. Not only is it a requirement, but it is also critical information needed by landowners who elect to participate in New York’s Farmland Protection Implementation Grant (FPIG) funding program.

Through FPIG, landowners voluntarily place a permanent conservation easement on their agricultural land/farmland to protect the land from future development, through the purchase/sale of agricultural conservation easements, possibly with some donated value. Through the FPIG application process, the application will need to show that the land is identified in the Town’s Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan (Plan) as being ‘important.’ Knowing where priority farmlands are located can also be important for comprehensive plans, open space plans, regulatory updates, and other similar efforts, as well as the town’s term easement program.

How are the important farmlands in Clifton Park identified? Many factors are taken into consideration, such as soils, farmland size, location, and other features. This section describes the methodology used in Clifton Park to identify, score, and map important farmlands.

## Clifton Park Parcel Rating Methodology

To effectively identify and prioritize the thousands of acres of land potentially available for agricultural conservation in Clifton Park, a Geographic Information System (GIS)-based parcel rating system was created using local criteria developed by the Town and project consultants. The rating system first includes criteria that define the level of farmland use and then gives points to each criterion depending on specific conditions on a specific farm (see the Table below in this section). Each farm in the Town is evaluated this way, and the farm-related criteria are scored. Clifton Park values all farmland but recognizes that some lands score higher on important farmland criteria than others.

## Identification and Prioritization

The farm priority scoring was based on over a dozen criteria, as detailed below.

Parcels that were included in the analysis met at least one of these criteria: coded as agricultural use in the tax assessment records, currently receiving an agriculture value assessment, regardless of coded use such as abandoned agriculture, residential with agricultural use, or other uses that were determined to include agriculture, based on committee input and/or reviewing recent ortho imagery. Vacant parcels (assessor codes 311–330) of seven acres or more, as well as parcels of seven acres or more coded as rural residential, residential with agriculture, or residential with recreation, were included in the analysis because they may support agricultural use in the future.

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Parcels that meet these criteria, but were identified by the town as parkland, were not included in the scoring.

The criteria used in the identification of important farmlands are explained as follows<sup>2</sup>:

- Parcels that are used primarily for agriculture, identified as active agriculture in the assessment data (or at least a portion of a farm made up of several parcels) or identified as vacant but receive an agricultural tax assessment, and that are larger in size, were given more points.
- Secondary agricultural use parcels were those that were identified as something other than agricultural use in the assessment data but were either receiving an agricultural assessment or were determined to have active farmland on the parcel. More points were assigned for larger parcels, as the size of the parcel can impact farm viability and value.
- Small parcels (two to less than seven acres), with a known agricultural use other than a hayfield, were included as a separate category so as not to lose these small farms that contribute to the community.
- Farms that have a higher percentage of open land are given more points. More land available on a farm means it is more likely to stay in farming. Acres of active farmland are also a scoring criterion for state farmland protection funding. In addition, acres of non-farmland that are clear of development, forests, and wetlands could theoretically be easily converted to (or back to) farmland in the future. The area of farmland and open land was determined from an analysis of summer 2024 USDA-acquired imagery and windshield surveys.
- High-quality soils (Prime or Statewide Importance) are important to many viable, sustained farm operations. The percentage of high-quality soils on a farm is also a scoring criterion for state farmland protection funding. In addition, the percentage of mineral soils, group 2-4, was included as these are the highest valued soils for farmland in New York State (there are no group 1 soils in Clifton Park).
- Protection of water resources is important for farm viability throughout the town. A 100-foot buffer layer was created for streams, surface waters, and mapped wetlands. The buffer area that each parcel encompasses was then calculated. Parcels that contain over 10 acres of water buffer area have the potential to have a significant positive impact on water quality, depending on how those areas are managed.
- Farms that were adjacent to lands already conserved were given more points. Being adjacent to other lands that will remain undeveloped or farmed means a higher chance of

remaining in agriculture and can create core areas of critical farmland. When farms are adjacent to other farms, there is less fragmentation, fewer nuisance complaints, and a higher chance that the land will stay in farming. Parcels that have close proximity to other active farmland receive higher points than those that are farther apart from each other.

- Parcels that participate in Clifton Park’s term easement program are included, as landowners who participate in the program have demonstrated a desire for long-term protection of their lands, with priority given to those parcels with a farmland easement over an open space easement.
- Parcels that are receiving an agricultural value assessment show a commitment by the landowner to maintain farming on the parcel. Parcels that receive an agricultural value assessment receive additional points in this analysis.
- Parcels that are part of a contiguous block of common ownership received an additional point, as there can be advantages to packaging multiple parcels in a single conservation effort.
- Parcels known to be leased by a farmer, based on committee member research, are important as they support a larger active farm operation.
- Relatively flat parcels are better for farming as steep slopes can be difficult to cultivate and are less appealing to livestock for grazing.

## Results

A total of 277 parcels were included in the analysis. The scoring results can be seen on Map 7. The average total score was 15.9 points, with a range of 4 to 31 points. A higher score represents a parcel that contains more of the important farmland priority criteria (see the chart below). A higher score means the parcel has characteristics that make it a higher priority parcel to preserve as farmland.

The scoring results were broken into five tiers, with Tier 1 representing the highest scoring and highest priority parcels. These tiers were identified using an approximate standard deviation curve that groups more farms in the middle categories and highlights the outliers (both positive and negative). The scoring breakdown for categories is:

- Tier 1 = 23-31 pts (52 parcels)
- Tier 2 = 18-22 pts (51 parcels)
- Tier 3 = 15-17 pts (48 parcels)
- Tier 4 = 10-14 pts (83 parcels)
- Tier 5 = 4-9 pts (43 parcels)

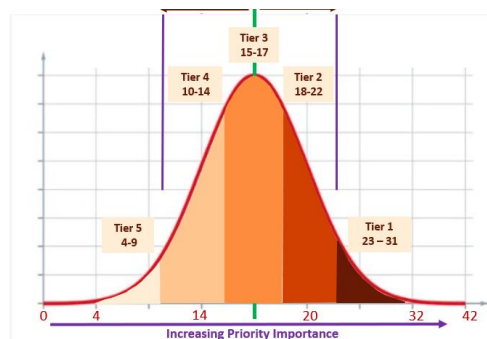


Illustration of a Standard Deviation curve.

Tier 1 lands are critical to protect the future of local farming. Clifton Park must support conserving these irreplaceable lands to ensure a setting where agriculture will be able to thrive for generations to come. There are high-priority farmland parcels spread throughout the western portion of the town, west of Vischer Ferry Road and east of Blue Barns Road. While there is a large concentration of high-priority parcels south of Route 146, there are also several north of 146, as well as some outside of the western portion.

## Clifton Park Farmland Prioritization Criteria

Criteria	Scoring Criteria			Why These Criteria Matter
	7 - <20 acres	20-50 acres	>50 acres	
Parcel with agriculture as the primary use	3 Points	4 Points	6 Points	The more farmland that can be protected at once, the better. Also, parcels that are primarily used for farming are of higher priority than “hobby” farms or rented land.
Parcel with agriculture as a secondary use	2 Points	3 Points	4 Points	
Small parcel (2 - <7 acres) used for farming, other than hay	2 points			Acknowledges the importance of small niche farms
Percent of Parcel Available for Farming	20-<40% 1 Point	40-70% 3 Points	>70% 5 Points	The area of cleared land, whether or not it is currently being farmed, is important
Farms that are in an Agricultural District	2 points			Farms in an ag district have protections for ag uses
Percentage of high-quality soils (Prime or State Importance)	20-<40% 1 Point	40-70% 3 Points	>70% 5 Points	Farm soils are critical to long-term farm viability
Percentage of mineral soils (2-4)	20-<40% 1 Point	40-70% 3 Points	>70% 5 Points	These are the highest valued soils for farmland, and thus most important for preservation
Parcels within 100' of a water resource (stream, lake or wetland)	>5 acres water resource buffer = 3 Points 1-5 acres = 1 Point			Farms can make use of water while also providing a buffer for the protection of surface waters

Criteria	Scoring Criteria			Why These Criteria Matter
Proximity to permanently conserved land	Adjacent Farmland 5 points	Adjacent Non-Farmland 3 points	W/in ¼ mile 1 point	Having conserved land adjacent to farmland reduces development pressure on the farm and limits nuisance complaints/issues
Proximity to active farmland	Adjacent 2 points		Within 1/4 mile 1 point	Having other farmland nearby creates a system of support for all farms in the area
Enrolled in term easement program	Farmland 3 points	Open Space 1 point		Shows a willingness for conservation
Farms that receive an agricultural value assessment	2 Points			Shows a commitment to farming
Parcel is part of a contiguous block under same ownership	1 Point			Advantages of packaging multiple parcels in one conservation project
Parcel known to be leased by a farm	1 Point			Support land is critical for farm viability
Parcel relatively flat, i.e., slopes < 15%	50-75% of the parcel 1 Point	>75% of the parcel 2 Points		Parcels with steep slopes can be difficult to work and are less appealing for livestock grazing

Town of Clifton Park  
Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan

Priority Farmland Parcels

Priority Parcel Scoring

- Tier 1
- Tier 2
- Tier 3
- Tier 4
- Tier 5
- Parks, Nature Preserves & Town-Owned Natural Areas
- Permanent Conservation Easements
- Term Easements**
- Farm
- Open Space

See report for farmland prioritization methodology.



Map is for planning purposes only and not to be used for navigation or legal determinations.



Map 7: Priority Farmland Parcels

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## Agricultural Strengths and Weaknesses - A Summary

An assessment of Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats, known as a SWOT Analysis, is an essential tool that provides a structured way to understand the internal and external factors shaping the future of farming in a community. The SWOT:

1. Provides a clear, organized snapshot of current conditions: A SWOT distills a large amount of community input, data, and stakeholder knowledge into a simple, four-part framework. This makes complex issues easier to understand for officials, farmers, and residents.
2. Helps identify what the community can build upon: Strengths highlight existing assets—such as high-quality soils, thriving farmstands, or supportive policies—that serve as foundations for future strategies.
3. Highlights internal challenges that must be addressed: Weaknesses identify barriers within the community, such as a lack of processing facilities, development pressure, and limited profitability. Understanding these helps target solutions.
4. Reveals external opportunities to enhance agriculture: Opportunities point to emerging trends or initiatives—grants, agritourism, new markets, partnerships, or policy tools—that the Town can take advantage of.
5. Anticipates external threats that could undermine agriculture: Awareness of threats such as land conversion, aging farmers, or rising development pressure help the Town prepare proactively and reduce risks.

The SWOT also forms the foundation for action and strategy development and directly informs the plan's goals, recommended actions, and implementation steps. It ensures recommendations respond logically to real conditions, not guesswork. Presenting a SWOT during public meetings or farmer workshops helps build common ground by reflecting what people said and what the data show.

The SWOT is not only used to shape the plan's vision and goals but also to guide recommended strategies and actions. It can also help Town decision-makers allocate resources, communicate the complex issues facing agriculture, and support future grant applications and funding proposals. SWOT findings help demonstrate readiness, needs, and local priorities, and are key elements in many NYS Agriculture and Markets and USDA grant programs.

The following lists from the SWOT analysis are important because they clarify where the agricultural community stands today and what factors will shape its future. This was developed from committee and public input, and evaluation of data and maps.

These tables are presented in alphabetical order, not in priority order.

<b>Table 5.Highlights - Strengths</b>
A relatively affluent customer base.
Access to veterinary care.
Agritourism.
Appreciation by residents and landowners.
Farmland Protection Programs (PDR and others).
Good, productive soils and fertile lands.
Great events like the Town’s Farm Fest and the former county-wide Sundae on the Farm .
Improvements in communication between farmers and the Town.
Location: proximity to markets for selling products.
Loyal clientele; people love local food.
Many direct-to-consumer sales of agricultural products at farmstands, on-farm markets, and farmers’ markets, with personal connections between farmers and customers.
Orchards that offer pick-your-own fruit.
Organizations that support agriculture.
People who want to eat healthy and to know where their food comes from.
Positive visual impact of farms on Clifton Park’s landscape.
Right to Farm law and signage.
Small-scale farms.
Strong sense of community among farmers .
Success of Saratoga County equine industry.
Successful farmers’ markets in Town.
Supportive Town government and Planning Department .
Water supply.

**Table 6. Highlights - Weaknesses**

A disconnect between public perception and the realities of farming.
Conflicts between farmers and their neighbors about odors, noise, animal care, etc.
Continued decline in the number of active farms in Clifton Park and Saratoga County.
Damage to crops from wildlife, including deer, due to increased development and disruption of habitat. Deer now congregate on the remaining farmland.
Development pressure.
Difficulty finding grants and financial assistance to support farm operations.
Difficulty locating repair services (e.g., farm equipment).
Equipment, supplies, and services used by farmers are not available in the Town or County.
High cost of land for farming.
Labor: difficulty finding people to work on the farm.
Lack of a USDA-certified meat processing facility in Saratoga County.
Lack of agricultural education in local school districts.
Low profitability and rising cost of farming.
The proximity of development to farming and a lack of familiarity and misunderstanding of new homeowners about legal farming methods.
Regulatory challenges in renovating historic barns and other farm structures.
Solar development on farmland.
Taxes on vacant farmland.
Traffic that impedes farm equipment movement.
Trespassing and destruction of farm property.

**Table 7. Highlights - Opportunities**

Advocate for tax incentives and financial assistance to keep farmland in production instead of selling to a developer.
Advocate for the increased availability of farm supplies, equipment repair services, and veterinary care within Saratoga County.
Allow for and support on-farm business ventures like farmstands, delis, ice cream shops, and direct sales of dairy, poultry, and meat.
Collaborate with state and federal agencies to streamline the process for farm conservation easements and grants.
Create a community garden space to engage residents in local food production.
Develop opportunities for independent “mom-and-pop” stores to purchase products from local farms to sell.
Encourage workforce development programs to address labor shortages on farms.
Enhance understanding about agriculture’s role in the Town and what its needs are to remain viable with Town officials and the public.
Establish a large, centralized, and possibly year-round farmers’ market to increase direct-to-consumer sales.
Establish specific goals to protect priority farmlands within the next 5 years.
Expand and promote the State and Town’s PACE programs, agricultural assessments, and other programs to protect farmland from development.
Support and expand events and other agriculture-related programming, such as Farm Fest, to promote local agriculture.
Expand agritourism efforts beyond seasonal events to create year-round experiences and/or new, different special event(s) in another season besides autumn.
Increase marketing of local farms and greenhouses in Clifton Park.
Maintain and enforce Right-to-Farm laws while improving public awareness of farming activities.
Promote green infrastructure by linking conservation hubs (e.g., Vischer Ferry Nature Preserve) with greenways and trails.
Promote small-scale specialty farming ventures, like flowers and high-value crops.
Promote sustainable farming practices that protect soil and water quality and other climate-resilient farming programs.
Explore opportunities for more recreational use of open space and forested lands around farms.
Update zoning to require enhanced standards for conservation subdivisions that <b>further</b> minimize development impact on farms.
Work with local and regional partners to develop a USDA-certified meat processing facility.
Work to get all active farmers into the NYS Agricultural District, even if they don’t qualify for the Agricultural Use Assessment.

**Table 7. Highlights - Opportunities**

Work with DEC and other appropriate organizations to develop regulations concerning wildlife damage to ag crops – specifically deer. DEC nuisance permits and local hunting regulations need updating.

**Table 8. Highlights - Threats**

Aging agricultural producers and legacy farmers who don't expect the next generation to take over the farming operation.

Housing development – “everyone wants to live in Clifton Park.”

Loss of access to rented farmland when it is sold for development .

Solar utility installations on farms are taking land out of production.

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# Vision, Goals, and Actions

## A Vision For Agriculture in Clifton Park

A vision statement is a clear and inspiring description of the Town’s desired future that is forward-thinking, reflects long-term aspirations, reflects the priorities and identity of the community, establishes a foundation for shared goals, and provides direction without getting into the details of how it will be achieved.

### Clifton Park Farms!

*“Clifton Park envisions a future where agriculture remains rooted in our Town identity and continues to be a vital and celebrated part of the community—providing fresh local food and agricultural products, enriching experiences connecting people to farmers/producers, and preserving the town’s rural, working farms character, open spaces, and scenic landscapes. The community supports all traditional, specialty, and small-scale farms. Programs and policies are in place to help promote thoughtful land use planning that allows development, farming, and environmental protection to coexist. Our farmers embrace innovation and technology to promote their economic viability, and the whole community plays a role in keeping agriculture strong, sustainable, and important to our shared future.”*

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## Goals

Goals are broad, strategic declarations that describe what the Town needs to achieve in order to meet its vision. The goals are general, but actionable, aligned with the vision, establish topics of importance, clarify community priorities, provide structure to more detailed recommendations to follow, and ensure consistency.

In the future, Clifton Park will work towards accomplishing the following goals (note presented in any priority order):

1. Strengthen Agricultural Economic Viability and Sustainability.
2. Preserve, Protect, and Expand Availability of Productive Farmland.
3. Increase and Diversify Agricultural Opportunities.
4. Enhance Community Engagement, Elevate Public Awareness and Appreciation of Our Farms and Farmers, and Provide Residents with Connections to Local Foods and Agricultural Products.
5. Improve Agricultural Infrastructure, Technologies, and Support Services.
6. Promote Compatible Development, Connected Open Spaces, and Environmental Stewardship.

## Strategies and Key Actions

The agricultural and farmland protection toolbox is large. It needs to be comprehensive because there is no one action or strategy that solves the complexity of challenges and barriers facing agriculture. Many recommended actions and strategies included in this plan serve to address more than one goal. Thus, they are presented and organized below by action-oriented objective. These objectives focus on the broad actions the Town could take to meet its goals and vision.

To meet Clifton Park's goals and realize its agricultural and farmland protection vision, the following strategies need to be implemented:

- A. Diversify Agricultural Crops, Products, and Markets
- B. Facilitate Agricultural Education and Technical Assistance
- C. Communicate Plan Vision and Goals: Enhance Marketing and Awareness of Agriculture
- D. Build Partnerships
- E. Improve Agricultural Infrastructure and Protect Environmental Resources
- F. Increase Funding Opportunities
- G. Protect Farmland

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## Recommended Actions

The following section presents the recommended actions and implementation strategies to advance agriculture and protect farmland in the Town. These recommendations are grounded in extensive public engagement, including farmer interviews, stakeholder meetings, public workshops, surveys, and input from local boards and committees. Through that process, residents and farmers articulated what they value most about the community’s agricultural landscape and what challenges must be addressed to keep farming viable for the next generation.

As presented in the previous section, the community’s vision for agriculture and a set of goals were established to express those values and priorities. The vision describes the desired future for farming and farmland—what the community wants to preserve, strengthen, and change. The goals translate that vision into broad directions, such as protecting high-quality soils, improving farm profitability, reducing conflicts between farms and non-farm neighbors, and maintaining the rural character that farms help define.

This section is where those ideas become actionable. Each strategy is designed to:

- Respond directly to what we heard from farmers, landowners, and residents;
- Advance the adopted vision and goals of this Plan; and
- Provide clear guidance to Town officials, partner organizations, property owners, and the agricultural community about what to do next, and in what order.

The recommendations are organized by objective, which are tied to the six goals. They are not presented in priority order.

Together, they form a roadmap for implementing the community’s vision, ensuring that public input, the vision statement, and the Plan’s goals are not just words on a page, but are actively used to guide decisions, shape policies, prioritize funding, and support a strong, resilient agricultural economy over the coming years.

Recommended actions create clarity and direction. They specify what the Town could accomplish— clear strategies to help the Town prioritize its resources, coordinate with partners, communicate effectively, and focus attention on efforts that will deliver the greatest long-term benefit to the agricultural sector.

The strategies help position the municipality for funding and grant opportunities. State and federal agricultural programs (including NYS Agriculture and Markets FPIG, farmland succession grants, and various USDA programs) often require applicants to demonstrate that projects align with an adopted plan. A well-constructed action section shows that the community has an intentional, long-term strategy and is ready to partner with others for implementation efforts.

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## A. DIVERSIFY AGRICULTURAL CROPS, PRODUCTS, AND MARKETS

- A-1. **Work with farmers regionally to promote sales of area farm products to institutions and area businesses (e.g., schools, nursing homes, restaurants).** A long-term cooperative effort would be needed to facilitate connections, reduce barriers, and create support infrastructure to help institutions and restaurants buy locally. Build institutional and local business partners, develop aggregation and distribution support such as food hubs, co-ops, shared cold storage infrastructure, distributors, helping with farmer readiness and training, branding, funding, and incentives.
- A-2. **Offer incentives for regenerative and pollinator-friendly farming.** This program could provide small grants of \$500 to \$2,000 to farmers or landowners to plant native wildflowers, hedgerows, or flowering cover crops. It could also include creating a “Clifton Park Pollinator-Friendly Farm” designation with signage and promotion on town websites and events, working with local businesses to sponsor pollinator gardens or regenerative pilot plots, or giving regenerative farms priority.
- A-3. **Allow community gardens, community supported agriculture, and urban agriculture uses, as allowed uses in updated zoning on available and fallow land, including on public land provided a clear, sustainable management plan is established, and on land with conservation easements, provided that private property owners are willing and the proposed use is compatible with the farm operation’s agricultural environmental management plan, to be farmed with specific guidelines.** Encourage these initiatives on private, fallow land as the priority. Work with landowners, businesses, and community groups to develop the capacity to manage these types of farming operations.
- A-4. **Update zoning to allow for diversified farm enterprises (e.g., agritourism, farm breweries, on-farm processing, farmstands, food co-ops, Community Supported Agriculture, or farming as an accessory use).** Add these uses to the Zoning Use Table and in definitions. Food co-ops are emerging as a viable option for enhancing the local food system and local farms. (See details in the Farm-Friendly Audit included in this Plan.)
- A-5. **Seek a Memorandum of Understanding between Clifton Park and Saratoga County to waive County Planning Board 239-m review for agricultural capital improvements to avoid micro-managing farm operations.** (See Part 2, Appendix 1, for more detailed farm-friendly updates Clifton Park could make to accomplish this.)
- A-6. **Work with Cornell Cooperative Extension to encourage the growth of small vegetable farms to capitalize on market opportunities.** There could also be opportunities for farmers to produce specialty crops, raise heritage livestock, develop value-added products, or explore agroforestry. These niche agricultural activities could draw younger people to the Town to farm.

- A-7. **Develop an “Eat Local” campaign and partner with Saratoga County and others to expand markets for locally grown agricultural products.**
- a. Ensure that farmers' markets in Clifton Park are included in the New York State Farmers' Markets Federation listing.
  - b. Consider other locations appropriate for selling farm products to reach a diversity of customers (e.g., Exit 9 rest area, Market Place shopping center, other local business locations).



*Information boards about the Farmland Protection Board at Clifton Park's Farm fest.*

## **B. FACILITATE AGRICULTURAL EDUCATION AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE**

- B-1. **Develop mechanisms to convey information on existing resources and assistance available to farmers or those desiring to start farming in the Town.** This would include resources offered through the Saratoga County Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD), Saratoga PLAN, Cornell Cooperative Extension (CCE), American Farmland Trust, Capital Region Chamber of Commerce (and other Chambers) , Farm Credit East, USDA Farm Service Agency, Clifton Park Industrial Development Agency (IDA), and other organizations, such as funding opportunities, technical support, and assistance with business development and marketing.
- B-2. **Encourage Cornell Cooperative Extension of Saratoga County to update the Agricultural Economic Development section of its website.** This could be a useful tool, but a lot of the information has not been updated in more than ten years, and there are many outdated links.

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- B-3. **Develop a farm mentorship program through which experienced farmers are matched with new and young farmers to share their successes and help them access resources.**
- B-4. **Increase the presence of Cornell Cooperative Extension in Clifton Park to provide support for new farming operations.** Consider creative ways to approach this, such as hosting a CCE satellite office in the Town to enhance farmer and farmland owner access to their resources.
- B-5. **Work with local school districts and BOCES to promote ways to enhance the involvement of students in agriculture and develop the next generation of farmers.** This could include:
- a. Developing agricultural education programs for elementary, middle school, and high school students
  - b. Integrating agriculture into social studies, science, and nutrition education content by using lesson plans and other resources available on the NYS Agriculture in the Classroom website (<https://newyork.agclassroom.org/>)
  - c. Creating mentorship and internship opportunities at local farms, orchards, and nurseries for interested high school students
  - d. Offering tractor and farm machinery certifications through 4-H for youth aged 14 and older.
- B-6. **Establish an Agricultural Heritage (or Resource) Center and farmers' market.** To promote success, this effort should include:
- a. A farmers' market plan that establishes a clear vision, the farmers' market structure and governance (who will run it), board and staff responsibilities, financial plan, and policies related to timing, stall layout, signage, ADA compliance, vendor policies and recruitment, marketing and outreach, insurance, taxes and permits, safety policies, market operations, timeline, and reporting to vendors and community.
  - b. Seek grants to hire a marketing expert to develop a professional marketing strategy for effective promotion.
  - c. Study and determine the appropriate location. One suggested location is the Historic Grooms Tavern. The Historic Grooms Tavern has the potential to serve this role, provided an agricultural center can be meshed with the focus on preserving history. Any effort at this location should be done with the Town and the Friends of Historic Grooms Tavern.
  - d. Avoid limiting vendors to those within Clifton Park; partner regionally with area farms. Local crafters and artisans can also participate.
  - e. Consider hosting educational programming, such as a "Meet Your Farmer" series or classes on sustainable practices, pollinators, and food distribution.
  - f. Long-term, consider including a commercial kitchen for small producers. Research and learn from the commercial kitchen at Capital Roots in Troy.
  - g. Explore opportunities to revive the Grange or a similar effort to bring people together at shared community events and meals.

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- B-7. Enhance the Town’s website so that agriculture has more of a presence.** It should include links to town-level programs (this Plan, the Open Space Conservation Program, events, and local programs). Links to other organizations that support farming could be provided. To remain effective, the website should be updated regularly.



## **C. COMMUNICATE PLAN VISION AND GOALS: ENHANCE MARKETING AND AWARENESS OF AGRICULTURE**

- C-1. Develop a marketing and promotion program that can address several different audiences and marketing needs in Clifton Park.** The overall goal of this marketing plan would be to promote existing local farms and agricultural products and attract new agricultural enterprises to Clifton Park. The marketing campaign should also work to enhance public awareness and understanding of agriculture, educate residents and youth about the local food system, celebrate the Town’s agricultural heritage, and strengthen the sense of community.

To attain these outcomes, the Town should pursue funding to hire a marketing expert to create and implement a comprehensive marketing strategy. The marketing and promotion plan should include the following components:

- a. Specific objectives for the marketing/promotion planning process.
- b. Identification of the various audiences and articulation of their different needs, methods of outreach, and desired outcomes. Audiences should include residents, visitors, youth, area institutions, and local businesses (especially restaurants), and

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- existing and prospective farmers. These efforts should promote agricultural products, events, and activities, and publicize Clifton Park as a place with great farming opportunities (a “Come Farm With Us” effort).
- c. Development of a marketing campaign program with sub-components for each of the audiences identified. This should include identifying marketing and promotion tactics and methods for each of the audiences, with specific methods and messages for each.
  - d. Drafting potential logos and tag lines for the effort.
  - e. Drafting sample press releases and marketing messages.
  - f. Integration of multimedia approaches to promote agriculture within the Town.
  - g. Development of materials such as a direct sales brochure, an online searchable app for direct sales and agritourism locations, and website/social media recommendations. Use the Town’s Granicus digital platform to continue to gather input and share updates with stakeholders and residents on preservation, protection, and expansion opportunities and successes of productive farmland.
  - h. Identification of staff, volunteer, and budget needs to organize, implement, and fund the effort.
  - i. Specific programmatic ideas that can be detailed in a marketing plan are:
    - i. A directory of local farms, orchards, and nurseries that sell agricultural products to the public, with a map, locations, products, hours, and seasons of operation, and contact information. This should be available online as a searchable app. Update the directory at least annually.
    - ii. Updates using Granicus to share links and articles, updates on grants, training, and events. Help spread existing information from sources such as Saratoga County SWCD, Cornell Cooperative Extension, Saratoga PLAN, and other organizations that could help Clifton Park farmers.
    - iii. A print brochure that could be made available at Town Hall, the library, local businesses, and other public places.
    - iv. Establishment and promotion of a branded Clifton Park agricultural “trail,” with a colorful map, to direct people to local farms, orchards, and nurseries. This would link to the above-mentioned brochure and searchable app.
    - v. A seasonal “Farm Passport” program to encourage visits to farms.
    - vi. Additional events and activities to promote local agriculture throughout the year and build on the success of Farm Fest, including farm tours.
    - vii. A branding and marketing campaign around the equine industry in Saratoga County to enhance promotion and awareness of this important element of agriculture. This could be developed regionally, with horse farms in towns throughout the County, and include equestrian events.
    - viii. An annual award for local farmers to recognize and bring visibility to the agricultural community.

**C-2. Provide training for Town leaders, Planning and Zoning Board of Appeals members, Code Enforcement and Assessor staff, and other municipal officials on agricultural practices, the New York Agricultural Districts Law, and how it relates to local zoning and planning, right to farm provisions, and SEQR to help them understand how to fully**

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**evaluate potential impacts on agriculture during project review.** Ensure that the Planning Board is fully prepared for and versed in NYS Agriculture District programs and requirements, and agricultural components of the Town's zoning, including use of the Agricultural Data Statement, recognizing and using the maps and their role in the project review process. Provide education regarding existing PACE programs and natural resource conservation programs, and support applications as they arise.

- C-3. **Increase farmer participation on Town boards and advisory committees so that agriculture is well represented and farmers are actively involved to provide input on town policies, events, and outreach strategies.** Appoint a farmers' representative to the Planning Board pursuant to NYS Town Law 271 (11).
- C-4. **Update Planning Board and Zoning Board procedures to enhance public awareness and participation in development project reviews.** These include posting meeting recordings within 5 business days after a meeting and ensuring a 72-hour public notice period for all Planning Board and Zoning Board meetings.
- C-5. **Advocate to Saratoga County the need to enhance the role and function of the County Agricultural and Farmland Protection Board (AFPB).** While County AFPBs are often narrowly focused on reviewing farmland protection projects for state funding and updates to the NYS Agricultural Districts Law, they have the authority and opportunity to play a bigger role as county-level champions for agricultural viability, innovation, and community awareness. Some examples of roles the AFPB could play include helping prepare and periodically update the County Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan, identifying priority areas, advising on agritourism, diversification, and local food systems, advising decision makers on agricultural impacts, and serving as a formal agricultural voice in county decision-making. Advocate for diversifying the Board to be representative of all types of agriculture in Saratoga County.
- C-6. **Employ the Granicus govDelivery system, a digital communications platform that the Town uses, to send targeted messages to farmers, landowners, and agri-businesses about training, funding, and other new ag-related opportunities.**
- C-7. **Work with Saratoga Plan as a regional navigator in the Farmland for a New Generation NY Program, FarmNet, the National Young Farmers Coalition, and veterans' organizations to attract new farmers, including veterans, to establish farm operations in Clifton Park.** Promotional materials should convey that Clifton Park is a supportive community with excellent access to markets and an interest in innovative, small, specialty, direct-to-market, and value-added agriculture (for specifics on marketing, see recommendation for the development of a marketing plan). A key component of this effort should be to make farmland more affordable to beginning farmers (see recommendation for a farm incubation program).

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**C-8. Encourage County and regional economic development organizations (e.g., Saratoga Economic Development Corporation, Center for Economic Growth, Farmers Market Federation of New York, and local Chambers of Commerce) to include and address the needs of the agricultural sector in their programming.**

- a. Conduct outreach to these organizations to emphasize that farms are small, entrepreneurial businesses. Traditionally, farms are often overlooked as small businesses because on-farm capital investments rarely create additional employment. However, financial assistance programs for agriculture should be funded by sources that do not require job creation.
- b. Communicate and work with farmers to encourage and promote their involvement in the Chamber and other organizations to enhance agricultural opportunities.
- c. Develop new ways the Chamber can become more involved in agricultural businesses, such as creating an agricultural group, inviting women farmers to the Chamber's Women's Business Group, or developing a special membership category for agricultural businesses.
- d. Develop a program that works with farmers to advise them on tax assistance and relief programs, grants, etc.

**D. BUILD PARTNERSHIPS**

**D-1. Encourage the Saratoga County Planning Department to include sessions on the NYS Agricultural Districts Program and ways to protect farming and farmland during planning board and ZBA project reviews at the annual Saratoga County Planning Conference.**

**D-2. Promote communication and networking to form liaisons, exchanges, information sharing, and coalitions with agencies and organizations that support agriculture.** Consider initiating an Agricultural Roundtable that meets periodically to promote better information sharing and problem-solving. This could include representatives from FarmNet, American Farmland Trust, Cornell Cooperative Extension, Saratoga County Farm Bureau, Saratoga PLAN, Saratoga County SWCD, Saratoga County Agriculture and Farmland Protection Board, neighboring towns' farm community, area economic development agencies, and advocates such as the local Chambers of Commerce and the Clifton Park IDA, and local farmer representatives. This effort should be coordinated by and part of the implementation efforts of the proposed Agricultural Committee. See also Recommendation D-3 (formation of an Agricultural Committee).

**D-3. Create an Agriculture and Farmland Protection Advisory Committee via Town Board resolution (see model in Part 2, Appendix 1) as a permanent committee with an identified role to implement the Plan, inform the Town Board about agricultural issues, and make recommendations to address these issues, and to enable and protect the productivity and stability of Clifton Park's agricultural resources.** This Committee would operate similarly and with the same level of importance as the existing Open Space, Trails and Recreation Committee and the Environmental Conservation Commission in Clifton

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Park. It would have oversight responsibility to coordinate and support the implementation of the actions in this Plan and advocate and advise the Town on strengthening Clifton Park as a “farm-friendly” town. Equally important is this Committee’s formal role, articulated in the Town’s zoning code, in the review of projects in Western Clifton Park to ensure that all proposals before the Planning Board and ZBA are reviewed for consistency with continuing agriculture. See Part 2, Appendix 1, for more details on the scope and role of this proposed committee and a model resolution to form this committee. However, the Town Board should undertake the updating of the zoning code per priority recommendations of the Farm-Friendly Audit done for this Plan, as key to future development review roles.

- D-4. **Coordinate with neighboring towns to identify regional food aggregation and distribution opportunities.**
- D-5. **Partner with workforce development providers and agricultural education providers and associations (e.g., BOCES, Hudson Valley Community College, SUNY Cobleskill, Northeast Organic Farming Association of NY (NOFA-NY)) and agriculture support agencies to develop opportunities for addressing agricultural labor shortages.**
- D-6. **Continue to partner with Saratoga PLAN on farmland conservation with willing landowners.** This Plan outlines a variety of important roles Saratoga PLAN can play in Clifton Park, as a Saratoga County-based land trust.
- D-7. **Partner with government and non-profit organizations to assist farmers in applying for funding available through NYS Department of Agriculture and Markets, the U.S. Department of Agriculture, NRCS, and other state and federal agencies.** Encourage and assist individuals in applying for “commodity-specific grants” at Ag and Markets, such as critical equipment or infrastructure updates.

## **E. IMPROVE AGRICULTURAL INFRASTRUCTURE AND MANAGE ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES**

- E-1. **Encourage farmers to prepare a new initial, or develop an updated Agricultural Environmental Management Plan, working with the Saratoga County Soil and Water Conservation District for their specific farm operations and property. AEM Plans are a requirement for state FPIG fund projects.**
- E-2. **Explore methods to increase shared agricultural infrastructure on a regional basis, such as cold storage facilities, commercial kitchens, processing facilities, food hubs, and a USDA slaughterhouse.** Work with farmers, other municipalities, and agricultural support organizations, such as CCE, to identify and address these needs.

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- E-3. **Explore the creation of a farm incubator for beginning farmers in Clifton Park.** A farm incubator could work jointly with a Day Habilitation and Supported Employment Program or other not-for-profit type of organization to raise crops. The incubator would provide new and young farmers with shared access to land, equipment, mentorship, and agricultural business training, with cooperative governance of the shared resources. It would lower entry costs and reduce risks for new farmers, protect farmland, and support the development of a local food system. The farm incubator could be developed on town-owned land in partnership with Cornell Cooperative Extension, or possibly on permanently preserved farmland owned by a willing property owner.
- E-4. **Ensure that zoning allows farmworker housing in a manner aligned with the NYS Agricultural Districts Law.** See comments on this topic in the Farm-Friendly Audit included in this Plan.
- E-5. **Offer incentives or housing support for seasonal and full-time farmworkers.**
- E-6. **Promote technology opportunities to leverage funds for climate control systems in barns (e.g., temperature, humidity, ventilation, ammonia, and CO2 sensors).**
- E-7. **Work with Saratoga County Soil and Water Conservation District and Cornell Cooperative Extension to help farmers use new technologies that support precision agriculture.** This includes GPS-guided equipment, soil sensors, and farm management software. Use satellite imagery to assess land use issues and natural conditions (i.e., successional growth) that may affect the agricultural sector over time.
- E-8. **Encourage farmers to transition to on-farm renewable energy (e.g., solar for barns, greenhouses, operations) to potentially bring down overhead costs.**
- E-9. **Maintain and upgrade local roads, culverts, and bridges to ensure farm equipment can access and use them.** Address the drainage concerns identified from the farm community to keep ditches, streams, and waterways clean on public and private property. Encourage, plan for, and fund stream corridor buffering, wetland and floodplain restoration, and bank stabilization efforts, including zoning revisions that promote conservation of these natural areas. Utilize the Town’s Highway Safety Committee as a resource to help with this.

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## F. INCREASE FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES AND ACCESS TO CAPITAL FOR FARM BUSINESS INVESTMENT

- F-1. **Work with local and regional non-profit organizations (e.g., the Adirondack Council, Saratoga County Chamber of Commerce, American Farmland Trust, and Cornell Cooperative Extension) to develop microloan and microgrant programs for agriculture.**
- F-2. **Assess the potential for the Town of Clifton Park Industrial Development Agency and the Saratoga Economic Development Corporation to invest in agricultural businesses or consider creating an agriculture-focused local development corporation to achieve this goal.**
- F-3. **Work with the NYS Department of Agriculture and Markets, Farm Credit East, USDA Farm Service Agency, and organizations such as the Carrott Project, Berkshire Ag Ventures, Hudson Valley Agribusiness Development Corporation (HVADC), New York Farm Net and other farm-friendly lenders to understand and/or access long-term, no or low interest loans for young and new farmers, including veterans.**
- F-4. **Consider options for and the feasibility of offering small grants or establishing a revolving loan fund for farmers in Clifton Park who are interested in starting, expanding, or diversifying their farm or upgrading infrastructure.** Evaluating these options should include identifying what entity could manage such a program (Town, non-profit, or other entity), funding sources, and eligibility criteria.
- F-5. **The Town of Clifton Park should advocate to New York State elected officials and the NYS Department of Agriculture and Markets, the importance of:**
- a. Expanding agricultural assessment programs for small farms
  - b. Providing funding for farm ownership succession planning
  - c. Implementing carbon tax credits for farming
  - d. Widening property tax assessment eligibility for farm buildings
  - e. Expanding funding for Cornell Cooperative Extension and local soil and water conservation districts
  - f. Expanding regional farmers' markets
  - g. Supporting legislation that further empowers existing and prospective farmers with tools and resources that enhance farm sustainability and economic viability.
- F-6. **Advocate at the County level for continued and expanded funding for Cornell Cooperative Extension (CCE) so the organization can provide the training and education needed by farmers.** Funding is needed to ensure that farm transition and estate planning become a priority program for CCE, as the median age of farmers in the County continues to rise. Increased funding is also needed to support programming related to farm

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business planning, marketing, and agritourism, and provide access to state and federal grant programs.

- F-7. **Promote farm succession and estate planning.** Partner with Saratoga PLAN to evaluate and apply for funding through the State’s Land Trust Grants to aid in farm ownership succession planning. Promote farmer opportunities to take advantage of guidance and assistance provided by American Farmland Trust and FarmNet for establishing a family estate plan, gratis.



## G. PROTECT FARMLAND

- G-1. **Target priority farmland parcels as identified in this Plan for permanent conservation to ensure farmland remains available for agricultural activities. Prioritize funding for this program.** Increase the use of conservation easements and land acquisitions to protect key parcels. Key parcels are those that received higher priority scores (see Map 7). To encourage and assist applications to farmland preservation programs based on the Town's target priority farmland methodology utilizing (but not limited to) the New York State Farmland Protection Implementation Grants such as the Purchase of Agricultural Conservation Easements (PACE) and the Transfer of Development Rights and Zoning Review program and the U.S. Department of Agriculture Farm and Ranchlands Protection Program, and, when such applications are submitted provide input into the review thereof.

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- a. Increase the amount of farm acreage protected in Clifton Park, which currently totals 258 acres. With approximately 1,100 acres of farmland remaining in the Town, work to protect at least half of that acreage (550 acres) over the next decade. Use this plan's Priority Farmland Map to help identify critical farmlands to focus on and conduct outreach to those landowners to generate interest in the Town's program.
  - b. Work to provide funding not only for the Town's easement program, but to help fund project grant match requirements. Local Town funds would enhance landowners' ability to participate in some programs.
- G-2. **Help connect farmers and farmland property owners to resources for farm transition and estate planning and to the next generation of farmers.**
- G-3. **Educate farmers and property owners about existing tools for farmland protection, such as but not limited to:** the Saratoga County Agricultural District #2 benefits to enrollment, Town's Purchase of Development Rights (PDR) / Permanent Conservation Easements, Term Easement (tax relief for a specific term) program, agricultural assessments, and the NYS Farmland Protection Implementation Grant Program. Note that Saratoga PLAN is the navigator for the Farmland for a New Generation New York program, which assists farmers looking for land and property owners who want to keep their lands in productivity. Work with Saratoga PLAN to explore navigating these funding opportunities.
- G-4. **Encourage farmers and farmland owners to enroll in the Saratoga County Agricultural District #2. Enrollment is possible on an annual basis, every October, through the Saratoga County Planning Department and the Saratoga County Agricultural & Farmland Protection Board.**
- G-5. **Prioritize farmland preservation through the Town's Purchase of Development Rights (PDR)/Permanent Conservation Easement program, and the Term Easement program. Prioritize funding for this program.** Use the Plan's priority farmland map to identify important farmland parcels that are eligible under the Town's program.
- G-6. **Adopt resolutions as needed to support local applications to the NYS Farmland Protection Implementation Program (FPIG). Outreach to willing priority farmland owners to encourage their participation in FPIG programs. The Town's goal should be to cultivate at least one farm to protect with a NYS Farmland Protection Implementation Grant in the next five years, leveraging a program with a cooperative property owner that aligns with the Town's priority protection parcels.** Applications to the FPIG program must be associated with parcels of land identified in this Plan's priority farmland map, and a resolution of the Town Board supporting preservation of these lands included. Properties identified in the priority farmland map should be included in the bi-annual Acquisition Sub-Committee priority list for open space projects.

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- G-7. **Review the regulations concerning sewer and water as set forth by the New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets (NYS 25-aa), the Town should develop a policy on water infrastructure expansion to enable the needs of farmers to be met while limiting non-farm uses.** Public infrastructure can be a growth-inducing activity and is not likely to create a development pattern consistent with the ability to maintain land in agriculture. Because farms also need and may benefit from public water sources, careful consideration needs to be given to minimize non-farm growth that can result. The Town should develop a policy on water infrastructure expansion to enable the needs of farmers to be met while limiting non-farm uses. Continue to support higher density and mixed-use development near existing water and sewer infrastructure in the Town Center to reduce pressure on Western Clifton Park.
- G-8. **Adopt and implement the Town of Clifton Park’s Open Space, Trails and Riverfront Committee’s Open Space Priority Protection List for acquisition, with the addition of priority farmland projects.**
- G-9. **Establish an annually renewable Town Agricultural Use Agreement Program, based on the Southampton model, which allows for clear agricultural valuation of the land for real estate property tax purposes.** This is an option for a shorter term instead of the 8-year Agricultural District term (See Appendix).
- G-10. **Update Planning Board (and Zoning Board as applicable) procedures to promote farmland preservation by:**
- a. Ensuring that all applications that meet the requirements for County Planning Board review (GML 239-m) are referred, including projects that are in or within 500 feet of a NYS Agricultural District.
  - b. Sending a Notice of Intent to the NYS Department of Agriculture and Markets and the County Agricultural and Farmland Protection Board before a water or sewer line serving non-farm uses within a NYS Agricultural District is proposed to be constructed, as required in Section 305 of the NYS 25-aa (Agricultural Districts).
- G-11. **Amend the Town’s Conservation Easement Law (Chapter 125) and reduce the number of acres needed to become eligible for the farmland Term Easement program.** Currently, 15 acres are required to be eligible, and this will preclude many important, but smaller farms, from being considered for this important program. It is recommended that eligibility be set at five acres in active agricultural operations.
- G-12. **Expand funding for farmland protection, including local funding to support the Town’s Purchase of Development Rights program.** Target enough funds to cover the protection of a minimum of 550 acres over the next 5-10 years. Some additional options to consider are:
- a. Create a Dedicated Agricultural/Farmland Land Protection Capital Fund (similar to the Open Space Capital Fund) to account for specific funding for farmland protection, separate from Open Space, for future clear tracking/availability.

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- b. Create a new fee associated with updated Subdivision and Zoning codes to be applied to development constructed in the future Agricultural Overlay District – which may include some lands outside of the Western Clifton Park Land Conservation Plan and GEIS, modeled after a “parkland fee” to be a “farmland fee” to be placed in a dedicated fund for farmland protection for all projects built on farmland.
  - c. Continue to apply for and use Saratoga County’s Farmland & Open Space Grant Program for funding to protect priority farmland protection parcels. This grant can be used in combination with state FPIG and local funding matching sources.
  - d. Explore financial assistance available through the New York State 30x30 program for the protection of open space and farmland (e.g., purchase of development rights from farmers).
  - e. Promote American Farmland Trust’s New York Farmland Access Fund and its innovative Buy-Protect-Sell-plus (BPS+) approach, in which AFT purchases “at-risk” farmland, protects the land with a conservation easement, and then sells it back to farmers at a reduced price. This prevents farmland from being sold to the highest bidder.
  - f. Explore a Municipal Bond for Farmland & Open Space Protection for 5 years. A separate Community Protection Fund (CPF) Advisory Board could be established to help manage such a fund.
  - g. Accelerate the preservation of farmland and open space by issuing a bond resolution to acquire strategic properties, as outlined by the Town Open Space committee and with input from the AFPC. This program will preserve and enhance the existing Open Space fund and provide the financial resources needed to purchase and preserve key properties in the Town.
  - h. Offer density bonuses in exchange for provision of conservation funds to mitigate impacts elsewhere (i.e., development credits) or mitigation banking (developers fund farmland preservation to offset agricultural land impacts elsewhere.) Revisit the existing Open Space Incentive Zoning Code as part of exploring this concept, and consider town-wide expansion, or create a separate program for the area outside of Western Clifton Park.
  - i. Explore additional options to enhance the tax incentive program for farmers and farmland owners to keep farmland in production instead of being sold for development.
  - j. Create a special assessment taxing district in critical farmland areas for non-farm development to allow for additional funds earmarked for farmland conservation.
  - k. Host community agreements and fees for facilities such as solar photovoltaic utility installations, which can be placed on and called “farms.”
  - l. In a parallel path, or as an alternative to a municipal bond approach, establish a Community Preservation Fund (CPF) through a real estate transfer tax, for a term of time, for Clifton Park farms as a crucial funding mechanism for land preservation in Clifton Park. Establishing such a fund through a 2% real estate transfer tax would require state legislative approval. Seek the ability from NYS to utilize revenue from a 2% real estate transfer tax at the Town level or team up with and secure the ability for other Saratoga County municipalities. Through the CPF, the Town can purchase land or

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development rights at fair market value from willing landowners, preserving farmland and open space. (The Town of Southampton extended the use of its CPF twice, and it is now extended until Dec. 31, 2050.)

- m. Create a financing plan similar to the Town of Clarence, NY's Greenprint program, whereby Clifton Park issues a bond resolution to preserve open space and farmland within the town. (NOTE: The General Municipal Law authorizes NYS towns to use public funds to acquire interests or property rights for open space and agricultural land preservation.) Models for this include Town of Southold, New Paltz, Dutchess County, Manlius, Red Hook, Beekman, Irvington, and others.
- n. Sales tax allocations.
- o. General obligation bonds, or revenue bonds (from special fees)
- p. Advocate for continued funding as well as changes to state and federal farmland protection programs that better address local farming characteristics and needs.

## H. REGULATORY UPDATES TO MEET PLAN GOALS

- H-1. **Update the Town's land use laws to enhance their farm-friendliness. See Part 2, Appendix 1, for a detailed review of Town zoning and subdivision laws and recommendations to improve their farm-friendliness.**
- H-2. **Change the definition of Farm in the Town's zoning.** Currently, this definition establishes that farms are only farms if they contain at least five acres. This definition is neither consistent with the NYS AML 25-AA definitions of what a farm operation is, nor is it beneficial to promoting small farms. There should be no acreage requirement to be considered a farm.
  - a. Zoning should enable residents to have small poultry flocks. Adequate regulations to avoid nuisances and to promote healthy flocks should be put in place. There should also be a mechanism in place to revoke such permits when health and safety standards are not met, perhaps by having an Ag Advisory Committee liaison to animal control officers.
- H-3. **Update the Town's Right-to-Farm Law (Chapter 102 – Farming).** See Part 2, Appendix 1, for a model Right-to-Farm law that includes a dispute resolution mechanism. This Plan's recommended Agricultural Advisory Committee could also serve a role in dispute resolution.
- H-4. **Update the Town's Subdivision law to elevate the importance of agricultural considerations when subdivisions occur.** This includes updating definitions and purpose statements, effective use of the Agricultural Data Statement, use of reviewing and identifying building envelopes on new lots, updating the open space subdivisions to fully incorporate the conservation subdivision methodology with at least a 50% of the parcel

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required to be preserved as a required lot layout technique for all major subdivisions, and procedural updates to ensure consistency with New York State Town law. (See details in the Farm-Friendly Audit included in this Plan.)

- H-5. **Update the Town’s Zoning law to protect agricultural areas from encroaching development.** (See details in the Farm-Friendly Audit included in this Plan.) Make the following major regulatory updates:
- a. Update the current Zoning provisions, especially in the Conservation Residential (CR) Zone, to enable and facilitate Smart Growth development practices that preserve agricultural lands, open spaces, scenic vistas, and other rural resources. This area needs to be the focus for making agriculture a priority land use with mechanisms to minimize conflicts with low-density non-farm development.
  - b. Update purpose statements and definitions to incorporate and emphasize agriculture.
  - c. Add new agricultural uses to the use table as allowed uses. This includes defining and allowing for a wide variety of agritourism, direct sales, and niche farming operations.
  - d. Consider renaming the CR district to CA (Conservation Agriculture) to emphasize the important role agriculture has to play in that district.
  - e. Review the list of uses allowed in the CR district via a special use permit. Allow uses that are compatible with farming, and do not allow non-farm uses incompatible with farming.
  - f. Remove the 5-acre minimum parcel size from the definition of a farm so that small agricultural operations can be established and maintained.
  - g. Allow farm products to be sold in all districts at farmstands or markets.
  - h. Update farm labor housing rules to be consistent with NYS guidelines so that farms that need to house workers do not face barriers.
  - i. Update the density bonus incentive program, “Open Space Incentive Zoning,” that applies to the zoning districts in Western Clifton Park to place more emphasis on protection of farmland beyond open space required in a conservation subdivision. Offer density bonuses for the permanent protection of more than the base 50% of the parcel required with a conservation subdivision.
  - j. When land is permanently protected to fulfill the “Permanent Open Space” requirements within a conservation subdivision in Western Clifton Park, ensure that the land is mapped. Over time, ensure that subdivision activity works to create a continuous, rather than fragmented, “green belt” of open space and farmland. Update zoning so that protected portions of land must be adjacent to other protected areas on other parcels to the maximum extent possible.
  - k. Update site plan and special use permit application requirements to include information on nearby agriculture so that the Planning Board can make informed analysis and decisions about project proposals. This would include items such as the Agricultural Data Statement, farmland soils, and farm activities in or within 500’ of a NYS Agricultural District. etc. This information is currently explicitly required as part of

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CR Standards, under conservation design layout, but needs to be cross-referenced as noted above.

- l. Create a program and clear process for and allow the Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) through a non-contiguous planned residential development (cluster and conservation subdivision as recommended). Encourage TDR from Western Clifton Park to the Town Center area to steer growth away from prime farmlands. This concept will require analysis of the “receiving area” to ensure the capacity and community support.
- m. Provide visual images as examples in the zoning code to demonstrate what compatible residential growth could look like based on the zoning laws, expanding upon and updating the visualizations in the Western Clifton Park Design Guidelines, Codify Design Standards to strengthen the code over the existing design guidelines.

- H-6. **Update zoning to address solar utility development issues on agricultural lands, buffers to protect adjacent farmlands, and preserve open spaces.** Adopt regulations that prohibit utility-scale solar facilities, battery energy storage systems (BESS), and data centers on prime agricultural land to minimize the conversion of productive farmland, particularly prime agricultural soil. (See full set of recommendations in the Farm-Friendly Audit included in this Plan.)

The NYS Department of Agriculture and Markets (Ag and Markets) has a goal to limit the conversion of agricultural areas within project areas to no more than 10% of soils classified as mineral soil groups 1-4, which are generally prime farmland. Consider adopting a tiered approach, such as the Onondaga County regulations, for solar development. Tier 3 and 4 systems, for example, should have requirements regarding the amount of agricultural land they can occupy. Special use permit requirements for Tier 3 and 4 solar energy systems should not be installed where it would substantially detract from or block the view(s) of a scenic viewshed, waterfront overlay, and stream corridor as viewed from a public road or publicly owned land. Tier 3/4 systems should be prohibited on or within 1000’ of state or federal wetlands. Furthermore, these systems should be prohibited on soils classified as Prime Farmland, Prime Farmland if Drained, Prime Soils, Prime Soil Lands, or Farmland of Statewide Importance; per the Saratoga County Ag Mapper, in order to preserve these important resources for agricultural purposes.

- H-7. **Ensure that the Planning Board and ZBA utilize the Agricultural Data Statement as required in NYS 25-AA (NYS Agricultural Districts Law). This Statement is used to notify farmland owners located in a NYS Agricultural District when a project is in, or within 500 feet of a proposed project.** The boards should ensure that the farmers identified on the data statement are notified directly about public hearings.
- H-8. **Enhance the Town’s land use regulations to allow on-farm business ventures that provide opportunities for farmers to earn additional income.** Examples include farmstands, small-scale value-added processing, farm-based craft beverage production,

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agritourism, farm stays, and food packaging operations. (See Appendix 1 for more detailed farm-friendly updates Clifton Park could make to accomplish this.)

- H-9. **Streamline local permitting for farmstands, greenhouses, and seasonal events.** When a local permit is needed for these operations, consider administrative approvals instead of processes that require Planning Board or ZBA reviews.
  
- H-10. **Update the Town’s “chicken law” to allow for appropriately located and managed backyard poultry.**



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# Implementation of Plan and Priority Actions

The Plan is meant to guide all those involved in the agricultural sector. It provides a toolbox of ideas and actions that can be implemented over time and offers a strategy for who, how, and when those strategies can be put to work. The Plan provides:

- Guidance to the Town and its partners on priority projects needed to support agriculture;
- A framework for the Town, its partners, including Town elected officials, staff, and members serving upon the various boards, commissions, and committees in Town, and interested landowners to promote farming, agri-businesses, agri-tourism, and local food systems;
- Guidance on obtaining funding to implement actions recommended in the Plan;
- An action plan showing priority strategies and information helpful for implementation; and
- A large inventory of data, maps, and resources to help implement priority actions.

Many individuals, agencies, and organizations have important roles to play in implementing this plan. The Town, with assistance from the Planning Department and the proposed Agricultural Advisory Committee (*Name to be decided by Town Board*), should take a primary role in the implementation of this Plan. There are many other important players, however, that will also have significant roles. Part 2, Appendix 1 includes a comprehensive list of agriculture and farmland protection-related organizations that could have a role in aiding the Town. Partners having critical importance to be involved in the implementation of this plan include:

- Adjacent municipalities
- American Farmland Trust
- Cornell Cooperative Extension
- Farm Bureau
- Farmers and agri-businesses
- NYS Department of Agriculture and Markets
- Saratoga County agencies
- Saratoga County Agriculture and Farmland Protection Board
- Saratoga County SWCD
- Saratoga PLAN
- The many economic development organizations in the County and region

The Town Board's role is to:

- Create/adopt the necessary committees and laws,
- Secure funding streams,
- Allocate annual budgets,
- Adopt supportive resolutions for grants and landowner efforts,

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- Update zoning and subdivision regulations,
  - Oversee farmland preservation acquisitions, and
  - Serve as the lead advocate and convener to ensure this plan becomes action.

**After adoption of this plan, the Town can take the following steps to start implementing the Plan’s highest priority strategies and actions:**

**1. Organizational & Oversight Steps**

- a. Amend the Comprehensive Plan to formally incorporate this Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan.
  - b. Schedule periodic updates (e.g., every 5–10 years) to ensure strategies remain current.
  - c. Adopt a resolution to establish a permanent body (Agriculture and Farmland Protection Committee, Agricultural Advisory Committee, or Agricultural Commission). Define the role and responsibilities of that body (e.g., reviewing projects, advising boards, public outreach, maintaining farmland maps, monitoring implementation).
1. Create a long-term mechanism to implement, oversee, and champion the implementation of this Plan and its recommendations. This includes creating an administrative, funding, and organizational structure to ensure that agriculture and the protection of Clifton Park’s agricultural lands receive sustained support from the Town and community.

## **Framework for a Permanent Agriculture & Farmland Protection Plan Advisory Committee**

*"Plans are only good intentions unless they immediately generate hard work."*



- Adopted by the Town Board, such committee would provide:
  - A **structured framework** for collaboration, input, and expertise
  - Effective **plan implementation**
  - ...and include farmers, landowners, local government officials, and community members.

*The advisory committee will play a vital role in identifying priorities, setting goals, outlining strategies for implementation, monitoring the plan's progress, evaluate its effectiveness, advise the Town Board and make necessary adjustments to ensure success in the future.*

Clifton Park Farms!  
10/29/2025

2. Create an Agriculture and Farmland Protection Advisory Committee via Town Board resolution (see model in Part 2, Appendix 1) as a permanent committee with an identified role to implement the Plan, inform the Town Board about agricultural issues, and make recommendations to address these issues, and to enable and protect the productivity and stability of Clifton Park's agricultural resources. This organization would have oversight responsibility to coordinate and support the implementation of the actions in this Plan. Its role would be to advocate and advise the town on strengthening Clifton Park as a "farm-friendly" town. The committee could be composed of citizens and ex officio members to provide guidance and support on agricultural matters.

The recommended scope of the Committee's work includes:

- a. Inform the Town Board, Planning Board, and Zoning Board of Appeals about agricultural issues and make recommendations to address these issues.
- b. Review proposed development projects within 500 feet of the Agricultural District to determine their impact on agriculture and submit written comments.
- c. Serve as an advocate of the agricultural community through education and communication with Town officials, residents, and property owners. Partner with others to support the goals of this Plan and build and maintain constituencies.
- d. Work with the Town's Open Space Program to help integrate critical agricultural lands into the Town's open space preservation program.
- e. Review and recommend updates to codes, rules, and regulations in Town related to agriculture and farmland.
- f. Maintain mapping and inventory of farms and farmland.
- g. Monitor trends in agriculture and local development to identify future issues.

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- h. Help update and implement this agricultural and farmland protection plan.
  - i. Offer policy guidance.
  - j. Promote integration of planning and economic development that ensures agricultural priorities are included in countywide programs.
  - k. Serve as liaison and communicate with farmers, the community, and the Town government.
  - l. Help educate policymakers by providing briefings to Boards and local government related to agriculture.
  - m. Help with public outreach, education, and awareness campaigns.
  - n. Advocate for cost-share programs, tax incentives, conservation practices, and infrastructure (such as small slaughterhouses).
  - o. Advocate for host community benefit agreements with developers that could generate funds for farmland protection.
  - p. Encourage and assist applications to farmland preservation programs, including but not limited to New York State Farmland Protection Implementation Grants.

## **2. Policy & Regulatory Updates**

- a. Amend the Town's comprehensive plan to include this Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan as an appendix.
- b. Amend zoning and subdivision laws to incorporate the farm-friendly land use policies identified in this Plan including:
  - 1. Add definitions and permitted uses for diversified farm enterprises, agritourism, on-farm processing, and farm labor housing.
  - 2. Strengthen conservation subdivision standards (e.g., a minimum of 50% land set aside, mapped contiguous greenbelts).
  - 3. Update density bonus programs to emphasize farmland protection.
  - 4. Protect farmland from incompatible solar utility/BESS/data center siting through overlays, buffers, and tiered standards.
  - 5. Streamline permitting farmstands, greenhouses, and seasonal events.

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6. Update Planning Board procedures to ensure that applications that are in or within 500' of the NYS Agricultural District are referred to the County pursuant to NYS 239-m.
  7. Send a Notice of Intent to NYS Agriculture and Markets before a water or sewer line serving non-farm uses within a NYS Agricultural District is proposed pursuant to NYS 25-aa.

### **3. Funding & Advocacy**

- a. Regularly update this Plan based on new data and feedback.
- b. Adopt farmland protection financing tools:
  1. Farmland protection capital fund (separate from open space)
  2. Development/farmland mitigation fees tied to subdivision/zoning approvals
  3. Consider real estate transfer tax (CPF), municipal bonds, or "Greenprint" bond programs.
- c. Prioritize annual funding in the Town budget for PDR (Purchase of Development Rights) and conservation easements.
- d. Assess the potential for the Town IDA and SEDC to invest in agricultural businesses.
- e. Continue to partner with Saratoga PLAN on farmland conservation programs and farmland protection projects. They can assist the Town and landowners with grant applications.
- f. Adopt resolutions of support for FPIG (Farmland Protection Implementation Grant) applications by landowners.
- g. Request that State and County officials pursue expanded funding of CCE, SWCD, farmland programs, tax credits, and small farm support.
- h. Direct staff to apply for grants (NYS Department of Agriculture & Markets, USDA, Land Trust Alliance, Saratoga County, AFT, etc.) to support agricultural infrastructure, marketing, and preservation.
- i. Advocate to Saratoga County the need to enhance the role and function of the County Agricultural and Farmland Protection Board.

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#### 4. Education & Awareness

- a. Encourage and support Saratoga County to update the County's Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan.
- b. To improve the Town's overall support for agriculture and reduce unintentional barriers to farm operations, the Town must establish internal practices that build a stronger, more informed, and consistent farm-friendly perspective across all municipal departments. Because Town staff interact daily with farmers, landowners, and residents—and play a key role in administering zoning, code enforcement, permitting, taxation, and public communication—it is essential that staff are equipped with the knowledge and tools needed to understand agricultural needs and respond appropriately. This can be accomplished by:
  - 1. Sponsoring training for Planning Board, ZBA, staff, and assessors on Agricultural Districts law, SEQR, and farmland protection tools. Communicate with farmland owners and farmers about the Town's willingness and ability to help them navigate the Town's zoning and easement programs and grant opportunities.
  - 2. Making it known that the Town's Planning Department is the point of contact for agricultural questions, permitting coordination and farmer communication.
  - 3. Incorporating agriculture into staff and Board procedures and customer service. Injecting farm-friendly guidance into protocols and equipping staff with information on agricultural exemptions, zoning, and best approaches to working with agricultural applicants.
  - 4. Ongoing communication between the Town and the agricultural community is important. Periodic farmer listening sessions with Town staff could help.
  - 5. Updating the Town's land use regulations as recommended in this Plan.
  - 6. Promoting a positive public image of agriculture across Town operations by including agricultural messaging in Town newsletters, social media, public notices, and event promotions. Highlight farms in town to promote agriculture as a valued land use and economic contributor.
- c. Develop mechanisms to convey existing resources and assistance available to farmers or those desiring to start farming in Town.
- d. Develop and connect people to a local farm mentorship program through which experienced farmers are matched with new and young farmers to share their successes and help them access

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resources. At the same time, ensure local farmers and producers are aware of outside resources throughout NYS.

- e. Work with local school districts and BOCES to promote ways to enhance the involvement of students in agriculture.
- f. Appoint and maintain a farmer representative to the Planning Board (per Town Law §271(11)).
- g. Develop an agricultural marketing and promotion program that can address several different audiences and marketing needs.
- h. Enhance the Town website with updated agriculture resources, plan updates, and direct links to assistance programs.
- i. Support agricultural events and campaigns (“Eat Local,” Farm Passport, Farm Fest, farmers’ markets, Agricultural Heritage Center at Grooms Corners).
- j. Encourage the Saratoga County Planning Department to include sessions on the NYS Agricultural Districts Program and farmland protection during the annual Saratoga County Planning Conference.

## **5. Partnerships & Communication**

- a. Form an Agricultural Roundtable or networking forum under Town leadership to link farmers with CCE, SWCD, Saratoga PLAN, Farm Bureau, Chamber, and others.
- b. Coordinate regionally with nearby towns and Saratoga County on shared farming issues such as but not limited to aggregation/distribution, farm incubation, and infrastructure (cold storage, commercial kitchens, slaughterhouse).
- c. Direct staff or committees to meet regularly with county, state, and nonprofit partners to align funding and programming.

## **6. Infrastructure, Farmland, and Town Investments**

- a. Target priority farmland parcels to protect land and prioritize funding for easement, PDR, and other land protection programs.
- b. Evaluate lands where it would be possible to establish opportunities for leasing to regenerative/pollinator farms or as a farm incubator site. Town-owned lands, private lands, or even land associated with agrivoltaic operations (solar farms) are all options for incubator farms.

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- c. Maintain local roads, bridges, and culverts with farm access in mind, and increase awareness of public safety for drivers on roads with farm tractors and equipment
  - d. Budget for drainage, stream corridor restoration, and farm-friendly infrastructure.
  - e. Consider renewable energy and technology pilots for farms, supported with incentives.
  - f. Explore methods to increase shared agricultural infrastructure on a regional basis.

## Priority Actions and Implementation Chart

The following chart identifies the priority policies, and details on implementation timelines, responsibility, partners, and category in the areas of Policy, Funding, Education, Partnerships, Infrastructure, and Farmland Protection.

Immediate = Year 1, Short = 1–2 years, Medium = 2–4 years, Long = 5+ years, Ongoing = continuous

## Agricultural & Farmland Protection Implementation Matrix

Theme	Priority Action	Responsible Party	Partners	Timeline
<b>Organizational &amp; Oversight</b>	Establish a permanent Ag Committee/Commission	Town Board	Town Clerk, Attorney	<b>Immediate</b>
	Define committee roles (review, outreach, mapping, monitoring)	Town Board; Ag Committee	Planning Board, CCE, SWCD	<b>Immediate</b>
	Incorporate Plan into Comprehensive Plan	Town Board; Planning Board	County Planning, Consultant	<b>Short</b>
	Schedule 5–10-year plan updates	Town Board; Ag Committee	Consultant, County Planning	<b>Ongoing</b>
<b>Policy &amp; Regulatory Updates</b>	Amend zoning for diversified farms, agritourism, and labor housing	Town Board; Planning Board	Consultant, CCE, Attorney	<b>Short</b>
	Strengthen conservation subdivision standards (a minimum of 50% set-aside, greenbelts)	Town Board; Planning Board	Consultant, County	<b>Short</b>
	Update density bonus for farmland protection	Town Board	Ag Committee, Consultant	<b>Short</b>
	Solar/BESS/Data Center siting protections (overlays, buffers, tiered standards)	Town Board	Consultant, NYSEDA, County	<b>Short</b>
	Streamline permits for farmstands, greenhouses, and seasonal events	Town Board	Building Dept., Farmers	<b>Short</b>
	Update PB referrals per NYS 239-m	Planning Board Chair	County Planning, Attorney	<b>Immediate</b>

Theme	Priority Action	Responsible Party	Partners	Timeline
	NOI before water/sewer extension in Ag Districts (AML §25-aa)	Town Board	NYS Ag & Markets, County	Ongoing
<b>Funding &amp; Advocacy</b>	Create a farmland capital fund	Town Board, Comptroller	County, Land Trusts	Medium
	Explore mitigation fees, CPF/transfer tax, and bonds	Town Board	Consultant, County	Medium
	Budget annual PDR/conservation easement funds	Town Board	Saratoga PLAN, Landowners	Annual
	Encourage IDA/SEDC investment in ag businesses	Town Board; Ag Committee	County IDA, SEDC	Medium
	Support FPIG applications with resolutions	Town Board	Landowners, Saratoga PLAN	Ongoing
	Lobby for expanded farm funding & tax credits	Town Board; Ag Committee	Farm Bureau, Chamber	Annual
	Apply for grants (Ag & Markets, USDA, AFT, etc.)	Staff; Ag Committee	Saratoga PLAN, Consultant	Ongoing
	Strengthen the County Ag & Farmland Board role	Town Board	County Planning	Short
<b>Education &amp; Awareness</b>	Training for PB, ZBA, staff, assessors	Town Board; Ag Committee	County Planning, CCE	Annual
	Convey resources to farmers & new entrants	Ag Committee; Staff	CCE, Farm Bureau	Short
	Farm mentorship program	Ag Committee	CCE, Schools, Farmers	Medium
	Partner with schools/BOCES on agricultural engagement	Ag Committee	School Districts, BOCES	Medium
	Appoint farmer rep to Planning Board (§271(11))	Town Board	Ag Committee	Short
	Multi-audience marketing/promotion program	Ag Committee	Chamber, Farm Bureau	Medium
	Enhance the Town website with agricultural resources	Town Staff	Ag Committee	Short
	Support agricultural events & campaigns (Eat Local, Farm Fest, etc.)	Town Board; Ag Committee	Chamber, Saratoga PLAN	Annual

Theme	Priority Action	Responsible Party	Partners	Timeline
	Encourage County Planning to add Agricultural District sessions	Town Board	County Planning	<b>Short</b>
<b>Partnerships &amp; Communication</b>	Create an Agricultural Roundtable/network forum	Town Board; Ag Committee	CCE, SWCD, Saratoga PLAN, Farm Bureau	<b>Short</b>
	Regional coordination on aggregation, incubation, infrastructure	Town Board; Ag Committee	County, Neighboring Towns	<b>Medium</b>
	Regular meetings with county, state, and nonprofit partners	Ag Committee; Staff	Saratoga PLAN, County Planning, CCE	<b>Ongoing</b>
<b>Infrastructure &amp; Investments</b>	Target priority farmland parcels for PDR/easements	Ag Committee; Saratoga PLAN	County, Landowners	<b>Ongoing</b>
	Evaluate Town-owned land for leasing/incubator	Town Board	Ag Committee, Farmers	<b>Medium</b>
	Maintain farm-friendly roads/bridges/culverts	Highway Dept.; Town Board	County DPW	<b>Ongoing</b>
	Budget drainage, stream corridor restoration, farm-friendly infrastructure	Town Board	SWCD, County	<b>Annual</b>
	Renewable energy/technology pilots for farms	Town Board; Ag Committee	NYSERDA, Utilities	<b>Medium-Long</b>
	Regional agricultural infrastructure (cold storage, kitchens, slaughterhouse)	Town Board; Ag Committee	County, Neighboring Towns, CCE	<b>Long</b>

# Town of Clifton Park

## Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan

### Part 2: Appendices



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## **List of Appendices**

Appendix I – Agricultural Resources

Appendix II – Public Involvement Record

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## **Appendix I: Agriculture Resources**

### **Existing Plans and Studies - Other Planning Efforts Related to Agriculture in Clifton Park**

The Town of Clifton Park and Saratoga County have demonstrated support and interest in agriculture and farmland protection through their investments in local land use, planning, and policy implementation. Identifying core farmland areas and establishing agricultural zoning districts through community planning studies has helped the Town and County develop strategies and guidelines for shaping development and preserving farmland as practicable. Below is a summary of planning initiatives and studies since the early 2000s that have shaped land use and zoning policies, which have impacted farmland in the Town.

#### **Clifton Park (Chapter 125) Conservation Easement Law (adopted in 1996, most recently amended in 2024)**

The Town first adopted the “Land Conservation and Historic Preservation Easement Law of the Town of Clifton Park” in 1996 and last amended it in 2024. The law provides a mechanism for owners of historic buildings or landowners with a minimum of 15 acres per lot (or 7.5 acres each for any two adjoining lots) to apply to the town’s term conservation easement program, for historic, open space, or agricultural term easements. In exchange for 15- to 25-year commitments to not develop the land, the town reduces the property tax assessments of participating landowners by 80 to 90 percent. Additionally, the Town Board updated the law in 2008 to include the town’s Permanent Conservation Easement Program activities, as the Town initiated purchasing development rights for permanent conservation easements with willing landowners to achieve permanent land protection goals.

#### **Clifton Park’s Open Space Plan (2003) Farmland Protection Plan Concepts:**

- Focus initial efforts on active farmlands with some types of existing temporary protection (such as farms with temporary term easements, agricultural assessment, and/or participation in the agricultural district program).
- Offer willing farmland owners options for permanent farmland protection, working out with each owner a fair appraisal, and the individual family’s estate planning needs.
- Partner with state and federal programs for permanent easements. One such permanent farmland protection option that has been used successfully across New York State and the nation is the purchase of agricultural conservation easements (PACE).
- Protect the most valuable working landscapes and active farmland, most valuable for the community.
- Core Farming Areas to Consider for Permanent Protection in the “west to southwest quadrant”

of town:

- From the Mohawk River to Vischer Ferry Road;
- Farm parcels along the western half of Grooms Roads;
- Sugar Hill Road, including from Kings Farm to Bowman's Orchard; Ray Road;
- Farms and orchards along the length of Riverview Road;
- Farms along the western end of Route 146, including Beck Farm, Tanner, Waite, and Garnsey Roads;
- Farms along MacElroy Road (both sides) and Hubbs Road; and
- The north/south corridor comprising Western greenbelt parcels along Schaubert, Ashdown, and Blue Barns roads.

Implementation:

- Evaluate and include farmers' priorities and interests in a voluntary program for permanent agricultural conservation easements. Perform a farmer-specific survey and other individualized outreach. Scale funding to balance landowner interest with community resources.
- Offer farmers the opportunity to participate in a voluntary purchase of permanent agricultural conservation easements (PACE) program and provide incentives for participation.
- Encourage participation in Saratoga County's agricultural economic development assistance programs, including marketing, training, and strategies.
- Continue support of and expand programs such as Farm Fest.
- Add a Farm Tour concept that could link to and be co-sponsored by neighboring towns, or link to a county-wide farm tour.
- Tap into county, state, and federal programs and resources.
- Review the term conservation easements law to make sure its enforcement policy is clear, and the administration mechanisms are in place.

2-5 Year Goal: Set up a permanent easement program in partnership with the NYS Department of Agriculture and Markets and American Farmland Trust; secure participation by several farms and farmland owners. Approximately 300-600 acres near term.

Western Clifton Park Land Conservation Plan & Final Generic Environmental Impact Statement (2005). The Study Area included about 13,900 acres of land in the western portion of the Town that primarily comprised rural lands like large lot residential, farms, environmentally constrained lands, and undeveloped land, as well as the historic hamlets of Rexford, Vischer Ferry, and Grooms Corners.

The Western Clifton Park Land Conservation Plan & GEIS included a fiscal impact study of development scenarios, and through extensive public engagement, established a new land use plan for both the conservation and the low-density development vision for Western Clifton Park, and led to the implementation of new zoning districts for the conservation of land resources and the preservation of rural character in the western area of the Town. It also provided a tool for identifying appropriate mitigation to minimize the environmental and socio-cultural impacts of development.

The zoning districts and land conservation plan elements can be found in Figure 1. The basic elements of the plan were:

- Rezone all residentially zoned lands in the Study Area to Conservation Residential. The result would be that all projects in this zone would be designed as conservation subdivisions, with the requirement of at least 50% permanent open space for the subdivision of parcels greater than 10 acres. With the policy goal of CR zoning to reduce overall density within the total zone, the community (through zoning) provided some property owners with potential relief through the Open Space Incentive Zoning tool. This tool included the opportunity to increase the development potential (density bonus) of a given site in exchange for the public benefit of providing increased conservation of open space, such as one option through the purchase of development rights (PDR) on a designated open space parcel.
- Rezone the residential portion of Rexford to Hamlet Residential to preserve the character of this area.
- Rezone all existing commercially zoned areas to Hamlet Mixed Use to promote uses more in tune with the rural character of the area.

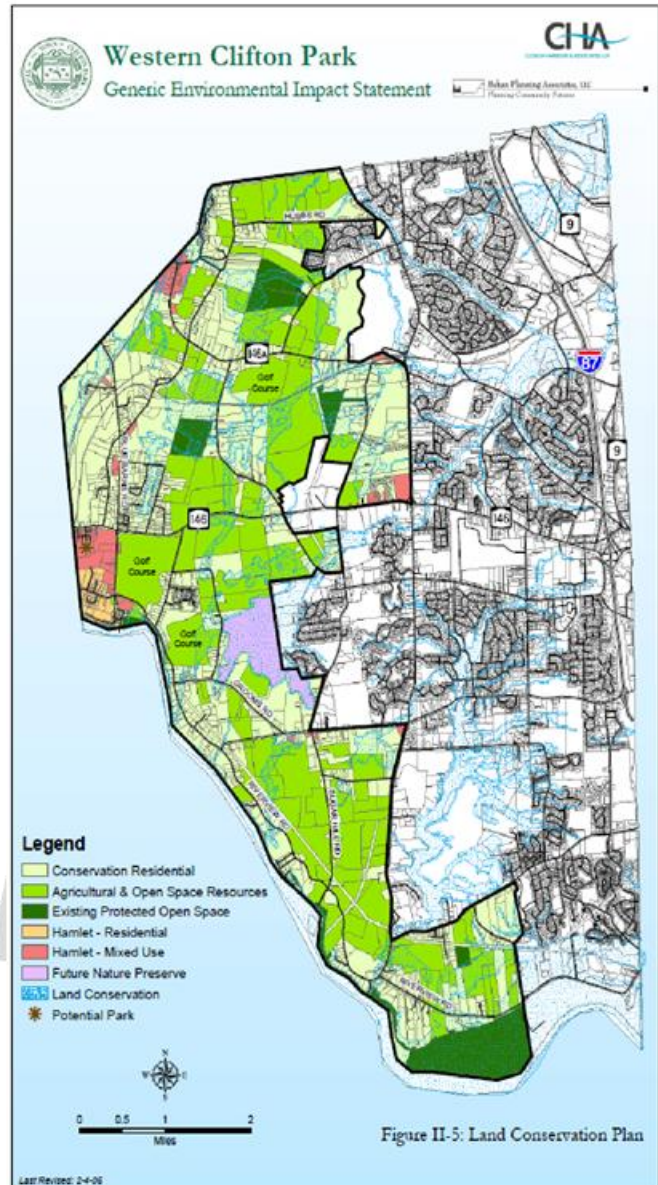


Figure 1. Final GEIS

- Conduct design workshops for the potential infill and enhancement of existing hamlets (particularly Rexford) to better understand growth potential and land use issues.
- Establish a PDR program and funding mechanism to permanently protect agricultural and open space resources in accordance with the Town’s Open Space Plan.

Green Infrastructure Plan for Saratoga County (2006)

The Saratoga County Green Infrastructure Plan was initiated to identify priority open space, natural, and farmland resources throughout the County to guide new development to appropriate areas. The County led the collaborative effort to protect regional resources like rivers, wetlands, and farmlands from increased development pressure as new housing units were projected to grow at a faster rate than the population.

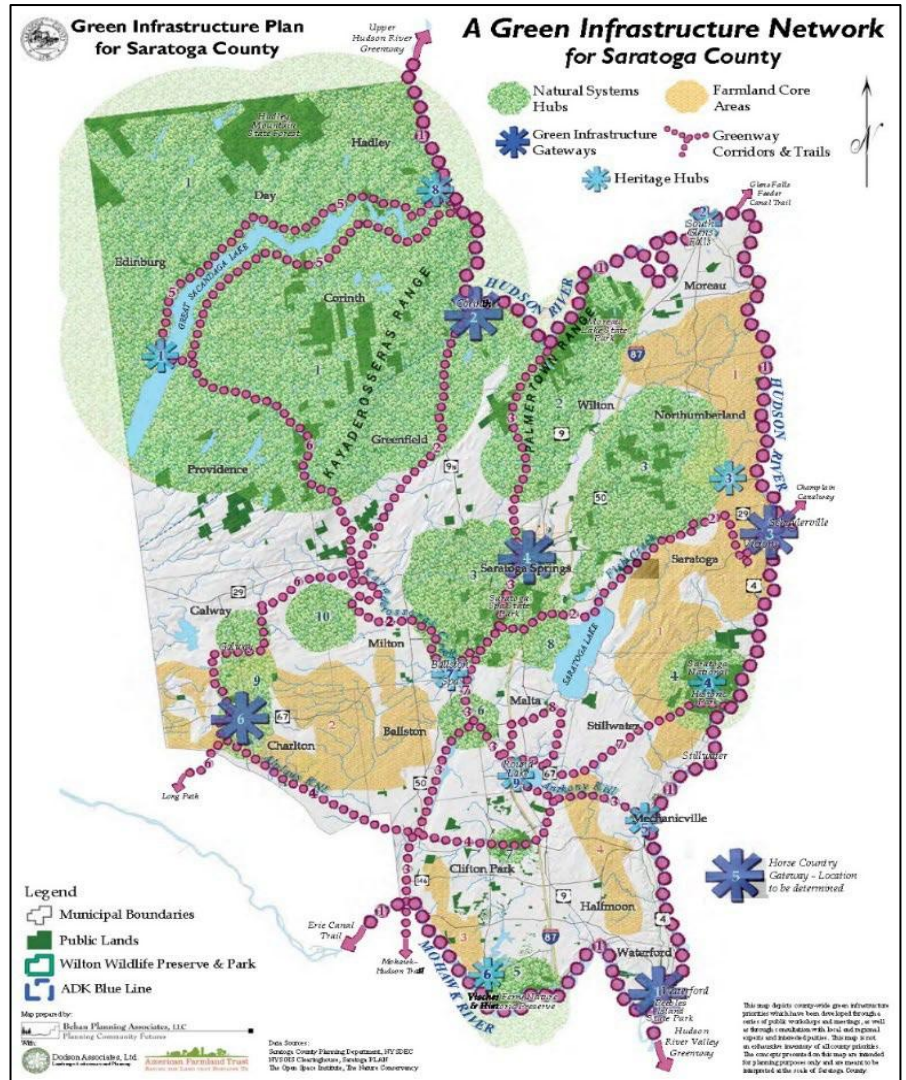
Ultimately, the vision for the County’s “green infrastructure” network included several “hubs” linked together by conservation greenways. The plan identified the Vischer Ferry Heritage Hub in southern Clifton Park.

Natural Systems Hubs – Vischer Ferry Nature & Historic Preserve and Dwaas Kill Natural Area, and a large Farmland Core Area in western Clifton Park. These hubs

are connected by a series of Greenway Corridors and Trails outlined in the plan, including the Erie Canal and Upper Hudson River Greenway, Alplaus Greenway, and Mid-County Trail System.

Town of Clifton Park Comprehensive Plan (2006)

The Comprehensive Plan encourages a balance of land uses that promotes residential and economic vitality while rural and historic character is preserved. Its measured residential areas comprise 75-80% of the Town, and the commercial/corporate areas are about 20- 25% of the Town’s approximately 50 square miles.



The Plan divides the Town into three planning areas:

- Area 1 includes the area bordered by Vischer Ferry Road and County Route 82 to the west, the Malta and Round Lake boundaries to the north, the Halfmoon/Clifton Park boundary to the east, and the county boundary to the south. It contains 80% of the Town's housing and population and the most public services and facilities. This area also includes major regional commercial and recreation destinations.
- Area 2 covers the western portion of the Town, bordered on the south by the Mohawk River, to the west by the hamlet of Rexford, on the north by the Town boundary and Route 146A, and Vischer Ferry Road to the east. It contains about 45% of the Town's land area and 20% of the Town's housing. This area has been predominantly rural and agricultural, but has been experiencing growth pressures since the 1980s. In response to a build-out analysis conducted in 2004-05 to evaluate growth pattern scenarios in this area of Town, the zoning was amended to ensure that the primarily rural residential, agricultural, and recreational nature of the Town would be preserved. New land use and zoning tools were created to assist the Town with preservation efforts.
- Area 3 is also located in the western part of the Town and includes the Hamlet of Rexford, which is primarily single-family residences with some commercial development. The hamlet is a town gateway with the only bridge in Town that crosses the Mohawk River. There are poor soils in this area, but no other environmental constraints, making it attractive for development.
- Comprehensive Plan Goals: Preserve and enhance the historic, residential, agricultural, and rural nature of the Town of Clifton Park while encouraging managed economic growth.
- Maintain a continuing planning process for the Town, with emphasis on the quality of life for all Town residents and an appropriate balance of land uses.
- Address issues essential to supporting existing development and to encourage future managed growth, while encouraging community diversity and quality of life.
- Ensure that all future development takes into account its environmental impacts on the Town, especially in terms of water supply, water quality, open space, scenic viewsheds, and historic preservation.
- Pursue appropriate opportunities to cooperate with other municipalities in the Capital Region to reduce the cost of public programs and facilities, especially in such areas as economic growth, assessment and taxation, land use, economic development, and transportation planning.
- Maximize resident participation in the deliberation and decisions of Town Government and provide speedy and efficient government services to town residents through all appropriate means.

- The Economy section of the Comprehensive Plan: Recognize and support local agricultural and farming businesses as important contributors to local economic diversity and health and fiscal stability.

Plan Concepts and Goals related to Farmland are:

#### Concepts

- Focus on active farmlands currently in the term easement program, agricultural district, or agricultural assessment programs.
- Support and enhance the town-sponsored term conservation easement programs.
- Partner with state and federal grant programs to obtain permanent conservation easements.
- Protect the most valuable working farms.

#### Goal

- Protect 300-600 acres in the next 2-5 years
- The Town’s environmental goal also includes requiring development to be done in a way that protects farmland and natural resources.
- The recommended implementation strategies are general but include a range of land use and zoning tools:
  - cluster zoning
  - conservation-based development design
  - land conservation zoning districts
  - planned unit developments
  - open space incentive zoning
  - purchase of development rights
  - conservation easements
  - open space incentive zoning

#### **Clifton Park / Halfmoon Exit 9 Land Use and Transportation Study (2008)**

This study was a joint effort by the Towns of Clifton Park and Halfmoon to guide land use and transportation decisions by addressing some of the issues and identifying opportunities in the I-87 Exit 9 commercial area. The Towns were motivated to embark on the study as a result of increasing traffic congestion and quality of life concerns created by disjointed land uses exclusively accessible by private vehicles. The recommended goals and strategies were shaped around the vision of creating a “town center” with multiple uses and activities that can be a pleasant place to walk. And a place where people can live, work, shop, and enjoy cultural activities without being dependent on a private vehicle. The principles established to achieve the vision included:

- Connect land use and transportation decisions
- Sustainable land use planning
- Complete Streets
- Rethinking parking
- Enhance design standards and design guidelines

To implement the Study’s recommendations, the Town identified resources to develop a Town Center Plan.

[Clifton Park Town Center Plan \(2012\)](#)

The Town Board retained a planning consultant, appointed a project advisory committee, and conducted a robust public planning process to create and ultimately adopt the Clifton Park Town Center Plan. The plan laid out a vision for the look, feel, and function of a future town center at the I-87 Exit 9 commercial area. The Plan was intended to guide future public policy as well as public and private investments in the area. Plan Concepts and Recommendations:

1. Conceptualize and plan for the Town Center as having a Northern and Southern Node rather than trying to bridge the two over NYS Route 146, given the nature and jurisdiction of the intense, divisive, multi-laned roadway, although this could still be a long-term goal. The Town will focus on what it can control, which is land use decisions within the nodes, and create two mixed-use, walkable, and attractive developments that include usable, attractive open space. The plan encourages both horizontal and vertical mixed uses, including retail, entertainment, offices, multi-family residential, institutional, and well-designed public parks and spaces. It also encourages the Town to organize the nodes around a walkable street network characterized by street trees, sidewalks, on-street parking, low vehicle speeds, and small block sizes that are safe. The Plan recommends converting Clifton Country Road into a “Main Street” for the Town Center. Because Clifton Park owns the road, it can make incremental changes that transform it through a series of pedestrian safety, beautification, and other design enhancements. Awarded federal transportation aid in 2022 through the TIP, the Town is currently implementing PIN 1762.60 “Clifton Park’s Main Street: Town Center Walkability Improvements on Clifton Country Road”. Encourage new residential uses in the Town Center to create the mixed-use, high-density character that is part of the Plan’s vision. This would also support housing diversity, including high-end apartment buildings, senior housing, townhomes, and even small-lot single-family homes. The mix of housing and uses makes walking, bicycling, and use of public transit feasible for everyday trips while preserving open space and recreational opportunities in the Town.
  
3. Integration of public building and other civic uses into the Town Center. This recommendation proposed a future public space similar to The Crossings in Colonie, NY. The space was envisioned to include nature trails and multi-use paths along with playgrounds, picnic pavilions, community buildings, and other recreational facilities. One major implementation action from this Town Center Plan is that the Town of Clifton Park purchased 37 acres from Shenendehowa School District in 2020, after significant public support, and proceeded to conduct a public planning process for designing a new town park. The Town constructed key

Phase 1 park elements and opened Town Center Park to the public in October 2022. The new park provides for an inviting pedestrian connection from Moe Road to Maxwell Drive/Southside Drive, as well as an open gathering space, the Glade, for the community in the natural woodlands and stream setting.

4. Enhance connectivity throughout each node to distribute traffic and create a more pedestrian and bike-friendly environment. Connections would be created by identifying rows of parking spaces that could be converted to streets and incorporated into future development. This recommendation also included extending existing roads to create new access to major nearby roadways and destinations.
5. Short-term and long-term solutions for NYS Route 146 require the Town and NYSDOT to coordinate and continue to look for opportunities to make incremental pedestrian and safety improvements to the corridor. The long-term vision is to redesign NYS Route 146 as a “Complete Street” or boulevard that would support the Town Center vision for a “Main Street.”
6. Complete sidewalk and pathway system within the study area and to/from the study area to other parts of Town.

#### Clifton Park Form-Based Development Code (2015)

This project developed proposed zoning language to implement the Clifton Park Town Center Plan (2012). A form-based zoning approach was chosen to illustrate desired development patterns and design graphically, and to streamline the development review process. The proposed zoning changes were intended to encourage redevelopment and reinvestment in the I-87 Exit 9 commercial area that attracted a mix of activities and created a vibrant and walkable town center. The Town amended its zoning code to adopt the Town Center District zoning language in 2015. By allowing mixed-use development that includes a residential component within the Town Center Zoning Districts, the Town provides housing opportunities in proximity to public parks, services, employment, and transit. This strategy helps absorb growth in a planned, centralized location, potentially reducing some development pressures on the more rural Western Clifton Park and preserving open space and agricultural character.

## Audit of Town Land Use Regulations

Review and Recommendations by Nan Stolzenburg FAICP CEP

July 15, 2025

See Also the Associated Audit Summary Chart

### Why an Audit?

An audit of the comprehensive plan, zoning, and subdivision laws in the Town of Clifton Park was completed as part of the development of the Town's Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan. This audit was designed to help gauge the 'farm-friendliness' of representative local plans and land use laws to help identify if local regulations place any barriers to agricultural uses, diversification or expansion, and identify areas that could be improved locally, in the future. Specifically, this Audit reviewed the farm-friendliness of local plans and regulations to identify elements that are both working to support agriculture and where improvements could be made to enhance agriculture in the Town .

### Background

**Role of Comprehensive Plans.** A comprehensive plan is an important community document because it is the foundation for local land use regulations. Land use regulations need to be consistent with a community's plan because regulations should be designed to meet community needs and objectives, which are usually outlined in a comprehensive plan. The plan establishes the vision a community has for itself, which is then translated into land use regulations such as zoning and subdivision. It is recognized that the Town of Clifton Park has several other significant plans that address and impact farm and farmland programs, including the Western Clifton Park Land Conservation Plan (& GEIS), the Open Space Plan, and continued updates on priority lands to be included in the Town's Permanent Conservation program from the Open Space, Trails, and Riverfront Committee.

**NYS Certified Agricultural Districts and Land Use Regulations.** Understanding the relationship between local land use regulations and NYS Certified Agricultural Districts is very important. New York State Agriculture and Markets Law 25-AA is a state law that establishes agricultural districts where farmers receive protection against local laws that unreasonably restrict farm operations. 25-AA also offers right-to-farm protection from private nuisance claims. The Town of Clifton Park has its own local-level right-to-farm law (Farming, Chapter 102). New York State Agricultural Districts (Ag Districts) are designed to support a favorable operating environment for farms. This Audit was conducted to identify consistency between local regulations and definitions, guidelines, and requirements imposed by NYS AML 25-AA. Many Clifton Park properties are enrolled in the Saratoga County Agricultural District #2, the NYS Certified Ag District that pertains to the geography of Clifton Park and is administered by the Saratoga County Agricultural and Farmland Protection Board. (Note that NYS Agricultural Districts are not the same thing as those farms that receive an agricultural assessment – which is a totally different program that does not address the regulatory environment for farms.)

**Role of Zoning Laws.** Zoning can create opportunities for agriculture but also can place barriers to farming or certain farming practices. Zoning identifies whether a farm use is permitted, whether a municipal review process, such as a site plan or special use permit approval is required, or whether setbacks, height, or acreage requirements are needed. When some of these regulations exist, there are potential barriers to or challenges facing farmers and agricultural operations. Zoning can also place “hidden” barriers by being vague, by missing important ag-related definitions, and by simply not addressing various aspects of agricultural uses. These “hidden” barriers can cause confusion, delays, or even added expenses when both farmers and the Town (staff and Planning Board) don’t have clarity.

Even when zoning is not explicitly farm-unfriendly, vague zoning (meaning those that do not really address agriculture) can introduce uncertainty for farmers, especially new farmers and farmers who wish to diversify or add direct sales or other farm-related businesses. This can also lead to unnecessary or lengthy permit reviews – all of which the NYS AML 25-AA seeks to avoid. These issues are especially poignant given trends for farm diversification, the addition of value-added processing or activities on the farm, and modern farming techniques.

One of the prime reasons for the existence of the NYS Agricultural District program pursuant to NYS AML 25-AA, is to prevent over-regulation of farms. Farm uses within a NYS certified Agricultural District are considered to be the primary and desirable land use in those areas. The Agricultural Districts (which are voluntarily established) serve to reduce or prevent regulatory hurdles to conducting accepted agricultural practices.

This Audit is, in part, designed to identify whether local zoning or other land use laws create any inconsistencies between the NYS Agricultural Districts law and local land use laws that would serve to *discourage* agriculture instead of encouraging it within those NY Agricultural Districts.

Zoning laws, which would be considered not farm-friendly, sometimes regulate where and how farms can operate, and whether Planning Board review is required before a farmer can undertake some agricultural practice or component of their business. Land use regulations can define and allow certain farm activities or can explicitly prohibit others. Sometimes, land use regulations introduce confusion when certain uses are not adequately defined, so the Audit evaluates what and how terms are defined.

**Role of Subdivision Laws.** Subdivision laws regulate how land is divided. Although subdivision laws do not regulate land use like a zoning law does, they have a great deal of influence on how non-farm development takes place and whether it is done in a manner compatible with farm neighbors. Many subdivision laws give little attention to agriculture and often do not assist in finding ways for farming and non-farm uses to be more compatible. Farm-friendly regulations give more attention to agriculture during the design and review phases of new non-farm projects.

In New York State, when a proposed subdivision meets all applicable local and state standards, the planning board has a legal responsibility to approve the application. However, agricultural concerns need to be considered via SEQR (Part 2 of the SEAF and FEAF), and through this SEQR review, the Planning Board is asked to evaluate potentially significant adverse impacts of a project on nearby agriculture, and especially via New York’s Agriculture and Markets Law 25-AA (Agricultural

Districts). It is within the planning board’s authority – especially when a project is in or within 500’ of a New York State certified agricultural district – that boards integrate agricultural considerations during the review process to ensure that new developments are compatible with existing farming operations. This can include evaluating the potential impact on neighboring farms, promoting buffer zones, and recommending design modifications that support long-term agricultural viability.

**Consequences of Local Plans and Laws that are not Farm-friendly.** Choices made by communities in their local land use regulations can have many consequences, including affecting land values, making farm expansion or start-ups difficult, contributing to land use conflicts, and even hastening the conversion of farmland to other uses. More broadly, when local laws restrict agricultural uses, and farming becomes more difficult both economically and day to day, a sense of impermanence for farming can develop as farmers begin to feel that non-farm uses will ultimately take over in the area.

That feeling of impermanence can, in turn, foster disinvestment in farm operations and ultimately lead to the sale of land for non-farm development. With low profitability and economic stress, selling land for non-farm development may be a necessity or at least very appealing to some farms or farmland owners. Understanding the local regulatory climate is the first step towards improving the farm-friendliness of an area. Ultimately, farm and farmland preservation is underpinned by economically successful farming, but land use regulations certainly influence those economic conditions.

## The Audit

To accomplish the audit, the comprehensive plan, other plans and studies, subdivision, and zoning regulations were evaluated for the Town. These plans, studies, and laws were evaluated against a series of questions designed to explore the level of farm-friendliness in the municipality. **This audit is not a criticism of any local law or plan but simply points out ways local land use regulations work with or present challenges to farming activities. Results of the Audit can help inform the new Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan’s recommendations for strategies and actions.**

The audit is also informed by guidance offered by the New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets through their “Guidelines for Review of Local Zoning and Planning Laws” (<http://www.agriculture.ny.gov/AP/agsservices/guidancedocuments/305-aZoningGuidelines.pdf>) and “Local Laws and Agricultural Districts: Guidance for Local Governments and Farmers” (<http://www.agriculture.ny.gov/AP/agsservices/new305/guidance.pdf>).

## Farm-Friendly Criteria Used in the Review

The following questions are those used in these audits to explore farm-friendliness. The answers offer insight into the level of farm-friendliness in plans and adopted laws in a community. A highly farm-friendly plan or land use regulation would positively address most of these criteria. Also see the chart at the end of this report.

## Comprehensive Other Plan-Related Questions

- Does the Town have a Comprehensive Plan?
- Is the Plan up-to-date (less than 10 years old)?

- Does the plan have a specific section addressing agriculture?
- Does the Plan include any maps of agricultural lands, important farmland soils, Agricultural Districts, etc.?
- Does the Plan explore the role of agriculture in the community? I.e., did a survey include questions about agriculture? Was there anything in the workshops about it?
- Does the Plan have a vision statement or goals that address agriculture in any way? Is there any visible demonstration of the value of agriculture to the community in the plan?
- Does the Plan recognize agriculture as an important resource in Town?
- Does the Plan recognize or reference a local or County agriculture and farmland protection plan?
- Does the Plan include any data on farms and farmland? Acreage? Income or occupations from farming or other ag-census data?
- Does the Plan establish policies towards farmland and farming?
- Does the Plan identify the value of farmland and farms to the community in some way?
- Does the Plan offer any recommended actions or strategies related to farming or farmland or ways to preserve or enhance farming?
- Does the Plan establish a policy and/or future actions related to conservation subdivision or clustering, conservation design layout, required identification and conservation of agricultural resources, agricultural overlay districts or other methods?
- Does the Plan discuss NYS Agricultural Districts and agricultural value assessments?
- Does the Plan consider farmland an important resource, recognize prime or soils of statewide importance, and encourage easements or other protections of that land?
- Is there a policy discussed for PDR, LDR or TDR?
- Is agriculture a consideration of where growth does or does not take place?

**Regulatory Questions (Subdivision and Zoning – but may have information from other local laws as well)**

- Does Subdivision Law address agriculture in any way?
- Does the subdivision application ask for any submissions related to agriculture?
- Are conservation subdivisions allowed? Voluntarily? Mandatory? Does it address agriculture?
- Does subdivision include siting of non-farm development in a manner that preserves farm use?
- Does the zoning regulation’s purpose statement include a discussion of agriculture, or promote preserving agriculture specifically?
- Does zoning allow agriculture as a permitted use by right?
- Does zoning prohibit agriculture in any district other than hamlet centers or commercial areas?
- Are site plan reviews required in one or more districts for agriculture or ag-related uses?
- Are special use permits for agriculture or agriculture-related uses required in one or more districts?
- Is residential, higher density or commercial growth allowed in core farm areas or where a NYS Agricultural District exists so that conflicts may arise?
- Does the zoning specifically establish a local agricultural zoning district designed for agriculture, agricultural overlay district, or special use district for agriculture?

- Does the zoning allow farms to have more than one business or offer flexibility to accommodate the needs of agricultural businesses?
- Are buffer zones between farmland and residential uses required for new non-farm construction or subdivision?
- Are innovative development patterns specifically designed to preserve farmland encouraged, allowed, or mandated (conservation subdivision, conservation design layout, required identification and conservation of agricultural resources, clustering, TDR)?
- Are off-site or on-site signs allowed to attract and direct people to farmstands and on-farm businesses?
- Are farmstands, farm retail markets, agritourism businesses, farm-based breweries, etc. Allowed? Are these allowed off-site of the primary farm property?
- Are farm processing facilities such as community kitchens, slaughterhouses, etc. allowed?
- Are farmstands limited to selling just products from that one farm or is that flexible?
- Do farmstands and other on-farm retail need a site plan review or special use permit?
- Does zoning allow for accessory uses such as greenhouses, barns, garages, equipment storage etc. permitted as of right?
- Do application requirements for non-farm uses include asking for submitting information or maps about farming that might be taking place on or near the project parcel? Whether it is in a NYS certified Agricultural District? What farming activities take place on or near the site? Whether prime farmland soils are present?
- Do standards exist beyond SEQR that require the Planning Board (PB) or Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA) to evaluate impacts of a project on agriculture?
- Do any design standards exist to direct building envelopes of non-farm development to areas on a parcel that would still allow farming to occur in remaining open spaces?
- Does the zoning define agriculture, agricultural structure, farmworker housing, agritourism, agri-business, and other ag-related terms?
- Are farm uses that are defined included in the Use Table?
- Are farm-related definitions broad and flexible and not confined to a certain number of acres or income earned?
- Are non-traditional or retail-based farm businesses allowed in a district or ag zoned district? For example, can a farmer set up a brewery on site and sell products onsite?
- Is an agricultural data statement as per AML 25-aa required as part of an application for site plan, subdivision, special use or other zoning?
- Is agricultural disclosure statement on plans or plats required when development takes place in a NY certified Agricultural District or otherwise recognize this?
- Does the regulation define and allow for farmworker housing? Are mobile homes allowed as farmworker housing?
- Are silos and other farm structures exempt from height requirements?
- Does Town have regulations for solar and wind?
- Do solar regulations address development on farmed parcels or address development on farmland soils?
- Are personal windmills and solar panels allowed for farm use? With permits or permitted as of right?
- Does zoning establish any rules for manure storage or spreading or other water quality related rules on farms?

## Town of Clifton Park Farm Friendly Audit Results

### Evaluation of the Town's Comprehensive Plan, and Other Plans and Studies:

Although the Town's Comprehensive Plan is relatively old (2006), the Town has completed several other key studies that align with and further the vision established in the 2006 Plan, including:

- Western Clifton Park Land Conservation Plan & GEIS (2005)
- Route 146 Corridor Study (2008)
- Town Center Plan (2013)
- Town-Wide Recreation Plan (2012)
- Town Center Zoning Update (2015)
- Town Center Zoning Expansion (2018)
- ADA Self-Evaluation and Transition Plan (2025)
- Kinns Road (CR-109) Corridor Study (Initiated 2025)

1. As per the Planning Department, "These studies have enabled the Town to implement meaningful improvements and policy updates in a manageable and strategic manner. Because they are smaller in scope, they can be updated more frequently and tailored to specific community needs.
2. Overall, agriculture and the continuation of agriculture have been identified as an important priority for the Town through all its plans and studies. While the Comprehensive Plan does not have much information on agriculture, the topic was clearly and comprehensively studied and evaluated in the Western Clifton Park Land Conservation Plan (& GEIS) (adopted 2005). All the Town's planning documents identify the important roles agriculture plays in the community (related to open space, scenic and landscape character, economically, and environmentally).
3. The public plans express a vision that includes agriculture. They establish policies towards farmland and farming. While the Comprehensive Plan offers general policies, the Western Clifton Park Land Conservation Plan & GEIS (WCP LCP) addresses specific strategies (most of which have already been implemented). The WCP LCP especially discusses conservation subdivision, clustering, and other regulatory methods such as PDR and TDR that can assist in maintaining farming and protecting farmland. Maintenance of agriculture is identified in these plans as a consideration of where and how much new non-farm growth occurs.

Overall Score – 15.75 or 93% of the total for planning-related farm-friendly criteria.

### Evaluation of the farm-friendliness of the Town's subdivision regulations:

The Town's subdivision law was originally adopted in 1989 and has been updated numerous times since then (1989, 1990, 1992, 1993, 1995, 1998, 1999, 2010, and 2022). The 2010 amendment added preservation language, and the 2022 amendment updated various definitions. The Town's

subdivision law does not place significant barriers or challenges directly on farms, but there are several opportunities that could be taken to enhance the law to further expand Clifton Park's farm-friendliness. These include for the Town's consideration:

1. It is great to see Article X (Open Space Subdivision). This is a section that establishes strong subdivision review and performance standards. This section's purpose statement establishes the protection of agriculture and farmland as one of the purposes of the law.
  - a. There are no agriculture-related definitions; however, to help.
  - b. There is some regulatory language that could be a barrier, though. It requires that new lots have 2x the minimum lot size, and the technique can only be applied when there is a subdivision of 7 or more lots on parcels that are 20 or more acres in size. The key to an open space subdivision is actually flexibility in its applicability, and these standards would serve to limit its use.
  - c. The open space subdivision is voluntary, which may diminish its likelihood to be used. At the same time, it is confusing and there may be a potential conflict with the zoning law, which requires conservation design for development in the CR district. All the right foundations are in the section, but it could be improved to maximize the use of this technique to preserve farmland.
2. Article X articulates design and approval criteria for open space subdivisions. More emphasis can be placed in this section on agriculture as an important open space. While this Article mentions agriculture, it is highly oriented to open space. There are some great ways to enhance its treatment of agriculture (see recommendations below). I also think that it is confusing to have a distinction between a cluster subdivision (179-37) and conservation density subdivision (179-38).
3. Article X (179-39 (A) (1) does not strongly articulate that preserved land in the open space subdivision can be used for agriculture. This sub-section actually limits the use of preserved land for agriculture because it ties allowance for agricultural use to "*on parcels subject to agricultural overlay district regulations, as may be adopted.*" Since there is no agricultural overlay district in Clifton Park, this allowance would not come into play.
4. To its credit, the law requires submission of the Agricultural Data Statement with a subdivision application but does not offer any guidance as to what the applicant or Planning Board should do with that statement or what it should contain. The Agricultural Data Statement is required via AML 25-AA to be submitted and is used primarily to notify other farmers in the Ag District about a proposed project.
5. There are no other subdivision application or plat requirements related to agriculture. This means that the Planning Board has little information about how the proposed subdivision impacts or interacts with nearby agriculture.
6. The subdivision law does not incorporate a requirement for, or review of, building envelopes. This technique places the emphasis on review of boundary lines, and not on where new

structures are going to be. Siting of new non-farm structures in areas where farming takes place is very important, however. Inclusion of building envelopes on detailed subdivision site plans would emphasize the placement of new structures in relation to adjacent farming activities.

I do note that the Town has adopted a 250' buffer requirement in zoning between farm and non-farm uses, which partly addresses this need. The subdivision law should reference Section 28-16 (B) (4) to ensure that this requirement is met when subdivisions occur.

7. The WCP LCP included the recommended use of flaglots and shared driveway. The subdivision mentions keyhole lots (with no definition) but does not offer clarity on the use of or design expectations for them. Note that in Zoning, keyhole lots are allowed only in R1 and R3 and only in "rare instances when required due to unusual conditions of the area." However, use of keyhole lots in a conservation design could be beneficial to maximize land preserved, so they should be allowed (with standards) in the CR district and outlined with development standards in the subdivision law. I recommend that the Town should not overly restrict their use in such a situation. Subdivision should clarify how flaglots are allowed, designed, and regulated by well-defined standards - standards that include such things as the length, width, and linearity of the "panhandle" or "flag pole" access drive. It's crucial to carefully consider the potential challenges related to access and maintenance in a flag lot property.
8. Within 179-39 (permanent open space), the law discusses the use of preserved land in a subdivision for agriculture on parcels "subject to agricultural overlay district regulations, as may be adopted." This sets the standard that agriculture shall be a principal use of preserved lands only within an Agricultural Overlay District. Since no such district has been established in the Town, it remains unclear if preserved lands within a subdivision are actually allowed to be agricultural uses. This should be clarified in both subdivision and zoning laws.
9. The subdivision law does not give any special consideration to prime or statewide importance soils or actively farmed areas when subdivisions are designed.
10. Although the Farming Chapter of the Code requires inclusion of the Agricultural Disclosure Notice on site plans and plats, this is not specifically recognized in the subdivision law.

Overall Score – 1.25 or 31% of the total for subdivision regulations, farm-friendly criteria.

**Evaluation of the farm-friendliness of Clifton Park's zoning regulations includes the following observations:**

The Town has established many innovative and "before its time" zoning methods to protect open spaces and agriculture. Overall, there are many successes that set Clifton Park way ahead of most municipalities. The Town has included many of the major zoning recommendations usually made for enhancing farm-friendliness already. This includes use of conservation design, easement programs, buffers, agriculture as an as-of-right use, and lowered residential density in important farmed areas. There are, however, some tweaks and improvements that can be made to strengthen and clarify what is already a farm-friendly set of zoning regulations. These include the following:

1. One of the purpose statements of the zoning law includes protecting “viable open space and agricultural resources.” While that is an excellent and farm-friendly statement, it is unclear what either ‘viable open spaces’ or ‘agricultural resources’ are. Strong definitions would improve the foundation of this purpose statement.
2. The zoning clearly establishes that agriculture is a permitted use in the CR district. It does not limit agriculture as a use, and it also refers to and allows those agricultural uses consistent with NYS AML 25-AA (the NYS Agricultural Districts law). While that is very good, there are some issues:
  - a. Many of the types of agricultural operations we see today are not clearly articulated. It is my opinion that the zoning can be made more farm-friendly when all the different types of agriculture are defined and specifically allowed to ensure there is no mistaking what is allowed and what is not. Without diverse definitions and a broad set of permitted uses, it makes it harder for people to easily know what type of farm may be allowed, or even whether farms can have multiple businesses beyond crops and livestock, such as agritourism, processing, value-added, direct sales, etc. Keep in mind that many farms need multiple operations to stay economically feasible. I would presume that flexibility is what was meant in the zoning, but it is not easily determined. I recommend that the full range of agricultural activities that do and could take place in Clifton Park be defined, included in the list of permitted uses, and clarified so there is no question as to what agricultural activities are included and allowed.
  - b. Farms are defined as “land containing at least 5 acres...” There is also a five-acre minimum for commercial greenhouses and roadside stands. In the CR district, where the entire district is designed to promote agriculture, a 5-acre minimum lot size still exists, and it is my opinion that this is a barrier that could prevent small niche farms and start-ups. In general, acreage requirements can stymie small farm development. Such small, niche farms are now more the norm, and regulation that prevents farming from taking place in a farm-oriented district seems to move the needle to be more aligned with residential uses than agricultural.
3. Not all ag-related terms used in the law are defined, and some ag-related terms that should be defined are not included.
4. In the CR district, commercial stables, riding stable/academy, commercial greenhouses, roadside stands, and permanent farm labor housing not only require certain minimum acreages, but also require special use permits to operate. This requirement seems overly burdensome in a zoning district designed to promote agriculture. NYS AML 25-AA (NYS Agricultural Districts) seeks to remove regulatory barriers to accepted agricultural practices and operations. A size requirement and a special use permit would generally be considered a barrier to agriculture, and in my opinion, inconsistent with NYS AML 25-AA.

- a. As an alternative to requiring special use permits, consider establishing a modified site plan review process for those farm uses that do need some review to control issues such as traffic, noise, etc. Such a review can be tailored and abbreviated to address certain agricultural uses.
5. Hamlet Residential (HR), R-1, R-3, and Hamlet Mixed-Use (HM) districts require a special use permit for ‘facilities for the sale and/or consumption of farm-and country-related edible and non-edible products at farm markets. Such facilities shall be consistent with the customary activities and operations normally associated with a farm.’ First, the words used in this section are not defined. What does this really mean? Does this mean that a farm market must get a special use permit? Why? And, what is a farm market (it is not defined)? Aren’t these districts where most of the Town’s population density is, and if so, isn’t it important to be able to easily offer local food there to improve the local food system? Some issues related to farm markets could be addressed via a modified site plan review.
6. Farm Labor Housing, which is so important to some farms, currently requires a special use permit, 10 acres of active farmland, and a determination by the Code Enforcement Officer that an employee on a farm is “integral to farm operations.” It also requires the farm to be an ‘operational commercial farm’ - that is not defined. This requirement is not well defined, but also could be a burden to farm operations, and likely inconsistent with NYS guidelines for farm labor housing.
7. 208-12 says that an attached barn (as well as other structures) can’t be closer than 10’ side/rear or 80’ from the front. Barn is not defined, so does this mean an agricultural barn used on a farm operation, is viewed in the same manner as a barn used as a garage? NYS Agriculture and Markets has dealt with this issue in other locations and has often found that such setback requirements (especially front setbacks) for agricultural operations in an NYS Agricultural District may be an over-regulation of farm operations.
8. 208-16 – Conservation Residential District. Overall, this district meets the purposes of the WCP LCP and goes a long way to protecting and incentivizing open space preservation. Agriculture is included in the definition of open space and this section’s purpose statement is clear that maintaining agriculture is an important purpose of this district. Overall, this section is farm-friendly.
  - a. The conservation design section requires a comprehensive site analysis (208-16 (13)) that includes 4 steps. While these are excellent and comprehensive, several other important steps to designing the actual development are not included. This is where the ‘standard’ language used in a conservation subdivision or development would be helpful. The site analysis outlined in the zoning is just step 1. Step 2 then uses that site analysis to identify house building envelopes in a way that maximizes preservation of the most important open space. Step 3 is to add in roads, driveways, and trail/sidewalk connections, and step 4 is to draw in lot lines. Note that the lot lines are the last and least important design step. Thus, the preferred conservation design puts more emphasis on where the structures go and

optimizes open space than on lot lines/sizes. I recommend an expanded description of this design process. More details on identifying important agricultural and open spaces to be preserved would be very helpful to improve this technique.

- b. When land is preserved in the CR district, crop agriculture is allowed to be used on that preserved space, but animal agriculture needs a minimum of 5 acres. I understand that this may have been set to ensure adequate space for animals (and separation between them and homeowners), but this could preclude small farm use (chickens, other small animals) on preserved lands? The Town should consider the usefulness of this requirement.
- c. In the CR district, new residential development is controlled by density. For parcels 3 to 10 acres, a maximum density of 1 dwelling unit per 3 acres of unconstrained land is required. If the parcel is < 3 acres, the density is 1 dwelling unit per 1 acre. For parcels > 10 acres, the density is 1 dwelling unit per 10 acres. At the same time, an incentive is offered via a higher density (1 dwelling unit per .33 acres) if 50% of the land is set aside as permanent open space. These densities do serve to reduce the development pressure in the CR district.

The application of when conservation design and preservation of land is required is confusing to me, however. The regulations say that conservation-based development design is required in the CR district. At the same time, it also seems as if it is voluntary to protect open space, and if some is preserved, a minimum of 25% needs to be protected. It also incentivizes the protection of open space by giving a density bonus if a minimum of 50% of the parcel is protected. In practice, the Planning Board may have a clear direction for this, but the wording in the zoning is not particularly clear. I am unsure whether this language ultimately results in any protection if the developer doesn't want to. There are some enhancements that could clarify this.

Voluntary conservation design is not recommended because most developers do not want to go through the site analysis to do that. I always recommend that it be a mandatory design process to take in priority areas. And, conservation designs require that a certain percentage (usually 50%) of the parcel be permanently preserved. Some towns incentivize this by allowing for a density bonus when the amount of open space preserved exceeds the minimum required. Without a firm requirement that conservation design be followed and that a certain amount of open space be preserved, the results are unknown and the goals of the district may not be met adequately. I recommend it is better to set the expectations as to how larger subdivisions would be designed and that there be a set percentage of land to be preserved. Given the development pressures in Town, updated language can further balance development with protection of agricultural and open space lands (See recommendations below).

- d. It is unclear whether the Western Clifton Park Design Guidelines are required or encouraged. While the zoning says that the design guidelines shall be used, the guidelines themselves are written in a way that conveys they are encouraged guidelines and not required standards (using the word 'shall' rather than 'may.' While the existing design

guidelines are very good, I recommend clarification that they are standards and not encouraging guidelines, so applicants and the Planning Board are clear about performance expectations. Overall, the guidelines address better siting to balance growth and farming, but the law should be clarified as to whether they are required standards or guidelines to consider.

- e. Section 206-16 (B) (4) establishes a 250' buffer requirement between active agricultural operations and a subdivision or commercial development. Requiring such a buffer is a very good practice. This section would benefit from fully defining 'active agricultural operation' so that it is clear to the Planning Board and applicants when this buffer is required.
- 9. 208-43 outlines the open space incentive zoning program. This has excellent purposes, and agriculture is included as an important component. Offering incentives is an excellent tool to include for farmland preservation. Even when land is not preserved, but the fee is paid, this opens an avenue for funding the Town's easement program. With that said, the section seems particularly weighted towards open space preservation and would benefit from additional language emphasizing the need to preserve active farmlands.
- 10. Brewery/distillery uses can be important value-added farm businesses. They are currently allowed only in the Light Industrial district of town. Consider allowing them in the CR district when part of a farm operation, with performance expectations that control noise, lighting, parking, and other nuisances.
- 11. Planned Development Districts (PDD) are allowed within the CR district with a minimum of 10 acres. While there can be benefits to allowing PDDs, they are also approval methods that can contradict the goals and objectives of the comprehensive plan. They often function like spot zoning and can erode the integrity, stability, and predictability of zoning. They can promote leapfrog development, increase conversion pressure, override agricultural zoning standards, trigger demands for more roads and public services, and shift efforts from farmland protection to PDD-related growth.

I recommend that, in the priority farm areas to be identified in the Ag Plan, the Town should consider limiting or prohibiting the PDD technique. There is no requirement that the Town allow for PDDs, so there should be some consideration if they are useful to meet the goals of the Town.

Use of an Agricultural Overlay District can be a good tool to target where PDDs are most acceptable and where they are not. If the Town desires to continue allowing for PDDs, the current PDD language can be improved by adding instructions to analyze and mitigate those impacts, specifically on agriculture.

- 12. Use of special use permits for farm operations in the NYS Agricultural District is frowned upon. Some of the special use permit requirements place challenges to certain agricultural uses.

Instead of using a special use permit, require a modified site plan designed specifically for those agricultural uses.

13. Neither the site plan nor special use permit submittal requirements address information needs to understand adjacent agriculture, and they do not offer the Planning Board information to help evaluate impacts on agriculture. Submittals can benefit from basic information on farmland activities, farmland soils, whether the parcel is in or within 500' of a NYS Agricultural District, etc.
14. Although the Farming Chapter requires inclusion of the Agricultural Disclosure Notice on site plans and plats, this is not additionally recognized in the zoning law.
15. The zoning doesn't specifically clarify if on-farm processing is allowed. It is implied but not explicitly stated.
16. Zoning does not exempt farm structures from height requirements.
17. The solar regulations do not specifically recognize that solar facilities on farms that are used for the farm operation (up to 110% of the farm's needs) are considered agricultural structures as per NYS Agriculture and Markets. Thus, on-farm solar used for the farm (not for community solar or utility scale), should be permitted uses when the farm is located in an NYS agricultural district.

Overall Score – 18.6 or 60% of the total for zoning regulations, farm-friendly criteria.

### **Recommendations that Can Enhance the Farm-Friendliness of Clifton Park's Land Use Regulations**

1. The Comprehensive Plan has the foundation of NYS Town Law 272-a behind it. As such, it would be advantageous for the Town to synthesize the many planning efforts that have been done over the years into a unified vision and updated plan rather than keeping them all separate. Consider integrating the existing plans into a cohesive, updated Comprehensive Plan. Of vital significance for the agricultural and farmland protection planning efforts, the new Ag Plan could be adopted as a new appendix to the 2006 plan, thus elevating it to Comprehensive Plan status.
2. Update the Subdivision Law to improve its farm-friendliness more fully – especially in the CR district. Updates could include:
  - a. Add agriculture-related definitions. All these definitions should also be consistent with those used in the zoning law. These can include at a minimum, definitions for farm, agriculture, agricultural data statement, buffer, building envelope, complete application, frontage, concept or sketch, SEQR, SWPPP, and others. Agriculture is mentioned in the definitions as part of open space, but given the importance of agriculture, I recommend it has its own set of definitions.

- b. Add a new purpose statement that articulates the importance of regulating subdivisions to minimize adverse impacts on agricultural operations and farmland, and to enhance the co-existence of agriculture and residential uses.
- c. Add information as to what the Planning Board should do with the submitted Agricultural Data Statement. The primary use is to notify those landowners identified in the statement about the proposed project and public input opportunities. But it also should be a trigger for the Planning Board to evaluate impacts on nearby agriculture of the proposed subdivision more comprehensively as the subdivision review and SEQR take place. Note that use of the Ag Data Statement for subdivision (as well as site plan review and special use permits) is required pursuant to NYS AML 25-AA.
- d. Define and establish the use of Building Envelopes in the subdivision law. A building envelope is a specific area within a larger property where new buildings and structures can be located. It's a tool used to guide development on farmland, ensuring that new construction doesn't encroach on critical agricultural areas or negatively impact conservation values. The location of building envelopes is typically determined by factors such as the size of the farm and the type of agricultural activities nearby. For the larger subdivisions, the conservation/open space design provides for more attention to siting of homes, but it is equally an important consideration in smaller subdivisions. Overall, the subdivision law should place more emphasis on the siting of the actual building location (building envelope).
- e. Allow for carefully designed keyhole (flaglots) in open space/conservation subdivisions in the CR district (currently allowed just in R1 and R3). This should include determining who will be responsible for the cost and construction of utility connections and what standards the access drive should be maintained, and by whom, when there are shared driveways planned.
- f. Enhance Article X, Open Space Subdivisions.
  - i. Update so that zoning and subdivision Article X use consistent language and have consistent design and performance standards.
  - ii. For consistency, rename Open Space Subdivision to Conservation Subdivision– that way it includes both open space and agriculture.
  - iii. Update Article X to offer more siting and design standards for new subdivisions that prioritize minimizing impacts to nearby farmland, agricultural uses, and the rural character of the CR district. Note that 179-35 (B) (2) does not include agriculture among the considerations the Planning Board uses when considering an open space subdivision.
  - iv. Make open space (conservation subdivision) design mandatory in the CR District (to match what the zoning language appears to require), remove the 20-acre threshold, and lower the requirement to 4 lots (not 7) so that this design technique can be applied to more types of development and associated land preservation with each subdivision.
  - v. Remove the requirement that new lots in a conservation density subdivision must be 2x the minimum lot size. The more important feature is that adequate space on the lot is provided for county-approved well and septic system placement. Lot sizes should be smaller so that a more effective agricultural and open space protection design can be developed (see also zoning recommendations for this same aspect, below). Place

- more emphasis on creating smaller lot sizes that are carefully sited to preserve open space/ag land in a way that minimizes conflicts with adjacent farm uses.
- vi. While many conservation subdivisions end up being designed as a cluster of new homes, the point is to strategically locate new structures to preserve the maximum amount of open space and farmland. Sometimes this is not a cluster. I recommend updating this entire section to be consistent with the language used for conservation subdivisions and removing the 20-acre, 7 lot requirement. Because the regulatory language for conservation subdivisions is more detailed and comprehensive than the cluster language, I also recommend removing the cluster subdivision section entirely, and just using the conservation subdivision language and process along with its performance expectations, for at least all major subdivisions in the CR District.
  - vii. Except on lands such as streams and other water bodies where natural filter strips are needed to protect water quality, allow agriculture to take place on any other preserved land within an open space (conservation) subdivision.
  - g. While not agricultural specific, there are some other general recommendations that could work to improve planning board review and public input into the subdivision law:
    - i. 179-4 establishes a 45-day deadline for setting a public hearing. The State law is 62 days. This gives more time for due consideration of the proposed subdivision.
    - ii. The time clock for hearing and decision-making is now triggered by the date of submission. The law sets a 62-day decision-making deadline after the hearing. However, a small change to this would make a difference: make the time clock start consistent with NY Town Law 276, which establishes that the hearing would be held within 62 days of receipt of a complete application.

State Town law defines a complete preliminary application to be one that has a negative declaration filed or a draft EIS has been submitted. It further states that “The time periods for review of a preliminary plat shall begin upon filing of such negative declaration or such notice of completion.” Establishing that the application has to be complete for review before the public hearing is held would ensure that both the Planning Board and the public have a full set of materials required or requested and a full set of information to begin the review. The Planning Board should be able to accept, review, request more information, and update subdivision designs to mitigate or avoid adverse impacts before the time clock starts. The key is to initiate that clock when the application is complete.

- iii. The subdivision law should include references to the Saratoga County 239-m referral requirements. The law should also include references to any other referral needed (such as the ECC, Historic Commission, or others).
3. Update the Zoning Law to allow the Town to enhance the farm-friendliness of these regulations. Updates could include:

- a. Add more agricultural-related terms to the definition section. Note that Farming (Chapter 102) has some definitions that can be used/coordinated with other laws in Town.
- b. Consider establishing an Agricultural Overlay District that covers the priority farmlands in Town. Special development standards (setbacks, density, use of PDDs, requirements for preserved farmland, etc.) can be set in that area to further protect farmlands and farm operations.
- c. Consider renaming the CR district (Conservation Residential) to CA (Conservation Agriculture) to elevate the role of agriculture. This is consistent with the stated purposes of the CR district. A conservation residential district kind of leaves agriculture out.
- d. The zoning states that a map showing parcels having approved protected farmland be mapped. It doesn't appear as if this is taking place. Having this map would aid in full knowledge of where protected areas are, and the Town can work better to ensure these areas remain linked. This would benefit ecosystems, habitats, and movement of people and equipment between preserved farm fields.
- e. Add a section to the zoning that articulates how lot splits will be monitored over time.
- f. Currently, agricultural cultivation is exempt from local wetland and stream rules. Crossing of streams by livestock, equipment, or for irrigation is not exempt, and those farm activities would need Town ECC consideration. To avoid over-regulation, consider exempting all these other agricultural activities from ECC consideration.
- g. Remove the 5-acre minimum parcel size from the definition of a farm.
- h. Reconsider requiring a special use permit for the sale of edible farm products in the R1, R3, HM, and HR districts. These may need review and proper siting, but the Town can expand local food opportunities to other neighborhoods. If a review is needed, consider using a modified site plan review process or an administrative review permitting process by Town Staff.
- i. Update farm labor housing rules to remove the 10-acre requirement and language that forces a decision as to the importance of the employee. These rules should a) be consistent with NYS guidelines, and b) remove barriers to having farm labor as may be needed.
- j. To ensure that some portion of every large subdivision (my recommendation of > 4 lots) includes preserved open space, I recommend that conservation design be mandatory and that a specific percentage of the parcel be required to be preserved. Most towns set this at 50% but it could be a different number. A true conservation design is density neutral – meaning that the developer gets the same amount of density allowed by the zoning district.

<p>Recommended Terms to be Defined (includes new terms and those terms used in the law but that are not yet defined).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Active Agricultural Use</li> <li>Agricultural Business</li> <li>Ag Data Statement</li> <li>Ag Processing</li> <li>Agricultural Resource</li> <li>Agricultural Structure</li> <li>Agritourism</li> <li>Barn</li> <li>Brewery, Cidery, Distillery</li> <li>Buffer (take from the Buffer law)</li> <li>Building Envelope</li> <li>Direct Sales</li> <li>Farm Equipment</li> <li>Farming</li> <li>Greenhouse or Nursery</li> <li>Horse Boarding Operation</li> <li>Livestock</li> <li>Small Farm</li> </ul>
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This will guarantee some preserved space, preferably for agriculture, in all large subdivisions.

- k. Additional density can be allowed as an incentive to permanently protect more than the required minimum. So, for example, the Town could approve a new housing development having a conservation design that includes 40% preserved open space and offer a density bonus if 55% of the parcel is preserved. That way, the Town can be assured that open space/agriculture is preserved, and over time, developments can be designed to have their preserved open spaces adjacent to each other to form a larger mass of linked preserved space.
- l. Clarify that the Western Clifton Park Design Guidelines are standards to be followed.
- m. Add in the full four steps to conservation design beyond the site analysis steps already included in this section for the CR district.
- n. Update the incentive zoning program to emphasize preservation of active farmland beyond open space.
- o. Currently, the zoning establishes that consistency with the Town's comprehensive plan, open space plan, and GEIS is a criterion for getting an incentive. Once the Ag Plan is adopted, development should be consistent with it, too.
- p. Allow brewery/cidery/distillery uses in the CR district when part of a farm operation.
- q. Consider limiting or prohibiting the use of PDDs in priority farmland locations. If the Town decides PDDs are useful to continue to allow for, the PDD section should be improved by including an analysis of impacts to agriculture, requiring new PDDs to be a conservation design with minimum of 50% of the parcel preserved.
- r. Some suggested enhancements to Special Use Permits Article XIV include:
  - i. 208-80 – strengthen tier 3 solar facilities that now encourage farmland soils to be protected to the maximum extent practical. Consider a specific percentage of prime farmlands to protect to offer more direction. Further, add language that requires the application of the NYS Department of Agriculture and Markets guidance on the siting of solar facilities on farmland.
  - ii. 208-85 – currently, riding stables and riding academies require a special use permit. Consider changing this to requiring a modified site plan review.
  - iii. 208-86 – Allows use of flagpole (keyhole) lots in R1 and R3. Update zoning to allow these designs in the CR district within a conservation design.
  - iv. 208-87 –Consider specifically exempting agricultural structures from height requirements.
  - v. 208-11 – Roadside sales currently can't be within 25' of a road or right-of-way "except for farm produce, farm products or nursery stock which shall be allowed by special use permit". A special use permit requirement for a farm operation within the NYS Agricultural District may be considered to be over-regulation. If any review is really needed, consider having them approved instead via a modified site plan review.
  - vi. 208-102 prevents lots less than the required area. But conservation design should be flexible to create new lots that are strategically located and sized to optimize open space and farmland preservation. Effective clustering needs flexibility. Ensure that there are exceptions to this rule in a conservation design.

- s. Update site plan and special use permit application requirements to include information on nearby agriculture so that the Planning Board can make informed analysis and decisions about project proposals. This would include items such as the Ag Data Statement, farmland soils, and farm activities in or within 500' of a NYS Ag District. etc.

### Audit Results and Reporting Spreadsheet

The following table reflects the question-by-question review and answers for the farm-friendly audit.

Farm-Friendly Criteria	Town of Clifton Park	Score (Percent)
<b>Comprehensive Plan and Other Related Plans</b>		
<b>Does the Town have a Comprehensive Plan?</b>	Yes, along with the Town Center Plan, and Western Clifton Park Land Conservation Plan/GEIS. WCP Design Guidelines, Open Space Plan, and updated Open Space Committee Goals	1
<b>Is the Plan up-to-date (less than 10 years old?)</b>	No, last updated in 2006	0.5
<b>Does the Plan have a specific section addressing agriculture?</b>	Yes, Agriculture is a part of all the plans, but the comprehensive plan itself has a small chapter dedicated to Ag. It is integrated through many topics, though.	1
<b>Does the Plan include any maps of agricultural lands, important farmland soils, agricultural districts, etc.?</b>	Not in Plan, but in the Western Clifton Park GEIS	1
<b>Does the Plan explore the role of agriculture in the community? I.e., did a survey include questions about agriculture? Was there anything in workshops about it?</b>	Yes, as do the other documents and plans.	1
<b>Does the Plan have a vision statement or goals that address agriculture in any way? Is there any visible demonstration of the value of agriculture to the community in the plan?</b>	Yes, goals identify the policy to preserve and enhance agriculture	1
<b>Does the Plan recognize agriculture as an important resource in Town?</b>	Yes, as do all plans and documents	1
<b>Does the Plan recognize or reference a local or County agriculture and farmland protection plan?</b>	Yes	1
<b>Does the Plan include any data on farms and farmland? Acreage? Income or occupations from farming or other ag-census data?</b>	Not in Plan but in other documents (GEIS)	1

Farm-Friendly Criteria	Town of Clifton Park	Score (Percent)
Does the Plan establish policies towards farmland and farming?	Yes	1
Does the Plan identify the value of farmland and farms to the community in some way?	Yes	1
Does the Plan offer any recommended actions or strategies related to farming or farmland or ways to preserve or enhance farming?	Plan offers general policies. GEIS addresses specific strategies	1
Does the Plan establish a policy and/or future actions related to conservation subdivision or clustering, ag overlay districts or other methods?	Yes, especially the GEIS	1
Does the Plan discuss NYS Agricultural Districts and agricultural value assessments?	Mentioned once, not a significant aspect	0.25
Does the Plan consider farmland an important resource, recognize prime or soils of statewide importance, and encourage easements or other protections of that land?	This was primarily done via the GEIS	1
Is there a policy discussed for PDR, LDR or TDR?	Yes, but primarily in the GEIS	1
Is agriculture a consideration of where growth does or does not take place?	Yes	1
Overall Score	Total Potential Score: 17	92.6%
<b>Regulations (Subdivision)</b>		
Does Subdivision Law address agriculture in any way?	Yes, but there are no ag-related definitions. Agriculture is mostly addressed via Article X, Open Space Subdivisions. There are no purpose statements for the law to set the policy that agricultural protection is an important purpose for the law to accomplish.	0.25
Does the subdivision application ask for any submissions related to agriculture?	The Ag Data Statement is required as part of the concept review phase, but there is nothing that guides the Planning Board as to what to do with that (i.e., notify those adjacent farmers when a subdivision is proposed)	0.25

Farm-Friendly Criteria	Town of Clifton Park	Score (Percent)
<b>Are conservation subdivisions allowed? Voluntarily? Mandatory? Does it address agriculture?</b>	Yes, Open Space Subdivisions - Article X as a cluster or as a conservation design. They are all voluntary. Yes, they address allowing agriculture to be used on the preserved lands. However, there are lot size requirements (a conservation design must have lots 2X the minimum lot size - which is opposite of what you want to have), and it must be for a subdivision > 7 lots. However, zoning requires conservation design for development in the CR and does not have these requirements. This may be a conflict.	0.75
<b>Does subdivision include siting of non-farm development in a manner that preserves farm use?</b>	No. The subdivision law does not define or use building envelopes or place emphasis on house placement. There is no buffer requirement in the subdivision law between housing and farms. Although the Town has adopted a new law establishing a buffer requirement, this is not referenced in the subdivision law.	0
<b>Overall Score</b>	Total Potential Score: 4	31.25%
<b>Regulations (Zoning)</b>		
<b>Does the zoning regulation's purpose statement include a discussion of agriculture, or promote preserving agriculture specifically?</b>	Yes. Agriculture is included. However, it uses some terms like "viable open space and agricultural resources", neither of which is defined.	0.75
<b>Does zoning allow agriculture as a permitted use by right?</b>	Yes.	1
<b>Does zoning prohibit agriculture in any district other than hamlet centers or commercial areas?</b>	No.	1
<b>Are site plan reviews required in one or more districts for agriculture or ag-related uses?</b>	For riding stable/academies, sales/consumption of farm and country-related edible products at farm market, and farm labor housing.	0.75
<b>Are special use permits for agriculture or ag-related uses required in one or more districts?</b>	For riding stable/academies, sales/consumption of farm and country-related edible products at farm market, and farm labor housing, - need special use.	0.75
<b>Is residential, higher density or commercial growth allowed in core farm areas or where a NYS Ag District exists so that conflicts may arise?</b>	Yes, the CR district allows single-family dwellings. PDDs may be allowed to be created in those areas, too. Density in CR district is lower than in other areas but still allowed. Density bonuses are also allowed in the CR district.	0.5
<b>Does the zoning specifically establish a local agricultural zoning district designed for agriculture, ag overlay district, or special use district for agriculture?</b>	No. There is mention of an ag overlay but one is not established.	0

Farm-Friendly Criteria	Town of Clifton Park	Score (Percent)
<b>Does the zoning allow farms to have more than one business or offer flexibility to accommodate the needs of agricultural businesses?</b>	Unclear. It is not addressed specifically.	0.5
<b>Are buffer zones between farmland and residential uses required for new non-farm construction or subdivision?</b>	Yes. 250' is required.	1
<b>Are innovative development patterns specifically designed to preserve farmland encouraged, allowed, or mandated (conservation subdivision, clustering, TDR)?</b>	Yes, in the CR district. Uses conservation design/subdivision with open space preservation requirements and incentivizes protection of lands via density bonuses. Subdivision (which may not be consistent with zoning) does offer both clustering and conservation subdivision. Has Wester Clifton Park Design Guidelines.	0.75
<b>Are off-site or on-site signs allowed to attract and direct people to farmstands and on-farm businesses?</b>	One temporary sign for roadside stands selling ag products grown on premises in season up to 16 sf, set back 10' from ROW allowed without permit. No off-premise signs are allowed unless in the Sign Overlay District. There are no prohibitions on signs in the CR district, but there is a sign permit/process. It does not appear as if signs for farms would be treated any differently.	0.5
<b>Are farmstands, farm retail markets, agri-tourism businesses, breweries, etc. allowed?</b>	Yes, roadside stands are allowed. Breweries are allowed only in the LI 1 District. While not included in the definition, permitted uses include farms and agricultural operations that meet NYS AML 25-aa, so likely they are allowed. But it can be clarified.	0.8
<b>Are farm processing facilities such as community kitchens, slaughterhouses, etc. allowed?</b>	Unclear. These are not addressed.	0.5
<b>Are farmstands limited to selling just products from that one farm or is that flexible?</b>	Unclear, but the zoning does not seem to limit it - it says for 'sale of farm products' but does not indicate if it is the farm on which the stand is located or can include produce from multiple farms. Should be clarified.	0.8
<b>Do farmstands and other on-farm retail need a site plan review or special use permit?</b>	In the CR district, they are permitted uses but need 5 acres	0.5
<b>Does zoning allow for accessory uses such as greenhouses, barns, garages, equipment storage etc. permitted as of right?</b>	Greenhouses are allowed as permitted use in the CR district. In the CR district, they are permitted but need 5 acres. Under 'farm operations,' it is assumed that garages, equipment, structures, etc. would be permitted.	0.75

Farm-Friendly Criteria	Town of Clifton Park	Score (Percent)
<b>Do application requirements for non-farm uses include asking for submitting information or maps about farming that might be taking place on or near the project parcel? Whether it is in an Ag District? What farming activities take place on or near the site? Whether prime farmland soils are present?</b>	No. This is not part of the submission requirements. In subdivision however, the Ag Data Statement is required (but not defined).	0
<b>Do standards exist beyond SEQR that require the PB or ZBA to evaluate impacts of a project on agriculture?</b>	No. There are no specific standards to evaluate the impacts of a project on agriculture.	0
<b>Do any design standards exist to direct building envelopes of non-farm development to areas on a parcel that would still allow farming to occur on remaining open spaces?</b>	The law does not define or use the building envelope concept, but the conservation design does work towards placement of buildings in a manner to protect open spaces and farmland. Yes, farming is allowed on preserved open spaces.	0.5
<b>Does the zoning define agriculture, agricultural structure, farmer housing, agritourism, agri-business and other agriculture-related terms?</b>	There are some ag-related terms included (permanent farm labor housing, riding academy, roadside stand, stable, tap/tasting room, timbering, farmland of statewide importance and prime, agriculture, farm). But other ag-business/agritourism terms are not.	0.5
<b>Are farm uses that are defined included in the Use Table?</b>	There is no use table, but a listing of allowed uses by district. Yes, those are included.	0.75
<b>Are farm-related definitions broad and flexible and not confined to a certain number of acres or income earned?</b>	They are broad, but not fully consistent with the full breadth of NYS 25-aa (even though that is referenced later on). But the definition of a farm confines it to a parcel that is 5 or more acres of land.	0.5
<b>Are non-traditional or retail based farm businesses allowed in a district or ag zoned district. For example, can a farmer set up a brewery on site and sell products onsite?</b>	Presumably by referring to any form of agriculture or horticulture consistent with Section 308 of AML.	0.75
<b>Is an agricultural data statement as per AML 25-aa required as part of an application for site plan, subdivision, special use or other zoning?</b>	No, not in zoning submissions, but it is required (but not defined) in subdivision.	0
<b>Is ag disclosure statement on plans or plats required when development takes place in a NY certified Ag District or otherwise recognize this?</b>	Yes. Farming, Chapter 102 (Right to Farm Law) does establish a disclosure notice and requires it to be included in building permits and on plats of subdivisions. In practice, is this known though? Is it referenced for all to know?	0.75

Farm-Friendly Criteria	Town of Clifton Park	Score (Percent)
<b>Does the regulation define and allow for farmworker housing? Are mobile homes allowed as farmworker housing?</b>	Yes, they are allowed, but only on a 'commercial farm' (not defined) that is 10 or more acres in size. Farm labor housing requires a special use permit from the Planning Board. Unclear from zoning if mobile homes are allowed.	0.5
<b>Are silos and other farm structures exempt from height requirements?</b>	No. The height requirements do not exempt agricultural structures from height limitations.	0
<b>Does Town have regulations for solar and wind?</b>	Yes.	1
<b>Does solar regulations address development on farmed parcels or address development on farmland soils?</b>	Yes. Language encourages limiting placement on prime agricultural soils, but it is not a specific development standard (uses 'to the maximum extent practicable').	0.75
<b>Are personal wind mills and solar panels allowed for farm use? With permits or permitted as of right?</b>	Not addressed in tier 2 and tier 3. Tier 2 is defined to be those that generate no more than 110% of the electricity consumed on the site, so presumably this is consistent with Ag and Markets consideration of the use of renewable energy on a farm to be considered as a farm structure. But this is not specifically articulated in the text or definition.	0.75
<b>Does zoning establish any rules for manure storage or spreading or other water quality-related rules on farms?</b>	No. There are no specific regulations that address this, so no restrictions.	1
<b>Overall Score</b>	<b>Total Potential Score</b>	<b>60%</b>

## Model Resolution to Form the Agriculture Advisory Committee

RESOLUTION NO. \_\_\_ OF 2026

### A RESOLUTION ESTABLISHING THE TOWN OF CLIFTON PARK AGRICULTURAL AND FARMLAND PROTECTION ADVISORY COMMITTEE

WHEREAS, the Town of Clifton Park recognizes the importance of agriculture to its economy, community character, environmental health, and quality of life; and

WHEREAS, the Town has recently completed and adopted the *Town of Clifton Park Agriculture and Farmland Protection Plan*, which outlines goals, strategies, and actions to support the long-term viability of farming and farmland within the Town; and

WHEREAS, the Town Board desires to establish a committee that will assist in the implementation of this Plan, provide ongoing guidance on agricultural matters, and help ensure agriculture remains a valued and protected component of the community;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Town Board of the Town of Clifton Park hereby establishes the Agricultural and Farmland Protection Advisory Committee (“the Committee”), and adopts the following purpose, structure, and scope of work:

#### Section 1. Purpose

The purpose of the Committee shall be to advise and assist the Town Board, Planning Board, Zoning Board of Appeals, and other Town departments in promoting, protecting, and enhancing agriculture and farmland in accordance with the goals and recommendations of the adopted Agriculture and Farmland Protection Plan.

#### Section 2. Composition

The Committee shall consist of \_\_\_ members appointed by the Town Board, representing a diversity of agricultural interests and community perspectives, including but not limited to: active farmers, farmland owners, agri-business representatives, members of relevant Town boards and committees, and residents with expertise or interest in agriculture and farmland protection. The Town Board shall designate a Chair and may designate liaisons from the Planning, Zoning, or Open Space, or Environmental committees as appropriate.

#### Section 3. Scope of Work

The Committee shall have the following responsibilities:

- a. Inform the Town Board, Planning Board, and Zoning Board of Appeals about agricultural issues and make recommendations to address such issues.
- b. Review proposed development projects located within 500 feet of a certified Agricultural District to assess potential impacts on agriculture and provide written comments during the review process.

- c. Serve as an advocate for the agricultural community by educating and communicating with Town officials, residents, and property owners; and by partnering with organizations and agencies to support the goals of the Town's Agriculture and Farmland Protection Plan.
- d. Collaborate with the Town's Open Space Program to identify and integrate critical agricultural lands into open space preservation efforts.
- e. Review and recommend updates to Town codes, rules, and regulations that relate to agriculture and farmland protection.
- f. Maintain and periodically update mapping and inventories of farms, farmland, and agricultural resources.
- g. Monitor agricultural and development trends to identify emerging issues and provide early guidance to Town officials.
- h. Assist in updating and implementing the Town's Agriculture and Farmland Protection Plan.
- i. Provide policy guidance to Town officials on matters affecting agriculture.
- j. Promote the integration of agriculture into regional and countywide planning and economic development initiatives.
- k. Serve as a liaison between farmers, the community, and the Town government to enhance communication and understanding.
- l. Educate policy makers by preparing briefings and presentations for Town boards and local officials on agricultural matters.
- m. Assist with public outreach, education, and awareness campaigns related to agriculture and farmland protection.
- n. Advocate for cost-share programs, tax incentives, conservation practices, infrastructure investments (including small-scale processing facilities), and other measures that support agricultural viability.
- o. Encourage the use of host-community benefit agreements with developers to help generate funding for farmland protection initiatives.
- p. Encourage, assist, and support applications to farmland preservation programs, including but not limited to the New York State Farmland Protection Implementation Grant Program (FPIG).

#### **Section 4. Reporting Requirements**

The Committee shall provide a bi-annual report to the Town Board summarizing its activities, findings, and recommendations, along with any updates to mapping or inventories and progress toward implementing the Agriculture and Farmland Protection Plan.

#### **Section 5. Effective Date**

This resolution shall take effect immediately.

## Model Right to Farm Law

### Town of Clifton Park, New York

(Local Law No. \_\_\_ of 2026)

### A Local Law to Protect and Preserve Agricultural Operations

#### SECTION 1. TITLE

This Local Law shall be known as the “Right-to-Farm Law of the Town of Clifton Park.”

#### SECTION 2. PURPOSE AND INTENT

The Town Board recognizes that farming is an essential activity that contributes to the Town’s economy, environment, cultural heritage, and rural character. It is the policy of the Town to conserve, protect, and encourage the development and improvement of agricultural land and operations for the production of food, fiber, and other agricultural products.

The Town also recognizes that when non-agricultural land uses expand into agricultural areas, agricultural operations may be threatened by complaints regarding normal farming activities. This Local Law is intended to reduce such conflicts and to reaffirm the right of farmers to engage in sound agricultural practices.

#### SECTION 3. STATUTORY AUTHORITY

This Local Law is enacted pursuant to the New York State Municipal Home Rule Law and Article 25-AA of the New York State Agriculture and Markets Law, including §308, which protects sound agricultural practices within New York State Certified Agricultural Districts.

#### SECTION 4. DEFINITIONS

As used in this Local Law, the following terms shall have the meanings indicated below:

- **Agricultural Activity or Operation:** Includes, but is not limited to, the production, preparation, and marketing of crops, livestock, poultry, horticultural products, maple products, aquaculture, apiary products, and timber; farm buildings and structures; agricultural tourism; and farm-related practices such as tilling, harvesting, manure management, fencing, irrigation, and the operation of machinery.
- **Farm:** Any parcel or contiguous parcels of land used for agricultural production, including farm buildings and equipment.
- **Farming:** A revenue-generating enterprise, tangibly raising crops or livestock, which invokes the artful implementation of concepts that emanate from the sciences of agriculture in the current time frame, for human benefit.
- **Livestock:** Any domesticated sheep, goat, horse, cattle, swine, poultry, camelid, or rabbit.
- **Sound Agricultural Practices:** Those practices determined to be legal and consistent with §308 of the NYS Agriculture and Markets Law, generally accepted farming methods, and all applicable federal, state, and local laws and regulations.

#### SECTION 5. RIGHT-TO-FARM DECLARATION

Farmers within the Town may lawfully engage in agricultural activities at any time and on any day, provided such activities conform to sound agricultural practices. Residents and property owners

neighboring farms shall be alerted to the potential for noise, dust, odors, smoke, operation of machinery, slow-moving vehicles, nighttime farm operations, and other inconveniences associated with normal farming activities. Such activities shall not be deemed a public or private nuisance.

#### **SECTION 6. NOTICE TO NEW RESIDENTS**

1. **Real Estate Disclosure:** All contracts for the sale or lease of residential property located within 1,000 feet of a farm shall contain a “Right-to-Farm Disclosure Statement” notifying buyers or renters that agricultural activities may occur nearby.
2. **Town Website and Materials:** The Town shall post the disclosure language on its website and include it in relevant brochures and permit information. A plan note containing the disclosure notice shall be placed on all filed plats and site plans that are within a New York State certified agricultural district or within 500 feet of a farm operation located within such a district.

#### **SECTION 7. COMPLAINT RESOLUTION PROCESS**

1. Any person who has a concern or complaint regarding agricultural practices shall first file the complaint with the Building Department.
2. When the complaint or concern has not been resolved, the Building Department shall refer the complaint to the Town’s Agricultural and Farmland Protection Advisory Committee (or other designated body).
3. The Committee shall meet with the complainant and the farm operator, conduct a site visit if needed, and make a written recommendation to the Town Board.
4. If the matter is not resolved locally, either party may seek guidance from the NYS Commissioner of Agriculture and Markets pursuant to §308 of the Agriculture and Markets Law.

#### **SECTION 8. SEVERABILITY**

If any section or portion of this Local Law is found to be invalid by a court of competent jurisdiction, such determination shall not affect the validity of the remainder of the law.

#### **SECTION 9. EFFECTIVE DATE**

This Local Law shall take effect immediately upon filing with the New York State Secretary of State.

## Southampton Model for a Town Agricultural Use Agreement Program

### Town of Southampton Agricultural Use Agreements

#### § 247-23. Definitions.

As used in this article, the following terms shall have the meanings indicated:

**ACTIVE PRODUCTION OF CROPS** — The cultivation and actual use of land for the exclusive purpose of growing and harvesting crops for sale, including agricultural land that is fallow for not more than two consecutive years.

**AGRICULTURAL USE AGREEMENT** — A written agreement between the Town of Southampton and the owner of eligible farmland, by which the property owner agrees to restrict the use of the land to the active production of crops and not to build upon or otherwise change the land for a period of one year.

**CROPS** — All crops, livestock, and livestock products as defined by § 301 of the State Agriculture and Markets Law.

#### § 247-24. Eligibility.

- A. Eligible farmland must consist of a single operation of at least 10 acres, which may include rented land and which may be comprised of separate noncontiguous tax lots, in the active production for sale of crops; and
- B. The land must be either located in the Agricultural Overlay District as depicted by the Zoning Map of the Town of Southampton<sup>2</sup> or the operation must have yielded a gross sales value of \$10,000 or more in the preceding two years, or the land must contain Class I or II prime agricultural soils.

#### § 247-25. Procedure.

- A. Any owner or owners of land may obtain from the Assessor's office an application for an agreement in such form as shall be approved by the Town Board.
- B. The Assessor shall review the application to determine the eligibility of the subject farmland under the terms of this article.
- C. The Town Board shall hold a public hearing on every application upon 10 days' notice to the public of the time and place of such hearing. Following the public hearing, the Town Board may approve, disapprove, or approve with modifications the proposed agricultural use agreement.
- D. The fully executed agricultural use agreement shall be filed with the Town Clerk on or

before the appropriate taxable status date.

## **Resource List of Agricultural Support Organizations**

Federal, state, and local agriculture programs and financial support are essential for protecting farmland from increasing threats of development, a changing economy, advancing technology, and climate change. Programs range from educational resources to direct financial assistance and play a crucial role in supporting farmers, meeting the changing needs of farmers and farm families, and enhancing agricultural productivity.

The following are a range of federal, state, and local programs that may be available to farmers, agribusinesses, and related organizations in Clifton Park.

### American Farmland Trust

112 Spring St # 207, Saratoga Springs, NY 12866

Phone: (518) 581-0078

Contact: Tim Biello, [tbiello@farmland.org](mailto:tbiello@farmland.org)

The mission of American Farmland Trust is to save the land that sustains us by protecting farmland, promoting sound farming practices, and keeping farmers on the land. They operate from Washington, D.C. and have eight (8) regional programs, including the New York Regional Program. Projects in the New York Region include the following: The American Farmland Trust (AFT) is a national non-profit organization created to protect agricultural land, promote environmentally sound farming practices, and keep farmers on the land. They operate from Washington, D.C. and have eight (8) regional programs, including the New York Regional Program.

Projects in the New York Region include the following:

### Farmland for a New Generation

A program coordinated by American Farmland Trust, in partnership with the state of New York, agricultural organizations, land trusts, and others, which helps farmers seeking land and landowners wanting to keep their land in farming. The program offers a statewide Resource Center and is supported by a network of Regional Navigators, partner organizations with dedicated staff who can provide information and personal assistance to farmers and landowners across New York. A program coordinated by American Farmland Trust, in partnership with the state of New York, agricultural organizations, land trusts, and others, which helps farmers seeking land and landowners wanting to keep their land in farming. The program offers a statewide Resource Center and is supported by a network of Regional Navigators, partner organizations with dedicated staff who can provide information and personal assistance to farmers and landowners across New York.

### Cornell Cooperative Extension of Saratoga County

50 W. High St # 1, Ballston Spa, NY 12020

Phone: (518) 885-8995

Contact: Nicolina Foti

Cornell Cooperative Extension (CCE) puts knowledge to work in pursuit of economic vitality, ecological sustainability, and social well-being. Rooted in every county of the state, we bring local experience and research-based solutions together, helping New York state families and communities thrive in our rapidly changing world.

#### Cornell Small Farms Program

Cornell University, Plant Science Bldg, G15A, Ithaca, NY 14853

Phone: (607) 255-9227

Small farms can help build human capacity, revitalize communities, supply regional food systems, and foster ecological resilience in a changing world. Since 2001, the Cornell Small Farms Program has fostered programs that support and encourage the sustainability of diverse, thriving small farms. It provides both resources and online courses.

#### FarmLink

Cornell University, Warren Hall, 350, 137 Reservoir Ave, Ithaca, NY

Phone: (800) 547-3276

Provides free, confidential support and assistance for New York State farmers on personal or financial matters.

#### Farmers Market Federation of New York

109 Twin Oaks Drive, Syracuse, NY 13206

Phone: (315) 400-1447

Diane Eggert, [diane99@dreamscape.com](mailto:diane99@dreamscape.com)

A statewide organization supporting and promoting farmers' markets and direct marketing farmers in New York. It provides resources, educational opportunities, and advocacy for its members, which include farmers' market managers, organizers, vendors, and direct marketing farmers.

#### Farm Credit East

394 NY-29, Greenwich, NY 12834

Phone: (800) 234-0269

Farm Credit East is made in agriculture - a cooperative owned by the customers it serves. More than any other lender, we understand your unique credit needs and offer the specialized products, tools, and services to help grow your success.

#### LEAD New York

Cornell College of Agriculture and Life Sciences, Ithaca, New York, 14853

[leadnewyork@cornell.edu](mailto:leadnewyork@cornell.edu)

Inspiring, developing, supporting and connecting leaders for the food, agriculture and natural resource sectors of the Northeast.

#### New York State Agricultural Society

1818 Linwood Rd, Linwood, NY 14486 [ann@nysagsociety.org](mailto:ann@nysagsociety.org)

Foundation Contact: [knoblewolfley@gmail.com](mailto:knoblewolfley@gmail.com)

Aims to build a robust future for New York's food, agricultural, and natural resource industries by providing networking and educational opportunities for its strongest advocates, decision-makers and aspiring leaders.

New York State Horticultural Society

PO Box 746, 635 W. North St., Geneva, NY 14456

Phone: (315) 521-0852

[nysht@hotmail.com](mailto:nysht@hotmail.com)

Educates, promotes, and protects the New York State fruit industry. Achieved by supporting educational opportunities for members, promoting the industry, and representing the industry in matters of public policy. The Society also focuses on research to improve the lives of young people in the area of crop research.

New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets

12235, 10B Airline Dr, Albany, NY 12205

Phone: (800) 554-4501

The mission of the Department of Agriculture and Markets is to promote New York State agriculture and its high-quality and diverse products, foster agricultural environmental stewardship, and safeguard the state's food supply, land, and livestock to ensure the viability and growth of New York's agriculture industries.

New York State Farm Bureau

Region 6, Natally Batiston, Manager

County Farm Bureau Relations & Development

Clinton, Essex, Franklin, Rensselaer, St. Lawrence, Saratoga, Washington

Phone: 518-937-0269 [nbatiston@nyfb.org](mailto:nbatiston@nyfb.org)

Supports today's agricultural needs and creates member opportunities for tomorrow through advocacy and education. This mission reflects the commitment to both the immediate needs of farmers and the long-term viability of agriculture in New York. It aims to be the voice of New York agriculture, uniting a diverse farm community and building a stronger food system and rural economy.

New York State Farm Bureau Member Services

Michele Bates, Manager of Workers' Compensation Services [mbates@nyfb.org](mailto:mbates@nyfb.org)

Supplies required Workers' Compensation and other Services for farm owners and workers.

North American Farmers Direct Marketing Association

<https://localfoodeconomics.com/data/recommendations/>

We are entrepreneurial farm families who invite customers to visit our farms and experience the food and the fun we create to sustain our livelihood. Our membership is made up of farmers, extension agents, industry suppliers, researchers, farmers' market participants, and government officials. Together, we work to advance agritourism, including on-farm retail, pick your own, consumer-supported agriculture, direct delivery, and farmers' markets. We facilitate events,

resources, communications, and peer-to-peer exchanges that bring together new relationships and opportunities.

#### Saratoga County Agriculture and Farmland Protection Board

50 W. High St # 3, Ballston Spa, NY 12020

Phone: (518) 884-4705

Charlie Hanehan, Chair: bahanehan@aol.com

New York State Agricultural and Farmland Protection Boards (AFPB) advise county legislative bodies on matters related to agriculture and farmland. They play a key role in the establishment, modification, and continuation of agricultural districts. They also review local plans, assess farmland protection plans, and can request reviews of state agency regulations affecting farming.

#### Saratoga County Agricultural Promotion Committee

Cornell Cooperative Extension Agricultural Educator, Jennifer Koval

50 W. High St # 1, Ballston Spa, NY 12020

Phone: (518) 885-8995 jh157@cornell.edu

In collaboration with Cornell Cooperative Extension of Saratoga County, the committee organizes annual events for the public.

#### Saratoga County Farm Bureau

Contact: Jamie Pettis, President (father of Sarah and Katelyn Hicks)

Natally Batiston, County Manager

Phone: 518-937-0269 nbatiston@nyfb.org

Gives farmers and non-farmers alike the opportunity to be part of an organization dedicated to supporting and enriching agriculture. It provides an opportunity for individuals interested in the food system, land issues, and rural living to join together and make their voices heard. We are active within the political system on a broad range of issues that concern every New Yorker, from taxation, conservation to local food availability. We believe that a strong, viable agricultural industry is beneficial not only to our economy but also to our local communities and our consumers.

#### Saratoga County Planning Department

50 W. High St # 3, Ballston Spa, NY 12020

Phone: (518) 884-4705

Contact: Jason Kemper, Director of Planning

The Saratoga County Planning Department's primary responsibility is to assist the county's towns, cities, and villages in administering their land use regulations. They provide technical assistance on planning and zoning matters to local legislative boards, planning and zoning boards, and building inspectors. They also review subdivisions and zoning actions that fall under General Municipal Law Section 239, which includes projects within 500 feet of certain boundaries or in agricultural districts.

### Saratoga County Soil and Water Conservation District

50 W High St, Ballston Spa, NY 12020

Phone: (518) 885-6900

Contact: Dustin Lewis, [dustinlewisaratogaswcd@gmail.com](mailto:dustinlewisaratogaswcd@gmail.com)

[scottmonicasaratogaswcd@gmail.com](mailto:scottmonicasaratogaswcd@gmail.com)

Promotes the conservation of natural resources, with a focus on farming as a preferred land use, by providing scientifically based technical assistance and cooperating with related agencies. It aims to increase farm viability while ensuring environmental standards are met, and neighborly relations are maintained, all while upholding a positive public image.

### Saratoga PLAN

112 Spring St UNIT 202, Saratoga Springs, NY 12866

Phone: (518) 587-5554

Contact: Tori Roberts

To preserve the rural character, natural habitats, and scenic beauty of Saratoga County so that these irreplaceable assets are accessible to all and survive for future generations. Saratoga PLAN acknowledges that the lands it conserves are ancestral homelands of Mohican, Mohawk, and Abenaki people.

### USDA Farm Services Agency

2530 NY-40, Greenwich, NY 12834.

Phone: (518) 692-9940

USDA Service Centers are designed to be a single location where farmers can access services from the FSA, Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), and Rural Development agencies and can file USDA-required reporting.

U.S. Department of Agriculture. The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) supports local farms through various programs and initiatives aimed at promoting agriculture, ensuring food safety, and providing economic opportunities. Some key programs available to local farmers include:

**Farm Loan.** The Farm Service Agency, as part of the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), offers loans to farmers and ranchers who cannot obtain commercial credit from a bank, farm credit system institution, or other lender. These loans can be used to purchase land, livestock, equipment, feed, seed, and supplies. Loans can also be used to construct buildings or make farm improvements.

**Housing Assistance.** The USDA provides homeownership opportunities to low- and moderate-income rural Americans through loan, grant, and guarantee programs. The programs also make funding available to individuals to finance vital improvements necessary to make their homes safe and sanitary. These programs include assistance for the development or rehabilitation of multifamily housing on rural properties for low- income, elderly, and disabled individuals and families, as well as domestic farm laborers.

**Rural Development Loan and Grant Assistance.** USDA creates partnerships with rural communities to fund a wide range of projects that bring housing, community facilities, business

guarantees, utilities, and other services to rural America. USDA provides technical assistance and financial backing for rural businesses and cooperates to create quality jobs in rural areas.

**Beginner Farmers and Ranchers.** Through the Farm Service Agency, the USDA provides direct and guaranteed loans to beginning farmers and ranchers who are unable to obtain financing from commercial credit sources. These financial resources can be used to purchase land or to assist with funding operating costs for beginning farmers and farm families.

The “beginner farmer” is defined as someone who (1) has not operated a farm or ranch for more than 10 years, (2) does not own a farm or ranch greater than 30% of the average size farm in the county as determined by the most current Census for Agriculture, (3) meets the loan eligibility requirements of the program to which they are applying, and (4) substantially participates in the operation.

**Livestock Insurance.** The USDA’s Risk Management Agency (RMA) operates the Federal Crop Insurance Corporation (FCIC) to preserve and strengthen the economic stability of America’s agricultural producers. RMA develops and/or approves agricultural insurance products from seventeen (17) private-sector insurance companies. It also sponsors educational and outreach programs and seminars that focus on risk management and compliance.

**Federal State Marketing Improvement Program.** This matching grant program provides funds to State Departments of Agriculture and other State agencies to explore new market opportunities for food and agricultural products and to encourage research and innovation aimed at improving efficiency and performance of the marketing system.

**Specialty Crop Block Grant Program.** Block Grant funds can be requested to enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops.

**Farmers Market Promotion Program.** This program was created through an amendment of the Farmer-to-Consumer Direct Marketing Act of 1976. Grants are targeted to help improve and expand domestic farmers' markets, roadside stands, community-supported agriculture programs, and other direct producer-to-consumer market opportunities.

**Organic Cost Share Program.** This program provides cost-share assistance to producers and handlers of agricultural products who are obtaining or renewing their certification under the National Organic Program (NOP). Eligible applicants include any certified organic producers or handlers who have paid organic certification fees to a USDA-accredited certifying agent.  
New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets

The NYS Department of Agriculture and Markets (NYSDAM) supports local farmers through a range of programs and initiatives aimed at promoting agriculture, ensuring food safety, and fostering economic development. They play a key role in promoting agricultural sustainability and consumer access to locally grown products in New York State. Some programs supported by NYSDAM include:

### On-Farm Conservation Programs

On-Farm Conservation Programs help farmers and landowners implement land management practices that aim to enhance soil health and deliver other environmental benefits. Financial assistance often takes the form of cost-share or grants to landowners that pay for all or part of the expense incurred to implement practices, often on a reimbursable basis. On-farm conservation programs complement federal Farm Bill conservation efforts, such as the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP), the Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP), and the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP).

- **Agricultural Nonpoint Source Abatement and Control Program.** Purpose: reduce or prevent non-point source contribution from agricultural activities in watersheds across the state based on identified impairment.  
Administering Entity: NYS Department of Agriculture and Markets  
This program receives funding from the NYS Environmental Protection Fund
- **Agricultural Environmental Management Program.** Administering Entity: NYS Department of Agriculture and Markets  
Program Purpose: assist farmers in maintaining the economic viability of their farm operations while addressing environmental impacts from those operations, including, but not limited to, soil, air and water pollution and greenhouse gas emissions.  
This program receives funding from the NYS Environmental Protection Fund; Clean Water, Clean Air, and Green Jobs Environmental Bond Act; Federal Quality Incentive Program (EQIP) funds can be used to match state funds
- **Climate Resilient Farming Program.** Purpose: encourage agricultural producers in urban, suburban and rural communities to reduce the effects of farming on climate change, such as greenhouse gas emissions, and adapt to and mitigate the impact of climate change by improving and maintaining water management systems and soil health and resiliency.  
Administering Entity: NYS Department of Agriculture and Markets  
This program receives funding from the NYS Environmental Protection Fund

Farm to Institution New York. AFT receives funding from a combination of grants and Foundations, as well as from the USDA's Specialty Crop Block Grant Program, to expand the volume of food grown on local farms and served in institutions across New York, such as schools, colleges, hospitals, and senior centers. The program focuses on advocating for supportive public policy and educating institutions about buying locally.

Demonstration Farm Network. This program provides opportunities for farmers to both demonstrate and learn innovative conservation practices. It connects farmers to a network of farmers, agribusiness, conservation agencies, and landowners to facilitate farmer-to-farmer discussions and learning opportunities.

Women for the Land New York. This AFT program provides education to promote sound farming practices while creating spaces for women to connect with one another about farmland transition, business planning, and service provider resources. In addition to outreach, this program addresses gender-related barriers in collaboration with partners across New York through direct technical assistance, research, and policy advocacy.

GrowNY Farmer Assistance. Through Farmers Assistance, the organization provides business development technical assistance to aspiring and established Greenmarket producers to ensure their long-term viability. GrowNY Farmers Assistance achieves this goal through three primary programs: the Beginner Farmer, Established Farmer, and Strategic Marketing Programs. As a Regional Navigator for Farmland for a New Generation New York, GrowNY Farmer Assistance provides one-on-one land access assistance to graduates from its Farm Beginning Training Course, including business planning for land access, land visits and assessments, and lease creation and review. GrowNY serves a large region, from Long Island north through parts of the Greater Capital Region, including Saratoga County.

## Appendix 2: Public Involvement Record

This Appendix details public input from all engagement activities, including interviews, the community survey, the farmers/farmland survey, the open house, and the farmers/producers meeting.

### Interviews

#### Interview Participants

- Isabel Prescott and Kevin Shea, Riverview Orchards
- Lois New, Stormy View Stables
- Daylyn Hicks Pettis, Hicks Farm
- Agatha Reid, Trade Winds Farm
- Greg Sokolowski, Sokolowski's Greenhouses
- Kenny Bowman, Bowman Orchards
- Kurt Swartz, Maple Hill Farm
- Kate Girard, National Resource Conservation Service (NRCS)
- Tori Roberts, Saratoga PLAN
- Dustin Lewis, Saratoga County SWCD
- Nicolina Foti, CCE Saratoga
- Jason Kemper, Saratoga County Planning Department

#### **Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats Related to Agriculture in Clifton Park Based on Interviews**

Interviews included 6 with agricultural producers and 5 with agricultural support organizations and Saratoga County Planning. Findings listed in alphabetical order.

#### Strengths

- Access to quality veterinary care, especially for horses
- Appreciation for agriculture in Saratoga County
- Good, productive soils in the County outside the Adirondack Park
- Good support structure for farmers – both agricultural organizations and the town
- Growth of agritourism, increasing sales
- Improving communications with the Town
- “It makes people happy to come” to the farm
- Loyal clientele; people love local food
- New signage around town about the Right to Farm Law
- Orchards that offer pick-your-own fruit
- People who want to eat healthy, to know where their food comes from

- Personal connection between farmers and customers
- Proximity to markets; great location for selling products
- Strong sense of community among farmers
- Success of Saratoga County horse industry
- Successful farmers' markets in Clifton Park
- Sundae on the Farm – was a successful Saratoga County event Supportive Town Planning Department
- The Town's PDR program
- Visual impact of farms in Clifton Park – people can see the land in production

#### Weaknesses/Issues

- Conflicts with neighbors, especially for livestock farms
- Cost of land; competition with developers for land
- Development pressure
- Difficulty finding grants and financial assistance
- Equipment, supplies, and services used by farmers are not available in Saratoga County; hard to get them without a dense agricultural population
- Farmers forced to learn how to produce with less land and fewer resources
- Finding labor – not enough hard workers, people expect \$30/hour
- Finding people to repair farm equipment and machinery, getting parts
- Finding quality farriers
- Government inspections: inspectors hold up operations, do not understand farming, and are not supportive
- Hard to make a profit as a farmer; slim margins
- Limited land for expansion; farms are hemmed in by development
- No large-scale vegetable farms in the town
- No USDA-certified meat processing facility in Saratoga County; must drive to facilities in Washington County
- Red tape is involved in renovating historic barns and other farm structures
- Regulations and paperwork for the H2A program
- Shenendehowa School District does not provide agricultural education, in contrast to other districts; need to expose kids to agriculture and farming, let them see where their food comes from
- Solar development: farms can make more money leasing their land for solar than selling their products
- State and federal regulations (e.g., overtime rules)
- State farmland protection programs - a long and arduous process to apply and get funding
- Traffic
- Trespassing, lack of respect, and destruction of farm property

## Opportunities

- Agritourism (but we need more than two events a year); agritourism as an opportunity given the town's proximity to Saratoga and Schenectady
- Cornell Food Systems (research arm) considering Saratoga County as a location for a regional satellite office – could open doors to new markets
- Developing this plan and raising awareness about farms in Clifton Park is key to getting support
- Establish one big farmers' market, like the one in Troy
- "Get creative" in how farms are protected from development; farmland protection should be a high priority
- Increase awareness among farmers of the PDR program, Agricultural Assessments, and resources available from CCE and other partners; continue the town PDR program
- Interest in starting horse farms
- Maintain and enforce Right-to-Farm laws so farmers are not penalized when homes are developed nearby; inform property owners about farming activities
- More farms growing flowers; people don't seem to mind paying a premium for fresh flowers
- More marketing of local agriculture by the Town; promote the purchase of goods from farms during the holiday season
- On-farm business development to support and promote agriculture: e.g., ice cream stands, small delis
- Opportunities for "mom and pop" stores, like the Vischer Ferry General Store, that buy local foods from small farms to sell
- PDR opportunities to sustain producers
- Potential to create recreational opportunities on forested lands and open space around farms
- Promote local farms and greenhouses, allow signage
- Provide tax breaks or other incentives to keep farmland in production instead of selling to a developer
- Selling meats, poultry, and dairy products (in addition to fruits and vegetables) at farmstands
- "The more farms we have, the more we can educate the public."

## Threats

- Aging agricultural producers and legacy farmers who don't expect the next generation to take over the farming operation
- Housing development – "everyone wants to live in Clifton Park."
- Loss of access to rented farmland when it is sold for development
- Solar fields taking land out of production

## Survey Results

# CLIFTON PARK AGRICULTURAL FARMLAND PROTECTION PLAN – FARMER SURVEY



## Survey Summary

### A. SURVEY OVERVIEW

As part of the public engagement process for the Town of Clifton Park Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan, a survey was conducted exclusively for Clifton Park farmers, farmland owners, and large landowners. The goal of this survey was to gather insights on the strengths, challenges, and



opportunities for sustaining agriculture based on their experiences and perspectives. The findings will help identify key needs, shape the Town’s vision and priorities, and guide the development of the Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan.

The survey was created and distributed using the SurveyMonkey web platform and went live in early December 2024. The Town of Clifton Park mailed a letter with the focused survey for farmers, farmland owners, and large landowners on December 2<sup>nd</sup>. The letter introduced the Agriculture and Farmland Protection Plan project and the Farmer Survey itself. The survey remained open until February 14<sup>th</sup>, 2025, with 34 responses received.



To make the survey more accessible, the Town collected paper surveys from farmers, farmland owners, and large landowners who had difficulty accessing the online survey or preferred to complete a hardcopy survey. To further encourage responses, a postcard reminder was mailed in January 2025. The survey and project were also highlighted at

Front and Back of Postcard

the Clifton Park Winter Fest with a dedicated table stand.

### Data Limitations

The survey is one piece of many public engagement activities that help recognize themes throughout the community. Because the survey responses are self-selecting, they are not statistically valid. The survey alone cannot be used to find the “answer” or “solution”, but it can in part help guide the community's long-term vision and identify the tools and actions needed to achieve that vision.

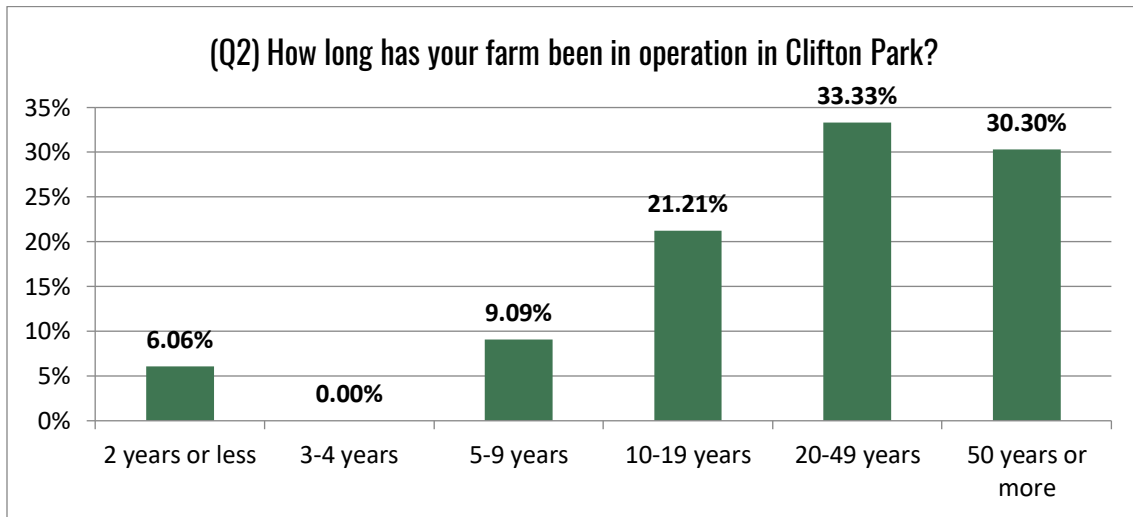
## B. SURVEY HIGHLIGHTS

The following is a brief highlight of selected survey findings from each section of the survey.

- Nearly 40% of respondents have farmed in Clifton Park for 20-49 years.
- The average number of acres farmed by respondent was 32.1 acres.
- Over half of the respondents have farms located in the Agricultural District (Ag2).
- The most prevalent agricultural service provided by respondents were hay production (44.44%) and growing vegetables (37.04%).
- The most popular farm-related activities selected by respondents were visiting on-site farm markets or farmstands (38.10%)
- Over half of respondents identify selling their agricultural by word of mouth or directly to customers. The second most common means to sell products was farm retail, farm stands, or u-pick operations.
- The most estimated gross revenues reported by respondents was less than \$1,000.
- Approximately 70% of respondents report that the income earned by their farm is minimal.
- Over 90% of respondents consider *Selling the entire farm for housing development* as “Not a priority”
- Of the respondents who indicated that they did not have a succession plan or were unsure, almost 70% stated that they are not interested in learning more about succession plans
- The most prevalent factor considered to be a “Major Issue” was farm operation costs (e.g. feed, equipment, fuel) by nearly 43% of respondents.
- The most common “Minor Issue” was Inadequate infrastructure (e.g., public water, high speed internet access) by 45% of survey respondents.
- Nearly 40% of respondents consider finding agriculture-related service and supplies for their farm as “Very Easy” and over a third of respondents think such is “Easy”
- In contrast respondents indicate that finding employees to work on their farm as “Difficult” (30.77%) or “Very Difficult” (23.08%).

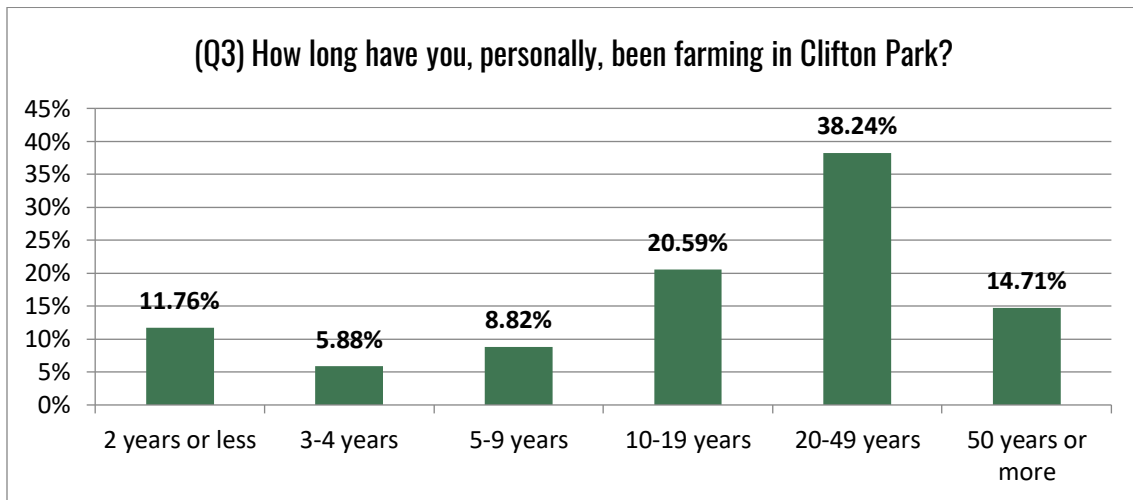
**Question 1 (Q1)** of the survey asked respondents if their farm is operated primarily for commercial sale of an agricultural product or service or if the operation is for personal or hobby use.

- Of the 34 who responded, 66.67% or 22 answered that their operations are for personal use.



**Question 2 (Q2)** asked how long their farm has been in operation in Clifton Park.

- Majority of farmers had their farm in operation for 20-49 years (33.33%) and another third had their farms in operation for 50 years or more.



**Question 3 (Q3)** of the survey asked respondents the length of time that the farmer has been farming in Clifton Park.

- Majority of respondents answered between 20-49 years (38.24%). Followed by 10-19 years (20.59%) and 50 years or more (14.71%).

**Question 4 (Q4)** asked how many acres of land are used for your farm operation.

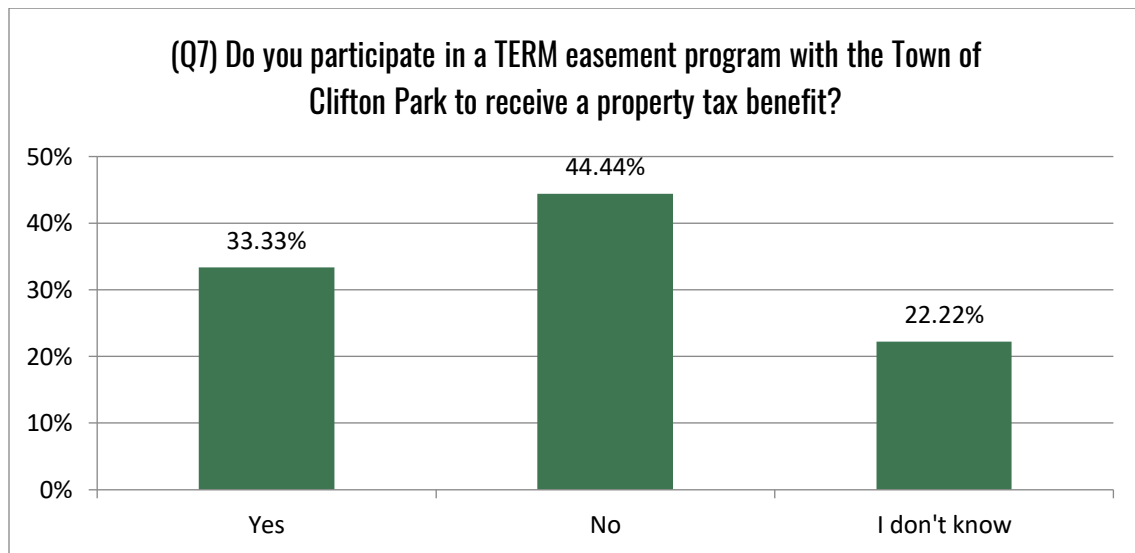
- The average number of acres reported is approximately **32.1 acres**.

**Question 5 (Q5)** How many acres of land do you use for your farm operation that you don't own?

- The average amount of land used that farmers don't own is approximately **2.43 acres**. However, the most common response submitted was **0 acres**.

**Question 6 (Q6)** How many people do you employ in your farm operation during a year?

	Average amount of workers
<b>Full-time</b>	.58
<b>Part-time</b>	.17
<b>Seasonal</b>	0.61



**Question 7 (Q7)** Do you participate in a TERM easement program with the Town of Clifton Park to receive a property tax benefit?

- Many respondents reported that they do not participate in TERM (44.44%) or they were unsure if they participate (22.22%).

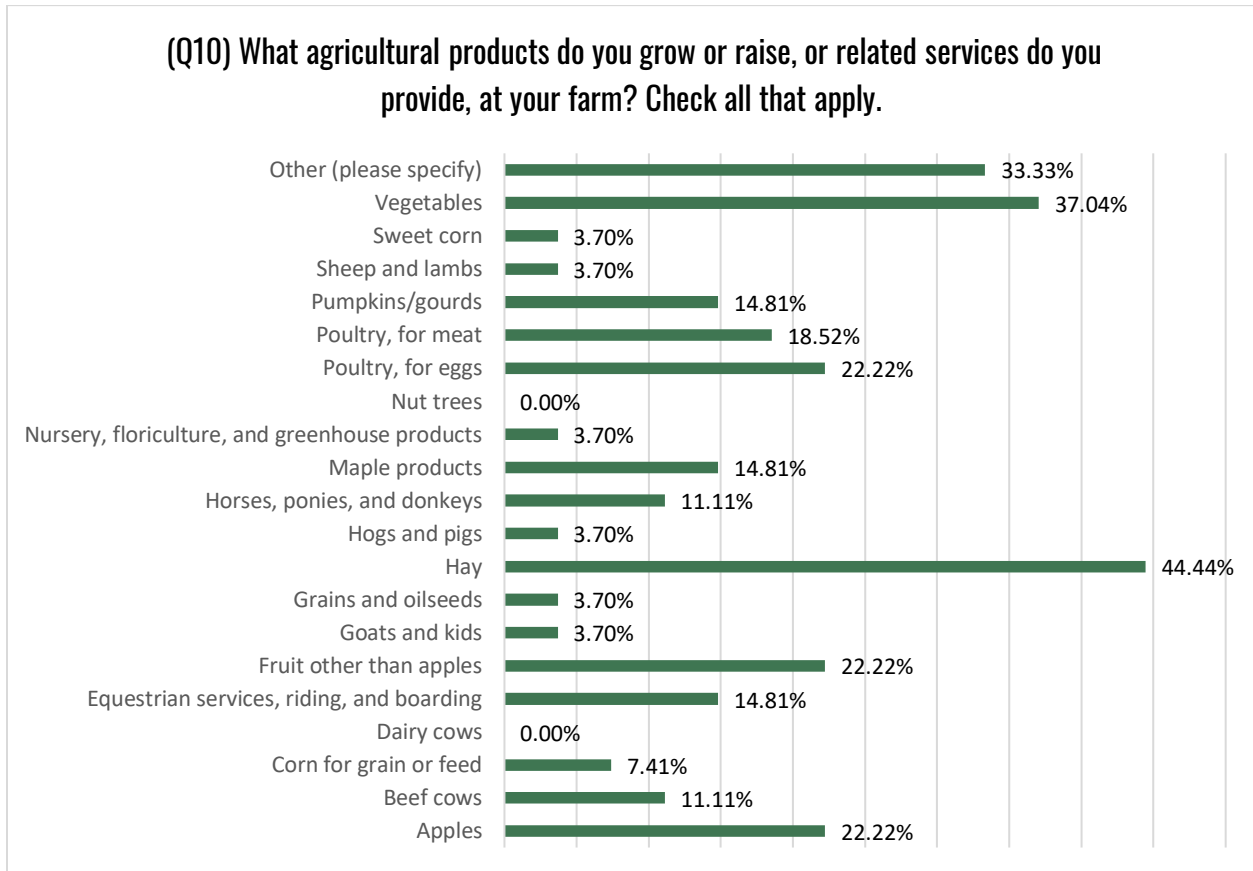
**Question 8 (Q8)** Does the land you currently farm receive an Agricultural Value Assessment to reduce property taxes?

- 43.33% of respondents answered "Yes"
- 36.67% of respondents answered "No"
- 20.00% of respondents were unsure

**Question 9 (Q9)** Is your farm located in the Agricultural District (Ag 2) pictured above?

- 56.67% answered "Yes, all of it is in the Agricultural District"
- 16.67% answered "Yes, some of it is in the Agricultural District"

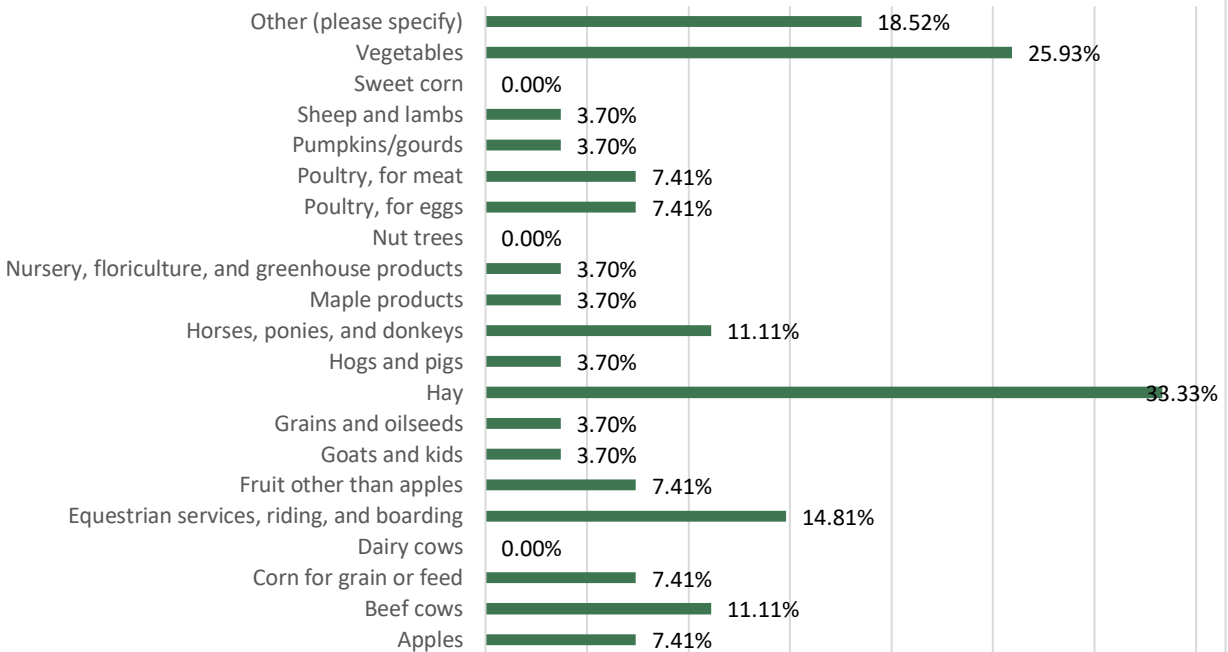
- 20.00% answered “No”
- 6.67% answered “I don’t know”



**Question 10 (Q10)** What agricultural products do you grow or raise, or related services do you provide, at your farm? Check all that apply.

- The most prevalent responses were hay production (44.44%) and growing vegetables (37.04%).
- Those that selected *Other* (33.33%) reported honey production, straw production and lumber production.
- The least common agricultural-related services reported were nut trees and dairy cows at 0%, respectively.

**(Q11) Which of these agricultural products or related services do you consider to be your primary farm product or service? Check all that apply.**



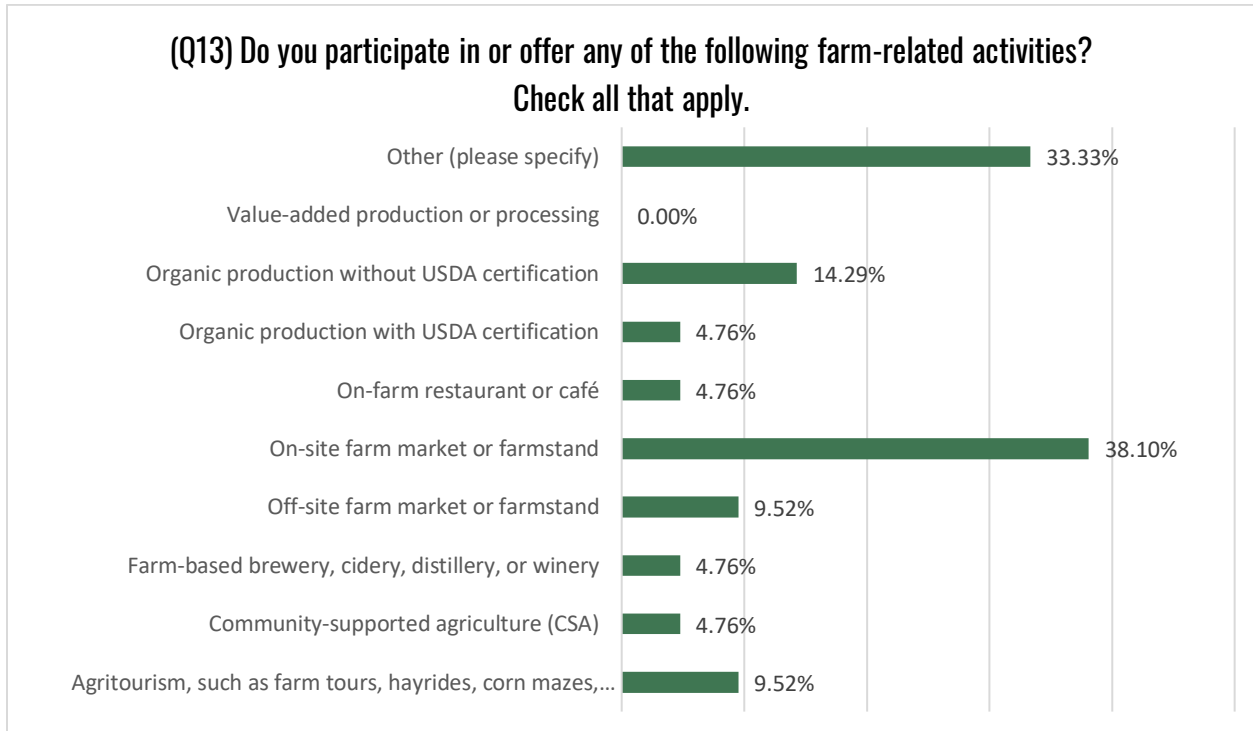
**Question 11 (Q11) Which of these agricultural products or related services do you consider to be your primary farm product or service? Check all that apply.**

- The most prevalent primary farm production or service according to respondents was hay production (33.33%) followed by growing vegetables (25.93%).
- Those that selected *Other* (18.52%) report honey and lumber to be their primary farm product.

**Question 12 (Q12) Do you obtain any technical help or participate in any programs from the following:**

	<b>Response</b>
<b>Cornell Cooperative Extension</b>	60.00%
<b>Saratoga County Soil and Water Conservation District</b>	46.67%
<b>Farm Bureau</b>	40.00%
<b>American Farmland Trust</b>	13.33%
<b>Saratoga PLAN</b>	20.00%
<b>Other</b>	20.00%

- The most prevalent programs selected by respondents were Cornell Cooperative Extension (60.00%), Saratoga County Soil and Water Conservation District (46.67%), and Farm Bureau (40.00%).



**Question 13 (Q13)** Do you participate in or offer any of the following farm-related activities? Check all that apply.

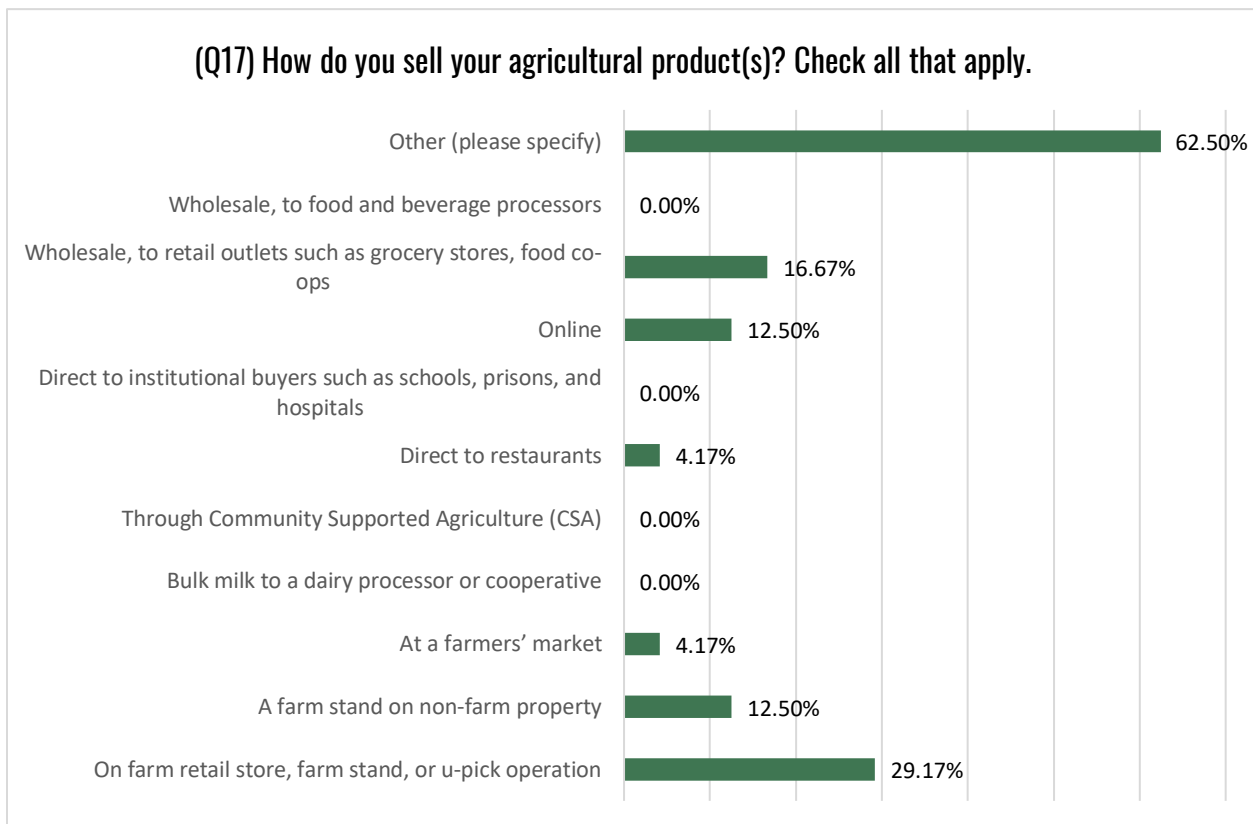
- The most common farm-related activities selected were visiting on-site farm markets or farmstands (38.10%).
- Those that selected *Other* (33.33%) listed activities like equestrian services or indicated that they do not participate in the activities provided.

**Question 14 (Q14)** Do you participate in or offer any of the following farm-related activities? Check all that apply.

- 3.33% answered “Yes”
- 70.00% answered “No”
- 26.67% selected “Yes” and described being supportive of agritourism, flower production and on-site farm stands.

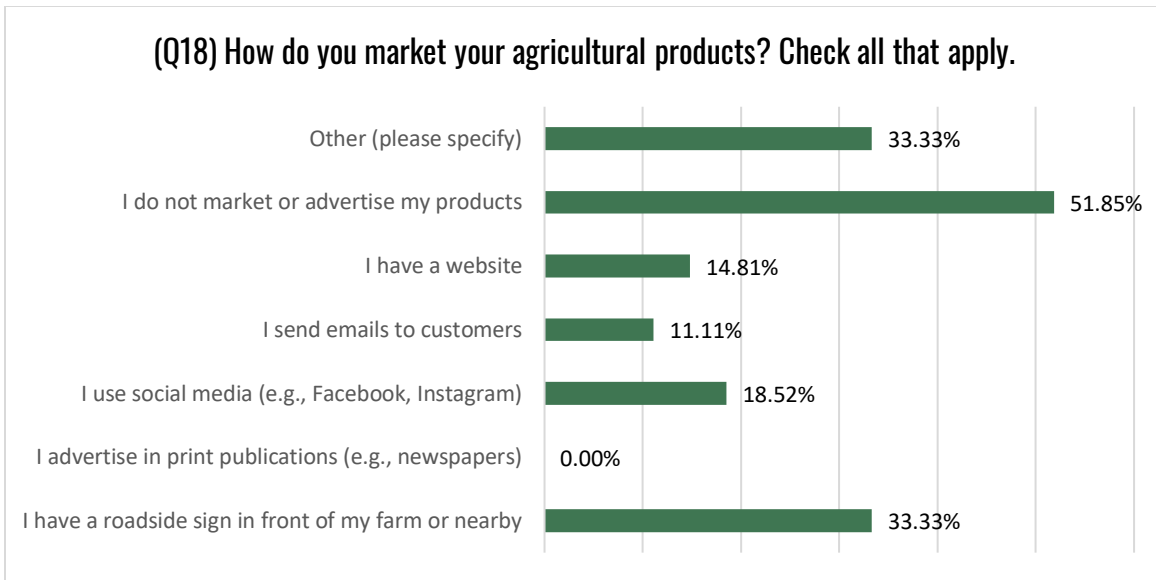
**Question 15 (Q15)** What are the Top 3 advantages of farming in Clifton Park?

Ranking	Advantages submitted by respondents
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Close to work</li> <li>• Central location (close to 87, airport, &amp; Saratoga)</li> <li>• Supportive Town Government</li> </ul>
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Low tax rate</li> <li>• Soil quality</li> <li>• School district</li> <li>• Excellent market to sell our products</li> </ul>
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Right to farm support by government</li> <li>• Nearness to population centers</li> <li>• Community has interest in local farming</li> </ul>



**Question 17 (Q17)** How do you sell your agricultural product(s)? Check all that apply.

- The most prevalent response was *Other* at nearly 63%. Many respondents with methods such as word of mouth and direct to customer. Other respondents indicated that they do not sell their agricultural products.
- However, the second most popular means to sell agricultural products was farm retail, farm stand, or u-pick operation (29.17%).



**Question 18 (Q18)** How do you market your agricultural products? Check all that apply.

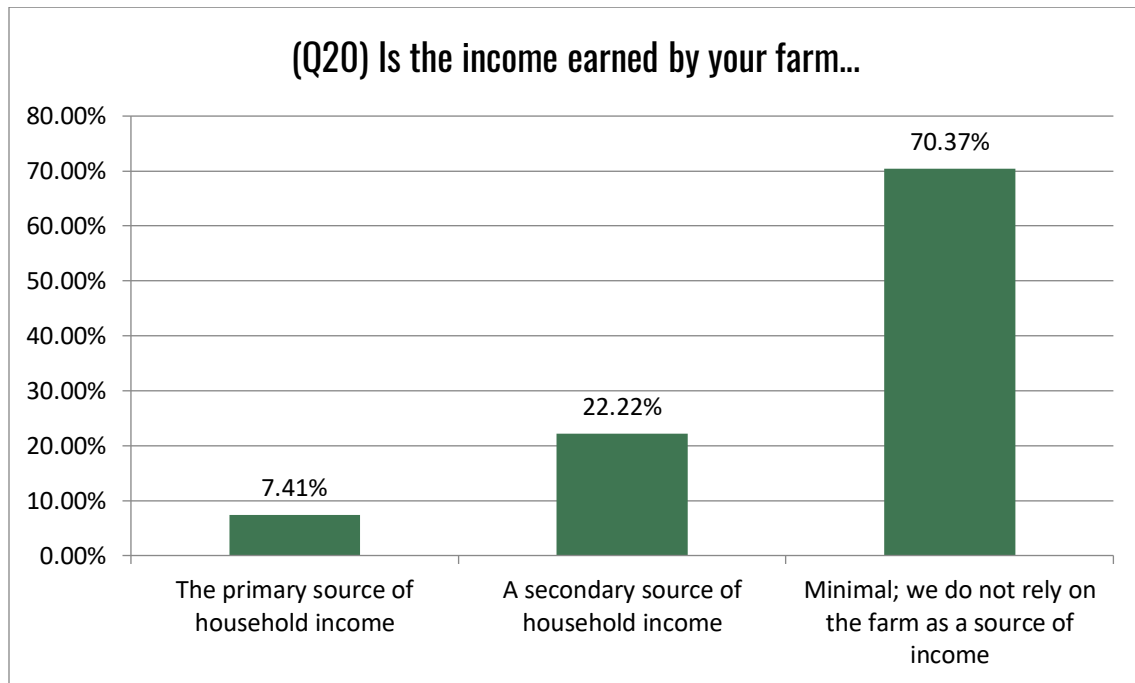
- More than half of the respondents do not market or advertise their products.
- A third of the respondents selected *Other*, and listed word of mouth and past customers as their primary means of marketing.
- There were no respondents that indicated the use of print publications such as newspapers.

**Question 19 (Q19)** What were the estimated gross revenues of your farm, before taxes and expenses, in 2023?

<b>Less than \$1,000</b>	48.00%
<b>\$1,000 to \$10,000</b>	12.00%
<b>\$10,000 to \$24,999</b>	16.00%
<b>\$25,000 to \$49,999</b>	8.00%
<b>\$50,000 to \$99,999</b>	4.00%
<b>\$100,000 to \$149,999</b>	8.00%
<b>\$150,000 to \$249,999</b>	0.00%
<b>\$250,000 to \$499,999</b>	4.00%
<b>\$500,000 or more</b>	0.00%

- The most prevalent estimated gross revenue provided was less than \$1,000 (48.00%).
- The second most common gross revenue was \$10,000 to \$24,000 (16.00%).

- No respondents reported having gross revenues of \$150,000-\$249,000 or \$150,000-\$249,999.
- Twelve respondents opted to skip this question.



**Question 20 (Q20) Is the income earned by your farm...**

- Approximately 70% of respondents report that the income earned by their farm is minimal.
- Less than 10% of respondents rely on the income earned by their farm as the primary source of household income.

**Question 21 (Q21) How profitable has your farm operation been over the last 5 years?**

- 3.70% answered “Very profitable”
- 14.81% answered “Somewhat profitable”
- 37.04% answered “break-even”
- 44.44% answered “Not profitable”

**Question 22 (Q22) Have you experienced a conflict or issue with a non-farm neighbor or trespassers?**

- The responses were equal. Half of respondents’ reports have experienced conflict with non-farming neighbors and the half have had no issues.
- Those that selected having conflicts identified poaching deer, trespassers, theft from farm stands or non-farming neighbors complaining about smells

	<b>High Priority</b>	<b>Priority</b>	<b>Not Sure</b>	<b>Not a Priority</b>
<b>Diversify the crops I grow or the animals I raise</b>	9.52%	28.57%	28.57%	33.33%
<b>Develop an agricultural environmental management plan</b>	10.00%	20.00%	40.00%	30.00%
<b>Develop agritourism activities on the farm</b>	4.76%	9.52%	23.81%	61.90%
<b>Expand or transition into a new market, such as wholesale or retail</b>	4.55%	13.64%	22.73%	59.09%
<b>Implement energy-saving strategies for on-site farm operations</b>	13.64%	22.73%	27.27%	36.36%
<b>Lease or sell some of my land for solar energy production for off-site use</b>	4.76%	9.52%	9.52%	76.19%
<b>Purchase additional land for agricultural expansion</b>	13.64%	9.09%	4.55%	72.73%
<b>Protect my farmland (e.g., selling development rights)</b>	18.18%	31.82%	45.45%	4.55%
<b>Sell a portion of the land for housing development</b>	0.00%	0.00%	18.18%	81.82%
<b>Sell the entire farm for housing development</b>	0.00%	0.00%	9.09%	90.91%
<b>Sell or rent my land to another farmer to keep it in agricultural use</b>	13.64%	9.09%	40.91%	36.36%
<b>Transfer the farm to a family member</b>	13.64%	4.55%	27.27%	54.55%
<b>I don't know / it depends</b>	4.76%	0.00%	47.62%	47.62%
<b>Stay the same / no changes anticipated</b>	12.50%	45.83%	41.67%	0.00%

**Question 23 (Q23)** Please rank your priorities for each topic below, for your farm or farmland over the next 5 years.

- Over 90% of respondents consider *Selling the entire farm for housing development* as “Not a priority”
- Protecting farmland was considered a “High Priority” by around 18% of respondents

**Question 24 (Q24)** Does your farm have a succession plan that discusses a process for transferring your farm to the next generation?

- 37.93% answered “Yes”
- 55.17% answered “No”
- 6.90% answered “I don’t know”

**Question 25 (Q25)** If no, or I don't know, are you interested in learning more about succession plans?

- Of the respondents who indicated that they did not have a succession plan or were unsure, almost 70% stated that they are uninterested in learning more about succession plans

**Question 26 (Q26)** Does your farm have an agricultural environmental management plan prepared with help from the Saratoga County Soil and Water Conservation District?

- 10.71% answered “Yes”
- 60.71% answered “No”
- 28.57% answered “I don’t know”

	<b>Not an Issue</b>	<b>Minor Issue</b>	<b>Major Issue</b>	<b>Not Sure</b>
<b>Access to retail, wholesale, and/or institutional markets</b>	80.95%	19.05%	0.00%	0.00%
<b>Availability of land in Clifton Park for expansion</b>	57.14%	23.81%	19.05%	0.00%
<b>Cost of land in Clifton Park for expansion</b>	52.38%	9.52%	33.33%	4.76%
<b>Changing weather patterns/weather extremes</b>	38.10%	28.57%	33.33%	0.00%
<b>Farm operation costs (e.g., feed, equipment, fuel)</b>	28.57%	28.57%	42.86%	0.00%
<b>Conflicts with or complaints from non-farm neighbors</b>	60.00%	20.00%	15.00%	5.00%
<b>Conflicts with other vehicles/drivers when moving farm equipment on roadways</b>	60.00%	15.00%	25.00%	0.00%

	<b>Not an Issue</b>	<b>Minor Issue</b>	<b>Major Issue</b>	<b>Not Sure</b>
<b>Fewer young people interested in farming as a career</b>	42.86%	23.81%	33.33%	0.00%
<b>Inadequate infrastructure (e.g., public water, high-speed internet access)</b>	55.00%	45.00%	0.00%	0.00%
<b>Lack of support for farming by municipal and County leaders</b>	33.33%	33.33%	28.57%	4.76%
<b>Limited public understanding of farming and agriculture</b>	23.81%	47.62%	28.57%	0.00%
<b>Pressure to develop/sell land for development</b>	36.36%	27.27%	36.36%	0.00%
<b>State and federal regulations (environmental, labor, etc.)</b>	36.36%	27.27%	36.36%	0.00%
<b>Suitable/affordable housing for farmworkers</b>	85.00%	5.00%	5.00%	5.00%
<b>Town zoning restrictions</b>	47.62%	19.05%	28.57%	4.76%
<b>Building codes for constructing farm buildings</b>	38.10%	19.05%	33.33%	9.52%

**Question 27 (Q27)** How much of an issue is each of the following for your farm operation in Clifton Park?

- Over 80% of respondents consider access to *retail, wholesale, and/ or institutional markets* as “Not an issue”
- The most prevalent factor considered to be a “Major Issue” was *farm operation costs (e.g. feed, equipment, fuel)* by nearly 43% of respondents.
- The most common “Minor Issue” was *Inadequate infrastructure (e.g., public water, high speed internet access)* by 45% of survey respondents.

	<b>1. Very Easy</b>	<b>2. Easy</b>	<b>3. Not Sure</b>	<b>4. Difficult</b>	<b>5. Very Difficult</b>	<b>Not Applicable</b>
<b>Find agriculture-related services and supplies for your farm?</b>	38.89%	33.33%	0.00%	16.67%	0.00%	11.11%

	<b>1. Very Easy</b>	<b>2. Easy</b>	<b>3. Not Sure</b>	<b>4. Difficult</b>	<b>5. Very Difficult</b>	<b>Not Applicable</b>
<b>Find employees to work on your farm?</b>	0.00%	7.69%	0.00%	30.77%	23.08%	38.46%
<b>Find veterinary care for farm animals?</b>	14.29%	14.29%	28.57%	0.00%	7.14%	35.71%
<b>Find wholesale customers?</b>	0.00%	8.33%	25.00%	8.33%	0.00%	58.33%
<b>Market your products?</b>	7.14%	35.71%	21.43%	14.29%	0.00%	21.43%

**Question 28 (Q28)** For each topic below, on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 meaning “Very Easy” and 5 meaning “Very Difficult,” how easy or difficult is it to:

- Nearly 40% of respondents consider finding agriculture-related service and supplies for their farm as “Very Easy” and over a third of respondents think such is “Easy”.
- Over 35% find marketing their products as “Easy”
- In contrast respondents indicate that finding employees to work on their farm as “Difficult” (30.77%) or “Very Difficult” (23.08%).

**Question 29 (Q29)** and **Question 30 (Q30)** were open-ended, inviting respondents to share their insights on actions that public and private entities should take, as well as any additional concerns regarding agriculture in Clifton Park.

Among the 27 responses submitted, three overarching themes emerged.

- **Farmland Preservation and Protection**
  - Strong concerns about the loss of farmland to development and the need to preserve agricultural land.
  - Interest in strengthening conservation incentives, tax advantages, and policies to make farming more viable.
- **Education and Outreach**
  - Desire for more community engagement through outreach programs, educational initiatives, and public awareness campaigns.
  - Calls for municipal education on agricultural laws and farmers' rights.
- **Support for Farmers and Agricultural Expansion**
  - Concerns about access to technical assistance and networking opportunities for farmers.
  - Need for financial assistance, grants, and tax incentives to support agricultural operations.



# CLIFTON PARK AGRICULTURAL FARMLAND PROTECTION PLAN

## Survey Summary

### A. SURVEY OVERVIEW

As part of the public engagement component of the Town of Clifton Park Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan, an online community survey was developed. The purpose of this survey was to gather input from community members, residents, visitors, business owners, and other stakeholders about the future of farming in Clifton Park. This information will help inform the overall needs, vision, and priorities of the Town and help shape the Town’s Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan.



Survey Flyer

The survey was created and distributed using the Survey Monkey web platform and went live on **September 13<sup>th</sup>, 2024**, to coincide with the Town’s annual Farm Fest celebration. The survey remained open until **February 14<sup>th</sup>, 2025**, with **302 responses received**.

The survey was advertised on the project website ([www.CliftonParkFarms.com](http://www.CliftonParkFarms.com)) and through the Town of Clifton Park website ([cliftonpark.org](http://cliftonpark.org)). Additionally, several press releases were distributed prior to and during the survey period, as well as social media platform pushes from the Town and Committee Members. Information and links to the survey were also distributed during the survey period on cards and flyers throughout the Town, which included a Quick Response (QR) code so respondents could access the survey directly on a mobile device.

### Data Limitations

The survey is one piece of many public engagement activities that help recognize themes throughout the community. Because the survey responses are self-selecting, they are not statistically valid. The survey alone cannot be used to find the “answer” or “solution”, but it can in part help guide the community's long-term vision and identify the tools and actions needed to achieve that vision.

## B. KEY TAKEAWAYS

The survey was divided into several topical areas to focus on and categorize the questions. The survey topic areas include Demographic, Background information, & Values, Challenges and Opportunities, Feedback, and Future. Below is a description of each key takeaway.

The *Demographic, Background Information, and Value* section provides insight into the survey respondents. Additionally, ensuring that responses represent a broad spectrum of individuals helps inform decision-making that is inclusive of the entire community. The *Challenges and Opportunities* section invited respondents to identify key obstacles to farming in Clifton Park while highlighting potential opportunities for growth. Understanding how community members interact with the town, along with their concerns and priorities, is crucial for shaping the Farmland Protection Plan effectively. Lastly, the *Feedback and Future* section assessed residents' engagement with farming in Clifton Park, their perspectives on future planning initiatives, and their recommendations for supporting agricultural activity within the town.

### **Demographic, Background Information, & Values (Q1-Q6)**

- Many respondents have a zip code of 12065 and over half of the respondents have lived in Clifton Park for 20 years or more.
- Nearly 85% of respondents find local farms and agriculture as very important to them.
- Agriculture is deemed important by respondents due to their enjoyment of shopping at farm stands and that agriculture retains the town's unique, rural character.

### **Challenges and Opportunities (Q7-Q12)**

- Overarching challenges posed to agriculture according to respondents include the loss of farmland, infrastructure strain, and economic pressure on farming.
- 50% of respondents regularly buy local agricultural products.
- 90% of respondents find the loss of farmland to development to be concerning and 85% consider farmland protection to be very important.

### **Feedback and the Future (Q13-Q23)**

- Many respondents seem unaware of the town's laws and program that support agriculture such as the Purchase of Development Rights to Permanent Conservation Easement which aids farmers and farmland owners.
- Most respondents are in support of local farmers and are calling for farmland protection, open space preservation, agricultural education for the community and increased accessibility for local farm products.

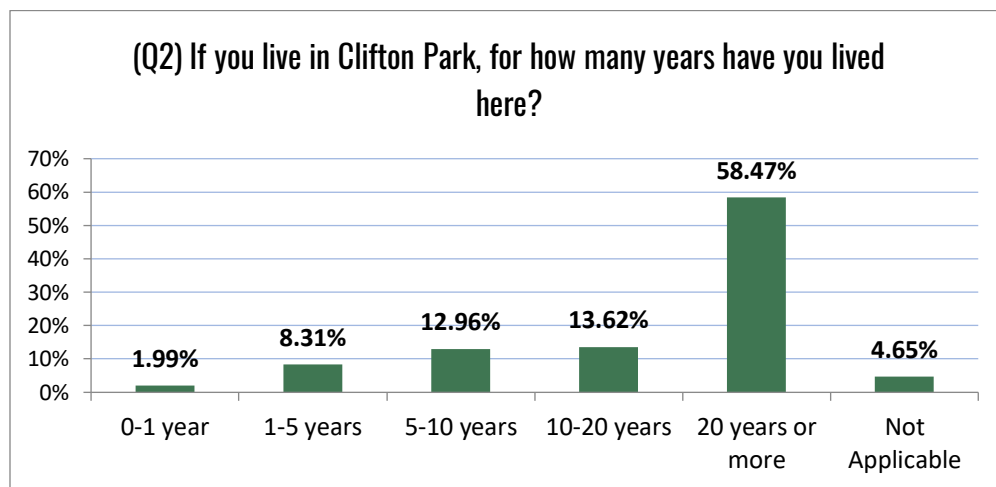
## C. SURVEY HIGHLIGHTS

The following are highlights of selected survey findings from each section of the survey.

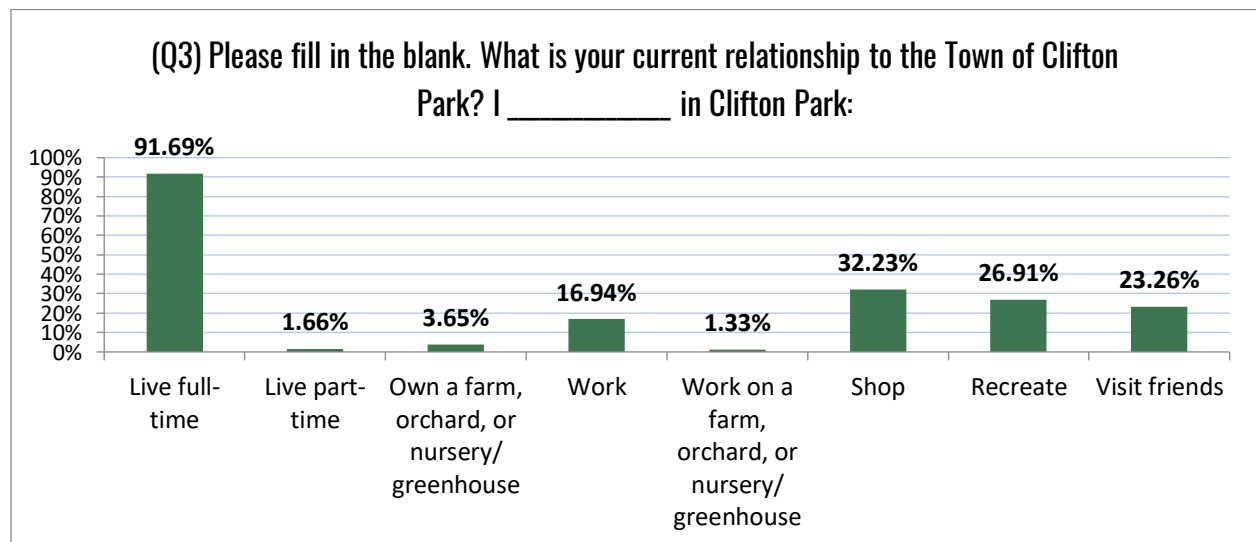
### Demographic, Background Information & Values (Q1 – Q6)

**Question 1 (Q1)** of the survey asked respondents to enter their zip code. The three most prevalent zip codes for respondents were:

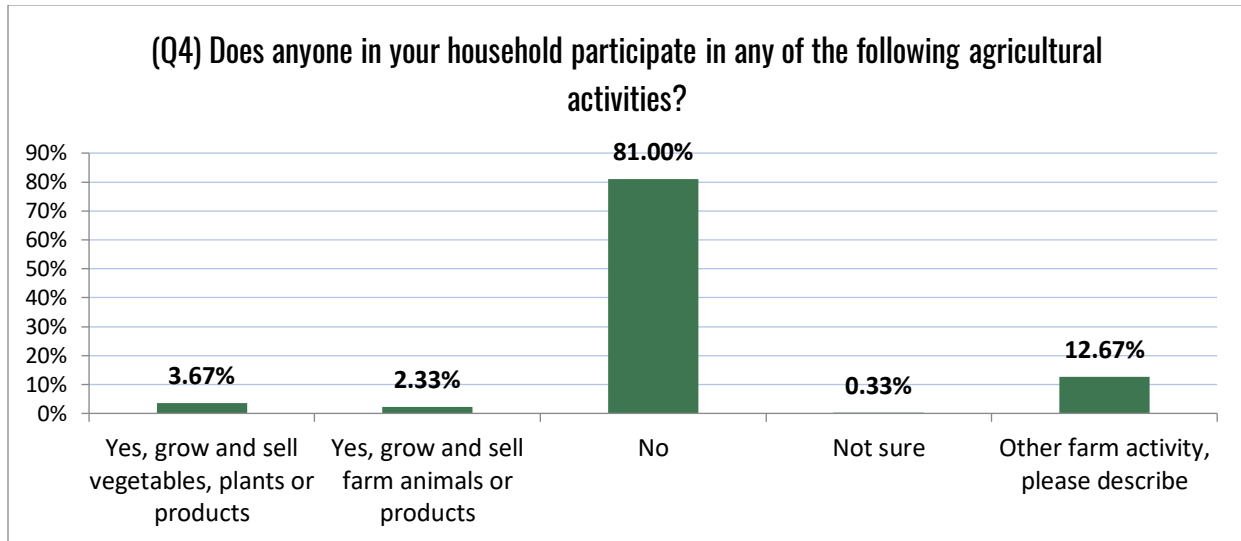
- 12065 (54.7%)
- 12148 (20.5%)
- 12019 (11.1%)



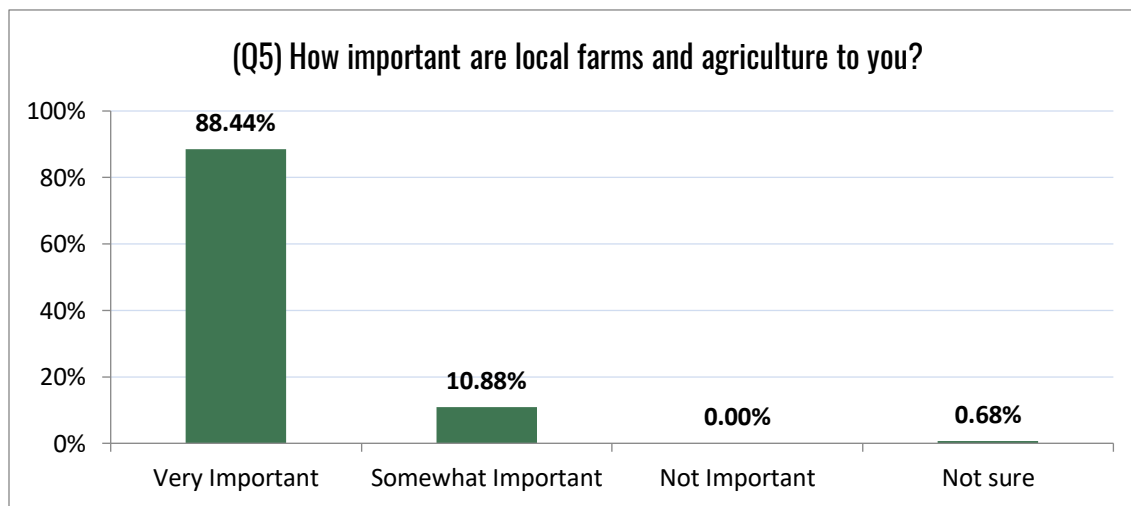
**Question 2 (Q2)** of the survey asked respondents if they lived in Clifton Park, and if so for how many years. More than half of the respondents (58.47%) report having lived in Clifton Park for 20 years or more, and nearly 14% report living in town between 10 and 20.



**Question 3 (Q3)** asked respondents to describe their current relationship with the Town of Clifton Park. The most prevalent response recorded living full-time in Clifton Park at over 90%. The second most comment responses were shopping in Clifton Park (32.23%) and recreation (26.91%). Less than 2% of respondents reported working on a farm, orchard, or nursery/ greenhouse in Clifton Park.

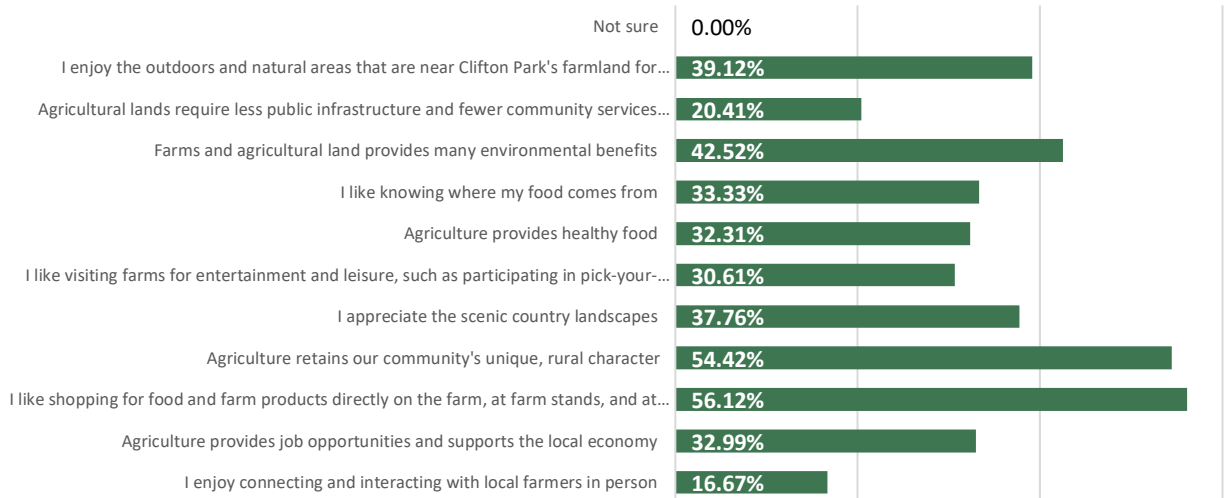


**Question 4 (Q4)** asked respondents if anyone in their household participates in agriculture activities. Over 80% respondents reported that No, no one in their household participates in the listed agricultural activities. Approximately 13% of respondents described other farm activities such as gardening flowers, growing vegetables for personal use, and owning horses.



**Question 5 (Q5)** asked respondents to rate how important agriculture is to them. The majority of respondents rated local farms and agriculture as *Very Important* (88.4%) and over 10% as it being *Somewhat Important*.

**(Q6) If agriculture in Clifton Park is important to you, why Please pick three.**

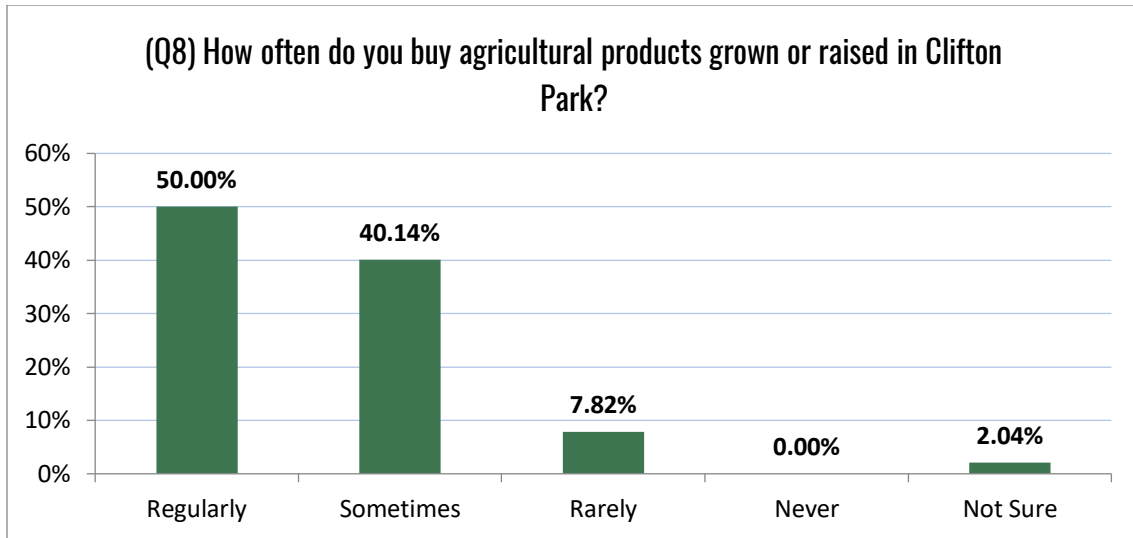


**Question 6 (Q6)** asked respondents to identify what agriculture is important to them. The top three choices were shopping for food and farm products directly on the farm, at farm stands, and at weekly farmers’ markets (56.12%), agriculture retains our community’s unique, rural character (54.42%), and farms and agricultural land provide many environmental benefits (42.52%).

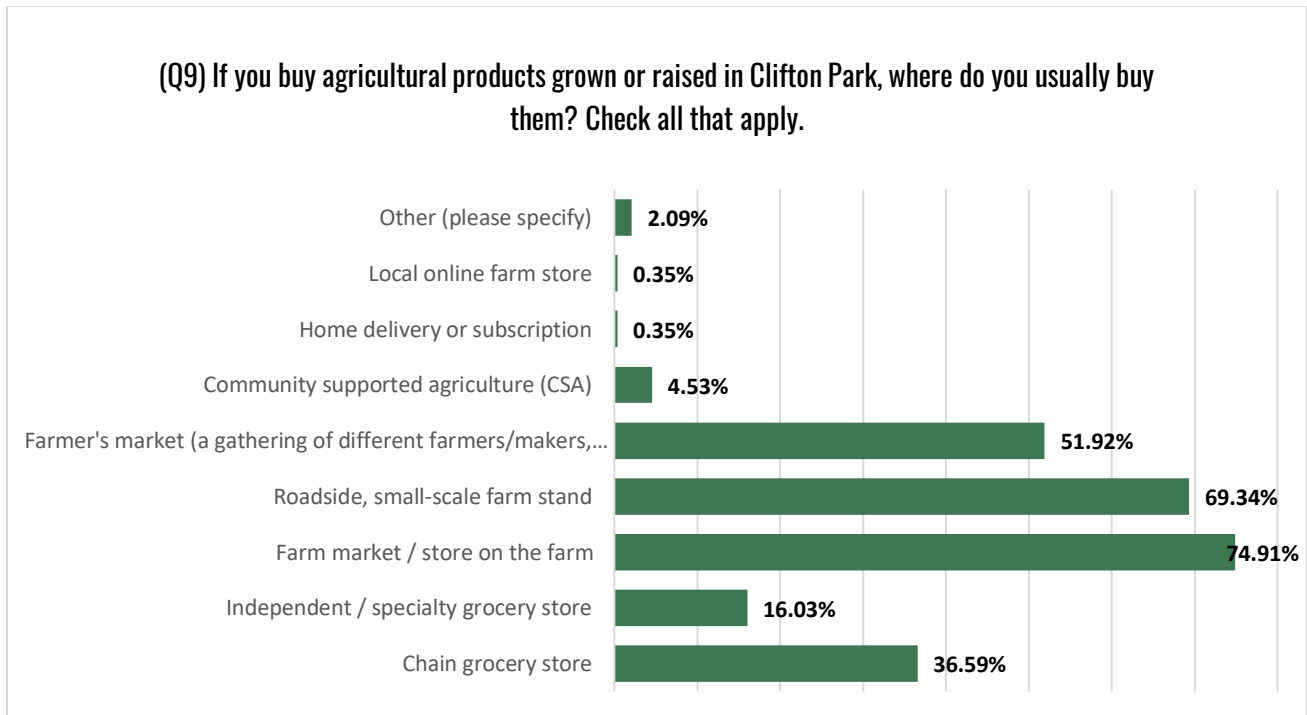
**Challenges and Opportunities (Q7 – Q12)**

**Question 7 (Q7)** asked respondents to identify major issues facing agriculture in Clifton Park. Based on the 247 respondents, the overarching common issues from the responses are overdevelopment and loss of farmland, infrastructure strain, and economic pressure on farming. Common responses from each theme are as follows:

- **Overdevelopment and Loss of Farmland**
  - Respondents report concern about housing and commercial development replacing agricultural land.
  - Worry that the town is losing its rural character due to urban sprawl.
- **Infrastructure Strain**
  - Increased traffic congestion and inadequate road infrastructure.
  - Concern about balancing development with maintaining quality of life.
- **Economic Pressures on Farming**
  - Competition with large retailers and rising costs make farming less viable.
  - Younger generations are not continuing family farming businesses.

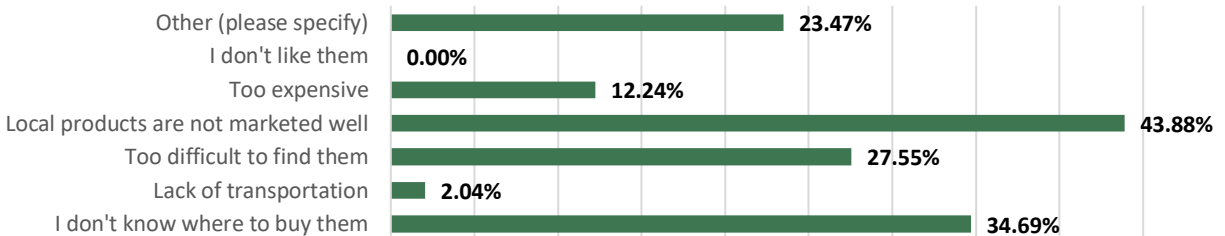


**Question 8 (Q8)** asked respondents how often they purchase agricultural products grown or raised in Clifton Park. Half of the respondents (147) reported making these purchases, while 40.1% indicated that they buy them occasionally. Notably, no respondents reported never purchasing these products.



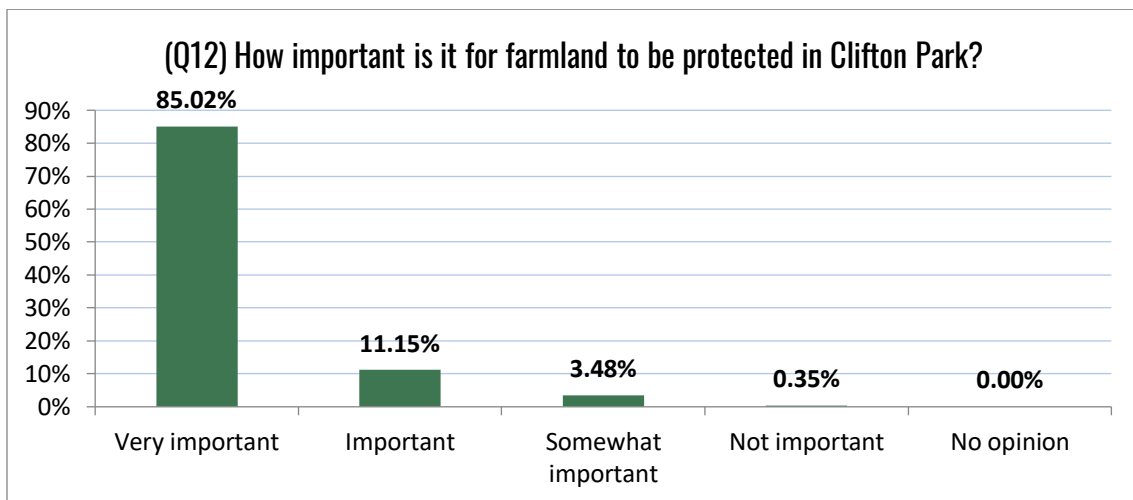
**Question 9 (Q9)** asked respondents where they purchase agricultural products grown or raised in Clifton Park. The most common locations reported were *farm market/store on the farm* (74.91%), *roadside/ small-scale farm stand* (69.34%), and *Farmer's market* (51.92%). Respondents who selected *Other* indicate that they purchase from local farms outside of Clifton Park or grow agricultural products at home.

(Q10) If you rarely or never buy agricultural products grown or raised in Clifton Park, why? Check all that apply:



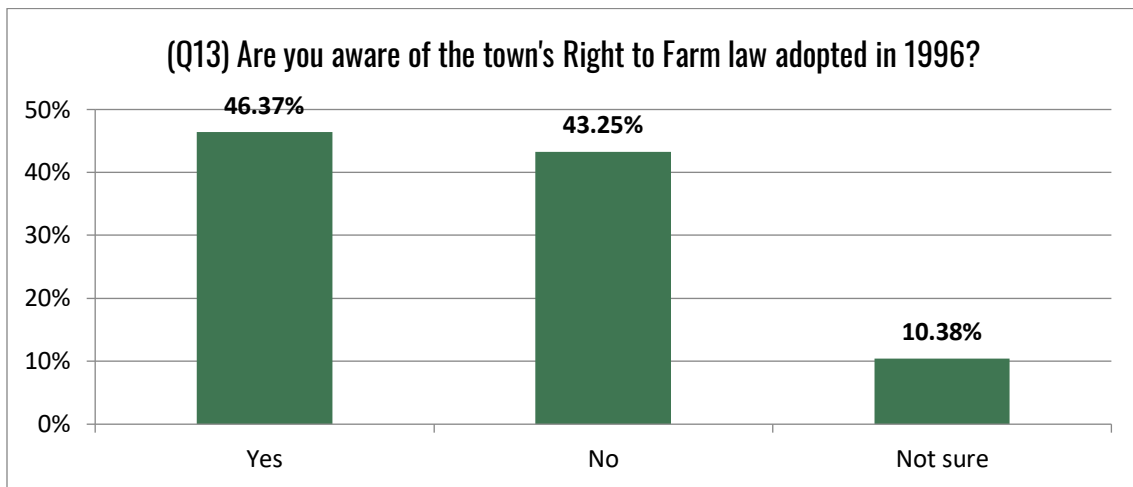
**Question 10 (Q10)** asked respondents to report reasons barring them from rarely or never buying agricultural products grown or raised in Clifton Park. The most common response was *that local products are not marketed well* at nearly 44%. Other prevalent selected responses were not knowing where to buy the products (34.69%) and that it is too difficult to find the products (27.55%). Those that selected *Other* report that they're not applicable, as they do purchase local agriculture products grown in town or grow their own. However, many others explain that they do not have the time purchase from farms and that it generally requires a special trip.

**Question 11 (Q11)** asked respondents if they felt concerned about the loss of farmland to development. Over 90% of respondents report that “Yes” the loss of farmland to development is a concern.



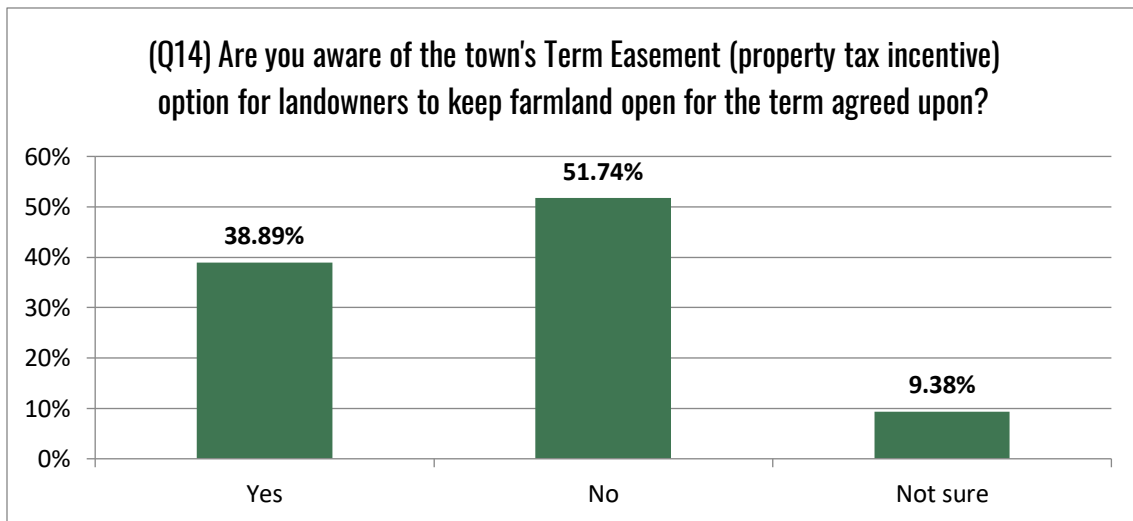
**Question 12 (12)** asked respondents to rate how important they believe it is for farmland to be protected in Clifton Park. The leading response recorded was *Very Important* by 85.02% of the respondents, followed by *Important* at least 11%. Less than 1% of respondents reported protecting farmland within Clifton Park as *Not Important*.

**Feedback and the Future (Q13 – Q23)**

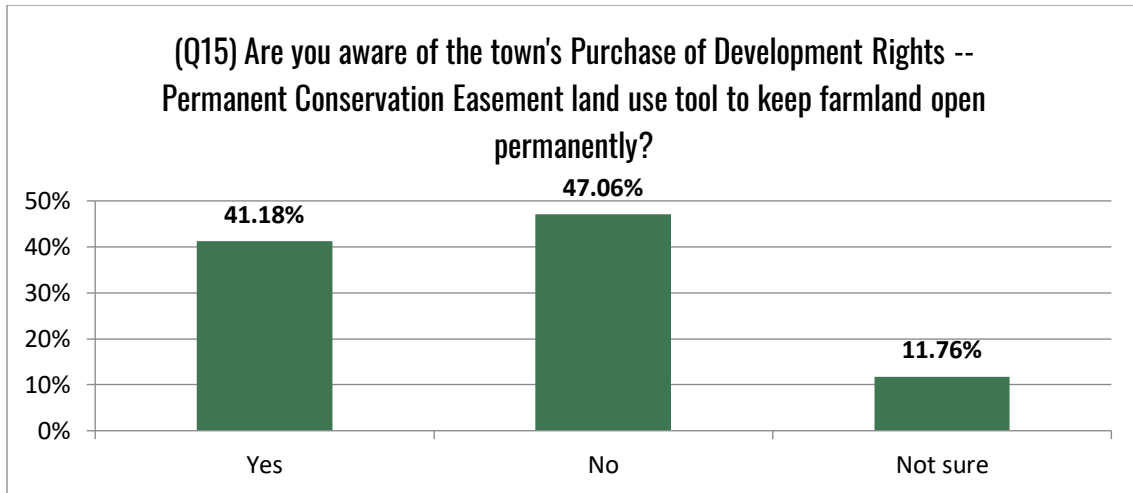


**Feedback and the Future (Q13 – Q23)**

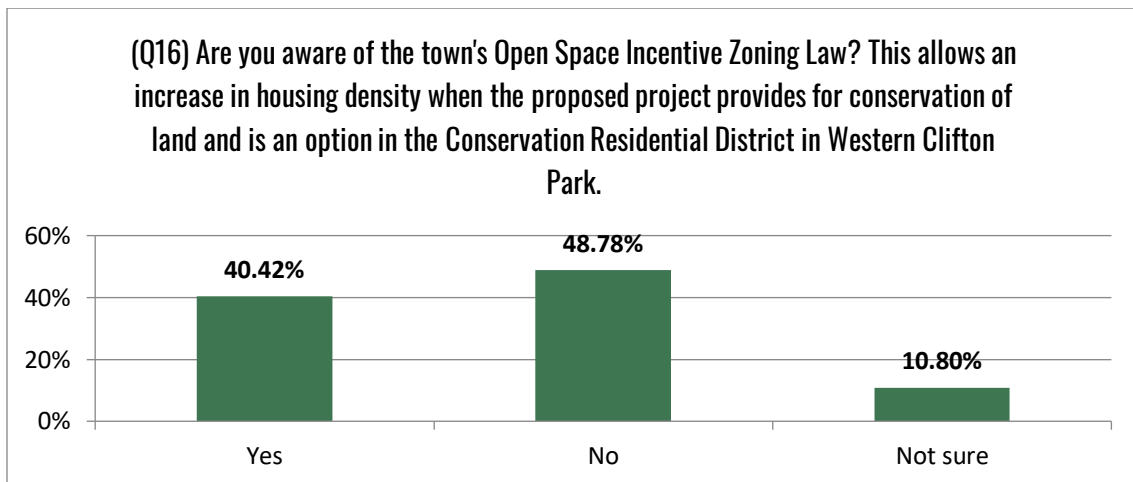
**Question 13 (Q13)** asked if respondents were aware of the Town’s Right to Farm Law; approximately 46% of respondents reported that they were aware of this law. However, 43% of respondents were unaware of its existence, and about 10% were not sure.



**Question 14 (Q14)** asked if respondents were aware of the Town’s Term Easement option for landowners. Over half of the respondents (51.74%) report that they were unaware of the Term Easement. With nearly 39% of respondents reporting that they did know about the Term Easement option.

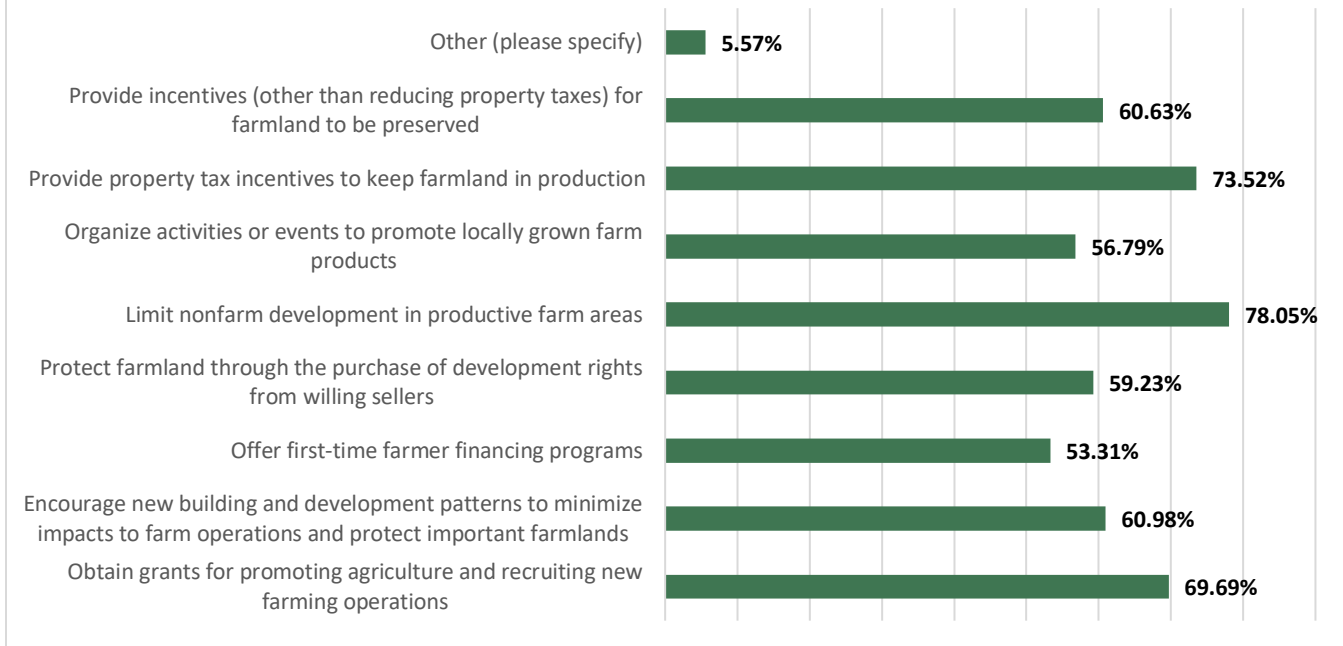


**Question 15 (Q15)** asked if respondents were aware of the Town’s Purchase of Development Rights, which is a permanent conservation easement land use tool to keep farmland open permanently. A little less than half of respondents (47.06%) and nearly 12% of respondents report not knowing of the Town’s Purchase of Development Rights.



**Question 16 (Q16)** asked if respondents were aware of the Town’s Open Space Incentive Zoning Law. Similar to the previous two questions, the most common response was *No* with nearly 49% of respondents indicating a lack of awareness. Additionally, more than 10% were *not sure*.

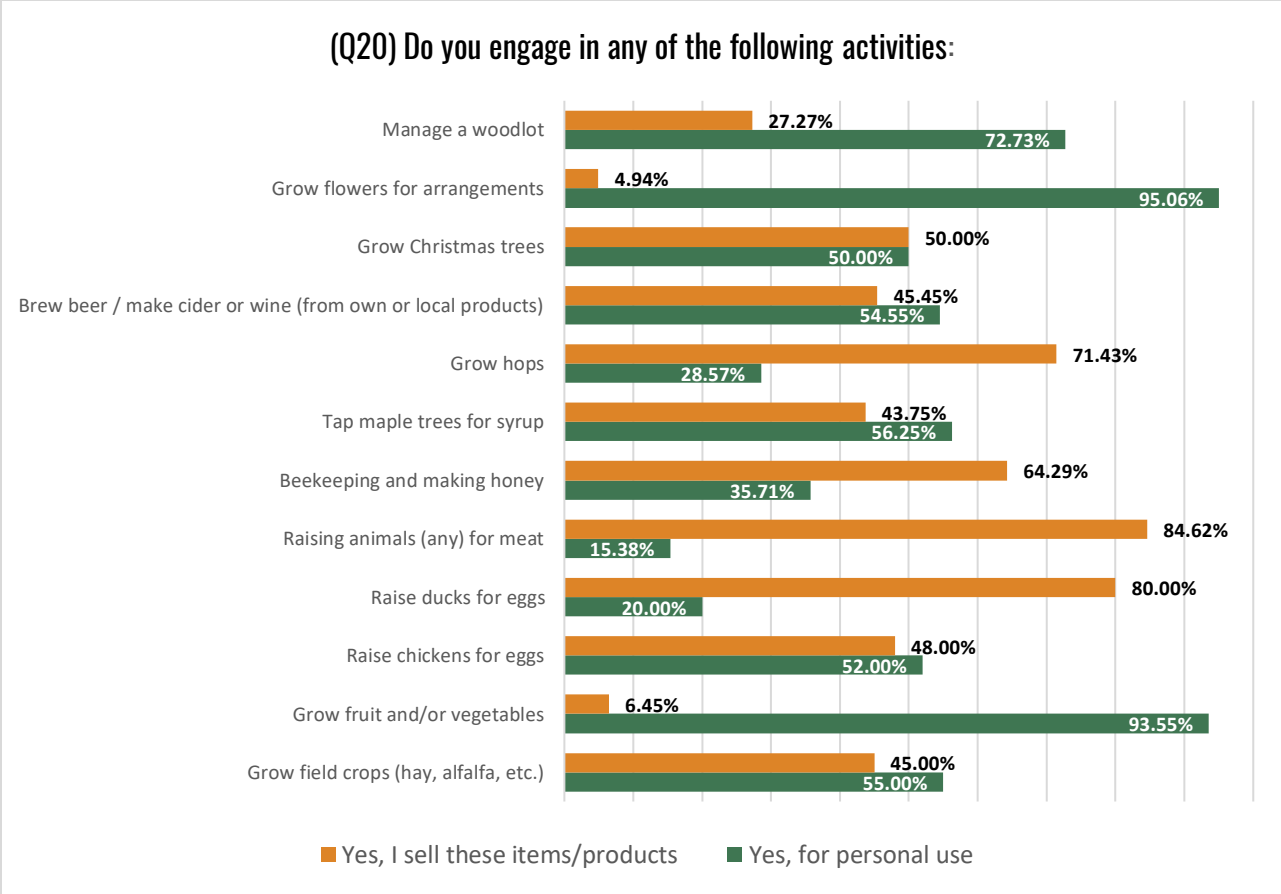
**(Q17) Which of the following planning actions would you support to keep farming viable in Clifton Park? (Check all that apply)**



**Question 17 (Q17)** invited respondents to choose which planning actions they support to keep farming viable in Clifton Park. The three most common responses were *Limit nonfarm development in productive farm areas* (78.05%), *provide property tax incentives to keep farmland in production* (73.52%), and *obtain grants for promoting agriculture and recruiting new farming operations* (69.69%). Respondents who selected Other suggested ventures like community gardens and grant programs sponsored by the town.

**Question 18 (Q18)** asked respondents if they experienced a conflict or issue with a nearby farm or farm activity in Clifton Park. Over 95% of respondents reported *No*.

**Question 19 (Q19)** asked respondents if they had experienced an issue with a nearby farm or activity in Clifton Park. Many of the submitted responses were not about issues with local farms but rather concerns about development impacting existing farms in Clifton Park.



**Question 20 (Q20)** asked respondents to identify which agricultural activities they take part in and whether they sell the products or if the activity is for personal use. Raising animals for meat production had the largest percentage of respondents (80.62%) followed by raising ducks for eggs (80.00%) and growing hops (71.43%). In contrast, growing flowers garnered the highest percentage for personal use (95.06%). Other common activities conducted for personal use include growing fruit and/ or vegetables (93.55%) and managing a woodlot (72.73%). However, activities that are somewhat equally sold and enjoyed for personal use include growing Christmas trees, brewing beer/ making cider, and raising chickens for eggs.

**Question 21 (Q21)** and **Question 22 (Q22)** invited respondents to list any ideas that may enhance agriculture in the Town of Clifton Park and for additional comments. Many of the responses to the question overlapped and had similar themes. Overarching common enhancements or comments include preservation of farmland and open space, supporting local agriculture and farmers, and community engagement with agricultural education.

- **Preservation of Farmland and Open Space**
  - Suggested further protection of existing farmland, forests, and open spaces to maintain air quality and rural character.
- **Support for Local Agriculture and Farmers**

- Increased visibility and accessibility for local farm products through farmers' markets, farm stands, and storefronts.
- **Community Engagement and Agricultural Education**
  - Proposals for school partnerships, farm-based internships, and public workshops on farming and sustainability.
  - Interest in community gardens, shared greenhouses, and hands-on farming experiences for residents

**Question 23 (Q23)** asked respondents to upload their favorite photo that depicts a farm or farm-related activity in Clifton Park. In total, 13 images were submitted and can be found attached.

## Open House Results

# TOWN OF CLIFTON PARK

## AGRICULTURAL & FARMLAND PROTECTION PLAN



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## MEETING SUMMARY

**PURPOSE:** Public Open House  
**DATE/TIME:** March 31, 2025, 4:00-7:30 PM  
**LOCATION:** Clifton Park Senior Center, 6 Clifton Common Blvd, Clifton Park, NY 12065

The Town of Clifton Park has undertaken an effort to conduct a public planning process and develop a town agricultural farmland protection and enhancement plan. The purpose of this project is to create a comprehensive Townwide Farmland Protection Plan that outlines a vision for the long-term economic viability of agriculture and protection of valuable farmland resources in Clifton Park.

On Monday, March 31, 2025, the first public open house for the development of the Clifton Park Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan. The event took place at Clifton Park Senior Center, 4:00-7:30 PM. Over 70 residents and stakeholders participated in the event.

The open house format allowed participants to informally walk through ten (10) activity stations to learn about the project at their own pace and provide their input and ideas. Additionally, participants had the opportunity to speak with Town staff, the Steering Committee members, and the Project Team, and also, share written ideas and/or comments on comment cards. A Participant Guide was provided to attendees to guide them through the various stations.

The activity stations included:

- Station 1 – Project Overview
- Station 2 – Survey Snapshots
- Station 3 – Strengths and Challenges
- Station 4 – Potential Strategies
- Station 5 – Maps
- Station 6 – Meet a Farmer
- Station 7 – Other Thoughts & Ideas
- Station 8 – Future of Farming
- Station 9 – Chat with Town Leaders & Staff
- Station 10 – Kids Table

Agenda Item	Open House Board Content and Results
<p><b>Activity Station 1: Project Overview</b></p>	<p>The Town of Clifton Park has undertaken an effort to develop an Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan with funding assistance from New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets’ Municipal Farmland Protection Plan Grant Program.</p> <p>The Agriculture and Farmland Protection Plan will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establish a vision for the long-term economic viability of agriculture and protection of valuable farmland resources in Clifton Park</li> <li>• Evaluate the status of agriculture and better understand farm characteristics and practices in Town</li> <li>• Further promote agriculture and preserve farmland in Clifton Park</li> </ul> <p>This station provided a timeline and planning process of the project.</p>
<p><b>Activity Station 2: Survey Snapshots</b></p>	<p>As part of public engagement, an online community survey was conducted from September 13, 2024, to February 14, 2025, gathering 302 responses.</p> <p>The following key highlights were displayed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Top 3 Zip Codes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ 12065 (54.7%)</li> <li>○ 12148 (20.5%)</li> <li>○ 12019 (11.1%)</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Demographics <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Over 50% have lived in Clifton Park for 20 years or more.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Local Support <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ 88% of respondents consider local farms and agriculture as “Very Important” to them.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Challenges <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Nearly 44% believe local products are not marketed well.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Awareness <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Many respondents seem unaware of the town’s laws &amp; programs that support agriculture.</li> <li>○ Nearly 52% did not know about the town’s Term Easement option.</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p><b>Farmer Survey Snapshot</b></p> <p>As part of public engagement, a survey for Clifton Park farmers, farmland owners, and large landowners was conducted by mail and online from early December 2024 to February 14, 2025.</p> <p>The following key highlights were displayed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Agricultural Services <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Top services include hay production (44%) and vegetable growing (37%).</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Farm Experience <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Nearly 40% have farmed in Clifton Park for 20-49 years.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Labor Challenges <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Respondents indicated that finding employees to work on their farm is “Difficult” (31%) or “Very Difficult” (23%)</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Marketing Methods</li> </ul>

<p><b>Activity Station 2: Survey Snapshots (Cont'd)</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Over 50% do not market their products, while 33% rely on farmstands or word of mouth.</li> </ul> <p>Commercial Farmers*</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● 33% of respondents are commercial farmers</li> <li>● Nearly 50% of these farmers have operated for 50+ years.</li> <li>● 50% consider farm income a secondary household source.</li> <li>● Half report breaking even over the past 5 years.</li> <li>● Over 88% receive an Agricultural Value Assessment.</li> <li>● Over 75% have a farm succession plan.</li> <li>● Consistent with the definition of a farm operation in NYS Agriculture and Markets Law, a commercial farm produces, prepares, and sells crops, livestock, or other agricultural goods as a business enterprise.</li> </ul>																																														
<p><b>Activity Station 3: Strengths and Challenges</b></p>	<p><b>Strengths of Agriculture and Farming in Clifton Park</b>  The station provided an opportunity for participants to identify the top three strengths of agriculture listed on Boards 3A and 3B. Participants affixed stickers to the board to cast their votes.</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="505 863 1365 1879"> <thead> <tr> <th><b>Clifton Park Agriculture Has the Following Positive Features:</b></th> <th>Total Stickers</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr><td>Positive visual impact of farms on Clifton Park's landscape</td><td>27</td></tr> <tr><td>Supportive Town government and Planning Department</td><td>24</td></tr> <tr><td>Farmland Protection Programs (PDR and others)</td><td>23</td></tr> <tr><td>People who want to eat healthy and to know where their food comes from</td><td>15</td></tr> <tr><td>Many direct-to-consumer sales of agricultural products at farmstands, on-farm markets, and farmers' markets with personal connections between farmers and customers</td><td>13</td></tr> <tr><td>Improved communications between farmers and the Town</td><td>11</td></tr> <tr><td>Small-scale farms</td><td>11</td></tr> <tr><td>Reasonable taxes</td><td>10</td></tr> <tr><td>Good, productive soils and fertile lands</td><td>9</td></tr> <tr><td>Organizations that support agriculture</td><td>8</td></tr> <tr><td>Orchards that offer pick-your-own fruit</td><td>7</td></tr> <tr><td>Agritourism</td><td>6</td></tr> <tr><td>Appreciation by residents and landowners</td><td>6</td></tr> <tr><td>Great events like Farm Fest and the former Sundae on the Farm, and a community garden space to engage residents in local food production</td><td>6</td></tr> <tr><td>Water Supply</td><td>5</td></tr> <tr><td>Loyal clientele; people love local food</td><td>4</td></tr> <tr><td>Success of Saratoga County equine industry</td><td>3</td></tr> <tr><td>Successful farmers' markets in Town</td><td>3</td></tr> <tr><td>Access to veterinary care</td><td>2</td></tr> <tr><td>Right to Farm law and signage</td><td>2</td></tr> <tr><td>Strong sense of community among farmers</td><td>2</td></tr> <tr><td>A relatively affluent customer base</td><td>1</td></tr> </tbody> </table>	<b>Clifton Park Agriculture Has the Following Positive Features:</b>	Total Stickers	Positive visual impact of farms on Clifton Park's landscape	27	Supportive Town government and Planning Department	24	Farmland Protection Programs (PDR and others)	23	People who want to eat healthy and to know where their food comes from	15	Many direct-to-consumer sales of agricultural products at farmstands, on-farm markets, and farmers' markets with personal connections between farmers and customers	13	Improved communications between farmers and the Town	11	Small-scale farms	11	Reasonable taxes	10	Good, productive soils and fertile lands	9	Organizations that support agriculture	8	Orchards that offer pick-your-own fruit	7	Agritourism	6	Appreciation by residents and landowners	6	Great events like Farm Fest and the former Sundae on the Farm, and a community garden space to engage residents in local food production	6	Water Supply	5	Loyal clientele; people love local food	4	Success of Saratoga County equine industry	3	Successful farmers' markets in Town	3	Access to veterinary care	2	Right to Farm law and signage	2	Strong sense of community among farmers	2	A relatively affluent customer base	1
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<b>Activity Station 3: Strengths and Challenges (Cont'd)</b>	Location: proximity to markets for selling products	1																																			
	<p>Attendees were presented with the following question: Are there other Strengths or Advantages of Agriculture and Farming in Clifton Park?</p> <p><i>The following comments were submitted:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Heritage square at Grooms Corner, historic barns</li> <li>• Historic farms (e.g., Garnsey)</li> <li>• We have 4 farms that sold their development rights</li> </ul> <p><b>Challenges of Agriculture and Farming in Clifton Park</b></p> <p>The station provided an opportunity for participants to identify the top three challenges of agriculture listed on Boards 3D and 3E. Participants affixed stickers to the board to cast their votes.</p> <table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <thead> <tr> <th style="text-align: left;"><b>Clifton Park Has the Following Challenges:</b></th> <th style="text-align: center;">Total Stickers</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr><td>Development pressure</td><td style="text-align: center;">35</td></tr> <tr><td>Solar development on farmland</td><td style="text-align: center;">26</td></tr> <tr><td>Continued decline in the number of active farms in Clifton Park and Saratoga County</td><td style="text-align: center;">25</td></tr> <tr><td>Labor: difficulty finding people to work on the farm</td><td style="text-align: center;">15</td></tr> <tr><td>Difficulty finding grants and financial assistance to support farm operations</td><td style="text-align: center;">14</td></tr> <tr><td>High cost of land for farming</td><td style="text-align: center;">14</td></tr> <tr><td>Traffic that impedes farm equipment movement</td><td style="text-align: center;">11</td></tr> <tr><td>Low profitability and rising cost of farming</td><td style="text-align: center;">9</td></tr> <tr><td>Conflicts between farmers and their neighbors about odors, noise, animal care, etc.</td><td style="text-align: center;">8</td></tr> <tr><td>Lack of agricultural education in local school districts</td><td style="text-align: center;">8</td></tr> <tr><td>Taxes on vacant farmland</td><td style="text-align: center;">8</td></tr> <tr><td>Disconnect between public perception and the realities of farming</td><td style="text-align: center;">7</td></tr> <tr><td>Regulatory challenges in renovating historic barns and other farm structures</td><td style="text-align: center;">6</td></tr> <tr><td>Trespassing and destruction of farm property</td><td style="text-align: center;">4</td></tr> <tr><td>Lack of USDA- certified meat processing facility in Saratoga County</td><td style="text-align: center;">2</td></tr> <tr><td>Equipment, supplies, and services used by farmers not available in the Town or County</td><td style="text-align: center;">1</td></tr> <tr><td>Difficulty locating repair services (e.g., farm equipment)</td><td style="text-align: center;">1</td></tr> </tbody> </table>		<b>Clifton Park Has the Following Challenges:</b>	Total Stickers	Development pressure	35	Solar development on farmland	26	Continued decline in the number of active farms in Clifton Park and Saratoga County	25	Labor: difficulty finding people to work on the farm	15	Difficulty finding grants and financial assistance to support farm operations	14	High cost of land for farming	14	Traffic that impedes farm equipment movement	11	Low profitability and rising cost of farming	9	Conflicts between farmers and their neighbors about odors, noise, animal care, etc.	8	Lack of agricultural education in local school districts	8	Taxes on vacant farmland	8	Disconnect between public perception and the realities of farming	7	Regulatory challenges in renovating historic barns and other farm structures	6	Trespassing and destruction of farm property	4	Lack of USDA- certified meat processing facility in Saratoga County	2	Equipment, supplies, and services used by farmers not available in the Town or County	1	Difficulty locating repair services (e.g., farm equipment)
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Continued decline in the number of active farms in Clifton Park and Saratoga County	25																																				
Labor: difficulty finding people to work on the farm	15																																				
Difficulty finding grants and financial assistance to support farm operations	14																																				
High cost of land for farming	14																																				
Traffic that impedes farm equipment movement	11																																				
Low profitability and rising cost of farming	9																																				
Conflicts between farmers and their neighbors about odors, noise, animal care, etc.	8																																				
Lack of agricultural education in local school districts	8																																				
Taxes on vacant farmland	8																																				
Disconnect between public perception and the realities of farming	7																																				
Regulatory challenges in renovating historic barns and other farm structures	6																																				
Trespassing and destruction of farm property	4																																				
Lack of USDA- certified meat processing facility in Saratoga County	2																																				
Equipment, supplies, and services used by farmers not available in the Town or County	1																																				
Difficulty locating repair services (e.g., farm equipment)	1																																				
<b>Activity Station 3: Strengths and Challenges (Cont'd)</b>	<p>Attendees were presented with the following question: Are there other Issues or Challenges of Agriculture and Farming in Clifton Park?</p> <p><i>The following comments were submitted:</i></p>																																				

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Newly appointed members of town boards seem to have limited knowledge of the Town’s past history and initiatives. Some members have conflicts of interest</li> <li>• Developers are given unfair advantage at Planning Board meetings. Public privilege needs to be reinstated now.</li> <li>• Developers are given unfair advantage over farmers + their land</li> <li>• All town officials should understand and acknowledge all town codes and understand the Ag District requirements</li> <li>• Farming is not always clean, neat, and odor free</li> <li>• Farmers are not that organized with each other</li> </ul>																																						
<p><b>Activity Station 4: Ideas to Enhance Agriculture &amp; Farming in Clifton Park</b></p>	<p>This station encouraged participants to share their insight about challenges and opportunities for agriculture and farming in Town. Attendees affixed stickers to identify their top three strategies displayed on boards 4A and 4B.</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="505 709 1369 1858"> <thead> <tr> <th data-bbox="505 709 1203 779">Ideas to Enhance Agriculture &amp; Farming in Clifton Park</th> <th data-bbox="1203 709 1369 779">Total Stickers</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td data-bbox="505 779 1203 867">Expand and promote the State and Town’s Purchase of Development Rights (PDR) programs, agricultural assessments and other programs to protect farmland from development.</td> <td data-bbox="1203 779 1369 867">29</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="505 867 1203 926">Advocate for tax incentives and financial assistance to keep farmland in production instead of selling to a developer</td> <td data-bbox="1203 867 1369 926">27</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="505 926 1203 984">Update zoning to encourage conservation subdivisions that minimize development impact on farms</td> <td data-bbox="1203 926 1369 984">19</td> </tr> <tr> <td 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<b>Activity Station 4: Ideas to Enhance Agriculture &amp; Farming in Clifton Park (Cont'd)</b>	Advocate for the increased availability of farm supplies, equipment repair services, and veterinary care within Saratoga County	3
	Work with local and regional partners to develop a USDA-certified meat processing facility	3
	Explore opportunities for more recreational use of open space and forested lands around farms	2
	<p>Attendees were prompted to answer the following question: Are there other Issues or Challenges of Agriculture and Farming in Clifton Park?</p> <p><i>The following comments were submitted:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Snacks should be farm products – i.e., celery, carrots, apples, etc. – things grown on Clifton park area farms. Why not have Reps from supermarkets tell how the buy local to sell local. Hannaford and Price Chopper Reps, perhaps.</li> <li>• Many questions are difficult to address – need to be a farmer to know how to answer some cost of equipment/maintenance?</li> <li>• We need good food as organic as possible. We need land to grow food. How about an Ag program at Shen.</li> <li>• Limit developers and eliminate code variances</li> <li>• Find individuals who want to combine farm with related business venture. Need to be able to produce income to sustain family life.</li> <li>• Include Grooms Tavern Historic Complex in this process – preserves the agricultural heritage of Town</li> <li>• Development projects near any agricultural parcels must adhere to ag + mkts laws!!!</li> <li>• Active community gardens</li> <li>• Towns need to be aware of the ag districts in our town and abide by their regulations</li> <li>• Farmstand at Clifton County Mall</li> <li>• More farmers markets</li> <li>• Don't split farm from open space</li> <li>• Active roadside stands</li> <li>• Promote stronger connection between the value and meaning of fresh food and how CP's farms want to help meet that need for fresh food</li> <li>• Featherbed farm a CSA – need more of this. Lots of opportunities to do more. Too far – need one closer</li> <li>• Buy Right-of-Way instead of letting Nat Grid take it</li> <li>• Marketing directly to our large local stores, Hannaford and Price Chopper</li> <li>• Consider setting up a co-op farm so farmers can come in weekly, draw produce pay annual subscription feature bed Farm in Saratoga does this</li> <li>• When does the Planning Board assess the number of vacant stores in the Town + the impact on the land before approving new development plans? Who is responsible for the vacant buildings and land rendered useless for farming on recreational use?</li> </ul>	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Put trails to farmland to increase public appreciation of farming – connect Ira Sugar Hill.</li> <li>• At the end of solar life, have the town work to attain those development rights. A win for the town – it could be a good time to negotiate more easements.</li> </ul>
<b>Activity Station 5: Maps</b>	<p>The following five (5) maps were presented:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parcels with Agricultural Use</li> <li>• Conservation, Recreation and Agriculture</li> <li>• Land Cover (as of summer 2024)</li> <li>• Development over Time</li> <li>• Changes over Time – Comparison of 1968 and 2024</li> </ul>
<b>Activity Station 6: Meet a Farmer</b>	<p>This was a place for attendees to sit and speak with various Clifton Park farmers with representatives from Bowman Orchards, Riverview Orchards and Shepherd’s Hey Farm</p>
<b>Activity Station 7: Other Thoughts &amp; Ideas</b>	<p>Participants were asked to share any additional thoughts and ideas that they may have for Clifton Park Agriculture and Farmland.</p> <p><i>The following comments were submitted:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CPC is interested in hosting farmer markets</li> <li>• Farmers market needed</li> <li>• No way to know if farm produce is organic, which discourages buying it. Love Featherbed!</li> <li>• Planning Board members need to be better informed on CR and Ag zoning. Stop voting before knowing</li> <li>• Encourage people to help looking farmers by Volunteering with food from farm benefits.</li> </ul>
<b>Activity Station 8: Future of Farming</b>	<p>Participants were asked to describe the future of Clifton Park farming in 3 words or phrases.</p> <p><i>The following comments were submitted:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Visual, water, traffic</li> <li>• Protected and growth of land</li> <li>• Farms linked to faculty – CSA</li> <li>• Future can be positive with vigorous protection by the Town. We will sorely need our farms</li> <li>• Too much economic pressure</li> <li>• Safe and protected</li> <li>• Great potential now underused</li> <li>• Government Intervention / Cutting Federal Support \$\$</li> <li>• Forms linked to faculty</li> <li>• An endangered species</li> </ul>
<b>Activity Station 9: Chat with the Town Leaders &amp; Staff</b>	<p>This was a place for attendees to sit and speak with Town leaders and faculty.</p>

<b>Activity Station 10: Kids Table</b>	This was a place for kids to be creative and share their ideas.
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**Other Comments from Discussion with Participants:**

People perceive the biggest threat to farming in town to be the lack of family to take over the farms. And also a lack of young farmers in general coming into the area.

There were also a lot of questions about how exactly farms can be protected, with further interest/discussion about the various easement options and also conservation subdivisions.

And then also heard from a few people who wondered what they could personally do to help preserve farmland in town.

Remember, there is a need/importance to include historic barns in our consideration as part of the history of the town, the importance of Grooms Corner/Heritage Square.

Lack of a year-round farmers' market

Not sure anything can be done for farming in light of development pressure

The only way forward to protect farming is if the Town funds the protection of it, and the current program is not sufficient.

**Farmer/Farmland Owner Meeting**

Notes from Farmers/Producers/Farmland Owners Stakeholder Meeting, 10/29/2025

These notes represent the conversation around a specific theme table, as recorded by the table leaders, while attenders rotated through all 5 tables. As such, duplications and common threads will exist, and some ideas are more fully developed than others.

**Theme 1: Grow Farm Business / Support Agricultural Operations (traditional & new); Ensure Adequate Infrastructure to Support Farm Community** (Emad Andarawis & Anne Dillenbeck)

*Highlights from the Wrap-Up Summary at the End of the Meeting:*

- Five (5) acres is a pain point for small producers and those who want to farm on smaller properties. Not all farm animals need 5 acres.
- Per water (or lack thereof): limitations of public water access impact farmers, and it also promotes growth – double-edged.
- Need term easements in different increments of time frames – to better serve landowners’ needs to plan
- Support idea for a **weekend farmers’ market** in town – direct access to markets

- Processing facility for meat animals/smokehouse
- Availability of farmland for farmers wanting to expand.
- Are there protected lands available to farmers who would like to expand?
- Mixed-use in CR zone developments
- Precision equipment: Some see a need for
- seed grants for farm expansion
- Permits for agricultural buildings – use common sense
- Zoning of solar and homebuilding in wetlands – make it make sense

*Detailed Notes from Theme 1 Discussion:*

- **Interest in knowing more details about the Town’s existing Term Easement Program; and also, interest in making some changes to the program to offer more flexibility to farmers and farmland owners:**
  - Older farmland owner wants to do another Term Easement, but is not sure how a Term Easement transfers. (Editor’s note: term easements run with the property, so it is valid for the term no matter who owns the property.)
  - Maybe the term easement program needs to change to offer different options to meet the needs of older landowners looking to plan for their land to transition
- **“Things that Clifton Park farmers need are not local...”**
- **Resource Need: Land for farming**
  - Big concerns – the availability of land and the cost of land; cost for financing for farmland for expansion
  - Hicks and others are haying on land owned by other farmers and other landowners
  - Are there opportunities for land created as permanently conserved through the CR Zoning development process that could be utilized for agricultural uses? Can this be examined?
- **Resource Need: Honeybees (and pollinators) need to be connected to open lands, hayfields, and wildflower meadows nearby**
- **Resource Need: Fencing & Fencing Installers**
- **Resource Need: Vets for Livestock**
  - Sheep vets come from 1 hour away
- **Resource Need: Closer facilities for Livestock / Meat Processing**
  - **For beef, pigs (pork), birds, turkeys, chickens**
  - Currently, some producers must go as far away as 1.5 hours for meat processing (Kelly Meats – Taberg, NY); Eagle Bridge is 45 minutes; Cobleskill is another option
  - Smokehouse – needed for pork
  - Need a USDA-certified inspector onsite
  - Hard to get an appointment for scheduling the processing
  - Challenge is not enough local farmers with the intense meat processing needs
  - Could there be shared resources around transporting animals for processing?
- **Resource Need: Precision technology,**

- One example is GNSS technology for limited spraying/precision spraying
- Farmers need cash and grants for adopting/buying/installing new technology
- One participant noted: “Nobody here can afford precision technology.”
- **Resource Need: Public Water Infrastructure**
  - Property owners on Ray Rd are interested in public water for fire protection for their homes
  - Water availability/lack of water is a limitation for farmers. Town water is chlorinated, but it can be treated according to the participants at the table.
  - Water is needed for cider operations and packing for orchards.
  - Availability of public water in agricultural districts and rural areas of town encourages development. Recognition that it is a double-edged sword to have public water lines in agricultural areas.
  - It was noted that the Department of Agriculture & Markets & the **NYS Agricultural Districts Law** can place limits on bringing water for agricultural operations without allowing regular development -- we need to be aware of this as a community. What are the parameters of this regulation? Can we find a way to bring water to a farm, but not go further? We have not examined or explored this sufficiently as a community. Potentially, this could be a special district – something that Clifton Park has done...
- **Laws, NYS Agricultural Districts Law, Regulations, and Zoning Code, and How it Relates to Agriculture & Farming**
  - Farmers need to be respected by community members for the “Right to Farm” law in town
    - One participant thinks the town’s Planning Board needs to be better informed about this law and other protections for farmers.
  - Need everyone on all sides of the table – to better understand what the Agriculture Related Regulations and Laws currently are, and how they impact farming – we need a better understanding of how the current zoning works, to see how to improve it for agriculture and farming.
- **Challenge: Dealing with Coyotes**
- **Opportunities:**
  - “We should be encouraging the expansion of agriculture in Clifton Park, not just supporting what we have today.” – *Greg & Nick Sokolowski*
  - There is so much traffic in Clifton Park – that is a good thing for markets!
    - **Open up & Allow More Direct Access to Markets**
    - Establish a **Weekend Farmers Market in town** that serves local farmers, but needs to be held on the weekend to serve the greater public and people who are working weekdays. (Editor’s note: Currently, there a seasonal weekday farmers market in CP operated through the Saratoga Springs Farmers Market non-profit, and the current make-up is primarily out-of-town producers).

- Recommend **establishing a Weekend Farmers Market once a week in the Town Center Area** of Clifton Park...where the traffic is....
  - There is a regional market for: Straw for Saratoga Racetrack use...
  - **Could there be mixed uses in CR – for agriculture and some compatible commerce?** One property owner would like to establish a private sports training building on his farm, as a mix of uses alongside his livestock operation.
- **Education:**
  - Some local young people are going to Cobleskill for farming education...
  - Interest in diversifying farm operations with the next generation
  - Neighbor Education for residential and other neighbors to “Right to Farm” properties, neighbors of farmlands, and neighbors of agricultural district properties.
  - Need to bring back agricultural and farming education at K-12
  - Need on-site farm education experiences for youth and young adults

**Theme 2: Continuing Education/Attract New Farmers & Provide Technical Support to Farmers; Create New Marketing for Clifton Park Farming, Local Foods, Products & Services** (Dan Mathias and John Scavo)

The following are key comments by attendees at the “Producer’s Meeting” held on October 29, 2025.

- 1) There was discussion about the lack of an FFA program in general at Shen and agricultural education specifically. Multiple groups expressed this issue. There are no “in-house” classes to develop students’ interest in agriculture. And, no home economics. It would help to “push” education to the students. Incentives are needed. Perhaps it would help to showcase farms to students.
- 2) A comment was made that the farming community could benefit from a local continuing education program, perhaps working with SUNY Cobleskill. Also, education on zoning and finance would help. Education of what is available from the state would be helpful.
- 3) More education of the public is needed (on farming issues) (multiple groups). Perhaps connect with homeowners’ groups. For example, where tractors are on the road, driver’s safety/lower speeds are required. Additional signage is needed (e.g., “Right to Farm”). Multiple groups spoke about conflicts with traffic and farm operations.
- 4) There is a need to address gaps in technical skills. As an example, how should farmers allocate costs? Multiple groups called for continuing technical education.
- 5) Farmers need help with funding. A local farm wants to focus on dairy but is having trouble obtaining the funding. Perhaps, grant writing assistance would be very helpful.
- 6) Hiring labor is challenging. There are liabilities to offering Internships.
- 7) There is a need to provide training to the Town Board/Town Officials to help them understand the issues facing farmers. Multiple groups called for training for public officials. For example, town leaders need education on farming laws. There is a need for zoning law changes (i.e., five-acre limit to raise chickens and bees .... Multiple people spoke about chickens and zoning)
- 8) The group made comments that they were happy to see the Town working on this plan, but they were skeptical about the impact. They are hopeful that the plan works. The plan is a

good thing, but it should not be just to defend what we have; it must expand agriculture to work.

- 9) An agricultural website would be helpful to farmers and the public. It would help farmers leverage information sharing and let the public know about agricultural goods and services. There is a need for a directory of agricultural services. Better advertising is needed. The idea of a newsletter was mentioned. Farmers also need to know where there are land opportunities. (Multiple groups identified the need for more communication.) What can farmers do with their land? New market (Craft Brewing).
- 10) Farmers' Markets – These have been tried before without success due to politics (e.g., “The Flats”?). One group thought that a farmers’ market at the mall might be workable.

#### Opportunities & Challenges Identified:

- **Kids/youth are a resource!**
- **Educate Youth** about agriculture & farming
  - o Bring back and increase agricultural education in schools
    - collaborate with Shenendehowa School District
    - work with local counties, local school districts, and nearby towns for creating local farm program
    - Offer opportunities for youth to learn specific types of farming; hire kids for labor, but not tech
    - strengthen BOCES agricultural programs
    - Bring back Future Farmers of America (FFA) program and club
    - Health classes could take the lead on growing food in greenhouses on school property
    - Farm equipment repair education could be offered at Shen
    - Link science classes to agriculture, including hydroponics
  - o Bring back the Saratoga County Dairy Promotion Program; leadership has changed so southern Saratoga County could be included
  - o Adopt a calf program idea
  - o Saratoga County 4-H can be a partner in bringing animals into schools and to other venues for kids to engage with farm animals
  - o Farmers can provide some limited access to have kids on the farm, but also, there are options to bring the farm animals out to the public
- **Increase jobs & opportunities for high school students and young adults to work on farms**
  - o One mixed-use farm concept for a sports training facility on a farm could help advance this idea
- **Continuing Education for Farmers** is needed:
  - o Each farmer has technical skills – but folks could benefit from continuing education opportunities
  - o Town could provide opportunities for 2-day continuing education at SUNY Cobleskill

- OR, maybe the town could help bring continuing education opportunities from SUNY Cobleskill closer to town – for grant writing services and navigating red tape
- Farmers need financial advice and business classes.
  - How determine the depreciation of farm equipment
- Internships with students/youth on the farm – liability costs and issues.
- **Educate the Community on Farming**
  - Education about zoning and land use as it relates to agriculture and farming
  - **SHARE THE ROAD with FARM VEHICLES:**
    - **Car travel speeds on rural road during the prime farm tourism season**
    - Need education to “share the road” with farming signage
    - Educate about Farm Tractor Awareness and Farming Education – related to Sharing Roadways
    - Tanner Road has farmland on both sides of the road – and conflicts with cars
    - Promote this with Homeowners Associations along Grooms Road, Miller Road, and others – about the need to coexist with agriculture
- **Educate (continue to educate) the Planning Boards and Zoning Boards and Town Leadership** on Agriculture and Farming
- **Keep working on Website presence – can help with:**
  - Farm and farm product promotion
  - Can be a community forum
- **Advertising to the public** / Marketing around Town for farm locations, and for wayfinding for products available and when they are available:
  - Wayfinding signs
  - Newsletter or bulletins of what’s available, when, and where among farms
- *Town* needs to promote who has what and who is looking for what in terms of agriculture
  - Promote farming all year round – grant writer, social media person
- **Farmers need information:**
  - Farmers need a directory for resources or technical expertise, or word of mouth.
  - Which they typically get from word of mouth as the primary way farmers hear about things, even though this may not be the most effective way to learn
  - Info about applicable programs and grants;
  - Info about what’s working with profit margins and products
  - farmers working all day with no time to do research – the town might assist
- **Landowners need to know their opportunities...**
  - Learn from town, from state resources, from word of mouth
  - Word of mouth is the best way...
- Need to shorten timeframes for doing conservation projects
- **Financial Needs:** Farmers need cash/capital for new farm investments:
  - Pettis Dairy is seeking to open its own dairy processing plant on site (cheese and milk). They have received a grant towards this for equipment valued at \$90,000.

- Greenwich (in Washington County) has farmer loans and opportunities for reduced insurance.
- Connect farmers to more regional markets
- Grow a Local farmers' market or coop similar to Troy's Farmers Market
- Work on opportunities for schools to buy local food and products
- More community gardens. Maybe tap open land vs. active farmland for expanding.
- An opportunity for land conservation is to do a Transfer of Development Rights to protect farmland and develop elsewhere in town.

#### Challenges / Barriers:

- Lack of labor supply of local young workers
- Lack of water supply
- Lack of year-round opportunities for farming: greenhouses would help
- Equipment is expensive. Farmers can't afford technical upgrades. High finance rates
- Education for entrants into farming, and for existing farmers.
- Education on allowable products, such as hemp production.
- Zoning law is too restrictive for chickens
  - Chickens needed on less than 5 acres for food, and for tick control
- Zoning law is too restrictive for seasonal farmstands
- Zoning law is too restrictive for livestock and honeybees on less than 5 acres
- Term conservation easements have a 15-acre minimum: this is too large; look at half the size, such as a 7.5-acre minimum
- Grocery store prices are too much! Reduce barriers to produce and sell locally.
- Trespassing on private farms can be costly to farmers. Example of a young person driving in a field, causing \$15,000 in damage.
- 

#### Additional Notes/Observations:

- Young people are our greatest opportunity for expansion and preservation of agriculture
- Need to excite young people – and get them to participate in farming classes/curriculum
- Consider renewing a Future Farmers of America program or club
- Consider an agriculture/farming-focused charter school
- Organic is big: opportunities to develop organic beverages, products, and non-processed products
- Farmers need a better understanding of what works for profit and need assistance with support and help.
- Upset with the lack of high school opportunities, such as the lack of Future Farmers of America locally
- Hopeful that the plan will work
- Need resources for implementing the plan



## **Theme 3: Build & Expand Partnerships to Strengthen Agriculture in Town & in the Region; Secure Funding & Invest in Agriculture and Farmland Resources (Kurt Swartz)**

Theme 3 Wrap-Up Highlights:

- Farmers/producers need technical help
- Need for improved education at all levels
- Land protection is competitive
- Grants assistance – who, how, administration
- Need a live body resource for producer questions and answers – not text

Detailed Notes from Theme 3:

Opportunities & Challenges Identified:

- **Grow the Farm Community Network:**
  - Need **improved farming community communications** throughout, and reaching the whole farming community
  - Share information among farmers: who has hay; help wanted; who is willing to work; machinery available to rent or borrow; etc.
  - **Farmer networking:** Need to get together more often as a farm community
- **Create Shared Resources Exchange among Farmers**
  - How help match farmers with other farmers to help each other? People resources.
  - Help Match-up resources to needs among the farm community locally and beyond
  - Need to keep networking among the agricultural/farming community
  - Create and keep a list of resources – match up of products, markets, farmer-to-farmer contacts - a resource for the active farming community and those wishing to be part of it
  - Identify the holes in connections to resources
  - **Identify and Share what the Available Land Resources:**
    - **help connect farmers to fallow lands**
    - **help restore successional farmland / inactive farmland** to crops or pasture, or other agricultural uses.
  - Identify all the resources helpful to farmers about local and regional and other resources, and help connect farmers to this information
  - Help farmers understand regulations and zoning
  - Would be valuable to have someone represent a block of Clifton Park farmers in larger marketplaces (such as selling products to chain groceries, or schools)
- **Help farmers identify business growth opportunities**
  - Certification for going organic
  - Heated greenhouses

- 3<sup>rd</sup> generation in one local farm business, coming back to agriculture after securing a degree in business
- Need help finding customers for local crops and products
- Need to grow for profitability: More revenue, more margin, more profit
- **How help farms and farm families in transitions?**
  - Farms need cash for the next generation...
- **Youth Farming Education:**
  - **Bring Youth to Farms – create Ag/farm experiences for youth to see the authenticity of farming:** Kids today are disconnected from nature and farms
    - Bring farm animals to youth where they are in school or other activities, too...
    - Show them and let youth see and experience farming, such as Bee suits, real cows, and real farm animals: Animals attract people, and people open up
  - Need to restore the **agriculture curriculum** at Shenendehowa School District
  - **Teach the Teachers** – teachers need a farming/agricultural education curriculum boost
  - **Develop and deliver Youth Agricultural Programs in Clifton Park.** Kids into gardening, beekeeping, kids getting their hands into dirt and growing things.
  - **Provide opportunities for direct contact with people and soil and animals.**
- **Education, continuing education, and specialized training for farmers:**
  - Need to invest in training more farmers
  - Need to improve *how we transfer knowledge to other farmers*, the next generation, and outreach more to farmers
  - Incentivize agricultural careers and do better marketing of farming/agriculture as a successful career choice
- **Farm Career Recruitment:**
  - Need for better recruitment to attract people of all ages to the career of agriculture and farming
  - Maybe tax everyone \$50 to help with bringing more people into farming
- **Increase/Improve Communications about Agriculture/Farming in the community**
  - Need better communications with the town government to help all aspects understand farming in Clifton Park
  - Newsletter idea: Need to reach the public and community members who are not farming -- about farming activities and agriculture as a presence in the community
- **Ag Infrastructure Needs**
  - Horse farmers need funding for **barns for more hay storage** to be able to store larger quantities (maybe through grants?)
  - Greenhouse operators – need **funding for technology improvements** for irrigation and specialized tools
- **Large-Animal Veterinarian:** Recommend attracting a large animal vet to be located closer to the farming community in Clifton Park

- **Start-up a manure to compost/topsoil facility** (to help large farm animal owners deal with their manure – and turn it into a usable product)
- **Grow more Partnerships with local businesses who support farming/agriculture** (example: Ace Hardware, Lapp Rd)
  - **How expand commercially? Reach out to the business community**

Challenges/Barriers:

- **Need Farm Labor:** Hard to **recruit people willing to work** on the farm
- **Need water infrastructure**
  - One farm has a vision of onsite dairy processing plant, which could become a cooperative plant
- **Need micro-loans, micro-grants for small investments**
- **Transfer of Land / Selling Farmland to Farmers Challenges:**
  - I bought farmland as an investment – I am looking for a return on my investment – ***I want market value for my land; so how do we make incentives for people to sell their land to farmers? (How compete with market value?)***
  - Need to be careful not to take rights away from landowners
  - Yes, get into grants to help farmers (state & fed)
  - Invest in buying development rights to protect farmland
  - **Increase tax reductions** as part of the solution to preserve land, “so it doesn’t need to be sold for development.”
  - **Need a shared vision of agricultural areas...**
- Need alignment of the agriculture vision with the zoning and regulatory situation
  - Need to adjust zoning to accommodate farms on 2 acres for a farmstand, for turkeys, for fruit trees...

What role could regional collaborations play in supporting local farms?

- Yes, strengthen relationships with nearby municipalities on a shared vision for agriculture and farming in the region
- Need for more farmworkers
- Agriculture Education:
  - Need ag education – **maybe work with BOCES** to play an increasing role
  - Advocate for changes to the **state education curriculum** for pre-K/K-12 students
- Help with bringing in a **large-animal vet** closer – regional issue
- Help with securing /closer meat processing
- Help getting Clifton Park products into larger markets...

Additional Observations

- Farmers live with managing / and dealing with “Mother Nature.”
- How do we make farming profitable?
- How do farms thrive and coexist here in Clifton Park with development?

- Too much regulation by the State on farmers

## **Theme 4: Conserve Farmland with Willing Landowners and Protect Resources that Support Agriculture (Miller & Roberts-facilitators)**

### *Wrap-Up Highlights:*

- Educate on what programs are available
- Review time & size requirements
- Mixed opinions on the expansion of water into Western Clifton Park and agricultural areas. Review zoning to prevent development if the water is expanded
- Need for grant help

### *Detailed Notes from Theme 4:*

#### Opportunities Identified:

- A top strategy supported is (#3) to **educate farmers and property owners about existing tools for farmland protection, as they need access to more information**. Educate more often (frequency matters); use mailers; create a website/portal. Connect farmers with resources such as USDA, CCE, and those farmers who already have easements.
- **Identified ideas for updating the “Term Easements” town regulation:**
  - **Review and consider reducing the size of the property for eligibility.** Can a 13- or 15-acre property reduce the Term Easement down to a 5 to 10-acre size? Can there be an adjustment to the Term Easements Code on eligible property to be smaller than the current minimum of 15 acres, such as down to 5- or 10-acre in size?
  - **Review the length of time for the terms offered.** Another idea was to shorten the length of the Terms for Term Easements. Current terms allowed are 15-years, 20-years, or 25-years.
- Organic certification:
  - Tax assessments for organic certification – connect with retailers
  - Maybe the Town or CCE could help farmers with filling out the organic certification application form filling out and with the cost of seeking this certification
- Community farms
- Why aren’t companies interested?
- What about conducting a refresher on “agricultural assessments”

## Challenges / Barriers:

- **Review water and sewer infrastructure expansion.** While **water infrastructure expansion is a positive for farms that need water, it can also be a growth inducement and open up agricultural lands to more conversion pressure.** Another top strategy supported was (#6): “Establish a Town policy that requires evaluating the impacts of expanding water and sewer infrastructure on agriculture in Western Clifton Park. Public infrastructure can be a growth-inducing activity and is not likely to create a development pattern consistent with the ability to maintain land in agriculture.”
  - Depriving folks of the value of their land, if not allowing water
  - We need a strategy for water and development
  - Find a balance
  - Zoning code should be reassessed.
  - Lack of water – if you don’t allow water, then development can “take up more land.”
- **Farmers and farmland owners need assistance applying for grants**
  - For operations
  - For structures
  - For equipment
- **Find a Balance for Solar development/impacts:** sometimes it is okay because of the “fit” of the property; need to find a balance in this use
- **Coyote presence** is a challenge on remaining farms and open space because of increasing development
- **State Regulations** are a challenge:
  - NYS DEC regulations interfere with agriculture (such as wetlands regs)
- **NYS Organic Certification** is high cost, and maybe the town could help assist with farm applications (or CCE)
- **Generational Transitions:** present folks with transition plan assistance, provide a good rapport, let them know about resources that are available
- **Farmers Need Help with Navigation:**
  - Multiple types of programs, the complexity of the programs out there
- Acquisition opportunities to buy large pieces of farms

## Suggested Actions/Next Steps:

- Review zoning to address solar/forest development/noise

## Theme #5 – Improve Local Regulations / Amend Zoning Code to Strengthen Agriculture (Larry Syzdek and Nan Stolzenburg)

### Detailed Notes from Theme #5:

## Challenges

- **Need Zoning Updates or Adjustments (regulations need to reflect current times):**
  - Need to say no to allowing other uses in agricultural districts.
  - Limit non-farm buildings
  - Why allow for all the solar when electricity rates are going up so it doesn't help. Also the solar development is ruining forestland too.
  - **Need to review Ag Buffers** – while protecting existing farms, could cause problems and take land away if too large a buffer.
  - **Update Local Zoning to be More Farm-Friendly.**
    - Allow more flexibility for diversified agriculture.
    - Get rid of the minimum 5-acre requirement. Allow for and recognize farming on less acreage than currently.
    - Loosen up and allow for more flexibility for signs.
    - Keep allowing for agritourism – farmers need to make a buck. But wants to grow on land.
    - Current rules are not with the times, and families need to grow, and allow people to grow their farms
  - **Direct Sales / Farm Stands:**
    - Promote and support farmstands.
    - Address that the town doesn't allow signs for direct sale off-site. Directional signs are needed; promotional signs are needed.
  - **Allow Small Farms, or “mini-farms”:**
    - Zoning law currently limits where farming can go due to the 5-acre rule.
    - Support and encourage “mini-farms”: lower the acreage requirements. **Allow homesteading on 2 to 3 acres.** Current zoning prohibits small farmers.
    - Chickens. The Town of Halfmoon allows chickens on less than 5 acres, but not in Clifton Park. Need to open it up for farmers and individual growers.
    - Give more leverage for smaller farms.
    - **Affordability of Land.** The next generation of farmers can't afford to buy more than 5 acres or more than 7 acres, which is another reason for reducing the minimum acreage for farming uses.
    - **Not enough Land Availability of 5-acre parcels or greater.** Another reason to reduce the minimum acreage requirement is that there is a lack of 5 acres or more of land for sale in Clifton Park.
  - **Allow a mix of uses, or Hybrid Uses, for agriculture,** to aid farmers with their businesses.
    - Allow more flexibility for diversified agriculture.
    - Consider allowing farm stays as another way for farmers to make money if they choose to take this route. This can allow for diversified income.



- Need for farmer education programs to know what they can do with farming.
- How to make a balance
- Give options for landowners – so that it is not black and white
- Few people want to keep farming here...and it is hard to get into farming here due to the high cost of land and availability
- There is a lot of competing pressure on the lands here in Clifton Park, and not as much land open here
- It is tougher to expand farming here in CP
- Make it fair. Allow farmers to get their fair value from their lands.
- May need to be able to combine lands and consolidate.
- **Help landowners understand their assessments and secure the best tax situation for their farming operation**
  - More than 30 years ago, lands were all taxed at highest and best use, but now the assessor assesses at agricultural values. If you are in farming need to make sure your lands are assessed at agricultural value.
  - Farmers need help with addressing their land taxation and assessed value
- **Housing for Farmworkers (H2)** – challenges working with the local building department over codes and permitting (also with county??)
- **Farm to market – needs to be a group to help with this**
  - Need marketplace portal/website
  - Farmers don't know what other products are available around town

Opportunities:

- **Offer Incentives:** Where is there an incentive to get into or to keep farming, for someone interested?
  - **Timber for cash crop and Open land up for agriculture** – do we have incentives for this?
- Idea: People are looking to eat better – and this is an opportunity for farmers
- Idea: Maybe there could be an insurance cooperative to help smaller farmers be able to afford farm insurance?
- Idea: Create a composting facility at the town transfer station – farmers can bring their manure to make compost at a central facility
- **Bring back Agricultural Education at Shenendehowa School District and other local school districts**
  - Shen needs to do more about ag education and agriculture careers.
- Start a local club of **Future Farmers of America (FFA)** at Shenendehowa School District, or independently?
- Idea: maybe there could be a **mobile slaughterhouse**? Mix of views
- Agritourism –
  - Keep supporting agritourism
  - farm fest idea – of certain sections of farming

- **Create a Trail Route Across Farms**
  - o Consider allowing mountain biking trails on farms – like Vermont?
  - o Trail development – expand and allow this so farmers can take advantage of it. This could help connect different locations and parks.
  - o Town can allow for this – and allow for snowmobile trails
  - o Would need to address issues of vandalism and insurance
  - o Trails can be agritourism
- **Grow more Partnerships**
- What about **Solar Agrivoltaics**?
- **Do this type of meeting again!**