

## **REQUEST FOR QUALIFICATIONS/PROPOSAL**

### **Town of Clifton Park Agricultural and Farmland Protection Planning Grant**

The Town of Clifton Park (Town) is seeking proposals for qualified, experienced, professional consultants to conduct a public planning process working with the Town and an agricultural committee, to help develop and prepare a town agricultural farmland protection and enhancement plan. In the late 1990's the Town initiated a term conservation easement program as a tool to encourage landowners to keep farming. In 2003, the Town adopted an Open Space Plan that included a component on agriculture and farmland, and set a goal to protect 300 to 500 acres. The Town Clifton Park has worked with willing landowners and protected four farms to date, and now holds the deeds of four permanent conservation easements on about 258 acres, as of December 2023, secured through the purchase of development rights. Since then, the town was awarded a NYS Department of Agriculture and Markets' Municipal Farmland Protection Plan Grant Award and is ready to do a focused, dedicated planning process to consider the future and the best strategies and actions going forward for supporting agriculture in the community and for conducting farmland protection amidst current economic, environmental, and regulatory conditions and trends.

#### **SUBMISSION REQUIREMENTS**

Proposals **MUST BE RECEIVED** by 5:00 p.m. on **Tuesday, April 23, 2024**.

Proposals must be submitted **by email** to:

[tbrobston@cliftonpark.org](mailto:tbrobston@cliftonpark.org)

Town of Clifton Park  
Attn: Teresa Brobston, Town Clerk  
One Town Hall Plaza  
Clifton Park, NY 12065

All **questions** or clarifications should be submitted by 5:00 p.m., April 18, 2024 to:  
[planning@cliftonpark.org](mailto:planning@cliftonpark.org) for receiving a response.

#### **PROJECT PURPOSE**

The purpose of this project is to create a comprehensive Town of Clifton Park Farmland Protection Agriculture Enhancement Plan/Program to contribute to the protection of farmlands and promote agriculture in the Town of Clifton Park. The community is looking forward to the next generation of farming, charting a course that will assure the long-term economic viability of agriculture and the protection of the Town of Clifton Park's valuable farmland resources. Existing plans express strong support for and recognition of the importance of agriculture, but they do not lay out specific strategies for preserving farmland and the local agricultural economy. This project will ensure that local planning documents contain clear language and explicit policies and goals that are supportive of local agricultural activities. Your proposal should indicate your team's expertise in providing specific strategies for preserving farmland and strengthening the local agricultural economy.

The Town of Clifton Park Agricultural and Farmland Protection and Enhancement Plan will consider and assess the town's agricultural and farmland resources and identify the location of farmland which should be prioritized for protection, the value of that land to the local economy, the value of that land as open space, the current and future anticipated types of conversion pressures, the consequences and impacts of possible conversion, and the types and level of conversion pressure on the proposed land.

## **BACKGROUND**

In September 2023, the Town of Clifton Park community celebrated its 30<sup>th</sup> Annual "Farm Fest", a special, community-wide event held annually in the fall that encourages the public to visit working farms, and to learn about and experience farming and agriculture in Clifton Park. The Town of Clifton Park supports this annual event with marketing assistance and publicity, advertising the event on the town's webpage and creating an event brochure, annually and investing about \$3,000 a year, at least, over the past 5 years on the event, totaling about \$15,000 in the past 5 years alone.

Amidst the appreciation for farming in the community, the Town of Clifton Park also experiences state and national trends in the changing face of agriculture with loss of farmers, loss of farm operations over time, challenges for renting land for farming as well as challenges for entry level farmers to gain access to farmland in Clifton Park. The rural, low density development of houses continues in Clifton Park, though balanced through the Western Clifton Park Land Conservation Plan and GEIS (adopted 2005) and Conservation Residential Zoning and Incentive Zoning for nearly 20 years. The town is also experiencing a sharp rise in solar utility installations on former farmland and forested lands in Western Clifton Park, as the state and federal incentives for solar energy development increase. Farmers face strong pressure for solar development in Clifton Park, and for some it has been a welcome option for utilization of their land and as an income source. Development pressure is continuing in the Town of Clifton Park and Saratoga County from residential and commercial development, including for solar photovoltaic arrays and utilities infrastructure in the community on open lands throughout Town. Large landowners are under pressure throughout the landscape. Amidst this development pressure, property owners continue to seek options and opportunities for their farmlands, including the potential for new farming activities and uses. The community of Clifton Park has successfully protected four (4) farms in town through purchase the development rights, with assistance from Saratoga County's Open Space and Farmland Protection Grant Program, and, its first NYS Department of Agriculture and Markets FPIG grant.

The Town previously took a deep look at farmland issues and protection as part of its 2001-2002 planning process for its Open Space Plan that was adopted by the Town Board in 2003. The community took another look at the Western Clifton Park area of town in 2004-2005 through its Western Clifton Park Land Conservation Plan and GEIS. More than 20 years later, after revising the entire zoning code in 2006 in Western Clifton Park, and after protecting four (4) farms totaling nearly 300 acres, securing more than 2,000 acres of public parks and preserves throughout Town, and implementing Town Center Area Form-Based Code Zoning in the eastern part of town, it is a good time to evaluate the town's resources and public values to define the public vision, goals and actions to guide the next 10 to 20 years of implementation. The Town of Clifton Park was awarded a NYS Agricultural and Markets Farmland Protection Planning Grant in December 2023 to support the work of this town wide farming plan.

## **PROJECT OVERVIEW**

While the Town of Clifton Park has made progress with farmland protection projects, the Town would benefit from a holistic review of and an objective check-in and evaluation of its town policies, land use and land use regulations, zoning code, plans and studies as to “how farm friendly” is it operate a farm in town today and in the future. The project will also include an updated GIS analysis of existing conditions and resource analysis using GIS tools and mapping visualizations, and a current public participation process and landowner check in, for the development of fresh recommendations for future focus on goals and actions in a comprehensive document designed to incorporate previous plans and activities with current analysis into a single, strategic agricultural promotion and protection plan. The project will focus on identifying ways to keep active farms viable, further protecting other agriculturally important lands, and enhance opportunities for future farming and agricultural endeavors.

## **PUBLIC PLANNING PROCESS**

The selected consultant will work through an advisory committee and town staff, and the proposed draft plan will be presented to the Town of Clifton Park Town Board for their adoption ultimately of the final plan.

Public participation activities and engagement are welcomed and will be a significant cornerstone of the project to help gauge current public values for agriculture and farming in the community and its community benefits. Understanding public values and public concerns will help with creating the recommendations for priority actions and future public investments in this realm.

Key project personnel include the Town Supervisor Phil Barrett, Planning & Zoning Director John Scavo, Open Space Coordinator Jen Viggiani and a Town Agriculture and Farmland Plan Advisory Committee, of diverse stakeholders, that will make recommendations to the Town Board through the consultant’s work.

The project will seek engagement with stakeholders of farmers, farmland owners and large landowners, as well as with the Saratoga County Agricultural and Farmland Protection Board, Saratoga County Planning Department, Saratoga County Soil and Water District (re Agricultural Environmental Planning role), Saratoga PLAN, a regional land trust, and Town entities such the Planning Board, the Zoning Board of Appeals, the Zoning Code Enforcement Officer, the Clifton Park Water Authority and the Town of Clifton Park Sewer Department, the Clifton Park IDA, and the Southern Saratoga Chamber of Commerce.

## **SCOPE OF SERVICES / Draft Work Plan components**

The project must meet the Municipal Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan requirements pursuant to §324-a of the Agriculture and Markets Law and §390.4 of Title 1 of the New York Codes, Rules and Regulations which sets forth the guidelines and requirements for municipal agricultural and farmland protection plans, and the procedures for the development and approval of such plans.

The work plan is anticipated to include the following tasks generally:

**1. Project Initiation**

- Project Kick-Off Meeting: (kick off meeting and review of project scope with consultant and advisory committee; review of project scope of services, tasks, and deliverables from consultant, and review expectations and role of advisory committee; review proposed project schedule and set meeting dates; review of public participation plan; establish/draft preliminary list of issues and opportunities and vision for farming in town
- Public Engagement: plan for how the Project Team of Consultants, Staff and Advisory Committee will interact with the Public for forming the farm plan. This is a townwide project and will be promoted and advertised as such to invite residents and community members across town to participate in public meetings and any other forms of outreach.
- Stakeholder Engagement: the plan and implementation for identifying all relevant stakeholders and the strategies for meeting with stakeholders. At least two meetings / opportunities for stakeholders to directly interact with the project team. All farmers, farmland owners, and large landowners known to the advisory committee will be contacted and invited to participate during the planning process.

2. **Development of the Plan’s Goals and Objectives.** The Advisory committee's work will include drafting preliminary goals and objectives through meetings with the public and stakeholders and further honed and refined to create final goals and objectives for the farmland plan. This process will include consideration of the Town’s Comprehensive Plan, Open Space Plan, Western Clifton Park Land Conservation Plan and GEIS and Design Guidelines and zoning districts for the Western CP area, Town Center Plan and Form-Based Code, the Town of Clifton Park Recreation Plan, the Saratoga County Agriculture and Farmland Protection Plan, the Saratoga County Green Infrastructure Plan, input from Saratoga PLAN, consideration of current State agricultural policies, State energy policies, and other policies.

3. **Conduct an Inventory and Assessment of Agricultural Resources, Programs, Policies and Activities** in the context of Clifton Park and Saratoga County. This work will aim to provide a comprehensive overview of the existing conditions of agriculture and farming in the community, including through public and stakeholder engagement, and compilation of data.

- **Data Collection** pertaining to the following recommended (but not limited to) elements:
  - Agricultural Land, Prime Farmland Soils, Ag Districts (Ag Resources)
  - Environmental Resources/Sensitive Environmental Areas
  - Aquifers, Stream Corridors/Riparian Zones, Floodplains
  - Climate Resiliency Considerations
  - Socio-Economic Data and Economic Assessment

- Understanding of Housing Market in the Community (consider comparing to the previous build-out projections from prior town plans)
  - Public Infrastructure, including Energy Infrastructure
  - Private/public development and capital projects in progress (private subdivisions and site plans under review, public capital projects)
  - Current Land Use Regulations and Zoning
  - Public Plans, Programs and Studies adopted and in use by the community
- **GIS Mapping and Analysis** of resources using publicly available GIS data such as, but not limited to the following:
    - existing land use classifications
    - existing zoning districts
    - prime farm soils and soils of statewide significance
    - current agricultural district boundaries: 2022 Saratoga County Agricultural District #2
    - Parcels in town’s permanent conservation easement (4 farms with deeds of permanent conservation easements to date)
    - Parcels enrolled in the Town of Clifton Park’s 15-year; 20-year, and 25-year **term** tax relief easement program (agricultural, open space and historic)
    - Locations of public infrastructure (water, sewer, roads, trails, utility corridors, electric substations, high speed fiber (water, sewer, major utility corridors and utility substations, existing and proposed solar PV utilities locations))
    - Existing public lands (lands owned in fee)
    - Work with the advisory committee to generate a new layer on lands rented or leased, if relevant
- **Town Farming Policies & Programs Audit.** Evaluation of the Town’s land use regulations by analyzing how “farm-friendly” are the current policies in place, to operate a farm including future farming needs, and of strategies to retain farmland and promote agriculture. What farm enterprises or mixed uses are not currently able to operate in town that may be of interest and value to the community in the future?
- **Business / Economic Development:** Below are some of the questions for consideration for understanding the economic context for farming in Clifton Park: What is our current inventory of business services available for the agricultural community? What businesses exist in the Town of Clifton Park or close proximity to support the agricultural industry? What incentive or other grant opportunities exist for farmers or in general the agricultural industry? Who are all the groups and entities that support the concept of

agriculture and farming in the Town of Clifton Park? What is the economic impact of farming in the Town of Clifton Park? What is the agricultural contribution to the local economy? What other businesses are supported by the agricultural industry in the Town of Clifton Park?

- **Identify, Document and Synthesize the Public Values, Issues, Needs, and Concerns** through advisory committee, public participation and stakeholder engagement activities.
- **Analysis of Findings and Recommendations for Farmland Protection**
  - The project team will identify and analyze the **strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats** to farming in the Town of Clifton Park, and considerations for within Clifton Park and outside of the community, and the key issues, pressures and influences on farming, including various types of development/conversion pressure.
  - **Develop public criteria / recommended methods for prioritizing land protection efforts.** Develop a draft and further refine a land evaluation and assessment rating system, taking into consideration land protection criteria previously developed for the implementation of the open space plan, with further current refinement for farmland protection focus that reflects the community's vision, values and goals for farmland and agricultural resources.
  - **Synthesis of an Action Plan for Implementation.** The Advisory Committee, staff and consultant team will develop an action matrix for implementing goals, recommendations and strategies identified in the plan. This work will include the identification of priority projects. Actions and potential projects will be prioritized with reasonable goals, time frames, responsible parties, potential funding sources, and partners. Likely a Farmland and Agriculture Advisory Committee in some shape or form will be needed to help with the plan's short- and long-term implementation.

The objective of this plan will be to provide a reference guide for Town officials - including the Town Planning Board, Zoning Board of Appeals, Open Space Committee and Environmental Conservation Commission - and residents -- of the farmland resources in the Town and an implementable action plan to guide local and outside entity steps that can be taken to support agriculture and retain farmland in Clifton Park.

The following topics have been identified as potential topics for consideration in the Farmland Protection Planning process:

- a. What are the Key Local Challenges and Issues for Farming and Agriculture in the Town of Clifton Park? (What is the context for Saratoga County and NYS?)
- b. What are the ideas for high leverage farming?
- c. What are the innovations and entrepreneurial stories here in Clifton Park, and in the vicinity of town/Regional Context?

- d. Who is the face of farming and agriculture in Clifton Park? Who are all the people involved in the whole local agricultural economy?
- e. Who are the farmers? Do we know all the farmers in town?
- f. What is the history of people farming / conducting agriculture in Clifton Park / perspective? Who used to farm? Who stewarded the lands before current times? What is the history of indigenous farming?
- g. Who are the foodies / local chefs / farm to table restaurateurs in town and region? Are these connections happening from restaurants to the local food supply?
- h. What are the Climate Resiliency Strengths in Clifton Park's Landscape?
- i. Elements of Farmland analysis and conservation prioritization. Proposed Elements to include in data analysis:
  - Environmental data
  - Agricultural Soils/Soil Health: Prime Farmland; Soils of Statewide Farming Significance
  - Water Resources - Proximity to Water Sources, Aquifers,
  - Floodplains – Resiliency: if within or near floodplains how vulnerable
  - Land Use data:
  - Land use classifications for agricultural uses (horse farms, dairy farms, orchards, etc.) range
  - Parcels enrolled in agricultural districts
  - Parcels that are leased by farmers – owned by other large landowners – show “farmshed” per farm – connections of main farm to all support, leased lands
  - Horse barns and indoor riding arenas
  - Barn inventory – recent study completed
  - Orchards
  - Parcels with significant pasture fencing for animals
  - Agricultural economic data:
  - Farms with onsite retail facilities
  - Farm market locations (permanent and seasonal locations)
  - Regional farm markets – where could local farmers go
  - Food Security Data: Proximity of Clifton Park farms and farm products to local and regional consumers
    - o Grocery stores; access to food – locally and regionally
    - o How do farms in Clifton Park serve this locality and the region? How do Clifton Park Farms support Food Security in the town, and in the region?
  - Subscription based farming – community supported agriculture (CSA) in town?
  - Farms with worker housing available onsite
  - Proximity to farming support businesses, such as supplies; farm animal veterinarians
  - Agricultural income data for Clifton Park farms? Any resources? Value of farming economy for town? Value of farming economy for Saratoga County? CDRPC? Federal data?
  - Forestry in town / Land use cover in forest – carbon sequestration? Interplay with farming properties?
- j. What is the State (Condition)/ Status of Farming and Agriculture in Clifton Park today? And how does it compare to the past? What are the current trends? What does the future look like? Next Generation Farms? What is the state of regulations on land use; farm workers; farm commodities; supply chains; all government impacts?

- k. How do the prime soils and soils of statewide importance in the Town of Clifton Park compare to other municipalities? What is the percentage of prime soils in Town?
- l. Farmland Resource Protection: What other considerations should be considered for farm protection?
- m. What is the role of agricultural environmental best practices – and role of Saratoga County Soil & Water District in working with individual farmers?
- n. Are education opportunities available for farming operators in the Town of Clifton Park or close proximity?
- o. Are there unique soil, topography, micro-climate features present in Clifton Park that make the landscape or portions thereof, unique, and help boost/make it attractive for farming? For any specialties?
- p. Is the presence of the streams, or Mohawk River and its tributaries boost farming?
- q. What natural resources exist in the Town of Clifton Park lending themselves to support agriculture?
- r. Are farms willing to utilize waterways, green strips, or other buffers to
- s. help mitigate storm water runoff in turn protecting Mohawk River and tributaries?
- t. Does our active transportation network factor into agriculture?
- u. Are there certain areas where development should be limited in an effort to assist in the protection of farmland?
- v. Is the current zoning doing enough to support and protect agriculture?
- w. What is the inventory of the existing farmlands?
- x. Who are the Farmers in the Town of Clifton Park? Who is Farming? How are they Farming?
- y. Inventory existing farming and agricultural operations of agricultural land use in the Town of Clifton Park. What are the sizes and types of farming operations? What are the similarities and differences between larger and smaller farming operations?
- z. What are the needs of the current agricultural operators?
- aa. Who are the landowners if they are not the farmers?
- bb. What is the landowner's interest in conservation? Interested landowners:
  - Land planning & estate planning by private landowners
- cc. What does it mean to invest in agriculture in Clifton Park? What / how should the community consider investing in / supporting the agricultural sector in the future?
- dd. What are the Outside Funding Opportunities for Resource Protection (Farmland Conservation) (Federal, State, County, Town funds, etc.)
- ee. What other Opportunities exist to Support the Local Agriculture Economy?
- ff. What are the farmers' transitions to next generation resources and support? What exists?
- gg. Programs and Partnerships (County, PLAN, Chamber of Commerce, Town, others?); Education – Landowner and General Public; Local Term Easements – Tax Relief 15 to 25 years; State Incentive Payments/Lease of Development Rights Creating & Holding Permanent Conservation Easements; Easement Monitoring
- hh. Marketing (How product is sold?): What is the current inventory of farm markets or availability of selling locally grown products? Onsite, and off-the-farm?
- ii. Is there a market for organic farming?
- jj. What is available through the Saratoga County Fairgrounds and/or the Saratoga County Agriculture and Farmland Protection Board, to support farming in the Town of Clifton Park?
- kk. Future Projections: What is the state of agricultural education in Clifton Park, Saratoga County, and the region? Do schools serving the Town of Clifton Park have any clubs or

- opportunities for students interested in agriculture? Is there a need to advocate for an agri-business program at a local community college or other venue?
- ll. What new ideas or innovation are trending in the agricultural industry which could position the Town of Clifton Park as an agriculture leader?
  - mm. What could be done to support the smaller farms? Agri-tourism? Other concepts?
  - nn. What needs are there for larger agricultural industry that might not currently be considered?
  - oo. What is the long term vision or farming opportunities for the next twenty to fifty years for agriculture in the Town of Clifton Park? Is there an opportunity for agriculture to continue to grow?

### **SCHEDULE**

The Town of Clifton Park anticipates the project should take approximately one year as an estimate. Please provide a proposed planning project schedule based on a reasonable timeline.

### **RFQ – REQUEST FOR QUALIFICATIONS**

#### **MANDATORY QUALIFICATIONS**

To be eligible for consideration the proposer must have previously completed at least two (2) New York State Municipal Farmland Protection Plans and identify for whom they have provided such plans. Proposers must have familiarity with town-based Comprehensive Plans that have a significant agricultural and rural issues emphasis.

Provide the qualifications of the principals who will be developing the plan, including experience in developing agricultural protection sections of comprehensive plans and land use regulations.

Please demonstrate through your response that you have the qualified, experienced staff/team that specializes in agricultural land use, farmland protection, and land use and zoning that pertains to rural and agricultural experience, energy sector planning and zoning issues, GIS mapping, and agricultural economic development planning to conduct the planning project on behalf of and with the Town of Clifton Park and its staff and a focused farmland protection planning working group.

Please identify the staff / team that would be assigned to the project components.

#### **NOTIFICATION OF AWARD**

The Town of Clifton Park will notify the successful proposer(s) verbally, followed by a written confirmation. The town will notify each proposer whose proposal is not selected in writing (either by email or postal mail). The successful proposer will submit a final scope of work and agreement to the Town, for town board authorization. An agreement defining all project terms and conditions and responsibilities of the successful proposer(s) are subject to review and approval by the Town Attorney and the Town Board.

## PROPOSAL CONTENT

Proposals must include the following information:

- (1) Written statement of qualifications that clearly and concisely identifies the experience of all individuals that will be working on the Plan and also state the specific individual(s) that will be delivering public presentations and responsible for deliverables. Consultant teams: please let us know how you have worked together previously, if applicable.
- (2) A written description of the Consultant's understanding of the project and the tasks involved and the process, and how the Consultant will meet the deliverables.
- (3) A proposed schedule/timeline for the initiation to the completion of the final plan.
- (4) A **proposed budget** which clearly states the personal service costs to complete the project as well as other anticipated costs such as office supplies, printing and travel.

## PROJECT DELIVERABLES

Digital copies of interim and final products will be provided as part of each submission.

Deliverables are anticipated for each of the following categories:

Public Participation Plan  
Summary Report of Public Meetings  
Summary of Stakeholder Interviews  
Synthesis of Goals and Objectives  
GIS Inventory and Mapping  
Preparation/Printing of any maps for public engagement / public participation needs.  
Draft Written Analysis / Draft Recommendations  
Draft Farmland Protection Plan  
Executive Summary  
Final Farmland Protection Plan

## FINAL PRODUCT

As part of the final product the following are anticipated to be submitted to the Town of Clifton Park:

- Eight (8) printed copies of the Final Report and Executive Summary
- Digital Final Report and Digital Executive Summary (PDF and MS Word) formats;
- All GIS shapefiles and any other electronic documentation this includes Shapefiles, Geodatabases, CAD files, GPS raw data, standalone tables, layer files, and any other spatial information prepared during the project. Output products including digital maps (Map Documents, PDFs, JPEGs, CAD files, etc.), hardcopy maps, etc.

## **NON-DISCRIMINATION AND NYS DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE AND MARKETS CONTRACT REQUIREMENTS**

By submitting a proposal, the consultant or consultant team is agreeing to comply with the provisions of the contract between the Town of Clifton Park and the NYS Department of Agriculture and Markets and will fully comply with and cooperate in the implementation of NYS Executive Law Article 15-A (“the Human Rights Law”) and 5 NYCRR Parts 142-144 (Minority and Women-Owned Business Enterprise (MWBE) Regulations).

## **PROPOSAL SUBMITTAL AND EVALUATION**

Responding firms are responsible for submitting their proposal as described herein. Failure to submit a complete proposal by the submission deadline will disqualify a firm from consideration.

Email digital copies of the proposal by **5:00 p.m., on Tuesday, April 24, 2024** to [tbrobston@cliftonpark.org](mailto:tbrobston@cliftonpark.org)

Proposals shall be addressed to:

Town of Clifton Park

Teresa Brobston, Town Clerk

One Town Hall Plaza

Clifton Park, NY 12065

Email: [tbrobston@cliftonpark.org](mailto:tbrobston@cliftonpark.org)

Re: [Clifton Park Agricultural and Farmland Protection Planning Grant RFP Response](#)

All questions about this RFQ/RFP should be submitted to the above address or by email to [planning@cliftonpark.org](mailto:planning@cliftonpark.org). All questions must be submitted by 5:00 p.m., Thursday, April 18, 2024.

This RFQ/RFP does not commit the Town of Clifton Park to award a contract, to pay for any costs incurred in the preparation of a Proposal, or to pay for any costs incurred in the preparation of a contract for services. The Town of Clifton Park reserves the right to 1) accept or reject any or all Proposals received, for any reasons, 2) cancel, in part or in whole, this RFQ/RFP, or 3) re-solicit Proposals in the event no response is deemed acceptable.

The Town of Clifton Park reserves the right to invite any or all proposers for an interview before making a final selection. Such an invitation does not commit the Town of Clifton Park to pay any costs incurred in participating in said interview.