

# Planning for Agriculture

An aerial photograph of a large farm complex. The central area contains several large, long barns with grey roofs, two tall white silos, and a large circular pond. To the left, there are more smaller buildings and another pond. The surrounding landscape is a mix of green fields, some of which appear to be planted with crops like corn, and areas of brown, tilled soil. A road or driveway winds through the property, connecting different sections. The background shows rolling hills and dense green forests under a clear sky.

American Farmland Trust

# American Farmland Trust

- National nonprofit founded in 1980
- Work at local, state and federal levels – advocacy, education and planning
- Mission: To stop the loss of productive farmland and promote sound stewardship of the land

# Program Outline

## Planning for Agriculture

- I. Background
- II. Town Tools
- III. Summary

# Planning for Agriculture?

**FOR  
SALE**

**120 ACRES**

**ZONED: AGRICULTURAL,  
COMMERCIAL & RESIDENTIAL**

*Good Farmland - Great Investment*

**CITY WATER SEWAR**

**SESSLER COMPANIES (315) 539-8222**



# What is Planning for Agriculture?

- Proactive
- Insure Land Base
- Improve Economic Opportunities for Farmers
- Not Just Planning for Open Space!





## Why Plan for Agriculture?

- Agriculture's Significant Economic Impact:
  - ✓ Farms create jobs: 40 cows = 1 job; avg. hourly rate is \$13 + benefits & 2 : 1 community jobs
  - ✓ Every \$ earned turns over 4X in local economy
  - ✓ Other benefits: tourism, open space, locally available fresh food)





# Fundamental Principles of P4A

- Demonstrate an understanding of agriculture
- Create a supportive business environment for farm businesses
- Support appropriate property tax policies for farm land and buildings
- Develop strategies to protect your best farmland
- Reduce the impact of new development on farms

# Town Tools to Plan for Agriculture

- Right to Farm Protections
- Comprehensive Plans
- Zoning
- Subdivision Laws
- Development Rights Programs
- Infrastructure Planning
- Tax Reduction Programs





# Right to Farm Protections

## Agricultural Districts

- Locally Designated Areas
- “Right to Farm” Protections
- Can Complement Town Land Use Policies
- Local Ordinance Provision – Sec. 305a



# Right to Farm Protections

## Local Right to Farm Laws

- Local Policy Supporting Farms
- Limit Farmer/Non-Farm Neighbor Conflicts
- Additional Protections
  - ✓ Dispute Resolution
  - ✓ Real Estate Disclosure Notices



# Comprehensive Plans

- Content
  - Vision
  - Identify Priority Farming Areas
  - Document Benefits and Challenges of Local Farms
- Recommendations
  - Address Business and Land Use Needs
  - Specific Section about Agriculture



# Town Farmland Protection Plans

- Towns are eligible for state grants to develop local agricultural and farmland protection plans
- Cover up to \$25,000 or 75% of the cost of the plan (whichever is less)
- Plans would:
  - Identify the priority farming areas
  - Document the benefits provided by farms
  - Describe threats to farmland and consequences of conversion
  - Outline strategies to support local farms

# Zoning Laws

## Supportive Business Environment



- Adopt a Broad Definition of Farming
  - NYS Ag & Mkts Law Section 301
- Evaluate Zoning District Purposes
- Support Business Opportunities Compatible with Ag
- Make Accommodations for Farm Worker Housing and Other Ag Needs



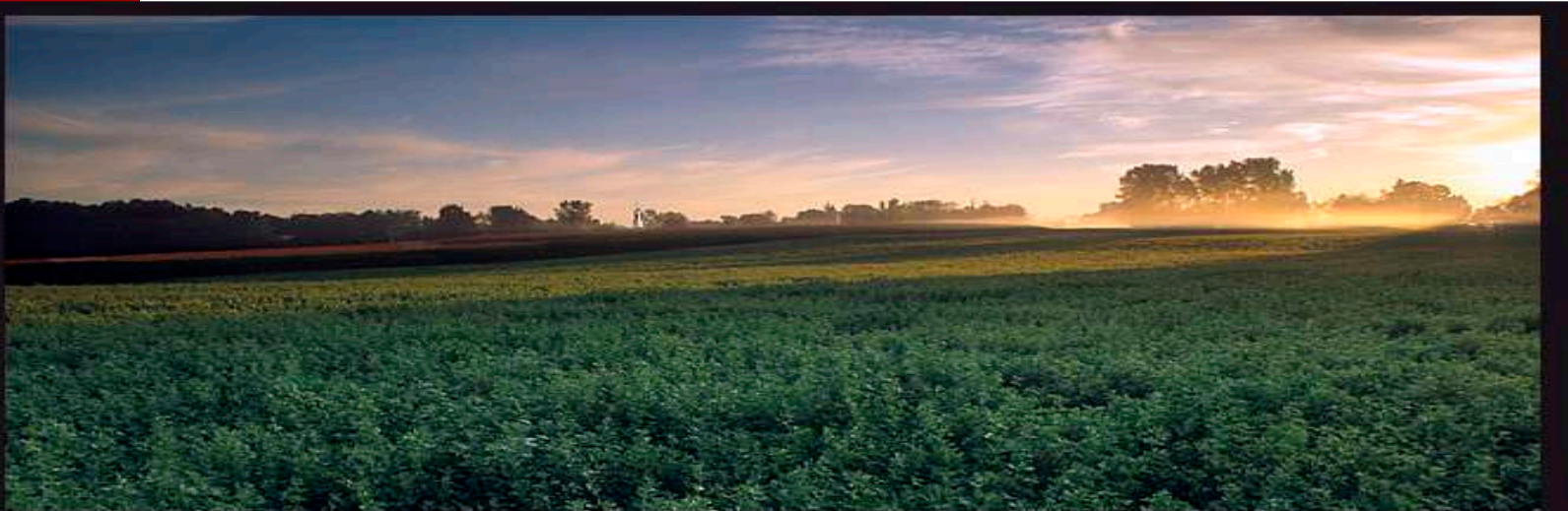
# Zoning Laws

## Stabilizing the Ag Land Base

- **Minimum Lot Size**
  - Reducing Density vs. Stabilizing Land Base for Agriculture
- Density Averaging (Fixed Ratio)
- Sliding Scale
- Overlay Zones

# Subdivision Laws

- Process
  - Evaluating Impacts of New Development
  - SEQR
- Substance
  - Design Standards
  - Cluster Development (Conservation Subdivision)





# Tax Reduction Programs:

## Local Options

- Promote Property Tax Benefits of Farms
  - COCS Study Results
- Be a Resource for Landowners About State Tax Reduction Programs
- Use Ag Assessment Values for Service Districts
  - Fire, Library, etc.





# Development Rights Programs

- Voluntary, Incentive Based Tools
- Provide Incentive for Landowner Accepting Deed Restriction Limiting Rights to Develop the Enrolled Property
- Deed Restriction = Conservation Easements
- Purchase (Permanent) vs. Lease (Term)

# Purchase vs. Lease



## Purchase

- Permanent Easement
- Incentive = Full Market Value – Restricted Value
- For Landowners Looking to “Cash In” on Equity

## Lease

- Term Restriction
- Incentive = Reduction in Property Taxes
- For Landowners Not Interested in Permanent Agreement

# Infrastructure Planning

## Limit Impacts on Agriculture

- Identify Priority Farming Areas
- Steer Water, Sewer & Major Roads Away From These Areas
- Use Mitigation Techniques
  - Lateral Restrictions



# Planning for Agriculture



- No 1 tool will meet all of agriculture's needs
- Mix of tools will differ
- Need to integrate town, county and state
- Ongoing commitment is necessary

# Further Information

[www.farmland.org/newyork](http://www.farmland.org/newyork)

[www.farmlandinfo.org](http://www.farmlandinfo.org)

[www.agmkt.ny.state.us](http://www.agmkt.ny.state.us)

Saratoga Office

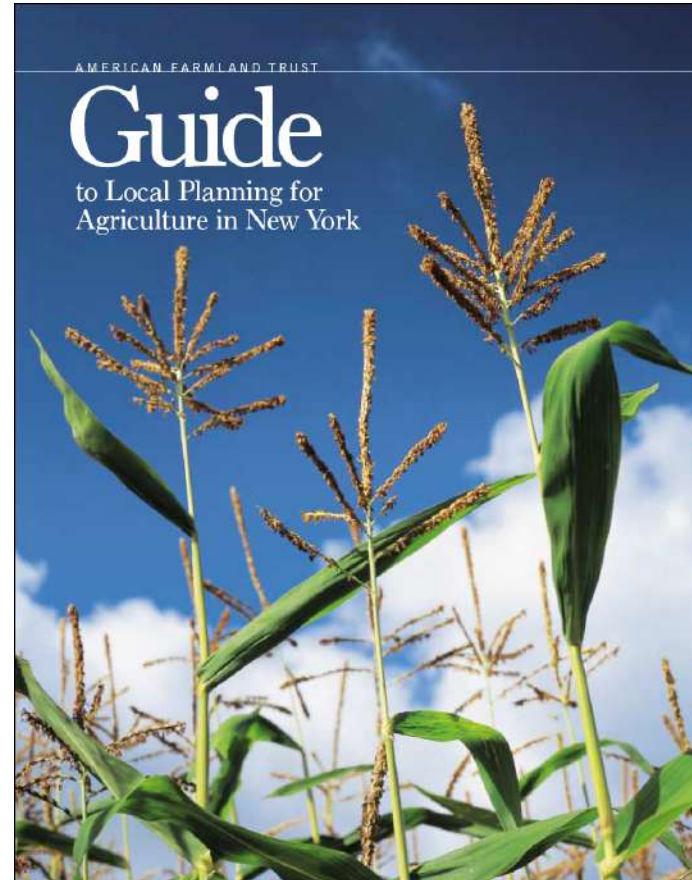
518-581-0078

[newyork@farmland.org](mailto:newyork@farmland.org)

Judy Wright

CNY Consultant

[jlw4220@yahoo.com](mailto:jlw4220@yahoo.com)



# Planning for Agriculture

An aerial photograph of a large farm complex. The central area contains several large, long barns with grey roofs, two tall white silos, and a circular pond. To the left, there are more smaller buildings and another pond. The surrounding landscape is a mix of green fields, some of which appear to be planted with crops like corn, and areas of brown, tilled earth. A road or driveway winds through the property, connecting different sections. The background shows rolling hills and dense green forests under a clear sky.

American Farmland Trust