

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 farm is surrounded by vast green fields, some of which are in different stages of cultivation, showing varying shades of green and brown. A road or path winds through the fields, connecting different parts of the farm. The background shows a dense line of trees 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



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- 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

www.farmlandinfo.org

www.agmkt.ny.state.us

Saratoga Office

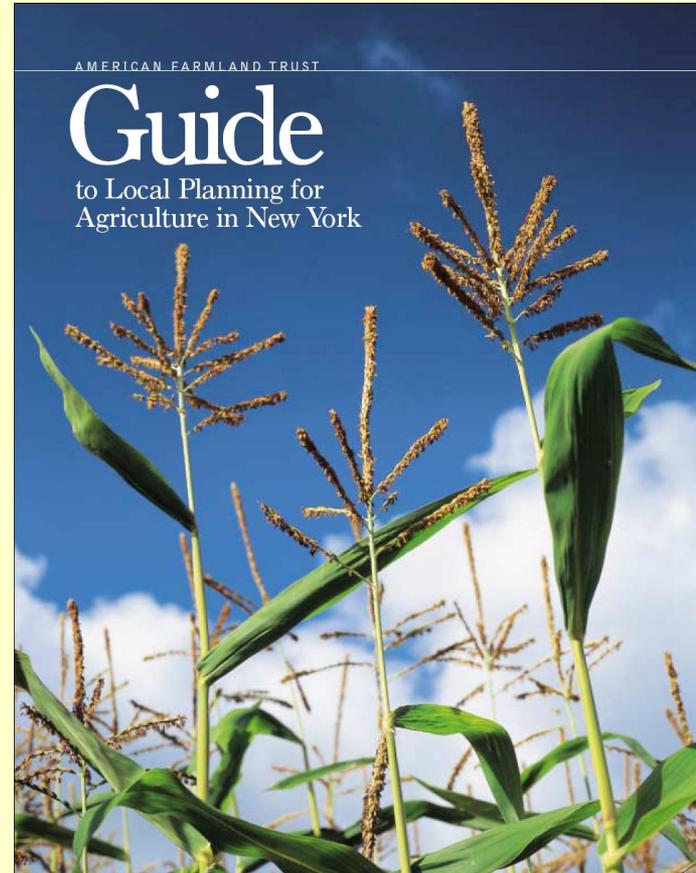
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