

**WAYNE COUNTY
AGRICULTURAL AND FARMLAND PROTECTION PLAN**

**Prepared for:
Wayne County Agricultural and Farmland Protection Board
Wayne County Planning Department**

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I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Wayne County Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan was prepared to document the status of agriculture and farmland in Wayne County and to provide recommendations for the preservation of both farming and farmland in the county.

Wayne County has a long history of successful agriculture and almost all land in the county is classified as prime and/or unique farmland (see Map 1). Especially important are the unique fruit-growing conditions along Lake Ontario, which have made Wayne county first in New York for apples, with fully one-third of the state's total apple production and acreage. Other important products include cherries and other tree fruit, onions and potatoes produced on the county's highly productive mucklands, dairy products, grain and vegetables. The county's rich agricultural production has brought many food processors and wholesalers to Wayne County, and employment in these facilities is a large part of the county's economic base, totaling over 2500 jobs in 1995.

In 1992, Wayne County had 919 farms on 174,000 acres, or 45 percent of the county's land area. Farming in Wayne County is under increasing stress, however, for two reasons: today's economic conditions favor larger more specialized farms, and the county has become increasingly popular as a residential suburb for metropolitan Rochester.

Agricultural specialization is a global phenomenon which is putting the small family farm under increasing economic pressure. Wayne County has lost 10 percent of its farmland (17,500 acres) in the past five years (1987-1992), and 25 percent of the farms in the county have gone out of business in the past ten years. While there have been a number of consolidations, Wayne County farms are still relatively small, averaging 190 acres in 1992. Larger farms are relatively difficult to create in the county, due to high land prices, existing development patterns, and numerous drumlins, which make large tillable parcels difficult to assemble.

Farms in Wayne County are still primarily family owned (84 percent in 1992) and a majority indicate that the next generation of their family will probably not be farming (62 percent, according to a 1994 WCAFPB survey). If these intentions hold, in 20 years or less the county will have fewer than 400 farms and an estimated 100,000 acres of farmland, a loss of almost half the acreage and more than half the farms now in production.

At the same time as farms are going out of business, there is increasing pressure for suburbanization in Wayne County, especially in the western towns closest to Monroe County. With the exception of the new town of Gananda and a few subdivisions near villages, new residential development in Wayne County is linear, consisting of half to two-acre lots fronting on established roadways. The county's road network forms a grid of large blocks, one to four miles square. In the western parts of the county, where water lines are in place, these roads

are typically lined with residential development (see Maps 6 and 7, *Development Infrastructure and Non-Farm Residential and Built-Up Areas*). The interior of the blocks remain in active farmland, but the close juxtaposition of farms and suburban houses causes lifestyle conflicts and constricts the contiguous land available for agriculture. It is also an inefficient use of infrastructure, since creation of new land for development requires waterline extension along yet another roadway.

Availability of water (and sewer) infrastructure creates a market for residential development and raises land values. In those areas of eastern Wayne County without municipal piped water supply, land sold for \$3,000 - \$4,000 per acre in 1996. In the western parts of the county, where municipal water is generally available, land was selling for four times that, or between \$12,000 - \$15,000 per acre. High land values are an advantage for those farmers who wish to sell their land, but make it difficult to effectively preserve agriculture in the area.

While the problems of agriculture and farmland protection do not lend themselves to simple solutions, there are many courses of action which can help farmers to stay in business and land to be preserved for agricultural use. As part of this plan, over 50 projects were investigated for possible implementation in Wayne County, including both projects to advance agricultural economics and projects to protect farmland (see Appendix A). Agricultural economic projects included marketing agricultural products, assisting farmers with farm labor issues and farm finance, promoting new and expanded agricultural businesses, agritourism and agricultural education. Farmland protection projects included methods of assisting new farmers, improving land use regulation, and purchasing easements to protect farmland from more intense development.

The Agricultural and Farmland Protection Board has selected 14 projects for priority implementation under the Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan, as listed below.

A. SHORT TERM PROJECTS

1. Purchase of Development Rights Program (PDR)

Establish PDR programs to permit farmers to sell that portion of their farm's value attributable to development, while continuing to work the land. Pilot projects are proposed for two towns, one in the suburbanizing western part of the county and one adjacent to the Montezuma wildlife area in the eastern part of the county. Funds are available for PDR from state and federal sources.

2. Staffing for Agricultural Projects - Use of Retired Experts and Volunteers

Work with the US Small Business Administration to establish a SCORE (Service Corps of Retired Executives) program, where retired people aid others in business. Encourage the volunteer committees who helped prepare the plan to continue their work.

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3. Training for Town, Planning and Zoning Boards in Agricultural Issues
Take advantage of existing training opportunities; develop a workshop specifically oriented to Wayne County agricultural preservation issues.
4. Video on Wayne County Farming
Develop a video to increase awareness of the diversity and importance of farming to the economy of Wayne County,
5. Resource Booklet
Sponsor the preparation of a booklet of information on resources available to Wayne County farmers.
6. Wayne County Farm Marketing Logo
Sponsor the design of a farm marketing logo; develop a program for its use for stickers on produce and value-added products, farmers' market signs, advertising materials, and roadside signs along the proposed farm trail.
7. Agritourism Plan
Coordinate with the Seaway Trail, Inc. and the Canal Corporation to develop a Wayne County Farm Trail, and integrate agritourism planning with county comprehensive planning.
8. Farm Labor
Dialog with local police to assure that local farm laborers are treated fairly.

B. LONG-TERM PROJECTS

1. Staffing for Agricultural Projects--Agricultural Economic Development Specialist
Establish an agricultural specialist position within the County to provide staffing for agricultural projects proposed by the plan.
2. New Farmer Program
Work with NY FarmNet to utilize the Farmlink program, which helps farmer sellers find buyers who will continue to farm the land.
3. Zoning for Farm Business Uses
Assist local town boards to adopt and implement proposed model zoning provisions which permit farmers to have secondary businesses on farms and provide regulation for agricultural support businesses.

4. County Comprehensive Plan
Advocate for the preparation of a County Comprehensive Plan which will provide guidance in delineating those areas where development should occur and those which should remain agricultural.
5. Property Tax Reform
Encourage the County Board of Supervisors and local towns to explore the potential for property tax reform to rectify some of the inequities in the property tax system.
6. Farm Labor
Explore the potential for assisting farmers with development of migrant worker housing and develop an *ombudsman* program to assist migrant workers.

II. VISION AND GOALS

The vision and goals of the Wayne County Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan were drafted by the WCAFPB in March, 1996, and have provided a strong framework for the preparation of this plan. The Board's vision is:

To promote a strong, economically viable and environmentally sound agriculture in Wayne County and preserve it for future generations.

The vision is further defined through a series of goals. Goals for the Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan are:

1. The preservation of farms and farmland in Wayne County.
2. An increase in the support for agriculture and the understanding of the needs and realities of farming among the people of the county.
3. An increase in Wayne County farm produce consumed in the upstate region of New York and in the northeast as a whole, through the purchase of Wayne County produce by local stores and institutions, and more value-added processing and other enterprises based on county agriculture.
4. The establishment of a new system of local taxation which encourages agriculture.

III. OPPORTUNITIES AND CONSTRAINTS

The process of planning for the Wayne County Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan began with a Survey of Existing Conditions (July 1996, available from the Wayne County Planning Board). The survey documents the history of agriculture in Wayne County, and describes current agricultural economic conditions, farmland quality, development pressures, land values, infrastructure issues, and status of agricultural districts, planning and zoning.

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The following table of opportunities and constraints of agricultural and farmland protection summarizes the Survey of Existing Conditions, highlighting those issues which either encourage or detract from the county's ability to fully protect and preserve its agriculture and farmland. The fold-out maps at the end of this section further illustrate many of the issues.

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ISSUE AREA	OPPORTUNITIES	CONSTRAINTS
Metropolitan Location	Significant metropolitan market opportunities for agricultural products.	Pressures for suburban development of agricultural land
Agricultural History	Long county tradition of successful agriculture, including production, processing, and marketing.	---
<p>Quality of Farmland and Soils</p> <p><i>See Map 1: Unique and Prime Farmland; and Map 2: Generalized Soils</i></p>	County farmland is of exceptional quality, including extensive areas of unique farmland along Lake Ontario suited to fruit orchard production; significant acreage of valuable mucklands used for potatoes and onions; very high percentage of prime farmland, used primarily for field crops.	The western towns, location of the highest concentration of prime farmlands, are under significant suburban development pressure. Unique orchard land along Lake under rapidly growing pressure for residential development. Mucklands in southeast under pressure for conversion to wildlife refuge expansion and/or hunting preserve.
Specialization Trends in Agriculture	Increased profits for larger farms.	Increasing economic pressures on small family farms.
Agricultural Commodities	Apple production (largest county crop) increasing with particular opportunities in fresh market varieties; fresh vegetable, nursery and greenhouse, organic and specialty produce markets increasing. New computer and biotechnology available to decrease costs, increase yields and conserve resources.	Decreasing production in cherries, pears, prune/plums; declining profits for smaller dairy herds; increasing competition from large mid-west growers, particularly for field crops; vegetable production generally decreasing; new technologies often too expensive for small growers.
Processing	Significant presence in county provides local market for county produce. Potential for additional producer	Decreasing prices paid by processors for agricultural products. Local processing industry in general losing

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	cooperatives can increase farmer profitability.	market share and experiencing increasing competition.
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ISSUE AREA	OPPORTUNITIES	CONSTRAINTS
Marketing	Processors continue to require large volumes of fruit and vegetables; major local supermarket chains are increasing demand for local produce; county farmers are increasing participation in local and regional public markets; farmstands and farmers markets enjoy wide community support.	Prices set by processors are half of fresh market prices; high volume terminal markets are a considerable distance from the county; supermarket selling logistics are problematic, including direct delivery, pricing and liability.
Land Values	Rising land values in suburbanizing western areas of the county and along the lakefront increase personal net worth of farmer landowners.	Increasing land prices in suburban and lake front areas tend to put land out of agricultural production. Loss of unique fruit-growing and other prime agricultural land is particularly serious.
Land Use Planning and Zoning <i>See Map 3: Generalized Zoning</i>	Eleven of the 15 towns and 5 of the 9 villages have a written comprehensive plan; 12 towns and all villages have zoning in place. Cluster or planned unit development provisions, which can help to protect farmland by creating larger contiguous open space, in place in 6 towns.	The County Comprehensive Plan and many municipal plans and zoning ordinances are over 20 years old and outdated; 3 towns have no plan and no zoning. Current zoning ordinances discourage compatible economic uses on farms; ordinances typically permit single family lots in all agricultural districts and thus offer little protection for farmland. Nine towns have no cluster or PUD provisions.
Agricultural Districts <i>See Map 4: Agricultural Districts</i>	Almost all county farmland is in Ag Districts, thus enjoying some protections and water/sewer tax benefits.	Ag District controls/benefits not sufficient to prevent substantial conversion of farmland to suburban use.

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ISSUE AREA	OPPORTUNITIES	CONSTRAINTS
<p>Water & Sewer Service</p> <p><i>See Maps 5 and 6: Development Infrastructure</i></p>	<p>Water service provided in 75-100% land in western towns of Ontario, Walworth, Macedon, and Williamson; 25-35% land in mid-county towns of Marion, Palmyra and Sodus. Sewer service typically provided in or close to villages.</p>	<p>Availability of water and sewer raises the value of land for suburban use. No overall county plan exists to determine extent of future water or sewer service.</p>
<p>Development Pattern: Active Farmland vs. Residential Use</p> <p><i>See Maps 7 & 8: Non-farm Residential and Built-up Areas; State Lands and Federal Montezuma Project</i></p>	<p>Much of the county's unique and prime farmland actively farmed. Very little development pressure in central or eastern towns (except in lakefront areas).</p>	<p>In the three westernmost towns, most established roads (1-4 mi. grid) lined with residential lots, altering the rural character of the landscape and creating conflicts with farm use. Lakefront orchard land under pressure for residential conversion. Farmland in the southeast being taken out of production for private hunting grounds or off the tax rolls for inclusion in wildlife refuge.</p>
<p>Food Pantries/Institutions</p>	<p>FoodLink in Rochester attracts significant donations and coordinates delivery.</p>	<p>Many food pantries have limited ability to store or stabilize produce. Institutions deal primarily with large suppliers.</p>
<p>Educational Programs</p>	<p>Ag in the Classroom program for grades 1-6, coordinated by Cornell University, used by 5 of the 11 local school districts .</p>	<p>Ag in the Classroom program not part of mandated NYS curriculum; 6 districts do not participate. Only 3 districts have agricultural programs at high school level.</p>
<p>Agritourism</p>	<p>Extraordinary beauty of local rural scenery. Many small local farm markets, u-pick operations, organic farms, festivals, farm tours, B&B's,</p>	<p>Little coordination or common marketing among county agritourism attractions.</p>

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	etc.	
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IV. IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

The vision and goals of the plan are wide ranging and it is recognized that realizing them will require myriad actions on the part of many people and groups. The strategy of this plan is to implement a number of projects, both large and small, which can begin to improve the economic life of farmers and preserve farmland in the county.

Project selection for the Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan began with review of the Survey of Existing Conditions and the identified opportunities and constraints for agricultural and farmland protection. The WCAFPB formed a series of nine committees to discuss various issues raised by the plan and to formulate possible courses of action. Committee reports were made at a public hearing where additional discussion deepened knowledge of the state of agriculture in the county.

Following the public hearing, preliminary proposals were made to the WCAFPB for over 50 possible projects which could help protect farmland and advance agricultural economics in the county (See Appendix A). From these, the Board selected 14 projects for priority implementation under the plan. These included eight short-term projects which can be implemented relatively quickly, and six long-term projects which are intended for implementation over a longer time period.

Priority projects are described below.

A. SHORT-TERM PROJECTS

1. Purchase of Development Rights Programs

Of all of the methods of protecting the future of farmland, purchase of development rights (PDR) is one of the most proactive. PDR allows preservation of farmland in active farming use -- the farmer continues to own and work the land. PDR is a strictly voluntary program which occurs only where the farmer and the participating funding body both wish it to occur.

Purchase of Development Rights programs protect farming by purchasing that portion of the land's value which is attributable to the long-term potential for non-agricultural development. The landowning farmer is compensated for the loss of this portion of the value. PDR does not require purchase of all of the rights in the land and therefore does not require paying full value as would be the case under outright purchase. The amount paid is a percentage of the full value, where the percentage, and the total amount paid, depend on the circumstances specifically affecting each parcel.

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A PDR program is particularly useful when suburban and other development pressures threaten farmland within a short term future, and when zoning and property tax concessions are insufficient to withstand development pressure. PDR does require a significant financial commitment from a local community, as well as the administrative capacity to implement the program.

One of the principal recommendations of the Wayne County Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan is that Wayne County and its municipalities should initiate a Purchase of Development Rights Program for portions of the county's prime agricultural lands. Conditions in upstate New York are now becoming supportive for such a program, as described below. Specifically, the two target areas recommended for initial PDR action in Wayne County are the Town of Walworth in the vicinity of the Gananda housing development, and portions of the Town of Savannah on the periphery of the Montezuma National Wildlife Refuge.

PDR in New York State

New York State, through its Department of Agriculture and Markets, has now initiated a program of implementation grants for communities with approved Agriculture and Farmland Protection Plans. On November 13, 1996, Ag and Markets sent a Request for Proposals to participating agricultural and farmland protection boards, counties and municipalities, which makes available 50:50 matching grants. Statewide, up to \$3,700,000 in NYS Environmental Protection Fund monies (which are drawn from real estate transfer taxes and other fee sources of the State) are being made available for these grants in this fiscal year. The State intends that this grant program will emphasize the protection of farmland in active use through the purchase of development rights.

It is expected that the Ag and Markets PDR implementation grant program will be continued in future years. Based on discussions with the Department, it is also expected that some additional funds from the Open Space component of the 1996 "Clean Air, Clean Water" Environmental Bond Act will be made available to supplement this activity.

Funding for PDR programs is also available from the federal Farmland Protection Program, authorized by the US 1995-96 Farm Bill. Recipients can be states, counties, or municipalities with qualified PDR programs. A total of \$35 million in matching grant funds is available for this program, of which \$14.5 million was awarded in 1996. The remaining funds will be awarded over a five-year period.

Under the NYS PDR program, local and state public funds are combined for use in purchasing the future development rights to designated parcels of farmland. The farmland owners are thus compensated for a portion of their equity interest and for allowing restrictions to be placed on the land. The restrictions limit use to farming although they allow for residential development for

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persons associated with the farm (the owner, the owner's children or farm labor). The farmer retains title to the land and can sell it to other parties, subject to the restrictions, which take the form of conservation easements attached to the land in perpetuity. The farmer can use the compensation paid for debt amortization, new investment in agricultural equipment or for any other purpose.

The New York State Commissioner of Agriculture and Markets will give priority in PDR funding decisions to projects which:

1. Are intended to preserve viable agricultural land;
2. Are in areas facing significant development pressure; and,
3. Serve as a buffer for a significant natural public resource containing important ecosystem or habitat characteristics.

As is discussed below, it is recommended that Wayne County develop a specific implementation plan for PDR during 1997 and submit an application for NYS funding in the State's 1998 fiscal year funding round. This timing will permit the County and the affected municipalities to develop joint partnership approaches, work with interested farmland owners, identify the local funding resources required and prepare a competitive application. The PDR implementation plan can also be the basis for an application for the federal Farms for the Future program.

The Town of Pittsford "Greenprint" Program

The Monroe County Town of Pittsford has made substantial progress in implementing a PDR program and can be considered a model for PDR action in upstate New York. At the same time that the State had been moving toward funding PDR programs, the Town of Pittsford developed and approved a "Greenprint for the Future" program to purchase \$9.9 million of farmland development rights for 1,200 acres on seven identified farm properties, at an average estimated value of \$9,000 per acre. The Town has estimated that each taxpaying household within its jurisdiction will pay approximately \$60 per year over the next twenty years in real property taxes to repay the local bonds which will fund this program. Funding of \$100,000 has already been received from the federal Farmland Protection Program and the Town has also applied for funds from the NYS Ag and Markets program.

As discussed in the Survey of Existing Conditions prepared as part of this Plan, land values in Wayne County are considerably lower than those in Pittsford. Funds required for the purchase of development rights, therefore, will also be considerably lower, especially in the eastern areas of the county. Where Pittsford will be paying approximately \$9,000 per acre for development rights, Wayne County could expect to pay considerably less, estimated at \$3,000 per acre in

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Walworth and \$1,000 per acre in Savannah. Given the current and prospective levels of State funding (\$3,700,000 statewide in the current year, potentially \$5,000,000 annually in future years) Wayne County may well be able receive up to \$300,000 for this purpose in a given year, enabling it to acquire 100-300 acres of development rights. Final prices under a PDR program would be based on actual appraisals of land value.

Applying the PDR Approach in Wayne County

Two locations have been identified for PDR application in Wayne County, one in the western part of the county and one in the eastern part. In the western tier of towns (Ontario, Walworth, Macedon), the Town of Walworth is experiencing the county's highest rate of farmland-to-residential subdivision conversion, now at a level of 65-90 new house lots per year. The Route 441 corridor, which crosses the mid-point of the Town in an east-west direction, and which serves as the main artery to the Gananda new community development, is the particular locus of this pressure. It is recommended that the County, through the Farmland Protection Board and the County Planning Office, work with the Town of Walworth and farm owners in this corridor to develop a first-phase PDR program in this location.

In Savannah, the critical relationship is that between existing farmland and the nationally significant Montezuma National Wildlife Refuge area. Specific farmlands should be identified in the southeast corner of the county which are both prime farmland and are threatened due to the shrinking critical mass of farming operations in this area. A voluntary PDR program should be developed for these lands which is designed to preserve an active ring of continuing farming operations at the perimeter of the Montezuma Wildlife Refuge expansion area.

Implementation: A Wayne County/Town Partnership

It is suggested that the Wayne County Agricultural and Farmland Protection Board work with Wayne County Planning to develop partnerships between the County and the Towns, respectively, of Walworth and Savannah, in order to implement PDR programs in each town. Consideration should be given to involving both the County Cooperative Extension Service and/or an appropriate Non-Profit Land Trust in these programs, which might help considerably in extending the staff resources available to the County.

2. Staffing for Agricultural Projects

The long-term goal of the Agricultural and Farmland Protection Board is to institute a full-time agricultural specialist job position within the county (see long-term projects below). Funding for this position is not immediately available, however, and it is hoped that in the interim volunteer

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staff will be able to begin implementing some of the projects recommended by this plan. The proposed volunteer efforts take two forms: securing the assistance of retired farmers and other experts, and continued work of the AFPB Advisory Committees set up by the Board as part of this planning process.

Use of Retired Experts

On a national level, the Small Business Administration's Service Corps of Retired Executives (SCORE) program provides small businesses with counseling and training on such subjects as marketing, financing, business planning, etc. Services are provided at no or nominal cost, with staffing provided by volunteer experts, most of whom are retired. Wayne County is served by the SBA office in Rochester, which has one of the largest SCORE memberships in the country. In addition to the main office, Rochester SCORE operates out of a number of satellite offices around the region. At present there is no satellite office in Wayne County, and SBA officials have indicated interest in establishing one in the county.

While most SCORE operations provide primarily individual counseling and training workshops, local SCORE leadership is willing to discuss sponsoring a volunteer person who would staff a Wayne County satellite office. SCORE officials contacted stressed that at present they have few volunteers with agricultural expertise, and would rely heavily on the WCAFPB and other Wayne County contacts to help recruit suitable local volunteers. If a volunteer permanent staff person can be recruited, either part or full-time, that person could begin to perform some of the functions of an agricultural specialist (see long-term projects below for details).

Wayne Economic Development Corporation, which had provided space at its Lyons office for SCORE in the past, is interested in exploring the potential of again functioning as a SCORE satellite office. WEDC could provide a location for meetings and a phone contact. Corporation officials indicate that space for a permanent staff member might be somewhat more difficult, but that they are willing to discuss how that could be done.

Advantages of being associated with SCORE include the fact that is an already organized program, with a well-known name, tested procedures, and a proven ability to attract both volunteers and business clients. SCORE also provides volunteers with out-of-pocket reimbursement for travel expenses and clerical support. An additional advantage of this program is the potential it affords for the AFPB to work with the WEDC, setting the stage for further cooperation in the future.

WCAFPB Advisory Committees

To help in preparing this plan, the AFPB established nine Advisory Committees, each of which prepared recommendations on a particular subject matter of interest to agriculture and farmland in the county. Committees included:

1. Land Quality and Evaluation
2. New Enterprises and Farm Diversification
3. Selling More Wayne County Produce to Local Institutions
4. Increasing Local Farm Food in Emergency Food Supplies
5. Marketing and Promotion
6. Labor
7. Finances
8. Agricultural Tourism
9. Agricultural Education

Committee members were chosen for their experience and interest in the topic, and in total numbered approximately 60 people. Each committee met at least twice, and most three times, gathering again at a public hearing to present their recommendations. In the course of their research and discussions, committee members forged working relationships with each other and deepened their knowledge of the topic at issue.

It is recommended that the committees consider continuing their task, working to implement the proposals which they prepared. If each subcommittee chose at least one project to work on, much of the work of the plan could be implemented.

3. Training for Town, Planning and Zoning Boards

There are a number of tools and techniques for preserving farmland which are only available through the local legislative and regulatory process. Members of local town, planning, and zoning and conservation boards, however, are not necessarily knowledgeable about farming or agricultural issues and could profit from training in techniques for preserving farmland.

Training programs for members of local boards are available from a number of organizations, and members of Wayne County Boards do attend these sessions. Many of these programs are excellent and are a good resource, although the focus of existing programs is generally not on the preservation of farmland. The County should strive to increase awareness of existing programs available to local boards, and work to develop a training workshop that is focused on farmland preservation.

Develop a Land Use Planning Workshop With a Farmland Preservation Orientation.

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The Wayne County Planning Department and the Farmland Protection Board should develop and present a workshop on land use planning for the preservation of farmland. The workshop should be presented to each of the towns in the County. Potential resource materials for the workshop include the *Agricultural and Farmland Protection Action Kit*, an educational program prepared by Cornell Cooperative Extension and the American Farmland Trust, and materials prepared by other Counties who have developed Farmland Protection Plans and are undertaking training initiatives.

The *Farmland Protection Action Kit* includes four training modules, contained on two video tapes. Each module, dealing with a major study theme, is based on video tape footage gathered at several sites around New York State. Companion printed materials facilitate further discussion. The four themes are: Agriculture and the Environment; Farmer/Neighbor Relations; Notice of Intent; and Farmland Protection Planning. The videos could be integrated into a live presentation, or could stand alone.

Portions of the *Farmland Protection Kit* could be presented to other groups as well, as an educational outreach initiative. A list should be prepared that identifies groups to target for presentation of the *Farmland Protection Kit* and then each member of the Board should be responsible for hosting a number of presentations and discussions. In addition to planning boards, potential groups to present to include high schools, chambers of commerce, service organizations, church groups, and others.

As a companion program to the workshop, a speakers series that takes advantage of regional experts could be developed. Regional experts with experience in farmland preservation/land use planning could be invited and planning and zoning boards should be encouraged to attend. For example, representatives from the Town of Pittsford, Cornell Cooperative Extension, the American Farmland Trust, Erie County Department of Environment and Planning, and others could give presentations regarding strategies and techniques they have encountered and their experiences. By taking advantage of regional experts, a speakers series should be possible with minimal funds.

Encourage Planning & Zoning Board Members to Take Advantage of Existing Training Opportunities

The Wayne County Planning Department should compile and distribute a comprehensive list of existing training sessions available to planning and zoning board members. Known training opportunities are outlined below.

Genesee/Finger Lakes Regional Planning Council in Cooperation With the New York Planning Federation, the New York State Department of State, the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation, and the Counties of the Genesee/Finger

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Lakes Region. The Planning Council sponsors a one-day Planning & Zoning Workshop each spring and fall. A basic introductory course is presented, along with concurrent sessions tailored to identified needs, such as stormwater management, agricultural economic development, cellular towers, highway development, and environmental clean-up.

Monroe County Planning Council. The Council offers an annual training program that is open to anyone, and Wayne County board members have attended in the past. The course consists of nine three hour sessions conducted over a two month period. Sessions are taught by professional planners, engineers, and land use attorneys. The fee is \$75.00 for the entire course, or \$15.00 a session. Session topics include Comprehensive Plans; Land Use & Law; Planning Board Procedures & Functions of the Zoning Board; Elements of Plan Review; Drainage Considerations and Water Quality; Traffic Considerations; State Environmental Quality Review Act; and finally, a Mock Planning Board Hearing.

The New York Planning Federation. The New York Planning Federation is concerned with land use and zoning and is oriented to lay planners. The Federation hosts an annual conference that includes training sessions geared to board members.

American Planning Association. The American Planning Association is concerned with land use and comprehensive planning issues and also conducts an annual conference that often includes training sessions on planning, zoning, and the State Environmental Quality Review Act.

State University of New York, School of Environmental Design and Forestry (SUNY ESF). The SUNY ESF Continuing Education department offers non-credit courses in Community Planning. Community Planning courses offered in the Spring 1997 session include The Basic Planning Board Course and The Zoning Board of Appeals Course. Instructors include practicing planners, attorneys, and consultants as well as faculty from SUNY ESF and Syracuse University. Previous courses have dealt with historic preservation, the State Environmental Quality Review Act, and other topics.

The Association of Towns of the State of New York. The Association hosts a Training School and Annual meeting on topics of interest to local town officials. Included are special sessions for Town Boards and members of Town Planning and Zoning Boards and a *Planning and Zoning Basic Training School* presented by the NYS Department of State. The 1997 annual meeting will be held in February in New York City.

NYS Department of State. In addition to assisting regional and statewide organizations like the Genesee/Finger Lakes Regional Planning Council and the Association of Towns with training programs, the DOS offers training sessions in local planning and zoning in conjunction with community colleges. These Local Government Institutes consist of a series of sessions on topics

of interest, and can be scheduled by contacting the DOS's Division of Local Government Services at (518) 486-9888 or (800) 367-8488.

4. Video on Wayne County Farming

A video on farming in Wayne County should be developed as an educational tool for the non-farming public. A video presentation could increase awareness of the diversity and importance of farming to the economy of Wayne County, as well as increase appreciation of the challenges farmers face. The potential also exists to educate farmers in different farming sectors about each other. Producing a video requires careful planning to ensure that the intended message is delivered. Following are a number of issues that should be taken into consideration and some pointers for getting started on producing a video.

Issues to Consider in Producing a Video

- a. Define the Audience. The intended audience and age group for the video will influence all other decisions related to production. A video intended for a town planning board is likely to have a different look and feel than a video produced for the general non-farming public. A video for young people will likely use very different music and present a different mood than a video for the older population. The more clearly the audience is defined, the more likely it is that the video will succeed in delivering a strong message.
- b. Define the Objectives. What message do you want to get across to the audience? In general, no more than three major objectives should be attempted in a short video.
- c. Define How the Video Will Be Distributed. Is public access television a possibility? How extensive is cable access in Wayne County, and will it reach the desired audience? Or will the video be presented to groups and gatherings where discussion can be facilitated afterwards?
- d. Define the Production Quality Required. Production quality can range widely and the level of quality desired will to a large degree define the budget .

Once these issues have been brain stormed and a general direction for the production agreed upon, a video producer should be engaged to help focus the project and develop a realistic budget. A producer can orchestrate the various components that need to be synthesized to produce the final product. Most video productions require the following elements:

- Scriptwriter
- Voice Over
- Camera Work
- Editor
- Music

- Titler

There are numerous professional video producers to select from. Conyer Communications is a professional television/video producer located in Rochester that has produced children's educational videos on agriculture, including one on crop farming and one on dairy farming. They can produce videos to meet more limited budgets and recently prepared an instructional video for the Newark High School. Ithaca College has a Student Productions Studio that produces high quality video productions. Other colleges or community colleges may offer similar services. Cornell University Media services provides professional production services and produced the *Agricultural and Farmland Protection Kit* video set.

Budget and Funding

In telephone discussions with a number of producers, it was generally agreed that it is extremely difficult to provide guidance on budgeting since so many factors will influence cost. A general rule of thumb for high quality professional productions is approximately \$1,000 a minute, but it may be possible to do a high quality production for somewhat less. For a ten to twelve minute video, \$6,000.00 - \$8,000.00 was generally considered the low end for a good quality production.

A budget and program developed with a producer can be very useful for fund raising. Potential funders want to know that you have a realistic budget, and also who will be producing the video. A strong grant proposal would include this information.

The Rural New York Program is one potential source of funding for a video on agriculture in Wayne County. The Program supports advocacy, planning, publications, and design related to three issue areas of rural New York. They are: Cultural Landscapes, The Built and Natural Environment, and Agriculture and Tourism.

Grants are awarded in amounts of up to five thousand dollars (\$5,000.00) with no cash match required. However, applicants who bring some level of financial resources to the project may be perceived as having a greater level of commitment, and therefore be in a stronger position to compete for grants. Those eligible to apply for funds include government entities such as counties and municipalities, not-for-profit organizations, and groups deemed as working in the public interest.

Announcement of 1997 funding availability is anticipated in mid-January. It is anticipated that the funding schedule will be as in previous years. This means that grant applications will be available at the end of January for submission in mid-March, and with a second round of grant applications being accepted in mid-September. Close coordination with the Program is

encouraged from the outset in order to increase the likelihood of a successful application.
Contact: Preservation League of New York State.
Telephone: 607-272-6510.

5. Resource Booklet

It is proposed that the WCAFPB sponsor the preparation of a small booklet of information on resources available to Wayne County farmers. This should take the form of descriptions of various programs with information on how to contact each organization. Subject headings should include agricultural financing, agricultural production, marketing, business planning, farmers' markets, cooperatives, sustainable/organic agriculture, educational resources, etc. Appendix B of this report provides a beginning text for the booklet. It is recommended that the AFBP add to this text as staff permits (see below). The completed booklet can be distributed to county farmers through the Cooperative Extension, County Planning Office, and other outlets.

6. Marketing Logo

It is proposed that the WCAFPB sponsor a competition for an artist to design a Wayne County farm marketing logo. Use of the logo would emphasize the importance of agriculture in the county and region and would offer myriad promotional possibilities.

The following gives examples of how groups in New York State and elsewhere have developed and used a farm logo program. (More detailed information on these programs is contained in a packet of materials which has been forwarded to the WCAFPB under separate cover.)

Farm Logo Program Examples

New York State Agriculture and Markets The Ag and Markets *Pride of New York* logo can be used in conjunction with private logos or trademarks. The start-up user fee of \$25 registers a participant in the program and provides for a re-usable page of camera ready logos (called an advertising "slick"). The logo pictorial symbol for New York is the Statue of Liberty, and add-ons for a combined county/state, or state/producer logo are possible. The logo program may be expanded to include point-of-sale material, consumer bags and posters. The department is circulating a descriptive brochure to producers for in-put.

The New York Apple Association . The Association sells their logo on stickers for fruit and numerous other items, including lapel pins, paper bookmarks, tee shirts, polo shirts, sweatshirts, jackets, and caps in addition to the normal point-of-sale material. All items are paid for by the user.

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Long Island, New York. Similar to western Wayne County, Long Island is a historically agricultural region which has experienced rapid suburban development and complicated right to farm issues. In 1985, the Long Island Farm Bureau held a competition for the design of a *Grown on Long Island* farming logo. A brochure was produced in cooperation with the Long Island Convention and Visitors Bureau and the Suffolk County Matching Funds Program. Logo items for sale include stickers; signs for trucks, farmstands and farmers' markets; sweatshirts; tee shirts; baseball caps; aprons and cloth tote bags. The user is charged retail cost for the items. The Farm Bureau maintains the program, and logo users are required to sign a waiver pledging to maintain quality standards. Ms. Tony Munna, Long Island Farm Bureau Director of Public Relations said the logo will be used in the production of a new farmstand guide financed by a regional economic development grant.

Dutchess County. Dutchess County's logo program is an example of the rewards of collaboration. The Cooperative Extension, the County Economic Development Corporation and the County Tourism Promotion Agency worked together to develop a logo program. The Tourism Agency financed a local artist to design the *Hudson Valley Harvest/Produced in Dutchess County* logo (\$600). The Economic Development Corporation paid for the production of the first 100,000 stickers (\$3200). Promotion, publicity and record-keeping are done by the Cornell Cooperative Extension Office, which will take orders for more stickers (cost to be paid by the user).

The logo was printed on 1" and 3" diameter circular stickers. The small stickers are used on value-added products, and on fresh packaged poultry; the large labels are used on produce boxes or U-pick bags. The stickers have been made available at all Dutchess County farmers' markets, and a logo tee shirt was sent to all Dutchess County farmers who participate in the New York City Greenmarket program for wear at the market. Camera-ready artwork is available from the county tourism office.

The new Dutchess County logo was launched in August 1996 with a food and wine reception at a Pleasant Valley farm. Ulster County and Orange County, neighbors in the Hudson Valley plan to use the same logo, changing only the insert that describes where the food is produced.

The Dutchess County consortium is now working with a local business college to design a business plan for the next phase of logo use. A booth is planned at the trade show of the National Direct Marketing Conference in New Mexico, representing value-added products from Dutchess County. If feasible, a "Hudson Valley Harvest" booth will be leased at the Specialty Food Products Trade Show in New York City, summer 1997.

Sonoma County California. The Sonoma County ag marketing logo--*Sonoma Select*--was launched with the aid of a USDA Federal State Market Improvement matching grant obtained

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with the help of the California Department of Agriculture. The county organization which initiated the logo had already developed a successful farm trails brochure, and has grown to become a free-standing group which promotes Sonoma farm products and tourism.

Connecticut recently developed *Connecticut Grown*, a state logo program. The logo design was done in-house, then shopped out to a printer. The program includes point-of-sale material (price cards, card stock, and posters), and agricultural signs on state roads. The signs have space for the appropriate commodity logo of the indicated farm operation. All costs are borne by the user. The signs cost \$500-600 for production and erection, with a filing fee of \$50. More than 50 participants have ordered the signs, and thousands of pieces of the point-of-sale materials have been ordered.

The thread in common to all these logo programs are cost effectiveness, marketing advantage of the local agricultural identity, and consumer appeal. The programs which are cost effective have multiple sponsors. Almost all of the logo programs' costs are paid by the user. Self-pay projects can be rapidly initiated and implemented.

Wayne County Farm Logo Project

The Wayne County Agriculture and Farmland Protection Board could be the lead group for the Wayne County farm marketing logo project. They could decide the parameters, outreach, and publicity for the design competition, and solicit partners to administer the logo program. Partners might include the Cooperative Extension, Wayne Economic Development Corporation, local supermarket chains, farm organizations, SBA Service Corps of Retired Executives, etc.

For a small start, 2,000 advertising slicks of camera ready logo copy could be purchased. This gives the user the versatility to contract for different promotional items: stickers are very popular, truck signs, window signs, and point-of-sale material can be produced for use in supermarkets, farm stands, farmers' markets. Coffee cups, "Post-em" notes, letterhead, vegetable bunching rubber bands, and posters are other options. Apparel can be cross-marketed to consumers as well as farmers--aprons, shirts, totes, hats, aprons are great souvenirs. Consumer plastic or paper bags for use at farmers' markets and in supermarkets also have a big impact. Restaurants using the logo show support for local farms. Farm and tourism listings would be highlighted with the logo. It can be used in the "yellow pages" farmer and nursery listings, and all promotional venues

The larger county processors, the Grange, the Farm Bureau, and local newspapers and power companies could be solicited for start up funds for a logo program. With local support demonstrated, the AFPB would be in a strong position to seek matching funds from foundations, USDA/State, or the regional office of the Empire State Economic Development Corporation.

The cooperation of the Department of Agriculture & Markets is needed to access a USDA Federal/State Market Improvement Grant. Officials in Washington are open to consideration of funding 50% of a logo program, since “the Sonoma Select” was a precedent and successful in gaining these funds.

The JM Kaplan Foundation, based in New York City has a revenue stream from the Welch’s Grape Juice Company and have funded numerous farmland preservation projects. The Stewart Mott Foundation also has an environmental emphasis, funding gardening and farming programs. The Penney Foundation also funds agriculture, community programs, and food and nutrition projects. Since the Wayne County logo will be designed by schoolchildren, it is eligible for funds from the Andy Warhol Foundation--one of the most generous of all foundations; their application process is uncomplicated, twice yearly, with a cap of \$250,000. The broad criteria includes educational projects, children’s’ programs, and open space.

A less likely option is a matching grant under New York State’s Economic Development Fund. The Empire State Development Corporation’s Regional Economic Development Partnership usually funds infrastructure development or job training (recently funded projects include the Seneca Foods expansion and job training for Cadbury-Schweppes), but the regional Economic Development Specialist in Rochester, Kevin Hurley, said there is funding for some “soft projects” in regional marketing. The grants must be supported by a match. The grant system has three rounds per year-- competition is keen and the submissions must be tightly focused. The state likes to see that the proposed project will result in job retention or increased employment.

7. Agritourism Plan

Coordination With Seaway Trail

The Seaway Trail runs east-west through the northern portion of Wayne County. The recent designation of the Seaway Trail as a National Scenic Byway will raise the profile of Seaway Trail nationally and will result in increased visitation. Wayne County agriculture is in a position to benefit from this increased visibility, and should continue to coordinate with Seaway Trail initiatives. Currently, Seaway Trail, Inc. is preparing a *Seaway Trail Agritourism Action Plan*. Each of the ten County Cooperative Extension Agents along the Trail are participating in the development of the *Action Plan*, and Seaway Trail has staff dedicated to the implementation of this project. Wayne County should seek a strong alliance through continued coordination with Seaway Trail in order to realize the greatest benefits.

Several of the priority projects identified in the *Action Plan* are in the planning and development phase. The first project will be to publish an article on agriculture and agritourism along the Seaway Trail in the next issue of *Journey* magazine. The magazine is included in tourism brochure displays around the State and mailed to Seaway Trail members. In the planning stages is the development of agri-tour brochures that will provide sample itineraries with an agricultural theme. The brochures will include farm bed-and-breakfasts, farm tours, u-picks, and other agriculture related activities. Seaway Trail is also in the planning stages of developing a reservation system. Seaway Trail will put together package tours, including agritourism tours, and offer them through the reservation system. By working closely with the Seaway Trail, Wayne County will insure that its agritourism attractions are included in the many promotional initiatives planned by Seaway Trail.

Seaway Trail currently maintains tourist information kiosks all along the Trail. An information/interpretive panel with an agricultural theme is under development. The panel will be available for use in kiosks when requested by the kiosk sponsor. Each County has been contacted to provide input on agriculture in their respective county.

Wayne County should also work with Seaway Trail to get *Farm Trail* signage incorporated into Seaway Trail signage (see illustration). This should be a streamlined process since the Seaway Trail signs are DOT approved. The *Farm Trail* signage should incorporate the planned Wayne farm marketing logo.

Wayne Farm Trail

Along the Route 104 corridor is the greatest concentration of farm markets and orchards in Wayne County, and the Wayne Farm Trail should utilize the Seaway Trail as its central spine. Connecting to the Seaway Trail are several north-south routes which also should be designated as part of the Wayne County Farm Trail. Each of these is lined with farms, farmstands and beautiful farm scenery, and each connects in the southern portion of the county to Rte. 31, which runs east-west along the Erie Canal and is an important tourism trail in its own right. *See illustration.*

The proposed Wayne County farm marketing logo will provide an identity for agriculture in the County and should be used on *Farm Trail* signage, labels, etc. *See illustration.* Start-up funding should be sought from growers and growers associations to demonstrate commitment and increase the likelihood of receiving funding from other sources. Corporate agriculture enterprises located in Wayne County should be approached as sponsors as well. Potential public funding sources for the logo/identity program as well as agri-tourism brochures include the Rural New York Program (described above), the New York State Environmental

Protection Fund Environmental Education Grants Program, and the New York State Council of the Arts.

Comprehensive Planning

Development of a County Comprehensive Plan is recommended. Agritourism should be integrated with a comprehensive tourism strategy for the County. Agritourism is part of the tourism mix and will benefit when coordinated with other tourism initiatives. The Comprehensive Plan should address tourism products, marketing, communications, training, and visitor services County-wide and make recommendations. Recommendations for improving coordination between tourism markets should also be addressed.

8. Farm Labor

Much of the seasonal work on Wayne County farms is done by migrant laborers. Many are from South America and do not speak English. Local communities are not always welcoming and some hostile attitudes have developed regarding farm migrants. It is suggested that the WCAFPB dialog with local police forces to understand conditions regarding migrant labor, as a first step in limiting any random questioning of workers and improving relations. (See also Long-Term Project #6).

B. LONG-TERM PROJECTS

1. Staffing

Establishing an agricultural specialist job position within the county is one of the most important objectives of this plan. This person would staff the AFPB and provide the essential day-to-day work on all of the proposed projects. Skills needed would include: general knowledge of agriculture, a knowledge of county, state, and federal resources (financial, legal, political, etc.), skills in building cooperatives, marketing and other business skills, creativity and networking ability.

Wayne Economic Development Corporation would provide an ideal working environment for the agricultural specialist, since so many of the proposed projects involve economic development. Contacts with WEDC have indicated that the corporation would be interested in exploring the potential of housing an agricultural specialist, if funding can be found for the position. NY Ag and Markets funding for farmland protection does not currently permit use of funds for staffing, but it is hoped that this can be changed over time, and the WCAFPB should continue to advocate strongly for it. Other potential sources of funds are the County itself,

Cornell Cooperative Extension, local agri-businesses, and private foundations. In the interim, it is suggested that volunteer assistance be sought (see Short-Term Projects, above).

If and when the agricultural specialist position is established at WEDC, it is hoped that the WEDC Board would be receptive to the formation of an agricultural subcommittee which could provide assistance in direction of the agricultural specialist.

2. New Farmer Program

Many farmers in Wayne County are nearing retirement age and do not have family members interested in continuing to work the farm. When Wayne County farms are put on the market, there are often few farmer buyers, and, particularly in western Wayne County, a larger market for other kinds of more intense development. While there are significant financial advantages to sellers of land for housing and other more intense uses, many farmers would prefer not to sell their farm for development, and many others are in areas where there is relatively little market for more intense uses. A program to attract new farmers could provide another option. The proposed program would:

1. Market Wayne County farms to new farmers
2. Provide a mentoring program whereby experienced farmers would assist new farmers in getting started
3. Provide estate planning assistance for owners who wish to transfer land

NY FarmNet, a state-funded organization in Ithaca associated with Cornell University, has a program called Farmlink, which helps connect farmers planning for retirement with farmers hoping to work into farm ownership. The program emphasizes building a farm transfer plan that will provide the entering farmer an opportunity to work into farming during a period of joint operation before the exiting farmer retires. A toll-free number (1-800-547-3276) serves as an access point for the program. Farmlink collects information about entering and exiting farmers and forwards information about interested beginning farmers to those planning retirement. It also provides some limited legal consultation.

It is recommended that the AFPB publicize the existence of the Farmlink program through Cooperative Extension, 4H, local schools and farm organizations, and its own outreach. Additional mentoring, legal and other assistance could be provided to potential program participants through SCORE volunteers and by the proposed agricultural specialist.

3. Zoning for Farm Business Uses

In order to make an adequate living and remain in farming, many farmers today must supplement their income. While jobs off the farm are not uncommon, farmers often desire to locate their own businesses on the farm itself. Local zoning ordinances do not necessarily facilitate secondary businesses, however, and in many cases discourage them. Zoning may also make it difficult to locate needed agricultural support businesses in places where they are convenient to farmers.

The following summarizes several model local zoning provisions which provide opportunities for secondary businesses on farms and location of agricultural support businesses while regulating them in such a way as to protect neighbors from negative influences, safeguard open space, improve property values, and preserve community aesthetics. *See Appendix C for suggested ordinance text.*

Secondary Businesses on Farms

The model ordinance proposes that secondary businesses on farms be divided into two categories: those allowed as of right, and those requiring a special permit. Businesses to be allowed on any farm include:

1. Farm stand selling locally produced items.
2. Home occupations conducted by the owner-occupant or tenant of the farm, within an existing building, with no exterior storage or display of products.

Businesses allowed on farms by special permit should be subject to site plan review and the following provisions:

1. Business to be conducted by the owner-occupant or tenant.
2. Uses to be not incompatible with the primary agricultural residential use of the property (see model ordinance text for details).
3. Maximum lot area to be devoted to the special permit business: 10,000 sq. ft.
4. Where practicable, special permit businesses to be conducted in an existing farm or residential building. If a new building is constructed for the special permit business, it should be set back at least 100 ft. from the roadway and located within 100 ft. of an existing residential or farm building (to preserve the cluster appearance of a traditional farmstead).
5. Any building constructed on a farm for a special permit business to be of such a nature that it can be converted to agriculture or residential use if the special permit business is discontinued. The exterior appearance of the building should be that of a farm or residential building.

6. Outdoor storage, parking, signage and other provisions to preserve the environment of a farmstead and facilitate the quiet enjoyment of neighboring properties (see text for details).

Agricultural Support Businesses

In agricultural residential districts, businesses which assist farmers to remain in farming should be encouraged, consistent with neighborhood values. Because they provide services to farmers, agricultural support businesses should be permitted to locate on non-farm as well as farm properties. They should be subject to site plan review and the following provisions:

1. Agricultural support businesses are defined as those which provide services to farmers, including such businesses as feed and fertilizer supply, butcher shop, grain mill, etc.)
2. Minimum lot size: three acres.
3. Maximum indoor floor area: 15,000 sq. ft.
4. Screening, parking, outdoor storage, and other restrictions to preserve the agricultural residential appearance and function of the neighborhood. (See text for details).

Implementation

Implementation of these model zoning provisions would involve:

1. Contacting Town Boards and Town Planning Boards, perhaps through the County Planning Board, to make them aware of the model ordinance and its intent.
2. Discussion with local farmers to determine those towns where local restrictions have impeded development of secondary farm businesses and agricultural support businesses.
3. Assisting local towns who wish to revise their ordinances to tailor the model ordinance provisions to local conditions.

4. County Comprehensive Plan

Wayne County's Comprehensive Plan was last updated in 1976. The ensuing twenty years have seen loss of many farms and considerable erosion in the amount of farmland in the county, particularly in the rapidly suburbanizing western towns (for details see the Survey of Existing Conditions prepared for this plan). Location of development in the county is considerably influenced by the availability of utilities, particularly water and sewerage facilities. Water and

sewer service is provided in the county primarily through the Wayne County Water and Sewer Authority.

A new county comprehensive plan would provide the county the opportunity to update its thinking regarding the location of development and the extent to which it wishes to protect farmland from additional conversion to residential and other uses. A commonly agreed upon land use plan would enable the County to provide direction to its Water and Sewer Authority concerning those areas where the County wishes utilities to be provided and development to occur, and those areas where it wishes agriculture and/or open space to remain the predominant land use.

A county comprehensive plan should also include a tourism plan, including agritourism, and an economic development plan. These would provide an opportunity to coordinate comprehensive planning with the activities of the Wayne County Tourism Office and the Wayne Economic Development Corporation. In meetings conducted as part of this study, both agencies indicated interest in participating in a comprehensive planning effort. WEDC has recently prepared a Strategic Economic Development Plan which could form the basis of the economic section of the comprehensive plan.

Preparation of a comprehensive plan would be the responsibility of the County Planning Office, which has indicated strong interest in such a venture. The primary issue is funding, and it is not yet known how soon the county will be able to fund a planning effort.

The Agricultural and Farmland Protection Board should encourage the County Board of Supervisors to fund a county comprehensive plan, and to include within it strong agricultural protection measures. These should include clear designation of those areas which should remain agricultural, encouragement to local towns to prepare comprehensive plans which protect agriculture and farmland, endorsement of cluster development and other zoning provisions which can assist in the preservation of farmland, and county support for purchase of development rights programs, agricultural businesses and agritourism.

5. Property Tax Reform

The WCAFPB encourages the County Board of Supervisors and local towns to explore the potential of property tax reform to rectify some of the inequities in the property tax system as it relates to agriculture and farmland. It has been documented by a number of studies that property taxes paid for agricultural land significantly exceed the value of the services local government provides to this land. In a study done in Dutchess County, NY¹, the Cooperative Extension and the American Farmland Trust found that for every dollar paid in property taxes

¹ *Cost of Community Services Study, Towns of Beekman and Northeast, Dutchess County*, Cornell Cooperative Extension of Dutchess County and the American Farmland Trust, 1989.

for agricultural land, the local government expended only \$.21-\$.48, whereas for residential land each dollar collected in taxes required the expenditure of \$1.12-\$1.36.

In rural New York, the farming community pays a large part of the total real property taxes collected, and the burden of property taxes is one major factor threatening agriculture in the state. According to the NY Farm Bureau, “on average, property taxes on New York farms amount to an equivalent of 40% of net farm income, which is substantially higher than the 12% of household income that New York residents are paying in property taxes.”

The recently enacted NYS 1996 Farmers’ Protection and Farm Preservation Act has provided some relief, making it possible for farmers making at least two-thirds of their income from farming to qualify for a dollar-for-dollar credit on state income tax for school property tax paid (by 1999: 100% credit for tax paid on 250 agricultural acres and 50% credit on any remaining agricultural acreage). A number of proposals for additional reform concentrate on shifting the burden for state mandated programs such as welfare and Medicaid from local property taxes to the state general fund or other state funding sources. Methods of saving local government money will also benefit farmers by reducing the tax burden overall. Current proposals include repeal of the state’s Wicks Law which requires that government construction projects be parceled out to more than one contractor; repeal of unnecessary governmental regulation; and local government cost containment programs.

It is hoped that the Wayne County Board of Supervisors and local municipal governments will discuss how these issues impact agriculture in the county, and formulate positions which can provide property tax relief to the agricultural community.

6. Farm Labor

Two long-term projects are proposed to assist with problems of migrant workers: an *ombudsman* program, and a housing program. The ombudsman should speak Spanish and would help migrant workers feel more welcome in the community. The ombudsman would provide informational and logistical services, such as help with dealing with government regulations, understanding local customs, accessing services, etc.

Providing decent housing is critical for retaining skilled farm labor. Recently developed manufactured housing has brought down the cost of housing construction, but barriers still include sales tax, real property tax, and architectural and permitting requirements, and the difficulty of amortizing costs over a short season. It is recommended that the WCAFPB dialog with local growers and labor providers to understand local issues, research how these problems are being solved in other places, and prepare a plan for development of migrant worker housing in the county.