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TOWN OF OAKFIELD AGRICULTURE AND FARMLAND PROTECTION PLAN

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Town of Oakfield Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan

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AGRICULTURAL ACTION PLAN

The Recommendation Section provides the toolbox of items that can be used by the Town to accomplish the Agricultural Goals of the Town. The Implementation Section provides a Summary Table of the priority actions, estimates the approximate costs and designates the responsible parties to accomplish these recommendations.

This section of the Plan is an Action Plan that provides a step-by-step approach for the Town of Oakfield to take over the next three years and beyond. These actions are essential to help protect and preserve farmland that may be placed under development pressure due to the development of the STAMP project in the adjoining Town of Alabama.

Year 1 – After Adopting the Plan

1. As stated now, the Town Board is responsible for overseeing the implementation of the Plan. Alternatively, the Town could form an Agricultural Committee to facilitate the implementation of the Plan. Such a Committee would include representation from the Town Board (Legislative Board), the Planning Board (Approval Board) and Agricultural Community (impacted property owners).
2. The following items must be started immediately by the Town Board (or the Agriculture Committee with the support of the Town Board):
 - a. Create and adopt a Right-to-Farm Law.
 - b. Evaluate the Town’s agricultural zoning district, and consider revisions using the examples provided in the Plan. The intent of a stronger agricultural zoning district would be to prioritize agriculture and agricultural related uses, while also discouraging new residential uses and the subdivision of lands.
 - c. Finalize which parcels of land in the Town that should receive greater protection under a new agricultural zoning designation. The “lands to be protected” map provides a first step.
 - d. Adopt this new district and amended zoning map.
3. The Town of Alabama is preparing a moratorium law restricting residential development and the subdivision of land. While development pressures are expected to be less in Oakfield, the Town of Oakfield may wish to consider a similar action.
4. Begin working with the County to help farms respond to economic trends (Goal 2 Actions).

Year 2

1. The Town Board/ Agriculture Committee with support of the Town Board should create an Agricultural Conservation Easement Program.
 - a. This law will require approval by the New York State Legislature and the Town Board must garner support by its delegates/ State legislators to help begin the process.
 - b. Also discuss this program with the school districts and Genesee County.



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2. The Town Agriculture Plan and County Agriculture Plan identify the prioritized Agricultural Lands that could be suitable for the use of purchase of development rights (PDR's).
 - a. The Town, working with the County, and other support organizations should further evaluate those farms that are considered prioritized farms that would be most suitable for PDR's. Meet with the farm owners and discuss the PDR and voluntary agricultural conservation easement programs.
 - b. The Town Board needs to amend the Incentive Zoning Law to add the protection of agricultural lands as an amenity for which incentives can be offered, and encourage targeting of agricultural protection as a priority of the Town. With this change, monies from Incentive Zoning can be used to preserve agricultural lands; including purchasing of development rights.
 - c. Prepare a plan to apply for Agriculture Protection monies through the New York State PDR Program.
3. Start the recommendations listed under goal 4 to increase awareness of farming in the Town. This will be especially important if the STAMP Project progresses.

Year 3

1. Adopt the new Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (if approved by the State Legislature).
2. Begin outreach about Agricultural Conservation Easements, and contacting farmers that may be interested in this program.
3. If ready, apply for an Agricultural Lands Protection Grant (PDR).
4. The Agriculture Committee should assess how the implementation actions adopted to date are working. If a STAMP project has been announced or built, determine if any unanticipated impacts or larger impacts are happening. Is growth only occurring in the Smart Growth areas? Are there transportation impacts?
5. Choose from the toolbox of recommendations to recommend new actions to the Town Board (also begin to look at recommendations under Goal 3).

Year 4

Continue to act on the recommendations of the Plan by evaluating the actions taken to date and prioritizing new actions from the recommendations section for each coming year. The Town should also consider new actions/recommendations that can be added to the Plan through a Plan amendment process.



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Farming in the Town of Oakfield has been practiced since the early settlement of the community. Today, farming continues as a way of life and economic driver in the Town, and expected to continue well into the future. The preparation of this Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan is a means of ensuring that agricultural activities remain active and viable in Oakfield and that productive farmland is protected to ensure the continuation of these activities.

In 2005, the Town of Oakfield and Town of Alabama prepared a joint Comprehensive Plan as a means of better managing future growth and development in the community. The plan includes specific goals and recommendations for the protection of farming and agriculture in the Town. An amendment to this plan was developed in 2011, as part of the planning and environmental review for the Science and Technology Advanced Manufacturing Park (STAMP) project, which is planned in the Town of Alabama. As a part of that process, it was recommended that the Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan for Genesee County be updated, along with the preparation of local Agriculture and Farmland Protection Plans for the Towns of Oakfield and Alabama. In 2014, the two Towns secured funding through the New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets to prepare Farmland and Agricultural Protection Plans in an effort to implement the recommendations of the Comprehensive Plan and Plan Amendment.

The New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets defines farmland and agricultural protection as “the preservation, conservation, management, or improvement of lands that are part of viable farming operations, for the purpose of encouraging such lands to remain in agricultural production.” In accordance with the State’s requirements, municipalities that develop agricultural and farmland protection plans must include, among other things:

- the location of farmland or other areas proposed to be protected;
- an analysis of the factors concerning the areas and lands proposed to be protected, such as the value to the agricultural economy, the value of open space to the community, the consequences of possible conversion of farmland to other land uses, and the level of conversion pressure on the lands or areas proposed to be protected; and
- a description of activities, programs and strategies intended to be used to promote continued agricultural use.

In accordance with State requirements, the preparation of the agricultural and farmland protection plan included public input and, thereafter, was submitted to the Oakfield Town Board and the Genesee County Farmland Protection Board for their review. Upon Town and County approval, the plan was submitted by the Town to the Commissioner of the New York State Department of Agricultural and Markets for approval. The Town of Oakfield Farmland and Agricultural Protection Plan has been developed to comply with the intended State requirements.



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A. Public Participation

As the Town of Oakfield was committed to the idea that a critical and necessary element of the planning process is continuous and effective public participation, a number of public outreach efforts were conducted in both Towns. Public outreach efforts included the recognition of issues important to local stakeholders, acknowledgement of public concerns, and the identification of potential opportunities. The public participation program for the development of the Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plans consisted of public meetings and stakeholder outreach, public comment forms, and postings on the Town's website.

- **Agricultural Protection Steering Committee**

As Agricultural Protection Steering Committee was established and charged with providing guidance and oversight for the development of the Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plans for the Oakfield and Alabama communities, and with the implementation of the goals set forth in each Plan. The Agricultural Protection Steering Committee included representation from the Town of Oakfield and Town of Alabama governments, as well as the agricultural community. This Steering Committee met on a regular basis to review the progress of plan development, provide insight into the planning process, and ensure that the concerns of stakeholders and local citizens were taken into consideration.

- **Farmers Round Table**

The first public outreach meeting was conducted in a Round Table meeting format. This meeting was held with local farmers, farmland owners and other interested individuals on March 3, 2016 at the Oakfield Community Center. This meeting was well attended and was aimed at gathering input on farming and agricultural activities in each Town. The meeting included a group discussion centered on a number of questions about farming and agriculture. The input provided from this discussion helped provide the project consultants with a better understanding of existing conditions and practices in Oakfield (as well as the Town of Alabama) and was used to help shape preliminary goals and objectives for both communities.


**Town of Alabama - Town of Oakfield
Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plans**

The Towns of Oakfield and Alabama are working together to prepare Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plans. Our goal with these plans is to identify ways to help the farming community and protect important farm lands. There will be separate plans for each community to reflect the differences in the nature of agriculture in the two towns. While Genesee County is also in the process of updating the County-wide Agricultural Protection Plan, each local plan will be targeted to strategies that meet the needs of local farms and farmers.

As part of the planning effort for the two plans, we are scheduling roundtable discussions with farmers, farmland owners and other groups connected to agriculture. We want to get your ideas and input on agriculture in the two Towns. Most of the meeting will be an open discussion to identify issues and brainstorm possible strategies and solutions to be included in the Plans.

We hope you will be able to attend this meeting and participate.

When: Thursday, March 3, 2016 from 6:00 to 8:00 pm
Where: Town of Oakfield Community and Government Center





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- **Public Information Meeting**

A Public Information Meeting was held on April 28, 2016 at the Town of Alabama Fire Hall to gather additional input from local residents and others on farming activities, and to vet preliminary goals and discuss the vision for the future of farming in Oakfield (as well as the Town of Alabama). This meeting included the completion of a survey questionnaire to gauge public sentiment and awareness about agricultural activities and associated issues in the Town. The results of this meeting were used to finalize draft goals and objectives for the Plan.


PUBLIC INFORMATION MEETING

TOWN OF ALABAMA & TOWN OF OAKFIELD
AGRICULTURAL AND FARMLAND PROTECTION PLANS

what: The Towns of Alabama and Oakfield are each preparing Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plans in recognition of the importance of farming in the communities. The plans will propose strategies for supporting agriculture and protecting important farmlands.

when: Thursday April 28, 2016 at 7:00

where: Town of Alabama Fire Hall located at 2230 Judge Rd, Basom, NY



Please come to learn about the plans and offer your input.

Written comments may be sent to: AgPlans@wd-ae.com

- **Agency Outreach**

Members of the Project Team contacted representatives from local and regional agencies to assess agricultural economic development and farmland preservation efforts in Genesee County and the Towns of Oakfield and Alabama, and to provide these representatives the opportunity to offer input into the planning process. These stakeholder agencies included the Genesee County Farm Bureau, the Genesee County Agricultural Protection Board, Western New York Land Conservancy, the Genesee Land Trust, Cornell Cooperative Extension and the Genesee County Planning Department.

- **Second Public Meeting**

A second meeting was held with local farmers, farmland owners, residents and other interested residents and individuals on March 23, 2017. The purpose of this meeting was to provide an opportunity for these stakeholders and the public to review the findings, SWOT analysis and recommendations in the Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan and offer their input. This meeting included a presentation of the information, viewing of maps, and an exchange of ideas and information in an effort to finalize this section of the Plan.



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B. Findings and Analysis

In developing the Town of Oakfield Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan, an assessment of farming and agricultural conditions, resources and activity in the Town, and other information gathered during the planning process, was undertaken. This assessment revealed the following issues, opportunities and concerns as they relate to farmland protection:

- A wide extent of the Town of Oakfield is included in a County-designated Agricultural District, and approximately 61 percent of the Town is currently farmland. Lands in the Town are primarily used for dairy farming, grain and feed crops and vegetable production. There are also a number of farm stands, farmers markets and other establishments where freshly grown farm products can be sold to the public.
- The community is underlain with good farm soils, including prime soils, prime soils when drained, and soils of State-wide importance. Over three-quarters of the Town's soils (76.3 percent) fall into one of these three categories.
- The trend in farming nationally is toward larger farms, and farming is increasingly competing as a global industry. Farmers in Oakfield market their products at a local, regional, national and international level, depending on what they produce.
- The trend in Genesee County is that farming is self-sustaining and this is expected to continue well into the future.
- The Town of Oakfield Comprehensive Plan recommends the protection of agriculture as a viable land use in the Town, and supports the preparation of the Agriculture and Farmland Protection Plan. The value of agriculture is also recognized, and farmland protection is strongly supported, at the County and regional levels; there are many programs available to assist farmers.
- Local farmers are knowledgeable, pro-active and adaptable to new markets and technologies, and work well with other farmers in the Town and region.
- There is strong public support for farming in the community and protection of rural character; residents want to see farming activity maintained and continued in the Town of Oakfield.
- Organic farming practices are becoming more popular, particularly on smaller farms. Training and technical assistance would be useful to help this industry prosper.
- The Oakfield-Alabama School District participates in the Farm to School Projects program. They currently purchase potatoes and apples from local farms in the area.



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- The extent of areas being farmed has remained constant, with a significant amount of land in the Town devoted to farming. Older farmers are staying in their family homestead, but renting acreage to other farmers to keep their lands in agricultural production. However, there is a need for estate and transition planning.
- There is not a lot of land available for the expansion of farming, which can drive up land costs and impact the ability of younger farmers and start-up operations to establish in the Town.
- Support businesses, including farm equipment sales and service, farming supplies, processing facilities, etc., are located throughout the region and available to farmers in the Town. However, there are no facilities for the processing of animals in the County.
- Public water is (or will be) available throughout most of the Town; public sanitary sewer infrastructure does extend to homes and businesses in the area surrounding the Village. Areas of the Town located further outside of the Village of Oakfield utilize septic systems.
- Priority development areas (smart growth areas) have been identified in the Town of Oakfield where public water service currently exists or will be extended. Once the Town's water system is complete, new development will only be allowed in these identified areas, where approximately 50 parcels that are not farmland exist for development.
- In the last round of review and revisions to the Genesee County Smart Growth Plan, the Town removed farmland from the priority development areas, making these areas smaller.
- The Town of Oakfield is in the process of adopting clustered development regulations; once adopted, public sewer service will be extended to three properties in the identified development areas where clustered residential development is desired.
- Public water is beneficial to dairies and farmers growing leafy vegetables. As farms grow bigger and employ more people, the importance of fresh water increases. Cows consume a lot of water, and quality water increases production. Fire safety and public health requirements also hinge on access to an adequate source of water. Water availability will affect existing and future agricultural product development.
- The New York State Department of Agricultural and Markets will allow lateral hook ups to agricultural operations and farms. However, if the agricultural use changes in the future, additional housing that is proposed for the property would not be provided access to public water service if the property is located in an agricultural district.



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- Between 1990 and 2014, the population in the Town of Oakfield has declined by approximately 2.7 percent and there is currently no pressure for new residential development. However, population growth and demand for new housing development is likely to increase over the long term as the STAMP project progresses and job opportunities materialize. This is something that the Town may want to monitor in an effort to gauge the level of development pressure in the community and determine if mitigative actions or programs may be needed to better manage growth.
- Local residents and farmers want to see new residential development kept in and around the hamlets. A preference was expressed for conservation subdivision development and other techniques that preserve farmland. Opposition was noted for standard road frontage development. In public meetings held for this effort, farmers in attendance indicated that they were not interested in selling off frontage lots, due to concern over problems with neighbors.
- The Town of Oakfield does not have adopted Right to Farm (RTF) regulations. This may become more significant in the event the community experiences an influx of new residents who may not be familiar with farming and farm practices as a result of the STAMP development. The public indicated support for RTF regulations.
- Residents in the Town of Oakfield (outside of the Village) must pay county, town, school district and special fire district property taxes; these are significant costs for farmers.
- Traffic is increasing on local roadways; conflicts between farm machinery and automobiles are becoming a more frequent occurrence and a greater concern. Farmers are also having greater difficulty entering and exiting their fields.
- Local roadway conditions and design constraints (limited width and narrow shoulders) and, in some locations, lack of maintenance impact the movement of farm machinery and farm truck traffic traveling to processing plants. The location of overhead power lines, culverts and mail boxes were also noted as a constraint for movement of farm machinery.
- The Town has an established Residential Agricultural (R-A) zoning classification that allows farms and farm related activities.
- Drainage improvements and ditch maintenance are a major concern in order to keep agricultural land viable and maintain the vitality of farm soils, get water off fields (drain mucky soils) and get water to fields to sustain crops.
- Additionally, wetland regulations are making it more difficult for farmers to drain their lands for use, which is resulting in the loss of productive farmland.



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- The use of small-scale, on-farm sources of alternative energy generation is beneficial to local farmers, allowing them the ability to cut utility costs and/or supplement their income. Leasing land for solar farms is feasible, providing it does not take productive farmland and good farm soils out of use.
- BOCES, Genesee County Community College and Cornell Cooperative Extension offer a number of valuable educational programs for farmers, such as the Agricultural Academy. However, there is a need to educate farmers on business management basics.
- Agricultural oriented programming needs to be offered/strengthened at all levels in the Oakfield Alabama School District to introduce farming culture (where does food come from, what do farmers do, farm tours, potential careers, etc.)

Analysis of Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats

The following SWOT analysis was prepared using the comments and other input gathered from discussions with farmers and other local stakeholders, the Advisory Committee, and the public, as well as the findings of the analysis of existing conditions and agricultural resources. This analysis identifies what are considered to be the strengths and weaknesses that affect farming and agriculture in the Town of Oakfield (internal factors over which you generally have some measure of control), and the opportunities and threats that come from outside the community (external factors over which you have essentially no control). This analysis is useful in helping to identify strategies for helping the Town achieve its goals and objectives for the future.

SWOT Analysis

| <u>Strengths</u> | <u>Weaknesses</u> |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <i>Wide extent of productive farm land</i> <i>Good / productive farm soils</i> <i>Strong farm traditions</i> <i>Farmers (proactive, knowledgeable, adaptable)</i> <i>Large number of family farm operations</i> <i>Strong public support for farming</i> <i>County and regional support/programs</i> <i>Limited development pressure</i> <i>Availability of support services</i> <i>Availability of public water</i> <i>Recognition of the value of agricultural land</i> <i>Few farmer/neighbor conflicts</i> <i>Interest in utilizing alternative energy sources</i> <i>Genesee County Smart Growth Plan</i> | <i>Land availability</i> <i>No local Right To Farm protections</i> <i>Technology limitations /internet access</i> <i>Roadway conditions</i> <i>Wetlands / wetland regulations</i> <i>Declining / aging population</i> <i>Drainage / potential loss of farmland</i> <i>Zoning / land use regulations</i> <i>Loss of agricultural programming in schools</i> <i>Limited business management skills/training</i> <i>Price volatility</i> |



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| <u>Opportunities</u> | <u>Threats</u> |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------|
| <i>Market trends</i> | <i>Market trends</i> |
| <i>Availability of processing facilities for produce and milk</i> | <i>STAMP / future development</i> |
| <i>County, regional and state programs/support</i> | <i>Roadway infrastructure</i> |
| <i>Infrastructure / support businesses</i> | <i>Increasing land costs</i> |
| <i>Stable county population</i> | <i>No facilities for processing animals in County</i> |
| <i>Increasing interest in buying local produce</i> | <i>Competition for limited resources</i> |
| <i>Growing agritourism industry</i> | <i>Lack of awareness about farming by the non-farm public</i> |
| <i>Labor availability</i> | <i>Immigration restrictions</i> |

C. Vision, Goals, Recommendations and Implementation Strategies

The Town's primary purpose for developing this Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan is to recognize, better understand and establish a strategy for protecting the agricultural and rural character of the Oakfield community. Using the findings of the inventory and analysis of resources, along with input from those who attended the Farmers and Agency Stakeholders' Round Table and Public Information meetings, a Vision for agriculture and farmland protection was developed:

The Town of Oakfield recognizes that farming provides jobs, food and other products important to the economic prosperity of the community, the region, and the state. Agriculture supports our families, helps balance the tax base, and is the highest and most fiscally valuable use of the land. We recognize that farming and agricultural activities contribute to the preservation of open space and rural community character, and are important to our heritage.

The Town of Oakfield supports protecting and promoting farming and agriculture in the community, and educating the public about the importance of agriculture for the long-term success and vibrancy of the Town. It is the vision of the Town of Oakfield to be a rural community that values its farmland and its agricultural heritage, and that supports the viability of the local agricultural economy.

To support this vision, goals and objectives were developed, shaped around the major issues and concerns expressed by farmers, residents, Town officials, agency representatives and other interested parties. The plan outlines a number of programs, activities, strategies and techniques that can be used to protect farming and promote the continuation of agricultural activities in a community. The choice of which mechanisms to utilize can be based on the extent of agricultural



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activities in a community, as well as the amount of development pressure that exists. Section V of this Plan provides an overview of programs and techniques that may be helpful to the Town for protecting the important farmland. These include farmland protection tools such as agricultural and incentive zoning, conservation subdivision, purchase of development rights (PDR) and transfer of development rights (TDR); estate and transition planning; tax relief programs, such as tax credit programs, agricultural use assessments, and farm building and forest land exemptions; and environmental management programs, such as the environmental quality incentive program, agricultural management assistance, organic farming, grazing, farm viability assistance and the biomass crop assistance program.

Recommendations and implementation strategies, which provide a wide variety of options that can be utilized by the Town to protect farming and agricultural activities in the community, were developed in conjunction with each of the goals, which are aimed at protecting and enhancing important agricultural resources and the long term viability of farming in the Town; increasing public awareness of agriculture in Oakfield; and protecting, enhancing and expanding the agricultural economy. The options that follow provide a tool box of strategies that can be employed by the Town, as needed, to address issues and concerns, capitalize on opportunities and ensure the continued presence of farming activities in Oakfield.

Goal 1:

Protect Lands and Resources Critical to the Long Term Success and Sustainability of Agriculture

The Town recognizes that farming and agricultural activities contribute to the preservation of open space and maintain the rural community character and heritage of the area, and that protecting and promoting the agricultural industry in the Town, which includes field crops, dairies, and keeping of animals, among other uses, is of primary importance to the local economy and overall future of Oakfield.

1. Adopt the Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan as a demonstration of commitment to maintaining farming as an important part of the Oakfield Community. Ensure that the adopted Plan is posted on the Town of Oakfield website and/or the website for the Genesee County Department of Planning.
2. Vest the Oakfield Town Board with the responsibility of implementing the Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan, advocating for agricultural protection, making appropriate land use decisions that with respect to the protection of agricultural lands, mediating potential conflicts and, in general, protecting the rights of farmers in the Town.
3. Adopt a Right-to-Farm Law as a commitment to the rights of farmers to work their land, including undertaking the various tasks and activities associated with their efforts.



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4. Work with Genesee County and neighboring communities, particularly the Town of Alabama and Village of Oakfield, to identify mutually beneficial ways to carry out the goals and objectives of the Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan.
5. The Town of Oakfield, with Genesee County, has been successful in maintaining or increasing the size of the State Agricultural District. These efforts should be continued to ensure that the number of farms located in the district is sustained well into the future.
6. In an effort to promote the Town's position on agricultural and farmland protection, post the adopted Town of Oakfield Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan, along with maps of local agricultural districts, a copy of the adopted Oakfield Right-to-Farm Law, and any other information pertinent to agricultural protection in the Town on the Town's website to facilitate access to this information for local real estate brokers, realtors and lawyers.
7. Support the provision of adequate funding from New York State for the repair of roads and bridges in the Town of Oakfield that need repair or improvement to alleviate problems and improve local use by farmers and product transporters.
8. Amend the Town's Zoning Law (Article IV Section 412.8) to require the establishment of substantial vegetated buffers (more than 10 feet in width) along lot lines located between new residences and adjacent farmland for all residential development that occurs in or adjacent to the Residential Agricultural (R-A) district to reduce potential conflicts.
9. Adopt Cluster Residential Development regulations to enable conservation subdivision design and ensure the quality and land preservation capability of new residential development.
10. Continue to support local farmers markets, agricultural vehicle signage, etc. in an effort to help keep farmers farming and help their businesses remain viable.
11. If pressure for land development increases in the future, in cooperation with Genesee County and the Oakfield-Alabama School District, explore the feasibility of enacting a local tax abatement program in exchange for term or permanent conservation easements for farmland protection. This kind of program provides a percentage reduction in property taxes as a part of the agreement between the landowner and the Town for farmland preservation.



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Goal 2:

Enhance and Expand the Agricultural Economy of the Town and its Capacity to Respond to Economic Trends and Changes

Agricultural related businesses support farming and contribute to the regional economy. The existing economic base of the community and viability of existing businesses should be protected and expanded because a strong base is good for farmers, the Town and the region.

Recommendations:

1. Promote the importance of programs, organizations and agencies that support and assist farmers and farmland property owners, such as Cornell Cooperative Extension, the Soil and Water Conservation District and the Natural Resources Conservation Service. Furthermore, advocate for the continued funding of these programs at appropriate levels.
2. Promote educational programs and training offered by Genesee Community College and other entities in the region to help existing farmers and those interested in farming careers gain a greater understanding of agricultural practices. Furthermore, encourage the County to offer training in basic business management techniques.
3. Encourage retired farmers and non-farm property owners of vacant land to rent/continue to rent their properties to other local farmers to maintain and expand the amount of land in agricultural use.
4. Promote the use of small-scale, on-farm solar technology, wind turbines and other energy efficient measures to help farmers conserve resources, reduce costs and stay up to date with farming practices and technology.
5. Work with Genesee County to secure access to broadband communication service in the Town to further assist local farmers and agricultural businesses.
6. Encourage Genesee County, Cornell Cooperative Extension and the Soil and Water Conservation District to create a clearing house of information (“one-stop shopping”) for farmers and others (website, training opportunities, seminars on state and federal programs of benefit to farmers, funding opportunities, etc.) in support of farming and agricultural business in the community.
7. Work with Genesee County to help farmers expand local markets for locally grown products.
8. Ensure that farmers are advised on the various tax relief programs that are available to help reduce their tax burden, as well as viable environmental management programs.



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9. Encourage farmers to explore and take advantage of federal and State programs that assist with the transition to organic farming or other farm technologies that could be of benefit.
10. Encourage the Oakfield-Alabama School District to continue their participation in the Farm to School Project program, and expand the purchase of local produce in the district. At present, the district only purchases locally grown potatoes and apples.

Goal 3:

Promote the link between farms and food

Farming provides a number of benefits to the community, including the production of local food, jobs, and other economic benefits. Strengthening this link and the local understanding of how farming and agriculture are important to the community will contribute to its long term success and long term prosperity.

Recommendations:

1. Use the Town of Oakfield (or Genesee County) website to post local events, newsletters and other means to increase awareness and promote the value and benefits of farming to Town residents and others.
2. Be supportive of an “Eat Local” campaign to increase awareness of the availability of local farm products and opportunities, including the variety of products produced by the Upstate Niagara Cooperative, Dairy Farmers of America, and other farmer-owned cooperatives.
3. Promote the availability of existing information that is posted on the Genesee County and Cornell Cooperative Extension websites on local farming, farm stands and farmers markets in the Town and region.
4. Work with Cornell Cooperative Extension and Genesee County to supplement/strengthen the information they offer to the public by creating a full, on-line directory of farm markets in the area, including their location, products and availability, prices, etc.
5. Encourage Genesee County and others to continue outreach programs, such as KinderFarmin’ and local farm tours for school students, residents, Town officials and others to promote agricultural awareness and the link between farms and food, and participate in these events.



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Goal 4:

Increase awareness of farming by the non-farm community to ensure the long term viability of farming in Oakfield

Farming provides benefits to the community, such as rural community character, scenic vistas, and a more balanced tax base. It is the highest and best use, and most fiscally valuable use, of land in Genesee County and the Town of Oakfield. Increasing public awareness of how agriculture positively impacts a community and the needs of farmers to operate successfully is essential for achieving public support for the long term viability of this industry.

Recommendations:

1. Ensure that the Right-to-Farm law includes a means for mitigating conflicts and disputes that may arise between farmers and non-farm residents in the future.
2. Encourage Genesee County Chamber of Commerce and other entities to create a “Farming in Oakfield” or a “Farming in Genesee County” packet to be distributed to new and existing residents that identifies the benefits of farming and the resources (fresh food, etc.) available in the community.
3. Support County-wide efforts to develop a public education campaign to help residents and others understand the benefits of farming for maintaining rural character and open space, contributing to the local economy, balancing the tax base, etc., as well as how farms operate, in an effort to build and strengthen local support for farming in Oakfield.
4. Install “The Town of Oakfield is a Right-to-Farm community” signage along roadways at all entry points to the community.
5. Install signage on heavily traveled roads that illustrates images of farm tractors or similar machinery to advise travelers on these local roadways that they are used by farm machines and to be aware of their presence. Encourage New York State and Genesee County to do the same for roadways under their jurisdiction.
6. Encourage the Oakfield-Alabama School District to participate in the “Agriculture in the Classroom” program that works with pre-K through middle school teachers, Cornell Cooperative Extension and other community educators, farmers and producers, volunteers, parents, and community partners to increase agricultural literacy in New York (<http://www.aqclassroom.org/ny/about/index.htm>).



Town of Oakfield Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan

7. To ensure that prospective residents are properly informed about the importance and nature of agriculture in the Town of Oakfield, and that they understand the Town's position on agricultural and farmland protection as a Right-to Farm community, post the adopted Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan, a copy of the Town's adopted Right-to-Farm law and any other pertinent information on the Town's website to ensure that local real estate brokers, realtors and lawyers have easy access to this information and can easily disseminate it to their clients.



Town of Oakfield Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan

SECTION I – INTRODUCTION

A. Grant and Consultant

In 2005, the Towns of Oakfield and Town of Alabama prepared a joint Comprehensive Plan as a means of better managing future growth and development in the community. The plan includes specific goals and recommendations for the protection of farming and agriculture in the Town. In 2014, the Towns of Oakfield and Alabama secured funding through the New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets to prepare Farmland and Agricultural Protection Plans in an effort to implement the recommendations of the Comprehensive Plan. The New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets defines farmland and agricultural protection as “the preservation, conservation, management, or improvement of lands that are part of viable farming operations, for the purpose of encouraging such lands to remain in agricultural production.” In accordance with the State’s requirements, municipalities that develop agricultural and farmland protection plans must include, among other things:

- the location of farmland or other areas proposed to be protected;
- an analysis of the factors concerning the areas and lands proposed to be protected, such as the value to the agricultural economy, the value of open space to the community, the consequences of possible conversion of farmland to other land uses, and the level of conversion pressure on the lands or areas proposed to be protected; and
- a description of activities, programs and strategies intended to be used to promote continued agricultural use.

Preparation of the agricultural and farmland protection plan must include public input and, thereafter, be submitted to the Oakfield Town Board and the Genesee County Farmland Protection Board for their review. Upon Town and County approval, the plan must be submitted by the Town to the Commissioner of the New York State Department of Agricultural and Markets for approval. The Town of Oakfield Farmland and Agricultural Protection Plan has been developed to comply with the intended State requirements.

B. Existing Plans and Programs

The following is an overview of existing land use plans that have been developed by other entities, including the Finger Lakes Region, Genesee County and the Town, that promote the protection and enhancement of agriculture. The information presented below includes the policies, goals and recommendations related to agricultural and farmland protection, as set forth in each individual plan. These plans are all supportive of the Town of Oakfield Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan and the Town’s desire to maintain farming as an important industry in the community.



Town of Oakfield Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan

Oakfield Alabama Comprehensive Plan – 2005

The Town and Village of Oakfield and the Town of Alabama jointly completed a comprehensive plan in 2005. The plan includes recommendations that address the following goals. A “Vision Map” for each municipality depicts preferred development and conservation areas, as well as recommendations for infrastructure and transportation connections.

Town of Oakfield

- Provide for economic development
- Protect and preserve agricultural land uses
- Maintain and enhance community character
- Protect the environmental features and resources of the community

Town of Alabama

- Protect, promote and preserve agriculture
- Maintain and enhance community character
- Protect the environmental features and resources of the Town
- Provide for economic development in the Town

Genesee County Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan

Genesee County completed an Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan in 2001, which was updated 2017. The County’s Plan includes background information on Agricultural Land Preservation in New York, an analysis of farmland protection techniques and case studies of best practices. The original Plan set forth a number of key recommendations and was intended to support the creation of "Enhanced Agricultural Districts" and a County-Wide Purchase of Development Rights Program. The following summarizes those recommendations:

- Refine the Strategic Farmland Map and incorporate it into the Smart Growth Plan.
- Reaffirm the importance of existing agricultural districts, especially with regard to water and sewer extensions.
- Conduct an ‘audit’ of each town's zoning and subdivision provisions and recent past development patterns to help the towns understand the potential impact on maintaining a critical mass of farmland
- Consider the designation of an ‘agricultural production zone.
- Consider use of incentive zoning as a mitigation tool.
- Develop new funding sources specifically for a farmland protection fund.
- Create ‘Enhanced Agricultural District Program’ for mid-term protection of Farmland.
- Prepare to Purchase Development Rights.
- Integrate a farmland protection component into the County's public education efforts about agriculture.



Town of Oakfield Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan

- Conduct periodic estate planning seminars for farmers and professionals.
- Advocate for implementation of the Agriculture Development Plan.

Although the County's Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan was prepared at the County level and assigns responsibility for implementation to County agencies, it includes the following recommendations that are applicable to Town level planning in Oakfield:

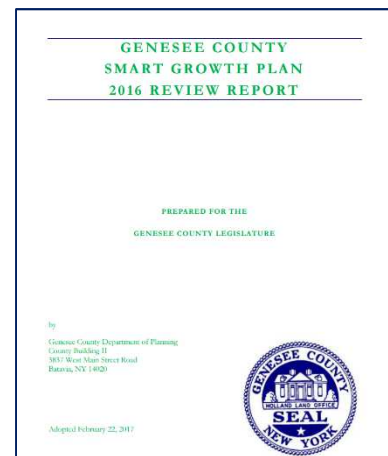
- *Retain, Expand and Recruit Agribusiness* - Emphasize the County's comparative advantages in distribution, production, processing and support services, and focus on the County's two most prominent sectors, which are dairy and vegetables;
- *Support Improvements to Rural Utilities* - This includes public and private efforts to extend high speed internet service and reduce electricity costs in the Town;
- *Integrate County Plans, Policies and Programs* - Utilize the County's Smart Growth Plan as an underlying policy document for land use and development decisions;
- *Direct Consistent and Supportive Land-Use Policies* - Improve comprehensive planning and investigate the use of incentive zoning, agricultural protection zoning and the use of performance criteria for granting special use permits; and
- *Advocate for Appropriate Infrastructure Development* - Identify needed transportation and water improvements.

Genesee County Smart Growth Plan

The Genesee County Smart Growth Plan was originally prepared in 2001 by the Water Resources Agency on behalf of the County Legislature, in conjunction with a plan to extend water service in Genesee County. The purpose of the plan is to minimize the potential impacts from additional growth and development that would otherwise result from the extension of water service.

The objectives of the Smart Growth Plan, which are consistent with the general principles of smart growth, are to:

- Focus County resources to support economic development opportunities in the most promising locations,
- Encourage the revitalization of existing industrial areas, business districts and residential neighborhoods in the City of Batavia and developed village areas, and
- Protect farmland and the rural character of the countryside, and maintain the viability of agriculture.



Town of Oakfield Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan

The primary function of the Genesee County Smart Growth Plan is to ensure that the extension of public water does not result in additional new development that is inconsistent with smart growth principles. The Plan delineates specific “Priority Development Areas” and “Reserve Areas” within the County. Genesee County reviews and refines the boundaries of the Development Areas on a regular basis, currently every three years. The Smart Growth Plan was most recently updated in 2016.

Priority Development Areas are locations wherein development and redevelopment would be encouraged and the County would not restrict access to portions of the public water systems. This includes areas with significant potential for economic development, as well as areas already relatively densely developed with housing and commercial and industrial uses. Priority Development areas were identified based on access to transportation, feasibility of extending or enhancing public water service, the availability or potential for extending other public infrastructure and services to support development, minimal contact with land in County Agricultural Districts and State regulated wetlands, and minimal contact with land identified as an ecological network or natural asset core, as identified by the Green Genesee Smart Genesee project.

Outside of these designated Development Areas, access to the County-funded portions of the County’s water system is subject to the policies and procedures specified in the Genesee County Smart Growth Plan. In general, the County has strict lateral restrictions for parcels located outside of the designated Development Areas. Only existing structures have been allowed access to public water hookups. The intent of the Plan is to discourage development outside of the Priority Development Areas in order to minimize conflicts between new development and agricultural uses. As a result of the 2016 review, and based upon recommendations in existing comprehensive plans, local planning initiatives, findings of the Green Genesee Smart Genesee project, results from NYS Agricultural District reviews and comments received during the public review process, the boundaries of the Priority Development Areas will be expanded in the hamlet of Basom in the Town of Alabama, and in the Town of Oakfield around the Village, along with a few other locations in the County. Priority Development Areas are also recommended to be scaled back in the southwest portion of the hamlet of Basom in the Town Alabama and in portions of the Town of Oakfield based on the criteria review. These modifications would protect natural systems per the Green Genesee Smart Genesee Road Map.

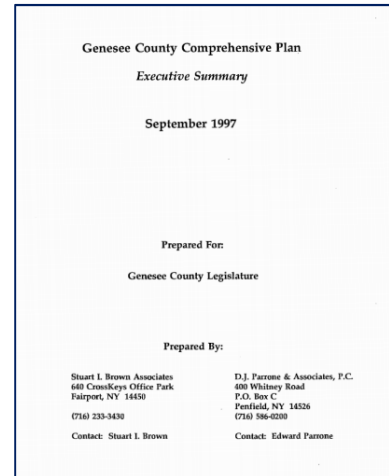
Two new “Reserved Development Areas” are also established south of the Village of Oakfield and in the hamlet of Basom in the Town of Alabama. Reserve Areas are lands adjacent to Priority Development Areas that currently have been set aside for near future development of significant density as determined through sufficient studies and plans by their respective municipalities. Water hookups are not automatic in the Reserved Areas until the areas are certified by Genesee County.



Town of Oakfield Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan

Genesee County Comprehensive Plan

The Genesee County Comprehensive Plan, adopted by the Genesee County Legislature in 1998, recommends strategies for ten focus areas, which currently include Economic and Workforce Development; Education and Government Administration; Housing Opportunities; Land Use, Environment and Placemaking; Agriculture and Food Production; Community Wellness; Criminal Justice and Emergency Management; Parks, Arts, Recreation and Culture; Technology and Utilities; and Transportation and Mobility. Every three years, ten respective Focus Groups convene to assess progress on each of the recommended strategies and issue a Monitoring Report. Monitoring reports were most recently prepared in April of 2017.



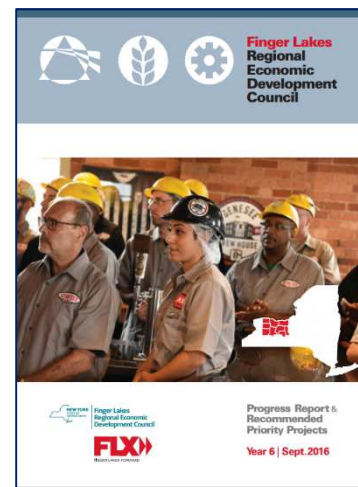
A report for Agriculture and Food Production was not prepared as the County's Agriculture and Farmland Protection Plan was updated in 2017, in concert with the preparation of the Agriculture and Farmland Protection Plans for the Towns of Oakfield and Alabama.

Genesee County Targeted Wastewater System Study (2007)

Genesee County prepared a study that estimated the cost for providing public sewer service to each of the areas identified as Development Areas in the Genesee County Smart Growth Plan.

Finger Lakes Regional Economic Development Council Strategic Plan

The Finger Lakes Regional Economic Development Council Strategic Plan is a comprehensive plan to create a more dynamic and sustainable economy for the region. It was initially prepared in 2011, with progress reports prepared on an annual basis. The Plan reflects the values, perspectives and aspirations of the people in the region. The Plan is aimed at making fundamental improvements in the economy to ensure sustainable and long-term growth in jobs and income in the nine-county region, and to contribute to the resurgence of the broader economy of New York State.



The Strategic Plan envisions that the Finger Lakes region will accelerate its transformation to a diverse, knowledge-based economy by building on strengths that include renewable natural resources, a talented and highly educated workforce, a historic commitment to innovation and philanthropy, leadership as the state's top agricultural region, international recognition as a center for optics and photonics, and national leadership in per capita intellectual property and degrees in higher education. Through these efforts, the region seeks to become a national leader in innovation and



Town of Oakfield Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan

commercialization with the long-term goals of increasing job creation at a rate that exceeds national levels and enhancing the region's quality of life to attract and retain business and our citizens.

The Strategic Plan highlights the fact that Finger Lakes agriculture has long exported to the rest of the nation. Regional entrepreneurs, who long ago realized that they could add value to their produce by processing crops and animal products locally before shipping, created cheese factories, wineries, frozen food factories, and many other food processing enterprises. Today, the agricultural and food processing cluster represents a crucial part of the region's economy, employing nearly 19,000 with a payroll of \$700 million. The Finger Lakes region leads New York State in sales of milk, fruit and nut, corn, and organic products. The region leads the state in sales of all crops, harvesting one-third of the state total by value, and in sales of all animal products, producing one-quarter. The Finger Lakes region is an important producer of fruits and vegetables. In addition to grapes, the region is a leading grower of apples, helping to make New York State second in the nation in apple production. Other leading crops include soybeans, cabbage, sweet corn, and onions, though the list of all crops grown in the region is much longer. As a leading producer of organic products, the region enjoys a booming network of farmers' markets, farm markets, and Community Supported Agriculture programs. The Finger Lakes region leads the state in dairy production, producing more than 3.1 billion pounds of milk each year and making New York State the third largest dairy state in the nation. Dairy products are exported to markets and used locally by cheese, yogurt, and other food and beverage manufacturers.

Farmers receive support from a variety of programs that offer education and training as well as agricultural research and advice. Each of the region's counties has a local Cornell Cooperative Extension association that supports programs such as the North Western New York Dairy, Livestock and Field Crops Team, the Lake Ontario Fruit Program, and the Cornell Vegetable Program. The region offers food processors two critical competitive advantages: abundant fresh water and easy access to major North American markets. More than one third of the combined population of the U.S. and Canada live within 500 miles of the region, reducing the cost and the time needed to get products to markets.

Recognizing that the Finger Lakes region is the breadbasket of New York State. The Plan includes strategies to enable the region to build upon leadership in agricultural sector over the next five years by continuing to leverage its competitive advantages and proximity to major markets in order to:

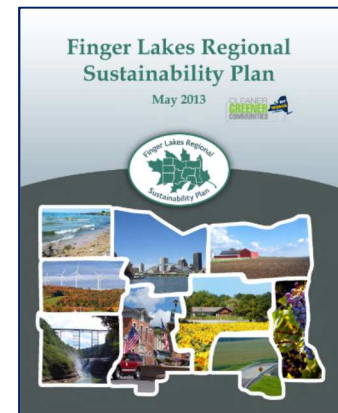
- Increase the value and diversity of agricultural products and exports;
- Support the creation and expansion of food processing companies in the region through incentives and academic-private partnerships to gain manufacturing efficiencies and access to new markets;
- Increase the number of people employed in the food processing industry in the region; and
- Invest in projects that create synergy between the region's agriculture and energy sectors, particularly in the area of biofuels.



Town of Oakfield Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan

Finger Lakes Regional Sustainability Plan (2013)

The Genesee Finger Lakes Regional Sustainability Plan was developed to create a future where social and environmental issues in the nine-county region are addressed within the framework of a sustainable regional economy. The Plan promotes the creation and maintenance of conditions under which the Finger Lakes Regional communities utilize available resources in the most effective ways to permit social and economic growth, while preserving natural resources. The Plan focuses on six areas that are critical to attaining sustainability in the region, including agriculture and forestry.



The Plan considers agriculture and forestry as two important industries that provide tremendous economic value and environmental benefits to local communities. The need to incorporate sustainable practices, protect agricultural land and increase the availability of value-added products are recognized in the Plan, as well as the fact agriculture in the region is important for supporting the entire food system, from farmers to processors, to restaurants and to grocers. Land that remains in farming also provides scenic, employment and tourism benefits, while avoiding the costs of urban sprawl.

Opportunities for agriculture in the region were identified as:

- Stronger connections with urban markets;
- Mostly family-owned farms, which are better suited to sustainable models;
- Environmental protections through farmland design and practice;
- The rise of local farmers markets;
- Slow food, locavore and organic markets; and
- Strategic land use policies and programs.

Challenges include rising costs, rapidly evolving technologies, development pressure, aging farm owners and succession planning, and public perception/nuisances. Additionally, variables effecting farming and agriculture include the availability of capital, a quality workforce, consumption patterns and consumer tastes, national and global markets, and erratic weather.

The Plan establishes regional sustainability strategies and sub-strategies, which include the following:

- Support the continued development of an efficient and productive regional food system.
 - Support the expansion of regional processing and distribution facilities, and/or other facilities that add value to regional food products.
 - Increase food security for individuals and households at risk of hunger.



Town of Oakfield Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan

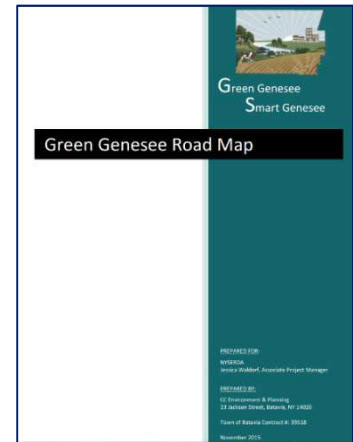
- Increase regional farms' sales to regional institutional buyers.
- Increase regional farms' direct sales to consumers through such means as multi-farm community supported agriculture programs and increased access to local food retailers.
- Increase adoption of distributed bio-energy production technologies to increase production of renewable energy from farm and forest products and product waste.
 - Advance the availability and affordability of scalable plug-and-play bio-energy production systems, and provide standards for selling excess power into the grid.
 - Assist farm operators in analyzing energy demand, as well as opportunities for efficiency and potential energy production.
 - Establish local policy frameworks and incentives for community-scale bio-energy production and distribution.
 - Develop purchase agreements for the sale of bio-energy produced by the agricultural and forestry sectors to the power grid.
- Reduce the conversion of quality farmland.
 - Support the creation and implementation of municipal farmland protection plans.
 - Improve regulatory context for purchase, lease and/or transfer of development rights.
 - Increase use of underutilized grasslands for livestock production.
 - Expand or create opportunities to engage existing and new farmers in succession planning efforts.
- Support farm-scale diversity of product types, both in-season and across seasons, and support the establishment and growth of a diversity of operations with regard to size, market, and operation type.
 - Develop models to assist in the management of farm-scale diversity for small and medium sized operations.
 - Strengthen opportunities for producing, marketing and exporting specialty agricultural products.
 - Support research and development initiatives regarding environmental markets and other incentives related to carbon sequestration and water quality improvement.
- Educate the non-farming community about the economic, environmental, and social impacts that the agricultural sector has on the region.
 - Support efforts to document the economic impact of agriculture and forestry throughout the region.
 - Expand access to service programs specifically oriented toward small farms.
 - Create or expand opportunities to build a regional food identity focused on the Finger Lakes Region.



Town of Oakfield Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan

Green Genesee Smart Genesee (2016)

The Green Genesee Smart Genesee is a sustainable land use plan funded through NYSEERDA's Cleaner Greener Communities program. The intent of the plan is to promote a more sustainable future for the County, exploring how environmental improvements can promote social and economic benefits. Recommendations build upon the County's Smart Growth Plan, and focus on ways to save energy and reduce greenhouse gas emissions while outlining ways to grow in a sustainable manner. The "Green" portion of the plan identifies and prioritizes lands for protection through a science-based process. The end result is a recommended "Green Belt" for the County, where high quality environmental features and connecting corridors are identified on a map that local municipalities can use when evaluating development proposals. Other elements addressed in the plan include green infrastructure, energy audits and alternative energy.



C. Approvals

In accordance with the requirements of the New York State Department of Agriculture, the Town of Oakfield Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan must be approved by the Genesee County Agricultural and Farmland Protection Board and the Oakfield Town Board before it receives final approval from the State. The Genesee County Agricultural and Farmland Protection Board reviewed a draft plan and approved it on _____, 2018. In addition, the Town Board must conduct a public hearing on the Plan. The Town Board held a public hearing on _____, 2018 and approved the Plan on _____, 2018.



Town of Oakfield Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan

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Town of Oakfield Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan

SECTION II – COMMUNITY INPUT AND GOALS

A. Public Participation

Farming in the Town of Oakfield has been practiced since the early settlement of the community. Today, farming continues as a way of life and economic driver in the Town. The preparation of this Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan is a means of ensuring that agricultural activities remain active and viable in Oakfield and that productive farmland is protected to ensure the continuation of these activities. As a part of the preparation of this plan, the Town took the following efforts to ensure that public involvement was a part of the planning process.

As noted in Section I, the Town of Oakfield prepared a joint Comprehensive Plan with the Town of Alabama and the Village of Oakfield in 2005. That Plan includes goals and recommendations for managing future growth and development in the community, and protecting agriculture. In an effort to achieve the goals and implement the recommendations outlined in the Comprehensive Plan, and in collaboration with the Town of Alabama, an Agricultural Protection Steering Committee that included representatives from Oakfield and Alabama was established and given the responsibility of overseeing the development of an Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan for each community.

As the Town of Oakfield is committed to the idea that a critical and necessary element of the planning process is continuous and effective public participation, the Agricultural Protection Steering Committee conducted an ongoing public outreach program as part of the development of the Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plans for Oakfield and Alabama. This effort included the recognition of issues important to local stakeholders, acknowledgement of public concerns, and the identification of potential opportunities. The public participation program for the development of the Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plans consisted of public meetings and stakeholder outreach, public comment forms, and postings on the Towns' websites.

- **Agricultural Protection Steering Committee**

As noted above, the Agricultural Protection Steering Committee was charged with providing guidance and oversight for the development of the Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plans for the Oakfield and Alabama communities, and with the implementation of the goals set forth in each Plan. The Agricultural Protection Steering Committee included representation from the Town of Oakfield and Town of Alabama governments, as well as the agricultural community. This Steering Committee met on a regular basis to review the progress of plan development, provide insight into the planning process, and ensure that the concerns of stakeholders and local citizens were taken into consideration.



Town of Oakfield Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan

- **Farmers Round Table**

The first public outreach meeting was conducted in a Round Table meeting format. This meeting was held with local farmers, farmland owners and other interested individuals on March 3, 2016 at the Oakfield Community Center. This meeting was well attended and was aimed at gathering input on farming and agricultural activities in each Town. The meeting included a group discussion centered on a number of questions about farming and agriculture. The input provided from this discussion helped provide the project consultants with a better understanding of existing conditions and practices in Oakfield (as well as the Town of Alabama) and was used to help shape preliminary goals and objectives for both communities. The meeting summary for the Farmers Round Table is included in Appendix A.

**Town of Alabama - Town of Oakfield
Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plans**


The Towns of Oakfield and Alabama are working together to prepare Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plans. Our goal with these plans is to identify ways to help the farming community and protect important farm lands. There will be separate plans for each community to reflect the differences in the nature of agriculture in the two towns. While Genesee County is also in the process of updating the County-wide Agricultural Protection Plan, each local plan will be targeted to strategies that meet the needs of local farms and farmers.

As part of the planning effort for the two plans, we are scheduling roundtable discussions with farmers, farmland owners and other groups connected to agriculture. We want to get your ideas and input on agriculture in the two Towns. Most of the meeting will be an open discussion to identify issues and brainstorm possible strategies and solutions to be included in the Plans.

We hope you will be able to attend this meeting and participate.

When: Thursday, March 3, 2016 from 6:00 to 8:00 pm

Where: Town of Oakfield Community and Government Center



- **Public Information Meeting**

A Public Information Meeting was held on April 28, 2016 at the Town of Alabama Fire Hall to gather additional input from local residents and others on farming activities, and to vet preliminary goals


PUBLIC INFORMATION MEETING

TOWN OF ALABAMA & TOWN OF OAKFIELD
AGRICULTURAL AND FARMLAND PROTECTION PLANS

what: The Towns of Alabama and Oakfield are each preparing Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plans in recognition of the importance of farming in the communities. The plans will propose strategies for supporting agriculture and protecting important farmlands.

when: Thursday April 28, 2016 at 7:00

where: Town of Alabama Fire Hall located at 2230 Judge Rd, Basom, NY



Please come to learn about the plans and offer your input.

Written comments may be sent to: AgPlans@wd-ae.com

and discuss the vision for the future of farming in Oakfield (as well as the Town of Alabama). This meeting included the completion of a survey questionnaire to gauge public sentiment and awareness about agricultural activities and associated issues in the Town. The results of this meeting were used to finalize draft goals and objectives for the Plan. The Public Information meeting was also well attended by local farmers. This provided the opportunity to gather additional input from these individuals and to confirm

information that had been gathered at the previous Farmers Stakeholders' Meeting. The meeting summary for the Public Information Meeting is included in Appendix A.

- **Agency Outreach**

Members of the Project Team contacted representatives from local and regional agencies to assess agricultural economic development and farmland preservation efforts in Genesee County and the Towns of Oakfield and Alabama, and to provide these representatives the opportunity to offer input into the planning process. These stakeholder agencies included the Genesee County Farm



Town of Oakfield Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan

Bureau, the Genesee County Agricultural Protection Board, Western New York Land Conservancy, the Genesee Land Trust, Cornell Cooperative Extension and the Genesee County Planning Department.

- **Second Public Meeting**

A second meeting was held with local farmers, farmland owners, residents and other interested residents and individuals on March 23, 2017. The purpose of this meeting was to provide an opportunity for these stakeholders and the public to review the findings, SWOT analysis and recommendations in the Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan and offer their input. This meeting included a presentation of the information, viewing of maps, and an exchange of ideas and information in an effort to finalize this section of the Plan. The meeting summary for this second Public Meeting is included in Appendix A.



B. Vision, Goals and Objectives

The Town's primary purpose for developing this Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan is to recognize, better understand and establish a strategy for protecting the agricultural and rural character of the Oakfield community. Using input gathered from those who attended the Farmers and Agency Stakeholders' Round Table and Public Information meetings, the Town developed the following vision statement for agriculture and farmland protection:

The Town of Oakfield recognizes that farming provides jobs, food and other products important to the economic prosperity of the community, the region and the state. Agriculture supports our families, helps balance our tax base, and is the highest and most fiscally valuable use of the land. We recognize that farming and agricultural activities contribute to the preservation of open space and rural community character, and are important to our heritage.

The Town of Oakfield supports protecting and promoting farming and agriculture in the community, and educating the public about the importance of agriculture to our long-term success and vibrancy of the town. It is the vision of the Town of Oakfield to be a rural community that values its farmland and its agricultural heritage, and that supports the viability of the local agricultural economy.

To support this vision, goals and objectives were established that were shaped around the major issues and concerns expressed by farmers, residents, Town officials, agency representatives and other interested parties. These goals and objectives are aimed at protecting and enhancing important agricultural resources; increasing public awareness of agriculture in Oakfield; ensuring the



Town of Oakfield Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan

long term viability of farming in the Town; and protecting, enhancing and expanding the agricultural economy.

GOAL 1: Protect Lands and Resources Critical to the Long Term Success and Sustainability of Agriculture

The Town recognizes that the protection of farming and agricultural activities contributes to the preservation of open space and maintains the rural community character and heritage of the area. Protecting and promoting the agricultural industry in the Town, which includes field crops, dairies, and keeping of animals, among other uses, is of primary importance to the local economy and overall future of Oakfield.

- Promote the protection of farms and farming related activities that are economically viable to maintain a critical mass of agricultural uses.
- Sustain agriculture as a means of economic development.
- Consider farming as the highest and best use for areas with prime farm soils or soils of State-wide importance.
- Maintain public support for local farms and farmers and the right to farm.
- Encourage growth patterns and conservation measures that are respectful of agricultural operations, enable continued agriculture uses, and protect productive farmland.
- Encourage flexible Town land use policies to support agriculture.
- Evaluate tax assessment policies that assist farm property owners who live on site.
- Include and improve protections for agriculture in the local zoning ordinance.
- Ensure that local regulations and permit procedures are supportive and protective of agricultural activities.
- Encourage the development of housing in a manner that discourages sprawl and enables residents to use existing services and infrastructure efficiently.
- Promote environmental stewardship of the land.
- Preserve and enhance viewsheds that contribute to the rural and agricultural character of the Town.
- Maintain positive relationships between the various levels of government and the farming community.
- Maintain partnerships with not-for-profit and government agricultural support agencies.
- Promote, support and build upon the County Agricultural District regulations and the County's Farmland Protection Plan.
- Avoid and mitigate conflicts between farmers and non-farm neighbors.
- Encourage farmland property owners to utilize available tax relief programs and agricultural district protections.
- Provide drainage support and relief, as needed, to maintain existing farmland.



Town of Oakfield Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan

GOAL 2: Enhance and Expand the Agricultural Economy of the Town and its Capacity to Respond to Economic Trends and Changes

Agriculture and agri-business are integral components of the character and economy of the Town of Oakfield. Agricultural related businesses support farming and contribute to the regional economy. The existing economic base of the community and viability of existing businesses should be enhanced and expanded because a strong base is good for farmers, the Town and the region.

- Promote the continuance of farming and agriculture as a business and a means of economic development.
- Foster a viable agricultural economy and encourage the expansion of agricultural activity within the Town.
- Encourage development of new businesses that are compatible with neighboring agricultural uses and are in character with the surrounding area.
- Recognize viable farmland and farm soils as a significant resource that can support farming as an economic activity and warrants protection.
- Locate business and industrial economic development in a manner that does not sacrifice viable and valuable farmland and farm soils.
- Encourage and allow farming related businesses and accessory farm uses as a support service and secondary interest to farming and agricultural activities in the Town.
- Promote organic farming as a viable form of sustainable, value-added agriculture.
- Realize the economic potential of agricultural tourism as a means of enhancing the economic vitality of farming and agriculture.
- Encourage the expansion of new technologies, including biomass production, and explore and promote new markets and agricultural activities.
- Increase the share of agricultural products direct marketed to consumers at higher margins.
- Promote community supported agricultural projects that bring farmers and residents together.
- Promote locally grown products.
- Encourage cooperative farming initiatives that benefit the community.
- Promote hobby farming in the community.

GOAL 3: Promote the link between farms and food

Farming provides a number of benefits to the community, including the production of local food, jobs and other economic benefits. Strengthening this link and the local understanding of how farming and agriculture are important to the community will contribute to its long term success.

- Promote an understanding of agriculture and its importance to the local and regional economy, culture, and landscape.



Town of Oakfield Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan

- Promote agricultural tourism as a means of increasing awareness of farming and agriculture.
- Promote and support fairs, festivals and farming events to make farming visible in the Town and help residents understand the benefit of having farms in the community.
- Promote programs in local schools that help to educate students about agriculture.

GOAL 4: Increase awareness of farming by the non-farm community to ensure the long term viability of farming in Oakfield

Farming provides benefits to the community, such as rural community character, scenic vistas, and a more balanced tax base. It is the highest and best use, and most fiscally valuable use, of land in Genesee County and the Town of Oakfield. Increasing public awareness of how agriculture positively impacts a community and the needs of farmers to operate successfully is essential for achieving public support for the long term viability of this industry.

- Educate the general public about agriculture and its value and benefits to the community and region.
- Develop a community environment that supports patience and understanding of the needs of farmers and farming operations.
- Educate the real estate community about the importance of agriculture in Oakfield and the Town's commitment to maintain the strength of this industry in the community.
- Promote community supported agricultural projects that bring farmers and residents together.



Town of Oakfield Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan

SECTION III – COMMUNITY OVERVIEW

A. Regional Setting / Location (see Map 1: Regional Setting)

The Town was first established in 1836 and is located in the southwestern portion of Niagara County, New York. The Town of Oakfield, and the Village of Oakfield, is situated directly north of the New York State Thruway (Interstate 90) in northwestern Genesee County. Located west of New York's Finger Lakes, the Town is uniquely situated at the crossroads of four counties, Erie, Niagara, Orleans, and Genesee. The Town of Oakfield is located approximately 25 miles east of Buffalo, 35 miles west of Rochester, 20 miles south of Lake Ontario, and 10 miles north of the City of Batavia. The surrounding communities include the Towns of Shelby and Barre to the north, the Town of Elba to the east, the Towns of Batavia and Pembroke to the south, and the Town of Alabama to the west.

The study area is predominantly a rural/agricultural area, with small pockets of denser residential and commercial development located around the Village Oakfield. The landscape is very typical of rural Western New York communities with the area being dominated by gently rolling hills, farm fields, pockets of woodlands, and rural homes.

B. Demographic Trends in the Town of Oakfield

The Town of Oakfield population was reported at 1,373 persons in the 2013 Census. This represents a slight decrease since 2000, when the population was reported at 1,398 persons. The number of households in the Town has generally remained stable. Genesee County lost less than one percent of its population between 1990 and 2000; similarly, Oakfield Town population decreased by approximately 1.8 percent. While the County lost additional population between 2000 and 2010, the population in the Town of Oakfield actually increased slightly, only to decline again in the following decade. The population growth trends are illustrated below:

**Table 1: Population Growth and Projected Change
Town of Oakfield and Genesee County 1990-2013**

| Community | 1990 | 2000 | 2010 | 2013 | % change 2000-2013 |
|-----------------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------------------------|
| Town of Oakfield | 1,494 | 1,398 | 1,437 | 1,373 | -1.8 |
| Genesee County | 60,060 | 60,370 | 60,079 | 59,872 | -0.8 |

Source: U. S. Census Data.



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The Genesee-Finger Lakes Regional Planning Board prepared projections for the area, showing population trends to 2030. Overall, the Oakfield-Alabama region is expected to grow slightly over the next thirty years, increasing to 5,347 persons by 2030. Most of the growth is expected to occur in the Town of Alabama, which is projected to increase by 12.5 percent. The Town of Oakfield is expected to grow by approximately six percent. These projections were prepared prior to the release of the 2000 Census, and overestimated growth in the Towns between 1990 and 2000. It is projected, however, that growth over the next thirty years will be relatively modest and easily absorbed within the two communities.

The number of households in the Town of Oakfield increased by 7.1 percent between 2000 and 2013. Household growth was stronger in Genesee County, with an increase of 5.7 percent (1,225 households) between 1990 and 2000. Following national trends, the average household size declined between 1990 and 2000. There are an average of 2.77 persons per household in Oakfield. This is modestly higher (almost 10 percent) than the County, where there is an average of 2.59 persons per household.

Slightly more than half of all family households in the Town of Oakfield include children under the age of 18 who are living at home. This data indicates that the majority of households in the Town are families, whereas non-family households are predominant nationwide. Most of non-family households in the Town are one-person households. On average, roughly five percent of all households are “non-traditional” households, consisting of non-related persons living together.

Of the 566 housing units reported in the Town of Oakfield in 2013, 78 percent were single-family dwellings and 18 percent were manufactured homes. Other dwellings are in structures with two or more units. Between 2000 and 2013, the overall number of housing units in the Town increased slightly (3.3 percent) and the number of vacant (including seasonal) units decreased to 7.1 percent. A total of 20 new residences were constructed in the Town between 2000 and 2014. Owner-occupied housing comprised approximately 75 percent of the total, down from 88 percent in 2000.

C. Land Use, Zoning and Other Policies and Regulations

- **Land Use - (see Map 2: Land Use)**

The majority of the land in the Town of Oakfield (62 percent) is used in agriculture and is also mostly located within one agricultural district. A large portion of the Oak Orchard Wildlife Management Area is located in the northern portion of the Town, in addition to privately owned conservation lands. Agricultural District No. 2 encompasses nearly 75 percent of the Town, covering much of the land area south of the Oak Orchard State Wildlife Management Area. A few of the obvious omissions from the District are the Village of Oakfield, the U. S. Gypsum property on Judge Road (which covers over 250 acres of land), and some vacant undeveloped lands just southwest of the Village. Oakfield also contains nearly 50 percent prime farmland soils with the largest concentration located in the vicinity of Lewiston Road, northwest of the Village. Much of the land



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in the Town is either owned or operated by Lamb Farms (one of the largest dairy farms in New York State) or owned by the U. S. Gypsum Company and leased to farmers.

Table 2: Land Use in the Town of Oakfield - 2014

| | Parcels | | Acres | |
|-------------------------------------|------------|-------------|---------------|-------------|
| | # | % | # | % |
| Agriculture | 138 | 16% | 7,616 | 52% |
| Commercial | 3 | 0% | 17 | 0% |
| Industrial and Storage | 10 | 1% | 278 | 2% |
| Private Hunt/Fish/Wildlife | 6 | 1% | 591 | 4% |
| Public and Community | 7 | 1% | 84 | 1% |
| Residential | 461 | 53% | 1,144 | 8% |
| Residential - Agriculture | 28 | 3% | 1,523 | 10% |
| Utilities and Transportation | 2 | 0% | 36 | 0% |
| Vacant | 209 | 24% | 1,668 | 11% |
| Wildlife Conservation Area | 3 | 0% | 1,745 | 12% |
| Total | 867 | 100% | 14,702 | 100% |

Source: Green Genesee – Smart Genesee: Alabama Oakfield Community Inventory and Analysis Report – May 2015

- **Zoning - (see Map 3: Zoning)**

The Town of Oakfield has five zoning districts identified in its zoning law. Map 3 depicts the current zoning districts, while Table 3 provides information on the number and percent of acres included in each zoning district. The majority of the Town (59 percent) is zoned Residential Agriculture (R+A). The second largest area (33 percent) which encompasses most of the northern third of the Town is zoned Land Conservation (LC). The General Residential (R) zone is found mainly near the periphery of the Village of Oakfield along State Highway 63, State Highway 262, and South Pearl Street while the Commercial (C) zone is found near the corner of Lewiston Road and State Highway 63. Industrial (I) zoned land is found on the north side of State Highway 63 on the south side of State Highway 63 and off of Garibaldi Avenue. No zoning district changes have been made in the Town since 2005.

The Town of Oakfield's zoning law also lays out each zoning class and lists all actual uses permitted by right, as well as those uses that are allowed by Special Use Permit. Bulk regulations for each zoning class and certain specified uses within those zoning classes are outlined in the Town of Oakfield Zoning Law, and summarized in a table entitled Section 900: Summary Zoning Schedule for the Town of Oakfield. These standards include minimum lot area, minimum lot width, minimum yard requirements (front, rear, one side and total side yards), as well as percent of lot coverage, minimum heights and minimum floor area per residential unit.



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For agricultural buildings or structures, the only bulk requirement is a required front yard of at least 50 feet.

The Town of Oakfield adopted a Land Separation Local Law and Land Subdivision Regulations in June of 1992. Although the Land Separation Law, which regulation minor splits of four lots or less, was repealed in 1997, the major subdivision regulations remain in effect. Subdivision of land is also addressed under Section 411. 3 of the Zoning Ordinance. Land use regulations for the Town of Oakfield can be found in Appendix B.

Table 3: Town of Oakfield Zoning: Districts and Permitted Uses

| Zoning Classification | Acres | | Permitted Uses |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------|-------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| | # | % | |
| Residential Agriculture (R+A) | 8,835 | 59% | Single family dwellings, mobile homes, farms and related agricultural operations, churches, schools, and other public uses and buildings |
| Commercial (C) | 13 | 0% | Motor vehicle sales and service, retail shops, offices and banks |
| Industrial (I) | 779 | 5% | General industrial uses (i. e. manufacturing, warehousing, research and development facilities, distribution facilities, etc.) |
| Land Conservation (LC) | 4,863 | 33% | Farms and related agricultural operations |
| General Residential (R) | 435 | 3% | Single and 2-family dwellings, farms and related agricultural operations, churches, schools, and other public uses and buildings |
| Total | 14,924 | 100% | |
| Source: Green Genesee – Smart Genesee: Alabama Oakfield Community Inventory and Analysis Report – May 2015 | | | |

- **Town Land Use Planning**

Oakfield - Alabama Comprehensive Plan

The Town and Village of Oakfield and the Town of Alabama jointly completed a comprehensive plan in 2005. The plan includes recommendations that address the following goals. A “Vision Map” for each municipality depicts preferred development and conservation areas. The plan also set forth objectives related to farmland protection, including:

- Provide for economic development,
- Protect and preserve agricultural land uses,
- Maintain and enhance community character, and
- Protect the environmental features and resources of the community.



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D. Natural Resources - (see Map 4: Environmental Features)

- **Topography**

The majority of the Town of Oakfield is extremely flat with very gently sloping land. There are a few areas of steep slopes although they are small and limited. Areas of slopes can be found in the northeastern portion of Oakfield, along Fisher Road.

- **Surface Waters, Wetlands and Floodplains**

Two primary watersheds drain the land within the Towns of Oakfield and Alabama; these include the Tonawanda Creek watershed, which drains approximately 27 percent of the land area to the Niagara River and Lake Erie Basin (to the west); and the Oak Orchard Creek watershed, which drains approximately 73 percent of the land area to the Western Lake Ontario Basin (to the north). The U. S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) defines watersheds as the area of land that catches rain and snow melt, which drains or seeps into a marsh, stream, river, lake or groundwater.

The two primary watersheds are divided into a number of sub-watersheds (see Map 4). The Tonawanda Creek watershed includes: Whitney Creek - Mud Creek, which is located in the northwest portion of Alabama; Black Creek – Tonawanda Creek, which is located in the southwestern portion of Alabama Town; and Galloway Swamp – Tonawanda Creek, which covers the southeastern portion of the Town of Alabama. The Oak Orchard Creek watershed includes: Iroquois Nations Wildlife Refuge – Oak Orchard Creek, which extend through a large portion of central Alabama; Brinningstoo Creek – Oak Orchard Creek, which extends into eastern Alabama and covers almost all of the Town of Oakfield; and the Headwaters of Oak Orchard Creek, which extends into the northeastern corner of the Oakfield Town.

The Town of Oakfield contains flood zones that have been designated by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) as areas that are subject to flooding. These areas are depicted on FEMA Flood Insurance Rate Maps. The flood zones are established based upon the degree to which an area is susceptible to flood damage. Only the 100-year flood zone (also known as the “A” Zone or area of special flood hazard) exists within the Towns. This area is described as the area of land that would primarily experience still water flooding, without significant wave activity, during a 100-year storm event.

Natural flood zones or floodplains are flat areas surrounding streams that are periodically inundated with water due to overbank flow. Most floodplains are located in the northern portion of the Town, within the wildlife conservation area. This explains why this area of the Town have been designated as wildlife conservation areas. These lands contain an inordinate amount of environmental features. They are covered by the 100-Year Floodplain and are also dominated by wetlands.



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Wetlands are defined by the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC) as transition areas between uplands and aquatic habitats. They are identified by a variety of factors including the presence of standing water, vegetation type, and soil type. Map 4 shows that both State and federally-designated wetland areas are located throughout the Town. State-designated wetlands are defined and regulated as any wetlands area measuring 12.4 acres or larger. Regulated federal (or non-jurisdictional wetlands) can measure between 0.1 acre and 12.4 acres, and require association with a navigable waterway. Wetlands are an extremely important environmental resource that perform numerous functions. The NYSDEC has listed some of these functions as flood and storm water control, surface and groundwater protection, erosion control, pollution treatment and nutrient cycling, and fish and wildlife habitat, as well as public enjoyment.

E. Infrastructure Services – (see Map 5: Water and Sewer Service)

- **Water Supply**

Much of the Town of Oakfield is served with public water, with significant extensions of infrastructure installed since 2005. The Town has sought funding for additional water line installation, with the objective of providing every residence with public water. Areas in the Town that are not serviced with public water use potable water from private wells.

Currently public water is available to the Town through service lines that extend through the Village of Oakfield. The Village of Oakfield purchases water wholesale from Genesee County. Genesee County provides the water through its leased City of Batavia Water Treatment Plant and also purchases approximately 300,000 gallons per day from the Monroe County Water Authority. Water is provided to the Village from the City of Batavia along Route 63, Galloway Road and South Pearl Road.

- **Wastewater Management**

Only a small portion of the Town of Oakfield has sanitary sewer service, which is provided from the Village of Oakfield. The remaining areas outside of the Village in the Town of Oakfield utilize on-site septic systems for wastewater disposal. The Village sewage treatment plant is located at the north end of Irving Parkway, which is privately operated by Valley River Inc. The plant has a capacity of 500,000 gallons per day but operates at about half its capacity, or approximately 225,000 gallons per day.

- **Roadways**

The major highways that pass through the Town of Oakfield include New York State Routes 63 and 262. Significant traffic also enters and exits the Town along NYS State Route 63/77, which extends from west to east through the Town of Alabama. NYS Route 63, which continues through Oakfield, leads to Exit 48 of the New York State Thruway (Interstate 90), in the Town of Batavia. Traffic also comes into the Town from the north, along County Road 883 (Albion Road), which intersects Route 63. State Route 262



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carries traffic between Oakfield and the Town of Elba, to the east, connecting with Route 63. The transportation infrastructure in the Town has not changed since 2005. The majority of traffic in Oakfield travels along NYS Route 63 heading to and from the Thruway. The segments with the highest traffic counts are along NYS Route 63, from the Village of Oakfield, southwest to the Oakfield-Batavia town line. The following table summarizes changes in reported Annual Average Daily Traffic (AADT) counts between those reported for 2000 and those for 2012.

Table 4: Average Annual Daily Traffic Counts

| Route # | Where to Where | Estimated AADT | | |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------|----------------|-------|-----------------------|
| | | 2000 | 2012 | Change 2000 - 2012 |
| 63 | Routes 63/77 intersection to Macomber Road** | 4,750 | 5,120 | 7. 2% |
| 63 | Route 262 to southerly Town line | 7,300 | 7,657 | 4. 7% |
| 262 | Route 63 to easterly Town line | 1,600 | 1,458 | -9. 7% |
| Source: Green Genesee – Smart Genesee: Alabama Oakfield Community Inventory and Analysis Report – May 2015 | | | | |



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SECTION IV – AGRICULTURAL LANDS AND RESOURCES

This section focuses on farmland and agriculture in the Town of Oakfield and the factors that add value to the lands to be protected in the Town, including the value of the agricultural economy. Land use in the Town of Oakfield is primarily comprised of farming and agricultural uses. Forested and vacant lands exist in the northern portion of the Town, which includes a large area of wildlife preserves and conservation areas. Large lot residential development can be found in association with farmland, with a number of residential frontage lots scattered along Town roadways throughout the community. A limited number of commercial and public service uses are situated in and around the Village of Oakfield.

There are 867 parcels of land in the Town of Oakfield, totaling 14,912.5 acres. Of this land area, approximately 166 parcels encompassing 9,139.3 acres (approximately 61 percent) are devoted to agricultural operations in the Town. Farm acreage in Oakfield is primarily used as cropland, hay and pasture lands. There are a small number of dairy farms.

The growing season in the Town of Oakfield extends from early May through early October (about 150 days). The area receives average annual precipitation of 36 inches, with growing season precipitation averaging about 15 inches.

A. Agricultural Soils (*see Map 6*)

The topography of the Town of Oakfield is comparatively flat to slightly rolling. The ground surface elevation ranges from slightly over 600 feet above mean sea level in the vicinity for wildlife preserves in the northern portion of the Town, to over 850 feet along the Onondaga escarpment, which extend across the western and southern portions of the Town.

The soils in the Town are predominantly of glacial origin and vary from dense glacial tills to soft lacustrine clays. Ontario loam is the most common soil series. This soil is deep, well drained and good for farming.

Prime Farmland

Prime farmland is land that has the best combination of physical and chemical characteristics for producing food, feed, forage, fiber, oilseed crops, and other agricultural crops with minimum inputs of fuel, fertilizer, pesticides, and labor. It has few, if any rocks, and minimal soil erosion. Approximately 5,025.2 acres or 34 percent of the Town contains soils that meet the requirements of prime farmland. Of this acreage, approximately 3,840.7 acres are currently located on properties that are actively being farmed. The Town also contains a large amount of soils that would be considered prime farmland if drained (4,087.6 acres or 27 percent of the Town).



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For local farmers, drainage and the need for the maintenance of ditches and other stormwater drainage ways is an important issue for the viability of their lands, indicating that such drainage improves the quality of the soils. A large extent of the soils located in the northern portion of the Town, where farming is limited, are considered wet. This area contains a fair amount of muck land soils.

Soils of Statewide Importance

In addition to the prime farmland soils, 2,267 acres of soils in the Town are classified as Soils of Statewide Importance. Soils of Statewide Importance are generally considered to be nearly prime farmland quality that economically produce high yields of crops when managed in accordance with acceptable farming practices. Although important to agricultural activity in the State, these soils exhibit certain characteristics, such as seasonal wetness or erodibility, and do not meet all of the criteria to qualify as prime farm soils. The majority of the Soils of Statewide Importance in the Town of Oakfield are found in the northern portion of the Town; they are also scattered throughout the central portion of the Town where farming is more abundant.

B. Agricultural Districts (*see Map 7*)

With the exception of the Village of Oakfield, and the conservation lands in the northern portion of the Town, the majority of the Town of Oakfield is located in Genesee County Agricultural District Number 2, as designated under the New York State Agriculture and Markets Law. The Agricultural District Law mandates that governmental agencies must avoid or minimize potential adverse impacts to farming operations when undertaking or acting upon any project within an Agricultural District that involves the acquisition of land or the use of public funds for construction purposes (A copy of the Agricultural Districts Law is included in Appendix C).

There are a number of benefits for agricultural landowners located within an Agricultural District. One is that agricultural land is assessed on its value as farmland, not on its potential development value, which reduces the tax burden on agricultural lands. State law also states that local laws may not unreasonably restrict farm operations within an Agricultural District and existing and proposed laws are subject to review by the State Department of Agriculture and Markets to ensure that they comply with the law and are not overly restrictive. Real estate agents are required to disclose to potential buyers that the property they are about to acquire is located in an Agricultural District or within 500 feet of any farm operation and/or farmland. In addition, any application for development of lands located within an Agricultural District, or land located within 500 feet of any farm operation and/or farmland must submit an agricultural data statement to the Town as a part of the land development application.



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Agricultural Data Statement

Pursuant to Section 283-a.2. of Article 16 of NYS Town Law, any application for a special use permit, site plan approval, a use variance or approval for subdivision of land, which requires review and approval by the Planning Board, Zoning Board of Appeals or Town Board, that would occur on or involve property that is located within an agricultural district and contains a farm operation, or on property situated within five hundred feet of a farm operation that is located in an agricultural district, shall include the preparation of an Agricultural Data Statement as part of the application. The information required by an agricultural data statement may also be included as part of any other application required by local law, ordinance or regulation.

The Town Clerk or other Town representative for the board reviewing the request must mail a notice to all owners of land as identified in the Agricultural Data Statement. This notice shall include a description of the proposed project and its location, and may be sent in conjunction with any other notice required by state or local law, ordinance, rule or regulation for the project. The cost of this mailing can be borne by the applicant. In addition, the Town must refer all applications that require an agricultural data statement to the County Planning Board, as required under Sections 239-m (for site plan) and 239-n (for subdivision) of the NYS General Municipal Law.

The local reviewing board must evaluate and consider the Agricultural Data Statement as a part of its overall review of the proposed action to determine the potential impacts that the action may have on the farm operations. This board should also determine present and future farming conditions to ensure the proposed land use does not conflict with current or future farming activities on the land. A farmer's knowledge of local agricultural conditions is fundamental for the local review board's evaluation and determination of appropriate mitigation measures and whether the action proposed could conflict with ongoing and future farming practices. A sample Agricultural Data Statement is provided in the Appendix D.

C. Farmland and Farm Operations in the Town

A review of Genesee County Real Property Service data indicates that there were 166 parcels identified as farm properties in the Town of Oakfield. Most of these lands are reported to be used for growing field crops, including corn, soybeans, wheat, hay and oats. Generally grain and hay showed the highest number of farm operations. Twelve farm operations reported hay sales. Soybean production has grown in recent years as markets for this product have increased. Local farmers report that they are selling their soybean crops to regional, national and international markets. There are also a small number of active dairy farms in the Town that sell their milk to Upstate Farms.



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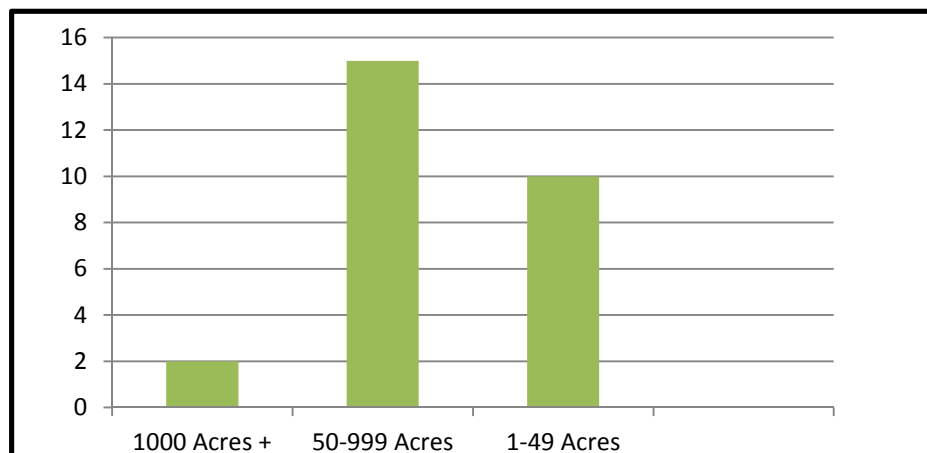
Overview of Oakfield Agricultural Sector

The US Census of Agriculture conducts a survey every five years that aggregates agricultural data at the zip code level.¹ The most recent data available for the Town of Oakfield zip code (14125) area was collected as part of the 2007 Census of Agriculture. Data from the more recent 2012 agricultural survey is only available at the County level. While the 2007 census survey data is not as specific as the information gathered at the aggregate County level, the numbers provide some insight about local levels of production and the types of agricultural activities likely occurring in the Town. Combined with public input collected locally from farmers during the course of this planning process, the census survey numbers help to provide a clearer picture of the significance of farming in the Oakfield area.

Size of Farm Operations

The 2007 Census of Agriculture documented a total of 27 farms that responded to the zip code survey for Oakfield area. Two farms were reported at over 1,000 acres in size. In addition to their dairy operations, the main crops that they raise include corn, alfalfa, wheat, and various vegetable crops including peas, beets, and cabbage. Fifteen other farms reported a size of between 50 and 999 acres, and ten farms reported a size of between 1 to 50 acres in their survey report. Of the 27 farm operators that responded, 17 indicated they were full-time owners and 10 were part-time owners. The farms in the Town contribute to the agricultural character of the Town and support the agricultural economy through the purchase of supplies and services. Certain of these farms also supply produce for “direct to market” farm stands.

Size of Farm Operation 2007
Town of Oakfield – Zip Codes 14125



Source: USDA Agricultural Census, 2007

¹ Census of Agriculture does not provide town-level data. While the zip code does not cover the entire Town of Oakfield, and includes properties outside of the Town, it is the closest available source for information at the town level.



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Variety of Products Grown

A wide variety of crops and animals were reported as being raised in the Town of Oakfield zip code. The most popular reported field crop was hay (12 total farms reporting). Other field and vegetable crops that were reported included corn, oats, potatoes, soybeans, and wheat. Specialty crops that were reported included horticultural operations.

Farms raising animals in the Oakfield were also reported, including dairy farms, beef cattle, hog and equine operations. A total of five farms were indicated as dairy operations and seven as beef cattle operations (with calves). Six farms reported raising horses and ponies (equine farms) and three reported raising hogs. The following table provides the complete list of the reported totals of crops and animals being raised in the Oakfield zip code area, as reported in the 2007 Census of Agriculture.

**Reported Crops, 2007 Census of Agriculture
Town of Oakfield, NY – Zip Code 14125**

| Crop | Farms reporting |
|--------------------------|------------------------|
| Beef Cattle, with calves | 7 |
| Berries | 1 |
| Chickens | 1 |
| Corn | 6 |
| Corn Silage | 5 |
| Dairy | 4 |
| Equine (horses/ponies) | 6 |
| Field Crops (other) | 3 |
| Fruit & Nut Trees | 1 |
| Grain with storage | 8 |
| Hay | 12 |
| Horticulture | 1 |
| Hogs | 3 |
| Oats | 2 |
| Potatoes | 2 |
| Soybeans | 3 |
| Vegetables | 9 |
| Wheat | 4 |
| Total Reporting | 78 |

Source: USDA Agricultural Census, 2007



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D. Agricultural Markets and Support Businesses

Local agricultural products that are grown or raised in the Town of Oakfield are marketed in Genesee County and other areas in the region and State. Additionally, local farmers indicated that they sell soybeans and corn to regional, national and international markets. For instance, Western New York Energy LLC in Medina, New York is the major regional purchaser and single biggest market for corn, which is used for ethanol production. Processing up to 22 million bushels of corn annually, this plant has changed the way corn is priced and marketed in the region.

A few Oakfield farmers sell local produce at roadside stands and at local area farmers' markets in the Town of LeRoy and City of Batavia. For example, fresh produce and other products can be purchased at Domoy Farms Market, on Drake Road in Oakfield. Domoy's offers a variety of fresh grown vegetables, including sweet corn, cabbage, broccoli, cauliflower, tomatoes, Brussel sprouts, pumpkins and winter squash. Harrington's Produce, on Route 63 in Oakfield, also sell seasonal farm fresh produce and fresh baked goods. Kern's Market, in the Town of Alabama, offers u-pick strawberries in season, along with other fresh produce, including corn and potatoes. There are also farmers' markets that operate in Batavia and the Town of LeRoy, including the Genesee Country Farmers' Market, the LeRoy Farmers Market and Pully's Farmers Market in LeRoy.

Support Businesses and Organizations

There are a number of suppliers of agricultural equipment and support materials available in Genesee County (particularly in the Town of Batavia) and elsewhere in the region, including Niagara, Orleans and Monroe Counties. LandPro is a John Deere dealer located in the Town of Oakfield. Other local suppliers in Genesee County include Monroe Tractor, Java Farm Supply, Kaz Farm Equipment, Alexander Equipment, Farm Equipment of Alexander, and Empire Tractor, among others. Other businesses in the region include, but are not limited to Robert Farm Shop, Hicks Hollow Farms and Ridge Farm Supply, in Orleans County; and Higbie Farm Supplies and Tractor Supply in Monroe County.

Farmers can reach out to the Cornell Cooperative Extension (CCE) office in Genesee County for assistance and support. The Genesee County CCE disseminates information on agricultural research through specialized production teams (dairy, field crops, livestock, small farms, vegetable, tree fruit, grapes, greenhouse and nursery). They assist with agricultural economic development and farm business development. They also provide information about agricultural districts and assistance with pesticide certification.

The Genesee County Soil and Water Conservation District also offers a number of support programs that can help farmers. The District works directly with farmers and other landowners to conserve soil and water resources, improve water quality and address issues of flooding and sediment damage. The District promotes the Agricultural Environmental Management (AEM) Program. AEM is



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a voluntary program designed to help farmers implement environmentally sound practices. The District offers technical assistance and financial incentives to encourage participation. Other services include pond siting assessments, hydroseeding, and assistance with conservation grants.

The Genesee County Farm Bureau is another organization that provides support and assistance to local farming interests. The Farm Bureau is a membership organization that offers a number of benefits to members, including insurance and banking, automotive, business and family and health, among other things. The Farm Bureau also monitors state and national legislative priorities and provides information of this nature to members in support of agricultural protection and prosperity.

E. Farm Statistics and Economic Contributions and Value to the Local and Regional Economy

Genesee County is one of the most diverse and productive agricultural counties in New York State. Currently, the County ranks fourth in farm gate sales across the State, with annual sales estimated at \$234.3 million. The total available farmland in Genesee County has been increasing. Major crops include corn for grain and silage, soybeans, winter wheat and dry alfalfa hay, which together comprise almost 50 percent of total farmland in the County. The remaining farm acreage is devoted to a diversity of crops, including vegetables, and dairy farming, including lands used to raise feedstock. Farms in the Town of Oakfield contribute significantly to the economic output reported in Genesee County each year through the production and sales of farm products. Most local growers have invested in on-farm storage facilities; some have also invested in processing capability.

Farms Produce Fresh, Local Food

Genesee County is a community that produces fresh food for local tables and has a well-established vegetable processing industry. The U.S. Census of Agriculture statistics indicates that the majority of fresh vegetables produced in Genesee County is acreage specifically earmarked for fresh market sale and processing. For example, locally grown produce is processed at the Bonduelle facility in the Village of Oakfield, as well as at other facilities in the region. Increased access to fresh fruits and vegetables is a strategy for combating childhood obesity and increasing the security of the local food supply. Farming also provides opportunities for the creation of community supported agriculture projects wherein residents can purchase “shares” of seasonal produce, such as the Porter Farms CSA based in the Town of Elba. This benefits local farmers, keeps land in production, and provides local residents and others with fresh fruits and vegetables throughout the growing season.

Total Crop Sales

As indicated in the 2007 Census of Agriculture for the Town of Oakfield, of the total 12 farms that reported crop sales data, two farms in the Oakfield zip code area reported crop sales of greater than \$250,000. Four farms reported sales of between \$50,000 and \$249,000, and six farms reported sales of less than \$50,000. There were other farms that indicated they had operations with sales, but their general revenues were not specified.



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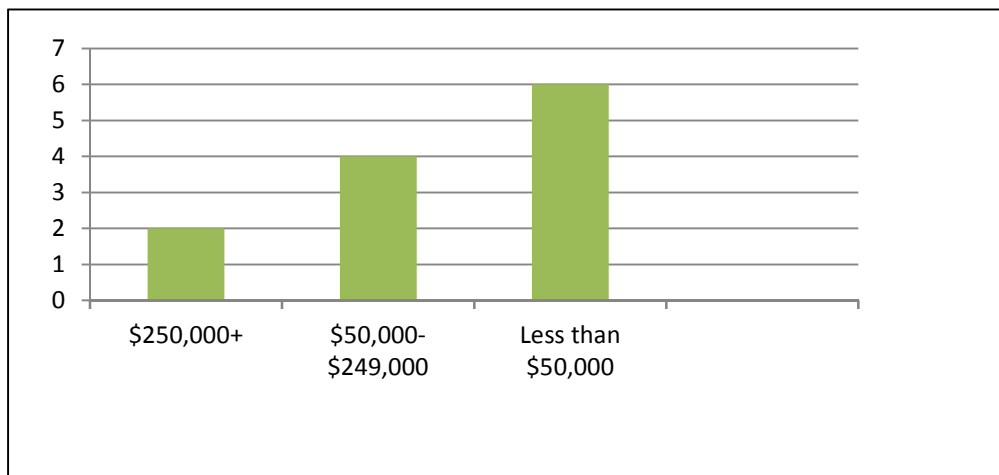
Total Animal Operations and Sales

As reported in the 2007 Census of Agriculture for the Town of Oakfield, there were a total of nine farms that reported animal operations with sales, including products. Four farms reported sales of greater than \$250,000. One farm reported sales of between \$50,000 and \$249,000. Four farms reported total sales of less than \$50,000. There were other farms that indicated they raised animals and had operations with sales, but their general revenues were not specified.

Total Economic Contribution

As many of the farms reported a “non-specified” figure for total crop and operational sales on the 2007 Agricultural Census survey, estimating a figure for the total economic contribution to the local and regional economy is difficult. Agriculture also generates economic impacts from businesses that provide services or goods to farmers and from businesses that process, transport or resell farm products. These include: retail businesses that sell equipment, fertilizer, seeds and other inputs; providers of financial, technical and engineering services; construction contractors; trucking companies; processing plants; and retail sales of farm products.

Total Crop Operations with Sales - 2007
Town of Oakfield Zip Code 14125

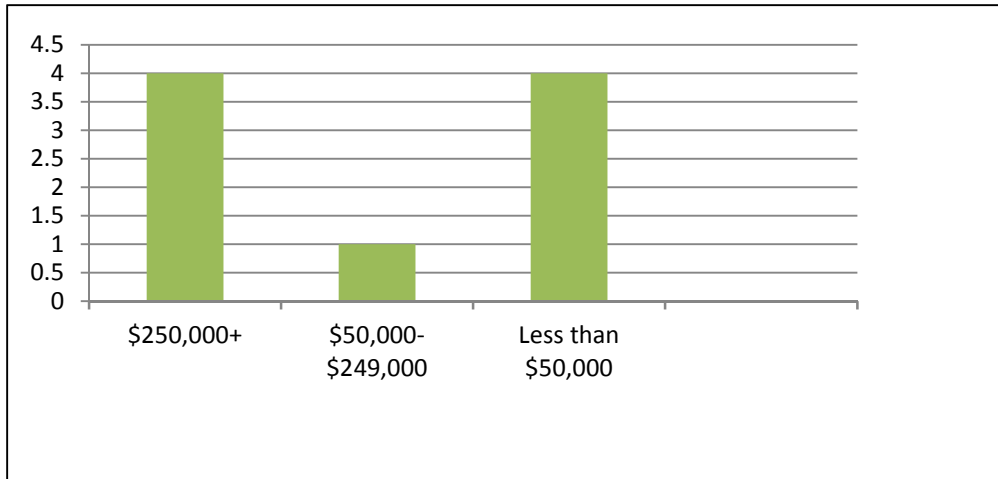


Source: USDA Census of Agriculture 2007

Total Animal Operation with Sales - 2007
Town of Oakfield Zip Code 14125



Town of Oakfield Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan



Source: USDA Census of Agriculture 2007

Local Farms Provide Jobs and Support the Local Economy

Agricultural operations in the Oakfield area contribute jobs to the local economy. The 2015 U.S. Economic Census reported that 47 residents from the Town of Oakfield reported their principal occupation in the fields of Agriculture, Forestry and/or Fishing. A total of 133 residents reported being employed in the agriculture, forestry, fishing, hunting and/or mining industry (an increase over the prior four years). These figures do not include the seasonal laborers that are employed by some farms to assist with harvest operations. A small number of farms in Oakfield are also “direct to market” operations that feature seasonal stands and/or pick-your-own offering fresh produce to residents and visitors.

Oakfield’s farms are local businesses that create jobs, provide fresh food to the Town and region, and purchase local goods and services. According to the US Census of Agriculture, the estimated total market value of all agricultural products in Genesee County in 2012 was over \$234 million (a portion of which was generated in Oakfield). This is a 33% rise over the 2007 Census figure of approximately \$177 million. This figure does not include the value of jobs connected with farms, such as electricians, carpenters, farm equipment dealers, bankers, food processors and truck drivers. Based on stakeholder interviews during the planning process, Oakfield farmers reported raising soybeans, grains (including wheat, hay and oats), corn, apples, pears and grapes. These harvests have a “multiplier” effect on the local and regional economy that extends far beyond the total market value of the product.

As previously noted, there are a number of processing facilities in the region, and some local farmers have invested in processing capabilities. While this adds significant benefits to the local and regional economy, it should be noted that the lack of broadband communication and improved internet access is a constraint for local farmers and food processors.

Scenic Working Farms Attract Tourists and Dollars



Town of Oakfield Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan

Agricultural tourism establishments and working ‘U Pick’ farms are direct draws for tourists and regional residents alike. Agricultural tourism is a growing industry throughout New York State.



There are a number of examples throughout Genesee County of successful agricultural tourism establishments, including Lamb Farms, Inc. in the Town of Oakfield. Lamb Farms offers tours of their dairy operations for school and non-school groups, as well as guided and self-guided tours. Visitors can learn more about where their food comes from, see cows being milked and gain a better understanding about dairy farming. Activities like this and other direct draws for residents and visitors strengthens the Town of Oakfield’s position within Genesee

County’s local agricultural tourism network and could likely result in more positive economic impacts for the Town.

The Genesee Region is Prioritizing Agriculture

The Finger Lakes Regional Economic Development Council (REDC) recognizes the region as the breadbasket of New York State and has prioritized agriculture as a key economic development component of its Strategic Plan. The Plan includes strategies to enable the region to build upon leadership in the agricultural sector over the next five years by continuing to leverage its competitive advantages and proximity to major markets in order to:

- Increase the value and diversity of agricultural products and exports;
- Support the creation and expansion of food processing companies in the regions through incentives and academic-private partnerships to gain manufacturing efficiencies and access to new markets;
- Increase the number of people employed in the food processing industry in the region; and
- Invest in projects that create synergy between the region’s agriculture and energy sectors, particularly in the area of bio-fuels.

Also of note, “Agriculture and Food Production” is one of the three pillars of the REDC’s Finger Lakes Forward Plan, which garnered \$500 million through the Upstate Revitalization Initiative. In the coming years these resources will be allocated to grow this sector of the regional economy through projects and initiatives.

Of great importance is the County’s efforts to update the Genesee County Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan. The updated plan builds upon the strength of the previous plan, re-evaluates the findings and recommendations in that plan, and based on current conditions and trends, includes a number of updated recommendations, including:



Town of Oakfield Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan

- *Explore New Markets:* Farmers can be most successful when there are ready markets for their products and Genesee County can help by identifying and encouraging new potential markets for agricultural products.
- *Water Management:* Water management is a major issue, and includes both drainage and irrigation. Managing drainage is increasingly more challenging, due to regulatory changes (e.g. wetlands, etc.) On the demand side, Genesee County has taken a relatively strong stance on limiting waterline extensions. However, farmers increasingly want access to public water, as a vital factor in productivity and profitability. Genesee County could take a leadership role in addressing water issues and developing a creative approach to extending water lines for agricultural use, while limiting the potential growth impacts from public water.
- *Education:* There is strong support and need for better education. Primary educational needs fall into several categories, including farm management skills training, training in cutting edge agricultural techniques, the reinstatement of high school level agricultural related programming, and greater public education about the practices and benefits of agriculture, with emphasis on increasing awareness of and sensitivity to agricultural needs.
- *Research:* There is a need for strong agricultural research. Relevant topics include high value, climate-appropriate vegetable products and pest control.
- *Creative PDR Program:* Genesee County should consider a PDR program tied to strict lateral restrictions. The program would enable the County to extend waterlines where needed for agricultural usage while controlling for growth impacts. The PDR program would offer compensation for the loss of the ability to develop frontage lands, thereby providing stronger limits to road frontage residential development. The Towns of Alabama and Oakfield could serve as a pilot program.
- *Roads/ Traffic:* Farmers are finding it increasingly difficult to access their fields. Genesee County could explore developing model roadway standards that mandate wider shoulders on roads heavily used by agricultural equipment, appropriate culvert widths, etc. Enhanced signage should be utilized to help raise awareness of the fact that local roadways are used by farmers and must be shared.
- *Model Zoning Code:* There is a desire to develop model “form-based” zoning for very rural lands that places emphasis on limiting development rather than on setbacks and use, and model “agriculturally - sensitive” zoning that places emphasis on guiding development to be farm-friendly through the use of buffers, appropriate building placement, etc.



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The Town of Oakfield's decision to maintain a focus on agricultural development and preserve farmland could result in positive future funding decisions and outcomes. By aligning with the REDC's mission, as well as the County's efforts, the Town could find itself eligible for new funding opportunities.

Additionally, Genesee County is working to assist farmers in the area. The Genesee County Economic Development Center is working to support and expand agricultural activity in the community. The GAIN Loan Fund supports agriculture and related business, including food processing (new business and expansions) and operating farms. This loan interest low fund is aimed at agricultural operations and related businesses that adopt new technologies, diversify their activities and/or expand.

F. Development Pressure and Consequences of Conversion

Competition for land is a challenge for many New York State farmers. As farmland is sought for new housing and other development, land values tend to price farmers out of the market. In addition, poorly planned development can bring new neighbors who are often unfamiliar with the sights, sounds and smells of nearby farming operations. Such situations can result in conflicts that may impact the future of farming in the community.

The landscape of New York State has been slowly changing for generations. According to the United States Department of Agriculture, New York State lost the equivalent of 9,000 acres of farmland per year between 2002 and 2010 – the equivalent of one farm every three days². Even more troubling are the findings from a 2009 Study completed by Cornell University in conjunction with the Brookings Institution. The study indicates that while over 425,000 acres of farm and forest land were converted in New York State between 1982 and 2007 (a 30 percent increase in developed land), the overall State population grew by only 2.6 percent.³

To control growth in Genesee County, including the Town of Oakfield, the County adopted the Genesee County Smart Growth Plan. The purpose of the plan was to minimize the impacts of growth and development that would otherwise result from the extension of public water service. The objectives of the plan are to focus County resources to support economic development opportunities in most promising locations; encourage revitalization of existing industrial areas, business districts and residential neighborhoods in the City of Batavia and developing village areas; and protect farmland and the rural character of the countryside, and maintain the viability of agriculture.

² <http://www.csrees.usda.gov/nea/economics/economics.cfm>

³ Pendall, Rolf. "Sprawl Without Growth: The Upstate Paradox". 1999.



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The primary function of the Genesee County Smart Growth Plan is to ensure that the extension of public water does not result in additional new development that is inconsistent with smart growth principles. The Plan delineates specific “Priority Development Areas” and “Reserve Areas” within the County. Genesee County reviews and refines the boundaries of the Development Areas on a regular basis, currently every three years. The Smart Growth Plan was most recently updated in 2016. Map 8 depicts the Smart Growth areas in the Town of Oakfield.

Priority Development Areas are locations wherein development and redevelopment would be encouraged and the County would not restrict access to portions of the public water systems. This includes areas with significant potential for economic development, as well as areas already relatively densely developed with housing and commercial and industrial uses. Priority Development areas were identified based on access to transportation, feasibility of extending or enhancing public water service, the availability or potential for extending other public infrastructure and services to support development, minimal contact with land in County Agricultural Districts and State regulated wetlands, and minimal contact with land identified as an ecological network or natural asset core, as identified by the Green Genesee Smart Genesee project. In the Town of Oakfield, all Priority Development Areas are in or adjacent to the Village of Oakfield.

Outside of these designated Development Areas, access to the County-funded portions of the County’s water system is subject to the policies and procedures specified in the Genesee County Smart Growth Plan. In general, the County has strict lateral restrictions for parcels located outside of the designated Development Areas. Only existing structures have been allowed access to public water hookups. The intent of the Smart Growth Plan is to discourage development outside of the Priority Development Areas in order to minimize conflicts between new development and agricultural uses.

The boundaries of the Priority Development Areas in the Town of Oakfield were revised in 2016. Approximately 227 acres were added, while 321 acres were removed, for a net decrease of 94 acres. The areas added to the Priority Development Areas are to the north and east of the Village, and adjacent to the existing priority areas in and around the Village of Oakfield. An additional area south of the Village was established as a “Reserved Development Area.” Reserve Development Areas are lands identified as appropriate for future development under the right circumstances. Water hookups are not automatic in the Reserved Areas until the areas are certified by Genesee County.

While the Town of Oakfield is not currently experiencing pressure for residential development, it is expected that the STAMP project will likely have an impact on the Town. The availability of jobs at STAMP will likely bring new residents to the Town who desire to live in closer proximity to their place of employment. This, in turn, will likely generate a demand for new residential development on the Priority Development Area lands that are available in and around the Village of Oakfield, as well as in other communities within commuting distance to the Town of Alabama. Such demands



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could drive up land values, as well as property taxes, creating incentives for farmers and others to sell their land, particularly frontage property. Typically, the land that is most suitable for development is the same well-drained land that is best for agriculture. For some farmers, their land is their retirement. Currently, the value of land as agricultural land exceeds its value for residential growth. With growth pressures, however, increasing property values can make the decision to keep land in farming more difficult. This can be further complicated by the lack of family members or others with the desire and/or ability to keep these lands in agriculture, as well as changing trends in farming and farm markets. At present, the value of farmland is strong in the Town, but the potential impacts from the STAMP project are unknown.

New residential development will heighten the desire for public water, which is an ongoing subject of controversy, as existing residents and farmers desire water extensions outside of the designated areas. Enforcement of the mandates of the Smart Growth Plan and proper controls will be needed to manage future development actions. Therefore, the Town of Oakfield should monitor future growth in an effort to gauge development pressures. This will enable the Town to effectively respond and determine the need to implement appropriate tools or techniques for farmland conservation, such as a purchase of development rights program, zoning changes or other such actions, as noted in Section V of this Plan.

Furthermore, new residents are not always aware of how to properly use and maintain on-site septic systems. Additionally, new residents and the expected multitude of STAMP employees who will come from outside of the area (and possibly pass through Oakfield) will add more cars to local roadways that will ultimately result in increased conflicts between working farmers and motorists, which is already a problem in the community. New motorists need to be educated on the need for farmers to have right-of-way access on local roads. At present, some roads are not properly designed, constructed or maintained to support existing agricultural use and activity. Existing roadway widths and conditions are a problem for trucks that service local processing facilities. In some areas, roadway shoulders are too narrow, and when combined with the presence of drainage ditches, it can make it difficult for farm machinery move out of the way to allow faster moving vehicles to pass. Many of the major roadways through Oakfield are County and State roadways, and the Town will need to work cooperatively with them to ensure adequate design and upkeep.

Poorly planned residential development can fragment large areas of farmland into smaller configurations that can promote conflict between farmers and residential neighbors. Although currently not a problem, farm-neighbor conflicts are likely to occur when new residential development is constructed adjacent to active farmland as lands are sold off for new housing. New residents need to be educated about a farmers “right-to-farm,” which can include the creation of unpleasant odors, mud on local roadways, the generation of airborne dirt/dust, etc. Local farmers have indicated that to maintain profitability, farms need to remain large. To maintain an active and

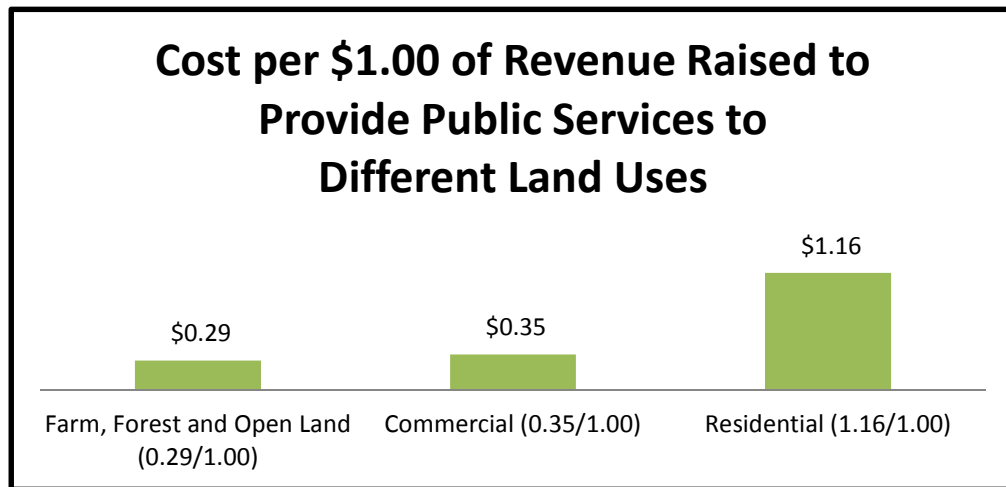


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viable agricultural industry in the Town of Oakfield, it is important to preserve the critical mass of farmland and farm soils, and maintain economies of scale.

New development will also bring about imbalance in the tax base, which can have an impact on the community. The saying “*Cows and Corn don’t go to school*” reflects the truism that while farmland pays less in property taxes than residential properties do, it requires significantly less in public services⁴. There is no lack of examples of communities that struggle to balance their tax base. As residential development increases, local residents will be faced with the associated costs of new residential development that are reflected in continuing increases in local, County and school taxes and, possibly, fees for services.

The American Farmland Trust (AFT) conducts Cost of Community Services studies (COCS) nationwide, which provide a snapshot in time of current revenues and expenditures on a land use basis. COCS studies analyze the demands on public services (e.g., schools, fire protection and road maintenance) and show how much it costs to provide public services to each land use in your community (e.g., residential, commercial and farmland). Unlike typical fiscal impact studies, COCS studies evaluate working land on equal ground with development. When the AFT completes these studies they find time and again that farm and forest land generate a net property tax “profit” while housing generally results in a property tax “loss” due to the high cost of associated residential needs and services. A Cost of Services Study Fact Sheet is included in Appendix E.



While pressure for the conversion of farmland to residential use is likely to result in the Town of Oakfield as a result of the development of the STAMP project, there is time to pro-actively address the potential for decreasing agricultural acreage. Oakfield retains a significant base of farmers who

⁴ Planning for Agriculture in New York. American Farmland Trust, 2012.



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have indicated that they actively use much of their available agricultural land. According to the input offered by local farmers, typically if the land is available, it is farmed. It was also indicated that there is an interest on the part of farmers in other communities to purchase or lease lands in the Town of Oakfield for agricultural use. A fuller understanding of the positive economic impacts of farmland preservation and promoting agriculture as a business can help Oakfield officials and residents make well-informed decisions and structure local land use planning techniques to help protect farmland and maintain a balance of the tax base.

G. Lands to be Protected

The Genesee County Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan includes a discussion of the Land Evaluation and Site Assessment (LESA) system, developed by the Natural Resources Conservation Service as a means for identifying high priority farmland for protection. Lands are evaluated based on a series of categories that help policymakers' rank agricultural parcels. Variables include soil-based "Land Evaluation Factors", as well as more general "Site Assessment Factors." Genesee County has developed an evaluation of priority issues, focusing on soils, parcel size, location and proximity to infrastructure. Under the County's system, priority lands are those that fall within an Agricultural District; represent parcels 100 acres in size or larger; and consist primarily of prime soils (Class 1 and Class 2 soil types). The County's prioritization system identifies agricultural lands of the highest priority, and the County's map identifies areas within the Town of Oakfield that are prioritized. However, the Town recognizes that there are additional important agricultural lands within the Town of Oakfield, including parcels that are smaller than 100 acres, that merit protection.

Development pressures have historically not been high in the Town of Oakfield, and 92 percent of the Town is zoned either Residential Agricultural (R+A) or Land Conservation (LC), zoning categories intended to prioritize protection of the land. However, the proposed STAMP project in the adjacent Town of Alabama may result in increased development pressures in the Town of Oakfield.

The Town of Oakfield strongly supports agriculture. Agriculture is important for the local economy, for the protection of open space, and for community character. Therefore, in addition to the priority lands identified at the County level, the Town supports protection of lands beyond those identified in the County's Agriculture and Farmland Protection Plan, and has developed an expanded category of lands to be protected, as shown on Map 10. Priority agricultural lands to be protected in the Town of Oakfield include all parcels within a New York State Agricultural District, as well as all lands receiving agricultural exemptions, with the exception of parcels that fall within the designated Smart Growth Areas. Prioritized lands, as shown on the map, incorporate much of the Town of Oakfield, with the exception of lands already protected as conservation areas. Although not mapped, properties with important scenic views, farms where there has been significant investment in agricultural improvements, and land in imminent threat of development should also be prioritized.



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SECTION V – FINDINGS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

A. Summary of Issues Relating to Farmland Protection and Agriculture as a Business

Oakfield is a rural community with robust agricultural activity that helps to protect and preserve the local character and heritage of the Town. Farming has been a long standing land use and activity in the Town of Oakfield since the early settlement of the community. In 2005, the Town of Oakfield, in collaboration with the Town of Alabama and the Village of Oakfield, prepared a Comprehensive Plan as a means of better managing future growth and development in the community. The Town's Comprehensive Plan recognizes the importance of farming in the Town and sets forth specific goals and recommendations for agricultural protection, including the need for the preparation of an Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan. In developing the Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan, an assessment of farming and agricultural activity in the Town and other information gathered during the planning process was undertaken. This assessment revealed the following issues, opportunities and concerns as they relate to farmland protection.

- A wide extent of the Town of Oakfield is included in a County-designated Agricultural District, and approximately 61 percent of the Town is currently farmland. Lands in the Town are primarily used for dairy farming, grain and feed crops and vegetable production. There are also a number of farm stands, farmers markets and other establishments where freshly grown farm products can be sold to the public.
- The community is underlain with good farm soils, including prime soils, prime soils when drained, and soils of State-wide importance. Over three-quarters of the Town's soils (76.3 percent) fall into one of these three categories.
- The trend in farming nationally is toward larger farms, and farming is increasingly competing as a global industry. Farmers in Oakfield market their products at a local, regional, national and international level, depending on what they produce.
- The trend in Genesee County is that farming is self-sustaining and this is expected to continue well into the future.
- The Town of Oakfield Comprehensive Plan recommends the protection of agriculture as a viable land use in the Town, and supports the preparation of the Agriculture and Farmland Protection Plan. The value of agriculture is also recognized, and farmland protection is strongly supported, at the County and regional levels; there are many programs available to assist farmers.
- Local farmers are knowledgeable, pro-active and adaptable to new markets and technologies, and work well with other farmers in the Town and region.



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- There is strong public support for farming in the community and protection of rural character; residents want to see farming activity maintained and continued in the Town of Oakfield.
- Organic farming practices are becoming more popular, particularly on smaller farms. Training and technical assistance would be useful to help this industry prosper.
- The Oakfield-Alabama School District participates in the Farm to School Projects program. They currently purchase potatoes and apples from local farms in the area.
- The extent of areas being farmed has remained constant, with a significant amount of land in the Town devoted to farming. Older farmers are staying in their family homestead, but renting acreage to other farmers to keep their lands in agricultural production. However, there is a need for estate and transition planning.
- There is not a lot of land available for the expansion of farming, which can drive up land costs and impact the ability of younger farmers and start-up operations to establish in the Town.
- Support businesses, including farm equipment sales and service, farming supplies, processing facilities, etc., are located throughout the region and available to farmers in the Town. However, there are no facilities for the processing of animals in the County.
- Public water is (or will be) available throughout most of the Town; public sanitary sewer infrastructure does extend to homes and businesses in the area surrounding the Village. Areas of the Town located further outside of the Village of Oakfield utilize septic systems.
- Priority development areas (smart growth areas) have been identified in the Town of Oakfield where public water service currently exists or will be extended. Once the Town's water system is complete, new development will only be allowed in these identified areas, where approximately 50 parcels that are not farmland exist for development.
- In the last round of review and revisions to the Genesee County Smart Growth Plan, the Town removed farmland from the priority development areas, making these areas smaller.
- The Town of Oakfield is in the process of adopting clustered development regulations; once adopted, public sewer service will be extended to three properties in the identified development areas where clustered residential development is desired.
- Public water is beneficial to dairies and farmers growing leafy vegetables. As farms grow bigger and employ more people, the importance of fresh water increases. Cows consume a lot of



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water, and quality water increases production. Fire safety and public health requirements also hinge on access to an adequate source of water. Water availability will affect existing and future agricultural product development.

- The New York State Department of Agricultural and Markets will allow lateral hook ups to agricultural operations and farms. However, if the agricultural use changes in the future, additional housing that is proposed for the property would not be provided access to public water service if the property is located in an agricultural district.
- Between 1990 and 2014, the population in the Town of Oakfield has declined by approximately 2.7 percent and there is currently no pressure for new residential development. However, population growth and demand for new housing development is likely to increase over the long term as the STAMP project progresses and job opportunities materialize. This is something that the Town may want to monitor in an effort to gauge the level of development pressure in the community and determine if mitigative actions or programs may be needed to better manage growth.
- Local residents and farmers want to see new residential development kept in and around the hamlets. A preference was expressed for conservation subdivision development and other techniques that preserve farmland. Opposition was noted for standard road frontage development. In public meetings held for this effort, farmers in attendance indicated that they were not interested in selling off frontage lots, due to concern over problems with neighbors.
- The Town of Oakfield does not have adopted Right to Farm (RTF) regulations. This may become more significant in the event the community experiences an influx of new residents who may not be familiar with farming and farm practices as a result of the STAMP development. The public indicated support for RTF regulations.
- Residents in the Town of Oakfield (outside of the Village) must pay county, town, school district and special fire district property taxes; these are significant costs for farmers.
- Traffic is increasing on local roadways; conflicts between farm machinery and automobiles are becoming a more frequent occurrence and a greater concern. Farmers are also having greater difficulty entering and exiting their fields.
- Local roadway conditions and design constraints (limited width and narrow shoulders) and, in some locations, lack of maintenance impact the movement of farm machinery and farm truck traffic traveling to processing plants. The location of overhead power lines, culverts and mail boxes were also noted as a constraint for movement of farm machinery.



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- The Town has an established Residential Agricultural (R-A) zoning classification that allows farms and farm related activities.
- Drainage improvements and ditch maintenance are a major concern in order to keep agricultural land viable and maintain the vitality of farm soils, get water off fields (drain mucky soils) and get water to fields to sustain crops.
- Additionally, wetland regulations are making it more difficult for farmers to drain their lands for use, which is resulting in the loss of productive farmland.
- The use of small-scale, on-farm sources of alternative energy generation is beneficial to local farmers, allowing them the ability to cut utility costs and/or supplement their income. Leasing land for solar farms is feasible, providing it does not take productive farmland and good farm soils out of use.
- Genesee Valley BOCES, Genesee County Community College and Genesee County Cornell Cooperative Extension offer a number of valuable educational programs for farmers, such as the Agricultural Academy. However, there is a need to educate farmers on business management basics.
- Agricultural oriented programming needs to be offered/strengthened at all levels in the Oakfield Alabama School District to introduce farming culture (where does food come from, what do farmers do, farm tours, potential careers, etc.).

B. Analysis of Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats

The following SWOT analysis was prepared using the comments and other input gathered from discussions with farmers and other local stakeholders, the Advisory Committee, and the public, as well as the findings of the analysis of existing conditions and agricultural resources. This analysis identifies what are considered to be the strengths and weaknesses that affect farming and agriculture in the Town of Oakfield (internal factors over which you generally have some measure of control), and the opportunities and threats that come from outside the community (external factors over which you have essentially no control). This analysis is useful in helping to identify strategies for helping the Town achieve its goals and objectives for the future.



Town of Oakfield Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan

SWOT ANALYSIS

| <u>Strengths</u> | <u>Weaknesses</u> |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <i>Wide extent of productive farm land</i> <i>Good / productive farm soils</i> <i>Strong farm traditions</i> <i>Farmers (proactive, knowledgeable, adaptable)</i> <i>Large number of family farm operations</i> <i>Strong public support for farming</i> <i>County and regional support/programs</i> <i>Limited development pressure</i> <i>Availability of support services</i> <i>Availability of public water</i> <i>Recognition of the value of agricultural land</i> <i>Few farmer/neighbor conflicts</i> <i>Interest in utilizing alternative energy sources</i> <i>Genesee County Smart Growth Plan</i> | <i>Land availability</i> <i>No local Right To Farm protections</i> <i>Technology limitations /internet access</i> <i>Roadway conditions</i> <i>Wetlands / wetland regulations</i> <i>Declining / aging population</i> <i>Drainage / potential loss of farmland</i> <i>Zoning / land use regulations</i> <i>Loss of agricultural programming in schools</i> <i>Limited business management skills/training</i> <i>Price volatility</i> |
| <u>Opportunities</u> | <u>Threats</u> |
| <i>Market trends</i> <i>Availability of processing facilities for produce and milk</i> <i>County, regional and state programs/support</i> <i>Infrastructure / support businesses</i> <i>Stable county population</i> <i>Increasing interest in buying local produce</i> <i>Growing agritourism industry</i> <i>Labor availability</i> | <i>Market trends</i> <i>STAMP / future development</i> <i>Roadway infrastructure</i> <i>Increasing land costs</i> <i>Competition for limited resources</i> <i>Lack of awareness about farming by the non-farm public</i> <i>Immigration restrictions</i> |

C. Tools and Techniques for Farmland Protection

There are a number of programs, activities, strategies and techniques that can be used to protect farming and promote the continuation of agricultural activities in a community. The choice of which mechanisms to utilize can be based on the extent of agricultural activities in a community, as well as the amount of development pressure that exists. The following is an overview of programs and techniques that may be helpful to the Town for protecting the important farmland.



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Farmland Protection

- ***Agricultural Zoning***

The main purpose of zoning is to separate land uses that might result in threats to public health, safety or welfare, or reduce a landowner's enjoyment of their land. Zoning also promotes orderly growth of a community, which can help control the cost of public services and maintain a pleasing visual quality in the community. Zoning should strike a balance between the right of a property owner to use their land and the right of the public to a healthy, safe and orderly living environment.

Agricultural zoning is aimed at reducing conflicts between farmers and non-farmers. Many normal farming practices can generate irritants, such as dust or odors for neighboring residents. Similarly, non-farm neighbors often do not respect private property, and farmers report problems with dirt bikes or all-terrain vehicles in fields or litter and vandalism. Agricultural zoning provides some protection for farmers by limiting the number of non-farm dwellings that can be built in the area. Agricultural zoning is used to protect valuable and productive farm soils and other resources that have value to the public, such as open space, wetlands, and wildlife habitat.

Agricultural zoning is the most commonly used land use technique for limiting the development of farmland into non-farm uses, and has become the first line of defense in most communities that have successful farmland protection programs. Agricultural zoning involves the creation of a zoning district that designates farming and other agricultural activities as the primary, preferred land uses. This type of zoning district generally targets the most productive soils and large contiguous areas of active farms. The minimum lot size may vary from a minimum lot size of 2 acres to over 40 acres, depending on the average size of farm properties in the area. Agricultural zoning districts can incorporate "density averaging" or "sliding scale" provisions to limit the number of dwellings permitted. The regulations may also specify maximum (as well as minimum) lot sizes for non-farm development. Regulations for this type of zoning district usually allow farm-related businesses and home-based businesses, and limit non-agricultural development and uses. Agricultural protection zoning may be combined with purchase of development rights or incentive zoning (discussed below).

Agricultural zoning districts intended to support farms and protect farmland should be designed to:

- Support a farm-friendly business environment;
- Protect a critical mass of agricultural land to encourage the continuation of crop production and other activities;
- Discourage land uses that would cause conflicts with farming operations;



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- Allow family farm-related businesses that generate extra income for the owners, but are secondary to the farm operation;
- Establish setbacks for farm building from property lines to limit the spillover of odors, chemical sprays, dust and noise that could cause conflicts with neighbors;
- Prevent the conversion of the Town's most productive farmland or the division of the land into tracts that are too small to farm profitably;
- Provide some assurance that the public investment in farm property tax breaks and in the potential purchase of conservation easements on farmland will be protected; and
- Help to keep land more affordable for farmers to purchase.

The Town of Oakfield has an adopted Residential Agricultural (R-A) zoning classification. It would be useful to add a statement of intent to this zoning classification that indicates recognition of the importance of agricultural uses and lends preference to agricultural uses over residential. Although the listing of permitted uses in the R-A district includes a number of agricultural uses, it could be improved to be more specific in range. Furthermore, the list of uses that are permitted upon issuance of a special use permit (SUP) should be revised. A number of uses that are not appropriate for an agricultural area, such as professional offices and child care center, should be removed from the list. Multi-family housing is permitted by SUP. If this is intended for housing farm workers, it should be specified as such; otherwise, it should also be removed from the list.

The Town may also want to revisit the minimum area requirements for the R-A district. At present, the minimum lot size for the creation of a residential lot is 30,000 square feet (approximately $\frac{3}{4}$ -acre). It might be wise to increase this minimum to two acres or slightly higher to ultimately reduce lot yield (and potential impacts/conflicts) of potential residential subdivisions that are constructed in close proximity to farmland. The minimum lot with should also be increased.

It should be noted that a good zoning classification is not necessarily enduring. Property owners may be granted variances from the zoning restrictions under certain conditions by a Zoning Board of Appeals or lands may be rezoned by a Town Board. Therefore, it is suggested that the Board appoint a Farmland Protection or Agricultural Advisory to keep track of changes to farmland in the area zoned for agriculture. This committee could help the Town Board consider the compatibility of rezoned land with neighboring properties, the public benefits of rezoning agriculture land to another classification, and if the rezoning is in compliance with the Town's Comprehensive Plan and Agricultural Protection Plan. This committee could also assist the Town Board with potential residential/farmland neighbor conflicts that may arise in the future.

Agricultural zoning must also enable flexibility and create a supportive business environment as the agricultural industry is frequently changing as farmers adapt to new market and operating



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conditions. As globalization continues to accelerate, it is likely that the rate and extent of change within the agricultural industry will increase as well. These changes may include the production of different agricultural products or adoption of new production practices. For instance, there is an increase in the use of greenhouses or other temporary structures for the production of fruits, vegetables, horticultural products and livestock housing. While these structures may not conform to some traditional views of farms, they are valuable to producers as they are a cost-effective means for increasing control of growing conditions, which is of great importance in New York given the State's limited growing season and varied (and often challenging) weather conditions.

- ***Incentive Zoning***

Article V, Section 590 of the Town of Oakfield Zoning Law includes provisions for Incentive Zoning. The purpose and intent of these provisions is to offer incentives to applicants who provide amenities that assist the Town to implement specific physical, cultural and social policies outlined in the Comprehensive Plan. Amenities can include affordable housing, child or elder-care facilities, road improvements, utilities, parks, passive or active open space and other similar public improvements or benefits. In exchange, the applicant may be granted decreases in required minimum lot size, changes in use or zoning, revised setback or height requirements, a reduction of required open space or any other changes in zoning provisions. As written, these provisions are helpful for achieving needed amenities as a part of residential or commercial development.

Incentive zoning can be used to encourage the private acquisition of agricultural conservation easements (development rights) on land located in designated conservation areas. A developer would be authorized to purchase agricultural conservation easements or contribute toward a public fund to purchase such easements (development rights). In exchange, the developer would be permitted to develop additional units in suitable areas, as designated by the Town. The technique is fairly easy for the Town to administer, as the developer and the owner of the farmland arrange the transaction privately. Once the developer demonstrates that land will be preserved, they would be entitled to the density bonus or other incentive granted on the property to be developed. This technique for agricultural protection, which has virtually no cost to the Town, could result in the permanent protection of farmland or open space through a conservation easement. Using incentive zoning for agricultural preservation can result in permanent protection of farmland if agricultural easements are provided as an amenity in exchange for the granted development incentive. It also allows for conservation easements to be purchased privately.

- ***Conservation Subdivision***

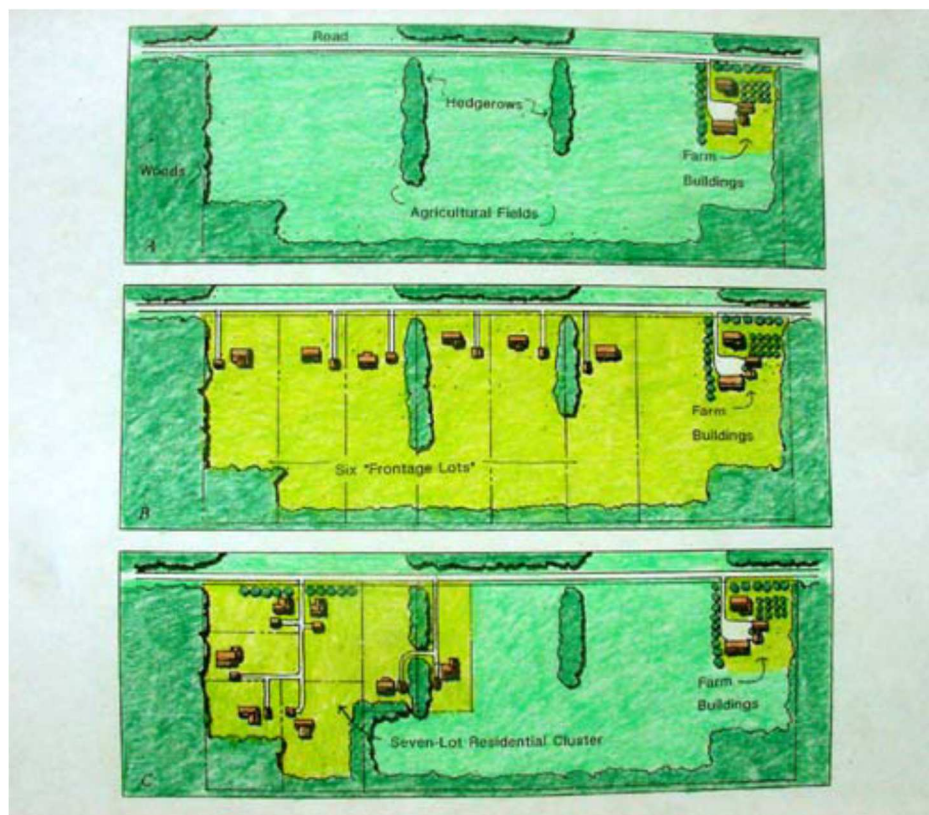
Subdivision regulations govern the division of large parcels into smaller lots. Subdivision laws allow communities to make decisions about land development to protect public interests and



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ensure that new development does not accelerate flooding and erosion, increase traffic or result in other negative impacts. Subdivision regulations typically require a plat that depicts the proposed location and dimensions of lots, new roads and other improvements and landscape features. These features may include wetlands, floodplains, utility easements, wooded areas or other important natural resources. From an agricultural standpoint, subdivision regulations could require the review of potential impacts to productive farmland and stipulate design standards to reduce such impacts and protect agricultural lands and farm soils.

Although currently not allowed in the Town, Conservation Subdivision is a tool the Town could consider in the future. Also known as clustered development or open space design, Conservation Subdivision encourages the concentration of new residences on a portion of a property, allowing the remainder of the site to remain undeveloped. This development technique is aimed at retaining areas of important farmland, and/or other important open space, while accommodating development. Conservation subdivision can enable the location of housing on lesser productive soils, keeping more productive farmland available for continued use. Housing would be situated on smaller lots with smaller lot width, reducing the extent of infrastructure development and disturbance of areas that are to remain undeveloped. Adapting conservation subdivision design principles can result in the same number of homes on about half the available land, thereby preserving farmland, open space and rural character.



Source: Arendt, Randall G. (May 2009). "Visualizing the Options: Choosing Among our Alternative Futures – Chautauqua County Design Principles Guidebook".



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As another example, the following graphic illustrates two potential development scenarios for an existing farm property. In the traditional design (center), all areas of the parcel that could continue to be farmed have been converted into residential lots. In the conservation example (right), in exchange for smaller lot size, a large area of the existing farmland is preserved and could continue to be utilized for agriculture.



At present, the Town of Oakfield does not include provisions to allow cluster development in the Residential Agricultural (R-A) zoning district. These regulations would enable better subdivision design and planned development in locations where new residential development is envisioned in the Town.

- ***Purchase of Development Rights (PDR)***

Purchase of Development Rights (PDR), also known as purchase of agricultural conservation easements (PACE), is a voluntary approach for farmland protection that compensates landowners for permanently protecting their land for agricultural use. In general, landowners possess a variety of rights to their property, including the right to use water resources, harvest timber or develop their property consistent with local regulations. Some or all of these rights can be transferred or sold. PDR programs essentially pay landowners to extinguish their rights to develop their land. Landowners retain other ownership rights to the property, the property remains on the tax rolls, and its taxable value is based on these remaining rights.

A PDR program places a deed restriction, commonly known as a conservation easement, on the property that is being preserved. In most cases, conservation easements are permanent agreements that are tied to the land and apply to all future owners. These binding agreements



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provide certain government agencies and/or qualified private, nonprofit organizations, the right to prevent non-farm development or activities that could interfere with the existing or future agricultural use on the property.

The goal of agricultural conservation easements is to protect land to help support the business of farming, and conserve productive soils for future generations of farmers. Land that is subject to an agricultural conservation easement can still be farmed or used for forestry, recreation and other uses compatible with agricultural activities. Since agriculture is constantly evolving, agricultural conservation easements typically provide opportunities for farmers to construct new farm buildings and farm worker housing, or to change commodities and crops that are grown or farm practices on the land.

In general, the value of a permanent conservation easement equals the fair market value of a property, minus its restricted value, as determined by a certified real estate appraiser. For example, if the full market value of a parcel of farmland is \$400,000, but the land is worth \$100,000 when protected, then the farmer would typically be paid the difference of \$300,000 for selling the development rights. PDR is popular with many landowners in part because the payment is financially competitive with development offers.

Advantages:

- Permanently protects farmland, while keeping it in private ownership;
- Participation, is voluntary;
- Farmers are allowed to transform land assets into liquid assets that can be used for other purposes;
- Can protect a variety of agricultural and natural resources; and
- Helps keep agricultural land affordable for farmers.

Disadvantages:

- Can be expensive;
- Can be difficult to fund adequately; demand for the program is usually far greater than available funds;
- May not protect some important farms where property owners choose not to participate.
- Can be complex and time consuming; and
- Requires an ongoing investment of time and resources to monitor and enforce conservation easements.

A PDR program can be an important “carrot” to counterbalance the “stick” of land use regulations. This is especially true in communities that are experiencing high development pressure, where there is a need for farmland protection alternatives that are financially competitive with development proposals. A PDR program can allow communities to permanently protect significant blocks of land as a resource for local farms. This protected land



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can also be a community resource, providing local food, rural character and cherished scenic landscapes. However, PDR programs are not a panacea. They will not solve all of the problems that challenge local farms. The programs are often expensive, and PDR program implementation typically takes considerable time and requires specific knowledge and skills. Towns debating whether to start or support a PDR program should consider what land should be protected and how to determine which lands have the highest resource value.

Due to the voluntary nature of a PDR program, landowners largely determine which properties end up being enrolled for protection. However, there is a benefit to having a ranking system, map and/or other plan that guides local farmland protection priorities. A local prioritization strategy can add legitimacy to PDR efforts, ensure that limited public funds are spent strategically, and address landowner or resident questions about the rationale for project selections. The specificity of a ranking system will differ by community. Realistically, the comprehensiveness and complexity of a local strategy should be balanced by the community's available time and resources. Because PDR programs tend to be landowner driven (based on voluntary participation), not all properties that are identified by the community as priority sites for protection may be included. However, it is helpful to identify and evaluate farmland properties and resources of value in an effort to determine local priorities. Appendix G includes information on some local PDR programs in the Western New York region.

How PDR preservation efforts will be funded is one of the most significant challenges for towns that want to establish a PDR program. Purchase of development rights is attractive because it offers a significant financial incentive for landowners. However, communities often are faced with significant landowner interest, as well as rising real estate prices. Without a consistent source of PDR funding, local programs can be stifled and may make slower progress than originally anticipated. Some of the traditional funding sources for local PDR programs in New York State include:

- New York State Farmland Protection Program
- United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS),
- Town bonds
- Town property taxes
- Town real estate transfer taxes

All of these funding sources have benefits and drawbacks. State and federal programs provide grants to eligible governments, which is an attractive option for local governments since the grants can bring hundreds of thousands of dollars to local projects. The downside is that they are currently significantly oversubscribed and require cost-share funds.



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- ***Estate and Transition Planning***

For many farm families, passing the farm on to the next generation can be a major challenge. Transferring a farm involves more than just passing on land. A will is an important part of an estate plan, but a will alone cannot guarantee a secure future for a farm family's land and business. Estate planning is needed to address inheritance tax and settlement issues that may arise because land is not a liquid asset.

Estate planning can accommodate the needs of all family members, even those who leave the farm operation. A good estate plan can accomplish at least four goals:

- Transfer ownership and management of the agricultural operation, land and other assets.
- Avoid unnecessary income, gift and estate taxes.
- Ensure financial security and peace of mind for all generations, and
- Develop the next generation's management capacity.

Frequent changes in tax laws highlight the need for estate planning that is tailored to individual circumstances and addresses the uncertainty about future tax legislation. There are many sources of information on estate and transition planning, including attorneys, accountants and other financial advisors. American Farmland Trust has also published "Your Land Is Your Legacy: A Guide to Planning for the Future of Your Farm".

- ***Transfer of Development Rights***

Another land preservation program that has proved useful for farmland preservation is Transfer of Development Rights (TDR). This type of program is most effective in communities that are under pressure for development and that have lands available to enable the actual transfer of development rights from agricultural lands to areas approved for denser development. While this program is not recommended for implementation in the Town of Oakfield, a time may come in the future where it might warrant further consideration. Therefore, information on TDR has been included in Appendix H.

Tax Relief Programs

Tax relief is an important issue for farmers. Farms need land to operate, and property taxes on farmland often are a considerable expense. Not only do property taxes add significantly to business costs for farmers, farms tend to pay more in property taxes than they require in public services. As farmers often say, "Cows don't go to school and corn doesn't dial 911." Increasingly, state and local governments are recognizing that keeping farmland in production may help control the cost of providing expensive community services. In response, New York State has established programs to reduce property taxes on farmland that meets certain eligibility requirements. Certain of these programs are utilized in the Town of Oakfield, others are lesser known and farmers should be made aware of their potential value for tax relief.



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- ***Agricultural Use Assessments***

Agricultural assessment provides “use value” assessment for eligible farmland. This allows farmland to be taxed for its agricultural value, rather than its market (i.e., non-farm development) value. Any owner of land used for agricultural production may qualify if the land meets the requirements or is rented to an eligible farm operation. Landowners must file for this agricultural tax exemption annually with the Town Tax Assessor’s office. Land placed under agricultural assessment and then converted to nonagricultural use is subject to conversion fees.

The NYS Department of Agriculture & Markets has established a formula to determine the Agricultural Use value of property based on soil types and projected crop yields. In areas where the land is valuable for development purposes, the agricultural use value will be much lower than the market value, resulting in significantly lower property taxes. However, in areas where farming is the “highest and best use” of the property – where a farmer is likely to pay as much for the land as anyone else - the agricultural use value is the same as the market value. While agricultural use assessments are applied automatically to property taxes levied by municipalities and school districts, fire districts must “opt in.” To do so, the governing body needs to pass a resolution agreeing to utilize agricultural use assessments.

To qualify for an agricultural assessment:

- Enrolled land must generally be a minimum of seven acres and farmed by a single operation.
- Land must have been used in the preceding two years for crop production, commercial boarding of horses or livestock production.
- Farm operation must gross an average of \$10,000 or more in sales per year.
- Land of fewer than seven acres may qualify if the operation has an average gross sales value of \$50,000 or more per year.
- Support land, land set aside in federal conservation programs or farm woodland (up to 50 acres per eligible tax parcel) may qualify.

Non-farmers who rent land to farmers are eligible to receive an agricultural assessment if the rented land satisfies the basic eligibility requirements described above. If the rented land does not satisfy the average gross sales requirement, but does satisfy the other requirements, it may still be eligible if it is farmed under a written rental agreement of at least five years, with other farmland that satisfies the eligibility requirements. This program may not be widely known among non-farmers and is something that the Town should promote as another means of preserving farmland.

- ***Farmers’ School Tax Credit***

This Tax Credit enables farmers to receive a tax credit against the state personal income tax or the corporation franchise tax to reimburse some or all of the school district property taxes paid by the farmer. An eligible farmer or corporation must own qualified agricultural property, must pay eligible school taxes during the year, and their income must be below the income limitation



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amount of \$250,000. Eligible farmers must receive at least 2/3 of their excess federal gross income from farming. Excess federal gross income is federal gross income, reduced by up to \$30,000. In other words, take gross income and subtract \$30,000. If 2/3 of the remaining amount is from the farm, you generally will qualify. Farming is defined as an individual or corporation that cultivates, operates or manages a farm for gain or profit, even though the operation may not produce a profit each year. Many commodities are included in the definition of farming, as well as commercial horse farms and Christmas tree farms. Also included in the definition of farming are members of a limited liability company, a shareholder of an S or C corporation, and the beneficiary of an estate or trust that is engaged in the business of farming.

This program allows eligible farmers to receive credit refunds of up to 100 percent of the school taxes paid on agricultural property up to 350 acres in size, and 50 percent of school taxes paid on acreage in excess of 350 acres. The school property tax credit should be claimed annually on the farmer's personal NYS tax return (complete Form IT-217-I, *Claim for Farmers' School Tax Credit*). Additional information on this program is included in Appendix I.

- ***Farm Building Exemptions***

Several provisions in New York's Real Property Tax Law exempt farm buildings or structures from property taxes. Section 483 exempts new or reconstructed agricultural buildings, such as barns or farm worker housing, from any increase in assessed value that results from the improvement. Farm worker housing is exempt provided that the facility meets all safety and health standards set by the State building code and the NYS Department of Labor. An application for a tax exemption for newly constructed or reconstructed farm buildings must be made within a year following the completion of construction work. The exemption continues automatically for 10 years, as long as the building continues to be used for farming. Sections 483-a, 483-c and 483-d permanently exempt certain agricultural structures from taxation. Some of the structures that qualify for the exemption include:

- Silos
- Grain storage facilities
- Bulk tanks
- Manure facilities
- Temporary greenhouses

Structures must be located on parcels of at least five acres and used for profitable agricultural production. Structures used for processing, retail merchandising, personal use or residences of applicants and their immediate families do not qualify for the exemption. The owner of the building or structure for which an exemption is sought must file application form RP-483, which is available from the Town Tax Assessor or the County Office of Real Property Services, with the Town or County.



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- ***Historic Barn Rehabilitation Tax Credits***

The New York State Farmer's Protection and Farm Preservation Act, enacted by New York State in 1996, was designed in part to preserve the historic barns that dot the State's landscape. Accordingly, the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation (OPRHP) created the Barn Restoration Program in 2000 to help preserve historic barns and protect agricultural landscapes throughout New York State. OPRHP has actively participated with the NYS Department of Taxation and Finance in developing the barn preservation income tax credit program to help farmers save a portion of the costs required for the restoration of historic barns. This program has certain requirements and criteria that apply to determine eligibility.

In order to qualify for an Historic Barn Rehabilitation Tax Credit, which is equal to 25 percent of the cost of rehabilitating historic barns, the barn must have been built or put into agricultural service before 1936 and the rehabilitation must be designed to house farm equipment, livestock or agricultural products or used for commercial activities (structures restored or converted for residential use are not eligible). The restoration cannot "materially alter the historic appearance" of the barn; only costs incurred after January 1, 2003 are eligible. In addition, the barn must meet the tax definition of income production. Interested farmers should file tax form IT-212-ATT (see Appendix J).

Additionally, the National Parks Services (NPS) also offers the Federal Historic Preservation Tax Incentive program, which allows a tax credit equal to 20 percent of the amount spent rehabilitating historic barns that are listed on or determined eligible for the National Register of Historic Places. This federal program has been administered by the NPS since passage of the Tax Reform Act of 1976. To date, over 30,000 buildings have been rehabilitated, including many barns.

- ***Sales Tax Exemptions***

New York tax law now exempts certain items used in farm production from State and local sales and use taxes. The items must be used "predominantly" (more than 50 percent) for farm production in order to qualify. Some of the exempt items include personal property used for production/operation; building materials used for farm buildings or structures; services to install, maintain or repair farm buildings or structures; motor vehicles used predominantly for production/operation; and fuel, gas, electricity, refrigeration or steam used for production /operation. Farmers seeking a sales tax exemption must file complete form ST-125.

- ***Forest Land Exemption***

To encourage the long-term ownership of woodlands, Section 480-a of the Real Property Tax Law allows eligible owners of forest land to receive reductions in tax assessment. Landowners must own a minimum of 50 acres of contiguous forestland and be willing to commit the land to forest crop production. In addition, landowners must follow forest management plans that have been prepared by qualified foresters and approved by the New York State Department of



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Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC). Owners of tracts certified by NYSDEC must apply annually to their local assessors for the exemption. Landowners must comply with the program for nine years following the last year of commitment. Penalties may be imposed if a landowner fails to follow the approved management program or converts the land to a use that prevents continued forest crop production.

Environmental Management Programs

Farmers have played an important role in the stewardship of New York's natural resources for generations. There are a number of voluntary programs aimed at helping farmers keep land in active agricultural use while protecting water, soil and air quality and achieving other natural resource goals. An example of some of the programs that could be helpful to farmers in Oakfield include the following.

- ***Agricultural Management Assistance***

The USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service oversees the Agricultural Management Assistance (AMA) program, which provides funding to 16 states (including New York) where participation in the Federal Crop Insurance Program has typically been low. The AMA program offers cost-share assistance to agricultural producers to address issues such as water management, water quality and erosion control, and to mitigate risk through diversification or transition to organic farming. Program priorities may vary from year to year. The AMA program funds up to 75 percent of the cost for producers to install and maintain eligible conservation practices.

- ***Environmental Quality Incentive Program***

The federal Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP) provides technical assistance, cost-share payments and incentive payments to assist with environmental and conservation improvements on land used for agricultural production. The EQIP pays up to 75 percent of the cost to implement structural and management practices on eligible agricultural land. Up to 90 percent cost-share assistance to limited resource, socially disadvantaged or beginning farmers. Cost-share payment may be made to help farmers install erosion control measures, agricultural waste management facilities or renewable energy resources. EQIP funding may also establish conservation practices, such as nutrient management, integrated pest management, forest management, manure management and wildlife habitat management. The 2014 Farm Bill increased the funding available for EQIP cost-share and incentive payments and extended eligibility to conservation practices directly related to organic production or transition. The USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service or the NYS Department of Agriculture and Markets can be contacted for more information on this program.



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- ***Organic Farming***

The 2014 Farm Bill continues and expands opportunities for organic agricultural operations that were established under the 2008 Farm Bill. The Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) Organic Initiative provides financial assistance to organic producers looking to address resource concerns by implementing and installing conservation practices tailored to organic crop production. Examples of activities for funding include the development of conservation plans, the establishment of buffer zones, planning and installing pollinator habitat, improving irrigation efficiency, and enhancing crop rotations and nutrient management, among other things. Organic, transitioning-to-organic, and producers that are exempt from National Organic Program certification requirements are eligible to contract with the USDA National Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) to install and implement organic-specific conservation activities that are consistent with an organic system plan. The EQIP Organic Initiative allows eligible agricultural producers to apply for \$20,000 annually, and \$80,000 over a maximum of six years.

Additionally, the funding allocated for the National Organic Certification Cost-Share Program was increased from just over \$5 million to \$11.5 million, to offset the costs of annual certification for organic farmers and handlers. This program provides assistance to producers, handlers and processors who are applying for National Organic Certification for eligible agricultural products. Producers may be reimbursed for up to 75 percent of their organic certification costs, not to exceed \$750. The 2014 Farm Bill renews funding for the Organic Agriculture Research and Extension Initiative at the previous \$20 million per year level, and funding for the Organic Production and Market Date Initiatives at \$5 million over five years. The National Organic Program also receives \$5 million for technology upgrades. The USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service or the NYS Department of Agriculture and Markets can be contacted for more information on these opportunities.

- ***Biomass Crop Assistance Program***

The 2014 Farm Bill continues a program established in 2008 that provides incentives to farmers, ranchers and forest landowners to establish, cultivate and harvest eligible biomass crops for heat, power, bio-based products, research and advanced biofuels. Individual farmers or farmers working as a group can propose a project for funding assistance. There is no minimum acreage requirement. Landowners must enter into five-year contracts for annual and perennial crops, and 15-year contracts for woody biomass. Program participants receive cost-share payments to support production, and funding to assist with the collection, harvest, storage and transport of materials.

- ***Grazing***

The federal Conservation of Private Grazing Land Program provides technical and educational assistance for conservation and enhancement of private grazing lands, including sustainable grazing practices such as rotational grazing.



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The Grazing Lands Conservation Initiative is a nationwide collaboration that provides technical assistance to owners and managers of private grazing lands to enhance long term productivity and ecological health. The USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) funds technical assistance and assists with public awareness activities about the benefits of private grazing land.

Farm Viability Assistance

There are a number of programs available to help farms and farmers to be economically viable and sustainable over the long term. There are a number of programs offered at the federal and state level to assist farmers. These include the following:

- ***New York Beginning Farmer Loan Program*** - low-cost financial assistance for the purchase of agricultural property and equipment to help start a farming business or to facilitate inter-generational transfer of a farm business;
- ***GROW New York*** - offers Agricultural Research and Development Grants, Farmland Viability Grants and Pride of New York marketing assistance;
- ***New York Farm Viability Institute Grants*** - funding for farm-based projects, including applied research and education;
- ***Northeast Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SARE)*** - grants funding assistance for innovative approaches and projects that advance good land stewardship, improve farm profitability and strengthen rural communities;
- ***Good Agricultural Practices and Good Handling Practices Certification Program*** – Farmer and Partnership Grants, and assistance for farmers/produce suppliers with the certification of their operations to meet voluntary standards;
- ***Farm to School*** - facilitates connections between New York State farmers and food service managers in educational facilities across the state;
- ***USDA Farm Service Agency*** - direct and guaranteed loans to beginner and family farmers and ranchers who are unable to obtain financing from commercial credit sources, and Emergency Farm Loans to help producers recover from certain production and operational losses;
- ***Rural Development Grants and Loans (USDA)*** - includes Farm Labor Housing Loans and Grants, Value Added Producer Grants; and
- ***Small Business MicroLoans*** - the Small Business Administration offers a number of financial assistance programs.



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D. Recommendations and Implementation Strategies

The following recommendations and implementation strategies support the Town's vision for the agricultural and farmland protection and provide a wide variety of options that can be utilized to protect farming and agricultural activities in the community. These recommendations and strategies are outlined under each of the five goals, which are aimed at protecting and enhancing important agricultural resources and the long term viability of farming in the Town; increasing public awareness of agriculture in Oakfield; and protecting, enhancing and expanding the agricultural economy. The options that follow provide a tool box of strategies that can be employed by the Town, as needed, to address issues and concerns, capitalize on opportunities and ensure the continued presence of farming activities in Oakfield.

Goal 1:

Protect Lands and Resources Critical to the Long Term Success and Sustainability of Agriculture

The Town recognizes that farming and agricultural activities contribute to the preservation of open space and maintain the rural community character and heritage of the area, and that protecting and promoting the agricultural industry in the Town, which includes field crops, dairies, and keeping of animals, among other uses, is of primary importance to the local economy and overall future of Oakfield.

Recommendations:

1. Adopt the Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan as a demonstration of commitment to maintaining farming as an important part of the Oakfield Community. Ensure that the adopted Plan is posted on the Town of Oakfield website and/or the website for the Genesee County Department of Planning.
Priority: High
Responsible Parties: Oakfield Town Board, Town Clerk, Genesee County Planning, NYS Department of Agriculture and Markets
2. Vest the Oakfield Town Board with the responsibility of implementing the Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan, advocating for agricultural protection, making appropriate land use decisions with respect to the protection of agricultural lands, mediating potential conflicts and, in general, protecting the rights of farmers in the Town. Alternatively, consider establishing an Agricultural Protection Committee charged with undertaking these tasks.
Priority: High
Responsible Parties: Oakfield Town Board
3. Adopt a Right-to-Farm Law as a commitment to the rights of farmers to work their land, including undertaking the various tasks and activities associated with their efforts.



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Priority: High

Responsible Parties: Oakfield Town Board, Genesee County Planning

4. Work with Genesee County and neighboring communities, particularly the Town of Alabama and Village of Oakfield, to identify mutually beneficial ways to carry out the goals and objectives of the Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan.

Priority: Medium

Responsible Parties: Oakfield Town Board, Genesee County Planning

5. The Town of Oakfield, with assistance from Genesee County, has been successful in maintaining or increasing the size of the State Agricultural District. These efforts should be continued to ensure that the number of farms located in the district is sustained well into the future.

Priority: High

Responsible Parties: Oakfield Town Board, Genesee County Planning

6. In an effort to promote the Town's position on agricultural and farmland protection, post the adopted Town of Oakfield Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan, along with maps of local agricultural districts, a copy of the adopted Oakfield Right-to-Farm Law, and any other information pertinent to agricultural protection in the Town on the Town's website to facilitate access to this information for local real estate brokers, realtors and lawyers.

Priority: High

Responsible Parties: Oakfield Town Board, Town Clerk, Genesee County Planning

7. Support the provision of adequate funding from New York State for the repair of roads and bridges in the Town of Oakfield that need repair or improvement to alleviate problems and improve local use by farmers and product transporters.

Priority: Medium

Responsible Parties: Oakfield Town Board, Town Highway Department, Genesee County Highway Department, Genesee County Planning, New York State

8. Amend the Town's Zoning Law (Article IV Section 412.8) to require the establishment of substantial vegetated buffers (more than 10 feet in width) along lot lines located between new residences and adjacent farmland for all residential development that occurs in or adjacent to the Residential Agricultural (R-A) district to reduce potential conflicts.

Priority: High

Responsible Parties: Oakfield Town Board, Genesee County Planning

9. Adopt Cluster Residential Development regulations to enable conservation subdivision design and ensure the quality and land preservation capability of new residential development.

Priority: High

Responsible Parties: Oakfield Town Board, Genesee County Planning



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10. Consider revising the Agricultural Residential District to further prioritize Agriculture and Agricultural related uses as primary allowed uses and limiting residential uses and subdivision of property. This can be accomplished utilizing the samples provided in this Plan and the Genesee County Agricultural Protection Plan. Rezone most farmland outside of the Smart Growth areas to this new district.

Priority: Medium

Responsible parties: Alabama Town Board and Planning Board

11. Continue to support local farmers markets, agricultural vehicle signage, etc. in an effort to help keep farmers farming and help their businesses remain viable.

Priority: High

Responsible Parties: Oakfield Town Board, Genesee County Planning, Genesee County Agricultural and Farmland Protection Board

12. If pressure for land development increases in the future, in cooperation with Genesee County and the Oakfield-Alabama School District, explore the feasibility of enacting a local tax abatement program in exchange for term or permanent conservation easements for farmland protection. This kind of program provides a percentage reduction in property taxes as a part of the agreement between the landowner and the Town for farmland preservation.

Priority: Low

Responsible Parties: Oakfield Town Board, Genesee County Planning, Genesee County Agricultural and Farmland Protection Board, Genesee County Cornell Cooperative Extension/Genesee County Soil and Water Conservation Service, Town Assessor, Western New York Land Conservancy

Goal 2:

Enhance and Expand the Agricultural Economy of the Town and its Capacity to Respond to Economic Trends and Changes

Agricultural related businesses support farming and contribute to the regional economy. The existing economic base of the community and viability of existing businesses should be protected and expanded because a strong base is good for farmers, the Town and the region.

Recommendations:

1. Promote the importance of programs, organizations and agencies that support and assist farmers and farmland property owners, such as Cornell Cooperative Extension, the Soil and Water Conservation District and the Natural Resources Conservation Service. Furthermore, advocate for the continued funding of these programs at appropriate levels.

Priority: Medium



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Responsible Parties: Oakfield Town Board, Genesee County Planning, Genesee County Agricultural and Farmland Protection Board, Genesee County Cornell Cooperative Extension/Genesee County Soil and Water Conservation Service

2. Promote educational programs and training offered by Genesee Community College and other entities in the region to help existing farmers and those interested in farming careers gain a greater understanding of agricultural practices. Furthermore, encourage the County to offer training in basic business management techniques.

Priority: High

Responsible Parties: Oakfield Town Board, Genesee County Planning, Genesee County Agricultural and Farmland Protection Board, Genesee County Cornell Cooperative Extension/Genesee County Soil and Water Conservation Service, Genesee Community College, Genesee Valley BOCES

3. Encourage retired farmers and non-farm property owners of vacant land to rent/continue to rent their properties to other farmers to maintain and expand the amount of land in agricultural use.

Priority: Medium

Responsible Parties: Oakfield Town Board, Genesee County Planning, Genesee County Cornell Cooperative Extension

4. Promote the use of small-scale, on-farm solar technology, wind turbines, methane digesters and other energy efficient measures to help farmers conserve resources, reduce costs and stay up to date with farming practices and technology.

Priority: High

Responsible Parties: Oakfield Town Board, Genesee County Planning, Genesee County Cornell Cooperative Extension

5. Work with Genesee County to secure access to broadband communication service in the Town to further assist local farmers and agricultural businesses.

Priority: High

Responsible Parties: Oakfield Town Board, Genesee County Planning, Genesee County Cornell Cooperative Extension

6. Encourage Genesee County, Cornell Cooperative Extension and the Soil and Water Conservation District to create a clearing house of information (“one-stop shopping”) for farmers and others (website, training opportunities, seminars on state and federal programs of benefit to farmers, funding opportunities, etc.) in support of farming and agricultural business in the community.

Priority: High

Responsible Parties: Oakfield Town Board, Genesee County Planning, Genesee County Cornell Cooperative Extension

7. Work with Genesee County to help farmers expand local markets for locally grown products.

Priority: High



Town of Oakfield Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan

Responsible Parties: Oakfield Town Board, Genesee County Planning, Genesee County Cooperative Extension

8. Ensure that farmers are advised on the various tax relief programs that are available to help reduce their tax burden, as well as viable environmental management programs.

Priority: High

Responsible Parties: Oakfield Town Board, Genesee County Planning, Genesee County Agricultural and Farmland Protection Board, Genesee County Cornell Cooperative Extension

9. Encourage farmers to explore and take advantage of federal and State programs that assist with the transition to organic farming or other farm technologies that could be of benefit.

Priority: Medium

Responsible Parties: Oakfield Town Board, Genesee County Planning, Genesee County Cornell Cooperative Extension

10. Encourage the Oakfield-Alabama School District to continue their participation in the Farm to School Project program, and expand the purchase of local produce in the district. At present, the district only purchases locally grown potatoes and apples.

Priority: Medium

Responsible Parties: Oakfield Town Board, Genesee County Planning, Oakfield-Alabama Central School District

Goal 3:

Promote the link between farms and food

Farming provides a number of benefits to the community, including the production of local food, jobs, and other economic benefits. Strengthening this link and the local understanding of how farming and agriculture are important to the community will contribute to its long term success and long term prosperity.

Recommendations:

1. Use the Town of Oakfield (and/or Genesee County) website to post local events, newsletters and other means to increase awareness and promote the value and benefits of farming to Town residents and others.

Priority: Medium

Responsible Parties: Oakfield Town Board, Genesee County Planning

2. Be supportive of an “Eat Local” campaign to increase awareness of the availability of local farm products and opportunities, including the variety of products produced by the Upstate Niagara (farmer-owned) Cooperative.



Town of Oakfield Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan

Priority: Medium

Responsible Parties: Oakfield Town Board, Genesee County Planning, Genesee County Cornell Cooperative Extension

3. Promote the availability of existing information that is posted on the Genesee County and Cornell Cooperative Extension websites on local farming, farm stands and farmers markets in the Town and region.

Priority: Low

Responsible Parties: Oakfield Town Board, Genesee County Planning, Genesee County Cornell Cooperative Extension

4. Work with Cornell Cooperative Extension and Genesee County to supplement/strengthen the information they offer to the public by creating a full, on-line directory of farm markets in the area, including their location, products and availability, prices, etc.

Priority: Medium

Responsible Parties: Oakfield Town Board, Genesee County Planning, Genesee County Cornell Cooperative Extension

5. Encourage Genesee County and others to continue outreach programs, such as KinderFarmin' and local farm tours for school students, residents, Town officials and others to promote agricultural awareness and the link between farms and food.

Priority: High

Responsible Parties: Oakfield Town Board, Genesee County Planning, Local Farmers, Oakfield-Alabama Central School District

Goal 4:

Increase awareness of farming by the non-farm community to ensure the long term viability of farming in Oakfield

Farming provides benefits to the community, such as rural community character, scenic vistas, and a more balanced tax base. It is the highest and best use, and most fiscally valuable use, of land in Genesee County and the Town of Oakfield. Increasing public awareness of how agriculture positively impacts a community and the needs of farmers to operate successfully is essential for achieving public support for the long term viability of this industry.

Recommendations:

1. Ensure that the Right-to-Farm law includes a means for mitigating conflicts and disputes that may arise between farmers and non-farm residents in the future.

Priority: Medium



Town of Oakfield Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan

Responsible Parties: Oakfield Town Board, Genesee County Planning, Genesee County Agricultural and Farmland Protection Board

2. Encourage Genesee County Chamber of Commerce and other entities to create a “Farming in Oakfield” or a “Farming in Genesee County” packet to be distributed to new and existing residents that identifies the benefits of farming and the resources (fresh food, etc.) available in the community.

Priority: High

Responsible Parties: Oakfield Town Board, Genesee County Planning, Genesee County Chamber of Commerce, Local Realtors

3. Support County-wide efforts to develop a public education campaign to help residents and others understand the benefits of farming for maintaining rural character and open space, contributing to the local economy, balancing the tax base, etc., as well as how farms operate, in an effort to build and strengthen local support for farming in Oakfield.

Priority: Medium

Responsible Parties: Oakfield Town Board, Genesee County Planning, Genesee County Chamber of Commerce

4. Install “The Town of Oakfield is a Right-to-Farm community” signage along roadways at all entry points to the community.

Priority: High

Responsible Parties: Oakfield Town Board, Oakfield Highway Department, Genesee County Planning, Genesee County Highway Department, New York State

5. Install signage on heavily traveled roads that illustrates images of farm tractors or similar machinery to advise travelers on these local roadways that they are used by farm machines and to be aware of their presence. Encourage New York State and Genesee County to do the same for roadways under their jurisdiction.

Priority: High

Responsible Parties: Oakfield Town Board, Oakfield Highway Department, Genesee County Planning, Genesee County Highway Department, New York State

6. Encourage the Oakfield-Alabama School District to participate in the “Agriculture in the Classroom” program that works with pre-K through middle school teachers, Cornell Cooperative Extension and other community educators, farmers and producers, volunteers, parents, and community partners to increase agricultural literacy in New York (<http://www.agclassroom.org/ny/about/index.htm>).

Priority: Medium

Responsible Parties: Oakfield Town Board, Genesee County Planning, Genesee County Cornell Cooperative Extension, Oakfield-Alabama Central School District, Local Farmers



Town of Oakfield Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan

7. To ensure that prospective residents are properly informed about the importance and nature of agriculture in the Town of Oakfield, and that they understand the Town's position on agricultural and farmland protection as a Right-to Farm community, post the adopted Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan, a copy of the Town's adopted Right-to-Farm law and any other pertinent information on the Town's website to ensure that local real estate brokers, realtors and lawyers have easy access to this information and can easily disseminate it to their clients.

Priority: High

Responsible Parties: Oakfield Town Board, Town Clerk, Genesee County Planning

E. Techniques for Protecting Agricultural Lands

Currently there is relatively little development occurring in the Town of Oakfield. However, the addition of new jobs at the STAMP site could create stronger development pressure. Another factor impacting this potential growth is the addition of additional public water lines in the Town.

It must be understood that Genesee County has a Smart Growth Plan which affects the Town of Oakfield. This Smart Growth Plan identifies the lands throughout the County that are suitable for growth. In the Town of Oakfield, these areas are located around the Village of Oakfield. The Village serves as the focus for redevelopment, and the areas of the Town near the Village would be appropriate for primarily residential development.

To help with targeting lands to be protected, the following actions are prioritized:

1. The Town has a relatively strong Agricultural Zoning District, but it could be strengthened. The intent would be to prevent, to the maximum extent practicable, residential growth outside of the designated development areas as outlined in the Genesee County Smart Growth Plan. Sample districts are included in the Appendix. The revised zoning district would prioritize agricultural and agricultural-related uses as allowed uses, while severely restricting residential uses and the subdivision of lands. Map 9 of this document illustrates what lands are prioritized for protection. The lands outside of the Smart Growth areas that are agriculture should be rezoned to this new district.
2. To further protect agricultural lands from future development, the Town will begin the process of implementing Agricultural Conservation Easements. These easements can be acquired on a voluntary basis (for tax considerations) or through a purchase of development rights (PDR) program. The following are the activities necessary to accomplish these recommendations:
 - A. Voluntary Agriculture Conservation Easements
 - 1) Create a draft law to address the use of voluntary Agriculture Conservation Easements (see sample law).



Town of Oakfield Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan

- 2) Obtain support from the Town's New York State Legislators to have them pass a bill authorizing the Town of Alabama to utilize these tax incentives.
 - 3) Educate Town residents about this program and begin the law adoption process.
 - 4) Once the New York State Legislation is passed, adopt the Agriculture Conservation easement law.
 - 5) Promote the use of the Agriculture Conservation Easement Law.
- B. Purchase of Development Rights
- 1) Utilizing Map 9 that prioritizes agricultural lands for protection as a guide, begin to evaluate which lands would best be suited for the New York State PDR Program. The highest priority lands are those that were prioritized in the Genesee County Plan and may therefore score highest in any grant application to New York State.
 - 2) Work with the farmers, Genesee County, and groups such as the Land Conservancy to begin the process of completing an application to New York State under their PDR Program (matching municipal funds could be from Incentive Zoning monies).
 - 3) Make application to New York State.
 - 4) Begin identifying other farms that could be submitted for this State grant (continuous process).
3. If development pressure increases, the Town may next consider the use of Transfer of Development Rights (TDR's). In order for the Town to accomplish this, there must be strong development pressure and the Town would need to consider greater densities of development in the Smart Growth areas, which may not be feasible due to sanitary sewer limitations. The following steps would need to be taken:
- 1) The Town would develop a draft TDR law; samples can be obtained from the County or from New York State.
 - 2) In that law, the Town would need to establish the "incentives" (typically greater densities) that would be allowed in the Smart Growth areas. The law would also need to establish the areas that development rights could be purchased from (prioritized Ag lands). Values for the development rights would also need to be established.
 - 3) If the greater densities require a sewer extension, the Town would need to identify how this could be accomplished, what the costs would be, and how they would be paid for.
 - 4) Typically, an entity would need to be contracted with to help run this process and manage the development rights purchased and utilized.



Town of Oakfield Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan

Implementation Matrix

| Goal 1: Protect Lands and Resources Critical to the Long Term Success and Sustainability of Agriculture | | | | |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------|-------------|----------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Recommendation | Priority | Cost | Time Frame | Participants & Partners |
| Adopt the Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan (AFPP) / post on-line | High | \$ | Immediate | Oakfield Town Board, Town Clerk, Genesee County Planning, New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets |
| Vest Town Board with responsibility of implementing the AFPP and advocating for agricultural protection | High | \$ | Immediate | Oakfield Town Board with Planning Board assistance |
| Adopt a Right-to-Farm Law | High | \$ | Immediate | Oakfield Town Board, Genesee County Planning |
| Encourage farms to remain in State Agricultural District | High | \$ | Immediate / On-going | Oakfield Town Board, Genesee County Planning, New York State |
| Post information about the AFPP and farming on website | High | \$ | Immediate | Oakfield Town Board, Town Clerk, Genesee County Planning |
| Amend zoning to require buffers between new residences and farms to reduce potential conflicts | High | \$\$ | Immediate | Oakfield Town Board, Oakfield Planning Board, Genesee County Planning |
| Adopt Cluster Residential Development regulations to allow for conservation subdivisions | High | \$\$ | Immediate | Oakfield Town Board, Oakfield Planning Board, Genesee County Planning |
| Support farmers markets and agricultural vehicle signage | High | \$\$ | Immediate / On-going | Oakfield Town Board, Genesee County Planning, Genesee County Agricultural and Farmland Protection Board |
| Revise Agricultural Residential District to further prioritize Agriculture and Agricultural uses. | Medium | \$ | On-going | Oakfield Town Board, Oakfield Planning Board |
| Work with County and other Towns to carry out goals of AFPP | Medium | \$ | On-going | Oakfield Town Board, Genesee County Planning |
| Support adequate funding from NYS for road and bridge repair | Medium | \$ | On-going | Oakfield Town Board, Town Highway Department, Genesee County Planning, Genesee County Highway Department, New York State |
| In the future, explore the feasibility of a local tax abatement program for conservation easements | Low | \$\$\$ | Long-term | Oakfield Town Board, Genesee County Planning, Genesee County Agricultural and Farmland Protection Board, Genesee County Cornell Cooperative Extension/ Genesee County Soil and Water Conservation Service, Town Assessor, Western New York Land Conservancy |

Town of Oakfield Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan

| Goal 2: Enhance and Expand the Agricultural Economy of the Town and its Capacity to Respond to Economic Trends and Changes | | | | |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------|-------------|-------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Recommendation | Priority | Cost | Time Frame | Participants & Partners |
| Promote training by Genesee Community College to help new and existing farmers gain relevant agricultural skills and knowledge | High | \$ | On-going | Oakfield Town Board, Genesee County Planning, Genesee County Agricultural and Farmland Protection Board, Genesee County Cornell Cooperative Extension/Genesee County Soil and Water Conservation Service, Genesee Community College, Genesee Valley BOCES |
| Promote energy improvements on farms (solar, wind, efficiencies, etc.) | High | \$ | On-going | Oakfield Town Board, Genesee County Planning, Cornell Cooperative Extension |
| Work with Genesee County to expand access to broadband | High | \$ | Immediate | Oakfield Town Board, Genesee County Planning, Cornell Cooperative Extension |
| Work with Genesee County to expand markets for locally grown products | High | \$ | Immediate | Oakfield Town Board, Genesee County Planning, Cornell Cooperative Extension |
| Advise farmers on available tax relief programs and environmental management programs | High | \$\$ | On-going | Oakfield Town Board, Genesee County Planning, Cornell Cooperative Extension, Genesee County Agricultural and Farmland Protection Board |
| Promote the importance of programs and agencies that assist farmers; advocate for their funding | Medium | \$\$ | On-going | Oakfield Town Board, Genesee County Planning, Genesee County Agricultural and Farmland Protection Board, Genesee County Cornell Cooperative Extension/Genesee County Soil and Water Conservation Service |
| Encourage rental of vacant lands to local farmers for agricultural use | Medium | \$ | On-going | Oakfield Town Board, Genesee County Planning, Cornell Cooperative Extension |
| Encourage farmers to take advantage of federal and state programs for organic farming or other technologies | Medium | \$\$ | On-going | Oakfield Town Board, Genesee County Planning, Cornell Cooperative Extension |
| Continue Farm to School Project; expand purchase of local produce in Oakfield -Alabama Central Schools | Medium | \$\$ | On-going | Oakfield Town Board, Genesee County Planning, Oakfield -Oakfield Central School District |
| Encourage creation of a “one-stop” source of info on resources to support farms and agriculture | Low | \$\$ | Mid-term | Oakfield Town Board, Genesee County Planning, Cornell Cooperative Extension |

Town of Oakfield Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan

| Goal 3: <i>Promote the link between farms and food</i> | | | | |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------|-------------|----------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Recommendation | Priority | Cost | Time Frame | Participants & Partners |
| Encourage County and others to continue outreach programs to promote agricultural awareness | High | \$ | Immediate / On-going | Oakfield Town Board, Genesee County Planning, Local Farmers, Oakfield - Oakfield Central School District |
| Use Town and County websites to post events, newsletters, other info on the benefits of farming | Medium | \$ | Immediate / On-going | Oakfield Town Board, Genesee County Planning |
| Support an “Eat Local” campaign | Medium | \$ | Immediate / On-going | Oakfield Town Board, Genesee County Planning, Genesee County Cornell Cooperative Extension |
| Work with Genesee County and Cornell Cooperative Extension to create an on-line directory of farm markets | Medium | \$\$ | Mid-term | Oakfield Town Board, Genesee County Planning, Genesee County Cornell Cooperative Extension |
| Promote information on County and Cornell Cooperative Extension websites about farms, farm stands, farm markets, etc. | Low | \$ | Immediate / On-going | Oakfield Town Board, Genesee County Planning, Genesee County Cornell Cooperative Extension |

Town of Oakfield Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan

| Goal 4: Increase Awareness of farming by the non-farm community to ensure the long term viability of farming in Oakfield | | | | |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------|-------------|-------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Recommendation | Priority | Cost | Time Frame | Participants & Partners |
| Ensure that the Right-to-Farm law includes a means of mitigating conflicts and disputes between farmers and non-farm residents | High | \$ | Immediate | Oakfield Town Board, Genesee County Planning, Genesee County Agriculture and Farmland Protection Board |
| Encourage Chamber of Commerce and others to create a “Farming in Genesee County” packet for new residents to identify benefits of farming and resources available | High | \$ | Mid-term | Oakfield Town Board, Genesee County Planning, Genesee County Chamber of Commerce, Local Realtors |
| Install “Oakfield is a Right-to-Farm Community” signs at entries points into the Town | High | \$\$ | Mid-term | Oakfield Town Board, Oakfield Highway Department, Genesee County Planning, Genesee County Highway Department, New York State Department of Transportation |
| Install signs on heavily traveled roads in Town to advise travelers to share the road with farm equipment | High | \$\$ | Immediate | Oakfield Town Board, Oakfield Highway Department, Genesee County Planning, Genesee County Highway Department, New York State Department of Transportation |
| Encourage school district to participate in “Agriculture in the Classroom” program to increase agricultural literacy | High | \$ | On-going | Oakfield Town Board, Genesee County Planning, Genesee County Cornell Cooperative Extension, Oakfield -Oakfield Central School District, Local Farmers |
| Post the AFPP and Right-to-Farm law on the Town’s website to make this information accessible to realtors, lawyers and others | High | \$ | Immediate | Oakfield Town Board, Town Clerk, Genesee County Planning |
| Support County-wide efforts for a public education campaign re. benefits of farming and how farms operate to build public support for farming | Medium | \$ | Mid-term | Oakfield Town Board, Genesee County Planning, Genesee County Chamber of Commerce |

Town of Oakfield Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan

SECTION VI – GLOSSARY, RESOURCES AND REFERENCES

Glossary

AFPB – Agriculture and Farmland Protection Board

AFT – American Farmland Trust

AIDER – Agricultural Land Development Enhancement and Retention Program

AMA – Agricultural Management Assistance

AML – Agriculture and Markets Law

A-R – Agricultural Residential

CAFO – Confined Animal Feeding Operation

CCE – Cornell Cooperative Extension

COCS – Cost of Community Services Study

EQIP – Environmental Quality Incentive Program

GBNRTC – Greater Buffalo Niagara Regional Transportation Council

LDR – Lease of Development Rights

LESA – Land Evaluation and Site Analysis

mgd – Million Gallons per Day

NRCS – Natural Resources Conservation Service

NYSDAM – New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets

NYSDEC – New York State Department of Environmental Conservation

NYSERDA – New York State Energy Research and Development Agency

PACE – Purchase of Agricultural Conservation Easement

PDR – Purchase of Development Rights

PUD – Planned Unit Development

REDC – Regional Economic Development Council

R-R – Rural Residential

SARE – Sustainable Agricultural Research and Education

TDR – Transfer of Development Rights

USDA – United States Department of Agriculture



Town of Oakfield Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan

Resources

American Farmland Trust

New York State Office

(518) 581-0078

www.farmland.org/newyork

Farmland Information Center

(800) 370-4879

www.farmlandinfo.org

Western New York Office

(716) 652-0100

Cornell Cooperative Extension

(607) 255-2237

www.cce.cornell.edu

Farm to School

(607) 255-2730

<http://farmtoschool.cce.cornell.edu>

Genesee County Office

(585) 343-3040

Grazing Lands Conservation Initiative

(607) 334-4632, ext. 116 (*NY coordinator*)

www.glci.org

Genesee County Department of Planning

(585) 344-2580, ext. 5467

planning@genesee.ny.us

Genesee Land Trust

(585) 256-2130

www.geneseelandtrust.org

Internal Revenue Service

(800) 829-4933

www.irs.gov

Land Trust Alliance, Northeast Office

(518) 587-0774

www.lta.org

NYS Department of Agriculture and Markets

(518) 457-3880

(800) 554-4501

www.agmkt.state.ny.us

NYS Department of Environmental Conservation

Division of Lands and Forests - Bureau of Private Land Services

(518) 402-9425

www.dec.state.ny.us

New York State Department of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation



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(518) 237-8643

www.nysparks.state.ny.us/shpo/tax-credit-programs/

New York State Department of State

(518) 474-4752

www.dos.state.ny.us

NYS Energy Research and Development Authority

(866) NYSERDA

(518) 862-1090

www.nyserda.org

NYS Environmental Facilities Corporation

(800) 200-2200

www.nysefc.org

New York Farm Bureau

(518) 436-8495

www.nyfb.org

NYS Farm Service Agency

New York State Farm Service Agency

(315) 477-6300

www.fsa.usda.gov/ny

New York Farm Viability Institute

(315) 453-3823

www.farmviability.org

NYS Department of Taxation and Finance

Taxpayer Assistance Bureau

(800) 225-5829

www.tax.state.ny.us

NYS Office of Real Property Services, Agricultural Unit

(518) 486-5446/(518) 474-2982

www.orps.state.ny.us

NYS Soil and Water Conservation Committee - NYS Soil and Water Conservation Districts

(518) 457-3738

www.nys-soilandwater.org

Northeast Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education Program (SARE)

(802) 656-0471

www.nesare.org

Small Business Administration



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(800) 827-5722

www.sba.gov

USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service

(315) 477-6504

www.ny.nrcs.usda.gov (New York NRCS)

USDA Rural Development - USDA Rural Business Cooperative Service

(315) 477-6400

www.rurdev.usda.gov/

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<http://www.csrees.usda.gov/nea/economics/economics.cfm>

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Green Genesee/Smart Genesee – Towns of Alabama and Oakfield and Village of Oakfield Community Inventory and Analysis Report, May 2015.

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Oakfield Alabama Comprehensive Plan – 2005.

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Genesee Finger Lakes Regional Economic Development Council Strategic Plan – Finger Lakes Upstate Revitalization Initiative Plan, 2015.

Genesee Finger Lakes Regional Sustainability Plan, 2013.

Town of Leroy Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan, August 2010.

