Supporting Agriculture with Community Planning

Dutchess County Planning Federation Workshop
October 4, 2016
Farm & Home Center Millbrook, NY

Speakers

Jen Fimbel Cornell Cooperative Extension
Becky Thornton Dutchess Land Conservancy
Brian Scoralick Soil & Water Conservation District
Brian Kehoe County Planning & Economic Development
Course Topics

- Profile of agriculture in Dutchess County
- Farmland Preservation
- NYS Agricultural Districts
- Comprehensive Plans & Zoning Codes
- Resources
- Wrap Up
Agriculture is Important to our Health and Well Being

...it’s where we grow the food we eat, supplies important farm products (wool/fiber), provides education (kids learn about farms) and recreational opportunities (horseback riding.)
Farmland acreage

Farm Trends

Farms
Acres


568 593 635 613 564 539 667 656 678
239 237 217 203 198 198 168 156 166

0 100 200 300 400 500 600 700 800

568 593 635 613 564 539 667 656 678
239 237 217 203 198 198 168 156 166
Commodity Farming

- 26,000 Acres
- 8,500 Acres
- 3,000 Acres
Small/specialty/direct-sales farms

Farm Products Sold Directly to Individuals in Thousands (2012 $)

- 1997: $2,233
- 2002: $2,948
- 2007: $3,073
- 2012: $5,658
Small farms generate significant dollars that are then spent on investments that fuel the local economy.

Larger farm operations, fewer in number, generate higher gross sales and capital investment.

Horse Industry impact
Veterinary Transport
Farrier
Trucks sales
Grain, hay, bedding
Equipment

Tack
Labor
Manure
Disposal
Fuel
Trainer
Food

Community Ag Profiles
Farmland Preservation

Why preserve farmland?

- Each acre of New York’s farmland provides...
- New York’s 7 million acres of farmland support over...

Graphics compliments of AFT
“Community services”

- Quality of life/viewshed
- Rural community/agricultural heritage
- Farms require only 37 cents in municipal services for every $1 of taxes they pay.
  (Scenic Hudson Foodshed Conservation Plan)

Rather than spread development out all over the land...
Balance open space and farmland protection with well planned growth.

Prioritizing Farmland to protect

- Open Land
- Built Land

- Pleasant Valley Open Space and Farmland Plan
- DC Ag. & Farmland Protection Plan
- Scenic Hudson Foodshed Plan
Transfer of Development Rights (TDR)

“Before Value”: unrestricted
- “After Value”: restricted
= value of development rights

Landowners use proceeds to:
• pay down debt: 30%
• purchase more farmland/retirement funds: 36%
• construct/improve farm buildings: 6%
  (AFT New York Farmland Protection Study, 2009)
40 working farms and over 5,800 acres are under easement with land trusts.

More projects in the works

Leveraged millions of dollars in Federal, State, County, Town and Private Funding.

PDR - 5,800 Acres in Dutchess County

Characteristics of PDR lands

- Quality Soils
- Successful farm operation with succession plan
- Critical mass of active farms in area
- Development pressure
- Public/natural resources
- Consistent with local policy documents
- Consistent with County Agriculture and Farmland Protection Plan; Municipal Open Space/Farmland Protection Plans
- Consistent with other plans: Scenic Hudson – NYC Hudson Valley Foodshed Plan
Isn't there more acreage between these land trusts?

Brian Kehoe, 8/29/2016
Priorities: Soils & Successful Farm Operation

...a plan for succession.

Priorities: Critical Mass & Development Pressure

Historical Populations

- Village of Millerton
- Town of North East
Priorities: Important Natural & Public Resources

- Important Habitat
- Viewshed protection from public vantage points

Priorities: Consistent with Local, County, State & other important Policy Documents

- Dutchess County Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan
- Town of New Castle 2013 OPEN SPACE AND FARM PLAN
- NICHE MAPS, LOCAL FOOD FOR NEW YORK CITY AND THE RUTHER VALLEY
Working with the Farm Family

Farmland Protection Funding Sources

USDA - Natural Resource Conservation Service
Ag Land Easement Program (ALE)

NYS Dept of Agriculture and Markets
Farmland Protection Implementation Grants (FPIG)

Dutchess County
Partnership for Manageable Growth Program (PMGP)

Municipalities:
Open Space Bonds
Community Preservation Acts
General Funds

Land Trusts, Foundations, Private donations
Land trusts are a resource
Agricultural Districts

County-Adopted, State-Certified areas where commercial agriculture is encouraged and protected
(NYS Ag & Markets Law §25AA)

4 Ag Districts
Adding property to NYS Ag Districts

8 Year Review

Annual Inclusion

**Landowner initiated**
Benefits to Producer/Landowner of Being in the Ag District

- Definition of agriculture
- Determination of “sound agricultural practice”
- Protection from unreasonably restrictive Local Laws
- Notices of Intent

NYSDAM review of local laws/actions

Effect on farm operation, production, viability?

Long delays for approvals/permits?

Is there a threat to public health or safety?

Compliance costs?

Are there less onerous means?
Whether a 75-100 foot setback for buildings along county/state roads unreasonably restricts farm structures.

Whether a proposed local law prohibiting the disposal and land spreading of food processing waste, septage, sludge and composted sludge unreasonably restricts farming practices.
Ag Value Assessment

Property tax assessment

Sets farmland assessment to its **Ag Value**

7+ acres and $10,000+ in gross receipts

Farmer can apply if not in Ag. District

Soil & Water CD/Town Assessor involved

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**Prime soils**

Non-renewable resource

well drained, high organic content

productive with minimal inputs

gently sloped
Statewide important soils

fertile and productive

requires more inputs by farmer, more intensive management, soil amendments, irrigation or draining
Ag Planning guidelines

- Comprehensive Plan
- Zoning Code
- Project review

NYSDAM guidance materials
- Farm worker housing
- On farm open burning
- Control of farm animals,
- Farm operations use of wetlands
- Temporary greenhouses
- Commercial Horse Boarding
Comprehensive Plan

- Farm-friendly topics
- High-quality soils
- Large blocks of farmland
- Support farm business success
- Reduce conflicts

Dutchess County
Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan
March 2015
NYSDAM Farmland Protection Planning Grants
- For Local Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plans
- Joint municipal application allowed
- 75% of cost up to $25,000
- Non-competitive funding; no deadline

John Brennan – NYSDAM  518-457-5606

Zoning guidelines

1. Allow ag uses
2. Allow ag uses in multiple districts
3. Preserve farmland
4. Reduce conflicts
5. Right size regulations
Allow ag uses

Multiple ag uses allowed on a farm
Allow ag uses in multiple Zoning Districts

Definitions

Farm worker housing
Agri-tourism
On-farm building
Solar energy facility
Farm Distillery
Greenhouse
Stabilize farmland base

- Prime soils
- Parcel sizes
- Incentive zoning, conservation subdivision....
- “Ag Zoning District”

Right-size review process

- Application materials/fees
- Avoid SUP in NYS Ag Districts
- SEQR Type 2
Agricultural Data Statement

Required by AML

Planning Board, ZBA, Town Board

With SUP, site plan, use variance or subdivision applications.

Ag District properties or within 500’ buffer

How Farm Friendly is my Town?
Focus infrastructure development

Greenway Connections

County programs

- Technical support
- Partnership for Manageable Growth
- Agricultural Advisory Committee
- “Agency Partner” funded programs
- Agricultural & Farmland Protection Board
- Greenway Compact
- Agricultural Navigator
Support and Resources

CCE
SWCD
HVADC
County Planning
And more.....

Wrap up