

Town of Charlton

FARMLAND PROTECTION PLAN



ADOPTED | FEBRUARY 2010

THIS BOOKLET SUMMARIZES THE PLAN WHICH IS AVAILABLE AT TOWN HALL AND ON THE TOWN'S WEBSITE

PREPARED BY



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FARMLAND PROTECTION PLAN EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Agriculture is a vital part of the Town of Charlton - some would argue it is what makes Charlton Charlton. The rural landscapes of the town are appreciated by residents and visitors alike, and make Charlton a desirable place to live. Ironically, as people move to “the country” the rural character that drew them in is in danger of being lost. New development threatens the agricultural landscape as lots get subdivided into smaller pieces, unusable for agriculture. New homes may encroach on existing farm operations causing conflicts and eventual abandoning of the farm operations. As more farm land is lost it gets more difficult for the remaining farmers to maintain a critical mass of land and resources to support profitable operations. This is a situation that has been seen time and time again in other areas, and one that Charlton hopes to avoid through the implementation of this farmland protection plan.

The goals of this plan were to create a detailed inventory of the town’s agricultural resources, devise a set of tools and strategies for maintaining agriculture in the town, establish a way to evaluate farms for future protection, and provide agricultural-friendly zoning recommendations. The plan was developed by the Agricultural Task Force Committee, with input from many of the town’s residents, the majority of which are involved in the agricultural community.

Farmland Protection Mission Statement:

The best way to keep Charlton a successful agricultural community is to make agriculture as economically viable as possible and keep the town farm-friendly, while implementing minimal regulations.

Based on public input during the planning process

The Town of Charlton is located in the southwest corner of Saratoga County, in the Capital District Region of Upstate New York. With the exception of the southeast corner of the town, the Town of Charlton and the immediate surrounding areas are very rural in nature. The town is rich with agricultural resources, with over half of the land in agricultural related ownership and an abundance of high quality soils throughout the town.

There are multiple types of agriculture in the town, with the primary operations being in dairy, cattle, hay, horses and field crops. There are a number of specialty farms providing products such as alpacas, maple syrup, and Christmas trees. There are six active dairy farms in Charlton, three of which are relatively large operations. These six farms and their associated support land account for approximately half of the agricultural land in Charlton. Over 1/3 of the agricultural land in the Town of Charlton is rented farmland. This land is critical to the success of the Charlton farmers, but is also the most vulnerable to development. As an example of the importance of the rented land - one of the largest dairy farmers in Charlton rents three acres of land for every one acre they own.

As was heard during the town’s comprehensive planning process, preserving agriculture and keeping the town rural and farm friendly is the primary theme heard throughout this planning effort. Something else that was made clear is that there is a lack of knowledge and understanding with regards to all the tools available to help preserve farmland. Many people have heard of things like “purchase of development rights” (PDR), but don’t necessarily know all the details. Others may not be taking advantage of tax abatements or the protections offered by enrolling in the agricultural district. Getting this information out to landowners in as many ways possible could go a long way in helping preserve agriculture.

There are numerous options and tools available to help promote and preserve agriculture in the Town of Charlton. The strategies in this plan are believed to be the most realistic and likely to succeed for the Town of Charlton. There are two primary ways to preserve farmland: making farming a viable option that people want to continue to pursue by using a combination of land use planning tools, promotion, and education; and by acquiring the development rights to ensure land stays open and available for farming. The first method requires a lot of work and cooperation, the latter requires a large financial commitment from the state, county, town or other group.

Agriculture and Farmland Goal:

“Farmlands are protected and active farms of varying types are economically viable and a major land use in Charlton”

2007 Comprehensive Plan

The following are some of the strategies that the town should consider focusing on in the short term, the details of which are explained in the plan. The majority of these strategies were highlighted at the public meeting as being the most important.

Get the Information Out - Making sure landowners are aware of their options, both while farming, and when they are ready to retire, is key to farmland protection.

Develop the Marketing Strategy - Whether it is one aspect, or all of the aspects discussed in the plan, a marketing strategy is a relatively low cost way to help protect farmland in town.

Install Right-to-Farm Law Signs - Charlton has a model Right-to-Farm law, and installing Right-to-Farm law signs can help demonstrate the town’s commitment to agriculture.

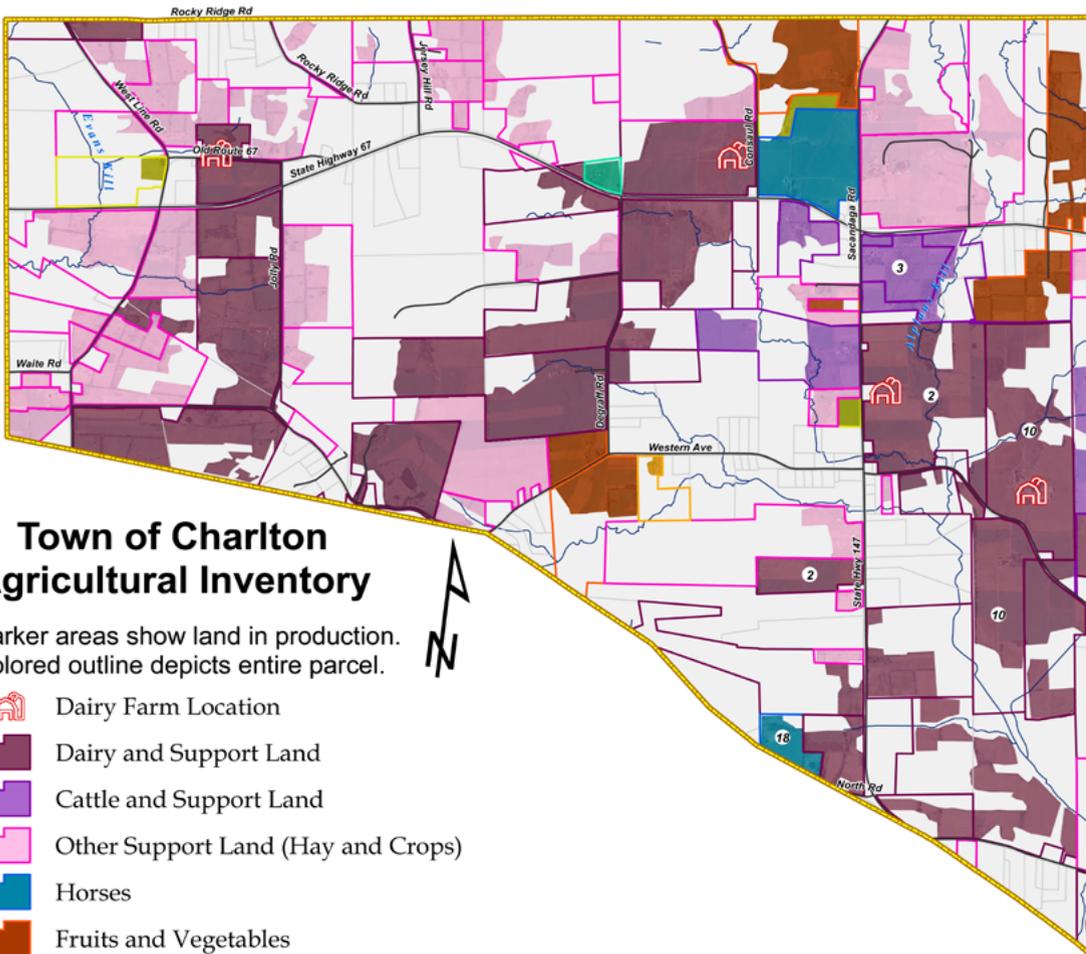
Update the Town’s Zoning per the Comprehensive Plan - The recommendations in the 2007 Comprehensive Plan are a good first step in a larger zoning update.

Modify the Town’s Conservation Subdivision Regulations - The town’s conservation subdivision regulations potentially represent one of the strongest tools for agricultural land protection available to the town.

Explore Ways to Locally Fund Farmland Protection Projects - Acquiring the development rights to ensure land stays open and available for farming is a critical method of preserving farmland, however while there is state and county money available, it is limited and there it is a very competitive process. Therefore the town should investigate ways to create a local source of funding for farmland protection.

Modify the Town’s Zoning Code - Changes in town laws will not guarantee farmers will not sell their land for development, but they can ease the burden on farmers by reducing residential encroachment, and ensure that land that is sold for development retains some of its original agricultural value.

The Town of Charlton is fortunate to have the forethought to plan for agriculture without the typical growth pressures that often drive this type of planning effort. Rather than having to hastily try to save a few last remaining farms, Charlton has been able to develop a road map to preserve as much productive farmland as possible through a combination of voluntary and regulatory tools. There is no “silver bullet” that will preserve Charlton’s agricultural heritage, but combining several of the approaches set forth in the plan should ensure that Charlton remain an agricultural community for future generations.



Town of Charlton Agricultural Inventory

Darker areas show land in production.
Colored outline depicts entire parcel.



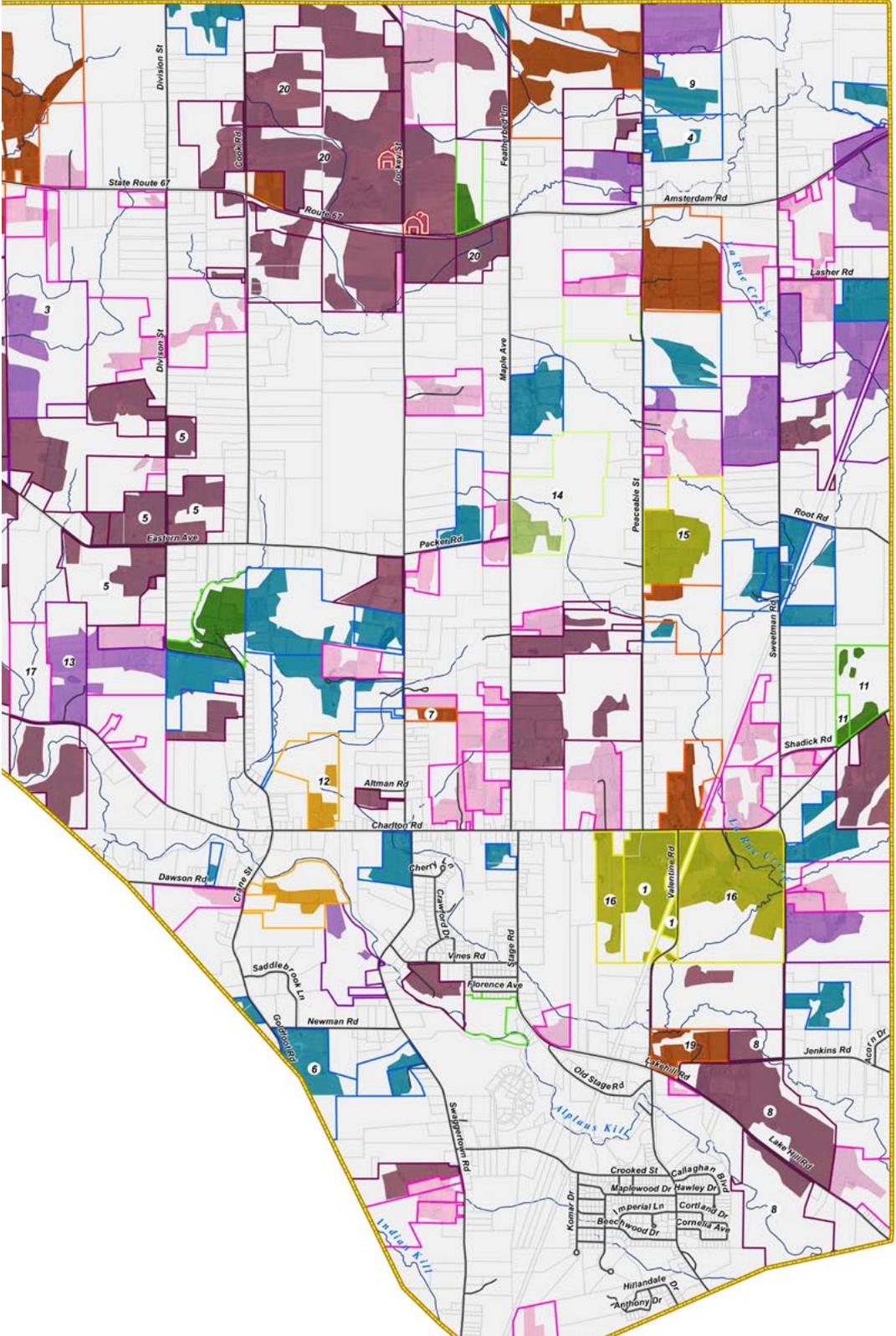
-  Dairy Farm Location
-  Dairy and Support Land
-  Cattle and Support Land
-  Other Support Land (Hay and Crops)
-  Horses
-  Fruits and Vegetables
-  Hay (Sales)
-  Trees (Maple and Christmas)
-  Other Livestock
-  Greenhouse
-  Wildlife Conservation

Note: the primary uses of the farmland are shown, in some cases there are multiple uses, including support for dairy (especially true for many horse farms). Inventory is based on a combination of Real Property data, committee review, and landowner surveys.

- Named Farms:**
1. A.G. Emerich & Sons
 2. Arnoldhaven Farms
 3. Balnaskill Farms
 4. Bishop's Gate Farm
 5. Century Farm
 6. Charlton Farms
 7. The Charlton Fruit Farm
 8. The Charlton School
 9. Dragon Tales Farm North
 10. Eildon Tweed Farm
 11. Ellms' Christmas Trees
 12. Full Circle Farm
 13. Hidden Acres
 14. Kirby House
 15. Landis Farm
 16. LaRue Farms
 17. Locust Tree Farm
 18. Platinum Stables
 19. Robert T. Garve Farm Stand
 20. Smith's Farm & Orchard

Land Use	# Parcels	Acres of Parcels
Dairy and Support Land	46	4,370
Cattle and Support Land	14	1,091
Other Support Land (Hay and crops)	79	3,159
Horses	29	1,144
Fruits and Vegetables	11	887
Hay (sales)	6	494
Trees (Maple and Christmas)	5	182
Other Livestock	3	139
Greenhouses	1	10
Wildlife Conservation	2	162

Northline Rd



Data sources: Saratoga County Planning and
Rail Property Departments; NYS GIS Clearinghouse;
2007 image interpretation and local input.



Agricultural Statistics for Charlton:

Size of Town: 21,000 acres (~33 square miles)

Total number of properties: 1,943

Total number of agricultural properties: 196 (**10% of all properties**)

Total acres of agricultural properties: 11,600 acres (**55% of town**)

Total active acres of agricultural land: 6,176 acres (**30% of town**)

Size of Agricultural District: 17,368 acres (**83% of town**)

Number of agricultural properties in Ag District: 170 (**87% of total**)

Prime Farmland Soil in Charlton: 8,430 acres (**40% of town**)

Acres of prime soil in production: 3,300 (**40% of soil** in production)

Farmland Soil of Statewide Importance: 10,232 acres (**49% of town**)

Acres of Farmland Soil of Statewide Importance in production: 2,515
(**25% of soil** in production)

Approximately 90% of land area encompassed by farmland properties
contain prime or statewide important soils

Based on combination of Real Property data, aerial photo interpretation, USDA soil data, and public input





There is a increased desire to “buy local” which presents opportunities for successful farm stands in Charlton.



Marketing can be a key factor in the success of a farm; Ellms tree farm has had success with online advertising.



Horse farms are becoming more prevalent in Saratoga County, and the Town of Charlton is no exception as there are several successful equine operations throughout the town.



There are six active dairy farms in Charlton, three of which are relatively large operations. Combined with their support land the dairy farms account for over 40% of the farmland in town.



Town-wide events such as “Explore Charlton” raise agricultural awareness and give the general public a chance to learn about the importance of farming.



Charlton has many “core” farm areas - carefully planned development can minimize fragmentation and ensure the farmland stays open and productive.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

TOWN BOARD

Alan Grattidge, Supervisor
Bruce Gardner
Bob Lippiello
Douglas Salisbury
Sandra Verola

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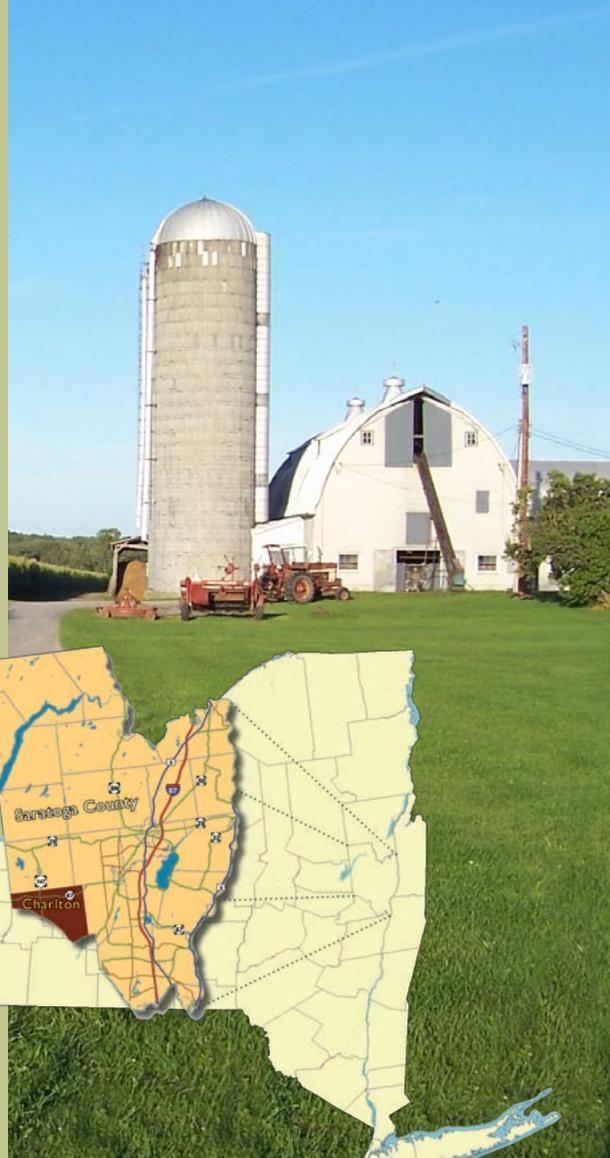
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TIMELINE OF THE PLAN

- 9 Committee Meetings (May '08 - June '09)
- 2 Focus Group meetings (Aug '08 & Feb '09)
- Agricultural Landowner Survey (Feb '09)
- Public Workshop for Draft Plan (April '09)
- Town Board Review & Approval (Aug - Sept '09)
- Saratoga County Agriculture & Farmland Protection Board Approval (Nov '09)
- NYS Dept of Ag & Markets Approval (Dec '09)
- Public Hearing and Unanimous Adoption of Plan as the first Amendment to the 2007 Comprehensive Plan (Feb '10)