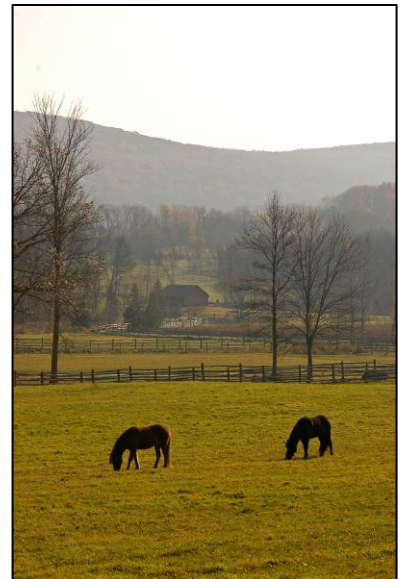




Town of Chatham

Agricultural Protection Plan

Adopted by the Town September 17, 2009



Acknowledgements

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www.chathamkeepfarming.org

This key website includes information on Keep Farming, the CAP, as well as farmland priorities, farmer-landowner partnerships, where to buy local food, land use in Chatham, and more. This site will continue to be a focal point for disseminating information to farmers, the public, and other agencies about farm and farmland preservation efforts in Chatham.

Executive Summary

Our town

Chatham, a town with deep agrarian roots, is located in Northern Columbia County in the scenic Hudson Valley. Over one-quarter of Chatham's 33,500 acres is in agricultural use. Two-thirds of the town's active farmland, about 5,000 acres, is used for commodity dairy farming. Of the land being farmed, about 40% is owned by farmers and the other 60% is owned by individual landowners. Part-time residents make up approximately 20% of the population.

Chatham is home to dairy, beef, horse, sheep, alpaca, goat, produce, and mixed-use farms, but the town's farming picture is dominated by commodity dairy farming, a sector particularly at risk. This plan addresses issues associated with keeping existing farmland in active agricultural use and maintaining our identity as an agricultural community.

Our plan

During Chatham's recent comprehensive planning process, the importance of farming to the economy, rural character, wildlife habitats, and scenic views of the town was evidenced by the strong support and interest voiced by citizens engaged in the process. Farming became a separate component of the plan and a group of citizens served as the steering committee for our participation as a pilot site for the Glynwood Center's Keep Farming program, drafting the comprehensive plan recommendations, and creating this Agricultural Protection Plan.

Throughout the planning process, great effort was made to include the town's farming community and other interested parties. The Chatham Agricultural Partnership was created to provide oversight of the planning process. Draft plans, farmland prioritization maps, and other documents were regularly reviewed with the larger farming community. We believe that this plan represents and protects the citizens' interest in preserving our town as a viable agricultural community.

Our vision

Chatham nurtures and sustains a viable agricultural economy.

Our goals

1. Chatham preserves property values, stabilizes property taxes, and maintains the attractiveness and unique rural character of the community by protecting farmland.
2. Chatham strives to achieve a “zero net loss” of working farmland by addressing farm transition issues and new farm development.
3. Chatham is a “farm friendly” town.
4. Chatham supports and sustains a system of locally grown, healthy foods.
5. Chatham promotes community awareness about the importance of agriculture in Chatham.
6. Chatham demonstrates the importance of agriculture by vesting leadership in a permanent body accountable to the Town Board.

Our strategy

This plan details our recommendations for achieving the vision and goals. The heart of our strategy is to:

1. Use smart growth principles to direct development pressure to the hamlets as a mechanism for protecting existing farmland.
2. Preserve and protect prime farmland by positioning the town to take advantage of funds available for Purchase of Development Rights (PDR) programs and encouraging voluntary conservation efforts.
3. Nurture the economic viability of farmland through diversification, including transitioning land used for farming operations at risk to other types of farming, helping new farmers enter farming, and providing technical assistance to farmers.
4. Build on the existing infrastructure to take advantage of the opportunities presented by our proximity to markets.
5. Work in partnership with other organizations to achieve local and regional farming objectives.

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Acronyms Used in Plan

Ag District	– Refers to a New York State certified Agricultural District
AML	– Agriculture and Markets Law
CAP	- Chatham Agricultural Partnership
CLC	- Columbia Land Conservancy
CP&EA	-Community Planning & Environmental Associates
DEC	- New York State Department of Environmental Conservation
GIS	- Geographic Information System
LDR	-Lease of Development Rights
LE	- Land Evaluation criteria
LESA	-Land Evaluation and Site Assessment
NYS	- New York State
PDR	-Purchase of Development Rights
SA	-Site Assessment criteria
SEQRA	-State Environmental Quality Review Act
USDA	- United States Department of Agriculture
ZBA	-Zoning Board of Appeals

Introduction

The Keep Farming Initiative

In early 2004, the Town of Chatham was selected as one of two national pilot sites for the Glynwood Center's Keep Farming Program. Program oversight was provided by 25 people who served as members of the Community Agricultural Partnership (CAP). Another 25 people served on teams that gathered data and made recommendations. 30 Chatham farms participated in the study, representing about 80% of the agricultural activity in the town. 450 citizens gave input regarding their buying habits and interest in local foods.

A Farmers' Forum was held in August, 2004, and a Community Agriculture Forum was held in November, 2004. This effort was woven into the Town of Chatham's planning process to establish a new Comprehensive Plan. Throughout 2004 through 2007, input from the general community and farm community was sponsored by Keep Farming, as well as through surveys, workshops, and public meetings as part of the overall comprehensive planning process.

The Planning Process

The Chatham Agricultural Partnership was created by the Town Board in early 2007. CAP members are appointed by the Town Board, and membership includes representatives of the major farming sectors in the town (dairy, produce, alpaca, sheep, horse, and mixed use), a Town Board member, a representative from the local agri-business community, a representative from the Columbia Land Conservancy, a realtor, and the Chatham Keep Farming coordinator.

The CAP took the lead in applying for a Municipal Agricultural and Farmland Protection planning grant on behalf of the town in November, 2007. The CAP identified Community Planning and Environmental Associates (CP&EA), the Hudson Group, and the Columbia Land Conservancy (CLC) as playing key roles in creating the plan.

The CAP worked with Nan Stolzenburg of CP&EA to develop a project plan with milestones and timeframes. Early activities focused on the prioritization of farmland using a rating scale outlined in this plan. The CAP worked with Don Meltz of CP&EA to analyze every parcel in Chatham, using multiple data sources, for the purpose of creating a complete GIS map of the town's agricultural activity. When the draft GIS map was complete, CAP members

solicited feedback from the farming community at the town's annual Harvest Dinner in November, 2008.



The CAP commissioned a fiscal impact study from the Hudson Group to analyze the potential impact of the protection of priority farmland as identified in the GIS maps. Specifically, the study looked at the impact on town services and residents' taxes should priority farmland be developed at historical and accelerated rates. The study is summarized in this plan.

The CAP worked with the Columbia Land Conservancy to create models and tools to be used when monies for PDR and LDR programs become available. CLC created a model easement and criteria that the town can use when in a position to allocate PDR and LDR funds in the future.

The CAP updated the environmental analysis and strategies that had been generated through the Keep Farming study and Comprehensive Planning process. Since we started the process 5 years ago, many things have changed in the environment, so the goals and strategies were modified to reflect the current and projected situations. The CAP solicited input and feedback from a variety of organizations for this purpose, working with the Columbia Land Conservancy, the Glynwood Center, and the New York State Farm Bureau.

Per the project plan, the CAP provided oversight and guidance of the process from the grant application through the final approval and adoption stages.

Town of Chatham Comprehensive Plan and its relationship to this Community Protection Plan

In June of 2007, the Town of Chatham completed an update to their comprehensive plan. This document, derived through a grass-roots effort included agricultural as a significant planning component. The entire Keep Farming initiative was included as the agricultural section of the plan. This document will serve as a roadmap to Chatham's future. It is a written document that identifies the goals, principles, guidelines, policies, standards, and strategies that can guide growth and development in the community. A Comprehensive Plan is not a local law but is at least partially be implemented through local laws.

The Comprehensive Plan establishes farming as a major topic to be addressed in Chatham. It includes a vision, five goals, and a set of broad strategies related to enhance and protect farming and farmlands. A summary of goals and strategies included in the Comprehensive Plan is included in the appendices.

The goal of this Agricultural Strategic Plan is to use the Comprehensive Plan as a starting point for policy and programs and provide details as to what should happen, when, and where. This plan is based upon the Comprehensive Plan but offers more detail as to what priority farmlands should be preserved in the future to sustain agriculture and offers specific zoning amendments, model laws, forms, and procedures that can be implemented to meet the goals of the Comprehensive Plan.

Definition of Agriculture

Chatham's emphasis is on promoting agriculture as a critical part of our town and regional economy. Thus, our focus is on the commercial sustainability of our farms. For the purposes of this plan, we have adopted the New York State definitions related to agriculture (AML 25 aa, Section 301). In particular, we define a farm operation as follows: "The land and on-farm buildings, equipment, manure processing and handling facilities, and practices which contribute to the production, preparation and marketing of crops, aquaculture, livestock and livestock products as a commercial enterprise, including commercial horse boarding operations, timber processing, compost, mulch or other biomass crops, and the management and harvesting of "farm woodland".



Environmental Assessment

Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats

Since our initial Keep Farming study five years ago many changes have occurred that impact farming and farmers in the town of Chatham. The current landscape presents new challenges, but also creates opportunities.

Scope of Farming

There are about 33,500 acres in Chatham. Roughly one-half of the land is forested, 8,371 acres have an agricultural assessment, and 1,448 acres are protected land. Approximately one-quarter of the town's land is in active agricultural use, and of the land being farmed, about 40% is owned by farmers and 60% is owned by individual landowners and leased to farmers. The percentage of town land being farmed is consistent with the land use patterns of Columbia County, where approximately one-quarter of the land, 106,500 acres, is in agricultural production.¹



Approximately 65% of the town's farmland is tillable, with acreage used for grass silage, haylage, green chop, grass/mixed hay, silage/green chop, alfalfa and corn. Of the remaining acres, about 18% are pasture, 11% are wood lots, 3% are wetlands, and the remaining 3% are used for other purposes such as barns and outbuildings.

The town has a long history as a dairy farming community, and there are currently six commodity dairy farms in Chatham. The town also has a large sheep farm, three produce farms, a goat farm, two alpaca farms, beef cattle farms, several mixed use farms, and a growing number of horse farms. Although the town does have variety in types of farms, from a land use perspective it remains a dairy farming community, with almost two-thirds of its farmland being used for commodity dairy farming.

Unlike many neighboring towns, Chatham has not suffered a significant loss of farmland in the past five years, but in other towns in the Hudson Valley, farms are going out of business and farmland is being developed for residential and commercial purposes.

¹ 2007 USDA Census of Agriculture

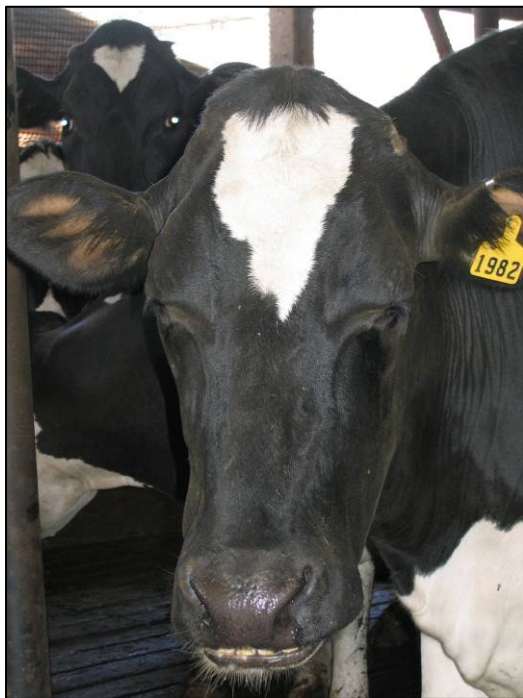
Many of the issues identified in this plan are regional and must be approached in concert with other towns and agricultural support organizations. Columbia County still has a significant and growing number of farms, but the county has lagged behind other counties in developing a county-wide agricultural protection plan.

Environmental Themes and Trends

The Dairy Dilemma

Almost two-thirds of the town's farming acreage is used for commodity dairy farming, a sector truly at risk. Historically low milk prices, combined with high energy, feed, and fertilizer costs, are causing financial difficulties for Chatham's dairy farmers. In January, 2009, the average price farmers received was \$13.39 per hundredweight (\$1.15 a gallon), far below the break-even cost of \$17.50 per hundredweight (\$1.50 a gallon).²

Nationally, there is a big drop in dairy farming, reflected in decreased numbers of dairy farms, land used in conjunction with dairy farming, and dairy cows.



Dairy farming generates at least 50% of Chatham farms' gross sales and represents more than 50% of the investment that farmers make in local products and services.³ Dairy farming and open space are tightly connected; dairy farms tend to use large parcels of land, leaving them undeveloped. Development of this land would have a profound impact on the rural character and agrarian economy of the town.

While dairy farmers are aware of and some are interested in exploring alternatives for the future (organic, beef cattle, creamery, etc.), lack of time and capital are major impediments to engaging in a different way of farming.

Dairy farms continue to present risk to the town's goal of "zero net loss of farmland." Several of the town's dairy farms appear to operate at a sustenance level. Once the economy rebounds, the land will be attractive to developers since it represents some of the town's most

² New York State Farm Bureau

³ Chatham Keep Farming study

“buildable” land. It is rare to see a dairy farm sold to someone who continues it as a dairy farm.

Non-dairy farming in Chatham is highly dependent on a small subset of dairy farmers who farm large parcels of land (leased and owned) and who provide a variety of services to other farmers such as selling green chop corn at affordable prices. The loss of dairy farms would impact other farming operations as well.

Locavores

Chatham’s local food movement is growing stronger, and this renewed interest and awareness has the potential to reshape the business of growing and supplying food. There is greater demand for and heightened awareness of the importance of local farms and local products.



From a land use perspective, produce farming is still a small part of the town’s farming landscape, less than 4% of the land in agricultural use. From a potential growth perspective, produce farming has tremendous potential. Demand from local residents and restaurants continues to increase, and demand from other markets (regional and national) continues to increase as well.

Local meat and dairy⁴ also have potential. More beef is being raised locally, especially in the Northern half of Columbia County. The limited local slaughterhouse infrastructure could present problems if meat production increases in the town. Limited produce processing, storage, and distribution systems could also create barriers to taking advantage of the sharp increase in demand of food and fiber products that are locally and regionally grown.

Increased Interest in Farming

The Hudson Valley market is ready for more farms, and there is an increase in the number of people interested in entering farming as well. After declining for more than a century, the number of small farms in the country increased 20% in the past six years.⁵ In Columbia County, the number of active farms stands

⁴ Chatham’s six dairy farms are commodity operations; none of the milk produced is sold locally.

⁵ U.S. Department of Agriculture

at approximately 550, up 50 farms in the past five years.⁶ While this trend is positive, increasing the number of small farms in Chatham will not mitigate the issues associated with the large acreage in commodity dairy farming.

According to the Beginning Farmers Project⁷, the three most formidable challenges to start-up farms in the Hudson Valley are access to skill development and farm business management training, access to land, and access to credit.

Land prices in Chatham are high; purchasing land for a start-up operation is expensive. With a large second home population, however, there are many residents who want to own a home and have someone else work it. Also, most of the new farming operations in the area are small niche operations that require less land and less equipment for their start-up.

There are increasing numbers of organizations providing support to prospective new farmers, providing technical training, financial advice, and facilitating partnerships between prospective farmers and landowners. Cornell Cooperative Extension of Columbia County, Hawthorne Valley Farm, the Columbia Land Conservancy and other support organizations are working to support and systematize opportunities for new farmers to lease.

The region is rich in organizations, agencies and governmental offices that provide “grass roots” level support, many of which have begun in the past five years - Hudson Valley Agri-Business Development Corporation, Columbia County Agriculture and Farmland Protection Board, Columbia County Bount, Columbia County Planning/Economic Development, Columbia County Real Property Tax Service Agency, Columbia County Soil and Water Conservation District, Farm Bureau, Farm To Chef, First Pioneer Farm Credit, NELPS, and many others.

Chatham is fortunate to be within the service area of the Columbia Land Conservancy. The Columbia Land Conservancy (CLC) is a 501(c)(3), nonprofit land trust that works with landowners, community groups and municipalities on a voluntary basis to protect wildlife habitat, farmland and rural open space, and encourage balanced growth in Columbia County, New York. Over the past 23 years CLC has protected more than 20,000 acres of privately owned land. During this same period, CLC has also assisted in the protection of some 5,000 acres of working farmland and the establishment of 5,300 acres of public lands in the county. As a result of these successes, they are nationally respected for their work in agricultural land protection, conservation easement management, and community-level conservation.

⁶ Columbia Land Conservancy

⁷ Cornell Cooperative Extension’s Small Farms Program

As a community-based land trust with a solid record of accomplishment, CLC has relationships with numerous landowners who would like to be part of a reinvigorated farming community, with farmers who desire to work more land than they own. CLC has begun implanting a database to match landowners with farmers. The Town could partner with CLC to help promote this type of program within Chatham.

CLC also has successfully partnered with a broad array of government agencies, not-for profits, community groups, and individuals that work to support agriculture; and has an in-depth knowledge of the County's land, institutions and culture. As such CLC has the ability to disseminate information, educate, and advocate for the needs of the farm community. A partnership with CLC will be a key strategy for implementing this plan.

The Columbia Land Conservancy currently holds more than 140 conservation easements, protecting over 20,000 acres of land throughout Columbia County. By the end of 2009 CLC will have completed a comprehensive, GIS-based inventory of the County's agricultural lands as part of our own internal strategic conservation plan. Working with CLC to update agricultural data and land protection strategies will be an important aspect of plan implementation.

A Fragile System

Chatham's farming system is complex, full of interdependencies, and extremely fragile. Approximately 60% of the land farmed is owned by non-farmer landowners. Some farmers lease or use land from more than twenty landowners. If these leased lands were to be converted to non-farm uses or otherwise made unavailable for agriculture, Chatham farmers would be at risk for losing critical farmland resources.

Agricultural land is disappearing or at risk. Even if farmers don't sell the land they own, they could go out of business if major landowners sell to others who either develop the land or prefer not to lease it for farming purposes.

Many of the town's farmers are older, and their impending retirement will stress the system unless the transition issue can be solved. In most cases, the land is the farmer's primary asset and retirement fund, so the temptation to sell the land is understandable.



It is increasingly difficult to get adequate labor due to immigration issues. The town lacks “next generation” farmers and little emphasis is put on training and education to prepare them.

Preserving Chatham’s Farmland

The State passed a bill allowing the town to put the Community Preservation Act to a referendum, but in 2008 the decision was made to not pursue this strategy at this time due to the softening economy. Direct farmland protection from the State has been reduced as well. Overall interest in and support for PDR and LDR programs, particularly those financed by a real estate transfer fee, has been negatively impacted by the current economy.⁸

There may be less development pressure in the current economic downturn, giving us a greater opportunity to preserve farmland. However, the mechanism for preservation has shifted from purchasing development rights and voluntary conservation to supporting the economic viability of local farms.

Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats

Strengths

- Farming is still an important component of the town’s economy.
- There is strong interest in and support for farming.
- The town passed a “Right to Farm” law in 2008, providing additional protection for farming operations.
- Keep Farming has given us a good understanding of farming issues; we have a data-based profile of farming in Chatham. We have built on the baseline data with GIS mapping of all parcels, prioritization of farmland, and a detailed analysis of the impact of potential development of farmland on the town’s finances.
- The Columbia Land Conservancy, located in Chatham, is a strong partner in implementing this plan’s recommendations.
- We have local and regional resources to help with farming issues.
- The critical infrastructure to support farming is still in place locally, including veterinary services, a slaughterhouse, a livestock auction facility, feed stores, tractor dealerships, and other ag-related businesses.
- Dairy farmers are aware of and some are interested in exploring alternatives for the future.
- 100% of “first income” farmers interviewed for the Keep Farming program would prefer that their land stay in farming.

⁸ The Nature Conservancy correlates public support for the Community Preservation Fund with metrics that include the Consumer Confidence Index, sales of durable goods, and real estate transactions, all of which have been negatively impacted by the current economy.

- Some farms are new, so we have examples of successful startup operations.
- There is interest in and awareness of local foods. A farmer's market and local food co-op have opened recently.
- Local food retailers are interested in selling more local products; local restaurants advertise the local products that they are using. Some local foods are used in the Chatham schools.
- The state legislature passed the enabling legislation for the Community Preservation Fund referendum.
- Residents have been educated on the Community Preservation Fund and the importance of protecting farmland.



Weaknesses

- Farming in Chatham is based on commodity dairy farming, the most vulnerable of all local agricultural operations. Dairy farming accounts for almost two-thirds of the town's farming acreage, generates at least 50% of gross sales, and represents more than 50% of the investment in local products and services.
- Dairy farming and open space are tightly connected. Dairy farms use large parcels of land, and those parcels are attractive to developers. Should the current dairy situation persist, several of the town's dairy farms will likely cease operations, putting that land at risk for development and/or going fallow.
- 60% of the land used for farming is owned by individual landowners other than the farmers. Some farmers lease land from more than 20 landowners. Should critical parcels of land be pulled from farming, a farming operation can be negatively impacted.
- While there is strong support for farming, there are also misperceptions. With a large influx of new residents, the traditional understanding of

farming is disappearing. Approximately 20% of residents are now part-timers, and some of them own high priority parcels of land that are leased to farmers.

- Large parcels of land have been bought by a few individuals during the past year, taking advantage of the lower real estate prices. It is unclear what will happen to this land in the future.
- The farming system is complex, full of interdependences, and extremely fragile. Factors stressing the system include:
 - Escalating land prices that create problems for those tied to the local economy that often exist on a sustenance level.
 - A lack of capital to invest in maintaining and/or changing farming operations.
 - A shortage of affordable, qualified, and reliable workers.
 - A lack of “next generation” farmers and little emphasis put on training and education to prepare them.
 - Fluctuating milk prices and the possibility of dairy buy-outs.
- While there is interest in starting new farming operations, the cost of entry (land, stock, and other equipment) is prohibitive.
- Developing the market for local produce and meat products for consumption is hampered by the lack of a reliable, year-round distribution system.

Opportunities

- Create a dedicated fund to support preservation of farmland and farming.
- Encourage private land stewardship that supports farming.
- Continue to educate residents about the Community Preservation Fund and position the town to move forward with a referendum when the economy improves.
- Sponsor a bond referendum to fund the purchase, leasing, or transfer of development rights as a way to protect high priority, “at risk” farmland.
- Investigate ways to equalize the tax burden.
- Insure that local policies, regulations, and zoning are “farm friendly.”
- Support business opportunities such as greenhouses, storage facilities, slaughterhouses, distribution systems, mechanisms to extend the growing season, and other entities that help stabilize and diversify the town’s farming base.
- Insure that farmers and landowners take advantage of the mechanisms currently offered by the state (ag assessment, ag district, etc.).
- Develop strategic partnerships (regional, county, state, and organizational) to pursue funding for agricultural land preservation and agriculture-related initiatives.
- Promote leadership for implementation of farming strategies to the Chatham Agricultural Partnership (CAP), giving them the authority to act on behalf of the town in pursuing regional, state, and federal economic development opportunities.

- Facilitate the entry of new farming operations in the town.
- Support commodity dairy farmers who are interested in converting to other types of farming operations.
- Build on the understanding and momentum created by the Keep Farming program and subsequent activities in the town.
- Take advantage of the increased growth of “hay and horses” in the Hudson Valley to create business opportunities and keep fields open.

Threats

- The threat of development will persist. As the economy improves, development pressures will return.
- Commodity dairy farming will continue to be unstable. Several dairy farms are operating at sustenance levels, and should they sell their land, it is unlikely that it will stay in farming.
- Although the recent comprehensive plan survey showed support for protection of farms and farmland, it is unclear whether this will extend to a real estate transfer tax, bond referendum, changes in tax structure, etc.
- The current economic situation and recent real estate reassessment in Chatham have created a climate of limited receptivity to raising funds for farmland protection.
- Many of the successful models are regional. Chatham cannot solve most of the issues on its own. The county has not historically had strong agricultural planning in place.
- The town currently has limited capacity to pursue funding for ag-related initiatives. There is no town economic development mechanism in place.



Vision and Goals for the Future

Vision: Chatham nurtures and sustains a viable agricultural economy.

- Goal 1. By protecting farmland, Chatham preserves property values, stabilizes property taxes, and maintains the attractiveness and unique rural character of the community.**
- Goal 2. Chatham strives to achieve a “zero net loss” of working farmland by addressing farm transition issues and new farm development**
- Goal 3. Chatham is a “farm friendly” town.**
- Goal 4. Chatham supports and sustains a system of locally grown, healthy foods.**
- Goal 5. Chatham promotes community awareness about the importance of agriculture in Chatham.**
- Goal 6. Chatham demonstrates the importance of agriculture by vesting leadership in a permanent body accountable to the Town Board.**

Recommendations

Goal 1. Chatham preserves property values, stabilizes property taxes, and maintains the attractiveness and unique rural character of the community by protecting farmland.

Strategy 1.1

The town shall protect as much of the town's remaining active farmland as possible through a multi-pronged strategy.

- A. Position the town to take advantage of future opportunities for private and public funding for Purchase of Development Rights (PDR) and Lease of Development Rights (LDR) purposes for the high priority farmland identified using the Farmland Prioritization criteria (LESA) and included in this plan.
- B. Continue to educate Chatham residents about the purpose and benefits of the Community Preservation Fund and the use of PDR and LDR programs as tools for farmland protection.
- C. Position the town to move ahead with a referendum for the Community Preservation Fund dedicated to farmland protection (for which the enabling legislation has been passed) at an appropriate time.
- D. Advocate at the state level for increased funds to be allocated for farmland protection initiatives.
- E. Follow the “smart growth” principles outlined in the Comprehensive Plan to encourage growth in and around the hamlets, thus preserving farmland.
- F. Encourage voluntary conservation easements, especially on high priority parcels of land leased for agriculture, but not owned by farmers. Partner with the Columbia Land Conservancy to promote and support these efforts.
- G. Educate individual landowners who lease land to farmers about the importance of that land to the overall farming landscape in Chatham and the importance of keeping that land in agricultural use.

- H. Investigate and consider joining conservation easements [permanent or term] with a local tax incentive.
- I. Use GIS to update the prioritized farmland maps on a regular basis, at a minimum of five year intervals.
- J. Continue to monitor development patterns, census data, agricultural census data, county and local infrastructure plans, and other relevant information for possible impact to agriculture; update this plan on a regular basis, at a minimum of five year intervals.

Goal 2. Chatham strives to achieve a “zero net loss” of working farmland by addressing farm transition issues and new farm development

Strategy 2.1

Facilitate farmer-landowner lease agreements through information, referrals and direct assistance.

- A. Maximize use of the town’s farming website (www.chathamkeepfarming.org) to disseminate information that helps current and prospective farmers enter into mutually beneficial relationships with landowners.
- B. Work with the Columbia Land Conservancy’s farmer-landowner match program to help introduce farmers and landowners with compatible interests.
- C. Secure funding sources and partners to conduct farm transition case studies involving a) conversion of a dairy farm to one or more viable agricultural models, and b) putting fallow farmland back into production.

Strategy 2.2

Monitor the town’s land use patterns and work with landowners and the Columbia County Agriculture and Farmland Protection Board to promote the understanding of the requirements and benefits of land in an agricultural district and to ensure that working farmland and other prime soil lands are included in New York State Agricultural Districts.

Strategy 2.3

Partner with other appropriate agencies and institutions to:

- A. Assist farmers who wish to diversify their operations and take advantage of new opportunities, such as transitioning to specialty crops, beef cattle, organic milk production, extended growing seasons, etc.
- B. Educate farmers about farm transition issues, estate planning and related issues.

Goal 3. Chatham is a “farm friendly” town.

Strategy 3.1

The CAP works with the Town Board to ensure that the town’s image, laws, policies and practices are consistent with the town’s vision in support of agriculture.

- A. Work with New York State Department of Transportation to place signs at the town’s major entry points, to read: “Welcome to Chatham: A Farm Friendly Community.”
- B. Work with the County Planning Board and other partners on training for town boards and officials.
 - 1. Ensure that the Town Board, Planning Board, and Zoning Board of Appeals are knowledgeable about the range of farmland protection techniques available for their use.
 - 2. Encourage training for town assessors about the proper assessment of farm structures and the range of tax abatement measures available for farms and forest owners, including options for local measures. Promote agricultural assessments for all eligible landowners.
- C. Review policies and make amendments where necessary to ensure compliance with New York State Agriculture and Market laws.
- D. Review and amend zoning laws to be “farm friendly” and consistent with the laws of the New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets.
 - 1. Permit a variety of agricultural uses and accessory uses consistent with farming operations.
 - 2. Remove any restrictions on farm operations, such as through excessive bulk regulations or setback requirements.

3. Modify site review plan procedures for farm-related operations to be consistent with the NYS model for ag site plans.
4. Ensure that new development projects do not have a negative impact on farming operations, and protect agricultural operations from constraints associated with adjacent non-agricultural use.
5. Encourage farmer representation on the Town Board, Planning Board and Zoning Board of Appeals, and encourage farmers to serve on local and county bodies and committees.

Goal 4. Chatham supports and sustains a system of locally grown, healthy foods.

Strategy 4.1

The town supports the development of the infrastructure necessary to provide a sustainable, local healthy food system.

- A. Support local food retail and distribution facilities through advertising and community education campaigns.
- B. Act with other towns and organizations, such as the Chamber of Commerce and the Hudson Valley Agri-Business Development Corporation, to facilitate ways for farmers to store, process, package, market, and distribute local products more efficiently, including by creating or locating new agriculture support businesses.
- C. Work with the Chatham school system and other institutions, and with organizations such as Farm-to-School, to adopt using locally produced foods in their meal programs.
- D. Inventory local facilities – e.g. school and church kitchens -- that may be used for added-value food processing; and create and disseminate a program to facilitate their use.

Goal 5. Chatham promotes community awareness about the importance of agriculture in Chatham.

Strategy 5.1

The CAP provides ongoing community education and awareness.

- A. Redo the local farming survey every five years.
- B. Educate residents about the importance of agriculture to the town's economy.
- C. Promote awareness of agriculture's role in conserving natural resources through sustainable practices.
- D. Educate landowners, and work with realtors to educate new residents, about what it means to live in an agricultural district.
- E. Work with the town to enact procedures to ensure that sellers of land, buyers of land, and real estate agents comply with the disclosure requirements of AML Article 25-AA, Section 310.
- F. Work with local schools to promote awareness of agriculture.
 - 1. Promote classroom education programs about agriculture.
 - 2. Support and assist the establishment and maintenance of school-based gardens.
 - 3. Facilitate a School-to-Work program to train and place students in agriculture and related jobs.

Goal 6. Chatham demonstrates the importance of agriculture by vesting leadership in a permanent body accountable to the Town Board.

The Town Board should formally appoint the Chatham Agricultural Partnership (CAP) as this Plan's implementing body. Other roles for Cap will be to promote agriculture, coordinate citizen involvement, represent the town in regional and state agriculture initiatives, and investigate and coordinate access to private and public funds. CAP members should be appointed by the Town Board and should include at least one Town Board member, members of the farm community, and others interested in the agricultural vitality of the town. The CAP should report to the Town Board on a quarterly basis. Support for CAP activities should be included in the town's annual budget.

In order to represent the town in working with the county and other municipalities on coordinated regional policies, CAP should:

- A. Act with other towns in the Hudson Valley to promote a regional and state farming agenda and to enhance the town's ability to impact issues such as farm policies, taxes, agri-tourism, and enhanced funding for agricultural issues.
- B. As part of regional activism, advocate at the State level for extending the agricultural tax assessment for buildings to the term during which the land is being farmed.
- C. Secure funding sources and partners to conduct a pilot program for a) converting a small commodity dairy farm to a more sustainable agricultural model, or b) putting fallow farmland back into production.

Enabling Recommendations

While this plan focuses on recommendations at the municipal level, many of our recommendations are dependent on the State and County taking actions that support, enable, and fund our local recommendations.

A. STATE

- 1. Revamp the existing state farmland protection program to:
 - a. Significantly increase funding available for farmland protection in the state.
 - b. Decrease the local match required.
 - c. Allow county and local partners to share the administrative burden and streamline the process, reducing the current bottleneck in the funding and allocation process.
- 2. Establish a grant program or revolving loan program to assist farmers who are:
 - a. Putting land back into active agricultural use.
 - b. Converting an existing farming operation to one that is more viable, such as converting a commodity dairy farm to a creamery.
 - c. Entering farming and require financial support during start-up.

- d. Direct monetary and staff assistance to help dairy farmers establish new markets and value-added/niche business planning so that they can take advantage of new opportunities to maintain or expand their dairy operations. Dairy farms are keystone agricultural operations and utilize the most agricultural land in Chatham. Loss of dairy farms would significantly and negatively impact Chatham. Maintenance of these farms is critical. Because dairy farmers are not likely to have a marketing, advertising, or retail/wholesale set of a business skills, other assistance is needed to help them move into value-added or niche products. State assistance in providing these services directly to farmers through either the Department of Agriculture or Markets or through a cooperative arrangement with Cooperative Extension would be extremely helpful.
3. Establish a local food purchasing policy that establishes a percentage of food products qualified as locally produced food for purchase and use in institutions that receive state funds.
4. Establish a Task Force to make recommendations for insuring that state regulations for small farming operations are appropriate for a small scale business and are simplified, understandable, and easy to comply with. Establish a position in NYS Ag and Markets to work with and advocate for small producers in the state.

B. COUNTY

1. Establish a county fund to be financed through a real estate transfer fee or other mechanism to provide a match for state funds for the purpose of farmland protection in the county.
2. Establish a food purchasing policy for Columbia County that establishes a percentage of food products qualified as locally produced food for purchase and use in Columbia County agencies and facilities.
3. Work cooperatively with the County to develop and implement county-wide agricultural initiatives, including a County Farmland Protection Plan and agricultural economic development initiatives, where appropriate.

Action Steps and Implementation Plan

This section outlines an action plan to implement the Agriculture Protection Plan's recommendations. Leadership from the Town Board is critical to put this plan into action. Although the Town Board has the ultimate responsibility in implementing this plan, they will need assistance from various boards, agencies, and organizations for specific strategies recommended in the plan. A critical and primary implementation step for the Board is to authorize the CAP as the principal implementation group on behalf of the Town Board. So that the ideas presented in this Plan can become a reality, it is recommended that the Town Board commit to the following immediately after adoption:

1. Adopt a resolution setting up the CAP as a local committee to begin implementing this plan. Their role would be to:
 - a. Coordinate implementation activities.
 - b. Communicate regularly with the Board about implementation activities and needs.
 - c. Identify funding needs to implement various strategies and work with town officials in obtaining necessary funds through grants and other means.
 - d. Make a quarterly report to the Town Board about implementation activities and upcoming needs.
 - e. Communicate regularly with the public so that everyone is informed of implementation progress.
2. Use the Priority Action Schedule below, as a checklist of implementation activities and establish time frames and expectations for implementation.
3. Evaluate implementation activities on an annual basis and establish expectations for each year's worth of implementation work.
4. Re-evaluate this Agricultural Protection Plan every five years and whenever the Town Comprehensive Plan is updated to ensure that it stays current and relevant to conditions in Chatham.
5. Provide all board members with the copies of this Agricultural Protection Plan as well as the Comprehensive Plan.
6. Maintain, update, and utilize the maps created through the GIS for this Plan and make them available on the Town website.
7. Determine costs of and seek cost-effective approaches to implementing

programs outlined in this plan.

Key to Priorities

This plan calls for a variety of policy decisions, program initiation, regulatory changes, coordination with regional organizations and agencies, and securing funding. The following schedule is a compilation of all the actions identified in this Plan. The action table does not detail each and every strategy contained in the Plan. Instead, it is a compilation of the major actions suggested and presents a prioritization of major categories of work to be accomplished in Chatham. This Action Plan should not be a substitute for the details contained in the rest of the Plan.

The priorities listed in the table below are based on the following scale:

1	2	3	4
High	Medium	Long-Term	Ongoing

Where

1 = High, implemented immediately following plan adoption (First Year)

2 = Medium, implemented within 18 months following plan adoption

3 = Long-term, implemented within 36 months

4 = Ongoing action item

Key to Type of Action

Each strategy represents a specific type of action that the Town can take. These types of actions are:

Funding or Capital Improvement: Any action that results in an investment and improvement in a property, structures, equipment, staff or other similar items.

Policy: Any action that results in establishment of a set policy that will govern the actions of the Town.

Program: Any action that results in establishment of a plan, activity, committee, proposal, or similar items.

Regulatory: Any action that results in the development of new or amendment of existing land use related laws in the Town. This typically refers to zoning, site plan review, or subdivision laws.

Date to be Completed	Summary of Task/Action	Type of Action	Responsible Party	Time Frame
Goal 1. By protecting farmland, Chatham preserves property values, stabilizes property taxes, and maintains the attractiveness and unique rural character of the community.				
	Take advantage of future private and public funding for PDR, LDR to protect priority farmlands identified in this Plan	Funding	CAP	1
	Continue education of Chatham residents about the benefits of the Community Preservation Fund and use of PDR and LDR	Program	CAP, CLC	1
	Position Town to move forward with referendum for the Community Preservation Fund	Program	Town Board, CAP	1
	Advocate at state level to increase funds allocated to farmland protection initiatives	Policy and Program	Town Board, CAP	1
	Follow smart growth principles outlined in the Comprehensive Plan to encourage growth in and around hamlets.	Program and Policy	Town Board, Planning Board, and CAP	2
	Encourage voluntary conservation easements, especially on high priority farmlands leased, but not owned by farmers.	Program	CAP, Town Board	2
	Educate landowners who lease land to farmers about the importance of keeping that land in agricultural use.	Program	CAP	4
	Investigate joining conservation easements with a local tax incentive.	Policy	CAP and Town Board	3
	Use GIS to update prioritized farmland maps	Program	CAP	4

Date to be Completed	Summary of Task/Action	Type of Action	Responsible Party	Time Frame
	on a regular basis.			
	Continue to monitor development patterns, census data, and other data needed to update this plan on a regular basis	Program	CAP and Town Board	4
Goal 2. Chatham strives to achieve a “zero net loss” of working farmland by addressing farm transition issues and new farm development.				
	Continue to use www.chathamkeepfarming.org to disseminate information.	Program	CAP	4
	Work with CLC to promote farmer-landowner matches.	Program	CAP, CLC	2, 4
	Secure funding to conduct farm transition case studies.	Funding	CAP	2
	Monitor town land use patterns and promote land being maintained in the NYS Agricultural District.	Program	CAP, Planning Board, Town Board	4
	Partner with appropriate agencies and institutions to help farmers diversify and become educated on farm transition, estate planning and other issues.	Program	CAP	4
Goal 3. Chatham is a “farm-friendly” town.				
	Place signage to promote farming.	Capital Improvement	CAP	2
	Provide for training of Town Board, Planning Board and ZBA on farmland protection techniques.	Program	Town Board, CAP	1
	Promote training and full use of agricultural assessments.	Program	Town Board, CAP, Town Assessor	1
	Ensure compliance with NYS AML.	Regulatory	Town Board, CAP,	1

Date to be Completed	Summary of Task/Action	Type of Action	Responsible Party	Time Frame
			Planning Board, Zoning Board of Appeals	
	Review and amend local zoning.	Regulatory	Town Board, CAP, Planning Board, Zoning Board of Appeals	1
Goal 4. Chatham supports and sustains a system of locally grown, healthy foods.				
	Develop advertising and community education campaigns related to local foods.	Program	CAP	3
	Facilitate ways for farmers to store, process, market and distribute locally grown foods.	Program	CAP	2
	Work to organize locally produced foods in institutions such as the Farm-To-School program.	Program	CAP	2, 4
	Inventory facilities that may be used for value-added food processing and facilitate their use.	Program	CAP	3
Goal 5. Chatham promotes community awareness about the importance of agriculture in Chatham.				
	Redo local farming survey every 5 years.	Program	CAP	4
	Educate public about agriculture's role in economy.	Program	CAP	4
	Promote sustainable practices.	Program	CAP	4
	Educate landowners and new residents about living in an agricultural district.	Program	CAP, Area Real estate Agents	4
	Work with local schools to promote agricultural	Program	CAP, Local School	2, 4

Date to be Completed	Summary of Task/Action	Type of Action	Responsible Party	Time Frame
	education.		Districts	
Goal 6. Chatham demonstrates the importance of agriculture by vesting leadership in a permanent body accountable to the Town Board.				
	Maintain CAP to assist in implementation of this Plan.	Policy	Town Board, CAP	1
	CAP represents Chatham and works with regional partners.	Program	CAP	4

Appendix A: Chatham's Farm Resources

Table 1: Assessment Rolls for Chatham

2007 CHATHAM ASSESSMENT ROLL					
<u>Property Use Code</u>	<u>Category</u>	<u>Number of Parcels</u>	<u>Number of Parcels With Ag. Assessment</u>	<u>Average Value (\$)</u>	<u>Total Market Value (\$)</u>
Agriculture					
105	Productive Vacant Land	42	22	186,651	7,839,354
112	Dairy	24	14	552,466	13,259,200
114	Sheep	2	2	934,923	1,869,846
117	Horse	8	5	1,154,115	9,232,923
120	Field Crops	9	3	327,655	2,948,905
170	Nursery	1	1	450,923	450,923
Subtotal		86	47		\$ 35,601,151

Source: Combination of GIS parcel data supplied by Columbia County in 2007 and Town assessment rolls on February 2008. Average and Market Values were calculated from the total assessment values, and the equalization rate.

Table 2: Farmland Inventory Information

Feature	Total Acres
105 Productive Vacant Land	2,428 acres
112 Dairy	2,320 acres
114 Sheep	298 acres
117 Horse	702 acres
120 Field Crops	731 acres
170 Nursery	42 acres
Non-Farm class properties, but identified as farmland	9,234 acres
Prime Farmland in the Town	7,013 acres
Soils of Statewide Importance in the Town	10,304 acres
Prime Farmland Soils on farms	3,299 acres
Soils of statewide importance on farms	4,816 acres
Land in a NY Certified Ag District	15,168 acres
Farmland in a NY Certified Ag District	12,380 acres
Number of farmland parcels in a NY Certified Ag District	23 parcels

Source: GIS parcel data supplied by Columbia County in 2007; NYS Ag and Markets Ag Districts, 2009; NRCS Soils data (Columbia County Soil Survey).

An in-depth study of 20 farming operations was completed through the Keep Farming initiative, with detailed surveys and interviews done at 15 operations.

This focused on “first income” farmers where farming is the primary source of income. Second income farmers were also included to ensure representation of most of the types of farming that occur in Chatham. In total, this study looked at 7,725 acres being farmed, including 6 dairy farms, 3 produce farms, 2 sheep farms, 4 horse farms, and 3 mixed livestock and other farms. While this study did not include all farms in the Town, it examined a representative sample of operations that cover most of the agricultural land (80%) in the Chatham. The results of this study are:

Table 3: Keep Farming Inventory of 20 Farms in Chatham

Of the 7,725 acres in the study:
5,119 acres are tillable (65%)
1,372 acres are pasture (18%)
827 acres are wood lots (11%)
198 acres are wetlands (3%)
200 acres are used for other purposes such as barns and other buildings (3%)
4,965 acres are dairy farms (64%)
1,144 acres are sheep farms (15%)
744 acres are mixed livestock and other farms (10%)
475 acres are horse farms (6%)
397 acres are produce farms (5%)
Of the 5,119 acres of tillable land in the study:
1,180 acres are grass silage, haylage, green chop (24%)
1,015 acres are grass/mixed hay (20%)
885 acres are corn for silage/green chop (17%)
785 acres are alfalfa (15%)
740 acres are corn for grain or seed (14%)
83 acres are vegetables and fruit (2%)
431 acres are other crops (8%)
Of the 3577 farm animals in the study, there were
Sheep & lambs 1,400
Poultry 125
Goats 1
Alpacas 50
Horses 172
Hogs & pigs 20
Total cattle 1,809
Cattle:
Milk cows 931
Heifers & heifer calves 770
Steers & bulls 24
Beef cattle 84

Source: Town of Chatham Comprehensive Plan, 2008

Town and Regional Agricultural Census Data

Table 4, below, summarizes major statistics that characterize agriculture in Columbia County between 1992 and 2007. This data is relevant because CAP believes that the success of agriculture depends on not only efforts within the Town of Chatham, but also of the County and entire region. Over the past 15 years, the number of farms has increased by almost 15% in Columbia County. However, during this same time frame, the land in farms has been reduced and all trends indicate that farms are getting smaller. The average farm size in 1992 was 231 acres and in 2007, it was 192. The trend toward smaller farms also shows in the data with a very large [97%] increase in the number of farms one to nine acres in size, and a 54% increase in farms 10 to 49 acres. While Columbia County is gaining more smaller farms, it is losing its largest farms: There was a 22% decrease in farms 500 to 999 acres.



The trend towards smaller farms is also confirmed with an analysis of income levels. There was more than a doubling of the number of farms earning less than \$2500 between 1992 and 2007 while the number of farms earning over \$25,000 decreased. Although there are more, smaller farms in terms of both size and income, the market value of land, buildings, and agricultural produce

has all increased. Per farm market value increased 3.2% and total products increased in value by \$18%. In 2007, the total market value of Columbia County farms was 11,871,800. With the large multiplier effect agriculture has, this almost \$12 million dollar industry in the County is still a significant economic contributor.

Table 4: Statistics on Agriculture in Columbia County, 1992 - 2007

Columbia County	1992	1997	2002	2007	% Change
Farms (number)	484	464	498	554	14.5
Land in farms (acres)	111,974	114,863	119,718	106,574	-4.8
Land in farms - Average size of farm (acres)	231	248	240	192	-16.9
Estimated market value of land and buildings 1/ - Average per farm (dollars)	606,857	627,489	867,345	823,806	35.7
Estimated market value of land and buildings 1/ - Average per acre (dollars)	2,867	2,586	3,165	4,282	49.4

Columbia County	1992	1997	2002	2007	% Change
Estimated market value of all machinery and equipment 1/ - Average per farm (dollars)	71,642	86,319	110,017	103,984	45.1
Farms by size - 1 to 9 acres	31	41	42	61	96.8
Farms by size - 10 to 49 acres	103	103	122	159	54.4
Farms by size - 50 to 179 acres	160	150	150	171	6.9
Farms by size - 180 to 499 acres	127	108	116	110	-13.4
Farms by size - 500 to 999 acres	46	47	46	36	-21.7
Farms by size - 1,000 acres or more	17	15	22	17	0
Total cropland (acres)	79,378	79,237	77,838	63,704	-19.7
Market value of agricultural products sold (see text) (\$1,000)	55,665	72,675	52,194	65,770	18.2
Market value of agricultural products sold (see text) - Average per farm (dollars)	115,001	156,627	104,807	118,718	3.2
Farms by value of sales - Less than \$2,500	95	93	166	192	102.1
Farms by value of sales - \$2,500 to \$4,999	42	49	36	42	0
Farms by value of sales - \$5,000 to \$9,999	55	33	35	61	10.9
Farms by value of sales - \$10,000 to \$24,999	80	91	67	84	5
Farms by value of sales - \$25,000 to \$49,999	44	42	56	35	-20.5
Farms by value of sales - \$50,000 to \$99,999	49	47	37	47	-4.1
Farms by value of sales - \$100,000 or more	119	109	101	93	-21.8
Principal operator by primary occupation - Farming (number)	298	290	337	287	-3.7
Principal operator by primary occupation - Other (number)	186	174	161	267	43.5

Source: 1992 to 2007 Agricultural Census

Local Agricultural Statistics by Zip Code

The Keep Farming study provided a snapshot of agriculture in the Town of Chatham. A full inventory of agricultural census data is not available at the town level. However, an analysis of the 2002 agricultural census data by zip code is available, and this will assist in the further characterization of agriculture in the town. 2007 zip code based data from the agricultural census will not be available until the summer of 2009 so Table 5, below, is the most up to date zip code data available.

Table 5 accounts for 1997 and 2002 data. There has been an increase in the number of farms – from 79 in 1997 to 90 in 2002. [It is possible that some differences can be attributed to more people filling out the form in 2002 than in 1997⁹]. There has been a slight increase in the number of farms in the Chatham area and slightly more smaller farms in 2002 compared to 1997.

Table 5: Number of Farms by Size of Farm in Chatham Zip Code Area, 2002

Zip Code	Place	All farms		1 to 49 acres		50 to 999 acres		1,000 acres or more	
		1997	2002	1997	2002	1997	2002	1997	2002
12037	Chatham	21	23	6	8	15	15	0	0
12060	East Chatham	11	10	2	*	9	6	0	*
12136	Old Chatham	14	16	7	7	6	8	0	*
12184	Valatie	33	33	11	16	22	17	1	0
Total Chatham Area		79	82	26	31	52	46	1	*

Source: 1992 to 2007 Agricultural Census

* Indicates data that cannot be reported due to the fact that it represents only one or two farms.

Table 6 shows market values compared between 1997 and 2002. Because the 1997 and 2002 data did not report exactly the same market value categories, it is somewhat difficult to compare 1997 to 2002. However, in both years, the majority of farms had relatively small market values and few farms (19% in 1997 and 10% in 2002) had larger market values at levels. Fifty-eight percent

⁹ The zip code data is presented for farms within the entire zip code area, and not just for those within the boundaries of the Town of Chatham. Malden Bridge is another area in Chatham that has a separate zip code. However, the 1997 Malden Bridge data is not available so this area was excluded from this analysis.

of farms in 1997 had less than \$10,000 in market value. IN 2002, 82% of farms had smaller market values.

Table 6: Value of Agricultural Products Sold by Chatham Zip Code by Number of Farms, 2002

Zip Code	Place Name	Value of all agricultural products sold							
		Total farms		Number of Farms Earning					
		1997	2002	\$10K in 1997	\$50K in 2002	\$10K to \$100K in 1997	\$50K to \$249K in 2002	\$100K + in 1997	\$250K + in 2002
12037	Chatham	21	23	12	20	5	*	4	*
12060	East Chatham	11	10	6	9	5	*	0	0
12136	Old Chatham	14	16	7	12	3	*	4	*
12184	Valatie	33	33	18	26	8	*	7	5
Total Chatham Area		79	82	43	67	21	*	15	5

Source: 1992 to 2007 Agricultural Census

* Indicates data that cannot be reported due to the fact that it represents only one or two farms.

Table 7 analyzes farm tenure. Fifty-three farms were operated by full-owners, while 19 were operated by part owners in 2002. The number of full owners was up slightly from 1997 and the number of part owners decreased. The number of farms with the principal operator living on the farm increased as did the number of farmers indicating that the farm was their primary occupation. About 30 farms in each reporting year had the principal operator working off the farm for more than 200 days each year.

Table 7: Farm Tenure in Chatham Zip Codes, 2002

Zip Code	Place Name	Full owners		Part owners		Tenants		Farms with principal operator living on the farm operated		Farms with principal operator reporting primary occupation as farming		Farms with principal operator reporting working off the farm for 200 days or more	
		1997	2002	1997	2002	1997	2002	1997	2002	1997	2002	1997	2002
12037	Chatham	11	15	7	6	3	*	15	18	8	13	10	9
12060	East Chatham	5	*	6	6	0	0	9	10	5	8	5	*
12136	Old Chatham	9	13	5	*	0	*	12	15	10	12	4	6
12184	Valatie	22	25	10	7	1	*	25	28	18	22	11	15
Total Area	Chatham	47	53	28	19	4	*	61	71	41	55	30	30

Source: 1992 to 2007 Agricultural Census

* Indicates data that cannot be reported due to the fact that it represents only one or two farms.

Table 8 examines cropland harvested by size of farms. There were not many significant changes between cropland from 1997 to 2002. One change is noted however: The number of farms reporting cropland was idle or used for cover crops and not harvested or pastured doubled between 1997 and 2002. In 1997, there were nine farms reporting idle cropland. In 2002, there were 19.

Table 8 illustrates cropland harvested by different farms in the Chatham area.

Table 8: Cropland Harvested by Size of Farms in Chatham Zip Codes, Number of Farms, 2002

Zip Code	Place Name	Cropland harvested										All other land							
		Total farms		1 to 49 acres (farms)		50 to 499 acres (farms)		500 acres or more (farms)		Cropland used for pasture or grazing, total farms		Cropland idle or used for cover crops or soil-improvement but NOT harvested and NOT pastured or grazed, total farms		Cropland in cultivated summer fallow, total farms		Total woodland, total farms		Total farms	
		1997	2002	1997	2002	1997	2002	1997	2002	1997	2002	1997	2002	1997	2002	1997	2002	1997	2002
12037	Chatham	14	17	6	8	8	9	0		14	11	2	5	2		12	14	14	18
12060	East Chatham	10	8	5	*	4	7	1		7	6	1	5	0		8	8	9	9
12115	Malden Bridge		5		*				*		*		*				7		*
12136	Old Chatham	10	10	5	*	4	5	1	*	7	6	2	*	0		9	9	11	9
12184	Valatie	28	24	11	13	15	9	2	*	10	15	4	9	0	*	18	21	23	16
Total Chatham Area		62	64	27	21	31	30	4	*	38	38	9	19	2	*	47	27	57	52

Source: 1992 to 2007 Agricultural Census * Indicates data that cannot be reported due to the fact that it represents only one or two farms.

New York State Agricultural Districts

New York's Agricultural Districts Law, Article 25-AA, was enacted in 1971 to protect farmland in New York. The law's purpose is to provide local methods for keeping land in agricultural use and sets forth the concept of "agricultural districts" as a viable way to protect farmland. State agricultural districts are not the same as a locally established agricultural zoning district. The following are the major components established under the Agricultural Districts Law:

- Creation and review of agricultural districts
- County Agricultural and Farmland Protection Boards (for advising and reviewing on agricultural districts, proposed government actions, preparation of county ag plans, etc.)
- Agricultural Assessment (for property tax relief)
- Ad Valorem Limitations (limits the taxation of farmland for improvements such as municipal water, sewer, lighting, non-farm drainage, solid waste disposal, or other landfill operations)
- Right to Farm (nuisance protection and shielding farmers from excessively restrictive local laws, or to ward off unwanted or intrusive public infrastructure). This includes definition of agriculture, local ordinance protections, notice of intent, sound agricultural practice determinations, and disclosure notices.



The Town of Chatham has one NYS certified Agriculture District, district #10, which covers 15,168 acres of the town. Within this district, there are 12,380 acres of farmland on 23 parcels (Table 2).

New York State Agricultural Assessments Program¹⁰

Agricultural assessment was established under the New York State Agricultural Districts Law to provide property tax relief for farmers. Any owner of land used for agricultural production may qualify if the land meets

¹⁰ Adapted from: Action Guide: Agricultural and Farmland Protection for New York. 1999. American Farmland Trust

the requirements or is rented to an eligible farm operation. Land does not have to lie within an agricultural district to receive the assessment. Agricultural assessments provide “use value” assessment for eligible land. This allows farmland to be taxed for its agricultural value, not for its market (non-farm) value. To qualify, land must be greater than 7 acres and gross an average of \$10,000 or more in sales, or land less than 7 acres with average gross sales value of \$50,000 or more, and be used for the preceding two years in agriculture.

Rented land may qualify, as may support land, farm woodland, and land set aside in federal conservation programs. Land used for processing or retail operations does not qualify.

In determining agricultural assessment, the local assessor uses state certified assessment values established on an annual basis for specific soil types. Each soil group gets a different assessment value. A parcels agricultural value is determined by totaling all soil group values by acre on the parcel together.

Land placed under agricultural assessment and then converted to non-farm use is subject to conversion fees. These payments equal five times the taxes saved in the last year during which the land received an agricultural assessment, plus 6% interest compounded annually for each year that the assessment was granted (up to 5 years). If only a part of the parcel is converted, then payment is based on the converted portion that had received agricultural assessment. Landowners have up to 6 months to notify the assessor whenever a conversion occurs. Failure to do so can result in penalties.

Farm Locations

Farms are located throughout the Town (See Agriculture and Identified Farmland maps). There is a large concentration of farms to the west of the Taconic Parkway. The map entitled “Identified Farmland” shows parcels identified by the assessor as farmland as well as from input from farmers and the CAP.

Farm Soils

There are about 7,000 acres of prime farmland in Chatham. Of those total prime farmlands, 47% are used for farming. In addition, there are 10,304 acres of soils considered to be of statewide importance, of which about 47% are used for farming (Table 2). These important farmland soils are located throughout the Town (See Farmland Map). Some farms are located in areas with neither prime nor soils of statewide importance.

Trends Impacting Agriculture in Chatham

Development Trends

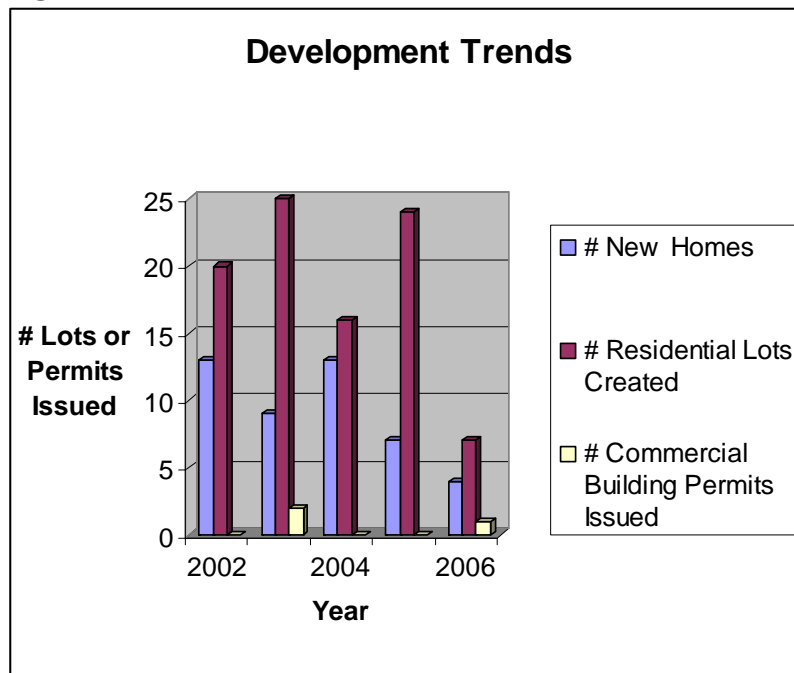
The following analysis examined the recent development trends to identify the level of growth taking place in Chatham over the past few years.

Table 9: Building Trends 2002 - 2006

	# New Homes	# Residential Lots Created	# Commercial Building Permits Issued	Average # Homes over 5 years	Average # New Lots Created Over 5 Years
2002	13	20	0	9.2 per year	18.4 per year
2003	9	25	2		
2004	13	16	0		
2005	7	24	0		
2006	4	7	1		
Total	46	92	3		

Source: Town of Chatham Building Department

Figure 1: Development Trends, 2002-2006



Based on data for the past 5 years, an average of 9.2 homes was built over that time period and an average of 18.4 new residential lots were created. 2003 had the highest subdivision creation rate (24 new lots) and 2006 had the lowest (7). 2006 was much lower than any of the past years – this may be in large part due to a moratorium that was in place between 2005 and 2007. Except for the Sperry Subdivision (18 lots in 2005), the other subdivision activities were those with two or three lots created. Very little commercial activity occurred during these years. The subdivisions have been throughout town and not concentrated in one location.

The chart below compares the Town of Chatham (outside the Village) between 1990 and 2000:

Table 10: General Demographic Characteristics of Chatham, 1990-2000

Demographic	1990	2000	# Increase	% Increase 1990 to 2000	2006	% Increase 2000 to 2006 [4]
Population	3576	3551	-25	-.70%	3662(1)	3.1%
# Households	1399	1469	70	5.0%	1515(2)	3.3%
# Housing Units	1688	1786	98	5.8%	1832(3)	2.5%

Source: 1990 and 2000 US Census

Using the building permit information

- (1) Calculated using the # people per household of 2.41 in 2000 x the number of new homes built 2002 to 2006 AND assuming that all households had permanent residents that would have been counted. Actual full-time resident population may not have increased if the homes built were second-homes.
- (2) Calculated from adding 1469 households in 2000 plus new 46 homes built 2002 to 2006
- (3) Calculated from adding 1786 housing units in 2000 plus 46 new homes built 2002 to 2006
- (4) Missing data for 2001 so this is a conservative estimate

Census data from 1990 and 2000 show a slightly decreasing population (town only) but a disproportionate rate of increase of housing units (5.8%). That indicates that there are more houses being built than population added to Chatham. Houses were added at an average rate of 9.7 per year.

The decade of 1990 to 2000 saw a 5.8% increase in the number of housing units. As a comparison, between 2002 and 2006, there was a 4.5% increase in 5 years. The average rate of new homes built between 2002 and 2006 was 9.2 which is about the same rate as that between 1990 and 2000. If that current

rate were continued for the entire decade, by 2010, an additional 92 homes would be added.

If you measure the growth rate by housing starts, then it appears as if the rate of growth now is about the same as it was for the prior decade. Chatham could expect about 90 to 100 homes every decade at the current rate. Another factor to consider however, is that the subdivision activity was larger than the home building activity. 92 lots were created but only 46 houses were built. If all lots subdivided were actually built on, then the rate of housing growth would have doubled. If all the lots created were built upon, then the rate of increase between 2000 and 2006 would have been 7%. The following table shows population projections to the year 2020 (from The Hudson Group Fiscal Impact Study Table 4).

Table 11: Population Trends, 1990-2007

	Total Town	Town Outside Village	Village Part of Town
1990	4,413	NA	NA
2000	4,249	3,551	698
2005	4,192	3,496	696
2006	4,148	3,463	685
2007	4,097	3,419	678

Source: Municipal and School District Fiscal Impact Study, December 2008

Table 12: Population Projections 2008-2020

	Total New
Estimated New Residential Units	298
Number of Primary Units	245
Total Resident Population	620
Total School Age Children	68
Number of Second Homes	53
Total Secondary Population	186

Source: Municipal and School District Fiscal Impact Study, December 2008

Zoning in Chatham

The Town of Chatham has laws or other regulations in effect regarding the following:

- Zoning ordinance (Chatham adopted an interim zoning law in 2006 that incorporated the conservation subdivision regulations)

- Subdivision regulations
- Site Plan Review (contained within the zoning law)
- Mobile home regulations
- Junkyard ordinance
- Unsafe buildings
- Road, sidewalk, and utility right of way dedication and maintenance
- Communication Towers
- Signs
- General Design Guidelines
- Dumping and littering
- Dog control

Of these, zoning, subdivision, and site plan review influences agriculture and agricultural operations. The 2006 amendment to the zoning allowed for use of conservation subdivision layouts and this includes language to promote preservation of agricultural lands. The town's current zoning establishes six different districts including two hamlet, one business, and three residential districts as follows:

Zoning District	Minimum Lot Size
Business	2 acres
Hamlet One	1.5 acres
Hamlet Two	1.5 acres
Rural Lands One	10 acres
Rural Lands Two	5 acres
Rural Lands Three	3 acres

Build-Out Analysis

A build-out analysis is an exercise designed to estimate the amount of development that can possibly occur if all developable land in a town, village, or county is fully built according to the municipality's current land use regulations. This buildout analysis uses the Town of Chatham's current land use regulations, considers environmental constraints that would limit development in certain areas, and calculates the total residential density allowed at full buildout of the Town. It does not predict when this buildout would occur, at what rate it would occur, or where it would occur first. It only predicts the possible end result.

A geographic information system (GIS) software program was used to conduct

this analysis. The existing zoning determines the allowed residential development density within each district. The results are as follows:

Table 13: Results of the Buildout Calculations for Entire Town Outside Village

		Calculation Without Considering Environmental Constraints as per current zoning	Calculated after subtracting water features, and also slopes over 15%, and 100 foot buffers around open water and DEC wetlands
Zoning District	Number of Parcels	Potential New Residential uses	Potential New Residential uses
Business	19	81	35
Hamlet One	199	592	315
Hamlet Two	19	55	40
Rural Lands One	179	364	201
Rural Lands Two	597	2,638	1,435
Rural Lands Three	112	257	179
Total	1,125	3,987	2,205

This indicates that at full build-out, there is a potential of at least 3,987 new residences using existing zoning regulations. If all water features, wetlands, and slopes over 15% were removed and considered “unbuildable”, then the development potential using current zoning is 2,205 new residences.

The Town of Chatham Draft Comprehensive Plan makes several recommendations to amend zoning district boundaries (See Volume I and Conceptual Zoning Map). The Plan calls for encouraging farmland preservation by focusing growth in and around the hamlets. Expansion of hamlet boundaries and allowing smaller lots where feasible is one way that smart growth principle can be accomplished. The Plan also recommends the use of a net-acreage technique to calculate density of development (See Volume I strategies and Appendix E of Volume II). A build-out scenario was conducted in order to determine the affect of those changes on the development potential of the Town. The results are as follows:

Table 14: Buildout Calculation Results Using Conceptual Zoning Districts

Recommended in Town of Chatham Comprehensive Plan

		Potential New Residential uses			
Zoning District	Number of Parcels	Calculated without considering environmental constraints	Calculated after subtracting water features [open water, DEC wetlands, and 100 year flood hazards]	Calculated after subtracting water features, and also slopes over 15%, and 100 foot buffers around open water and DEC wetlands	Calculated using an environmental control formula [outlined below]
Business	19	61	59	50	40
Hamlet	237	623	564	405	304
Rural Lands One	190	565	482	309	262
Rural Lands Two	549	2,922	2,708	1,698	1,742
Rural Lands Three	84	199	169	115	102
Total	1,079	4,370	3,637	2,577	2,450

Relationship of Potential Buildout to Agriculture

The Chatham Comprehensive Plan recommended several changes to zoning. The Map entitled “Potential new Residences on Priority Farmland from Comprehensive Plan Buildout” shows the overlap between priority farmlands and potential building as presented in the Comprehensive Plan with existing zoning. Zoning establishes a certain level of capacity for development even on farmlands. According to this buildout, 1,488 potential new residences would be allowed on the 241 farmland parcels, covering 13,180 acres.



Appendix B: Prioritizing Farmland for the Future

Identification of Important Farmlands in Chatham

As part of the Comprehensive Planning Process, a thorough evaluation of the types and locations of agricultural uses and their contribution to the local economy and quality of life, was prepared by the Agriculture Subcommittee, and the Chatham Agricultural Partnership (CAP). The first step in this evaluation was the identification of all of the agricultural uses in the town. Beginning with the property class information contained in the GIS database, farm class parcels were mapped. This map was then used in a number of public events and committee meetings to further identify farmland that is owned by, or leased to a farmer, and is in active agricultural use. One of the committee members also reviewed the data, and added a number of horse farms that were then added to the database. The result was a complete inventory of agricultural uses in Chatham.

The second step in the process was the prioritization of the identified agricultural uses. Knowing that funds and human resources are limited, some kind of ranking system needs to be employed to ensure that those farms that are protected or preserved have the most positive impact in advancing the goals outlined in Chatham's comprehensive plan.

Land Evaluation and Site Assessment (LESA) for Chatham

Land Evaluation and Site Assessment, also referred to as LESA, is a tool to help citizens and local officials to prioritize those lands that should be protected from conversion to nonagricultural uses. LESA was developed by the United States Natural Resources Conservation Service, and is based on a technique developed in Orange County in 1971 (the first place it was used in the United States.) LESA has a long history of use in New York, and throughout the United States. It is basically a rating system designed with local conditions and needs in mind. It is a tool that can help local officials identify farmlands needing protection by taking into account soil quality and other factors that affect agricultural practices. LESA is an analytical tool. It is not a regulatory program. LESA's role in Chatham is to provide a systematic and objective procedure to rate and rank sites in order to help people make decisions on where to target farmland protection programs. A LESA system can be useful to answer questions such as what lands are most appropriate to designate for long-term continuation in agricultural uses, and which farms should be given the highest priority for purchase of development rights monies.

How LESA Works

LESA is a rating system. The LESA system combines soil quality factors with other factors that affect the importance of the site for continued agriculture. Soil quality factors are considered Land Evaluation Factors (LE). The other factors are considered Site Assessment Factors (SA). The SA factors include non-soil factors that measure enhancements to, or limitations to agricultural productivity or farm practices; factors that measure development pressure or land conversion; and factors that measure other public values such as protection of water resources.

The following SA factors were incorporated into Chatham's LESA system, in addition to the soil factors:

- Adjacent farmland
- Access to a Major Transportation Corridor
- Sensitive water features on the parcel
- Adjacent land that is already protected or preserved in some way
- Area of the parcel that is being actively used for farming

Funding Criteria

Most of the funding that is available for implementing PDR and other farmland protection programs comes from State and Federal programs. Both the State and Federal programs have established specific criteria for funding eligibility. These criteria have been incorporated into the LE and SA factors for Chatham. In this way, farmland in the town that is highly ranked by the LESA system will also be identified as meeting those important funding criteria.

State Funding Criteria

Priority is given for funding under the State program when:

- A) Viable agricultural land is preserved (viable is defined as "land highly suitable for agricultural production and which will continue to be economically feasible for such use if real property taxes, farm use restrictions, and speculative activities are limited to levels approximating those in commercial agricultural areas not influenced by the proximity of non-agricultural development". Viability also addresses other factors principally about the property such as quality of soil resources, percent of total farm available for agricultural production, number of acres to be protected, level of demonstrated farm management, etc.)
- B) Locations that are facing significant development pressure; and
- C) Locations that serve as a buffer for a significant natural public resource containing important ecosystem or habitat characteristics.

Consideration is also given to:

- 1) The number of acres that will be protected;
- 2) The quality of the soil resources involved;
- 3) The percentage of the total farm acreage available for agricultural production;
- 4) The extent to which the property is bordered by or proximity to other farms which are already protected by a conservation easement or which might reasonably be expected to enter into a farmland preservation agreement in the future;
- 5) The level of farm management that is demonstrated by the current landowner;
- 6) The likelihood of the property's succession as a farm if the present ownership changes.
- 7) Proximity to markets and processors.
- 8) Proximity to vendors providing supplies and services available.
- 9) The level of local partners' (both public and private) commitment to farmland protection (e.g., these and other activities would be relevant: implementation of actions contained in local farmland protection plans; total local public and private expenditures on Purchase of Development Rights projects; number and acreage of permanent conservation easements on local viable agricultural land; all agricultural districts have been reviewed on or before their respective anniversary date, etc.).

Federal Program Eligibility

In order to be eligible for federal funding for conservation easements, the property must have:

- A) Prime, unique, statewide, or locally important soil or contain historical or archaeological resources. Farms must contain at least 50% of prime, unique, statewide, or locally important soils. Eligible historical or archaeological parcels must be on a farm listed on the National Register of Historic Places, or formally determined eligible for listing by the State Historic Preservation Officer, or formally designated by the State or Tribal Historic Preservation Officer.
- B) Cropland, grassland, pasture land, and incidental forestland and wetlands that are part of an agricultural operation. Farms must be in

compliance with federal wetland conservation and highly erodable land provisions.

How the calculations were performed and the final rankings were arrived at

Prime Farmland and State Significant Soils on the parcel

- One half of the total percentage of Prime Farmland Soils, or Soils of Statewide Significance found on the property was used as the score

Amount of adjacent farmland

- If over 70% of the land area within ½ mile of the property is also farmland, a score of 15 was given
- If between 33 and 70% of the land area within ½ mile of the property is also farmland, a score of 10 was given
- If between 10 and 33% of the land area within ½ mile of the property is also farmland, a score of 5 was given

Access to Major Transportation Corridor (I-90 or Taconic State Parkway)

- If the property is within 2 miles of an exit of the Taconic State Parkway, or Interstate 90, a score of 10 was given

Percent of sensitive water features on the parcel

- If over 25% of the property is in a flood plain, or within 100 feet of a lake, pond, stream, or wetland, a score of 5 was given
- If between 5 and 25% of the property is in a flood plain, or within 100 feet of a water body, stream, or wetland, a score of 2 was given

Amount of adjacent land that is protected or preserved in some way

- If over 20% of the land area within ½ mile is already protected or preserved in some way, a score of 10 was given
- If between 1 and 20% of the land area within ½ mile is already protected or preserved in some way, a score of 5 was given

Percent of the parcel that is being actively used for farming

- If the actively farmed area of the parcel is over 50 acres in size, a score of 10 was given
- If the actively farmed area of the parcel is between 25 and 50 acres, a score of 5 was given

The total score was added up for each property evaluated. The higher the score, the higher the priority would be for that property to be kept as farmland. See Map entitled “Ranking for Prioritizing Agriculture Protection Efforts”.

Appendix C: Municipal and School District Fiscal Impacts of Agricultural Protection

Town Growth Outlook and Purpose of Analysis

Although the Town has experienced little overall population growth since 1990, it has experienced an increase in new housing construction from 2000 to 2007. During this time frame other nearby towns also grew with some suburbanizing occurring in the towns of Kinderhook and Schodack.

2008 to 2020 projections show that the Town of Chatham (outside of village) could grow by 18 percent in population with the addition of 620 full-time residents and 298 new residential units. About 18 percent of these units are likely to be seasonal/second-home dwellings. However, these figures need to be tempered by the current national financial and housing crisis which will



dampen the town's development outlook.

If all 378 parcels prioritized during this planning process were to be permanently protected (through PDR/easement programs), the expected growth capacity could be expected to decrease by 110 residential units by 2020. This reduced development would be the result of a reduction in the availability of developable land.

Another scenario analyzed in this study was a partial protection of priority

lands. If the 176 highest rated priority parcels were permanently protected, there would be a reduction of expected residential growth by 50 units as the supply of developable land would be somewhat greater than if all the parcels were preserved. The purpose of this analysis is to evaluate the impact of preservation of these lands on town government and school district finances.

Town Government and School District Finances

From 1993 to 2006, the town's overall expenditures grew by 77 percent, with its operational expenditures growing by 121 percent. The town highways department accounts for the largest share of the Town budget (58 percent) and general government (clerks office, town council, justice, assessing, building and finance), accounts for 23 percent (2006 budget data).

Property taxes are the towns largest source of revenue and increased 111 percent from 1993-2006. Sales tax from the county is the second largest source of revenue, followed by state aid. Property values grew significantly during this period, and the tax rate increased by a modest 14 percent from 1993 to 2007. Most of the property taxes paid by town taxpayers go to support the three school districts servicing the town (Chatham, Kinderhook and New Lebanon Central School Districts). Only 8 percent of all property taxes are for general town purposes, as shown below:

Table 15. Distribution of Property Taxes - 2007

	Taxes (\$000)	Percent
Total	12,634	100%
County	3,326	26
Town	1,033	8
School Districts	8,017	63
Special Districts	257	2

Source: Municipal and School District Fiscal Impact Study

The Chatham School District covers most of the town's area (64 percent) followed by New Lebanon with 22 percent, and then Kinderhook with 13 percent. (East Greenbush has less than 1 percent and was omitted from our study). Per student property tax levy per student is highest for New Lebanon at \$12,634 followed by Chatham at \$11,133 and Kinderhook's is lowest at \$6,499, because of a larger share of its budget is covered by State aid.

Fiscal Impacts of Farmland Protection on Town Finances

Town fiscal impacts to the year 2020 are shown below.

Table 16. No Action versus Farmland Protection Scenario – Year 2020

	No Preservation Action Scenario (New Residential Units Estimated at 298 units)	Preserve all 378 Priority Parcels (New Residential Units Estimated at 188 units)	Preserve Only Highest Ranked 176 Parcels (New Residential Units Estimated at 248 units)
a. Expected Changes in Expenditures to Service New Units	+ \$289,540	+\$179,795	+ \$238,637
b. Changes in Revenues by type:			
1. Property Tax Gains From New Dwelling Units	+ \$244,110	+ \$154,603	+\$203,425
2. Losses in Potential Tax Revenue Due to Increase of Ag Assessments on Preserved Properties	None	- \$32,665	-\$17,363
3. Gains due to new Sales Tax	+\$102,660	+\$63,748	+\$84,611
c. Total Revenue Changes (b1+b2+b3)	+ \$347,770	+\$185,686	+\$270,673
NET FISCAL IMPACTS (c – a)	+\$58,230	+\$5,891	+32,036

Source: Municipal and School District Fiscal Impact Study

The No Action Scenario shows a very small positive effect on the town's finances with revenues exceeding expenditures by \$58,230. Translated to an average applied to a residential dwelling in the town (projected to the year 2020 in today's dollars), this results in a annual per dwellings savings of \$38.61.

The scenario where all priority farmlands are preserved also results in a positive net fiscal impact, but it is very small with revenues exceeding expenditures by about \$6,000. Translated to an average applied to a residential dwelling in the town (projected to the year 2020 in today's dollars), this result in an annual savings of almost \$4 per dwelling.

The scenario where only the highest ranked farmland parcels are preserved also shows a positive fiscal impact revenues being greater than expenditures by \$32,000. Translated to an average applied to a residential dwelling in the town [projected to the year 2020 in today's dollars] this results in an annual per dwellings savings of about \$20.

These results show all potential scenarios could result in a positive fiscal impact to the Town of Chatham, and that farmland preservation – even of significant acreage does not negatively impact town finances.

Fiscal Impacts of Farmland Protection on School Finances

Chatham Central School District

This district covers about two-thirds of the town's area. The net fiscal impacts are all positive for the no action, total farmland preservation or partial preservation scenarios as shown below.

Table 17: Net Fiscal Impacts to Chatham Central School District

	Projected Residential Units	Enrolled Students	Net Fiscal Impact
No Action Scenario	200	41	+\$438,797
Preserve All Parcels	100	20	+\$106,048
Preserve Only Priority Parcels	150	31	+\$247,858

Source: Municipal and School District Fiscal Impact Study

The no action scenario shows a large positive effect with revenues being greater than expenditures by \$438,797. Translated to an average applied to a current residential dwelling in the school district area [projected to the year 2020 in today's dollars], this results in an average annual per dwellings property tax savings of \$500. This amount could represent an 8 percent reduction to the average 2006 school tax bill per dwelling in the school district.

The full preservation scenario also shows a positive effect on the school district's finances with revenues being \$106,000 more than expenditures. Translated to an average applied to a residential dwelling in the school district area [projected to the year 2020 in today's dollars], this result in an annual cost savings of \$121 per dwelling.

Preservation of priority parcels (176 parcels) shows more of a significant

positive effect on the school district's finances with revenues being greater than expenditures by \$247,858. Translated to an average applied to a residential dwelling in the school district (projected to the year 2020 in today's dollars) this results in a annual per dwellings savings of almost \$282. This amount would represent a 4.5% reduction to the average 2006 school tax bill per dwelling in the school district.

The differences between net revenues between the no action scenario and the preservation scenarios reflects reduction in property tax gains from a reduction in projected housing units, and loss in revenue from the expansion in use of the agriculture assessment program under the preservation scenario which would be offset only partially by the reduction in local property tax levy needed to support a lower number of students projected under the preservation scenarios.

Kinderhook School District

This district covers 13 percent of the town's area and the net fiscal impacts are similarly all positive for the different scenarios as follows:

Table 18: Net Fiscal Impacts to Kinderhook School District

	Projected Residential Units	Enrolled Students	Net Fiscal Impact
No Action Scenario	45	9	+\$185,774
Preserve All Parcels	35	8	+\$97,336
Preserve Only Priority Parcels	45	9	+\$168,597

Source: Municipal and School District Fiscal Impact Study

This shows that for the Kinderhook school district the effects preservation of farmland, both in absolute and relative dollar terms has similar positive impacts on its finances.

New Lebanon School District

For this district, which covers 22 percent of the town's area, the net fiscal impacts are all positive for the *Base Scenario* and for the two options for the proposed Farmland Preservation Plan.

Table 19: Net Fiscal Impacts to New Lebanon School District

	Projected Residential Units	Enrolled Students	Net Fiscal Impact
No Action Scenario	51	6	+ \$180,679
Preserve All Parcels	51	6	+\$142,992
Preserve Only Priority Parcels	51	6	+\$172,591

Source: Municipal and School District Fiscal Impact Study

The fiscal impact to the New Lebanon School district is similar to both Chatham and Kinderhook. The no action scenario and both farmland preservation scenarios result in positive impacts on the finances of the district.

Summary: The Fiscal Impact Analysis indicates that there would be no negative impacts to the finances of either the Town of Chatham or the three school districts that serve Town students should some or all of Chatham's farmland be preserved. Thus, this offers reassurance that such a program would not result in negative fiscal impacts, which is often an argument used to oppose such programs.



Appendix D: Recommended Zoning Amendments

The town zoning code is one of the most effective tools for action on the local level to protect agriculture and help sustain a viable agricultural economy. This planning process included an “audit” of the town zoning code, Section 180 of the Town of Chatham Code to identify additions or changes that will remove apparent barriers to farm operations or offer opportunities to enhance farm viability. Areas of the code identified for changes are itemized below, often with proposed zoning language (in italics).

§180-1. Purpose. Add the following sentence to highlight the importance of agriculture as the dominant land use in Chatham:

A further purpose is to sustain a viable agricultural economy and protect farmland.

§180-4. Definitions. Add definitions to address a wider variety of agricultural uses that should be allowed in Chatham, including the following.

Agricultural Data Statement

Agri-tourism

Bed and Breakfast Inn

Commercial Horse Boarding Operation (Stable)

Farm Operation

Farmland

Roadside stand

Forestry

Nursery & Greenhouse

Public Outdoor Recreation

Riding Academy

Private Stable

Veterinary Office

Kennel

Brewery or Distillery

Winery

The Definitions section of the code should meet the requirements for land located in an agriculture district, using guidelines set by the New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets. The definition of a farm operation itself should be drafted to reflect the town’s existing agricultural base as well as its vision for agriculture in the future, and it should be as broad as possible to encourage a diversity of income producing opportunities. The New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets has established its own definition for a farm operation, which can be consulted when formulating one for Chatham.¹¹:

¹¹ Section 301(11) of the Agriculture and Markets Law defines “Farm Operation” as the “land and on-farm buildings, equipment, manure processing and handling facilities, and practices which contribute to the production, preparation and marketing of crops, livestock and livestock products as a commercial enterprise.” Section 301(2)

District Uses: The use schedule should permit a wide range of farming and farm-related businesses, such as bed and breakfasts, “U-picks,” agri-tourism, etc. Accessory uses such as veterinarians, equipment and supply dealers, feed milling, etc. should be allowed. Non-farm businesses compatible with farming should also be permitted as long as they meet the following standards:

- The use will be of a nature, intensity, scope, size, appearance, type and quantity that conforms to the existing structures;
- New commercial buildings will be located in a way that does not interfere with or displace current farm uses, and that minimizes significant adverse impact on future farming operations and expansion of agricultural uses. Whenever possible, new buildings shall be placed on or adjacent to an existing building footprint.
- The business will be conducted primarily by persons who reside on the farm, are family members, or farm employees.
- The non-farm use is subordinate to the farm operations.
- The proposed use and structures are not so much more valuable than the existing structures so as to make future sale of the property to a farmer unlikely.

Adaptive reuse of existing farm structures, for example as multi-unit dwellings, mixed-use dwellings, or accessory uses, should be permitted by special use permit and subject to Rural Siting Guidelines.

In addition to adding the specific permitted uses listed below, the existing categories of uses should be revised to be specific and clear using the expanded list of definitions.

§180-10. H-1 Hamlet One. Add the following as permitted uses with Special Permits to provide additional income producing sources for farms.

Bed and Breakfast Inn
Roadside stand (See §180-38 (C))

§180-11. H-2 Hamlet Two. Add the following as permitted uses with Special Permits:

Bed and Breakfast Inn
Roadside stand (See §180-38 (C))

§180-12. RL-1 Rural Lands One. Replace the existing list of permitted and specially permitted uses with the following :

Permitted Uses
Accessory building

Permitted Uses With Special Permits
Multi-family dwelling

defines “crops, livestock and livestock products” broadly, including field crops, fruits, vegetables, horticultural specialties, livestock and livestock products including furs, maple sap, Christmas trees, aquaculture and woody biomass.

Agricultural use
Nursery and Greenhouse
Farm or Residential Pond
Roadside stand (See §180-38 (C))
Home occupations
Private swimming pool with fence
Recreation court
Private stable
Farm operation
Commercial Horse Boarding
Operation (see §180-XXX)
Riding Academy (See §180-XXX)
Agri-tourism
Two-family dwelling
Single family dwelling

Animal hospital
Group home
Bed and Breakfast Inn
Small nonprofit recreation facility
Public buildings
Travel trailer camps
Water storage facility
Forestry
Cemetery
Continuing Care Retirement Community
Campground
House of Worship
Museum, art gallery, performing arts center
Public Outdoor Recreation

§180-13. RL-2 Rural Lands Two. Replace the existing zoning list of permitted and specially permitted uses with the following:

Permitted Uses

Single family dwelling
Two family dwelling
Agricultural use
Farm operation
Nursery and greenhouse
Farm or residential pond
Home occupation
Private swimming pool with fence
Accessory building
Recreational court
Commercial Horse Boarding
Operation (See §180-XXX)
Riding academy (See §180-XXX)
Private stable
Roadside stand (See §180-38 (C))

Permitted Uses With Special Permits

Multi-family dwelling
Group home
Continuing Care Retirement Community
Small nonprofit recreational area
Water storage facility
Public building
Public outdoor recreation
Campground
Museum, art gallery, performing arts center
House of worship
Cemetery
Bed and Breakfast Inn

§180-14. RL-3 Rural Lands Three. Replace the existing zoning list of permitted and specially permitted uses with the following:

Permitted Uses

Permitted Uses With Special Permits

Single family dwelling
Two family dwelling
Agricultural use
Farm operation
Nursery and greenhouse
Farm or residential pond
Home occupation
Private swimming pool with fence
Accessory building
Private stable
Commercial Horse Boarding
Operation (See §180-XXX)
Riding academy (See §180-XXX)

Continuing Care Retirement Community
Small nonprofit recreational area
Water storage facility
Public building
House of worship
Hospital or clinic
Mobile Home Park
Nursing and convalescent home
Planned business development
Roadside stand (See §180-38 (C))

§180-17. Site Plan Review. The code currently exempts “farm buildings” from site plan review without defining these structures. Clarify the assessment for agriculture as follows:

“...The construction of a residential single or two-family dwelling and construction of structures associated with a farm operation, commercial horse boarding operation, and riding academy shall not be covered by this section.”

§180-26. Height regulations. This section sets the height limit for all new uses at 35 feet “except for farming purposes”. Farming purposes is not defined. Clarify this exception for agricultural structures as follows:

“Except for agricultural uses, and structures associated with a farm operation, commercial horse boarding operation, or riding academy, in all districts....”

§180-32. Signs. This section sets standards and requirements for signs. Part G. regarding off-site signs should be revised to permit them for farm businesses. Temporary/seasonal signs should be permitted without site plan review.

§180-36. Agricultural Uses. Subsection (A) of this section requires that farm buildings shall not be erected within 100 feet of a neighboring property. This requirement would unnecessarily restrict agricultural uses where neighboring properties consist of vacant land, farmland or other non-residential uses. Modify this section as follows:

A. Farm buildings, other than a dwelling, shall not be erected within 100 feet of an adjacent residential property.

§180-53. Matter accompanying application for permits.

Add a new section to incorporate the NYS Agriculture and Markets Law requirements for agricultural data statements as follows:

- C. (1) Any application requiring a special use permit, site plan approval, use variance or subdivision approval shall be accompanied by an Agricultural Data Statement if the proposed project occurs on property within a New York State certified agricultural district containing a farm operation or on property with boundaries within 500 feet of a farm operation located within an agricultural district.*
- (2) The appropriate reviewing board shall mail a written notice containing a description of the proposed project and its location to owners of land as identified by the applicant in the Agricultural Data Statement. The costs associated with such mailing shall be borne by the applicant.*
- (3) The reviewing board shall also refer all applications requiring an Agricultural Data Statement to the Columbia County Planning Board as required by sections 239-m and 239-n of the General Municipal Law.*
- (4) The reviewing board must evaluate and consider the Agricultural Data Statement to determine the possible impacts the proposed project may have on the functioning of farm operations within the subject agricultural district. In determining the possible impacts of the proposed project, the reviewing board should consider:*
- a) Whether the proposed land use conflicts with farming activities.*
 - b) Whether the new use negatively impacts a farmer's ability to use existing right-of-ways or farm roads needed to access fields.*
 - c) Whether the new use affects land values and rental rates for agriculture?*
 - d) Whether any new proposed public roads will accommodate agricultural equipment and traffic.*
 - e) Whether the new use will be a non-farm growth-inducing activity.*
 - f) Whether the new use will remove significant amount of land from being available for farming?*

§180-19. Reserved. Use this reserved section to add new rural siting standards to promote compatibility when non-farm development is planned in or near farms. Alternatively, this could be added into the subdivision regulations.

- A. All subdivisions within the RL-1 and RL-2 Districts shall be platted to preserve the maximum amount of prime and statewide important farmland soils for continued agricultural use. During subdivision review, and insofar as practicable, building envelopes shall be identified and located in a manner to protect the maximum amount*

of prime and statewide important farmland soils as follows:

- (1) On the least fertile soils for agricultural uses and in a manner which permits access to active agricultural land. Structures shall, to the maximum extent practicable, avoid being placed on lands defined by the Columbia County Soil Survey as being Prime Farmlands, or Soils of Statewide Importance.*
- (2) Within any woodland contained within the parcel, or along the far edges of open fields adjacent to any woodland, so as to reduce impact on agricultural operations and to enable new construction to be visually absorbed by natural landscape features;*
- (3) To maintain the largest amount of contiguous acreage for agricultural use;*
- (4) Within woodlands, or along the far edges of open agricultural fields adjacent to any woodland so as to reduce encroachment on agricultural soils and areas; and*
- (5) All new non-farm development shall buffer itself from existing agricultural uses. It shall be the responsibility of a non-farm applicant, subject to approval by the Planning Board or the Zoning Board of Appeals, as the case may be, to provide an effective buffer that will reasonably distance and protect adjacent non-farm and residential living areas from agricultural procedures. Buffers adjacent to actively farmed land shall be established to reduce the exposure of non-farm uses to odors, noise, and other potential nuisances associated with the agricultural operation and to protect the agricultural operation from potential complaints related to same. Such buffers may consist of vegetative screening, woodlands, vegetated berms, or natural topographic features and shall be no less than one hundred (100) feet in width. Buffers may be required to be larger depending upon the type of agriculture or farm use adjacent to the non-farm use, the topography and the proposed design and planting of such buffer.*
- (6) Wherever feasible, retain and reuse existing old farm roads and lanes rather than constructing new roads or driveways.*
- (7) Locate new development so that the flow of water to farm properties is not impeded, and in ways that are compatible with existing field drainage patterns.*

Appendix E. Agricultural Data Statement and Agricultural Disclosure Notice

Agricultural Data Statement

According to the New York State Agricultural Districts Law (Article 25-aa, Section 305-a), "Agricultural data statement" means an identification of farm operations within an agricultural district located within five hundred feet of the boundary of property upon which an action requiring municipal review and approval by the planning board, zoning board of appeals, town board, or village board of trustees pursuant to article sixteen of the town law or article seven of the village law is proposed, as provided in section three hundred five-a of this article.

As per Section 305-a and NYS Town Law 283-a, any application for a special use permit, site plan approval, use variance, or subdivision approval requiring municipal review and approval by a planning board, zoning board of appeals, or town board that would occur on property within an agricultural district containing a farm operation or on property with boundaries within five hundred feet of a farm operation located in an agricultural district, shall include an agricultural data statement. The planning board, zoning board of appeals, or town board shall evaluate and consider the agricultural data statement in its review of the possible impacts of the proposed project upon the functioning of farm operations within such agricultural district. The information required by an agricultural data statement may be included as part of any other application form required by local law, ordinance or regulation.

When the planning board, zoning board of appeals, or town board receives an application with an agricultural data statement, they must mail a written notice of such application to the owners of land as identified by the applicant in the agricultural data statement. Such 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 said project. The cost of mailing said notice shall be borne by the applicant. The agricultural data statement shall include the following information: the name and address of the applicant; a description of the proposed project and its location; the name and address of any owner of land within the agricultural district, which land contains farm operations and is located within five hundred feet of the boundary of the property upon which the project is proposed; and a tax map or other map showing the site of the proposed project relative to the location of farm operations identified in the agricultural data statement.

The board reviewing the request must mail a description of the proposed project and its location to all owners of land as identified in the Agricultural Data Statement. The cost of that mailing can be borne by the applicant. Further, the Town must refer all applications that require an agricultural data statement to the County Planning Board as required by Sections 239-m and 239-n of the NYS General Municipal Law.

The following is an agricultural data statement for use by the Town of Chatham:

Agricultural Data Statement

Instructions: This form must be completed for any application for a special use permit, site plan approval, use variance or a subdivision approval requiring municipal review that would occur on property within 500 feet of a farm operation located in a NYS Ag and Markets certified Agricultural District. County Planning Board review is also required. A copy of this Agricultural Data Statement must be submitted along with the referral to the Columbia County Planning Department.

1. Name and Address of Applicant: _____

2. Type of application (Check one or more):

- ☐ Special Use Permit ☐ Site Plan Approval ☐ Use Variance
☐ Subdivision approval

3. Description of proposed project to include (1) size of parcel or acreage to be acquired and tax map identification number of tax parcel(s) involved; (2) the type of action (single-family dwelling or subdivision, multi-family development, apartment, commercial or industrial, school, non-residential use, etc., and (3) project density (Please provide this information on the reverse side of this application and attach additional description as necessary).

4. Is this parcel within an Agricultural District? ☐ Yes ☐ No

5. If Yes, what is the Agricultural District Number? _____

6. Is this parcel actively farmed? ☐ Yes ☐ No

7. List all farm operations within 500 feet of your parcel. Attach additional sheets if necessary.

- A. Name: _____
Address and Telephone #: _____
Type of Farm: _____
Is this parcel actively farmed? ☐ Yes ☐ No
- B. Name: _____
Address and Telephone #: _____
Type of Farm: _____
Is this parcel actively farmed? ☐ Yes ☐ No
- C. Name: _____
Address and Telephone #: _____
Type of Farm: _____
Is this parcel actively farmed? ☐ Yes ☐ No
- D. Name: _____
Address and Telephone #: _____
Type of Farm: _____
Is this parcel actively farmed? ☐ Yes ☐ No

8. Signature of Applicant:_____

9. Reviewed by:_____ Date:_____

Agricultural Disclosure Notice

This is a requirement of the Agriculture and Markets Law 25-aa (§ 310) to inform property owners about farming practices before they purchase property in an agricultural district. The requirements are:

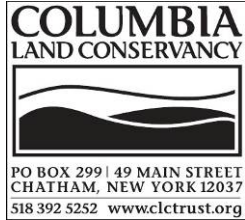
1. When any purchase and sale contract is presented for the sale, purchase, or exchange of real property located partially or wholly within an agricultural district established pursuant to Article 25-aa, the prospective grantor shall present to the prospective grantee a disclosure notice which states the following:

"It is the policy of this state and this community to conserve, protect and encourage the development and improvement of agricultural land for the production of food, and other products, and also for its natural and ecological value. This disclosure notice is to inform prospective residents that the property they are about to acquire lies partially or wholly within an agricultural district and that farming activities occur within the district. Such farming activities may include, but not be limited to, activities that cause noise, dust and odors. Prospective residents are also informed that the location of property within an agricultural district may impact the ability to access water and/or sewer services for such property under certain circumstances. Prospective purchasers are urged to contact the New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets to obtain additional information or clarification regarding their rights and obligations under article 25-AA of the Agriculture and Markets Law."

2. The disclosure notice shall be signed by both the prospective grantor and grantee prior to the sale, purchase or exchange of such real property. And the receipt of such disclosure notice shall be recorded on a property transfer report form prescribed by the state board of real property services as provided for in section three hundred thirty-three of the real property law.

Appendix F: Additional Columbia County Farm Statistics

Appendix G: Columbia Land Conservancy Recommendations for Use of the Town of Chatham's Proposed Agricultural Protection Funds



****** The Columbia Land Conservancy believes that the first priority for agricultural protection funds made available to the Town of Chatham should be to serve as leverage for New York State Purchase of Development Rights (PDR) farmland protection grants awarded through the New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets (NYSDAM), of which the Town of Chatham would be the applicant. We recommend that if possible the first \$250,000 available per year be available for use towards the required 25% local match for these State PDR grants. If additional funding can be made available on an annual or bi-annual basis for farmland protection it should then be used for direct PDR projects. If there are no State grant awardees in a given year, then we recommend the available funds be used for direct PDR projects.

Recommendations for PDR Match Funds

- Providing the 25% local match that is required of projects with farms that are awarded NYSDAM PDR funds is perhaps the most important role that the proposed Chatham CPA funds can play towards the protection of agriculture in Chatham. Such match funds would significantly leverage grant awards from the State program and thus enable more farms to be protected.
- Approximately \$250,000 per year minimum should be made available as the local match, if possible. On average, depending on the value of a farm's development rights, this may provide the match for approximately one to three farms per year.
- The criteria for matching funds awarded should be based on those farms that are awarded grants through the State program, and therefore which have satisfied the State's criteria. See www.agmkt.state.ny.us/RFPS.htm for the most updated State criteria.
- If more than one farm is awarded a State PDR grant in a given year and both (or all) are awarded funds in the same grant round, the allocation should be split between the awarded farms. Allocations per farm should be based on an equal percentage of total project costs as outlined in the State grant budget form.
- Note the State Program currently defines "farm" as a farm operation; e.g. this can be one parcel owned by the farmer, and a second parcel leased by that same farmer. Chatham criteria in this regard should mimic the State

criteria with each grant round [criteria and definition of a “farm” can change in any given year].

- Currently the timeline for the State program is as follows: RFPs generally released in June, applications due in early-mid September, and announcements made in late December. The actual disbursement of Chatham agricultural funds would likely be approximately two years after the award announcement, given the average time necessary to complete the State grant implementation process.
- Decisions regarding match funds to be awarded should be made once per year, after State grant awards have been announced. Given the current State timeline of announcing awards in late December, February might be a good time for applications for funding requests from the Town of Chatham to be due. Award announcements from the Town of Chatham should take a maximum of two months following application submittal.
- It will be important to ensure that the Town can award funds quickly so as not to delay the State grant process (which can take up to two years without any unforeseen delays).
- The Columbia Land Conservancy would be willing to draft an application form for those farms seeking funding from the Town of Chatham towards the required 25% match for State applications.

Recommendations for Direct PDR Projects—Selection and Process

- If funding is available [i.e. beyond the \$250,000 available towards matching funds in any given year], the Columbia Land Conservancy recommends one direct PDR grant round per year, or if sufficient funding is unavailable one round every two years.
- Announcements for applications should indicate the amount of funding available for direct PDR projects in any given year.
- Applicants should plan their proposed PDR project in collaboration with the Columbia Land Conservancy, which would be the likely holder of the ultimate conservation easement. The Conservancy can assist farmers with the grant application process.
- Selection criteria for which farms are most competitive for direct PDR funding should be based on the pre-established LESA rating system for Chatham farms and the associated “Town of Chatham’s Ranking Map for Prioritizing Agriculture Protection Efforts Draft”, as well as additional criteria as outlined below:
 - Does the farm have a high likelihood of continuing as a farm (either within the family or with an alternative farmer/farming use)?
 - Will the funds assist the farm with its long-term viability?
 - Does the farm serve a particularly unique or important function in the community? (biological, economic, social, historic, or other)

- The Columbia Land Conservancy would be willing to create a draft application form for farms applying for direct PDR through the Town.
- Awards should be made ideally so as to fully fund one farm rather than partially funding several farms. This should enable projects to be completed with a higher probability and with greater ease.
- If the total dollar amount needed for a PDR project exceeds the amount available, applicants should have the option of working with the community to raise the additional funds, or of closing the project in a bargain sale arrangement.
- Award amounts should include total project costs such as a survey, title work, attorneys fees, Conservancy staff time, closing fees, etc.

Appendix H: Maps

The following maps are referenced as part of this plan:

1. Agriculture
2. Property Class
3. Farmland
4. Environmental Constraints
5. Potential Buildout Results – Buildout Without Environmental Constraints Included
6. Aerial Photo 2004
7. Ag Class Parcels
8. Protected Lands
9. Identified Farmland
10. Agricultural Prioritization – All Categories
11. Agricultural Prioritization – Two Categories
12. Potential New Residences on Priority Farmland from Comprehensive Plan Buildout
13. Existing Zoning
14. Existing Zoning Compared to Priority Agricultural Parcels

Appendix I: Comprehensive Plan Goals

The following agriculturally-related goals are established in the Town of Chatham Comprehensive Plan:

Goal 1. Chatham nurtures and sustains a viable agricultural economy. In order to accomplish this, Chatham has set a policy of achieving a “zero net loss” of active farmland in Town. This goal can be reached by maintaining the Chatham Agricultural Partnership (CAP), an advisory board that will facilitate beneficial relationships between farmers and landowners, and will promote regional farming agenda, work with New York State to apply agricultural assessments to both land and buildings when the land is being farmed, leverage the capabilities of local organizations, and encourage town assessors to seek special training about the assessment of farm structures to ensure that farm building assessments are fair and accurate. Together with CAP, the Town will investigate and consider establishing additional tax incentive programs for farms at the local and regional levels, implement land use management policies that support the economic viability of farm operations, and develop and adopt a right-to-farm law to provide legal protection for farmers.

Goal 2. Chatham supports and sustains a system of locally grown, healthy foods. The Town will accomplish this goal by supporting the development of the infrastructure necessary to provide a sustainable, local healthy food system and to help form partnerships that enhance the ability of Chatham farmers to store, package, market and distribute local products more effectively.

Goal 3. Chatham is a “farm friendly” town. To accomplish this, the Town needs to establish an agricultural identity, work to increase understanding among the various town and planning boards on the range of farmland protection techniques that are available for their use, and work to use the New York State Agricultural District designation to protect farms and farming.

Goal 4. Community awareness of the importance of agriculture in Chatham is promoted and this will be accomplished through ongoing community education and awareness programs outlined in the Plan.

Goal 5. By protecting farmland, Chatham preserves property values, stabilizes property taxes, and maintains the attractiveness and unique rural character of the community. The Town shall preserve as much of the town’s remaining active farmland as possible through a multi-pronged

strategy. This includes creation of a long-range Community Preservation Plan; creation of a Purchase/Lease of Development Rights Program to preserve important farmland for the future (funded through Community Preservation Act); amending Chapter 156 of the Chatham code to allow for placement of an agricultural member on the Town Planning Board; requiring new multi-house residential development to provide their own buffer zone and/or landscape plantings for screening when the property abuts active farmland; and allowing adaptive reuse of existing farm structures for new uses that support agricultural uses. Other land use related strategies outlined in the rural character and natural resources sections will also benefit protection of farms and farmland.