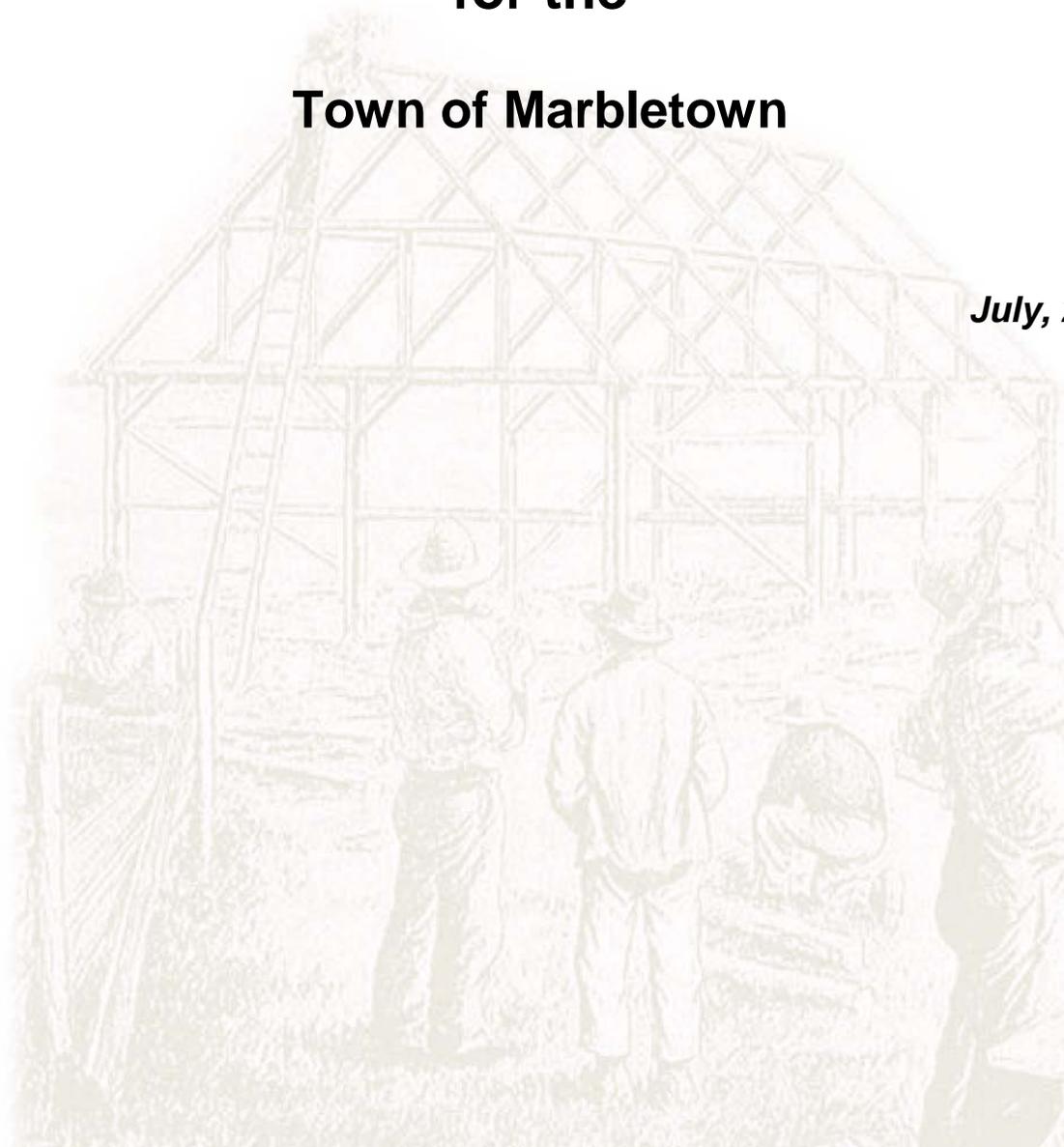




Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan for the Town of Marbletown

July, 2010



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

INTRODUCTION

This project has two purposes: 1) to analyze and understand the foundations of the agricultural economy in the Town of Marbletown (“the Town”) and 2) to create an Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan that not only addresses a suite of issues facing farmers and citizens in the Town today, but also sets the stage for agricultural growth in the future.

The project output encourages long-term policy formation in support of agriculture, while providing a specific short-term framework to guide local programs regarding specific agricultural economic development and land use initiatives. The result of the process is a series of seven recommendations for action relative to agricultural business and land use conditions.

Updating of the Plan will be necessary to keep the Plan relevant to both the community and the agricultural industry. Updates will be driven by the Plan’s vision to keep agriculture a viable element of both the local economy and the local landscape.

Agricultural Protection Vision

*To enhance the economic viability of Marbletown’s working lands
in a manner consistent with community character and open space needs.*

CURRENT CONDITIONS

As of August 2009, there are 5,423 acres on 239 parcels classified as Agricultural Districts or with agricultural tax exemption. These agricultural lands account for a wide variation in crop and livestock production, all of which contribute to a diverse, but vibrant local agricultural economy.

The value of farmland to Marbletown is anchored to its residents’ need for maintaining the Town’s’ natural endowments, local history, open space, and ecosystem.¹ Thus, agriculture is a sector that receives much support. The protection of farmland is consistent with the residents’ vision for the Town. Emphasis is placed upon particular locations, such as the Route 209 valleys. Other priority areas include the Rondout and Esopus Creeks, Shawangunks woodlands, Catskill foothills, and the various floodplains and wetlands interwoven with the open spaces. These areas generally make up the agricultural heritage and natural features of the Town.

Preserving the Town’s agricultural heritage coincides with managing the growth that is necessary to support the Town. Between 1990 and 2000, Marbletown’s population grew nearly eleven percent, putting it in the mid-tier of growth communities in Ulster County. From 2000 to 2007, Marbletown’s population grew an additional three percent, reaching a population of 6,039 individuals. Population growth, though modest, is expected to lead to increased housing demand, which could lead to affordability gaps, i.e., an excess of

¹ Marbletown New York Town Plan, 2005.

demand over supply, and upward pressure on housing prices. The implication for farm and forest operations is that new neighbors are less likely to be familiar with farm operations and their daily operating characteristics.

The Town's zoning policies reflect its intent to protect rural areas and guide growth toward hamlets. These policies are guided by the State of New York's legislative enactments, which also support open space and provide means to conserve, protect, and encourage the preservation of agricultural lands and other natural and ecological resources.²

Marbletown's most significant effort to support agriculture and open space is represented in the Marbletown Preservation and Investment Commission. This organization is the outgrowth of the Town Board's authorization, through referendum, of \$2 million for the acquisition of open spaces, areas, and development rights. An initial report on programs and procedures related to this bond initiative is due in 2010.

Looking to the future, there are many factors that will influence the direction of agriculture in Marbletown, some of which can be supported through the Farmland Protection Plan. Many of these factors are incorporated within the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) Matrix (see page eight) and include some of the following highlights:

- Marbletown hosts a robust agricultural community with strong direct marketing infrastructure and interest in expanding value-added opportunity.
- Limits on the availability of agricultural land and growing regional development pressure reduce the availability, and increase the cost, of expanding agricultural operations.
- Farmers have a local and regional history of cooperation and mutual support that is represented in organizations such as the Rondout Valley Growers Association.
- Excellent opportunities to develop local food distribution and marketing projects exist, both locally and regionally.
- Marbletown's citizens support active agriculture land preservation by authorizing a \$2 million dollar bond for purchasing conservation easements.

² State of New York General Municipal Law § 247 and Environmental Conservation Law § 49-0301.

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

The recommendations in this report are designed to enhance public and private sector efforts to support and sustain agriculture over the coming decades by treating agriculture as a critical element of Marbletown's economic backbone and as a key land use. Successful implementation of these recommendations will involve a multidisciplinary effort supported by the public sector, private industry, and agricultural operations. The necessary partnerships will be driven by the specific implementation needs of each recommendation. Funding support for each respective recommendation must also be built independently on the merits of the recommendation and evidenced needs.

Key elements of the recommendations are as follows.

1. **Enhance Town of Marbletown Agricultural Land Protection Program** by expanding landowner financing options, exploring new funding vehicles, and educating landowners on the locally relevant tools and techniques of land conservation.
2. **Integrate Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan findings within core marketing, tourism, and economic development activities** to expand the job and wealth creation potential of agriculture, forest products, and related industries.
3. **Support County efforts to expand farmland protection outreach and education** to better integrate the general community with agricultural and forest products industries.
4. **Co-create a new farmer development program in conjunction with neighboring towns** to ensure a renewing source of farm operators in the future. Such a program would incorporate a formal curriculum, as well as an internship and mentor program.
5. **Integrate the Marbletown Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan into agency work plans** to increase the effectiveness of its implementation and to promote agriculturally friendly policies.
6. **Support an update to the Ulster County Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan** that includes critical elements of the Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan for the Town of Marbletown.
7. **Explore enhancements to New York State Right-to-Farm protections** to reduce the burden of neighbor conflicts, while increasing the understanding of agriculture in the community.



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This project was funded by the New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets. The statements, findings, conclusions, and recommendations are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect those of the Town of Marbletown Government or other organizations mentioned in this report. Staff involved in the project include:

Town Project Leader

Brooke Pickering-Cole
Town Supervisor

Michael Warren
Town Board

Study Team Leader

J. Philip Gottwals

Study Team Members

Daniel Drigatti, ACDS, LLC
Reuben Hermoso, PhD., ACDS, LLC

The researchers and authors of the report owe a debt of gratitude to the many organizations and individuals that participated in interviews and focus groups for this project.

CONTENTS

A. Introduction..... 1
B. Methodology..... 2
C. Farmland and Agricultural Resources 3
D. Value of Farmland to the Community..... 6
E. Extent of Development Pressure on Farmland..... 6
F. Overview of Existing Plans, Programs, and Regulations..... 10
G. Issues and Opportunities 15
H. Farmland Proposed for Protection..... 17
I. Evaluation of Potential Agricultural Preservation Techniques..... 18
J. Strategies and Recommendations 21
K. Implementing the Plan..... 32

APPENDICES

- Appendix A: Town of Marbletown Farm Survey Results
- Appendix B: Demographic and Social Data
- Appendix C: Zoning Code Summary and Town Maps
- Appendix D: Prioritizing Agricultural Lands in Marbletown
- Appendix E: Farmland Protection and Planning Tools
- Appendix F: Installment Purchase Agreement Fact Sheet
- Appendix G: Agricultural Term Easements
- Appendix H: Massachusetts Farm Viability Program Summary
- Appendix I: Farmland Protection Outreach Samples

Town of Marbletown Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan

A. Introduction

Marbletown's character is defined by the scenic landscape, rich farm soils and mountain views that attracted its early settlers. These attributes remain today, along with many acres of active farmland and the seven historic hamlets that provide focal points for our rural neighborhoods.

Marbletown's current population of approximately 5,900 is made up of a mix of long time local families, more recently arrived full-time residents and weekend homeowners from the New York Metropolitan area. The hamlets of Stone Ridge and High Falls are the two commercial centers, providing services, shopping, and recreation for this diverse community.

Representing the diverse interests of the Town's citizens through active community engagement has allowed the Town Government of Marbletown to balance the often conflicting needs of growth and development with the demand to protect community character and quality of life. The balance achieved in Marbletown has come as the result of in-depth public processes which have proven effective in developing community visions for projects as diverse as farmland protection, zoning, capital infrastructure, programs, and financial planning. By example, a professional survey conducted in 1997 by the Town provided a major source of information and was an important springboard for action in subsequent years. During the same period, design guidelines were put in place for the business districts in the Town.

Community involvement became institutionalized with the creation of the Community Development Committee and the Planning and Zoning Committee. These committees are the vehicles through which new projects are vetted and developed and they have used town-wide visioning exercises to identify projects, prioritize actions, and select implementation options. Projects selected for implementation through these committees include: the creation of the Marbletown Community Center, a renewed focus on the Rail Trail, the revitalization of the Environmental Conservation Commission and various land preservation efforts, and the formation of a Marbletown Arts Association.

The overarching community goals for the Town of Marbletown are set by the Marbletown's Comprehensive Plan. The Comprehensive Plan (also referred to as the "Town Plan") is the primary policy guidance tool used by the Town and its direction and intent are driven by a common vision for the future of the Town. The vision for the future of Marbletown is:

"...one in which we will conserve open space, preserve our farmland and promote sound and responsible development through proactive planning."

At the same time, the Town Plan places special emphasis on the importance of preserving the qualities that make Marbletown unique and special:

"...the rural character and small town atmosphere of our community...(we) embrace sound planning as a tool to balance growth and conservation."

With the new Town Plan completed, the Town launched a succession of key initiatives designed to answer the call for the protection of cherished natural resources, viewsheds, and farmland. Programs and plans put in place since 2005 include:

- Conservation Subdivision Regulations adopted in 2006
- The passing of a referendum to authorize the borrowing of up to two million dollars for municipal Purchase of Development Rights (PDR) and the establishment of the Marbletown Preservation and Investment Commission to oversee the PDR program.
- The 2008 adoption of the Marbletown Natural Heritage Plan.
- The creation of a Farmland Protection Plan for the Town (2010).

In recognition of the value of its cultural history, the Town Board passed an Architectural Heritage Law in 2007 which allows for the bestowing of local landmark status upon significant historic structures, thereby affording them special protection against irreparable alteration and demolition.

Just as the Town Plan speaks to the importance of preservation, so does it encourage the Town to protect its economic base and to allow for growth that is compatible with its existing character and quality of life.

B. Methodology

The Town of Marbletown developed an Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan to assess the Town's farmland and agricultural resources, identify issues and opportunities for agricultural and farmland protection, formulate strategies and recommendations for protection, and provide guidance for implementation.

Quantitative and qualitative methods were applied in the different components that make up this Plan. Quantitative methods include the collection and analysis of acreage data for agricultural districts and agricultural use. Qualitative methods include the administration of a double iteration survey in the spring of 2009 to measure land ownership per farm, land use, and farming practices. The survey used a purposive sampling of local farmers to obtain information from sources who are most familiar with and knowledgeable about the Town's agricultural sector. These methods guided the Plan's findings and helped shape the recommendations and implementation strategies.

C. Farmland and Agricultural Resources

Marbletown's natural terrain is characterized by steep slopes, wetlands, major streams, and floodplains. The diverse topography varies from the rugged slopes of the Shawangunk Mountains in the south and the rolling land of the Catskill Mountains in the west to the flat lands along the Rondout Creek and Esopus Creek.

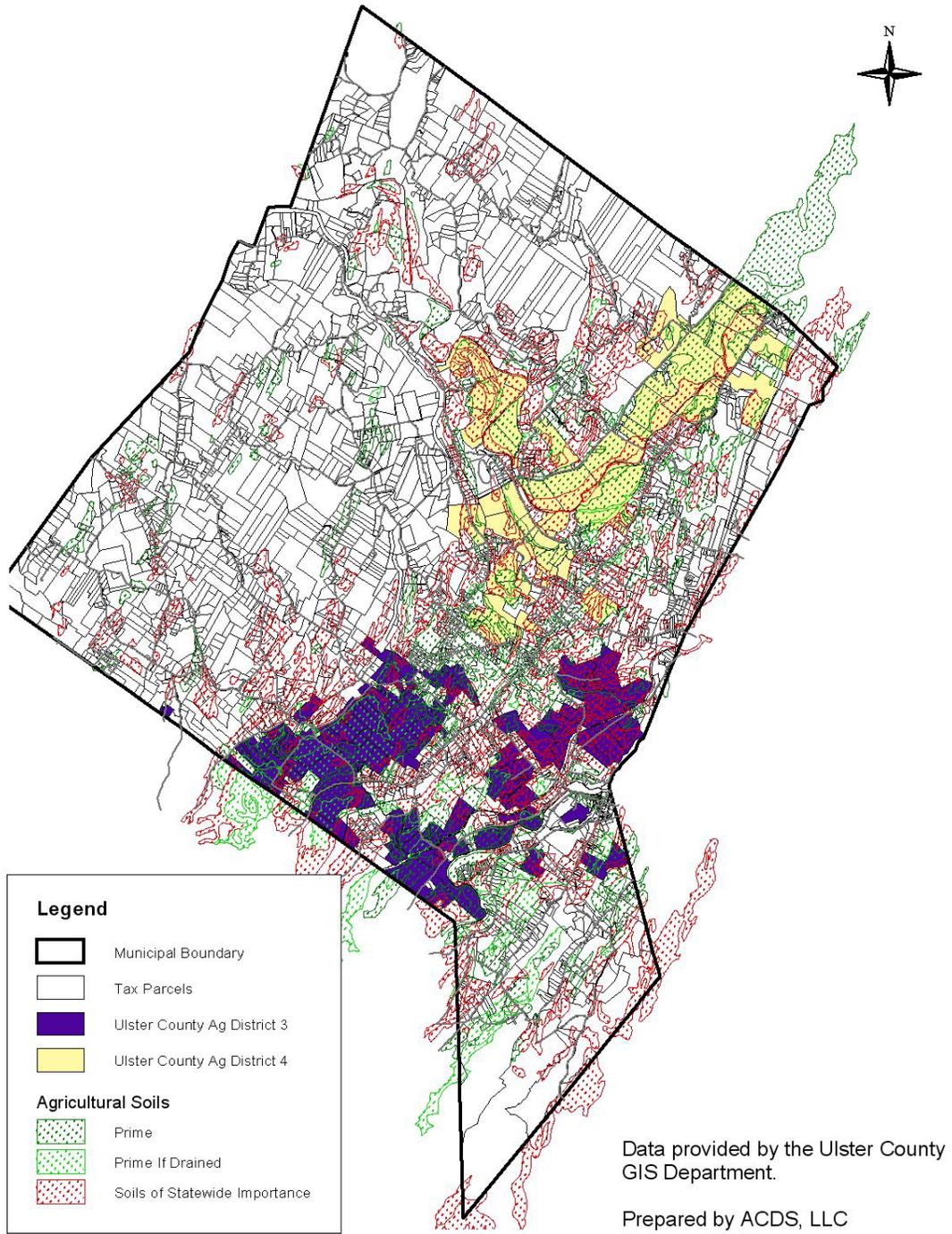
The dominant physical characteristics of the Town are the Shawangunk and Catskill Mountains. The Shawangunk Mountains rise to a height of approximately 1,500 feet above sea level in the southeastern tip at Lake Mohonk. This is the highest point in the Town. The Shawangunk's rugged slopes are characterized by thin rocky soils, cliffs, and hemlock northern hardwood forest. In the western portion of the Town, the Catskills reach an elevation of approximately 1,100 feet at a point located west of Atwood Road and north of The Vly-Atwood Road. Generally, however, the elevations of the Catskills within the Town are less than 1,000 feet. The Catskills here have slopes more gentle than the Shawangunks, with deeper soils and mixed hardwood vegetation interspersed with white pine and hemlock.

The lowest elevation in the Town is 120 feet, located along the Rondout Creek at the Town of Rosendale boundary. The lowest elevation of the Esopus Creek is approximately 160 feet and is located at the Town of Hurley boundary.

Watersheds are included among the notable natural features of the Town. These features include several wetlands, such as the Scarawan Swamp, Cantine Swamp, Noxes Vly and other federal and State-listed wetlands, such as those along the northern Coxingkill. Some significant secondary streams draining into the Rondout or Esopus Creeks include the Kripplebush Creek, Northern Peterskill, and the Coxingkill. Several other smaller creeks, such as Mossy Brook and Vly Brook, are also present in the Town.

Because of the regional impact of these significant water features, Marbletown is actively engaged with neighboring towns in watershed management planning for both the Esopus and Rondout Creeks. Current intermunicipal initiatives include: the Lower Espous Watershed Partnership (Towns of Marbletown, Rochester, Hurley, Olive, Town and Village of Saugerties, and City of Kingston) and the Rondout Creek Watershed Council (Towns of Marbletown, Rochester, Wawarsing and Rosendale). This collective effort to ensure the preservation and protection of the watersheds and their water resources is heavily influenced by agricultural and forest land uses, which will play a role in their conservation.

Figure 1: Agricultural Features Map



Active Farmland

Table 1: Assessed Agricultural Uses, as of August 2009

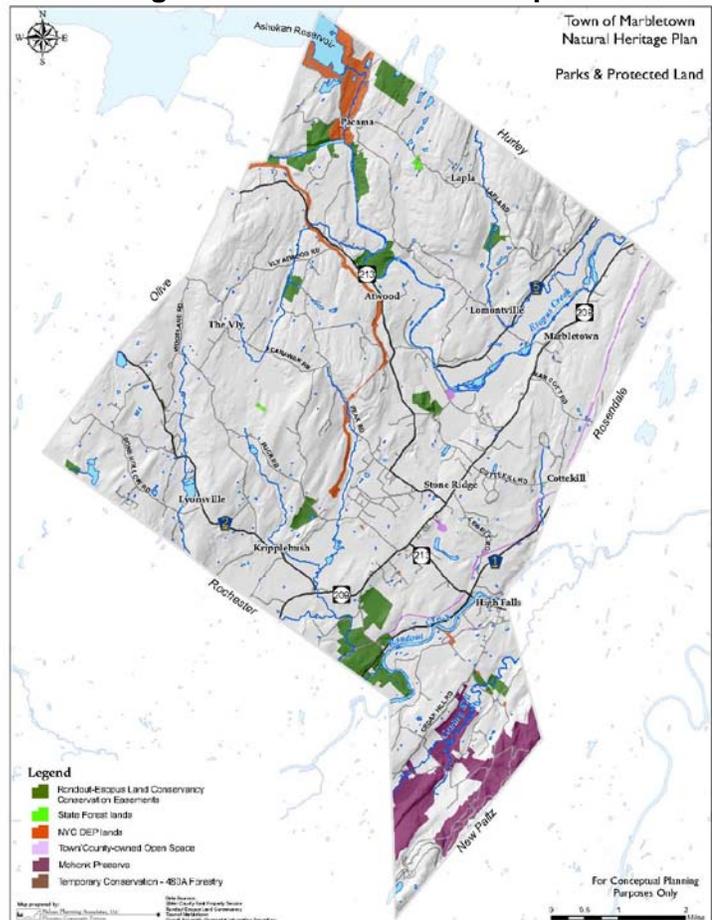
Dairy Products: Milk, Butter and Cheese	2%
Field Crops	14%
Agricultural Vacant Land (Productive)*	57%
Tree Fruit	5%
Truck Crops - Not Mucklands	22%
Total	100%

*Refers to land used as part of an operating farm.
Source: Marbletown Tax Assessor's Office.

As of August 2009, there are 5,423 acres in Marbletown that are fully or partially dedicated to agricultural use and are classified as Agricultural Districts or with agricultural tax exemption. These agricultural lands, which are located on 239 parcels, account for a wide variation in crop and livestock production (as demonstrated in Table 1), all of which contribute to a diverse, but vibrant local agricultural economy.

According to the Marbletown Natural Heritage Plan, approximately ten percent of the Town's 35,700 acres have some level of protection through conservation easements, public ownership, private conservation ownership, or temporary forestry easements. Most lands are held in areas of the Town that are not considered highly productive agricultural areas, such as the Mohonk Mountain Preserve acres, and the Ashokan watershed, which is owned by the New York City Department of Environmental Protection. Nearly 1,300 acres of land are held in easement by the Rondout-Esopus Land Conservancy, much of which can be found in Prime Soils and Soils of Statewide importance. Figure 2 highlights the location of these protected lands.

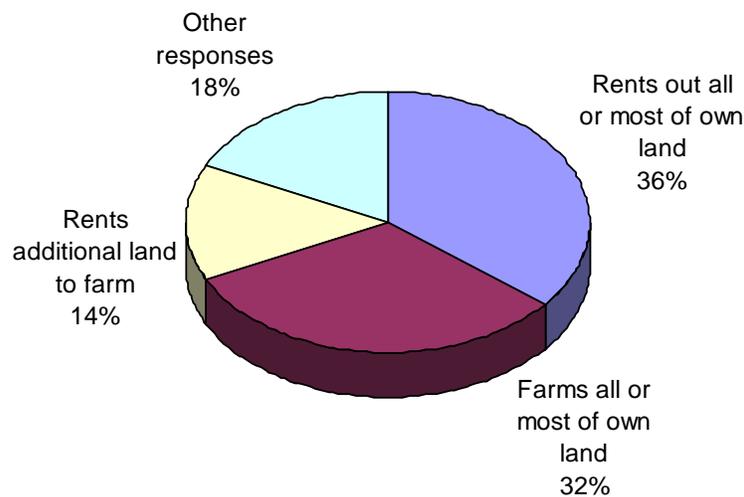
Figure 2: Protected Lands Map



D. Value of Farmland to the Community

The value of farmland to Marbletown is anchored to its residents' need to maintain the Town's natural endowments, local history, open space, and ecosystem.³ Thus, agriculture is a sector that receives a lot of support and the protection of farmland is very consistent with the residents' vision for the Town. Emphasis is placed upon particular locations, such as the Route 209 valleys. Other priority areas include the Rondout and Esopus Creeks, Shawangunks woodlands, Catskill foothills, and the various floodplains and wetlands interwoven with the open spaces. These areas make up the agricultural heritage and natural features of the Town.

Figure 3: Farmers' Use of Land



Supplemental research to measure local support for farmland was done by the study team through a survey of local farmers. Findings show that 36 percent of respondents rent all or most of their land, while 32 percent directly farm their land. Additional land is rented by 14 percent of surveyed farmers. The results indicate that farmland has a high utilization rate in the area, which is a good indicator of how farmland is valued in Marbletown.

Additional survey information can be found in Appendix A.

E. Extent of Development Pressure on Farmland

E. 1. Population Trends

Preserving the Town's agricultural heritage must be carefully managed to accommodate the Town's need to support some level of long-term growth. At present, the natural growth level in the Town remains at a very manageable level with three-quarters of one percent annual growth between 1990 and 2000 and one-

³ Marbletown New York Town Plan, 2005.

third of a percent from 2001-2007. At this growth level, Marbletown’s population grew increased roughly on-par with the County as a whole.

Table 2: Population Trends

	Population			Change		
	1990	2000	2007	1990	2000	2007
Ulster County	165,304	177,749	181,860		7.5%	2.3%
Marbletown	5,285	5,854	6,039		10.8%	3.2%
Share	3%	3%	3%			

Source: Ulster County Planning Department, 2009.

The Town, however, grew at a much slower pace than those towns directly impacted by access to the major transportation corridors (e.g., I-87) or adjacent to growth areas such as Orange County. The development influences that caused growth in Towns such as Rochester and Gardiner are unlikely to affect Marbletown in the same manner, given the Town’s relatively isolated geography and limited highway access. Given that these factors are unlikely to change, population growth is predicted to be modest over the next ten years and is expected to have limited impact on working land conservation over this period.

Despite being small, the demographic base in Marbletown demonstrates urban characteristics highlighting its role as a recreational and second home venue for metropolitan residents (see tapestry analysis in Appendix B). This is a positive sign for the development of a strong local food system, as individuals with strong urban ties tend to be more supportive of farmers markets, Consumer Supported Agriculture and similar direct marketing. High disposable income and high net worth are additionally supportive characteristics that support such growth and provide credence to local farmers’ views that untapped direct marketing potential exists in the local market.

Expanded demographic data is available in Appendix B and includes factors that might reasonably affect development, housing, and even consumer purchasing patterns within the next five years.

E. 2. Housing Trends

Population trends have a direct and immediate effect on the demand for housing. Anticipated increases in population leads to increases in the need for both owned and rented housing units. With this in mind, housing growth, as measured by issuance of new building permits, demonstrates that Marbletown has added an average of 27 new houses per year over the last decade. According to County data, this growth rate has been declining since 2006 demonstrating the sensitivity of Marbletown’s housing demand to general economic conditions.

Using an affordability gap analysis, Table 3 depicts historical and projected trends for owned and rented housing units in Marbletown. The analysis compares the current supply and current demand. Demand was estimated using available data from a 2009 Three-County Regional Housing Needs Assessment for Ulster, Orange, and Dutchess Counties. Housing supply data are also based on the same study, which

sourced housing estimates from the 2006 American Community Survey, local building permits, and County Planning Department rental surveys, and parcel data for property tax purposes.⁴

Table 3: Housing Trends

Forecast of Housing Affordability and Total Demand, as of 2006

	Total Demand for Housing Units				Growth in Demand for Housing Units			
	2006	2010*	2015*	2020*	2006	2010*	2015*	2020*
Owned	1,992	1,995	2,065	2,129	N/A	3	70	64
Rented	568	574	593	612	N/A	8	19	19

Source: Three-County Regional Housing Needs Assessment, 2009.

*Estimated

Positive values for the gap in Table 3 point out that demand exceeds supply in Marbletown but will require the addition of fewer than 20 new housing units per year between now and 2020. More importantly, the positive gap values indicate that housing units are currently available to be purchased or rented at an affordable price or rent, but households will likely be paying more than the traditionally accepted 30% threshold of household income for housing costs in the future. This is supported by Marbletown’s relatively low 2008 average housing cost of \$218,251, which was 73 percent of the County average value of \$296,297. As this historic pricing differential closes, it may have a negative impact on housing growth rates.

If current real estate conditions hold, Marbletown plans to service much of this housing demand within planned hamlet centers, particularly along the Route 209 corridor and within the High Falls area. This will reduce the impact of growth on agricultural and forestry operations by keeping development clustered away from prime agricultural soils. Such a development pattern will have the added benefit of keeping commuter and residentially derived traffic concentrated in existing high capacity road corridors. This will help to keep slower, farm related traffic separated from high speed, commuter oriented traffic.

Trends in housing growth may change, for reasons outside of Marbletown’s control. Such a change would not be quick and could include forces that would either reduce, or increase, the rate of housing growth. Key factors that may influence such a change would include a major change in zoning codes in nearby towns; improvements in road systems to increase capacity and service to Marbletown; a rapid rise in regional employment options; or improvements, upgrades, or expansions to public services. Given the fiscal challenges facing the State and County combined with the absolute decline in jobs in Ulster County, the trend of slow growth is likely to continue in the foreseeable future.

Additional demographic and social information can be found in Appendix B.

⁴ For a detailed description of the methodology, see *A Three-County Regional Housing Needs Assessment, 2009*.

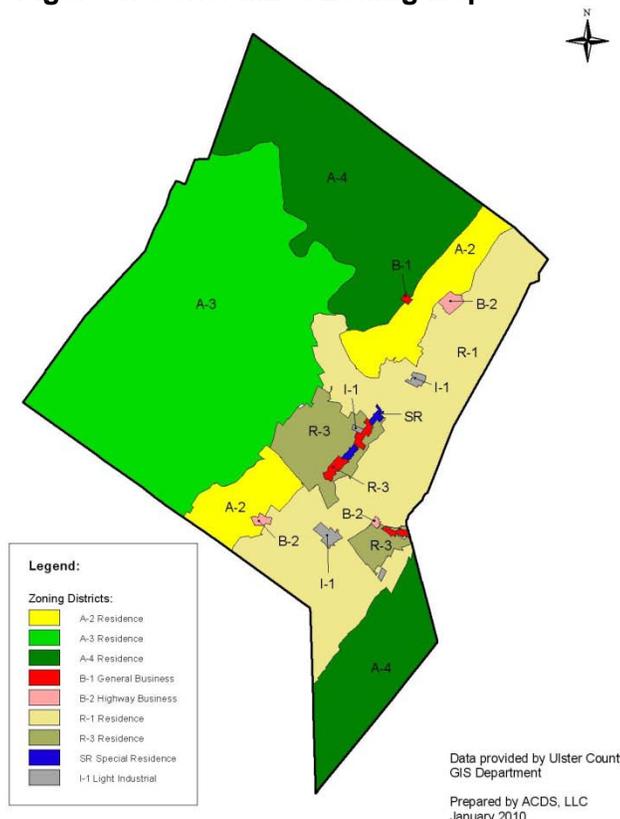
E. 3. Zoning

The Town’s zoning policies are guided by the State of New York’s legislative enactments, which state that it is an important State policy to provide for open space and to conserve, protect, and encourage the preservation of agricultural lands and other natural and ecological resources.⁵ Growth and development may encroach upon and even eliminate open areas, some of which have scenic or aesthetic values that would maintain physical, social, aesthetic, ecological, and economic characteristics if preserved.

Marletown supported the State’s vision by implementing a program for the acquisition of interests or rights in real property for the preservation of open spaces and farmland. The Town Board funded a Purchase of Development Rights (PDR) program by authorizing \$2 million for the acquisition of open spaces, areas, and development rights. The Town has formed a working committee called the Marletown Preservation and Investment Commission to develop the necessary processes, procedures, and evaluation criteria to implement these funds. An initial report on evaluation and application procedures is due in 2010.

Most of the Town’s land area is defined as residential and is included in the low density Districts A, R, and SR. High density residential and most business and industrial districts are located at the central Stone Ridge/High Falls area and encourage high traffic and high density uses to cluster.

Figure 4: Generalized Zoning Map



High density residential and most business and industrial districts are located at the central Stone Ridge/High Falls area and encourage high traffic and high density uses to cluster. Zoning and development have followed the standard model of locating non-residential establishments at the town center, with residential units in the surrounding areas. This model also evolved around the Town’s rural and agricultural features. A detailed explanation of the Town’s zoning classification system is provided in Appendix C, as well as a review of the zoning code’s impact on agriculture which was conducted by the New York Planning Federation in June 2008.

⁵ State of New York General Municipal Law § 247 and Environmental Conservation Law § 49-0301.

F. Overview of Existing Plans, Programs, and Regulations

Previous plans for Marbletown and other areas have been made and provide guidance in the development of this Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan. In 2005, a Town Plan⁶ was revised with the vision to “conserve its open space, preserve our farmland, and promote sound and responsible development through pro-active planning.”⁷ The Town Plan defines the general location and distribution of major land use categories, (namely hamlets, open space, and different residential density areas), as envisioned by the goals and objectives of the Town Plan. It is to be updated to include cultural, historic, and natural resource inventories of Marbletown as they become available. The following table provides the various issues the Town Plan addresses, as well as the necessary implementation strategies and goals to achieve them.

Table 4: 2005 Town Plan Key Points

Issue	Goal	Strategy
The Environment	Protect the natural fragile features	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Responsible Resource Use or Consumption 2. Ecosystem Health and Biodiversity 3. Air Quality Protection and Improvement 4. Waste Management and Recycling 5. Natural Resource Protection 6. Recreational Use of Natural Resources and Open Areas 7. Wetland Preservation 8. Control of Quantity and Quality of Run-off
The Economy	Encourage natural, historic, cultural sustainability in businesses	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Small Scale Businesses 2. Four Season Tourism 3. Specialized/Niche Agriculture
Development Patterns	Preserve the natural resource base	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Agricultural, Forest, and Open Space 2. Controlled Hamlet Growth
Historical and Cultural Resources	Encourage the recognition of their importance	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Resource Inventory Maintenance 2. Development Should Be Compatible with Resource Preservation
Housing	To be provided to all economic levels of residents	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Cluster Single Family Homes on Smaller Lots to Preserve Green Space and Natural Features
Infrastructure and Community Facilities	Should allow concentration and expansion of hamlets	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Repair or Construct Underground Utilities 2. Regulate Development

Source: 2005 Marbletown-New York Town Plan.

⁶ This is also referred to as the “2005 Marbletown Town Plan.”

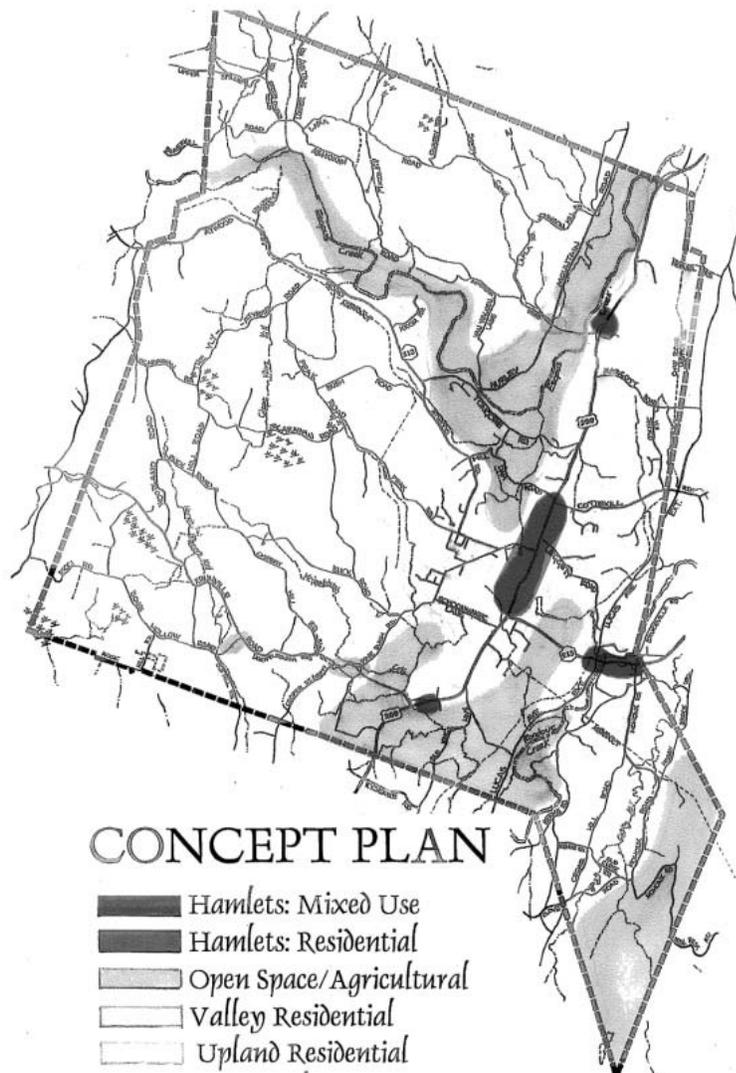
⁷ “Marbletown, New York Town Plan,” p. 4.

The Town employs Smart Growth principles within its Land Use Plan as a means to direct its conservation efforts outside of hamlet areas and to encourage both residential and commercial development within hamlets. The intent of using hamlet centered growth policies is to reduce the footprint of development within the Town to areas where development has been historically concentrated and where the infrastructure is extant to support additional growth.

A centerpiece of the Town Plan⁸ is to focus growth on the hamlets. This concept is also a driving force behind the Town's environmental protection, land development, and economic support programming. The concept of hamlet growth sets the framework for the creation of future land development policy while guiding investment in public infrastructure and setting the tone for environmental and working lands conservation.

Figure 5: Town Concept Plan

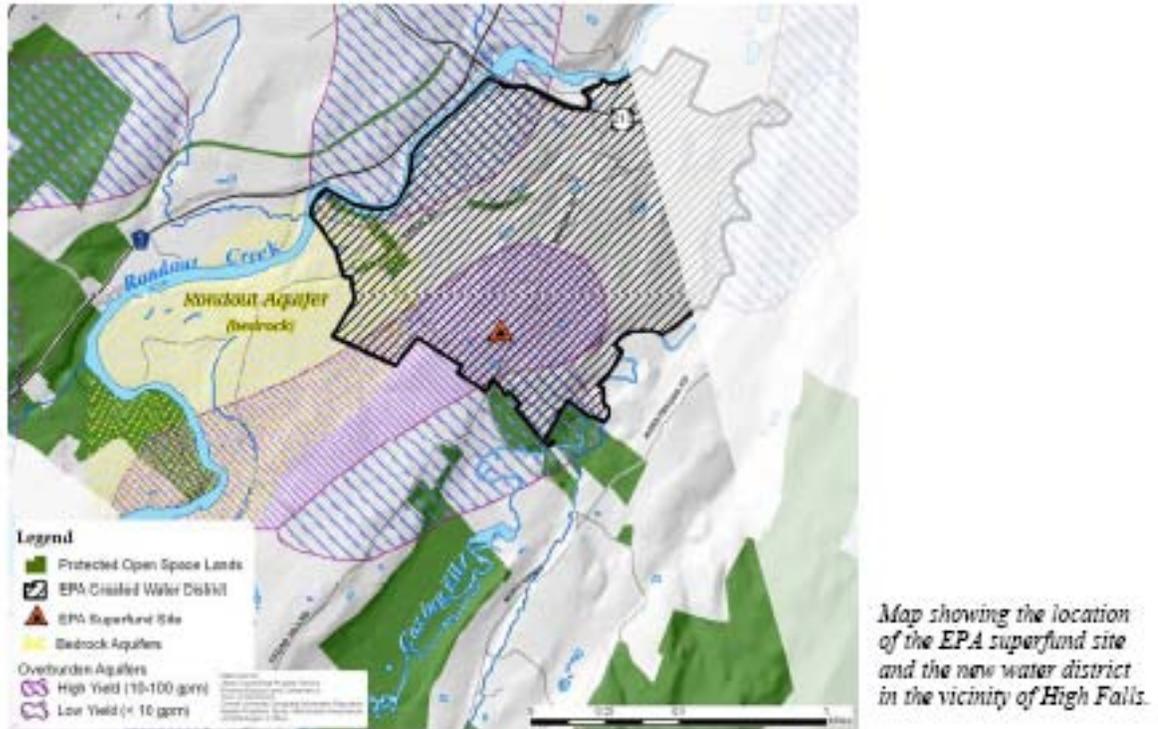
Since the Plan was created, the Town has used it to create a policy guidance document for the protection of farmlands, forests, critical aquifers, and watersheds. The Town has also followed Plan guidance by establishing a conservation subdivision ordinance in R-1 and A-2 zoning districts to conserve farmland in the Route 209 corridor and encourage growth in the hamlets. Development of a town economic development plan to encourage job creation in the hamlets and investment in pedestrian friendly infrastructure is ongoing in order to make the hamlets appealing for higher density development.



⁸ The Town of Marbletown is currently creating a Hamlet Development Plan.

The Town's only public water infrastructure, which exists in the Town of High Falls, is currently in-place as a response to an Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) mandate to supply water where wells have been, or may be, affected by groundwater contamination. The contamination effects more than 70 households primarily to the northeast of the site. Based on long-term monitoring of the site, the EPA delineated the maximum possible extent of contamination, as depicted in Figure 6, and the High Falls Water District was created to serve those impacted.

Figure 6: High Falls EPA Superfund Site and Water District



Source: Marbletown Natural Heritage Plan

While this water system has expansion potential sufficient to supply 500 residences, its expansion is intended to support any additional water requirements made necessary by the growth of the contaminant plume or for selected developmental purposes in the hamlet or at the Ulster County Community College. Given the topography of the area, and the fact that the contamination plume follows the general down slope of the area, any expansion of the system is expected to have little impact on agriculture.

Marbletown Natural Heritage Plan

The Town's Natural Heritage Plan is an implementation item of the 2005 Town Plan, which analyzed the Town's future growth and development potential. The Natural Heritage Plan defines that Town's natural heritage resources, including regional forests, core farm areas, aquifers, streams and waterways, supporting forests, and wildlife areas. The Plan's findings include:

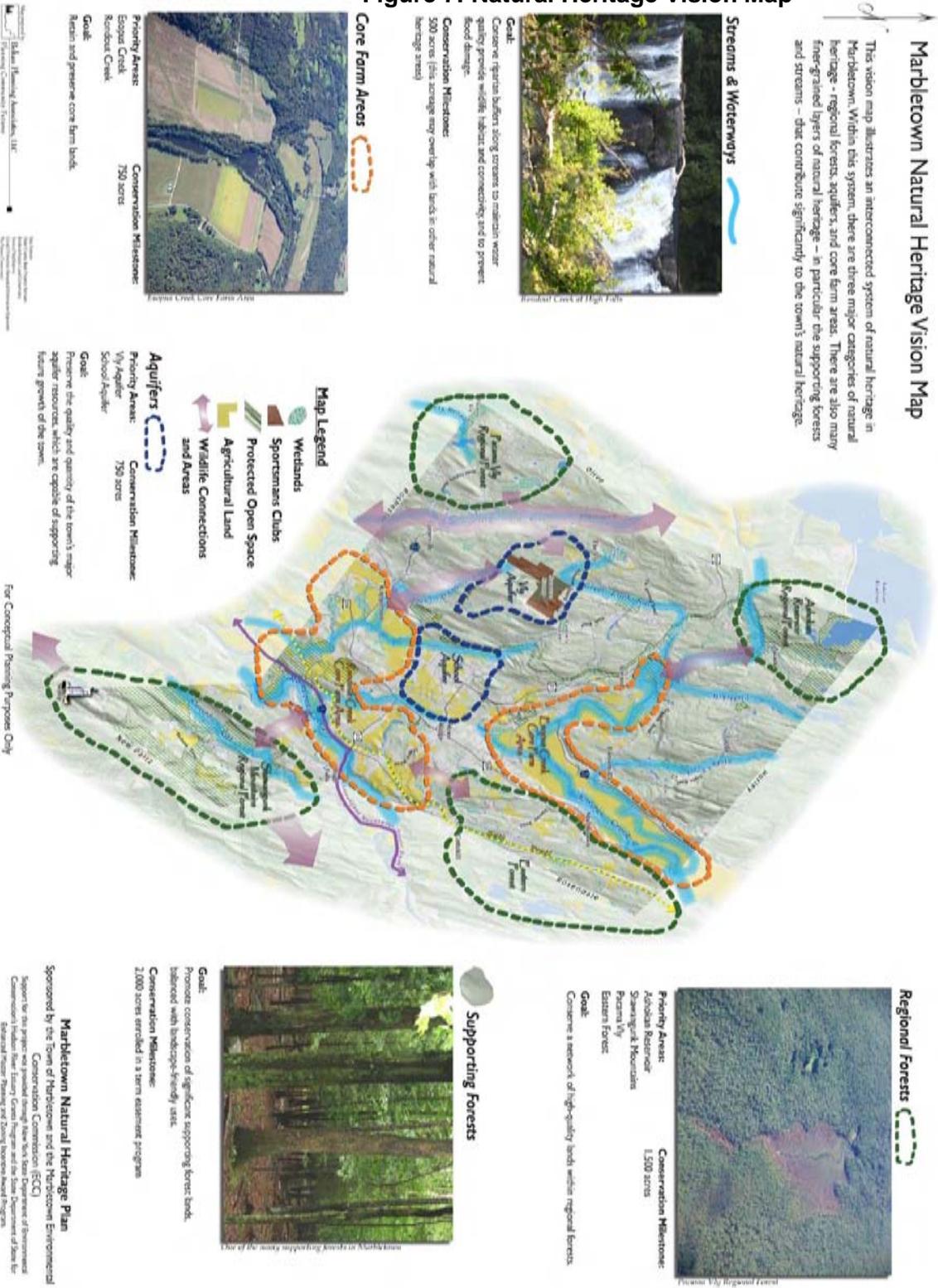
1. the continued development of a local land conservation program
2. supporting sustainable land uses
3. planning for economic and development growth
4. continued advanced research, management, and stewardship efforts
5. expansion of options for conservation financing.

These findings and the attendant action items included in the Plan are intended to ensure that Marbletown retains its critical natural areas and working landscapes, even as the Town grows. With this in mind, the Plan directs specific program and policy development toward balancing resource needs within a Natural Heritage Vision Plan. This vision, as depicted in Figure 7 on the following page, highlights the interaction of regional forests, core agricultural areas, cultural and recreational systems, ground and surface water systems, other natural areas such as wildlife corridors. For each of these systems, core protection areas are identified and conservation practices are recommended. These practices are as diverse as the conservation objectives and include items such as funding agricultural conservation easements and mapping wildlife and plant biodiversity. For full recommendation see the Marbletown Natural Heritage Plan at www.marbletown.net.

Despite its focus on the needs of each core protection area, the Plan offers an integrated approach to protecting the Town's key resources. This integrated approach is driven by the interrelationships between the core areas. For instance, major features of many of Marbletown's farms include forestland, aquifer recharge areas, estuaries, and wildlife habitat. With these inter-relationships highlighted, the Natural Heritage Plan offers integrated conservation milestones which highlight the extent to which the Town has committed to permanently protecting its land based resources. These targets include the permanent conservation of 1,500 acres of forest land, 750 acres of priority aquifer recharge areas, 750 acres of core farmland, and 500 acres of river and flood plains with the understanding that conservation in anyone core area will likely support multiple objectives.

As a means to implement the above conservation goals, the Town of Marbletown created the Marbletown Preservation Investment Commission (MPIC). The MPIC is currently developing an approach to integrating the above objectives into a comprehensive preservation program, which will include agricultural land conservation. By authorizing the creation of the MPIC, the Town has established a single point of contact and action to limit the possible confusion of creating separate programs for each conservation goal. The Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan should therefore fit within the scope of the MPIC.

Figure 7: Natural Heritage Vision Map



G. Issues and Opportunities

SWOT Analysis Results

The various issues stated in the previous sections and the findings of the conducted survey were examined and categorized as Strengths, Opportunities, Weaknesses, or Threats relating to agricultural production in the Town. Brief discussions of selected issues are provided in the SWOT table below and were generated from the farmland owner survey and interviews conducted between April 2009 and August 2009.

Table 5: SWOT Results

<p>Strengths</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High quality agricultural soils in bottomlands • Expansion of on-farm value added • Demand for farmers’ markets and roadside stands • Public support for agriculture • Economic value (value-added, jobs) • Agricultural heritage (orchards) • Strong inter-farm cooperation • Access to markets 	<p>Weaknesses</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cost/availability of leasing land for agricultural production • Residential development in close proximity to working farms • High wildlife pressure • Poor understanding of agricultural practices
<p>Opportunities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased interest in “buying local” may expand market opportunities • Active preservation initiatives • Regional support for purchase of development rights 	<p>Threats</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development pressure increases cost of land, reduces availability of land for agricultural production • Regional development patterns are beyond control of the Town

G.1. Demand for Farmers’ Markets and Roadside Stands

Findings from an informal survey conducted for the Plan showed that most farmers believe farm stands and farmers’ markets would be the most beneficial initiatives in keeping agriculture viable in the area. On the supply side, such retail establishments would complement the vegetables and grain crops grown in the Town, as well as the scale of production. On the demand side, farm stands and farmers’ markets would serve as a food and fiber source for the growing base of new Marbletown residents, both permanent and seasonal.

Growth in the regional population base provides additional opportunity to encourage on-farm and off-farm market developments, such as those proposed by the Rondout Valley Growers Association, that would incorporate food manufacturing, distribution, on-site sales, and food donations for regional food banks. However, connecting farmers with markets is a perennial challenge due to the difficulty of managing the consumer interface and the geographic dispersion of Marbletown’s population.

G.2. Public Support for Agriculture

There is overwhelming support, even among non-farmers, to protect the Town's farmland and keep agriculture sustainable. Additionally, this sentiment is accompanied by a pragmatic view that economic growth and development is also beneficial. Survey results show that 56 percent of farmers would welcome new development on the conditions that it coexists with the local agricultural sector and that it not alter the local character. In developing future agricultural policies or initiatives, it is evident that local knowledge is important and that consultation with key groups and sectors within Marbletown could provide valuable insights or solutions.

G.3. Regional Support for Purchase of Development Rights

Thirty percent of the farmers surveyed for the development of this Plan expressed a willingness to consider a PDR program and/or conservation easement, while 27 percent would want more information on it. Only 13 percent of farmers surveyed would not consider it. Local support is present among an informed group of farmers and there is the potential for additional support among those who want more information to ensure sound financial decisions can be made. Residents also support Purchase of Development Rights, as does the Ulster County Agricultural and Farmland Protection Board. (PDRs and easement programs are discussed further in Section H.)

Note that the Town's voters have already authorized \$2 million to employ a town-based open space preservation program. The Marbletown Preservation and Investment Commission is charged with developing the implementation program.

G.4. Residential Development in Close Proximity to Working Farms

Survey results show that 56 percent of farmers are not opposed to new development on areas where there is active farm use. However, some respondents expressed that some conditions have to be met first, such as examining the population characteristics and the ability of farming and development to coexist without compromising either sector. As mentioned earlier, the results demonstrate a pragmatic perspective in facing local, and potentially competing, issues.

G.5. Strong Inter-Farm Cooperation

Marbletown is home to the Rondout Valley Growers Association (RVGA), which is a not-for-profit association of farmers formed to promote and advance farming in the region. The RVGA also supports land preservation and market development activities. With more than 60 member farms, RVGA represents products ranging from Christmas trees to produce and beef. Many products are sold directly to consumers at farmers' markets and roadside stands in the region, as well as through wholesale outlets. The RVGA represents many growth-oriented farm businesses and provides a strong support mechanism for both existing and start-up farms.

H. Farmland Proposed for Protection

This Plan recommends the adoption of the “Core Farm Areas” identified in the Marbletown Natural Heritage Plan (See Figure 7) as the farmland areas to be targeted for preservation using state and federal farmland protection grant funds.

H.1. Establish Target Number of Acres that Would Comprise “Critical Mass” of Farmland

To target properties with the highest productive, environmental, and cultural value, ACDS, LLC recommends that the Marbletown Preservation and Investment Commission’s (MPIC) rating system, which can be found in Appendix D, be utilized. The MPIC’s draft criteria focus on the following issues:

- 1) Location in a Natural Heritage Area as defined in the *2008 Marbletown Natural Heritage Plan*. Locations within critical watersheds and aquifer recharge areas receive the highest point totals.
- 2) Presence of farming and farmland soils as defined by assessment data and Natural Resource Conservation Service Soil maps. Points are awarded based on scale of farming activities, scale of high productive soils onsite, presence of an Agricultural District, and level of onsite agricultural investments.
- 3) Protection of critical watersheds as defined by presence of a major or supporting aquifer; abutment to water bodies and impoundments; and proximity and relationship to rivers, streams, and wetlands.
- 4) Protection of forests, fields and other working lands, either directly or indirectly, using data provided by the U.S. Forest Service - Forest Inventory Assessment, the Department of Environmental Conservation regional forester, and other data from the U.S. Geological Survey.
- 5) Other criteria are also used to evaluate properties, including cultural and scenic assets, proximity to other protected acres, role of the property in regional conservation initiatives, the level of protection for a given project cost, involvement of partners, and impact on tax base.

Grouping high ranking parcels would provide for a critical mass of properties. Such a process would ideally be linked to County, State, and private land trust plans to ensure that Marbletown’s efforts are not orphaned.

H.2. Assessment of Development Impact

Once parcels for protection are identified, the zoning district, acres of priority farmland, housing units on each allowed acre, and the projected build out units can be estimated. With these indicators, an assessment of the impact of development can be made and various scenarios for sensitivity analysis can be conducted.

I. Evaluation of Potential Agricultural Protection Techniques

Programs and initiatives are available to help local governments, farmers, key stakeholders, and other organizations achieve productive and sustainable farmland protection. The following table highlights these techniques. Additional details can be found in Appendix E.

Table 6: Summary Land Protection Tools and Techniques

Protection Tool	Definition	Benefits	Drawbacks	Applicability/Status-Marbletown
Comprehensive Plan	Guiding vision of what a community wants to be in the future and a strategy for achieving it.	An organized way to identify productive farmland and set growth and protection goals. Serves as basis for land use regulations.	Not legally binding. May be changed or ignored by officials as they rule on development proposals.	Marbletown has completed the Town Plan that employs Smart Growth principles by encouraging development in hamlet areas where services and population are currently centered. These efforts encourage the development of agriculture and home-based businesses, town center development, economic development core areas, neighborhood activity centers, and crossroad commercial centers, while discouraging commercial and industrial development in other settings. Additional policy direction is given to creating aquifer recharge protection areas as part of land conservation efforts.
Differential Assessment	Taxation of farmland based on its agricultural use rather than its development value.	Modest incentive to keep land in commercial farming.	Benefits land speculators waiting to develop land.	Minimum of seven acres and \$10,000 in sales; horse boarding operations now eligible. Available to county farms but not widely used, even among district properties.
Agricultural Districts	State designation of an area of at least 500 acres of viable agricultural land. Initiated by landowners, adopted by the County. Land can go in any time but can only come out when district is reviewed every eight years. Not tied to agricultural	Farmed land within district provided protection from local ordinances, nuisance suits, and utility ad valorem taxes. Commissioner of NY State Ag & Markets has authority to rule	Area defined by landowner willingness. County adopts, but town ordinances are affected if there is a dispute. State has authority to rule on local land use conflicts.	Some towns concerned about perceived loss of local control; others working to bring local ordinances in line with farm operation needs.

Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan for the Town of Marbletown

	assessment.	on local land use conflicts.		
--	-------------	------------------------------	--	--

Protection Tool	Definition	Benefits	Drawbacks	Applicability/Status-Marbletown
Agricultural Conservation Easements (See Recommendation J.1, J.3, and J.6 for Further Expansion of This Topic)	Voluntary separation and sale of the development rights from land in exchange for a permanent conservation easement. Typically paid difference between restricted value and fair market value. Land remains in private ownership and on tax rolls.	Provides permanent protection of farmland and puts cash into farm and farm economy.	Public cost may be high. Combined with being voluntary, it may be difficult to protect a critical mass of farmland.	Currently no purchase of development rights program in County for agricultural land. Only State funds through Ag and Markets are currently available to be used to conserve lands in the County and Town. Marbletown is currently developing its own conservation easement program with the authorization of \$2 million in conservation funding. Currently land trusts operate the only active conservation easement programs in the Town.
Right-to-Farm Laws (See Recommendation J.7 for Further Expansion of This Topic)	In NY for land in ag district: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Definition of agriculture 2. Local ordinance provision 3. Notice of Intent 4. Sound ag practices determination 5. Disclosure notices 	Strengthens the ability of farmers to defend themselves against nuisance suits. Shields farmers from excessively restrictive local laws and unwanted public infrastructure. Tied to agricultural district designation.	Not meant to shield from all legal disputes with neighbors. Does not stop complaints from non-farm neighbors. May not protect major changes in farm operations or new operations.	Marbletown does not have a Right-to-Farm law but supports development of a County RTF since State protections are limited to farmland in the agricultural district. Farmers and landowners in Marbletown do not feel that State protections offer sufficient protection from nuisance suits at this time. Additional controls at the town level are unlikely to meet desire for a required arbitration process.
Agricultural Zoning (See Recommendation J.1 for Further Expansion of This Topic)	Typically low density zoning, such as one unit per 20 acres in a predominantly farming area.	Limits non-farm development in areas intended for agricultural use. Can protect large areas of farmland at low public cost.	Local government can rezone land. Landowners may complain about loss of 'equity value' if land values have begun to escalate due to development pressure. May create a "Constitutional	There is currently low interest among operating farms for the additional protections offered by large lot zoning. Changes to zoning code, however, are recommended as highlighted in Appendix C.

Protection Tool	Definition	Benefits	Drawbacks	Applicability/Status-Marbletown
Transfer of Development Rights (TDR)	Voluntary separation and sale of development rights from land in one part of a jurisdiction to be used to increase density in another part. Conservation easement placed on sending parcel.	Developers compensate farmland owners. Creates permanent protection of farmland and shifts some costs to private sector.	Difficult to establish and administer. Opposition by landowners in receiving areas. PDR needs to be an integral part of a jurisdiction's growth management strategy at a time that sending area resources are relatively intact and intensification of receiving areas is feasible.	The Town of Marbletown has conducted an analysis of TDR as an effective tool for managing growth and does not find that TDR is useful for that purpose due to low development pressure and the limited size of developments. Furthermore, TDR banking was abandoned in consideration of creating a town preservation fund.
Private Land Trusts	Local non-profit 501.c (3) corporations designed to identify resources to be protected, accept permanent conservation easements from landowners, and monitor their provisions through time.	Can provide permanent land protection. Can forge public-private partnerships. Greatly facilitates the donation of conservation easements from landowners able to benefit from income tax benefits.	Private land trusts may focus on specific areas and or types of easements. Land trusts may not be able to fund a purchase of development rights program and typically prefer to work on projects with a donation component. Unless specifically designed for agricultural protection, farming may be difficult on easements designed for other purposes.	The Open Space Institute (OSI) is the most active land trust in the region. OSI accepts donated easements and provides funding for purchase of conservation easements. OSI will partner with towns, such as Marbletown, to develop and finance easement programs and to provide easement monitoring support.
Conservation Subdivision	Cluster Subdivision ordinances allow or require houses to be grouped close together on small lots to protect open land. They increase density on part of a parcel while leaving the rest undeveloped.	Allows more compact land-use with the intent to provide open space, working lands, and environmental protection at a low cost to the public.	Clustering provides a formulaic redistribution of density. This may lead to greater build out potential than does conventional subdivision. Generally does not protect highest quality land. Open space is not always appropriate for agricultural uses.	Marbletown enacted a cluster ordinance in 2006 with the intent to reduce the impact of development in the R-1 and A-2 districts along the Route 209 corridor. The new ordinance includes a downzoning to 1 unit per 3 acres and a 50% open space requirement. Private road and affordable housing standards are part of the conservation subdivision change.

Additional information on these and other farmland protection tools can be found at the Farmland Information Center, www.farmlandinfo.org or on the Town of Marbletown

website, www.marbletown.net under the Town Code Section.

J. Strategies and Recommendations

The following recommendations are offered to improve the integration of agricultural and residential land uses in Marbletown, as well as to improve the general economic conditions facing farming and related uses.

The recommendations in this report are designed to enhance public and private sector efforts to support and sustain agriculture over the coming decades as a critical element of Marbletown’s economic backbone and as a key land use. Successful implementation of these recommendations will involve a multidisciplinary effort supported by the public sector, private industry, and agricultural operations, as well as state and local agencies. The necessary partnerships will be driven by the specific implementation needs of each recommendation. Funding support for each respective recommendation must also be built independently on the merits of the recommendation and evidenced needs.

Key elements of the recommendations are presented in the following table.

Table 7: Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan Recommendations			
Recommendation	Implementation Timeline		
	Short Term	Medium Term	Long-Term
1. Enhance the Town of Marbletown’s Agricultural Land Protection Program	Ongoing		
2. Integrate Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan findings within core marketing, tourism, and economic development activities	Ongoing		
3. Support County Efforts to Expand Farmland Protection Outreach and Education	Ongoing		
4. Co-create a New Farmer Development Program in Conjunction with Neighboring Towns	√	Ongoing	
5. Integrate Marbletown’s Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan into Agency Work Plans	Ongoing		
6. Support an Update to the Ulster County Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan		√	
7. Explore Enhancements to NYS Right-to-Farm Protections		√	√

Detailed descriptions of each recommendation, including action steps, implementation responsibility, and budget guidance, are presented on the following pages.

J.1. Enhance the Town of Marbletown's Agricultural Land Protection Program

As a vital first step in developing an effective farmland protection program, the Town of Marbletown already supports the conservation of critical areas through easement acquisition and has encouraged landowner participation in the State's Agricultural Districts. Strengthening this commitment with a broader set of local tools will enhance farmer participation and make the Town a friendlier place for agricultural activities. Establishing additional tools, beyond those available from the State and County, should begin by setting a preservation target that directs permanent protection toward the Town's best and most threatened agricultural resources. Protection of 50% of remaining Prime and Productive agricultural soils is recommended as an initial target.

Recommended Actions

- Establish initial and long-term protection goals to guide the creation of an appropriate protection toolkit.
 - Set acreage goals for agricultural and forestry lands.
 - Identify critical agricultural and forestry infrastructure.
 - Link agricultural and forestry protection goals to natural resource and water protection goals.
 - Integrate viewshed, cultural, and other goals as appropriate.
- Expand ranking criteria to target areas for conservation where agricultural operations are clustered, development pressure is expected, and/or key agricultural infrastructure is concentrated.
 - Target initial program activity in bottomland areas of the Town where soil quality is highest.
 - Integrate target areas with County and regional plans and conservation organization activities.
 - Develop mapping layers.
- Consider funding an Installment Agreement Program to encourage participation of tax-motivated landowners (See Appendix F for additional information).
- Expand local funding options through grant writing and partnerships with land conservation organizations.
 - Seek revolving loan funds to support programs.
 - Examine use of County economic development funds.
 - Seek United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Rural Development revolving loan funds.
 - Apply for direct project support from the New York Department of Agriculture and Markets and USDA's Farm and Ranch Land Protection Program.
 - Explore earmark opportunities for new farmer land programs in cooperation with the Hudson Valley Agribusiness Development Corporation (HVADC).

- Update zoning code.
 - Consider allowing poultry and egg production in A zones as a matter of right.
 - Amend definition of “Crops” in S. 200-89 per New York Planning Federation memo dated June 19, 2008.
- Adopt a new definition of “agriculture” to formally incorporate the definition of agriculture included in Agriculture and Markets Law 25-AA. This definition will apply to all areas of Town code that refer to agriculture.

Potential Partnerships

It is expected that the Town of Marbletown Board and Marbletown Preservation and Investment Commission will receive assistance from County agencies to carry out these actions as necessary and appropriate.

Budget Guidance

This recommendation is expected to require significant staff resources and a modest outreach and marketing budget. An annual operating budget may be required to maintain an easement monitoring program. Cost sharing with Ulster County Agricultural and Farmland Protection Board or a local land trust is recommended to avoid duplication of services and costs. Grant funds may be available to support tours and development of marketing materials. Sufficient staff or financial resources would be allocated to support two to four grant applications per year (approximately 120 to 320 hours). Additional information on grant resources can be found at www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/frpp.html and <http://www.agmkt.state.ny.us/AP/agservices/farmprotect.html>

J. 2. Integrate Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan Recommendations within Core Marketing, Tourism, and Economic Development Activities

Marbletown is in a unique position to lead the region in developing an agribusiness industry cluster based on its unique assets. These assets include the Rondout Valley Growers Association (a strong base of direct market producers); the Rondout Valley Business Association; positive demographic traits for supporting local production, such as high education and high income levels; a solid transportation network; and good quality of life. Some agribusiness and tourism development is already evident in the Route 209 corridor. Enhancement of this cluster, however, will take coordinated private-public partnerships and planned support. Several economic development initiatives are highlighted for further action.

A. *Work with the County to broaden access to development capital for agriculture*

~~A.~~

Whether established or new, agricultural operations report difficulty in obtaining the financing needed for expansion and development activities. For existing farms and agribusinesses, the issues focus on access to grant and equity resources to expand farming operations or to develop marketing infrastructure. New farmers express a need for flexible financing terms for

land acquisition and capital equipment accumulation. Addressing these issues at the Town level is a challenge, and may require assistance from a coalition of towns, entities, and the County.

Recommended Actions

- Improving access to capital is a regional issue that will require action on the items listed below. Programs may include a land preservation term easement requirement replicating the Massachusetts Farm Viability Grant Program (See Appendix H).
 - Collaborate with County and State efforts to develop new sources of capital dedicated to agriculture.
 - In conjunction with a partner agency such as Ulster County Development Corporation or HVADC, assist farmers with match requirements for agribusiness development, value-added, and innovation-oriented grants.
 - Review existing successful models to expand finance opportunities targeting cost reduction and environmental technologies, such as biomass combined cycle power generation, manure digestion, and new production technologies.
 - Integrate elements of this recommendation with the new farmer development recommendation.
 - Encourage private donations and private market funding to augment the public funding of easement programs.
 - Support creation of a revolving loan fund to leverage easement purchases and assist young and beginning farmers with capital acquisition.

B. *Create a town-based alternative energy program to support development of green jobs*

B.

Large- and small-scale bio-energy projects are becoming more commonplace throughout the region. Farming and agricultural communities are beginning to serve these emerging opportunities as an important supply source. Communities like Marbletown, given its agricultural and forestry production base, are well situated to benefit from supporting growth in such opportunities. This strategy envisions the Town taking an active role by demonstrating technologies for both retail and commercial use and highlighting the performance and operating characteristics of selected technologies. The intent of this strategy is to facilitate market acceptance of emerging bio-energy technologies and to encourage localized development of a supply infrastructure.

Recommended Actions

- Increase landowner and farmer understanding of bio-energy opportunities.
 - Co-sponsor an alternative energy conference in conjunction with the bio-energy industry, USDA Rural Development, and the Division of Forestry to highlight emerging technologies, technical support services, and financing opportunities.

- Apply for a USDA Rural Development grant to support applied research and education related to the utilization of appropriately scaled alternative energy and energy conservation practices, such as energy audits, wind power, biomass (fuel and combined heat and power), solar, and others (as appropriate).
- Support consumer and industry outreach to include tours, an alternative energy website (in cooperation with partners such as Cornell Cooperative Extension and HVADC), local on-farm demonstrations, and an alternative energy trade show.
- Apply for a USDA Urban Forestry grant to explore feasibility of a woody biomass aggregation and distribution capability that meets Forest Stewardship Council and Sustainable Forestry Initiative certification requirements.
- Identify technical resources for those exploring the application of alternative energy and energy conservation practices on farms, in cooperation with Cornell Cooperative Extension and HVADC.

C.

C. *Support greater direct market access to local food and fiber products*

Based on research conducted by the HVADC, there is significant unsatisfied demand for food and culinary related sales in the Hudson Valley region. This demand is expected to exceed \$500 million in lost sales revenue annually. Providing a venue for consumers to experience local foods in a rural environment is one method to capture a portion of this demand. Given the Town's easy access from Route 209 and proximity to Catskills and Shawangunks, ACDS, LLC believes the Stone Ridge area provides an appropriate venue for a niche-oriented Agriculture and Culinary Arts Center. Examining models such as the Wine and Culinary Centers in Modesto and Lodi California may provide excellent models for future development. Development of an agricultural and culinary arts center may be used to complement growth and development of local organizations like the Rondout Valley Growers Association.

Recommended Actions

- Encourage development of a Stone Ridge farmers' market.
- Support local agricultural outreach events to celebrate the diversity of local agriculture and culinary arts.
- Conduct a feasibility analysis of creating an agritourism and culinary point of interest with private sector partners, such as the Rondout Valley Growers Association.
 - Identify private sector partner(s).
 - Conduct a retail opportunity study
 - Feasibility analysis
 - Leakage surplus analysis
 - Site location analysis
 - Product and services list creation
 - Design analysis
 - Financial analysis.
 - Identify grant support resources.

- Market development
- Farmer support/supply.
- Assist in the development of farmer marketing relationships to assure profit margins at all levels of the local marketing system.
- Support value-added and wholesale marketing opportunities.
- Integrate a seasonal farmers' market into an incubator facility concept.
- Integrate with existing marketing activities, such as the Shawangunk Wine Trail.

Potential Partnerships

The Town of Marbletown Board and private partners, such as the Rondout Valley Growers Association, are expected to take the lead in further development of this recommendation.

Budget Guidance

This recommendation is expected to require modest staff resources and development funding support. Development funding for specific projects may meet Economic Development Administration (EDA) requirements, as described below, and may therefore be integrated within the HVADC's Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS). Match funding to support a feasibility study or loan fund due diligence would require a local match of \$5,000 to \$35,000, depending on level of feasibility analysis.

Applicability of EDA Funds to Marbletown

The Economic Development Administration is the primary federal entity charged with supporting development projects in urban and near urban areas with significant poverty or economic dislocation. Because of these requirements, Marbletown does not generally qualify for receipt of such funds; however, other areas of the County, as well as the HVADC, do qualify under both requirements.

Areas that receive funding must possess an up-to-date CEDS that has been approved by the EDA. Completing a CEDS is the first step in receiving these funds and is a lengthy and involved process that is best undertaken as a regional effort. Currently, HVADC has an active CEDS in place.

J. 3. Support County Efforts to Expand Farmland Protection Outreach and Education

The general level of understanding of land preservation tools in Marbletown, outside of a few agencies, is limited. Before additional land preservation programs can be implemented, or even developed, this condition must be addressed.

The necessity for multiple agencies to be involved in designing and implementing such programs complicates matters of outreach and education on this complex issue. Appointment of a lead agency, such as Cooperative Extension, is required to keep the public positively informed about the importance of agriculture to the local

economy, environment, and culture. Developing such an understanding is crucial to a successful farmland protection program. Initial activity should focus on developing a better public understanding of the agricultural industry, as well as a better understanding of the farmland protection tools available to landowners. Furthermore, an informed citizenry that understands and accepts the industrial nature of agriculture will make better neighbors and better consumers.

Recommended Actions

- Support creation of a Farmland Protection Coordinator position within the Cooperative Extension.
 - Examine county funding options to share the position with surrounding towns.
 - Develop a program of work for farmland protection.
 - Introduce program and policy ideas to the community.
 - Work with agencies and industry to implement protection programming.
- Develop an outreach plan
 - Identify key audiences/stakeholder groups that impact agriculture.
 - Develop important message statements to deliver to above audiences.
 - Produce collateral material
 - Print material (See Appendix I for samples)
 - Media kit
 - Television and radio programming
 - Website
 - Special events.
 - Host meetings of county administrative staff and finance officers with outside subject area experts, including public officials from counties with long standing programs and bond counsel.
 - Create an agricultural speakers' bureau to carry the "message" to important community and civic groups through periodic public speaking engagements.
- Develop a series of educational tours for policy makers to highlight the benefits and challenges of implementing a land protection program.
 - Host local tours to counties with land protection programs.
 - Plan annual out-of-state tours to places with long standing and innovative programs such as Virginia Beach, VA; Montgomery County, MD; and Burlington County, NJ.
- Integrate the "message" of agriculture, as well as topical "on-farm" issues, into local farm tours.
- Integrate the forest product industry and forest landowners into outreach programming.
- Enhance the public relations network and partnerships with other agencies that have an active public outreach program, such as the Ulster County Chamber of Commerce.

Potential Partnerships

Action items require significant interagency cooperation. It is expected that leadership be provided by the Marbletown Preservation and Investment Commission, the Ulster County Agricultural and Farmland Protection Board, agricultural industry associations, and other municipalities with land preservation programs.

Budget Guidance

This recommendation is expected to require modest staff resources and a marketing budget of \$5,000 to \$10,000 for materials and printing. Leveraging is likely and will be issue-based.

J. 4. Co-create a New Farmer Development Program in Conjunction with Neighboring Towns

The long-term success of agriculture is predicated on having farm operators in the future. Without such a supply of farm operators and risk takers, there is little reason to have an Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan.

Developing a program to support beginning farmers' calls for a multi-phased approach to securing training, finance, land, and market opportunities. Such an approach will require a multi-town effort of planning and development, which may be enhanced by involvement of outside agencies, such as the Ulster County Community College. The Rondout Valley Growers Association provides a natural partnership in developing the producer training and marketing linkages for such a program.

Recommended Actions

- Support development of a multi-year pilot program that creates individualized new/young farmer training programs
 - Identify feeder sources for interns and participant screening criteria.
 - Create a program of work tailored to individual farm and intern needs.
 - Examine successful local models for best practices, such as Hawthorne Valley Farms.
 - Collaborate with Cornell College of Agriculture and Life Sciences to develop curriculum-based training.
 - Incorporate programming needs of local producers and producer groups such as RVGA.
 - Develop a formal mentor program targeting newly graduating interns from local farms, students graduating from local schools, and other pre-qualified new/beginning farmers.
 - Host evening farm start-up and management classes modeled after Frederick County, Maryland's beginning farmer classes.
 - Assess the need for an agricultural academy modeled after the Central Carolina Community College in partnership with the Ulster County Community College.
- Conduct landowner meetings to assess the availability of land and agricultural infrastructure.
- Promote development of a farm incubation program similar to Orange County, North Carolina.
 - Provide land resources to qualified (pre-screened) new farmers with a focus on produce, livestock, and equine.
 - Provide business planning and finance support in cooperation with the HVADC's Agribusiness Incubator without Walls.
 - Provide production assistance in cooperation with Cornell Cooperative Extension.

- Develop a related marketing infrastructure, such as year-round roadside markets and packing facilities. (Some infrastructure may be extant.)
- Explore partnerships to expand small farm research and development that is focused on small farms.
- Expand agribusiness training and business planning efforts with County and regional partners.
- Develop an outreach program to attract interested new and beginning farmers to the County and link them to land resources.
- Create a mentor program to link new farmers to experienced agribusiness owners.
- Collaborate with County and State efforts to develop new sources of capital dedicated to first time farmers.
- Develop an ongoing financial literacy training program for young and upstart farmers.
- Create partnerships with Farm Credit and statewide industry associations as an attraction tool.
- Coordinate training of home-based food production in cooperation with the Master Gardener program at Cornell Cooperative Extension.

Potential Partnerships

Action items under this recommendation require significant interagency cooperation with a range of potential task leaders. It is expected that overall leadership will be provided by a multi-town committee. Additional support may be sought from New York Farm Bureau, agricultural industry associations, Ulster County Community College, Cornell University, and HVADC, as well as other agencies.

Budget Guidance

Developing expanded beginning farmer programming can be a costly procedure, but it is also one that has numerous potential funding sources. Fundraisers, philanthropies, and federal grants through USDA, Cooperative State Research Extension, and Education Service are all practical means to funding programs. Initially an allocation, or fundraising initiative, should be undertaken by a supporting not-for-profit entity, such as HVADC, to raise \$30,000 to \$35,000 for establishing a mentorship and intern program. Such a program can gradually expand to include a sustainable agriculture curriculum at the Ulster County Community, such as that of Central Carolina Community College. Additional program needs and resources should be evaluated after such implementation.

J. 5. Integrate Marbletown’s Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan into Agency Work Plans

Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plans require the efforts of numerous Town departments to be truly successful, and it is highly recommended that Marbletown’s plan be integrated within relevant agency work plans. Furthermore, elements of the Farmland Protection Plan may appropriately be used as guidance in developing and refining other plans, such as the Town Plan and other, similar documents.

Recommended Actions

- Seek inclusion of the appropriate elements of the Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan within the strategic and/or comprehensive plans of other, related agencies at the Town and county level, such as Economic Development, Public Works, Parks and Recreation, local water and sewer agencies, et al.
- Communicate with county agencies and elected officials about the importance of integrating Marbletown’s Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan into the Ulster County Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan.

Potential Partnerships

The Town of Marbletown Board is expected to lead implementation of this recommendation.

Budget Guidance

This recommendation requires limited town staff involvement.

J. 6. Support an Update to the Ulster County Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan

Ulster County’s Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan has been in existence for more than a decade and should be updated to include recent trends. In addition, Marbletown should advocate for the inclusion of the Marbletown Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan as part of any County Plan update.

Potential Partnerships

Ulster County Agricultural and Farmland Protection Board is expected to lead implementation of this recommendation.

Budget Guidance

This recommendation requires limited town staff involvement.

J. 7. Explore Enhancements to New York State Right-to-Farm Protections

Typical right-to-farm protections in New York are designed to protect landowners from spurious changes in land use code, while providing limited protection from nuisance suits through sound agricultural practice determinations under Section 308. According to farmer interviews, these protections do not go far enough in protecting the producer from the type of neighbor conflicts generated from mixing residential use with the sometimes industrial nature of agricultural operations. New right-to-farm protections that safeguard farmers and their non-farm neighbors may help promote the success of agriculture. Understanding complex right-to-farm issues is essential to crafting a town level response to the issue of nuisance protection

Recommended Actions

- Recommend a review of Section 308 of the Agricultural Districts Law to incorporate a higher level of nuisance suit protection, such as mandatory arbitration or mediation.
- Explore local methods to deal with neighbor conflicts
 - Notification of property locations within affected area annually.
 - Creation of a notice document for inclusion with settlement forms.
 - Creation of a mediation system to review agricultural nuisance claims.
- Encourage and work with Ulster County to create a countywide Right to Farm law that provides equal protection to agricultural and forestry operations.

Potential Partnerships

The Town of Marbletown Board should lead an effort to define needed protections with the support and assistance of the Marbletown Preservation and Investment Commission, the Ulster County Agricultural and Farmland Protection Board, New York Farm Bureau, and the New York Department of Agriculture and Markets.

Budget Guidance

This recommendation is expected to require modest staff resources and can be integrated with Recommendation 1.

K. Implementation

The Town of Marbletown Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan provides a guiding vision for agricultural preservation and development in the Town as well as a strategic direction for achieving those ends. Both the vision and strategy are based on long held community interests as well as the current economic realities of the agricultural industry. Over time, these conditions are likely to change in unexpected ways, which will necessitate amendments to the Plan.

Updating of the Plan will be necessary to keep the Plan relevant to both the community and the agricultural industry. Updates will be driven by the Plan's vision to keep agriculture a viable element of both the local economy and the local landscape.

Agricultural Protection Vision

To enhance the economic viability of Marbletown's working lands in a manner consistent with community character and open space needs.

Developing a process to accommodate change while keeping the Plan relevant will be critical to the success of farmland protection efforts in Marbletown. Creating a farmer-led committee to conduct periodic reviews of the Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan and prepare a work plan for implementing Plan elements will be essential to maintaining this relevance. This agricultural advisory committee would be officially created, and then charged with identifying the top two or three initiatives to be incorporated into the Town's agricultural preservation work plan.

The diagram below summarizes the update process, though it is imperative that the project team spend time establishing a thorough set of process guidelines. For example, there may be standard processes for collecting data, reviewing the data, and determining the critical data points at which actions are required.



Adoption of the Farmland Protection Plan and implementation of the recommendations included in this Plan will be at the discretion of the Town Board. Implementation priorities will be set by the Town's annual farmland preservation work plan pending funds availability, and priority to other town issues. This process will require close coordination with the Town and County agencies as well as other partners. Under this scenario, the Marbletown Preservation and Investment Commission will be overseeing the implementation of the Plan's recommendations, until such time as it becomes necessary to adopt a different structure.