

Town of Brutus, New York

Agriculture and Farmland Protection Plan

Prepared by the Town of Brutus
with the assistance of American Farmland Trust





Town of Brutus

Agriculture and Farmland Protection Plan

January 2010

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Citizens of the Town of Brutus

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Agriculture is closely connected with the history of the Town of Brutus. Brutus' support for agriculture has often been informal as the Town Board, other boards and committees have farmer representation on them. As farm numbers have decreased, the perception that agriculture is no longer viable in Brutus has increased. However, there are still significant amounts of high quality farmland in agriculture today that offer residents the benefits of active farms.

The Town of Brutus is geographically positioned in the approximate middle of Upstate New York with a significant agriculture industry within reach for both marketing supplies and/or offering support services. There are pockets of high quality farms, land and services to support a viable agricultural industry. This plan will help current and future decision makers to consider agriculture as a significant component of the Town.

Brutus is located in Cayuga County which is still considered largely rural with significant crop and dairy production which require significant amounts of farmland. The loss of any land, especially productive agricultural land, has a significant economic impact on agriculture. The economic value generated from Cayuga County farms is significant, totaling \$214 million of agricultural products sold in 2007. This was an increase of 67% from 2002. From 1990 to 2000, the population of Cayuga County remained steady with a small decrease of 352 people but the number of housing units increased by 2,624 from 1990 to 2007. This trend, a decreasing population with an increase in housing units, occurred across upstate New York and is a classic indicator of a declining but sprawling population. This sprawl contributes to conversion pressure on agricultural lands.

In the Town of Brutus, agriculture is the second largest land use with residential as the largest. In the Weedsport zip code there are 44 active farms, most in the Town of Brutus. Of the 44 farms, over half of the farm operators report that farming is their primary occupation. Almost 60% of the soils in the town are Prime or Statewide Significance (designations given to soils that are capable of quality crop production). The majority of farmland in Town is used for field crop production with dairy and cattle farms the second and third most prevalent agricultural uses. In addition there is a greenhouse/nursery and several seasonal vegetable and small fruit operations.

Agriculture in Brutus offers many benefits. In addition to keeping the rural character of the town valued by its residents, farms allow for a diversified economy, provide employment opportunities, help to keep taxes for non-farm residents low and provide access to fresh, local foods. A significant amount of land is rented to farms headquartered outside of the town. While rented land seems different from historical agricultural practices, it keeps this land open and available for the future. Farmers in general are considered good stewards of the land and well managed farms help to maintain water quality when compared to residential use, provide wildlife habitat and recreational opportunities for the residents of the Town and the open space lends for scenic views appreciated by tourists.

There are many challenges being faced by the farm community in Brutus that are not unlike those being faced by farms across Central New York. One of the most often cited challenges is new residents. Rural residential development has the potential to create conflict between farmers and new neighbors over smells, noise and traffic on the roads created by the practice of farming. Farmers often

comment about non-farm neighbor conflicts in terms of increase in yard waste in fields, downed crops, theft of crops and lack of respect for fields with mechanized vehicles along with a disregard for Posted signs.

This plan intends to signify that the Town of Brutus is ready to take action to support the remaining viable agriculture located in the town. The town can capitalize on its proximity to the New York State Thruway which offers easy access east to Syracuse, Albany, NYC and New England and west to Rochester and Buffalo. In addition, the town is geographically positioned in the approximate middle of Upstate New York with a significant agriculture industry within reach for both marketing supplies and/or offering support services. There are still pockets of significant quality farms, land and services to support a viable agricultural industry. This plan will help current and future decision makers to consider agriculture as a significant component of the Town.

In 2008, the Town of Brutus received a grant award from the New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets to develop an Agriculture and Farmland Protection Plan focused on protecting farmland in Brutus and planning a future for agriculture. The purpose of the plan is for the community to document the importance of local farms, challenges facing local farmers and strategies that the Town of Brutus can implement including draft language revisions to the Town's zoning and subdivision ordinances. Plan development has utilized a number of activities: public input via public meetings, personal interviews, and mapping land uses and natural resources. During the approximate eighteen month planning process, strategies to enhance farm viability and protect farmland have been identified.

Goals of the plan include:

- ***Support current and future farm businesses by building public support for agriculture and farmland protection in the Town supporting economic opportunities for local farmers and related businesses.***
- ***Educate the non-farm public in the Town of Brutus about the value and current state of agriculture in the Town and how to have good relationships with neighboring farms.***
- ***Protect farmland by identifying high quality agricultural lands in the Town of Brutus that are at risk for conversion and adopting appropriate protection strategies and tools.***
- ***Protect the town's rural character by evaluating the impacts of farm and forestland on local taxes and the demand for public services and working to encourage citing of non-farm public infrastructure near Village and other developed areas.***

Residents, local elected officials and government agencies of the Town of Brutus can utilize this plan as a road map to implement recommended strategies to support the business of agriculture now and into the future.

INTRODUCTION

In 2008, the Town of Brutus received a grant award from the New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets to develop an Agriculture and Farmland Protection Plan focused on protecting farmland in Brutus and planning a future for agriculture. The purpose of the plan is for the community to document the importance of local farms, challenges facing local farmers and develop strategies that the Town of Brutus can implement including draft language revisions to the Town's zoning and subdivision ordinances.

Agriculture is closely connected with the history of the Town of Brutus. Brutus' support for agriculture has often been informal as the Town Board, other boards and committees have farmer representation on them. The town's new Agriculture and Farmland Protection Plan (AFPP) will now formalize the town's support for agriculture from this point forward.

According to Brutus' website home page, "the Town of Brutus has a population of 4,777 including the Village of Weedsport thus making it the largest town population in Cayuga County." The town has experienced an increase in scattered rural residential housing away from the principle population center, the Village of Weedsport. The population of the Village of Weedsport, similar to Auburn and other urban places in Cayuga County, has been "stable" since WWII. Development away from the Village was allowed by the town's zoning and subdivision codes that were written in the 1960's when agriculture was the predominate use of the land.

Brutus now realizes it is in a position to capitalize on proximity to the New York State Thruway which offers easy access east to Syracuse, Albany, NYC and New England and west to Rochester and Buffalo to grow its agricultural base and related agricultural industries. In addition the town is geographically positioned in the approximate middle of Upstate New York with a significant agriculture industry within reach for both marketing supplies and/or offering support services. There are still pockets of significant quality farms, land and services to support a viable agricultural industry. This plan will help current and future decision makers to consider agriculture as a significant component of the Town.

ANALYSIS OF LOCAL CONDITIONS

Cayuga County

In 1996, Cayuga County was the second county in New York State to have their Agriculture and Farmland Protection Plan (AFPP) approved. The AFPP was designed to plan for agriculture as both a land use and an industry. At that time there were 873 farms in the county on 254,002 acres of farmland with an average 291 acres per farm (1992 Census of Agriculture). Since then the number of farms has increased to 936 farms, however, both the acres of farmland have decreased to 249,476 acres and the average size of the farm now at 267 acres (2007 Census of Agriculture). It may seem counterintuitive that the decrease in average size of a farm from 291 acres in 1992 to 267 acres in 2007 was occurring- while the number of farms was increasing and there was a loss of over 4,500 acres of farmland.

This trend, however, is not unusual for a county on the urban edge. Cayuga County is still considered largely rural with significant crop and dairy production - both of which are land intensive enterprises. The loss of any land, especially productive agricultural land, has a significant economic impact on agriculture. The economic value generated from Cayuga County farms is significant, totaling \$214 million of agricultural products sold in 2007. This was an increase of 67% from 2002. From 1990 to 2000, the population of Cayuga County remained steady with a small decrease of 352 people but the number of housing units increased by 2,624 from 1990 to 2007. This trend, a decreasing population with an increase in housing units, occurred across upstate New York and is a classic indicator of a declining but sprawling population. This sprawl contributes to conversion pressure on agricultural lands.

Brutus

Brutus' roots are in farming. Settled in 1802, it has a current population of 4,777 according to the 2000 US Census. Situated along the Erie Canal and the New York State Thruway, the Town of Brutus and Village of Weedsport have been at the cross roads of transportation for decades. According to the 2002 Agricultural Statistics based on zip code (which includes some of Cato), there are 44 active farms, most in the Town of Brutus. Of these 44 farms, 43 have the principal operator living on the farm. Approximately half reported that farming was the primary occupation of the principal owner, the remainder reported that the principal owners either worked off the farm 200 days or more or they had farm-related sources of income.

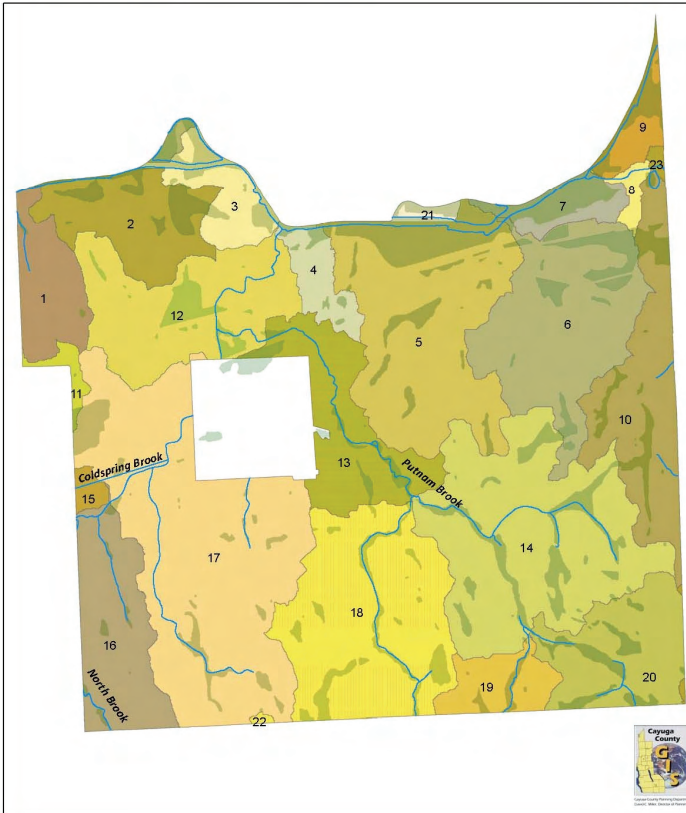
Natural Environment

Topography: The Town of Brutus is bound to the north by the Seneca River, which gives the northern quarter of the Town the flat topographic characteristics of a floodplain. Often rising and falling 200 feet above the Town's base elevation, glacial drumlins run north to south throughout the southern half of Brutus. These undulations mark the southernmost extent of a regional drumlin field that extends northward to Lake Ontario.

Hydrology: The Town's drainage network conveys water through the town from South to North delivering it to the Seneca River primarily via Putnam Brook and Cold Spring Brook. The Cayuga County Department of Planning has identified 23 water catchment areas or sub-watersheds in Brutus to help describe the Town's surface water hydrology see Figure 1.

TOWN OF BRUTUS

Sub-Watersheds / Catchment Areas



Legend: Brutus Water Catchment Areas

- 1) Direct to Seneca River
- 2) Direct to Seneca River
- 3) Direct to Seneca River
- 4) Direct to Seneca River
- 5) Direct to Seneca River
- 6) Direct to Seneca River
- 7) Direct to Seneca River
- 8) To Seneca River via Skaneateles Creek
- 9) Direct to Seneca River
- 10) To Seneca River via Tributary to Skaneateles Creek
- 11) To Seneca River via Tributary to Seneca River
- 12) To Seneca River via Putnam / Coldspring / North Brook
- 13) To Seneca River via Putnam Brook
- 14) To Seneca River via East Branch of Putnam Brook
- 15) To Seneca River via Coldspring Brook
- 16) To Seneca River via North Brook
- 17) To Seneca River via Tributary to North Brook
- 18) To Seneca River via West Branch of Putnam Brook
- 19) To Seneca River via Marshes & Tributary to East Branch of Putnam Brook
- 20) To Seneca River via Marshes & Tributary to East Branch of Putnam Brook
- 21) Direct to Seneca River
- 22) To Seneca River via Skaneateles Creek
- 23) To Seneca River via Skaneateles Creek

Figure 1: Town of Brutus Sub-Watersheds / Catchment Areas

Brutus has nearly 2000 acres of wetland, most of which is located in the northern floodplains proximate to the Seneca River. Other wetlands in the Town are scattered in throughout the low-lying areas between drumlins and adjacent to Putnam Brook and Cold Spring Brook. In addition to wetlands, the town has 1160 acres of soils that are sufficiently wet to be considered 'hydric soils'. In terms of potential for flooding in Brutus, the United States Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) has mapped those areas which, each year, have a 1% chance of flooding. These areas are said to be in the 100-year flood plain. Those areas in the 100-year floodplain, with hydric soils or composed of wetlands are shown in Figure 2.

Soils: Of the nearly 13,000 acres that make up the Town of Brutus, over a third of it - or 4,977 acres - is recognized as USDA Prime Agriculture Farmland. An additional 2,793 acres – or 21% of the Town - is recognized by the State of New York as Farmland of Statewide Significance. The soils that form the basis for the highly regarded agricultural value of the land can be described in terms of its texture. Soil texture refers to the relative proportion of sand, silt and clay size particles in a soil. Clay size particles are the smallest (<.002mm), while sand size particles are the largest (.05mm - 2.0mm).

Silt is a medium size particle. Soils that are dominated by clay are called fine textured soils. Soils dominated by larger particles are referred to as coarse textured soils. A "soil triangle" scaled to indicate percentages of sand, silt and clay is often used as a guide to classifying soils on the basis of texture (see Figure 3 - Soil Triangle).

Soil texture (Figure 4 - Soil Texture) affects many other properties of soil including porosity and permeability. In general, coarse textured soils hold relatively little water, drain rapidly, and are low in fertility. Fine textured soils hold relatively large amounts of water, may be poorly drained or well drained depending on their structure, and can be high or low in fertility depending on the types of clay particles present. Most of the soils in Brutus are either fine loamy or medium-to-fine loamy in texture, especially those in the southeast portion of the Town. The soils in the northwest quarter of the Town are dominated by soils with a fine texture, while the soils near the Seneca River are generally fine-silty or fine-loamy.

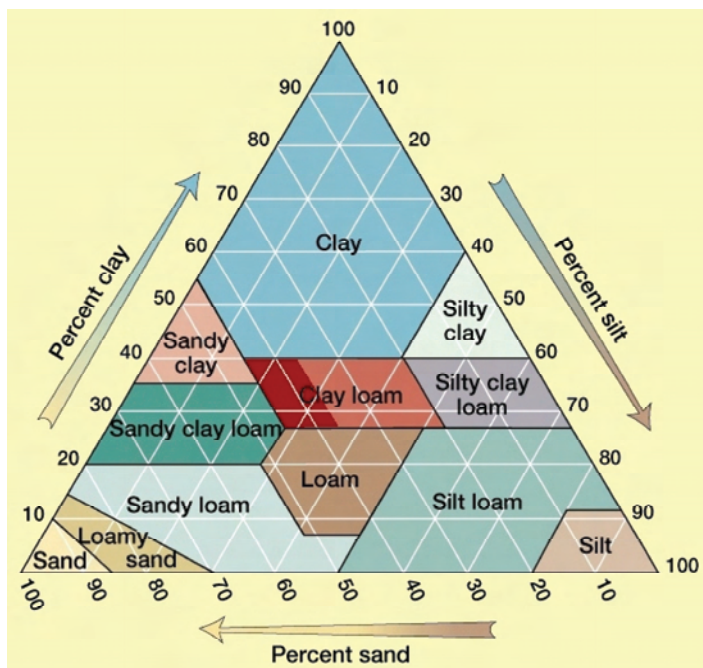


Figure 3: Soil Triangle

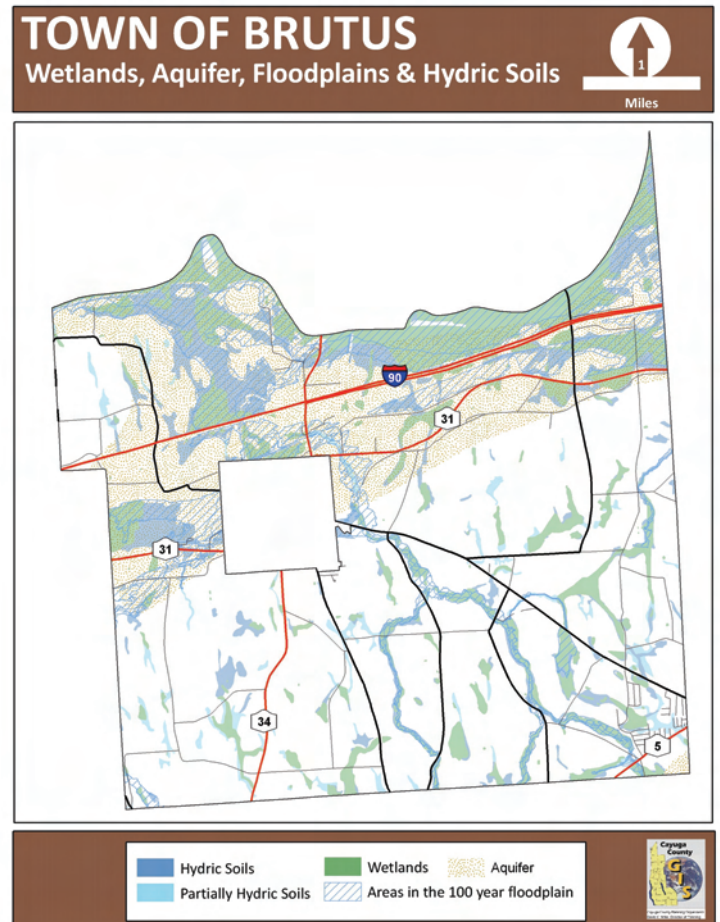


Figure 2: Hydrology of the Town of Brutus

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) groups of soils according to their suitability for field crop production. USDA Prime soils is a classification given to soil groups that produce the highest yields with minimal inputs of energy and economic resources, and farming them results in the least damage to the environment. Soils of statewide significance is a classification to groups of soils considered to be of importance for crop production statewide. These soils are important to agriculture in the state but exhibit some properties that do not meet the Prime Soils criteria, such as seasonal wetness or erodibility. These soils are capable of producing fair to good yields when properly managed. (see Figure 5 - Soils Map of the Town)

Article 25-AA of the New York State Agriculture and Markets Law authorizes the creation of local agricultural districts pursuant to landowner initiative, preliminary county review, state certification, and county adoption. Cayuga County has participated in the creation of Agricultural Districts since the mid to late 1970's with the Town of Brutus currently located in Cayuga County Agricultural District #4.

As of April 2002, 341 agricultural districts existed statewide, containing approximately 21,500 farms and 8.6 million acres (about 30 percent of the State's total land area). Currently over half (57.4%) or 7,342 acres of the Town's land area is in Cayuga County Agricultural District #4. Cayuga County is in the process of consolidating the Agricultural Districts and expects to have this complete by May 2010. New York State's Agricultural Districts law was enacted in 1971 to help keep farmland in active agricultural production.

Land Use in the Town of Brutus

The Town of Brutus is approximately 20 square miles or 12,784 acres. According to an analysis conducted by the Cayuga County Department of Planning and Economic Development, nearly a quarter of the Town's land area – or 3,052 acres - is used for agriculture.¹ Agriculture is second only to residential land use, which accounts for 30% (3,861 acres) of the Town's land area. Other land uses include unimproved land referred to as 'vacant' (9% or 1,126 acres), 140 acres of commercial land, 100 acres of parkland, and less than 100 acres each of industrial uses, public services such as utilities and communications, and community services such as schools, churches and Town buildings.

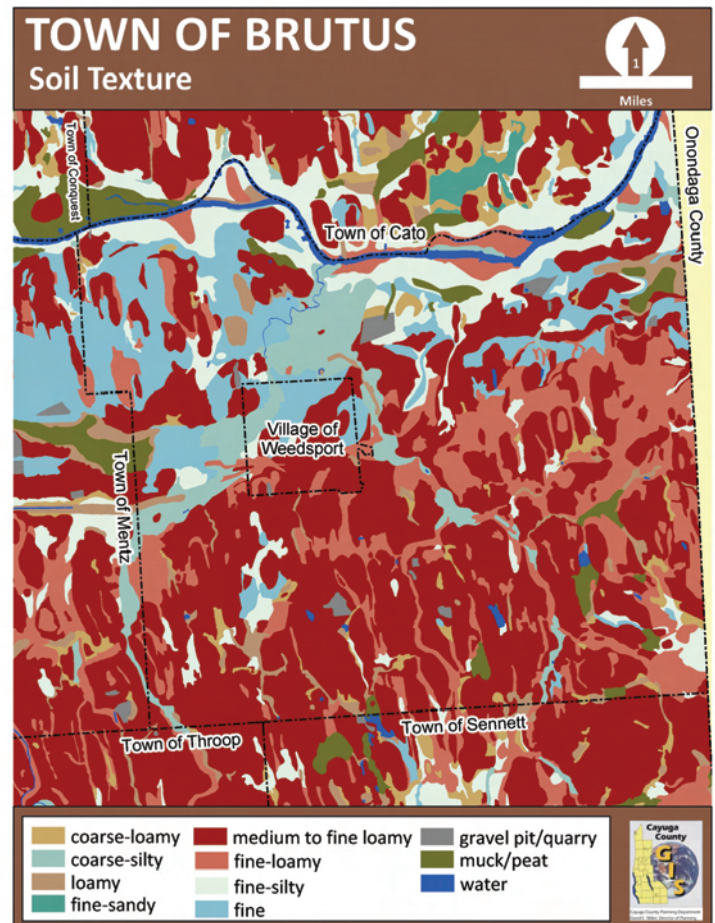


Figure 4: Soil Texture

Farmland Classification	Acres
Not prime farmland	5,013
USDA Prime farmland	4,978
Farmland of Statewide Importance	2,793

Table 1: Acres of Land by Type of Farmland

¹Agricultural use was determined through a visual survey of aerial images from 2006, Town assessor property class codes and validation at public meetings.

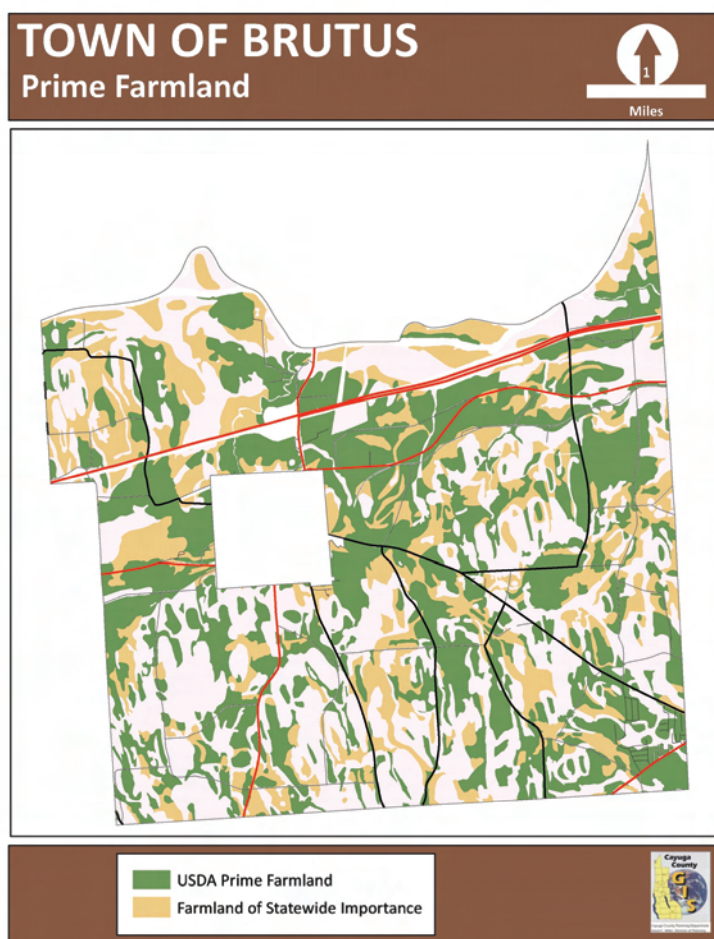


Figure 5: Soils Map of Town of Brutus

Zoning in the Town of Brutus

Brutus has a zoning law that establishes seven districts: residential (R), medium-density residential/agriculture (A-R), high-density residential (R-2), riverfront (R-F), commercial – light industrial (C-I), industrial (I) and special development (S-D).

Agriculture is not currently defined in the law, but the “tilling of the soil” is a permitted use in four of the seven districts covering 91% of the Town’s land area. Only the industrial (I), high-density residential (R-2) and special development (S-D) districts do not list any agricultural activity as an as-of-right use.

The law permits residential uses in all districts except the industrial (I) district. Residential density is regulated by the minimum lot size requirements in each district that range from 6,000 sq. ft. (0.13 acres) in the high-density residential (R-2) district to 25,000 sq. ft. (0.57 acres) in the residential (R) district to 50,000 sq. ft. (1.14 acres) in the medium-density residential / agriculture (A-R) district.

Types of Agriculture in the Town of Brutus

Reports from the Town assessor indicate that the majority of farmland in Town is used for field crops or is otherwise categorized as ‘agriculturally vacant land – productive’². Dairy and cattle farms were the second and third most prevalent agricultural uses in Town with 263 and 171 acres dedicated to each, respectively. There is one greenhouse/nursery facility that occupies 69 acres and one parcel used to produce vegetables or ‘truck crops’.

According to the US Census of Agriculture from 2002, there are 44 farms in the Weedsport zip code, 13166, which the Town of Brutus shares with the Town of Cato to the North (See page 42 in Appendix for Map). On all but one of these farms the owner lives on-site. Over half of the farm operators surveyed reported farming as their primary occupation, while the rest reported having an off-farm job for more than 200 days a year. 16% of the farms reported direct marketing as their primary marketing strategy and no farms reported the use of production contracts.

²A term used to describe land which, though it is in agricultural production, does not have living accommodations and cannot be specifically related to any of the other divisions in the agricultural category

The agricultural production in the Weedsport zip code area is diverse with a variety of plant and animal operations. Of the 44 farms reported in the 2002 Agricultural census, 70% raise hay and other forage, 36% raise corn for grain and 32% for silage and 23% raise soybeans. There are seven farms in the area producing oats, 5 producing wheat, 5 producing vegetables and a least one farm producing berries, potatoes or orchard fruits. In terms of animal production, 14 farms reported having beef cow inventories in 2002, 8 reported having dairy cows and at least one farm reported layers or hogs. Horses were reported on 8 farms.³

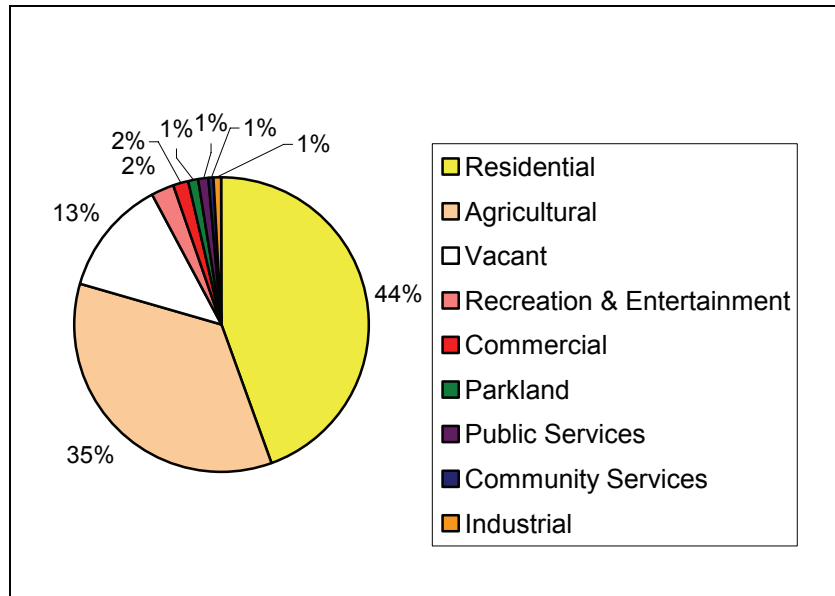


Figure 6: Percent of Town Land Area by Land Use

Of the 19 certified organic farming operations in Cayuga County one is located in the Town of Brutus specializing in soybeans, field corn, triticale, clover hay and wheat⁴.

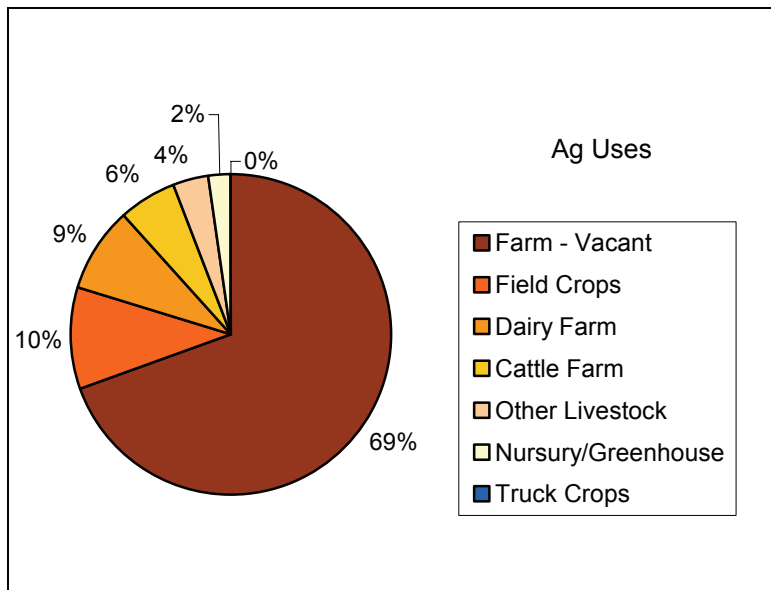


Figure 7: Percent of Agricultural Land by Type of Agriculture

Population Trends

The total population in the Town outside of the Village has decreased by 8.2% (247 people) over the 17 year period from 1990 to 2007. Over the same period, Cayuga County's population only declined by 1.3% (1,070 people). These population losses in both the Town and the County come on the heels of a thirty-year period of robust population growth in which the Town gained 1,944 people – an increase of 181.0% – while the County gained 8,371 people – or 11.3%.

³ USDA National Agricultural Statistics Service (www.nass.usda.gov)

⁴National Organic Food Association of New York (<http://nofany.org>)



Figure 8: Types of Agricultural Operations

A comparison of the Town's population in 1970 and 2000 by age cohort is illustrative of the demographic shifts that are occurring. The base of the pyramid from the year 2000 (P_{2000}) is more narrow than the base of the pyramid from the year 1970 (P_{1970}). This demonstrates a lower birth rate in 2000 than in 1970 resulting in fewer Town residents. The shape of P_{1970} is truly 'pyramidal' with its wide base and a narrow top describing a growing population. P_{2000} , however, is much less 'pyramidal' with a relatively narrow base and more uniform structure. This shape is indicative of a population that is not growing.

Residential Development Trends

Residential development trends may be described in a number of ways. This report considers the number of subdivision approvals, the number of building permits issued, the development of water and sewer infrastructure and a historic residential density analysis.

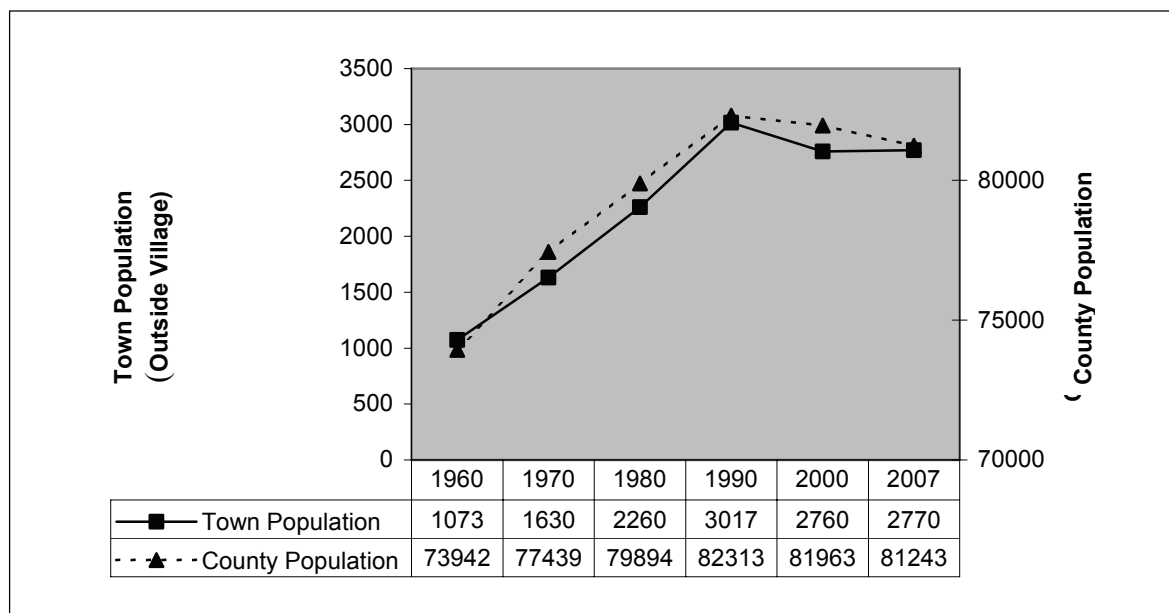


Figure 9: Population Trends in Brutus and Cayuga County

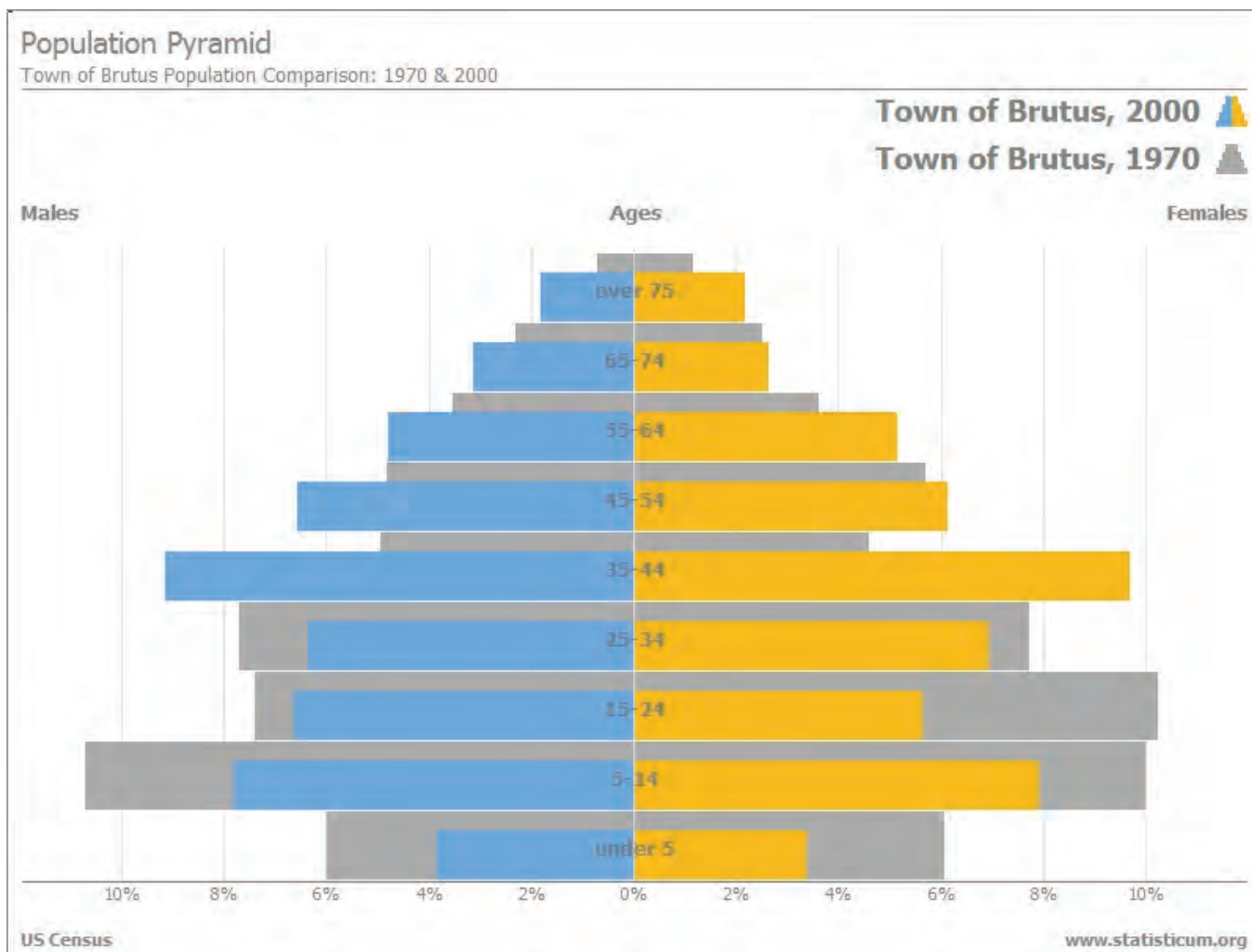


Figure 10: Population of the Town of Brutus

Subdivision and Building Permits: The Cayuga County Clerk’s Office maintains records of new land surveys that have been conducted and filed with their office. A portion of the surveys that have been filed with the County Clerk are performed to show the subdivision of a single existing parcel. A database of such surveys was used to determine the number of new parcels that were created as a result of subdivision between the years 1992 and May of 2009 in the Town of Brutus. Over the 18 year study period, the database identifies 374 new parcels resulting from subdivision, averaging to nearly 21 new parcels per year.⁵ The 18-year trend in the subdivision of land in the Town of Brutus, represented in Figure 11 as the heavy dashed line, is toward an increasing number of subdivisions. To demonstrate the frequency with which the subdivided lots are built on, the chart also shows the number of building permits issued by the Town. The Town provided building permit data for the years 2003 to 2007. The building permit data for this period seems to describe a fairly slow building environment which trends slightly towards fewer new project starts. The data for subdivision and building permits suggests

⁵ It should be noted that over this period the Town lost 8% of its population. The Central New York phenomenon of increasing subdivision and housing development amidst stagnant or decreasing population is referred to as “Sprawl without Growth”.

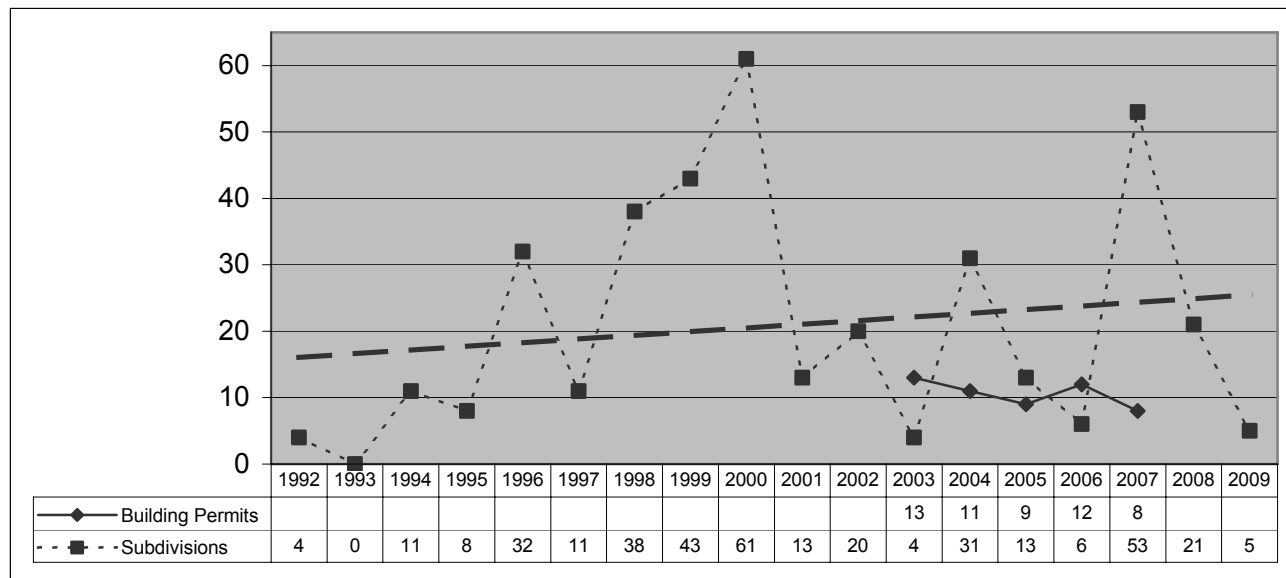


Figure 11: Subdivision Trends

there is a growing number of subdivided parcels on which there is no building activity. This may reflect a greater interest on the part of landowners to sell their land for residential use than the current ability or interest to build in the Town.

Public Water and Sewer Infrastructure: Public water and sewer infrastructure are important precedents to residential development. Without proper sewerage, development density is limited by the land requirements for the proper use of septic systems. In places with limited access to wells that produce an adequate amount of clean, potable water, the potential for development may be limited.

The Town of Brutus has two types of public waterlines: municipal waterlines and Cayuga County Water and Sewer Authority waterlines. The municipal waterlines service the Village of Weedsport via a main trunk running through the Town along Weedsport Sennett Road from the Town of Sennett. Additional municipal waterlines extend up to the Town of Sennett but stop at the Brutus/Sennett border on Jericho Road and Shepherd Road. The Cayuga County Water and Sewer Authority (CCWSA) has a waterline which runs east to west through the town following Towpath Road from the Town's border with Onondaga County, through the Village of Weedsport and picking up Route 31 to continue on into the Town of Mentz. CCWSA also has a line that extends south along Pump Road from the intersection of Pump Road and Towpath Road. This line services the higher density residential area in the southeast corner of the town. Several branches extend east from the Pump Road line toward the Town of Elbridge in Onondaga County.

Other water infrastructure in the town includes a CCSWA water tank located off of East Brutus Street Road near Woodside Lane, a municipal water tank just south of the Village of Weedsport on Weedsport Sennett Road, and a CCSWA pump house located at Clinton Road and Pump Road.

At this time sewer service is limited to the Village limits. To identify sewer districts in Brutus, the Cayuga County Office of Real Property Services (CCORPS) database was consulted to identify those

parcels within the Town that are subject to a special sewer district tax. The database produced no such parcels in the Town of Brutus. The Village of Weedsport has a Village Sewer District with a service area limited to the Village boundary.

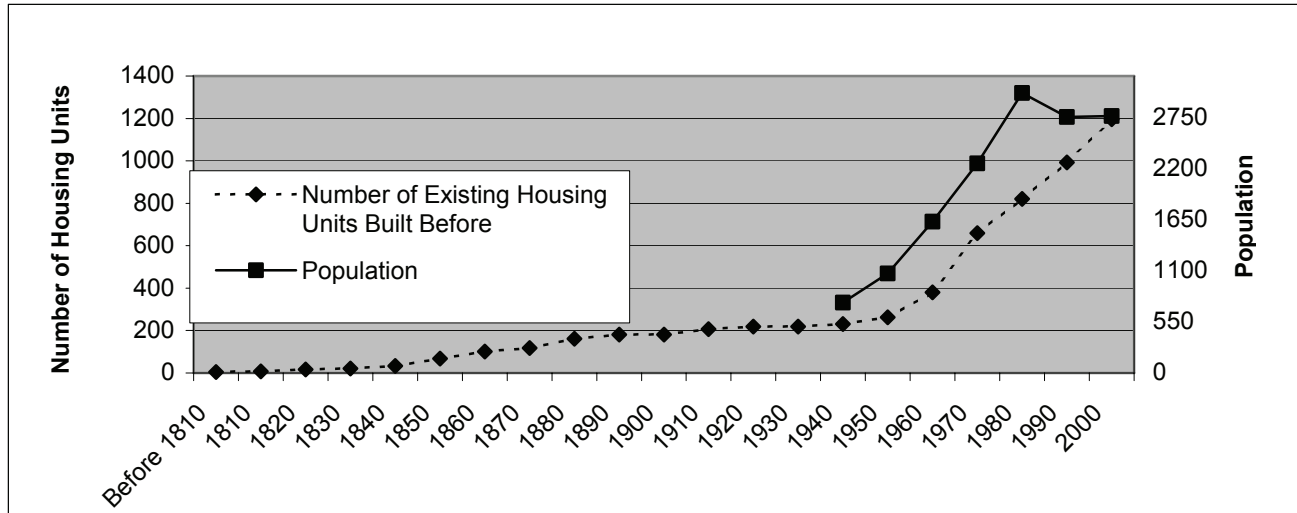


Figure 12: Age of Existing Housing Stock (including mobile homes)

Historic Residential Density Analysis: According to Cayuga County Emergency 911 database, the Town of Brutus has, as of June 2009, 1196 residential addresses. This number includes mobile homes, apartment units, and single-family residential homes among other types of residential buildings. Figure 12 describes the amount of land that is currently attributed to each type of residential use. This description of the current residential land use is a static look at current conditions. For a look at how residential land use has changed over time, a historic residential density analysis was conducted.

The analysis joins address points from the Cayuga County Emergency 911 database with information collected by the Town assessor detailing the year each structure was built. Unfortunately, “year-built” data is often either not available or unreliable for mobile homes. For this reason mobile homes are excluded from the analysis. Though mobile homes make up a significant portion of the residential dwelling units in the Town, most are found within several mobile home parks in the Town’s southeast area. For purposes of this discussion, only non-mobile homes with the attached “year built” data were used. These points were separated into 12 cohorts based on the decade each house was built. Using the density function in ESRI’s spatial analyst toolbox, a gradated display of address points per square mile was produced for each of the 12 time-period cohorts.

This map series sheds light on how housing development has occurred in the Town. It does not take into account those houses that were built and subsequently removed, but it does help one to visualize where homebuilding has occurred over the given periods of time and how that homebuilding has affected the overall development pattern in the Town. For example, much of the East Brutus Street Road – Cottle Road corridor was developed between 1951 and 1980, while most of the development along Tanner Road between Route 34 and Hoyt Road happened since 1971.

1800 - 1850



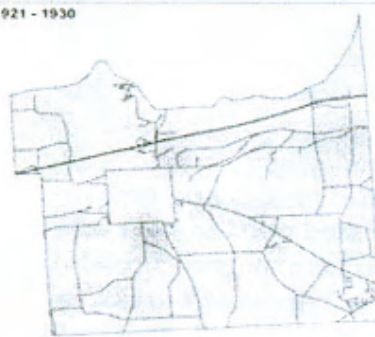
1851 - 1900



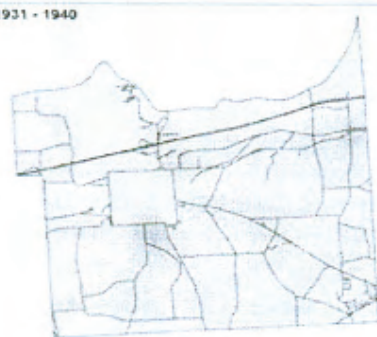
1901 - 1920



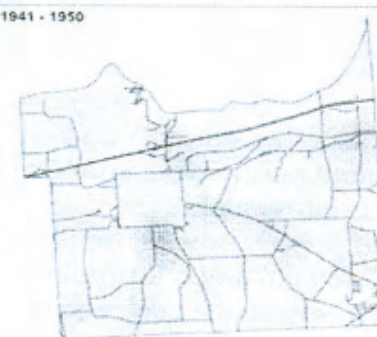
1921 - 1930



1931 - 1940



1941 - 1950



1951 - 1960



1961 - 1970



1971 - 1980



1981 - 1990



1991 - 2000



2000 - 2009



Figure 13: Residential Density Over Time (Non-mobile Homes)

The analysis has three shortcomings. Most importantly, it does not take into consideration mobile homes. The development of the mobile home parks in the southeastern corner of the town has fundamentally shifted the town's residential center of gravity and predicated the extension of water infrastructure to service the density. Second, it does not take into consideration the address points from the Village of Weedsport or adjacent towns. If this analysis did take into consideration such address points, the map series would show higher densities in the Town around the Village and Town boundaries. Finally, it does not consider those homes that were built and subsequently torn down. The extent to which this distorts the residential density shown on the map series is thought to be minimal.

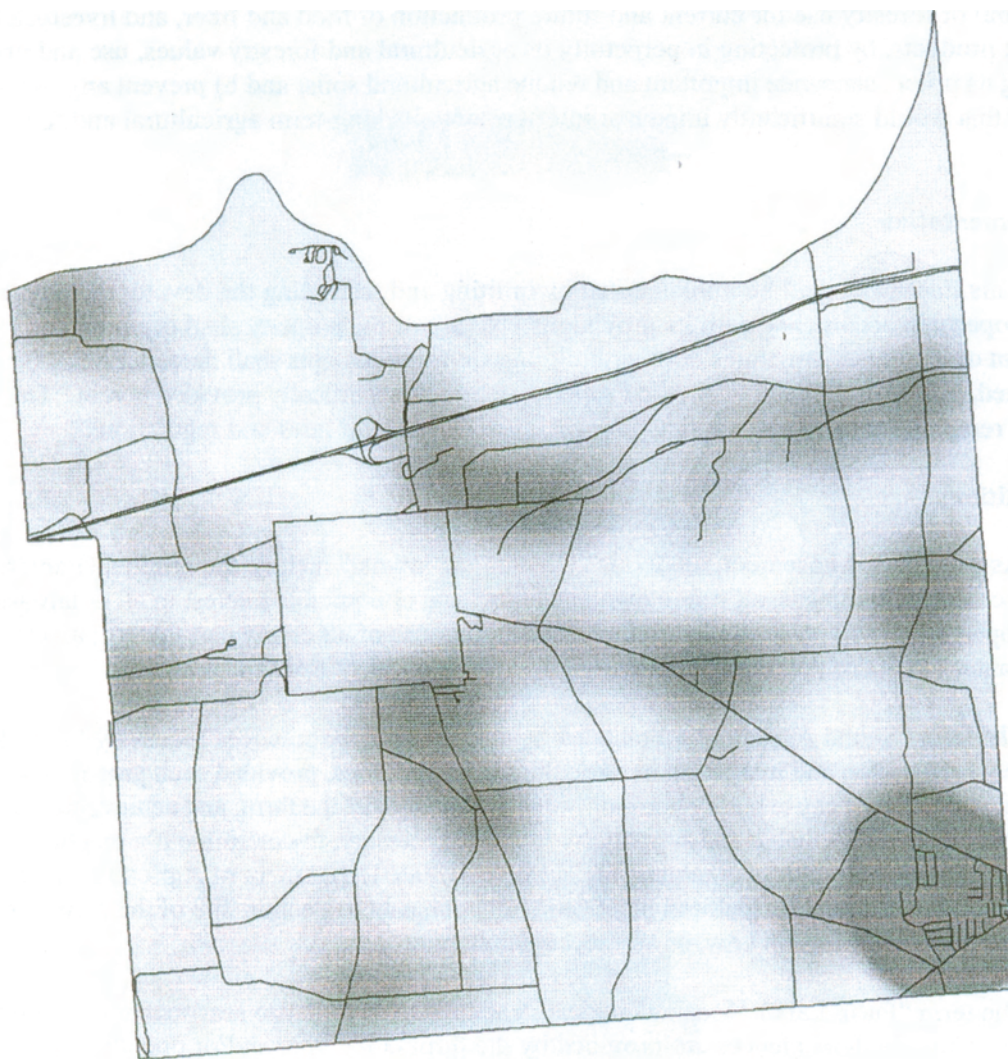


Figure 14: 2009 Residential Density (including mobile homes)

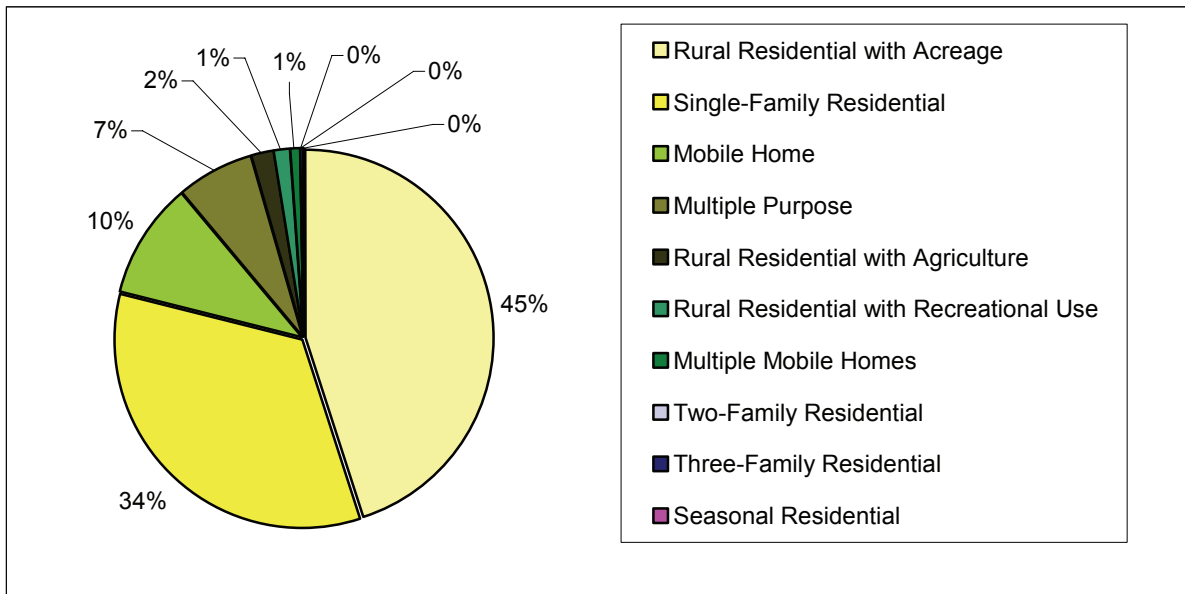


Figure 15: Residential Land Use by Type

Fiscal Impact of Agriculture in the Town of Brutus

According to the Cayuga County Office of Real Property Services (CCORPS) the total market value (or equalized full value) of all property in the Town of Brutus amounts to \$119.9 million - of which \$12.8 million or 10.6% is derived from agricultural parcels⁶ (both land and buildings). After the \$2.3 million agricultural district property tax exemption is removed from the total market value of the agricultural parcels \$10.3 million in taxable market value remains from agricultural parcels.

Given the tax rates shown in Table 2 from 2009, property taxes generated from agricultural parcels in the Town of Brutus sum to \$327,614, accounting for almost 10% of the \$3.4 million in property taxes collected in the Town. More specifically, they generate:

- \$20,617** for the Town of Brutus;
- \$84,971** for Cayuga County;
- \$1,705** for the Cayuga Community College; and
- \$220,321** for the Weedsport Central School District.

EQ Rate	0.97
School District Tax Rate (per 1000)	21.315524
Town Tax Rate (per 1000)	1.99462
County Tax Rate (per 1000)	8.22069
Community College Tax Rate (per 1000)	0.16499

Table 2: Tax Rate Table

There are tax advantages to maintaining farmland and keeping a control on residential development. Cost of Community Services Studies (COCS), developed by American Farmland Trust determine the

⁶ For the purposes of the fiscal analysis an “agricultural parcel” was defined as one that either has been identified by the Town assessor as ‘agricultural’ (a property classification code in the 100s) or on which an agricultural district property tax exemption (exemptions 41720) was claimed.

difference between taxes generated by different types of land uses and the cost of services each type of land use requires. Over fifteen of these studies have been conducted in New York and the results are all similar. While the ratios vary from town to town, the overwhelming conclusion is that agriculture pays more than its share of the cost of services while residences receive more services than they pay for. On average the COCSs for New York towns found that only 29 cents for every dollar generated by farms was necessary to provide the services for the farm's parcels. The surplus (71 cents) that farms provide helps to offset the deficit created by residences. On average the COCSs found that residences require \$1.27 in services for every dollar they generate in taxes. Farmland provides many benefits including a net tax gain.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Public input was a major consideration for the Town of Brutus Agriculture and Farmland Protection Plan. Public support will be critical for the implementation of the plan and must have input from residents as well as local elected officials. To accomplish this, a citizen advisory committee was formed and four meetings were scheduled. The public was invited, all Agriculture Advisory Committee meetings and they were open to the public. In order to have significant input from the farm community, one-on-one interviews were conducted with eleven farmers, agribusiness owners, and farm landowners. The summary of these interviews can be found in the Appendix.

To create as much enthusiasm for the Plan as possible, all landowners of property shown on the Town's assessment rolls as agricultural received written notices of the initial organizational meeting, held April 15, 2008, for the planning project and of subsequent Agriculture Advisory Committee meetings. This meeting was attended by about two dozen people – a mix of community members, farmers, and committee members. It was designed to educate interested individuals on the planning process and why it was being undertaken, but was primarily an opportunity for the community to express their thoughts and feelings about agriculture in the Town of Brutus. This was done with a series of open ended questions asked of those in attendance. The agenda and notes are in the Appendix. Overall, those in attendance at the public meetings were supportive of agriculture, generally liked Brutus's quality of life, and wanted the rural character of the community to remain while encouraging growth that would support that quality of life.

Subsequent meetings were held for the Agriculture Advisory Committee on 5/29/08, 11/13/08, 12/11/08, and 4/8/09 with the public invited and in attendance. The first, held May 29, 2008, had approximately 15 in attendance and provided a review of the Kick-Off meeting and sought to confirm the summary, identify a list of interviews and further review and refine Town maps. The November 13, 2008 meeting provided a summary of the individual interviews and start the discussion of the goals as well as finalized the town agricultural land use and related maps.

A third public meeting was held December 11, 2008 with the Agriculture Advisory Committee members and several interested Town residents in attendance. The interview summary was reviewed to bring everyone up to date and then there was a discussion of the proposed goals and recommendations with background information about the recommendations provided.

At the April 8, 2009 an Agriculture Advisory Committee meeting was conducted with approximately twelve present. This meeting focused around the prospect to establish Rural Residential and Agricultural zoning districts and a review of the recommendations for the plans goals. There was general consensus that all was in order and that a draft plan would be written for the committee to review mid- July.

Beginning in September 30, 2009 three meetings were conducted to solicit public input on the draft Plan (9/30, 10/14 and 10/15). The draft plan was also placed on the Town's website. Advertisements were placed in the local Shopper to advise the public of these meetings and the availability of the draft on the website. Twelve members of the community attended the three meetings. A draft incorporating the public input will be presented to the Town Board on December 14, 2009 for further public comment. Comments and suggested changes received at the December 14th hearing will be incorporated into the Plan.

FARMLAND PROTECTION AND PRIORITIZATION

The majority of the farmland in the Town of Brutus is in the current Residential/Agriculture (A-R) and Residential (R) zones. The farmland in current production, especially those with soils designated Prime and Soils of Statewide Significance, were identified as the land most important to protect with the appropriate tools identified in the recommendations section of this Plan.

An inventory of the town's farmland and a spatial analysis was prepared to better understand how farmland is distributed throughout the town and what relationships may exist between farmland and residential development. The farmland inventory consisted of those parcels of land which are located within the existing agriculture/residential (A-R) zoning district and either:

- had been identified by the town assessor as being in agricultural use (with NYSORPS property class codes in the 100s), OR
- were identified by the town assessor as parcels in residential use and which the CCGIS identified as larger than 10 acres, OR
- a parcel received an agricultural assessment for property tax purposes.

The analysis also considered, among other indicators of agricultural viability including large contiguous parcels, location of prime farmland and farmland of statewide importance, location of waterlines and types of agricultural operations.

A review of the location of farmland and agricultural lands in relation to zoning district boundaries helps to identify opportunities and challenges for continued agricultural use of the land. The review revealed that of all parcels of land recognized by the NYSORPS data as agricultural (Land Use Codes 100 – 199), Brutus agricultural assessment parcels, and Agricultural District lands, approximately 80% are located within two Zoning Districts – Residential/Agriculture (A-R) and Residential (R). Not surprisingly, as listed in Table 1, these two zoning districts also contain the highest percentages of prime and statewide important soils, a USDA classification system that identifies good soils for agriculture and described in the local analysis.

In the Town:

- 4978 acres (39%) are prime
- 2793 acres (22%) are of statewide importance
- 5013 acres (39%) are not prime or of statewide importance

In the AR Zone:

- 3747 acres (37%) are prime
- 2136 acres (21%) are of statewide importance
- 3732 acres (37%) are not prime or of statewide importance
- 391 acres (4%) would be prime if they were drained

Other stats:

- 75% of the Town's Prime farmland is in the AR District
- 77% of the Town's farmland of Statewide importance is in the AR District
- 78% of the Town's land is in the AR District

Conversion Pressure

Targeting new residential development towards the Village of Weedsport and other residential areas of the Town (per the Recommendations section) is key to reducing the fragmentation of agricultural lands that occurs with scattered lot residential development. Based on a visual drive through the Town of Brutus it is evident that agricultural land has been lost to scattered lot residential development. So far, it has not been rapid compared to other areas of the region and state but every time a few acres of quality soils are removed from production their chances of ever returning to production agriculture are minimal. There is continued potential for lands to be converted along the many State Routes and well maintained Town roads. At the eastern edge of the Town in particular there is development pressure. NYS Route 5 in this area provides fast and easy access to Syracuse and commuters are choosing to live in this area, not only in Brutus, but in the adjoining Towns of Sennett and Elbridge.

During the past decade water lines have been extended east from the Village of Weedsport along NYS Rt. 31 and adjoining roads to developing areas near NYS Rt. 5. Now water lines exist throughout the eastern portion of the Town, along NYS Rt. 31 between Weedsport and Port Byron and new lines are under consideration north of the Village of Weedsport along NYS Rt. 34. Several persons interviewed for this Plan expressed a desire for public water to be available to them without offering the pressure for conversion as a concern. New home pressure is greater when water lines are present as often the farmer or land owner needs to try and recover some of the costs associated with public water. Zoning techniques in combination with lateral line and hook up restrictions become important tools to manage growth in agricultural areas of the Town with public water.

Prioritizing Agricultural Land

A set of maps prepared by Cayuga County Department of Planning and Economic Development illustrate that there are concentrations of viable agricultural parcels within the Town's AR Zone. In most cases these concentrations coincide with the best agricultural soils in the Town, patterns of individual investment in farm infrastructure, documented interest in the NYS PDR program, and locations of NYS Ag Districts within the Town. Non-farm development within the AR Zone tends to be concentrated, again a condition that is well illustrated by the County Planning Department maps.

It is these areas of agricultural concentration within the Town's current AR Zoning district that make up the first priority for protection by this Plan. Certainly isolated, viable farms are found elsewhere in the Town and it is not the Town's intention to ignore them, but, rather to utilize tools that are more individually targeted such as the protections of the State Ag District program and PDR, to protect this group of farms.

The maps shown below illustrate the areas of agricultural concentration in the Town's current AR Zone.

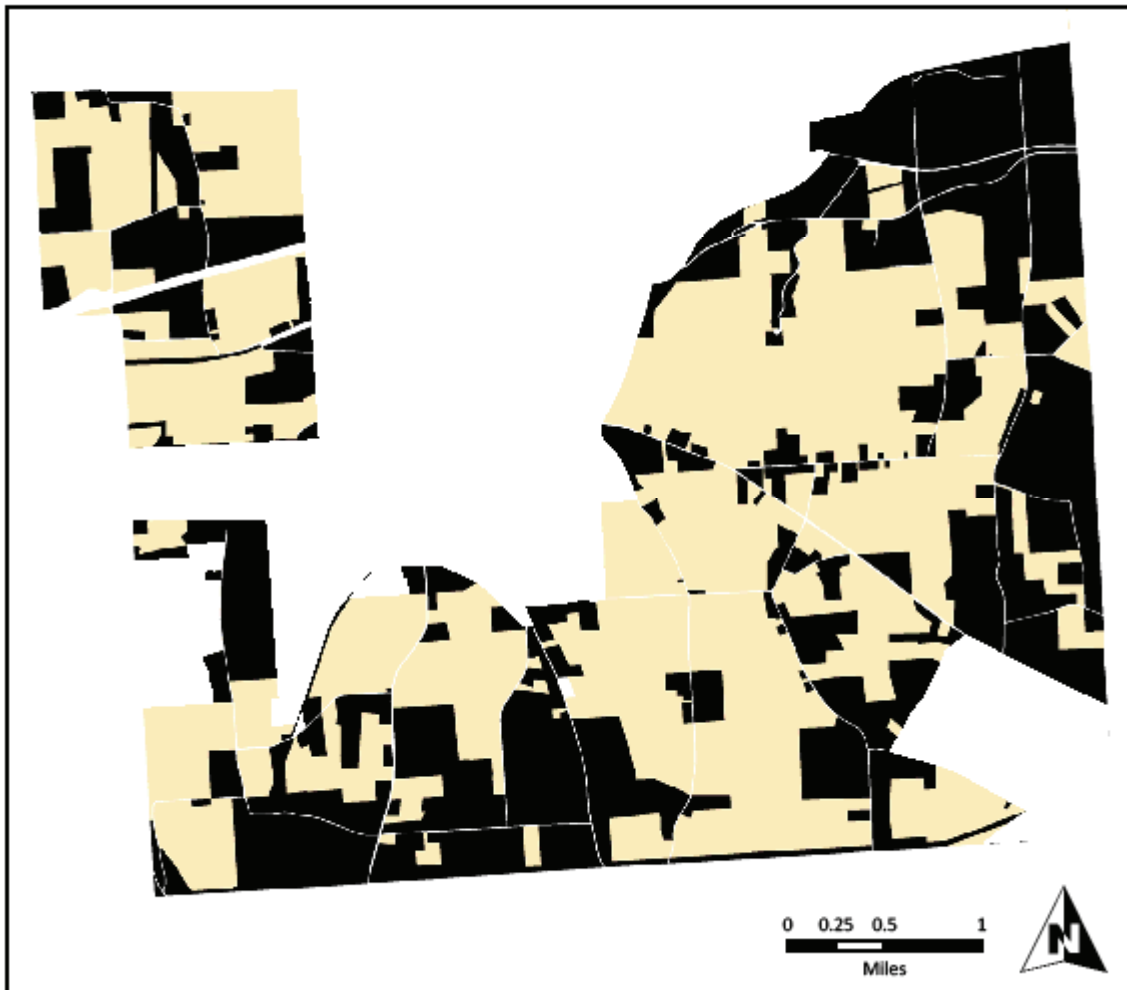
Town of Brutus

Agricultural Uses in AR Zone

March 2009

Legend

 Agriculture  Non-Agricultural



Town of Brutus

Residential Uses in AR Zone

March 2009

Legend

- House on Lot >10acres
- Residential Parcel <10 Acres
- Non-Residential



VISION, GOALS, RECOMMENDATIONS & ACTIONS

Vision Statement

The Town of Brutus values agriculture and recognizes the importance farms play in maintaining rural character and strengthening the regional economy. The town seeks to proactively support agriculture by working to retain valuable farmland and provide opportunities for agricultural businesses to grow.

Introduction to Goal #1

Farms are an important sector of the local economy and need town support to continue to operate productively. As is typical of many upstate New York towns, Brutus's history and rural character is based in the business of farming in the town. Without an agricultural business base, the town stands to lose the rural character and open space that farming provides.

Goal #1: Support current and future farm businesses by building public support for agriculture and farmland protection in the Town supporting economic opportunities for local farmers and related businesses:

Recommendations:

- **Adopt a municipal Right to Farm Law to demonstrate local support for agriculture and mitigate possible future conflicts between farmers and non-farm neighbors.**

Typically, right-to-farm laws are aimed at maintaining a supportive operating environment for farmers. They document the importance of farming to a town and put non-farm residents on notice that generally accepted agricultural practices are to be expected in farming areas. Such laws can provide farmers and agricultural landowners a sense of security knowing that farming is a valued and accepted activity in the community. Identify locations in town for the placement of Right to Farm Law signs.

- **Encourage agribusinesses to locate in the Town's commercial and industrial zones.**

Local farmers depend upon machinery dealers, fertilizer companies and other area businesses to sell them goods and services. Many farmers also depend upon trucking companies, distribution centers and food processors to market their products to consumers. The town's location as a gateway from the NYS Thruway into the county's strong agricultural economy could make it a desirable location for new or expanding agribusinesses that will support local farmers.

The permitted uses within the town's current commercial and industrial zones should be reviewed to insure that they permit farming as well as related agribusinesses, such as food processing, food storage and distribution and farm machinery dealerships. The town should also work with the Cayuga County Department of Planning and Economic Development to recruit and offer additional incentives to agribusinesses to locate in these areas.

- **Work with the Cayuga County Agriculture and Farmland Protection Board to update the County Agriculture and Farmland Protection Plan. Engage Town of Brutus farmers, agricultural landowners and local officials in the County plan update process.**

The current County Plan was adopted in 1996 and is now outdated. When the Plan was developed the State's Purchase of Development Right's program was just beginning and it was not perceived as a viable program for Cayuga County. Only five years later, the first farm in the county was awarded funding which since created increased demand for the program on the local level.

Landowners in the Town of Brutus will continue to apply through the County process. Having representation from the Town in the update process will ensure that agriculture not only in the Town but north of Auburn is included in this important document. Additionally, the Town of Brutus should encourage Cayuga County to promote opportunities and strategies to attract agribusinesses to Brutus and Weedsport as part of the county's overall agricultural economic development strategy.

- **Encourage farmers to seek positions on all local boards in order to have consistent representation from the farm community in all aspects of local government.**

Historically and currently farmers have been active members of these boards. The single best way to insure that agricultural business interests are represented in local decisions is to continue to have farmer members on as many local boards and committees as possible.

- **Establish a Town Agricultural Advisory Committee.**

This committee should be comprised of at least 5 members who are either farmers or own agricultural land in the Town and are closely associated with agriculture. This committee will spearhead implementation of Brutus' Agriculture and Farmland Protection Plan, act in an advisory capacity to the Town Board, Planning Board, Zoning Board of Appeals, Code Enforcement Officer and Town Assessor on issues impacting agriculture and could serve as a dispute resolution mechanism for farmer/neighbor conflicts.

- **Adopt the Town of Brutus Agriculture and Farmland Protection Plan as part of the Town of Brutus's Comprehensive Plan when it is developed. Update the Agriculture and Farmland Protection Plan at regular intervals, such as when the Comprehensive Plan zoning code are updated**

Introduction to Goal #2

Although there is still a lot of agriculture in the town, many residents are a few generations removed from the farm and have limited occasions to visit working farms. This can create a disconnect between the producers of food and the consumers, sometimes leading to misunderstandings about production practices, food safety, and environmental stewardship. The Town can help to facilitate discussions between farmers and the non-farm public, and provide educational opportunities.

Goal #2: Educate the non-farm public in the Town of Brutus about the value and current state of agriculture in the Town and how to have good relationships with neighboring farms:

Recommendations:

- **Consider establishing a regular Town newsletter on the internet which consistently includes articles about agriculture and related issues identified in the draft plan.**

Some of those interviewed felt that they were not as informed of local activities as they could be. The development and distribution of a digital town newsletter would provide an opportunity to provide important updates and discussions of agricultural issues, property tax relief programs, farm-related events or news.

- **Utilize the “Town of Brutus Agriculture and Farmland Protection Plan” publication to promote the benefits of agriculture to the Town.**

The Plan should be posted to the Town’s website and an executive summary should be distributed to town residents.

- **Work with the Brutus Historical Museum to promote its displays of local agricultural history.**

Work to increase awareness of the permanent agricultural displays at the Museum. These include historic tractors and agricultural tools used in the area and a replica of an early farm kitchen. Perhaps the Town Agricultural Advisory Board could support a specific annual event at the Museum such as a Farm Day/Weekend. Finally, local grade school students currently visit the Museum annually as part of their study of New York history, including local agricultural history. It is recommended that these efforts be continued and if possible enhanced.

- **Work with local schools to encourage the implementation of or support established Ag in the Classroom programs.**

Introduction to Goal #3

Maintaining the agricultural land base in Brutus is good fiscal policy for the town. Farmland requires less in services than the property taxes paid on the land, and the businesses that work the land contribute to the local economy. Development pushing at the edges of Brutus and out from the Village in addition to scattered lot residential development puts pressure on local farmland for conversion. It is necessary to proactively protect the land on which farms depend.

Goal #3: Protect farmland by identifying high quality agricultural lands in the Town of Brutus that are at risk for conversion and adopting appropriate protection strategies and tools:

Recommendations:

- **Establish a local Farmland Protection Program to permanently protect blocks of high quality farmland in Brutus.**

Purchase of Development Right (PDR) is a voluntary program that pays landowners for permanently protecting their land for agriculture. Many communities in New York State have developed local PDR programs which pay landowners to extinguish their right to develop their land with a deed restriction known as a conservation easement; this easement runs with the deed forever. The goal of an agricultural conservation easement is to protect the land to help support the business of farming and to conserve productive soils for future generations of farmers. PDR can be applied to agricultural properties as well as lands with scenic, natural, or other open space values.

Currently Cayuga County AFPB has a pre-application process to rank and select the farms that are competitive on the state level. This ranking process can be used to help select Town of Brutus farms interested in participating in the State's program. In 2008 the County could submit a maximum of five farms and towns can submit a maximum of two farms per funding cycle. Historically, Town of Brutus farms have not ranked high in the County's pre-application process due to the higher Prime and Statewide soils found on farms south of Auburn. This ranking does not preclude the state desiring to fund farms north of Auburn where there are significant quantities of desirable soils, pressure to convert land from farming and that there is a significant public resource that the farm protects.

The town, working in partnership with the County AFPB will allow for a strong town application and help to supplement and diversify protected farms throughout Cayuga County to continue a strong agriculture industry. Specific actions that Brutus should consider include:

- Work with Cayuga County Department of Economic Development and Planning and Cornell Cooperative Extension to host workshops for landowners from Brutus about New York's Farmland Protection Program and other farmland conservation options.

- Reach out to local land trusts, such as New York Agricultural Land Trust, about partnership opportunities for permanently protecting farmland.
 - Distribute a letter annually to Brutus farmland owners inviting those interested in protecting their land to contact the town. Use the town's farmland prioritization system developed as part of this plan to rank prospective projects. Work with landowners to develop competitive projects that include concentrations of high quality farmland.
 - Consider allocating town funding to hire a grant writer to assist in the development of applications to New York's Farmland Protection Program.
 - Support increased funding for New York's Farmland Protection Program and the United States Department of Agriculture's Farm and Ranchland Protection Program to enhance the likelihood of securing funding to protect farms in Brutus.
- **Evaluate the potential for adopting a term conservation easement law.**

Work with the Cayuga County Department of Planning and Economic Development to research the costs and benefits of creating a town program that would reduce property tax assessments for participating agricultural landowners in exchange for a term conservation easement on their agricultural property. Consider options for providing expanded benefits to beginning farmers by linking property tax reductions for a specified time period to minimum land use and percentage of income from farming.

- **Consider the creation of an Agricultural Zoning District.**

The Town of Brutus should consider the establishment of an Agricultural Zoning District to insure a supportive operating environment for farms and related agribusinesses. Such a zoning district may include provisions such as:

- Agriculture and related businesses are the preferred land use. All other proposed uses are to be judged on their compatibility with agriculture.
- Provide current definitions of agriculture, agricultural commerce, farmers markets and related agricultural terms.
- Include "right to farm" language in the code to reinforce farmers' ability to use sound agricultural practices.
- Clearly authorize agricultural production, processing and marketing as well as related agricultural commerce that is compatible with farming.
- Consider modifications to density requirements to encourage residential development on smaller parcels at lower densities.

- **Modify the town’s Subdivision Regulations to mitigate the conversion of high quality farmland and reduce the impacts of new subdivisions on nearby farm operations.**

Consider changes to Brutus’ Subdivision Regulations to encourage the continued viability of agriculture within the community including:

- Add goals related to agriculture to the Purpose section such as “promoting the long-term health and viability of the town’s agricultural industry and reducing conflicts between farmers and non-farm neighbors”;
- Evaluate definitions to insure that terms such as “high quality farmland” and other agricultural terms are included;
- Require that the Planning Board transmit a copy of preliminary plats within 500 feet of land enrolled in a state-certified Agricultural District or a new town Agricultural Zoning District to Cayuga County’s Agriculture and Farmland Protection Board;
- Require that state-certified Agricultural Districts, highly productive farmland (prime or statewide important soils), field tiling and ditching that extends off the property and farm roadways be identified during the preliminary plat or layout stage;
- Require proposals describe the anticipated traffic to be generated and compatibility with local roadways as well as nearby farming operations;
- Require a filing of an agricultural data statement for projects proposed within 500 feet of a farm operation in a state-certified Agricultural District;
- Include new design standards aimed at enhancing the compatibility of new subdivisions with agriculture including placing utility lines and service lines underground below plow depth and citing driveways along field edges.
- Require buffers be located on proposed residential subdivisions neighboring farm fields and consider requiring the vegetative buffers be designed and installed on proposed subdivisions on open land.

Introduction to Goal #4

Property taxes can be a significant burden for farmers and rural landowners. Efforts to reduce property taxes can help keep land available for farming.

Goal #4: *Protect the town's rural character by evaluating the impacts of farm and forestland on local taxes and the demand for public services and working to encourage citing of non-farm public infrastructure near Village and other developed areas:*

Recommendations:

- **Annually distribute information to agricultural landowners about property tax relief programs such as agricultural assessment, farm building exemptions and Farmers School Tax Credit to insure that farmland owners are taking advantage of existing programs.**
- **Encourage adoption of agricultural assessment values in current and future special taxing jurisdictions (fire, ambulance, library, etc.).**
- **Promote more rigorous consideration of the growth inducing and fiscal impacts of road, sewer and water infrastructure in an Agricultural Zone that may be formed, or in proximity to working farms regardless of the zoning district in which they are located.**
 - Adopt the New York State Department of Agricultural and Markets recommended guidelines for connections to water lines in the Agricultural Zone when it is formed, and be certain that these are part of any districts established within NYS Ag Districts within the Town.

Guideline from NYSDAM regarding lateral water line hook ups are part of this Plan for consideration.

IMPLEMENTATION MATRIX

Goal #1: Support current and future farm businesses by building public support for agriculture and farmland protection in the Town supporting economic opportunities for local farmers and related businesses. Farms are an important sector of the local economy and need town support to continue to operate productively. As is typical of many upstate New York towns, Brutus's history and rural character is based in the business of farming in the town. Without an agricultural business base, the town stands to lose the rural character and open space that farming provides.

Recommendations:

- **Establish a Town Agricultural Advisory Committee.**
Implementation Responsibility: Town Board and Town Attorney
Budget Considerations: Town Staff time
Funding Resources: Allocation of funding for Town staff time
Priority: Easy (Year 1)
- **Adopt a municipal Right to Farm Law to demonstrate local support for agriculture and mitigate possible future conflicts between farmers and non-farm neighbors.**
Implementation Responsibility: Town Agricultural Advisory Committee, Town Attorney and Town Board
Budget Considerations: Volunteer Committee Time, Town Staff time
Funding Resources: Allocation of funding for Town Staff time
Priority: Easy (Year 1)
- **Encourage agribusinesses to locate in the Town's commercial and industrial zones.**
Implementation Responsibility: Town Agricultural Advisory Committee, Planning Board, Cayuga County Department of Planning and Economic Development, County IDA
Budget Considerations: Volunteer Committee time, Town Staff time
Funding Resources: Allocation of Town Staff time
Priority: Moderate (Year 1 to 3)
- **Work with the Cayuga County Agricultural and Farmland Protection Board to update the County Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan. Engage Town of Brutus farmers, agricultural landowners and local officials in the County plan update process.**
Implementation Responsibility: Town Agricultural Advisory Committee, Town Board, Cayuga County Department of Planning and Economic Development
Budget Considerations: Volunteer Committee time, Town Staff time
Funding Resources: Allocation of Town Staff time
Priority: Moderate (Year 1 to 3)

- **Encourage farmers to seek positions on all local boards in order to have consistent representation from the farm community in all aspects of local government.**

Implementation Responsibility: Town Agricultural Advisory Committee

Budget Considerations: Volunteer Committee time

Funding Resources:

Priority: Easy (Yearly)

- **Adopt the Town of Brutus Agriculture and Farmland Protection Plan as part of the Town of Brutus's Comprehensive Plan when it is developed. Update the Agriculture and Farmland Protection Plan at regular intervals, such as when the Comprehensive Plan zoning code are updated.**

Implementation Responsibility: Planning Board, Town Board and Town Attorney with assistance from Town Agricultural Advisory Committee

Budget Considerations: Town Staff time

Funding Resources: Allocation of funding for Town staff time, Volunteer time

Priority: Moderate (1-3 years or whenever the Town Comprehensive Plan is adopted)

Goal #2: Educate the non-farm public in the Town of Brutus about the value and current state of agriculture in the Town and how to have good relationships with neighboring farms. Although there is still a lot of agriculture in the town, many residents are a few generations removed from the farm and have limited occasions to visit working farms. This can create a disconnect between the producers of food and the consumers, sometimes leading to misunderstandings about production practices, food safety, and environmental stewardship. The Town can help to facilitate discussions between farmers and the non-farm public, and provide educational opportunities.

Recommendations:

- **Consider establishing a regular Town newsletter on the internet which consistently includes articles about agriculture and related issues identified in the draft plan.**

Implementation Responsibility: Town Board with assistance from Town Agricultural Advisory Committee

Budget Considerations: Town Staff time

Funding Resources: Allocation of funding for Town staff time, Volunteer time

Priority: Moderate (Year 1)

- **Utilize the "Town of Brutus Agriculture and Farmland Protection Plan" publication to promote the benefits of agriculture to the Town and share with new residents.**

Implementation Responsibility: Town Board with assistance from Town Agricultural Advisory Committee

Budget Considerations: Town Staff time

Funding Resources: Allocation of funding for Town staff time, Volunteer time

Priority: Easy to Moderate (Years 1 to 3)

- **Work with the Brutus Historical Museum to promote its displays of local agricultural history.**

Implementation Responsibility: Town Agricultural Advisory Committee

Budget Considerations: Town Staff time

Funding Resources: Volunteer time, some possible Town staff time

Priority: Moderate to Difficult (Years 3 to 5)

- **Work with local schools to encourage the implementation of or support established Ag in the Classroom programs.**

Implementation Responsibility: Town Agricultural Advisory Committee and local Farm Bureau and/or Cornell Cooperative Extension Educators

Budget Considerations: Town Staff time

Funding Resources: Volunteer time, some possible Town staff time

Priority: Moderate (Years 2 to 3)

Goal #3: *Protect farmland by identifying high quality agricultural lands in the Town of Brutus that are at risk for conversion and adopting appropriate protection strategies and tools.* Maintaining the agricultural land base in Brutus is good fiscal policy for the town. Farmland requires less in services than the property taxes paid on the land, and the businesses that work the land contribute to the local economy. Development pushing at the edges of Brutus and out from the Village in addition to scattered lot residential development puts pressure on local farmland for conversion. It is necessary to proactively protect the land on which farms depend.

Recommendations:

- **Establish a local Farmland Protection Program to permanently protect blocks of high quality farmland in Brutus.**

Implementation Responsibility: Planning Board and Town Board with assistance from Town Attorney, Town staff, Town Agricultural Advisory Committee and Cayuga County Agriculture and Farmland Protection Board

Budget Considerations: Town Staff time, Volunteer time, Grant writer for purchase of development rights applications

Funding Resources: Allocation of funding for staff time and grant writer, Volunteer time

Priority: Moderate to Difficult (Years 1 to 3)

- **Evaluate the potential for adopting a term conservation easement law.**

Implementation Responsibility: Planning Board, Town Board, Town Attorney, Cayuga County Department of Planning and Economic Development

Budget Considerations: Town Staff time

Funding Resources: Allocation of funding for Town staff time

Priority: Difficult (Years 3 to 5)

- **Consider the creation of an Agricultural Zoning District.**
Implementation Responsibility: Planning Board, Town Board, Town Attorney
Budget Considerations: Town Staff time
Funding Resources: Allocation of funding for Town staff time
Priority: Moderate (Years 1 to 3)
- **Modify the town's Subdivision Regulations to mitigate the conversion of high quality farmland and reduce the impacts of new subdivisions on nearby farm operations.**
Implementation Responsibility: Planning Board, Town Board, Town Attorney
Budget Considerations: Town Staff time
Funding Resources: Allocation of funding for Town staff time
Priority: Moderate (Years 1 to 3)

Goal #4: *Protect the town's rural character by evaluating the impacts of farm and forestland on local taxes and the demand for public services and working to encourage citing of non-farm public infrastructure near Village and other developed areas.* Property taxes can be a significant burden for farmers and rural landowners. Efforts to reduce property taxes can help keep land available for farming.

Recommendations:

- **Annually distribute information to agricultural landowners about property tax relief programs such as agricultural assessment, farm building exemptions and Farmers School Tax Credit to insure that farmland owners are taking advantage of existing programs.**
Implementation Responsibility: Town Assessor to get information for tax billing
Budget Considerations: Town Staff time
Funding Resources: Allocation of funding for Town staff time
Priority: Easy (Years 1 to 3)
- **Encourage adoption of agricultural assessment values in current and future special taxing jurisdictions (fire, ambulance, library, etc.).**
Implementation Responsibility: Town Agricultural Advisory Committee to Town Board and Town Attorney
Budget Considerations: Volunteer time and Town Staff time
Funding Resources: Allocation of funding for Town staff time
Priority: Moderate (Years 3 to 5)
- **Promote more rigorous consideration of the growth inducing and fiscal impacts of road, sewer and water infrastructure in an Agricultural Zone that may be formed, or in proximity to working farms regardless of the zoning district in which they are located.**
Implementation Responsibility: Planning Board and Town Board
Budget Considerations: Town Staff time
Funding Resources: Allocation of funding for Town staff time
Priority: Moderate to Difficult (Years 3 to 5)

APPENDIX

**Town of Brutus
Agriculture and Farmland Protection Plan**

**Kick-Off Meeting
4/15/08
7:00 PM**

- Welcome and Introductions
Jim Hotaling, Town Supervisor
(15 mins.)
- Plan Components and Process
Trish Riter, Cayuga County Planning & Dave Miller, Town Board
(15 mins.)
- Importance of a Town Agriculture and Farmland Protection Plan
David Haight, American Farmland Trust
(15 mins.)
- Agriculture in Town of Brutus
Judy Wright, American Farmland Trust
(30 mins.)
 - State of Agriculture
 - Importance of agriculture to the Town of Brutus
 - Opportunities and Threats to agriculture viability
 - Review current maps from Cayuga County Planning
- Next Steps
David Haight, American Farmland Trust
(15 mins.)

STATE OF AGRICULTURE
in the
TOWN OF BRUTUS

APRIL 15, 2008
KICK-OFF MEETING RECAP

- Threatened by new housing
- Hamilton and Ball Roads- Big project
- New growth is moving west from Syracuse
- Roads, water, school
- Harder to find rental land
- Complaints related to:
 - Manure spreading
 - Spraying
 - Noise
- People want to come to the country (from NYC and New Jersey) but don't want working farms
- Progression is to buy a lot, then want paved roads, then want two lane highway
- Good soils, available water
- Privacy- why people move out to the country, larger lots
- Three sons want to take it over
- Three dairies left in Town
- Lack of connection between farmers, residents and their food
- Many residents don't think about farming
- Assessor took away exemption for silos?
- 50 + people own ag land
- 30-35 people in town own ag land
- Land becomes fragmented
- Rental land is not or just barely paying taxes

WHY IS AG IMPORTANT?

- Access to fresh, local food
- Know where the food comes from
- What is the alternative? Can we afford new infrastructure? Tax Issue
- Adds to a diversified economy

Notes taken by Judy Wright and David Haight, American Farmland Trust

Town of Brutus Agriculture Community Interview Summary

During the summer of 2008 eleven individuals were interviewed about their perceptions of the current and future state of agriculture on the Town of Brutus. Those interviewed were randomly selected from a list of possible interview candidates identified by the Ag Advisory Committee at the May 29, 2008 meeting. The Town sent a letter to the total list making them aware of their selection and possible phone contact for a personal interview by AFT staff. Judy Wright, CNY Field Representative for AFT conducted the interviews during September and October of 2008. In total six farmers, four landowners who rented to farmers and one ag related business owner were interviewed. Below is a summary of the individual conversations.

Brutus is supportive of its remaining agricultural industry and the agricultural community has interest in working with the Town to implement tools to support the business of agriculture, protect the remaining valuable farmland in the town and to stop sprawl. Over the long term agriculture has changed but recently (past 10 years) not much has changed. At first agriculture is defined as cattle and crops but there has been a growth in land rented to farms in neighboring towns (support land) and conversion to vegetables which are growing for road side markets and area farmers markets. Farmers are now the minority of the town residents but they are still involved in the community. Although there are few areas left in town with large blocks of land in single ownership, there are still significant areas which are contiguous. The sense is that farms in town will be smaller to help address the difficulty in finding quality labor. Most land owners who rent land want the rent to cover the taxes, once the taxes are not covered chances are greater that the land will be sold for development. By renting the land it helps to keep it open (free of development) and adds to the rural character of the town. As one retired farmer stated, “the Town is not against agriculture but not for it either”- perhaps the development of a farmland protection plan will shift focus back to farming.

Agriculture’s viability and profitability are a major concern for both the farm and non-farm community. Agriculture has been the largest part of the Town’s economy since its founding yet farming is taken for granted by many of the town’s residents who fail to recognize the benefits farming affords the community in general. The benefits include but are not limited to the views of a rural landscape which in turns promotes tourism, opportunity for hunting and hiking (by permission), road side stands offer fresh produce and farm products to local residents, and the easy access to the Thruway offers potential for marketing farm products as well as support services. “Good quality agricultural land is a commodity which needs to be used wisely.” Recently farmers have sought ways to diversify their income (by shifting from dairy to vegetables or grain crops). There are opportunities for the Town of Brutus to support remaining farms and even encourage new farms. Examples of this support might include: the Town passing a Right to Farm law to establish current and future support for agriculture on the Town level and establishing an Agricultural Advisory Board to aid all local boards and committees on an as needed basis in decision making that might have an impact on agriculture. This is in addition to encouraging farmers to seek positions on all local boards to assure consistent representation from the farm community in all aspects of local government. There is interest from both farm and rural landowners for greater property tax relief since they seem to pay a significant portion of the property taxes even when agricultural assessment reductions are accounted for. The majority of the farmers interviewed expressed interest in permanent farmland protection tools like Purchase of Development Rights (PDR) however, those not supporting it needed more information

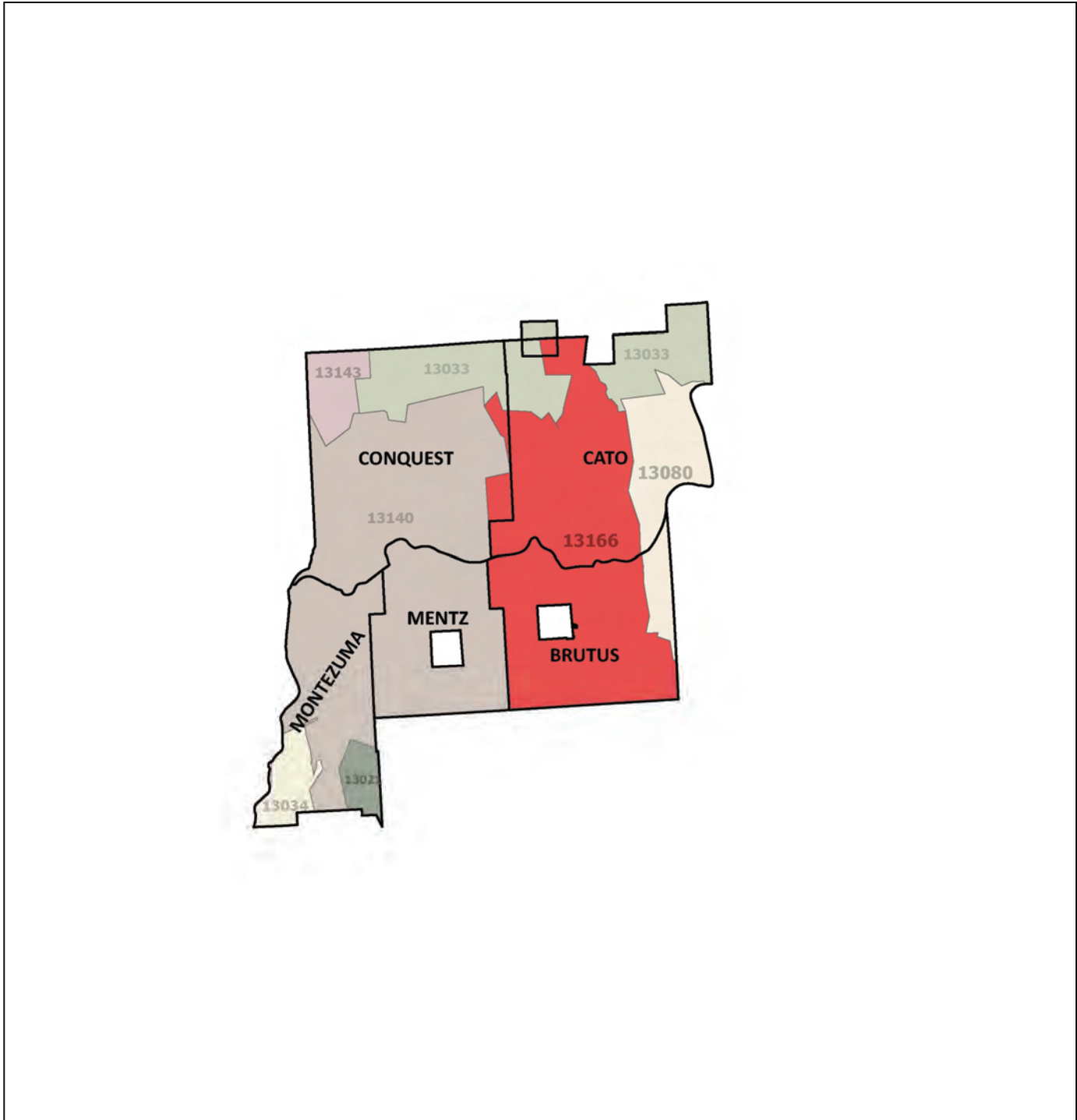
and/or saw it as possibly limiting their ability to sell the land in the future when they retire or can no longer rent the land. They felt if it were permanently protected then they or their heirs would be stuck with the land.

New residents have created some challenges to agriculture. The Town of Brutus has seen its share of scatter rural residential lot development spreading from the Village of Weedsport with the typical farm-neighbor interface. New neighbors complain about the “country smell” yet farmers who spread manure “are fast to plow it under” to reduce odor. One person observed that these types of complaints have increased with the number of houses increasing. In addition, neighbor kids play in the fields and knock down crops, ATV’s ignore posted signs, complaints to the State Troopers about farm trucks on the roads during critical harvest time. Several farmers mentioned the amount of yard waste and even garbage that ends up in fields as well as neighbors feeling free to help themselves to farm products growing in the fields and complaints about bird scare tactics. Most farmers do their best to be a good neighbor but the new neighbors seem to call someone with a complaint rather than the farmers. There needs to be a forum for open dialogue. Farmers and land owners agreed that there is a need to protect farmers from unreasonable complaints especially noise.

Despite the current challenges faced by agriculture, there is hope among the majority that farming will continue to be a predominate land use in the future. Approximately half interviewed had a plan or process in place to transition the farm and were hopeful that the land would remain in agriculture. They expressed more hope that this could be accomplished with a Town adopted Agriculture and Farmland Protection Plan. The majority were supportive of examining the current tools to prevent further sprawl and to encourage future generations to farm. In order for this to be effective one individual felt that “Farmland Protection will need to benefit landowners. The Town needs to offer a carrot to landowners to keep current land in production.” When presented with the idea of creating separate Residential and Agricultural Zones most were receptive to the idea. Those who were opposed did not want anything that would prevent them from selling their land in the future. There was general support for careful consideration of where future infrastructure should go. One person was not opposed to having water lines come through the farm but was not sure that the next generation would not take advantage of this and then develop the land; thus PDR was a good option.

General support was shared by all to protect quality land. It was generally felt that the land that was being worked today should remain in production. There was concern about how the Planning Board made decisions where house could be built. “Seems like all the new houses go on the most productive land, is there not a way to place them on the less productive land and let the farmers farm the rest?” Most supported some type of measure that would prevent the purchase of a large tract of land and then subdividing a few acres with road frontage and then selling or renting the remainder for agriculture. One person observed often when this happens, the access to the field is either restricted or no longer available. Some thought should also be given, when a plan comes in for review, to the placement of all the houses along the road frontage or one house in the middle of a 15 acre lot.

Map showing 13166 Zip Code Area





TOWN OF BRUTUS

DRAFT AG PLAN

READY FOR REVIEW AND COMMENT !

Town of Brutus has been developing a plan to protect and promote agriculture in the Town. This effort is funded by a grant from the NYS Department of Agriculture and Markets. A draft plan has now been completed and is ready for review and comment.

AG PLAN DRAFT REVIEW MEETINGS

1PM, Wednesday 9/30

8 AM, Wednesday 10/14 (coffee and donuts available)

6:30 PM, Thursday 10/15

(All meetings will be held at the Town Office, 9021 North Seneca St. Weedsport)

if you prefer, you may review the draft plan on the Town website at co.cayuga.ny.us/brutus/whatsnew . You can email any comments you have to the Town at the email address on the web site.



Or, good old fashioned paper copies of the draft plan are available at the Town office and you are welcomed to pick one up during regular office hours.

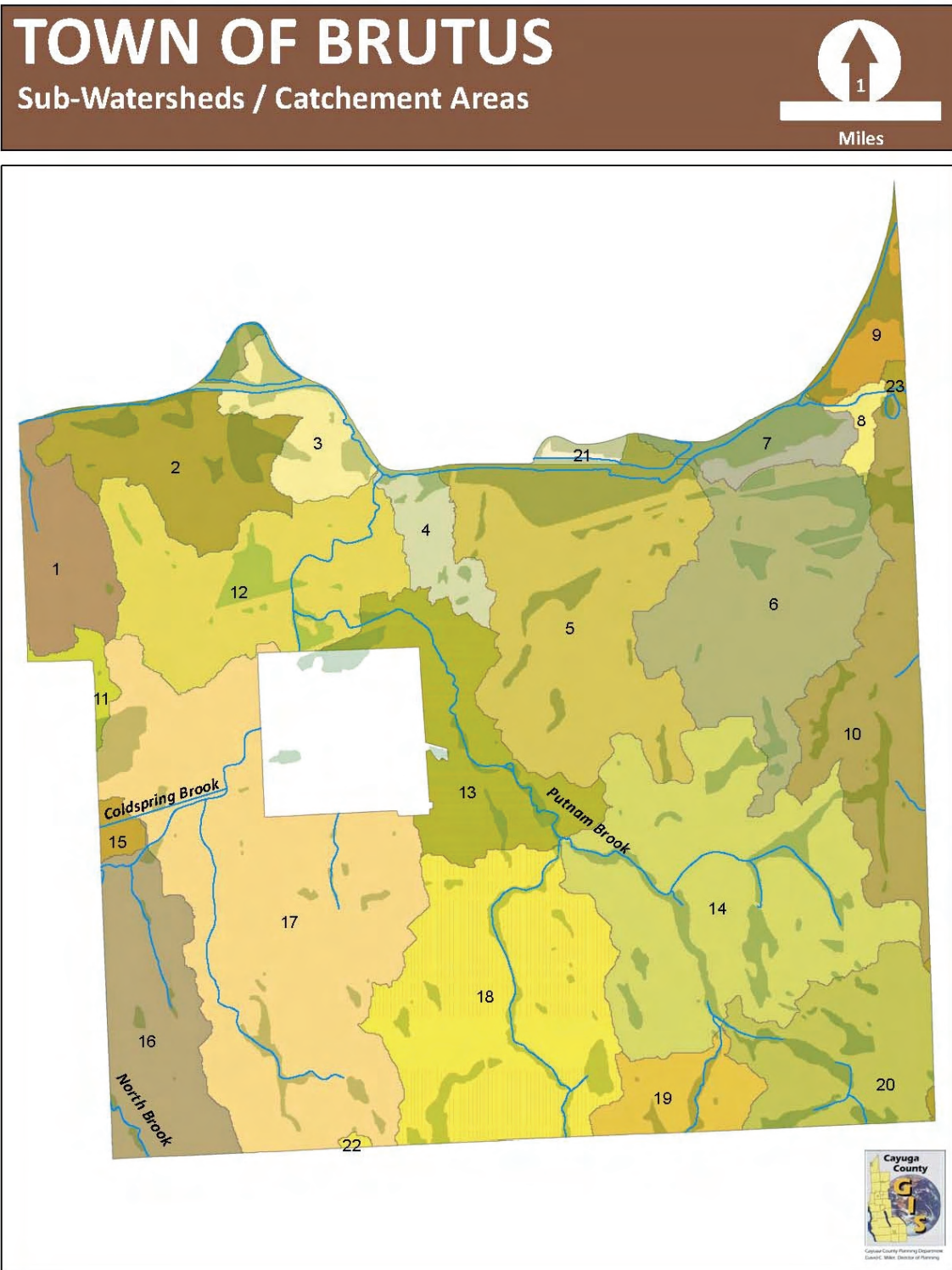


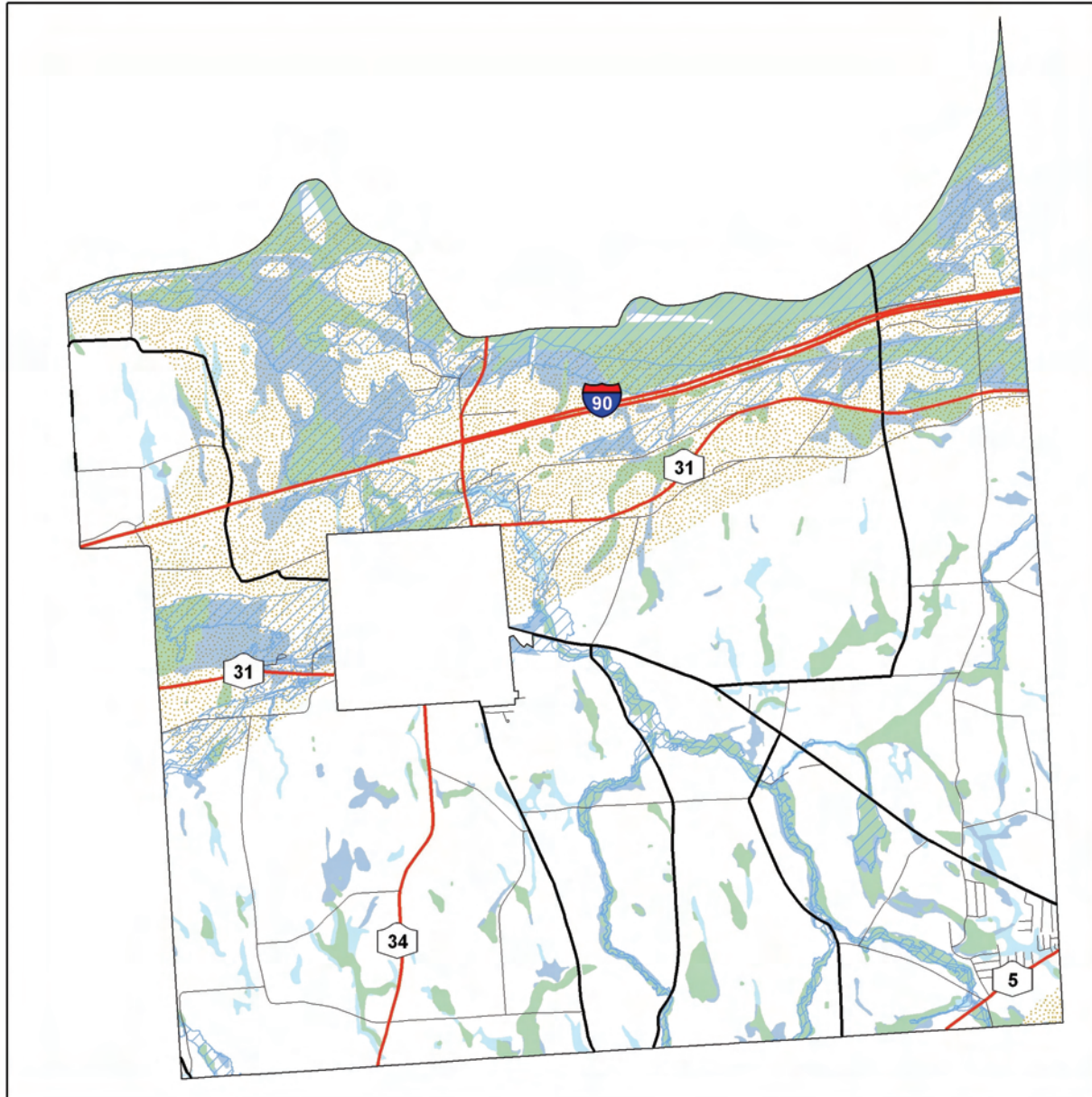
Figure 1: Town of Brutus Sub-Watersheds /Catchment Areas (Map Legend on following page.)

Legend: Brutus Water Catchment Areas

- 1) Direct to Seneca River
- 2) Direct to Seneca River
- 3) Direct to Seneca River
- 4) Direct to Seneca River
- 5) Direct to Seneca River
- 6) Direct to Seneca River
- 7) Direct to Seneca River
- 8) To Seneca River via Skaneateles Creek
- 9) Direct to Seneca River
- 10) To Seneca River via Tributary to Skaneateles Creek
- 11) To Seneca River via Tributary to Seneca River
- 12) To Seneca River via Putnam / Coldspring / North Brook
- 13) To Seneca River via Putnam Brook
- 14) To Seneca River via East Branch of Putnam Brook
- 15) To Seneca River via Coldspring Brook
- 16) To Seneca River via North Brook
- 17) To Seneca River via Tributary to North Brook
- 18) To Seneca River via West Branch of Putnam Brook
- 19) To Seneca River via Marshes & Tributary to East Branch of Putnam Brook
- 20) To Seneca River via Marshes & Tributary to East Branch of Putnam Brook
- 21) Direct to Seneca River
- 22) To Seneca River via Skaneateles Creek
- 23) To Seneca River via Skaneateles Creek

TOWN OF BRUTUS

Wetlands, Aquifer, Floodplains & Hydric Soils



 Hydric Soils	 Wetlands	 Aquifer
 Partially Hydric Soils	 Areas in the 100 year floodplain	



Figure 2: Hydrology of the Town of Brutus

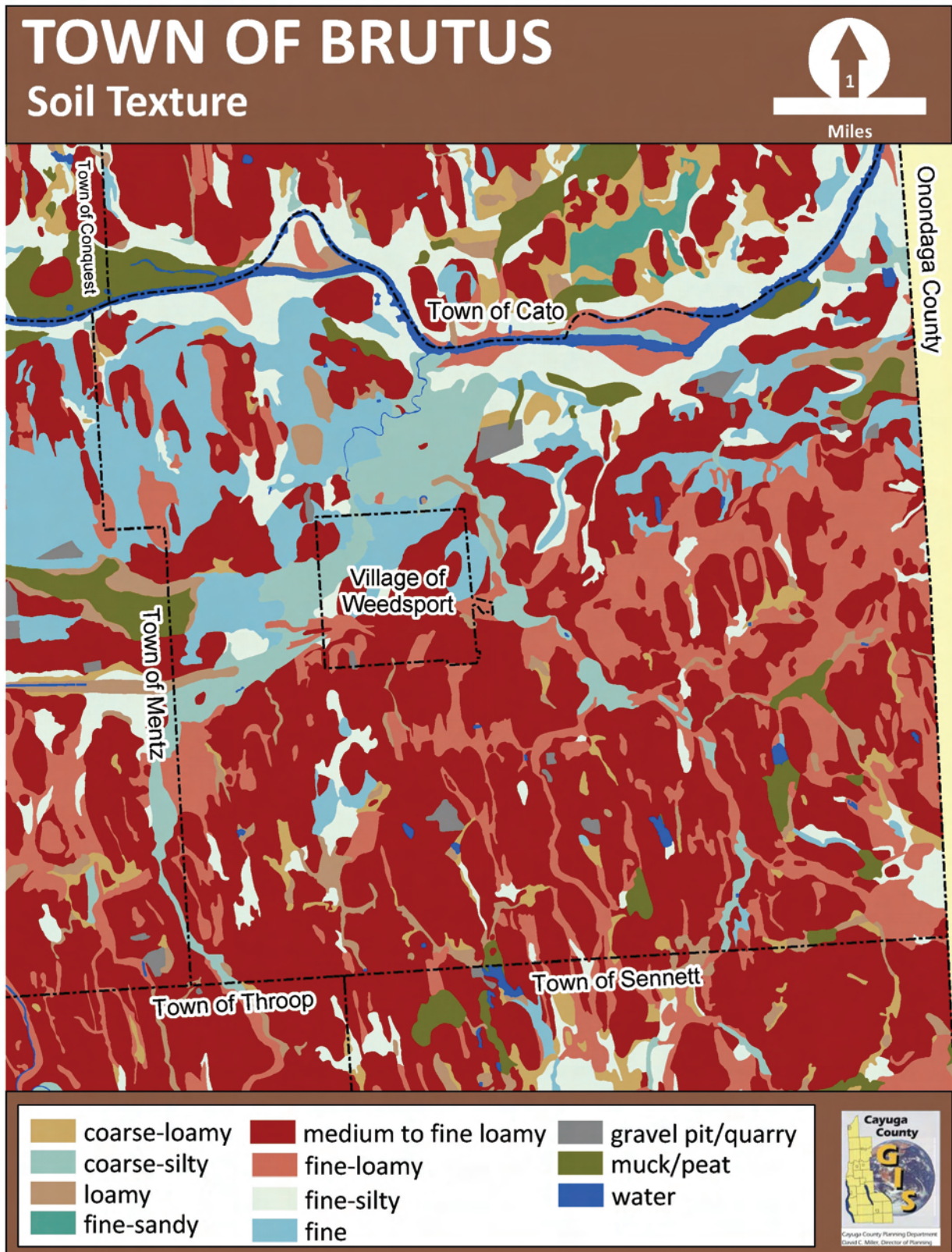


Figure 4: Soil Texture

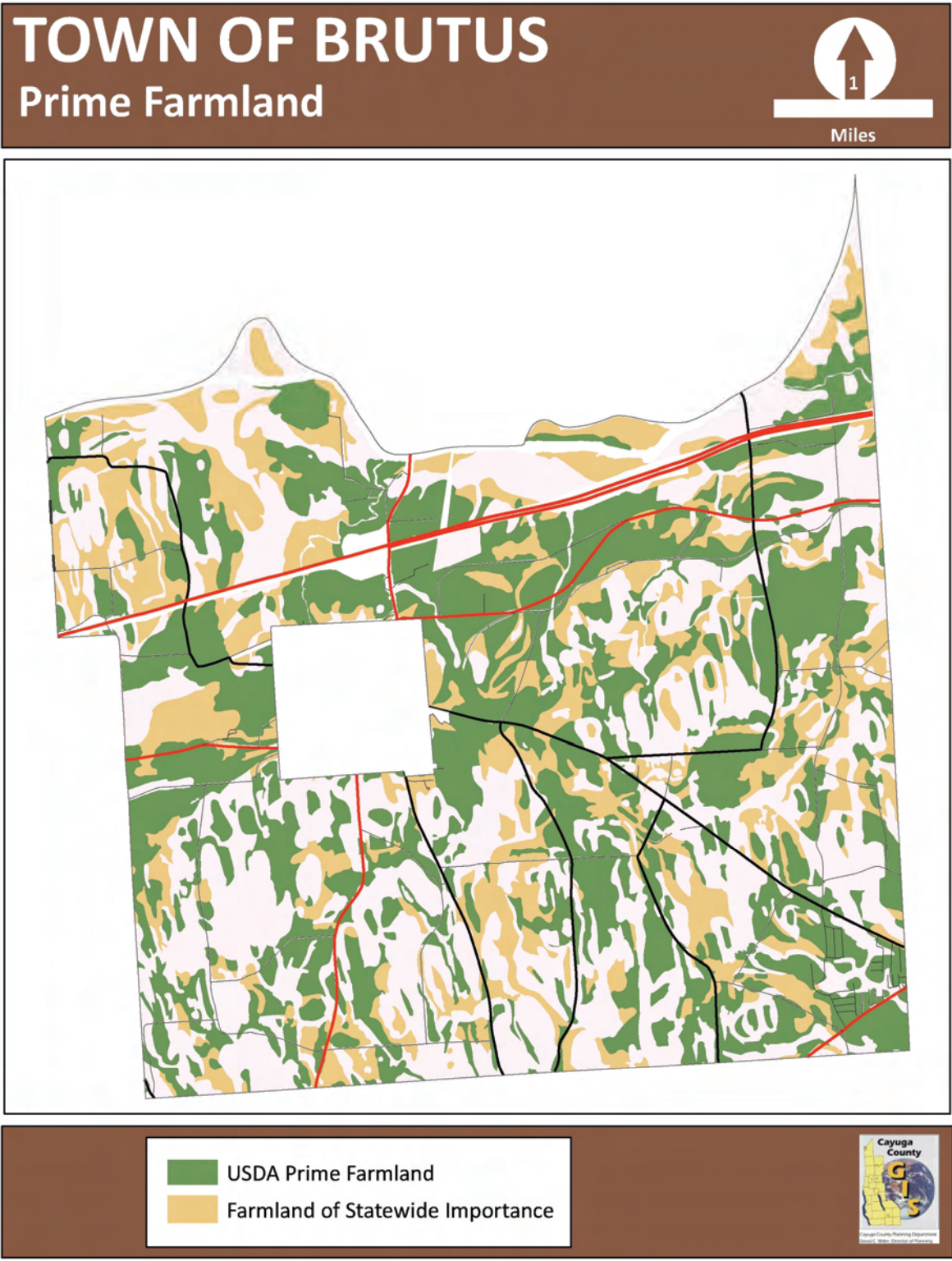


Figure 5: Soils Map of Town of Brutus

TOWN OF BRUTUS

Type of Agricultural Operations



Non - Agricultural	Cattle Farm	Truck Crops
Farm - Vacant Land	Donkey/Goat Farm	Nursery and Greenhouse
Dairy Farm	Farm - Field Crops	Rural Residence with Agriculture



Figure 8: Types of Agricultural Operations