

**TOWN OF WRIGHT
AGRICULTURAL
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Wright Developing Agriculture and Farmland Protection Plan

Farms are vital to Wright in many ways. Agriculture forms the backbone of the town's economy--producing food, employing people and paying taxes. The town's farms also buffer natural resources and provide the town's bucolic landscape which attracts tourism and enriches residents' quality of life. Protecting its agricultural lands and supporting the business of farming is a priority for Wright.

In 2007 Wright applied for a grant from New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets (NYSDAM) to assist in the development of town agricultural and farmland protection plan. This funding is made available through NYSDAM's Farmland Protection Program which supports local efforts to protect agricultural land and ensure the continued economic viability of the agricultural industry.

Agricultural and farmland protection plans are developed at both the town and the county level. The majority of the counties with farmland in the state already have agriculture and farmland protection plans in place. The state is making grant funding available to counties to update their plans. In addition towns are being encouraged to create their own agriculture and farmland protection plans. This is important because most land use decisions are made by town governments in New York.

A town agriculture and farmland protection plan takes stock of a community's agricultural resources and identifies the ways in which farming is important to the town. The plan makes recommendations on how the town can prevent the loss of farmland and support the business of agriculture.

In January 2008, the state awarded Wright the grant funds. The town appointed a committee to oversee the development of its agriculture and farmland protection plan. The committee hired American Farmland Trust (AFT) as a consultant to help in the development of their plans. AFT is a national nonprofit organization that works to protect farmland and improve the economic viability of agriculture. AFT's New York State office is headquartered in Saratoga Springs. The town is working with David Haight, AFT's New York State director, and Laura Ten Eyck, field consultant. In addition the town receives assistance from the Schoharie County Planning Department Agency. The Schoharie County Cooperative Extension (CCE) as well as the county's Soil and Water Conservation District and Real Property Tax Agency are also providing expertise to the project.

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In an effort to gather input from the community, a number of farmers and owners of farmland have been interviewed and two public meetings have been held. The committee has inventoried agriculture in the town and is in the process of studying the town's soils and developing maps depicting active agricultural land. AFT has reviewed the town's land use regulations. CCE is working with the committee to analyze the economic impact of agriculture in the town. The committee has discussed how the town wants to define agriculture and developed goals they want the plan to achieve. The committee is currently developing recommendations that will enable the town to meet those goals.

Once a draft plan is written, the town will hold a public hearing to enable the community to comment on the plan. After any necessary revisions have been made, the Town Board will vote on the adoption of the plan. The plan must also be approved by the County Farmland Protection Board and NYSDAM. The final deadline for completion of the plan is January 7, 2010.