

FARMLAND & OPEN SPACE

It is our policy to conserve Jerusalem's rural heritage and to protect our active farmland and valuable open space. We understand the important role that agriculture and open space have in our community, in the region and beyond. Open space and agricultural lands define the community's landscape and scenic quality. In addition, these critical lands are an important part of our healthy local economy, due to agriculture-based businesses and their positive impact on the tax base. The Town will support regulations and actions that protect prime farmland and other important open space from encroachment of residential and commercial development. Conserving the town's open space areas is an important part of maintaining the quality of life and the character that makes Jerusalem a wonderful place to live and visit.

Strategies

1. Support agriculture-related businesses and promote their presence and availability throughout the town and surrounding region.
2. Preserve contiguous parcels of open space and farmland throughout the town in order to maximize agriculture resources and maintain the rural appearance and function of the community.
3. Modify zoning and land use regulations to protect vital farmland and minimize the impact of residential and commercial development.
4. Encourage events, activities and enterprises that support the local farming community and continue Jerusalem's rural tradition.

Measures

- Acres of active farmland
- Number of acres included in Agricultural Districts
- Annual agricultural sales
- Number of agri-tourism / agri-business events conducted annually



1. Support agriculture-related businesses and promote their presence and availability throughout the town and surrounding region.

- A. Develop and expand partnerships with regional, state and federal agencies related to farmland preservation. For example, the NYS Agriculture and Markets Department, the local Cornell Cooperative Extension and regional land conservancies offer a multitude of services and resources to assist the farming community.
- B. Encourage participation in local and regional farmers' markets.
- C. Encourage farmers to participate in local and regional agricultural organizations and to create a town-based volunteer group for local farmers and agricultural supporters.
- D. Develop signage and other marketing tools that promote the town's agricultural activity and heritage.

2. Preserve contiguous parcels of open space and farmland throughout the town in order to maximize agriculture resources and maintain the rural appearance and function of the community.

- A. Create a town-wide active farmland and critical open space inventory that identifies key parcels to be preserved for future farming activity or dedicated open space.
- B. Utilize cluster development techniques in and near designated agricultural areas to maximize development potential in a way that preserves contiguous blocks of farmland.
- C. Encourage land owners to participate and continue future participation in New York State's Agricultural Districts program that is operated through Yates County. The program provides tax incentives and right-to-farm protection in return for farmers' agreement not to develop or sell the land for development.
- D. Educate and encourage landowners about private land conservation techniques (e.g. conservation easements and land conservancies).
- E. Explore public and private grant funding opportunities that can be used to initiate a purchase of development rights program.

3. Modify zoning and land use regulations to protect vital farmland and minimize the impact of residential and commercial development.

- A. Survey and research other rural communities in New York State regarding their method for farmland protection in an effort to help Jerusalem prioritize and implement the land use tools most appropriate here. This "best practices" approach will help the town identify potential pitfalls, learn from other communities' experiences and avoid the unanticipated legal and development impacts that occur without proper planning.

STATUS

- B. Ensure strict enforcement of development regulations, building, housing and zoning codes.
 - C. Initiate zoning changes that will encourage land preservation and farmland protection, such as limiting development in agriculture and open space areas, identifying zoning incentives to protect viable farmland, encouraging cluster development in appropriate areas of the town and setting appropriate lot sizes in districts with large blocks of agricultural lands.
- 4. Encourage events, activities and enterprises that support the local farming community and continue Jerusalem's rural tradition.*
- A. Work with neighboring communities to identify opportunities for collaborative preservation endeavors.
 - B. Work with existing businesses and organizations to enhance seasonal festivals such as Keuka Wine Trail events, the Windmill, Cooperative Extension programs, Wine/Grape Foundation, the Yates County Fair, and produce markets.
 - C. Work with the County to locate agricultural interpretive exhibits and or centers within the town that can be used for educational purposes. Examples in other communities include the Helmer Nature Center, Springdale Farms, the Cummings Nature Center and the proposed Wine Center in Canandaigua.

CELEBRATING JERUSALEM'S FARMING HERITAGE

One way to celebrate Jerusalem's agricultural resources, such as grape vineyards, is to develop interpretative signage and interactive exhibit areas to inform and educate residents and visitors alike.

Interpretive opportunities will help to meet the increasing demand for educational visitor experiences. It also can be designed to serve a functional purpose. For example, in Saranac Lake, New York, interpretive signage was installed along a recently constructed Riverwalk to educate people about the types of fish found in the waters and the types of lures used to catch each species. A similar approach to signage could be adapted to agricultural resources. For example, interpretive signage could focus on the various types of grapes grown in the region and the kinds of products developed with each variety.

Interpretive signage and exhibit areas provide several key objectives; they

- Encourage visitors and residents to care about the places they visit;
- Educate people about the critical role that agriculture plays in the community, the region and beyond;
- Provide an inexpensive tourism attraction that is interesting and informative that requires very little long-term maintenance; and
- Encourage collaboration among stakeholder groups and organizations.

In Jerusalem, interpretive signage and exhibit areas present a unique opportunity to expand the town's ongoing relationship with Keuka College, local school districts and farming organizations.

The photos below provide just a few examples of what other communities have done to interpret their key natural and agricultural resources. These have been provided to illustrate the variety of topics that can be interpreted as well as the various types of signage that can be used. In considering interpretive signage, the Town will need to ensure that the design is consistent and respectful of its surrounding environment as well as the specific topic area.



Springdale Farm is a premiere agricultural education facility open to the public that welcomes over 40,000 visitors annually.



Saranac Lake installed interpretive signs along its Riverwalk to educate people about fish populations.