

Appendix K

Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats Analysis

Town of Bethlehem Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan

Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats Analysis

In July 2008 a Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats exercise regarding agriculture in the Town, was conducted in cooperation with the Agricultural and Farmland Study Advisory Committee. The Committee's responses are listed below. Generally, strengths and weakness are factors that may be internal to the community, while opportunities and threats may be factors that are external to the community. This information provided important information to the Study Advisory Committee as they developed draft goals and recommendations for the plan. Recommendations were written with the hope of addresses weaknesses and threats to agriculture while expanding opportunities to capitalize on its strengths.

INTERNAL FACTORS

Strengths	Weaknesses
Proximity to markets and relatively affluent customer base that is demanding local food	High property/school/sewer taxes
Relatively flat land with diverse soils that allow for growing a multitude of crops	Wet heavy clay soils limit agricultural production and income potential of land
Proximity to Albany law makers and service providers	Neighbor issues - in some cases neighbors are reporting perceived violations to local/state regulations
Proximity to other rural/farming areas - town agricultural land is part of bigger agricultural community	Trespassing on agricultural land causes damage to crops
Good access to transportation systems to distribute/receive products	Support businesses are far away, including vets, feed, and equipment dealers. Fewer farms mean less services in the future as well.
Community at large is supportive of aesthetics of agriculture and rural nature of town	Deteriorating farm facilities. Structures/equipment need replacing
Those involved in agriculture have long tenure in community and much experience/knowledge	Moving equipment on busy roads - especially a challenge with bicycles and pedestrians
Large population of young people interested in equine	Disparity between the value of land as agriculture and as development
Water and sewer services provided by Town - help some farms by providing access	Issues with the Planning Board and Zoning Board of Appeals in meeting requirements

EXTERNAL FACTORS

Opportunities	Threats
Get farmers involved in local policy - on Planning Board or Zoning Board of Appeals	Development pressure is encroaching on agricultural land
Direct marketing/Agri-tourism - tap into local interest and capture more of retail dollar	Impact of new senior housing construction on agricultural land - odors/liability/loose animals
Opportunity to value school taxes differently – (farmer school tax credit requires 50% income from farm)	Lack of younger generation to take over the farm - long hours/poor income leading them to take other jobs
Reforms in liability insurance - currently difficult to invite public onto the farm	Current zoning may not allow for new agricultural uses - or may make it difficult to start new uses
Implement a tax on non-farmers to subsidize farmers	Public/community doesn't understand the realities of agriculture - only enjoy the scenic qualities
Educational opportunities for general public	Drainage from new development impacting water flow on farmland - flooding fields and barns
Expand Farmer's Market in Town and increase access to it - encourage local farmers to sell/restrict to local farmers only?	Lack of knowledge of public officials and local police in dealing with trespassing/truck permits, etc.
Growth in interest in equine	Lack of competent local labor force
Town legislation to prevent people from outside town/county to sell farm products next to farm landowners in town	Estate tax issues after 2010 - taxes are due in nine months - not feasible
Review zoning in non-rural areas	Conflict over the future of the land within families
Education in schools - encourage back to agricultural 4H/ offer credit opportunities for high schoolers to work on farm	
Link older/younger generation farmers or existing and new farmers to help prepare the next generation	
Opportunity to attract processing slaughterhouse/milk processing facilities	