

# **Town of Gorham**

## **Farmland, Open Space & Resource Conservation Plan**

*June 2005*

### **Statement of Purpose**

The purpose of the Town of Gorham Farmland, Open Space and Resource Conservation Plan is to identify, describe and map significant agricultural, scenic, natural and cultural resources in the Town and to present an appropriate course of action for protecting these resources.

### **Plan Objectives**

- Protect water quality of Canandaigua Lake
- Retain high quality farmland for continued agricultural use
- Protect scenic views important to the community
- Protect natural resources and the environment
- Provide for future outdoor recreation land
- Preserve the rural character of the Town

### **Overview of Planning Process and Public Involvement**

The Town of Gorham initiated its Farmland, Open Space and Resource Conservation Program in 2000 as an implementation phase of the Town's Comprehensive Plan. The program addresses the community's concern for retaining the essential character of the town in the face of growing development pressure and the potential loss of important community assets.

In 2001, the Town completed the initial phase of its Farmland, Open Space and Resource Conservation Program. The purpose of Phase I was to: evaluate the community's desire for and support for such a program; and, to identify a range of feasible solutions - addressing both immediate needs and longer term options. The process included both community involvement and professional assistance to identify the specific land use management tools deemed most likely to enhance the Town of Gorham's unique character and sense of place.

In February 2002, the Gorham Town Board adopted an amendment to the Comprehensive Plan to incorporate a Farmland, Open Space and Resource Conservation Program. The amendment directed the Town to:

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- prepare a Green Print map showing prioritized areas where open space should be preserved to comply with the goal of preserving the rural character of the Town;
- develop a mechanism for funding and acquiring development rights and/or easements for properties included in the Green Print Map;
- conduct a fiscal analysis of the cost of implementing a Farmland, Open Space and Resource Conservation Program, including the cost of not implementing such a plan;
- conduct a survey to assess the level of financial support town residents wish to commit to a farmland, open space and resource conservation program; and to
- set up a Conservation Board to employ the funding and mechanism set up to acquire development rights and/or easements for properties included in the Green Print Map. The Conservation Board shall be charged with ranking tax abatement applications, easement proposals or acquisitions and making priority recommendations to the Town Board for execution.

This document represents Phase II of the Town's Farmland, Open Space and Resource Conservation Program.

### Steering Committee

A Steering Committee was established to oversee the preparation of the Farmland, Open Space and Resource Conservation Plan. The following Town residents and resource people participated on the Committee:

- Tom Harvey
- Tom Bay
- Gordon Frieda
- Dale Frankish
- Andrew Hoover
- Kevin Olvany, Manager, Canandaigua Lake Watershed
- Lynne McCoy
- Richard Calabrese, Supervisor
- Fred Lightfoote
- John Frank

### Consultants

The Town retained Stuart I. Brown Associates to facilitate Committee discussions and public meetings, conduct technical assessments and prepare the maps and written plan. Staff from the Ontario County Planning Department provided assistance with GIS mapping. A land cover survey completed by the Canandaigua Lake Watershed Committee was invaluable in identifying and mapping resources in the Town.

### Public involvement

A Property Owners' Survey was conducted in September 2003 to determine the opinions of Town residents regarding the need to take action to preserve agricultural, open space and

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natural resources in the Town, and to determine receptivity toward various conservation approaches. A public meeting was held on January 13, 2004 to present the results of the survey. The survey report is in Appendix 1.

A focus group meeting was held on February 18, 2004 with representatives from the agricultural community and other large landowners.

Town Board conducted a public meeting and hearing on the Farmland, Open Space and Resource Conservation Plan on \_\_\_\_.

Copies of the draft plan were made available on the Town's website and in the Town office.

### Relationship to other planning programs

The Town of Gorham Farmland, Open Space and Resource Conservation Plan builds on the Town's Comprehensive Plan, which was adopted in 1997. It implements recommendations of the 2001 amendment to the Comprehensive Plan, which consisted of Phase I of the Town's Farmland, Open Space and Resource Conservation Program.

The Town completed a Cost of Community Services Study in conjunction with the preparation of the Farmland, Open Space and Resource Conservation Plan. The study demonstrated that future residential development in the Town, especially if it is comprised of low and moderately priced houses, will increase costs for both the Town and School District. The additional property tax revenue generated by the development would not offset the increased costs. The report from the Cost of Community Services Study is available in the Town Clerk's office.

During the process of preparing the Farmland, Open Space and Resource Conservation Plan, the Town of Gorham completed a study of the Route 364 Corridor. This study identified the carrying capacity of Route 364 and how it relates to potential development of land to the east of Route 364. The final report from this study is expected to be available in Fall 2005.

The Town of Gorham also revised its zoning and subdivision regulations during 2004. These amendments removed the incentive zoning provisions and revised conservation subdivision provisions to require additional open space to be incorporated into the design of new subdivisions. The revised regulations were adopted by the Town Board in Fall 2004.

Various ecological communities were identified in the 2003 Land Cover mapping project coordinated by the Canandaigua Lake Watershed Manager and the Ontario County Planning Department. This project categorized land cover by type of ecological community. Descriptions of the ecological communities found in the Town of Gorham are included in Appendix 2.

Contents of Farmland, Open Space and Resource Conservation Plan

The Town of Gorham Farmland, Open Space and Resource Conservation Plan includes:

- an inventory of the agricultural, open space, natural and cultural resources in the Town
- a mechanism to prioritize resources for purchase of development rights or other conservation approaches
- a recommended course of action for protecting and preserving resources.

The Appendices include:

- Report from the Residents Survey completed in 2003
- Background information relating to the inventory
- Methodology for the ranking system
- Background information relating to the recommended actions

A report from the Cost of Community Services Study, completed in 2003, is available at the Town Clerk's office.

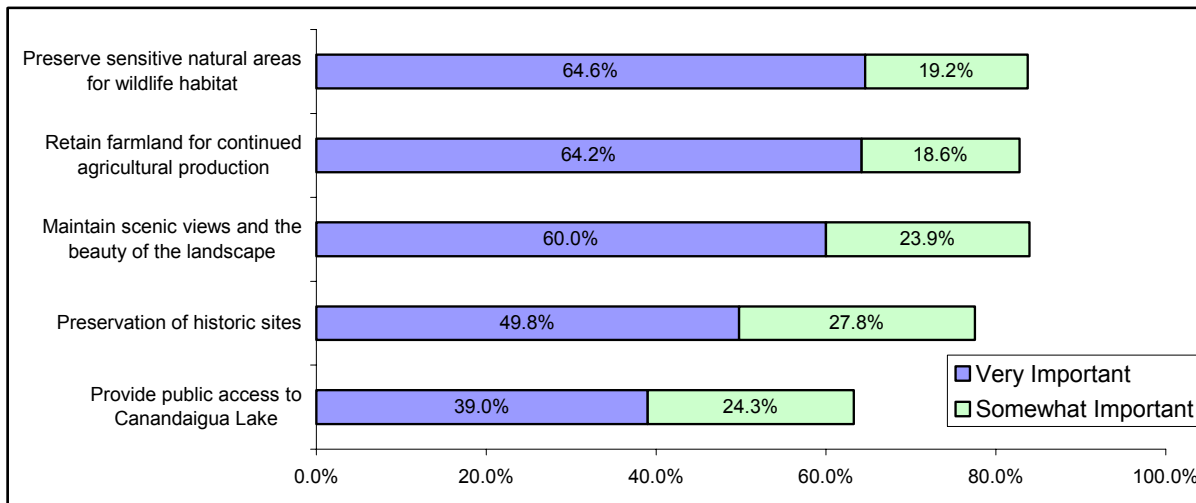
## **Inventory of Agricultural, Scenic, Natural and Cultural Resources**

The inventory of agricultural, scenic, natural, historic and recreational resources identifies and categorizes those lands in the Town of Gorham that may have value for conservation and/ or preservation. Maps of these resources are in Appendix 2. The Ontario County Planning Department maintains the resource maps in the County’s computer-based Geographic Information System (GIS).

Many of these resources serve multiple functions. For example, working farm landscapes in the Town of Gorham contribute to the scenic views in the Town. Natural areas may have potential for future recreational use.

The residents’ survey confirmed that a majority of the population favors the protection of these resources (see Appendix 1). The following table summarizes the survey responses.

**Relative Importance of Protecting Resources**



Source: Town of Gorham Property Owners’ Survey, Stuart I. Brown Associates, 2003

### **Agricultural Resources**

Farmland and agriculture are significant elements of the Town of Gorham’s landscape and economy.

Farming relies on the high quality agricultural soils that are prevalent in the Town. Soils suitable for agricultural production are classified by the US Department of Agriculture as “prime,” “prime when drained,” and “other soils of statewide importance.” As shown on Map 1 in Appendix 2, most of the Town has high quality agricultural soils.

A large proportion of the Town’s land area is currently farmed. Map 2 depicts those lands that are actively farmed, based on 2003 Land Cover mapping derived from aerial photographs.

Map 3 depicts land in a County Agricultural District and those parcels that are part of commercial farms within the Agricultural District that received a property tax exemption for agricultural use during 2004. These properties generate more than \$10,000/ year in sales and their owners have demonstrated a commitment to continue farming by applying for the exemption.

### **Natural Resources**

The Natural Resources rating is based on the amount of land in various ecological communities as well as the presence of streams on the parcel.

Documentation of the ecological communities that form the basis for the land cover mapping is included in Appendix 2. Maps of the individual resources that form the basis for the ratings are also included in Appendix 2.

### **Streams and watersheds**

Approximately one-half of the land area in the Town of Gorham is in the Canandaigua Lake watershed. The remaining land drains toward Flint Creek and the Clyde River. (See Appendix 2, Map 4.)

Streams provide habitat for fish and other wildlife. Protection of streams helps to protect the water quality of Canandaigua Lake and other receiving waters. Land areas within 50 feet of designated streams are considered part of the "stream corridor."

### **Woodlands**

Several woodland communities were identified in the 2003 Land Cover mapping project coordinated by the Canandaigua Lake Watershed Manager and the Ontario County Planning Department. (See Map 5.) The "floodplain forest" and "silver maple-ash swamp" communities are considered "vulnerable" in New York State. These wooded areas are located along streams and in wetlands. Other mature woodland communities in the Town are "Appalachian oak-hickory forest," "Beech-maple mesic forest," and "Hemlock-northern hardwood forest."

Successional woodlands have grown from abandoned farmland. Examples of these communities in the Town of Gorham are "successional northern hardwoods" and "successional red cedar woodland." In addition, several areas of "conifer plantations" are included in the inventory.

Land cover categories that are not included in the inventory of woodlands are "successional shrubland" and "successional old field" communities. These areas may be classified as woodlands at a future time.

### **Wetlands**

Wetland communities identified in the 2003 Land Cover mapping project for the Town of Gorham, other than those associated with the woodland communities listed above, are "deep emergent marsh," "shallow emergent marsh," "reverted drained muckland," and "shrub

swamp.” (See Map 6.) Wetlands are uniquely suited for certain types of plants and animals and help to retain stormwater.

#### Calcareous cliff

The unusual “calcareous cliff” community, located along Canandaigua Lake in the southwest corner of the Town, is designated as “vulnerable” in New York State.

#### Ponds

Ponds identified in the 2003 Land Cover Inventory are categorized as “eutrophic ponds” and “quarry ponds.”

#### **Scenic Resources**

Land at higher elevations is viewed from throughout the Town of Gorham and offers views of surrounding landscapes. Map 7 depicts areas of land located 1000 ft. or higher above sea level and prominent hilltops that were delineated from USGS topographic map. Scenic viewpoints and corridors were identified in the Town’s Comprehensive Plan. Appendix 3 contains photographs of many of the scenic views, taken during the summer of 2003.

#### **Cultural and Recreational Resources**

##### Historic

Historic resources were identified in a survey conducted by the Landmark Society of Western New York. Currently, none of the historic buildings in the Town are listed in the National Register of Historic Places. Map 8 depicts the location of historic resources. The table that accompanies the map provides a brief description of each site. (See Appendix 2.)

##### Recreational

Existing recreational facilities include two parks along the Canandaigua Lake shore operated by Ontario County, the Crystal Beach playground, the Town of Gorham’s Heritage Park, a private marina, a private camp operated by Family Life Ministries, and two private campgrounds.

A portion of the Ontario Pathways trail passes through the northeast corner of the Town of Gorham. A former railroad right-of-way, jointly owned by the Town of Gorham and the Village of Rushville, extends from the center of the Village of Rushville to Blodgett Road. This corridor has the potential to be developed into a trail.

The Flint Creek drainage right-of-way is protected from development by easements. The easements also permit limited use of the right-of-way for recreation.

Map 9 depicts existing outdoor recreation resources in the Town.

## **Conservation Priority Ranking System**

The Town has established a ranking system to rate parcels in the Town based on their resource preservation value. Each parcel in the Town that contains five (5) or more acres was rated for agricultural, natural, scenic and cultural/recreational value, as well as for consistency with the conservation priorities in the Town's Comprehensive Plan.

The rating factors for each resource are summarized in the Rating Factors table in Appendix 3. The rating system utilizes ArcGIS software and is maintained by the Ontario County Planning Department. The Conservation Board will be provided with CDs that contain the resource maps and the rating factors and map viewing software to facilitate the evaluation of parcels that may be proposed for acquisition or preservation.

The following narrative summarizes the methodology used to develop the rating system. Maps that depict the relative score of parcels based on the five categories are included in Appendix 3.

### **Agricultural**

The "agricultural" rating is based on the suitability of soils for agriculture (see Appendix 2, Map 1), the amount of actively farmed land (see Appendix 2, Map 2), and whether the property is receiving an agricultural property tax exemption (see Appendix 2, Map 3). The sum of these three factors resulted in the overall "Agricultural Rating."

- The "soils rating," is based on the number of acres of "prime," "prime when drained" and "other soils of statewide importance" multiplied by a weighting factor for each category.
- The "active agriculture" rating is based on the acreage of actively farmed land in each parcel multiplied by a weighting factor.
- Parcels within the Agricultural District that receive an agricultural property tax exemption were assigned additional points, as the owners of these properties have demonstrated a commitment to continue farming.

### **Natural Resources**

The "natural resources" rating is based on the number of acres of significant ecological communities plus the number of linear feet of stream on the parcel.

The rating for stream corridors was derived from the number of linear feet of stream that flows through each parcel multiplied by a weighting factor. Streams that flow into Canandaigua Lake received a higher weighting factor than streams that flow into Flint Creek and the Canandaigua Lake Outlet. (See Appendix 2, Map 4).

For parcels that contain woodlands (see Appendix 2, Map 5), or wetlands (see Appendix 2, Map 1), the number of acres of these ecological communities present in each parcel was multiplied by a rating factor. The presence of ecological communities that are considered rare or vulnerable in the State resulted in a higher rating factor. Parcels that contain a portion of the relatively rare and vulnerable "calcareous cliff" community, located along Canandaigua Lake at

the southwest corner of the Town, was assigned an exceptionally high rating factor due to its small size and uniqueness.

The “natural resources” rating is the sum of the ratings for woodlands, wetlands, ponds, calcareous cliff, and stream corridors.

### **Scenic Resources**

Scenic resources include the higher ground in the Town (1000 ft. above sea level or higher) as well as prominent hilltops and scenic viewpoints and corridors identified in the Comprehensive Plan (see Appendix 2, Map 7). These resources represent places from which to observe scenic landscapes and Canandaigua Lake. In addition, these places are visible from a large area within and outside of the Town.

The scenic resources rating does not address the landscapes viewed from the higher elevations in the Town. These landscapes include the agricultural land and natural resources that received separate ratings.

The rating for scenic resources is based on the number of acres within a parcel that are 1,000 feet or higher above sea level and the number of acres that are part of a prominent hilltop, and the presence of a designated scenic viewpoint or corridor. (See Appendix 2, Table 1.)

### **Cultural and Recreational Resources**

The cultural and recreational resource rating is based on the presence of historic resources (see Appendix 2, Map 8), and proximity to existing recreational resources (see Appendix 2, Map 9). Parcels were assigned points if they contain a site identified as a historic resource in the survey conducted by the Landmark Society of Western New York, are located within 500 feet of an existing trail, or are located within 500 feet of an existing outdoor recreation facility. The total “Cultural and Recreational Resource” rating is the sum of these ratings.

### **Priority for Protection**

The Town has designated a “targeted conservation area” that is distinguished from those areas designated for utility services and relatively higher density development in the Comprehensive Plan (see Appendix 2, Map 10.). The Town considers these areas to have the greatest potential for long-term protection and seeks to protect a “critical mass” of land within these areas. Land within this area was assigned additional rating points. Land within this area that is closer than 1,000 feet to the boundary of the area received a higher rating.

An additional rating was assigned to land within 500 feet of State-regulated wetlands and regulated flood hazard zones (see Appendix 2, Map 11). Future ratings will be assigned to land within 500 feet of permanently protected open space, such as land protected by a private conservation easement, land for which the development rights have been purchased by the Town, and land protected by a private land trust. Currently, no such parcels exist in the Town.

## **Implementation Strategy**

The Town of Gorham Farmland, Open Space and Resource Conservation Plan recommends eight (8) implementation actions. The following narrative summarizes the steps needed to complete the action, the entity responsible for carrying out each step, and the funding needed.

Resources that provide information to assist in the implementation are listed. These resources are included in Appendix 4.

### **Summary of Implementation Actions**

- A. Establish a Conservation Board
- B. Establish a program to purchase and/or accept donations of development rights or conservation easements
- C. Work with private organizations such as the Finger Lakes Land Trust to encourage the preservation of farmland, open space and natural resources in the Town
- D. Utilize conservation subdivisions to preserve open space in conjunction with new development.
- E. Enact incentive zoning provisions
- F. Develop overlay zoning provisions to protect stream corridors and woodlands
- G. Establish a fund financed through subdivision fees to purchase land for recreational purposes
- H. Establish a program to help fund the landowner's share of the cost of installing conservation practices through the USDA's Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program.

### **A. Establish a Conservation Board**

The Town's Conservation Board will be responsible for implementing many of the recommendations of the Town of Gorham's Farmland, Open Space and Natural Resource Conservation Plan. The responsibilities and organization of a Conservation Board are specified in NYS Town Law (see Appendix 4A.) These include maintaining an inventory of natural resources and reviewing land development projects that are being considered by the Town Planning Board and Zoning Board of Appeals.

Before a Town can designate a Conservation Board, it must appoint a Conservation Advisory Committee. The Town must take the following actions to establish a Conservation Board.

Recommended Actions

1. Town Board creates a Conservation Advisory Council (CAC) by Local Law (Town Board by Local Law)
  - Determine the number of members. The Town Board may appoint three to nine members for two-year terms. The recommended number of members is seven (7).
  - Draft a local law specifying the duties of the CAC (see GML Section 239-x and attached sample.)
  - Hold a public hearing on the proposed local law and advertise it at least 5 days in advance in the Town’s official newspaper.
  - Adopt the local law by majority vote.
  - Appoint the members by resolution. Designate the chairman from the appointed members
  - File local law with Department of State
  - Notify the State Commissioner of Environmental Conservation in writing that a Conservation Advisory Council was established in the Town of Gorham
2. CAC determines which resources will “trigger” review of development proposals by the Conservation Board.
3. CAC presents “Open Space Index” to Town Board. This includes an inventory and map of conservation and open areas and will be based on the Resource Inventory maps included in Appendix 2.
4. Town Board accepts and approves the inventory and map as the open space index of the town and redesignates the CAC as the Conservation Board (Town Board by resolution)

**Timeframe:**

Summer 2005: Town Board creates Conservation Advisory Council by Local Law

Fall 2005: Conservation Advisory Board presents Open Space Index to Town Board; Town Board accepts and approves the inventory and map and redesignates the CAC as the Conservation Board by resolution

**Funding:** None. Preparation of the Open Space Index was completed as part of the Farmland, Open Space and Resource Protection Plan.

**Resources:** *Excerpts from NYS General Municipal Law Section 239-x (See Appendix 4A)*

**B. Establish a program to purchase and/or accept donations of development rights or conservation easements**

The purchase of development rights places a conservation easement on property to ensure that the land remains undeveloped. The cost is calculated as the difference between the appraised value of the property and the value of the property for agriculture or open space.

Several communities in the region have established Town purchase of development rights programs that are funded by bond issues. State and federal grant funding is also available to support the purchase of development rights to farmland.

The Town has established a Land Preservation Reserve Fund to purchase land for conservation and open space. In 2005, the fund had \$550,000.

Recommended Actions

1. Maintain and continue to fund the Town’s Land Preservation Reserve Fund (Town Board)
2. Establish a formal process for landowners to submit bids for the Town purchase of land or development rights. (Conservation Board; Town Board)
3. Purchase and/or accept donations of land and/or easements for property that meets the criteria for preservation in the Farmland, Open Space and Resource Conservation Plan.
  - Utilize the rating system to identify priority parcels or easements for acquisition, either by purchase or donation (Conservation Board)
  - Encourage donations of property or easements to the Town (Conservation Board)
  - Communicate with landowners regarding preservation options, including tax advantages of donations and “bargain sales” (Conservation Board)
  - Provide notice and hold public hearing prior to purchase of land or easements (Town Board)

**Timeframe:** On-going

**Funding:** Town of Gorham Land Preservation Reserve Fund

**Resources:** *NYS General Municipal Law S 247(See Appendix 4B)*

**C. Work with private organizations such as the Finger Lakes Land Trust to encourage the preservation of farmland, open space and natural resources in the Town**

The Finger Lakes Land Trust acquires land and conservation easement from landowners on a voluntary basis using funds it has raised from memberships and donations. The FLLT has expressed interest in protecting resources within the Town of Gorham.

Recommended Actions

1. Share information regarding land resources and maintain communications with the Finger Lakes Land Trust (Conservation Board)
2. Work with the Finger Lakes Land Trust to provide information to landowners about donating conservation easements (Conservation Board)
3. Partner with the Finger Lakes Land Trust to acquire land or conservation easements (Conservation Board, Town Board)

**Timeframe:** On-going

**Funding:** None

*Resources: Finger Lakes Land Trust brochure and newsletter; Estate planning brochure; Information about conservation easements to distribute to landowners. (See Appendix 4C)*

**D. Utilize conservation subdivisions to preserve open space in conjunction with new development**

The Town of Gorham's zoning and subdivision regulations currently include provisions for conservation subdivision development (see zoning regulations on page 4). The regulations authorize the Planning Board to require or an applicant to propose a conservation subdivision design during subdivision review.

In 2004, the Town adopted a requirement for a minimum of 30% open space on all subdivisions, not including an additional 5% for active recreation areas. Most developers are expected to meet this requirement on a voluntary basis by placing dwelling units on smaller lots and placing a conservation easement on open space.

Recommended Actions

1. Continue to require a minimum of 30% open space, not including undevelopable areas, for "major subdivisions." (Town Board, Planning Board)

2. Provide illustrated design guidelines to help applicants understand the community's goals prior to designing a project. Examples of illustrated design guidelines are found in such publications as Rural By Design by Randall Arendt. (Planning Board)

**Timeframe:** On-going

**Funding:** Minimal; included in Planning Board budget

**Resources:** *Conservation subdivision provisions in recently amended Town zoning and subdivision regulations*

*Illustrations of design guidelines*

*(See Appendix 4D)*

## **E. Enact incentive zoning provisions**

### Recommended Actions

1. Reinstigate incentive zoning provisions to encourage the private purchase of development rights or easements in exchange for higher densities in designated "target" areas.
  - Include a requirement that the developer study the "carrying capacity" of available infrastructure (i.e., roads, water, sewer) to ensure that the infrastructure is sufficient to accommodate the additional units.
  - Utilize the rating system to identify suitable parcels to be preserved.
  - Designate an appropriate target area that does not include ridges or lakeshore
  - Establish a formula to determine the number of dwelling units that may be "transferred" from the preserved parcel to a parcel in the "target" area

**Timeframe:** 2006

**Funding:** None needed if provisions are drafted in-house

**Resources:** *Sample Incentive Zoning provisions in NYS Town Law (See Appendix 4E)*

**F. Establish environmental protection overlay zoning provisions to protect sensitive natural areas**

Overlay zones are used to recognize and protect specific resources or features of a landscape, such as stream corridors, wetlands, woodlots, steep slopes, and ridges or hilltops. These regulations are often known as “Environmental Protection Overlay Districts” (EPODs). The “overlay” regulations apply to specific areas in addition to the zoning requirements of the “underlying” zone.

The resources to be protected by an overlay zone must be clearly defined in the zoning regulations, either with a description or a map. For example, a stream corridor overlay district would include land within a certain number of feet from the stream bank, or land within a mapped corridor. A scenic resource overlay may include all land above a certain altitude or within designated ridge lines or hilltops.

The overlay district regulations typically include limitations to development, and sometimes requirements to retain vegetation. For example, a stream corridor overlay may limit building construction and require that vegetation be preserved. A scenic resource overlay may require that new construction remain below a certain altitude. A woodlot overlay may include restrictions on the removal of trees.

The Town of Gorham currently has overlay zoning districts that apply to floodplains, the lake shore, land within the Canandaigua Lake watershed, and areas designated as suitable for telecommunications towers. The requirements for development within these overlay zones supplement the requirements of the underlying zoning districts. For example, the watershed protection overlay zone requires more stringent erosion control and stormwater management within the watershed than elsewhere in the Town.

In addition, the Town of Gorham’s zoning regulations currently require minimum setbacks from streams. Current zoning and subdivision requirements also encourage the conservation of wooded areas and stream corridors to be incorporated into the design of new subdivisions.

Recommended Actions

Establish environmental protection overlay district regulations for sensitive natural areas that are not sufficiently protected by existing zoning regulations. Ensure that regulations do not restrict accepted farming practices. (Town Board, assisted by Conservation Board and Planning Board)

**Timeframe:** 2006

**Funding:** None needed if provisions are drafted in-house

**Resources:** *Sample Environmental Protection Overlay zoning provisions (See Appendix 4F)*

**G. Establish a fund financed through subdivision fees to purchase land for recreational purposes**

New York State Town Law enables towns to charge per-lot fees to developers of residential subdivisions, in lieu of land, for the development of parks or recreational facilities. (See text of law in Appendix 4G.)

Although the Town of Gorham has not charged such fees, several municipalities in Ontario County and throughout the State have used these fees to establish dedicated funds for the purchase of recreational land and the development of parks. For example, the Town of Victor requires a \$1,000 fee per lot for all subdivisions. The Town of Farmington charges \$2,500 per lot.

Recommended Actions

1. Establish an equitable subdivision fee in lieu of recreational land. Determine the appropriate fee based on fees charged by neighboring municipalities
2. Create a dedicated fund for the future purchase of land for recreational purposes and for recreational programs

**Timeframe:** TBD

**Funding:** None

**Resources:** *NYS Law authorizing towns to charge subdivision fees; Examples of subdivision fees charged by other Ontario County municipalities (See Appendix 4G)*

**H. Assist landowners to install conservation practices through the USDA's Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program.**

The Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) is a voluntary program administered by the USDA Farm Service Agency and Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). The program will pay farmland owners a portion of the cost to install conservation practices on their property. In addition, the program makes an annual rental payment to the farmer to compensate for the loss of land associated with the conservation practice. For example, if a farmer put fencing along a stream to keep cows from wading into the water, the program would pay for a portion of the cost of the fencing, and will make a lease payment for the land that is no longer used for pasture.

The landowner must pay for 50% of the cost of certain improvements. USDA funds will pay for 90% of the cost of high priority improvements, such as fencing to keep livestock out of streams, establishing a buffer between cropland and a stream, and establishing a grassed waterway to prevent the formation of gullies.

Recommended Actions

1. Encourage landowners to participate in the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) (Conservation Board)
2. Create a way to provide funding for a portion of the landowner's share of the cost of installing conservation practices. (Town Board)
3. Establish a program whereby landowners submit applications for funding assistance for projects that have been approved for matching funds. (Town Board, Conservation Board)

**Timeframe:** To be determined

**Funding:** To be determined

**Resources:** *CREP Fact Sheets (See Appendix 4H)*