

FARMLAND SCORES

In evaluating farmland in the Town of Canandaigua, a parcel's conservation value was determined by the size, shape and location (Landscape) of a parcel together with the productivity of a farm's soils (Agricultural) and its proximity to other "working farms." Since water quality is critical to the economic well being and quality of life in the Town, land use practices that enhance and maintain surface water quality (Environmentally Sensitive) by preserving stream corridors and by minimizing development on steep slopes is scored higher than those that adversely impact water quality. Since protecting and preserving ridgelines and scenic views benefits all member of the community and enhances the Town's tourism potential, those parcels with attractive ridgelines and views of Canandaigua Lake were scored higher than those that did not.

The conservation value of a parcel also may be enhanced by the legal protection afforded it. A parcel will merit a higher score if it contains lands designated by the federal, state or local government as environmentally sensitive (one example – wetlands). Moreover, the legal protection that is placed on a parcel will determine if the land remains in conservation in perpetuity, or if it will be converted to another land use at some future time. Finally, the conservation value of land that is adjacent to developed areas is lower than land that is more remote. This scorecard item is controversial but the rationale for the measure is that a parcel's remoteness gives urban/suburban dwellers a chance to escape to the "solitude of the great outdoors" where one can enjoy nature, wildlife and the sense of "being one" with nature. In contrast, a parcel in an area of intense development may only provide a break in a pattern of sprawl. While recognizing the importance of having "sprawl buffers," the Environmental Commission decided to place a higher value on those areas free from the hustle and bustle of developed properties while recognizing the parallel need for open space in areas of rapid development. Our Extraordinary Factors score, in some instances, was designed to pick up this open space need.

The Scorecard Results.

1. The John Miller Farm. The top rated farm from the Commission's review was the John Miller farm (Miller's Nursery) on County Road #16 with a score of 83 out of a possible 100. (See the following Table.) The farm is comprised of approximately 142 acres and lies close to the Town of Canandaigua's Onanda Park. This proximity to the Town's Park adds to its Landscape and Conservation value. While the parcel does not have any "prime agricultural soils," it does contain steep slopes and a spectacular view of Canandaigua Lake. It is zoned AR-3 and does not have any major housing developments in its immediate vicinity. Commission members also awarded the parcel 10 extra points for its outstanding view of the Lake and its history as an important local family fruit and tree farm.

Land Use Options: Outright purchase of the John Miller Farm would be very expensive. The benefit to the Town, however, would be the parcels proximity to

Onanda Park and the recreational and open space opportunities that would be provided to the town's residents. A "Purchase of Development Rights (PDR)" would be less costly but still would be expensive. While the land would be protected from development by a PDR, one drawback would be the lack of public access. Nevertheless, one benefit of the PDR would be to provide a development buffer to the Town's Park.

Farmland Scorecard Summary			Landscape	Agricultural	Envir. Sensitive	Ridgelines/Scenic	Legal Protection	Potential Development	Extraordinary
Farmland Scores (Avg. Comm. Members)		100	33	14	19	16	10	6	0 to 10
	Rank								
Miller (Civ Rd #16)	1	83.0	33	14	19	16	10	6	10
Miller (Civ Rd #32, Hickox & Bliss)	2	82.0	23	14	19	11	3	6	6
Hicks Farm (Coyne Rd)	3	73.0	17	14	10	10	1	4	
Knopf	4	72.0	18	14	12	11	3	6	3
Purdy	5	70.0	23	14	8	11	3	6	
Burt	6	69.0	13	14	12	11	3	6	5
Outhouse (Seneca Pt Rd)	7	61.0	17	8	11	16	3	6	
Wyffels	8	58.0	13	9	12	16	4	-6	10
Brocklebank	9	55.0	13	14	11	7	4	6	
Pritchard (N of Yerkess)	10	51.0	17	14	11	7	3	-6	

2. The Miller Farm (County Road #32 – Hickox and Bliss). The Miller farm on County Rd #32 was a close second to the farm discussed above. The parcels owned by the Miller's comprise hundreds of acres – many of which are contiguous. The property contains wetlands, rolling hills as well as hydric and prime agricultural soils. The parcels are adjacent to other working farms and one parcel can be seen from Canandaigua Lake. While the parcel has been zoned as AR-2 and has not been designated as "most" suitable for development (as the Southern Corridor has), developers have been "sniffing" around this area for sometime. Since this homestead is one of the premier farms in the Town, the Commission decided to award it 6 extraordinary points.

Land Use Options. Given the sheer size of the Miller farm and given that developers already have the property in their "cross hairs", an outright purchase of the entire farm or even a small parcel would be financially prohibitive for the Town of Canandaigua. The only viable options would be a PDR on a portion of the farm (a parcel or parcels with wetlands or an exceptional view shed). Alternatively, the Millers might wish to consider a conservation easement with the separated development rights donated to a "Land Trust." Considering the new changes in Federal and State tax laws, the benefit to the Millers would be a tax

credit for property taxes paid, a charitable deduction for the gift to the Land Trust and a cut in federal estate taxes.

3. *The Hicks Farm (Coye Road)*. The parcel that was ranked in third place (73 points) by the Commission was the Hicks' property. This parcel comprises 51 acres. While the property does not abut protected lands, a neighboring property to the south and east is owned by a Land Trust supporter who is committed to preserving the property as bird habitat and unlikely to allow future development. Environmentally the parcel scored 18 points out of a possible 19 points, the highest of any of the farms in our survey. The property contains steep slopes, buffered streams that flow into the lake, and unusual geologic features in its terrain. With the exception of the Hicks' house, the property is undeveloped and treed and contains a beautiful view of Canandaigua Lake. (See photos.)



The farm is active, with grape production and some cattle grazing, but it does not contain any "prime soils." The parcel, however, is threatened by development from the south. The developers, Marie and Charlie Kenton, have purchased property just to the south of the Hicks' farm in the Town of South Bristol and have plans to construct 20 high value homes. In addition, the expansion of Bristol Harbor continues and highlights the desirability of this area for development. Currently, the Town of Canandaigua has zoned the Hicks' farm AR-3. Even with this restriction, the rural character and the outstanding viewshed make this an attractive parcel for developers.

Land Use Options. In the Commission's view, the Hicks' farm is an ideal candidate for a PDR. Besides acting as a buffer to the development coming from the south, the parcel would provide a tremendous scenic view for Town residents. The attractiveness of the property could be enhanced if town officials could convince the Hicks to set aside a small parcel of their land on Coye Road as a scenic turnout. While not on a heavily traveled road such a turnout would at least provide some psychic benefit to the Town's residents.

The Hicks also have two sons that own property adjacent to the farmstead. This land totals 31 acres. One parcel fronts Seneca Point and Coye Road and the other

is opposite the corner of Monks Road and Seneca Point Road. While not evaluated by the Commission, both parcels would make an ideal addition to any potential PDR and would enhance the benefits from this project.

4. The Wyffels' Farm. While not in our top-three-ranking, the Wyffels' Farm deserves special mention because of a PDR grant from the State to allow the Town of Canandaigua to purchase the Wyffels' development rights. When evaluated by the "Scorecard's" six conservation factors, the farmstead attained a score of only 48 points, near the bottom of our ranking. The parcel scored low because it is not near any protected lands and is in an area under intense development pressures. In general, land in areas where development is occurring, will not compare favorably in its ecological or conservation value to areas not threatened by development. As history has shown, a working farm with a PDR that is adjacent to a housing development will be a source of frustration to both the homeowners in the subdivision and to the farmers. The cost of farmland in a rapidly developing area also is likely to be very high per acre relative to more remote areas. Thus, an outright purchase or a PDR would stretch a municipality's limited conservation resources and divert resources from more cost-efficient uses.

Nevertheless, The Town's Environmental Commission members believed that a PDR would not only create an open space vista that would break up the monotony of subdivision sprawl but also would provide a blocking action to future development along Middle Cheshire Road. In the view of some Commission members, this action would provide the benefit of keeping the population and traffic densities in the area to manageable proportions. In effect, suburban sprawl would be curtailed in this area by a PDR on the Wyffels' farm.

In addition, some members suggested that the Town Board should take a longer-term view of this property. With future development likely around the hamlet of Cheshire and to the West of the Southern Corridor, the Wyffels' farm might provide a useful option for a park at some point in the decades ahead. Along the same line, one Commission member pointed out that the view north from the rise just before the Wyffels' farmhouse is pastoral. A scenic turnout, looking out over the open space to the North, would provide psychic benefits the Town's residents and would remind them of the Town's rural heritage. Thus, a PDR on the Wyffels' property might include a contingency that the Wyffels donate a one or two acre parcel to the Town for a scenic turnout.

Needless to say, these factors weighed heavily on Commission members. The potential to stop suburban sprawl in its tracks and to provide open space to Town's residents in the future, encouraged Commission members to award 10 extraordinary points to the Wyffels' farm, thus raising its total from 48 points to 58 points. This subjective adjustment boosted its "Scorecard" ranking from 10 to 8.

5. Other Deserving Farms. A number of other farms ranked high in our "Scorecard" ranking. The Knopf Farm on Cooley Road recorded a score of 72 just one point behind the Hick's parcel, and the Purdy Farm in Emerson/Sandhill Road area was awarded a rating of 70. The Purdy parcel scored high for Landscape factors, prime agricultural soils and its view shed. This is a beautiful farm. A conservation easement or a future PDR would help preserve this outstanding property. The Burt farm on Woolhouse Road, and the Outhouse property on Seneca Point Road also scored very high. In short, the Town of Canandaigua is blessed with some beautiful farms that will continue to underpin the economic health of this area.

SCENIC VIEWS

Scenic views are abundant in the Town of Canandaigua and their protection and their preservation benefits all members of the community and enhances the Town's tourism potential. The ranking of the views listed in the Town's "Farmland and Open Space Report," however, presented the Commission with a number of challenges. First, the "Conservation Scorecard" that the Commission adopted to evaluate farms was not suitable for evaluating scenic views. A view shed has to be evaluated by the extent and visual range of the parcel's vista, the land's accessibility, and the possible diminution to the view posed by future construction.

A second challenge was the size of the scenic parcel being evaluated. While most scenic (highway) overlooks typically are one or two acres in size, the viewshed is typically much larger. Some overlooks would not be endangered by future construction, since the building might be on a lower slope. In other cases, however, the development might be directly in the line of site, thus reducing the aesthetics and psychic benefits of the view.

To meet these challenges, the Environment Commission decided to construct a "Scenic Value Scorecard" that recognizes these issues and prioritizes scenic sites by providing a single value for each parcel being evaluated. The scorecard is designed to compare the attributes and qualities of a parcel to those of an ideal site, such as the Route #12 scenic outlook in South Bristol. Four general factors were used by the Commission to evaluate scenic parcels: Landscape (size of parcel, natural vegetation, and proximity to protected lands); Ridgelines and Scenic Views (extent and visual range of the parcel's vista, accessibility of the parcel, and obstructed or unobstructed view); Legal Protection (type of legal protection, and location in or outside regulatory boundary); and Development Potential (could the parcel's scenic view be threatened by construction of buildings in the immediate vicinity?). A copy of the "Scenic Value Scorecard" is located in Appendix B.

The Scenic View Scorecard Results

1. Goodale Road. The top ranked "Scenic View" in the Commission's review was Goodale Road just west of Smith Road. The vista from this area is truly spectacular and