## Agriculture Introduction

Agriculture is an integral part of the Town of Clayton, both historically and currently. Agriculture has defined the Town's Rural Character since the late 1800's. Agriculture has kept the Town lands open and green, preserving vast expanses of pastures, cropland, woodlots and wetlands that frame rural vistas for all to appreciate. Early on, agriculture gave our countryside a design vocabulary of small clusters/groupings of wood frame buildings (homes, barns, sheds, and miscellaneous support structures) scattered throughout the Town and surrounded by open fields, woodlots, and nature.

Today the Town is fortunate to still have that character, a Town of open fields, treed horizons, and open skies. A character that we have held onto, a character that has become a visual signature for residents of, and visitors to our Town. Single family homes have become scattered throughout the countryside, along highways, and near highway intersections and population centers. Yes, the rural fabric of the Township remains intact, visible to its residents and all those that choose to visit. Our barn roofs, church steeples, and silos are still the dominant elements piercing our skies. It is character worth preserving.

Maintaining, protecting, and enhancing this tradition is recognized as essential to the Town's future. The history of the Town is deeply intertwined with agriculture; farming was one of Clayton's main occupations when the Town was first settled. Agriculture remains one of the more unifying components of the Town's economy, heritage, and culture from Clayton's settlement to today.

Up until the mid-20th Century, Clayton's farms produced not only the major portion of local

**Agricultural Goals**:

1. *Reduce the negative impacts non-farm development has on critical farm areas, especially related to farmland fragmentation, traffic, and conversion in the Town of Clayton.*
2. *Permit, protect and encourage the continued use of rural areas for agricultural activities.*
3. *Revitalize, encourage, and protect agriculture activities as they function as farm businesses.*
4. *Recognize New York State, the County, and the Town as a "right to farm" priority area.*
5. *Research and implement policies for the protection of agricultural lands from unreasonable development pressures and property tax pressures due to increasing values.*
6. *Recognize the value the community gains through these policies, an added indirect benefit from agricultural lands, as agricultural properties have one of the lowest cost ratio of town services vs. taxes paid.*
7. *Promote and encourage all current forms of agricultural activities in Clayton; our working dairy/beef farms, vineyards, grain or hops producers, large and small market farms, backyard and community gardens.*
8. *Promote and encourage sustainable agricultural practices and/or organic practices. Promote and encourage "holistic" sustainable approaches to both small and commercial agricultural operations.*

**Agricultural Objectives**:

1. Recognize Clayton's agricultural lands are also the single largest form of protection of the town's "open spaces", and Town Policy should reflect this vital relationship and contribution when developing proactive agricultural friendly land use policies.
2. Promote and encourage agricultural production and small to mid-size agricultural processing businesses to locate in the Town. Promote agricultural based entities that can utilize current and future local agricultural production. These would include: wineries, microbreweries, distilleries, small cheese producers as well as other types of small-scale agricultural processors.

diets, but they also shipped both processed and unprocessed food and food products via railroad to New York's urban centers, becoming a major driver of the local economy. This agricultural growth continued in tandem with the "Golden Age" of 1000 Islands tourism. So as Clayton experienced its Golden Age of farming, tourism also flourished.

By the late 20th Century, however, more modern dairy equipment led to some changes on local farms. These improvements led to a reduction in the acreage actively farmed and total active farms in the Town. This, however, made available many of the shoreline properties and areas outside the village and hamlet areas for other types of development the Town enjoys today. The former and continuing agriculture activities in Clayton play a key role in maintaining the open spaces and rural character throughout the Town and its communities.

Recently, the Town has witnessed a resurgence of agricultural activity of a wide variety and a renewed desire by people to consume locally sourced food. To experience a new balance in the amount and types of agriculture, the Town should not only maintain and encourage local farms and related businesses, but to also proactively work toward creating the conditions and policies that will bring about a New Golden Age of local agriculture in the Town of Clayton.

**Agricultural Objectives**:

3. Promote and encourage future agricultural developments and trends to continually revitalize and expand the Town Ag Economy.
4. Promote and encourage increasing the percentage of the locally produced foods in people's diets to a level of 25%. Historically, (decades ago) people's diets were almost exclusively derived from the area. Also, dollars spent on local foods stay within the community, and is one of the best ways to have a healthier diet, support local agricultural entrepreneurs, and protect local open spaces.
5. Promote and encourage marketing of produce and products from Clayton, promoting the farmers market and other local outlets. Explore establishing a label/logo for Clayton produce and products.
6. Consider farm-friendly zoning definitions and processes consistent with ag and markets law.
7. Consider allowing solar energy facilities for on-site energy production for farm use to increase agricultural product viability.
8. Foster businesses that develop or sell value added farm products to enhance local agricultural viability.

## Cost of Community Services

Communities often evaluate the impact of growth on local municipal budgets. Many municipalities believe that residential development benefits the fiscal health of the community and that it will lower property taxes. Others view farmland as a land use that should be developed to a higher and better use as residential or commercial property. However, a variety of fiscal impact studies done throughout New York State have shown that residential development is a net fiscal loss and that maintaining land in farming is fiscally beneficial. It is also a critical part of community character and open space maintenance.

A Cost of Community Study (COCS) is a form of fiscal impact analysis that helps communities measure the contribution of agricultural lands to the local tax base. Farmlands may generate less tax revenue compared to residential, commercial, or industrial properties, but they also require little infrastructure or public services. Multiple COCS studies done throughout the state show farmlands actually generate more public revenue than they receive back in public services, according to the American Farmland

Trust, Fact Sheet on Cost of Community Services. COCS not only show that there is a high cost of residential development, but that agricultural land uses offer fiscal benefits similar to commercial and industrial land uses. "In nearly every community studied, farmland has generated a fiscal surplus to help offset the shortfall created by residential demand for public services. This is true even when the land is assessed at its current, agricultural use."

The median cost per dollar of revenue raised to provide public services is $0.29 for commercial and industrial uses, $0.35 for farmland and open lands, and $1.16 for residential land uses. This means that for every $1 collected in taxes by a municipality from a particular type of land use, it costs either a larger or smaller amount to provide public services back to that same land use. For example: for every $1 collected in taxes the median cost is $1.16 to provide municipal services to residential users. But for farmland, the cost is 35 cents. For commercial and industrial users, the cost is 29 cents.

While there have been no COCS done in Jefferson County to compare, the exact dollar and cents figures change from location to location. But studies both within New York State, as well as other locations within the United States, show a great amount of consistency in the general results: agricultural land uses are key to a community's fiscal health.

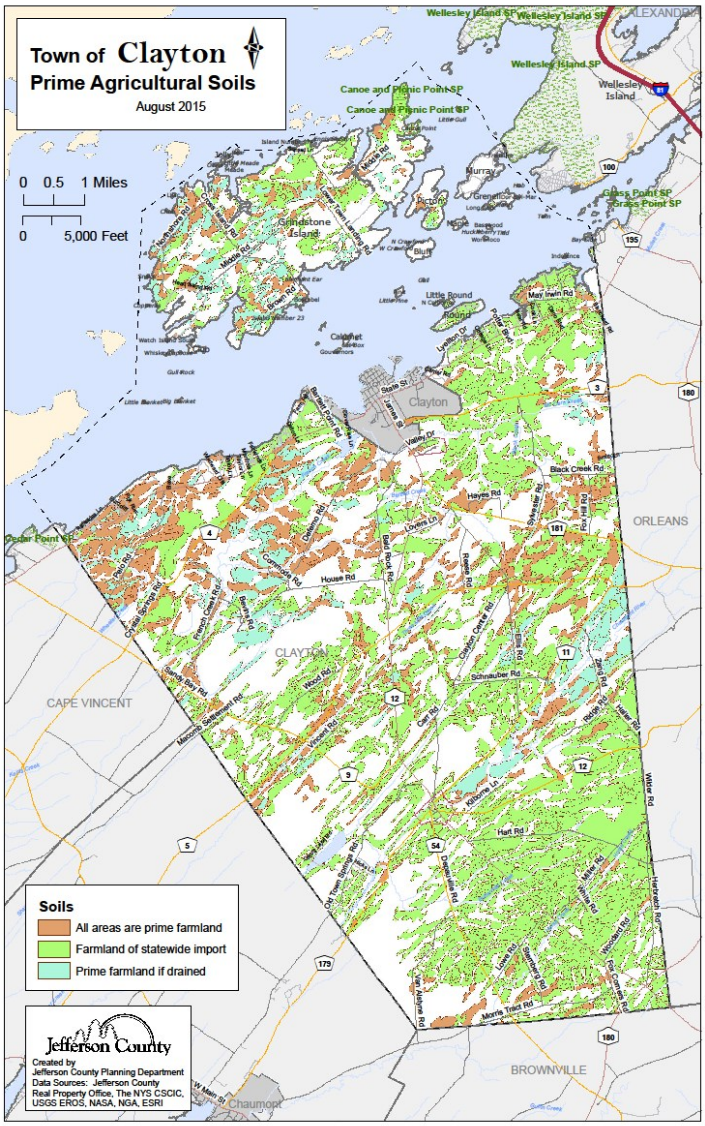



**Table 20. High Quality Farm Soils, Town of Clayton**

| | Land Acres (non-water) | Percent Prime Farmland | % Prime Farmland if Drained | % Soils of Statewide Importance | Total % All Farm Soils |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Clayton | 52,894 | 12% | 8% | 42% | 62% |

Source: Jefferson County Farmland Protection Plan, 2016

## Prime Ag Soils

Successful agriculture depends on good soils. High quality soils require less fertilizer and nutrients for growing crops. Farms with higher quality agricultural soils typically have lower costs and higher production rates. Prime farmland soils produce the highest yields of food, feed, forage, fiber, and oilseed crops, while soils of statewide significance are important to agriculture in the state, but exhibit some properties that do not meet prime farmland criteria, such as seasonal wetness or erosion. Both of these soil types (prime farmland and farmland of statewide

significance) are considered the most productive soils for farming.

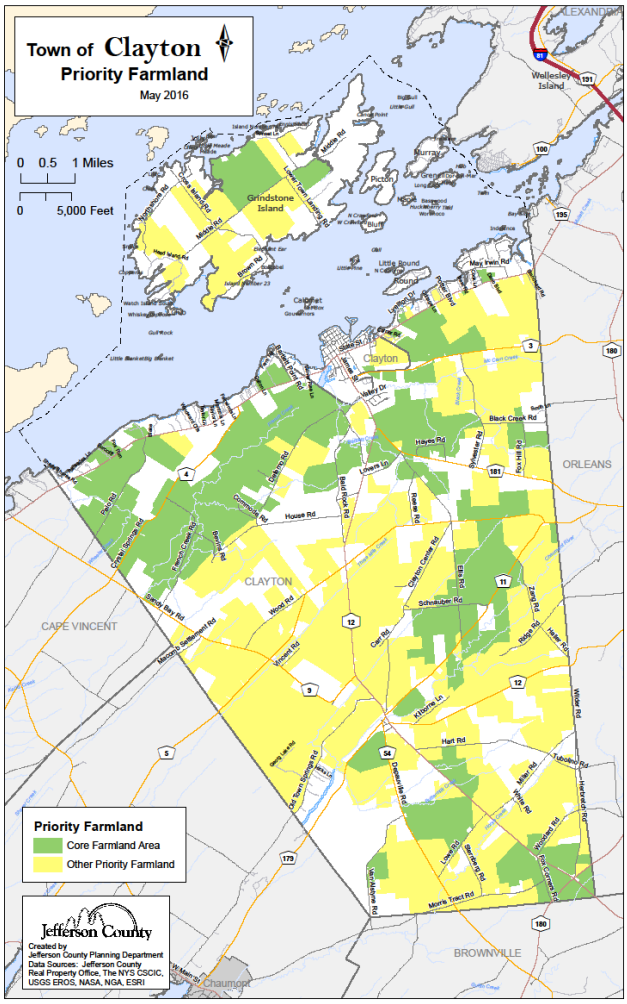
Table 20 indicates 62% the land within the Town (non-water area) contains prime farmland soils or soils of statewide significance as illustrated on the Prime Ag Soils Map.

Prime farmland soils are generally located adjacent to French Creek, with small pockets located on the northern portion of Grindstone Island and at various points along the Town's mainland shoreline. Soils of statewide significance are located on Grindstone Island, adjacent to the Lower Town Landing Road, west of School House Road, northeast of Flynn Bay, on Mason Point, northeast of Carrier Bay, inland from Bartlett Point, northeast of Sawmill Bay, and generally scattered adjacent to French Creek.

Soils of Statewide Importance occur throughout the Town as shown in green on the Prime Ag Soils Map, but are more dominant within the areas east and southeast of the Village and Hamlet of Depauville.

## Priority Farmland Map

While all of the farmland identified in the Jefferson County Farmland Protection Plan should be considered a priority, as far as preservation efforts are concerned, there is a select, core area that is of special concern. The Farmland Priority Map shows pertinent special Core Areas that the Jefferson County Agriculture and Farmland Protection Board considers critical to the continued economic vitality of the agricultural industry in Jefferson County. These core areas, symbolized in green on the map, deserve extra attention beyond preservation efforts, especially when local or regional projects will or could have a major impact on their continuation as farmland.




## Is Clayton Farm Friendly?

Part of the 2016 Jefferson County Agricultural & Farmland Protection Plan process examined the Towns throughout Jefferson County to gauge how farm friendly their Comprehensive Plans were as well as their zoning law. The Farm-

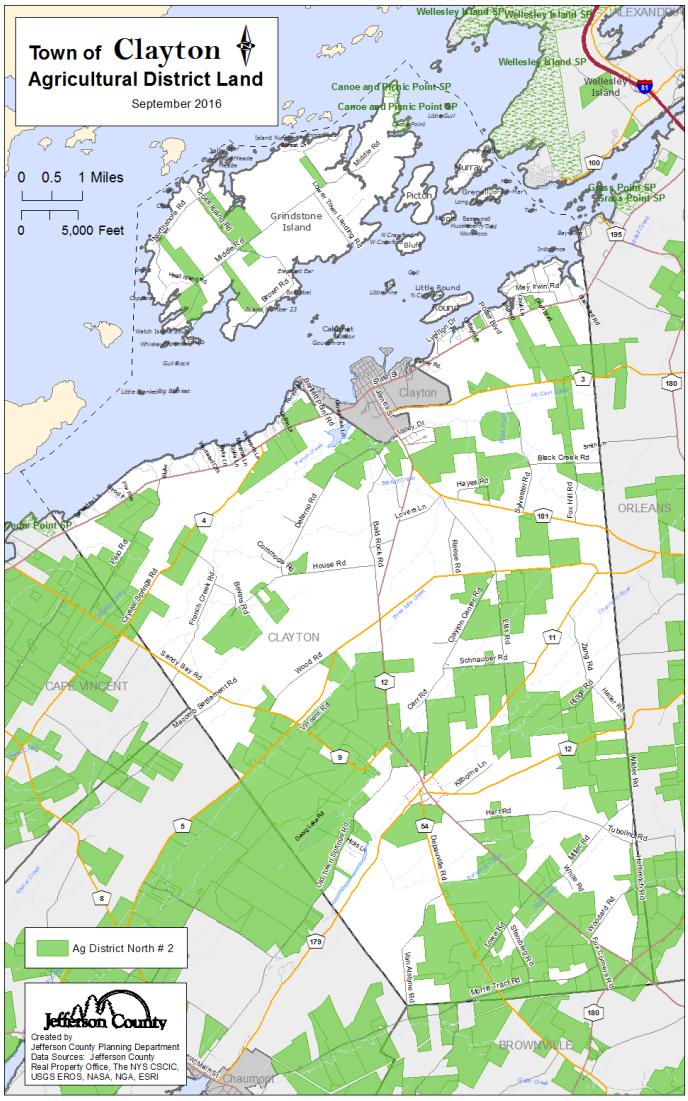
Friendly Criteria can be used to gauge how well the current plan update might perform against the criteria.

For the purposes of this Comprehensive Plan Update, the agricultural section here and the Land Use Chapter address all the Farm –Friendly Criteria identified by the Jefferson County Ag and Farmland Protection Plan 2016 (Table 21).

| Table 21. Farm-Friendly? | CLAYTON | |
|---|---|---|
| Comprehensive Plan Criteria | Yes, Whole or Partly | No, or Doesn't Address |
| Does the plan have a section on agriculture? | 2016 Plan | |
| Does the plan include maps of agricultural lands, important farmland soils, agricultural districts, etc? | 2016 Plan | |
| Xploration about the role of agriculture in the community? I.e. did a survey include questions about agriculture? Was there anything in workshops about it? | 2016 Plan | |
| Does the vision statement or goals address agriculture in any way? Is there any visible demonstration of the value of agriculture to the community in the plan? | 2016 Plan | |
| Does the plan consider agriculture as an important resource in Town? | 2016 Plan | |
| Does the plan recognize or reference a local or County agriculture and farmland protection plan? | 2016 Plan | |
| Does the plan include any data on farms and farmland? Acreage? Income or occupations from farming or other demographic data? | 2016 Plan | |
| Does the plan establish policies towards farmland and farming? | 2016 Plan | |
| Does it identify the value of farmland and farms to the community? | 2016 Plan | |
| Does it offer any recommended actions related to farming or farmland or ways to preserve or enhance farming? | 2016 Plan | |
| Does the plan establish a policy and/or future actions for the agricultural use of open space that may be created in a conservation subdivision or clustering? | 2016 Plan | |
| Does the plan discuss NYS agricultural districts and how the town can be supportive of that? | 2016 Plan | |
| Does it consider farmland a natural resource and encourage easements or other protections of that land? Is there a policy discussed for PDR, LDR or TDR? | 2016 Plan | |
| Is agriculture a consideration of where growth does or does not take place? | 2016 Plan | |

## Certified Agricultural Districts

NYS Agriculture and Markets Law, Article 25AA authorizes counties to create Agricultural Districts that are reviewed and certified by the NYS Commissioner of Agriculture and Markets. These Districts offer participating landowners options to




support agricultural operations. These options include: Agricultural Assessment; Notice of Intent; Limitation on use of eminent domain; Benefit Assessments; Restrictive Local Laws; Agriculture Data Statements; and Sound Agricultural Practices. Landowners of operating agricultural operations can apply for a special agricultural assessment which may result in a lower assessment.

If a government agency is proposing to take land within a certified agricultural district

through eminent domain, then that agency is required to file a Notice of Intent and the project is reviewed by the County Agricultural and Farmland Protection Board to determine impacts on the agricultural operation and agricultural district.

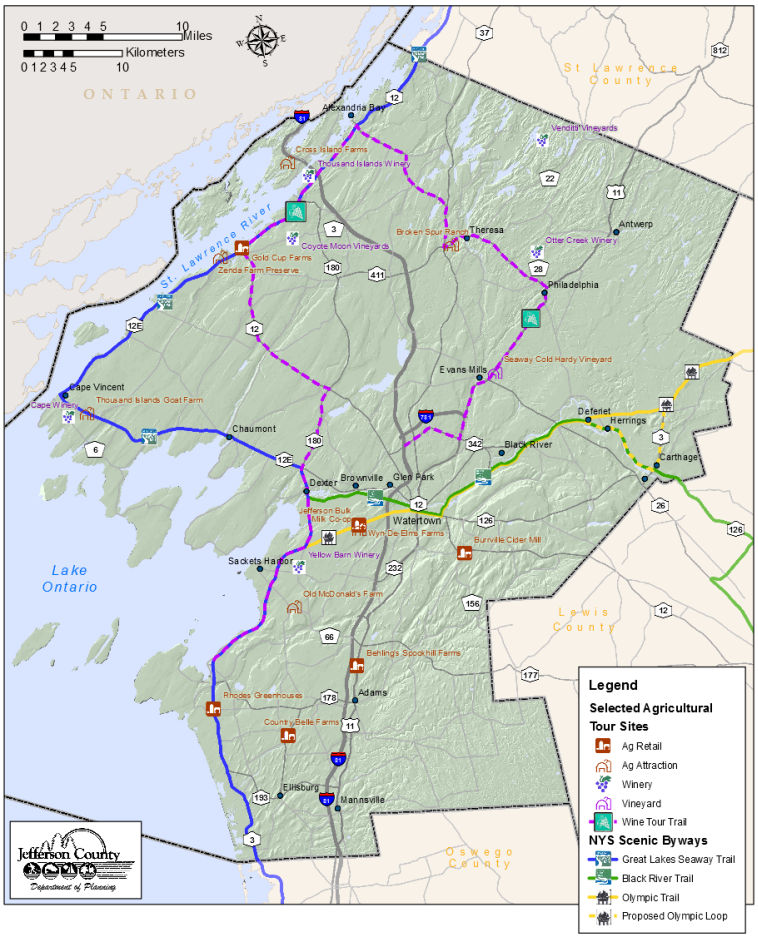
Municipalities are discouraged from passing local laws that place undue restrictions on agricultural operations. As an example, a local junkyard law cannot require that a farmer place all equipment within a structure or behind buffers. When local boards are reviewing projects any farm operation within five hundred feet must be identified and notified of the project and potential impacts on the operation are considered during the review.

As of 2016, there were 16,690 acres of land within a certified Agricultural District in the Town of Clayton as the map on the previous page illustrates.

## Farm Beverage Industry

The farm beverage industry is one that is expanding in New York State. Aside from the 106 farm breweries, New York is now home to 133 micro-breweries, up from 40 in 2011, and 39 restaurant breweries, up from 10 in 2011. Also, eight farm breweries have opened off-site branch stores. According to the Governor, as of 2016, the craft beer industry accounts for 6,552 direct jobs, in addition to supporting another 8,814 jobs in related industries. It is responsible for more than $2.9 billion in direct and indirect revenue within New York State, and another $554 million in direct and indirect wages bringing the total economic impact of nearly 3.5 billion. Additionally, more than 3,000 jobs are supported by tourism related to the craft beer industry, representing $77 million in annual wages.

Scenic Byways and Driving Tours
Jefferson County, New York




## Thousand Islands Seaway Trail Wine Tour

Within Jefferson County, the Thousand Islands-Seaway Wine Tour Trail has been used to promote tourism and vineyard visitation. Coyote Moon Vineyards in Clayton is located on the wine tour. It has three locations that offer tastings, the main vineyard and winery in the Town of Clayton on East Line Road, one downtown in the Village of Clayton on Riverside Drive, and another located within the Salmon Run Mall.

In addition, St. Lawrence Spirits (former Fairview Manor) on NYS Route 12E features tastings, and DeLukes Landscape and Garden Center features a winery and tasting room on NYS Route 12 east.

## 1000 islands Agricultural Tour

The 1000 Islands is well-known for its on the water attractions, but off the water the region reveals another side of its character. The 1000 Islands Agricultural Tour is a great way to explore the countryside. The region has been long known for its dairy farms and traditional products such as honey and maple syrup. Today, visitors can buy direct from producers of a wide array of agricultural products. Use this Tour to help you make delicious discoveries along our country roads. The Ag Audio Tour lets you visit farms, wineries, and crop stands at your own pace throughout Jefferson County and includes an audio narrative for each destination to allow visitors to hear the stories, see the fields, pet the animals, smell the cider, and taste the wine.

The stops in the Town of Clayton are (as of 2016): the Zenda Farm, 1000 Islands River Rat Cheese (former Gold Cup Farms), DaLukes winery, St. Lawrence Spirits, Beshaw Farms, and Coyote Moon Vineyards. Simply call (315)221-5104 and enter the two digit code on the sign at the location you're visiting and the corresponding recorded narrative will be played for you on your phone.