

E. Agriculture and Farming

Agriculture has long been tied to the history of Hebron. For the vast majority of its history, agriculture was the primary business activity carried on in the community. As such it has left its imprint on the town with the lingering pattern of open meadows against forest edge.

The Town's active farms continue to be a positive factor in the community. They provide jobs, income and contribute to the Town's economic base. The view of existing farm building and farming operations along several of the Town roadways is a significant contributing factor to the rural character of the community. Due to the fact that these farming operations encompass large acreage, the continuation of farming in the community keeps these large parcels in an undeveloped state, contributing significantly to the open feel of the Town and requires little to no demand for town services.



It is an important finding of this Plan to establish Town goals and objectives to protect existing farms, to encourage their continuance in the Community and to encourage open communication between the Town and the farming community to foster a positive and productive relationship.

There are several significant ways that the Town could promote and actively encourage the continuance of farming in the community. One such effort that the Town should actively pursue is the purchase of development rights from interested property owners.

The Town should encourage the State of Connecticut in this activity and assist them with whatever means are available to the Town. The Town should lobby to have the State adequately fund the existing agricultural preservation program to reduce the present backlog and to make this a more viable option for local farmers. The Town should also consider pursuing the purchase of development rights from farms locally.

The use of open space acquisition funds available to the Town could yield a far greater impact in retaining rural character than outright purchase of open space land. A focus of these efforts should be in those areas of best agricultural soils and in areas of substantial acreage. These areas are generally shown on the "Future Open Space Plan" in Subsection J.

The following goals and objectives are hereby established to further the interest of the agricultural community in Town.

Goal: Protect and promote agriculture and farming as a viable natural resource industry and as a primary representative of Hebron's rural landscape.

Objectives:

1. Protect valuable productive soils that emphasize agricultural, horticultural and forest uses

as defined in Hebron's Natural Resources Inventory.

2. Assist local property owners, who are interested in the farmland preservation program, in working with the CT Department of Agriculture to purchase the development rights of local farms.
3. Encourage the Town to utilize local open space land acquisition funds to purchase development rights from interested farm owners as a supplement to the State program.
4. Promote local farm products at retail outlets, roadside stands and local fairs e.g. adopt supportive zoning regulations to permit farm stands in all zoning districts.
5. Encourage active tree farming as an agricultural use and consider instituting a town wide holiday festival to support this activity.
6. Help support town festivals like Farm Day Tours, and strawberry and maple fests.
7. Work with the CT Department of Agriculture to encourage good forest management for harvesting.
8. Support participation in programs such as the farmland, forestland and open space assessment program authorized by Public Act 490 (now Sections 12-107 a-e of the Connecticut General Statutes), to maintain agricultural and forest lands in their present conditions.
9. Review and research zoning and subdivision regulations and other ordinances or regulations to reduce impacts to local farmers and farming operations from new residential development.



