

CHAPTER 9

AGRICULTURAL LANDS

The primary factors that attracted people to settle in this area, and ultimately to found the City of Farmington, were the abundant water from mountain streams and the fertility of the soil. For nearly 150 years farming has constituted the primary use of land in the City. Today there are few active farms in the City. Farmington's once well developed, irrigated crop and pasture land is located in close proximity to a market area where its products used to be inexpensively distributed.

The very factors that make this land valuable for farming also make it attractive for other types of more intensive development. With the development of the State and local road system much of the agricultural land has become even more accessible. Residential subdivisions are gradually encroaching along with some commercial and industrial uses. The open agricultural areas that have characterized Farmington for so long are slowly diminishing. Notwithstanding this, the land's historic value and importance as open space is a community resource that we can ill afford to lose.

Prime agricultural lands are one of the earth's rapidly disappearing, irreplaceable resources. As these lands disappear under asphalt and concrete they must be replaced by less suitable, less productive and more remote farmlands elsewhere.

Recommendations:

1. Those lands within the City currently in agricultural use should be protected and the property owners encouraged to continue and maintain productive agricultural operations.
2. The City should perform an open space study to determine, in part, land that should be considered prime agricultural land and which should be given the highest priority in terms of preservation within a comprehensive open space system. Once identified, these lands should be designated as agricultural/open space.
3. The City should adopt policies and procedures intended to acquire and maintain farmland in order to preserve the historic character of Farmington. These procedures may include such methods as:
 - a. outright purchase of such lands which may then be leased back to farmers who will continue to keep them productive;
 - b. acquisition of development rights;
 - c. establishment of conservation easements through which property would be limited to agricultural or open space use;
 - d. establishment of a land conservancy trust to which property owners could voluntarily donate land to be maintained and preserved for future generations.
4. If necessary, the Zoning Ordinance and Subdivision Ordinance should be amended to provide protection for farmlands as development occurs near such lands.

5. All land below the 4218 elevation in the western part of Farmington should be zoned for agricultural use, very low density or designated as open space.