

Summary of Significant Events in Protecting Agricultural Lands in Auburn

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For City of Auburn — AGRP Steering Committee
November 29, 2017

Overview:

The priority that Auburn established as it set aside farm and forest lands in 1964 was to concentrate new development close to downtown and major highways, in large part to limit public costs for providing utility and school services while also maintaining an attractive community. Planning documents prepared before the adoption of the AGRP assumed that farm income would continue to decline and farm population would decrease. Studies also noted that marketing, processing, and distribution factors had a greater effect on agriculture than land availability. No attention was given at the time to addressing these conditions, fostering a more financially sustainable agriculture, or to incentivizing local farmers to address the challenge of feeding a population that planners assumed would double by 2000. Yet the Ordinance did solidly establish that protecting farmland in the city was in the public interest.

In the mid-1980s, developers sought to remove land from the AGRP in favor of rural housing development. While the Planning Board opposed taking this step, the City Council adopted a plan favoring rural residential development. But the courts struck this down. A 1986 review of AGRP zoning found that farmland had indeed been protected, but also found that the most significant loss of open agricultural land was due to forest growth on untilled fields. In later years, additional beltways were carved out of the AGRP District to allow Rural Residential development.

Meanwhile, Maine has built considerable demand for community-based foods. One of the more successful farms sells direct to wholesale clients and Maine retail stores who value food grown in the state. Several new initiatives have brought new farmers to Auburn, many of whom seek more diverse options for both farming and residential dwellings.

The Auburn Comprehensive Plan (2010) encouraged greater flexibility in applying standards for the AGRP, and suggested that city staff be given greater leeway in interpreting requirements. The plan preserved the 10-acre minimum site size for new home construction and allowed for permanent set-asides of land for agricultural, conservation, and other open-space purposes. Significantly, the Plan also encouraged new approaches that are compatible with new economic realities. This policy suggests that the current 50% income standard for building a new home in AGRP should be changed.

On August 21, 2017, the Auburn City Council took further steps to address the need to support local food systems, not simply farm and forest land, by adopting a Food Sovereignty Ordinance. “The intent and purpose of Auburn’s Food Sovereignty Ordinance is to ensure that residents are provided unimpeded access to local food and to reduce governmental regulation of the local food system to the fullest extent permitted by home rule authority....” The ordinance exempts producers, growers, and processors of local food or food products within the City for sale direct to the final consumer from licensure and exemption requirements. Auburns Ordinance was drafted to allow exemptions to the extent allowable by State Law. When State Law was revised

to uphold state and federal inspection of meat and dairy products that changed the reach of Auburn's Ordinance.

The ordinance was enabled by a Maine statute that provides the following definition: "**2-B. Local Food System.** "Local food system means a community food system within a municipality that integrates food production, processing, consumption, direct producer-to-consumer exchanges and other traditional foodways to enhance the environmental, economic, social and nutritional health and well-being of the municipality and its residents."

Thus these City and State actions have established a precedent in favor of strengthening *local food systems* — not simply agriculture — in order to achieve broader health, well-being, environmental, and economic benefits. This may form the basis for revisions of AGRP.

While the 1964 provision protected lands still available for agricultural use today, it did not address other fundamental components of a localized food system, including the following:

- Can Auburn take effective action to create markets for farmers and food businesses so that farmland stays populated?
- How should the City of Auburn invest in infrastructure that creates greater efficiencies for farmers in the city who wish to sell food to Auburn residents?

Issues that **were addressed** in the 1960s also pose new challenges today:

- Is the 50% income guideline still relevant, since most existing farms greatly rely upon off-farm income?
- If this limit is changed, how can Auburn ensure that rural areas are actually farmed, not dominated by nonfarm residences?
- Should the 10-acre parcel limit be changed to accommodate pockets of dense housing (such as clusters of veterans, Somali Bantu and Somali farmers, etc.)?
- If this limit is changed, how can Auburn ensure that the rural character and open space are preserved?
- How does Auburn express through the AGRP its commitment to broader goals of protecting the environment, ensuring food security for Auburn residents, and promoting health and well-being?

New issues also have arisen:

- How can the City assist new farmers in establishing solid businesses?
- What other actions are needed to ensure that emerging farms build effective businesses?
- How does the City want to invest in advancing its food sovereignty policy?
- Could food systems development be viewed as an approach that integrates planning for both urban and rural areas simultaneously?
- Temporary land protections (ARPZ) have reduced demand for permanent land protection services.

Global Contexts:

New England farms lost prosperity in the 1800s as Midwestern states became important farm producers, and began to supply urban markets in the East.

National credit upheavals in the late 1800s meant that farmers across the US experienced tremendous poverty.

Increased demand for food resulting from immigration, industrial growth, and international demand during World War I created peak prosperity for US farmers during the years 1910-1914.

Farming communities globally experienced a depression in the 1920s. This erosion of rural economies was a major cause of the Great Depression of 1929. This was a global crisis initiated by global commodity price uncertainty. Only later did it spread to the stock market. Those analysts who paid any attention to agriculture at the time found that had the farm economy been sound in 1929, the US would have been able to readily recover from the stock market crash [Meter (1990), *Money with Roots*, www.crcworks.org/roots.pdf].

New federal farm policy and international demand after World War II (the US loaned money to Europe to rebuild since their fields were devastated by the war, and these nations purchased grains from the US) created a new era of prosperity for farms. With increased mechanization and new fertilizers, farm production increased dramatically, and rural dwellers moved to cities.

In the 1950s, Europe became able to produce its own food again, so US farmers were caught with a surplus and prices fell. By 1962, national policy makers initiated a discussion aimed at moving some farmers off the land. One influential policy group, the Committee for Economic Development (CED), wrote a report called "An Adaptive Program for Agriculture," stating that "The movement of people out of agriculture has not been fast enough to take advantage of the opportunities that improving farm technologies, and thus creating capital, create."

It is not clear today whether civic leaders in Auburn were aware of these global economic developments, but in the late 1950s, the City took steps to protect open space and farms under the assumption that farm population would decrease.

Auburn 1958: The Blackwell Report

Blackwell, John T. (1958). "City of Auburn City Plan Report." December.

The City hired Boston consultant John T. Blackwell to draft a plan for Auburn. Blackwell concluded that urban growth should be concentrated in specific areas, protecting rural areas for farming, lumbering, and recreational uses. He did not write specific plans for protecting agricultural lands, but he did draw a map that showed a "farm and forest" district. This was one step to the creation of the AGRP district.

"Generally, farming as a way of life has been declining," the report stated on page 16. It did not address how the City could protect farm lands in the face of this presumed decline.

Blackwell predicted that "The Auburn future population will be mainly urban, suburban, and rural non-farm... The number of people will depend mainly on future urban employment, which we believe will to be more in non-manufacturing categories than in manufacturing" [page 95].

Blackwell identified “three major groups of planning problems” that he said needed to be addressed in Auburn. Interestingly, these only indirectly dealt with agriculture: (1) Urban Cluster Problems, (2) Tiny Rural Village Problems, and Widely Scattered Rural Farm and Nonfarm Homes; and (3) Woodland Protection and Improvement. The concerns listed under number two were that the cost of providing services to rural households, and the need to hold property taxes at steady levels so family farm and forest businesses could survive (i.e., to not provide services to scattered locations) were the primary issues to address. Strengthening farms financially was not named as a concern.

Specific proposals were made for Residential, Industrial, and Business development in Auburn [page 30-37], and strategies were suggested for wooded areas. No specific provisions were offered for agriculture. As noted above, Blackwell assumed that the farm population would decline over time.

Proposals made for wooded areas included [pages 34-35]:

1. Create a town forest to serve as a model for good forestry practices and a source of income.
2. Develop buffer strips to separate land uses.
3. Develop campsites.
4. Build special recreational sites (such as rod and gun clubs, ski slopes, waterside sites, and wild lands).
5. Special sites for sanitary landfill, dumps, etc.

The report anticipated that more and more Auburn residents would attain wealth, and would have more leisure time. It also predicted that demand for food would increase and that more people would want to build homes on larger lots [page 47]. However, no proposals were made to assist Auburn farms to expand to meet this increased food demand. The report noted that the “Turner Centre Creamery...north of Auburn, was once one of the largest in New England,” and that the cannery at Skilling’s Corner had closed [page 17-18].

The Blackwell report did specifically mention the City-owned farm, which had once served as a poor farm. The study recommended that this farm might no longer be necessary due to “the decline in farm living and because of far-reaching changes in community approaches to rehabilitating or caring for disabled, enfeebled, or abandoned older citizens.” Blackwell recommended that the City retain ownership of the land so it could serve as part of a circle of public open space surrounding Lake Auburn.

The report predicted that the city population would rise to “45,000-50,000 or more by the year 2000.” Actual population in 2016 was 22,948 [Federal Census], just below the 1950 level of 23,124 [page 93].

Continuing, the Blackwell report stated that “More future population growth can be expected within Auburn municipal boundaries than in Lewiston, we suggest, because there was in 1957 so much more attractively developable acreage in Auburn, both for industry and for residence” [Page 96]. Note that neither agriculture nor forestry is mentioned here.

Section IX of the Blackwell report offers “An Urban Renewal Program for Auburn.” Nothing regarding agricultural or forestry economic development is mentioned [page 110]. Blackwell did recommend that federal dollars be sought to renovate housing in the “outside downtown” area, suggesting “partial or total clearance at Sandy Beach on Taylor Pond, the land to be used for municipal recreational use and to clear a pathway for the recommended new parkway,” adding that “There would probably have to be total clearance on Howell and Clifford Streets at Stevens Mill Road and Old Hotel Road, across from Sandy Point.” Blackwell also suggested that housing could be rehabilitated in [what he termed] “retarded” subdivisions in (a) “the vicinity of Manley and Old Portland Roads,” and (b) “Easterly of South Main Street in the south part of New Auburn, upon the plateau” [page 112].

Moreover, the Blackwell report set out the vision for what became rural residential districts. “The principal eight suburban and rural residential districts suggested in the Land Use and Circulation Plan (not counting strips zoned for rural residence in outlying Auburn) appear to aggregate some 3500 buildable acres and would accommodate, we estimate, some 2,250 new one-family dwellings, over and above those already existing, as follows:

- 1) Northerly: along Center street between the recommended Parkway and East Auburn Village, about 150 dwellings;
- 2) Northerly: In a triangle bounded by Mt. Auburn Cemetery, Mt. Auburn Avenue, Turner Street, and Summer Street, about 180 dwellings;
- 3) Northwesterly: both sides of a recommended new parkway, in an area bounded by Summer Street, Park Avenue, a line parallel to and northerly of Lake Street, the recommended new parkway and Taylor Pond, easterly shore, about 300 dwellings;
- 4) West Central: between Taylor Brook and recommended parkway, bounded southerly by Minot Avenue, about 135 dwellings;
- 5) Southwesterly: west of the parkway and south of Minot Avenue, about 130 dwellings;
- 6) East of the parkway and south of Minot Avenue, extending easterly to Washington Avenue Southbound and southerly to the Little Androscoggin River, about 600 dwellings;
- 7) Beech Hill northerly, northeasterly, and easterly slopes, from Marston's Corner to Washington Avenue Southbound, south of the Little Androscoggin River, about 150 dwellings;
- 8) New Auburn Plateau, south of the New Auburn Fire Station, approximately 450 suburban dwellings, and in a triangle of rural territory adjoining southerly between the plateau, the Maine Turnpike and Little Androscoggin River, about 150 dwellings.

On a map following page 116, the Blackwell report showed a recommended “farm and forest” zoning district. Yet no details were offered explaining what such zoning would involve.

The report further noted that “Auburn and Lewiston have very little employment directly related to forestry exploitation, notwithstanding the extended wooded lands in and surrounding Auburn” [page 18]. Blackwell found that 95 jobs in Lewiston-Auburn involved forestry and agriculture, compared to 13,265 jobs in manufacturing at the time. The report concluded, “Farming and forestry activities in and around Auburn may expand also because of the national need for more food and more fibre products as the regional and national populations increase, but farm and forestry employment will not expand as much as productivity by new methods and equipment” [page 19].

Analysis: The report was primarily an urban growth proposal, one that far overstated Auburn’s true growth potential. It suggested new urban development for a population that was not actually rising. It did not assess what would be required economically for agriculture and forestry to survive. More critically, it assessed agriculture primarily in terms of how many people were moving out of agriculture [page 13]. It noted that 2.5% of the city’s employment base was in farming.

While the report noted that “Marketing, processing, and distribution factors appear to be the determinants of agricultural activities throughout Maine, New England, and the nation, not physiographic factors,” it did not suggest strategies for improving these economic factors.

Essentially, it appears that the author assumed that the decline of agriculture could be viewed as a positive development for Auburn since it would reduce pressure to build new homes, and would minimize demand for new city services.

1960: Atwood, Blackwell, and Young: “Looking Toward the Year 2000 with Foresight”

Prepared for the Auburn City Planning Board. This report is essentially an updated version of the 1958 Blackwell report, one that is simplified and with maps to guide a civic discussion.

This report to the Auburn Planning Board showed a map that highlighted “farm and forest” areas that align closely with what became the Agricultural Resource Protection Zone [page 6].

“Orderly provision for urban growth is the purpose of the Central Auburn Plan....The heart of the Central Auburn Plan is conscious concentration of urban and suburban growth at controlled densities, backed up and surrounded by mainly farm and forest usage of all of outlying Auburn” [page 7].

The report noted that the urban sections of Auburn had expanded from their original compact areas to a three-mile zone north to south. Further, it stated, “Outlying Auburn is occupied by a few dairy farms, poultry farms, apple orchards, brick yards, sand and gravel pits, several small outlying clusters of homes, and extensive woods and hills [page 1]. The report further noted that seven rural “village clusters” existed at East Auburn, North Auburn, West Auburn, Young’s Corner, Marston’s Corner, Haskell Corner, Rowe’s Corner, and Danville.

The report proposed setting aside “some 3,600 acres for suburban one-family development at one-acre or more per dwelling north, west, and south of the urban center.” Summaries of the recommendations for each region follow.

Southern region of Auburn: “Separated from all the rest of Auburn are 20+ square miles of rolling, wooded territory with a few farms. A farm and forest future, mainly a woodland future, is foreseen and recommended for this area. The small number of year-round dwellings will probably decline, but dwellings will continue along the River and at Danville. No new home building is recommended in the interior, and only low-density along the River and at Danville. The portions of Durham and New Gloucester townships adjoining this southernmost portion of Auburn are also of farms and forest character” [page 4].

Northern region of Auburn: In this 22-square mile section of the city are four outlying villages and “major apple orchards on Perkins Ridge....The combination in Northern Auburn of settled clusters and scenic sites but absence of existing utilities leads to recommendations of selected rural residence development areas, and a farm and forest future for most of the rest of this study area” [page 5].

Western region of Auburn: a nine-square mile region with “very few year-round residents...so a farm, vacation cottage, and forest future is recommended....Both Taylor Pond and Lake Auburn afford fishing and boating opportunities” [page 3].

As with the 1958 report, a priority was placed on holding down costs for providing city services. “The bulk of urban Auburn is primitively sewered by gravity directly into Androscoggin River and tributaries. Homes, schools, and factories were being built beyond the geographic and topographic limits of this primitive sewerage. Continued urban expansion is recommended westerly toward Taylor Pond, westerly toward Old Hotel Road and westerly toward the Little Androscoggin River, and the Airport. Growth requires either individual sewage disposal on large lots or sanitary sewerage and effluent treatment” [page 13].

Further, the report suggested setting aside “more public lands along lakes and streams,” adding that these green spaces “would enhance Auburn living enjoyment. Also they would improve and stabilize tax values of neighboring properties and would prevent unwise building on steep slopes or flood-endangered locations” [page 15].

Analysis: In this publication, very little attention is paid to protecting agriculture itself. It is assumed that the farm sector will specialize to serve broader markets beyond Auburn, and that many of the existing farm homes will deteriorate. The focus of this report is to reduce municipal costs for services by concentrating development in specific areas.

1964: AGRP Ordinance adopted by Auburn City Council

Chapter 29 Zoning Ordinance; Section 3 Zoning Districts; 3.1 to 3.3

Sec. 3.3: Forest and Farming Districts. Every part of the City of Auburn not otherwise hereinafter designated Flood Plain, Rural Residence, Suburban Residence, Urban Residence, Neighborhood Business, General Business, or Industrial District is hereby expressly declared to be in Forest and Farming Districts [page 4].

Sec. 4.2 outlines permitted uses in these districts. These include:

- Woodlands, orchards, gardens, pastures, and field with all land, building equipment and machinery and buildings accessory to the same;
- Summer camps and bonafide farm residences required for farm labor or management but no other year-round dwellings by construction nor by conversion of non-residential structures;
- Outdoor recreational uses with such accessory buildings as may be required after approval by the Planning Board;
- Other uses allowed in other residential districts.

Analysis: While Forest and Farming Districts were named first in the Ordinance, these districts are demarcated primarily because they are not zoned for a different purpose. This has the effect of encompassing nearly all of the City's undeveloped land. As Maurice Keene pointed out in our interview, this ordinance allowed houses only for a "bonafide farm" but this term was not defined in detail. Additional definitions, including the 50% income and 10-acre plot guidelines, were added later. We have not yet determined at what point these definitions were added.

1980s: Proposed Amendment to the Agriculture and Resource Protection Zone, 1980s

http://www.auburnmaine.gov/CMSContent/Planning/Ag%20and%20Resource%20Protection%20District/2017%20Documents/1980s_ProposedDistrictAmmend.pdf

[Consultants do not know who introduced these proposals]

Goals

1. Maintain a healthy agricultural economy.
2. Provide development patterns that minimize the need for incurring greater costs in the provision of municipal services.
3. Protect valuable agricultural land.
4. Allow for the extraction of equity from property that has been held under long-term ownership.
5. Provide greater flexibility in the agricultural area in order to accommodate families locating on the land.

Problems to be Avoided

1. Cutting off access from large acreages that do not front on public roads.
2. The interjection of land uses incompatible to agricultural activities.
3. Having development occur where the existing infrastructure cannot support it.
4. Creation of a land development scenario that distributes tax responsibilities and tax benefits *[Consultants are not sure what this means]*.

Analysis: In the 1980s, the weakness of the agricultural economy — now beset by a global debt crisis — has become a more significant issue, yet remains unresolved. Minimizing development pressure is still a high priority. New flexibility is sought. Yet no major actions are taken at this point.

1983: Remarks by Commissioner of Agriculture Stewart N. Smith Concerning the Auburn ARPZ, October 3

http://www.auburnmaine.gov/CMSContent/Planning/Ag%20and%20Resource%20Protection%20District/2017%20Documents/1983_AgCommissionerSmith_Remarks.pdf

“Maine currently lacks a state level ag-land protection program... I believe that the Auburn ARPZ is one of the most effective, forward-looking farmland protection programs in Maine and a unique model for other towns... Maine’s existing productive farmland amounts to less than 8% of the state’s total acreage. It is a scarce resource that is absolutely essential to our current and future agricultural production and the loss of farmland is a statewide problem that affects all Maine citizens.... Unquestionably, residents of Maine and New England will in the future have to turn to more local supplies of food. Water tables in the west are receding significantly, and those states will be providing a smaller proportion of our food supply over time. In addition, the increasing costs of energy have increased transportation costs, making food imported from a great distance more expensive than it has been in the past.”

“One of the arguments supporting a relaxation of abandonment of Auburn’s ARPZ is based on the opinion that farming in the zone is rapidly beginning to slide or decline... We are also told that although the number of individual farming operations has declined, the amount of agricultural land kept in production has remained the same... [Yet] Statewide the number of farms has actually increased... cash receipts of many of our agricultural commodity groups has also increased.”

“Despite indications of a revitalized agriculture in Maine and national trends that favor this revitalization, we are still losing viable farmland in many areas of the state... whenever we wait until farmland losses are at a critical level it already has become too late. “

Allowing rural residential development “makes it much more expensive — sometimes prohibitively expensive — for new farming operations to locate there and keep or bring available farmland back into production.”

Analysis: At this point, just prior to the outbreak of the farm credit crisis, Smith recognizes that that restricting rural residential development is critical to protecting farmland, since it increases the tax burden on landowners in the AGRP.

1986: UM—Farmington Study Evaluates Success of AGRP

Frederic, Paul B. (1986). “Protection Farmland Protection: The Case of Auburn, Maine.” University of Maine at Farmington. Presented to American Association of Geographers in May.

“The Zoning Act...has significantly restricted urban sprawl for twenty years” [page 1]. This minimized pressure for new housing that came from within the community. The study noted that although the population of Auburn decreased slightly from 24,449 in 1960 to 23,128 in 1980, the number of households increased from 7,580 to 8,491. Fewer people were living in each household.”

Frederic surveyed 17 farmers in 1984, and found that there were 11 dairy farms, 3 poultry farms, 3 orchards, 3 fresh vegetable farms, 2 farms raising beef, 1 small fruit farm, and 5 other

farms raising other crops or livestock (some farms reported more than one major product). Total property valuation of the city's farms was \$3.1 million, and Auburn farms contributed \$77,444 to the City's tax base [page 5].

Yet Frederic also found the farm sector had weakened. "Continued erosion of the farm sector results in a reduction of the region's ability to produce food and fiber, diminishes the aesthetic character of the rural countryside and may lead to a loss of all farmers if the number of operating units drops below the critical mass needed to support various farm services and markets" [page 1].

"The loss of farmland has been slower in the protection zone. The Agricultural Zone contained 43% of the [city's] farmland in 1964, but only represented 28% of Auburn's [farmland] loss to 1980. Only 10% of the farmland in the protection zone was lost compared to 17% in the Rural Residence Zone (Table 5)...Most farmers [surveyed] think the zoning regulations benefit their operation" [page 6].

Yet looking more deeply at the author's data, it is important to note that only 15 acres of farmland was lost in the APRZ from 1964 to 1980, while 25 acres of farmland was lost in areas zoned Rural Residential. Much more farmland was lost to forest growth over the same period, with losses of 235 acres in the ARPZ and 307 acres in RR zones. A small amount of land in each zone was also gained as wooded areas were cleared [page 7].

Interestingly, while 43% (2,339 acres) of the open agricultural land in Auburn was within the ARPZ, 34% (1,853 acres) of the city's open agricultural land was zoned RR, and another 23% (1,252 acres) was zoned in other categories. All told, there were 5,444 acres of open farmland in Auburn in 1964, and 4,573 acres in 1980, a loss of 871 acres, or 51 acres per year over all zoning categories. Only 4% of open farmland was lost to development during that period, while 13% was lost to forest growth [pages 7-8]. The author noted that this mirrored statewide trends.

Frederic also points out that the ARPZ remained stable despite a major challenge in 1984. "Pressure from developers and an orchard owner to open extensive areas of rural land to development resulting in a major attack on the law. The apple farmer was elected to the Council and led a battle to weaken the law." Despite the fact that the City Council replaced three Planning Board members who had opposed development with three new members who were more sympathetic to development, the new Planning Board rejected the proposal to open more land to development. Nevertheless, the Council voted to open up "large acreages" to development. But a 1985 court order (in response to legal action filed by Citizens to Protect Auburn) blocked this measure, stating that the Council had failed to provide adequate public notice when the decision was made, and that the action they took was inconsistent with the City's comprehensive plan [pages 6, 10].

"No major changes [to the law] were passed by the City Council [from 1964 to 1980] and farmland protection remains an important element of the comprehensive [master] plan" [page 6].

Analysis: Frederic's research shows that farmland had been protected. Yet the primary loss of farmland is due to forest growth on formerly tilled fields, not from new housing development. Few new homes had been built on either farmland or in rural residential areas at this stage.

Pressure from developers to utilize open lands for housing and other development had become clear, however.

2009: Current AGRP Ordinance

The current version of the Ordinance is posted at the following address:

<http://www.auburnmaine.gov/CMSContent/Planning/Ag%20and%20Resource%20Protection%20District/2017%20Documents/>

Division 2. AGRICULTURE AND RESOURCE PROTECTION DISTRICT

Sec. 60-144. – Purpose

“The purposes of this district are to allow for conservation of natural resources and open space land, and to encourage agricultural, forestry, and certain types of recreational uses. It is declared to be in the public interest that these areas should be protected and conserved because of their natural, aesthetic, and scenic value, the need to retain and preserve open space lands, their economic contribution to the city, and primarily because these areas are so remote from existing centers of development that any added uncontrolled growth could result in an economic burden on the city and its inhabitants. This section shall be construed so as to effectuate the purposes outline[d] here and to prevent any attempt to establish uses which are inconsistent with these purposes or any attempt to evade the provisions of this division.”

(Ord. of 9-21-2009, § 3.31A)

Analysis: The Ordinance states that it is in the public interest to protect specific areas of the city, “primarily because these areas are so remote from existing centers of development that any added uncontrolled growth could result in an economic burden on the city and its inhabitants.” This clearly places a priority on protecting land and water resources to reduce municipal costs. Very little attention was paid here to building economic infrastructure that would promote the financial sustainability of agriculture or forestry.

2010: Auburn Comprehensive Plan Recommends Greater Flexibility

City of Auburn Comprehensive Plan – 2010. Chapter 2 Future Land Use Plan. Approved by City Council April 19, 2011. Type D. Preservation Areas: Designation: Open Space/Conservation.

The objective of the Agriculture / Rural District (AG) is to “Preserve and enhance the agricultural heritage of Auburn and protect the City’s natural resources and scenic open space while maintaining the economic value of the land.” The plan seeks to continue the current rural development pattern, foster recreational development, and maintain a land reserve “while maintaining the potential for appropriate future development.”

“Allowed uses: The Agriculture/Rural District should continue to include the uses allowed in the existing AG/RP zoning district. In addition, a broader range of rural uses should be allowed. Agriculturally related business including retail and service activities and natural resource industries should be permitted. The reuse of existing agricultural buildings should be allowed for low intensity non-agriculture related uses.

“Residential uses should continue to be limited to accessory residential development as part of a commercial agriculture or natural resource use, not just traditional farms. The criteria for determining when an accessory residential use is permitted should be based on updated standards that take into account the economic realities of today’s commercial agricultural activities, including outside sources of income and part-time and small-scale commercial operations. Residential development may also be part of a commercial recreational use as part of a planned development in which the recreational open space is permanently preserved” [page 109].

Further, the Plan states that “the basic residential density standard for the current AG/RP zoning district should be maintained,” while “the standards for the development of accessory residential units should provide greater flexibility in the siting of those units,” consistent with best management practices for environmental protection. Waivers of road frontage requirements and access standards are allowed. New commercial recreational development should conform to the current 10-acres-per-dwelling unit standard; land that is to be permanently protected should be placed in a conservation easement or similar binding preservation measure [page 109].

This section of the Comprehensive Plan also includes specifications for both a Resource Protection District (RP), and a Conservation/Open Space District (COS).

Analysis: The 2010 Comprehensive Plan encourages greater flexibility in applying standard for the AGRP, and suggests that city staff be given greater leeway in interpreting requirements. The plan preserves the 10-acre minimum site size for new home construction and allows for permanent set-asides of land for agricultural, conservation, and other open-space purposes.

Significantly, the Comprehensive Plan also encourages new approaches that are compatible with new economic realities. This would suggest that the current 50% income standard could be changed.

However, emerging farm operations (for example, the veteran’s farming project or the Somali Bantu and Somali farmers that are currently starting commercial farms in Auburn) have expressed interest in housing options that are denser than the current standard and these recommendations allow.

2017: Auburn Launches Agriculture Economics Study; Steering Committee to refine AGRP

City of Auburn RFP (2017): “Study to Support and Enhance Auburn’s Agricultural and Resource Sector” issued March 20.

Background: Rural Auburn has a unique Agricultural and Resource Protection (AGRP) zoning district, which has been in place since the early 1960s. It contains over 40% of the City’s land area, or over 20,000 acres. The purpose and intent of the AGRP zoning regulations have been to manage development and to promote food, agricultural, timber, and natural resource production and uses. The AGRP zoning regulations have significantly restricted development for the past 50 years. Today, however, the nature and trends of farming and food production have drastically changed.

Values Statement: Consultant's work will be guided by The City of Auburn Values Statement: The City of Auburn values its agricultural heritage, protects the natural beauty of its land, and promotes locally grown food, raising livestock, managing forests, and natural resource-based businesses.

Purpose: The City of Auburn desires to strengthen its natural resource-based economy (farming, timber, food businesses, etc.) and to better integrate this sector into community planning and City-wide priorities.

Analysis: This work is just getting underway, so few conclusions can be drawn at this point.

2017: Auburn Adopts Food Sovereignty Ordinance

Ordinance 07-08072017, Sec. 14-50, Adopted August 21, 2017

"The intent and purpose of Auburn's Food Sovereignty Ordinance is to ensure that residents are provided unimpeded access to local food and to reduce governmental regulation of the local food system to the fullest extent permitted by home rule authority under Title 30-A M.R.S. § 3001, the Constitution of Maine, Article VIII, Part Second, and pursuant to 7-A M.R.S. §201, et Seq....

"Producers, growers, and processors of local food or food products in the City of Auburn are exempt from licensure and exemption with respect to the sale of local food and food products to consumers within the local food system of the City of Auburn."

This Ordinance was later revised, under pressure from the Federal Government, to state that meat and dairy products were subject to Federal and State inspection.

Note also that the Maine statute giving authority to the City of Auburn to adopt this Exemption states the following definition: "**2-B. Local Food System.** "Local food system means a community food system within a municipality that integrates food production, processing, consumption, direct producer-to-consumer exchanges and other traditional foodways to enhance the environmental, economic, social and nutritional health and well-being of the municipality and its residents."

Analysis: Both City and State actions set a strong precedent in favor of strengthening *local food systems* — not simply agriculture — in order to achieve broader health, well-being, environmental, and economic benefits.