



Options. As is the case with most of the scenic sites that the Commission evaluated, an outright purchase of one or two acres for a turnout would be appropriate for this site. However, as the above picture illustrates, such a purchase would not protect the viewshed for the public to enjoy in the future, since houses could be constructed in the immediate vicinity. Hence, any outlay of Town funds for this site must be conditional on obtaining a "Conservation Easement" on the land in the immediate viewshed. In this regard, the Town, a Land Trust and the owner of the land should be brought together to discuss the advantages of such an arrangement.

Some Cautionary Words and General Observations

The attractiveness of the Town of Canandaigua as a place to live, work and play strongly suggests that the scenic views are likely to disappear quickly in the years just ahead. One site that was visited by the Environmental Commission and that had a very high score later had been graded for a new home. This parcel which was 9/10ths of a mile south of the County Turnout on Route 21S, is now lost forever. The disappearance of these sites will have a detrimental impact on the tourism industry and ultimately on employment in the region.

Throughout the Commission's evaluation process, the working assumptions were that high scoring farms would be candidates for PDRs, and that high scoring scenic views would be candidates for purchase by the Town (or donation by residents) of one or two acre parcels for parking and picnic area. The Commission believes that the Town of

Canandaigua can get the "biggest bang for the buck" if the two features (farmland and scenic views) are contained in one site. A number of the high scoring parcels listed above have this "double benefit." They include: the Hicks farm and the Miller farms.

Finally, development pressures can have a significant impact on the potential for conservation action by the Town. For instance, the greatest development pressures at present time are in the northwest part of the town (coming from Victor/Farmington); the area directly west of the City of Canandaigua (proximity to water and sewer); and the portion west of the Lake (the Southern corridor). The relatively "unspoiled" areas with the most "natural" scenic views of farmland and/or lake are in the far southern part of Town (Monks, Coye, Deuel, and Seneca Point Roads; in the central section (County Road #30, Woolhouse and Bliss Roads); and in the far Northeast (Emerson and Sandhill Roads). These are areas where land protection projects may have the biggest potential impact and success.

Within highly developed areas, the possible projects (Wyffels, Albright and Farren properties) should be considered natural conservation "islands." While important and while providing benefits to residents, these islands are certainly different from the farmland and open space in the undeveloped sections of the Town. As suggested above, these islands can provide a break in the monotony of suburban sprawl, and could be recreational space for Town residents. Creation of these green space islands thus should be a priority of the Town Board.

Long-Term Funding Mechanisms

Advising the Town Board on a long-term funding program for farmland and open space conservation was one of the Environmental Commission's Priorities. Such a funding program would be consistent with the recommendations cited in the Town of Canandaigua's "Comprehensive Plan." The Town currently has a reserve fund of approximately \$1 million set aside for open space and farmland preservation. Some of these funds will be used in the near future as additions to the State funds that have been or will be earmarked for PDRs. However, the desirability of the Town as a place to live, work and play is pushing land costs ever higher, and while the property market has cooled off recently, the long-term trend remains in an upward direction. Thus, the parcels evaluated in this report can be expected to become ever more expensive in the years ahead.

To meet this financial challenge, the Town of Canandaigua should begin to develop a strategic land acquisition plan that targets specific parcels. At the same time, the Board with the help of the Environmental Commission should develop a mechanism to finance these acquisitions. In the Commission's view, a successful land protection program will significantly exceed the financial resources currently held by the Town. In this regard, a bond issue is one option that should be considered to address this financial constraint.

The justification for bonding land acquisition is that since future generations will reap the benefits from the preservation of open space and scenic views that they, not just the current generation, also should share in the cost of purchasing the land. This intergenerational cost/benefit analysis is a well-established principle in Public Finance. In the Commission's view, the voters would approve a bond referendum, if it were timed correctly and linked to well-defined projects. The specific parcels recommended in this "Report" for preservation could be used as a justification for the bond financing.

While the ECC has ranked the parcels in the Town by their conservation value, described options for preserving these lands, and discussed long-term funding mechanisms, the hard part for town officials is yet to come. Philosophical debates about private property rights, the use of public funds to convey benefits on one landowner versus another, the benefits to the public of one parcel over another, are likely to be heated. Decisions regarding the funding of acquisitions also will require the Town Board's ingenuity, especially given its limited resources. Nevertheless, with the goals set forth in the Comprehensive plan as a reminder and with a spirit of doing what is best for the present and future generation of town residents, Commission members believe that the recommendations in this report will provide useful input and support to the Board's decision making process.

Finally, the members of the Commission believe that the Town Board should consider creating a permanent Environmental Conservation Board to advise it on matters affecting the preservation, development and use of the natural resources in the Town. The Conservation Board also could provide expertise on some of the environmental questions now faced by the Town's Planning Board. In the year ahead, the Commission (subject to the approval of the Town Board) could begin to work on the feasibility of a trail network in the Town. This effort would be a joint project with the Town's Parks and Recreational Committee. The proposed "Environmental Board" also could serve as a liaison with environmental organization such as the Watershed Council, the Watershed Alliance and the Finger Lakes Land Trust in educating the public in the importance of preserving the wonderful resources in the Town.
