A wide-angle photograph of a rural landscape. In the foreground, a large, cylindrical hay bale lies on a green field. The middle ground is dominated by a lush green field, possibly corn or soybeans. In the background, a line of trees separates the field from a distant barn and other farm buildings. The sky is a clear, light blue.

***IPSWICH FARMS  
AND AGRICULTURAL LANDS***

*Walter Cudnohufsky Associates, Inc.*

*13 January 2010*

*Agricultural land is as essential  
to the character of Ipswich  
as its coastal marshes  
or historic village center.*

- *Farmland is a central component of the town's "green infrastructure"*

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- *It is an essential element in the **balance between economic development and protection of natural, cultural and historic resources***

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- *Farms and farming support the social, economic and scenic diversity of Ipswich*
- *Farms employ local workers, increase tourism, generate millions in sales revenues, and stimulate additional local dollars*
- *Local agriculture is the key to  
community resilience*

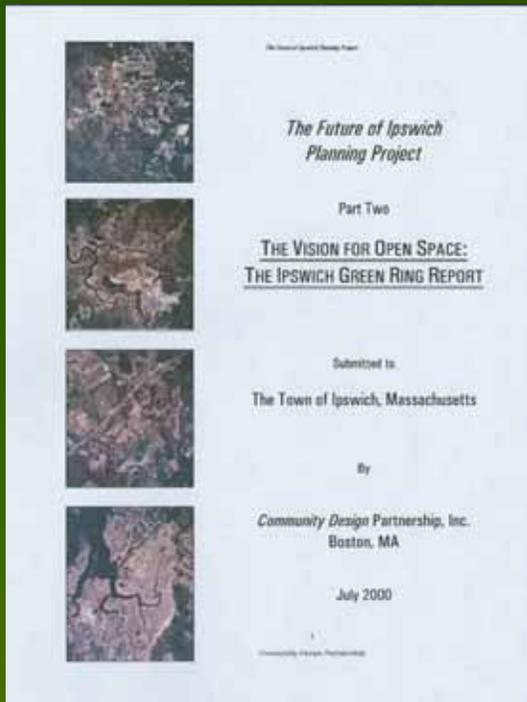
A wide-angle photograph of a rural landscape. In the foreground, a large, cylindrical hay bale lies on a green field. The middle ground is dominated by a vast, green field, possibly a cornfield. In the background, a line of trees separates the field from a distant barn and other structures. The sky is a clear, light blue.

# *PLANNING BACKGROUND*

## *2000: Ipswich Vision Project*

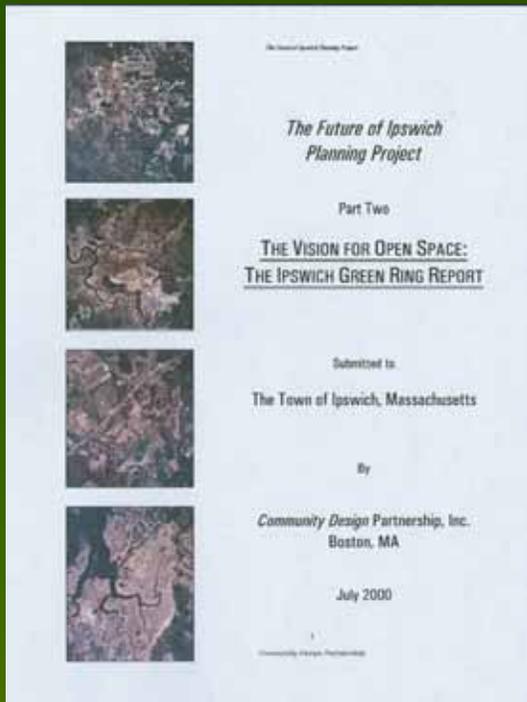
*In 2020, Ipswich manages change by*

- *Protecting the town's natural beauty, water resources and environmental health through enhancing its "green infrastructure"*
- *Preserving its historic structures and sites*
- *Sustaining its rural heritage by supporting local farming*
- *Providing a wide variety of economic and housing opportunities...*



## *2000: Ipswich Vision Project 2000: Green Ring Report*

*"If 'rural' means something more than low-density housing...the town will have to consider how much of an active role it wishes to take in promoting the rural economy in Ipswich. The landscapes created by agriculture and pastures **will not persist over time** if those or similar activities are not continued on a specific parcel of land."*

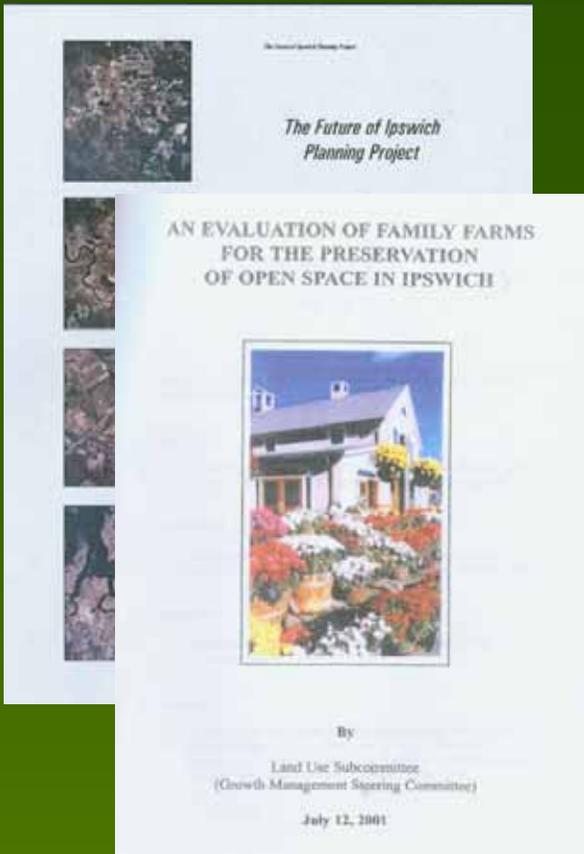


*2000: Ipswich Vision Project*

*2000: Green Ring Report*

*2001: Evaluation of Family Farms*

*"Does Ipswich, as a community, really wish to preserve agriculture, i.e. working farms, or just open space? ... Is farming so **financially precarious** that the farms of the future will have to be non-profits like Appleton Farms?"*



*2000: Ipswich Vision Project*

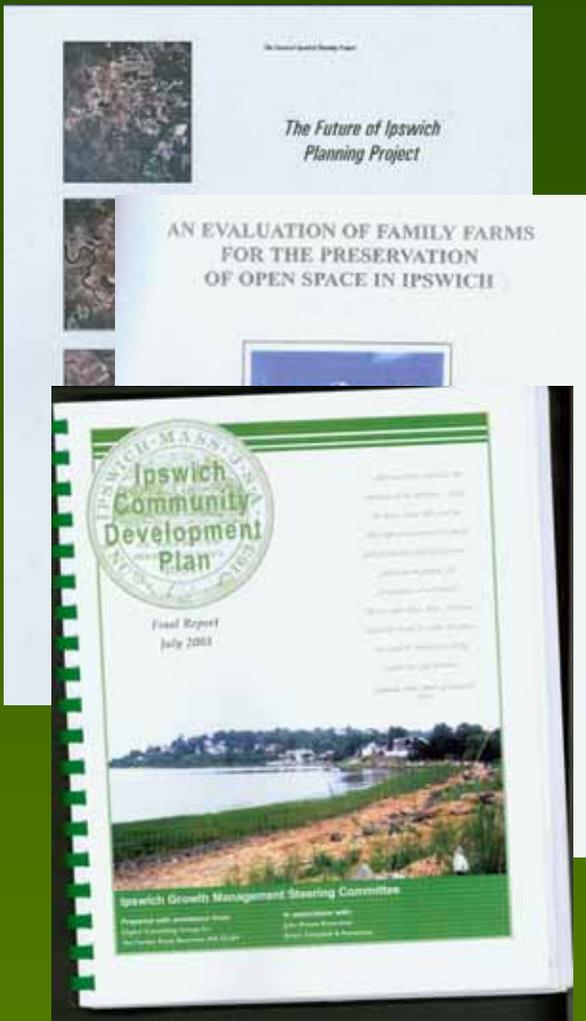
*2000: Green Ring Report*

*2001: Evaluation of Family Farms*

*2003: Community Development Plan*

*Focus on housing, economic development and transportation.*

*“Support the survival of **resource-based businesses**, as they are critical to the character of the town, the conservation of open space, and the livelihood of local residents. Shellfishing and farming are vital elements of Ipswich’s sense of identity and sense of place.”*



*2000: Ipswich Vision Project*

*2000: Green Ring Report*

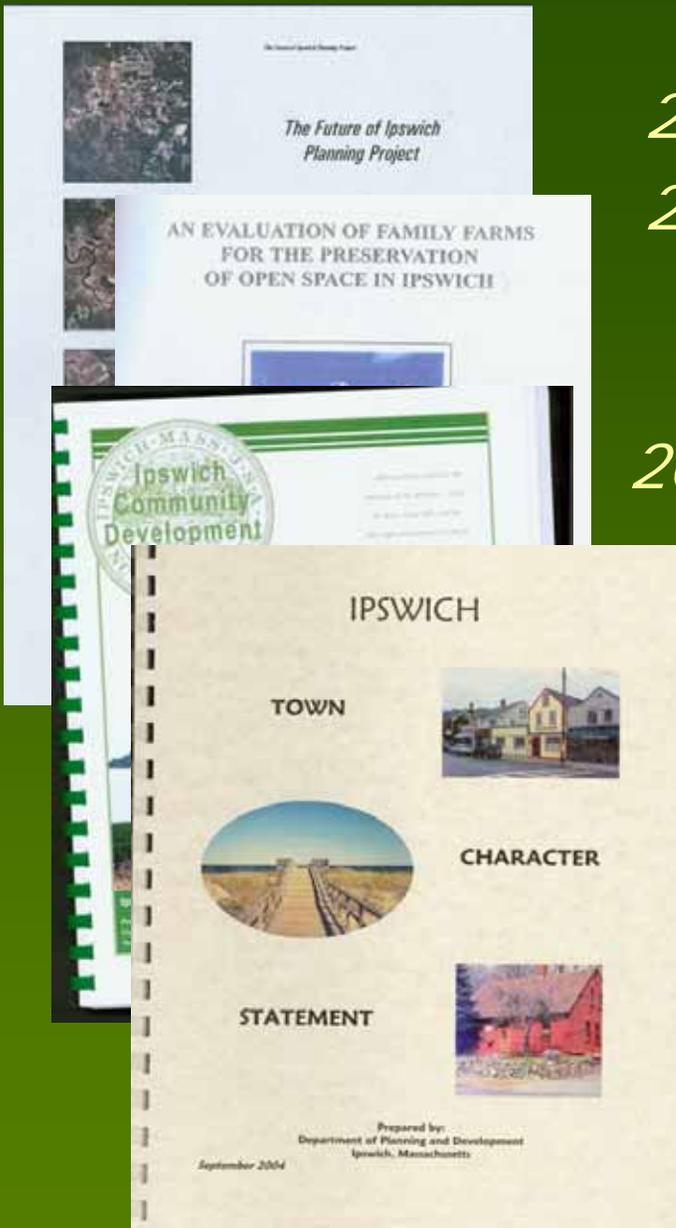
*2001: Evaluation of Family Farms*

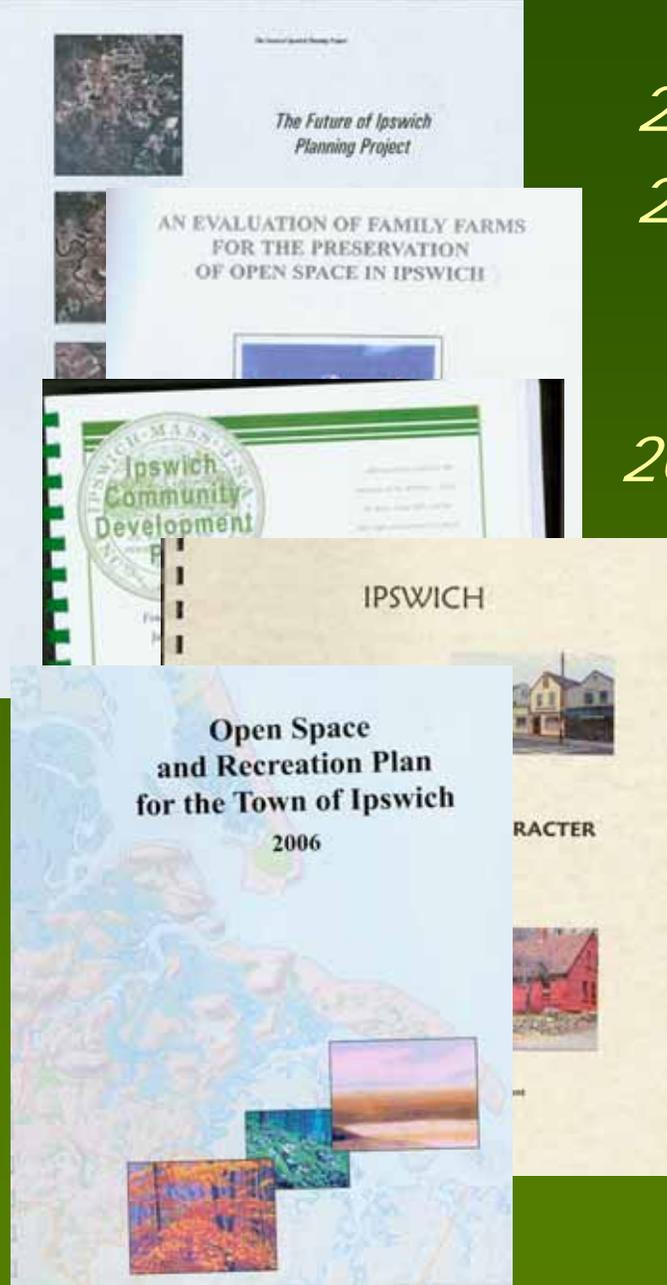
*2003: Community Development Plan*

*2004: Town Character Statement*

*"The family farms are especially important town resources that provide important open space, wildlife habitat and recreational trails."*

*"The town's unprotected open space is **vulnerable to development**... Retain and support farmland as an integral part of open space."*





*2000: Ipswich Vision Project*

*2000: Green Ring Report*

*2001: Evaluation of Family Farms*

*2003: Community Development Plan*

*2004: Town Character Statement*

*2006: Open Space & Rec. Plan*

*Goal 1: Preserve the historic and scenic character of the Town*

*Objective 1-1: Retain and promote agricultural lands and uses in Ipswich*

# *Town actions support farming*



- *\$10 million bond to protect open space, including agricultural lands*
- *October 2009 Town Meeting vote to preserve Maplecroft – multiple open space values*
- *Town Meeting vote to identify Ipswich as a Right-to-Farm community*

A wide-angle photograph of a rural landscape. In the foreground, a large, cylindrical hay bale lies on a green field. The middle ground is dominated by a vast, green field. In the background, a line of trees separates the field from a distant barn and other structures. The sky is a clear, light blue.

# *MAPPING THE RESOURCES*



# *How to define good agricultural lands in Ipswich?*

- *Looked at parcels 5 acres or larger*
- *Established criteria to evaluate ag potential*
  - percentage of land within each parcel that had*
    - good agricultural soils,*
    - slopes less than 5%,*
    - minimal wetlands, and*
    - proximity to working farms and other protected open space.*
- *Ranked parcels as “prime” or “other arable soils”*
  - Shown in green on the following maps*
- *Then compared these properties to other conservation values*

# Water Protection Zones of Ipswich

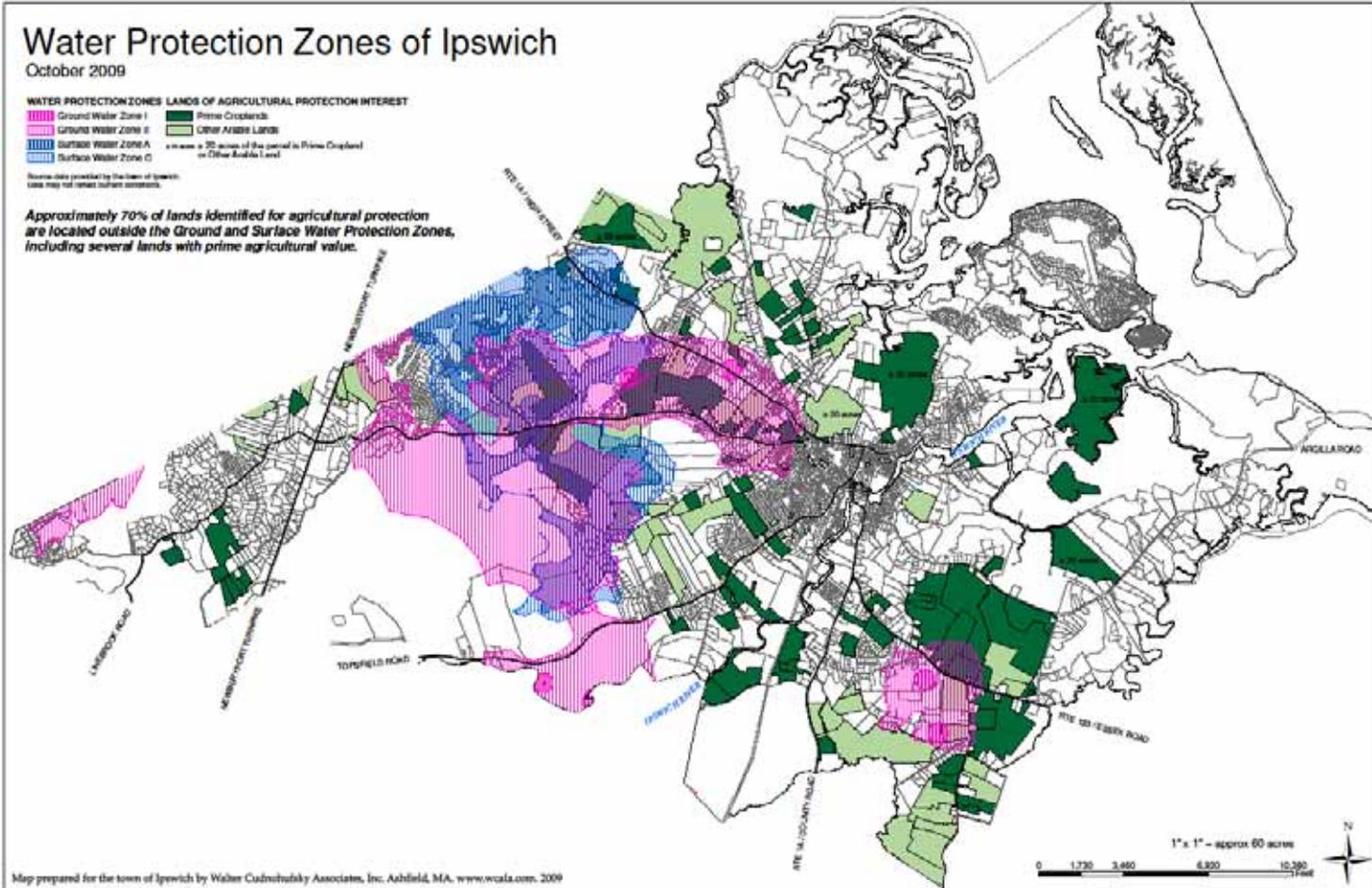
October 2009

## WATER PROTECTION ZONES LANDS OF AGRICULTURAL PROTECTION INTEREST

	Ground Water Zone I		Prime Croplands
	Ground Water Zone II		Other Aerial Lands
	Surface Water Zone A		± 20 acres of the parcel is Prime Cropland or Other Aerial Land
	Surface Water Zone C		

Source: data provided by the town of Ipswich.  
Data may not reflect current conditions.

Approximately 70% of lands identified for agricultural protection are located outside the Ground and Surface Water Protection Zones, including several lands with prime agricultural value.



*Ground and Surface Water Protection Zones protect the headwaters of Bull Brook as well as lands surrounding and contributing to six public wells. Agricultural activities within this overlay district must be particularly attentive to ground and surface water protection.*

# NHESP Habitats for Rare & Endangered Species

October 2009

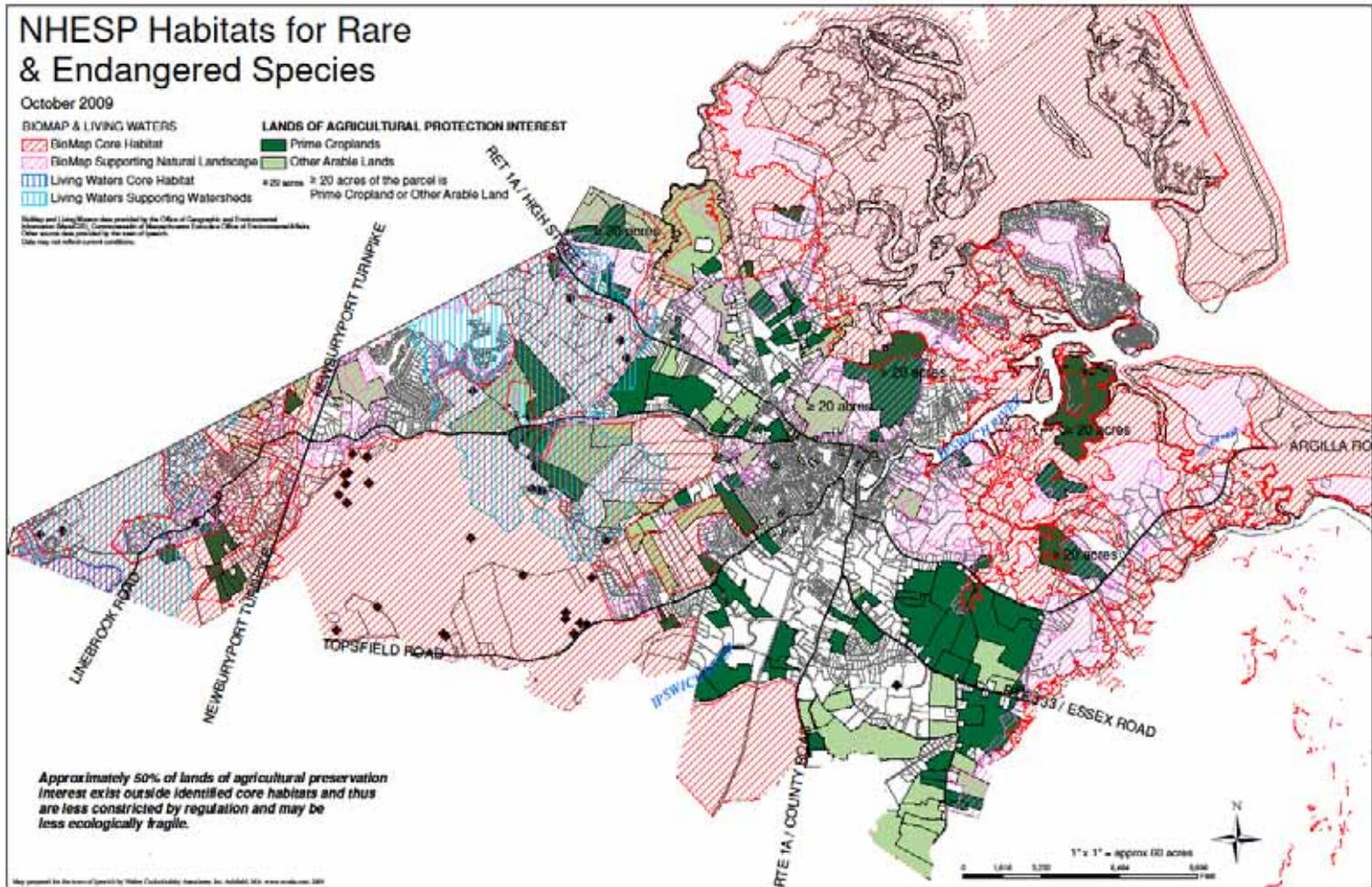
## BIOMAP & LIVING WATERS

-  BioMap Core Habitat
-  BioMap Supporting Natural Landscape
-  Living Waters Core Habitat
-  Living Waters Supporting Watersheds

## LANDS OF AGRICULTURAL PROTECTION INTEREST

-  Prime Croplands
  -  Other Arable Lands
- \* 20 acres > 20 acres of the parcel is Prime Cropland or Other Arable Land

Soil and Living Waters data provided by the Office of Geographic and Environmental Information (MGIS), Commonwealth of Massachusetts (Division of Environmental Planning). Other areas were provided by the user of species. Data may not reflect current conditions.



*Approximately 50% of lands of agricultural preservation interest exist outside identified core habitats and thus are less constricted by regulation and may be less ecologically fragile.*

Map prepared for the town of Ipswich by Water Conservation Associates, Inc. 10/10/09. www.wcaonline.com

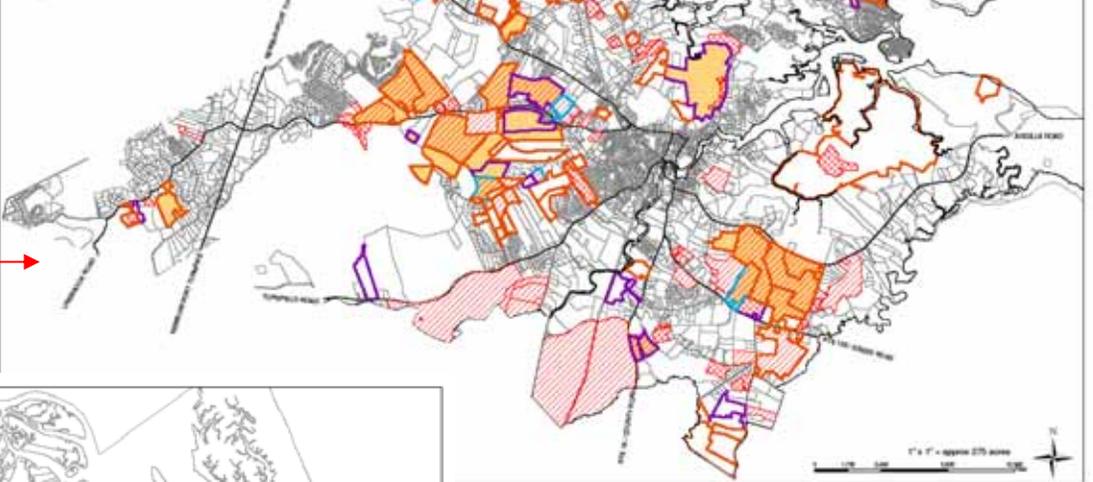
*Nearly all of Ipswich is within either **biomap core habitat** and supporting landscape, or **living waters habitat** and supporting watershed, as identified by the Massachusetts Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program.*

Although only 6 of 95 priority Open Space Bond properties named agriculture as the primary value, the list included 28 actively farmed properties.

### Bond Lands & Priorities

October 2009

- CURRENT / PROPOSED BOND LANDS (source: Town of Ipswich)
- City Reason (land)
- Agricultural Reasons
- Various Reasons
- HIGH PRIORITY BOND PARCELS
- Prime Lands (zoned for high income)
- EXISTING FARMS
- Home Farm Lands & Association
- Central Farm Lands



### OSRP Action Plan Lands of Conservation Interest

October 2009

OSRP ACTION PLAN: PARCELS OF CONSERVATION INTEREST

Parcels Identified by the OSRP Action Plan

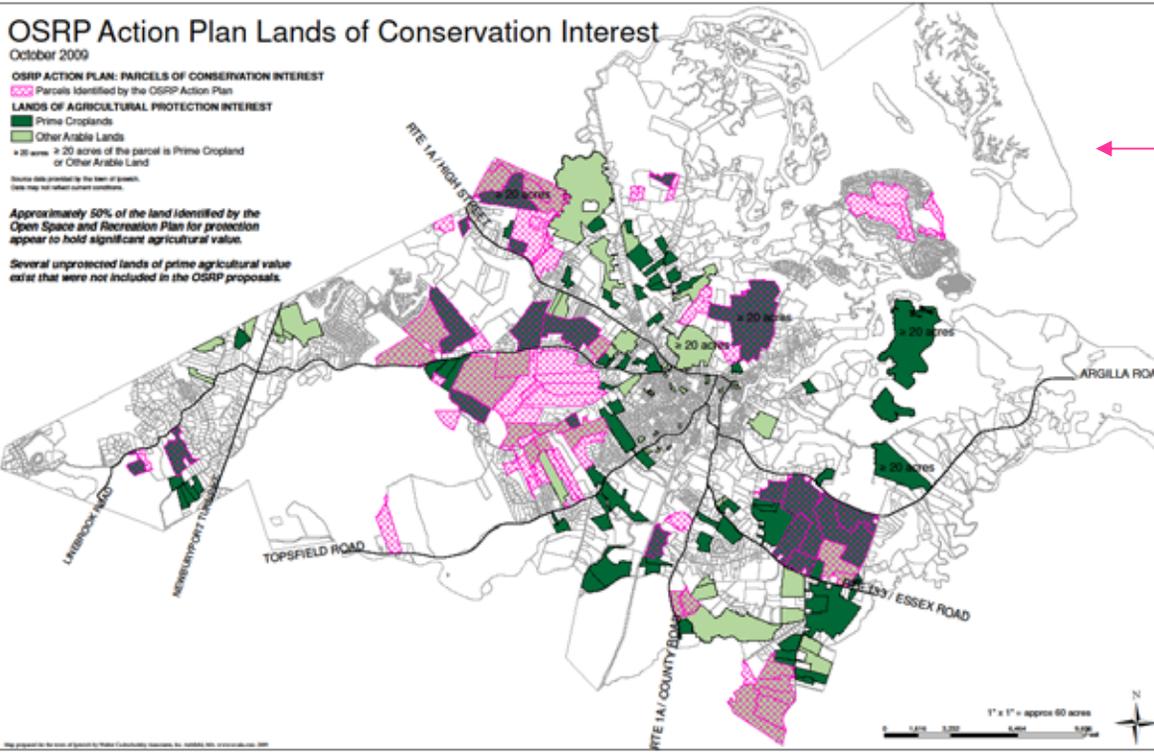
LANDS OF AGRICULTURAL PROTECTION INTEREST

- Prime Croplands
- Other Arable Lands
- \* 20 acres > 20 acres of the parcel is Prime Cropland or Other Arable Land

Source data provided by the town of Ipswich. Data may not reflect current conditions.

Approximately 50% of the land identified by the Open Space and Recreation Plan for protection appear to hold significant agricultural value.

Several unprotected lands of prime agricultural value exist that were not included in the OSRP proposals.



Half of the Lands of Conservation Interest identified by the Open Space and Recreation Plan have significant agricultural value, and coincide in large part with the Bond Properties.



# Lands of Agricultural Protection Interest

October 2009

## EXISTING FARMS

-  Rented Farm and Aquaculture Lands
-  Owned Farmlands

## LANDS OF AGRICULTURAL PROTECTION INTEREST

-  Prime Croplands
-  Other Arable Lands

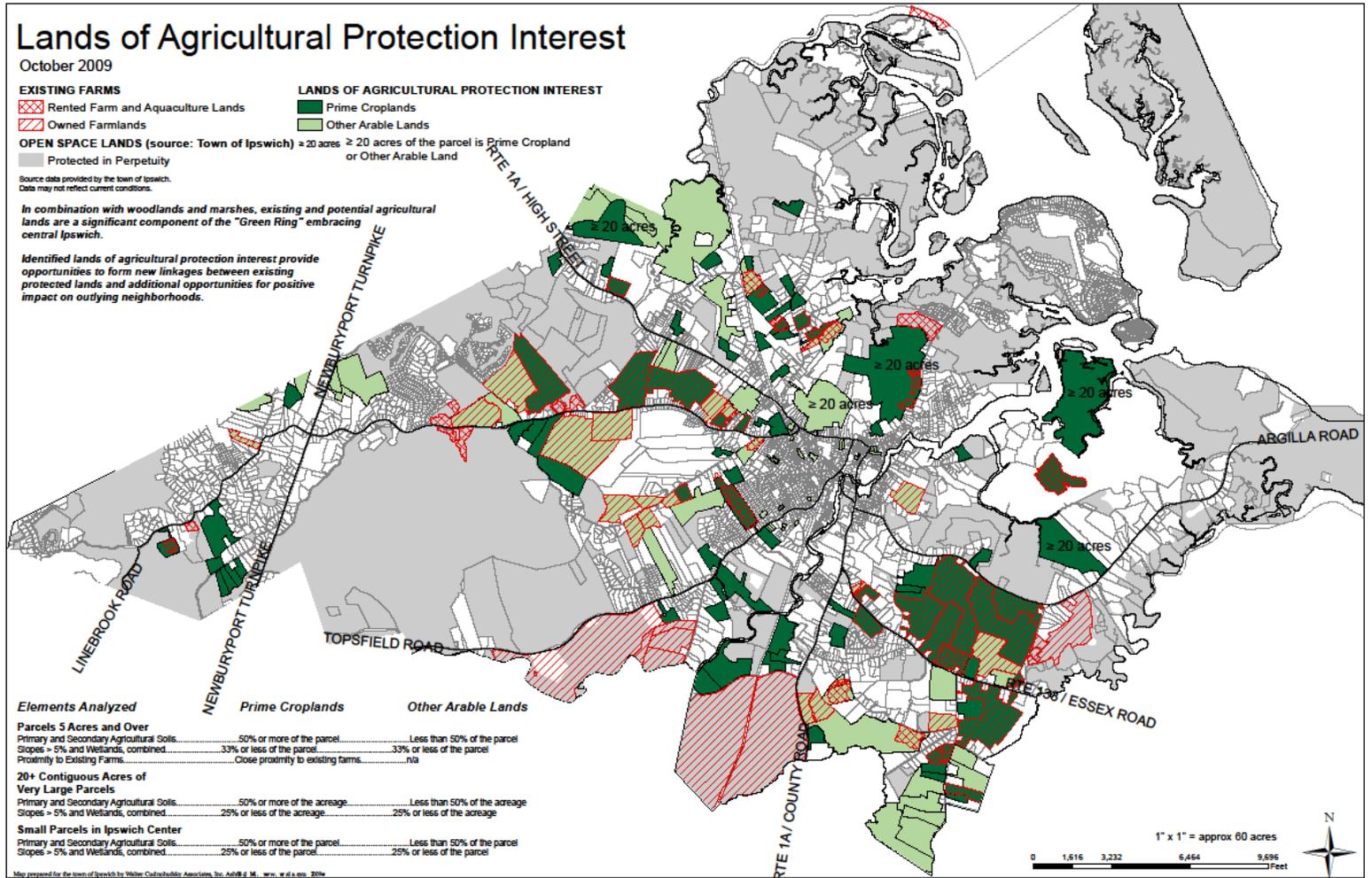
**OPEN SPACE LANDS** (source: Town of Ipswich)  $\geq 20$  acres  $\geq 20$  acres of the parcel is Prime Cropland or Other Arable Land

-  Protected in Perpetuity

Source data provided by the town of Ipswich.  
Data may not reflect current conditions.

In combination with woodlands and marshes, existing and potential agricultural lands are a significant component of the "Green Ring" embracing central Ipswich.

Identified lands of agricultural protection interest provide opportunities to form new linkages between existing protected lands and additional opportunities for positive impact on outlying neighborhoods.



## Elements Analyzed

### Parcels 5 Acres and Over

Primary and Secondary Agricultural Soils.....	50% or more of the parcel.....	Less than 50% of the parcel
Slopes > 5% and Wetlands, combined.....	33% or less of the parcel.....	33% or less of the parcel
Proximity to Existing Farms.....	Close proximity to existing farms.....	na

### 20+ Contiguous Acres of

#### Very Large Parcels

Primary and Secondary Agricultural Soils.....	50% or more of the acreage.....	Less than 50% of the acreage
Slopes > 5% and Wetlands, combined.....	25% or less of the acreage.....	25% or less of the acreage

#### Small Parcels in Ipswich Center

Primary and Secondary Agricultural Soils.....	50% or more of the parcel.....	Less than 50% of the parcel
Slopes > 5% and Wetlands, combined.....	25% or less of the parcel.....	25% or less of the parcel

Map prepared for the town of Ipswich by Water Conservation Associates, Inc. April 8, 2009. www.wca.com 2009

*Using criteria to assess agricultural value (soils, slopes, wetlands) and proximity to existing farms and protected lands, we prioritized existing and potential agricultural land for protection.*

# Lands of Agricultural Protection Interest

October 2009

## EXISTING FARMS

- ▨ Rented Farm and Aquaculture Lands
- ▨ Owned Farmlands

## OPEN SPACE LANDS (source: Town of Ipswich)

- ▨ Protected in Perpetuity
- Source data provided by the town of Ipswich.  
Data may not reflect current conditions.

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- ▨ Prime Croplands
  - ▨ Other Arable Lands
- ≥ 20 acres ≥ 20 acres of the parcel is Prime Cropland or Other Arable Land

In combination with woodlands and marshes, existing and potential agricultural lands are a significant component of the "Green Ring" embracing central Ipswich.

Identified lands of agricultural protection interest provide opportunities to form new linkages between existing protected lands and additional opportunities for positive impact on outlying neighborhoods.

## Three primary zones of agricultural interest

- ▶ Include key existing farms
- ▶ Significant frontage on arterial roads
- ▶ Link and include already protected lands
- ▶ Many with no agricultural protection

## Outlying aggregated farmlands

- ▶ Less prominent visually
- ▶ Overlap with other conservation interests
- ▶ Potential neighborhood impact
- ▶ Few have even temporary protection

## Elements Analyzed

### Parcels 5 Acres and Over

Primary and Secondary Agricultural Soils	50% or more of the parcel	Less than 50% of the parcel
Slopes under 5% and Wetlands, combined	33% or less of the parcel	33% or less of the parcel
Proximity to Existing Farms	Close proximity to existing farms	Not

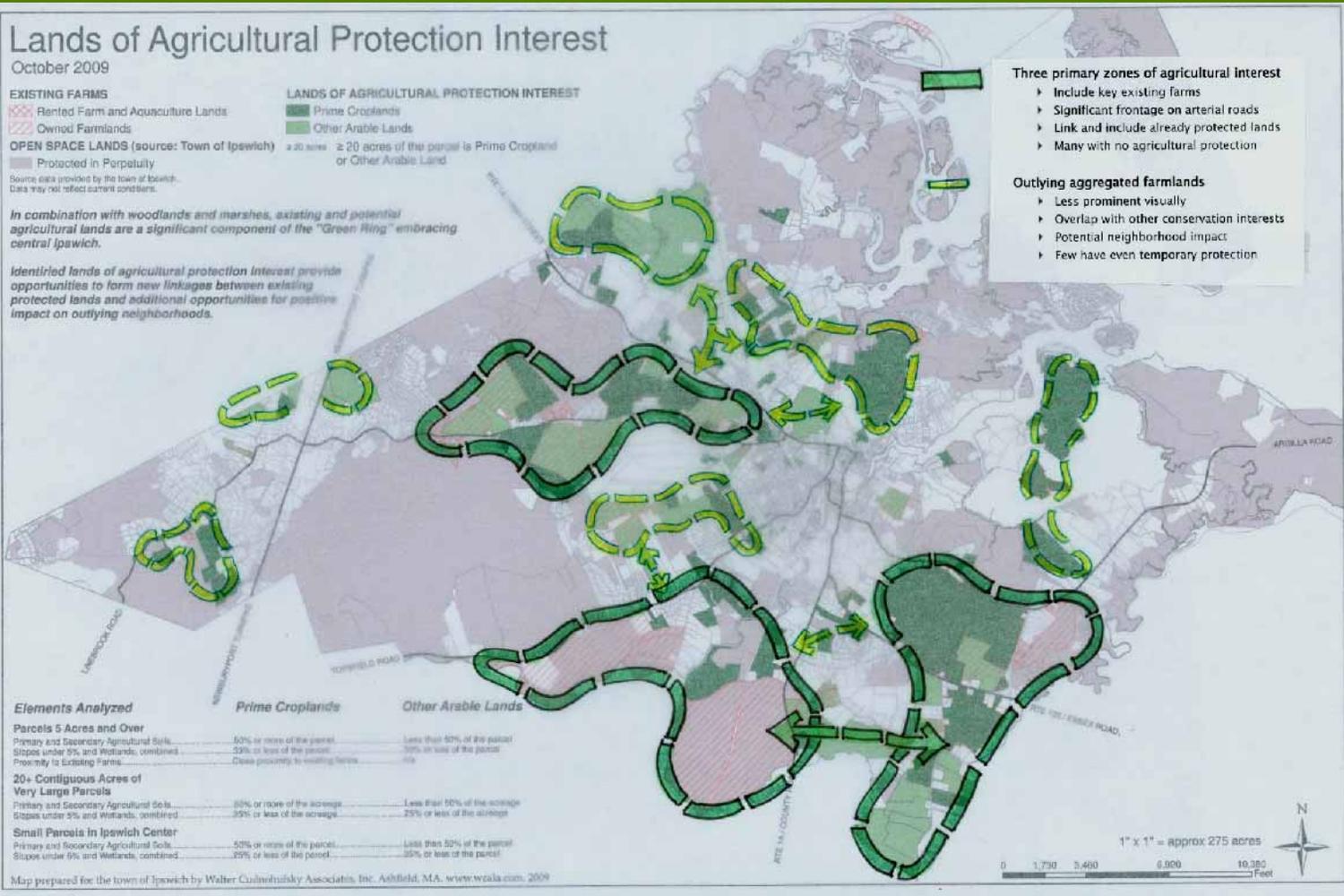
### 20+ Contiguous Acres of Very Large Parcels

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Map prepared for the town of Ipswich by Walter Czulawski Associates, Inc. Ashfield, MA. www.wca.com 2009



*Three larger zones include highly visible lands with significant road frontage, gateway prominence, and incorporate existing farms and protected lands.*

*The smaller outlying lands are less prominent, and many coincide with other conservation interests.*



*INTERVIEWS WITH FARMERS*

# *Ipswich farms are remarkably diverse!*

*in products:*

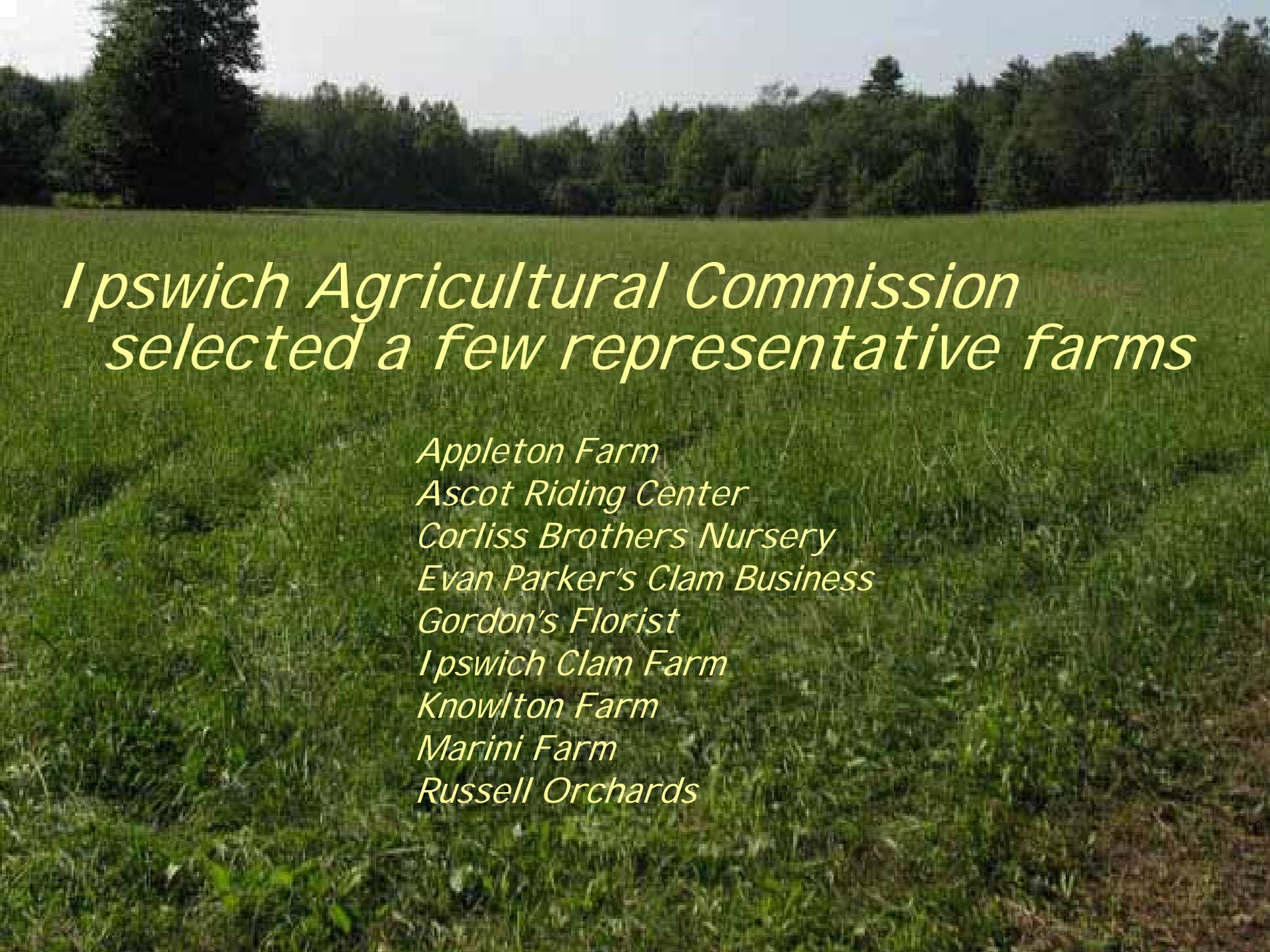
- *vegetables*
- *fruits*
- *nursery plants*
- *flowers*
- *livestock*
- *dairy*
- *clams*
- *hay*
- *value-added products (cider, wine, baked goods, jelly, etc!)*



*...and ways to engage the public:*

- *pick your own*
- *corn maze*
- *farm stands*
- *farmers market*
- *CSA*
- *classes*
- *horseback riding*





*Ipswich Agricultural Commission  
selected a few representative farms*

*Appleton Farm*

*Ascot Riding Center*

*Corliss Brothers Nursery*

*Evan Parker's Clam Business*

*Gordon's Florist*

*Ipswich Clam Farm*

*Knowlton Farm*

*Marini Farm*

*Russell Orchards*

# *Initial Findings*

- *Adapted products and distribution according to changes in the market*  
*but most rely on a second off-farm income, and a seasonal borrowing cycle*
- *Roughly half of all sales are local*  
*(to customers within Ipswich and surrounding communities)*
- *Aware of their potential impact on natural systems*  
*(ground water, air quality, wildlife habitat, soil stability)*
- *Employ environmentally sound practices*
  - Drip irrigation*
  - Composting*
  - Crop rotation*
  - IPM-Soil testing*
  - Alternative energy*
  - No spray*
  - Low tillage*
  - Good Agricultural Practices (GAP)*

A rural landscape featuring a large green field in the foreground with a single hay bale lying on the grass. In the background, there is a line of trees and a barn. The sky is clear and blue.

# *CHALLENGES FACING FARMERS*

- *Land values*
- *Cost of farming*
- *Public support*
- *Environmental concerns*
- *Town planning priorities*
- *Land protection measures*
- *Food safety and security*

# *Value of land in Ipswich*



*Ipswich is a very desirable community in which to live.*

- *Market value greatly exceeds agricultural value*
- *Does not reflect multiple ways in which farmland benefits Ipswich*
- *Development pressure is very real*
- *Prohibits the next generation of farmers from farming in Ipswich*

# *Cost of farming*



*Unless farming can be economically viable, productive land will be abandoned.*

- *Start-up costs (equipment, facilities, lime, seed, fuel) are prohibitive*
- *Cost of fertilizer has increased more than 4x over past decade*
- *Cost increases not matched by market*
- *Farmers must sell products at or below cost of production*

# *Lack of public support*



*Joint effort by the Open Space Committee and Agricultural Commission seeks to improve support for farmers.*

- *Support for farmland is not matched by support for farmers*
- *Farmers feel under-valued and over-regulated*
- *Farmers not adequately represented on town boards and commissions*

# *Environmental concerns*



*Farming near wetlands and in water protection districts is tightly regulated.*

- *Most farms are on environmentally sensitive lands*
- *Water quality and quantity is a particular constraint*
- *There is an adversarial relationship between agriculture and conservation*
- *Additional challenges include invasive plants, marauding deer, industrious beavers!*

# *Town planning priorities*



*Former farmlands are easy to convert to recreational use.*

- *Other open space needs, such as ball fields, compete for land*
- *Protecting habitat for grassland birds means delaying the first mowing*
- *Cleared and level land is less expensive to develop for affordable housing*

# *Land protection measures*

- *State programs (APR, Farmland Viability Program) have been used rarely in Ipswich.*
- *Placing conservation restrictions on agricultural lands reduces the farmer's equity against which to borrow*
  - *While placing farmland under Chapter 61A reduces taxes and gives the Town the right of first refusal, this option is temporary and rarely used.*
  - *Many farmers rely on leased lands, often unprotected and vulnerable to change.*



*The best way to protect farmland is to keep it economically viable.*

# *Food safety & security*



*Local produce is fresher, healthier and increasingly preferred by the public.*

- *National food scares, such as contamination of produce, has resulted in greater government scrutiny.*
- *Regulatory requirements have discouraged farmers from offering some products (e.g., unpasteurized cider, raw milk)*
- *Moving from growing to processing involves ever greater licensing*

A wide-angle photograph of a rural landscape. In the foreground, a large, cylindrical hay bale lies on a green field. The middle ground is dominated by a lush green field, possibly a cornfield. In the background, a line of trees separates the field from a distant barn and other structures. The sky is a clear, light blue.

# *UNDERLYING ISSUES*

- *Address the cost of land*
- *Improve communication*

# *Cost of land and farming*

- *Increasing costs outpace market revenues*
- *Need for second income*
- *Farmers depend on leased land*
- *Real estate values encourage development*
- *Once sold, it is lost forever*
- *Start-up costs for new farmers are prohibitive*

*Ipswich needs to find ways to remove market value of land without punishing the farmer, and help young farmers gain access to productive land in transition.*

# *Improved communication and education*

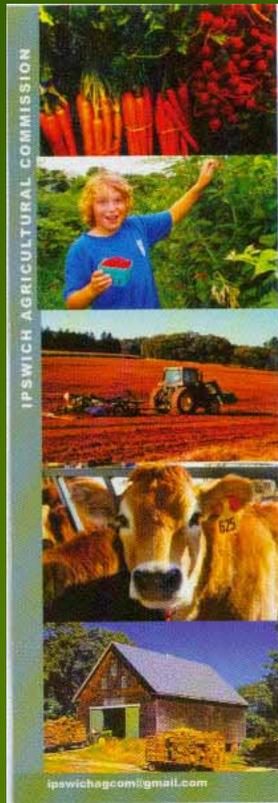
- *Climate of tension between farmers and town leadership*
- *Challenges faced by farmers are not fully understood or appreciated*
- *Regulations are increasingly complex*
- *Farming is no longer considered a viable career for youth*

*Confront these issues directly. Encourage a stronger public voice among farmers. Find common ground. Engage the schools in agricultural programming.*

A wide-angle photograph of a rural landscape. In the foreground, a large, cylindrical hay bale lies on a green field. The middle ground is dominated by a vast, green field, possibly a cornfield or a pasture. In the background, a line of trees separates the field from a distant barn and other structures. The sky is a clear, light blue.

# *RECOMMENDATIONS*

# 1. *Farmers need to be their own best advocates*



- *Define the issues*
- *Explore ways to collaborate*
- *Actively recruit farmers to be on key town boards*
- *Initiate a regular program on Ipswich Community Access Media*

## *2. Promote Ipswich as a Right-to-Farm Community*



- Widely distribute the bylaw with photographs of local farms.*
- Post signs at gateways to Ipswich.*
- Incorporate the right to farm with overall promotion of Ipswich's productive fields and seas.*
- Celebrate this key element of town identity and pride of place.*

### *3. Initiate a farming/conservation dialogue*

- Establish a cross-board committee to review relevant and controversial regulations*
- Explore ways to reduce conflicts and streamline regulations for those who work environmentally sensitive lands*
- Design a guidebook to explain regulations and their purpose; distribute to farmers*
- Promote ways in which farmers steward natural resources*
- Reward those who employ Good Agricultural or Best Management Practices*

# 4. *Raise the profile of farmers in Ipswich*



- *Put photos of farmers in newspaper ads, posters, school displays, at stores, galleries*
- *Host seasonal events that celebrate local food and products*
- *Install road signs directing visitors to farms*
- *Create a brochure with map of farms*

# 5. Create a local identity for "Ipswich Bay" products



- Collaborate with abutting towns in a "buy local" campaign
- Aggressively promote this "seal of approval"
- Incorporate the logo in farmstand signs, labels, bumper stickers, menus, and gateway signs
- Promote sustainable agricultural practices as part of this identity



## *6. Increase amount of land available to farmers*



- *Evaluate town-owned lands for agricultural use*
- *Encourage large land-owners to lease land for production*
- *Draft long-term lease agreements to protect farmers and landowners*
- *Match new farmers with farmland in transition*



# 7. *Establish a community farm*



- *Create a public/private partnership*
- *Work with school committee on a curriculum*
- *Focus production on high value crops*
- *Host seasonal events*
- *Learn from other communities*

## *8. Explore innovative financing and incubator programs*

- *Host a sub-regional conference on micro-financing for new or expanded ventures*
- *Apply for grants to increase value-added products, sustainable agriculture, and market promotion*
- *Set up a community food processing center, with associated training and storage*



# *Regional collaboration*

- *Small New England farms cannot compete against industrial agriculture*
- *Farming in Ipswich can only survive with regional and inter-agency support*
- *Work with adjacent communities to address education, marketing, processing, distribution, purchasing and servicing equipment, establishing niche markets, etc.*

# *Good Agricultural Practices*

- *Ipswich farmers incorporate many sustainable practices*
- *Create incentives for farmers to further reduce non-organic inputs, convert to renewable energy (solar, wind, biofuels), irrigate with greywater, extend hedgerows for wildlife corridors, protect wetland buffers, recharge ground water, sequester carbon*

## *In conclusion...*

- *Agricultural lands support multiple conservation objectives, preserving scenic views, passive recreation, low development density over ecologically sensitive lands, and preserving town character.*
- *Agricultural preservation and environmental protection must work in conjunction.*
- *A strong local food system is essential for community self-reliance, with farmers at the heart.*

