

# Comprehensive Plan Town of Niles, NY

January 2010





# TABLE OF CONTENTS

---

Introduction .....	5
Public Participation .....	6
Plan Structure .....	6
 Chapter 1 – Goals and Recommendations .....	 7
Community Vision Statement .....	7
Agriculture and Open Space .....	8
Land Use Regulation .....	8
Environmental Stewardship and Water Quality Protection .....	9
Public Utilities and Community Services .....	10
Economic Development and Cultural Heritage .....	11
Recreation and Tourism .....	12
 Chapter 2 – Adopting and Implementing the Plan .....	 13
Adopting the Comprehensive Plan .....	13
Review and Maintenance of the Comprehensive Plan .....	14
Implementing the Comprehensive Plan .....	15
 Appendix A – Background, Historic Information and Demographics .....	 17
Location .....	17
History of the Community .....	21
Cultural History .....	21
Hamlets and Historic Settlement .....	23
Population .....	31
Housing Demographics .....	32
Business Development and Economic Base .....	33
Municipal Infrastructure and Public Utilities .....	36
Transportation.....	39
Historic and Cultural Resources .....	43
Natural Resources and Environmental Issues .....	53
Owasco Lake .....	57
Skaneateles Lake and Highlands .....	59
Wind and Wind Energy .....	65
The Marcellus Shale & Natural Gas .....	66
Agriculture and Open Space .....	67
Public Parks, Recreation and Protected Areas .....	75
Regional Influences .....	79
Land Use Regulation .....	82
Environmental Stewardship and Water Quality Protection .....	84
Economic Development .....	85

Recreation and Tourism .....	85
Appendix B – Vision Sessions, Survey & Results .....	86
Appendix C – History of Planning and Land Use in the U.S. and the Region .....	99
Federal and State Planning Initiatives .....	100
Regional and Local Planning Initiatives .....	101
Appendix D – Comments .....	103
 List of Maps	
Regional Location, Colleges & Universities .....	19
School Districts .....	37
Energy Facilities and Resources .....	41
Roads and Scenic Views .....	45
Cemetery Locations in the Town of Niles.....	51
Topography and Land Cover in Southeastern Cayuga County.....	54
Slope .....	55
Owasco Lake Watershed .....	58
Skaneateles Highlands Topography .....	61
Wetlands and Floodplains .....	63
Average Annual Wind Speed .....	65
Current Agricultural Districts in Cayuga County .....	69
Proposed Agricultural Districts in Cayuga County .....	70
Land Use & Agricultural Districts .....	71
Farmland Classification of Soils .....	73
Public Lands and Recreation .....	77

**GIS DATA Disclaimer**

The original sources of each dataset is identified on the maps. Due to the different sources and scales of projection, key features such as roads, parcel boundaries and streams may not overlap accurately when comparing several data layers on the same map. Acreage calculations for various parameters in this report were generated through the use of ArcGIS and are an approximation of the actual size. For more precise measurements, contact the Cayuga County Planning Department.



View across the south end of Skaneateles Lake toward Niles in 1928, by O.D. Von Englund (source: <http://freepages.genealogy.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~springport/pictures.html>)

## INTRODUCTION

The Town of Niles Comprehensive Plan was initiated, generated, and supported by the Niles community in a collaborative process intended to guide Town officials and the community in making decisions that affect the future of the Town. The comprehensive plan provides a basis for guiding future growth, development and community preservation. The plan also acts as a historical document that identifies present land use and infrastructure, as well as the physical, cultural, and demographic characteristics of the Town.

In early 2006, the Niles Town Board in consultation with the Niles Planning Board agreed to appoint a volunteer group of Niles citizens to a Comprehensive Planning Committee (CPC) to research and prepare a Comprehensive Plan. In July 2006, the CPC held its first meeting and began to identify the formal process it would follow to develop the plan. Members of the committee attended a training course presented by the Cayuga County Planning Board. The CPC has met on a monthly basis. The completed DRAFT plan was submitted to the community for input in September 2009.

The Town of Niles CPC was guided and assisted in the comprehensive planning process by the Central New York Regional Planning Board (CNYRPB), under a grant provided by Congressman James Walsh.

***Members of the Comprehensive Plan Committee:***

Sharon Andrus	Peter Andrus	John Behrens	Dick Coalson
Teri Cuddeback	Jason Cuddeback	Tony Hart	Caroline Head
Jane Kozlosky	Rose Roser	Larry Roser	Al Dougherty
Russell Stayton	Belinda Stayton	Bill Carmin	Kristopher Scholl

Co-Chairs: Diana Plue, Dorothy Rizzo  
Secretary: Ellen Abend

**Public Participation**

The following series of public visioning and input sessions were held in two separate locations over a six (6) month period to seek the community’s input, perception and ideas for the future of the Town of Niles:

Visioning Session #1 – March 24, 2007 – Special Topic – Agriculture

Visioning Session #2– April 26, 2007 – Special Topic – Land use Regulations in Niles

Visioning Session #3 – July 21, 2007 – Special Topic – Lake and Watershed Issues

Visioning Session #4 – August 18, 2007 – Special Topic – Owasco and Skanateles Lakes

With input from the visioning process, the Comprehensive Planning Committee formulated a survey which was then mailed to 900 Town residences. The intent of the survey was to seek out public opinions on the Town of Niles at present, and how to address the future of the Town. Analysis of the results of both the written community survey, and comments from the community visioning process formed the basis for this comprehensive plan (see Appendices B and D).

All CPC meetings, held on a monthly basis between August of 2006 and May of 2009, were open to the public. Citizens, Town Board and Planning Board members also attended many of these meetings. All thirty of the CPC and public meetings were well attended.

**Plan Structure**

The contents of this plan are divided into two chapters. Chapter 1, Goals and Recommendations gets into the specific recommendations of the CPC based on the input provided through the community survey and community visioning process. Chapter 2, Implementation Strategy, intends to define the Plan adoption process, suggested strategies for implementation of the Plan, and offers thoughts on reviewing and updating the Plan in the future. The five appendices included at the end of the report provide additional background and historical information related to the Town and the region.



Carpenter's Falls in 1928, by O.D. Von Englund  
(source: <http://freepages.genealogy.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~springport/pictures.html>)

## CHAPTER 1: GOALS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

As a direct result of the public participation process that included a community survey mailed to 900 Town residences, and input from four (4) community visioning sessions, the following statement was formulated by the Comprehensive Planning Committee to provide guidance in planning and development decisions in the future:

### **Community Vision Statement**

*The community seeks to preserve and enhance the unique natural, cultural, historic, and scenic rural characteristics of the Town of Niles; to encourage farmland protection in conjunction with sustainable economic growth; to foster preservation and revitalization of the historic hamlets of Niles; to protect the health of all environmental resources; and to create an inviting atmosphere in Niles for all to experience including the Skaneateles and Owasco Lake waterfronts, historic hamlets, and rural-agrarian landscape.*

The goals and recommended actions listed below should be considered in all future planning and decision-making in the Town of Niles.

## Agriculture and Open Space

### 1. *Preserve the rural-agrarian character of the Town*

- a. Support the protection of farmland balanced with managed community growth and preservation of open space
- b. Support a collaborative relationship with educational institutions and community-oriented nonprofit organizations in support of local agriculture and the farming community
- c. Consider sponsoring an annual “Agricultural Day” in conjunction with the Soil and Water Conservation District and Cornell Cooperative extension to educate the general public about the importance of local agriculture, local foods, etc.
- d. Work in collaboration with State, County and other agencies to encourage farmland preservation
- e. Consider working with Cayuga County to establish a local Purchase of Development Rights (PDR) program to preserve high quality farmland
- f. Continue to support farmland protection and agricultural easements

### 2. *Support future viability of local agricultural practices*

- a. Encourage and support sustainable growth in a wide range of local agricultural services and businesses in support of the local farming community including local processing and local markets
- b. Continue to support the Right-to-Farm law and cooperate with the NYS Department of Agriculture and Markets Agricultural District laws
- c. Watch for and make use of new NYS Dept. of Agriculture and Markets programs that can strengthen local agriculture including support for local produce distribution programs and farm markets<sup>1</sup>
- d. Work with Soil & Water District and Cornell Cooperative Extension personnel to address agricultural issues
- e. Support tax incentives to keep farmland in production
- f. Continue to allow agricultural values on farmland (not residences or farm buildings) for fire, am balance and other special districts for which a benefit assessment or special ad valorem levy exists
- g. Evaluate and implement tax abatement programs, if feasible, for further reductions in agricultural assessments from the State Agricultural Assessment Program coupled with comparable penalties for converting to non-farm use
- h. Encourage the use of “Best Management Practices” in all agricultural endeavors

## Land Use Regulation

### 3. *Protect the existing open space and scenic views in the Town of Niles*

- a. Review and rework existing land use regulations to effectively plan for and manage land uses to encourage smart growth while protecting the community’s rural-agrarian and scenic identity.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> see Agriculture and Farmland Protection Programs: Local Stakeholder Views, A Report to the New York State Advisory Council on Agriculture, New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets November 5, 2003, <http://www.agmkt.state.ny.us/ACARoundTableReport.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> Develop a Town-wide plan to support low-impact development patterns and land uses that conserve resources, complement the rural character of the residential setting, and encourage farms to remain in farm production, while providing reasonable land area for neighborhoods of single-family dwellings at a medium to low density on a range of lot sizes using conservation-sensitive design (The resources, lands and values identified by the community as important to conserve include: rural character, agriculture, highly visible open space lands, scenic views, and wildlife buffer areas).

- Encourage “density averaging” in rural and ecologically sensitive areas of the Town as well as other areas where lot sizes are large enough to allow the preservation of open space.
- Regulate and limit building to areas with slopes less than 15% to reduce soil erosion, storm water
- Investigate opportunities to apply for NYS Department of Agriculture and Markets grant funds. runoff, and sedimentation of water resources.
- Encourage preservation of large and continuous areas of absorbent open space while minimizing overall land disturbance and the introduction of impervious surfaces associated with development.



- b. Review and revise existing subdivision regulations and site plan review
- c. Consider developing all land use policies with an eye toward achieving the goals set forth in this plan (especially water quality protection through three priority areas: management of steep slopes [over 15%], stormwater management, and retaining vegetated buffers to watercourses)<sup>3</sup>
- d. Consider establishing a local Conservation Advisory Council (CAC) to research, inventory and map open space, agricultural lands, scenic views and corridors, and historic resources in the Town
- e. Consider revising existing subdivision regulations to incorporate conservation analysis into the subdivision approval process for major subdivisions
- f. Ensure that home-based commercial business endeavors meet requirements of any new site plan review and overlay district laws
- g. Inventory publicly accessible scenic views and corridors throughout the Town and consider guide lines such as easements for preserving these views

## **Environmental Stewardship and Water Quality Protection**

### ***4. Adopt effective strategies for protecting and enhancing the natural resources of significance to the Niles community***

- a. Develop an inventory and map of all natural resources including stream corridors, water bodies, beaches, wetlands, watershed areas, vegetation communities, woodlands, swamps, meadows, wild life habitats, soils, geology, steep slopes, ridgelines, and aquifers
- b. Establish protective overlay districts<sup>4</sup> to require development precautions or to prohibit high risk land uses in critical public supply watershed and aquifer recharge areas
- c. Review and amend existing lakefront local laws to ensure both shoreline and water quality protections through adequate minimum shoreline requirements.<sup>5</sup>
- d. Support environmental conservation efforts in the town

### ***5. Support water quality preservation and good stewardship of Skaneateles and Owasco Lakes and their watersheds***

- a. Actively seek inter-Town cooperation to improve water quality<sup>6</sup>
- b. Actively work with the Owasco Watershed Lake Association, the Tri-County Skaneateles Lake Pure Water Association, and the Skaneateles Lake Watershed Agricultural Program to preserve and

<sup>3</sup> The composition of Land Cover (i.e. forests v.s. lawn, pavement, or frequent tilling) impacts water quality in very different ways. Ecosystem Services such as filtration and infiltration of stormwater runoff can be cost-effectively implemented by incentivising the conversion of frequently tilled land or less pervious surfaces such as lawn and traditional paving to no-till land, meadow, garden, shrubland, or forest. Ecosystem services such as this can prevent the need for a costly traditional engineered municipal water treatment system in the future.

<sup>4</sup> Overlay districts are additive restrictions mapped out for specific areas such as limits on excavation of soil within 100 feet of a stream corridor, or limits on fuel stations within an aquifer contribution zone. Overlay districts can be used to protect valuable resources without applying broad zoning restrictions to large areas. Three criteria are important in their creation: 1) the district should have a clearly defined purpose, e.g. to protect groundwater, prevent erosion, or preserve historical character. 2) areas that relate to achieving the purpose of the overlay district must be identified and mapped. 3) specific rules should be developed that apply to the identified district such as development guidelines that require capture and filtering of runoff, architectural design guidelines, etc.

<sup>5</sup> Excessive development of environmentally sensitive lake shorelands can have direct, adverse water quality impacts. Existing local law 2-2008 (Shared Lakefront Recreation) currently allows a development of 20 dwelling units to have deeded lake access rights on a shared lakefront parcel of less than 1 acre and only 200' of shoreline. With lake front access densities set this high, there is high potential for negative environmental impacts associated with 20 or more individual vehicles, boats and their guests using 200' of shoreline. Recommended lake front access densities designed to preserve water quality and for environmental protection would be best determined by an Environmental Carrying Capacity Study, but in general would be much lower, i.e. 70' of shoreline per dwelling unit (see *Fair Lake Michigan Environmental Carrying Capacity Study*: <http://www.ftwrc.org/publications/Fairlakeecc.pdf>).

<sup>6</sup> Work collectively with other Towns in both watersheds to identify watershed preservation districts and best practices that can be implemented to improve water quality including protection of steep slopes and watercourses. Work with other Town/government agencies to produce compatible zoning or land use regulations to address issues related to water quality and watershed protection.

- improve the quality of the water in these two lakes
- c. Work with Cayuga County Soil and Water Conservation District, Finger Lakes-Lake Ontario Watershed Protection Alliance (FL-LOWPA), Cayuga County Water Quality Management Agency (CCWQMA) and other appropriate agencies to seek funding to adopt the same Best Management Practices (BMPs) for Owasco Lake Watershed as recommended in the Skaneateles Lake Watershed Agricultural Program
  - d. Work with the County Soil and Water Conservation District to implement improved and protective roadside ditch cleaning practices that will lessen or prevent erosion and pollutant runoff
  - e. Amend site plan review to ensure that all site development requirements include standards for BMPs to minimize soil disturbance, erosion, and stormwater runoff; and ensure that those standards are met (particularly in lakefront and streamside areas) through erosion and runoff abatement procedures and limits on percentage of lot coverage with impervious surfaces.<sup>7</sup>
  - f. Support/encourage watershed inspection and protection activities in both watersheds
  - g. Encourage the protection of riparian corridors with the use of buffer strips along all perennial and intermittent streams and shorelines to help reduce or eliminate sedimentation and nutrient runoff
  - h. Ensure that manure is spread and tilled in according to existing regulations and guidelines (ex. Section 1100 of NYS The Public Health Law, section 104.1.d.7 states that manure shall not be field spread within 75 feet of a lake or watercourse unless it is plowed underground on the same day it is spread
  - i. Encourage BMP's for the elimination of phosphorous fertilizers, the reduction of impervious surfaces, and the preservation of vegetated and forested land cover throughout the Town in residential applications
  - j. Encourage BMP's for the minimization of phosphorous fertilizer application, and the preservation of vegetated and forested land cover throughout the Town in agricultural operations
  - k. Work with other Town/government agencies to address impacts of heavy truck traffic on the community

## **Public Utilities and Community Services**

### **6. *Work to improve communications infrastructure***

- a. Explore options to improve/broaden internet access and foster the availability of Town-wide wireless internet service
- b. Explore options to improve/broaden cellular phone service and be pro-active with cell phone companies for placing cell towers

### **7. *Work to improve electrical reliability***

- a. Work with utility providers to update electrical infrastructure to guarantee reliability of electrical services in the Town
- b. Create a task force to work with National Grid on this issue
- c. Strongly consider pursuing opportunities to develop local municipal power

### **8. *Support volunteer recruitment for fire and ambulance services***

- a. Explore and review potential creative ways to provide incentives for volunteers such as tax breaks,

<sup>7</sup> It is a general rule that 1 acre of impervious surface = 1 million gallons of runoff per year. Carried with that runoff are the many chemicals and particulates that accumulate on lawn, driving and parking surfaces from fertilizers, herbicides and gasoline combustion engines. Permeable surfaces such as green roofs, water permeable concrete, and gravel help to filter out these pollutants and reduce their transfer through runoff to water bodies.

- health insurance and tuition assistance
- b. Support and implement effective incentive programs for fire and emergency volunteers

**9. Investigate opportunities for renewable energy development and green technologies such as wind, solar thermal, solar photovoltaic, geothermal, and biofuels throughout the Town and region and develop rules to regulate these activities**

- a. Conduct a critical review of both individual and commercial wind power siting opportunities and their potential benefits and impacts on the Town
- b. Explore clean energy development and infrastructure funding opportunities available to municipalities through NYSERDA and the NY Department of State Shared Municipal Services Department

**10. Increase community support for public education services**

- a. Encourage increased representation on the Moravia School Board (which receives a significant portion of its funding from the Town of Niles)

**11. Continue to maintain the present quality of Town roads and services**

- a. Review road maintenance procedures to ensure continued quality of Town roads
- b. Maintain the Town's current practice of holding six (6) clean-up days
- c. Continue the whole Town garbage/trash collection program and keep the cost to the taxpayers low

**12. Explore opportunities for consolidation of public services**

**13. Seek opportunities to increase community participation and civic resources**

- a. Explore ways to attract young families to re-locate to the Town
- b. Explore the possibility of expanding the Town Newsletter (more frequent editions & community input)
- c. Encourage continuing development of the Town of Niles website
- d. Encourage recruitment of a growing volunteer base for Town organizations such as the Town Planning Board, Election Inspectors, and Assessments

## **Economic Development and Cultural Heritage**

**14. Develop a plan to encourage economic growth in the Town that improves community life, and protects the existing cultural and environmental assets of the Town**

- a. Encourage a mix of uses in the hamlets such as village scale commercial, retail, and professional uses in combination with second floor residential units
- b. Create a local entity such as a grange or chamber of commerce that would work with the Cayuga County Chamber of Commerce, Finger Lakes Tourism, and Skaneateles Chamber to support the development of low impact, eco-friendly cottage industry endeavors that would offer employment and services for the Niles community
- c. Identify unmet needs of both year-round and seasonal Niles residents (such as a country store in New Hope or West Niles) and encourage the development of local small businesses to fulfill those needs

**15. Preserve the historic and rural character of the Town and hamlets**

- a. Inventory the historic buildings, structures and landscapes that contribute to the historic character

- of the Town and hamlets
- b. Evaluate the potential for National Register designations, especially for hamlets such as Kelloggsville, but also for individual historic buildings and structures through the State Office of Historic Preservation
- c. Consider establishing Local Preservation Districts with special tax incentives for preservation and rehabilitation of historic buildings and structures
- d. Evaluate the potential for the establishment of a Town history museum and use this as an opportunity for the rehabilitation or restoration of an important historic building
- e. Consider development of regulations for signage design, placement, and maintenance compatible with the historic and rural character of Niles



Niles Creamery Museum sketch courtesy of Clancy Edmonds, 2007.

**16. Capitalize on the many existing historic and natural resources, and the rural-agrarian character of the Town as an economic asset**

- a. Focus economic development efforts on the rehabilitation and restoration of existing structures and on context sensitive development within or near the hamlets
- b. Encourage agriculture-related economic development in the Town and tourist or visitor-related economic development in the hamlets
- c. Encourage incentives for preferred character treatment in any commercial development within or near the hamlets
- d. Adopt clear form-based architectural and development standards compatible with the historic character of the hamlets to guide the Town Planning Boards in the preservation of that character
- e. Consider management of future economic development in the Town to ensure the protection of scenic views and corridors
- f. Encourage the use of federal and state investment and income tax credits available for the restoration of historic buildings and barns (NYS Office of Historic Preservation, <http://nysparks.state.ny.us/shpo/>)
- g. Work cooperatively within the Finger Lakes Region to support state policy that would compensate Towns for maintaining their rural character
- h. Pursue preservation project funding through the Preservation League of New York and the New York Council on the Arts Architecture Planning & Design grants programs

**Recreation and Tourism**

**17. Consider developing a plan for a Town-wide greenway system that links scenic, natural, historic and recreational resources (well-marked hiking trails, bike paths, play and picnic areas, lake access points, and historic places of interest throughout the Town and hamlets)<sup>8</sup>**

**18. Consider the development of additional community recreational facilities**

- a. Identify community recreation needs and pursue funding to assist in fulfilling those needs - for

<sup>8</sup> NYS Department of State Division of Coastal Resources offers grants to waterfront communities through their Local Waterfront Revitalization Program (LWRP) (see: [http://www.nyswaterfronts.com/waterfront\\_natural\\_resources.asp](http://www.nyswaterfronts.com/waterfront_natural_resources.asp)).

example (but not limited to) hiking trails, bike paths, playgrounds, skateboard park, Town docks, tennis courts, snowmobile trails, etc.

- b. Explore opportunities for the development of a Town park for multi-purpose recreation – i.e. Old Home Days events, tennis courts, basketball courts, etc.
- c. Identify land that may be used or acquired for the development of community lake access at both Skaneateles and Owasco Lakes, and for additional community recreational facilities such as parks, hiking trails, bike paths, playgrounds, playing fields and courts, etc.
- d. Explore the possible use of the Town hall in New Hope as a ‘community center’

**19. Consider developing a heritage tourism program to showcase the historic sites throughout the Town**

- a. Encourage the development of a Town history brochure and map
- b. Consider promoting Niles historic sites through state and regional heritage tourism websites
- c. Support the efforts of the Town Historian to preserve physical evidence of the Town’s history and establish a Town History Museum



## CHAPTER 2: ADOPTING AND IMPLEMENTING THE PLAN

### Adopting the Comprehensive Plan

This Plan includes analytic documents, maps, strategies, and tools for use in the guidance of community well-being, future land use and development in the Town of Niles. Once adopted, review of future projects occurs in consideration of the community vision and the Comprehensive Plan. In addition, all other governmental agencies must consider this plan when directing or funding capital projects that occur within the Town. This Plan must meet the provisions of the New York State Environmental Quality Review Act prior to final adoption of the Plan by the Town Board. Adoption of a Comprehensive Plan is a discretionary decision and is considered a Type I action pursuant to Article 8 of the Environmental Conservation Law and Title 6 of the New York Code of Rules and Regulations Part 617.4(b)(1).



View west across Skaneateles Lake showing clear-cutting of trees that occurred at around the turn of the twentieth century on the steep southeast slopes of Niles, date unknown (source: <http://freepages.genealogy.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~springport/pictures.html>).

The benefits of adopting this Plan far outweigh any potential adverse impacts that may be generated from the adoption and administration of the Plan. The purpose of adopting a Comprehensive Plan is the protection of the health, safety, and general welfare of the citizens of the community. In accordance with GML 239, the Governing Board must refer the adoption or amendment of the proposed Comprehensive Plan to the County Planning Board's 239 Land Use Committee for review for potential inter-municipal impacts of the proposed Plan. The Governing Board may adopt a Comprehensive Plan (or an amendment to a Comprehensive Plan) by resolution.

### **Review and Maintenance of the Comprehensive Plan**

Because communities are continually changing and adjusting to new conditions, this Comprehensive Plan is a work in progress, and can be thought of as a temporary Constitution of the Town; a document that provides the guiding principles for the future development and growth. This Comprehensive Plan should be reviewed regularly to ensure its continued relevance with the existing conditions, goals and objectives of the Town of Niles. Every three (3) to five (5) years, the Town Board should conduct an in-depth review of the plan and make changes as needed. This in-depth review should assess the status of the Plan's recommendations and implementation actions such as land use regulation revisions, capital improvement programming, expansion of recreational opportunities, tourism, economic development, and progress on other work identified in the Goals & Recommendations (Chapter 1) of the Plan. As policy-making changes and the physical characteristics of the community change, the Comprehensive Plan should also change. The Plan should be a "living document".

#### ***Circumstances that may warrant revising the Plan include:***

- A finding of significant change within the community or substantial unforeseen circumstances or impacts;
- A finding of significant public benefit associated with the proposed revision or a need to maintain and protect public investments and resources; or
- The need to maintain compliance with new laws, regulations, court actions, or other mandates

The governing board should provide, as a component of a proposed Comprehensive Plan, the maximum intervals at which the adopted Plan shall be reviewed.

### **Implementing the Comprehensive Plan**

All of the work that the community has done thus far in preparing the Comprehensive Plan can be lost without a solid framework for implementation based on available funding resources and realistic expectations. Some recommendations in this Plan may be implemented over a long time horizon, others will be a concentrated, short-term effort, but all elements of the Plan should be considered in terms of budgets and time frame.

A Comprehensive Plan is a valuable resource a community can use to win significant grant funding from a wide variety of sources. Forming partnerships with various public agencies at the local, county, state and federal levels is advisable. These agencies can often assist communities in their implementation efforts. Special committees may be established by the Town Board to address specific focus areas identified in the Plan. These committees should include members of the community most familiar with the Comprehensive Plan and its guiding principles. Examples of such committees are a Revitalization Committee, a Conservation Advisory Council, an Open Space Committee, or a Business Improvement District.

Through all of these efforts, the Town Board should pursue joint relationships with other agencies and neighboring municipalities. Planning for, and implementing change can be impacted by, and have impacts on the region that a community is a part of as a whole. Community efforts can often be strengthened and community benefits broadened by cooperative planning and promotional strategies among neighboring communities.







Looking west across Owasco Lake from Rockefeller Road in Niles, October 2008

## APPENDIX A

---

### BACKGROUND, HISTORIC INFORMATION & DEMOGRAPHICS

#### **Location**

The Town of Niles is located in Cayuga County in the eastern part of the Finger Lakes Region of Central New York. Cayuga County is comprised of a hilly southern plateau where the Town of Niles is located, and a relatively flat central plain region with drumlins in the north. Cayuga, in the Iroquoian language of the Cayuga people native to the region, means “people of the wetlands”. Largely a rural, agricultural community, Niles is located to the southeast of the City of Auburn in the heart of Cayuga County and is nestled between Owasco Lake to the west and Skaneateles Lake to the east, approximately halfway between the southeastern shore of Lake Ontario and the New York/Pennsylvania border. The region features deep north-south valleys bordered by beautiful sloping shorelines occasionally cut by picturesque glens and gorges. The gently rolling hills between the lake shores vary in elevation at near 900 feet and from their heights offer spectacular

views of the deep, glacially-formed lakes and surrounding farmland. Both Skaneateles Lake and Owasco Lake offer prime water supply sources to populations throughout the region. Above Owasco Lake, the slope of the land is gradual. At the southern portion of Skaneateles Lake the slope of land to the lake is steep. Near the center of the Town, Dutch Hollow Brook flows north through the hollow formed by the steep hills. Also flowing north, but through the eastern part into Skaneateles Lake, is Bear Swamp Creek.

The quality of life in Niles, in the heart of the Finger Lakes Region, is enhanced by the availability of both low-cost, and architecturally intact historical housing, high quality schools, nearby cultural, parks and recreational opportunities, and low crime rates. Outdoor recreation opportunities abound in central Cayuga County with many nearby locations for hiking, biking, cross-country skiing, snowmobiling, snowshoeing, hunting, and enjoying the outdoors. In the Town of Niles, access to two Finger Lakes offers plenty of potential opportunity for water activities including boating, sailing, canoeing and kayaking, swimming, and sport fishing. (<http://www.cayuganet.org/profile.html#dem>)

# Regional Location Colleges & Universities

## Town of Niles Comprehensive Plan

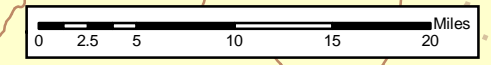
### MAP 1

- 50 Mile Buffer around the Town of Niles
- Municipal**
- Town of Niles
- County Boundary
- Cayuga County
- Urban Areas
- Natural Features**
- Water Body
- Transportation**
- Limited Access
- Highway
- Major Road

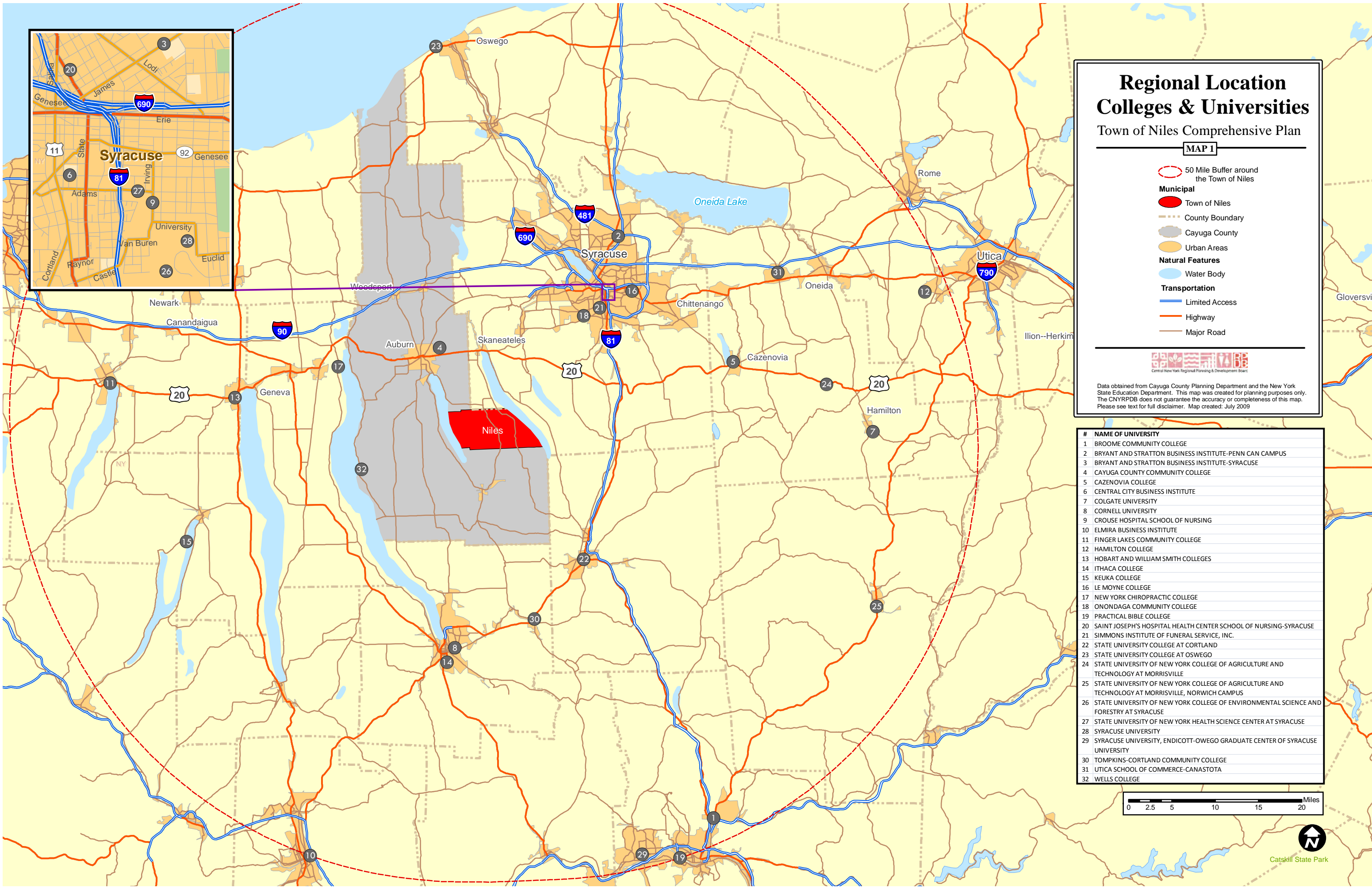


Data obtained from Cayuga County Planning Department and the New York State Education Department. This map was created for planning purposes only. The CNRPDB does not guarantee the accuracy or completeness of this map. Please see text for full disclaimer. Map created: July 2009

#	NAME OF UNIVERSITY
1	BROOME COMMUNITY COLLEGE
2	BRYANT AND STRATTON BUSINESS INSTITUTE-PENN CAN CAMPUS
3	BRYANT AND STRATTON BUSINESS INSTITUTE-SYRACUSE
4	CAYUGA COUNTY COMMUNITY COLLEGE
5	CAZENOVIA COLLEGE
6	CENTRAL CITY BUSINESS INSTITUTE
7	COLGATE UNIVERSITY
8	CORNELL UNIVERSITY
9	CROUSE HOSPITAL SCHOOL OF NURSING
10	ELMIRA BUSINESS INSTITUTE
11	FINGER LAKES COMMUNITY COLLEGE
12	HAMILTON COLLEGE
13	HOBART AND WILLIAM SMITH COLLEGES
14	ITHACA COLLEGE
15	KEUKA COLLEGE
16	LE MOYNE COLLEGE
17	NEW YORK CHIROPRACTIC COLLEGE
18	ONONDAGA COMMUNITY COLLEGE
19	PRACTICAL BIBLE COLLEGE
20	SAINT JOSEPH'S HOSPITAL HEALTH CENTER SCHOOL OF NURSING-SYRACUSE
21	SIMMONS INSTITUTE OF FUNERAL SERVICE, INC.
22	STATE UNIVERSITY COLLEGE AT CORTLAND
23	STATE UNIVERSITY COLLEGE AT OSWEGO
24	STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURE AND TECHNOLOGY AT MORRISVILLE
25	STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURE AND TECHNOLOGY AT MORRISVILLE, NORWICH CAMPUS
26	STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK COLLEGE OF ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCE AND FORESTRY AT SYRACUSE
27	STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK HEALTH SCIENCE CENTER AT SYRACUSE
28	SYRACUSE UNIVERSITY
29	SYRACUSE UNIVERSITY, ENDICOTT-OWEGO GRADUATE CENTER OF SYRACUSE UNIVERSITY
30	TOMPKINS-CORTLAND COMMUNITY COLLEGE
31	UTICA SCHOOL OF COMMERCE-CANASTOTA
32	WELLS COLLEGE



Catskill State Park



## History of the Community

The Town of Niles was incorporated in 1833. Niles lies between the west shore of Skaneateles Lake and the east shore of Owasco Lake in Cayuga County. The regional setting of the Town between these beautiful glacial lakes to the southeast of the City of Auburn, NY, and between the Villages of Skaneateles and Moravia, offers much of historical interest to both residents and visitors. Historic sites of interest in the region include the boyhood home of Millard Fillmore, the 13th President of the U.S., the home of William Seward, President Lincoln's Secretary of State, and the Harriet Tubman Home and Reference Library in Auburn. Ted Case, at Case Research Lab in Auburn, pioneered the sound used in talking movies, and Willard Chapel, also located in Auburn, is the only complete Louis Comfort Tiffany religious interior remaining in the world.

### *Cultural History*

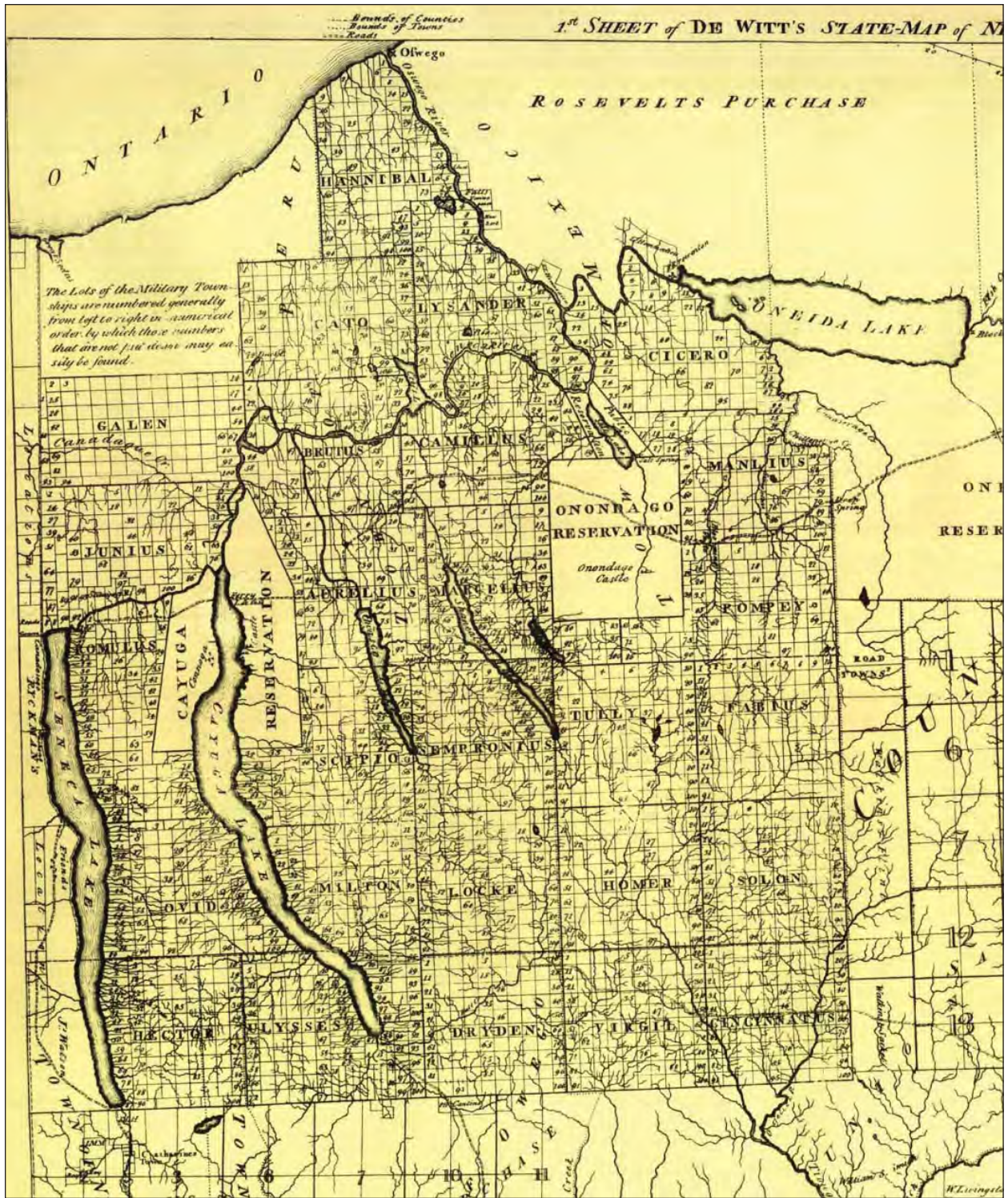
Prior to European colonization, lands in the Finger Lakes Region of Central New York were home to the Haudenosaunee people of the six nations of the Iroquois. The Cayugas, one of the six nations, were known as the "people of the marsh." The Haudenosaunee, raised crops and livestock in clearings, wetlands, and forested areas they maintained near regionally nomadic settlements. In 1779, President George Washington launched an effort to clear the Iroquois people from their ancestral homes across New York State. That year the Sullivan-Clinton Campaign employed over 5,000 troops, roughly one third of the Revolutionary Army in that effort. By Sullivan's official report, the 1779 Campaign burned 40 Haudenosaunee Towns and their agricultural fields (<http://sullivanclinton.com/texts>).

In 1795 and 1807, as the new American colonial government continued to pursue a westward push, the State of New York purchased the lands of the region from the Iroquois, although the state land purchases were never ratified by the U.S. Congress. (Iroquoia, Engelbrecht, William, 2003)

During the Revolutionary War, both New York State and the Continental government offered land as a bounty for enlistment in the military forces. On March 20, 1781, in an attempt to raise two regiments, New York State passed legislation promising bounties of un-appropriated land equal to five times the grant of the federal government (500 acres) to an enlisting private fulfilling a three year enlistment. By July 1782, an area known as the Military Tract was set aside for this purpose. The Military Tract, situated in the Finger Lakes area, contained 28 Townships, including two Native American reservations for the Cayugas and the Onondagas. Each of these subsections or Townships was comprised of 60,000 acres, and the Townships were named for classical heroes as they were surveyed, mapped and numbered 1 through 26. The Townships as originally surveyed were too large and geographically challenging to administer and were gradually divided into smaller Towns. On March 20, 1833 the Township of Sempronius was so divided and the Town of Niles was formed out of the upper section which included Lots No. 1-41, while the Towns of Moravia and Sempronius contained the other sixty lots.

The Town of Niles derives its name from Elder Robert Niles, Former Pastor of the First Baptist Church of Sempronius. West Niles was once called Pennyville. Owasco and Skaneateles Lakes, between which the Town of Niles lies, generated some inconsistencies in the division of lands. It is interesting to note that, as the original Townships were laid out, because of the curve of the lake, parts of Lots 5, 12, 13, and 26, of the Township of Scipio, appeared on the western edge of the then Township of Sempronius, becoming a part of Niles when it incorporated in 1833. The same is true of the eastern edge of Niles, where Lots 11, 12, 13 and 14 are lost to the Town of Tully in Onondaga County, because of the curve in Skaneateles Lake.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>9</sup> (from Niles 1833-1983 written by Mable L. Crosby, Town of Niles Historian, and Alberta Winters)



Map of the Military Tract of Central New York, 1793 (source: <http://www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~nycayuga/maps/1793/dewitt.jpg>).



View of Niles farmland, date unknown (source: Historic Photos and Maps of New York State, <http://freepages.genealogy.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~springport/pictures.html>).

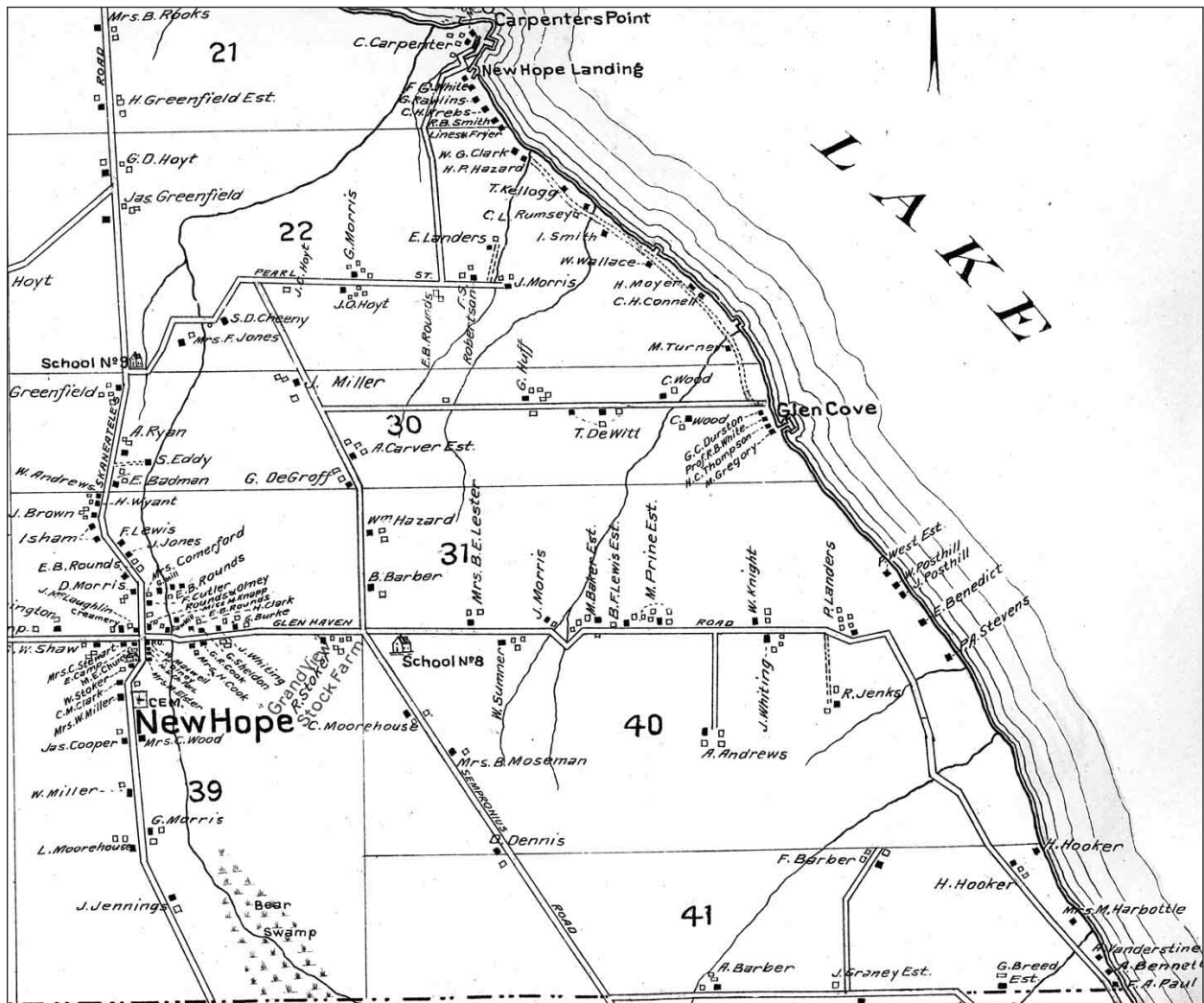
Good agricultural soils in Niles led to the establishment of many small farms producing crops such as hay, corn, wheat, oats, rye, dairy, and beef cattle. Related businesses such as a creamery and flour mills developed in several locations during the nineteenth and early twentieth century taking advantage of the abundant water resources and filling a local and regional demand for high quality products. The census of 1875 indicated that 234,973 pounds of butter and 2,040 pound of cheese were made by Niles families from 1,686 dairy cows. Many commercial stores and service businesses were established throughout the Town of Niles as farms and hamlets were settled. Residences, churches, schools, post offices, libraries, and cemeteries consolidated in small, vibrant hamlets dotted the Town.

Over the years, as the industrial age brought new technologies and ever more efficient ways of producing products (once the economic backbone of central New York's rural communities), small scale farming and production operations in the Town began to decline. During the mid-to-late twentieth century, many smaller rural industries were lost completely as a new service economy began to take hold offering economic opportunity unrelated to local agriculture industry pursuits. Land in close proximity to centers of economic development became more highly valued for residential development than as productive farmland, and many farms in the region succumbed to the pressure to sell. The landscape of Niles reflects these land and cultural value changes today with growing areas of residential development. Recent development patterns in Niles have a very different character than existed a century ago. Once consolidated among the small land parcels in rural hamlets, rural residential development now tends to spread out in large parcel subdivisions of former farmland. Even so, Niles today retains much of its historic and scenic rural character especially along its rural roadways where large lot residential development patterns have not yet consumed the agrarian landscape.

### ***Hamlets and Historic Settlements***

The settlement of New Hope, located about half way between Moravia and Skaneateles at the intersection of Glen Haven Road and Skaneateles Road (Route 41a) filled a need for local goods with the opening of its first store in 1820. With its roots in wagon-making and undertaking, the Hamlet of New Hope grew to become a small center of commercial activity with barber shops, a cobbler shop, a blacksmith, a flour mill, and a variety of other services and stores.

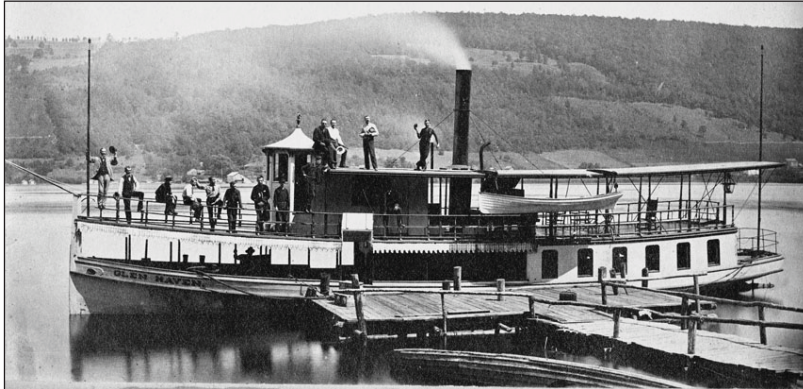
Continued development and enterprising business in the Hamlet of New Hope no doubt benefited from the early success of a freight and passenger steamboat service from the Village of Skaneateles on Skaneateles Lake. The steamboat, Ben Porter, was named after a Civil War hero and travelled the 16 mile waterway beginning in 1866. In the 1870s, an annual fair was held in September in New Hope. For many years a series of steam vessels arrived on regularly scheduled trips to the Town of Niles. An 80 foot steamer, the Glen Haven, and a 68-footer, the Ossahinta, made the rounds to the massive wood docks (some 40 to 50 feet long) constructed at various private estates and resorts around the lake. Steam boat service included stops at New Hope Landing located at Carpenter’s Point, and another landing at Glen Cove.



Map showing the Hamlet of New Hope, New Hope Landing at Carpenter’s Point and the landing at Glen Cove in c.1904 (source: Historic Photos and Maps of New York State, <http://freepages.genealogy.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~springport/pictures.html>).

Passengers, mail and freight arrived and departed from these locations, and the activity surrounding the regularly scheduled steamer service contributed greatly to the early development of the Town of Niles and the Hamlets. Operation of the steamers steadily employed local youth in interesting and profitable summer jobs in positions such as Captain, Engineer, Stoker, Deck Hand, Postal Clerk, Candy, Butcher and Freight Clerk. According to “The Story of the Steamboats on Skaneateles Lake,” by Charles B. Cooper, “As the

boat made its regular trips from Skaneateles to Glen Haven stopping at each of the individual piers, a feeling of camaraderie developed among the cottagers which added to the pleasure of the trip and fostered a sense of neighborliness around the lake.”



The 80 foot steamer, Glen Haven at a landing on Skaneateles Lake, date unknown (source: Historic Photos and Maps of New York State, <http://freepages.genealogy.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~springport/pictures.html>).



Postcard looking south, showing the inclined ramp, shade structure and dock at New Hope Landing in c.1911 (source: Historic Photos and Maps of New York State, <http://freepages.genealogy.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~springport/pictures.html>).



Postcard looking north, showing New Hope Landing and Carpenter's Point in c.1911 (source: Historic Photos and Maps of New York State, <http://freepages.genealogy.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~springport/pictures.html>).

At the turn of the twentieth century, the facilities at New Hope Landing included an inclined ramp providing access from the shore to a floating dock, with a small shade structure and sitting bench, tied to wood pilings. From this location, canoes and other small boats were launched for a row on the lake. Today, this same location is the shorefront of the Bahar Preserve. The Hamlet of New Hope, less than two miles from the old landing and historically the western heart of the Skaneateles Lake community retains several historic buildings and is the location of the Niles Town Hall.



Kelloggsville, a small hamlet at the intersection of Globe and Old Salt Roads, was settled in 1804 by Judge Charles Kellogg. Old Salt Road, bisecting the hamlet, was constructed in c.1794 and used for many years as the transport route for salt from the Syracuse shore of Onondaga Lake south to Ithaca and Owego.



The salt that travelled along Old Salt Road by horse and carriage originated in the salt beds at Syracuse, New York, date unknown (source: Historic Photos and Maps of New York State, <http://freepages.genealogy.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~springport/pictures.html>).

During the nineteenth century, Kelloggsville featured various merchant stores, a post office, law office, church, farms, residences and a school. In 1921, the Kelloggsville Library was established in the former Slade Law Office building at the center of the hamlet by local resident, Marie Kilborne Flaherty. The tiny library remained open through 1941. Although the Kelloggsville Library has not survived, many historic buildings remain at Kelloggsville today including the L.A. Newland Home which appears on an 1859 map of the hamlet. The picturesque historic settlement was recognized with a state historic marker in 1976 as the Home of Charles Kellogg and a place visited by Millard Fillmore and Family, but as yet has not been nominated for listing on the National Historic Register.



At left, a barn and fields in the picturesque Hamlet of Kelloggsville at the intersection of Globe and Old Salt Roads, 2008. At right, the c.1859 L.A. Newland Home in the historic hamlet, 2008.

Various historic settlement sites are located throughout the Town including Niles, earlier known as Dutch Hollow, at the intersection of Route 38a and Dewitt Road, which once featured a grocery store, school, tavern, mills, and post office; Twelve Corners near the geographic center of Town at the intersection of Twelve Corners and Cream Hollow Roads, had a mill, church, school and cemetery; Austin, or Nine Corners as it was also known, in the western section near Owasco Lake had stores, shops, a post office, and dance hall; and Pennyville, also known as Ormro in southwestern Niles near the Moravia Town line featured a church and library. Some of these historic settlements retain historic structures and sites today that provide a unique character, and a reminder of the once vibrant life of the small settlements throughout the Town of Niles.

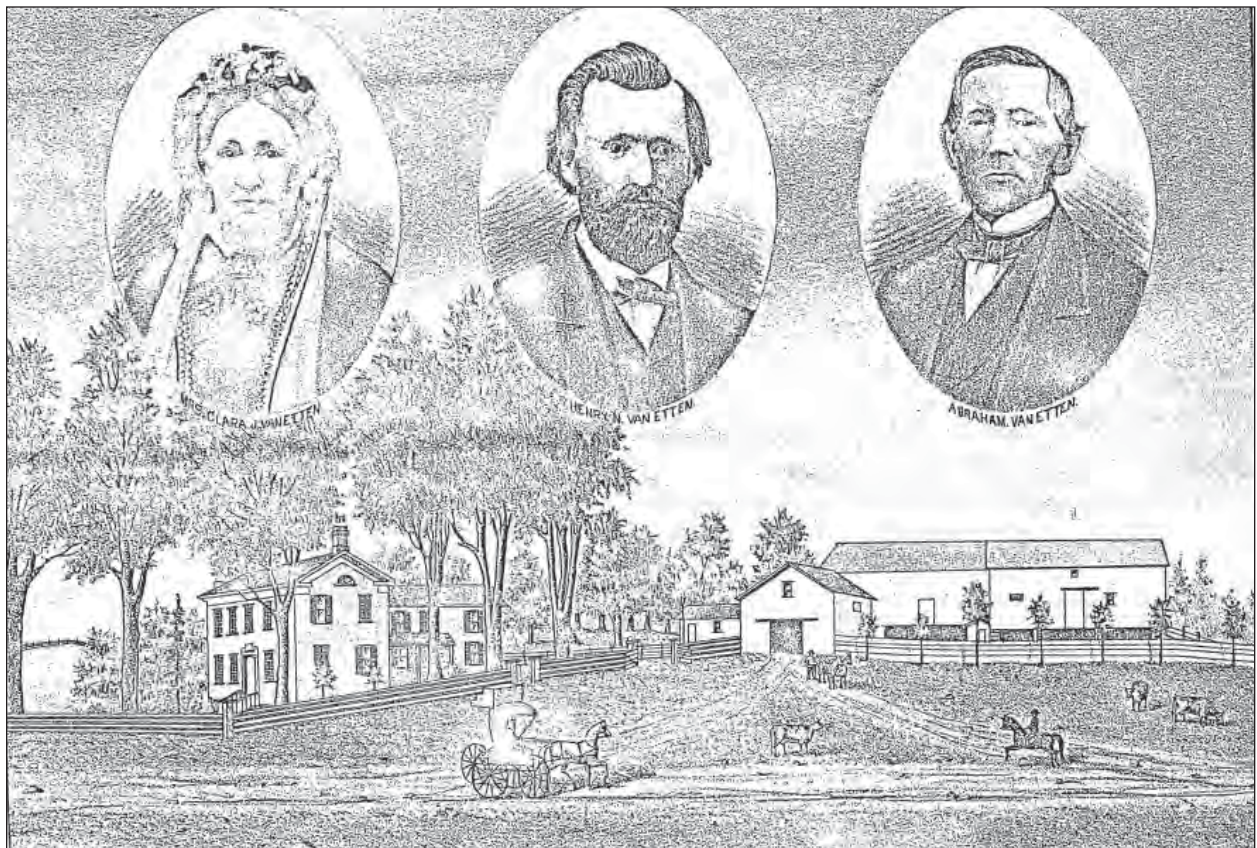


An etching of the L.A. Newland home on Old Salt Road in the Hamlet of Kelloggsville, date unknown (source: photo copy from Town of Niles history archives).

In addition to the historic settlement areas, many historic farm houses remain intact throughout the Town of Niles such as the c.1850 Abraham Van Etten home and farm on Twelve Corners Road. The Van Etten farm appears on an 1859 map of the Town of Niles, and remains in its historic location today.



The c.1850 Abraham Van Etten residence on Twelve Corners Road, 2009.



An etching of the Abraham Van Etten residence on Twelve Corners Road, date unknown (source: photo copy from Town of Niles history archives).

The Bonnie Brae Airfield was constructed in c.1928 on the Philo Ramsey Farm, south of Keonig's Point overlooking Owasco Lake in the northwest corner of the Town of Niles. Bonnie Brae was one of the first airfields in Cayuga County and it operated through the early 1960s. Charles Lindbergh landed at Bonnie Brae Airfield in the late 1920s, one of hundreds of stops on an America tour following his ground-breaking solo flight across the Atlantic Ocean in 1927. Beginning in 1930, a 15 passenger Ford Tri-Motored Plane powered by three Wright Whirlwind Motors and a wing span of 74 feet offered 25 mile aerial tours to the public for \$5.00. The City of Auburn's first air mail service began from Bonnie Brae Airfield in May of 1938. A small building, once used as the Bonnie Brae Airfield Office still exists on the site today.



***The Safest Ship That Flies***

ALL PASSENGERS ARE FULLY INSURED

# Now You Can Fly

# In the Ford Tri-Motored Plane

***25 Mile Aerial Tour For 5 Dollars***



BONNIE BRAE — KOENIG'S POINT ROAD — EXTENDED FLIGHTS DAILY FROM 10 A. M. TO 8 P. M.

The Giant Ford Plane is in Auburn for a stay of three days — Piloted by Captain O. M. Goodsell, world-war ace and night air-mail pilot, who has had over 5,000 hours in the air.  
Plane seats fifteen passengers, has wing-spread of 74 feet, speed 115 miles per hour and is powered by three Wright Whirlwind Motors of 230 horsepower each.



Just buy that new Ford you've been planning to get or place a bona-fide order for delivery within the near future and the ride is yours FREE! A free ride with each used car purchased from HENDERSON & LATHROP INC, while plane is in Auburn

THIS SHIP IS BROUGHT HERE THROUGH ARRANGEMENT WITH

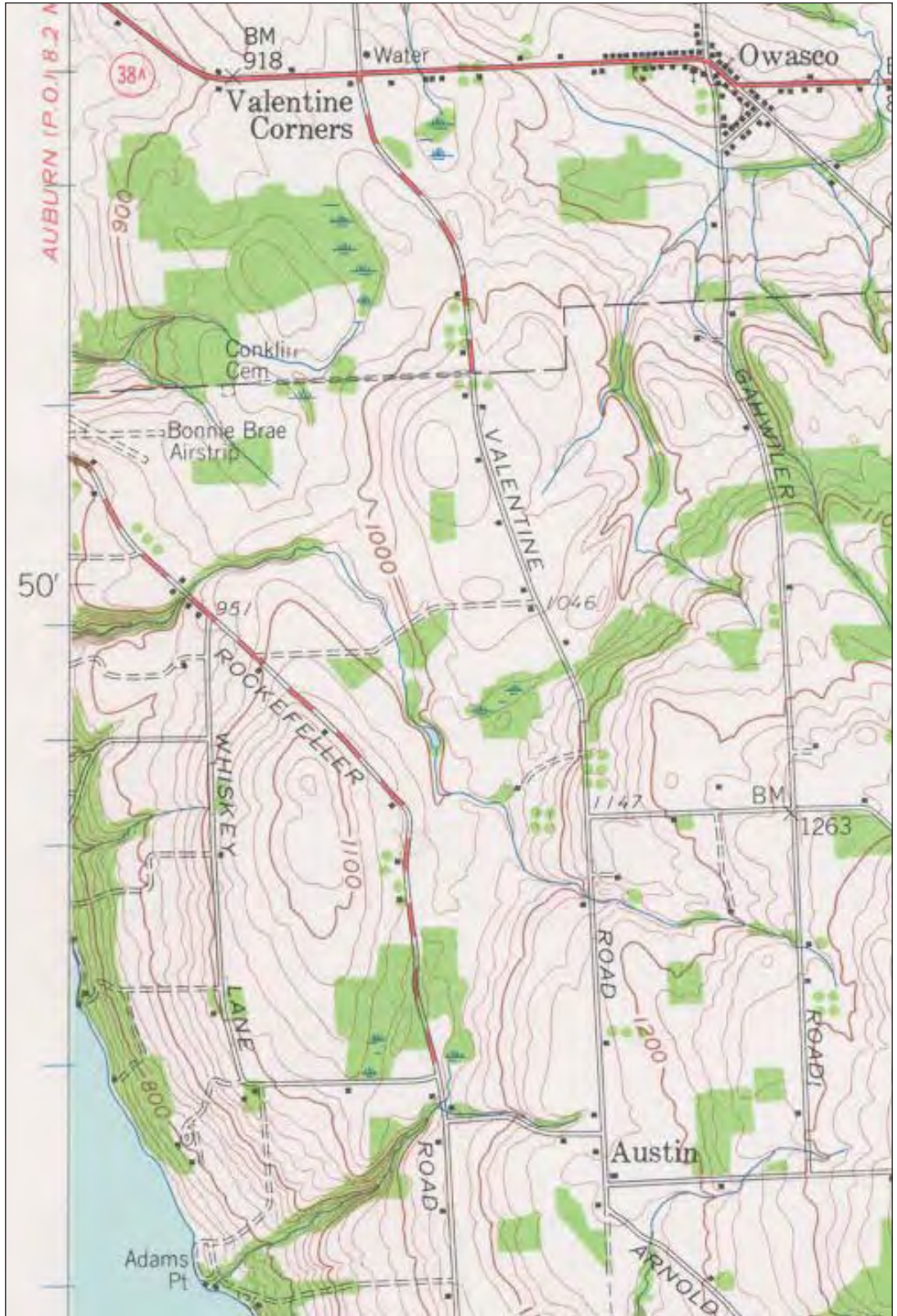
## HENDERSON & LATHROP, Inc.

PHONE 2105
AUTHORIZED FORD AND LINCOLN DEALERS
43 MARKET ST.

Advertisement for 25 Mile Aerial Tours from Bonnie Brae Airfield, from the *Auburn Citizen* 1930.

Photo of former Airfield Office building still located at the old airfield site, 2008 (courtesy of Dick Coalson).



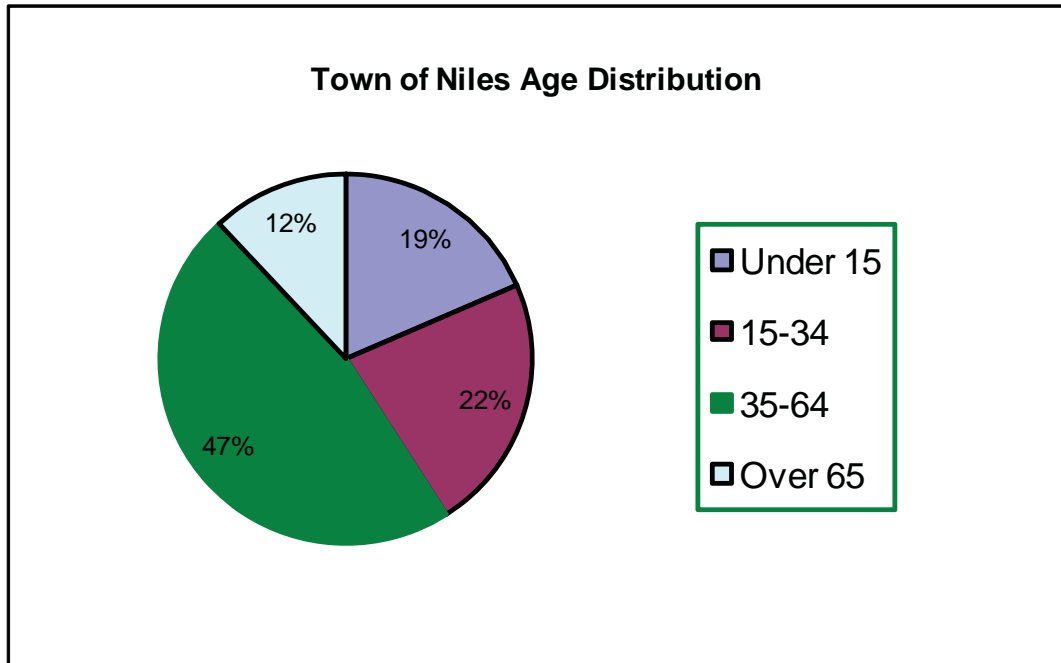


1955 USGS Map showing the location of Bonnie Brae Airstrip with two runways (at left, upper third of image).

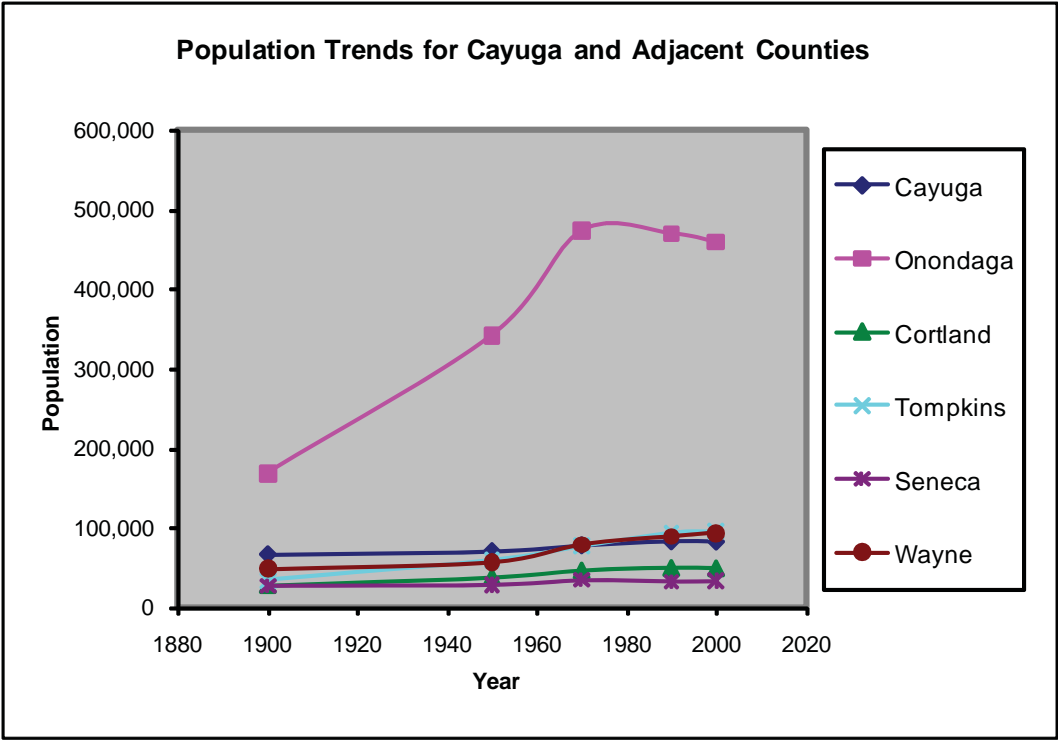
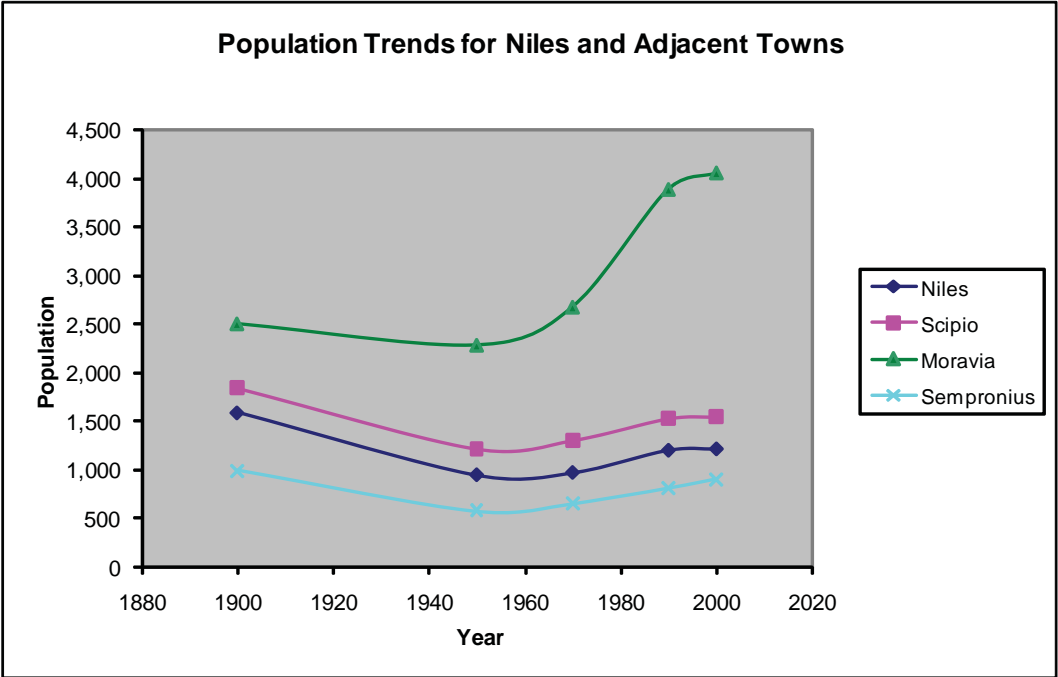
## Population

Cayuga County's total population for 2000 was 81,963. The largest proportion of this population resides within the center of the County and includes the City of Auburn with a population of 28,574, surrounded by the five Towns of Sennett, Throop, Owasco, Fleming and Aurelius. Other than the City of Auburn, there are twenty-three incorporated Towns in Cayuga County ranging in population from Brutus with 4,777 residents in 2000 to Sempronius with 893 residents.

The largest block of residents of the Town of Niles is 47% in the age range of 35 - 64 years of age. 22% are between the ages of 15 and 34; 19% under 15 years; and only 12% above the age of 65. Population growth trends have been much steeper in the more urban areas of Central New York such as Onondaga County and the Town of Moravia. The population of the Town of Niles fell gradually from a high of 1,579 residents in 1900 to 941 in 1950 and then rose steadily until levelling off at around 1,200 residents since the 1990's.



(Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2000 Census)



(Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2000 Census)

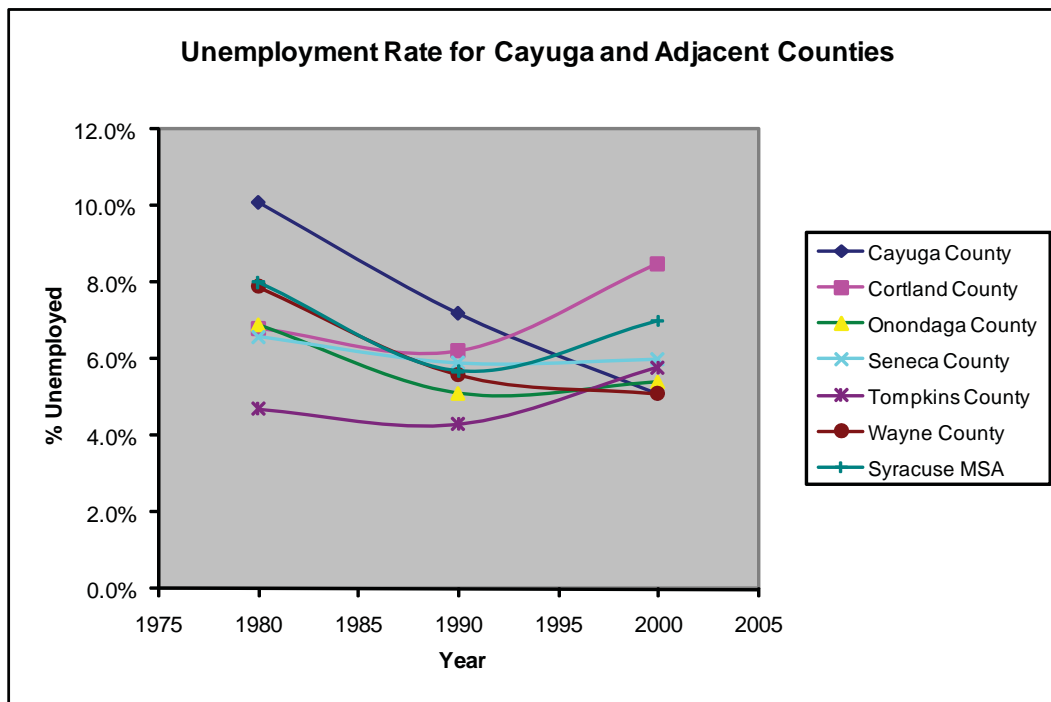
### Housing Demographics

The total number of households in the County is approximately 30,558, with approximately 11,411 of those in Auburn. Although the County offers a diversity of housing choices, the majority of homes were built before 1939 and the County is well known for its wealth of 19th century architecture.

In the Town of Niles, out of a total 824 housing units according to the 2000 U.S. Census, only 432 (52%) were owner-occupied. This data reflects the large number of seasonal and rental residences located along the lakefront areas of the Town. Housing values rose some 36% between 1990 and 2000 in the Town of Niles and rents were up 29% in that same period. These numbers represent substantial residential growth trends for a rural, agricultural community, and may predict an accelerated loss of Niles farmlands to future residential development to meet increasing pressures to sell these lands.

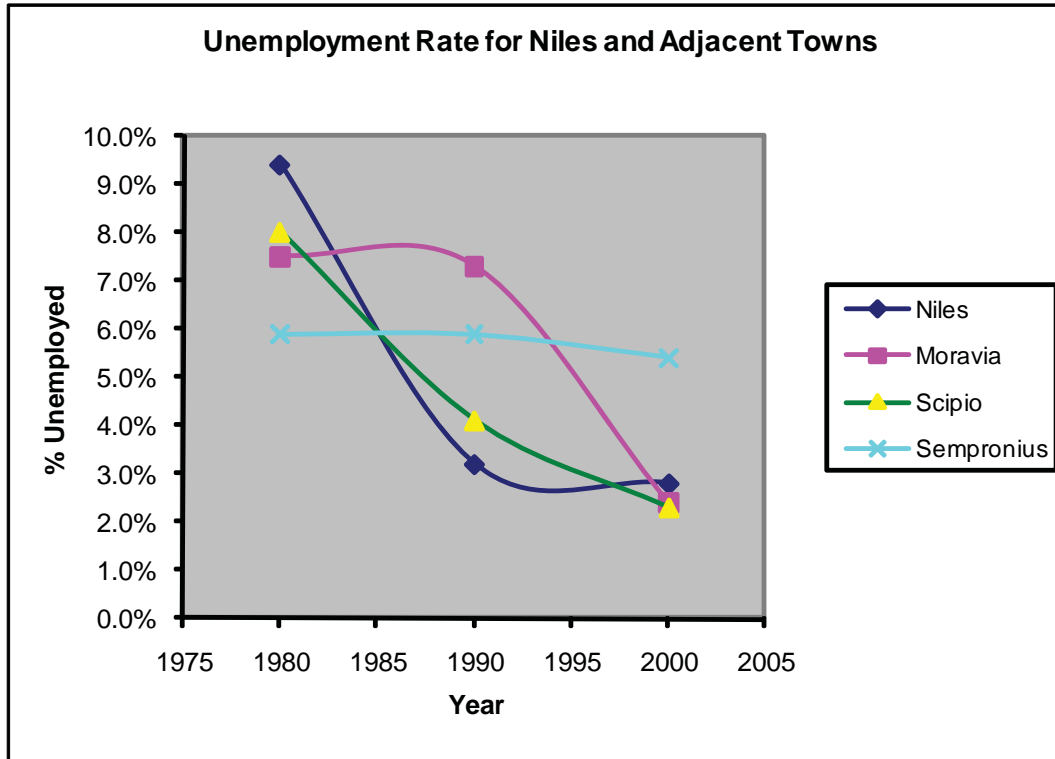
### Business Development and Economic Base

Situated in Central New York State between Syracuse and Rochester, Cayuga County’s principal source of employment is manufacturing, with most of the industry located in or near the City of Auburn. Manufactured products include electrical and electronic components, fiber optics, auto parts, glass bottles, plastic products, and high quality steel and machined products. Agriculture is vital to the area’s economy, with Cayuga County producing some of New York State’s finest livestock, dairy products and cash crops. Cayuga County is the State’s number one corn producing county and ranks fourth in New York State for milk production. Agriculture generates \$125.4 million in income for the County. Cayuga County has fared well in comparison to other Central New York counties in recent decades in terms of unemployment. The unemployment rate in Cayuga County fell from a high of 6.8% in 1960 to a low of 5.1% in 2000 with other counties experiencing growing unemployment rates. The Town of Niles experienced a high unemployment rate of 9.4% in the 1980s to a low of 2.8% in 2000.



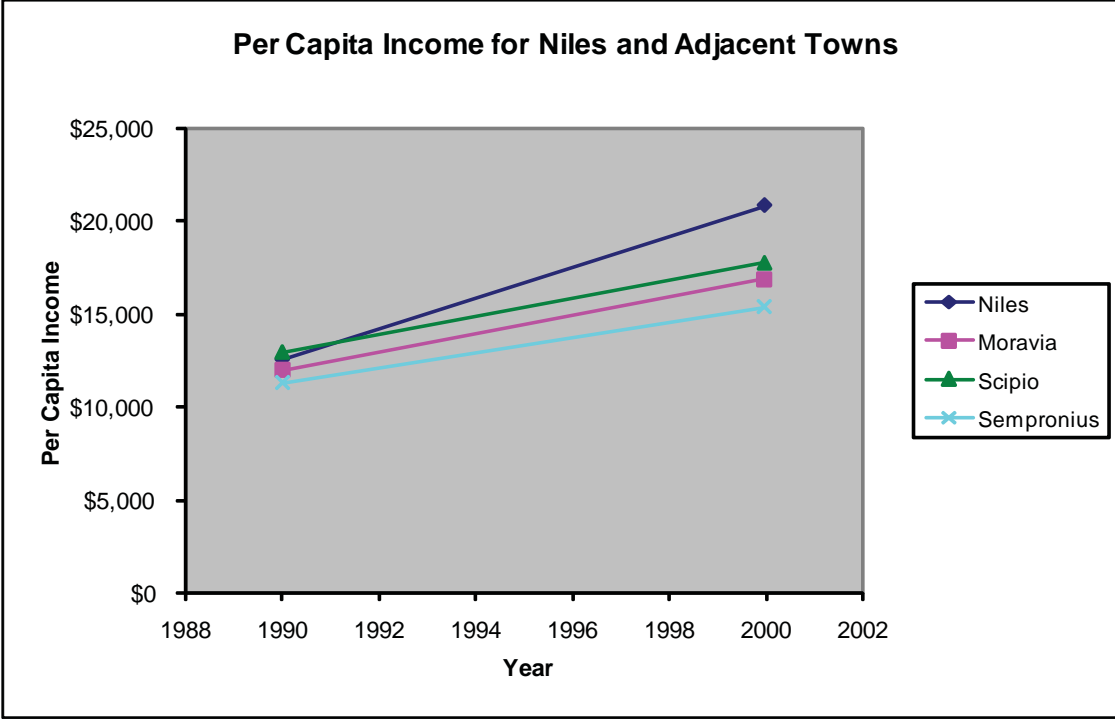
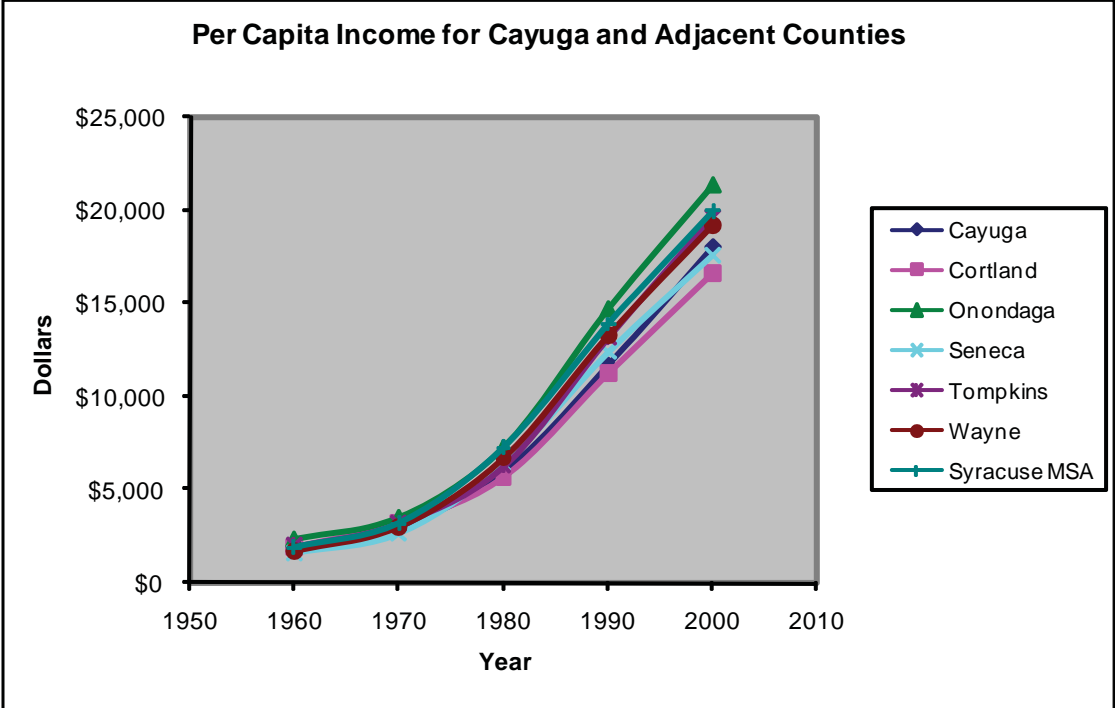
(Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2000 Census)





(Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2000 Census)

Although the largest percentage of the Town of Niles workforce (58.7%) is employed outside the Town in either management, professional, sales or office work; the local economy of Niles includes many small business operations such as boat and excavation services, country markets and antiques, lumber, automotive services and pet care services. Rural-agriculture related commercial and service businesses comprise the largest sector of the local economy. Although the business of agriculture in recent years has necessitated consolidation of smaller farms into much larger operations, the practice continues in the production of much the same types of crops as have been produced in Niles for nearly 200 years. They include hay, corn, wheat, oats, rye, dairy and beef cattle. In addition, Niles features a variety of small service, amenity and family businesses catering to both residents and visitors to the area. The median family income for the Town of Niles in the year 2000 was \$47,188. A list of businesses currently operating in the Town of Niles is included in Appendix C.



(Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2000 Census)

## Municipal Infrastructure and Public Services

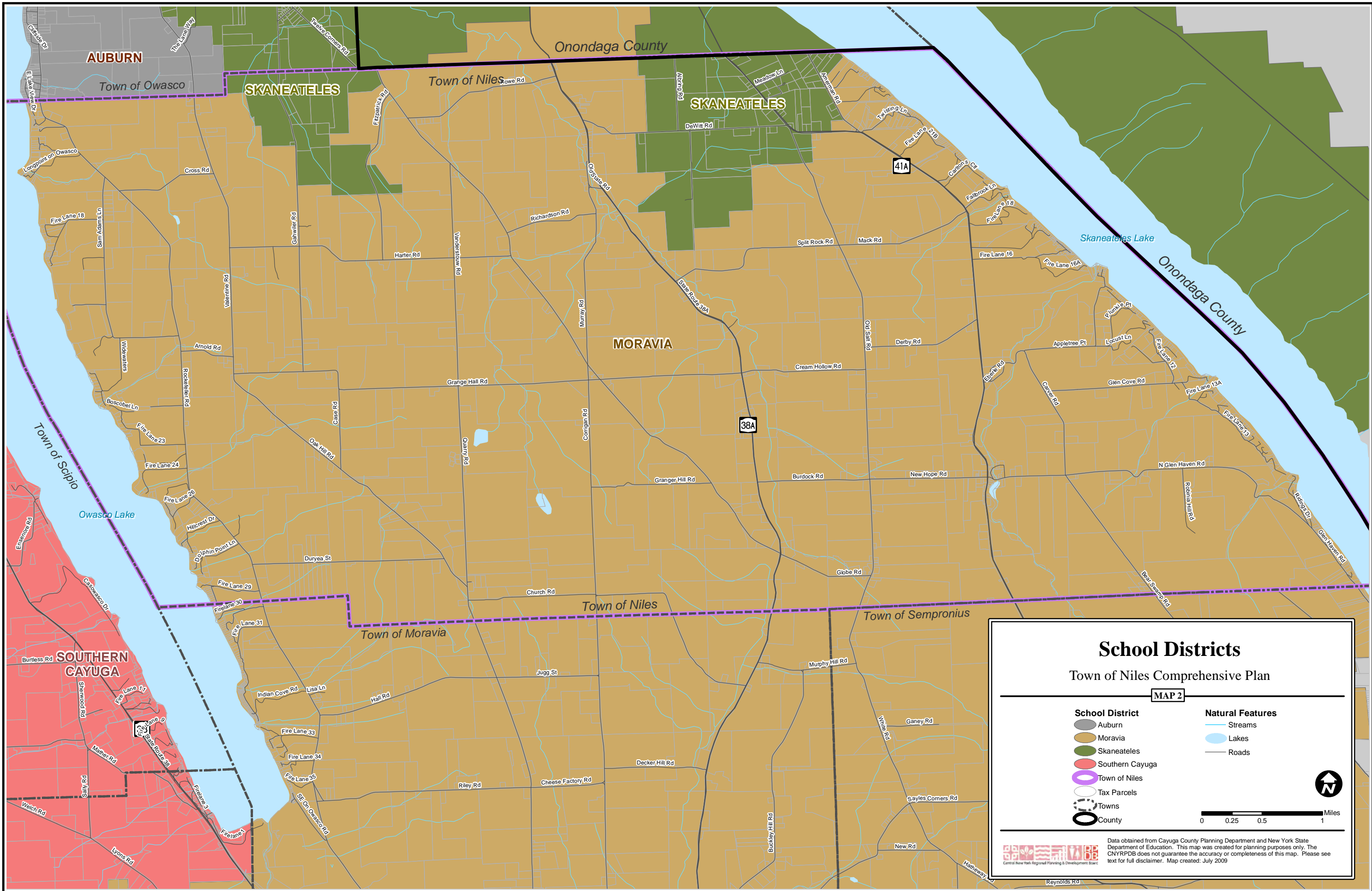
The Town of Niles, with two voting districts, is comprised of 39.10 square miles of land area and 4.26 square miles of fresh water not including the two Finger Lakes it borders, Owasco Lake and Skaneateles Lake. Within the Town of Niles, there is no municipal sewer or water. All properties have private well water and septic systems. The Niles Town Hall, located on New Hope Road also functions as the Town's emergency shelter. A new Town garage has been erected adjacent to the Town Hall on New Hope Road.



The closest hospitals are Auburn Memorial Hospital and Cortland Hospital, and there are several hospitals in Syracuse, NY. Skaneateles Urgent Care Center is located at 793 W. Genesee St. in Skaneateles, NY, and Community Medical Center is at 66 Central St. in Moravia. Family Health Network of CNY is located on Main St. in Moravia as well. Physicians have practices in both Skaneateles and Moravia. There is a Sheriff Satellite office in the Village of Moravia and the State Police serve the Town of Niles from Auburn and Moravia. There are two volunteer Fire Companies, New Hope Fire Department at 5949 New Hope Road in Moravia, and West Niles Fire Department on Valentine Road. Ambulance service is provided via the Cayuga County Dispatch by Four Town First Aid Squad, Inc. at 90 Main Street in Moravia.



There are two school districts serving the Town of Niles, Skaneateles and Moravia. There is currently no public transportation in the Town, but the Cayuga County SCAT Van provides needed transportation to Town citizens over the age of 60, and Seneca Cayuga ARC, a not for profit agency providing programs and services for people with disabilities and their families, provides transportation to individuals enrolled in their programs. Powers Library, a part of the Finger Lakes Library System, serves the Town of Niles and is located in Moravia.



## School Districts

Town of Niles Comprehensive Plan

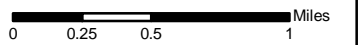
MAP 2

### School District

- Auburn
- Moravia
- Skaneateles
- Southern Cayuga
- Town of Niles
- Tax Parcels
- Towns
- County

### Natural Features

- Streams
- Lakes
- Roads



Data obtained from Cayuga County Planning Department and New York State Department of Education. This map was created for planning purposes only. The CNYRPDB does not guarantee the accuracy or completeness of this map. Please see text for full disclaimer. Map created: July 2009

The electric service provider for Niles is National Grid (see Map 3). The reliability of electric service in the Town of Niles has been less than desirable in recent years with frequent power outages reported by many residents. There is currently no Cable T.V. service in the Town, and only a small part of the Town has access to high speed internet through Verizon. Satellite or dial up service are the options for internet use.

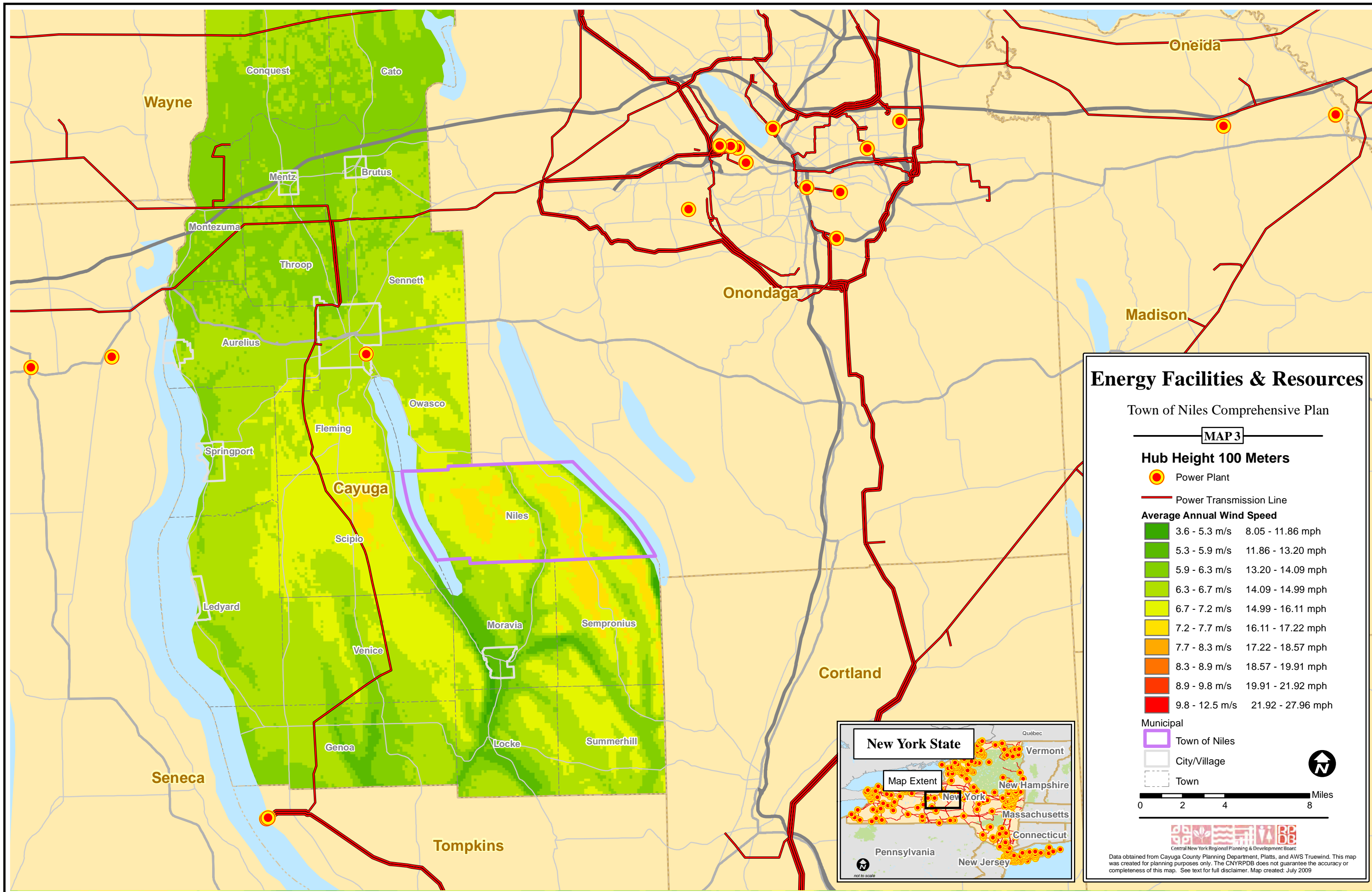
### ***Transportation***

There are 38.7 miles of Town road and 31.5 miles of county road in the Town of Niles, and 11.1 miles of state road including Routes 38A and 41A running generally north/south through the Town. With a total of 81.3 miles of roads in the Town, the heaviest traffic in the Town (1,787 avg. daily traffic count) occurs on the segment of Route 41A north of Dewitt Rd. Truck traffic along the two lane Route 41A is frequent and has been a concern of some residents. The remaining sections of Routes 41A and 38A average significantly less daily traffic at 909. Most of the roads that access the shoreline of both Skaneateles and Owasco Lakes in the Town of Niles are private roads leading to private lakeside enclaves. The Town of Niles has a Highway Department that provides snow plowing of Town roads and some county roads. New York State plows state roads. It takes approximately 2½ hours to plow snow off of the roads in the Town of Niles. The Town Highway Department also provides road paving and annual spring clean up service.<sup>10</sup>

---

<sup>10</sup> (Source: Town of Niles Highway Superintendent, Cayuga County Planning Department and NYS Department of Transportation)





Wayne

Conquest

Cato

Oneida

Montezuma

Brutus

Onondaga

Madison

Throop

Sennett

Aurelius

Fleming

Owasco

Springport

Cayuga

Niles

Scipio

Ledyard

Moravia

Sempronius

Venice

Cortland

Seneca

Genoa

Locke

Summerhill

Tompkins

New York State

Map Extent

Pennsylvania

New Jersey

Quebec

Vermont

New Hampshire

Massachusetts

Connecticut

0

2

4

8

Miles



Data obtained from Cayuga County Planning Department, Platts, and AWS Truewind. This map was created for planning purposes only. The CNYRPDB does not guarantee the accuracy or completeness of this map. See text for full disclaimer. Map created: July 2009

## Historic and Cultural Resources

### *The Rural-Agrarian Landscape*

As described by O. D. Von Engeln in his 1988 book *The Finger Lakes Region, Its Origin and Environment*, the Town of Niles is located in a region that is “scenically unique.” Von Engeln’s description of the geographical environment of the Finger Lakes Region with “its general expression wide farm acres and level upland pastures [amid] long, narrow, roughly parallel lakes...with high, almost cliff-steep shores.[and] narrow, deep gorges” is an accurate description of much of the landscape in the Town of Niles. Located roughly halfway between NYS Designated Scenic Routes 20 and 90 to the north and south respectively, Niles is among the most picturesque places to traverse in the eastern Finger Lakes.

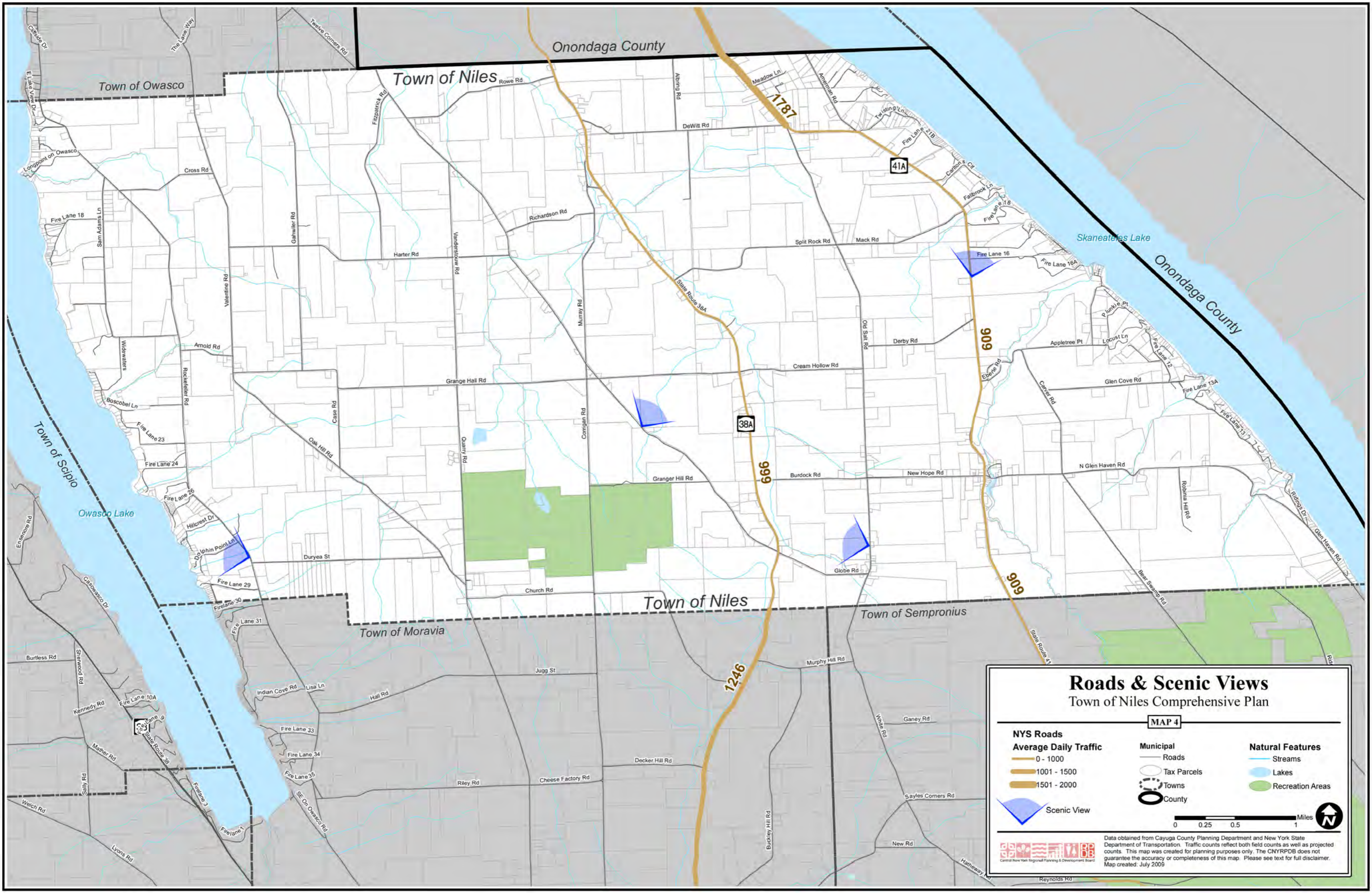
NYS Route 41A originates in the Village of Skaneateles and crosses the Town of Niles to the southeast into Cortland County in the Town of Homer. There are scenic vistas of farmland sloping toward Skaneateles Lake along Route 41A in the Town of Niles, although land use along the northern section of this route is increasingly becoming suburban residential in character. Route 38A bisects the Town between the Hamlet of Mandana just north of Niles and heading south to the Village of Moravia. Route 38A is a scenic two lane rural-agrarian road featuring picturesque rolling farm fields with historic barns and buildings along its course. Several other roads in the Town of Niles feature spectacular scenic views particularly from their heights above the lakes. Some of the most impressive publicly accessible views in the Town are the north-eastward view from the summit along Twelve Corners Road of Skaneateles Lake and the surrounding hills, the westward view from Rockefeller Road over Niles farmland and across Owasco Lake of Scipio farm-lands, and the historic Hamlet of Kellogsville surrounded by farm fields on Old Salt Road (see Map 4).



Looking northeast from the high point of Twelve Corners Road in the Town of Niles, 2008.







### Roads & Scenic Views

#### Town of Niles Comprehensive Plan

**MAP 4**

<p><b>NYS Roads</b></p> <p><b>Average Daily Traffic</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><span style="display: inline-block; width: 20px; height: 5px; background-color: #f0e68c; border: 1px solid black; margin-right: 5px;"></span> 0 - 1000</li> <li><span style="display: inline-block; width: 20px; height: 5px; background-color: #d4af37; border: 1px solid black; margin-right: 5px;"></span> 1001 - 1500</li> <li><span style="display: inline-block; width: 20px; height: 5px; background-color: #c49a3b; border: 1px solid black; margin-right: 5px;"></span> 1501 - 2000</li> </ul>	<p><b>Municipal</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><span style="display: inline-block; width: 20px; border-bottom: 1px solid black; margin-right: 5px;"></span> Roads</li> <li><span style="display: inline-block; width: 20px; border: 1px solid black; border-radius: 50%; margin-right: 5px;"></span> Tax Parcels</li> <li><span style="display: inline-block; width: 20px; border: 1px dashed black; border-radius: 50%; margin-right: 5px;"></span> Towns</li> <li><span style="display: inline-block; width: 20px; border: 2px solid black; border-radius: 50%; margin-right: 5px;"></span> County</li> </ul>	<p><b>Natural Features</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><span style="display: inline-block; width: 20px; border-bottom: 1px solid #add8e6; margin-right: 5px;"></span> Streams</li> <li><span style="display: inline-block; width: 20px; height: 10px; background-color: #add8e6; border-radius: 5px; margin-right: 5px;"></span> Lakes</li> <li><span style="display: inline-block; width: 20px; height: 10px; background-color: #90ee90; border-radius: 5px; margin-right: 5px;"></span> Recreation Areas</li> </ul>
--	---	--

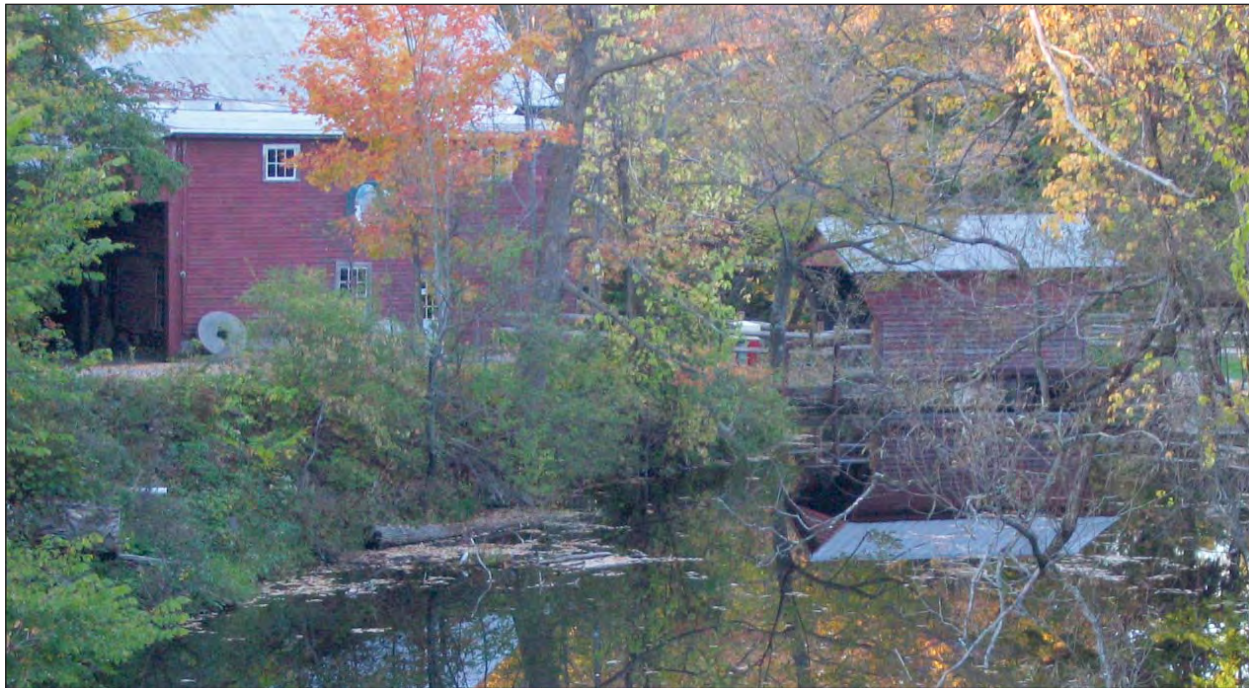
▲ Scenic View

Scale: 0 0.25 0.5 1 Miles

Data obtained from Cayuga County Planning Department and New York State Department of Transportation. Traffic counts reflect both field counts as well as projected counts. This map was created for planning purposes only. The CNYRPDB does not guarantee the accuracy or completeness of this map. Please see text for full disclaimer. Map created: July 2009

### *Historic Resources*

In the 1850s, fifteen water powered industries lined the banks of Bear Swamp Creek, in the Town of Niles. New Hope Mills is the only factory still in existence on Bear Swamp Creek. The flour mill, still in operation today, was built by Judge Charles Kellogg, a member of the New York State Assembly (1808-09, 1821-22) and later reelected to Congress (1825). Judge Kellogg sold the mill to Horace Rounds in 1851, and the mill remained in the Rounds family until 1947. The mill was then sold to Howard Weed, Hubert Latta, and Leland Weed becoming New Hope Mills. The mill originally contained three runs of stone and had a capacity of 200 bushels of grain a day. In 1892, the mill began grinding with roller mills which are still in the mill today. The flour mill along with a saw mill a short distance upstream, are known today as New Hope Mills Inc. Although the waterwheel is most visible, the mill's real power came from the water turbine underneath the mill. The turbine could run all year round providing there was sufficient water volume. The mill consistently produced quality flour without pollution because the water was aerated as it passed over the waterwheel or through the turbine, and the wheel did not add petroleum into the water because the wheel bearing is made of wood *Lignum vitae* which contains a natural lubricant.



New Hope Mills in the Hamlet of New Hope, 2008.

Local history contends that the community of New Hope was given its name from the top of its new flour mill in 1823. After the mill's forty-foot, five-sided ridge pole was put in place, a man climbed to the top and threw a gallon jug of whiskey over his shoulder declaring the Town of Sodom be renamed New Hope.

New Hope Mills, at Glen Haven Road and NY Route 41A in Niles, was placed on the National Register in 2004. New Hope was the workplace of Sampson Eddy (1844-1909) for almost 35 years, an African American born in slavery in Goldsboro, North Carolina. Eddy joined the Union Army during the Civil War and came north to settle in upstate New York when the War was over. Sampson Eddy left a special mark in New Hope due to a remarkable gift he had as a Christian evangelical preacher. When Eddy died, he was buried in New Hope Cemetery immediately south of the mills.

New Hope Mills Falls, at Glen Haven Road in the Town of Niles features four large waterfalls, of which three are directly accessible. The falls are the result of the two mill ponds that power the mill; an upper mill pond with a twenty-four-foot waterfall before the saw mill, and the lower mill pond before the flour mill which has a twenty-eight-foot waterfall. Water can be stored overnight in the upper pond to run the mill the following day. There is also a small seasonal waterfall downstream from the mill, and numerous smaller cascades along Bear Swamp Creek.

Carpenter Falls, 37 acres nestled in the Skaneateles highlands, above Skaneateles Lake, is fed by Bear Swamp Creek, a clear and clean water source in the protected and closely monitored Skaneateles Lake watershed. Forests abundant with oaks, maples, hemlocks, and beech trees cover the sides of the steep surrounding gorge. The Audubon Society has listed the Carpenter Falls area as an important birding area where rare goshawks and cerulean warblers nest. Carpenter Falls, a 90' Ribbon plunge fall, and Angel Falls, a 62' overhanging drop and cascade, are two of the largest waterfalls along the steep drop of Bear Swamp Creek on its way to the west shore of Skaneateles Lake. Once the site of industry and commerce, a trail along the creek to the falls was known as the 'old jug path' where lake side residents travelled to a distillery that was located on the site. Two other waterfalls between 11' and 30' high feature various cascades and chutes not directly accessible from hiking trails. Carpenter Falls is now owned by the State of New York and managed by the NYS Department of Conservation.



Old postcard of Carpenter's Fall in the Town of Niles (source: Historic Photos and Maps of New York State, <http://freepages.genealogy.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~springport/pictures.html>, Date Unknown).

The Mid-Lakes United Methodist Church of New Hope at New York 41A in Niles, New York has historic significance as the church of freedom seeker Sampson Eddy “a preacher of power and one fervent in prayer. Eddy conducted evangelistic and worship services in local churches and school houses, private homes and camp meetings.” In 1936, the local Methodist Church, to which his widow and son still belonged, installed a window in the church in memory of Eddy.<sup>11</sup>



The window installed in memory of Samson Eddy in 1936 in the Methodist Church in New Hope, to which Samson Eddy's widow and son still belonged, (source: <http://www.esf.edu/NET2006/Window%20in%20Eddy's%20Memory%20Ververs%20poster.pdf>)

Just west of North Glen Haven Road in Niles, is the site of the boyhood home of Millard Fillmore (1802-1816), 13th President of the United States, and signer of Fugitive Slave Act. The home was moved to the front of the Purchase family farm barn, but when the barn was about to collapse, the Cayuga County Agricultural Museum salvaged beams from it and then the local fire department burned it down, not realizing the building's historic significance.<sup>12</sup>



New Hope Cemetery in the Town of Niles, 2008.

<sup>11</sup> Research by Sheila Tucker, Cayuga County Historian. Moravia Republican-Register, February 28, 1936, quoted in Leslie L. Luther, Moravia and Its Past (Moravia: F. Luther and Co., 1966)

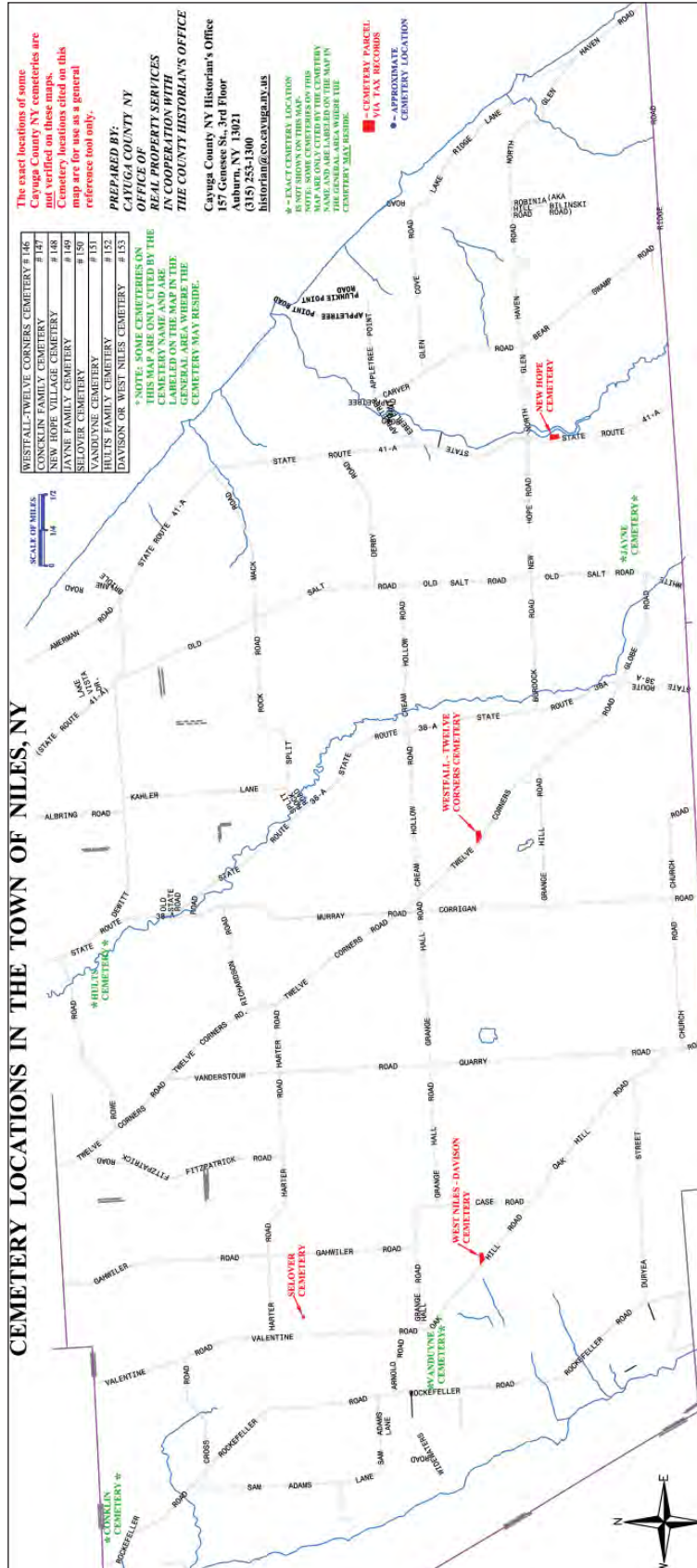
<sup>12</sup> Cayuga County Historian's Office, and Sheila Tucker



North Glen Haven Road site of the boyhood home of Millard Fillmore, 13th President of the United States and signer of the Fugitive Slave Act. The historic site is now a Town park, 2009.

Historic Cemeteries in the Town of Niles include New Hope Cemetery, Jayne Cemetery, Westfall –Twelve Corner’s Cemetery, Hults Cemetery, West Niles – Davidson Cemetery, Selover Cemetery, Van Duyne Cemetery, and Conklin Cemetery.<sup>13</sup> Graves marked with the stories of local sons lost in the Civil War may still exist among Niles cemeteries.

<sup>13</sup>Cayuga County NY County Historian's Office Cemetery Location Maps (next page), <http://co.cayuga.ny.us/history/cemetery/>





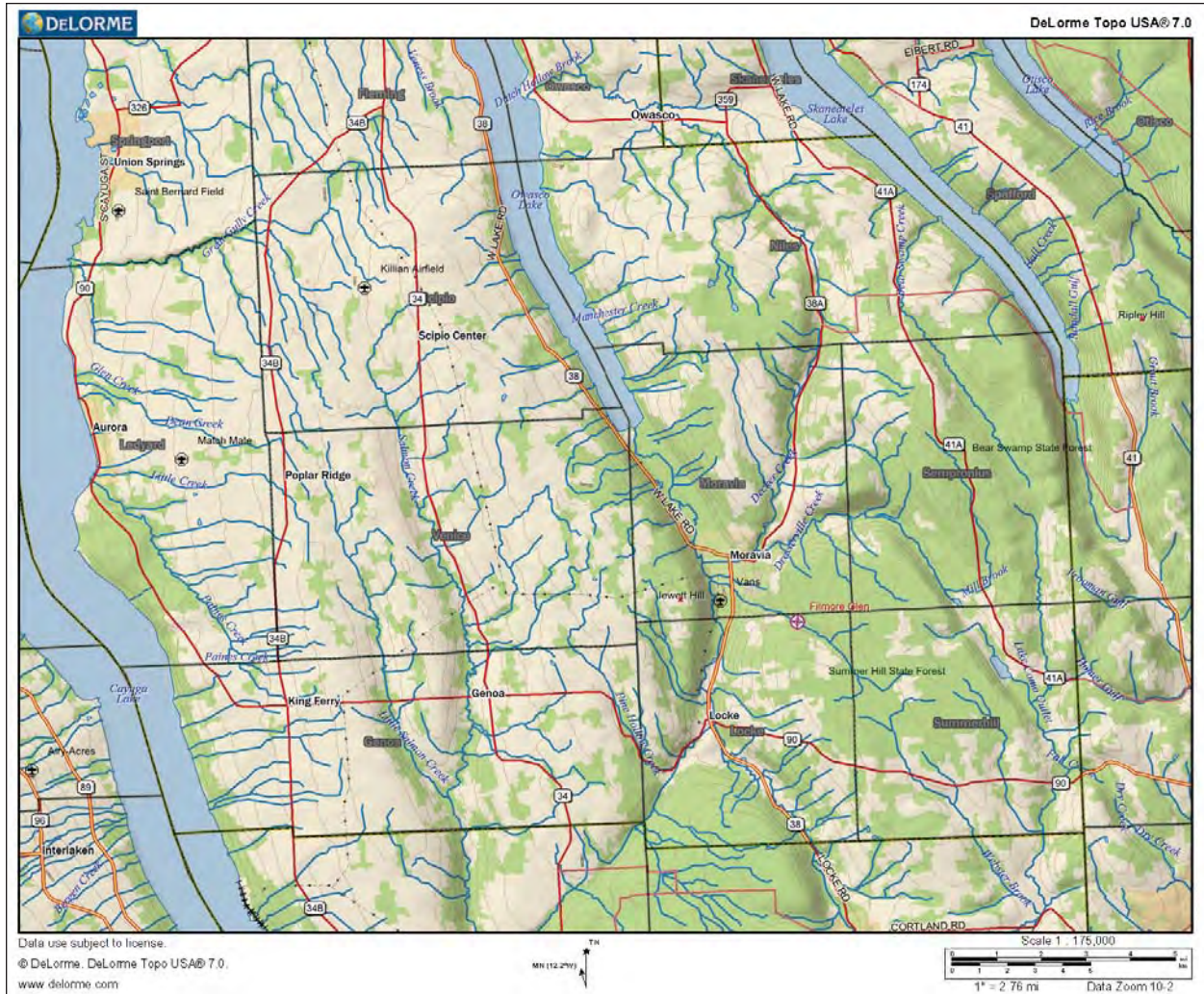


## Natural Resources and Environment

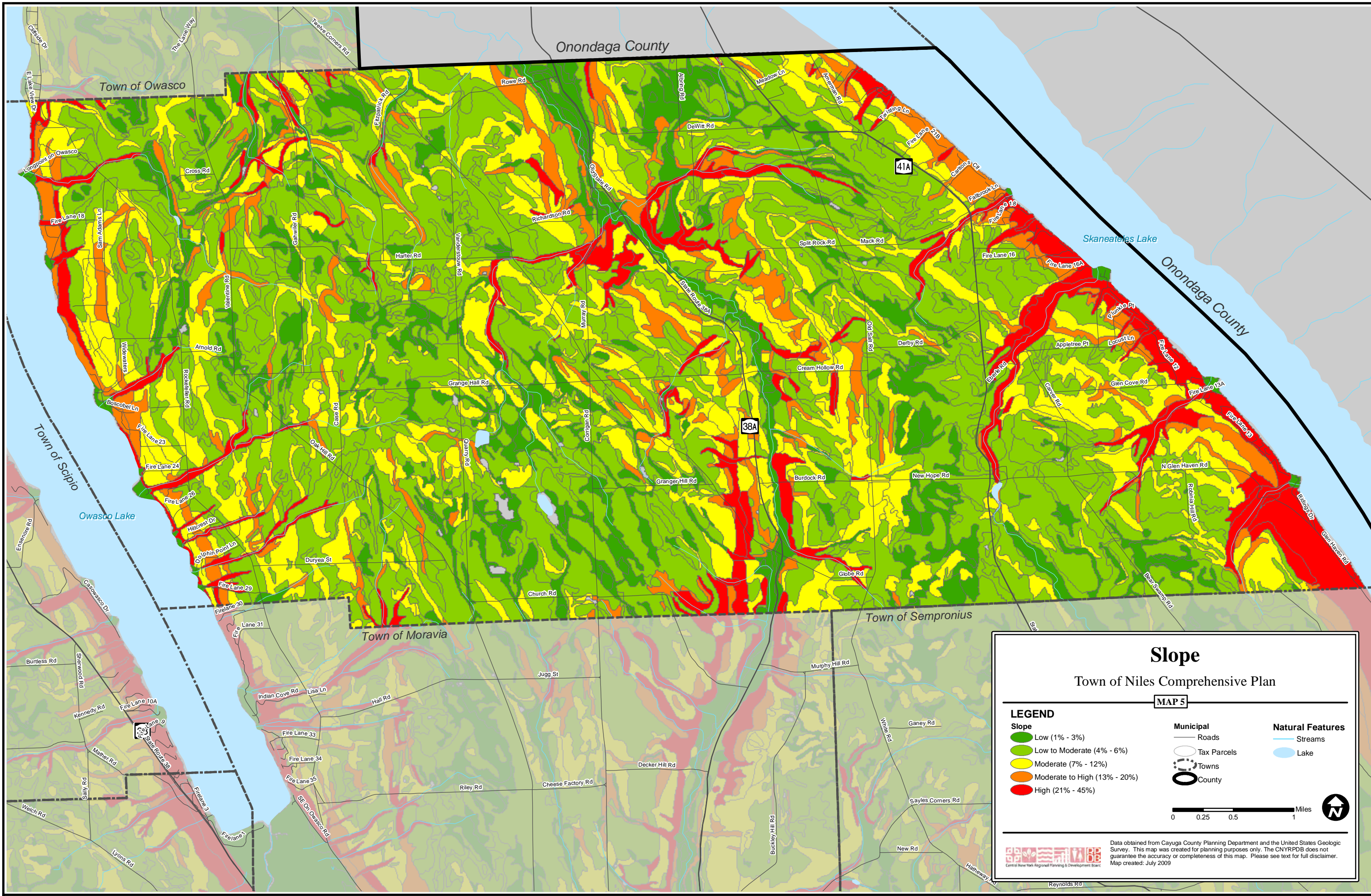


View north from the edge of a farm field above Skaneateles Lake at its southeast end. Carpenter's Point and the Town of Niles in the distance at left.

The natural setting of the Town of Niles among rolling hills and winding roads, with open agricultural fields includes uniquely rich wetlands perched high above two of the 11 Finger Lakes in the region and countless streams through steep, forested slopes feeding those lakes. Due to its location amid the eastern Finger Lakes, the Town of Niles has a somewhat extended growing season even though it receives heavy amounts of snow in winter that are typical of Central New York State. The unusual topography of this region results in a great diversity of landscapes and ecological types within relatively small geographical areas like the Town of Niles. Within the boundaries of the Town, there are windy hilltops with expansive views, vast acres of open farmland, limestone cliffs dropping to lakes, deep wooded ravines with cascading waterfalls, maple beech mesic forest, perched wetlands, lowland creeks and sandy beaches.



Map showing the variations in topography and land cover among some of the Towns in the southeastern end of the Finger Lakes Region of Central New York (green indicated forested areas, tan represents mostly open land). Note the dramatic topography and steep slopes at the south end of each lake where the headwaters feed these lakes.



## Slope

### Town of Niles Comprehensive Plan

**MAP 5**

<b>LEGEND</b>	
<b>Slope</b>	<b>Natural Features</b>
<span style="color: lightgreen;">■</span> Low (1% - 3%)	<span style="color: lightblue;">—</span> Streams
<span style="color: green;">■</span> Low to Moderate (4% - 6%)	<span style="color: blue;">■</span> Lake
<span style="color: yellow;">■</span> Moderate (7% - 12%)	
<span style="color: orange;">■</span> Moderate to High (13% - 20%)	
<span style="color: red;">■</span> High (21% - 45%)	
Roads	Tax Parcels
Towns	County

0 0.25 0.5 1 Miles

Data obtained from Cayuga County Planning Department and the United States Geologic Survey. This map was created for planning purposes only. The CNYRPDB does not guarantee the accuracy or completeness of this map. Please see text for full disclaimer. Map created: July 2009

## Owasco Lake



View southwest of the Town of Niles along Owasco Lake, photo courtesy of Bill Hecht.

Carved into the Appalachian Plateau in Central New York State by Pleistocene glaciers, Owasco Lake has a surface area of 10.4 square miles, maximum depth of 177 feet and a watershed area of approximately 205 square miles. In the book *Slim Fingers Beacon* (1945), Archibald Merrill described Owasco Lake as a “sapphire gem of purest ray serene seemingly born to shimmer unseen, away from casual tourist gaze.” Around its rugged head stretches the farm countryside where a President of the United States, Millard Fillmore, was born, where an Oil King, John D. Rockefeller, lived as a boy, and a New York State Governor, Enus T. Throop, was given birth.” Although Owasco Lake is one of the smallest Finger Lakes, its watershed ranks third of all the Finger Lakes and is comprised of all or portions of fourteen Towns including approximately 2/3 of the Town of Niles.

Owasco Lake serves as a drinking water supply to an estimated 58,000 users (some 70% of Cayuga County residents)<sup>14</sup> and is considered to be an exceptional fishery with a variety of species prized for recreational fishing including yellow perch, smallmouth bass, northern pike, lake trout, brown trout, and landlocked salmon. The declining water quality of Owasco Lake in recent years has been a great concern of many residents in surrounding communities, and several studies have led to a better understanding of issues contributing the decline as well as the implementation of measures such as monitoring and watershed inspection in an effort to reverse downward water quality trends. While Niles is largely an agricultural community with highly absorptive, vegetated land cover in crops with some remaining woodland; demand for lake front access may result in the conversion of large areas of vegetated land to the far less permeable conditions of mown lawn and asphalt drives and roadways. Land use changes, especially the continued loss of forest and shrubland cover on the slopes above the lake in watershed municipalities may result in decreasing percentages of stormwater infiltration to soils and increased run-off to tributaries that feed Owasco Lake, thus negatively impacting water quality in future years. Retaining wooded areas around the lake, encouraging rain gardens, meadows and green roofs, and minimizing road and driveway widths will contribute to higher water quality.

<sup>14</sup> Source: *State of Owasco Lake Watershed*, published by the Cayuga County Soil and Water Conservation District, James Hotaling, Executive Director. Principal Author: Michele Wunderlich, Cayuga County Department of Planning and Development, July 2001



Map showing the extent of the Owasco Lake Watershed and Cayuga County Municipalities within the watershed.



USGS Satellite image highlighted to show at risk forested areas within the Owasco Lake Watershed in the Town of Niles. Retaining forest cover up slope provides free ecosystem services and is key in protecting water quality (Source: <http://www.bing.com/maps/>).

### *Skaneateles Lake and Highlands*



Skaneateles Lake from the southeast highlands with the Town of Niles shoreline and Carpenter's Point at left. Photo courtesy of Mark Whitmore, Finger lakes Land Trust, 2008.

Skaneateles Lake, located in the Oswego River Drainage Basin, is the fourth largest of the Finger Lakes and one of the most picturesque of the Finger Lakes. It is a long, narrow lake that occupies a valley with over-steepened slopes in the south that gradually diminishes to the north where the lake meets the Lake Ontario Plain. The lake was formed in the Pleistocene Era by the advance of the continental glacier. Skaneateles

Lake has a mean elevation of 863.27 feet above sea level, a length of 16 miles, an average width of three quarters of a mile, and a maximum depth of 300 feet.

The unusual ecology of the Skaneateles Highlands overlooking deep blue-green waters of Skaneateles Lake have been said by geologists to give the impression of a glacial fiord. Steep, forested lake valley walls are cut by numerous small ravines, and gorges harboring tiny wetland pockets and intermittent streams with stone cliffs in some areas. There are actively farmed lands on the gentler terrain of a plateau above the steep slopes and the many fields cleared for farming afford spectacular views of the surrounding countryside for which the Finger Lakes Region is famous.



A farm field above Skaneateles Lake looking east from Route 41A.

The Skaneateles Lake Watershed is comprised of portions of one Village and seven Towns within three counties: Onondaga, Cayuga, and Cortland. The 1/3 of the Town of Niles that is not in the Owasco Lake Watershed, is in the Skaneateles Lake Watershed. A large portion of the watershed is steeply sloped with the highest point of elevation, 1,980 feet at the southeast end. The headwaters of Skaneateles Lake lay in the steep valleys and perched wetlands to the south in the Towns of Niles, Sempronius, Scott, and Spafford. One of the two main tributaries to Skaneateles Lake is Bear Swamp Creek south of Glen Haven Road in the Town of Niles. The highlands encompassing the southern half of the lake include rugged natural areas such as the steep forested valley walls surrounding the lake and Bear Swamp, as well as large tracts of rich farmland that has been under cultivation for generations. The south and eastern portions of the Town of Niles are located within these highlands which have been widely recognized for their scenic beauty and their regional significance. The diverse natural features just to the south of the Town include Bear Swamp, a globally significant wetlands identified by the New York Natural Heritage Program and an Audubon-designated Important Bird Area (IBA) known as the Southern Skaneateles Lake Forest Important Bird Area. This forested area supports at-risk species of birds including the American Bittern, Northern Harrier, several species of Hawks, Thrushes, Warblers and many others.

# Skaneateles Highlands Topography

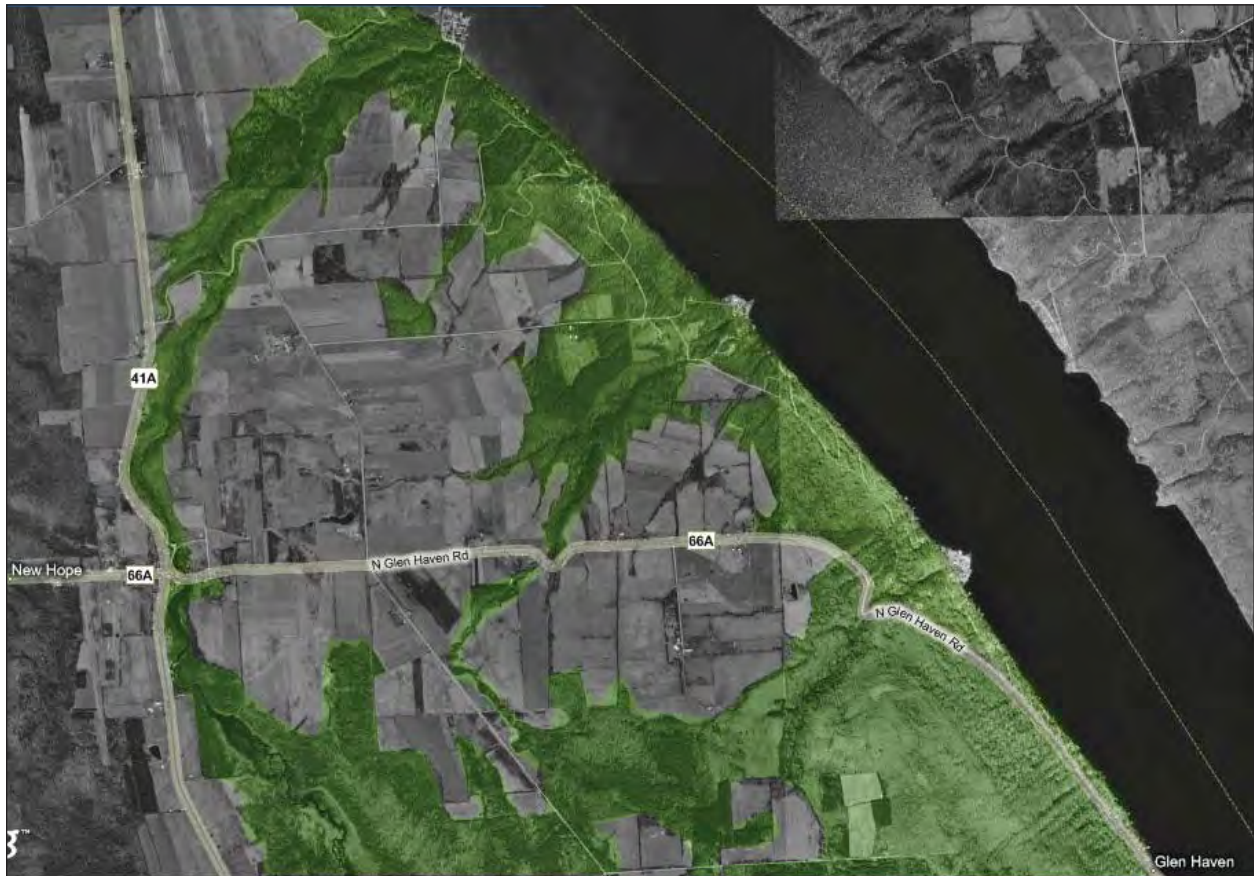


Mapping provided by the City of Syracuse Dept. of Water and the CNY Regional Planning and Development Board - 02.05.09

Map of the area identified as the Skaneateles Highlands. The yellow line shown as the “project boundary” also delineates the extent of the Skaneateles watershed in the Highlands.

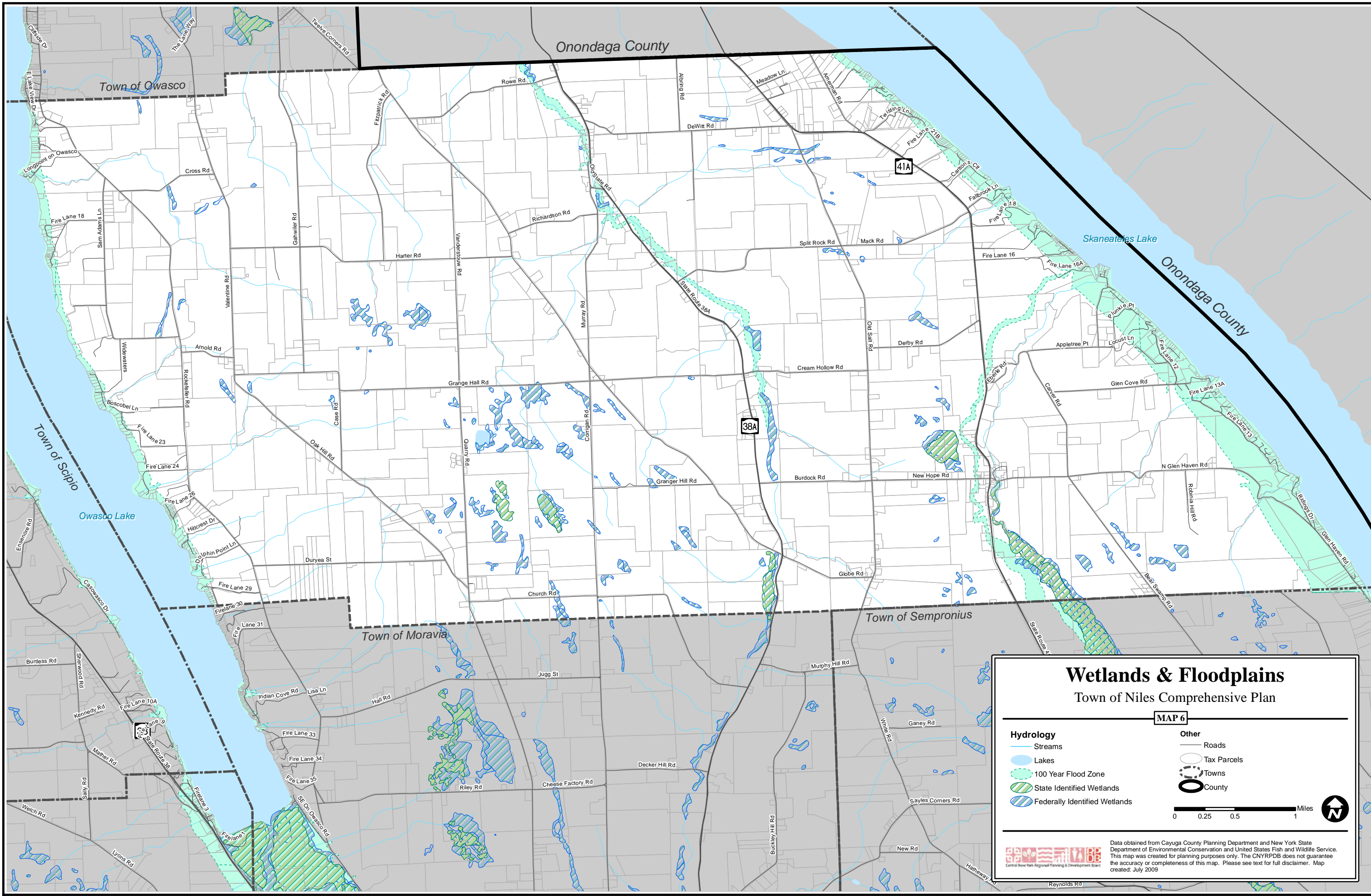


Forests on the steep slopes above Skaneateles Lake serve as important buffers by minimizing sediment and nutrient runoff into the lake. Skaneateles Lake is one of only six AA unfiltered water sources serving a major metropolitan area in the United States. The City of Syracuse Water Department has identified the steep forested hillsides surrounding the lake as one of the most important factors influencing water quality. The quality of stormwater run-off from the many creeks and streams in the Highlands is key to maintaining the existing high quality of the lake water. Unchecked erosion, poorly planned land clearing, roadway pollutants, and nutrient run-off from agricultural practices all have the potential to severely impact the quality of this high quality resource. With the exception of existing public and private conservation lands, there are currently no special requirements for the management of these important forested lands.<sup>15</sup>



USGS Satellite image highlighted to show some of the forested slopes within the Skaneateles Watershed in the Town of Niles that are so important to preserving water quality in Skaneateles Lake (Source: <http://www.bing.com/maps/>).

<sup>15</sup>Source: Auduban Society, <http://iba.audubon.org/iba/viewSiteProfile.do?siteId=2807&navSite=state>, and Skaneateles Highlands Conservation Planning and Stakeholder Survey Project, Finger Lakes Land Trust and CNY Regional Planning and Development Board, 2009.



# Wetlands & Floodplains

## Town of Niles Comprehensive Plan

MAP 6

- |                               |              |
|-------------------------------|--------------|
| <b>Hydrology</b>              | <b>Other</b> |
| Streams                       | Roads        |
| Lakes                         | Tax Parcels  |
| 100 Year Flood Zone           | Towns        |
| State Identified Wetlands     | County       |
| Federally Identified Wetlands |              |

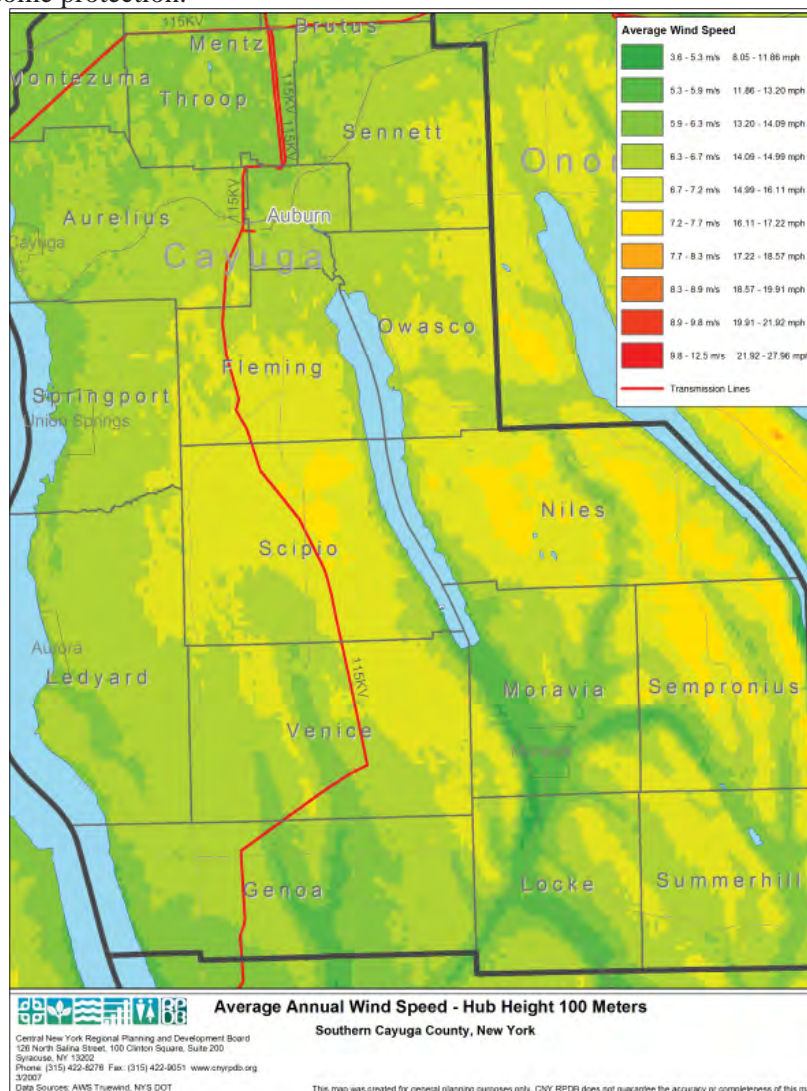


Data obtained from Cayuga County Planning Department and New York State Department of Environmental Conservation and United States Fish and Wildlife Service. This map was created for planning purposes only. The CNYRPDB does not guarantee the accuracy or completeness of this map. Please see text for full disclaimer. Map created: July 2009



## Wind & Wind Energy

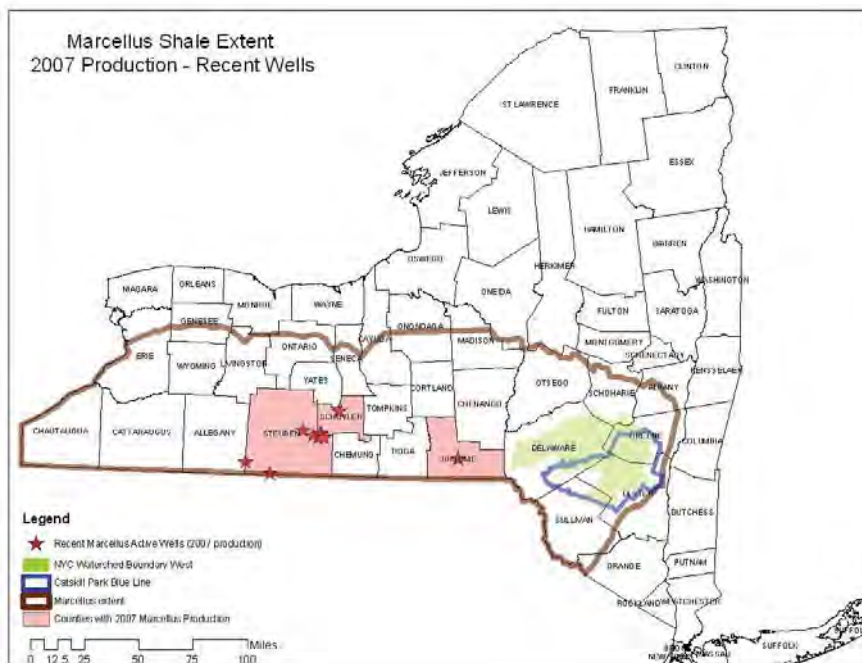
Wind energy is a renewable resource that is abundant in Cayuga County. With significant areas of good power density class ratings (available wind energy), the Town of Niles may be presented with opportunities to take advantage of this resource for commercial, community-based, or on-site wind turbines. With the cost of non-renewable energy resources becoming increasingly costly, renewable resources such as wind can help to boost local economic development while contributing to resource conservation and the mitigation of global warming. The open, agricultural landscape throughout the Town of Niles may present potential aesthetic challenges to the siting of wind turbines. There are techniques for assessing and mitigating visual impacts of Small Wind Energy Systems (SWES). The Town may want to consider establishing overlay districts that define where (taller) wind energy systems may be appropriate; or to identify particular locations for these facilities on certain educational, industrial, or municipal land; or to discourage them within historic districts or sensitive habitat areas. In areas where there are distinctive scenic vistas, landscapes, and roadways, municipalities can consider prohibiting facilities of this kind. Alternatively, important viewsheds that have been identified may be protected by locating turbines toward the edges of the viewshed. A municipal scenic resource inventory and evaluation offers many benefits including determining which significant local areas merit some protection.



### The Marcellus Shale & Natural Gas

Marcellus Shale, also referred to as the Marcellus Formation, is a Middle Devonian-age carbonaceous shale that occurs in the subsurface beneath a large swath of the northeastern U.S. The Town of Niles is located entirely within the Marcellus Formation which is estimated to contain an undiscovered resource of about 1.9 trillion cubic feet of natural gas. Natural gas occurring within the Marcellus Shale can be difficult to extract through tiny disconnected pore spaces, but recently energy companies have begun to employ a new extraction technique known as “hydraulic fracturing” that creates fractures in the shale and allows the gas to flow more readily through the rock and into a well bore. This extraction method involves high-pressure and high volumes of water, and a chemical gel injection to induce fractures in the rock surrounding the well bore to increase the flow of gas to the well. The hydraulic fracturing method for gas extraction in New York State is currently under review by the NYSDEC. Comments on NYSDEC’s draft Supplemental Generic Environmental Impact Statement were submitted in December 2009 by the Federal Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) citing concerns about potential impacts to human health and the environment that warrant further scientific and regulatory analysis. Of particular concern to EPA were issues involving water supply, water quality, wastewater treatment operations, local and regional air quality, management of naturally occurring radioactive materials disturbed during drilling, and cumulative environmental impacts of hydraulic fracturing for natural gas extraction.

Natural gas is a highly valuable resource and royalties to property owners from a well yielding over one million cubic feet of natural gas per day can be very high. Some landowners in the Town of Niles have already entered into lease agreements for research and development of gas production on their land. It is likely that additional leases will be pursued in the Town in the future. In addition to protecting vulnerable water supplies, communities located within the targeted region may want to review local regulations to assure protection from environmental impacts such as air-borne emissions and impacts to existing rural character. New pipeline systems, wastewater (flowback) storage tanks, 24/7 noise and lights, as well as significantly increased truck traffic on local roads are some of the potential impacts on existing rural character of hydraulic fracturing for natural gas.





A farm in the Town of Niles, date unknown (source: Historic Photos and Maps of New York State, <http://freepages.genealogy.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~springport/pictures.html>).

## Agriculture and Open Space

The practice of farming in Niles has historically been a key component of the Town's character and economy. In past years Niles farms produced crops primarily for human consumption including red kidney beans, black turtle beans, sugar beets, sweet corn and buckwheat. Today, field crops produced in the Town of Niles include grain corn and soybeans for animal consumption, hay, barley, winter wheat grain and straw, and rye straw. Since its invention late in the eighteenth century, Niles farmers have used the moldboard plow to turn the soil along with disking, dragging or chisel plowing. Today, Niles farms employ a zone-till, no-till, minimal till, or conventional till method for conventional, natural, and organic agricultural crop production.

Technological changes in agricultural practice in recent decades have included biological engineering, chemical inputs, and considerable advances in farm machinery. Since 1993 the use of bovine somatotropin (BST) a synthetic hormone that may increase milk production has been common in dairy production; and in 1996, Genetically Modified Organisms (GMOs) were introduced across the U.S. in agricultural production of corn, soybeans, cotton, and milk. These trends underscore the dilemma farmers face over production and pricing requirements that are increasingly challenging to meet, even as there has been cause for concern over the potential long-term effects of genetic modification of crops and hormones in food supplies.

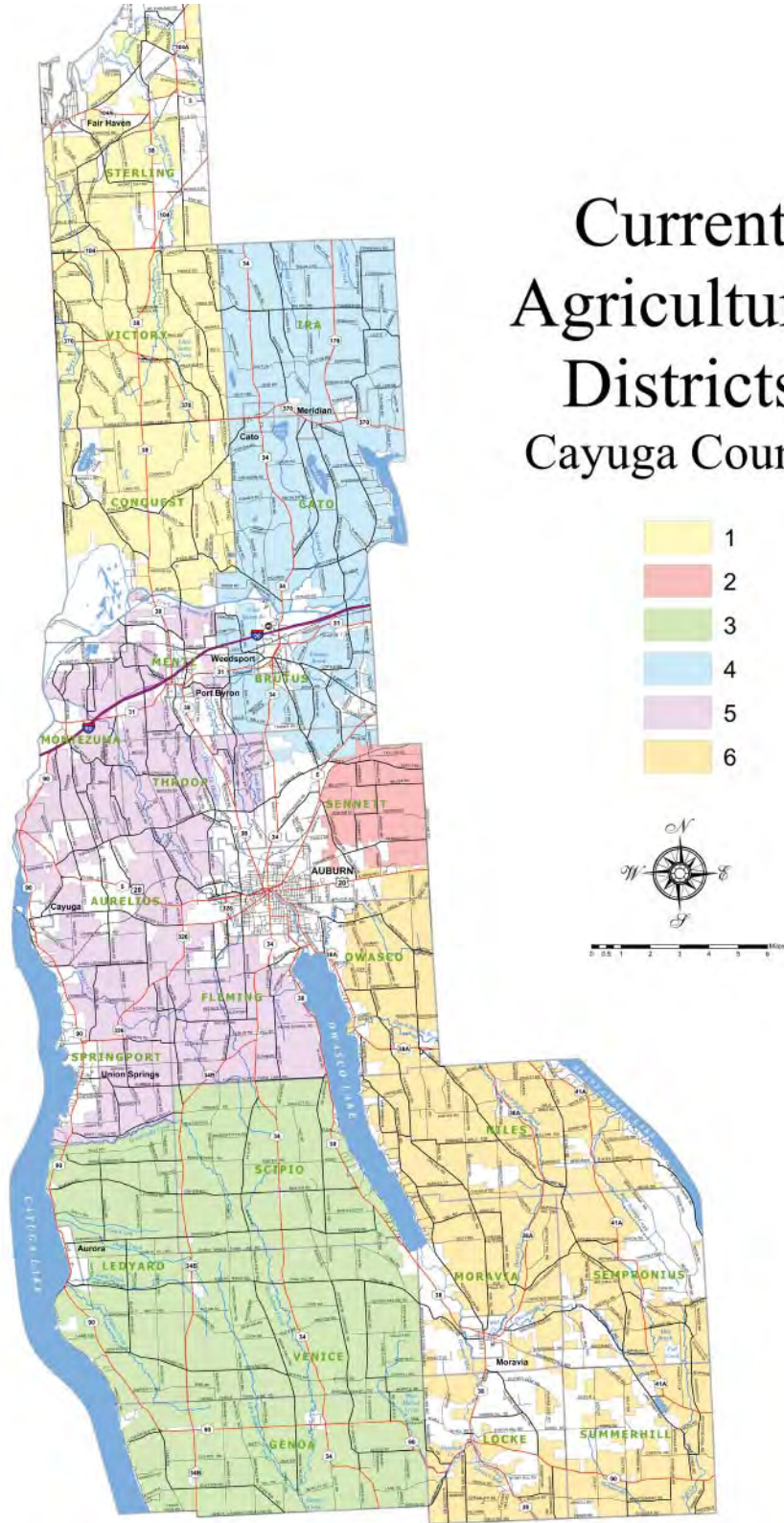
Environmental Best Management Practices (BMPs) in farm management that strive to protect Niles natural resources and are used faithfully can assure that farming is good land stewardship practice. High quality agricultural soils continue to be an important natural resource in the Town of Niles. Diverse and sustainable practices in farming open land also contribute to high aesthetic values associated with scenic farmland views from surrounding lands, and in addition provide an important source of food and forage for migrating birds and pollinator species. The working farms that continue the practice of agriculture in Niles today continue to give the community its much valued rural-agrarian character.

Nearly all of the Town of Niles is located within an Agricultural District. Agricultural Districts provide protection from conflicting land uses and demonstrate a commitment to the future of the community's farming industry. In New York State, Agricultural Districts must predominately consist of viable agricultural land; more than fifty percent of the land must be in farms. The identification of Agricultural Districts helps keep lands in production, municipalities manage growth and development; and communities maintain their rural character, and scenic landscapes. Cayuga County has a Farmland Protection Program and administers six NYS-certified Agricultural Districts, assisting local municipalities with land use planning, supporting agricultural economic development, and working with local farmers to develop alternative energy sources including ethanol and methane in addition to supporting the growth and enhancement of local farmers markets. In the Town of Niles, most land is included in Cayuga County Agricultural District 6, one of six agricultural districts containing a total of 364,617 acres. Agricultural District 6, comprised of 82,142 acres, is the most recent agricultural district to be established in Cayuga County in 1981 and is currently under review. Proposed changes to the six agricultural districts in the County are primarily concerned with consolidation of the six separate County districts into three County districts. Agricultural District 6 parcels in Niles range in size from less than 1 acre to over 239 acres, but the largest number of acres on any one parcel that is currently farmed is 161.

The increase in the scale of agricultural operations in recent years has raised concerns about associated impacts of manure spreading and nutrient runoff to Skaneateles and Owasco Lakes. The Skaneateles Lake Watershed Agricultural Program and its recommendations have been implemented by many farms in the Town of Niles to help preserve and improve the quality of the water in these two lakes. In 2008, the Cayuga County Soil and Water Conservation District launched an Agricultural Environmental Management (AEM) program to assist county farmers in improving their environmental stewardship as well as economic viability. The vision of the AEM program is to have a strong, progressive and sustainable farming sector in Cayuga County through a voluntary method of assessment, planning, implementation and education addressing natural resource concerns related to agriculture. Some farms in the Town of Niles are currently implementing AEM program Best Management Practices (BMP's).

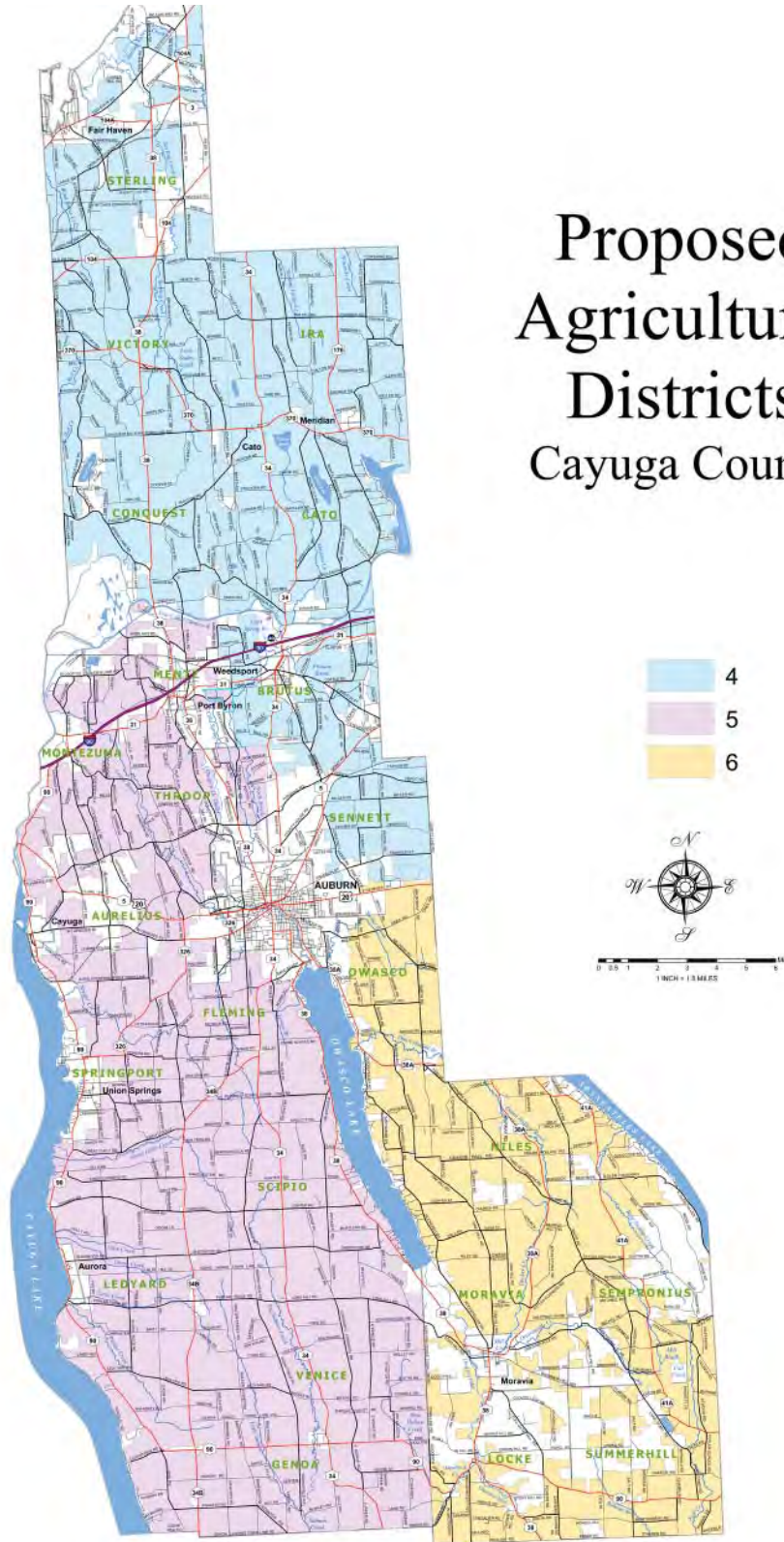
The Niles community survey revealed a desire to protect both agricultural lands and open space. To address this community desire, the Town may consider establishing a local Conservation Advisory Council (CAC) to research, inventory and map open space, agricultural lands, scenic views and corridors, and historic resources in the Town. In addition, the Town might consider setting a required minimum acreage for preservation for agriculture, especially those areas featuring prime agricultural soils, or open space in areas identified as priority areas for conservation. Lands identified as dedicated open space could be permanently protected from future development through conservation easements, purchase of development rights programs, or other protective land use tools. Two priority conservation projects listed in the 2006 New York State Open Space Conservation Plan are located in the Town of Niles: the Carpenter Falls/Bear Swamp Creek Corridor; and as part of a regional priority, the Finger Lakes Shorelines and Wetlands.

# Current Agricultural Districts Cayuga County



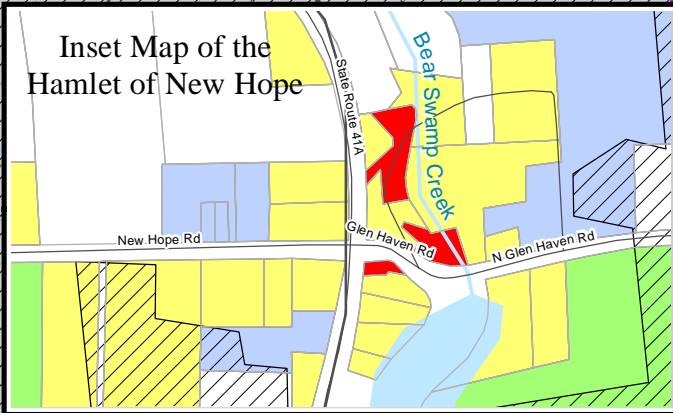
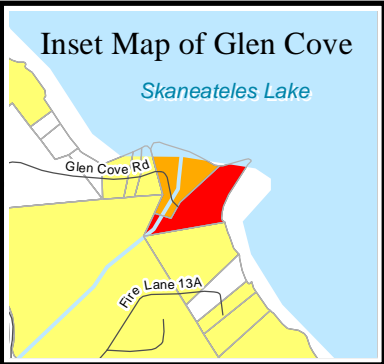
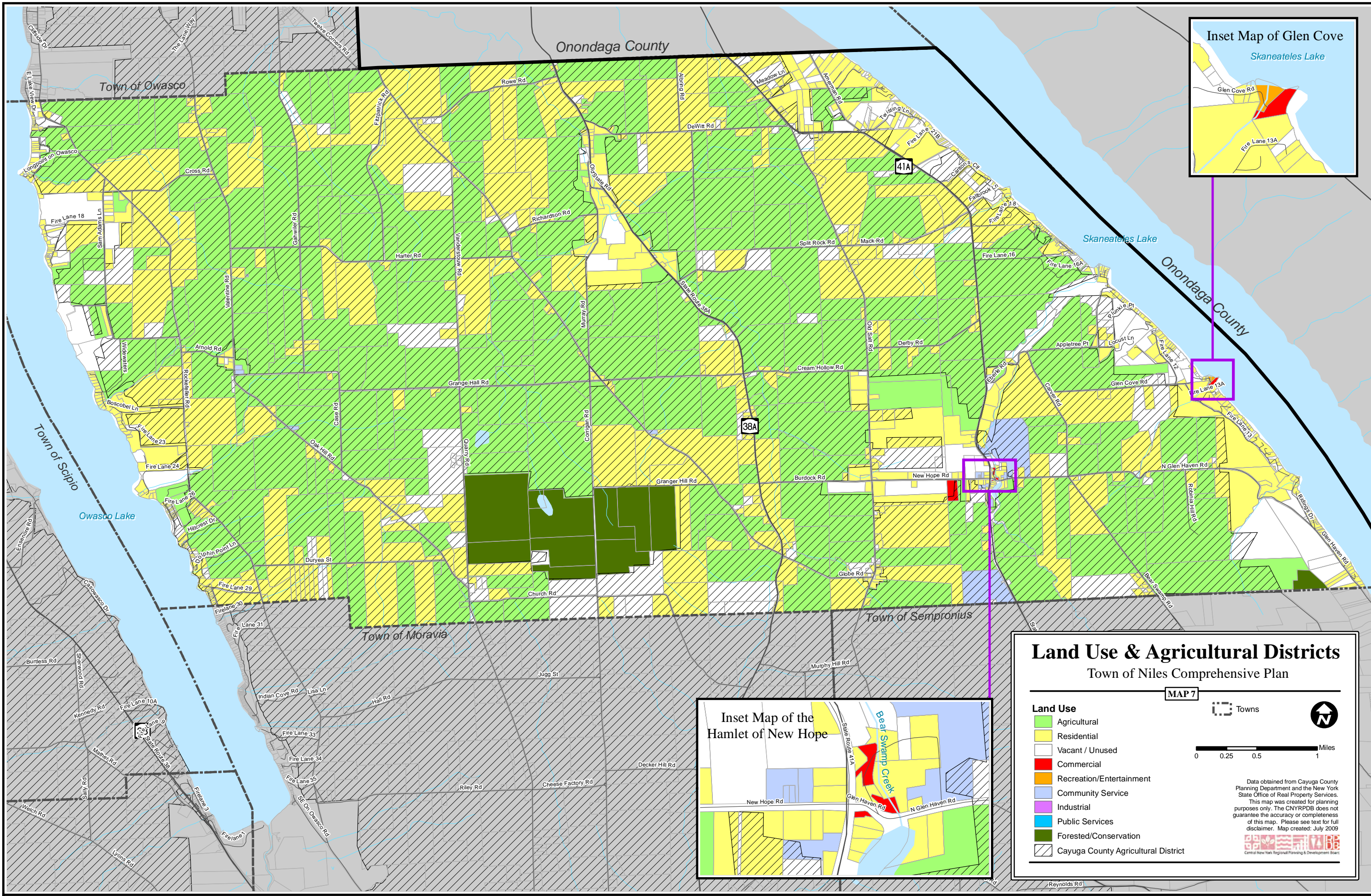
Map showing the location of six current agricultural districts in Cayuga County (Source: Cayuga County Planning, 2009).

# Proposed Agricultural Districts Cayuga County



Map showing the proposed consolidation of the six existing agricultural districts in Cayuga County into three agricultural districts (Source: Cayuga County Planning, 2009).





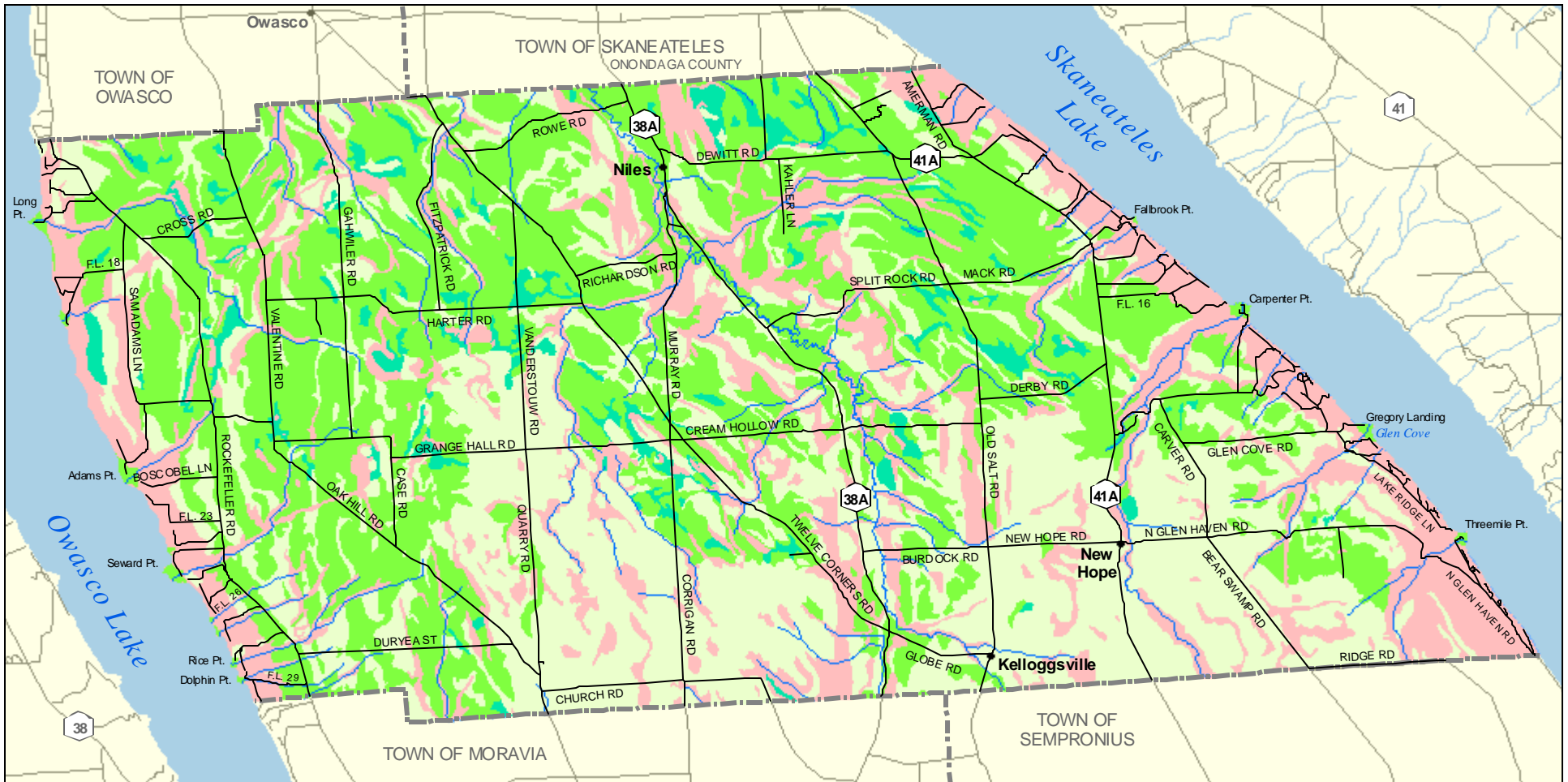
### Land Use & Agricultural Districts

Town of Niles Comprehensive Plan

MAP 7

	Agricultural		Towns	
	Residential			
	Vacant / Unused			
	Commercial			
	Recreation/Entertainment			
	Community Service			
	Industrial			
	Public Services			
	Forested/Conservation			
	Cayuga County Agricultural District			

Data obtained from Cayuga County Planning Department and the New York State Office of Real Property Services. This map was created for planning purposes only. The CNYRPDB does not guarantee the accuracy or completeness of this map. Please see text for full disclaimer. Map created: July 2009



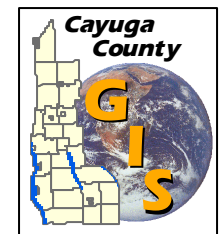
# Farmland Classification of Soils

## Town of Niles

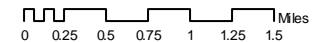
### Cayuga County, New York

- Prime Farmland
- Prime Farmland if Drained
- Farmland of Statewide Importance
- Not Prime Farmland

Sources:  
 Digital Soil Survey Geographic (SSURGO) database for Cayuga County, USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, 2002  
 National Map Unit Interpretation Record (MUIR) Database, USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, 1994.



Cayuga County Department of  
 Planning and Economic Development



## Public Parks, Recreation and Protected Areas

Public lands in the Town of Niles include the Behar Nature Preserve, Carpenter Falls, and Frozen Ocean State Forest. The Bahar Nature Preserve, a 52-acre preserve purchased by the Finger Lakes Land Trust in 1998, is located along Bear Swamp Creek on the western slope above Skaneateles Lake. The land was purchased by the State of New York to protect the area from development, and the waterfront and forest is accessible to those who come to enjoy the preserve's natural beauty. Although most evidence of an old mill disappeared when the lake level rose in the 1800's; a former sluiceway remains to guide hikers up to a knoll shaded by hemlock trees. From the knoll there is a wonderful view of the 100-foot-deep Bear Swamp Creek ravine. The preserve extends across the creek and up the opposite slope. Upstream beyond the preserve boundary, Bear Swamp Creek cascades over Carpenter Falls. A carpet of mosses and ferns such as shining clubmoss and maidenhair fern add to the lush forest vegetation. White trillium and Jack-in-the-pulpit are among the woodland wildflowers.

The Bahar Nature Preserve also includes a 65-foot crescent of shorefront on Skaneateles Lake. In 1904 this same location was known as New Hope Landing, one of two places along the Skaneateles shore where steamboats on lake excursions frequently made a stop in the Town of Niles. The landing featured an inclined ramp connecting the shore with a floating dock that was also used to launch canoes and small rowboats. Although the shoreline of the Bahar Preserve remains in public ownership, an access ramp and dock are no longer in place. The rocky shore in this location makes it a challenging place to access the lake, or beach a canoe or kayak near the trail into the preserve. ([http://www.fllt.org/protected\\_lands](http://www.fllt.org/protected_lands))

The Bahar Nature Preserve features a unique ecology and dramatic geologic features that draw visitors to explore the beautiful, but uninterpreted preserve along undeveloped hiking paths on the hillside above Bear Swamp Creek. The Preserve is currently managed by the NYS Department of Conservation.<sup>16</sup>



New Hope Landing, c.1911 (left). The same location at the shorefront of the Bahar Preserve, 2009 (right).

<sup>16</sup> Friends of Reinstein Nature Preserve in Cheektogwa, NY provide an example of a successful NYS DEC partnership with community non-profit groups committed to improved resource management and interpretation (see: <http://www.dec.ny.gov/education/1971.html>). The Town of Marathon, NY recently received a \$515K grant through the NYS Department of State Division of Coastal Resources - Local Waterfront Revitalization Program (LWRP) (see: [http://www.nyswaterfronts.com/aboutus\\_LWRP.asp](http://www.nyswaterfronts.com/aboutus_LWRP.asp)). NYS Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation also offer grants to communities for trail development through the federally funded Recreational Trails Program (see: <http://nysparks.state.ny.us/grants/programs/recreation.asp>).

Frozen Ocean State Forest encompasses 754 acres of land in the Town of Niles and is situated on one of the highest points in Cayuga County. The New York State Department of Environmental Conservation manages Frozen Ocean State Forest which was acquired by the state in purchases made during the 1930s and also as recently as the 1990s. The name is said to have originated from the fact that during the winter season, extremely cold winds sweep across the land turning the woods into endless stretches of frozen forest, the way that the ocean stretches endlessly across the horizon seemingly frozen in time. The forest is comprised of northern hardwood, hemlock, European and Japanese larch, Norway spruce, red pine and white spruce providing a wide range of diverse habitats that allow many species to call the area home. The forest's primitive nature provides excellent hunting and trapping opportunities, as well as true "roughing it" camping experiences. Frozen Ocean State Forest offers year-round recreational opportunities including hiking, cross-country skiing, hunting, trapping, and of course nature viewing. There are several trails designated for the public's enjoyment including a hiking trail and a cross-country ski trail. One trail from Quarry Road runs east for about 1/4 mile to an 11 acre pond. There is also a foot trail leading west to a scenic 16 acre pond. Two glistening ponds offer visual relief from the endless stretches of trees and a wonderful environment in which to cast a line. The ponds attract the local wildlife, and there are many varieties of plants and wildflowers.<sup>17</sup>



(Left) A pond at Frozen Ocean State Forest in Niles, 2008, (Center & Right) Camp Y Owasco and Yaiewano Program Center in Niles. Camp Y-Owasco, a YMCA Camp is located along the east shore of Owasco Lake, and offers limited camping use to YMCA members. Specialized sports camps combine instruction and games under the direction of high school and professional coaches. Camp Y-Owasco is nestled on 35 acres of fields, woods and hills on the east shore of Owasco Lake, approximately 8 miles south of Auburn. 1000 feet of shoreline provide the setting for a variety of aquatic programs, while the unspoiled terrain provides a natural backdrop for outdoor play and learning. An A-frame lodge and cabins provide shelter, while platform tents equipped with bunks and mattresses become 'home' for the campers.<sup>18</sup>

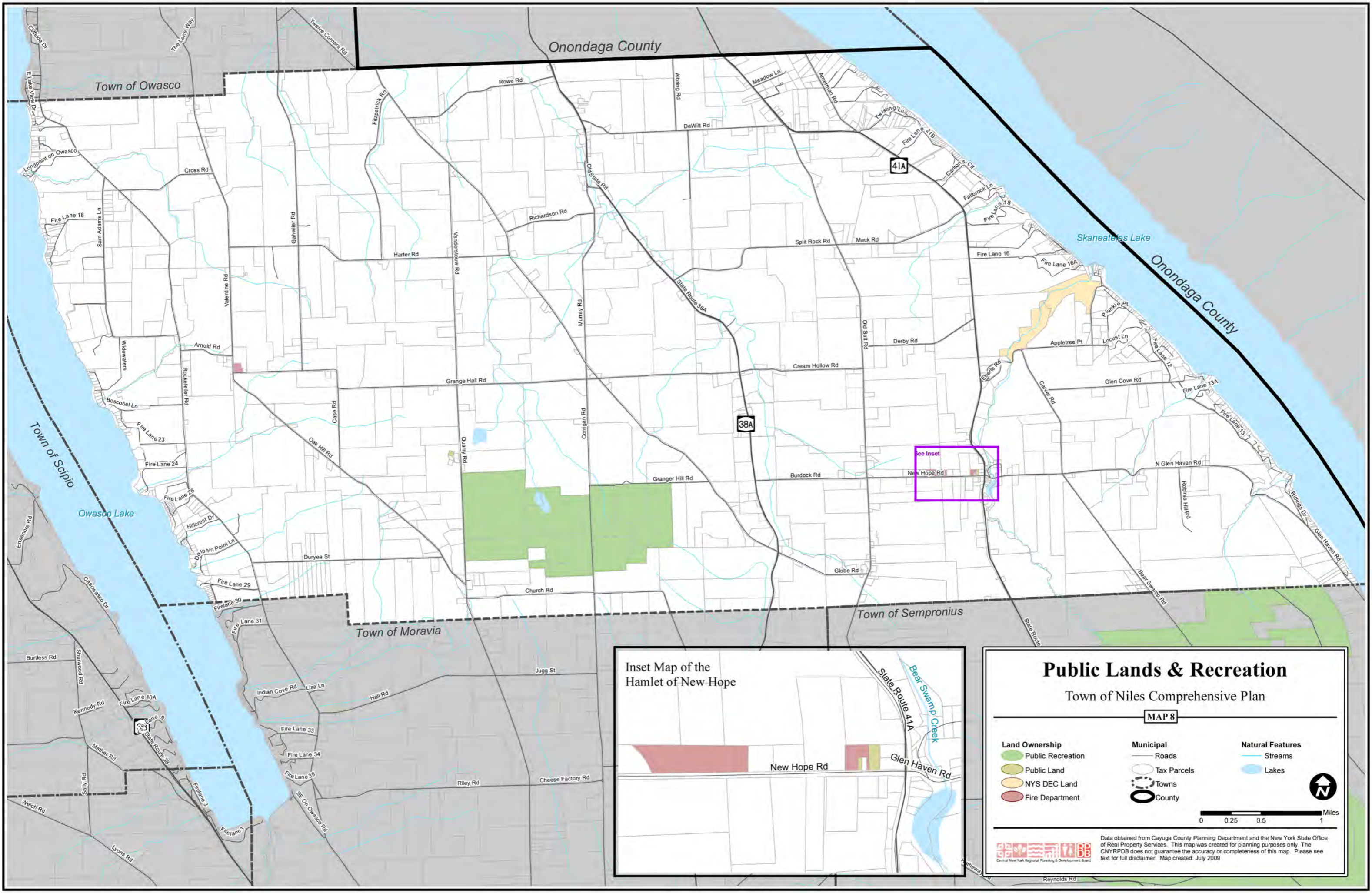
Camp Rotary, located on 29 acres on Owasco Lake in Niles, NY, is a Cub Scout summer camp that offers year-round camping, tent campsites, lean-tos, rowboats and canoes.<sup>19</sup> Currently, a merger of the Cayuga and Seneca County chapters of the national organization has led to uncertainty as to the specific future use of the site. The Girl Scouts of NYPENN Pathways maintains Yaiewano Program Center also located in the Town of Niles on Owasco Lake with activities offered to include girls from ages 5 – 17.<sup>20</sup>

17 Source: <http://www.dec.ny.gov/lands/36682.html>

18 Source: <http://www.auburnymca.org/about/>

19 Source: <http://snebsa.tripod.com/ny-ccc.htm#bscamp>

20 Source: <http://www.auburnpub.com/pdf/livinghere2006.pdf>



## Public Lands & Recreation

### Town of Niles Comprehensive Plan

**MAP 8**

<b>Land Ownership</b>	<b>Municipal</b>	<b>Natural Features</b>
Public Recreation	Roads	Streams
Public Land	Tax Parcels	Lakes
NYS DEC Land	Towns	
Fire Department	County	

0 0.25 0.5 1 Miles

Data obtained from Cayuga County Planning Department and the New York State Office of Real Property Services. This map was created for planning purposes only. The CNYRPDB does not guarantee the accuracy or completeness of this map. Please see text for full disclaimer. Map created: July 2009

## Regional Influences



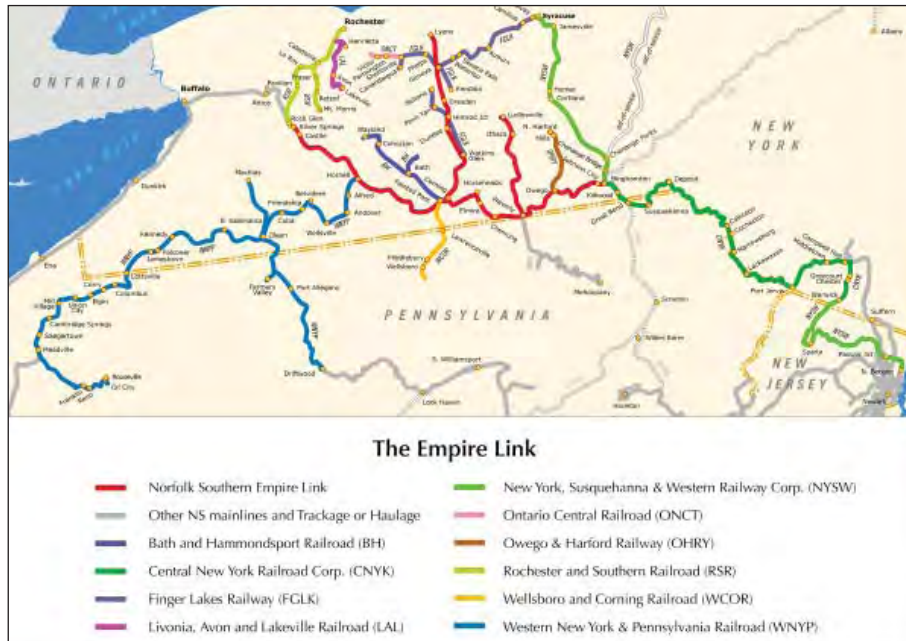
(Source: [http://www.iloveny.com/\\_files/map\\_region\\_fl.pdf](http://www.iloveny.com/_files/map_region_fl.pdf))

### *The Finger Lakes Region*

The Town of Niles is located in Cayuga County in the eastern Finger Lakes Region of Central New York State. The Finger Lakes Region, approximately midway between New York City and Niagara Falls, encompasses 14 counties with 11 lakes ranging in size from 11 to 40 miles in length with more than 650 miles of shoreline. Located in the triangle formed by the cities of Rochester, Syracuse and the Corning/Elmira area, the region is bordered by Pennsylvania to the south and Lake Ontario to the north. Lakes in the region include Canandaigua, Cayuga, Owasco, Keuka, Seneca, Skaneateles, Canadice, Conesus, Hemlock, Honeoye and Otisco. The names of these lakes reflect the region's rich Native American heritage. The region draws visitors from all over the world to experience Finger Lakes Region Wines, stunning rural scenery, historic villages, beautiful waterfalls, and recreational opportunities that abound throughout the area during all four seasons of the year.



Niles is located less than 20 miles south of the New York State Thruway and 10 miles west of Interstate Route 81 just west and south of the crossroads of Central New York at Syracuse. The nearest railroad to the Town of Niles is the Finger Lakes Scenic Railway offering limited passenger excursion service between Syracuse and Victor New York with a stop at Skaneateles Junction about 14 miles to the north of Niles. The railway is a part of the Empire Link, a collaborative business arrangement between Norfolk Southern Corporation and ten short line railroad members of the American Short Line and Regional Railroad Associations Eastern Region with limited seasonal east/west passenger service between Syracuse and Victor New York. The railroad collaborative has also allowed the conversion of short haul truck traffic to rail, an attractive option for shippers in New York, Pennsylvania and New Jersey by using excess freight capacity on these lines. Amtrak offers daily service to major cities throughout the region from Syracuse, about 32 miles away.



Map showing the Empire Link, a collaborative system of short line railroads in the Central New York Region (Source: <http://www.fglkrail.com/maps>).

There are no airport facilities in the Town of Niles. The Skaneateles Aerodrome, a small regional airport is located in Skaneateles and the Ithaca/Tompkins Regional Airport is located just northeast of Ithaca, New York. Hancock International Airport is located in Syracuse, New York.

Cayuga County is one of 23 counties traversed by the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor, a 524 mile-long scenic navigable waterway constructed in 1825 connecting the Great Lakes of New York State with the Atlantic Ocean at New York City via the St. Lawrence Seaway and the Hudson River. The federally designated National Heritage Area features cultural events and festivals along its route as well as an off-road multiple-use trail currently in development that will stretch 350 miles when completed and become the longest such trail in the nation. The Canalway Trail will be open to hikers, joggers, bicyclists, and cross country skiers connecting hamlets, villages and cities across New York State.



Map showing the location of the Town of Niles in relation to the central portion of the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor indicated by the green shaded area (Map courtesy of the National Park Service).

The Town of Niles is just about ten miles to the south of the picturesque Village of Skaneateles, a popular tourist stop bustling with activity. Daily scenic boat tours operate seasonally from the Village of Skaneateles heading south on Skaneateles Lake offering and stunning views of farmland and wooded slopes along the eastern edge of the Town of Niles which once provided a stop on the lake excursion route at New Hope Landing near Carpenter’s Point.



Sixteen major cities lie within 500 miles of the Town of Niles including New York City (239 miles), Boston (348 miles), Baltimore (324 miles), Pittsburgh (348 miles), Toronto (200), Rochester (74 miles), and Syracuse (25 miles). Immediate support industries in Cayuga County include trucking, warehousing and an array of small manufacturing facilities. For employment, entertainment, and other needs, the Town of Niles has easy access to the cities of Auburn (12 miles), Cortland (24 miles), and Ithaca (32 miles) away.

The Town of Niles is within easy commuting distance of several state and private Colleges and Universities including the following:

Cayuga County Community College  
Cornell University  
Hobart and William Smith Colleges  
Ithaca College  
Le Moyne College  
Monroe Community College  
Onondaga Community College  
Nazareth College  
Rochester Institute of Technology (RIT)  
St. John Fisher College  
SUNY Cobleskill  
SUNY College of Environmental Science & Forestry (ESF)  
SUNY - Cortland  
SUNY Health Science Center  
SUNY – Morrisville  
SUNY - Oswego  
Syracuse University  
Tompkins County Community College  
University of Rochester  
Wells College

## **Land Use Regulation**

The Town of Niles established a Town Planning Board in the fall of 1986 and also has an Appeals Board. Under existing subdivision regulations the Planning Board reviews and regulates the following: public street and road design, sanitary sewer design, water system design, stormwater quality restrictions, stormwater drainage design, slope restrictions, erosion and sediment control, lake rights conveyance, and shared lakefront recreation. The Town has adopted a State Environmental Quality Review Act (SEQRA) law to ensure appropriate consideration of environmental impacts resulting from concentrated development.

*A Plan for the Town of Niles, Cayuga County N.Y.* was compiled and adopted by the Town in August of 1987. The 1987 Plan described an emerging consensus “that a minimal set of regulations should be developed to achieve the basic objectives of the Town.” The guidelines for future growth and development in the Town of Niles became the municipal code, published in the year 2000 and updated in 2006. The Code of the Town of Niles includes Chapters regarding Setbacks and Lot Sizes, Site Plan Review, and Subdivision of Land, in addition to general and administrative legislation for the Town. The Town has a lot size law with a

2-acre lot minimum. The exception to this law are lake front lots on Owasco and Skaneateles Lakes, which have a minimum of 15,000 sq. ft. and a minimum of 75 ft. of lake frontage. The setback on lake front lots is a minimum of 25 ft. from the mean high water mark.

A new local law (2-2008) was adopted by the Town of Niles in 2008 to allow the Planning Board to review and regulate lake rights conveyance and all shared lake front recreation along the shorelines of Skaneateles and Owasco Lakes in the Town. The law allows the granting of special permits for shared lakefront recreation (deeded lake access rights) with a minimum of 10' of shoreline and 2,000 sq. ft. of lot area on the shared lakefront recreation parcel (per dwelling unit) in lake front or inland developments. The law also allows modifications to these dimensional requirements for lakefront parcels over 20,000 sq. ft. or with over 200 feet of shoreline with some additional mitigating measures. To illustrate how the law, as written, could translate to allowed development in the Town, the following example is given:

*A proposed development of 40 homes (160 people and associated boats, vehicles, etc.), could be approved for a parcel along the lakefront or up slope on an inland parcel that would grant deeded lake access for all of these dwellings to 400' of lake shorefront. With nearly 10 miles of lake shorefront, and spectacular upland views from existing Niles farmland and open space, the existing 10' shoreline minimum has the potential to result in approximately one 20 home development every ¾ mile along each lake (if just 5% of Niles shore front land is developed as shared lake front recreation).*

Considering the community's primary concerns (from the survey conducted for this Plan) about water quality, loss of open space and farmland, the Town may wish to review and revise Local Law 2-2008 to effectively address the community's goals listed in Chapter 1 of this Plan.<sup>21</sup>

Municipalities employ a range of methods to help them reach their land use goals. One method is the use of regulatory tools such as legislation in the form of local laws. Land use issues are addressed on an individual basis, i.e. subdivision regulations, mobile home regulations, outdoor entertainment regulations, etc. These laws are generally drawn up by the Planning Board, submitted for public hearing, and enacted by a vote of the Town Board. The Town of Niles has historically used and currently uses this form of land use regulation.

Another common method of regulating land use is through the creation of zoning districts. Areas of the Town are divided into districts, or "zones," for particular, or combinations of uses, i.e. agricultural, residential, commercial, industrial, historic, mixed use, etc. Zoning can be used to screen out incompatible land uses, as well as to encourage and control favorable land use practices.

Another important tool many communities use for review and approval of development proposals is Site Plan Review. The Town of Niles currently has a Site Plan Review law through which commercial development in the Town is regulated. Site Plan Review can also be used to regulate housing development to encourage open space preservation.

---

<sup>21</sup> Lake area land use regulations and Best Management Practices (BMPs) developed to prevent degradation of water quality and encourage preservation of open space are most effective when based on an Environmental Carrying Capacity Study. Typically, effectively constructed regulations require a minimum of 70' of shorefront per dwelling unit. Even with a 70' shorefront minimum, at a 5% conversion of waterfront land to shared lake front development could result in 10 new homes for every 2 ½ miles of Niles shoreline.

Both zoning regulations and local laws provide relief from the strict application of regulations through the granting of variances (for use or area). A variance is the granting of permission by the administrative body (Board of Appeals or Zoning Board of Appeals) to use the land in a manner that is not in accordance with, or is prohibited by the local law or zoning regulation. The granting of variances is not automatic; the property owner seeking relief is expected to provide reasonable argument as to why the law or regulation should be waived in their particular situation, and the variance may or may not be granted, depending upon the decision of the Board.

Land use regulation in the Town of Niles should be carefully constructed to effectively balance the management of land uses with the individual rights of the property owner; to protect the community's rural-agrarian identity; encourage smart growth; preserve agricultural and open lands; protect and improve the quality of water resources; and encourage revitalization and preservation of culturally-valued historic buildings, structures and landscapes. At present, the Town of Niles has no existing zoning laws, and the Towns' setback and lot area regulations were developed and adopted over twenty years ago.

There are special purpose regulatory tools listed below that can help the Town to achieve identified community goals including protecting valuable community resources. Some of the special tools the Town of Niles should consider using to help protect agricultural, water, ecological, historic, and scenic resources may include: special districting or overlay zones that can provide added protections to existing requirements for sensitive areas such as historic areas and stream corridors; business improvement districts; purchase or transfer of development rights programs (PDRs or TDRs); conservation subdivision design; and scenic or agricultural easements.

### ***Subdivision of Land***

Conventional subdivision regulations currently in use in the Town of Niles may not support the community's desire to protect the rural-agrarian character of the Town. A conservation analysis prior to site plan layout could be very beneficial. This would include identifying the location of any significant natural or cultural resources on a sketch plan, followed by a dialogue between the property owner (or developer) and the planning board about the conservation value of the lands proposed for development. The conservation method of subdivision of land is intended to allow an opportunity to preserve or protect natural, scenic, historic, or cultural features of value to the community while also allowing flexibility and an opportunity for developers to initiate creative solutions to protecting important community resources (i.e. steep slopes, scenic views, prime agricultural soils, trail corridors, stream corridors, wetlands, woodlands, historic sites, stone walls, etc.). Smart planning strategies such as conservation subdivision design result in far less open land being consumed by development, and much less money spent by municipalities on infrastructure and community services than would be spent as a result of conventional subdivision design.

## **Environmental Stewardship and Water Quality Protection**

Protection and preservation of natural resources was identified as important to the Niles community, and is critical to sustain and improve the community's environmental, social, and economic health. Development of a community natural resources map with the location of all known valuable natural resources is the crucial first step in the protection of these vital community assets. Natural resources include the lakes, stream corridors, agricultural lands, beaches, wetlands, watershed areas, vegetation communities, trees, woodlands, swamps, meadows, wildlife habitats, soils, geology, steep slopes, ridgelines, and aquifers.

In order to protect valued water resources, the Town may consider developing and adopting a Water Resources Protection Plan that identifies potential sources of pollution and sedimentation of lakes and streams including lands directly contributing storm water run-off to streams and erosion prone slopes. Such a plan might include recommendations for Best Management Practices (BMP's) in land management to prevent future pollution of the community's water resources. The establishment of protective overlay zones along stream corridors, steep slopes, and lake shore areas to limit development and retain vegetated cover in these areas would minimize sedimentation and nutrient run-off to lakes and help to protect fish spawning areas, aquatic life, wildlife habitat, and water quality.

## **Economic Development**

In 2008, among the eleven economic regions in the State of New York, the Finger Lakes Region ranked fourth in tourism/visitor spending after New York City, Long Island, and Hudson Valley. Visitors to the Finger Lakes Region spent \$2,671,392 in 2008 supporting the employment of 57,416 people in the region. This positions the Finger Lakes third out of eleven regions in visitor-related employment only following NCY and Long Island. Although the portion of this employment benefit in Cayuga County is only 4.9%, the potential for the expansion of visitor-related economic development in the County and in the Town of Niles is very real.<sup>22</sup> Economic growth in the Town of Niles and its hamlets are interdependent. A vibrant hamlet economy spurs Town-wide economic opportunity, and additional economic opportunity in the Town brings life to the hamlet. Revitalized hamlet business districts, including protection and restoration of the historic buildings, and context sensitive infill would encourage the sustainability of these unique areas; increase the variety of goods and services available to residents, and could potentially attract visitors to the Town of Niles and its hamlets to experience the traditional rural setting and unique sense of place. Mixed uses are appropriate in hamlet areas with hamlet-scale commercial/retail and business/professional uses in combination with upper floor residential units. Development in the hamlets should meet clear, form-based architectural review standards that are consistent with the scale and character of the historic hamlet form.

## **Recreation and Tourism**

The identification and acquisition of land for the development of additional community recreational facilities, including waterfront access at the Skaneateles Lake and Owasco Lake shores, is a need and desire expressed by community members in the survey conducted for the development of this Comprehensive Plan. This supports the Town's consideration of a future plan to provide universally accessible facilities for public access at both lakes. A system of well-marked interconnected greenway trails and bike paths that could provide a community-wide link to public, recreational and historic resources in the Town of Niles.

---

<sup>22</sup> (Sources: The Impact of Tourism in New York State, April 2009, Tourism Economics, [www.tourismeconomics.com](http://www.tourismeconomics.com))

## APPENDIX B

---

### VISIONING SESSIONS, SURVEY & RESULTS

The following series of public visioning and input sessions were held in two separate locations over a six (6) month period to seek the community's input, perception and ideas for the future of the Town of Niles:

Visioning Session #1 – March 24, 2007 – Special Topic – Agriculture

Visioning Session #2– April 26, 2007 – Special Topic – Land use Regulations in Niles

Visioning Session #3 – July 21, 2007 – Special Topic – Lake and Watershed Issues

Visioning Session #4 – August 18, 2007 – Special Topic – Owasco and Skaneateles Lakes

With input from the visioning process, the Comprehensive Planning Committee formulated a survey which was then mailed to 900 Town residences. The intent of the survey was to seek out public opinions on the Town of Niles at present, and how to address the future of the Town. Analysis of the results of both the written community survey, and comments from the community visioning process formed the basis for this comprehensive plan.

#### **Results of Visioning Session I – March 24, 2007**

1. If you were trying to get a friend that lives a great distance away to come to the Town of Niles, what would you say to encourage them?
  - Rural character, friendly/down to earth people, lake views, outdoor recreation (i.e. Bear Swamp), fishing opportunities, quiet, relaxing atmosphere
  - Enjoying tranquility of rural living, enjoy the rolling hills with farms, woodlands, and residences
  - Know your neighbors, welcoming area
  - Pretty lakes, open land, open country
  - Rural, peaceful
  - Rural atmosphere, lakes, outdoor recreation activities, peace and quiet, limited amount of traffic
  - Rural setting, reasonable tax base
  - Scenic views, close neighbors, close to major hospitals and food markets
  - Rolling hills, beautiful location within the Finger Lakes, rustic settings, quaint areas
  - Country setting, beauty, the fall colors
  - Quiet neighborhood, nice scenes
  - Skaneateles lake, open space, fresh air, gorgeous views, relaxed way of life, closeness to mother nature and her finest offerings
  - In the country, beautiful views, quiet, neighborly
  - It is a peaceful, beautiful areas and in this crowded world – we appreciate it
  - Skaneateles Lake – boating, cross country skiing, schools, agriculture
  - Hunting, fishing, relaxation, camping, boating
  - Rural, conservative, everything we need is here (church, ambulance, good roads, friendly people), great scenic views
  - "Elbow room", peaceful, restful, scenic
  - Quiet, open spaces, spectacular views, lots of snow for winter sports, fishing, boating, water sports

- I was born here, I am connected to my land, scenic views are beautiful, the winters are great
- I wouldn't necessarily encourage them to come, but if I was it would be because it is beautiful, peaceful, and quiet. They would probably rather visit a friend in Skaneateles – which is fine with me. Best time is after Labor Day – before June.
- Beautiful views, wonderful summer weather, low/no crime, relatively low cost, good schools, wonderful neighbors, great soil
- Beautiful lakeshore, good neighbors, laws in place to control random growth
- Because the town and the Syracuse Water Authority, has in place regulations that control random growth or unplanned growth and regulations that prevent water pollution of both lakes
- Open space, beautiful farmland, privacy – the right to do what you want with your own land
- Quiet place to live with good neighbors for the most part
- Rural, farms
- Beautiful countryside, lakes!!, recreational opportunities, relaxing, calm, peaceful, friendly people, low cost of living (comparatively)
- Great rural area, good hunting and fishing, friendly atmosphere, safe community
- We spend a lot of time fishing, hunting, boating, and good looking sights
- Great views, scenery, fishing, biking, boating
- Proximity to Skaneateles, proximity to downhill and cross country skiing
- A peaceful, relaxed and beautiful countryside with rolling hills and crystal blue lakes, neighbors very nice
- Peaceful and cozy
- Not many intrusive rules, farther from main cities
- Historically quiet country, open spaces, lots of creeks, springs, low crime, small town
- Situated between two of the prettiest glacially formed Finger Lakes
- Come here for some great outside activities, clean air, no traffic, walks on country roads, you will see wildlife and country homes
- Niles is rural, scenic, mostly quiet, but easy to get to Auburn, Skaneateles, Moravia, etc. for shopping, entertainment, etc., very centrally located
- Clean air, great views, lakes – cool in summer (need to be cleaner), country setting, access to theater, NYC, eastern sea coast, cultural hubs, great shopping

**GROUP DISCUSSION:** Know who your neighbors are, wonderful neighbors, great soil, good schools, beautiful views, regulations in place for growth and to keep the lakes clean, seasonal changes are beautiful, hunting, fishing, wildlife, closeness to mother nature/finest offerings, not a lot of regulations, hub for cultural areas (shopping, travel, etc)

## **Town of Niles Comprehensive Plan Committee - Visioning Session II West Niles Fire Department, April 26, 2007 (7:00-8:45 PM)**

Attendance: Twenty-nine (29) Town of Niles residents were present including Town Officials, County Legislator, Steve Cuddeback and Comprehensive Plan Committee members.

Opening remarks by Co-Chairperson, Diana Plue included defining a comprehensive plan as a map for the future of the town and stressing the importance of input from all residents of the Town. Each member of the Comprehensive Plan Committee introduced him/herself.

### **Presentation: Review of why the Town of Niles Needs a Comprehensive Plan**

Kristy LaManche (CNYRPB) provided a review of the planning initiative and funding secured by Congressman James Walsh to work with the Towns of Owasco, Fleming, Scipio and Niles on the future of the Skaneateles and Owasco watersheds.

Ms. LaManche reviewed some basic information and statistics about the Town:

- Town is uniquely situated between two beautiful Finger Lakes.
- Population of the Town was 1,208 (2000 census)
- During 1990-2000, pattern of new houses equaled 10 new homes per year.

- There has been a loss of farmland in the Finger Lakes region and NYS, 1990 -2000.
- The average work commuting time for residents is 28 minutes.
  - The number of people commuting outside the county to work has increased 5%.
- Changes to the Town can mean:
  - Loss of scenic views
  - Loss of agricultural resources
  - Degradation of water resources

Finally, Ms. LaManche reviewed the definition of a comprehensive plan as a community driven process to provide a blue print to determine the future of the Town. The plan would give direction to the Town government to amend the land use regulations to ensure that the growth of the town is what the residents want.

### **Visioning Session I Review**

Three Comprehensive Plan Committee members offered comments about the first visioning session. Ms.Rizzo stated that the answers to the questions brought up ideas/concerns that she had never previously considered. Mr. Hart mentioned that the agricultural community is important to many people in the Town. Mr. Scholl said that the comments indicated that good neighbors seem to be important to residents and this concept seemed to be tied to the farmers.

Participants were given a written summary of the answers to the questions posed at the first visioning session and Ms. LaManche provided a very brief overview. An invitation to provide comments on the questions by visiting the website or by writing a letter was offered to residents.

### **Special Topic: Land Use Regulations in the Town of Niles – Past, Present and Future**

Bob Martin, Chairperson of the Niles Planning Board began with a brief history of the Town which included the fact that the area was first settled through Revolutionary War land grants given to soldiers who survived the war. In 1833 the Town of Niles was separated from Sempronius. The Town is an agricultural community and there is a state "Right to Farm" law which exempts land in designated agricultural districts from most of the land use regulations.

Mr. Martin then provided an overview of the Land Use Laws passed in 1987 and currently in place. The public does not vote, but residents can comment on rules changes. The Town Board has the authority to make changes to the land use regulations and it is important that people understand that these laws are not static. (The full text of the land use regulations may be found on the Town of Niles website.)

- (1) Chapter 123: Junkyards: Purpose is to license persons engaged in the business of operating junkyards, to regulate and control the location and to control and designate the places where abandoned automobiles may be kept. Example: Only one unregistered vehicle is allowed to be visible on private property.
  - (2) Chapter 135: Mobile Homes: Purpose is to preserve the health, safety and welfare of occupants of mobile homes and communities by ensuring that suitable plans are prepared and provisions made for their placement as to providing water, sewage disposal, recreation area and parking. Example: Minimum size of mobile home – 900 square feet; mobile home community must apply for a permit.
  - (3) Chapter 164: Setbacks and Lot area: Purpose is to promote the health, safety or the general welfare of the town; to secure safety from fire, provide adequate light and air, prevent the overcrowding of land, to avoid concentration of population, and to ensure the purity of groundwater. Example: Commercial property – 50 feet set back from property lines; Residences – 25 feet setback from property lines; Lake front – 75 ft. frontage by 200 ft.
  - (4) Chapter 170: Site Plan Review for businesses (store fronts) which would include setback, signs, parking, buffer with residences, lighting. Existing farm or agricultural land use is exempt from review.
  - (5) Chapter 190: Subdivision: At the moment there is a moratorium (1 year) on major subdivisions in the Town of Niles and it will most likely continue for the length of the comprehensive plan process. A major subdivision includes five or more parcels of land or a subdivision that will be serviced by new public roads or other public infrastructure. A subdivision does not include the sale, transfer or development of land for agricultural purposes, open space or conservation. Any major subdivision will require a SEQR – environmental quality review.
- The time frame for approval of a subdivision or add-on of land is approximately one month, if there is compliance with the land use laws. If not in compliance, the subdivision will not be approved; the applicant may then go before the Town Appeals Board.

Discussion about the land use laws by committee members and Town of Niles residents involved some specific questions or concerns:

- At this time, the Town currently has 33 miles of roads. Requests for new public roads will not be approved.
- People can be misinformed about laws. Example – some people believe that the Town of Niles has a law against a business having a liquor license. There is no such law in place.
- The Town takes a very small portion of the tax monies collected, but provides services and built the new Town Hall without the need for bonding.
- Discussion on septic systems and holding tanks for lake side properties.

Mr. Martin stated in closing that for the most part, the current land use regulations do work.

A summary of the meeting was provided by Ms. LaManche and Ms. Plue with a reminder that the next public visioning meeting will be held in June, in the Niles Town Hall. Appreciation was extended to The West Niles Fire Dept. and Judge Richard Winters for providing the meeting place and refreshments.

Respectfully submitted, Ellen Abend, Secretary

### **Town of Niles Comprehensive Plan Committee - Visioning Session III Niles Town Hall, July 21, 2007 (9:00 – 11:00 AM)**

**Attendance: Approximately forty (40+) Town of Niles residents and guests were present.**

A welcome to the group including a short history of the progress of the comprehensive plan process was given by Co-Chairperson, Diana Plue. Following her remarks, each member of the Comprehensive Plan Committee introduced him/herself.

#### **Presentation: Overview of the Plan Process and Review of Previous Public Sessions**

Kristy LaManche (CNYRPB) provided an overview of the comprehensive plan process stressing the fact that since it is a public driven process, input from the community is important. She stated that the plan will address a variety of issues that potentially will affect the whole Town of Niles but this meeting was focusing specifically on Skaneateles and Owasco Lakes and watershed issues. Ms. LaManche noted that the planning initiative funding was secured by Congressman James Walsh. She also briefly reviewed the proceedings of the two previous visioning sessions. Three points were raised by the audience during this presentation: (1) the need to address the seaweed problem in the lakes (2) funding for this project ultimately comes from "our" taxes (3) there is an urgent need to discuss lake issues now.

#### **Special Topic: Lake and Watershed Issues in the Town of Niles**

Dr. Joseph Wasileski, President of the Owasco Lake Association (OWLA) presented a short history of the Association which was formed 15 years ago to address water quality that would be affected by the construction of a new prison in Moravia. Currently there are 400 members and one of the major issues today that OWLA is addressing involves a fish farm which is dumping phosphates in the Owasco Lake Inlet and the need for improved sewage treatment in Groton to control this problem. Dr. Wasileski stated that Owasco Lake is considered the dirtiest of the Finger Lakes with the following major problems: increase in sediment, algae, and weed growth. The projects that OWLA is involved with include water quality monitoring, partnerships to control soil erosion, boater safety and public education. He noted that a water quality inspector will be in place next week. He also stated that 70% of the Town of Niles is in the Owasco Lake watershed and land use planning needs to be a major part of the comprehensive plan. Dr. Wasileski ended by showing some pictures of good and bad development projects on the lake with respect to soil erosion which, in turn, affects the water quality. More information can be found on the website: <http://www.owla.org/>

Ms. LaManche provided a short overview of the Tri-County Lake Pure Water Association which was formed in 1988 to address water quality issues in Skaneateles Lake. 30% of the town is in the Skaneateles Lake watershed and two of the projects of this group involve water quality monitoring and aquatic invasive species. This Association has standing committees to address the following: (1) education and public awareness about development that involves good stewardship (2) lake ecology – control the spread of Eurasian water milfoil and other invasive species (<http://www.skanmilfoil.com/>) (3) watershed – helping people understand their role (4) government relations – assist with communication between the three counties and municipalities involved with the lake and (5) hazardous waste truck traffic.



### Group Discussion of Issues

- The percent of property that needs to be kept “green” and size of setbacks when developing new sites. These regulations should be in the comprehensive plan. Any development in the Skaneateles watershed must be approved by the city of Syracuse.
- Taxes – have doubled in the past two years.
- Weed control in Owasco Lake is a major issue. A representative from the Sempronius Comprehensive Plan Committee gave an example of “buffer zones” (aquatic plants to decrease effluent) in mobile home sites in PA.
- Erosion – along creek/stream banks is a problem. The Comprehensive Plan can address this issue to minimize the erosion. Question: Is there a specific plan of what types of plants should be planted? Ans.: Check with Cornell Cooperative Extension or the Soil & Water Conservation District (SWCD) Office.
- Question: How far away from stream bank can you disturb the land (plow or build)? Concern was expressed that at one site, the land had been plowed up to and over the stream itself. Ans.: Residential issues can be addressed through setbacks.
- Question: Is there a recommended amount of land for a buffer zone? Ans.: There are many variables such as types of soil, land slope.
- Roadside ditch cleaning allows for an increase in erosion. Note: Cayuga County is trying to coordinate this cleaning with SWCD to hydro-seed ditch right after the process. At this time, a Cornell graduate student is compiling GIS coordinates on all roads to facilitate this.
- Being aware of all resources is important. Question: What else is available through Cornell to assist? Ans.: Soil testing. SWCD also offers a 0-phosphorus fertilizer.
- There are common issues between all towns involved in the watershed. Questions: Are there any efforts to coordinate efforts between the towns? Ans.: Yes, the “Water Quality Management Agency” meets the first Thursday of every month at the Cayuga County Office Building. Some of the agencies involved include: Cayuga County Planning Board, CNYRPB, Lake Associations, Cornell Cooperative Extension, SWCD.
- Should have a Town of Niles museum – there is a creamery next to the New Hope fire house, behind the antique store that could house the museum. Important not to tear it down – donations could come from the townspeople – farm equipment, household goods.  
(Note: this suggestion was offered after the meeting had ended.)

Ms. LaManche posed the following question about lake access to the participants: Would you like more public access to the lakes?

- Yes, let the public use it.
- If more people use the lake, then it will help them see the problems and become more involved in finding solutions.
- There are two places on Owasco Lake that the Town (Owasco?) will have the first option to buy, if they are put up for sale.
- Need to be concerned about “lake rights” – size of property (2nd wave of development).
- Taxes may make property become unaffordable.
- Rental properties on lake fronts may be an issue (i.e. Town of Fleming problems)

NOTE: The public is invited to a meeting on August 23, 2007 at 7:00PM at the Town Hall. The new Assessor for the Town of Niles will present information about agricultural assessments and a Finger Lakes Trust representative will also speak.

The visioning session was formally adjourned at 11:00 AM.

The next public visioning session will be held on Saturday, August 18, 2007 from 9:00 – 11:00 AM at the West Niles Fire House.

Respectfully submitted, Ellen Abend, Secretary

(The following notes were recorded by Ms. Kozlosky during the general discussion and summarized by Ms. LaManche.

Town of Niles Comprehensive Plan - Public Meeting #3, Niles Town Hall, July 21, 2007)

## Lake and Watershed Issues

### General Discussion

- Taxes – raising taxes prohibitive
- Weed control is a big problem on both lakes (milfoil, invasive species, etc)
- Land use regulations to control changes with lakefront properties - lake rights, % of lot developed, buffer strips
- Lake and stream erosion
- Education on specific species to plant for control, mowing practices to improve runoff filtration
- Setbacks from streams (not mowing lawn to edge of property)
- Owasco streams influence lake water quality greatly
- Regulations for slope, % developed – could be included in site plan review regulations
- Roadside ditch cleaning causes erosion and road runoff
- Current studies underway to determine best time, better way to manage ditches, etc.
- Hydroseeding performed locally by SWCD after ditch cleaning
- Be aware of current resources and availability of assistance
- Fertilizer and lawn chemical issues
- What to do with lawn clippings
- Where to get soil tested
- What to do with plants removed from the shore of lakefront property
- Coordinate neighboring towns land use regulations/comprehensive plans to benefit watershed and lake-wide issues (include east side of Skaneateles Lake)
- Town of Spafford active in Tri County Skaneateles Lake Pure Water Association initiatives
- Town of Skaneateles sub-committees to address water quality monitoring and weed problems
- City of Auburn and Owasco heavily involved in Owasco Lake issues (due to water purveyor responsibilities)
- Tie in work of other Finger Lakes to avoid “reinventing the wheel” – learn from their experiences and successful practices
- Public access to lakes
- Potential for town to acquire Boy Scout camp if property is ever up for sale
- Complete access to public on both lakes
- Identify potential land for the town to buy for public land/lake access/parks
- Litter issues to contend with when you have public land
- Lakefront property development moving on to second tier – property not on the lake, but with views (and potentially lake rights)
- Rental and seasonal home issues
- Multiple cottages being purchased and one large house being built in its place
- Out of town people buying property and doing what they want
- Subdivisions and development with lake rights on narrow strips of land
- Town museum
- Creamery next to firehouse
- Do not tear down
- Local donations: farm equipment/household

## **Town of Niles Comprehensive Plan Committee - Visioning Session IV West Niles Fire House, August 18, 2007 (9:00 – 10:30 a.m.)**

**Attendance: Approximately 19 Town of Niles residents and guests were in attendance.**

Introduction/Opening Remarks: Ms. Kristy LaManche of CNYRPB opened the meeting and welcomed participants. She stressed the importance of signing in for each meeting and mentioned handouts were available outlining topics and issues from each previous session. Ms. LaManche then introduced the guest speakers, Dr. Joseph Wasileski of Owasco Lake Association (OWLA) and Mr. Bob Liegel of Tri-County Skaneateles Lake Pure Water Association, who each addressed the special topic of this meeting: lake and watershed issues in the Town of Niles.

Dr. Joseph Wasileski of Owasco Lake Association: Dr. Wasileski gave a brief overview of the origin of OWLA, which was started 15 years ago when the Moravia prison was being built. Current concerns include a fishery in Groton and the discharge of excess phosphates, leading to degradation of water quality in Owasco Lake. Groton's new sewage treatment plant was okayed to discharge 4 pounds per day by the Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC). It is currently discharging 1½ pounds per day. Dr. Wasileski felt the DEC was not working with local interests in mind and that local communities must protect their own areas via comprehensive plans. He outlined some lake issues facing the Town of Niles and surrounding towns, including learning about watershed issues, practice changes over the years, i.e., small camps knocked down and large houses built without regard for drainage issues, and the importance of resource preservation—all issues for which a comprehensive plan plays a key role. He noted that the comprehensive plan for Owasco is still evolving. He announced Ms. Jessica Miles, an Auburn native, is the new watershed inspector. Her role will include meeting with local townships and comprehensive planning committees to exchange ideas on watershed issues. Her job will not only be as an inspector but also as a watershed steward. She will teach about watershed issues at schools, meet with planning boards, look at permits, and work with farmers. The goal of OWLA is to have several inspectors, and two additional inspectors will be added next summer as a result of funding from the Emerson Fund. They will collectively work as watchdogs and liaisons with the DEC, towns and state government. Ms. LaManche asked for specific plans regarding land use. Dr. Wasileski mentioned Maine and New Hampshire have implemented planning rules to prevent building too close to lake shores, to prevent erosion, to address percolation issues and to preserve buffer zones. He has sent for a publication entitled "Lake Shore Zoning." He stressed the need to balance development and environmental concerns and that the comprehensive plan must have balance.

Mr. Bob Liegel of Tri-County Skaneateles Lake Pure Water Association: Mr. Liegel gave an overview of this organization whose roots date back to 1969. It was initiated by an individual upset with oil emissions from outboard motors in Skaneateles Lake. The group gradually evolved over the years with the objective to try and address development issues. Skaneateles' first comprehensive plan was in 1996 and it took about two years to develop. It was updated in 2005. They used the services of a professional planner, Joel Russell, of Dutchess County. Mr. Liegel talked about the importance of a comprehensive plan as back up for future zoning laws. He outlined important issues Skaneateles faced, including zoning for lot size which helped protect the watershed but created problems with compliance of existing lots, milfoil in the lake, and the fact that all communities with lakefront face denser development. He stressed that each town has enormous power and that the federal and state governments will not address many local problems. He gave an example that Skaneateles blocked development that could have damaged the watershed. He also stated that local government can oftentimes take quicker action than state government. He stressed that the comprehensive plan has a lot of legal power. He also addressed the problem of getting town residents and property owners to attend public meetings and raised the issue of virtual meetings. Skaneateles has developed a web site and wants to have links to OWLA, other similar groups and surrounding communities. He also mentioned Lake George as a model. Lake George has already developed a plan to address many issues faced by local communities, such as development and septic systems. He also mentioned that the City of Syracuse and County Department of Health do not do enough routine ongoing inspections of septic systems in the watershed and that septic systems are too close to the lake in many instances. He cited that Cornell Cooperative demonstrated a hybrid septic system that acted as a mini waste-water treatment with each septic system treating its own sewage. He also noted that property owners often do not have enough land to support a leach field but are allowed to go ahead with their septic systems anyway. He stressed the lakes are reservoirs, that citizens have the right to prevent pollution, and that the comprehensive plan will work to guide protection of the watersheds. Mr. Richard Coalson of the Niles Comprehensive Plan Committee pointed out that Cayuga County inspects lake property septic systems every two years.

## Group Discussion

- A question was raised about the federal government being to blame for large houses being built on lakefronts, specifically concerning income tax issues. It was mentioned that there is no local control on income tax issues and that individual towns regulate lot sizes and some control with tax assessment. It was also discussed that with larger homes there are larger taxes and that the comprehensive plan is important in this regard with the example given that the comprehensive plan is key as a backup for any future zoning. It was also pointed out that the comprehensive plan can be amended over time.
- A question was raised about why Skaneateles is allowing oversized boathouses. Mr. Liegel pointed out that he has worked for 26 years in the village of Skaneateles and helped develop a lot of their zoning ordinances but that lakefront control has only come about in the last 10 years. He also advised that other towns address this issue early on and consider the potential of oversized building on the lakes. Ms. LaManche mentioned that a comprehensive plan can address the issue and create lake shore zoning guidance, identify potential districts affected, and propose ideas to the town. She also brought up the fact that not only lake shore but other "concentric rings" with views around the lakes would be a matter of concern that could be addressed in the comprehensive plan, specifically noting the rate of development and lot size. Mr. Liegel mentioned that the plan would not necessarily need a lot of language in this regard but could, as an example, state: "All efforts will be made to avoid obstruction of views by neighbors." He also mentioned that zoning is based on the comprehensive plan and it is important to get the comprehensive plan in place.
- Note was made that there is currently a six-month moratorium on subdivisions while the comprehensive plan is being developed.
- Again Lake George was cited as an example of sound watershed preservation practices. As an example, Lake George requires an access permit to put a boat in the water.
- A comment was made that laws are needed regarding sewage disposal on the lakefront. It was brought up that inspection personnel are spread too thin and that local people need to be proactive about obvious problems and watch out for issues and that part of the comprehensive plan should address protection of watershed. Note was made that the county health department can be called about violations and they would conduct inspections in response to complaints. It was also mentioned that the new Owasco watershed inspector's duties would be to document and help rectify issues such as these and help with education to prevent problems.
- A question was posed about whether Cornell University is affiliated with the fish farm previously discussed. Answer: Cornell helped development the plan for the fish farm and Cornell professors are on the board of directors.
- Dr. Peter Andrus of the Niles Comprehensive Plan Committee summarized Mr. Liegel's main ideas as:
  1. Move forward and complete the plan.
  2. Make it as comprehensive as possible and cover as many issues as possible.
  3. A lot of resources are available and accessible via the Internet to use as models.

Outline of Next Steps in the Development of the Comprehensive Plan: Ms. Diana Plue, co-chair of the Niles Comprehensive Plan Committee outlined the direction of the comprehensive plan process. Subsequent to the four public meetings already conducted, the committee will send a survey to all town residents and property owners at their addresses as listed on the tax roll. The survey will include the ideas, concerns and comments raised at the public meetings. It will provide an opportunity for comments on any issue, whether new or previously raised. Every comment will be included in an addendum to the comprehensive plan. The surveys will be mailed in October or November 2007. After review of all surveys the first draft of the comprehensive plan will be submitted to the town in the spring of 2008. A public hearing will be held before the plan is formally adopted by the town. Then any future action to be taken based on the plan will be up to the town. Incentives for participating in the survey may include a gift basket with local products.

### Note

- A public announcement was made about the need for volunteer firemen and EMTs.
- Mr. Jason Cuddeback of Cayuga County Soil and Water Conservation District attended the meeting and provided a display of some of their past and current projects.
- Note was made that all meeting minutes are posted on the CNYRPB web site.

The visioning meeting was formally adjourned at 10:30 a.m.

Respectfully submitted, Jane Kozlosky, Town of Niles Comprehensive Plan Committee Member





**"Niles At Present" - Summary Information**

<b>How Do Your Rate the Following:</b>	<b>Good</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Acceptable</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Poor</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>% of Total Responses</b>
Air Quality	225	99.6	1	0.4	0	0.0	226	95.0
Ambulance Service	121	58.2	82	39.4	5	2.4	208	87.4
Drinking Water	130	62.8	56	27.1	21	10.1	207	87.0
Electrical	79	35.3	97	43.3	48	21.4	224	94.1
Employment	16	8.7	63	34.4	104	56.8	183	76.9
Fire Protection	121	56.5	85	39.7	8	3.7	214	89.9
Health Services	40	20.1	90	45.2	69	34.7	199	83.6
Housing Availability	60	30.0	124	62.0	16	8.0	200	84.0
Police Protection	58	27.8	118	56.5	33	15.8	209	87.8
Road Maintenance	106	47.3	101	45.1	17	7.6	224	94.1
School District Quality	78	43.3	80	44.4	22	12.2	180	75.6
Sewage Disposal	46	27.7	81	48.8	39	23.5	166	69.7
Shopping and Restaurant Availability	29	14.1	67	32.5	110	53.4	206	86.6
Snow Removal	126	58.3	74	34.3	16	7.4	216	90.8
Social Services Availability	28	15.7	109	61.2	41	23.0	178	74.8
Sports and Rec. Facilities	34	18.5	70	38.0	80	43.5	184	77.3
Telecom Facilities	15	9.5	54	34.2	89	56.3	158	66.4
<b>Total Responses</b>	1312		1352		718			

<b>Moravia</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Skaneateles</b>	<b>%</b>
143	95.2	15	4.8

<b>How Do Your Rate the Following:</b>	<b>Good</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Acceptable</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Poor</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>% of Total Responses</b>
Internet Service	16	8.3	48	24.9	129	66.8	193	81.1
Phone LAN	50	27.6	89	49.2	42	23.2	181	76.1
Phone Cell	11	13.9	20	25.3	48	60.8	79	33.2
TV Service	39	19.2	78	38.4	86	42.4	203	85.3
Town Operations	54	39.4	72	52.6	11	8.0	137	57.6
Assessment Process	35	16.4	117	54.9	61	28.6	213	89.5
Code Enforcement	50	24.5	116	56.9	38	18.6	204	85.7
Planning Board Procedures	52	27.4	114	60.0	24	12.6	190	79.8
Town Board Procedures	56	28.9	117	60.3	21	10.8	194	81.5
Trash Collection	151	70.9	55	25.8	7	3.3	213	89.5
Recycling	108	50.0	78	36.1	30	13.9	216	90.8
Town Clean-up Days	158	71.5	59	26.7	4	1.8	221	92.9
<b>Total Responses</b>	780		963		501		2244	

<b>Are You Concerned About:</b>	<b>Very Concerned</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Some Concern</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Not Concerned</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>% of Total Responses</b>
Big Truck Traffic	97	42.5	57	25.0	74	32.5	228	95.8
Increased Traffic	55	26.4	64	30.8	89	42.8	208	87.4
Lake Access	43	20.1	67	31.3	104	48.6	214	89.9
Lake Water Quality	120	55.0	61	28.0	37	17.0	218	91.6
Loss of Farmland	87	38.7	91	40.4	47	20.9	225	94.5
Loss of Open Space	96	42.7	82	36.4	47	20.9	225	94.5
Speeding	79	37.6	64	30.5	67	31.9	210	88.2
<b>Total Responses</b>	577		486		465		1528	

**"Looking Ahead" Summary Information**

<b>Should Niles:</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>No Opinion</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>% of Total Responses</b>
New Policies to Minimize Neighbor Conflicts	62	29.7	60	28.7	87	41.6	209	87.8
Farm Protection Through Easements	119	54.8	44	20.3	54	24.9	217	91.2
Limit Conversion of Farmland	111	50.5	61	27.7	48	21.8	220	92.4
Maintain Rural Character	179	80.3	17	7.6	27	12.1	223	93.7
Niche Farms/Agritourism	120	55.6	20	9.3	76	35.2	216	90.8
Tax Incentives for Productive Land	123	56.7	53	24.4	41	18.9	217	91.2
Would You Sell Development Rights?	36	24.3	37	25.0	75	50.7	148	62.2
<b>Total Responses</b>	<b>750</b>		<b>292</b>		<b>408</b>		<b>1450</b>	

<b>What Will You do with Farm Upon Retirement?</b>	<b>Count</b>	<b>%</b>
Give to Family	33	35.1
Sell to Developer	8	8.5
Sell to Farmer	8	8.5
Don't Know	40	42.6
Other	5	5.3
<b>Total Responses</b>	<b>94</b>	<b>100</b>

<b>Should Niles Encourage:</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>No Opinion</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>% of Total Responses</b>
Enhanced Stewardship								
Owasco/Skanateles Watershed	182	79.8	28	12.3	18	7.9	228	95.8
Preserve Scenic Views	196	85.2	15	6.5	19	8.3	230	96.6
Protect Environment Through Local Laws	168	74.7	35	15.6	22	9.8	225	94.5
Protect Natural Resources	208	89.3	19	8.2	6	2.6	233	97.9
Tax Reducations for Undeveloped Land	167	73.9	32	14.2	27	11.9	226	95.0
Allow Commercial Mining	47	20.9	139	61.8	39	17.3	225	94.5
Should Niles Remain Rural	202	89.8	5	2.2	18	8.0	225	94.5
<b>Total Responses</b>	<b>1170</b>	<b>73.5</b>	<b>273</b>	<b>17.1</b>	<b>149</b>	<b>9.4</b>	<b>1592</b>	

<b>Should Niles Encourage:</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>No Opinion</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>% of Total Responses</b>
Commercial Facilities	81	37.5	100	46.3	35	16.2	216	90.8
Cottage Business	161	72.2	26	11.7	36	16.1	223	93.7
Heavy Manufacturing	23	10.5	169	76.8	28	12.7	220	92.4
Light Manufacturing	118	53.2	76	34.2	28	12.6	222	93.3
Retail Businesses	118	53.6	65	29.5	37	16.8	220	92.4
Professional Services	155	69.5	41	18.4	27	12.1	223	93.7
Restaurant Facilities	142	64.3	54	24.4	25	11.3	221	92.9
Concentrate Manufacturing	76	36.4	61	29.2	72	34.4	209	87.8
Concentrate Commercial	68	33.0	67	32.5	71	34.5	206	86.6
<b>Total Responses</b>	<b>942</b>		<b>659</b>		<b>359</b>		<b>1960</b>	

<b>Should Niles Encourage:</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>No Opinion</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>% of Total Responses</b>
Mobile Homes on Individual Lots	67	30.2	123	55.4	32	14.4	222	93.3
Mobile Home Parks	21	9.3	192	84.6	14	6.2	227	95.4
Owned Multi Unit Houses	80	35.7	111	49.6	33	14.7	224	94.1
Rental Multi Unit Housing	64	29.2	120	54.8	35	16.0	219	92.0
Senior Citizen Housing	149	66.8	47	21.1	27	12.1	223	93.7
Single Family Housing	201	87.8	15	6.6	13	5.7	229	96.2
Two Family Housing	96	43.6	90	40.9	34	15.5	220	92.4
Cluster Housing	74	33.3	107	48.2	41	18.5	222	93.3
Other	1	10.0	3	30.0	6	60.0	10	4.2
Concentrate Residential Development	35	18.4	88	46.3	67	35.3	190	79.8
<b>Total Responses</b>	<b>788</b>		<b>896</b>		<b>302</b>		<b>1986</b>	



Town of Niles Community Survey November 2007 - DRAFT Results

<b>Should Niles Encourage:</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>No Opinion</b>	<b>%</b>		<b>% of Total Responses</b>
Community Center	81	37.9	85	39.7	48	22.4	214	89.9
Farmers Market	106	59.2	34	19.0	39	21.8	179	75.2
Hiking and Biking Paths	134	60.1	59	26.5	30	13.5	223	93.7
Outdoor Athletic Fields	63	32.0	79	40.1	55	27.9	197	82.8
Owasco Lake Public Access	103	48.1	61	28.5	50	23.4	214	89.9
Skaneateles Lake Public Access	102	47.4	70	32.6	43	20.0	215	90.3
Snowmobile Trails	101	46.8	71	32.9	44	20.4	216	90.8
Historical Society	105	49.5	42	19.8	65	30.7	212	89.1
Town Park	114	53.0	53	24.7	48	22.3	215	90.3
<b>Total Responses</b>	<b>909</b>		<b>554</b>		<b>422</b>		<b>1885</b>	

<b>Should Niles Have Land Use Regulations for:</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>No Opinion</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>% of Total Responses</b>
Clustering of Homes	121	56.3	64	29.8	30	14.0	215	90.3
Degradation of Environmentally Sensitive Areas	141	65.9	45	21.0	28	13.1	214	89.9
Design Standards for Commercial Development	142	64.5	46	20.9	32	14.5	220	92.4
Future Subdivision of Large Parcels	141	63.5	55	24.8	26	11.7	222	93.3
Land Use That Lowers Surrounding Land Values	136	61.8	59	26.8	25	11.4	220	92.4
Land Use That Adversely Impacts the Environment	146	67.3	48	22.1	23	10.6	217	91.2
Minimum Lot Sizes	135	69.6	32	16.5	27	13.9	194	81.5
Mobile Home Placement	153	69.2	45	20.4	23	10.4	221	92.9
Rental Housing Inspections	151	68.9	46	21.0	22	10.0	219	92.0
Routine Septic Inspections	157	72.0	50	22.9	11	5.0	218	91.6
Siting for Cell Towers	163	75.1	37	17.1	17	7.8	217	91.2
Siting for Windmills	156	71.6	44	20.2	18	8.3	218	91.6
Other	0	0.0	1	33.3	2	66.7	3	1.3
Should Niles Consider Zoning?	108	53.2	75	36.9	20	9.9	203	85.3
<b>Total Responses</b>	<b>1850</b>		<b>647</b>		<b>304</b>		<b>2801</b>	

Additional Answers for Minimum Lot Size Question

<b>Increase</b>	<b>%</b>
44	58.7
<b>Decrease</b>	<b>%</b>
1	1.3
<b>Same</b>	<b>%</b>
30	40.0
<b>Total</b>	
75	

<b>Should Niles Undertake:</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>No Opinion</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>% of Total Responses</b>
Inventory historical sites	137	64.0	34	15.9	43	20.1	214	89.9
Improve communications with neighboring Towns	153	71.8	20	9.4	40	18.8	213	89.5
Improve Towns website	107	51.4	16	7.7	85	40.9	208	87.4
Increase the frequency of newsletter	89	42.4	75	35.7	46	21.9	210	88.2
Place community events in local newspaper	147	71.0	20	9.7	40	19.3	207	87.0
Publish periodic community events calendar	133	65.8	37	18.3	32	15.8	202	84.9
<b>Total Responses</b>	<b>766</b>		<b>202</b>		<b>286</b>		<b>1254</b>	

<b>How do you receive information about Niles?</b>	<b>Count</b>	<b>%</b>
Bulletin Board	15	4.1
Local newspaper	84	23.1
Town Newsletter	189	52.1
Town Website	31	8.5
Other	44	12.1
<b>Total Responses</b>	<b>363</b>	<b>100</b>

## APPENDIX C

---

### HISTORY OF PLANNING AND LAND USE IN THE U.S. AND THE REGION

Towns across America, as a result of an evolving story of settlement, bare unique physical and cultural characteristics reflected in their villages and along their roadsides. Rural Towns like Niles contribute to, and are affected by regional centers of social, cultural, and economic activity. Rural life offers residents, employees, and visitors a wealth of opportunities and experiences to enjoy every day. Rural character and identity rests upon both tangible and intangible elements such as sights, sounds, scents and experiences that combine to provide the Niles community with a familiar sense of place, and for many, a profound sense of meaning.

A Comprehensive Plan provides a framework within which these unique characteristics and elements of a place can be drawn upon to create or preserve an environment supportive of a community's vision for itself. Through careful analysis, including direct community involvement in the process, rural planning addresses problems and takes advantage of opportunities to create unique, viable and pleasant rural places. This first Comprehensive Plan for the Town of Niles, strives to do just that for a community already rich in citizen commitment and possibilities.

As European settlers immigrated to the United States they adopted English common law under which land they owned, their "property," meant a place in which they held a bundle of rights including:

- 1) the right to control and use the property;
- 2) the right to benefits from the property;
- 3) the right to transfer or sell the property; and
- 4) the right to exclude others from the property.

However, those rights were not absolute; they were, as they still are, subject to the rights of society often as codified in law. In the early history of the United States, society placed few limitations on the use of land as it seemed an endless resource, especially with a limited population base. From Jefferson's Corps of Discovery to the Homestead Act to massive federal irrigation, road building, and energy producing projects, the challenge was not limiting use of land but rather getting it settled, cultivated, and developed.

As the population increased and people began to congregate in cities, the need arose for local governmental control to put some limits on the movement of industry and commerce into residential areas and to prevent residents from becoming nuisances to each other. These limitations generally took the form of zoning ordinances regulating incompatible uses, building heights, setbacks, and lot sizes. As the density of populations grew and spread, some began to recognize a need for planning. Noting the changing times, Theodore Roosevelt reminded his constituents in the summer of 1910: "Every man holds his property subject to the general right of the community to regulate its use to whatever degree the public welfare may require it."

Concern for the public welfare reached a peak in the 1960s and 1970s as members of Congress observed that the balance between economic growth and development on the one hand, and protection of natural resources on the other, had tipped too far in the direction of growth and development. Congress moved to expand legal limitations that would address the issue of dwindling natural resources and environmental

degradation. As a result, federal laws were enacted such as The National Environmental Policy Act, The Wilderness Act, The National Forest Management Act, The Endangered Species Act, etc., that have had significant impacts on land use. Many states also passed their own laws and adopted policies that complemented the new federal laws.

In New York, the enactment of Article IX of the State Constitution, the Municipal Home Rule Law, the Statute of Local Governments, and the State Environmental Quality Review Act have provided municipalities the power to enact local laws that compliment several of the federal laws mentioned above. The scope of this power and the procedures for implementing it, are set out in the Municipal Home Rule Law, adopted in 1963. Section 10 of the Municipal Home Rule Law contains the constitutional grants of power to local governments and adds thereto the powers to collect local taxes authorized by the Legislature, to provide for the protection and enhancement of the physical and visual environment, the apportionment of local legislative bodies, and assessments for local improvements, as well as the powers granted to local governments in the Statute of Local Governments.

The Municipal Home Rule Law also includes a Bill of Rights for Local Governments and provision for a unique Statute of Local Governments, under which home rule powers may be given to quasi-constitutional protection against change (Section 2(b)(1)). Among the rights and powers enumerated under the Bill of Rights for Local Governments are the right to have a legislative body elected by the people; to adopt local laws; to have local officers elected or appointed by the local residents or officers; the power to agree (as authorized by the Legislature) with the federal government, a State, or other government, to provide cooperative governmental services and facilities. Also included are the power of eminent domain; the power to make a fair return on the value or property used in the operation of certain utility services, and the right to use the profits therefore for refunds or any other lawful purpose; and the power to apportion costs of governmental services of function upon portions of local areas as authorized by the Legislature.

### **Federal and State Planning Initiatives**

The New York State Open Space Conservation Plan (2006) serves as the blueprint for the State's land conservation efforts, which during the past several years have conserved nearly a million acres of land with an investment of more than \$658 million. The Plan is required by law to be revised every three years. The 2006 Plan was released on November 1, 2006. The plan references the federal Coastal and Estuarine Land Conservation Program (CELCP) established in 2002 to protect important coastal and estuarine areas that have significant conservation, recreation, ecological, historical, or aesthetic values, or that are threatened by conversion from their natural or recreational state to other uses (Public Law 107-77, Department of Commerce, Justice, and State Appropriations Act of 2002). Priority status is given to lands which can be effectively managed and protected and that have significant ecological value.

The New York Statewide Comprehensive Recreation Plan (SCORP) is prepared periodically by the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation (OPRHP) to provide statewide policy direction and to fulfill the agency's recreation and preservation mandate. The updated SCORP serves as a status report and as an overall guidance document for the recreation resource preservation, planning, and development through 2014. The document is also used to guide the allocation of state and federal funds for recreation and open space projects. The document provides guidance for the allocation of municipal and not-for-profit funds to local areas and facilities with the greatest needs.

## Regional and Local Planning Initiatives

Various community-based planning initiatives have contributed to the development of the Town of Niles Comprehensive Plan. The development of the *Owasco Lake Watershed Management Plan*, in July of 2001, was a result of the collaboration, co-operation, and work of agency staff, municipal officials, and the public. The plan was produced by the Cayuga County Department of Planning and Development. Owasco Lake is an important resource to the communities within its watershed. Indeed, over 70% of the people residing in Cayuga County use it as a drinking water source. Residents and tourists enjoy recreational opportunities and the scenic views of the lake, while agriculture, fisheries, and wildlife depend on its water. The development of the *Owasco Lake Watershed Management Plan* was an important community action taken for the protection of the watershed and Owasco Lake water quality. The plan documents on-going lake management efforts, serves as a guide for future development and environmental initiatives in the watershed, and lists sources of revenue to fund projects.

The *Owasco Lake Watershed Management Plan* Steering Committee and the Cayuga County Water Quality Management Agency, with the support of the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation and the Owasco Watershed Lake Association, produced *The State of the Owasco Lake Watershed Report* which contains information on watershed characteristics, land use, economy, cultural resources, laws, ordinances, regulations, management programs, municipalities, and issues of concern. The report also discusses 30 issues that affect or will affect the future of the lake including land use changes. The information contained in the report was used in the development of the *Owasco Lake Watershed Management Plan*. Since watershed management is a dynamic process, the action plan will be evaluated and updated yearly by the Water Quality Management Agency.

In June of 1997, The City of Syracuse contracted with Cornell Cooperative Extension of Onondaga County to provide a Skaneateles Lake management plan report for the Environmental Protection Agency. *The Skaneateles Lake Watershed Management Plan* charts the course for future lake management programs and the funding of the federal Clean Lakes Program in the watershed. Numerous reports and updates on the City's progress for Filtration Avoidance provided the factual information about the Lake and its environs as well as management programs and activities. Comments and concerns raised at public meetings and strategy sessions, periodically held throughout the watershed were used in the development of the plan. In September of 1997, the *Draft State of the Lake Report* outlined issues but withheld recommendations. The report was sent to 130 stakeholders around the watershed in August 1997, and as a result, comments received from concerned citizens, government agencies, non-profit groups, and municipalities, were incorporated into the report. Three meetings were held after the report was made public: 1) a limited group of stakeholders and government agencies met at Cornell Cooperative Extension in Syracuse on September 19, 1997; 2) a meeting of the Watershed Agricultural Program Review Committee; and 3) a group of local officials from around the watershed met at the Village office in Skaneateles on November 13th, 1997. Specific comments and recommendations that resulted from these meetings were incorporated into the report. The plan is not conclusive, but does provide a number of recommendations for action that may be taken by the diverse municipalities, citizens, non-profit organizations, and government agencies that are charged with managing the resources of the lake. Although the report lists a number of actions that are being taken to protect the lake through existing agency programs, there are a number of recommendations that have no action pending. Advancement of new initiatives and programs will depend on the interest of the citizens and municipalities around the watershed to take the next step.

Through the Onondaga County Soil and Conservation District in partnership with Cornell Cooperative Extension, the USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service, the City of Syracuse and individual Skaneateles Lake watershed farmers, comprehensive *Whole Farm Plans* are developed on a farm by farm basis under the *Skaneateles Lake Watershed Agricultural Program* initiated in 1994. Through a 5 tier process, the program identifies potential risks to water quality, develops comprehensive plans for, implements, operates and maintains Best Management Practices (BMPs), and evaluates and revises practices as necessary to address environmental concerns related to agricultural practices in the watershed.

## APPENDIX D

---

## COMMENTS

