

Town of Eaton

2019 Comprehensive Plan



Eaton Windfarm



Mott Morse House



Eaton Brook Reservoir Boat Launch



Bradley Brook Reservoir from Westcott Road



Chenango River from Rt. 26

Comprehensive Plan Committee

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Prepared by Madison County

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Executive Summary

The 2019 Town of Eaton Comprehensive Plan is the catalyst for any and all future plans for the town. The committee that developed the plan has spent well over a year researching, meeting, reaching out for input, and writing a plan that will serve as a blueprint for the future efforts to help our town move forward in a positive direction. The success of this plan hinges on all components of our Eaton community: the residents, businesses, college, churches, schools, volunteer organizations and local government are all players in this effort to make the Town of Eaton successful.

The town survey and public meeting were the driving forces in focusing the plan on six (6) main areas, chosen by the committee as focus topics. Land Use, Economic Development, Housing, Recreation, Environment, and Agriculture. Each of these areas are addressed in the following pages with goals and action items to accomplish the goals. The Town plans to create small committees to pursue the goals outlined in each of the sections of this plan. This will ensure that there is an active group responsible for maintaining progress in each of our subject areas. It is our hope that in the next 5-10 years, we will see substantial improvement. The Town Board will also have these areas as regular agenda items for their meetings and they will be updated on a regular basis on the progress made.

While this Plan does not include the Village of Morrisville, we recognize that the Village and Town must work together to be successful, and we welcome that partnership going forward. Indeed, our comprehensive plans illustrate many interests shared across both communities.

The Town wishes to thank the members of the committee that is listed here as well as the members of the Madison County Planning and Economic Development Office and especially Stefan Lutter who led us through this process.

Enjoy reading the Plan and if you have questions, please contact us.

Cliff Moses, Town of Eaton Supervisor

Introduction

A community's challenges, needs, and expectations are always dynamic. Community members must take a proactive approach in considering changes and anticipating future issues. The culmination of such an effort, the Comprehensive Plan: a vision for the community's future and a set of goals, recommendations, and tools for how to work toward that vision. A Comprehensive Plan prepares a community for future changes, outlines existing resources, and provides direction in consideration of land use policies and regulations.

This 2019 plan is the continuation of an ongoing effort in Eaton, most recently the 2009 Town of Eaton Comprehensive Plan. The 2009 Plan noted the primary purpose as a 'comprehensive review' of the existing Land Use Regulations, and recommended considering minor adjustments to the regulations originally enacted in 1990 and amended in 1997. A decade after the plan was adopted, it is time for a full update that can lead the town into the future. In preparing this plan, this committee analyzed data and collected public input through both a survey and public meeting, in addition to the work and knowledge offered by the steering committee.



Geography

The town of Eaton, home to hamlets that include Eaton, West Eaton, Pine Woods, and Pratt's Hollow, and the Village of Morrisville, is known most prominently for the beautiful landscape featuring rolling hills, lakes, reservoirs, farms, forests, and wetlands. While there are several major employers in the Town of Eaton, most of the town is residential. The Town is located on the northern fringe of the Appalachian plateau and is bordered by five other towns in Madison County as well as the Village of Hamilton.

The landscape features of Eaton are a result of glacial deposition. Landscape of most of the Town is rolling hills with fairly level hill tops. The center of the Town features two relatively narrow valleys. In one valley, the Chenango River starts just north of Morrisville flows south through Morrisville and the hamlet of Eaton and continues south through the Town of Lebanon. Eaton Brook begins at the outlet of Eaton Brook Reservoir on the western edge of the town and flows east and outlets into the Chenango River at the hamlet of Eaton. The far east portion of the Town is occupied by a wider glacially carved valley.

The Town is in the headwaters of three major watersheds. Most of the land in Eaton is in the Susquehanna River watershed and stream water eventually drains into Chesapeake Bay. The northeast corner of the town is in the Oneida Creek watershed and that water eventually flows into Lake Ontario. The eastern and southeastern portion of the Town drains into remnants of the Chenango Canal and outlets into Oriskany Creek. This water is in the Hudson River watershed by way of the Mohawk River. Some grant programs designed to reduce water pollution are available based on watershed location. There are also limits on larger volumes of consumptive use of water in the Susquehanna River watershed.

There are five lakes in the Town of Eaton. All of them have served at one time as water sources for the either the Chenango Canal or Erie Canal. Woodman Pond, Leland Pond and Hatch Lake are natural waterbodies though all have had their water elevations raised by dam construction. Woodman Pond serves as the emergency water supply for the Village of Hamilton and does not have shoreline development. Hatch Lake originally fed into the Otselic River but its waters now flow east towards the Chenango River. Bradley Brook Reservoir and Eaton Brook Reservoir are man-made lakes that were built to serve as water supplies for the NYS canal system. Eaton Brook reservoir is partially in the Town of Eaton and Partly in the Town of Nelson.

Potable water can be obtained from groundwater in all locations in Town of Eaton. Depth to groundwater and yield vary with location. High yielding aquifers are located under the Valleys of the Chenango River and Eaton Brook. The Chenango River aquifer is the source of groundwater for the Morrisville municipal water system.

The Town is served by a very good network of well-maintained State, County, and Town Roads. U.S. Route 20 is a state highway and traverses the town from east to west and passes through Morrisville. Other state highways are State Route 26, State Route 12B, and State Route 26.

Most of the Town is well suited to development. In parts, though, development can be limited by slopes over 15%, wetlands, poorly drained soils, and shallow soils. Soil survey information can be found at local libraries or by visiting the USDA NRCS office located in the Town of Eaton just north of Hamilton on State Route 12B.

History

The Town of Eaton was originally a principal location of the Oneida tribe, part of the Iroquois nation. From the Revolutionary war onward, the Native American presence diminished as the white settler influence grew.

In 1793 Joshua Leland built a sawmill and gristmill at Leland's Ponds and started a potash factory, founding the first industrial settlement in Eaton. Another early settler, Joseph Morse, along with his sons and grandsons, constructed and operated sawmills, gristmills, plow foundries, a distillery, and a wooden pipe factory. Eaton was home to the notable Wood, Taber & Morse Steam Engine Works, which operated from 1859 to 1890 and produced the world's first practical four-wheel-drive steam traction engine.

Morrisville, originally known as "Morris Flats" did not progress as fast as "Log City" (now the hamlet of Eaton) until after the county seat was moved there from Cazenovia in 1817. Judges and lawyers took up residence, and jurors and witnesses had to stay in town for the duration of trials, spurring business in what is now Morrisville.

The Town of Eaton, officially formed from the Town of Hamilton in 1807, is named for General William Eaton, an American Commander at Tripoli. Settlers were drawn to the area for its many bodies of water, including the swift-flowing "Alderbrook" (Eatonbrook), which supplied waterpower for mills and factories. West Eaton, Pierceville, and Pratt's Hollow, small communities located in the Town of Eaton, grew in population and prospered in the 1800's as a result of mills, cheese factories, machine shops, and tanneries.

The village was incorporated in 1819 and renamed Morrisville. After about ten years, the incorporation was allowed to lapse until 1849. When the courthouse was built in 1817 the building was apparently unsafe from the beginning and was later condemned and re-built in 1849. In 1864 the courthouse burned, and at the time, it was believed that the fire was set by the Loomis Gang to destroy evidence against one of their members who was on trial. A new courthouse was built the following year.

The county seat was moved to Wampsville in 1907, threatening Morrisville's very existence. However, in 1908, the New York State School of Agriculture was created by an Act of the New York State Legislature and signed by Governor Charles E. Hughes on May 6. The Act permitted the State to take title to buildings vacated by Madison County and brought new life to the community. Two farms were purchased, faculty members hired, a curriculum set up, and the School was underway. Today, the former NYS School of Agriculture is a member of the State University of New York (SUNY) system. SUNY Morrisville has grown from a School of about 50 students offering two year courses in Agriculture and Home Economics to a college enrolling over 3000 students and offering Associates and Bachelors degrees, with a Masters degree program in Agribusiness being developed. The institution is critical to the Town of Eaton, bringing economic opportunities, cultural resources, and a steady supply of visitors, newcomers, and students who support and contribute to the community.

The Village of Morrisville, situated on Route 20, is the largest population center in the town by a considerable margin. The village is home to resources such as SUNY Morrisville, the fire department, library, elementary school, various retail and professional buildings, and eateries. However, Morrisville recently suffered the loss of it's only grocery store, insurance agency, bank, and credit union. Efforts continue to bring back these vital services.

Population

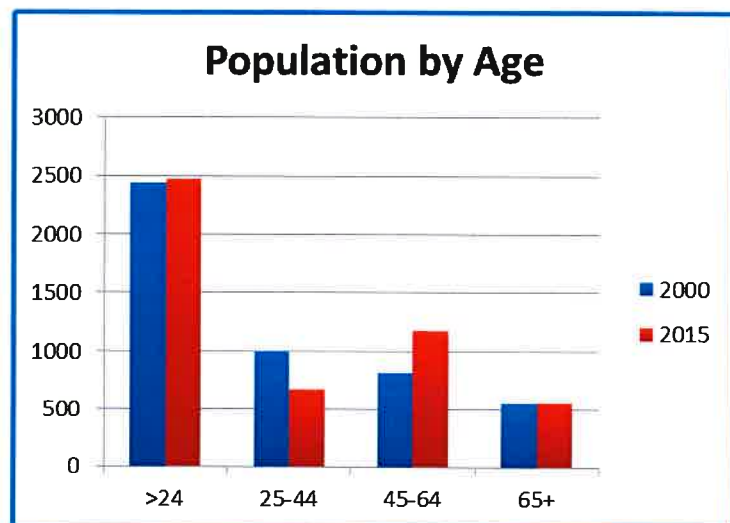
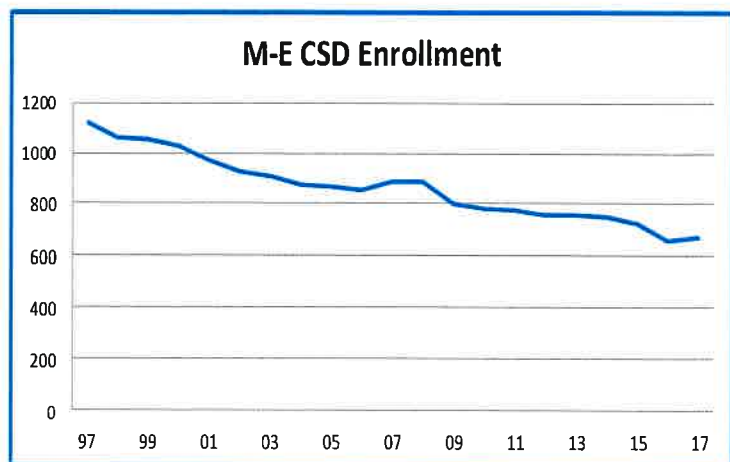
Eaton’s population, including the Village of Morrisville, is 4,892. The median age is 24.4 years, a number significantly impacted by the presence of the college. For comparison, Madison County’s median age is 40.8 years. The 15-24 year old age group is a full 40% of Eaton’s population.

Popula- tion	2000	2015
Town	2,678	2,954
Village	2,148	1,938
Total	4,826	4,892

While the population has remained relatively constant over time, even experiencing some minor growth, social changes including smaller family size means that school age population has declined. In particular, Morrisville-Eaton School District has seen enrollment drop in the past two decades. Adding population may prove necessary if Eaton wishes to sustain it’s school operations at the current level.

Similarly, the 25-44 year old age group has decreased in number by about 25% since 2000. This also has implications for the school population, as younger adults and newer families are decreasing in number. The corresponding increase in the 45-64 year old age group shows a clearly aging non-student population. This demographic shift poses unique challenges for Eaton: for instance the need to accommodate an aging population’s needs and the need to attract new people to move to and settle down in Eaton and sustain the community. Many rural communities are struggling with a similar problem.

Meanwhile, SUNY Morrisville has continued to attract students, bringing a steady supply of young people into Eaton. Although few stay after their education is complete, they remain an important resource while they are.



Survey

In order to better assess public opinion on various issues facing the Town of Eaton, a survey was developed. The survey featured 29 questions and covered an array of topics. It was developed by Madison County Planning Department and the Town of Eaton Comprehensive Plan committee.

The survey was available as paper copies, though people were encouraged to take it online (via SurveyMonkey). The survey was marketed through existing list serves (such as the Village of Morrisville newsletter), the Mid York Weekly, and NextDoor Eaton. A postcard was sent to addresses in Eaton advertising the survey and encouraging participation. In addition, employees and students at Morrisville State College were made aware of the survey.

The survey was taken by 334 (roughly 13% of the population) individuals and the answers helped to identify several trends the Comprehensive Plan should address. Key findings from the survey are outlined below.

Who took the survey? Despite participation from MSC students (18%), the largest age demographic to participate was 55-64 years old, at 22% of respondents. 55% of respondents were female, and 45% identified themselves as full time residents of the Town of Eaton (16% identified as part time residents, 18% as SUNY Morrisville students, and 21% as non-residents).

Why do people live here? Preference for rural life was selected as a reason for living in Eaton by over 30% of respondents. People also live in Eaton because they work in the area (25%), because of Eaton's quality of life (23%), because they have family nearby (22%), because the housing is affordable (19%), or because they were a college student at MSC (20%).

Where are people going? Most respondents work in the Town of Eaton (27%), are retired (23%), or a student (13%). However, smaller percentages work in Hamilton, at home, Cazenovia, the Syracuse area, or the Route 5 corridor. Most survey respondents selected Hamilton (44%) as where they do their grocery shopping, with less choosing Oneida and Cazenovia. Less than 3% do their grocery shopping in Eaton. For non-grocery shopping, most people are either primarily shopping online (22%) or in East Syracuse area (22%). Less than 5% chose Eaton. Meanwhile, Syracuse and Hamilton were the most common destinations for recreational activities.

What are people doing? The most popular recreation categories were hiking, trail walking, skiing and snowshoeing (65.85%), swimming and boating (50.77%), and movies, theater, and live music (45.23%). About 50% of respondents agreed that there are enough recreational opportunities to meet their needs. People ranked a farmer's market (69%), music festival (67%), and outdoor recreational events (55%) as the public events they would most like to see in Eaton.

What are the issues? The only type of business respondents thought should be discouraged were industrial and extraction businesses, while small, locally owned businesses were the most supported (95%). A good number of respondents were concerned with housing issues in Eaton, most prominently that housing was in disrepair or poor condition (73% identified as a problem) and lack of housing variety or choice (46% identified as a problem). Two of the highest needs identified from a list were access to high speed internet (62% ranked as high need), and improved downtown Morrisville and Hamlets (62% ranked as high need).

What about the lakes? The main concerns regarding lakes in Eaton echo the ongoing issue across the State and beyond of harmful algal blooms (HAB) and invasive species. Nearby water bodies such as Owasco and Cayuga Lakes have both experienced significant setbacks from these issues, which helps explain local concern. Concern is spread about equally between septic system issues, nutrient and soil related runoff, invasive species, and algal blooms. Only about 23% of residents said they had no concerns regarding the lakes. 22% of respondents owned lake shore property in the Town of Eaton. About 38% of respondents indicated there was a high or moderate need for public fishing access, and 60% indicated a high or moderate need for public swimming.



Public Meeting

In addition to the survey, a public input meeting was held on April 30th, 2018. About 25 community members attended. The process consisted of a general input session modeled on a simplified SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats) analysis where attendees were asked generally what they liked about Eaton and what could be improved. The 'good' featured lakes, agriculture, schools, community engagement and involvement, history, access to Route 20, downtown Morrisville and the hamlets, a large amount of preserved woodland, forests, and open space. The 'needs improvement' list included, among others; clean up better defined land use that reflects issues facing the town, water quality, more economic opportunity and businesses, recreational opportunity and access, food access, and senior housing options.

From there, the breakout groups were formed and led by Madison County Planning staff and Comprehensive Plan Committee members. These groups used draft comprehensive plan 'goals' and identified issues as a starting point to discuss issues in six subject categories: recreation, energy and the environment, housing, land use, economic development, and agriculture. The list of comments generated from these discussions is attached in the appendix.



A Vision for Eaton

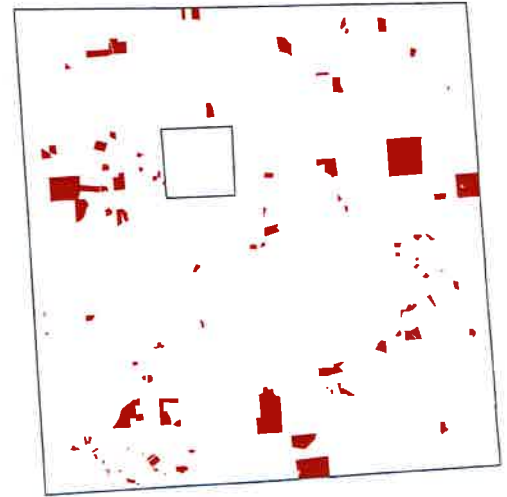
A vision is a brief, overarching statement capturing the ultimate, overall purpose of the comprehensive plan. It can be described as how the community would like to see itself in the future under ideal circumstances. The statement captures both what makes Eaton a wonderful place now and what could strengthen the town in the future.

The Town of Eaton aspires to be a thriving community offering residents and visitors alike access to an enjoyable life featuring a strong community, clean water, a beautiful natural environment, and calming rural areas. The economy in Eaton reflects the broader values of the community, working in cooperation with the people and the environment, and focusing on agriculture and small, locally owned businesses that invest in and contribute to the town. People of all ages, backgrounds, and incomes can find a place to enjoy Eaton's strong sense of community. Eaton strives to partake in broader planning and community efforts with neighboring municipalities, Madison County, Central New York, and beyond.



Vision: Land use in Eaton reflects and supports the community's broader goals.

The Town of Eaton will likely continue to experience a low amount of residential growth over the coming years. Despite that, even low growth can accumulate over time and have a large impact on a community. It is important to have land use regulations in place that support the broader vision of the community so that as growth does occur, it is channeled in a manner appropriate for the Town. The map to the right shows new residential properties in Eaton since 2000, some of which may have been better captured to benefit the community. For example, the hamlet of Eaton (pictured below), is a potential site for adding smaller lots and homes in a manner complementary to existing character.



Residential Development in Eaton since 2000:

117 Properties

Average Size: **9 acres**

Median Size: **2.5 acres**

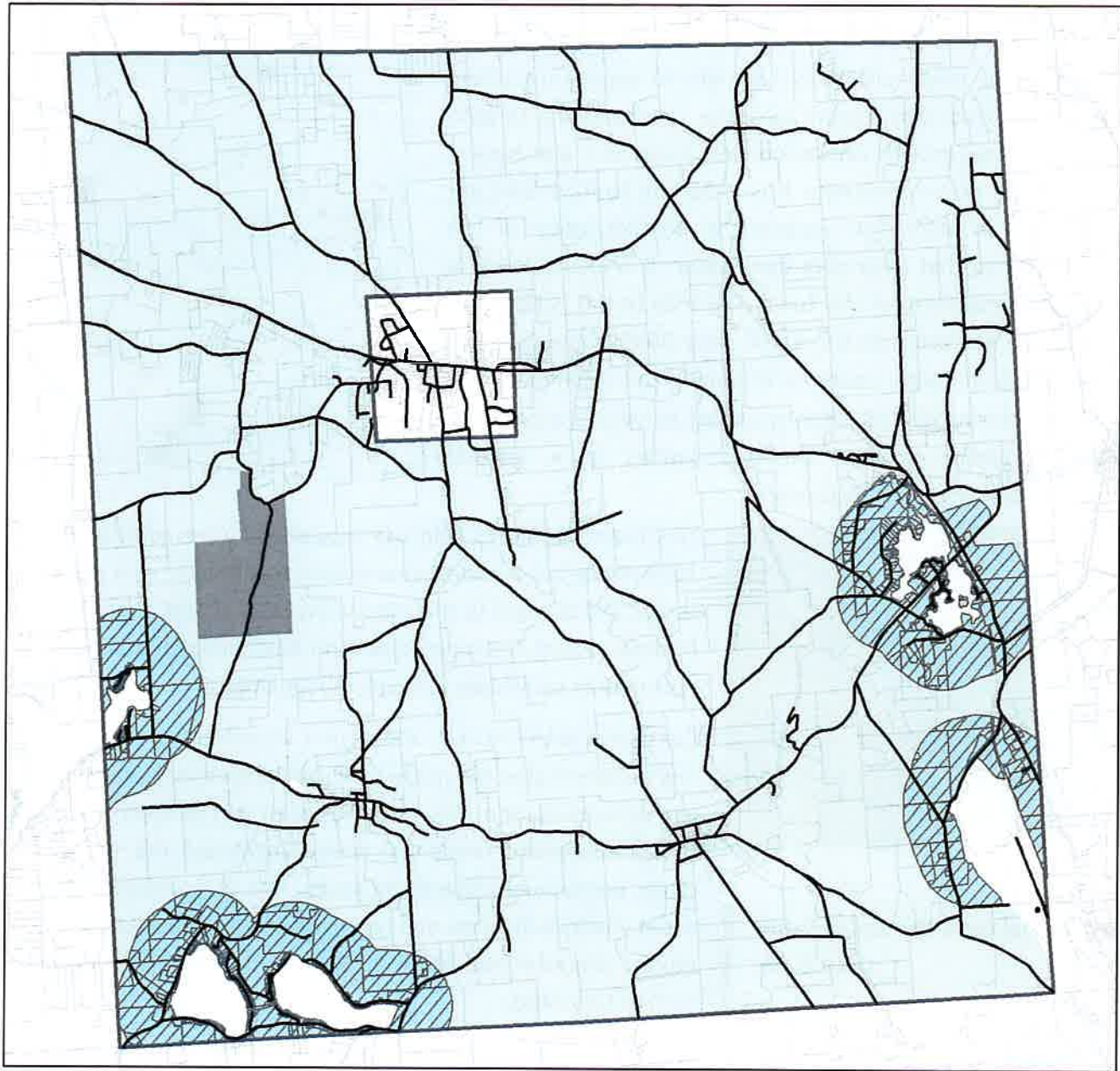
Total Land Consumed Since
2000: **1,117 acres**

The Town of Eaton's land use regulations were adopted in 1997. While minor changes have been made since, new challenges and changes to the community such as loss of anchor businesses and declining population have presented an opportunity to reconsider the current regulations.

Consistent with the rest of Madison County, over the past few decades Eaton has made land use decisions that encourage suburbanization. The result has been loss of open space to car dependent residential development and the subsequent community impacts, including: loss of economic and social vitality in hamlets and Morrisville, degradation of community character and sense of place, and loss of resources such as farm land.

Looking toward the future, anticipated trends over the next 20 years include: an aging population, a growing need and interest in walkable areas, less interest in traditional, isolated 'suburban' development, climate change and subsequent impacts, and sustainable energy production. Eaton's land use regulations should undergo revision to ensure and improve preparedness for these trends.

The Comprehensive Planning process has also identified concern for water quality and preservation of environmental resources, and these and several other issues articulated by this plan can be addressed in some way by changes to land use regulations.



Existing Land Use

Map Prepared by the Madison County Planning Department



Agricultural/Residential/Commercial District— a loosely defined zone with the cited purpose of preserving farmland, provide for separate residences of all kinds, and to invite all other uses under certain controls.

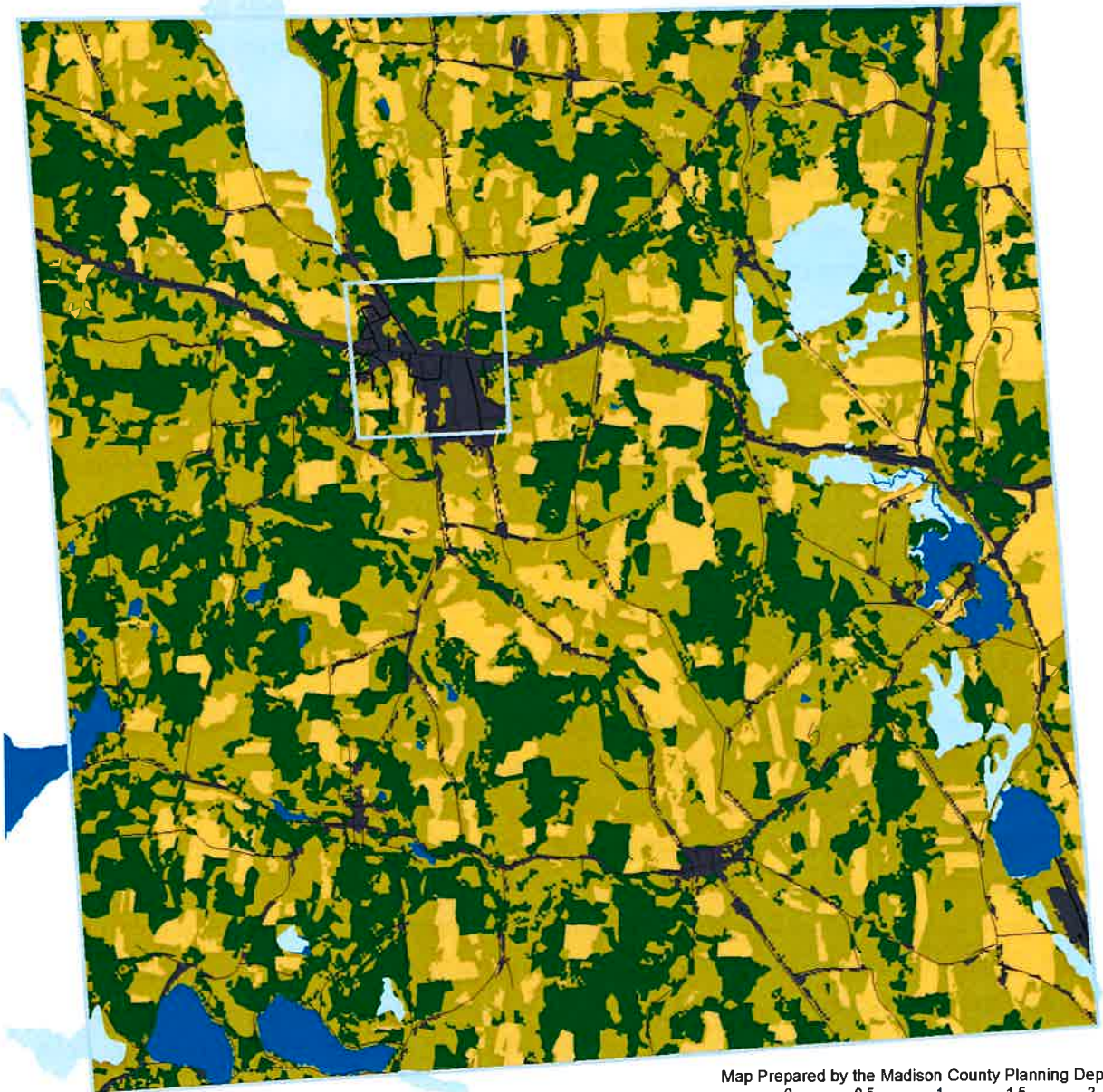
Agricultural/Residential/Commercial District 2— essentially a replica of the above zone, the main difference being language that excludes mobile homes.

Residential District 2— zone to provide for summer and year-round housing in and around water front property with minimum nuisance caused by different land uses.

Eaton Land Cover

Legend

-  Lakes
-  DEC Wetlands
-  Cultivated Crops
-  Developed
-  Mixed Forest
-  Meadow/Brush/Pasture



Map Prepared by the Madison County Planning Department
0 0.5 1 1.5 2 Miles

Proposed Land Use

Despite low anticipated growth in the Town of Eaton, it remains crucial to capture any growth in an appropriate manner that furthers the goals of the Town. Current land use regulations are not ideal for this purpose and indeed have led to underwhelming development patterns throughout the Town. The following is a draft of what future land use regulations that support the goals of this plan might look like. The proposed land use zones were determined using information on existing land cover, existing development patterns, agricultural district parcels, sensitive environmental areas, and other considerations.

GOALS

Accommodate and incentivize changes in land use that further the goals and visions outlined in the Comprehensive Plan. Land use in the Town of Eaton should encourage open space preservation, conservation of resources such as productive agricultural soils, a diverse economy that builds on the agrarian culture and landscape. Basic principles include:

- Pattern of growth that values and preserves natural resources, including agricultural resources, water resources, habitat, etc.
- Maintain agriculture and open space as the overwhelming land use in the Town and foster economic viability of farms by reducing competition for and increasing protections of agricultural land
- Allows for a diverse mix of housing options that are appropriate for the existing and historic fabric of the built environment and the diverse and changing population
- Makes opportune use of public infrastructure and reduces economic burden of new development
- Protects the quality of life

The following are the proposed land uses by category:

AGRICULTURE

Agriculture is the largest existing land use in the Town of Eaton and these areas reflect that. Agriculture and agriculture related land uses such as support services and businesses, direct marketing enterprises, and agri-tourism should be the dominant and priority land uses here. The Town of Eaton aims to preserve these areas for future agricultural uses and open space preservation to maintain the rural character of the community and continued economic viability of farms. Recognizing that farmers like to farm near other farmers, and that a certain density of farm operations is required to maintain support businesses, minimal non-agricultural development should occur in these areas. Woodlots, wetlands, and other ecological assets should also be protected and fostered in these areas. Above all, agriculture is a legitimate land use and should not be treated simply as a place holder for other eventual uses.

VILLAGE GROWTH BOUNDARY

These areas adjacent to the Village of Morrisville have seen development similar to that in the Village. Further growth in this area should be mixed use and echo traditional Village developments, with smaller lot sizes, less setback, and be generally pedestrian oriented. Care should be taken to maximize development in these areas to take advantage of proximity to existing infrastructure.

HAMLET

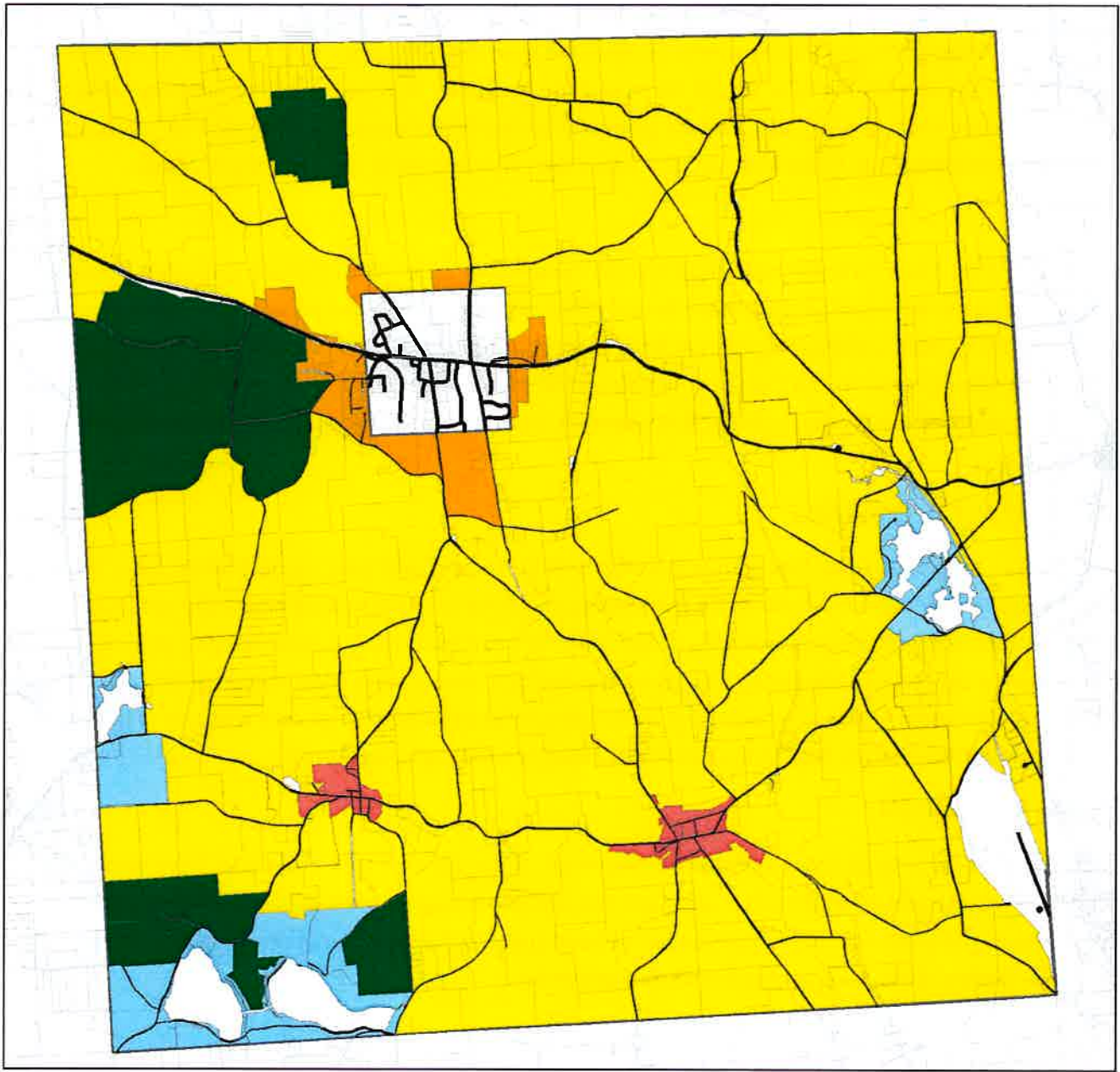
Eaton and West Eaton are the two larger hamlets within the town. Both feature some remaining commercial activity. Future land use here should reflect the character of a hamlet: a small, mixed use area with denser, walkable residential development. A significant portion of new residential development should occur in the hamlets, increasing the sense of community while preserving open space and improving business viability. Both hamlets are in need of revitalization of existing structures.

LAKE AND WATER DISTRICT

These areas consist of small lots with a mix of seasonal 'camps' and year round homes. Here the scale of new development should match the existing character of the lake area neighborhoods. Other regulations and guidelines concerning environmental protection (particularly, but not limited to water quality protection) should also apply to this district. These areas have some of the highest density development within the town, and due to ecological sensitivity, special care must be taken to alleviate potential erosion, habitat loss, and water quality issues, among others.

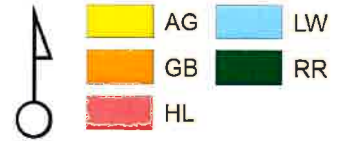
RURAL RESIDENTIAL

These areas feature large lot residential development. Generally this is in areas that have already seen some residential development and/or are less suitable for agricultural purposes. Development in these areas should encourage preservation of open space and protection of environmentally sensitive or valuable areas, such as woodlands and wetlands.



Future Land Use

Map Prepared by the Madison County Planning Department



The above is a potential land use map Eaton could pursue if they resolve to write new land use regulations that better reflect the overall objectives outlined in this plan.

Economic Development

Vision: Eaton has a diverse economy centered on locally owned, adaptable, resilient businesses that improve the quality of life for Town residents.

Eaton's economy is based on education, with 43% of residents working in the field of Educational, Health Care, and Social Services. The largest employers are Morrisville-Eaton Central School District and Morrisville State College (MSC), while an additional two colleges (Colgate and Cazenovia) are located within a short distance. Agriculture is another important driver in the town, and historically has been an economic and cultural pillar of the community for decades. Not only does MSC offer several agriculture-related degree programs, 7.5% of residents work in agriculture and 12,058 acres within the town (roughly 45% of total land) is classified as agricultural land.

Median household income sits at \$51,987, \$2,500 less than the County average. Approximately 15% of Eaton residents over the age of 25 have no high school diploma, while 35% have not attended college. Despite being home to MSC, only 18% of Eaton residents have a Bachelor's degree or higher.

A primary struggle Eaton faces is attracting and maintaining a diverse economy, particularly in regards to shops and retail operations. Positioned within driving distance of Hamilton, Cazenovia, and the Route 5 corridor, all of which have denser and larger populations, Eaton has lost recent opportunities for local business development to their larger neighbors. One recent example is the location of an ALDI's market in Cazenovia, which has made the prospect of a full grocery store in Eaton less likely.

Eaton is between two popular, similar small towns. It needs to carve out its own niche.



The loss of the 'supermarket' opportunity in Eaton offers lessons for economic development in the Town. Successful economic development policy will focus on fostering local businesses and a creative, flexible approach to challenges. With a careful, thought-out approach, Eaton can continue to expand the economic opportunities available to its residents while increasing their quality of life by expanding access to necessities and various goods and services.

One key resource in the town is SUNY Morrisville. Morrisville has served a positive role in providing the Eaton community by the establishment of institutions such as the Copper Turret. Such investments can spur further enhancement of business growth downtown and offset the loss of property tax income. However, more needs to be done to maintain and expand businesses and services operating in Eaton, giving residents more reason to get out, interact with one another, and avoid having to drive out of town to meet basic needs. Such improvement of Eaton's economy will generate sales tax income that can be reinvested in community services and growth to build a strong local economy that delivers for all those in the Eaton community.

There has been community initiative on economic development recently, with the recent formation of Center of New York Economic Alliance (CONYEA) which is made up of several local officials and business owners to promote economic development in Eaton.



Partnerships are key to Eaton's future. Improved cooperation between the Town and SUNY Morrisville will result in positive results for both. Strategic long-term investments spurred by SUNY will pay off, even if properties are removed from the tax rolls. In addition, build relationships with neighboring municipalities, particularly Hamilton, which is close by and where many Eaton residents work, shop, and recreate.

Economic Development Goals

1 Pursue grant funding and programs to support local business and infrastructure development

- A **Partner** with existing organizations such as Partnership for Community Development (PCD), Cazenovia Area Community Development Association (CACDA), SUNY Morrisville
- b **Work** together with existing organizations such as Center of New York Economic Alliance (CONYEA)
- c **Continue** to utilize resources available through Madison County such as Planning and IT services

2 Improve Eaton's image and communication

- a **Work** with major employers to encourage employees to consider living in Eaton
- b **Enhance** town website and provide access to services such as area job training, grants, etc.
- c **Establish** Town of Eaton Community Resource Directory including community groups, local agencies, etc, and make available on Town website and other relevant avenues

3 Integrate partnerships into local economy

- a **Connect** Morrisville-Eaton school students with programs at SUNY Morrisville
- b **Improve** cooperation with MSC in creating programs for public, retaining graduates to live and work in the community, and encouraging employees to live in Eaton and participate in Eaton's community

4 Foster grassroots economy

- a **Develop** and maintain communication with existing businesses to understand needs, strengths, weaknesses, as well as allow local businesses to see new Town commitment and revitalized effort
- b **Pursue** data that indicates what businesses are missing or what goods and services are desired by residents, strive for a diverse and healthy economy that meets as many needs as possible
- c **Develop** a publicly operated, centrally located community space and incubation center that offers space and resources to help new local business initiatives get up and running, space for public events, and opportunity to fill underserved needs (for instance, a small food store in cooperation with MSC)
- d **Pursue** town-wide broadband to ensure possibility of home-based employment or businesses, and identify and address cell service issues.
- e **Balance** economic development strategy on inclusivity, local-based growth that centers on quality of life and service improvements rather than tax incentives and external business recruitment

Housing

Vision: Housing in Eaton is affordable, reflective of the rural character, and available to a range of needs, while new housing development is concentrated in specific areas to preserve open space and foster livable communities

Housing issues were a recurring concern throughout the planning process. The survey, for instance, made apparent that residents feel a struggle in maintaining a quality, healthy, and affordable housing stock. A significant outcome of this is the physical deterioration of properties; residents are struggling to afford major improvement costs such as paint, siding, and roofs.

Lack of variety in housing types, in particular lower maintenance, smaller homes geared towards aging residents, is another concern. Rental units being neglected by owners is another, and results in properties in disrepair that can negatively impact the appearance of neighborhoods and discourage others from investing in their properties.

Perhaps most importantly, Eaton's slow rate of residential development over the past has occurred throughout the town, with little protection given to the open landscape, natural and agricultural resources, and efficient use of public infrastructure. This has contributed to a decrease in community vitality in Morrisville and all the hamlets, particularly Eaton and West Eaton.

While the residential development cannot be undone, it is worth considering that Eaton can still expect slow residential growth in the future, and that should be captured to any degree possible in a manner that limits the negative impacts of 'sprawl' development while maximizing the benefits of denser communities that can support commercial operations, encourage walking and social interactions, and reduce environmental and economic impact on the Town.



Denser housing, as seen in this pocket neighborhood, not only conserves open space and reduces the burden on public infrastructure, but fosters a sense of community between residents by increasing interactions. Smaller homes are also easier to maintain and can be better suited for older residents. *Source: Greenwood Cottages, Shoreline WA. Architect Ross Chapin*

*In summer of 2018,
Madison County and the
Town of Eaton
successfully applied for a
\$450,000 Affordable
Housing Corporation
grant to assist qualified
homeowners with exterior
home improvements.*

A deteriorating housing stock has also led to the deterioration of historic homes throughout the community. Aside from providing housing, historical buildings are a valuable cultural asset that provide community character. Efforts should be made to identify historic properties in the Town, and when appropriate, share educational information on preservation techniques and opportunities with owners. An excellent example is the Mott Morse House in the hamlet of Eaton. Joseph Morse arrived in 1796 with his wife Eunice Bigelow Morse, and construction of this home was finished in 1802. Still remaining are the original fire house for the estate and a brick office with iron vault. Later, a grist and saw mill were built on Eaton Brook. The entire area is a significant piece of Eaton, and Madison County history. The Town should reach out to historic preservation professionals who can assist in working with existing owners to maintain and save these structures to the extent possible, including those at Cornell University Historic Preservation and Planning program and Preservation Association of Central New York (PACNY).



Clockwise from Top Left: The brick office building, the fire house, and the original stone Mott Morse House.

Housing Goals

1 Improve appearance of existing neighborhoods

- a **Develop** design guidelines and standards to create a unique and cohesive built environment
- b **Improve** code enforcement and education of proper code and home maintenance
 - Form committee of Planning Board Member, Code Enforcement Officer (CEO), and community member to update and draft regulations that protect and promote responsible property ownership and maintenance in all neighborhoods and commercial areas
 - Improve CEO compensation and available hours and develop new protocol to conduct regular re-views and surveying, assess violations, and communicate warnings and follow-up visits.
- c **Acquire** abandoned or underutilized properties for revitalization efforts, concentrating on hamlets and areas around Morrisville, if possible coordinate with SUNY Morrisville
 - Identify key locations and properties to target
 - Maintain list of grant, loan, and partner opportunities.
- d **Focus** infrastructure improvements in areas such as hamlets, where public investment impact is maximized
 - Develop list of priority infrastructure improvements with cost estimates and potential funding sources
- e **Identify** and protect historic properties in the town
 - Educate property owners on assistance opportunities and general preservation guidelines. Work with colleges (such as Historic Planning and Preservation at Cornell) to develop materials for owners
- f **Work** to provide assistance to low income residents by pursuing affordable housing grants such as Homeownership Improvement (NYS Affordable Housing Corporation)

2 Concentrate modest residential growth in key areas

- a **Work** with major employers to encourage employees to consider living in Eaton
 - Develop a 'marketing strategy' that focuses on factors influencing where newly hired staff decide to live and area realtor information
- b **Pursue** land use regulations that incentivize denser residential development in existing neighborhoods and hamlets as a way of reducing burden on public infrastructure and facilitating social and economic productivity in Eaton's historic areas
- c **Discourage** typical 'suburban' development and large lot sizes that consume open space, erode Eaton's open space, and undermine existing population centers

Recreation

Vision: Eaton offers residents and visitors alike yearlong opportunities for recreation, with a specific focus on access to the unique outdoor resources in the Town

Recreational amenities are essential services that offer numerous benefits to the community. Open spaces can offer storm water retention, contribute towards improving and protecting water and air quality, produce habitat for wildlife and provide a place for children and families to connect with nature. Access to active recreation such as public swimming or trails encourages Town residents to both be physically active and healthy while engaging with other community members.

While Eaton’s beautiful scenery and natural environment is an excellent resource for outdoor recreation, steps must also be made to encourage other activities and events within the Town. Historic architecture and historic walking tours, live music, and access to other events (such as block parties, festivals, farmer’s markets, and more) foster a sense of community among residents and encourage others to visit.

While most of the survey respondents (40%) indicated Eaton or Morrisville as their primary location for recreation, many prefer other places, including Syracuse (36%), Hamilton (29%), Cazenovia (22%), Route 5 (23%), and Utica (20%). This indicates a potential for more recreational needs to be met by the Town itself. Existing resources such as the Madison County Children’s Camp and the Morrisville Community Club should be examined by the Town to find opportunities to expand recreational access to the public.



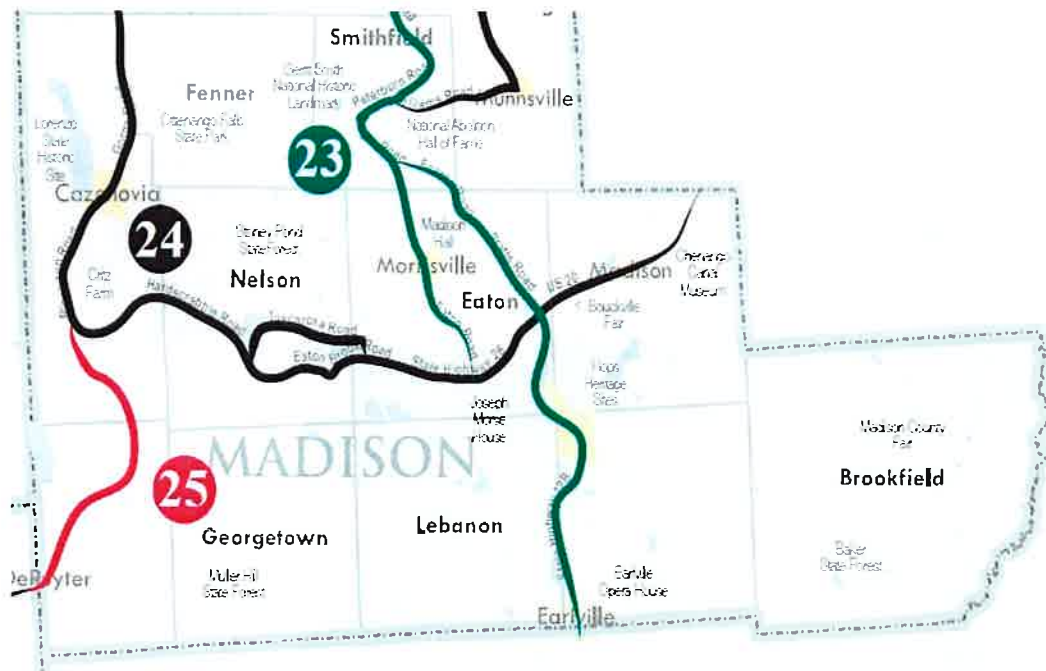
The Madison County Children’s Camp, a non-profit operation, is a unique resource that could potentially be expanded to increase public recreation in the Town.

*Partnership for
Community Development
acquired funding to improve
and expand the
Chenango Canal
Towpath Trail,
which extends from
the village of Hamilton
through Eaton*

Mad. County Tourism Spending		Millions
Lodging	15.2	
Recreation	2.7	
Food and Bev	32.6	
Retail	16.8	
Transportation	5.1	
Second homes	16.5	
Total	\$88.9	

Aside from offering enjoyment to residents, recreational amenities can encourage economic development. Tourism dollars generated from recreational activities can improve Eaton’s economic base. In 2016, travelers spent an estimated \$88 million in Madison County. Meanwhile, CNY’s Regional Recreation and Heritage Plan outlines an emphasis on several regional bike routes, two of which go through Eaton. These routes will increase grant access opportunity, and indeed CNY Regional Planning and Development Board has already made funding available for drafting streetscape improvements along these routes. Madison County, and Eaton in particular, offers a series of uniquely appealing elevation changes as the geography transitions from the Lake Plain Region into the upper reaches of the Appalachian region. Eaton is also home to some beautiful rural vistas, road side farm stands, lakes and ponds, and hamlets, all of which are in demand for travelers in rural areas. As with any tourism effort, care should be taken to balance the needs of residents with the benefits of attracting visitors.

The Town of Eaton is a dynamic place to live and play in harmony with the natural environment; comprised of open space, lakes, streams, campgrounds, and trails. With a renewed effort to improve access to these resources and enhance emphasis on leisure activities, Eaton, steeped in tradition and rich in history can continue to attract residents and visitors alike.



The Eaton section of CNY Recreation Trail Map. Funding is available for design of bicycle and pedestrian-friendly streetscape improvements.

Recreation Goals

1 Coordinate Area Recreation

- a **Cooperate** with County Tourism, Rural Health Network, and neighboring towns in development, maintenance, and advertising of recreational resources such as the Chenango Canal Towpath Trail and O&W Railroad
- b **Ensure** presence on, maintenance of, and local advertisement of the GoSoMad website for Southern Madison County recreational opportunities
- c **Participate** in and leverage funding of broader recreation and pedestrian safety efforts, such as the CNY Regional Recreation and Heritage Plan funding to improve bicycle and pedestrian safety in certain corridors
 - Utilize the Mark Fenton audit to identify and prioritize potential improvements

2 Establish new recreational opportunities

- a **Establish** a process and prioritization method for Town to determine where to acquire and enhance recreational opportunities
 - Work with Southern Madison Heritage Trust to investigate potential recreational properties
- b **Develop** a truly public swimming option on one of the lakes
- c **Establish** small parks and public spaces within hamlets
- d **Initiate**, foster, and support live shows, summer entertainment, and public events
- e **Identify** and develop a public park space that can host events, similar to Hamilton's green
- f **Hold** an information session on assisting landowners on how to make appropriate land available for public use through easements, land trusts, etc.
- g **Work** with MSC to encourage public use of resources such as skating rink, lectures, panels, etc.
- h **Monitor** opportunities, such as tax auction and potential donations, to acquire land for parks or general public use either as the Town or in cooperation with a land trust
- h **Continue** to support efforts to improve access for fishing, hunting, and boating for Eaton residents.
 - Encourage local schools and clubs to partake in education programs focused on getting residents young and old into various recreational activities (such as fishing, hunting, hiking, snowmobiling, boating, etc).

Vision: Eaton is a community that values and protects local environmental resources and strives to participate in broader environmental protection and climate change mitigation efforts.

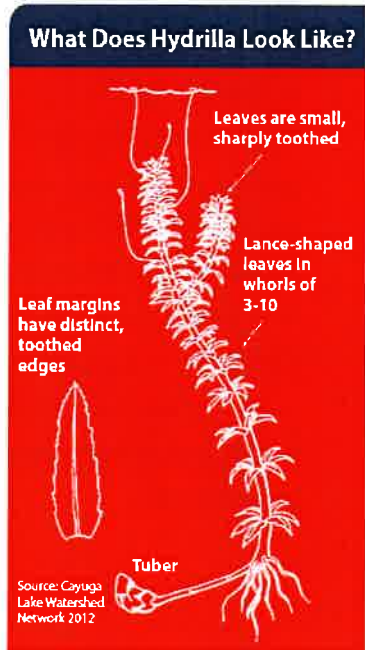


The natural, rural environment in Eaton is a source of community pride and culture, offers recreational opportunities and ecological services, and is a major source of value to the town by attracting residents and visitors alike. Eaton not only appreciates the natural landscape, but the Town’s prosperity is linked to the continued prominence and protection of that landscape.

Eaton is home to gorgeous lakes and streams nestled between hills and valleys, a landscape unique to CNY. The abundance of such resources is an anomaly for communities in this area, and such features were not always present in Eaton. Many of the lakes we see today are actually reservoirs built in the 1830s to supply water to the Chenango Canal: the first reservoir-fed canal in the country. Reservoirs were created and feeder canals dug to bring water to the ‘Summit’ level of the canal, between Bouckville and Hamilton. To that end, Eaton was graced with numerous reservoirs. Bradley Brook and Eaton Brook were exclusively built as reservoirs. Hatch Lake (Camps Pond), Lelands Pond, and Woodsmans Pond were modified to provide additional water. Hatch Lake used to drain to the Otselic River, but that outlet was plugged and the outflow redirected to Bradley Brook to feed the Bradley Brook Reservoir and ultimately the Canal via a clever series of streams and feeder canals serving the Summit portion. Creating and precisely controlling this water supply was a massive piece of early 1800’s hydraulic engineering.

Lake Threats

- > Invasive species
- > Nutrient loading and other pollution
- > Overuse of facilities
- > Infrastructure Maintenance
- > Degraded fisheries
- > Poor lake ecology management or evaluation
- > Educational and communication issues



Hydrilla is an example of a plant, present in the region, that could wreak Havoc on Eaton lakes.