

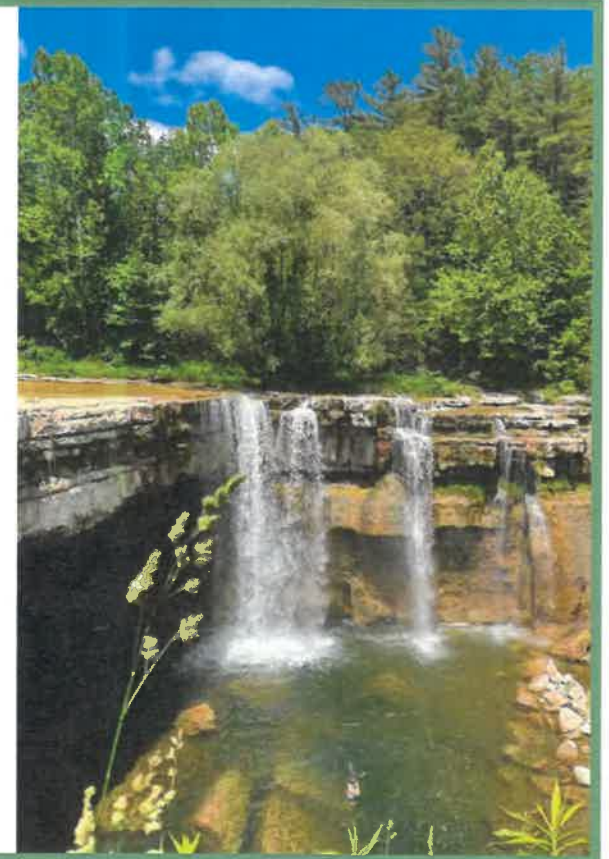
# Executive Summary

The Town of Lansing is fortunate to be home to a rich abundance of open spaces, natural resources, and scenic vistas. In order to fully understand the extent of these natural resources the Town tasked the Conservation Advisory Council (CAC) with the development of a Natural Resources Inventory (NRI), which was completed in 2021. Building upon the momentum of the NRI, the CAC was then tasked with the development of this Open Space Conservation Plan (OSCP). These tasks were identified as a part of the Town's Comprehensive Plan, which was adopted in 2018.

The OSCP is intended to inventory and prioritize of the Town's abundant open spaces. This prioritization allows the Town to understand where the highest value open spaces exist, and thus where to focus potential future funding, programming, and other conservation efforts. The OSCP also presents potential implementation strategies to achieve the vision of the OSCP, as follows:

## Open Space Vision

"Vast open spaces, scenic vistas, and an abundance of natural resources are the defining features of the Town of Lansing, and are invaluable assets to the community's residents and leaders. As such, Lansing will protect and celebrate its open spaces and natural resources to maintain its identity and preserve the rich quality of life that they afford the Town's residents. The Town will prioritize conservation efforts, and will develop and maintain strong partnerships with local agencies, organizations, and the farming community to accomplish its goals while supporting their efforts. This will require thoughtful planning and strategic actions to ensure that this vision and the community's goals are realized. These efforts will allow for enhanced community access and recreation, uplift local property values, and ensure the protection of crucial environmental resources that will enhance the Town's resiliency and sustainability for years to come."



The contents of this Plan were steered by public input, including several public outreach events, a community survey, and a series of stakeholder meetings. The ranking process was crafted based on the values identified as a part of the community survey, and was reviewed alongside the priority areas identified by the public early on in the process. Ultimately, the conservation efforts that stem from the OSCP are intended to provide a wide range of benefits, including:

- **Maintaining scenic vistas**
- **Increasing public access and recreation opportunities**
- **Enhancing climate resiliency**
- **Reducing flooding risks**
- **Improving water and air quality**
- **Conserving wildlife habitats**
- **Improving public health outcomes**
- **Increasing property values**
- **Protecting community character and quality of life**

The Plan contains an inventory and analysis of existing natural features in the Town; generally summarizing the content of the NRI. The Vision, as stated on the previous plan, and the six goals of this Plan are then presented, which are as follows:



**Maintain the agrarian heritage of the Town and preserve its scenic beauty.**



**Preserve agriculture as a viable economic sector in Lansing.**



**Build local resiliency to climate change impacts.**



**Enhance resident quality of life through scenic and recreational resources.**



**Protect our local ecosystem and support wildlife habitat.**



**Ensure the long term sustainability of our water, air, and land resources.**

The ranking process is contained within the Open Space Index (OSI) section of the Plan. The Open Space Index (OSI) provides a systematic rating of land across the Town based on various natural features and other open space characteristics. The OSI enables the Town to be strategic in its allocation of funds and efforts by providing a tool to both proactively identify parcels and resources that meet the goals of the open space program; and to analyze the merits of individual projects and opportunities as they present themselves. The following steps were utilized to create the OSI:

## Step 1. Establish Ranking Criteria

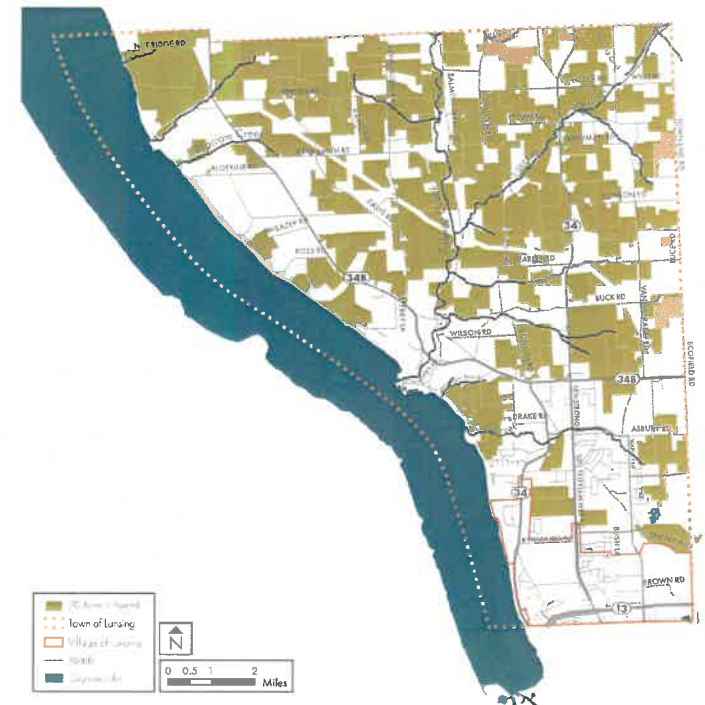
To determine the relative value of each open space parcel identified, and apply consistent criteria for evaluating each parcel, the project team developed a ranked list of criteria to evaluate each parcel. The CAC developed the list of evaluation criteria used based on Question 6 in the Community Survey, but further refined it to include additional attributes of the landscape that were deemed essential to include through discussions of the CAC. The table on the right illustrates the categories used and their respective rank compared to the other criteria. Associated with the relative value of each criteria, a weighted value for each category was assigned that was applied to the scoring shown on the additional OSI boards presented. This ensured that the most important criteria to the community was given additional emphasis during the scoring process.

Criteria	Rank	Weighted Value
Susceptibility to Development	1	10
Unique Natural Areas	2	9
Stream Corridors	3	8
Significant Wildlife Habitat	4	6
Cayuga Lakefront	4	6
Steep Slopes	6	4
Forests & Woodlots	6	4
Wetlands	8	3
Grasslands & Meadows	9	2
Agriculture & Farmlands	9	2
Floodplains	10	1

## Step 2. Identify parcels to be evaluated

For the purposes of this Plan, the CAC only evaluated parcels that were over 70 acres in size. The evaluation included all parcels within this size threshold, regardless of existing land use, which resulted in a total of 119 parcels analyzed. The map to the right shows the parcels analyzed, and the breakdown of properties analyzed by land use is as follows:

- 75 Agricultural Parcels
- 18 Residential Parcels
- 17 Vacant Parcels
- 4 Industrial Parcels
- 2 Commercial Parcels
- 2 Community Services Parcels
- 2 Recreation Parcels
- 1 Public Service Parcel



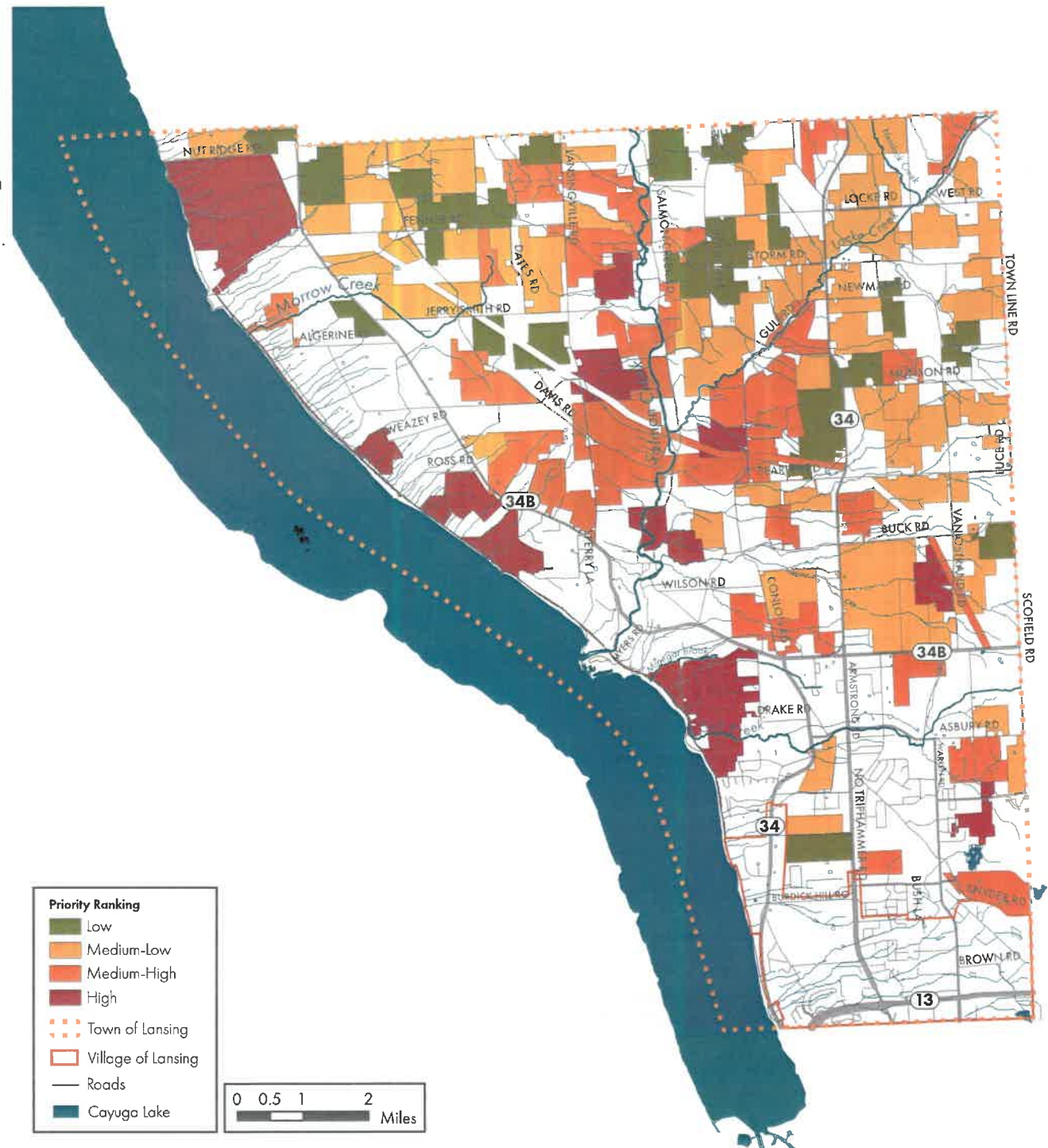
### Step 3. Analyze data for each parcel and assign scoring

Prior to weighting with the Priority Points established for each category, the project team assigned each parcel an unweighted value between 0 and 3 for each of the 11 categories. These points were assigned based on an overlay analysis performed using GIS, that depicted the spatial relationship between the characteristic in question (e.g. farmlands) and the parcel.

### Step 4. Compile results

Once the project team assigned unweighted scores to each parcel for each category, each value was weighted based on the Priority Points for each category. The project team then summed the weighted values for each parcel to develop an overall comparative ranking, which translated into "High," "Medium-High," "Medium-Low," and "Low" priority parcels in regard to open space value. The results of this ranking process are displayed at right, and listed below:

- **Low priority:** 8%, or 22 parcels
- **Medium-low priority:** 41%, or 49 parcels
- **Medium-high priority:** 26% or 31 parcels
- **High priority:** 14% or 17 parcels



The final component of the OSCP is the Implementation Strategy, which outlines tools and tactics that the Town can employ to achieve its overall open space vision. These options range from outright purchase of land within the Town, to land use regulations that will help to steer future development in a direction that supports conservation efforts. Each option is briefly described, alongside estimated cost ranges, potential partners, and an estimated timeframe. Timeframes are meant to describe the estimated time an action will take to complete, not how soon the action item should be accomplished. The generalized cost estimates, based on order of magnitude, use the symbols below to reflect the following estimated cost ranges:

- \$:** Under \$50,000
- \$\$:** Between \$50,000 and \$100,000
- \$\$\$:** Over \$100,000
- N/A:** No Cost

The tables below and on the following page summarize each of the implementation options. Funding opportunities, as well as potential grant sources are also listed in the Implementation Options section of the full OSCP.

STRATEGY	DESCRIPTION	COST	POTENTIAL PARTNERS	TIMEFRAME
<b>Potential Amendments to Development Regulations</b>				
<b>Promote conservation subdivisions</b>	Review existing conservation subdivision design regulations for opportunities to bolster or encourage their application, where appropriate	\$	Town Board, Planning Board, CAC, <b>Town Planning Dept.</b>	Short
<b>Environmental Protection Overlay Districts (EPODs)</b>	Develop overlay zoning districts that provide protection for environmentally sensitive areas (typically wetlands, floodplains, steep slopes, etc.).	\$	Town Board, Planning Board, CAC, <b>Town Planning Dept.</b>	Medium
<b>Development Review Process</b>	Reference the OSCP as a relevant plan or study in the development review process.	N/A	Town Board, <b>Planning Board</b> , CAC, Town Planning Dept.	Ongoing
<b>Mature tree retention</b>	Require development to maintain trees on lot over a certain diameter at breast height (DBH).	\$	Town Board, Planning Board, CAC, <b>Town Planning Dept.</b>	Short
<b>Habitat corridor preservation</b>	Identify and require preservation of local habitat corridors during development process.	\$	Town Board, Planning Board, <b>CAC</b> , Town Planning Dept.	Medium
<b>Open space requirements</b>	Modify the code to require development to maintain a certain acreage or percentage of a lot as open space - to be either publicly or privately held	\$	Town Board, Planning Board, CAC, <b>Town Planning Dept.</b>	Short
<b>Open Space Incentive Zoning</b>	Allow for developer to gain certain benefits in exchange for open space conservation and/or monetary funds to support conservation efforts	\$	Town Board, Planning Board, CAC, <b>Town Planning Dept.</b>	Medium
<b>Cayuga Lake Scenic Byway Overlay District</b>	Consider the development of a Cayuga Lake Scenic Byway Overlay District to protect scenic viewsheds along Route 34B.	N/A - \$	Town Board, Planning Board, <b>CAC</b> , Town Planning Dept.	Short

STRATEGY	DESCRIPTION	COST	POTENTIAL PARTNERS	TIMEFRAME
<b>Land Conservation</b>				
<b>New York State Purchase of Development Rights (PDR) Program through Tompkins County</b>	Participate in the NYS PDR - a voluntary program that involves a landowner selling the development rights of a parcel. The landowner maintains all other rights and responsibilities, and can use or sell it for purposes allowed in the easement.	\$\$\$	<b>Tompkins Co.</b> , Cornell Cooperative Extension, NYS Dept. of Agriculture & Markets, Town Planning Dept.	Short
<b>Purchase of land</b>	Acquire undeveloped land. Requires significant capital for the purchase and long term stewardship of land.	\$\$\$	Town Board, Town Planning Dept., CAC, FLLT, Tompkins Co., NYS Parks	Ongoing
<b>Conservation Easement</b>	Create a voluntary legal agreement that protects the natural resources of a parcel of land by restricting future development permanently, but could allow other activities such as farming or public access. Agreement is held between landowner and a government or land trust. Easement can be donated or sold.	N/A - \$\$\$	Town Board, Town Planning Dept., CAC, FLLT, Tompkins Co., American Farmland Trust, Open Space Institute, The Conservation Fund, The Nature Conservancy, NYS Dept. of Agriculture & Markets, US Dept. of Agriculture	Ongoing
<b>Transfer of Development Rights</b>	Create a voluntary program that involves a landowner selling the development rights of their property within a certain area (sending area) to a developer, who can then use these rights to increase the density of development within another specified area (receiving area).	\$\$ - \$\$\$	Town Board, <b>Town Planning Dept.</b> , Planning Board, CAC, Agriculture & Farmland Protection Committee	Long
<b>Tompkins Co. Natural Infrastructure Capital Program</b>	Participate in the County's Natural Infrastructure Capital Program, which provides funding to protect natural systems that can help mitigate the adverse impacts of climate change. Tompkins County will cover up to 1/3 of the assessed value of an eligible property, up to a maximum of \$200,000.	\$\$\$	<b>Tompkins Co.</b> , FLLT, Town Planning Department, Town Board, CAC	Long
<b>Other Implementation Options</b>				
<b>Low impact / Green Development</b>	Utilize green infrastructure and low impact design to lessen the impacts of development on natural resources.	\$	Town Planning Dept., Planning Board, <b>Private Developers</b>	Ongoing
<b>Conservation Board Establishment</b>	Prepare the OSCP, and approval by the Town Board as the Town's official index of open space. This will result in the existing CAC being eligible to become a Conservation Board (CB).	N/A - \$	<b>Town Board</b> , CAC	Short
<b>Increase Administrative Capacity of Town</b>	Add staff to the Town's municipal operations. This would allow for increased administrative capacity and more active open space conservation efforts, such as applying for grant funds.	\$\$ - \$\$\$	<b>Town Board</b> , Town Staff	Long