SECTION 3: LAND USE POLICIES - AGRICULTURE

Lands designated Agriculture are areas with highly valued soils in accordance with the CLI mapping and therefore have potential for agricultural production, areas demonstrating a concentration of farming actively, as well as pockets of lesser valued soils within the greater context of a prime agricultural area. The Canada Land Inventory (C.L.I.) of Soil Capability for Agriculture, Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs information on land in agricultural use and site investigations were used to identify the Agriculture designation on Schedule 'A'. It is a policy of this Plan to protect agricultural lands to ensure their availability on a long-term basis by protecting them from incompatible uses and preventing their fragmentation.

Agriculture and farm related businesses and industries are important economic generators for the local and regional community.

Farming requires large investments, a high degree of risk, long term planning and responsible management of the land resource. More and more, this business is subject to fluctuations and uncertainty due to market changes, trade practices and competition. Over time, we can expect an ever increasing number of farm consolidations resulting in fewer, larger farm units to achieve economies of scale; a growing complexity and sophistication of land management and farm operations; and a declining farm population. It is important to protect these areas from various threats that impede farm operations. These threats include the increased pressure for non-farm related uses in rural areas which may constrain agricultural practices, fragment land ownership, inflate agricultural land prices, and create land use compatibility problems.

The Municipality recognizes the contribution of the agricultural industry and land resource to North Grenville’s economy, heritage and quality of life and will strive to protect this valuable resource. Through the Official Plan, land use will be managed so that agriculture is recognized and maintained as a long term use of land within the Municipality. The implications of land use change for agriculture and the potential impacts of agricultural operations and non-farm land uses will be fully assessed.

3.1 Agricultural Goal

It shall be a goal of the Municipality of North Grenville to conserve agricultural land, protect the viability of farms and farm-related industries, and maintain the quality of rural life for the benefit of all.

3.2 Agricultural Objectives

The use of areas designated "Agriculture" shall be directed towards the following objectives:

a) Protect, maintain and improve the prime agriculture areas for future generations. Prime agricultural areas are lands with highly valued soils in accordance with the CLI mapping and therefore have potential for agricultural production, areas
demonstrating a concentration of farming actively, as well as pockets of lesser valued soils within the greater context of a prime agricultural area;

b) Promote and support a healthy and productive agricultural industry as a key component of the Municipality’s economic base and heritage;

c) Promote farm practices which encourage the conservation of surface and groundwater resources, aquatic habitat, woodlands, wetlands, wildlife habitat and other natural features, where such practices do not impose undue limitations on the farming community;

d) Support a pattern of agricultural land holdings that increases the viability of farm operations and avoids the fragmentation of land ownership;

e) Discourage uses which are not supportive of agriculture from locating in areas designated for agricultural purposes;

f) Direct permitted agriculturally-related development in agricultural areas to lands that have a marginal or lesser capability for agriculture, and where the potential for conflict between agricultural and non-agricultural uses will be minimized;

g) Minimize the potential for land use conflicts between residential uses in the settlement area and livestock operations;

h) Conserve agricultural land with the Municipality of North Grenville as a valuable, limited and non-renewable resource;

i) Protect the productivity of farmland for agricultural production for the global community and future generations;

j) Protect the long term viability and stability of agricultural lands by recognizing these areas as a permanent use of land;

k) Encourage economic development and research opportunities associated with teaching and learning establishments;

l) Encourage effective farm management practices which are practical and environmentally responsible by supporting farm stewardship incentive programs and initiatives aimed at reducing erosion; promoting the responsible use of pesticides; improving energy conservation; preserving and enhancing topsoil and effective nutrient management; promoting conservation of woodlots and wetlands; and encouraging the preparation and implementation of Nutrient Management Plans;

m) Promote the infill and intensification of development in urban areas to minimize the amount of farmland required for urban growth purposes.
3.3 **Permitted Uses**

The Agriculture designation shall permit many forms of agricultural uses, secondary uses and agriculture-related uses on lands designated as Agriculture, in order to take advantage of its proximity to urban areas and markets.

3.3.1 **Primary Permitted Uses**

Within areas designated ‘Agriculture’ on Schedule ‘A’ and Schedule ‘B’, the primary permitted use of the land shall be for the growing of crops, including nursery and horticultural crops; raising of livestock; raising of other animals for food, fur or fibre, including poultry and fish; aquaculture; apiaries; agro-forestry; maple syrup production; forestry and associated on-farm buildings and structures, including accommodation for full-time farm labour when the size and nature of the operation requires additional employment.

3.3.2 **Secondary Uses**

Secondary uses in the ‘Agriculture’ designation include uses secondary to the principal use of the property which are compatible with and shall not hinder surrounding agricultural operations, including but not limited to, accessory dwelling (farm house), home occupations, bed and breakfast establishments, home industries, forestry related uses and uses that produce value-added agricultural products from the farm operation on the property. Secondary uses could include herb gardens, farm gate sales, kennels and craft shops.

New residential dwellings on vacant lots existing as of the date of adoption of this Plan shall be permitted.

3.3.3 **Agriculture-Related Uses**

Agriculture-related uses in the ‘Agriculture’ designation includes uses such as, feed mill or seed cleaning plants, livestock assembly points, grain drying, animal husbandry services, storage for farm produce, abattoirs, custom machinery operators, or similar agri-businesses. These uses may be permitted upon lands designated as Agriculture provided it has been demonstrated that there are no reasonable alternative locations which avoid Agricultural designated lands and that there are no reasonable alternative locations within the Agriculture designation with lower priority agricultural lands. Such uses shall be placed in a separate zoning category.

Agriculture-related tourist commercial uses or agri-tourism uses such as farm vacations and pick-your-own operations are also permitted;

3.3.4 **Other Permitted Uses**

A dwelling accessory to any of the above uses and located on the same lot therewith will be permitted subject to the provisions of the Zoning By-law. A maximum of two accessory dwelling units may be permitted on a farm property provided at least one dwelling consists of a single detached dwelling unit.
Notwithstanding the above permitted uses, on lands designated agriculture and described as Part of Lot 26, 27, and 28, Concession 4, former Oxford on Rideau and located on Schedule B and owned by the University of Guelph, shall be operated as a post secondary education institution.

3.4 Policies

a) An amendment to the Official Plan will be required to change the designation from Agriculture to another designation. Any decision affecting Agricultural lands shall be consistent with policy statements issued under the Planning Act.

b) Within the Agriculture designation, there may be small pockets of land which are marginally productive or of lower priority for agriculture due to their size, shape, topography, soil, class, drainage and other physical characteristics. However, these physical limitations and site characteristics alone do not merit consideration for an Official Plan amendment to a non-agricultural designation.

c) New land uses, and new or expanding livestock facilities shall comply with the minimum distance separation (MDS) formulae and the General Development Section of this Plan. Specific regulations related to the implementation of the MDS Guidelines shall be identified in the Zoning By-law.

d) Notwithstanding Section 3.3.3 above, within the Agriculture designation, farm related commercial and industrial uses which require proximity to agricultural operations and provide agricultural services and supplies, such as a farm implement dealer, a feed mill or seed cleaning plant, an agricultural produce warehouse, an abattoir or other similar agri business may be permitted without an amendment to this Plan. These uses shall generally be encouraged to consolidate into groups within or adjacent to existing communities or in areas of lower quality agricultural land. Regard shall be had to the following matters in reviewing applications for the development of such uses:

i. the compatibility of the proposed use with surrounding land uses; and
ii. the siting and design of the proposal so as to ensure the provision of adequate off-street parking and loading facilities, appropriate setbacks, landscaping and buffering and that any lighting or signs are arranged so as to blend in with the character of adjacent uses.

Such uses may be permitted conditional upon approval of an amendment to a separate zoning classification in the implementing Zoning By-law where appropriate provisions and regulations are established to govern the use of such lands.

e) Permitted farm related commercial or industrial uses will be subject to Site Plan Control, as outlined in Section 14.3 of this Plan. In addition, the Municipality may require a preliminary site plan as part of the application for a Zoning By-law amendment.

f) When considered necessary, the Municipality may seek the advice of
government agencies or individuals having appropriate specialist knowledge in matters concerning the potential effects of any proposed farm related commercial or industrial use. In accordance with comments received from government agencies and/or other expert opinion, the Municipality may impose building controls in the development or site plan agreement.

g) Consents in the Agriculture designation shall be in accordance with the provisions of Section 12.

h) Agricultural related businesses and services will be permitted in the Agriculture designation subject to the following:

i. the proposed use is directly related to agriculture and it should be demonstrated that it is necessary to be in close proximity to farm operations;
ii. the proposed use is proposed for less productive land wherever possible; and
iii. the uses shall be appropriately zoned in the Zoning By-law.

i) An existing lot of record in an Agriculture designation may be used for residential purposes in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Zoning By-law provided such lot is an appropriate size and shape and the dwelling can be serviced with private sewage disposal and water services, does not violate the Minimum Distance Separation Formulae as amended, and it complies with other relevant policies of this Plan.

j) Where any mineral aggregate operation takes place within areas comprised of Class 1, 2 or 3 soils according to the Canada Land Inventory of Soil Capability for Agriculture, it may be a requirement of the Municipality, to be imposed through the license, that appropriate rehabilitation sufficient for agricultural purposes is carried out. The terms and conditions for such rehabilitation may be established in consultation with the appropriate government agencies.

k) Impacts from any new or expanding non-agricultural uses on surrounding agricultural operations and lands should be mitigated to the extent feasible.

l) The creation of non-farm residential lots in the Agriculture designation shall be prohibited.

3.4.1 Land Stewardship, Sustainable Operations and Nutrient Management

a) Agricultural operations will be subject to the Nutrient Management Act, 2002 regulated by the province under Bill 81. Bill 81 provides for the management of materials containing nutrients in ways that shall achieve optimal crop yields and product quality, manage input costs and enhance the protection of soils and water resources. It provides for a sustainable future for agricultural operations and rural development.

b) Agricultural operations shall be encouraged to operate their business under best management practices and to participate in farmer-led stewardship initiatives,
such as the Environmental Farm Plan, which protect the long term productivity of soils and minimize or eliminate negative environmental impacts. In order to minimize negative impacts on water bodies, agricultural operations are encouraged to maintain appropriate setbacks or buffer strips from water bodies.