

Fulton County Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan



Draft Plan – Parts I and II
February 2025

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Abbreviations Used in this Plan

AFPB – Agricultural and Farmland Protection Board

Ag District – New York State Agricultural District

AML – New York State Agriculture and Markets Law

CADE – Center for Agricultural Development and Entrepreneurship

CCE – Cornell Cooperative Extension

CSA – Community Supported Agriculture

FCAFPB – Fulton County Agricultural and Farmland Protection Board

FPIG – New York State Farmland Protection Implementation Grant

GDD – Growing Degree Days

GIS – Geographic Information System

HFM BOCES – Hamilton-Fulton-Montgomery Board of Cooperative Educational Services

MW - Megawatt

NYS – New York State

NYSED – New York State Education Department

OPAV – Option to Purchase at Agricultural Value

ORES – New York State Office of Renewable Energy Siting

PTECH – Pathways in Technology Early College High School

SWCD – Soil and Water Conservation District

SWOT – Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats

USDA – United States Department of Agriculture

ZBA – Zoning Board of Appeals

Part I

- **Executive Summary**
- **Introduction**
- **Current Agricultural Conditions**
- **Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, & Threats Facing Agriculture**
- **Vision and Goals for Enhancing Agriculture**
- **Recommendations**
- **Implementation and Action Plan**



Executive Summary

Overview

Agriculture is a vital component of Fulton County’s economy, landscape, and rural heritage. It supports local food systems, tourism, and community character while contributing significantly to the economy through farm operations and related agribusinesses. However, local farmers face economic, environmental, and policy challenges that threaten the long-term viability of agriculture. Recognizing the need for an updated strategy, Fulton County has developed this Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan to guide future policies, investments, and support mechanisms. The Plan aims to ensure that agriculture remains a strong and sustainable industry, balancing growth, conservation, and economic development.

This Plan updates and builds upon the 2002 Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan, integrating new data, emerging opportunities, and current threats. It aligns with the Vision 2026 Development Strategy, reinforcing agriculture as a cornerstone of economic development in the County.



The Planning Process

The development of this Plan was a collaborative effort, led by the Fulton County Planning Department with input from the Fulton County Agricultural and Farmland Protection Board (AFPB) and key stakeholders, including farmers, farmland owners, ag-related businesses, and community organizations.

Funded by a grant from the New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets, the planning process included:

- **Data Collection & Analysis:** Reviewing agricultural census data, economic trends, and farmland usage patterns.
- **Public Engagement:** Conducting surveys, focus groups, interviews, and open houses to gather input from farmers and residents.
- **Mapping & Land Use Assessment:** Identifying priority farmlands, agricultural trends, and conversion pressures.
- **Policy & Regulatory Review:** Evaluating zoning, land use regulations, and existing municipal policies for farm-friendliness.

- Strategic Development: Outlining goals, priorities, and recommendations to enhance and protect agriculture.

Current Agricultural Conditions in Fulton County

Fulton County's agricultural sector is diverse but faces several challenges and opportunities. According to the 2022 Census of Agriculture, the County has 205 farms covering 23,234 acres of farmland, with an average farm size of 113 acres, which is smaller than the state average. Farms in the county primarily focus on livestock (45%) and crops (55%), with forage crops, corn for grain, Christmas trees, soybeans, apples, and vegetables being the most common.

The economic impact of agriculture in Fulton County is significant, with total agricultural product sales reaching \$9.4 million in 2022. However, farm profitability has declined, with a 91% drop in net cash farm income over the past five years. Small farms dominate the County, with 59% of farms generating less than \$10,000 annually and 12% earning over \$100,000. Direct-to-consumer sales are growing, with 17% of farms selling their products directly to consumers at farm stands and farmers' markets.

The farming population is aging, with 60% of farm operators aged 55 or older, while only 6% are under 35. Workforce shortages and a lack of farm succession planning pose risks to the future of agriculture in the County. Additionally, land availability and development pressures are increasing, as residential and solar development encroach on agricultural lands.

Despite these challenges, new trends are emerging, including growth in specialty agriculture, agritourism, and direct-to-consumer sales. Maple syrup production has increased significantly, and niche markets such as farm-based craft beverages and farm tourism are expanding. However, issues such as rising production costs, inadequate local processing facilities, and limited broadband access continue to hinder farm operations.

Challenges & Opportunities (SWOT Analysis)

An analysis identified the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats facing agriculture based on all previous tasks and input. Key features include:

Strengths:

- Strong community support for local agriculture.
- Growth in direct sales, agritourism, and farm-to-table initiatives.
- High-quality farmland and agricultural soils.
- Existing farm-friendly policies such as Agricultural Districts.

Weaknesses:

- Declining dairy and livestock operations.
- Lack of processing facilities (meat, dairy, value-added products).
- Limited access to financing and grants for small farms.
- Labor shortages and difficulty attracting younger farmers.

Opportunities:

- Expansion of agritourism and direct-to-consumer sales.
- Investment in meat processing, food hubs, and value-added production.
- Strengthening farm-friendly zoning and land use policies.
- Diversifying agriculture with specialty crops (e.g., flowers, hops, berries, poultry, apiaries, hemp, etc.).
- Enhancing public awareness and education on agriculture's economic impact.



Threats:

- Continued land conversion for solar and residential development.
- Climate change impacts such as unpredictable weather patterns.
- Economic pressures, including high taxes and low commodity prices.
- Lack of a younger generation willing to take over farms.

Vision and Goals

Fulton County envisions a future with a vibrant, resilient, and economically robust agricultural sector. We are committed to preserving our rich agricultural heritage, encouraging the next generation of farmers, and enhancing farm profitability. We will support efforts to promote local food production, increase agritourism, and diversify farm operations to ensure that agriculture remains a cornerstone of our economy and a source of pride for all residents. Together, we will cultivate a future where agriculture flourishes, rural character is protected, and farming remains an important part of Fulton County's identity.

Goals to achieve this vision include:

1. Increase profitability of farm operations and the long-term viability of agriculture.
2. Enhance marketing and promotion of Fulton County farms and agricultural products.

3. Advocate for policies and collaboration at the local, County, State, and federal levels that support and protect the interests of farmers.
4. Enhance agritourism opportunities.
5. Strengthen community engagement and education in support of local agriculture.
6. Ensure that farmers in Fulton County have support for and access to the latest research, technology, and financial resources.
7. Promote environmental stewardship and sustainable farming practices that conserve natural resources, reduce environmental impact, enhance soil health and biodiversity, and assist farmers in addressing changes in weather patterns.
8. Minimize adverse impacts of solar development on agriculture and lands that support agriculture.
9. Improve agricultural infrastructure to enhance the efficiency and competitiveness of local farms.
10. Encourage a new generation of farmers.

Key Recommendations & Action Plan

To address the County's goals, the Plan outlines strategic recommendations and priority actions, categorized under five (5) focus areas:

1. Agritourism Enhancement

- Expand farm tours, festivals, and other agritourism activities.
- Develop farm-to-table dining experiences and local food branding.
- Create an online directory of local farms and products.

2. Marketing and Promotion

- Create brochures and other materials to promote farms and orchards.
- Improve wayfinding to direct visitors to farmstands and farmers' markets.
- Expand outreach to residents about local healthy eating options.

3. Technical Assistance and Ongoing Support

- Increase county funding for the local Cornell Cooperative Extension (CCE) office.
- Improve agricultural tax assessment and enforcement.
- Encourage succession planning by older farmers.
- Provide financial support for farm expansion and diversification.

4. Developing the Next Generation of Farmers

- Enhance agricultural education programs in schools and colleges.
- Provide mentorship, training, and financial support for young farmers.
- Expand farm-to-school programs.

5. Farm and Farmland Protection

- Promote farm-friendly land use regulations at the municipal level.
- Establish best practices for solar development.
- Enact a countywide right-to-farm law.

Implementation & Next Steps

The success of this Plan relies on collaborative implementation among:

- County and municipal governments
- Farmers, agribusinesses, and cooperatives
- Agricultural support agencies and organizations
- Economic development and tourism organizations

Fulton County Planning, with input from the County Agricultural and Farmland Protection Board will take a lead role in initiating these efforts, seeking funding, and fostering partnerships to ensure the long-term sustainability of agriculture as a core asset in the County.

The Fulton County Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan provides a comprehensive strategy for strengthening local agriculture, ensuring long-term farm profitability, and protecting farmland for future generations. By implementing these recommendations, Fulton County can foster a thriving, diverse, and sustainable agricultural economy that supports both farmers and the wider community.

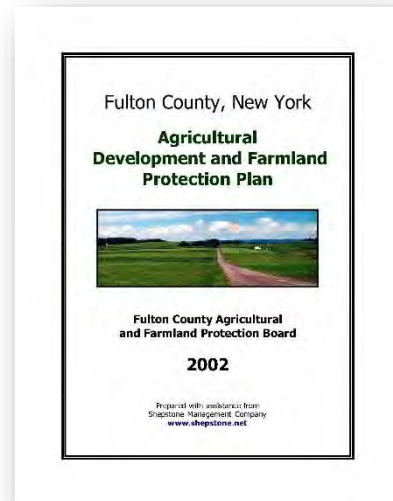


Introduction

A New Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan for Fulton County

Fulton County is located in the Mohawk Valley region, approximately 45 miles northwest of Albany, the state capital. With a total area of 533 square miles, the County has two cities, ten towns, and four villages. A large portion of Fulton County lies within the Adirondack Park.

Fulton County adopted its original Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan in 2002. That plan described farming as a “fundamental economic opportunity” that “pays cultural, environmental and social dividends” for the County. It noted that agriculture is “much more than farming,” as it provides year-round business for non-agricultural establishments that provide goods and services to farmers. Agricultural uses also generate property tax revenues well above the expenditures for the public services that they require, contribute to the County’s rural character, preserve natural environments, and attract tourism.



In 2018, Fulton County also adopted the Vision 2026 Development Strategy. This 10-year plan guides growth and preservation, and addresses tourism, agriculture and food processing as a key industry in the County. It specifically establishes an initiative to promote local, healthy foods, attract new and diverse food establishments, and expand farm markets throughout the County. The Strategy further establishes a recommendation to encourage a thriving agricultural economy via farmer’s markets, venues and events, evaluate the feasibility of becoming a regional food hub, promote value-added agriculture for small farms, protect critical farmlands and soils, increase participation in tax incentive programs that promote agriculture and active farmland and to work with local municipalities to encourage local codes to be farm and visitor-friendly.

The Mohawk Valley, which incorporates the counties of Fulton, Herkimer, Montgomery, Oneida, Otsego, and Schoharie, has a rich agriculture heritage. During the colonial period, the region was known as the “breadbasket of the Revolution,” as local farms supplied grain to the Continental Army. The area’s fertile soils supported the growth of many crops. Later, agriculture expanded into milk production, and the region was at the core of a thriving dairy industry. Today, farms in the Mohawk Valley produce a variety of crops and livestock, with many selling their products at farm stands and farmers’ markets.

The Mohawk Valley Regional Economic Development Council’s 2023 Strategic Plan identifies agribusiness and food systems as key regional industry sectors and areas of opportunity. The plan calls for the Mohawk Valley to “play a pivotal role in propelling Upstate New York as the food basket of America... we are well positioned to serve a burgeoning demand for sustainably produced craft foods and beverages to domestic and international markets.”¹ Although the strategic plan acknowledges the challenges faced by farmers in the Mohawk Valley, it also cites opportunities for diversification, including incorporating agritourism activities and expanding into niche markets, such as value-added products, organic and specialty crops, and direct-to-consumer sales.

Agricultural Programming Since the 2002 Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan

- HFM BOCES and PTECH expanded agricultural education opportunities
- New agricultural and food processing businesses including High Tower Farm/Robotic Milking, Euphrates Cheese, Pata Negra, Fage USA, Vireo Health, Westmeadow Creamery, Mohawk Harvest Co-op, and Johnson Family Farm Store
- Expanded specialty operations including Goderie’s Tree Farm, Peaceful Valley Maple Farms, Brower Road Sugar House, Upstate Coffee, and Philia Organic Farm
- Establishment of craft beverage producers including Rogers’ Cideryard, Stump City Brewing, Great Sacandaga Brewing Company, Kessler Brewing Company, and Higher Ground Distilling Company
- Farm and food-related events and trails including the Farm-2-Table Tour, Craft Beverage Trail, Bacon & Brew Fest, Fulton Montgomery Quilt Barn Trail, and Food Truck Fridays

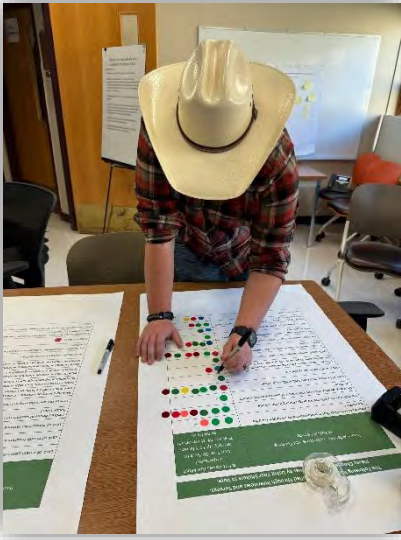
The agricultural economy in New York State faces several stressors that affect farm sustainability and growth. These include land development pressure, such as suburban sprawl and rising land prices; economic and financial challenges, such as high production costs and fluctuating market prices; scarcity of labor, rising costs of labor, and lack of housing for farmworkers; environmental and climate challenges such as degradation of soil health, changing weather patterns, increased frequency of extreme weather such as droughts, floods and severe storms; regulatory pressures from a myriad of federal, state and local regulations related to land use, environmental protection, labor, and food safety; and national/international trade policies which impacts export opportunities and profitability. These same stressors face Fulton County farms. In addition, since the COVID-19 pandemic, municipalities on the eastern side of the County, closest to the Capital Region, have seen increased development of subdivisions and renewable energy projects on lands that were, in the past, used for agriculture.

At the same time, new emerging farming practices including more agritourism, technologies and equipment, new farming methods, and new crops and markets are supported by a local population that desires locally produced food and agricultural products. All of these are positive changes from which Fulton County farmers can benefit.

¹ Mohawk Valley Hudson Regional Economic Development Council, *State of the Region: Mohawk Valley 2023 Strategic Plan*, p. 32, accessed at <https://regionalcouncils.ny.gov/mohawk-valley>.

Because of all these changes, the 2002 plan is no longer sufficient to guide programs, policies, and initiatives that support agriculture in the County. Addressing these stressors and emerging opportunities requires coordinated efforts from government, industry, and community stakeholders to create supportive policies, provide financial and technical assistance, and promote sustainable agricultural practices. This is the foundation of this Plan – to provide a roadmap for keeping agriculture strong in Fulton County.

The Planning Process



This Plan, developed between July 2023 and October 2024, was led by the Fulton County Planning Department with the assistance of the Fulton County Agriculture and Farmland Protection Board (AFPB) and project consultants. It is based on input from the AFPB and from farmers, farmland owners, agriculture-related businesses, members of the public, and other stakeholders.

Funded by Fulton County and a grant from the NYS Department of Agriculture and Markets, the planning process included the following steps:

1. Designating the Fulton County AFPB to serve as the project advisory committee, and holding meetings of the AFPB, the Planning Department, and the consultants.
2. Compiling data from the Agricultural Census and other sources to understand current farming operations and evaluate trends impacting agriculture in the County.
3. Developing and analyzing the results of two online surveys: one on perceptions of agriculture and agritourism, targeted at residents and visitors; the other directed to farmers and farmland owners, with questions on their agricultural operations, practices, issues, and opportunities.
4. Facilitating four (4) focus groups to engage members of the agricultural community in discussing strengths, challenges, and opportunities by topic. Focus groups included dairy, livestock, horses; field crops, maple, and orchards; solar development; and agritourism, craft beverages, and restaurants.
5. Conducting interviews with approximately 20 stakeholders including farmers, economic development and tourism staff, educators, businesses and organizations that sell goods and offer services to farmers, and others identified by Planning staff.

6. Creating a Geographic Information System (GIS) database and maps showing agricultural lands and resources.
7. Identifying important farmlands in Fulton County.
8. Conducting farm-friendly audits in four communities to understand how local land use regulations address agricultural land uses.
9. Analyzing all information collected to identify strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats related to agriculture in Fulton County.
10. Facilitating three (3) open house forums where participants could learn about the Plan and offer feedback.
11. Developing vision and goal statements.
12. Recommending and prioritizing strategies and actions to enhance and promote agriculture, address challenges, and protect farmland in Fulton County.
13. Preparing a Draft Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan.
14. Developing an online, user-friendly summary of the Plan that provides maps and narrative for ease of use and understanding of this Plan's components.
15. Submitting the Draft Plan to the Fulton County AFPB.
16. Referring the Draft Plan from the AFPB to the Fulton County Board of Supervisors.
17. Holding a public meeting about the Draft Plan.
18. Editing the Draft Plan to create the Final Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan.
19. Adoption of the Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan by the Fulton County Board of Supervisors.
20. Submission of the County-approved plan to the Commissioner of the New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets.

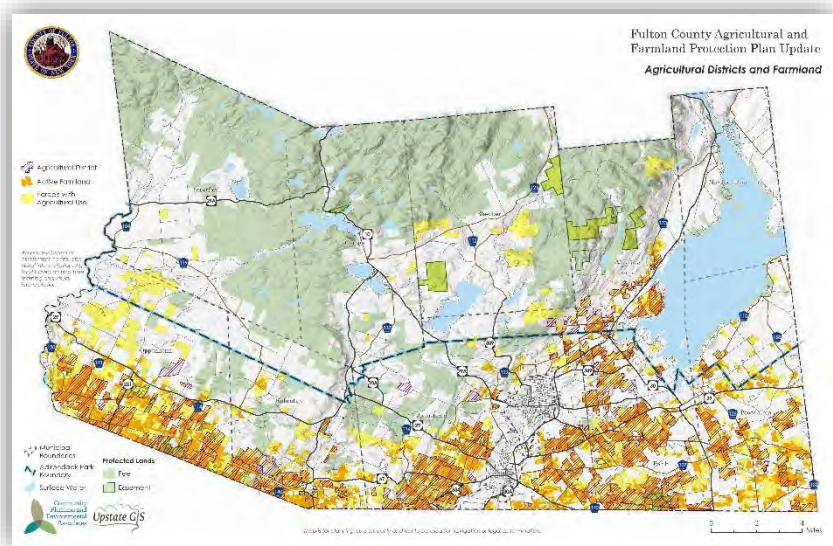
How This Plan Can Be Used

This Plan details and emphasizes agriculture’s importance to the local economy. It sets the stage for favorable opportunities to engage a range of community stakeholders, in addition to the many growers and producers themselves, to continue building support for local agriculture and achieve success in realizing the vision and goals for agriculture established by the County in this Plan.

The actions, strategies and policies recommended in this Plan aim to solidify and grow the agricultural economy, articulate priority projects, and provide the basis for protecting critical farmlands in the County. Although this Plan offers a countywide perspective on agriculture, it is intended to be used by a variety of stakeholders including farmers, farmland owners, agri-businesses, ag-related agencies and organizations, County staff and County decision-makers. Because enhancing agriculture in the County is complex and requires a variety of efforts and initiatives, multiple stakeholders, including those responsible for implementing programs at the town level, are important. Priority programs can be implemented in coordination with the farm community, agricultural service agencies, other organizations, and the municipal, County and New York State governments.

Different components of the Plan can be used in different ways as follows:

- **Detailed maps.** County staff along with agencies and organizations such as the Fulton County Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD), Fulton County Farm Bureau, new and experienced farmers, and municipalities can use the maps to understand where farming is taking place and how it relates to other land uses in the County. They illustrate the role agriculture plays locally. Municipalities can also use these maps in their comprehensive planning and development of local policies. The Priority Agricultural Areas Map can be used at the town and county levels to help guide planning and decision-making to minimize the conversion of critical farmland. This map is also essential to farmers who wish to protect their land through the New York State Farmland Protection Implementation Grants Program.



- **A Farm Friendly Audit** that can be used by municipalities to enhance their plans, zoning, and subdivision laws and ensure that barriers to agricultural land uses are minimized.
- **Up-to-date information.** The Plan includes supportive data, charts, tables, and statistics that provide information on agricultural conditions, trends, and issues in Fulton County and serve as the factual groundwork for the Plan. This information will be useful at both the municipal and County levels for planning, project review, regulatory decisions, and grant writing.
- **Vision and goals** that all can use as guideposts in decision-making.
- **Actions and strategies** that can be implemented to achieve the vision and goals.
- **Implementation Plan.** County staff and officials can use this section to help move priority actions forward to reality. The details offered describe what, how, and who should be involved to successfully launch or expand a program to further agriculture in the County. This will be particularly important for future grant writing.

Moving forward, the County, in collaboration with the many local and regional agricultural organizations and agencies, can take primary leadership to coordinate and implement the Plan. It can be used as a guidepost to develop new projects, training, and programs and seek funding needed to support those actions.

As the County and its partners implement programs to enhance agriculture, this Plan will be essential in future grant writing and will provide the foundational data, maps, and public input needed to fund future programs successfully.

Current Agricultural Conditions in Fulton County

Agriculture has been and continues to be a critical part of the County’s economy. The economic benefits of agriculture are significant: in 2022, the total market value of sales was \$9.4 million. Although buffeted by challenges, changes, and loss of farm activity, agriculture remains an important economic sector in the County.

Beyond economics, farming is a way of life that influences many in Fulton County. Some of the ancillary benefits of our agricultural economy include:

- Maintaining diverse and scenic landscapes, providing clean air, clean water, and wildlife habitats.
- Providing recreational opportunities and scenic landscapes that appeal to residents and tourists.
- Preserving the lifestyle of our rural communities in the County.

A series of maps was created to help illustrate and identify current farm and farmland characteristics. These maps illustrate types and location of farms, development patterns, farmland and soil resources, and other features related to agriculture. All the maps described here can be found in Appendix 2 of this Plan.

- Putting focus on, and helping to preserve, our unique history and regional character.
- Maintaining open lands that can mitigate the effects of severe weather changes.
- Minimizing the costs of providing public services such as roads, schools, and public safety infrastructure.

Highlights from the Agricultural Data Analysis

Highlights from the profile of agriculture in Fulton County, based on the 2022 Agricultural Census, are provided below. A more detailed analysis is provided in Appendix 3.

- Fulton County has 205 farms, including orchards, nursery and greenhouse growers, and maple syrup producers; and 23,234 acres of land in agricultural production.
- The average farm size is 113 acres, below the statewide average of 212; 46% of farms are on less than 50 acres.
- Top crops in acreage include forage, corn for grain, cultivated Christmas trees, soybeans, nursery stock crops, apples, vegetables, and berries.
- \$9.4 million in agricultural product sales in 2022: 45% in the livestock sector (e.g., dairy, beef, horses), 55% in crops (e.g., hay, fruit, vegetables, nursery and greenhouse products).
- The County ranks 51st of all New York counties in the total market value of agricultural products sold, and 7th in the sales of cultivated Christmas trees.
- 59% of farms have annual sales under \$10,000. 12% have sales of \$100,000 or more.
- One of the lowest agricultural product sales per farm (i.e., average sales) in the state, at \$45,814.
- Of all agricultural operations in Fulton County:
 - ▶ 25% have employees
 - ▶ 17% sell their products directly to consumers at farm stands and farmers' markets
 - ▶ 5% produce and sell value-added products, including farm-based craft beverages
 - ▶ 5% farm organically
 - ▶ 4% sell to retail stores and institutions
 - ▶ 2% earn income through agritourism and recreational services (e.g., farm tours, hayrides), excluding direct sales of agricultural products, which is widely considered part of agritourism
- 60% of the individuals who make decisions concerning farming operations are aged 55 and older, while 6% are under 35 - defined by the Agricultural Census as "young producers."

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) defines a farm as any place that produced and sold, or normally would have produced and sold, at least \$1,000 worth of agricultural products during a given year.

Agricultural Trends, 2002-22

Trends in Fulton County over the last 20+ years, based on the Census of Agriculture, have included:

- A 38% net reduction in farmland acreage (the total area of land used for farming, including cropland, pasture, and grazing, and any woodlands that are part of the farm operation), from 37,652 acres in 2002 to 23,234 in 2022.
- A shift away from dairy and beef production as a principal activity and more farms are growing a mix of crops, producing fruit, and raising poultry for their eggs.
- Huge increase in maple syrup production.
- Reduced inventory of nearly all types of livestock and poultry: for example, there are 80% fewer dairy cows, 80% fewer goats, and 42% fewer horses and ponies.
- The loss of many mid-sized and large farms... and a 23% increase in the number of agricultural operations on less than 50 acres
- A decline in the percentage of farms with annual sales under \$10,000, from 66% to 59%
- A steep decline in dairy operations and milk production.
- A 32% decline in the market value of agricultural products sold when dollar amounts are adjusted for inflation.
- Growth in the value of nursery and greenhouse products, floriculture, and sod and cultivated Christmas trees sold.
- An increase in the number of farm operations selling products directly to consumers.
- Since 2017, an increase in the number of farm operators/producers who are under age 35 and ages 35 to 44.

TABLE 1. SUMMARY AGRICULTURAL STATISTICS, 2002-22, FULTON COUNTY

	2002	2007	2012	2017	2022	% CHANGE, 2002-22
Number of Farms	246	222	211	207	205	-16.7%
Total Land in Farms (Acres)	37,652	33,851	31,869	22,181	23,234	-38.3%
% Of Land in Farmland	11.9%	10.7%	10.1%	7.0%	7.3%	
Average Acres Per Farm	153	152	151	107	113	-26.1%
Total Market Value of Sales (\$millions) <i>in Constant 2022 Dollars</i>	\$13.8	\$12.9	\$12.0	\$12.4	\$9.4	-32.1%
Average Market Value of Sales Per Farm <i>in Constant 2022 Dollars</i>	\$56,241	\$58,248	\$56,900	\$59,934	\$45,814	-18.5%

Source: U.S. Census of Agriculture.

Economic Impact of the Food and Agriculture Industries in Fulton County

Produced annually, the *Feeding the Economy* report estimates the economic impact of the U.S. food and agriculture sector. The analysis measures the economic activity generated by businesses involved in the production, manufacturing, wholesaling, and retailing of food. (For more information on the study methodology, see <https://feedingtheeconomy.com/methodology/>)

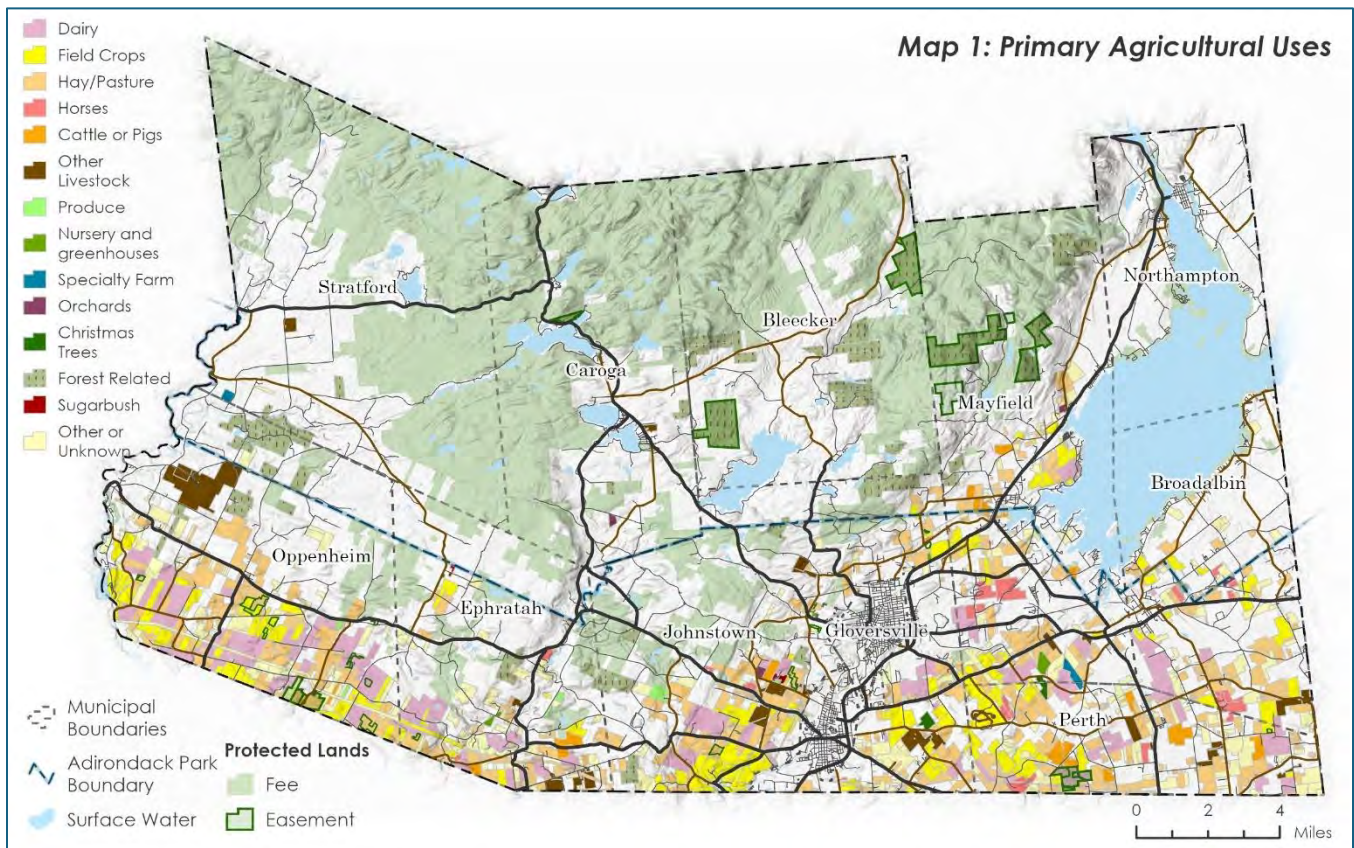
Based on 2023 data from *Feeding the Economy*, the food and agriculture industries in Fulton County generate \$544.3 million in economic activity, directly supporting 3,453 jobs. Workers in these industries are paid about \$171.9 million in annual wages.

Suppliers to the food and agriculture industries – which produce and sell farm equipment, trucks, fertilizer, and other products and provide a broad array of services – generate nearly \$376 million in economic activity in Fulton County. These industries are responsible for an estimated 2,209 jobs.

The spending by employees in the food and agriculture industries and its suppliers results in what is known as the *induced impact*. This spending generates an additional 1,659 jobs and \$263.9 million in economic activity.

Combining the direct, indirect, and induced effects, the food and agriculture industries in Fulton County generate a total of \$1.184 billion in economic activity and support approximately 7,321 jobs.





Note: See Appendix 2 to view 11” by 17” versions of all maps.

Highlights of Farmland and Land Use Characteristics

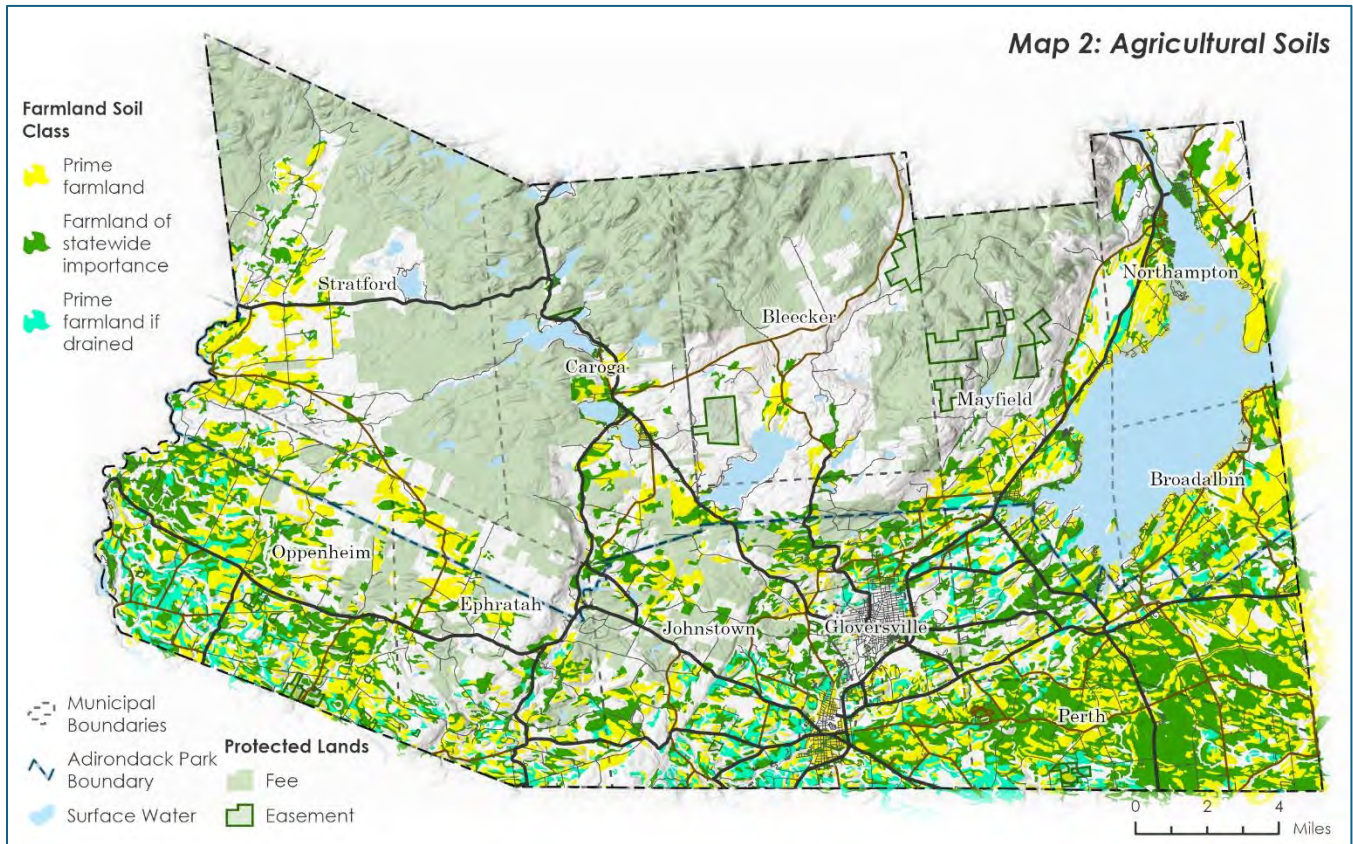
Farmland Soils

In Fulton County, 53,420 acres have prime agricultural soils, of which 9,283 acres (17%) are in production. Farmland soils of statewide importance cover 56,445 acres, with 7,910 acres (14%) currently in production, while soils classified as prime farmland if drained comprise 12,974 acres, of which 4,554 acres (35%) are in production. The **Agricultural Soils Map (Map 2** below; see also full-size maps in Appendix 2 for more details) shows locations of these farmland soils.

Prime Farmland (including Prime, if Drained soils) and Farmland of Statewide Importance are found intermixed throughout the lower part of Fulton County. The largest concentration of these farmland soils are in the Town of Perth and Broadalbin.

TABLE 2. AGRICULTURAL SOIL CLASSIFICATION, FULTON COUNTY

	Acres	Percent of County Land Area	Acres in Production	Percent of Soil in Production
Prime Farmland Soils	53,420	17%	9,283	17%
Farmland of Statewide Importance	56,445	18%	7,910	14%
Prime Farmland Soils If Drained	12,974	4%	4,554	35%



Agricultural Districts

Fulton County has one New York State agricultural district, Agricultural District #1, that includes a total of 704 parcels on 28,597 acres of land. Agricultural District #1 includes parcels in the Towns of Broadalbin, Ephratah, Johnstown, Mayfield, Oppenheim, and Perth. Much, but not all land within the District is farmed, however. About 93% of the Agricultural District is covered with Agricultural Parcels. Field acres within the District encompasses 13,889 acres. Table 3, and the **Agricultural Parcels Map (Map 3)** detail information about the New York State Agricultural District, and agricultural parcels in Fulton County.

An agricultural district was first established in Fulton County in 1976 and included areas in the Towns of Johnstown, Mayfield, and Perth. Over the years, additional land areas were added to what is now

Agricultural District #1. Farms can be added to the District annually; the enrollment period set by the Board of Supervisors is in March of each year. Parcels can be removed through a county-wide review every eight years. In 2009, the district was 26,020 acres and was 26,821 acres in 2017 and most recently, 28,597 acres. Fulton County’s 8-year review period is currently underway.

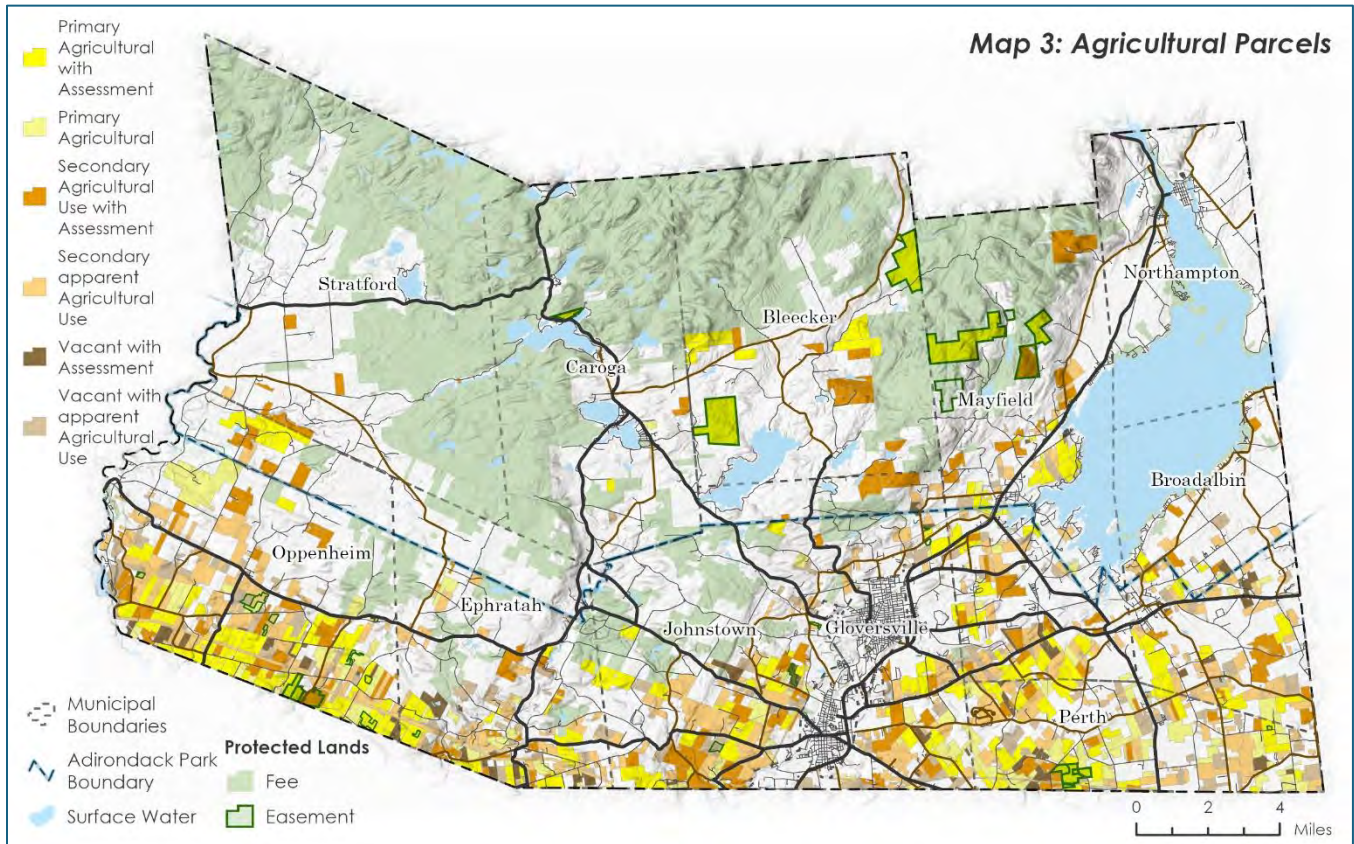


TABLE 3. LAND USES IN AGRICULTURAL DISTRICT #1, FULTON COUNTY

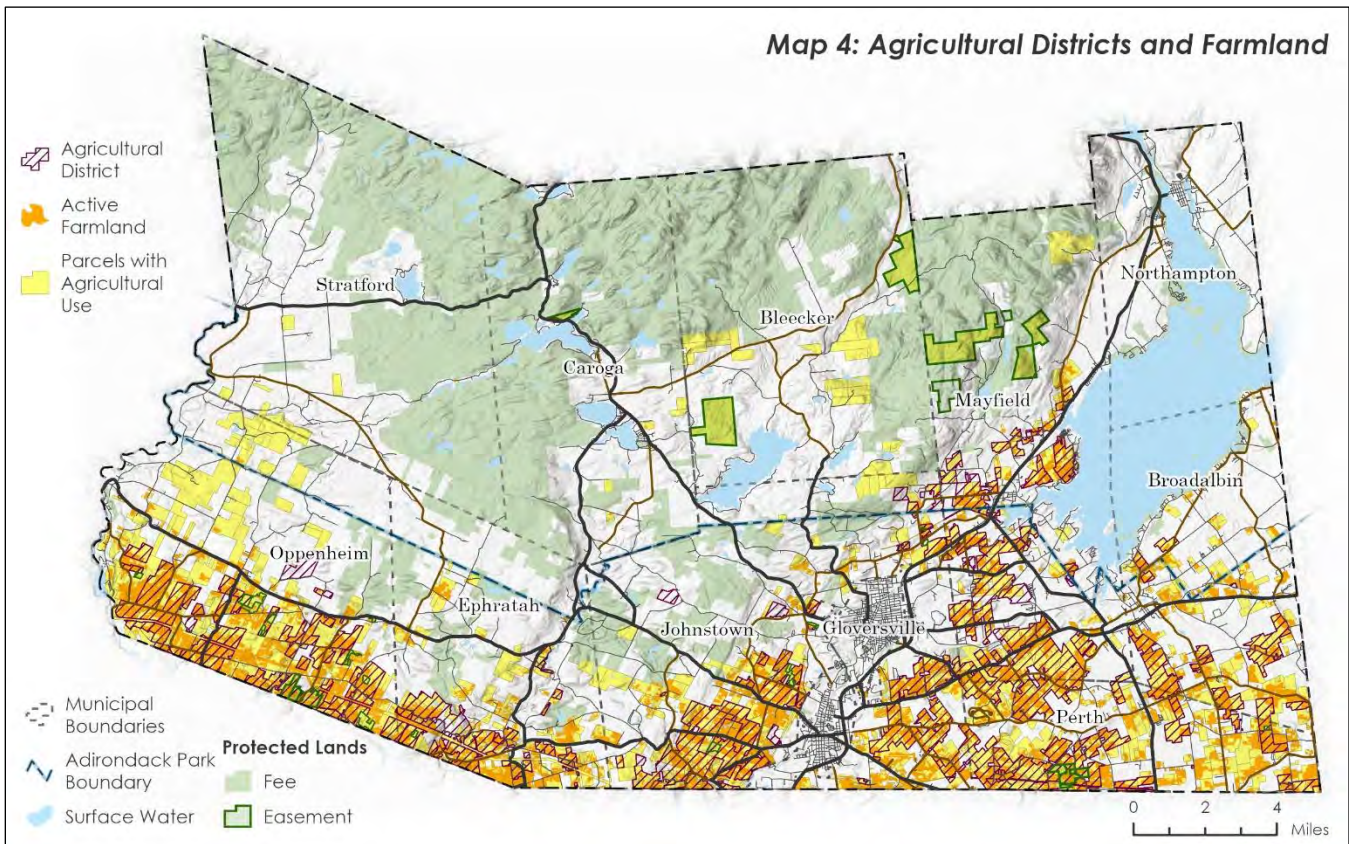
	Parcels	Acres on Parcels	Agricultural Field Acres
Primary Agricultural	81	3,368	1,595
Primary Agricultural with Assessment	206	11,110	6,426
Secondary Agricultural	67	4,376	2,091
Apparent Secondary Agricultural	78	4,745	2,338
Vacant with Agricultural Assessment	50	1,509	646
Vacant with Apparent Agriculture	71	1,412	793
Non-Agricultural Parcel	151	2,077	0
Total	704	28,597	13,889
<i>Percent of Agricultural District Covering Agricultural Parcels</i>		93%	
Percent of Ag Parcels Within the Ag District			
Primary		69%	77%

TABLE 3. LAND USES IN AGRICULTURAL DISTRICT #1, FULTON COUNTY

	Parcels	Acres on Parcels	Agricultural Field Acres
Secondary		35%	39%
Vacant		29%	35%

“Primary” agricultural parcels are those that are classified by the local tax assessor as having an agricultural use (100 class codes in the assessment manual). “Secondary” agricultural parcels are those coded by the assessor as something other than an agricultural use or vacant, typically a residential use.

The **Agricultural Districts and Farmland Map (Map 4)** shows the correlation between farm locations and farmland soils – all concentrated in the lower half of the County mostly below the Blue Line (i.e., the Adirondack Park boundary). There are several large parcels having agricultural uses outside both the Blue Line and Agricultural District #1. There are several large forest tracts of land that have been preserved with an easement (shown in bold green outline on the map) that are actually outside the Agricultural District.

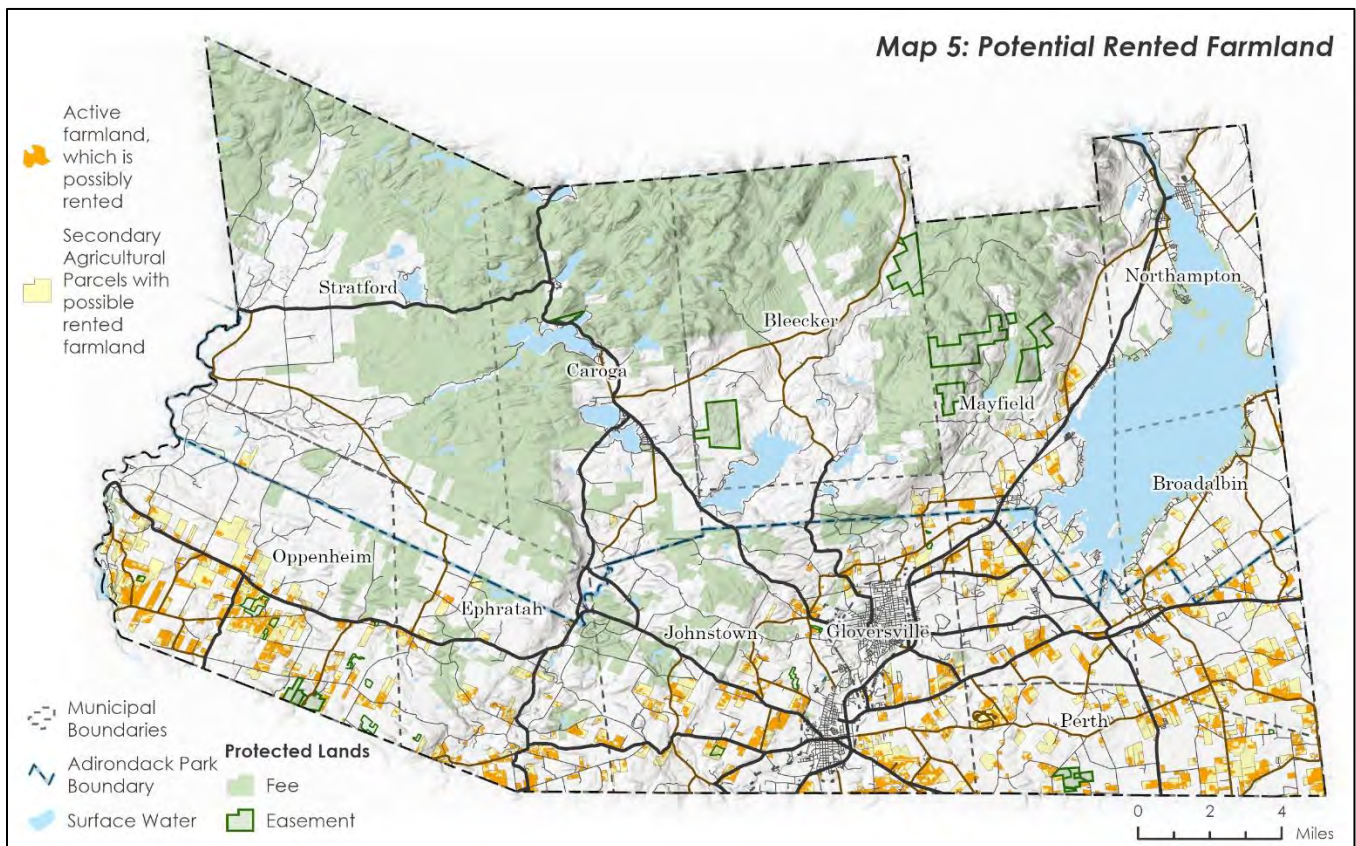


Other characteristics of farming in the County include:

- 40% of parcel acreages below the Blue Line have an agricultural use (primary or secondary).
- 18.3% of the total land area below the Blue Line is in active farmland.
- 30.8% of the County is protected land, primarily New York State Forest Preserve (88% of that land is above the Blue Line).
- 35 acres of active farmland are fully protected via a purchase (fee simple) and 150 acres are protected under an agricultural/conservation easement.

Rented Farmland

The **Potential Rented Farmland Map (Map 5)** shows that 750 parcels of land, or 47% of all agricultural parcels are believed to be rented. This was primarily determined based on comparing ownership of secondary agricultural properties with the ownership of the primary agricultural properties. In terms of acres, that equates to 10,289 acres rented agricultural acres, or 40% of all agricultural land. That represents quite a large percentage of land not directly owned by farmers/farm operations.



Several key issues can arise when farmers rely on rented land. These include potential for inconsistent management practices due to the landlord's lack of farming expertise, reduced investment in long-term land improvements, difficulty for young farmers to access land, concerns

about land consolidation, and potential conflicts regarding land use decisions between the landowner and the tenant farmer; all of which can impact the sustainability and economic viability of farming operations in those areas. Rented land can limit flexibility for farmers, can result in only short-term leases that prevent long-term investment in buildings, crops, or soil management, and can increase the potential for conflicts and for an increase in the cost of land (both for rental and purchase). Non-farm landowners can also have unrealistic expectations on rental prices that can also contribute to higher costs for those farmers renting the land.

Conversion Pressure

Agricultural success is dependent on the availability of land, processors, suppliers, and agricultural services, among other features. When there is a concentration of farmers near each other, it generates an economy of scale that allows them to share and access services more economically than isolated producers. As an agricultural community shrinks, there is potential that there will not be enough production to support the related services that currently exist and benefits from economies of scale may be lost. Without that supportive infrastructure, the agricultural industry in an area may not be able to sustain itself.

This raises the concept of "critical mass" in agriculture – meaning that a certain concentration of farm operations is needed to make them all sustainable. As farms are converted to non-farm uses, the critical mass of farms is diminished. Economic success of our farms will not be realized if the County loses its critical mass of agricultural operations.

Most farming takes place in the southern portion of Fulton County where there is an abundance of productive farmland. However, some farmland has been lost over the years as it has been converted to residential and commercial uses in places. Compared to 2016, the County has lost farms and farmland acreage based on the tax parcel data (Table 5).

Conversion pressure on farmland can be measured in several direct and indirect ways:

- Population Change – Where and what level of change? In Fulton County, population has actually decreased by about 5%.
- Housing Change – Where and how much additional housing is being built? In Fulton County, the number of housing units has decreased slightly. Most of the housing is not concentrated in traditional village and hamlet locations but is spread out along all roads throughout the southern part of the County.
- Critical Mass of Farmland – Where is the critical mass of priority farmland in Fulton County and are these areas under conversion pressure? The Solar Risk, Recent Development, and Solar Risk and Priority Farmland maps illustrate where conversion has or could take place.

Table 5 below details changes in land cover in Fulton County between 2016 and 2021. This illustrates the loss of agricultural land, increases in the amount of developed land and increases in the amount of shrub/scrub lands. All these reflect changes in agriculture and spread of low density development.

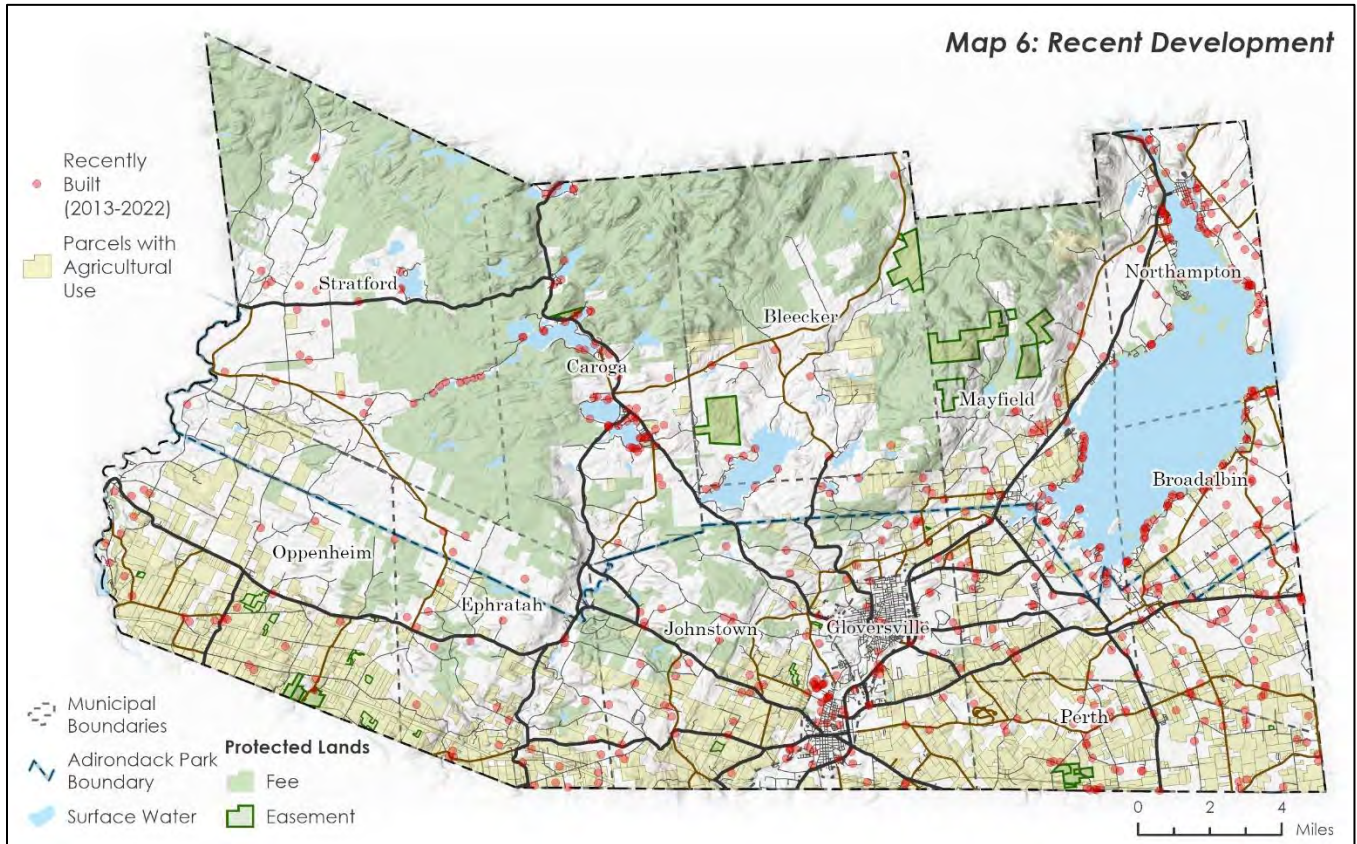
TABLE 5. CHANGES IN LAND COVER, FULTON COUNTY, 2016-2021			
	2016	2021	Change, 2016-2021
Herbaceous	1,884	1,364	-27.6%
Hay/Pasture	30,929	30,946	0.1%
Cultivated Crops	3,619	3,614	-0.1%
All Ag Land	36,432	35,924	-1.4%
Developed, Open Space	11,982	11,802	-1.5%
Developed, Low Intensity	6,116	6,167	0.8%
Developed, Medium Intensity	2,766	2,951	6.7%
Developed, High Intensity	841	859	2.1%
Developed, All	21,705	21,779	0.3%
Deciduous Forest	103,548	103,824	0.3%
Evergreen Forest	71,532	71,272	-0.4%
Mixed Forest	40,367	40,583	0.5%
Forest, All	215,447	215,679	0.1%
Woody Wetlands	39,458	39,564	0.3%
Emergent Herbaceous Wetlands	2,750	3,116	13.3%
Wetlands, All	42,208	42,680	1.1%
Open Water	23,015	23,173	0.7%
Barren Land	1,434	800	-44.2%
Shrub/Scrub	889	1,094	23.1%

Development Trends – One challenge facing agriculture is when land is converted to non-farm uses. When this happens, farms often find themselves facing neighbors who don’t understand, and in some cases, do not like various agricultural activities. The more non-farm uses are mixed in with farm uses, the more conflicts can arise and the harder it becomes to maintain farm activities.

The **Recent Development Map (Map 6)** shows development trends in Fulton County by mapping new construction between 2013 and 2022. There have been 594 buildings constructed during that time on parcels covering 4,978 acres of land. The Recent Development Map shows these locations in relation to agricultural uses. It uses data derived from County real property data. The land development pattern that emerges is one of widespread, low-density, and scattered development that has taken place throughout areas where farming takes place.

It appears as if residential development has not taken large areas of land for development for big projects such as major subdivisions but is instead a pattern of expanding low-density development. Additionally, there has been more concentration of new development along the shorelines of the Great Sacandaga Lake. This widespread land development pattern could have long-term consequences for agriculture.

Coupled with a decrease in farm acres and the number of farms, widespread low-density development is a pattern that should be evaluated and addressed. Techniques can be put into place to prevent farmland fragmentation and conflicting farm and non-farm uses, and to ensure prime farmland soils remain available for food and agricultural crop production into the future.



Conversion to Solar

Other kinds of non-farm development also pressure farms in the County especially related to solar development. Solar development in Fulton County has been occurring rapidly. Since 2015, there have been 53 solar projects:

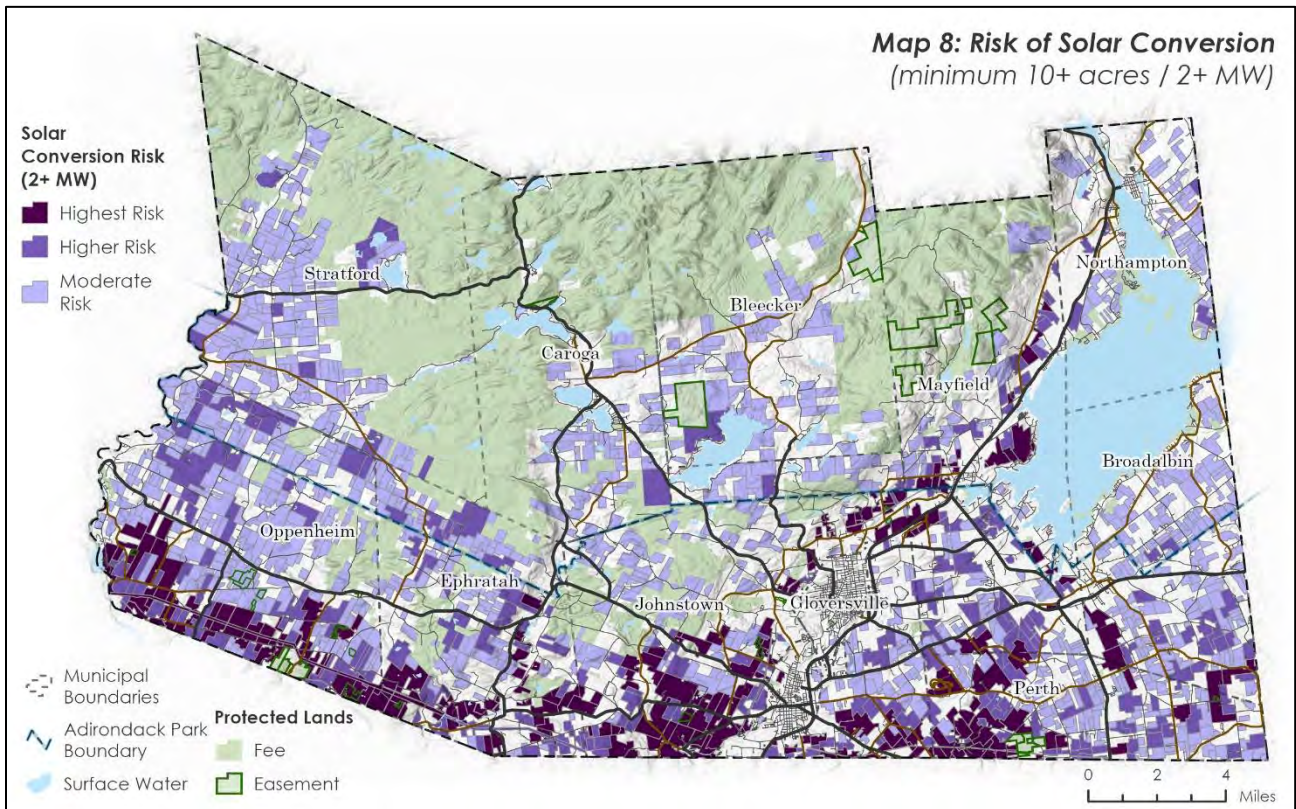
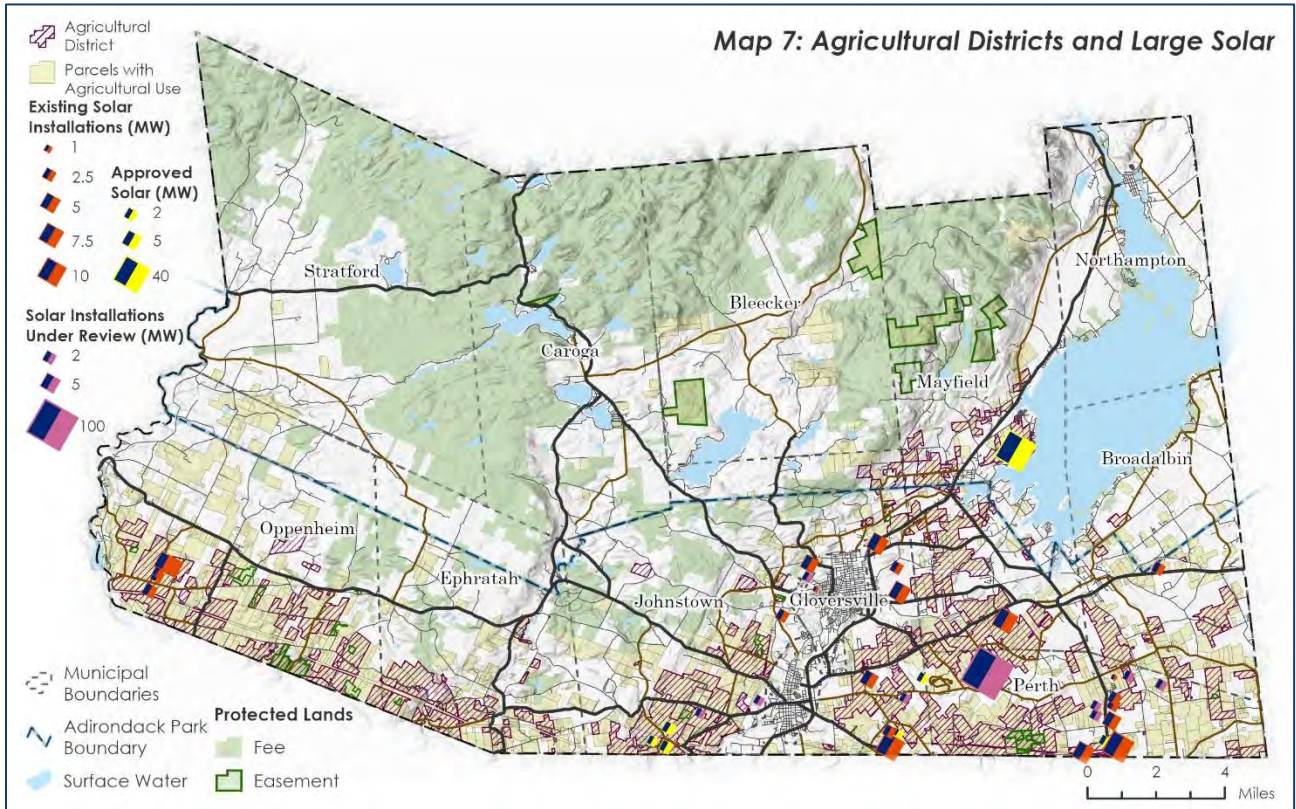
- Two (2) projects reviewed by the New York State Education Department (NYSED) on school property within the City of Gloversville and the Town of Perth, which did not go to the municipal board²
- One (1) on land owned by Greater Johnstown Enlarged School District to meet new NYSED goals and objectives
- Two (2) projects have been or slated to be reviewed by the NYS Office of Renewable Energy Siting (ORES) as they are projects that are 20 MW or greater:
 - One 40 MW within the Town of Mayfield and Village of Mayfield
 - One 100 MW potentially within the Town of Perth and Town of Mayfield
- 48 projects have been received to be permitted by a local municipality:
 - Out of those, 29 projects have been approved by a municipal board (Town Board or Planning Board)

This Plan includes an analysis of the potential for additional solar development in Fulton County. **Map 7** shows the location of the existing and planned solar facilities in relation to existing farmland and the county agricultural district.

As of this writing, Fulton County has the largest solar development within the Adirondack Park, which is reviewed not on the municipal level, but by the Office of Renewal Energy Siting (ORES). This removes most of the local review of the project. Additionally, recent court decisions have also resulted in community solar projects being deemed a public utility. This allows solar applications to meet public utility standards of New York State. The Risk of Solar Conversion Map (Map 8, discussed below) and this Plan are designed to offer both state and local municipal agencies additional information about the location and importance of critical farmlands that may be affected by conversion of farmland to solar facilities.

The **Risk of Solar Conversion Map (Map 8)** details those parcels of land that are at moderate to high risk for solar development. This was based on parcels that have a minimum of 10 acres (for at least 2 MW of electricity generation) and slope, presence of south facing areas, and shorter distance to suitable electrical lines and substations.

² See *Ravena-Coeymans-Selkirk Central School District v Town of Bethlehem* (2020) which states that school districts need to comply with local zoning: <https://casetext.com/case/ravena-coeymans-selkirk-cent-sch-dist-v-town-of-bethlehem-3>



Identification of Priority Farmlands in Fulton County



To identify important farmlands, Fulton County undertook an analysis to define and map priority farmlands. This evaluation is not only important for the long-term planning for farmland protection in Fulton County but is a required element from New York State Agriculture and Markets Circular 1500, which establishes expectations for State-funded agricultural and farmland protection plans.

Prioritization is important for many reasons including that landowners who desire to participate in the NYS Farmland Implementation Grant program to protect their land via a state-funded conservation easement must show that their property is identified as important in the County Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan. Furthermore, identification of priority lands can help Fulton County target other programs and projects to promote long-term food security, environmental benefits, climate change mitigation, community stability, and economic success. The criteria and maps generated as part of this process can help the Fulton County community develop steps to promote farming in those areas over other uses.

A summary of the scoring used to identify priority farmlands is presented in Table 6a and 6b, below. The analysis considered a variety of important agricultural factors such as farm size, soils, location and development pressure. (A more detailed description of the analysis can be found in Appendix 6.)

This scoring represents the weight Fulton County places on each of the listed criteria. Table 6a establishes scoring criteria for farmland based on three sizes of farmland parcel categories (<50 acres, 50-100 acres, and >100 acres). However, because small farms are also recognized in Fulton County as being important components of the agricultural economy in the County, a second analysis was done specifically to identify important smaller farmlands that range from 2 acres to <50 acres. Scoring criteria for those farms are shown in Table 6b.

Each agricultural parcel was scored using the criteria shown in Tables 6a and 6b. Using those scores, the primary priority area are the areas around and between the high, higher and highest scoring parcels. The secondary priority areas are those around and between all the other farmland parcels in the county.

The results of this analysis are shown in the **Priority Agricultural Areas (Map 9)**. Using the criteria outlined in Table 6a and 6b, Primary Priority Agricultural Areas are concentrated in the southern portion of the County, outside the cities of Johnstown and Gloversville, east of Route 30A to the County boundary, and south of Great Sacandaga Lake. There are scattered parcels of primary priority farmland areas north of State Route 29 as well. Secondary Priority Areas can be found throughout the middle portion of the County.

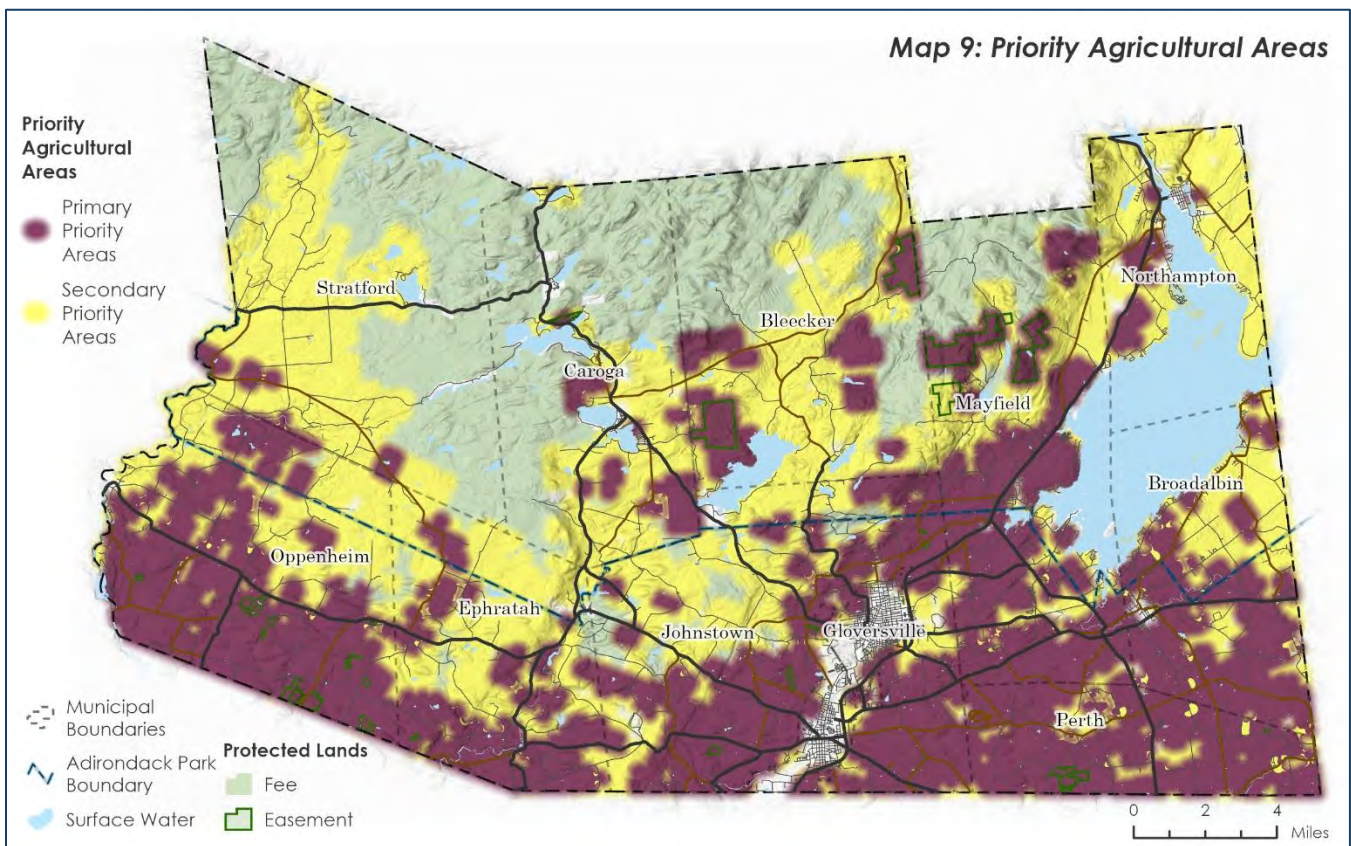


TABLE 6a. FARMLAND PRIORITIZATION SCORING CRITERIA

Criteria	Scoring Criteria		
	<50 acres	50-100 acres	>100 acres
Parcel with Agriculture as Primary Use*	1 point	3 points	5 points
Parcel with Agriculture as Secondary Use*	1 point	2 points	3 points
Percent of Parcel Available for Farming**	20% to <40%	40% to 70%	>70%
	1 point	3 points	5 points
Farms That Are in an Agricultural District	2 points		
Percentage of High-Quality Soils (Prime or State Importance)	20% to <40%	40% to 70%	>70%
	1 point	3 points	5 points
Parcels Within 100' of a Water Resource (Stream, Lake, or Wetland)	>10 acres water source buffer = 3 points		
	1-10 acres = 1 point		
Proximity to Conserved Land	Adjacent Farmland	Adjacent Non-Farmland	Within ¼ Mile
	5 points	3 points	1 point
Frontage Along U.S., State, or County Road	500-<1,000 ft	1,000-<2,000 ft	≥2,000 ft
	1 point	3 points	5 points
Proximity to Active Farmland	Adjacent		Within ¼ Mile
	2 points		1 point
Proximity to Water and Sewer, Including Proposed	500 ft	¼ mile	½ mile
	3 points	2 point	1 point
Proximity to Village, City, or CDP (0.5 Miles)	3 points		
Farms That Receive An Agricultural or Forest Value Assessment	1 point		
Proximity to Power Transmission	≤500 ft	>500 ft and ≤1/4 mile	
	2 points		

TABLE 6b. FARMLAND PRIORITIZATION SCORING CRITERIA FOR FARMS 2 ACRES TO < 50 ACRES

Criteria	Scoring Criteria		
	2 - <5 acres	5 - 20 acres	>20 - <50 acres
Parcel with agriculture as primary use*	3 Point	5 Points	2 Points
Parcel with agriculture as secondary use*	2 Point	4 Points	1 Points
Percent of parcel available for farming**	20-<40%	40-70%	>70%
	1 Point	3 Points	5 Points
Farms that are in an Agricultural District	2 Points		
Percentage of high-quality soils (Prime or State Importance)	20-<40%	40-70%	>70%
	1 Point	2 Points	3 Points
Proximity to conserved land	Adjacent Farmland	Adjacent Non-Farmland	W/in ¼ mile
	5 Points	3 Points	1 Point
Proximity to active farmland	Adjacent 2 points		Within 1/4 mile 1 point
Proximity to Village, City or CDP (0.5 miles)	3 Points		

TABLE 6b. FARMLAND PRIORITIZATION SCORING CRITERIA FOR FARMS 2 ACRES TO < 50 ACRES

Criteria	Scoring Criteria		
	2 - <5 acres	5 - 20 acres	>20 - <50 acres
Farms that receive an agricultural or forest value assessment	1 Point		

**Primary use are parcels coded in the 100 class codes or 900 class codes with a forest assessment. Secondary uses are parcels coded as something other than proceeding but having an agricultural use as determined by receiving and agricultural or forest assessment and/or having active farmland as determined by imagery analysis*

***and/or containing deciduous trees for parcels for sugarbush or timber*

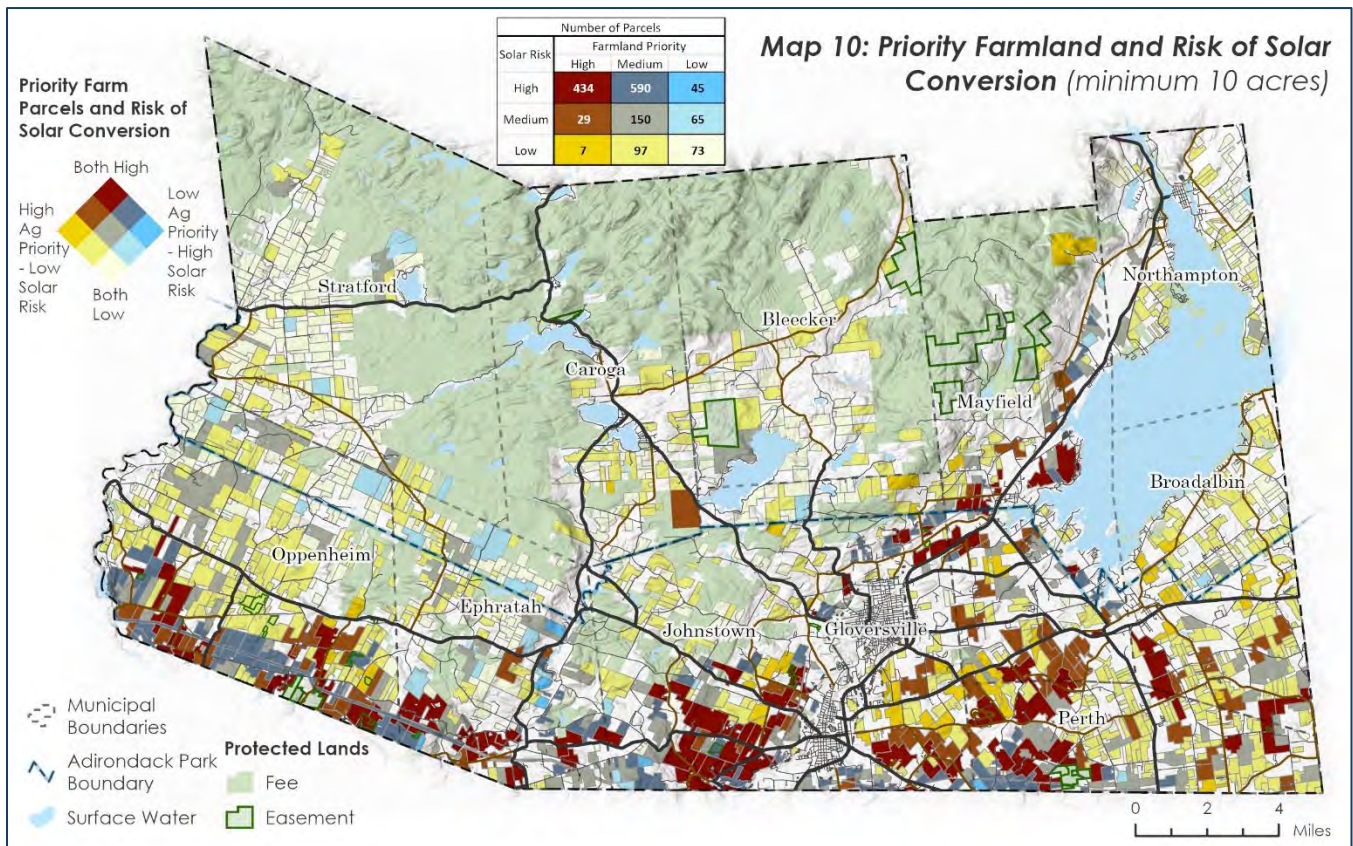
Priority Farmlands and Solar Conversion

Map 10 shows the correlation between parcels that are highly suitable for solar and those parcels that are high priority agricultural parcels. This does not however, indicate that solar facilities are planned for those areas – only that they have land characteristics that may make them attractive for solar development.

The **Priority Farmland and Risk of Solar Conversion (Map 10)** offers additional information about solar conversion pressures. It shows those parcels that are both a high agricultural priority and that have characteristics that make them locations a high solar conversion risk. Darker colors on this map indicate parcels that are both high priority agricultural parcels based on the rating criteria developed for this plan and for use as solar facilities. It clearly shows the many priority agricultural parcels that could also be suitable for solar development.

The map shows parcels that have a minimum of 10 acres (for at least 2 MW of electricity generation) and slope, presence of south-facing areas, and shorter distance to suitable electrical lines and substations throughout the county. This map shows that the lands located in the southernmost part of the County as more suitable (thus riskier) for conversion to solar.





Changing Weather Patterns

Farmers and farmland owners recognize the changes that have been occurring to weather patterns in Fulton County and the region. These have included changes in temperature, precipitation, and growing seasons. Others include more frequent and severe weather events such as heat waves, droughts, and heavy rainfall that can lead to flooding. Additionally, these changes affect growing seasons, the choice of plant varieties able to be grown, and more invasive species affecting farm and crop production.

The New York State Climate Impacts Assessment discusses climate change and agriculture. The following influences on agriculture include:³

- Extreme rainfall can damage crops, flood fields, increase diseases and weeds, and cause delays in planting and harvesting. More frequent flooding has forced farmers to rethink which crops to plant and where to plant them.

³ From https://nysclimateimpacts.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/Sector-Fact-Sheet_Ag-1.pdf

- Short-term drought reduces crop yields and causes water shortages. Higher summer temperatures increase the risk of short-term droughts.
- Warmer temperatures and longer growing seasons could increase yields for some crops and offer opportunities to grow new crops. Flooding caused by extreme rainfall has damaged this tomato crop on a farm in Upstate New York.
- Heat stress affects livestock, crops, farmers, and farm workers. High soil and air temperatures can harm plant growth and reduce crop yields. Heat stress can threaten the health of dairy cows and other livestock. Extreme heat can cause illness or death among workers exposed to high temperatures.
- Increased weeds, diseases, and insects damage crops. Warmer temperatures can increase the populations and ranges of some insects and other pests. Warmer temperatures might also allow new invasive species to take hold and increase the range of herbicide-resistant weed species, creating management challenges for farmers. Crops may become more susceptible to diseases as the climate becomes warmer and more humid. The Fulton County Hazard Mitigation Plan (<https://fulton.mitigateny.org/hazards>) has identified invasive species – including the Spotted Lantern Fly, Japanese Knotweed, Emerald Ash Borer, and Gypsy Moth Caterpillar – as a hazard to be mitigated.
- Changes to the seasonal cycles of plant and animal life. For example, unseasonably warm temperatures in early spring can cause fruit trees to bloom early. When cold temperatures return, the buds can freeze, and the fruit crop can be destroyed.

Some of the Fulton County climate trends since 2013 from the Cornell Climate Smart Farming website (<http://climatesmartfarming.org/tools/csf-county-climate-change/>) include:

- Temperature Trends: Increasing trend of .5 degrees/decade
- Average High Temperatures: Increasing .5 degrees/decade
- Growing Season Length: Increasing 4.7 days/decade
- Growing Degree Days: Increasing 71.5 GDDs/decade
- Total Precipitation: Increasing 2.4"/decade

Local Land Use Policies

Farm-Friendly Audit

Why an Audit? An audit of the comprehensive plans and zoning laws in the Towns of Mayfield, Perth, Johnstown, and Caroga in Fulton County was completed as part of development of the Fulton County Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan. This audit was designed to help gauge the ‘farm-friendliness’ of representative local plans and land use laws to help identify if local regulations place any barriers to agricultural uses, diversification, or expansion, and identify areas that could be improved locally, in the future. Specifically, this Audit reviewed the farm-friendliness of local plans and regulations to identify elements that are both working to support agriculture and where improvements could be made to enhance agriculture in the County.



Role of Comprehensive Plans. A comprehensive plan is an important community document because it is the foundation for local land use regulations. Land use regulations need to be consistent with a community's plan because regulations should be designed to meet community needs and objectives – which are usually outlined in a comprehensive plan. The plan establishes the vision a community has for itself, which is then translated into land use regulations, such as zoning and subdivision. This Audit evaluates whether local comprehensive plans recognize agriculture as an important component of the locality and whether it sets policy direction for agriculture in the future.

NYS Certified Agricultural Districts and Land Use Regulations. Understanding the relationship between local land use regulations and NYS Certified Agricultural Districts is very important. New York State Agriculture and Markets Law 25-AA is a state law that establishes agricultural districts where farmers receive protection against local laws that unreasonably restrict farm operations. 25-AA also offers right-to-farm protection from private nuisance claims. New York State Agricultural Districts (Ag Districts) are designed to support a favorable operating environment for farms. This Audit was also conducted to identify consistency between local regulations and requirements imposed by NYS AML 25-AA.

Role of Zoning Laws. Zoning can create opportunities for agriculture but also can place barriers to farming or certain farming practices. Zoning identifies whether a farm use is permitted, whether a municipal review process such as a site plan or special use permit approval is required, or whether setbacks, height, or acreage requirements are needed. When some of these regulations exist, they are potential barriers to or challenges facing farmers and agricultural operations.

One of the prime reasons for the existence of the NYS Agricultural District program pursuant to NYS AML 25-AA, is to prevent over-regulation of farms. Farm uses within a NYS certified agricultural district are considered to be the primary and desirable land use in those areas. The Districts (which are voluntarily established) serve to reduce or prevent regulatory hurdles to conducting accepted agricultural practices. This Audit is, in part, designed to identify whether local zoning or other land use laws create any inconsistencies between the NYS Agricultural Districts law and local land use laws and that would serve to discourage agriculture instead of encouraging it within those NY Ag Districts.

Zoning laws which would be considered not farm-friendly sometimes regulate where and how farms can operate, and whether Planning Board review is required before a farmer can undertake some agricultural practice or component of their business. Land use regulations can define and allow certain farm activities or can explicitly prohibit others. Sometimes land use regulations introduce confusion when certain uses are not adequately defined, so the Audit evaluates what and how terms are defined.

Even when zoning is not explicitly farm-unfriendly, vague zoning (which doesn't really address agriculture) can introduce uncertainty for farmers, especially new farmers and farmers who wish to diversify or add direct sales or other farm-related businesses. This can also lead to unnecessary or lengthy permit reviews – all of which the NYS AML 25-aa seeks to avoid. These issues are especially poignant given trends for farm diversification, addition of value-added processing or activities on the farm, and modern farming techniques.

Role of Subdivision Laws. Subdivision laws regulate how land is divided. Although subdivision laws do not regulate land use like a zoning law does, they have a great deal of influence on how non-farm development takes place and whether it is done in a manner compatible with farm neighbors.

Consequences of Local Plans and Laws that are not Farm-friendly. Choices made by local communities in their local land use regulations can have many consequences including affecting land values; making farm expansion or start-ups difficult; contributing to land use conflicts; and even hastening conversion of farmland to other uses. When local laws restrict agricultural uses, a sense of impermanence for farming can develop as farmers begin to feel that non-farm uses will ultimately take over in the area.

That feeling of impermanence can in turn foster disinvestment in farm operations and ultimately lead to furthering the sale of land for non-farm development. With low profitability and economic stress, selling land for non-farm development may be a necessity or at least very appealing to some farms or farmland owners. Understanding the local regulatory climate is the first step towards improving an area's farm-friendliness.

See Appendix 4 for full details and narratives for the Mayfield, Perth, Johnstown and Caroga Audits that were completed. The following summarizes the findings:

- These four (4) towns exhibit a varying degree of farm-friendliness in their plans and land use regulations. All have comprehensive plans that are at least 10 years old and would benefit from an update and a more thorough examination of agriculture, the role it plays, and show support for agriculture and for the long-term continuation of farming. The maps and data included in this county-wide agriculture and farmland protection plan offer a great deal of information local towns can use to plan for agriculture.
- The subdivision laws in each of the four towns are also dated, and none of them address agriculture as a resource of importance to be considered during subdivision review. Several communities allow for clustering – which has largely been updated via use of conservation subdivision methods. Regardless, none of the laws that allow clustering offer any direction related to incorporating agricultural activities into preserved open space or for ensuring clustered subdivisions do not adversely affect active agricultural operations nearby. Newer subdivision methods that include use of building envelopes to be located on plats,



identification of prime soils and soils of statewide importance that should be evaluated during subdivision, or rural siting/design standards to ensure that new development limits farm fragmentation and maintains farm field access are all elements that could be included to make subdivision laws more farm friendly. Subdivision applications in or within 500' of a NYS Agricultural District should require use of the Agricultural Data Statement.

- While each town has some components of their zoning that are farm friendly, overall, definitions could be improved and aligned more fully with those from AML 25-aa. Definitions are important to add clarity and can help avoid conflicting/confusion. The County could aid in updating definitions by providing a uniform set of terms that could be included in zoning updates. Many farm uses we see today in many places, including Fulton County, are those that are not specifically defined or allowed (direct sales, CSAs, agritourism, value-added

activities, etc.). One aspect of being ‘farm-friendly’ is to offer a definitive path for ag activities. If there is a question as to whether something is allowed or not, or how it might be allowed, then it delays those farm uses. All of the four (4) zoning laws could be enhanced by spelling out other common agricultural activities that could be on a farm operation and allow them in a way consistent with NYS AML 25-aa guidelines and definitions. In order to survive, farms need to diversify, and many have multiple types of businesses on their farm. Zoning needs to recognize the type of farm activities that take place and allow for them.

- Finally, another area common to all four zoning laws is the reliance on site plan reviews and special use permits for certain ag or ag-related activities. Requiring site plans or special use permits, meeting setbacks, fencing, having to be a certain size, or limiting the number of or types of animals on farms in a NYS Ag District needs to be avoided. It is recommended that the County assist by providing more farm-friendly definitions and regulations, consistent with NYS AML 25-aa and specifically address zoning encouragement of smaller farms, farm diversification, and multiple farm uses on a farm operation.
- Allowing for farm worker housing, removing barriers such as special use permits or site plan reviews, or promoting an abbreviated review for those uses that may have issues deserving review (such as parking and traffic) are farm-friendly updates that could be promoted. While not part of the Farm Friendly Audit given the makeup of the municipality, the County Planning Department worked with the City of Gloversville on urban food production during their most recent update to the Zoning Ordinance in 2023. Given the national trend of adaptive reuse and the plethora of former industrial buildings, the City amended its Light Manufacturing definition to allow for the manufacturing and/or production of food and other agricultural items within a facility that includes but is not limited to aeroponics, aquaponics, cannabis, dairy products, hydroponics, mushroom cultivation, and vertical farming.

Use of the Farm-Friendly Audit shows where there are potential barriers that may make it harder for new farms, smaller or niche farms, or expanding farm operations to move forward. The questions asked in the Audit offer directions that will improve opportunities for farming operations and limit regulatory barriers. The County can facilitate this by educating local municipalities on ways local laws can be updated to be more farm-friendly, providing sample definitions and language, facilitating training, and working with individual communities to assist in finding ways to allow for a diversity of new farming activity.

Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats Facing Agriculture

Strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats facing agriculture in Fulton County were identified through the public input process. This included input from the Agricultural and Farmland Protection

Board, the Board of the Fulton County Farm Bureau, stakeholder interviews, a series of focus groups that engaged members of the farming community, “town-hall” style open houses, and surveys of farmers, farmland owners, and the public. The issues and trends are also based on the data collected for this Plan. The “SWOT” serves as the foundation for developing strategies and actions that will maintain the County’s strengths, improve upon or mitigate weaknesses, capitalize on opportunities, and minimize threats.

Strengths: Resources, Features, or Capabilities That Make Agriculture Successful
★ Agricultural Districts: Most of the County’s farmland is located within the NYS certified agricultural district.
★ Agricultural Services and Support: Availability of services like equipment dealers, veterinarians and other farm services are still available in the region (though not always right in Fulton County); resources and services provided by USDA, NRCS, and Cornell regional programs.
★ Agritourism: Agritourism is growing in popularity, supported by public interest and the “buy local” movement, with potential for further expansion; Farm-2-Table Tour, held the last Sunday in July, is well-attended; interest in bringing the kids to see the farm; opportunity to educate people about farming.
★ Blueberry Farming: More farms growing blueberries (increase from 4 in 2002 to 13 in 2022).
★ Community Support: Loyal customers for farmers’ markets and farm stands; public recognition of agriculture’s role in the local economy; residents perceive farming as important to themselves, their neighbors, and the broader community.
★ Cultivation of Trees and Shrubs: Increase in acreage used to grow cultivated Christmas trees and nursery stock crops; Fulton County is ranked #7 in NYS in the sales of cultivated Christmas trees, up from #21 in 2017.
★ Direct Consumer Sales: Many farmers have direct on-farm sales; more farms selling agricultural products directly to consumers at farm stands and farmers’ markets (increase from 23 in 2012 to 34 in 2022).
★ Diverse Farm Products: Fulton County farms produce a variety of crops and livestock, including hay, beef, vegetables, grains, and dairy; a diverse agricultural landscape that includes apple orchards, maple syrup producers, blueberry growers, and nurseries and greenhouses.
★ Established Farming Community: Most farmers have been in business for over 20 years and have a lot of knowledge about the County and their land; tight-knit community.
★ Family-Friendly Environment: Farmers feel that Fulton County is a good place to raise a family.
★ Favorable Climate: Unlike the Hudson Valley, the warming climate is seen as a positive for most agriculture in Fulton County; good water and rain for crops.
★ Good Markets: Can tap into both local and visitor markets; proximity to urban market; growing customer base for orchards; tourists visiting the many lakes in the County is beneficial for agritourism and direct sales.
★ Growth in Maple Syrup Production and Sales: 14,807 gallons were produced in 2022, up from 992 gallons in 2002; sales increased 86% between 2012 and 2022.
★ Land Ownership: Farmers own more land than they rent, providing longer-term stability and control over the land base.
★ Natural Beauty: The area's natural beauty supports tourism; the lakes attract visitors to the County, which is beneficial for agritourism.
★ Solar Infrastructure: Infrastructure conducive to solar development, which some farmers feel is a benefit to help them keep their farms; transmission lines exist for utility-scale solar and substations that tie into the grid for distribution to create good interconnections for solar.
★ Young Farmers: An 80% increase in the number of farm operators under age 45 since 2017.

Weaknesses: Internal Challenges and Deficiencies That Prevent Agriculture from Being More Profitable, Successful, and Resilient

- ★ **Decline in Dairy Farms:** Decline due to market loss and challenges with cooperatives like Agri Mark; steep reduction in milk production and sales.
- ★ **Development:** Rising land costs driven by competition for solar arrays and housing; the availability of land in the future for farming is of concern; long-term risks associated with leasing land that is owned by non-farmers; loss of farmland to residential and commercial development.
- ★ **Diminished Livestock Sector:** Reduced livestock inventories across the board and significant decline in the sale of livestock, poultry, and their products.
- ★ **Environmental Impacts:** Changing weather patterns, weather extremes, and invasive species affecting farm operations and crop yields, although some are skeptical about climate change and concerned about political agendas.
- ★ **Farm Succession Issues:** Little interest by younger people to take over family farming operations from their parents or grandparents; many farmers do not have succession plans.
- ★ **Food Processing Infrastructure:** Lack of processing infrastructure and markets for certain commodities; region has lost processors that no longer do meat and pork; high processing costs affect meat prices; disconnect between local food manufacturers and farming operations; manufacturers purchase few inputs locally.
- ★ **High Costs, Low Profitability:** High property and school taxes; rising expenses for equipment, feed, fuel, fertilizers, repairs, and maintenance; many farmers do not consider their farm as a primary source of income.
- ★ **Labor Shortages:** Difficulty finding skilled and unskilled labor; general lack of interest in farming careers among the younger generation; the impact of state labor laws.
- ★ **Lack of Agricultural Education:** Disconnect between people and farming means there is less understanding of farm operations and practices; lack of agricultural programming and education in schools; people don't understand where food comes from; need to support Ag Awareness Day at schools.
- ★ **Lack of Awareness and Capacity:** Farmers are often unaware of grant opportunities and do not have the ability to apply for funding.
- ★ **Limited Organic Production and Sales**
- ★ **Limited Sales to Local Stores, Restaurants, and Institutions:** Only a handful of farms sell to retailers, restaurants, and institutions; almost half of farmers have no interest in expanding into new markets and have farm products that cannot be sold directly to consumers such as dairy; lack of Farm to School initiatives.
- ★ **Loss of Services:** Loss of local agriculture-related services; lack of County support for Cornell Cooperative Extension, especially related to youth education (4-H).
- ★ **No Right-to-Farm Statute:** Lack of Right-to-Farm laws means fewer protections for farmers.
- ★ **Perceived Lack of Support:** Perception among farmers that agriculture is not supported by the public or by municipal leaders (note: the public survey showed a lot of support and recognition of farms and farmers in the County, so this indicates a disconnect); Town politics seem to favor residential instead of agricultural uses; perception that County officials do not understand or value the importance of farming.
- ★ **Seasonal Sales Fluctuations:** Challenges for new farmers due to the seasonal nature of local markets.

Weaknesses: Internal Challenges and Deficiencies That Prevent Agriculture from Being More Profitable, Successful, and Resilient

- ★ **Solar Development:** Encroachment of productive farmland by solar arrays; impact of solar development on rented land needed by farmers; concerns about overreliance on solar and what happens to solar panels after their useful life; perceived inadequacy of solar regulations.
- ★ **Veterinary Care:** Limited veterinary care in the area for large livestock.
- ★ **Land Use Planning and Regulations:** Limited up-to-date farm-friendly local land use planning and land use controls that prioritize agricultural uses.

Opportunities: Strategies, Actions, Programs, and Policies That Could Positively Impact Agriculture and Promote Its Profitability, Resilience, and Long-Term Success

<p>Enhanced Marketing and Promotion</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ★ Improve marketing strategies through websites, social media, and community events. ★ Promote cooperative advertising and cross-promotion among farmers and related businesses. ★ Market programs of local crops and products from Fulton County to draw new farmers to the area.
<p>Collaborating with Agricultural Support Agencies</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ★ Strengthen collaboration with organizations like Cornell Cooperative Extension, USDA, and Soil and Water Conservation Districts to provide farmers with the necessary resources and support. ★ Increase cooperation with agricultural support agencies to enhance educational opportunities and provide financial assistance.
<p>State and Municipal Support</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ★ Make agriculture a priority in the County. ★ Lobby the State Legislature to restore municipal control over solar arrays. ★ Use state tourism funds to promote agritourism. ★ Develop walking and biking trails with farm stands along the routes. ★ Advocate for state tourism promotion and infrastructure projects to boost local economies.
<p>Enhancing Agritourism</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ★ Expand agritourism activities such as farm tours, events, and on-farm sales to attract visitors and create additional revenue streams. ★ Collaborate with Montgomery County (and possibly Herkimer County) on agritourism initiatives and marketing. ★ Encourage farms to develop “kid-friendly” attractions and activities related to farming. ★ Create additional festivals focused on agriculture. ★ Develop local agritourism and farm-to-table initiatives, such as wineries, breweries, and farm-based dining experiences.
<p>Supporting Small and Family Farms</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ★ Focus on the needs of small and family farms, ensuring they receive adequate support and resources to remain viable. ★ Provide resources for education and mentorship in agricultural careers.
<p>Diversifying Crops and Products</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ★ Encourage farmers to diversify their crops and products, including specialty crops like flowers, hops, hemp, fruits, berries, heifers/calves for dairy farm support, hogs/pigs, and poultry (both meat and eggs). ★ Increase maple syrup production to meet high demand at farm stands. ★ Explore new agricultural ventures such as apiaries (beekeeping) and sheep and goat farming.

Opportunities: Strategies, Actions, Programs, and Policies That Could Positively Impact Agriculture and Promote Its Profitability, Resilience, and Long-Term Success

<p>Educational Programs and Outreach</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ★ Increase educational initiatives to teach the public about the importance of local agriculture. ★ Guide young people towards careers in farming through youth education programs, mentorships, internships, and in-school programs like FFA and 4-H. ★ Offer agricultural programming at SUNY Fulton Montgomery, PTECH, BOCES, and local school districts. ★ Collaborate with educational institutions like SUNY Cobleskill.
<p>Economic and Marketing Initiatives</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ★ Promote direct sales and farm stands. ★ Create an online map of who is selling agricultural products and where. ★ Continue to promote the 44 Lakes Beverage Trail and Capital Craft Beverage Trail.
<p>Community Engagement</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ★ Build awareness of local agriculture through effective communication and marketing strategies. ★ Increase community engagement and support for agriculture through educational programs and public awareness initiatives. ★ Organize farm festivals and events to promote local agriculture and draw visitors.
<p>Minimizing Impacts of Solar Development</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ★ Encourage planning boards to differentiate between conventional solar and agrivoltaics and be flexible. ★ In communities with zoning, additional land use controls with consideration of a special use permit that allows a code enforcement officer to look at the property every year or two. ★ Encourage planning boards to find common ground and engage in dialogue with solar companies to produce creative solutions. ★ Develop a set of codes for the operation and maintenance of the land that focuses on the solar company rather than the individual landowner. ★ Encourage agrivoltaics and dual-use. ★ Establish county policy towards solar development and agriculture
<p>Agricultural Economic Development Grants and Loans</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ★ Help farmers to identify programs and write grants. ★ Offer grants for start-ups and small farms to support new agricultural ventures. ★ Provide low-interest loans or grants to help farmers improve efficiency, expand operations, and invest in new technologies.
<p>Restaurant Partnerships</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ★ Encourage restaurants to buy goods from local farmers and use them as ingredients in their recipes. ★ Host "Field to Fork" forums and farm-to-table tours to connect farms with restaurants and consumers. ★ Develop a Food Systems Plan for Fulton County
<p>Incentives for Sustainable Practices</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ★ Explore the use of conservation trusts and other methods like selling development rights to preserve critical farmland. ★ Promote and support sustainable farming practices and renewable energy projects that are compatible with agricultural use. ★ Encourage the use of high tunnels and other innovative practices to extend the growing season and improve crop reliability.

Opportunities: Strategies, Actions, Programs, and Policies That Could Positively Impact Agriculture and Promote Its Profitability, Resilience, and Long-Term Success

Infrastructure Improvements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ★ Invest in meat processing facilities to meet local demand and reduce costs for farmers. ★ Expand food and beverage manufacturing and processing capacity. ★ Develop shared commercial kitchens and farm retail hubs for processing and selling products.
Farm-Friendly Planning and Regulations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ★ Enhance local comprehensive plans to address agriculture and agricultural businesses. ★ Promote farm-friendly regulations that include good definitions and use of techniques such as conservation subdivision, agricultural buffers, and easy permitting of agritourism uses.
Other	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ★ Encourage innovative farming practices such as using high tunnels, diversifying crops, and engaging in alternative farming methods to overcome challenges and seize opportunities. ★ Establish a veterinary hospital specializing in large animals to meet the demand for veterinary care.

Threats: External Factors That Negatively Impact Agriculture and Hinder Its Success (May Overlap with Weaknesses; Often Factors Out of Direct Control of Local Government)

- ★ Climate change
- ★ Continued encroachment by solar energy facilities and residential and commercial uses
- ★ High costs and low profits
- ★ Lack of a next generation of farmers
- ★ Low commodity prices

Vision and Goals for Enhancing Agriculture in Fulton County

Our Vision for Agriculture

The following statement expresses the long-term vision for agriculture in Fulton County:

Fulton County envisions a future with a vibrant, resilient, and economically robust agricultural sector. We are committed to preserving our rich agricultural heritage, encouraging the next generation of farmers, and enhancing farm profitability. We will support efforts to promote local food production, increase agritourism, and diversify farm operations to ensure that agriculture remains a cornerstone of our economy and a source of pride for all residents. Together, we will cultivate a future where agriculture flourishes, rural character is protected, and farming remains an important part of Fulton County's identity.

Goal Statements

Goals to achieve Fulton County's vision for agriculture include:

1. Increase profitability of farm operations and the long-term viability of agriculture.
2. Enhance marketing and promotion of Fulton County farms and agricultural products.
3. Advocate for policies and collaboration at the local, County, State, and federal levels that support and protect the interests of farmers.
4. Enhance agritourism opportunities.
5. Strengthen community engagement and education in support of local agriculture.
6. Ensure that farmers in Fulton County have support for and access to the latest research, technology, and financial resources.
7. Promote environmental stewardship and sustainable farming practices that conserve natural resources, reduce environmental impact, enhance soil health and biodiversity, and assist farmers in addressing changes in weather patterns.
8. Minimize adverse impacts of solar development on agriculture and lands that support agriculture.
9. Improve agricultural infrastructure to enhance the efficiency and competitiveness of local farms.
10. Encourage a new generation of farmers.

Recommendations

Enhancing agriculture and protecting farmland ultimately requires implementation of a diversity of actions. No individual tool can address the complexities facing agricultural operations today.

The major tools in the agricultural enhancement toolbox include:

- Economic programs and incentives
- Support for agritourism, direct sales, value-added production, and infrastructure for processing, marketing, and distribution
- Comprehensive land use planning
- Farmland protection programs, especially for high-quality priority farmlands
- Regulatory and policy adjustments
- Community support and awareness
- Environmentally sustainable practices that include water resource management and climate-smart farming
- Collaboration and partnerships

A comprehensive approach is needed to ensure that farming remains economically viable for future generations. A range of strategies that focus on land use planning, policy development, economic support and community engagement is needed.

To accomplish this, the following topic areas have been established as important. Each topic establishes specific priority actions to be implemented. These priority actions are considered those that are essential to addressing current issues facing farms, or that must be implemented to lay the foundation for other actions later.

Major Topics to Enhance Agriculture in Fulton County:

- ▶ Agritourism Enhancement
- ▶ Marketing and Promotion
- ▶ Technical Assistance and Ongoing Support
- ▶ Developing the Next Generation of Farmers
- ▶ Farm and Farmland Protection



Priority Topics and Actions

Plan recommendations were developed based on feedback from farmers and other stakeholders, mapping, evaluation of data, and analysis of current conditions, as well as from other public engagement efforts. The Fulton County Agricultural and Farmland Protection Board (FCAFPB) also provided essential input by reviewing and ranking a preliminary list of strategies generated by the public at the three (3) open houses. Among the broad strategies identified by the FCAFPB as most important were to make agriculture a priority in the County, encourage farmers to diversify their products and explore new agricultural ventures, promote direct sales of farm products to consumers, address the needs of small and family farms, help farmers pursue grants, and raise public awareness of local agriculture. This direction forms the foundation for the recommendations detailed in this section.

The following specific actions are recommended to help Fulton County attain its vision and goals for a prosperous and resilient agricultural economy. Priority actions under each section are shown in **bold**.

Agritourism Enhancement

Connecting consumers with producers, agritourism offers a way for farmers to diversify their operations, attract more customers, and remain sustainable. It is a growing segment of the tourism industry in Fulton County, as demonstrated by the success of the annual Farm-2-Table Tour, held in partnership with Montgomery County farmers. As people become more conscious of where their food comes from and support local farms, there are opportunities for further expansion of agritourism in the County.

As illustrated in the diagram at right, there are five major categories of agritourism: direct sales, entertainment, hospitality, education, and outdoor recreation. Fulton County is strongest in the direct sales category; there are many farms and orchards where customers can purchase agricultural products at farm stands or on-site markets. Seasonal farmers' markets and "pick-your-own" operations offer additional options for consumers. A sunflower maze and a rodeo are among the local examples of farm-based entertainment, though they are not widely promoted outside Fulton County. Other agritourism activities in the County, especially those related to hospitality



and education, are much more limited, but could be developed to draw visitors and foster a greater appreciation for the agricultural industry. There is also the potential to create additional special events, festivals, and promotions around agriculture and local foods.



Recommended strategies for enhancing agritourism through the Fulton County Visitor’s Bureau include:

- 1. Encourage the development of additional agritourism activities in Fulton County, including farm-based hospitality (e.g., farm stays, farm bed-and-breakfasts, glamping), “kid-friendly” activities, and farm-to-table dining. These opportunities are particularly important in rural communities that are not well-served by hotels and restaurants.**
- 2. Develop more agriculture-related events to support agriculture, raise awareness and attract more people to the County. Events such as a Maple Weekend, blueberry festival, or Sundae on the Farm are examples of new events that would increase agritourism and highlight agricultural activity in the County.**
- 3. Increase awareness among farmers of websites like LandTrust.com and Hipcamp.com, where property owners can offer to rent their land to guests for outdoor activities such as hunting, fishing, and/or camping by the day. This is one way that farm owners can earn passive income.**

4. Continue to organize the Farm-2-Table Tour, which connects the public to farmers in Fulton and Montgomery Counties, on an annual basis.
5. Encourage collaboration with bordering counties on developing and promoting agritourism. As an example, the current 44 Lakes Craft Beverage Trail, which has five establishments in Fulton County, could be rebranded and extended into Montgomery and/or Herkimer Counties, increasing the number of venues to as many as 14. Cross-visitation along the trail could be encouraged by creating a “passport” program that challenges people to visit all of the trail stops over time, with some sort of small gift or discount provided for completing the challenge (see the website of the Hunterdon County, New Jersey Beer Trail⁴). Partner with the Capital Craft Beverage Trail to extend reach within the Capital District and Mohawk Valley regions.
6. Work with the Cornell Agritourism Program Work Team, Cornell Cooperative Extension of Fulton and Montgomery Counties, and other organizations to provide agritourism workshops, training programs, and educational materials to farms and agriculture-related businesses. Educate both agritourism operators and local municipalities about the New York Safety in Agritourism Act to enhance readiness for agritourism operations.
7. Organize an Agritourism Summit with participation by farmers, craft beverage producers, representatives of existing agritourism operations, and tourism industry professionals. The purpose of the summit would be to share ideas and successful best practices, determine the need for financial and technical assistance, and plan future agritourism activities and events. The Summit could be held in coordination with Montgomery County, and/or Herkimer County.

Marketing and Promotion

The need for enhanced marketing and promotion was identified by the Fulton County Agricultural and Farmland Protection Board as the most important topic to be addressed in this Plan, as it impacts virtually all agricultural operations. Marketing is critical for driving agritourism as well as for increasing sales of local farm products to residents and businesses.

Recommended strategies for enhancing marketing and promotion of farms, orchards, and other agriculture-related businesses in Fulton County include:

1. **Develop a visually appealing brochure, updated annually, on local farms and orchards with farm stands or on-farm markets that are open to the public. It should include a map with contact information and the products being sold by each establishment. The brochure can be distributed during the growing season at locations such as businesses that receive high foot traffic (e.g., coffee shops), farmers’ markets, community events,**

⁴ <https://hunterdonbeertrail.com>

and the Fulton County Visitor Center in Vails Mills. This should also be available digitally, as a PDF, to promote direct sales of agricultural products.

2. **Improve the visibility of established farmers' markets and related specialty stores to capture passing traffic and capitalize on the presence of second-home owners and tourists during the summer months. This could include directional signage on major roadways, as well as visibility in advertising, printed materials, websites, and social media.**
3. **Collaborate with county departments and nonprofits to expand outreach to Fulton County residents on the Farmers' Market Coupons and educate and/or assist local farmers enrolling in the program (e.g., vegetable farms, farm stands, apple orchards, and blueberry farms). Re-establish the Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP) within the county targeting neighborhoods with limited food access and disadvantaged communities.**
4. Improve the agritourism page at 44lakes.com. Create an interactive, online map of agricultural operations that can be used for wayfinding. Add search capabilities to the site that make it possible for users to find farms by product, activity, and location. Provide visual elements (i.e., photos, graphics) to make the page more attractive and inviting. Review farm and business listings at least annually and update addresses, phone numbers, websites, hours of operation, and other information as needed. Because the information on this page is useful to residents as well as visitors, encourage municipalities and partners to link to the agritourism page at 44lakes.com rather than providing separate content on their individual websites.
5. Recruit farmers to participate as vendors, at a reduced fee or free, at special events in the County. This would provide another opportunity for farmers to sell their products at retail prices. Farmers who market food directly to consumers have a higher chance of remaining in business, according to a 2015 USDA study.

Promote agriculture in the broadest sense of the word.

Marketing materials and websites should feature not only farms that produce crops and livestock, and the farm stands and farmers' markets where these products are sold, but also fruit orchards, apiaries, nurseries and greenhouses, tree farms, mushroom growers, maple sugarhouses, horse farms that offer riding lessons or shows, breweries and distilleries, and related establishments.

Technical Assistance and Ongoing Support

Support is needed to help farmers access the resources necessary to facilitate farm business development and expansion, develop agritourism ventures, and/or diversify their operations. Given that many farmers have reached retirement age, resources should also be directed toward succession planning so that their land can continue to be productive and remain as active farmland.



Recommended strategies to enhance technical assistance and support to farmers include:

- 1. Increase County funding for Cornell Cooperative Extension (CCE) of Fulton and Montgomery Counties in order to support goals and recommendations in the Plan. CCE is an important resource, offering an array of educational workshops and training programs, as well as one-on-one technical assistance, to farmers and farm business owners. CCE operates 4H clubs and Agriculture in the Classroom programs, and at one point in time, offered Office for the Aging support in Fulton County. CCE is also involved in tourism and regional collaboration.**
- 2. Provide annual training for local municipal assessors regarding NYS Agricultural Assessments to keep current and new assessors up to date on this program. Enforce NYS AML 25-AA fines to be imposed when farmland that has benefited from receiving an agricultural assessment is converted to non-farm uses. The fines, which are often**

ignored at the local level, are levied to be a disincentive to converting farmlands. Funds from those fines can be used locally for other farmland protection planning or protection programs.

3. **Work with CCE, Farm Bureau, and other organizations to encourage older farmers to complete succession and/or ownership transition plans. Stakeholders such as family members/heirs, employees, educational institutions and groups that have programs for young and beginning farmers, and members of the farmer’s professional service team (e.g., attorneys, accountants) should be engaged early in the process. Succession planning guidebooks, webinars, and workshops can be helpful – see, for example, the excellent resources offered by New Hampshire organization Land for Good⁵ – but many farmers will require a skilled facilitator or navigator to coordinate the process and keep it moving forward.⁶**
4. Offer small grants to help farmers transition to new crops, livestock, and/or markets and purchase the equipment needed to grow or diversify. Because agricultural projects rarely create employment, the grants should be funded by sources that do not require job creation. The Fulton County Center for Regional Growth’s Job Development Authority (JDA) Agricultural Loan Fund provides low-cost financing for farm expansion and diversification projects, but program requirements associated with the funding source have discouraged potential applicants. One possibility would be to work with Montgomery County to establish such a program. According to the 2017 Montgomery County Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan, a revolving loan fund that would be created in partnership with Fulton County was contemplated years ago, but never implemented.
5. Expand the Fulton County Soil and Water Conservation District’s shared service program that lends farm equipment and machinery, such as no till drills, and provide a method of transportation to deliver equipment directly to farmers within the county.
6. Assess the feasibility of a USDA-certified processing facility within the County.
7. Evaluate the level of interest among agricultural producers in small-scale value-added food and beverage production and the need for equipment, facilities, and/or training. Rather than developing a commercial kitchen, identify and coordinate access to existing community kitchens at firehouses, churches, municipal buildings, etc. that are seldom used.

⁵ <https://landforgood.org/resource/group/transferring-a-farm/>

⁶ The role of a facilitator in the succession planning process is described in a CCE fact sheet at https://nydairyadmin.cce.cornell.edu/uploads/doc_1028.pdf.

8. Increase coordination and programming with the Mohawk Valley Farm and Agribusiness Network⁷ and the Agri-Smart Mohawk Valley campaign. They are a regional resource and provide guidance, technological enhancement, and other assistance to farms and agribusinesses.
9. Evaluate opportunities for farmers to sell their products to local restaurants. Survey restaurant operators to determine whether and to what extent they purchase from local farms, the products they would purchase if available, and any barriers to local purchasing.
10. Develop a food systems plan for Fulton County. It would build on this Plan, but expand on it to address opportunities to enhance food security, support sustainable agriculture in the County, and grow food-related connections within the County and region. A food systems plan should link land use, economic development, public health that promotes good nutrition through local foods, transportation options, food value chains, and food waste reduction. The planning process should go beyond this Plan to identify retailers (grocery stores and restaurants, for example), consumers, farmers, and local governments.

What is a Community Food System?

A food system is the soil-to-soil system that connects food production, processing, distribution, acquisition, consumption and waste disposal in food and agriculture. This includes all the resources, technologies, stakeholders, relationships, policies and laws that shape and influence how food moves through the system – from farm to plate and back to the farm again. In a well-functioning community food system, the food production, processing, distribution, consumption and post-consumer waste disposal are all integrated to enhance the environmental, economic, social and nutritional health of a particular place and its inhabitants.

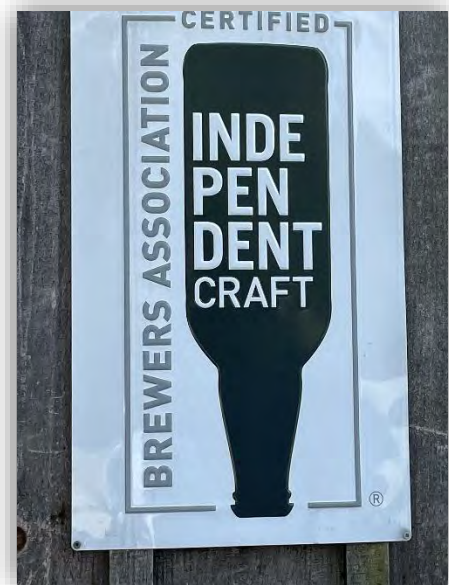
Developing the Next Generation of Farmers

Labor shortages and the lack of interest in (and awareness of) farming and careers related to agriculture among younger generations have been identified as barriers to the sustainability of the agricultural sector in Fulton County. There is a need to increase agricultural education and programming in local schools as well as in institutions of higher education. It is also important for the County to attract young and beginning farmers, especially as older farmers retire, to keep land in production.

⁷ <https://www.mvfoodaction.org/home>

Recommended strategies to develop the next generation of farmers include:

- 1. Support and enhance existing agriculture-related programming at PTECH, Hamilton-Fulton-Montgomery (HFM) BOCES, and SUNY Fulton Montgomery. There is a huge need for large animal veterinarians, veterinary assistants, and veterinary technicians, and for people who can maintain and repair farm equipment and machinery.**
- 2. Encourage local school districts to participate in Farm-to-School Programs such as the Patrick Leahy Farm to School Grant Program (as the Greater Johnstown School District has done).**
 - Increase the availability of local foods in schools and connect students to the sources of their food through education, taste tests, school gardens, field trips, and local food sourcing for school meals.
 - Develop relationships with local farms and orchards to bring more of their foods into these programs.
- 3. Promote the Farming for a New Generation program. Farmland for a New Generation New York⁸ is a robust, multi-faceted statewide program coordinated by American Farmland Trust, in partnership with the State of New York, agricultural organizations, land trusts, and others, that helps farmers seeking land and landowners who want to keep their land in farming.**
4. Continue to support agricultural education, including 4-H Clubs, FFA, and Agriculture in the Classroom programs, for elementary, middle school, and high school students. The Mayfield Central School District recently started an FFA chapter. Students need to understand where their food comes from; elementary school students would benefit from field trips to local farms. Students should also be made aware of the diverse career opportunities available in the agricultural industry, which increasingly involve new technology. Cornell Cooperative Extension of Fulton and Montgomery Counties administers many of these programs, but additional staff resources are needed to increase their capacity.



⁸ Farmland for a New Generation New York: Bringing a New Generation of Farmers to the Land, <https://nyfarmlandfinder.org/>

5. Develop mentorship and internship opportunities on local farms for young people with an interest in agriculture.⁹
6. Acquiring land that can be divided into farm plots and leased to young and beginning farmers may be an option to help return vacant and underutilized farmland to agricultural use, while providing a place where people can start a farm. This could also offer affordable, long-term leases to farmers while allowing access to land and even shared equipment and facilities. Educate area land trusts (e.g., Saratoga PLAN, Adirondack Land Trust, Mohawk Hudson Land Conservancy, American Farmland Trust, Schoharie Land Trust), agricultural support organizations (e.g., CADE, Farm Bureau), farmers, and residents about this potential land management and ownership opportunity to promote young and new farmers.
7. Provide incentives and financial support to attract and retain new, young, and veteran farmers. Enhance veterans programming to involve veterans in agriculture in Fulton County.

There are a variety of programs actively working to involve veterans in farming that Fulton County and its partners can promote, including:

- Heroic Food, which offers hands-on training to prepare veterans for careers in sustainable farming, agricultural trades, and food entrepreneurship in a supportive environment: <http://heroicfood.org>
- The Farmer Veteran Coalitions' Fellowship Fund. a small grant program that provides direct assistance to veterans who are beginning farmers, with links to training programs, farming resources, business resources, and farm financing options: <http://www.farmvetco.org>
- New York State Veterans in Agriculture listserv: NYVETSAG-L-request@cornell.edu
- Armed to Farm, a National Center for Appropriate Technology that provides training on sustainable agriculture for veterans: <https://www.ncat.org/armedtofarm>
- USDA Start Farming: <https://newfarmers.usda.gov/veterans>
- Farm Bureau Resource Guide to Assist Veterans in Agriculture: https://www.farmvetco.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/FB_Vet_GuideOct13final.pdf

Farm and Farmland Protection

1. **Increase agricultural awareness in land use planning by providing technical assistance.**
 - **Promote and provide support to local municipalities to develop new or updated comprehensive plans.**

⁹ The Glynwood Center in Cold Spring, NY has a decentralized, multi-county apprenticeship program that provides education, training, and mentoring to aspiring farmers. See <https://www.glynwood.org/what-we-do/farm-training/apprentice-program.html>.



- **Promote consideration of agriculture in new or updated comprehensive plans and land use laws, and support municipalities in these efforts. Provide annual training to municipalities on comprehensive plans and the importance of addressing agriculture as a land use within it. Provide support and mapping as needed for their planning efforts.**
- **Develop agriculture-related provisions in site plans, subdivisions, special use permits, and renewable energy (including solar) regulations.**
- **Provide clarity in zoning regulations regarding agritourism, what is allowed and what is not allowed, and other regulatory requirements.**
- **Develop outreach to local elected and appointed officials specifically to enhance their knowledge about agriculture in Fulton County, the role agriculture plays in their community, and the needs of farmers.**
- **Provide town-level data and mapping from this plan to provide local officials with additional information about agriculture in their municipality.**
- **Develop model subdivision and zoning language that municipalities can use to advance their own local farm-friendly land use regulations. By providing model definitions, a list of agriculture-related businesses that could be included in a zoning use table, farm-friendly tools such as abbreviated site plan review for certain agricultural operations, conservation subdivision design, use of farm buffers, etc.,**

the County can help local governments understand and rectify regulatory roadblocks to farming.

- **Model language should also address:**
 - **Conservation Subdivisions where 50% of a lot is preserved for agriculture at the same time that the base density of housing is allowed.**
 - **Use of Agricultural Overlay Districts**
 - **Use of buffers between farm and non-farm uses (provided by the non-farm user).**
 - **Use of density bonuses in exchange for permanent protection of agricultural lands.**
 - **Use of average lot size for minor subdivisions to enhance flexibility and allowance of mix of lot sizes – including those able to be used for agriculture.**
 - **Definitions to support agriculture and agritourism, direct sales, on-farm food processing, etc. that are consistent with AML 25-AA.**
 - **Development of rural siting standards or guidelines for non-farm development to help minimize adverse impacts on farms that may arise due to non-farm growth.**
 - **Use of the Farm-friendly Audit criteria in this Plan to identify other model language and methods the County can develop to aid municipalities in updating their land use regulations.**
 - **The need for NYS Department of Agriculture and Markets review when local land use regulations are developed or updated to ensure consistency between local laws and State regulations.**
- 2. Establish county-wide policies on solar. Solar energy development is very prevalent in Fulton County and is seen by some as an economic benefit on farms that allow other farm activities to continue. Others view solar development as a threat to agriculture in the County that is hastening the loss of active farmland and important farm soils. Solar development was identified across all public engagement as a concern to be addressed. This Plan recommends establishment of Farmer First Solar Policies, which prioritize solar designs that support farming options, soil health, and farm viability.**



- Establish a farmer first solar county-wide policy designed to safeguard lands for farming, strengthen farm viability, and allow for renewable energy development. Adopt a resolution or policy statement.
- Establish best management practices and expectations for solar developments in the County via a resolution of the Board of Supervisors,. These practices can be a) adopted by municipalities that have solar laws or zoning, b) by landowners signing lease agreements, and c) by the Fulton County Planning Board in their GML 239-m review of projects.
- **Best management practices for solar include:**
 - Prioritizing farming as part of the solar design.
 - Limiting the amount of prime farmland soils that can be disturbed and involving the Fulton County Soil and Water Conservation District in advising on soils best suited to remain in active agriculture vs marginal lands.
 - Using marginal lands for solar siting. When prime farmlands are the only option for siting solar, require dual use or agrivoltaics to allow continuance of farming activities that co-exist with solar facilities.
 - Promoting agrivoltaics, co-location and dual use of solar energy production and agriculture on the same land. This may require more flexibility than some solar laws currently offer to allow for additional height and spacing that may be required for agrivoltaic/dual use.
 - Requiring application of the New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets Guidelines for Solar Energy Projects – Construction Mitigation for Agricultural Lands.
 - Enhancing the use of berms and vegetation (both planted and natural vegetation) to screen solar facilities from roadways. This should include long-term operation and maintenance agreements between the landowner and solar company and/or solar company and the municipality to ensure that such screening is effective throughout the life of the solar facility.
 - For communities that have zoning, encouraging municipalities to permit solar facilities via the Special Use Permit process.

See American Farmland Trust’s Smart Solar Principles at <https://farmland.org/american-farmland-trust-releases-smart-solar-guiding-principles-to-save-the-land-that-sustains-us/>

See also Tioga County Solar Project Best Practices and Policies for Tioga County Municipalities at www.tiogacountyny.com/media/05xgol3x/tioga-county-solar_local-laws-and-procedures-full-package_for-print_not-editable.pdf



- **As a condition of approval, requiring periodic code enforcement officer inspections to ensure that any conditions of approval are maintained, and problems addressed on a regular basis.**
- **Avoiding wetlands, critical habitats and habitats of listed plant and animal species, and other sensitive environments.**
- **Supporting and promoting the use of high-value-shade resistant crops.**
- **Educating landowners about and ensuring that any required conversion payments are collected. When farmland located in Fulton County Agricultural District #1 has received an agricultural tax assessment to lower property taxes and is converted from farming to solar, the landowner is liable for payment of a fee. Landowners must inform the assessor within 90 days if they change a parcel that had been granted an agricultural assessment to a non-agricultural purpose. Failure to report this conversion could result in a fine of up to \$1,000 for the landowner.**
- **Addressing battery storage facilities.**
- **Help prepare municipalities for solar development.**
 - **Develop a model solar energy law and model battery energy storage law for use by municipalities.**
 - **Use the Solar Risk Map and Priority Farmland Map in this Plan and limit commercial-scale solar facilities on priority farmland parcels. This map helps identify solar potential and should be useful in planning efforts.**
 - **Using data from the Solar Risk and Priority Farmland Map, create a municipal specific solar risk map for use by municipalities as they conduct local planning efforts related to solar.**
 - **Provide training opportunities for planning board members on solar best siting practices, agrivoltaics, and regulating solar facilities.**

- **Prepare maps for municipalities showing critical environmental areas and work to prohibit or restrict development in those locations.**
 - **Help communities use and understand the utility Hosting Capacity maps to help learn if/where solar development may be economic in their community.**
 - **Promote comprehensive planning in local communities that address and establish policies for both agriculture and solar.**
- 3. Adopt a County right to farm law. This aids in the protection of farmers from nuisance lawsuits brought by non-farm uses that are located in agricultural areas. Such a law also makes a statement about the importance of farming to the County and helps safeguard the continued viability of farming operations without challenges due to the normal noise, odors, or other farm operations. As Fulton County experiences more non-farm development, this will become important.**
4. Provide annual training to County Planning Board and local Planning Boards and Zoning Boards of Appeals (ZBAs) on the New York State Agricultural Districts Program and use of the required Agricultural Data Statement during project reviews of non-farm development proposed within a NYS Agricultural District.
5. Encourage and support urban agriculture within cities and villages with an Urban Agriculture Overlay District. This could serve as an economic catalyst on vacant land and unused former industrial sites to innovate new business growth and develop a new generation of non-traditional farming methods as a means for diverse economic development (e.g., aeroponics, aquaponics, breweries, boutique food operation processing, rooftop above restaurants, cannabis, hydroponics, mushroom cultivation, micro greens, vertical farming). Other ways to promote urban agriculture include:
- Providing clarity on agricultural definitions.
 - Specifying which zones permit urban agriculture and what types.
 - Allowing on-site sales.
 - Allowing for small-animal husbandry.
 - Allowing for noncommercial urban agricultural production.
 - Allowing accessory structures to support production.
 - Promoting equity/access in the zoning code.
6. Continue dialogue with Amish sects within the Towns of Oppenheim and Ephratah and other locations within the Mohawk Valley to determine whether their children or other family members would be interested in establishing a stronger foothold within Fulton County which could be used by some farmers as part of their succession plan.
7. Promote the Family Counseling Center. Coordinate awareness about the Family Counseling Center in Gloversville regarding the mental health needs of farmers. The Family Counseling

Center has a Drop-in Center in Gloversville and a satellite office in Fort Plain. Farm resources should include raising awareness of this program, as well as NY Farm Net (800-547-3276), FarmAid (800-327-6243), AgriStress (833-897-8474), and other similar programs.



8. Develop a model farmland rental agreement to facilitate farmland rental, promote long-term partnerships in maintaining farmland, and allow for farmer investment in soils, crops, or other needed infrastructure on rented land.

9. Promote, through education, training, and funding assistance, continued Fulton County farm participation in SWCD's Climate

Resilient Agriculture program. Climate Resilient Agriculture is an active program funded through NYS Agriculture and Markets directed to Soil and Water Conservation Districts.

10. Educate farmers on alternative farming methods to address climate change.

- Develop programs and technical expertise to help farms develop best management practices to address a changing climate and enhance conservation through the following:
 - SWCD programs to enhance conservation tillage
 - USDA Adaptation Resources for Agriculture, a framework to help farmers address climate change
 - USDA Climate Smart Farming Program, which has 27 climate resilient farming practices and provides assistance to farmers interested in them. These programs provide technical assistance and funding for conservation practices for water management, livestock grazing, building soil, crop diversification, and sequestering carbon
- Promote regenerative farming practices and consider switching to alternative rotations, commodities, or diversification of crops.
- Promote agroforestry, especially silvopasturing, a type of agroforestry that integrates trees, forage, and grazing livestock on the same land. Silvopasturing may be particularly well suited to Fulton County and may be a way to expand farm activities in forested areas

or on vacant land through rotational grazing and planning for tree regeneration, specifically in the Adirondack Park.

- Establish dialogue with agribusiness on hazards that threaten field crops (e.g., flooding, drought, heat waves, cold waves, and invasive species such as Spotted Lanternfly, Gypsy Moth Caterpillars, and Japanese Knotweed).

11. Promote the use of Option to Purchase at Agricultural Values (OPAV). OPAV is a legal tool used to keep land affordable to farmers with commercial agricultural operations, and to discourage conversion of good farmland to large residential properties. OPAVs restrict the sale of land to qualified farmers or family members and restrict sale prices related to agricultural values.

12. Promote initiatives in Fulton County that focus new, non-farm development using smart growth principles that serve to create vital and sustainable communities while maintaining farmland and active farms as follows:

- Develop plans and land use regulations that allow for and encourage mixed-use neighborhoods.
- Enable a diverse mix of housing types, providing opportunity and choice for all.
- Prioritize infill and redevelopment of existing buildings to revitalize neighborhoods and downtowns, including areas around public transit.
- Provide well-planned, equitable, and accessible public spaces.
- Encourage compact neighborhood design and concentrated development around existing infrastructure.
- Preserve open space, agricultural resources, and natural resources.
- Prioritize transportation options such as walking, cycling, and public transportation.
- Promote climate resiliency and adaptation, preferably through nature-based solutions, and reduce greenhouse gas emissions.
- Build on unique traits to create an attractive and welcoming community with a strong sense of place.
- Engage in an inclusive, collaborative public planning process that considers the needs and character of the community.

13. Because many priority farmlands exist surrounding the cities of Gloversville and Johnstown, develop a long-term capital improvement/infrastructure plan for these urban areas to allow for growth via the smart growth principles above, but which do not extend to critical farming areas. Expansion of these systems often leads to increased development and conversion of agricultural land into residential or commercial uses.

14. Work with local realtors, Fulton County SWCD, and the Fulton County Center for Regional Growth to market land no longer actively farmed that could be reused for agriculture. Use

websites, social media, brochures, and advertising in farming publications to reach potential buyers, providing high-quality photos, soil and topographical maps, detailed property descriptions, and information about farming in Fulton County.

15. Establish a county initiative to enhance farmland protection.

- Work with land trusts that serve Fulton County to educate farmers about and enhance participation in the NYS Farmland Protection Implementation Grants program (FPIG).
- Support farmers' applications to the FPIG program through aid in mapping and applying for this program including adopting resolutions to support the application.
- Use the Priority Farmland Map in this Plan to help focus farmland protection grant applications on identified priority areas.

16. Continue to support farmers' markets in Northville, Johnstown, and Gloversville.



Implementation and Action Plan

The Plan is meant to provide guidance for all those involved in the agricultural sector. It provides a toolbox of ideas and actions that can be implemented over time and offers a strategy for who, how, and when those strategies can be put to work. The Plan provides:

- Guidance to the County, towns, and partners on priority projects needed to support agriculture;
- A framework for the County, towns, partners, and interested landowners to promote farming, agri-businesses, agri-tourism, and local food systems in the County;
- Guidance on obtaining funding to implement actions recommended in the Plan;
- An action plan showing priority strategies and information helpful for implementation; and
- A large inventory of data, maps, and resources to help implement priority actions.



Many individuals, agencies and organizations have important roles to play in implementing this plan. The County, under the leadership of the Planning Department and the Fulton County Agricultural and Farmland Protection Board, should take a primary role in implementing this Plan. There are many other important players, however, that will also have significant roles. These include other County agencies, other ag-support agencies such as FC SWCD, Farm Bureau, local municipalities, farmers and agri-businesses.

In the Action Plan, below, specific agencies and groups have been identified as having leadership or technical skills needed to implement the strategies. After adoption of this plan, the County can take following steps that can be taken to start implementation:

1. A key first step for the County to take will be to ensure all agencies, farmers, and the public are made aware of this plan, and to initiate projects through communication and coordination among all these entities. Promote the completed Plan with farmers, the public, and with elected and appointed officials from towns in Fulton County through press releases, letters, newsletters, social media, and other means. Work to update the County website to create a dedicated page for agriculture and post this plan along with its maps and the online StoryMap, and list all partners identified in this action plan (outlined below) with links to their websites.

2. Under leadership of the Fulton County Planning Department and with input from the County Agricultural and Farmland Protection Board, a coordinating steering committee of the major partners identified in this plan should convene. This committee should develop a short-term and long-term scope of work from identified priority strategies to guide implementation. It will be advisable to set an annual work plan to guide future work. This effort should identify appropriate individuals, staff and organizations needed to be involved to take specific roles in each priority project. The Action Plan that follows below will be helpful in identifying those partners. Creation of an annual work plan will assist in development of a task list and budget.
3. Ensure that this Plan (or future updates) becomes the “road map” for enhancing agriculture in Fulton County for all County agencies. Ensure that all departments and organizations are made aware of this plan and its importance to the economy, environment, character, and quality of life in Fulton County.
4. Review this Plan periodically: every 5-7 years with possible revisions and updates. The Plan should be dynamic and able to change as appropriate to incorporate and take advantage of new science, new conditions, new laws, and new opportunities.
5. Monitor and evaluate progress. To continue the County’s leadership and support of agriculture, monitoring and evaluation of program implementation, accomplishments and effectiveness should be an expectation. County agencies including Planning and the Visitors Bureau all have roles and programs that intersect with agriculture. Each should report annually to the County Board on progress made, challenges faced, and program support needed to implement this Plan. Likewise, organizations receiving County funding and support such as the SWCD (or as recommended, Cornell Cooperative Extension) should also monitor effectiveness and report to the County on an annual basis.

Action Plan

The Action Plan, organized by topic and in matrix form, begins on the next page. Priority actions are listed in bold, as they were in the previous chapter.

AGRITOURISM ENHANCEMENTS

#	Goal	Recommended Action	Partners Funding Sources	Timeline
1	Expand Agritourism Activities	Encourage the development of additional agritourism activities in Fulton County, including farm-based hospitality (e.g., farm stays, farm bed-and-breakfasts, glamping), “kid-friendly” activities, and farm-to-table dining. These opportunities are particularly important in rural communities that are not well-served by hotels and restaurants.	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Partners</u> FCVB, FMRCoC, Municipal Tourism/ Business Groups</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><u>Funding Sources</u> NYSED, NYS ESD I LOVE NY, FCVB</p>	YEAR 1
2	Develop Agriculture-Related Special Events	Develop more agriculture-related events to support agriculture, raise awareness and attract more people to the County. Events such as a Maple Weekend, blueberry festival, or Sundae on the Farm are examples of new events that would increase agritourism and highlight agricultural activity in the County.	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Partners</u> FCVB, FCFB, CCE, Local Agribusinesses</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><u>Funding Sources</u> NYS ESD I Love NY Capital Tourism Grant</p>	YEAR 2
3	Increase Awareness of Passive Income Opportunities	Increase awareness among farmers of websites like LandTrust.com and Hipcamp.com, where property owners can offer to rent their land to guests for outdoor activities such as hunting, fishing, and/or camping by the day. This is one way that farm owners can earn passive income.	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Partners</u> FCVB, FCFB, FCAFPB, CCE, FMRCoC</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><u>Funding Sources</u> FCVB</p>	YEAR 3
4	Continue and Expand Farm-2-Table Tour	Continue to organize the Farm-2-Table Tour, which connects the public to farmers in Fulton and Montgomery Counties, on an annual basis.	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Partners</u> FCVB, FCFB, CCE, FMRCoC, FCAFPB, FCSWCD, MCT</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><u>Funding Sources</u> FCFB, FCVB, MCT, NYS ESD I LOVE NY</p>	ONGOING

AGRITOURISM ENHANCEMENTS

#	Goal	Recommended Action	Partners Funding Sources	Timeline
5	Increase Regional Collaboration	Encourage collaboration with bordering counties on developing and promoting agritourism. As an example, the current 44 Lakes Craft Beverage Trail, which has five establishments in Fulton County, could be rebranded and extended into Montgomery and/or Herkimer Counties, increasing the number of venues to as many as 14. Cross-visitation along the trail could be encouraged by creating a “passport” program that challenges people to visit all of the trail stops over time, with some sort of small gift or discount provided for completing the challenge. Partner with Capital Craft Beverage Trail to extend reach within the Capital District REDC and Mohawk Valley REDC.	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Partners</u> FCVB, FCFB, FMRCoC, MCFB, MCAFPB, MCT, HerkCT, HamCT, SCT</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><u>Funding Sources</u> NYS ESD I LOVE NY, FCVB, MCT, HerkCT, HamCT, SCT</p>	ONGOING
6	Improve Agritourism Education	Work with the Cornell Agritourism Program Work Team, Cornell Cooperative Extension of Fulton and Montgomery Counties, PTECH, and other organizations to provide agritourism workshops, training programs, and educational materials to farms and agriculture-related businesses. Educate both agritourism operators and local municipalities about the New York Safety in Agritourism Act to enhance readiness for agritourism operations.	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Partners</u> FCVB, FCFB, CCE, FCAFPB, PTECH</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><u>Funding Sources</u> NYS DAM, USDA</p>	YEAR 2
7	Establish Regional Agricultural Summit	Organize a Regional Agritourism Summit with participation by farmers, craft beverage producers, representatives of existing agritourism operations, and tourism industry professionals. The purpose of the summit would be to share ideas and successful best practices, determine the need for financial and technical assistance, and plan future agritourism activities and events. The Summit could be held in coordination with Montgomery County, and/or Herkimer County.	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Partners</u> FCVB, FCAFPB, CCE, FCFB, MCT, MCAFPB, MCFB, FMRCoC, HCFB, HCAFPB, HerkCT</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><u>Funding Sources</u> FCVB, FCAFPB, FCFB, MCT, MCAFPB, MCFB, FMRCoC, HerkCT, HCAFPB</p>	YEAR 5

AGRITOURISM ENHANCEMENTS

#	Goal	Recommended Action	Partners Funding Sources	Timeline
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ABBREVIATIONS USED: **BOCES** – Board of Cooperative Educational Services ▪ **CADE** – Center for Agriculture Development and Entrepreneurship ▪ **CCE** – Cornell Cooperative Extension ▪ **FCAFPB** – Fulton County Agricultural and Farmland Protection Board ▪ **FCBOS** – Fulton County Board of Supervisors ▪ **FCCRG** – Fulton County Center for Regional Growth ▪ **FCFB** – Fulton County Farm Bureau ▪ **FCHF** – Fulton County Highways and Facilities ▪ **FCPD** – Fulton County Planning Department ▪ **FCOFA** – Fulton County Office for the Aging ▪ **FCRPTS** – Fulton County Real Property Tax Services ▪ **FCSWCD** – Fulton County Soil & Water Conservation District ▪ **FCVB** – Fulton County Visitors Bureau ▪ **FCVSA** – Fulton County Veterans Service Agency ▪ **FMRCoC** – Fulton Montgomery Regional Chamber of Commerce ▪ **HamCT** – Hamilton County Tourism ▪ **HCAFPB** – Herkimer County Agriculture and Farmland Protection Board ▪ **HCFB** – Herkimer County Farm Bureau ▪ **HerkCT** – Herkimer County Tourism ▪ **MCAFPB** – Montgomery County Agriculture and Farmland Protection Board ▪ **MCT** – Montgomery County Tourism ▪ **NOFA** – Northeast Organic Farming Association ▪ **NYSED** – New York State Education Department ▪ **NYSDAM** – New York State Department of Agriculture and Market ▪ **NYSDOT** – New York State Department of Transportation ▪ **PTECH** – Pathways in Technology Early College High School ▪ **SCT** – Saratoga County Tourism ▪ **USDA** – United States Department of Agriculture

MARKETING AND PROMOTION

#	Goal	Recommended Action	Partners Funding Sources	Timeline
1	Enhance & Create Agricultural Materials	Develop a visually appealing brochure, updated annually, on local farms and orchards with farm stands or on-farm markets that are open to the public. It should include a map with contact information and the products being sold by each establishment. The brochure can be distributed during the growing season at locations such as businesses that receive high foot traffic (e.g., coffee shops), farmers' markets, community events, and the Fulton County Visitor Center in Vails Mills. The brochure should also be available digitally, as a PDF, to promote direct sales of agricultural products.	<u>Partners</u> FCVB, FCFB <u>Funding Sources</u> FCVB, FCFB	YEAR 1
2	Establish Agricultural Wayfinding	Improve the visibility of established farmers' markets and related specialty stores to capture passing traffic and capitalize on the presence of second-home owners and tourists during the summer months. This could include directional signage on major roadways, as well as visibility in advertising, printed materials, websites, and social media.	<u>Partners</u> NYSDOT, FCHF, Local Municipalities, Municipal Tourism/ Business Groups, Local Farmers' Markets (V-Northville, C-Gloversville, C-Johnstown) <u>Funding Sources</u> FCVB, Local Businesses	YEAR 5
3	Expand Outreach of Local Healthy Eating Options	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaborate with county departments and nonprofits to expand outreach to Fulton County residents on the Farmers' Market Coupons and educate and/or assist local farmers enrolling in the program (e.g., vegetable farms, farm stands, apple orchards, and blueberry farms). • Re-establish the Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP) within the county targeting neighborhoods with limited food access and disadvantaged communities. 	<u>Partners</u> FCOFA, FCVSA, Fulmont Community Action, CCE, Local Farmers <u>Funding Sources</u> FCBOS, NYSDAM, USDA, CCE	ONGOING

MARKETING AND PROMOTION

#	Goal	Recommended Action	Partners Funding Sources	Timeline
4	Increase Agricultural Awareness & Opportunities on County Websites	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve the agritourism page at 44lakes.com. • Create an interactive, online map of agricultural operations that can be used for wayfinding. Add search capabilities to the site that make it possible for users to find farms by product, activity, and location. • Provide visual elements (i.e., photos, graphics) to make the page more attractive and inviting. • Review farm and business listings at least annually and update addresses, phone numbers, websites, hours of operation, and other information as needed. 	<u>Partners</u> FCVB <u>Funding Sources</u> FCVB	ONGOING
5	Invite Agribusinesses to Local Events Throughout the County	Recruit farmers to participate as vendors, at a reduced fee or free, at special events in the County. This would provide another opportunity for farmers to sell their products at retail prices. Farmers who market food directly to consumers have a higher chance of remaining in business, according to a 2015 USDA study.	<u>Partners</u> FCVB, Local Tourism/Business Groups that host events (e.g., Gloversville Recreation Commission, Caroga Tourism Committee, City of Johnstown Tourism Committee) <u>Funding Sources</u> N/A	YEAR 1

ABBREVIATIONS USED: **BOCES** – Board of Cooperative Educational Services ▪ **CADE** – Center for Agriculture Development and Entrepreneurship ▪ **CCE** – Cornell Cooperative Extension ▪ **FCAFPB** – Fulton County Agricultural and Farmland Protection Board ▪ **FCBOS** – Fulton County Board of Supervisors ▪ **FCCRG** – Fulton County Center for Regional Growth ▪ **FCFB** – Fulton County Farm Bureau ▪ **FCHF** – Fulton County Highways and Facilities ▪ **FCPD** – Fulton County Planning Department ▪ **FCOFA** – Fulton County Office for the Aging ▪ **FCRPTS** – Fulton County Real Property Tax Services ▪ **FCSWCD** – Fulton County Soil & Water Conservation District ▪ **FCVB** – Fulton County Visitors Bureau ▪ **FCVSA** – Fulton County Veterans Service Agency ▪ **FMRCoC** – Fulton Montgomery Regional Chamber of Commerce ▪ **HamCT** – Hamilton County Tourism ▪ **HCAFPB** – Herkimer County Agriculture and Farmland Protection Board ▪ **HCFB** – Herkimer County Farm Bureau ▪ **HerkCT** – Herkimer County Tourism ▪ **MCAFPB** – Montgomery County Agriculture and Farmland Protection Board ▪ **MCT** – Montgomery County Tourism ▪ **NOFA** – Northeast Organic Farming Association ▪ **NYSED** – New York State Education Department ▪ **NYSDAM** – New York State Department of Agriculture and Market ▪ **NYSDOT** – New York State Department of Transportation ▪ **PTECH** – Pathways in Technology Early College High School ▪ **SCT** – Saratoga County Tourism ▪ **USDA** – United States Department of Agriculture

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE AND ONGOING SUPPORT

#	Goal	Recommended Action	Partners Funding Sources	Timeline
1	<p align="center">Increase Funding to Cornell Cooperative Extension of Fulton and Montgomery Counties and Reestablish County Presence on CCE Board</p>	<p>Increase county funding for Cornell Cooperative Extension (CCE) of Fulton and Montgomery Counties in order to support goals and recommendations in the Plan. CCE is an important resource, offering an array of educational workshops and training programs, as well as one-on-one technical assistance, to farmers and farm business owners. CCE runs 4H clubs and Agriculture in the Classroom programs and at one point in time, offered Office for the Aging support in Fulton County. CCE is also involved in tourism and regional collaboration.</p>	<p align="center"><u>Partners</u> FCBOS, CCE, FCOFA</p> <p align="center"><u>Funding Sources</u> FCBOS</p>	<p align="center">YEAR 1</p>
2	<p align="center">Improve Agricultural Tax Assessment & Enforcement</p>	<p>Provide annual training for local municipal assessors regarding the NYS Agricultural Assessments program to keep current and new assessors up to date on this program. Enforce NYS AML 25-AA fines to be imposed when farmland that has benefited from receiving an agricultural assessment is converted to non-farm uses. The fines, which are often ignored at the local level, are levied to be a disincentive to converting farmlands. Funds from those fines can be used locally for other farmland protection planning or protection programs.</p>	<p align="center"><u>Partners</u> FCRPTS, Local Municipalities, Local Municipal Assessors</p> <p align="center"><u>Funding Sources</u> N/A</p>	<p align="center">YEAR 3</p>
3	<p align="center">Agricultural Succession Planning for Existing Farmers</p>	<p>Work with CCE, Farm Bureau, Land As Your Legacy, and other organizations to encourage older farmers to complete succession and/or ownership transition plans. Stakeholders such as family members/heirs, employees, educational institutions and groups that have programs for young and beginning farmers, and members of the farmer’s professional service team (e.g., attorneys, accountants) should be engaged early in the process. Succession planning guidebooks, webinars, and workshops can be helpful, but many farmers will require a skilled facilitator or navigator to coordinate the process and keep it moving forward.</p>	<p align="center"><u>Partners</u> FCFB, FCAFPB, CCE, FarmNet</p> <p align="center"><u>Funding Sources</u> FCFB, FCAFPB, CCE</p>	<p align="center">YEAR 2</p>

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE AND ONGOING SUPPORT

#	Goal	Recommended Action	Partners Funding Sources	Timeline
4	Offer Grants and Loans for Farm Diversification and Expansion That Do Not Require Job Creation	Offer small grants to help farmers transition to new crops, livestock, and/or markets and purchase the equipment needed to grow or diversify. Because agricultural projects rarely create employment, the grants should be funded by sources that do not require job creation. The FCCRG's JDA Agricultural Loan Fund provides low-cost financing for farm expansion and diversification projects, but program requirements associated with the funding source have discouraged potential applicants. One possibility would be to work with Montgomery County to establish such a program. According to the 2017 Montgomery County Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan, a revolving loan fund that would be created in partnership with Fulton County was contemplated years ago, but never implemented.	<u>Partners</u> FCCRG <u>Funding Sources</u> USDA, NYS DAM, others TBD	INITIATE YEAR 2, THEN ONGOING
5	Expand and Market Shared Equipment & Machinery Program	Expand the Fulton County Soil and Water Conservation District's shared service program that lends farm equipment and machinery, such as no till drills, and provide a method of transportation to deliver equipment directly to farmers within the county.	<u>Partners</u> FCBOS, FCSWCD, USDA, NYSDAM <u>Funding Sources</u> FCBOS, FCSWCD, USDA, NYSDAM CRF Climate Resilient Funding	ONGOING
6	Evaluate Processing Facility	Assess the feasibility of a USDA certified processing facility within the County.	<u>Partners</u> FCBOS, FCIDA, FCCRG, USDA, NYSDAM, MVREDC <u>Funding Sources</u> NYSDAM, USDA	YEAR 3

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE AND ONGOING SUPPORT

#	Goal	Recommended Action	Partners Funding Sources	Timeline
7	Inventory Existing Commercial Kitchens	Evaluate the level of interest among agricultural producers in small-scale value-added food and beverage production and the need for equipment, facilities, and/or training. Rather than developing a commercial kitchen, identify and coordinate access to existing community kitchens at firehouses, churches, municipal buildings, etc. that are seldom used.	<u>Partners</u> FCPD, Houses of Worship, CCE, NYSDOH, NYSDAM, Local Municipalities <u>Funding Sources</u> N/A	YEAR 3
8	Improve Technical Assistance Cooperation	Increase coordination and programming with the Mohawk Valley Farm and Agribusiness Network and the Agri-Smart Mohawk Valley campaign. They are a regional resource and provide guidance, technological enhancement, other assistance to farms, and agribusinesses.	<u>Partners</u> CCE, FCFB <u>Funding Sources</u> N/A	YEAR 5
9	Increase Collaboration between Local Farmers and Restaurants	Evaluate opportunities for farmers to sell their products to local restaurants. Survey restaurant operators to determine whether and to what extent they purchase from local farms, the products they would purchase if available, and any barriers to local purchasing.	<u>Partners</u> CCE, FMRCoC, Restaurant Industry, Farming Community <u>Funding Sources</u> NYSDAM, others TBD	YEAR 4
10	Enhance the Community Foods System	Develop a food systems plan for Fulton County. It would build on this Plan, but expand on it to address opportunities to enhance food security, support sustainable agriculture in the County, and grow food-related connections within the County and region. A food systems plan should link land use, economic development, public health that promotes good nutrition through local foods, transportation options, food value chains, and food waste reduction. The planning process should go beyond this Plan to identify retailers (grocery stores and restaurants, for example), consumers, farmers, and local governments.	<u>Partners</u> Local Municipalities, Retailers, Food Processors and Distributors, Farming Community, Health Systems, Nonprofit Organizations <u>Funding Sources</u> USDA	YEAR 4

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE AND ONGOING SUPPORT

#	Goal	Recommended Action	Partners Funding Sources	Timeline
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DEVELOPING THE NEXT GENERATION OF FARMERS

#	Goal	Recommended Action	Partners Funding Sources	Timeline
1	Enhance & Expand Educational Agricultural Programs	Support and enhance existing agriculture-related programming at PTECH, Hamilton-Fulton-Montgomery BOCES, and SUNY Fulton Montgomery. There is a huge need for large animal veterinarians, veterinary assistants, vet techs, and people who can maintain and repair farm equipment and machinery.	<p align="center"><u>Partners</u> PTECH, BOCES, SUNY Fulton Montgomery</p> <p align="center"><u>Funding Sources</u> MVREDC, NYSED, CCE, SUNY, PTECH, BOCES, SUNY Fulton Montgomery</p>	ONGOING
2	Expand Farm-to-School Programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage local school districts to participate in Farm-to-School Programs such as the Patrick Leahy Farm to School Grant Program • Increase availability of local foods in schools and help connect students to the sources of their food through education, taste tests, school gardens, field trips, and local food sourcing for school meals. • Develop relationships with local farms and orchards to bring more of their food into the program. 	<p align="center"><u>Partners</u> USDA, NYSDAM, BOCES, FCFB, CCE, School Districts within the County</p> <p align="center"><u>Funding Sources</u> USDA, NYSDAM, CCE'S EFNEP Program, Cornell's Agriculture in the Classroom Program (NYAIRC), BOCES, School Districts within the County</p>	ONGOING
3	Establish Next Generation of Farmers	Promote the Farming for a New Generation Program. Farmland for a New Generation New York is a robust, multi-faceted state-wide program coordinated by American Farmland Trust – in partnership with the State of New York, agricultural organizations, land trusts, and others – that helps farmers seeking land and landowners who want to keep their land in farming.	<p align="center"><u>Partners</u> CCE, AFPB, FCFB, Future Farmers of America</p> <p align="center"><u>Funding Sources</u> New Generation Program</p>	YEAR 1

DEVELOPING THE NEXT GENERATION OF FARMERS

#	Goal	Recommended Action	Partners Funding Sources	Timeline
4	Support Agricultural Education	Continue to support agricultural education, including 4-H Clubs, FFA, and Agriculture in the Classroom curricula, for elementary, middle school, and high school students. Students need to understand where their food comes from; elementary school students would benefit from field trips to local farms. Students should also be made aware of the diverse career opportunities available in the agricultural industry, which increasingly involve new technology. Cornell Cooperative Extension of Fulton and Montgomery Counties administers many of these programs, but additional staff resources are needed to increase their capacity.	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Partners</u> CCE, BOCES, School Districts within Fulton County</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><u>Funding Sources</u> NYSED</p>	ONGOING
5	Develop Streamline Apprentice Program	Develop mentorship and internship opportunities on local farms for young people with an interest in agriculture.	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Partners</u> PTECH, BOCES, SUNY Fulton Montgomery, SUNY Cobleskill, FCCRG</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><u>Funding Sources</u> NYSED, SUNY, MVREDC, NYSDAM, US Dept of Labor Apprentice Ambassador Program</p>	YEAR 3
6	Create Affordable Land Opportunities	Acquiring land that can be divided into farm plots and leased to young and beginning farmers may be an option to help return vacant and underutilized farmland to agricultural use, while providing a place where people can start a farm. This could also offer affordable, long-term leases to farmers while allowing access to land and even shared equipment and facilities. Educate area land trusts, agricultural support organizations (e.g., CADE, Farm Bureau), farmers, and residents about this potential land management and ownership opportunity to promote young and new farmers.	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Partners</u> FCFB, CCE, Saratoga PLAN, ADK Land Trust, MH Land Conservancy, American Farmland Trust, Schoharie Land Trust, CADE, Local Municipalities</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><u>Funding Sources</u> N/A</p>	YEAR 5

DEVELOPING THE NEXT GENERATION OF FARMERS

#	Goal	Recommended Action	Partners Funding Sources	Timeline
7	Enhance and Promote Veterans Programming	Provide incentives and financial support to attract and retain veterans to own and/or operate farming operations.	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Partners</u> FCVS, FCFB, CCE, CADE, Future Farmers of America, Salute to Service</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><u>Funding Sources</u> USDA New Beginning Farmers and Ranchers, NYSDAM, Cornell Small Farms Program - Farm Ops Initiative</p>	YEAR 5

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FARMS AND FARMLAND PROTECTION

#	Goal	Recommended Action	Partners Funding Sources	Timeline
1	<p>Increase Agricultural Awareness in Land Use Planning by Providing Technical Assistance</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote and provide support to municipalities to develop new or updated comprehensive plans. • Promote consideration of agriculture in new or updated comprehensive plans and land use laws, and support municipalities in these efforts. Provide annual training to municipalities on comprehensive plans and the importance of addressing agriculture as a land use within it. Provide support and mapping as needed for their planning efforts. • Develop agriculture-related provisions in site plans, subdivisions, special use permits, and renewable energy (e.g., solar) regulations. • Provide clarity in zoning regulations regarding agritourism, what is allowed and what is not allowed, and other regulatory requirements. • Develop outreach to local elected and appointed officials specifically to enhance their knowledge about agriculture in Fulton County, the role agriculture plays in their community, and the needs of farmers. • Provide town-level data and mapping from this plan to provide them with additional information about agriculture in their municipality. • Develop model subdivision and zoning language that municipalities can use to advance their own local farm-friendly land use regulations. (See text for list of other items that model language should address.) 	<p><u>Partners</u> FCPD, Local Municipalities</p> <p><u>Funding Sources</u> FCPD</p>	<p>ONGOING</p>

FARMS AND FARMLAND PROTECTION

#	Goal	Recommended Action	Partners Funding Sources	Timeline
2	Establish County-Wide Policy on Solar	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish a farmer's first solar county-wide policy designed to safeguard lands for farming, strengthen farm visibility, and allow for renewable energy development. Adopt a resolution or policy statement. • Establish best management practices and expectations for solar development in the County via a resolution of the Board of Supervisors. These practices can be (1) adopted by the municipalities that have solar laws or zoning, (2) by landowners signing lease agreements; and (3) by the Fulton County Planning Board in their 239-m review of projects. (See text for list of best management practices for solar.) • Help prepare municipalities for solar development. (For additional details, see text.) 	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Partners</u> FCPD, FCBOS</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><u>Funding Sources</u> N/A</p>	YEAR 1
3	Enact County-Wide Right to Farm Law	Adopt a County Right to Farm Law. This aids in the protection of farmers from nuisance lawsuits brought by non-farm uses that are located in agricultural areas. Such a law also makes a statement about the importance of farming to the County and helps safeguard the continued viability of farming operations without challenges due to the normal noise, odors, or other farm operations. As Fulton County experiences more non-farm development, this will become important.	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Partners</u> FCPD, FCBOS</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><u>Funding Sources</u> N/A</p>	YEAR 1
4	Conduct Agricultural Trainings to Local Boards	Provide annual training to the County Planning Board, local Planning Boards, and Zoning Boards of Appeals (ZBAs) on the New York State Agricultural Districts Program and use of the required Agricultural Data Statement during the project reviews of non-farm development proposed within a NYS Agricultural District.	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Partners</u> FCPD, Local Boards, FCPB, SUNY Fulton Montgomery, NYSDAM, FCAFPB, FCSWCD, Montgomery County</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><u>Funding Sources</u> FCBOS</p>	ONGOING

FARMS AND FARMLAND PROTECTION

#	Goal	Recommended Action	Partners Funding Sources	Timeline
5	Promote Urban Agriculture	Encourage and support urban agriculture within cities and villages with an Urban Agriculture Overlay District. This could serve as an economic catalyst on vacant land and unused former industrial sites to innovate new business growth and develop a new generation of non-traditional farming methods as a means for diverse economic development (e.g., aeroponics, aquaponics, breweries, boutique food operation processing, cannabis products, hydroponics, mushroom cultivation, micro greens, vertical farming, etc.).	<p><u>Partners</u> FCPD, Local Cities and Villages, FCCRG</p> <p><u>Funding Sources</u> Restore NY, FAST NY</p>	ONGOING
6	Develop Relationship with Amish Community	Continue dialogue with Amish sects within the Towns of Oppenheim and Ephratah and other locations within the Mohawk Valley to determine whether their children or other family members would be interested in establishing a stronger foothold within Fulton County and used by some farmers as part of their succession plan.	<p><u>Partners</u> CCE</p> <p><u>Funding Sources</u> N/A</p>	ONGOING
7	Educate Farmers on Local Mental Health Options	Promote the Family Counseling Center. Coordinate awareness about the Family Counseling Center in Gloversville regarding the mental health needs of farmers. The Family Counseling Center has a Drop-in Center in Gloversville and a satellite office in Fort Plain. Farm resources should include raising awareness of this program, as well as NY Farm Net, FarmAid, AgriStress, and other similar programs.	<p><u>Partners</u> Family Counseling Center, CCE</p> <p><u>Funding Sources</u> N/A</p>	ONGOING
8	Create Farmland Rental Template	Develop a model farmland rental agreement to facilitate farmland rental, promote long-term partnerships in maintaining farmland, and allow for farmer investment in soils, crops, or other needed infrastructure on rented land.	<p><u>Partners</u> CCE, NYSDAM, FCAFPB</p> <p><u>Funding Sources</u> N/A</p>	YEAR 6

FARMS AND FARMLAND PROTECTION

#	Goal	Recommended Action	Partners Funding Sources	Timeline
9	Continue SWCD Education and Trainings	<p>Promote, through education, training, and funding assistance, continued Fulton County farm participation in SWCD’s Climate Resilient Agriculture program. Climate Resilient Agriculture is an active program funded through NYS Ag and Markets directed to Soil and Water Conservation Districts.</p>	<p><u>Partners</u> FCSWCD</p> <p><u>Funding Sources</u> NYSDAM, USDA</p>	ONGOING
10	Educate Farmers on Alternative Farming Methods to Address Climate Change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop programs and technical expertise to help farms develop best management practices to address a changing climate and enhance conservation through the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o SWCD programs to enhance conservation tillage o USDA Adaptation Resources for Agriculture, a framework to help farmers address climate change o USDA Climate Smart Farming Program, which has 27 climate resilient farming practices and assists interested farmers. These programs provide technical assistance and funding for conservation practices for water management, livestock grazing, building soil, crop diversification, and sequestering carbon • Promote regenerative farming practices and consider switching to alternative rotations, commodities, or diversification of crops. • Promote agroforestry, especially silvopasturing, a type of agroforestry that integrates trees, forage, and grazing livestock on the same land. Silvopasturing may be particularly well suited to Fulton County and may be a way to expand farm activities in forested areas or on vacant land through rotational grazing and planning for tree regeneration, specifically in the Adirondack Park. • Establish dialogue with agribusiness on hazards that threaten field crops (e.g., flooding, drought, heat waves, cold waves, and invasive species such as Spotted Lanternfly, Gypsy Moth Caterpillars, and Japanese Knotweed). 	<p><u>Partners</u> FCAFPB, FCFB, CCE, FCSWCD, NOFA, CADE</p> <p><u>Funding Sources</u> NYSDAM, USDA</p>	YEAR 5

FARMS AND FARMLAND PROTECTION

#	Goal	Recommended Action	Partners Funding Sources	Timeline
11	Educate the Public on Option to Purchase at Agricultural Values	Promote the use of Option to Purchase at Agricultural Values. OPAV is a legal tool used to keep land affordable to farmers with commercial agricultural operations, and to discourage conversion of good farmland to large residential properties. OPAVs restrict sale of land to qualified farmers or family members and restrict sale prices related to agricultural values.	<u>Partners</u> FCAFPB, FCFB, CCE, Area Land Trusts <u>Funding Sources</u> N/A	YEAR 6
12	Promote Smart Growth Principles	Promote initiatives in Fulton County that focus new, non-farm development using smart growth principles that serve to create vital and sustainable communities while maintaining farmland and active farms. (See text for additional details.)	<u>Partners</u> FCPD <u>Funding Sources</u> NYS Smart Growth Grant Programs	YEAR 6
13	Develop Long-Term Infrastructure Plans for Urban Areas to Minimize Impact on Surrounding Farmlands	Develop long-term capital improvement/ infrastructure plan for the cities of Gloversville and Johnstown to allow for growth via smart growth principles, but which do not extend to critical farming areas. Expansion of these systems often leads to increased development and conversion of agricultural land into residential or commercial uses.	<u>Partners</u> FCPD, City of Gloversville, City of Johnstown, Town of Johnstown <u>Funding Sources</u> NYS Smart Growth Grant Programs or other Grant Opportunities	YEAR 6
14	Promote Agricultural Use of Formerly Active Farmland	Work with local realtors, FCSWCD, and FCCRG to market land no longer actively farmed that could be reused for agriculture. Use websites, social media, brochures, and advertising in farming publications to reach potential buyers, providing high-quality photos, soil and topographical maps, detailed property descriptions, and information about farming in Fulton County.	<u>Partners</u> FCPD, FCSWCD, FCCRG, Local Realtors <u>Funding Sources</u> N/A	ONGOING

FARMS AND FARMLAND PROTECTION

#	Goal	Recommended Action	Partners Funding Sources	Timeline
15	Enhance Farmland Protection	Establish a county initiative to enhance farmland protection. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with land trusts that serve Fulton County to educate farmers about and enhance participation in the NYS Farmland Protection Implementation Grants program (FPIG). • Support farmers’ applications to the FPIG program through aid in mapping and applying for this program including adopting resolutions to support the application. • Use the Priority Farmland Map in this Plan to help focus farmland protection grant applications on identified priority areas. 	<u>Partners</u> FCPD, FCFB, Area Land Trusts <u>Funding Sources</u> TBD	YEAR 2
16	Support Farmers’ Markets	Continue to support farmers’ markets in Northville, Johnstown, and Gloversville.	<u>Partners</u> FCPD <u>Funding Sources</u> N/A	ONGOING

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Part II

Appendices



Appendix 1 – Resources for Agriculture and Farming

Fulton County/Southern Adirondack Region

- **[Adirondack Land Trust](#)**
 - Organization dedicated to conserving the forests, farmlands, waters, and wild places that advance the quality of life and ecological integrity of the Adirondacks.
 - Serves the Adirondack Region. Does not initially say it serves Fulton County, but it does do work in Fulton County
 - Has protected 7,500 acres of farmland.
- **[Fulton County Farm Bureau](#)**
 - Involved with farming advocacy at the political level within Fulton County and within New York State at large. Helps with addressing grievances farmer members have, does lobbying to local representatives.
 - Young Farmer & Rancher Program - leadership and networking program for people aged 18-35
 - Legal referral system for members to take advantage of, as well as an educational program.
- **[Fulton County Soil and Water Conservation District](#)**
 - Legal subdivision of the state responsible for the conservation of natural resources.
 - Assists private landowners, schools, government agencies through free services, partnerships, and resources.
 - Offers services such as invasive species control, hydrological studies, hydroseeding, agriculture value assessments, GIS mapping, and conservation materials.
 - Offers programs such as agricultural environmental management, a tree and shrub program, and a fish stocking program.
 - Hosts educational events like Farm Day, Envirothon and Farm and Home Safety Day.
- **[Open Space Institute, Southern Adirondack Foothills](#)**
 - Aids with local infrastructure projects, which can benefit farmers
 - Land conservancy for farmers in the Southern Adirondack Foothills
- **[Adirondack Park Agency](#)**
 - State agency dedicated to protecting the public and private resources of the Adirondack Park. Roughly half of Fulton County is within the Adirondack Park.
 - “Agricultural Use” and “Agricultural Use Structure (as defined by the Agency) is non-jurisdictional. Should a farm operation be considered an “Agricultural Service Use” or a “Commercial Use,” it would be considered a Class B or Class A project, depending on the Land Use area.
 - Clearing of land for agricultural purposes does not require a permit if it meets certain criteria.
 - Should a farm operation be unsure where their project might fit within the APA definitions, they can fill out a [Jurisdictional Inquiry Form](#) or contact the main office.

New York State

- [American Farmland Trust, New York Office](#)
 - Advocacy for farmers' issues and other matters within New York State
 - Helps new farmers find land and retiring farmers keep their land in agriculture
 - Farm-to-Institution program
 - Demonstration farm network
 - Promotion of involving more female voices in agriculture and female farmers at large
- **Beginning Farmers Grant Program - \$1 million**
 - NYS program administered by the New York Farm Viability Institute
 - Grants awarded on a competitive basis to farmers who have not operated a farm for more than ten years, and who will operate a farm in New York State; will range from \$5,000 to \$250,000
- [CADE, The Center for Agricultural Development and Entrepreneurship](#)
 - Fulton County is home to 24 clients, partners, and funders
 - Helps with access to farmland and capital, business development and marketing, regenerative practices, and connecting with peers and mentors.
- [Farmers Market Federation of New York](#)
 - Gives guidance on innumerable topics such as safety recommendations, local regulations for farmers markets, and handouts for frequently asked questions.
 - Provides tools and toolkits on the different regulations of farmers' markets, pre-planning checklists, succession plans, and more.
 - Provides further reading on regulations, how to grow a farmer's market, market assessment, and how to overall market to consumers.
 - Provides handouts for customers on how to shop at a farmer's market, why one should shop at a farmers' market, and the storage of goods from farmer's markets.
 - Also provides tons of programs to get involved with.
- [New York Ag Connection](#)
 - Provides latest updates on the prices of different agricultural products.
 - Provides relevant news regarding agricultural markets.
 - Provides a directory of different farm-related businesses for farmers to take advantage of, everything from veterinary services to financial services to farm equipment and everything in between.
 - Provides links and addresses to upcoming auctions of farm animals, equipment, and estates.
- [New York FarmNet](#)
 - Helps with financial analysis, business planning, farming within a family (conflict management, etc.), personal well-being, connection with agribusiness professionals, retirement & estate planning, and business transfers.

- FarmNet is a free service to use, but may refer a farmer to a different agency that may charge money if FarmNet is unable to assist.
- **[New York Farm Bureau](#)**
 - Provides Workers' Compensation Insurance for members engaged in eligible ag-related businesses.
 - Agricultural Education wing helps educate the public about agriculture.
 - Advocacy in the political arena and provision of legal resources to members.
 - Helps agricultural producers and enthusiasts between 18-35 plan their futures, join in social activities, and develop leadership skills.
- **[New York Farm Viability Institute](#)**
 - Nonprofit grantmaking organization running competitive grant programs in order to fund agricultural research and education projects.
 - Grant programs:
 - FVI - awards ~\$1.5 million each year through competitive process
 - Dairy Program - small program providing support to individual farms through Dairy Profit Teams and to groups of farms that work with a Topic Specific Team.
 - USDA Specialty Crop Block Grant - Administration of a competitive program on behalf of NYS Dept. of Agriculture and Markets
 - Connects farmers with other various grants and resources.
- **[New York Marketmaker](#)**
 - An interactive platform that seeks to foster business relationships between producers and consumers of food industry products and services.
- **[NYS Department of Agriculture and Markets](#)**
 - Division of Agricultural Development aims to strengthen the viability and consumer awareness of New York's food and agricultural industry; includes activities and services in market development, business development and support.
 - Specialty Crop Block Grant Program: Funding to enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops, defined as "fruits, vegetables, tree nuts, dried fruits, horticulture, and nursery crops (including floriculture)."
 - Organic Farming Development/Assistance: Guidance in locating resources on organic agriculture and organically produced foods.
 - Additional funding opportunities announced periodically.
- **[NYSERDA - New York State Energy Research and Development Authority](#)**
 - Offers objective information and analysis, innovative programs, technical expertise, and funding to help New Yorkers increase energy efficiency, save money, use renewable energy, and reduce reliance on fossil fuels.
 - Programs and funding opportunities for the agricultural sector - \$5 million grant to demonstration projects that co-locate agriculture and solar.
- **[NY Food for NY Families](#)**

- NYS program funded by the USDA Local Food Purchase Assistance Cooperative Agreement Program
- In 2022, NYS announced 2 competitive grant opportunities through the program... now closed, but a second opportunity will be announced in the future
- Goals are to:
 - Support local and traditionally disadvantaged farmers/producers by building and expanding economic opportunities and creating new marketing channels
 - Establish and broaden partnerships between New York farmers/producers and the food distribution community and local food networks to ensure distribution of fresh nutritious foods in rural, remote, and/or underserved areas
 - Improve food access for underserved communities by tailoring distribution to unique local challenges.
- [New York State Future Farmers of America](#)
 - Provision of education to youth of all ages who are interested in farming.
 - Available to all students in all New York schools.
- [Small Scale Food Processors Association of New York](#)
 - Provides access to new regulatory information, mentors for startups, member information, and technical information and assistance.
 - Provides outreach on Instagram and Facebook
- **Socially and Economically Disadvantaged Farmers Grant Program - \$4 million**
 - NYS program to be administered by The Northeast Farmers of Color Land Trust (NEFOC) and its fiscal sponsor, Resist Inc.
 - Grants awarded on a competitive basis to eligible farmers will range from \$5,000 to \$250,000

Northeast Region

- [Black Farmer Fund](#)
 - Provision of skillshares and webinars available.
 - Grants and scholarships are available.
 - Provides business, legal, and community resources to those in need.
 - Educational resources on the history of black farming, archive about the history of black farming.
- [Farm Credit East](#)
 - “The # 1 financial services cooperative for the agricultural industry” in the northeastern U.S.
- [New England Small Farm Institute](#)
 - Promotes small farm development by providing information and training for aspiring, beginning and transitioning farmers.
- [Northeast Organic Farming Association](#)

- [Northeast/Mid-Atlantic Transition to Organic Partnership Program](#) - USDA initiative investing \$100 million over 5 years to provide education, technical assistance, and support to help producers transition to organic
 - This includes farmer to farmer mentoring, technical assistance and training, community building, and workforce development and training.
 - Includes CT, RI, MA, NY, VT, NH, ME, NJ, PA, DE, MD, WV, and VA.
 - Also has a soil carbon restoration program.
 - Does political advocacy and publishes different works.
- **[Northeast Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education](#)**
 - Offers grants for funding relevant agricultural research projects.
- **[Northeast Sustainable Agriculture Working Group](#)**
 - NESAWG is a network of over 500 participating organizations and thousands of individuals carrying out farm and food systems endeavors in 12 states and Washington D.C.
- **Regional Food Business Centers Program (Northeast)**
 - Provides coordination, technical assistance, and capacity building.
 - Helps with overcoming barriers to market access and provides direct business technical assistance to small and mid-sized food and farm businesses.
 - Awards up to \$100,000 to support projects focused on regional needs.
 - Northeast specifically has \$30 million for direct funding into two grant streams, mostly from partners Buffalo Go Green and Cornell University's Center for Regional Economic Advancement (CREA).
 - CREA will have online platform that will have educational materials and links to technical service offerings.

Federal

- **Dairy Business Innovation Initiatives - \$23 million**
 - USDA program
 - Goal is to support dairy businesses in the development, production, marketing, and distribution of dairy products
 - [Northeast Dairy Business Innovation Center \(NE DBIC\)](#)
 - Based in VT
 - Supports dairy farmers and processors in 11 states (including NY) through grants, access to technical services, education, and events
- **[Partnerships for Climate-Smart Commodities](#)**
 - USDA program; \$3.1 billion investment in 141 selected projects
 - Projects will provide technical and financial assistance to producers to implement climate-smart production practices on working lands; pilot innovative and cost-effective methods for quantification, monitoring, reporting and verification of greenhouse gas benefits; and develop markets and promote the resulting climate-smart commodities

- Most projects cover multiple states
- [NYS DEC, in partnership with AGM, Cornell University, SUNY ESF, and Syracuse University](#) were awarded \$60 million from this federal program in fall 2023 to implement climate smart agriculture and forestry practices
- **[USDA Agricultural Marketing Service](#)**
 - Administers programs that facilitate the efficient, fair marketing of U.S. agricultural products, including food, fiber, and specialty crops; provides the agricultural sector with tools and services that help create marketing opportunities.
- **[USDA Farm Service Agency](#)**
 - *Farm Loan Programs*: Direct loans and loan guarantees to help family farmers start, purchase, or expand their farming operation; includes Farm Ownership Loans, Farm Operating Loans and Microloans, Emergency Farm Loans, Land Contract Guarantees, Loans for Beginning Farmers, etc.
 - *Biomass Crop Assistance Program*: Financial assistance to owners and operators of agricultural and non-industrial private forest land who wish to establish, produce, and deliver biomass feedstocks.
- **[USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service](#)**
 - *Agricultural Management Assistance*: helps agricultural producers use conservation to manage risk and solve natural resource issues through natural resources conservation.
 - *Conservation Stewardship Program*: helps agricultural producers maintain and improve their existing conservation systems and adopt additional conservation activities to address priority resources concerns.
 - *Environmental Quality Incentives Program*: provides financial and technical assistance to agricultural producers to address natural resource concerns and deliver environmental benefits such as improved water and air quality, conserved ground and surface water, reduced soil erosion and sedimentation or improved or created wildlife habitat.
 - *Agricultural Conservation Easement Program*: provides financial and technical assistance to help conserve agricultural lands and wetlands and their related benefits.
- **[USDA Rural Development, New York Office](#)**
 - *Value-Added Producer Grants*: provides agricultural producers with matching funds for value-added ventures that will increase the return on their agricultural commodities; can be used for planning (e.g., feasibility studies, business plans) and/or working capital.
 - *Rural Energy for America (REAP)*: grants and guaranteed loans to help agricultural producers purchase and install renewable energy systems and make energy efficiency improvements.
 - *Farm Labor Housing Program*: Direct loans and grants for new construction or substantial rehabilitation of safe, affordable rental housing for farm workers.

Other/Nationwide

- [Agricultural Marketing Resource Center](#)
 - Addresses marketing and business planning for U.S. agricultural producers.
- [Dirt Capital Partners](#)
 - Invests in farmland in partnership with sustainable farmers throughout the northeastern U.S., promoting land access and security for farmers while keeping farmland in productive use. Most of their land investment partnerships result from a farmer contacting Dirt Capital with one of the following scenarios: 1) Farm operation has been leasing land, has a successful operation, and wants to purchase their leased parcel or relocate to a larger and/or more secure farm; 2) Successful farm operation is looking to expand by acquiring adjacent or nearby land; or 3) Retiring farmer wants to keep his or her farm in active production, and would like to transition the farm to family members or other successor farmers.
- [Equity Trust](#)
 - A small, national non-profit organization committed to helping communities gain ownership interests in land and other local resources; works to make economic changes that balance the needs of individuals with the needs of the community.
 - Program areas include: 1) Farms for Farmers - promotes alternative ownership structures for farms, to benefit farmers who need affordable farmland and communities that want a secure source of locally grown food and a way to preserve their environmental heritage; 2) Equity Trust Fund - a revolving loan fund enabling socially conscious lenders and donors to support projects that are creating new ways of owning, using, and stewarding property; and 3) Our Property and Values Program - promotes exploration, understanding, and implementation of socially equitable forms of property ownership and economics based on principles of social justice, equity, and environmental sustainability.
- [Farm Aid Resource Network](#)
 - Connects farmers to services, tools, opportunities, and resources.
- [Farmer Veteran Coalition](#)
 - Farmer Veteran Fellowship Fund - Small grant program providing direct assistance to veterans who are in their beginning years of farming/ranching.
 - No money directly to veterans, but rather to third-party vendors the veteran has identified will make a difference for them.
 - Awards range from \$1,000 to \$5,000, with nearly \$4 million awarded to more than 930 veterans since 2011
 - Provides links to storefronts of veteran-owned farms.
 - Provides training programs, farming resources, business resources, farm financing options, and more to veterans.
- [National Farm to School Network](#)
- [National Good Agricultural Practices Program \(through Cornell\)](#)
- [National Sustainable Agriculture Information Service](#)

- Source of sustainable agriculture information for farmers and others involved with farming.
- Agricultural specialists provide individualized assistance to those involved with agriculture directly.
- Runs an internship hub that connects those that want to get involved with farming to those offering positions. The network is nationwide. Users can either find an internship or recruit an intern.
- Online forum run in order to enable farmers to connect with each other across the nation to share information.
- **[Ohio Direct Marketing Food & Agriculture](#)**
 - From Ohio State University, a blog with marketing news and trends and other resources for agricultural producers and marketers.
- **[Rodale Institute Your Two Cents Fund](#)**
 - Offers grants of up to \$5,000 to farmers who are transitioning to certified organic production or have recently obtained organic certification.
- **[U.S. Farmstay Association – Starting a Farmstay](#)**
 - A farmstay is essentially a hotel sort of experience but on a farm and helps farmers make more money and helps people get out into the countryside more.
 - Note: More information on actually starting a farmstay is behind a paywall for members of the Farm Stay community only
- **[WWOOF \(World Wide Opportunities on Organic Farms\)](#)**
 - Website linking volunteers/interns with organic farms and growers.

Appendix 2 – Farm and Farmland Resource Maps

The following 11” by 17” maps are included in this Plan:

Agricultural Districts and Farmland
Agricultural Districts and Large Solar Facilities
Agricultural Land in Production
Agricultural Parcels
Agricultural Soils
Primary Agricultural Uses
Priority Areas
Priority Parcels
Priority Small Parcels
Recent Development
Rented Farmland
Solar Risk
Solar Risk and Priority Farmland



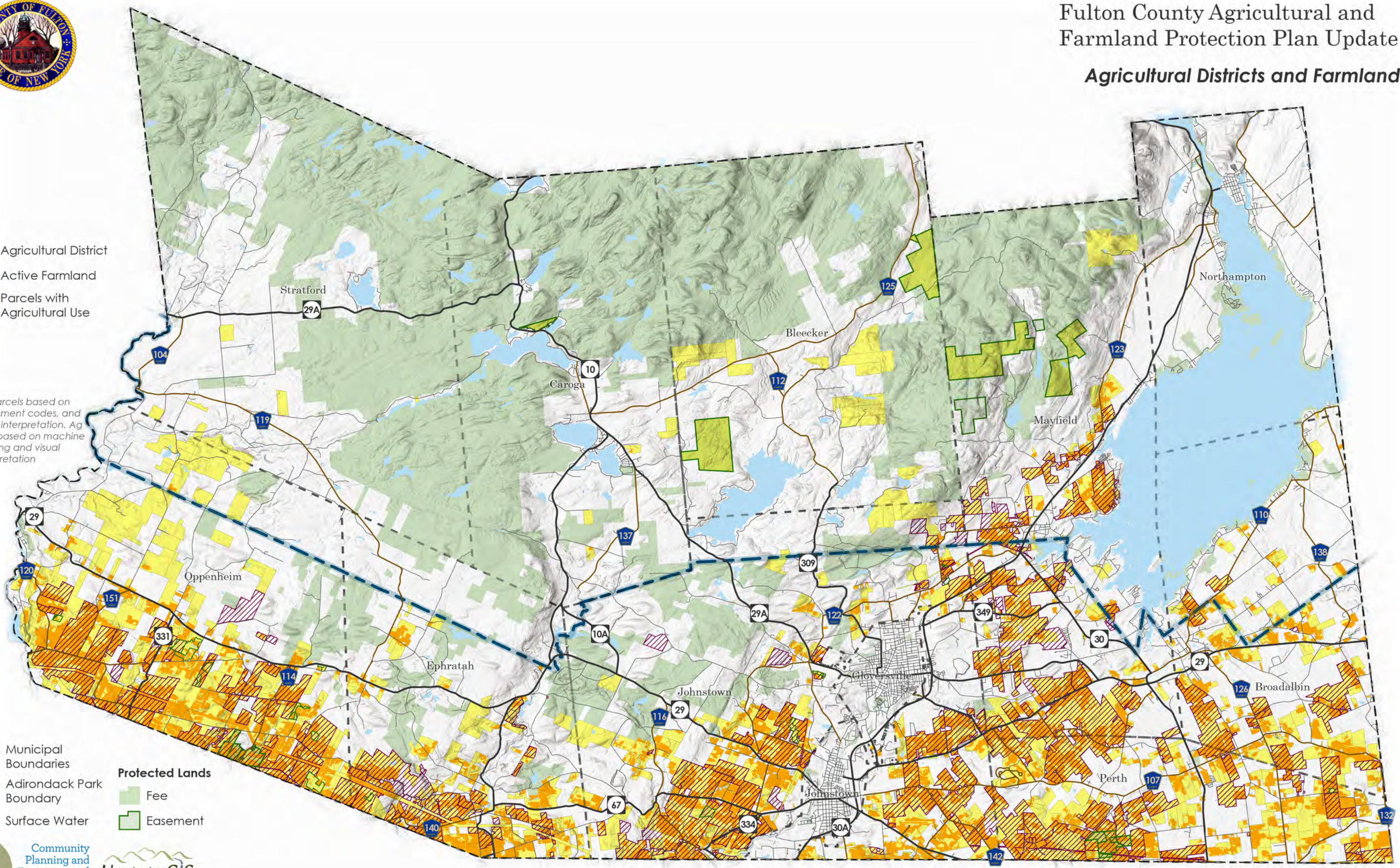
Fulton County Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan Update

Agricultural Districts and Farmland

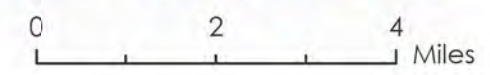
- Agricultural District
- Active Farmland
- Parcels with Agricultural Use

Ag parcels based on assessment codes, and visual interpretation. Ag land based on machine learning and visual interpretation

- Municipal Boundaries
- Adirondack Park Boundary
- Surface Water
- Protected Lands**
 - Fee
 - Easement



Map is for planning purposes only and not to be used for navigation or legal determinations





Fulton County Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan Update

Agricultural Districts and Large Solar

Agricultural District

Parcels with Agricultural Use

Existing Solar Installations (MW)

- 1
- 2.5
- 5
- 7.5
- 10

Pending Solar Installations (MW)

- 2
- 5
- 20
- 40

Municipal Boundaries

Adirondack Park Boundary

Surface Water

Protected Lands

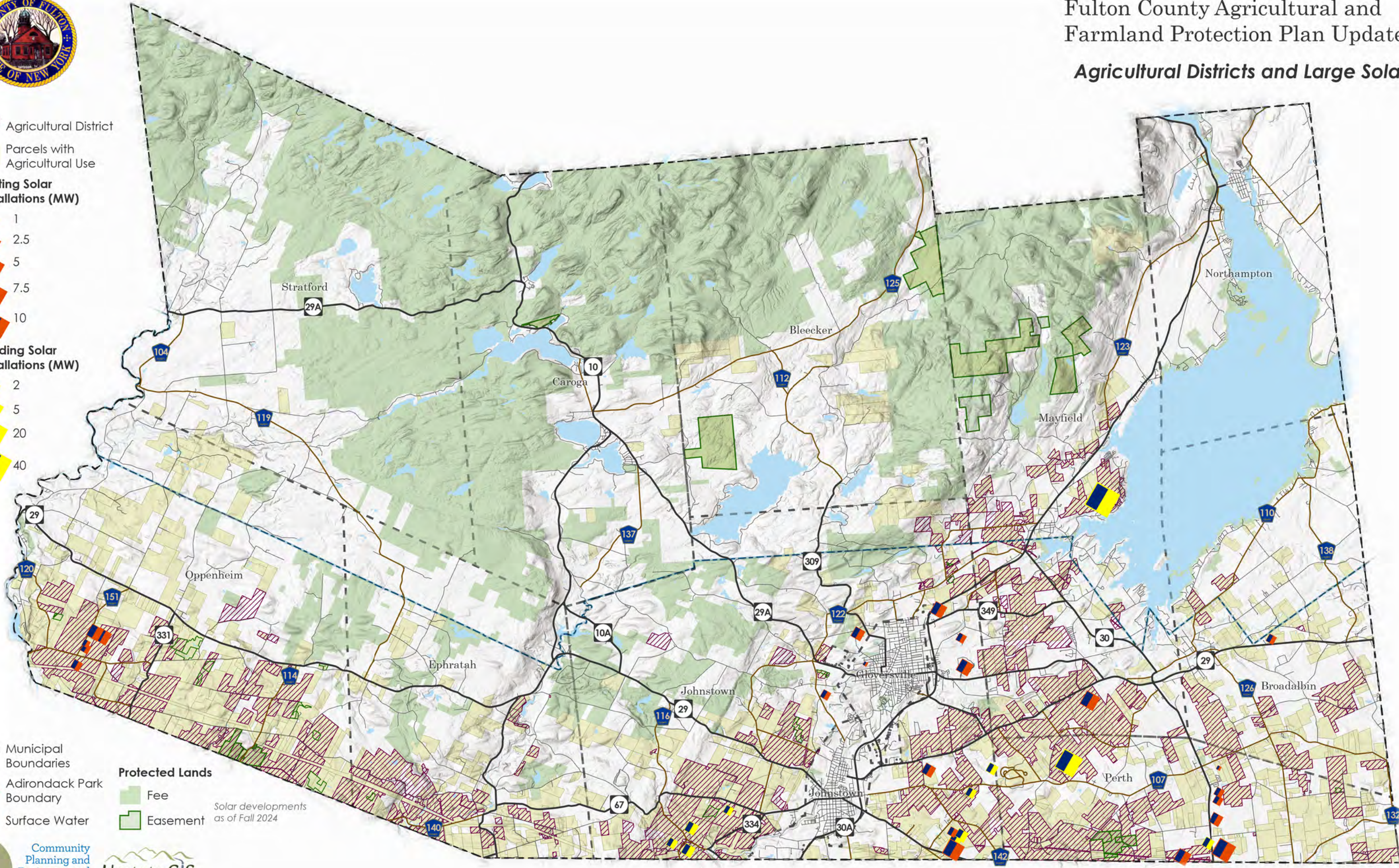
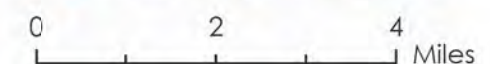
Fee

Easement

Solar developments as of Fall 2024



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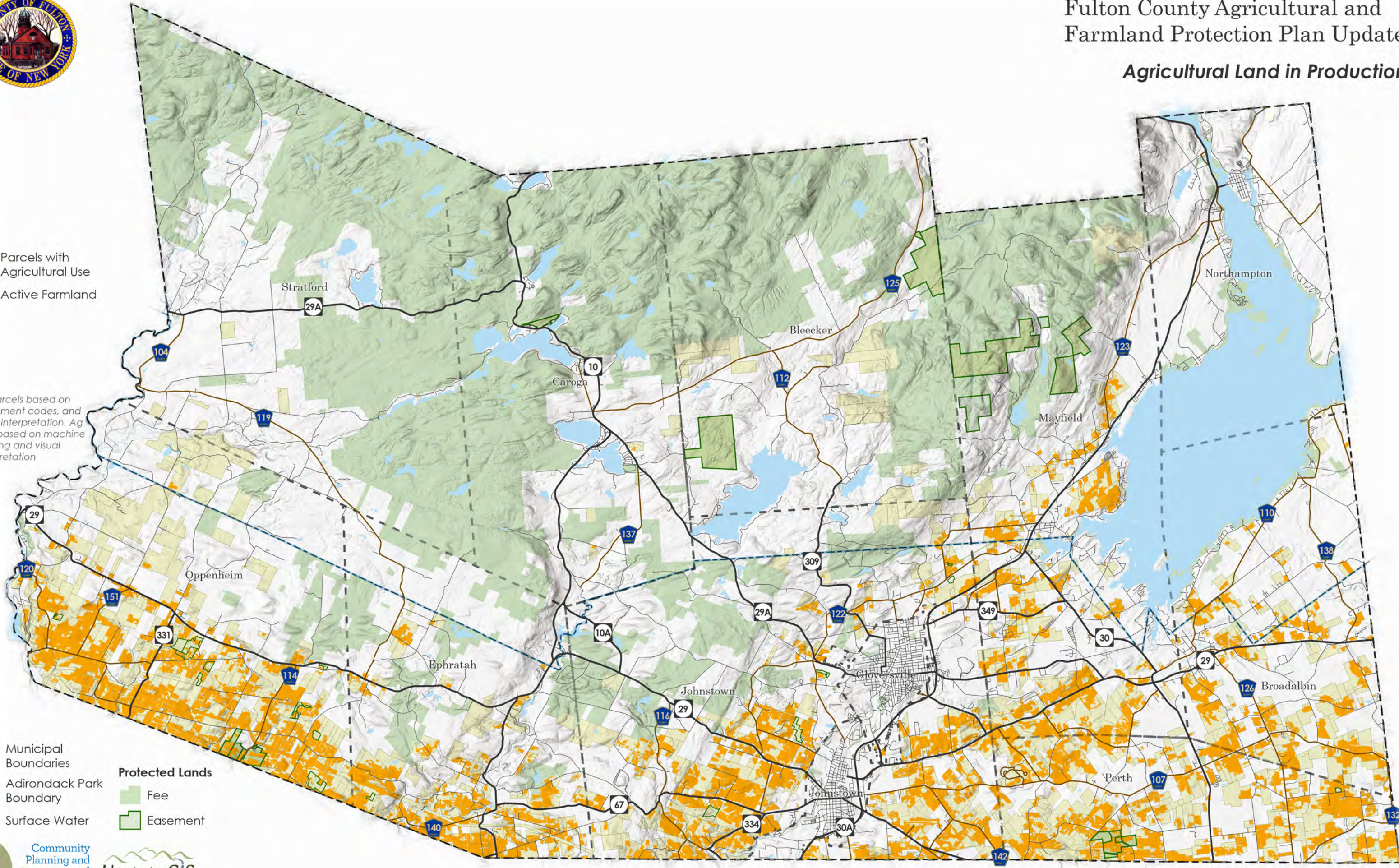
Fulton County Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan Update

Agricultural Land in Production

- Parcels with Agricultural Use
- Active Farmland

Ag parcels based on assessment codes, and visual interpretation. Ag land based on machine learning and visual interpretation

- Municipal Boundaries
- Adirondack Park Boundary
- Surface Water
- Protected Lands
 - Fee
 - Easement



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Fulton County Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan Update

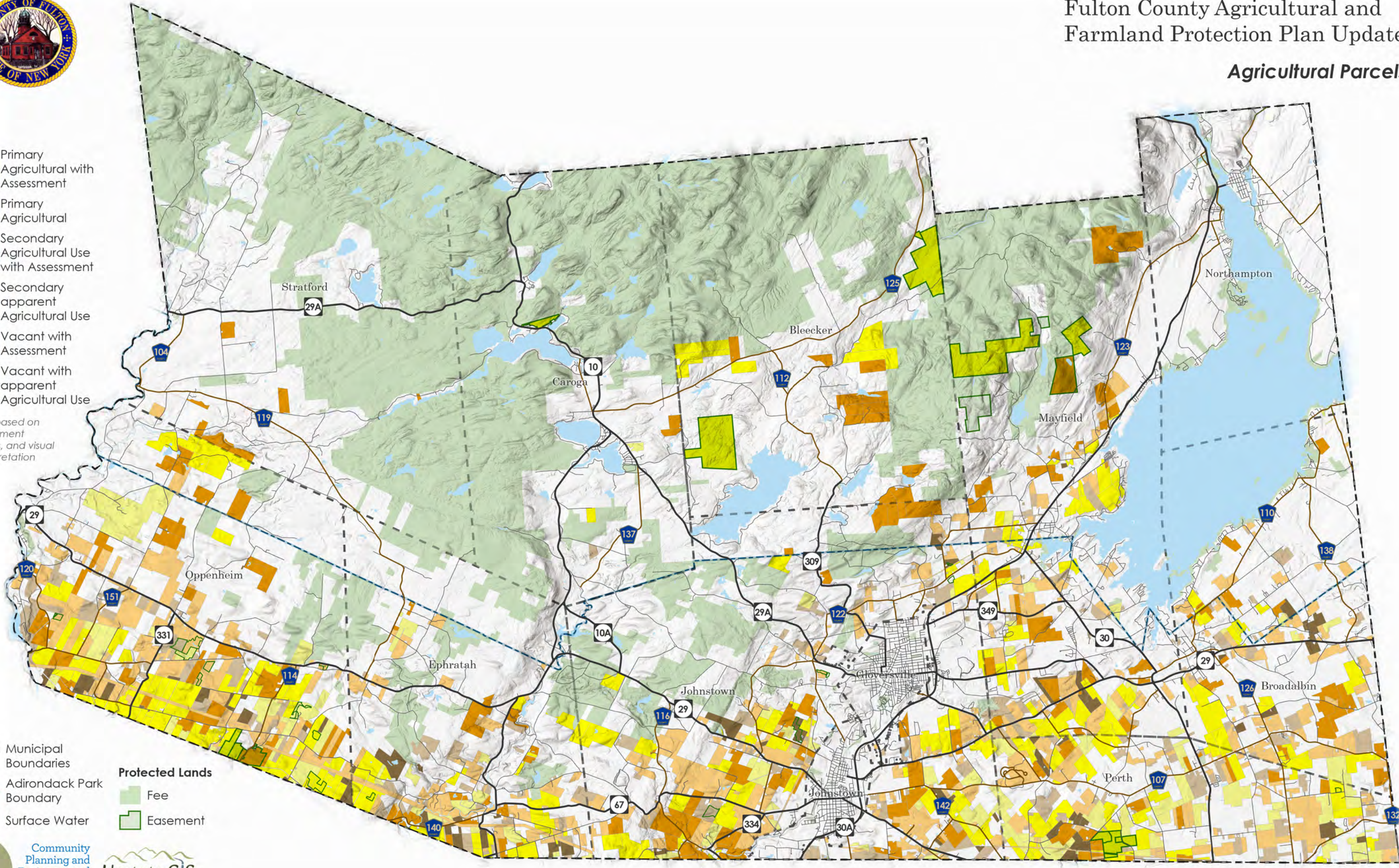
Agricultural Parcels

- Primary Agricultural with Assessment
- Primary Agricultural
- Secondary Agricultural Use with Assessment
- Secondary apparent Agricultural Use
- Vacant with Assessment
- Vacant with apparent Agricultural Use

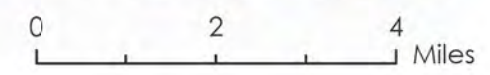
Uses based on assessment codes, and visual interpretation

- Municipal Boundaries
- Adirondack Park Boundary
- Surface Water

- Protected Lands**
- Fee
 - Easement



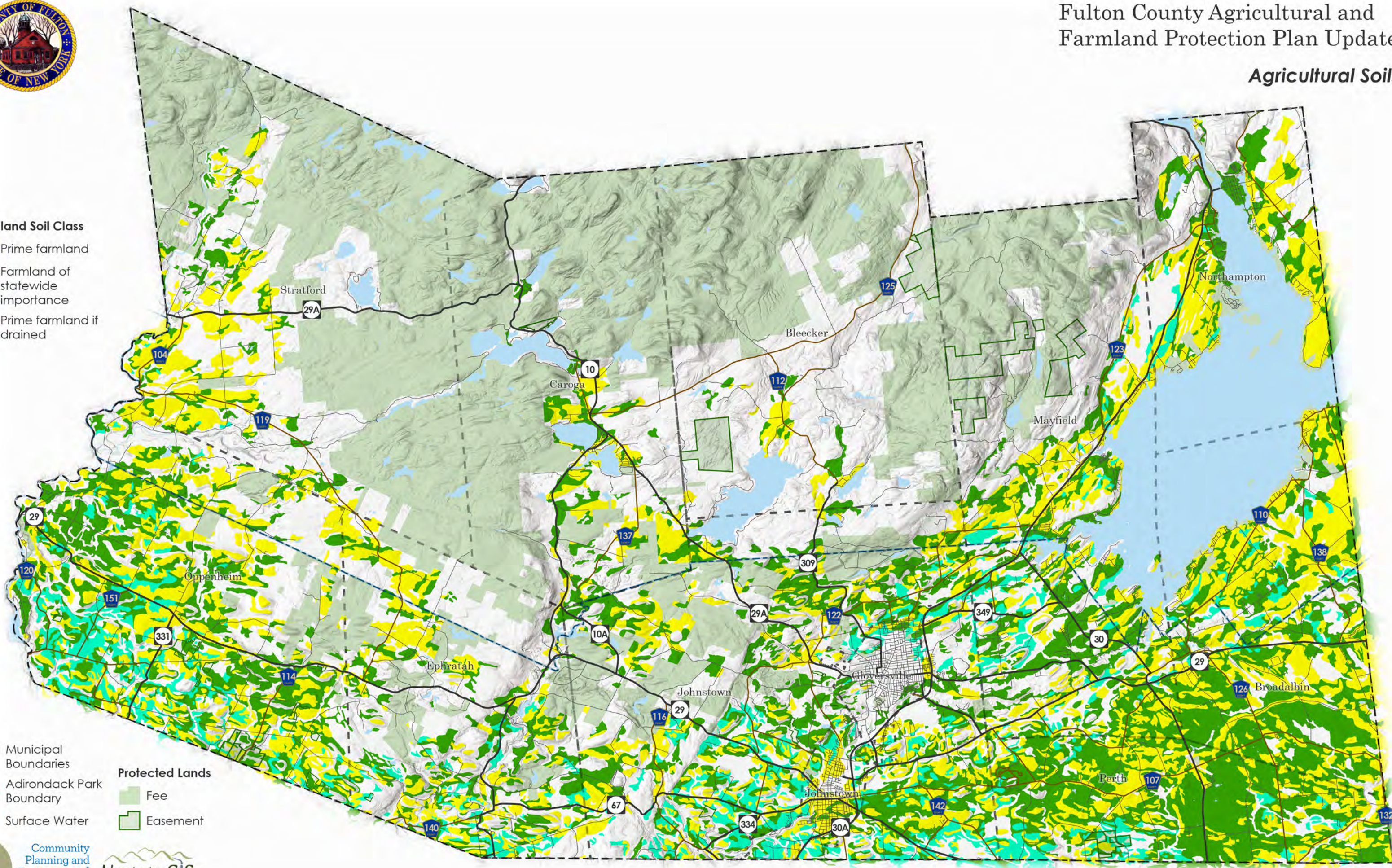
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Fulton County Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan Update

Agricultural Soils

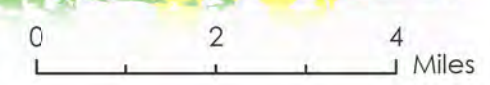


- Farmland Soil Class**
- Prime farmland
 - Farmland of statewide importance
 - Prime farmland if drained

- Municipal Boundaries**
- Adirondack Park Boundary
 - Surface Water
- Protected Lands**
- Fee
 - Easement



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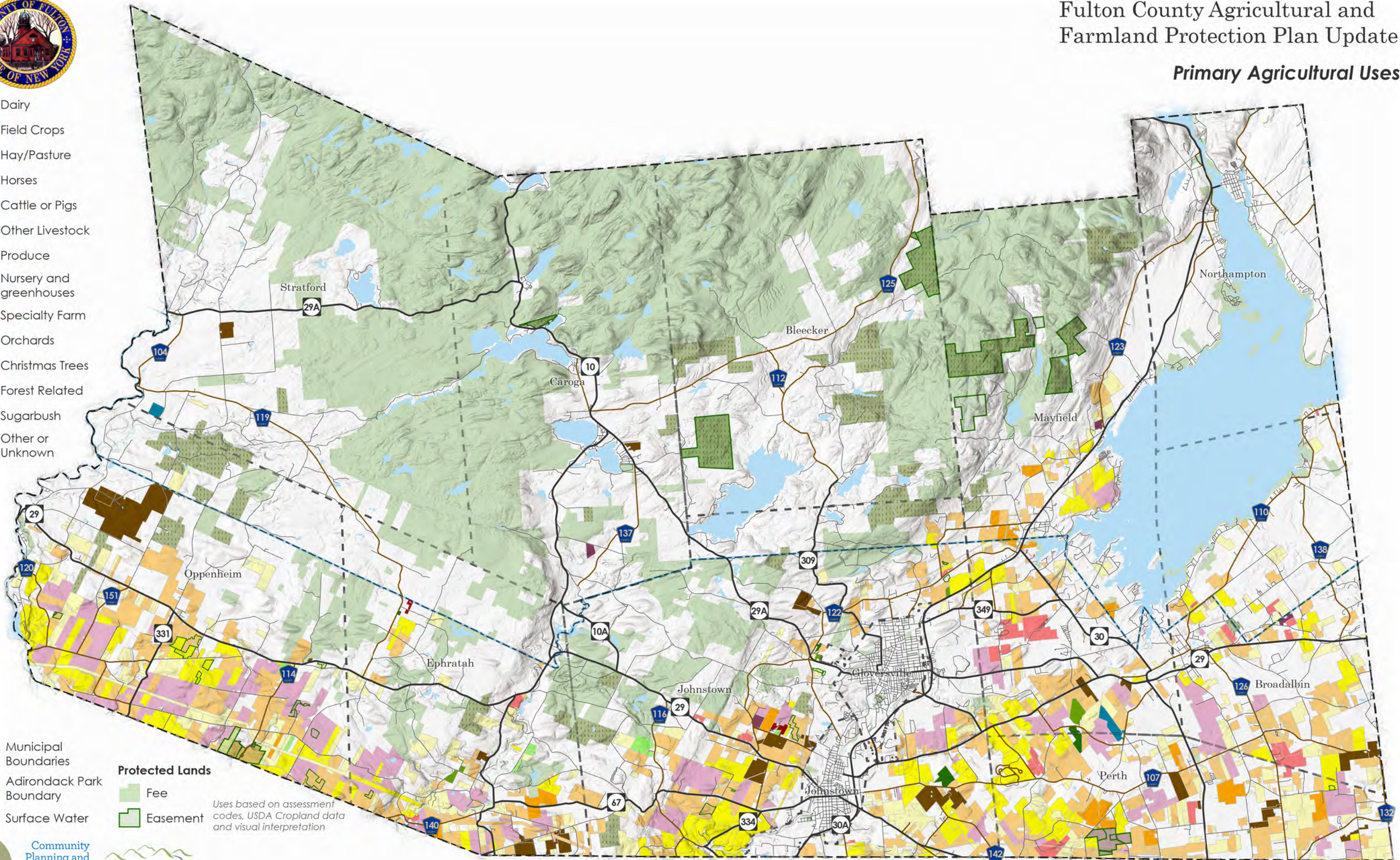




Fulton County Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan Update

Primary Agricultural Uses

- Dairy
- Field Crops
- Hay/Pasture
- Horses
- Cattle or Pigs
- Other Livestock
- Produce
- Nursery and greenhouses
- Specialty Farm
- Orchards
- Christmas Trees
- Forest Related
- Sugarbush
- Other or Unknown



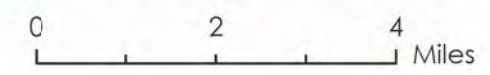
- Municipal Boundaries
- Adirondack Park Boundary
- Surface Water

- Protected Lands**
- Fee
 - Easement

Uses based on assessment codes, USDA Cropland data and visual interpretation



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Fulton County Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan Update

Priority Agricultural Areas

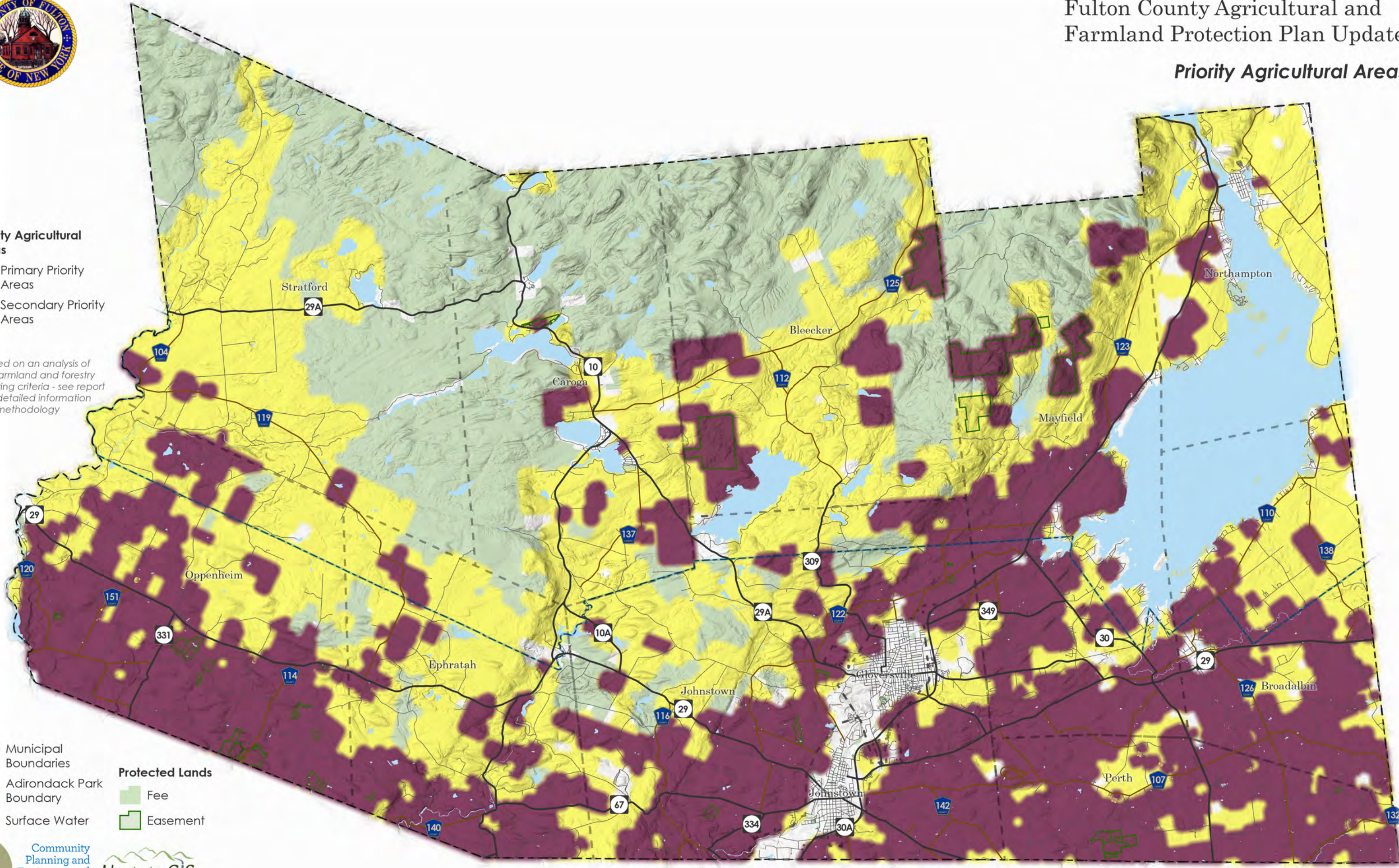
Priority Agricultural Areas

- Primary Priority Areas
- Secondary Priority Areas

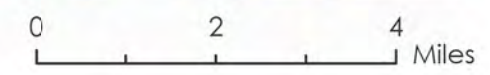
Based on an analysis of 12 farmland and forestry scoring criteria - see report for detailed information on methodology

- Municipal Boundaries
- Adirondack Park Boundary
- Surface Water

- Protected Lands**
- Fee
 - Easement



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Fulton County Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan Update

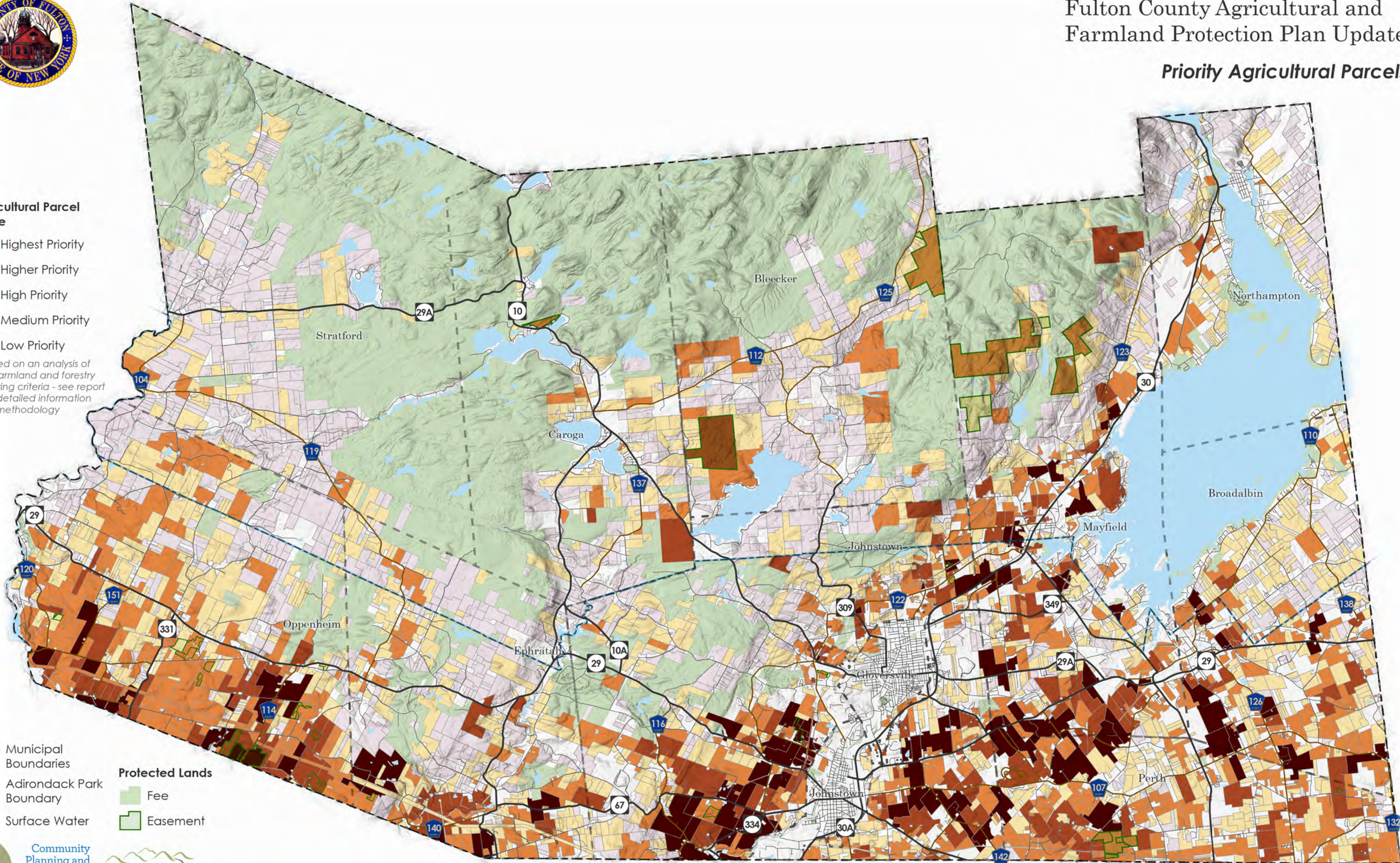
Priority Agricultural Parcels

- Agricultural Parcel Score**
- Highest Priority
 - Higher Priority
 - High Priority
 - Medium Priority
 - Low Priority

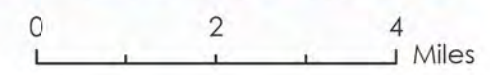
Based on an analysis of 12 farmland and forestry scoring criteria - see report for detailed information on methodology

- Municipal Boundaries
- Adirondack Park Boundary
- Surface Water

- Protected Lands**
- Fee
 - Easement



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Fulton County Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan Update

Priority Small Agricultural Parcels (2 to <50 acres)

Small Farm Agricultural Parcel Score

- Highest Priority
- Higher Priority
- High Priority
- Medium Priority
- Low Priority

Based on an analysis of eight farmland and forestry scoring criteria - see report for detailed information on methodology

- Municipal Boundaries
- Adirondack Park Boundary
- Surface Water

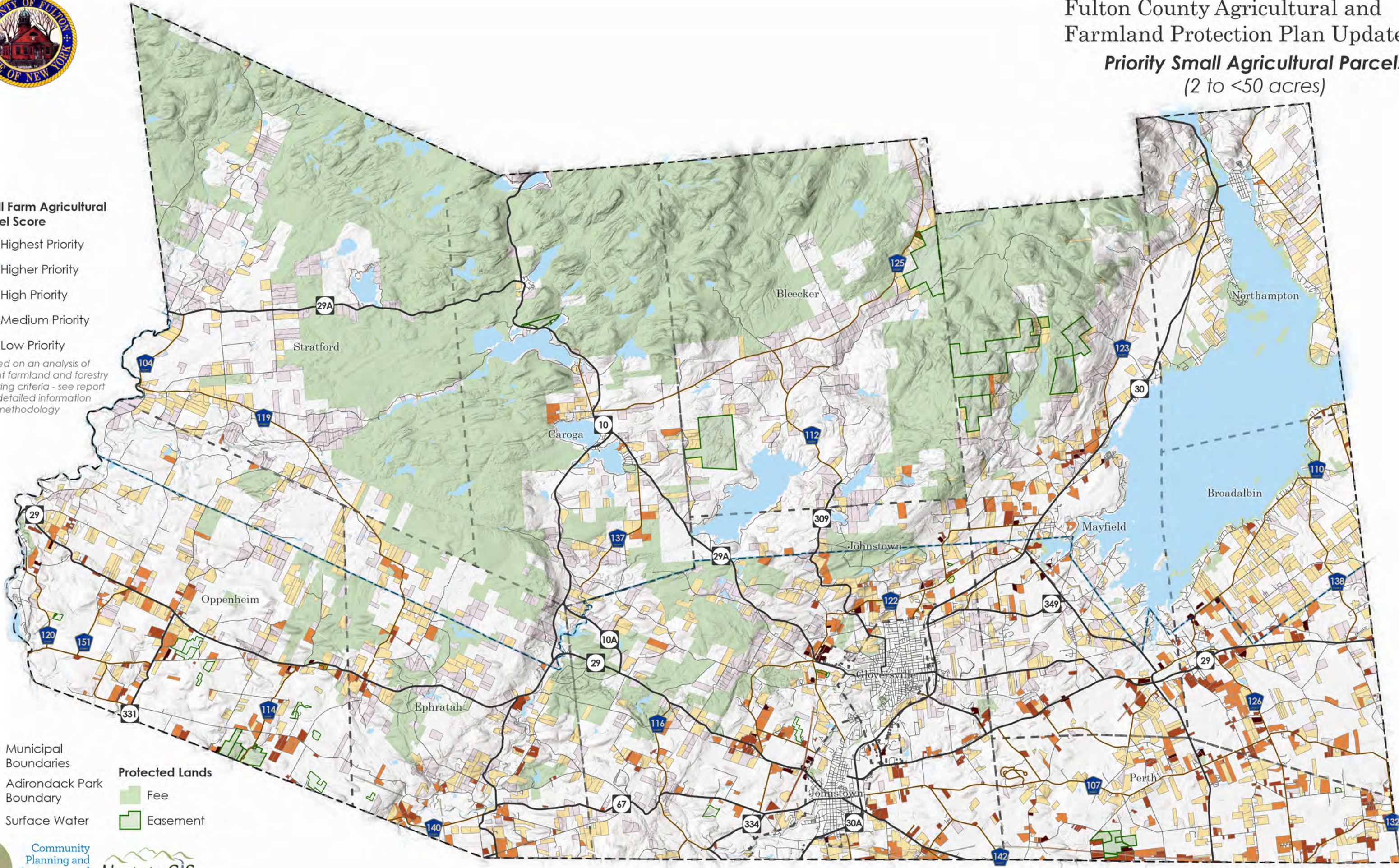
Protected Lands

- Fee
- Easement



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0 2 4 Miles



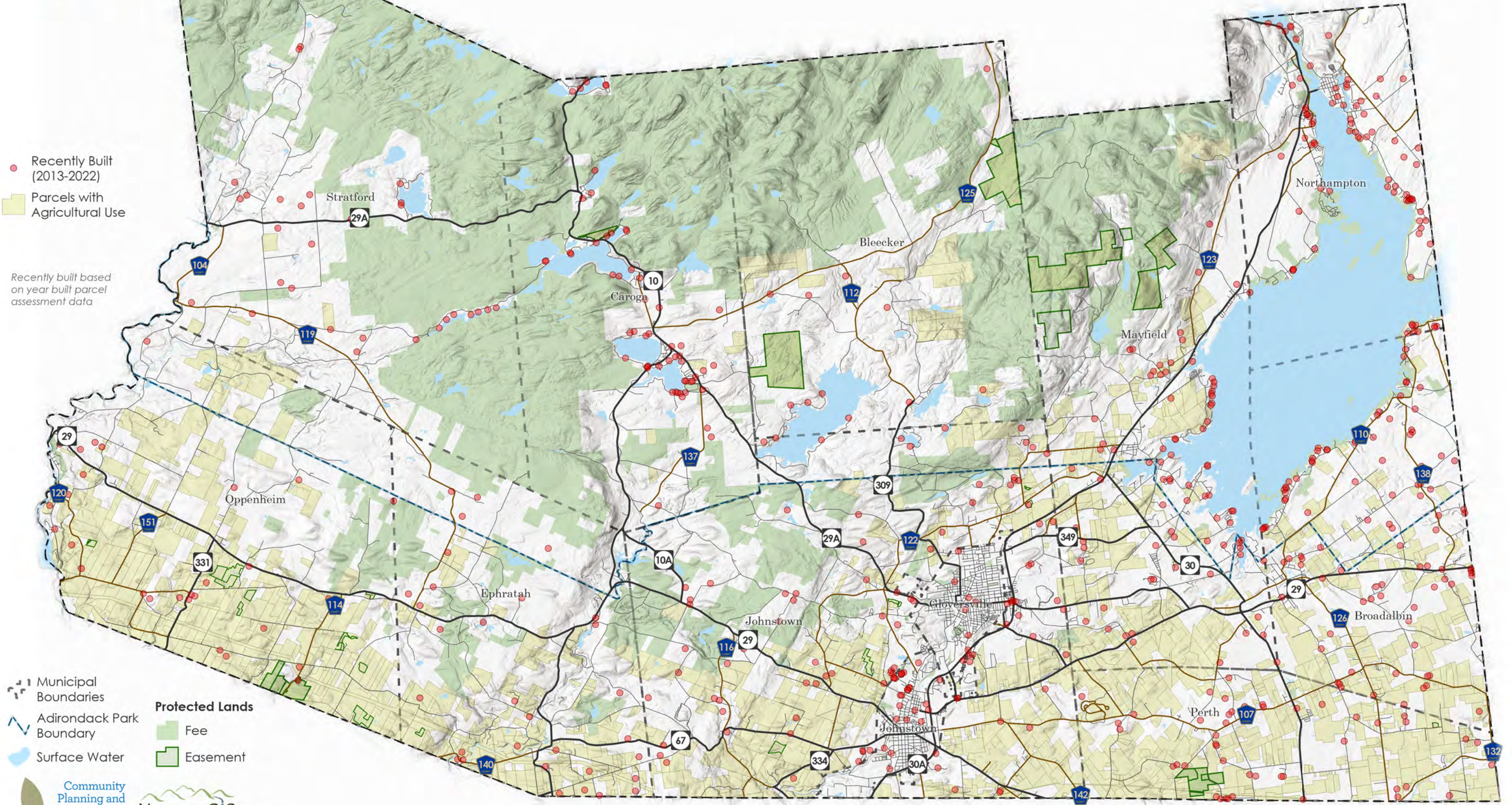


Fulton County Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan Update

Recent Development

- Recently Built (2013-2022)
- Parcels with Agricultural Use

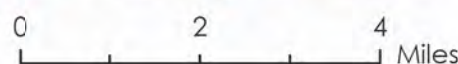
Recently built based on year built parcel assessment data



- ▭ Municipal Boundaries
- ▬ Adirondack Park Boundary
- ▭ Surface Water
- Protected Lands**
 - ▭ Fee
 - ▭ Easement



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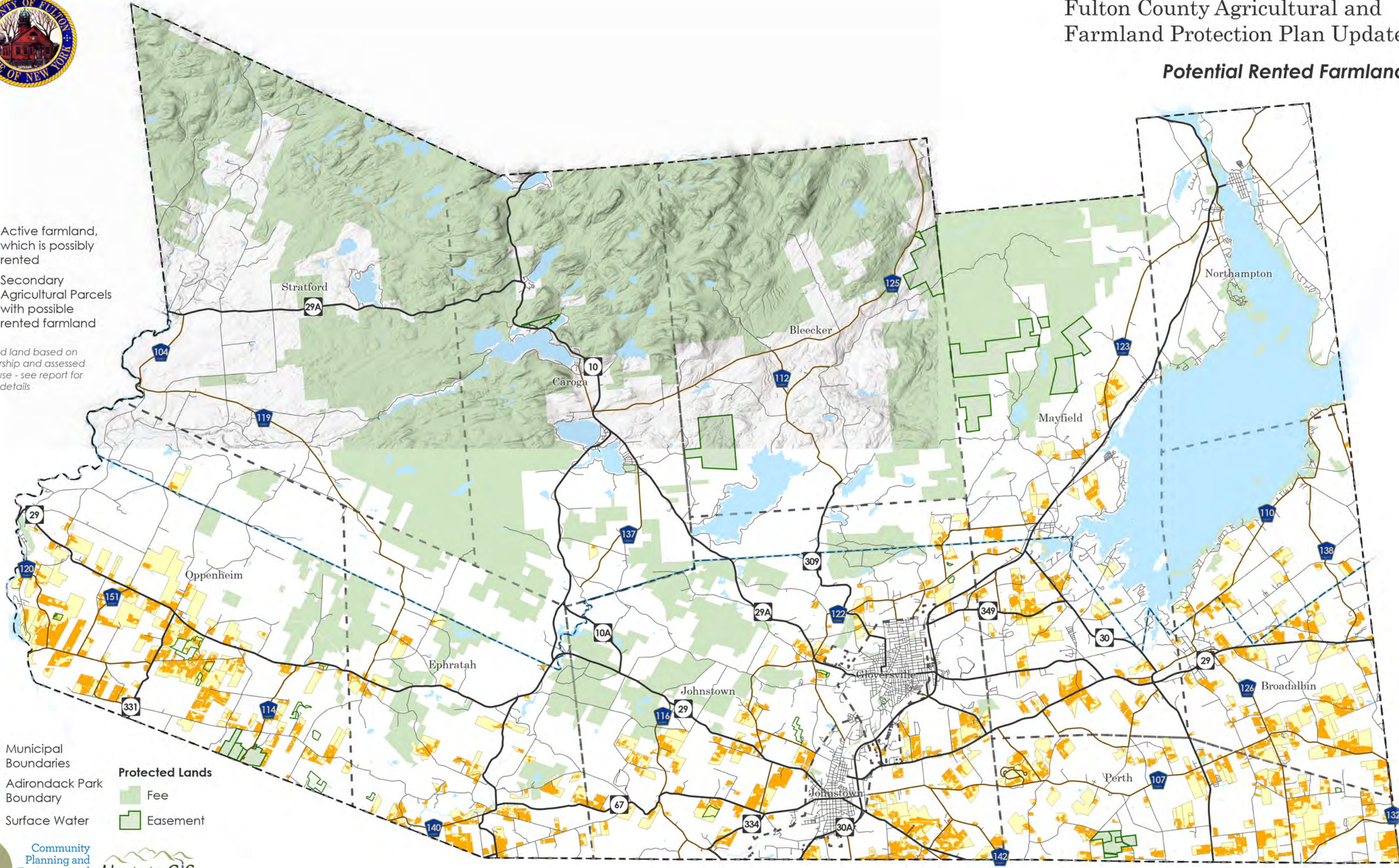
Fulton County Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan Update

Potential Rented Farmland

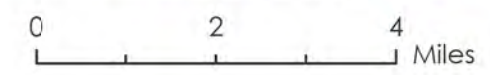
- Active farmland, which is possibly rented
- Secondary Agricultural Parcels with possible rented farmland

Rented land based on ownership and assessed land use - see report for more details

- Municipal Boundaries
- Adirondack Park Boundary
- Surface Water
- Protected Lands
 - Fee
 - Easement



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Fulton County Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan Update

Risk of Solar Conversion (minimum 10+ acres / 2+ MW)

Solar Conversion Risk (2+ MW)

- Highest Risk
- Higher Risk
- Moderate Risk

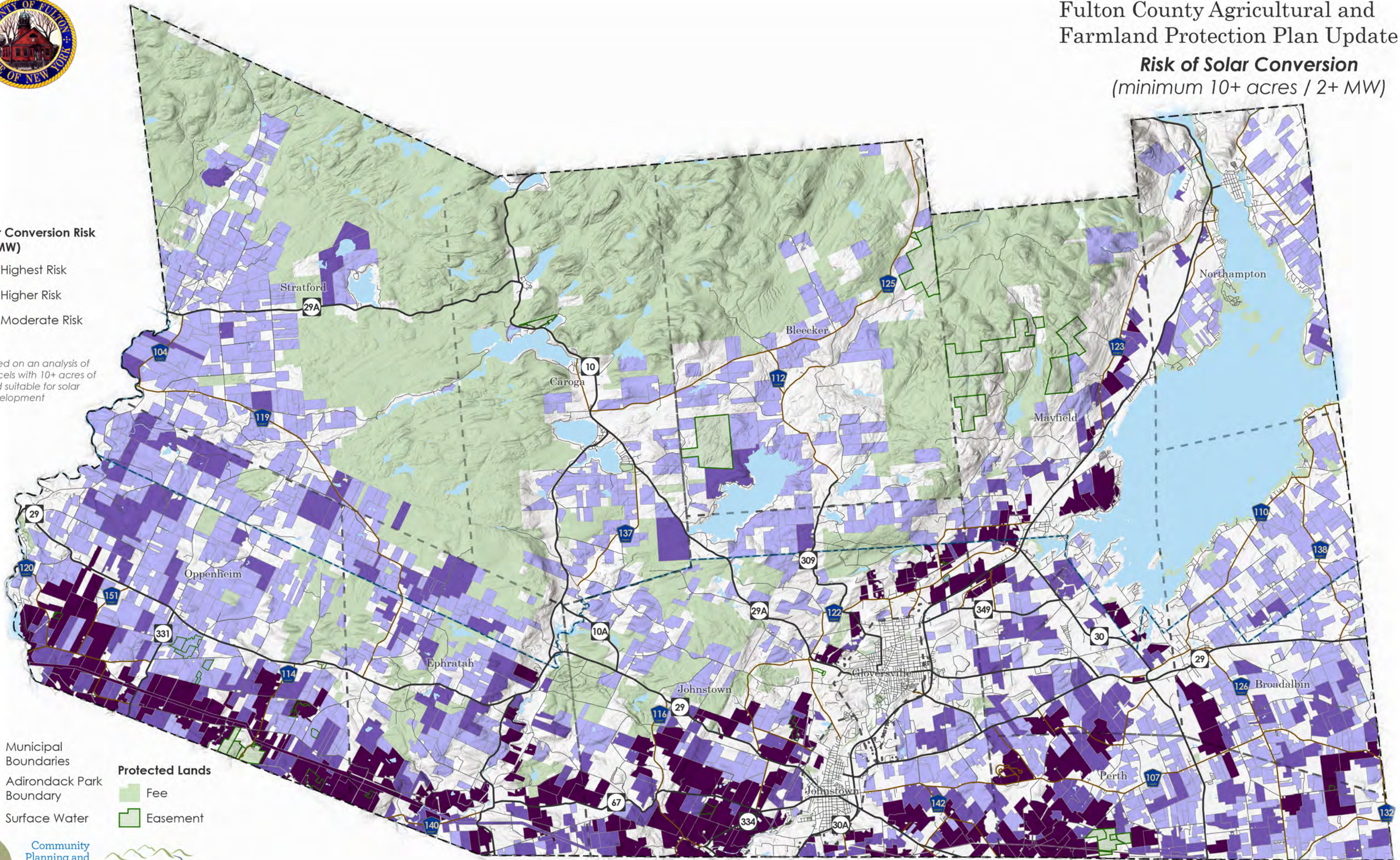
Based on an analysis of parcels with 10+ acres of land suitable for solar development

- Municipal Boundaries
- Adirondack Park Boundary
- Surface Water
- Protected Lands
 - Fee
 - Easement



Map is for planning purposes only and not to be used for navigation or legal determinations

0 2 4 Miles

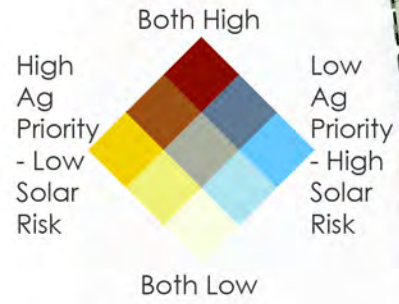




Fulton County Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan Update

Priority Farmland and Risk of Solar Conversion (minimum 10 acres)

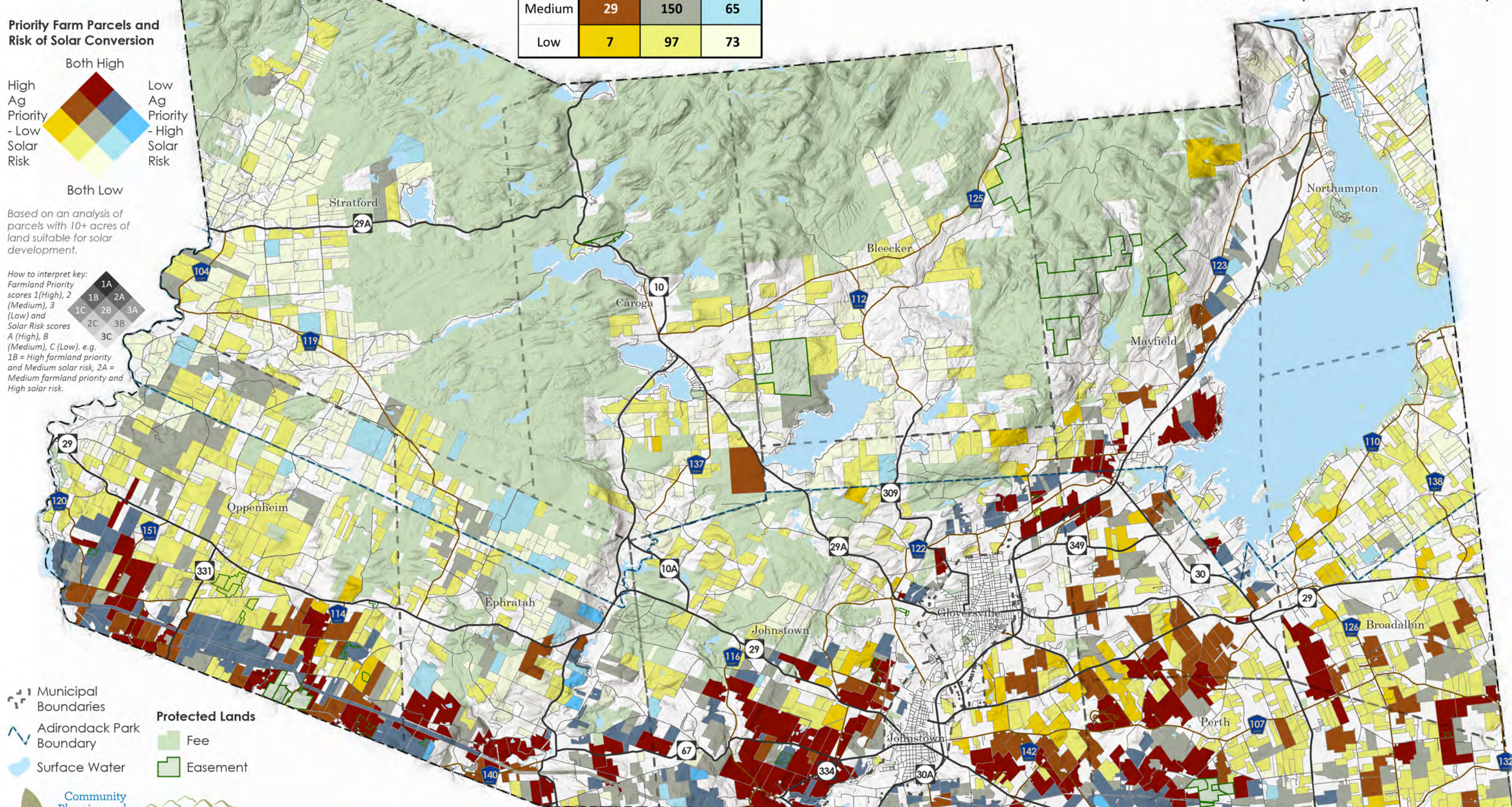
Priority Farm Parcels and Risk of Solar Conversion



Based on an analysis of parcels with 10+ acres of land suitable for solar development.

How to interpret key:
Farmland Priority scores 1(High), 2 (Medium), 3 (Low) and Solar Risk scores A (High), B (Medium), C (Low). e.g. 1B = High farmland priority and Medium solar risk, 2A = Medium farmland priority and High solar risk.

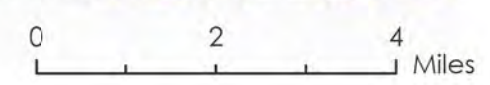
Solar Risk	Number of Parcels		
	Farmland Priority		
	High	Medium	Low
High	434	590	45
Medium	29	150	65
Low	7	97	73



- Municipal Boundaries
- Adirondack Park Boundary
- Surface Water
- Protected Lands
 - Fee
 - Easement



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Appendix 3 – Fulton County Agricultural Data Analysis

Unless otherwise noted, the data used in this analysis are from the USDA’s Census of Agriculture, a complete count of farms that is conducted every five years; the most recent report is from 2022. The Census form asks questions about land use and ownership, producer characteristics, production practices, income, and expenditures. The agricultural producers themselves serve as the source of the data; however, the USDA uses an accepted statistical methodology to correct for nonresponse, misclassification, and other issues.

Farms and Farmland

The 2022 Census of Agriculture reports that Fulton County has 205 farms, close to the number reported in 2017 (Figure A3-1). For the census, a farm is defined by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) as a place that produces and sells or normally would sell at least \$1,000 of agricultural products. Land dedicated to agriculture totals 23,234 acres, or 7.3% of the County’s total land area. Farmland acreage is 38% less than it was in 2002; however, the 2022 figure reflects an increase of over 1,000 acres, or 5%, since 2017.

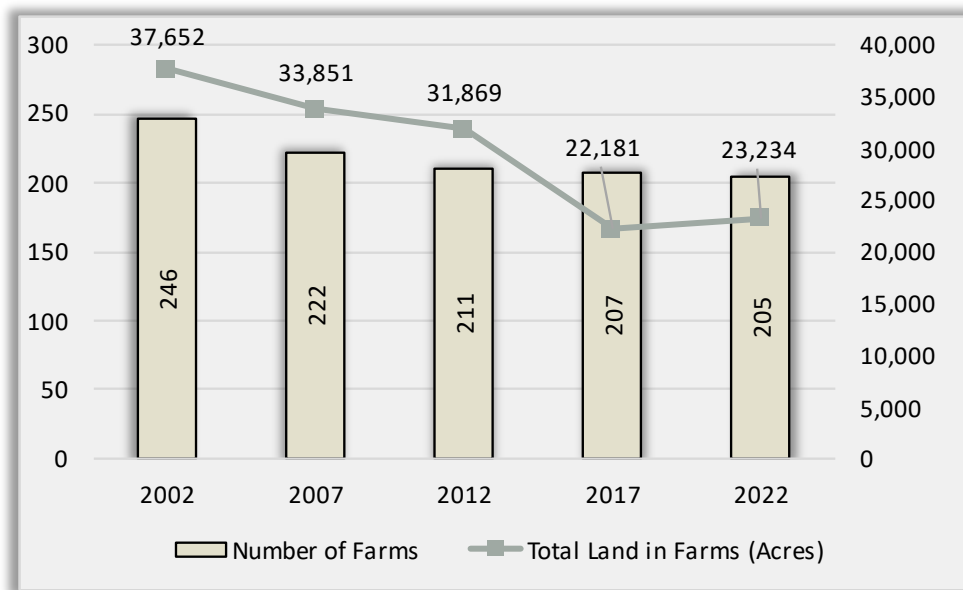


Figure A3-1. Farms and Farmland, Fulton County

Source: U.S. Census of Agriculture

Land in farms is comprised of cropland, woodland associated with the farm operation, permanent pasture, and land in farmsteads. As illustrated in Figure A3-2, cropland acreage in Fulton County has steadily declined over the past twenty years, from 22,520 acres in 2002 to 11,395 in 2022. This may be indicative of changes in the types of crops grown, or the decline in livestock farms, as roughly half of the cropland in the County is devoted to forage, a category that includes hay, haylage, grass silage, and other plant material consumed by livestock.

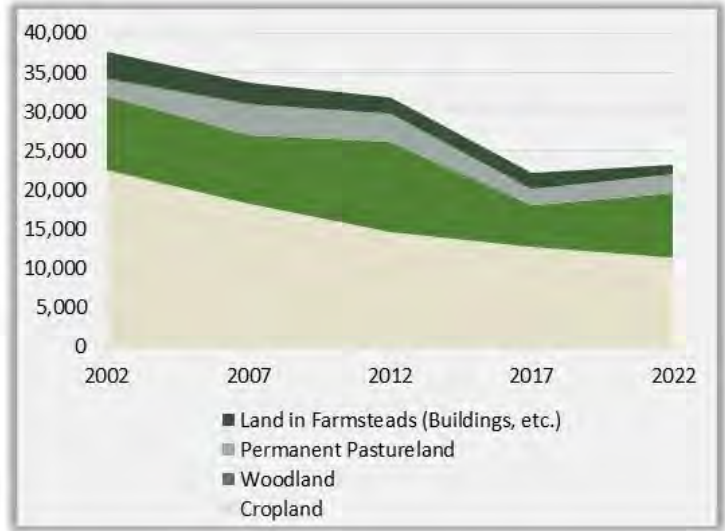


Figure A3-2. Farmland Acreage, Fulton County
 Source: U.S. Census of Agriculture

Farm Size

Figure A3-3 shows the distribution of farms by size and how it has changed over time. Farms of 50 to 179 acres make up the greatest share of agricultural operations in Fulton County. Since 2002, the County has lost many of its mid- and large-sized farms. There are now 8 farms with at least 500 acres, down from 15 in 2002, and 37 farms with 180 to 499 acres, compared to 58 twenty years earlier. In fact, the only growth has been among farms with less than 50 acres.



Figure A3-3. Distribution of Farms by Size Class, Fulton County
 Source: U.S. Census of Agriculture

With the increase in small farms, the average size of a farm in Fulton County declined from 153 acres in 2002 to 113 in 2022 (Table A3-1). Both figures are below the New York State average, which changed marginally over the twenty-year period. Farms in Fulton County are also smaller than those in the neighboring counties of Montgomery and Herkimer. (For additional comparisons between Fulton County, neighboring counties, and New York State, please see Tables A3-8 to A3-10 at the end of this chapter.)

TABLE A3-1. AVERAGE FARM SIZE, 2022	
Fulton County	113
Montgomery County	217
Herkimer County	207
Saratoga County	122
New York State	212

Source: U.S. Census of Agriculture.

Farms by Principal Product

The USDA uses the North American Industrial Classification System (NAICS) to classify agricultural production establishments (e.g., farms, orchards, greenhouses) in the Census of Agriculture by type of activity. The NAICS code identifies the *principal product*: the crop or animal that accounts for at least 50% of the establishment’s agricultural production. Not all farms, however, produce a single group of crops or livestock.

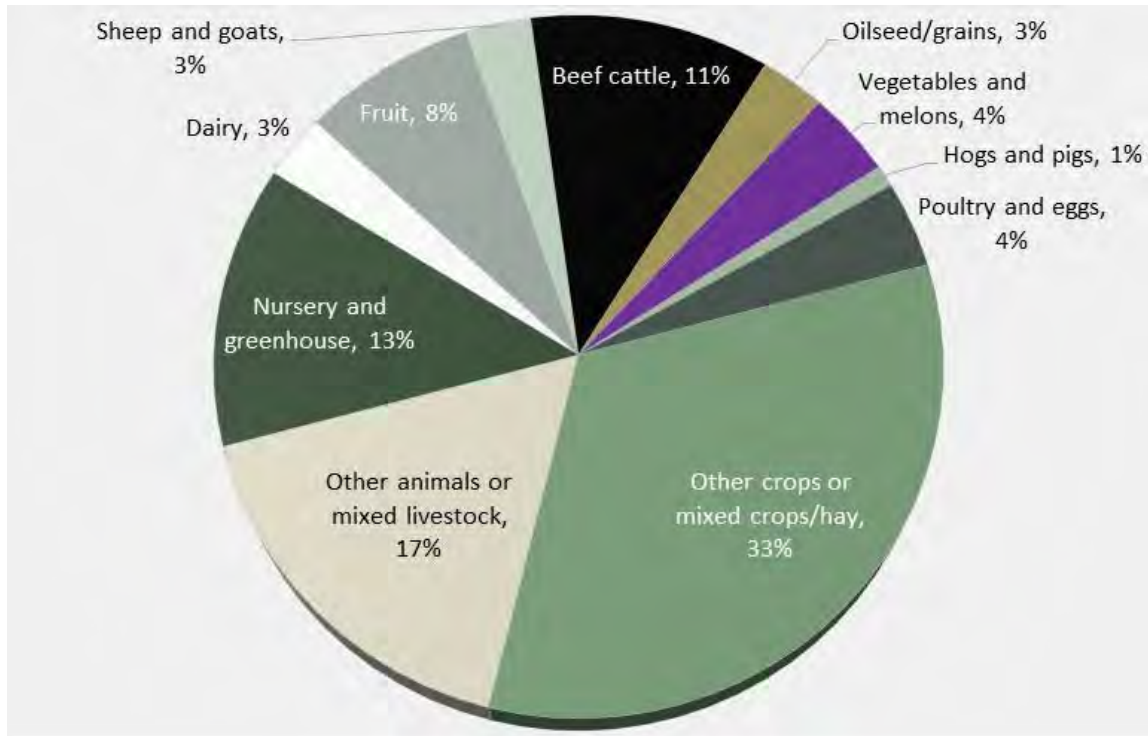


Figure A3-4. Distribution of Farms by Principal Product, Fulton County, 2022

Source: U.S. Census of Agriculture

As shown in Figure A3-4, one-third of all farms in Fulton County cultivate a combination of crops, or crops not included in other categories like hay and maple syrup, while 17% raise a combination of livestock, or other animals not reflected in other categories such as horses. Agricultural operations that primarily grow nursery and greenhouse products account for 13%.

Since 2002, the composition of farms by principal product in Fulton County has shifted away from dairy and beef production. Dairy farms, for example, experienced an 82% decline, and only seven (7) are still in operation. More farms, on the other hand, are producing a mix of crops, growing fruit, or raising poultry for their eggs. (See Figure A3-5 for the 2002 distribution of farms by principal product.)

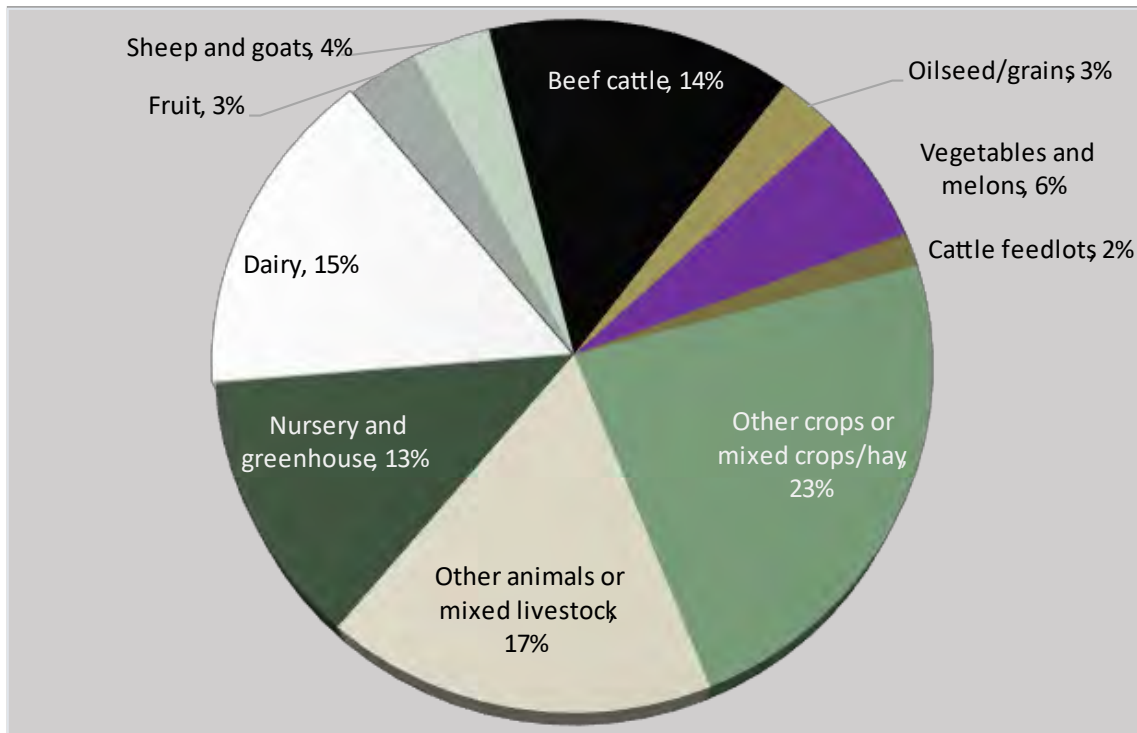


Figure A3-5. Distribution of Farms by Principal Product, Fulton County, 2002

Source: U.S. Census of Agriculture

Crops

Fulton County’s top crops in acreage are listed in Table A3-2 below. Forage crops, plant materials like hay and silage that are grown to be consumed by livestock, cover 5,591 acres, or 24% of the farmland in the County, while corn used for grain covers 679 acres. At 577 acres, cultivated Christmas trees represent the third largest crop in the County. Other top crops include soybeans, corn for silage, nursery stock crops (e.g., ornamentals, shrubs, shade trees, evergreens, fruit and nut trees), apples, blueberries, and vegetables.

Nurseries and Greenhouses
 A *nursery* grows plants (typically trees and shrubs) both inside and outside, while a *greenhouse* grows plants (e.g., bedding/garden plants, flowers, sometimes vegetables) year-round inside a building made of glass or plastic. As of January 2024, Fulton County had **15** nursery growers and greenhouses certified by the state.

Between 2002 and 2022, Fulton County experienced a considerable reduction in the number of acres dedicated to forage crops, corn for grain, and corn for silage, possibly due to the loss of local dairy farms, with a marginal decline in the acreage used for growing vegetables and berries. There was, however, an increase in the number of acres used for producing cultivated Christmas trees, nursery stock crops, and apples. According to one local producer, the market for trees has been very good over the last 2-4 years due in part to the strong economy.

TABLE A3-2. TOP CROPS IN ACRES, FULTON COUNTY					
	2002	2012	2022	Net Change, 2002-22	
				Number	Percent
Forage, All	13,969	9,912	5,591	-8,378	-60.0%
Corn for Grain	813	901	679	-134	-16.5%
Cultivated Christmas Trees	476	358	577	+101	+21.2%
Soybeans for Beans	-	237	219	NA	NA
Corn for Silage	2,386	1,177	204	-2,182	-91.5%
Nursery Stock Crops	25	42	95	+70	+280.0%
Apples	53	NA	80	+27	+50.9%
Vegetables, All	61	69	56	-5	-8.2%
Berries	16	16	13	-3	-18.8%

Source: U.S. Census of Agriculture.

Another important agricultural product in Fulton County is maple syrup, which relies on access to the area’s abundant woodlands (it is not listed in the table because production is measured in gallons, not acres). In 2022, 14 farm operators produced 14,807 gallons of maple syrup, up from a mere 992 gallons reported in 2002.

Livestock

Concurrent with a decline in the number of livestock farms in Fulton County, inventories of nearly all farm animals have decreased since 2002. As shown in Table A3-3, there are 80% fewer dairy cows, 80% fewer goats, 42% fewer horses and ponies, and 28% fewer beef cattle at local farms. Despite growth in the number of farms raising poultry for their eggs, there are half as many layers on local farms as there were in 2002.

	2002	2012	2022	Net Change, 2002-22	
				Number	Percent
Layers	1,261	498	637	-624	-49.5%
Dairy Cows	2,784	1,549	534	-2,250	-80.8%
Beef Cows	596	421	432	-164	-27.5%
Horses and Ponies	684	637	399	-285	-41.7%
Goats, All	519	244	103	-416	-80.2%
Hogs and Pigs	36	79	50	14	38.9%
Sheep and Lambs	1,010	442	NA	NA	NA
Broilers/Meat-Type Chickens	195	87	NA	NA	NA

Source: U.S. Census of Agriculture.

Farm Product Sales

Fulton County farms and orchards generated \$9.3 million in sales in 2022, with crops accounting for \$5.2 million and livestock, poultry, and their products accounting for \$4.2 million. This is the first time since 2002 that the livestock and poultry sector was not the dominant revenue-producer.

In **2022**, Fulton County ranked **51st** of all New York counties in the total market value of agricultural products sold. It also ranked **7th** in the sales of cultivated Christmas trees, up from 21st in 2017.

As shown in Figure A3-6, milk from cows remains the highest valued product. With \$2.4 million in sales, the dairy sector produces about 26% of the total market value of agricultural products in Fulton County, compared to 73% in 2002. The second highest valued product is other crops and hay at \$2.0 million, \$525,000 of which is derived from the sale of maple syrup. The commodities with the next highest market value are beef cattle, at \$1.4 million; nursery and greenhouse products, floriculture, and sod, at \$1.2 million; and cultivated Christmas trees, \$702,000. Combined, the top five commodity groups account for about 82% of the total agricultural sales.

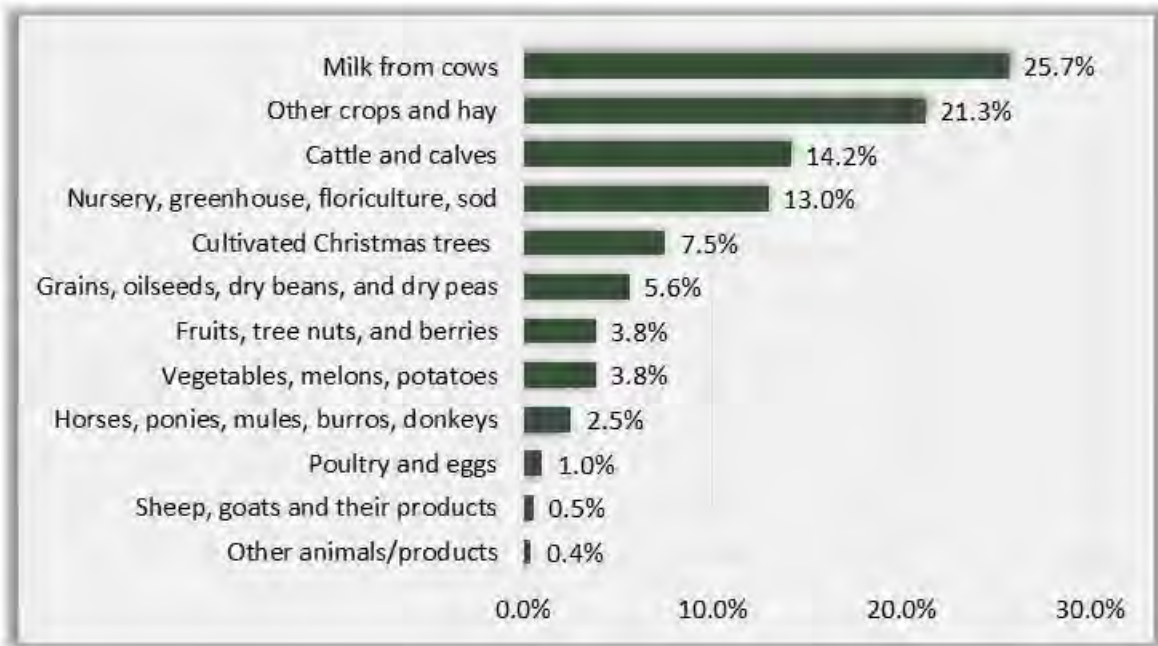


Figure A3-6. Distribution of Sales by Agricultural Commodity, Fulton County, 2022

Source: U.S. Census of Agriculture

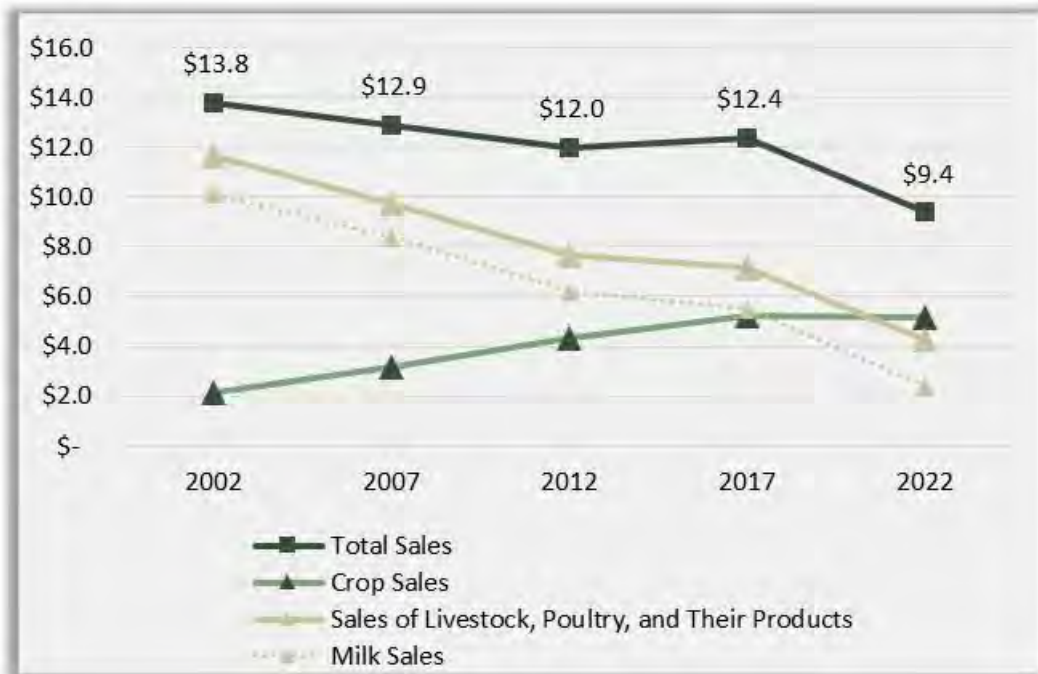


Figure A3-7. Market Value of Agricultural Products Sold in Millions, Converted to Constant 2022 Dollars, Fulton County

Source: U.S. Census of Agriculture

Converted to constant 2022 dollars – that is, dollars adjusted to account for inflation – the value of agricultural products sold by farms in Fulton County actually *declined* between 2002 and 2022, by about 32%. This is mainly due to the reduction in milk sales, as illustrated in Figure A3-7. Sales of livestock, poultry, and their products, measured in inflation-adjusted dollars, decreased by 64% over the period.

In contrast, sales of crops increased dramatically, from \$1.3 million in 2002 (or \$2.2 million in inflation-adjusted dollars) to \$5.2 million in 2022. This is attributable to the increased market value of nursery and greenhouse products, cultivated Christmas trees, and other crops and hay in Fulton County. Fruit and vegetable sales did not grow above the rate of inflation.

Figure A3-8 presents the distribution of farms by the market value of agricultural products sold and how it has changed over time. According to the 2022 Agricultural Census, 120 farms, or 59% of all farms in Fulton County have sales of less than \$10,000 per year, compared to 163 or 66%, in 2002. The households that operate these farms probably earn most of their income off the farm, or through agricultural activities other than product sales. At the opposite end of the spectrum, 18 farms have annual sales of \$100,000 to \$249,999 and seven have sales valued at \$250,000 or more. These farm operations represent about 12% of all farms in the County, but they generate almost 80% of the sales.



Figure A3-8. Farms by Market Value of Sales, Fulton County

Source: U.S. Census of Agriculture

Sales per farm in Fulton County average \$45,184, well below not only the state average of \$262,228, but also much less than in neighboring counties, including Herkimer (\$181,112), Montgomery

(\$241,625), and Saratoga (\$191,198). In fact, Fulton County has one of the lowest average sales per farm in the state.¹⁰ (For a comparison of gross market revenue per acre, see Table A3-9.)

Direct and Intermediated Sales

In 2022, 34 or 17% of farms in Fulton County sold agricultural products directly to consumers at farm stands and on-farm markets, orchards where the public can “pick-your-own” fruits and vegetables, and farmers’ markets in Gloversville and Johnstown (Table A3-4). Direct-to-consumer sales totaled \$476,000, down 11% from 2017 when figures are adjusted for inflation, even though the number of farms selling directly to consumers increased from 26. This could be related to the temporary restrictions on business operations during the COVID-19 pandemic.

In addition to direct-to-consumer sales, the Census of Agriculture collects data on the sale of agricultural products directly to retail stores, institutions like schools and hospitals, and so-called intermediaries, such as wholesalers and food hubs. Only a handful of farms in Fulton County sold products through these channels in 2022, earning a total of \$36,000. There may be opportunities for additional farms to participate in farm-to-school and farm-to-institution initiatives that have been promoted by New York State in recent years.

TABLE A3-4. SELECTED FARM PRACTICES AND MARKETS, FULTON COUNTY				
	Number of Farms		Sales (000s) In Constant 2022 Dollars	
	2017	2022	2017	2022
Sell directly to consumers	26	34	\$538	\$476
Sell directly to retailers, institutions, and intermediaries	7	8	\$70	\$36
Produce/sell value-added products	10	10	\$124	\$134
Produce/sell organic products	4	10	\$569	\$187
Earn income through agritourism and recreational services	6	4	NA	NA

Source: U.S. Census of Agriculture.

Value-Added and Organic Production

Approximately 5% of farm operations in Fulton County produced and sold value-added products in 2022, grossing \$134,000. Although the sales revenue was limited, it increased about 8% in inflation-adjusted dollars over the amount reported in 2017, and there appears to be potential for additional value-added production in the future.

¹⁰ Excluding counties with fewer than 20 farms, the others are Putnam (\$22,373), Warren (\$26,783), and Schenectady (\$44,142).

Changes to state laws and regulations have resulted in a dramatic rise in the number of farm-based craft beverage producers that utilize – and essentially add value to – ingredients grown in New York State. Fulton County currently has two licensed farm breweries, a farm distillery, and a farm cidery, as well as a microbrewery not associated with a farm, which are featured on the 44 Lakes Craft Beverage Trail and the Capital Craft Beverage Trail.

As reflected in Table A3-4, Fulton County had 10 farms with organic product sales in 2022, more than double the number recorded in the previous Agricultural Census. This is a notable increase, given that New York State lost 20% of its organic farms between 2017 and 2022. Of the County’s 10 organic farms, five (5) have organic production certified by the USDA.

Organic product sales in Fulton County totaled \$187,000, reflecting a 67% decline in inflation-adjusted dollars from the amount reported in 2017. According to the Census, four farms generated 92% of the organic product sales in 2022. The other six farms had organic sales that averaged \$2,500 per year.

Farm-Related Income

With nearly 73% of the farm operations in Fulton County earning less than \$25,000 per year in sales, some farmers have turned to other agricultural activities as an additional source of income. These include providing services to other producers (e.g., plowing, planting), renting out farmland or buildings, boarding or breeding livestock, and selling standing timber and firewood. In 2022, one in three farms in the County received farm-related income, averaging \$19,630 per year.

Another activity that can generate farm-related income is agritourism. According to the 2022 Census of Agriculture, four (4) farms in Fulton County earned income through agritourism and recreational services, defined by the USDA as “services such as hunting, fishing, farm or wine tours, hayrides, etc.” This is a relatively limited definition, however, and does not include direct sales of agricultural products, which is widely considered part of agritourism. It also does not reflect farm-based craft beverage producers whose facilities are considered agritourism destinations. Due to the small number of farms providing agritourism and recreational services, the Census does not show how much revenue these activities generated. There is an opportunity for the development of additional agritourism in Fulton County.

Tourism is an integral and growing part of the Fulton County economy. The area’s natural beauty and rural character, diverse recreational opportunities, and 44 lakes – including Great Sacandaga Lake, the fifth largest in the state – attract thousands of visitors and part-time residents. In 2022, visitor spending grew to \$79 million, reaching 119% of 2019 (pre-pandemic levels). The tourism industries supported more than 850 jobs and generated \$5.9 million in local taxes. (Source: *Tourism Economics, Economic Impact of Visitors in 2022: Capital-Saratoga Focus*, September 2022)

Farm Production Expenses

Fulton County farms spent approximately \$10 million on production costs in 2022, averaging about \$49,000 (Table A3-5). The biggest expense was for hired farm labor, at \$1.6 million; it accounted for about 15% of the total expenses. Other major expenses included property taxes, feed, repair and maintenance of farm equipment, and gasoline, fuels, and oils. Production costs vary, however, depending on the type of farm operation, its ownership, and its activities. More than two-thirds of the farms in the County incurred costs for fuel, property taxes, repairs and maintenance, feed, and/or utilities, while fewer farms paid for fertilizers, livestock and poultry, or leasing farmland and buildings.

TABLE A3-5. FARM PRODUCTION EXPENSES, FULTON COUNTY, 2022

	Total in 000s	# Farms
Hired Farm Labor	\$1,555	52
Property Taxes	\$1,284	197
Feed for Livestock	\$1,264	130
Repairs, Supplies, and Maintenance	\$1,047	193
Gasoline, Fuels, and Oils	\$1,007	204
Seeds, Plants, Vines, Trees	\$777	81
Livestock and Poultry	\$534	40
Fertilizers and Soil Conditioners	\$383	75
Utilities	\$305	135
Interest Expense	\$280	53
Cash Rent for Land/Buildings/Grazing Fees	\$178	33
All Other Expenses	\$1,070	-
TOTAL	\$10,044	-

Source: U.S. Census of Agriculture.

One-quarter of the farms in Fulton County have hired farm labor, including paid family members, on their payroll. These farms directly employ 216 people, up from 176 in 2002; most have between one (1) and nine (9) workers. No migrant workers were reported in the Agricultural Census, either as hired or contract labor.

Farm production expenses nationwide reached record highs from 2020 to 2023 as the U.S. experienced its highest rates of inflation in 40 years. Agricultural inputs such as feed, fertilizer, and fuel as well as labor experienced the largest (but by no means the only) cost increases. Farm labor costs in New York State have also been impacted in recent years by regulatory changes at the state level, including minimum wage rates that are well above the federal minimum wage and new overtime pay requirements for farmworkers.

In Fulton County, farm production expenses in inflation-adjusted dollars increased about 7% between 2017 and 2022, with the largest cost increases in seeds, plants, vines, and trees (+110%); gasoline, fuels, and oils (+81%); and hired labor (+75%).

Farm Profitability

Low sales and rising production expenses, coupled with tight profit margins in the agricultural sector, have had a significant impact on the prosperity of farms in Fulton County. As shown in Table A3-6, the net income of farm operations in the County was \$353,000 in 2022, following fifteen years of growth that reached a high of \$5 million (in inflation-adjusted dollars) in 2017. Nationwide, net farm income reached a 20-year high in 2022, though the USDA projects that farm sector profits will fall in 2024 due to downward pressure on commodity prices and higher production expenses.¹¹

The average net income realized by farm operations in Fulton County was \$1,720, a fraction of the state average of \$76,781, but not a loss. Only 26% of farms in the County earned a profit in 2022, less than they did between 2007 and 2017, and below the state average of 40%. The average net gain was \$71,168, while the average net loss was \$23,745. (For comparisons with neighboring counties, see Table A3-8.)

TABLE A3-6. NET CASH FARM INCOME IN CONSTANT 2022 DOLLARS, FULTON COUNTY					
	2002	2007	2012	2017	2022
NET INCOME OF FARM OPERATIONS (000s)	\$355	\$2,740	\$2,937	\$5,000	\$353
Average Net Income	\$1,437	\$12,343	\$13,921	\$24,153	\$1,720
Operations with Gains	71	83	92	97	55
% of All Farm Operations	28.9%	37.4%	43.6%	46.9%	26.8%
Average Net Gains	\$49,962	\$54,443	\$54,529	\$64,318	\$71,168
Operations with Losses	176	139	119	110	150
% of All Farm Operations	71.5%	62.6%	56.4%	53.1%	73.2%
Average Net Losses	\$18,073	\$12,794	\$17,475	\$11,265	\$23,745

Source: U.S. Census of Agriculture. Dollars shown have been adjusted for inflation.

Fixed Assets

Real estate typically represents the largest single component of a farm's total assets. In addition to being a source of wealth, real estate often serves as collateral for farm loans. An appreciation in land values means that farm property owners can get a good price if they decide to sell their land, whether it is for agriculture or for another use, but it can also put the cost of farmland out of reach of farmers who are interested in leasing land. When land prices decline, on the other hand, young and beginning farmers, as well as existing producers that want to expand, may find it easier to purchase or lease farmland.

¹¹ U.S. Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service, "Farm Sector Income and Finances: Highlights from the Farm Income Forecast," February 7, 2024, <https://www.ers.usda.gov/topics/farm-economy/farm-sector-income-finances/highlights-from-the-farm-income-forecast>.

The Census of Agriculture classifies farms by the tenure of producers. In 2022, 75% of the farms in Fulton County were operated by full owners; 20% by part owners, who farm on land they own as well as on land that they rent from others; and 5% by tenants, who operate only on land rented from others (Figure A3-9). Approximately 20,000 acres, or 86% of the farmland in the County, is owned by the producer; the remainder, about 3,200 acres, is rented or leased. Statewide, the rate of farmland ownership is 73%.

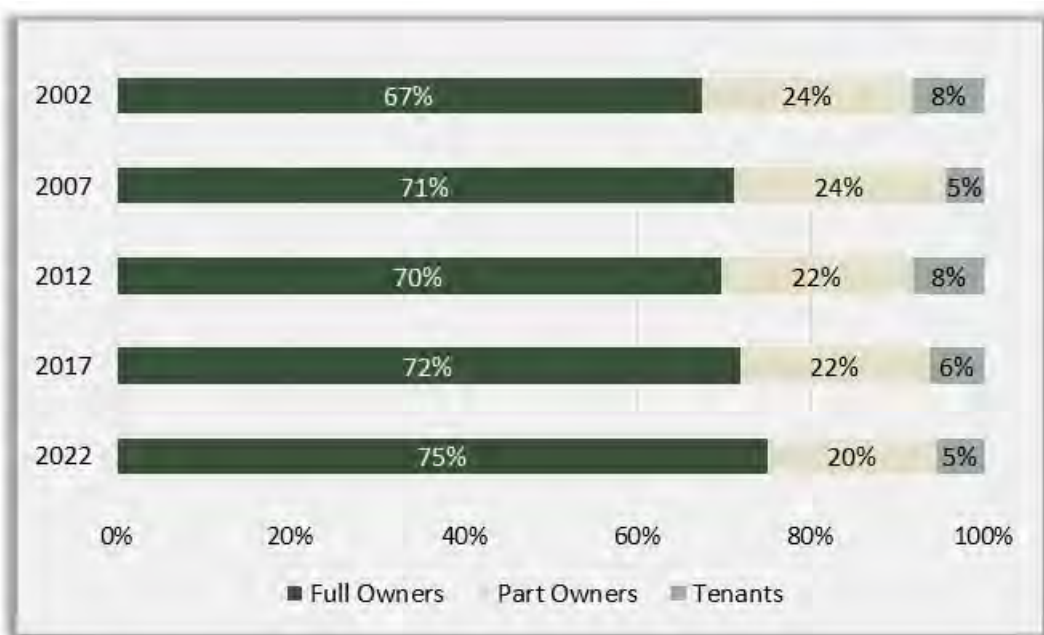


Figure A3-9. Distribution of Farms by Tenure, Fulton County
 Source: U.S. Census of Agriculture

As shown in Figure A3-10, the average market value of land and buildings on farms in Fulton County¹² was estimated at \$330,469 in 2022, much less than the average value in New York State (\$870,211). Of the County’s 205 farms, 35 had an estimated value between \$500,000 and \$999,999 and 10 were valued at \$1 million or more. The average farm in Fulton County, however, is much smaller than the statewide average. Measured on a *per-acre* basis, the average market value of farms in Fulton County (\$2,916) is still not as high as it is in the state (\$4,102), but the differences are not quite as extreme, as Figure A3-11 shows. (See Table A3-10 for comparisons with neighboring counties.)

¹² It should be noted that the market value of land and buildings on farms in the Agricultural Census is based on estimates provided by the farmers.

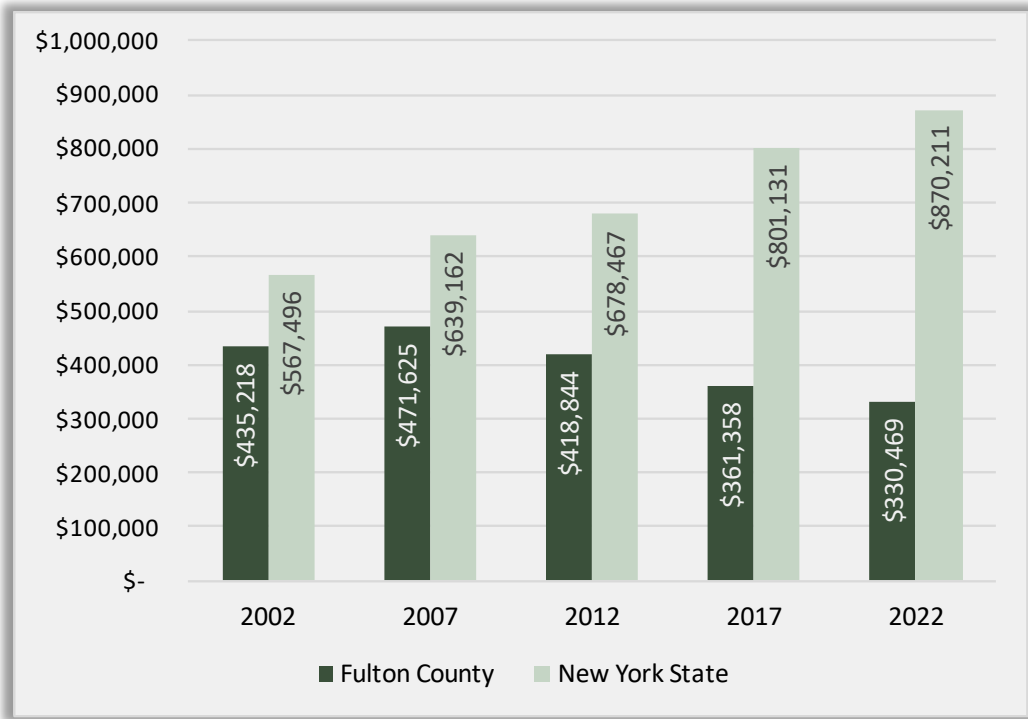


Figure A3-10. Average Market Value Per Farm in Constant 2022 Dollars

Source: U.S. Census of Agriculture

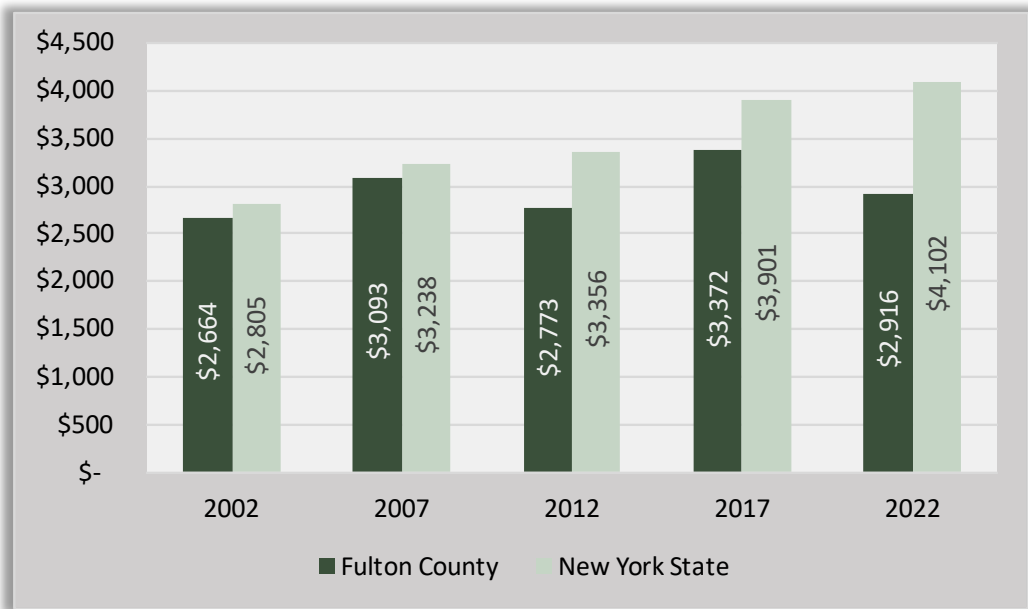


Figure A3-11. Average Market Value Per Acre in Constant 2022 Dollars

Source: U.S. Census of Agriculture

Data on arm's length real estate sales in Fulton County indicates that 61 parcels classified in property assessment records as Agricultural at the time of sale changed hands from 2014 through 2023. The parcels include farms with buildings as well as agricultural vacant land. Totalling 3,135 acres, the parcels sold had a median selling price of about \$2,300 per acre.

In addition to real estate, farmers own and maintain a variety of agricultural implements, machinery, and equipment. Many of these items are purchased in Fulton County or in neighboring communities, contributing to the regional economy. The total market value of these items is estimated at \$16.2 million and includes 247 trucks, 459 tractors, and 73 hay balers. About 25% of the farms reported that they have at least \$100,000 worth of machinery and equipment; the average value per farm is \$79,159.

Farm Operator/Producer Characteristics

According to the 2022 Census of Agriculture, Fulton County's 205 farms have a total of 373 producers, defined as the people involved in making decisions for the farm operation.¹³ Key characteristics of farm producers in Fulton County can be summarized as follows:

- ★ More than 46% of the producers are full-time farmers
- ★ On average, the producers have been on their present farm for 23.1 years
- ★ About 78% of producers have been on their current farm for a minimum of 10 years, 7% for two (2) years or less
- ★ 20% of the producers farm alone
- ★ Fulton County farmers have an average age of 57.1 years, slightly above the state average of 56.7
- ★ Three out of five producers are aged 55 and older
- ★ Approximately 6% of the producers are under age 35, defined by the Census as "young producers"; the percentage statewide is 11%
- ★ 40% of producers are women
- ★ The Census classifies producers with less than 10 years of farming experience as "new and beginning producers." In Fulton County, they make up 19% of the producers (compared to 28% statewide) and work on 23% of the farms (compared to 33% statewide)

¹³ The 2022 Agricultural Census farm allowed farmers to identify up to 4 producers per farm.

Agriculture-Related Industry

Agriculture in Fulton County extends beyond production to incorporate a variety of ancillary businesses that support farms as well as associated industries that rely on agricultural products. These are listed in Table A3-7. The County is known for the strength of its successful food manufacturing cluster, which includes companies like Fage USA, Euphrates Cheese, Westmeadow Creamery, and Espuña. When products grown or raised locally are processed, distributed, prepared, and sold within the County and the region, money stays local. Creating and increasing linkages between local farm operations and businesses in agriculture-related industries would enhance the economic impact of agriculture.

TABLE A3-7. AGRICULTURE-RELATED INDUSTRY, FULTON COUNTY			
Industry and NAICS Code	Firms	Employees	Nonemployees
AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION AND SUPPORT SERVICES			
Crop Production (NAICS 111)	3	NA	-
Animal Production/Aquaculture (112)	2	NA	-
Forestry and Logging (113)	7	34	34
Agriculture and Forestry Support Activities (115)	-	-	24
Veterinary Services (54194)	5	59	-
Landscaping Services (56173)	13	42	65
MANUFACTURING			
Food Manufacturing (311)	5	370	-
<i>Dairy Manufacturing (3115)</i>	2	NA	-
<i>Animal Slaughtering and Processing (3116)</i>	2	NA	-
<i>Bakeries and Tortilla Manufacturing (3118)</i>	1	NA	-
Beverage Manufacturing (312)	5	49	-
Agricultural Implement Manufacturing (33311)	1	NA	-
WHOLESALE			
Grocery/Related Product Merchant Wholesalers (4244)	6	85	-
<i>Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Merchant Wholesalers (42448)</i>	1	NA	-
RETAIL/FOOD SERVICE			
Lawn and Garden Equipment and Supply Stores (4442)	5	24	3
<i>Nursery, Garden Center, and Farm Supply Stores (44424)</i>	1	NA	NA
Food and Beverage Stores (445)	30	474	18
<i>Grocery Stores (4451)</i>	21	438	9
<i>Specialty Food Stores (4452)</i>	1	NA	5
<i>Beer, Wine, and Liquor Stores (4453)</i>	8	34	4
Florists (4531/4593)	2	NA	8
Food Service / Eating and Drinking Places (722)	93	923	47
TOTAL, AGRICULTURE-RELATED INDUSTRY	178	2,060+	199

Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, *Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages (firms and employees, 2022)* and U.S. Census Bureau, *Nonemployee Statistics (2021, the latest available)*.

Based on the statistics available, agriculture-related industries in Fulton County employ approximately 2,060 workers in 176 firms, accounting for 16% of total private-sector employment. The County also has 199 nonemployees, mostly sole proprietorships, in agriculture-related industries. Together, these nonemployees generate about \$9.2 million in sales.

Comparisons with Neighboring Counties

Tables A3-8 through A3-10 below are provided for reference and feature comparisons between Fulton County and three neighboring counties – Herkimer, Montgomery, and Saratoga – as well as New York State.

TABLE A3-8. FARM PROFITABILITY, 2022					
VARIABLE	FULTON	HERKIMER	MONTGOMERY	SARATOGA	NEW YORK STATE
Average Net Cash Farm Income Per Farm	\$1,720	\$47,452	\$60,675	\$49,486	\$76,781
% Of Farms with Net Financial Gain	26%	41%	39%	32%	40%
Average Net Loss Per Farm	\$23,745	\$22,211	\$33,201	\$42,201	\$31,688
Average Net Gain Per Farm	\$71,168	\$145,897	\$205,839	\$246,230	\$236,202

Source: U.S. Census of Agriculture.

TABLE A3-9. FARM REVENUE, MARKETS, AND DIVERSITY OF INCOME STREAMS, 2022					
VARIABLE	FULTON	HERKIMER	MONTGOMERY	SARATOGA	NEW YORK STATE
Average Gross Market Revenue Per Farm	\$45,814	\$181,112	\$241,625	\$191,198	\$262,228
Average Gross Market Revenue Per Acre	\$404	\$874	\$1,113	\$1,565	\$1,236
% Of Farms with Direct to Consumer Sales	17%	18%	11%	21%	17%
Direct to Consumer Sales Per Farm	\$14,000	\$8,344	\$21,610	\$9,524	\$54,584
% Of Farms with Sales to Retailers, Institutions, and Intermediaries	4%	9%	6%	5%	8%
Average Sales to Retailers, Institutions, and Intermediaries	\$4,500	\$43,326	\$46,000	NA	\$233,968
% Of Farms That Sell Value-Added Products	5%	5%	7%	7%	7%
Average Sales of Value-Added Products	\$13,400	\$14,222	\$19,052	\$33,178	\$172,335

TABLE A3-9. FARM REVENUE, MARKETS, AND DIVERSITY OF INCOME STREAMS, 2022

VARIABLE	FULTON	HERKIMER	MONTGOMERY	SARATOGA	NEW YORK STATE
% of Farms with Farm-Related Income	33%	39%	38%	43%	41%
Ratio of Farm-Related Income to Gross Market Revenue	0.10	0.02	0.03	0.19	0.05

Source: U.S. Census of Agriculture.

TABLE A3-10. FARM ASSETS, DEBT, AND EXPENSES, 2022

VARIABLE	FULTON	HERKIMER	MONTGOMERY	SARATOGA	NEW YORK STATE
Average Market Value of Land and Buildings Per Farm	\$330,469	\$657,697	\$803,031	\$817,028	\$870,211
Average Market Value of Land and Buildings Per Acre	\$2,916	\$3,172	\$3,700	\$6,689	\$4,102
Average Market Value of Machinery and Equipment Per Farm	\$79,159	\$149,684	\$165,027	\$152,628	\$174,160
% Of Farms with Interest Expenses	26%	38%	33%	37%	33%
Average Interest Expenses Per Farm	\$5,283	\$12,000	\$15,156	\$17,407	\$19,781
Average Labor Cost Per Hired Farm Worker	\$7,199	\$16,035	\$25,395	\$23,649	\$21,657
Average Production Expenses Per Farm, Total	\$48,997	\$138,752	\$190,096	\$179,145	\$201,523

Source: U.S. Census of Agriculture.

Dairy Farms and Milk Production

Dairy remains the top agricultural product in Fulton County in market value. However, many farmers have exited the dairy industry, and the number of dairy farms in the County has been in steep decline for many years. According to the Federal Milk Market Administrator, there were five dairy farms in Fulton County in 2023, compared to 48 in 2003. These farms sold just 6.5 million pounds of milk, a 90% decline from 61.9 million pounds twenty years earlier.

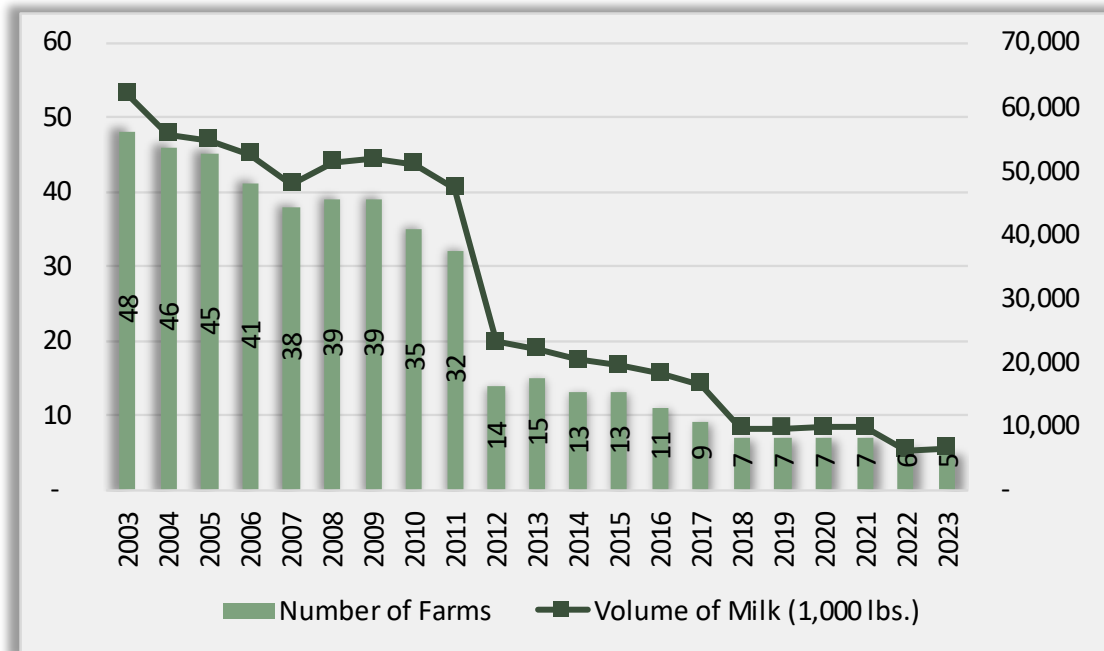


Figure A3-12. Dairy Farms and Milk Production in Fulton County, 2003-23

Source: Market Administrator's Annual Statistical Bulletins, 2003-23, Northeast Milk Marketing Area, Federal Order No. 1

According to the USDA, there are now half as many dairies in the United States as there were in 2003. Given its agricultural heritage and the economic importance of the dairy sector, New York State has been particularly affected. In the last 20 years, the number of dairy farms has fallen by 74% in Saratoga County and 59% in Herkimer County. Yet, milk production increased in these areas – and in the state as a whole – as many small-scale dairy farms closed or transitioned to other agricultural products, and commercial dairies with larger herd sizes have become the norm. In Montgomery County, for example, the number of dairy farms declined from 242 in 2003 to 161 in 2023, while total milk production increased from 300.7 million pounds to 366.9 million pounds.

Forests in Fulton County

According to the USDA Forest Service, forests cover approximately 295,100 acres in Fulton County. Two-thirds of the forest lands are privately-owned; the remainder are owned by local and state governments.

The forests in Fulton County are dominated by maple, beech, and birch species, which cover 204,500 acres, or 69%. As previously noted, there has been a huge increase in maple syrup production in the last ten years, yielding nearly 15,000 gallons in 2022. Other tree species cover far less acreage, but most of the County's forest resources are in hardwoods.

Fulton County contains three state forests wholly within its borders: Lassellsville, Peck Hill, and Rockwood. The largest is the Peck Hill State Forest in the Town of Johnstown, at 2,868 acres. The property contains Willie Wildlife Marsh, a wetland habitat with a recreational trail and opportunities for wildlife viewing. One stand in Peck Hill State Forest has been identified as being a good candidate for maple tapping. Located in the Town of Oppenheim and Ephratah, the Lassellsville State Forest is a 2,487-acre property. Rockwood State Forest is the smallest of the state forests with approximately 859 acres. It is in the Towns of Ephratah and Johnstown. DEC has developed a Fulton County State Forests Unit Management Plan for these lands.

Fulton County also contains parts of the Ferris Lake Wild Forest (147,454 acres) and Shaker Mountain Wild Forest (40,527 acres). Both areas are within the Adirondack Park and offer abundant opportunities for outdoor recreation.

Appendix 4 – Farm-Friendly Audits

The Audit

To accomplish the audit, comprehensive plans, subdivision laws, and zoning regulations were evaluated in four (4) towns: Mayfield, Perth, Johnstown, and Caroga. These towns were chosen for the audit, as they are Fulton County towns having comprehensive plans, zoning laws, and agricultural activities taking place. All of the Town of Caroga, 71% of the Town of Mayfield, and 11% of the Town of Johnstown are within the Adirondack Park.

Comprehensive plans, zoning and subdivision laws were evaluated against a series of questions designed to explore the level of farm-friendliness in each town. These questions are based on similar farm-friendly audits done throughout the State and region. The audit is not a criticism of any local law or plan but simply points out ways local land use regulations work with, or present challenges to farming activities. Results of the Audit help inform the Plan’s recommendations for strategies and actions.

The audit is also informed by guidance offered by the New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets through their “Guidelines for Review of Local Zoning and Planning Laws” (<http://www.agriculture.ny.gov/AP/agsservices/guidancedocuments/305-aZoningGuidelines.pdf>) and “Local Laws and Agricultural Districts: Guidance for Local Governments and Farmers” (<http://www.agriculture.ny.gov/AP/agsservices/new305/guidance.pdf>).

Farm-Friendly Criteria Used in the Review

The following questions are those used in these audits to explore farm-friendliness. The answers offer insight into the level of farm-friendliness in plans and adopted laws in a community. A highly farm-friendly plan or land use regulation would positively address most of these criteria.

Comprehensive Plan-Related Questions

- Does the Town have a Comprehensive Plan?
- Is the Plan up-to-date (less than 10 years old?)
- Does the plan have a specific section addressing agriculture?
- Does the plan include any maps of agricultural lands, important farmland soils, agricultural districts, etc.?
- Does the Plan explore the role of agriculture in the community? I.e., did a survey include questions about agriculture? Was there anything in workshops about it?
- Does the Plan have a vision statement or goals that address agriculture in any way? Is there any visible demonstration of the value of agriculture to the community in the plan?

- Does the plan recognize agriculture as an important resource in Town?
- Does the plan recognize or reference a local or County agriculture and farmland protection plan?
- Does the plan include any data on farms and farmland? Acreage? Income or occupations from farming or other ag-census data?
- Does the plan establish policies towards farmland and farming?
- Does the plan identify the value of farmland and farms to the community in some way?
- Does the Plan offer any recommended actions or strategies related to farming or farmland or ways to preserve or enhance farming?
- Does the Plan establish a policy and/or future actions related to conservation subdivision or clustering, ag overlay districts or other methods?
- Does the plan discuss NYS agricultural districts and ag assessments?
- Does the Plan consider farmland an important resource, recognize prime or soils of statewide importance, and encourage easements or other protections of that land?
- Is there a policy discussed for Purchase of Development Rights (PDR), Lease of Development Rights (LDR), or Transfer of Development Rights (TDR)?
- Is agriculture a consideration of where growth does or does not take place?

Regulatory-Related Questions (Subdivision and Zoning)

- Does Subdivision Law address agriculture in any way?
- Does subdivision application ask for any submissions related to agriculture?
- Are conservation subdivisions allowed? Voluntarily? Mandatory? Does it address agriculture?
- Does subdivision include siting of non-farm development in a manner that preserves farm use?
- Does the zoning regulation's purpose statement include a discussion of agriculture, or promote preserving agriculture specifically?
- Does zoning allow agriculture as a permitted use by right?
- Does zoning prohibit agriculture in any district other than hamlet centers or commercial areas?
- Are site plan reviews required in one or more districts for agriculture or ag-related uses?
- Are special use permits for agriculture or ag-related uses required in one or more districts?
- Is residential, higher density or commercial growth allowed in core farm areas or where a NYS Ag District exists so that conflicts may arise?
- Does the zoning specifically establish a local agricultural zoning district designed for agriculture, ag overlay district, or special use district for agriculture?
- Does the zoning allow farms to have more than one business or offer flexibility to accommodate the needs of agricultural businesses?

- Are buffer zones between farmland and residential uses required for new non-farm construction or subdivision?
- Are innovative development patterns specifically designed to preserve farmland encouraged, allowed, or mandated (conservation subdivision, clustering, TDR)?
- Are off-site or on-site signs allowed to attract and direct people to farm stands and on-farm businesses?
- Are farm stands, farm retail markets, agri-tourist businesses, breweries, etc. allowed?
- Are farm processing facilities such as community kitchens, slaughterhouse, etc. allowed?
- Are farm stands limited to selling just products from that one farm or is that flexible?
- Do farm stands and other on-farm retail need a site plan review or special use permit?
- Does zoning allow for accessory uses such as greenhouses, barns, garages, equipment storage etc. permitted as of right?
- Do application requirements for non-farm uses include asking for submittal of information or maps about farming that might be taking place on or near the project parcel? Whether it is in a NYS-certified agricultural district? What farming activities take place on or near the site? Are prime farmland soils present?
- Do standards exist beyond SEQR that require the PB or ZBA to evaluate the impacts of a project on agriculture?
- Do any design standards exist to direct building envelopes of non-farm development to areas on a parcel that would still allow farming to occur on remaining open spaces?
- Does the zoning define agriculture, agricultural structure, farm worker housing, agri-tourism, agri-business, and other ag-related terms?
- Are farm uses that are defined included in the Use Table?
- Are farm-related definitions broad and flexible and not confined to a certain number of acres or income earned?
- Are non-traditional or retail-based farm businesses allowed in a district or ag zoned district? For example, can a farmer set up a brewery on site and sell products onsite?
- Is an agricultural data statement as per AML 25-aa required as part of an application for site plan, subdivision, special use or other zoning?
- Is ag disclosure statement on plans or plats required when development takes place in a NY certified ag district or otherwise recognize this?
- Does the regulation define and allow for farm worker housing? Are mobile homes allowed as farm worker housing?
- Are silos and other farm structures exempt from height requirements?
- Does Town have regulations for solar and wind?
- Does solar regulations address development on farmed parcels or address development on farmland soils?
- Are personal windmills and solar panels allowed for farm use? With permits or permitted as of right?

- Does zoning establish any rules for manure storage or spreading or other water quality related rules on farms?

Farm-Friendly Audit Narratives by Town

Mayfield

The Town of Mayfield's Comprehensive Plan is 10 years old (adopted in 2013) and may no longer reflect current land use and agricultural conditions anymore. With that said, the Plan is farm-friendly in that it includes a discussion of agriculture in the Vision statement. The plan seeks to promote agriculture and has several recommendations designed to address this as a land use including promoting agritourism, farmers markets, and creation of a food hub. The Plan does not offer maps or data that evaluates the location, level or condition of farms, and in the 10 years since adoption of the Plan, land use conditions in the Town have changed. The plan does not really emphasize the role of agriculture in maintaining the rural character of the Town. A portion of the NYS-certified Ag District is located in the Town of Mayfield.

Their subdivision law was adopted in 2012 and does not address agriculture. Maintenance or protection of agricultural operations are not included in the law's purpose statements. There is no mention of submissions providing information on adjacent agricultural activities near a proposed subdivision, nor does it recognize land within a NYS Ag District. The subdivision law does define agricultural land however but offers no details as to how a subdivision may co-exist or impact nearby farms. The Law does allow for clustering pursuant to NYS Town Law 278, which is a land use technique that can result in preserved open space when subdivision takes place, but no details, criteria, or emphasis on including active agricultural lands in that open space are provided for.

The Town of Mayfield is looking to update its Comprehensive Plan within the next two years with the Village of Mayfield. It is their goal to do a joint zoning ordinance as well following approval of the Comprehensive Plan.

Evaluation of the farm-friendliness of Mayfield's zoning regulations includes the following observations:

- The Town's solar regulations strongly address protection of farmland soils when solar development is proposed.
- Zoning does not recognize or address agriculture in its purpose statements
- Adequate definitions of agriculture, agriculture, non-livestock, agricultural land, riding academy, cluster housing, and hobby farm with livestock exist.
- Zoning creates two ag-oriented districts (Ag 1 and Ag 2). Agriculture is a permitted use in both these districts, and in the mixed use 1 district. Agriculture, non-livestock is also a permitted use in most districts in Mayfield. A riding academy, however, is treated differently, and requires a site plan review in Ag 1, Ag 2, the mixed use districts, and commercial and business districts. Note that AML 25-aa includes commercial equine operations as an allowed activity

on a farm operation if it receives \$10,000 or more in fees and has at least 7 acres. Thus, requiring site plan reviews for riding stables and academies may be inconsistent with AML 25-aa.

- Hobby farms with and without livestock are permitted uses in all districts.
- Agricultural products and sales are not considered a home occupation if sales are in a < 400 square foot structure. It is unclear what this means for direct sales on a farm operation.
- Ag 1 and Ag 2 require a minimum lot size of 1 acre, but it is not clear if these dimensions are also required for farm operations. However, this does establish a relatively high residential density potential within agricultural areas.
- Agriculture is not required to meet the height limitations that other structures have.
- Zoning does establish setbacks for manure (150'), animal barns (50'), and 100' from existing dwellings. Those setbacks for farm animals require a permit when taking place on a lot < 10 acres in size. The zoning limits the number of animals on lots < 10 acres, prohibits farm animals on lots < 3 acres in size, but has no limits for parcels > 10 acres in size. Section 503 explicitly exempts agricultural practices and agricultural structures from those dimensions when the parcel is within the NYS Ag District. While it is excellent that they clarify that larger farmed parcels are exempt from those setbacks, it does pose challenges for small, niche farms.
- The Town has a Right to Farm Law (2007) having excellent definitions and components that can serve as a model for other farming communities in Fulton County. It is recommended that the definitions used in the Right to Farm Law also be used in an updated zoning law for clarity and consistency. Given changes with increased development on longstanding farms, any subdivision that is approved by the Planning Board has Right to Farm language on the plat prior to approval.
- The Town uses net acreage to calculate density (buildable area) which is a good technique in rural areas to ensure that development better matches the capacity of the parcel.
- The Town also allows for clustering, but does not offer any standards or ag-related open space opportunities within a clustered subdivision.

Perth

Perth has a 2013 Comprehensive Plan and while there are no specific chapters devoted just to agriculture, it does discuss agriculture, ag districts, prime farmland soils, and farmland. They are currently updating their comprehensive plan now. The vision statement does not include agriculture however, nor is any data on agriculture at the time offered. The Plan discusses the important historical role agriculture has played in the local economy, and the important role farms has played in the Town's history. A portion of the NYS-certified Ag District is located in the Town of Perth.

It also encourages specialty crops and farm diversification. The 2013 Plan offers recommendations for local farmers to form a farmers' market to be located at the Grange Building (which has since been demolished). The Plan is farm-friendly in that it encourages continued use of farmland for ag production and seeks to develop land use regulations that protect prime farmland areas and

encourages cluster housing and high-density mixed uses areas to protect those farmland areas. The Land Use Plan presented in this Comprehensive Plan also includes discussion of agricultural uses.

The Subdivision Law in Perth was last revised in 2006. It does not include mention of agriculture in the purpose statements, in any standards or evaluation criteria for subdivisions, nor as for any ag-related data from subdivisions proposed within the NYS Ag District.

Evaluation of the farm-friendliness of Perth's 2017 zoning regulations includes the following observations:

- Zoning purpose statements include the role of zoning to continue and diversify agricultural activities.
- Adequate definitions are included that include on-farm agricultural distillery, ag processing plant, ag services, aquaculture, Concentrated Animal Feed Operations (CAFOs), land spreading, livestock auction/sale, microbrewery (includes farm brewery), nursery, riding stable and academy, storage yard for forest products, and veterinarian.
- It establishes the A/R district having purposes primarily oriented to farmland uses.
- Housing density is set in the A/R district as 1 acre minimum lot size, or ½ acre if water infrastructure is available. It is unclear whether this minimum lot size would be required for farm operations. It does, however, set up a relatively high residential density capacity for areas where agriculture is considered the primary land use.
- Silos and other ag buildings are exempt from the height restrictions only when those structures > 25' are two times the distance from any residence. Within a NYS-Certified Ag District, this may be considered an over-regulation of farm structures.
- The law establishes a 50' setback for poultry and 100' for horses, ponies and other livestock. If applied to farm operations in the NYS Ag District, this may be overly restrictive.
- Special Use Permit applications require submission of the Ag Data Statement, which will allow the Planning Board to notify ag-owners in the NYS Ag District of non-farm activity taking place nearby.
- The law does require a special use permit for some operations considered under NYS 25-AA to be part of a farm operation including farm winery, ag distillery, ag processing plant, ag services, aquaculture, CAFOs, farm stand, microbrewery, livestock auction, riding stable, and storage yard for forest products. It is noted that the law specifically exempts aquaculture and farm wineries from the Special Use Permit process if proposed within the NYS Ag District. Within the NYS Ag District, the special use process is generally considered an over-regulation when occurring on farm operations that meet NYS definitions. This is especially true for CAFOs, which already have to meet NYS requirements for manure management plans. Also requiring a special use permit for those larger operations could be considered an over-regulation of farms within a NYS Ag District. Each of those special permit uses do have specific development standards or criteria to be met.
- The Site Plan Review section requires use of the Ag Data Statement as well.

- It is unclear whether agricultural operations (such as agritourism operations) must meet the parking requirements established in the law.
- No off-premise signs are allowed.
- Farms are permitted uses in the A/ R district as are farm stands, and nurseries.
- Livestock and riding academies require a special use permit in the A/R district.
- Land spreading is prohibited, and it is not clear if this would be regulated on agricultural operations in Town or not.
- The solar law strongly protects prime farmland soils by prohibiting solar facilities to be located on such soils and discourages them from being placed on lands having soils of statewide importance.
- There is no mention of allowance for farmworker housing, although manufactured homes are permitted uses in all districts.

Johnstown

The Town of Johnstown has a Comprehensive Plan adopted in 2004. They are hoping to update their comprehensive plan starting early 2025. In the intervening 20 years since the original plan was adopted, changes have likely occurred to farm operations in Town and the updated Plan would reflect this. The Plan recognizes the importance of rural character and open space and the desire to preserve that character. The Plan includes goals to preserve rural character and also establishes an agricultural section that discusses agriculture's important role in Johnstown's economy and culture. This Plan also establishes a policy to protect the right of farmers to expand and diversify their farm businesses. It also recognizes the limited amount of good agricultural soils in Town, identifies that loss of prime ag soils has negative impacts on agriculture and on community character, and discusses the need for consideration of prime soils during development. A portion of the NYS certified Ag District is located in the Town of Johnstown.

Chapter 63 (Subdivision), originally adopted in 1974 and updated in 1989 and 2011, does not address agriculture or non-farm development impacts. The law's purpose statements do not include agricultural or farmland protection, has no ag-related definitions, and does not include use of the Ag Data Statement when development occurs in or near a NYS Ag District. The Subdivision Law does allow for clustered subdivisions pursuant to NYS Town Law 281 but offers no process of development criteria that could steer open space to remain as active farmland.

Evaluation of the farm-friendliness of Johnstown's zoning regulations, adopted in 2011, includes the following observations:

- The zoning's purpose statements emphasize the importance of regulating land to promote the Town's rural character, but there is no mention of agriculture specifically.
- A variety of zoning districts are established, each with its own purpose statement. The Town has established the Agricultural Use District (AUZ) specifically to promote ag uses.
- Within the AUZ, a variety of non-farm uses are allowed including single family residences and restaurants, but many farm uses are allowed. Farms, ag produce stand, and animal

husbandry on parcels > 2 acres in size are all uses permitted as of right (no Planning Board review).

- Both the AUZ district and the RA district (which also allows for farms) require a 1 acre minimum lot size, or ½ acre lot size with sewer. It is unclear whether these would apply to farms but does introduce a relatively high residential density into areas considered primarily for agricultural uses (the AUZ district).
- Zoning does not require farm buildings to be limited to the height limitations.
- In the RA district, there are 100' setbacks required for stables and shelters for livestock – again this may not be consistent with NYS AML 25-aa.
- A Chapter is established for animal husbandry. If parcels are > 10 acres in size, the rules established in this section of the zoning do not apply. However, for parcels < 10 acres, there are rules established for the number of animals that can be housed by acreage. For example, it allows for one (1) horse, dairy cow or other livestock on 10 acres with a special use permit. This may limit the establishment of smaller farm operations that meet NYS AML 25-aa definitions.
- Parcels < 10 acres need to provide screening for any manure storage with a limitation of no more than 5 cubic yards able to be stored. Parcels > 10 acres are exempt from this rule.
- Zoning specifies that barns and structures used for livestock are accessory uses and must meet accessory building setbacks established for that district. For farms in a NYS Ag District, this may be overly restrictive.
- Other farm uses however, require either site plan or a special use permit by the Planning Board. Animal husbandry on small lots < 2 acres in size, ag distillery/winery, aquaculture, CAFOs, and livestock or auction sales all require a special use permit. Other farm uses require a site plan review and approval and include agricultural services and ag processing plant. Some of these uses, especially aquaculture and CAFOs would all be considered farm operations pursuant to NYS AML 25-aa and these requirements may be considered over-regulation when within the NYS Ag District in Town. Manure storage requires a site plan review in the AUZ, and it is unclear whether this applies to farm operations or not. Zoning is unclear whether a special use permit would be required if some of these uses were part of a farm.
- Temporary signs on premises are allowed in -season if they are not > 40 square feet in size. No off-premise or portable signs are allowed.
- Section 84-29 establishes supplemental regulations for Ag Produce Stands. It allows one stand per parcel, with a sign, provided it is 20' from the right of way, and follows all accessory building requirements. These stands are allowed if the structure is temporary, portable and < 150 sf, have no utility connections, no traffic impacts, and have trash pickup. Note that the definition for an ag produce stand indicates it can't be more than 350 square feet, with < 20% of the floor area to be used for non-agricultural goods.
- Section 84-30 establishes a 1000' setback for aquaculture operations and requires a 5 acre minimum lot.
- Section 84-36 defines and addresses CAFOs and requires a special use permit with site plan review approval by the Planning Board. It requires a minimum size of 50 acres, with a 300'

buffer, and must provide best management practices for waste products. The acreage and buffer requirements may be considered overly restrictive when the CAFO is located within a NYS Ag District.

- Section 84-40 addresses riding stables and academies and requires a special use permit. These are farm operation activities as defined by NYS AML 25-AA and this requirement may not be consistent with those state regulations.
- Both special use permit and site plan review processes, and applications for a use variance require submission of the Ag Data Statement. The zoning specifically establishes that the Planning Board must evaluate whether a use variance would adversely affect farm operations.
- A variety of definitions are established in the zoning law including on farm ag distillery, ag processing plant, ag produce stand, ag products, ag services, on farm ag-waste, animal husbandry, aquaculture, and farm. Most of these definitions are farm friendly but some of the language is vague, which may pose lack of clarity. For instance, the definition for an on farm ag distillery says that it must have “a not insignificant portion of production... produced on farm.” It is unclear what “not insignificant portion” means.
- Like other communities in Fulton County reviewed in this Audit, riding academies/stables are not included as a farm and has separate requirements.
- The Town has both solar and small wind requirements.
- Agricultural and farm uses are exempt from the property maintenance requirements established in the zoning.

Caroga

The Town of Caroga has a comprehensive plan adopted in 2011. It does not include any mention of agriculture in its vision statement. It does discuss the role agriculture plays in the economy and recognizes that the small amount of ag land in the Town is important (mentions horse and blueberry activities). It establishes the desire of the community to continue agricultural activities along specifically named roads in the Town but also mentions these areas are primarily residential areas and agriculture would be seen as a secondary use here. It does promote small scale farms for personal use and recognizes that farming had an important role to play historically in Caroga. There are currently no NYS Ag Districts located in Town.

Article 14 is the Town’s Subdivision Law. There are no references to agriculture in this law’s purpose statement nor any development standards related to evaluating impacts of non-farm development on farms. It does allow for an optional clustered subdivision, which is allowed in residential districts on a lot that is doubled in size from the minimum required. The only other place where agriculture is mentioned is that ag activities are exempt from the stormwater pollution prevention plan requirements.

Evaluation of the farm-friendliness of Caroga’s zoning regulations includes the following observations:

- Zoning includes several ag-related definitions including ag service use, ag use, ag structure, barn, on-farm winery, riding stables/academy, farmers market, and ag style fencing. These definitions are fairly broad and not restrictive. The definition of a principal building states that structures used for agriculture as well as mobile homes used by farmers and their employees and families together are all considered a principal building.
- The special use process and the site plan review process requires submission of the Ag Data Statement.
- Some ag-related uses are allowed as of right with no Planning Board review in the R districts. These include ag uses, ag structures, and residential greenhouse. Some districts allow for aquaculture, barns, farmers market and riding stable/academies with a site plan review in several districts. Solar panels are allowed in R8.5, R10, R15 and in the HC districts.
- Several ag-uses or ag-related uses would be considered a commercial use as per the definitions and Use Table. These include a brewery/microbrewery, distillery, commercial greenhouse, nursery, and winery. These are not allowed in the ODA (Open Development Area, and the residential districts.
- The Open Development Area (ODA) requires a 42 acre lot, and it is unclear whether this dimension would be required for farm operations.
- Zoning does exempt farm buildings from height restrictions.
- All signs, including those for farms, require a sign permit. Off-premise signs may be allowed if they meet sign standards.
- Fencing may need to meet fencing/hedge requirements and receive a permit. Ag uses are not specifically exempt from those requirements.
- All accessory structures must meet all minimum setbacks.
- The keeping of livestock requires a 50' setback from roadways and 100' from any well or waterway.

Farm-Friendly Criteria	Mayfield	Perth	Town of Johnstown	Caroga
Comprehensive Plan and Other Related Plans				
Does the Town have a Comprehensive Plan?	Yes (2013)	Yes (2013)	Yes (2004) and hope to update in 2025	Yes (2011)
Is the Plan up-to-date (less than 10 years old?)	No	No, but in the process of updating	No, but hope to start the update in 2025	No, but they are currently in the updating process
Does the plan have a specific section addressing agriculture?	Yes, but not very detailed	Not a separate section, but ag is discussed in several places	Yes	Yes
Does the plan include any maps of agricultural lands, important farmland soils, agricultural districts, etc.?	No	Yes, but not found online	Ag Districts and Land Uses showing locations of agriculture	No
Does the Plan explore the role of agriculture in the community? I.e., did a survey include questions about agriculture? Was there anything in workshops about it?	Yes, the role of Ag is discussed	Yes, role of Ag is discussed	Yes, role of Ag is discussed	Yes, role of Ag is discussed
Does the Plan have a vision statement or goals that address agriculture in any way? Is there any visible demonstration of the value of agriculture to the community in the plan?	Yes	The vision statement does not include agriculture, but a later discussion talks about role of ag in economy, history of Town, and in rural character	Not in any vision statement, Ag is addressed in two specific goals related to protecting rights of farmers to expand and diversify their business, and to protect prime ag soils. Farms also recognized as contributing to rural character	Not in vision statement or goals. Value of Ag to history of town discussed, as is recognition that there is a small amount of ag taking place that they want to continue but that soils are not conducive to many ag activities

Farm-Friendly Criteria	Mayfield	Perth	Town of Johnstown	Caroga
Does the plan recognize agriculture as an important resource in Town?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes, especially to Town's history, but also that it is not a large component of land uses in Town. Not an emphasis.
Does the plan recognize or reference a local or County agriculture and farmland protection plan?	No	Yes	Yes, County Ag Plan	No
Does the plan include any data on farms and farmland? Acreage? Income or occupations from farming or other ag-census data?	Minor amount	Minimal. Two maps related to Ag noted, but not on website	No	No
Does the plan establish policies towards farmland and farming?	Yes, Minor, the Plan addresses it but does not emphasize ag as a land use	Yes, offers recommendations	Yes, as policy statements	Yes, minor. Identifies specific places ag should be allowed to continue and to allow small scale farms, especially for personal use
Does the plan identify the value of farmland and farms to the community in some way?	Yes, somewhat, but the discussion is oriented to the loss of farming and farms that has taken place	Yes	Yes	Yes

Farm-Friendly Criteria	Mayfield	Perth	Town of Johnstown	Caroga
Does the Plan offer any recommended actions or strategies related to farming or farmland or ways to preserve or enhance farming?	Somewhat - addresses agritourism	Yes. Encourages preservation of farmland, having land use regulations that protect prime farmlands, encourage clustering and high density mixed use areas to protect ag areas, and supports farm diversification	The plan basically offers policy towards ag but does not offer definitive strategies to implement those policies	The plan offers a list of locations that are residential areas where ag should continue as a secondary use
Does the Plan establish a policy and/or future actions related to conservation subdivision or clustering, ag overlay districts or other methods?	No	Yes, establishes recommendations for clustering	No, not specifically	No
Does the plan discuss NYS agricultural districts and ag assessments?	No	Yes, briefly	Yes, briefly mentions the Ag District and its location	No
Does the Plan consider farmland an important resource, recognize prime or soils of statewide importance, and encourage easements or other protections of that land?	Addressed in limited fashion	Yes. But does not discuss easements specifically	Yes, but it does not discuss strategies or use of easements	No
Is there a policy discussed for PDR, LDR or TDR?	No	No	No	No
Is agriculture a consideration of where growth does or does not take place?	Land Use Concept Map shows two Ag Areas, relating to ag lands in or out of the Fulton County Ag District.	Yes, land use concepts show an area for agricultural uses	Indirectly. The Plan seeks to keep open space between the two cities - which is an area that includes farmland	Not an emphasis in plan, but it is recognized as a land use to continue. Ag and residential uses overlap.

Farm-Friendly Criteria	Mayfield	Perth	Town of Johnstown	Caroga
Regulations (Subdivision)				
Does Subdivision Law address agriculture in any way?	No	No	No	No
Does subdivision application ask for any submissions related to agriculture?	No	No	No	No
Are conservation subdivisions allowed? Voluntarily? Mandatory? Does it address agriculture?	Not addressed	No	Does Allow, but offers no details beyond referring to State Town Law	No, but subdivision does allow for cluster development
Does subdivision include siting of non-farm development in a manner that preserves farm use?	No	No	No	No
Regulations (Zoning)				
Does the zoning regulation's purpose statement include a discussion of agriculture, or promote preserving agriculture specifically?	No	Yes - to continue and diversify ag activities	No, but does mention importance of rural character	No
Does zoning allow agriculture as a permitted use by right?	Yes	Yes - Farms (but these are not defined) in A/R zone	Yes - allowed as permitted use in RA and AUZ districts	Yes, in the Open Development Area and residential districts
Does zoning prohibit agriculture in any district other than hamlet centers or commercial areas?	No	No	Yes, only allowed in RA and AUZ	No

Farm-Friendly Criteria	Mayfield	Perth	Town of Johnstown	Caroga
<p>Are site plan reviews required in one or more districts for agriculture or ag-related uses?</p>	<p>Use Table requires Site Plan for riding academies; no Site Plan review for all other ag uses</p>	<p>Yes - for those uses that also require a special use permit, for ag-related uses (not Farm - which is not defined)</p>	<p>Not required except that manure storage requires SPR, CAFOs require both SUP and SPR and Riding Stables/Academies require SUP</p>	<p>Ag uses, ag structures, barns are permitted as of right. Others ag uses that would be considered commercial are allowed in certain districts with site plan review such as commercial greenhouse, nursery, winery. Famers Markets are permitted uses in Town Center, and HC, but needs site plan review in other places. Riding stables and academies are allowed with SPR in R8.5, R10, R 15 and HC districts</p>
<p>Are special use permits for agriculture or ag-related uses required in one or more districts?</p>	<p>No</p>	<p>Yes - for those ag-related uses (not Farm - which is not defined)</p>	<p>Yes, certain ag uses do require a special use permit. Of significance is SUP required for a CAFO, small lot animal husbandry, Ag Distillery/Winery. Equine on acres < 10 acres requires a SUP</p>	<p>Ag service uses require SUP and are allowed in highway commercial areas.</p>

Farm-Friendly Criteria	Mayfield	Perth	Town of Johnstown	Caroga
<p>Is residential, higher density or commercial growth allowed in core farm areas or where a NYS Ag District exists so that conflicts may arise?</p>	<p>Yes, minimum lot size is 1 acre in Ag1 and Ag2, where most of the agriculture takes place</p>	<p>Yes, minimum lot sizes are 1 acre without sewer, and 1/2 acre with sewer in A/R.</p>	<p>Yes, minimum lot size is 1 acre without sewer and 1/2 acre with sewer in both RA and AUZ</p>	<p>Yes, many residential uses and commercial uses are allowed where ag takes place. Note there is no NYS Ag District identified in Caroga. So, there are no conflicts with that, but there are a mix of uses that could impact ability of ag to function. Note that ODA district requires 42 acres. It is unclear if ag operations are exempt from this lot requirement.</p>
<p>Does the zoning specifically establish a local agricultural zoning district designed for agriculture, ag overlay district, or special use district for agriculture?</p>	<p>No</p>	<p>No</p>	<p>Yes, the AUZ district purpose is primarily for agriculture, but also allows for residential and several other uses.</p>	<p>No</p>
<p>Does the zoning allow farms to have more than one business or offer flexibility to accommodate the needs of agricultural businesses?</p>	<p>Possibly. This is not stated, however. Section 503 exempts farm practices and structures in the NYS Ag District, but nothing explicitly addresses this</p>	<p>Possible, It is not stated or clarified. With no definition for 'farm' it is unclear</p>	<p>Possible, it is not stated. The Comp Plan stresses the need to allow farmers to expand and diversify. The zoning doesn't prohibit it but doesn't specifically address</p>	<p>Possible. Not stated. Zoning does define all ag buildings, including homes used for farmers or their employees all as a single primary use, so it is likely that additional buildings would be allowed.</p>

Farm-Friendly Criteria	Mayfield	Perth	Town of Johnstown	Caroga
Are buffer zones between farmland and residential uses required for new non-farm construction or subdivision?	No	No	Yes, but for parcels < 10 acres having animal husbandry, it is the farm use that must provide the buffer	No
Are innovative development patterns specifically designed to preserve farmland encouraged, allowed, or mandated (conservation subdivision, clustering, TDR)?	Clustering is defined, mentioned, and authorized, but there are no procedures or development standards.	No	Clustered subdivisions are allowed, but no standards or process given, and nothing specific offered to preserve farmland	No. Clustering is allowed in residential districts, however. Minimal standards for clustering and no mention of preservation of ag lands in that technique.
Are off-site or on-site signs allowed to attract and direct people to farm stands and on-farm businesses?	Not addressed	No, off-site signs are all prohibited	On site temporary signs are allowed for seasonal uses. Business uses in AUZ and RA are allowed on site signs. No off site signs are allowed, except that temporary off site signs may be.	With a sign permit
Are farm stands, farm retail markets, agri-tourist businesses, breweries, etc. allowed?	No, neither defined, in the Use Table or otherwise mentioned. However, Section 503 may be interpreted to include those if on the same premises. Not explicitly stated.	Farm stands are permitted use in A/R but are not defined. Microbrewery and ag distillery and other ag-related uses are allowed with SUP and standards.	Yes, Agricultural produce standards are a permitted use in RA and AUZ and needs site plan review in Commercial (C-2)	Farm markets are allowed, but farm stands or roadside stands are not defined or included. The farm market definition is broad so may allow for a farmer to sell. Brewery and microbrewery considered a commercial use

Farm-Friendly Criteria	Mayfield	Perth	Town of Johnstown	Caroga
Are farm processing facilities such as community kitchens, slaughterhouse, etc. allowed?	Not as separate uses. Maybe if part of the farm operation. Not explicitly stated.	Ag Processing in industrial district allowed	Yes, (Ag processing plant) in the RA and AUZ, and C-2 districts with a site plan review	Yes, via ag service uses with a special use permit in certain districts
Are farm stands limited to selling just products from that one farm or is that flexible?	Not stated, no standards for farm stands	No, but it does require lot size, and setbacks, and regulates hours of operation. Use table allow Farm and Farm Stand (neither defined), and exempts aquaculture and farm winery when in NYS Ag District	Not limited to on farm produce but does limit floor space for sale of non-ag products. Note that Farm distilleries and Farm Wineries do have vague language indicating that they use mostly produce grown on site	NA - farm standards not defined or included. Farm markets not limited.
Do farm stands and other on-farm retail need a site plan review or special use permit?	Not stated, no standards for farm stands	No, they are permitted uses in A/R	No, they are permitted uses, but do have to meet specific standards	Yes, in H district, but are permitted uses in Town Center and HC's
Does zoning allow for accessory uses such as greenhouses, barns, garages, equipment storage etc. permitted as of right?	Not explicitly stated, but Section 503 would probably allow for these as part of a farm operation in a NYS Ag District	Yes, with setbacks. Ag related accessory uses were not specifically exempted from setbacks, so it appears they apply.	Yes, barns and structures for livestock are accessory uses and must meet setbacks for accessory structures for district.	Not explicitly stated, but accessory uses are generally allowed. However, all farm buildings together are considered a principal use, so unsure it is necessary to address.

Farm-Friendly Criteria	Mayfield	Perth	Town of Johnstown	Caroga
<p>Do application requirements for non-farm uses include asking for submittal of information or maps about farming that might be taking place on or near the project parcel? Whether it is in an ag district? What farming activities take place on or near the site? Whether prime farmland soils are present?</p>	No	No	No	No
<p>Do standards exist beyond SEQR that require the PB or ZBA to evaluate impacts of a project on agriculture?</p>	No	No	In part. A Use Variance requires Planning Board to determine if there are adverse impacts to agriculture	No
<p>Do any design standards exist to direct building envelopes of non-farm development to areas on a parcel that would still allow farming to occur on remaining open spaces?</p>	No	No	No	No
<p>Does the zoning define agriculture, agricultural structure, farm worker housing, agri-tourism, agri-business and other ag-related terms?</p>	Defines some - agriculture, non-livestock agriculture, agricultural land, riding academy, hobby farm	Defines some - the critical ones (Farm and Farm stand) are not defined.	Some. Farm worker housing, agritourism are not defined, but many others are.	Does include flexible, and broad definitions for agricultural use, agricultural structure, and other terms.
<p>Are farm uses that are defined included in the Use Table?</p>	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Farm-Friendly Criteria	Mayfield	Perth	Town of Johnstown	Caroga
<p>Are farm-related definitions broad and flexible and not confined to a certain number of acres or income earned?</p>	<p>They are adequate - not limited by acres or income</p>	<p>The issue is missing definition for farm and farm stand. Others are adequate.</p>	<p>Definitions are adequate but standards do limit the number of animals parcels < 10 acres can have. There is some confusion between text and table (where text indicates no parcels < 2 acres are allowed to have animal husbandry while the Use Table says that they require a SUP)</p>	<p>Generally</p>
<p>Are non-traditional or retail based farm businesses allowed in a district or ag zoned district. For example, can a farmer set up a brewery on site and sell products onsite?</p>	<p>Probably but somewhat unclear. Section 503 may allow for this if part of an agricultural operation in a NYS Ag District. Not explicitly stated.</p>	<p>Probably but somewhat unclear. This is not really addressed other than aquaculture and farm winery are exempt from SUP requirements in a NYS Ag District</p>	<p>Probably. Ag Distillery and Ag Wineries are on farm uses that are allowed with SUP</p>	<p>Probably. Some uses may be considered a commercial use though (brewery, microbrewery, distillery, greenhouse, nursery). Winery is also an on-farm commercial use. So probably allowed, but with SPR process in many districts.</p>
<p>Is an agricultural data statement as per AML 25-aa required as part of an application for site plan, subdivision, special use or other zoning?</p>	<p>No</p>	<p>Yes, required for SUP and Site Plan applications</p>	<p>Yes, required for SUP and Site Plan applications</p>	<p>Yes, for both site plan and special use applications</p>

Farm-Friendly Criteria	Mayfield	Perth	Town of Johnstown	Caroga
Is ag disclosure statement on plans or plats required when development takes place in a NY certified ag district or otherwise recognize this?	No, but they have a Right to Farm Law with the Ag Disclosure Statement articulated and required	No	No	No
Does the regulation define and allow for farm worker housing? Are mobile homes allowed as farm worker housing?	No	No, farm worker housing not defined or included in Use Table. Note that manufactured housing (which is often used for farm workers) is a permitted use in the A/R	No. Not addressed in zoning	No, but there is mention that single family residences and mobile homes used on a farm for farmer or employees and their families on a farm are considered all together as a principal use. This implies it is allowed.
Are silos and other farm structures exempt from height requirements?	Yes	Yes, they are exempt	Yes, they are exempt	Yes, they are exempt
Does Town have regulations for solar and wind?	Yes - solar	Yes	Yes	Yes
Does solar regulations address development on farmed parcels or address development on farmland soils?	Yes, solar, which prohibits solar on prime farmlands and discourages on soils of statewide importance	Yes, solar, which prohibits solar on prime farmlands and discourages on soils of statewide importance	No, this is not part of the regulations	No

Farm-Friendly Criteria	Mayfield	Perth	Town of Johnstown	Caroga
Are personal wind mills and solar panels allowed for farm use? With permits or permitted as of right?	Not mentioned or addressed	Not mentioned or addressed	Not mentioned or addressed	Not mentioned or addressed
Does zoning establish any rules for manure storage or spreading or other water quality related rules on farms?	Yes, but somewhat unclear if Section 503 exempts agricultural operations in NYS Ag Districts from this or not. Unclear if the animal rules extend however to agriculture. Setbacks from manure storage is required from steams, wetlands, etc. and property lines. Unclear if agriculture is exempt from these due to Section 503 or not.	No	Yes, manure storage is not defined, but requires SUP on parcels < 10 acres	Livestock must be kept 50' from boundary line and 100' from well or waterway. Refuse, waste, compost also must meet those setbacks. Those terms are not defined, but probably would include manor storage.

Appendix 5 – Public Engagement Results

Public Survey

The Fulton County Public Survey on Agriculture and Agritourism was conducted from July 2023 to December 2023. It aimed to gather residents' and visitors' perspectives on the importance of agriculture, their engagement with agricultural activities, and their opinions on agritourism in Fulton County. The survey received responses from 173 individuals.

Demographics

- Most respondents (94.2%) were residents; the others were visitors or owners of seasonal homes in the County.
- The largest age groups represented were 55-64 (25.2%) and 65-74 (16.6%).

Importance of Agriculture

- 81.5% of respondents indicated that agriculture and farm stands are very important to them; 17.3% said that they were somewhat important.
- Reasons why they viewed agriculture as important included that it provides healthy local food (95.7%), retains rural character and scenic vistas (84.1%), provides employment opportunities, and supports the local economy (80.4%).
- Asked whether they think agriculture is a topic of general importance to other residents in their community, 59.3% of respondents said yes, 11.1% said no, and 29.6% were not sure.
- Asked whether they think agriculture is a topic of general importance to municipal leaders in their community, 36.2% said yes, 23.3% said no, and 40.5% were not sure.

Purchasing Preferences

- Key factors influencing food purchasing decisions were freshness and quality, locally grown or produced, and price.
- During the growing season, 76.5% of respondents said they regularly buy agricultural products grown in Fulton County.

Agritourism Interests

- The most popular agritourism activities among respondents included farm stands, farmers markets, farm-to-table restaurants, and educational farm tours.
- The agritourism activities in which respondents were most interested were farm stands, farm-to-table restaurants, farmers' markets, pick-your-own operations, and farm-based bakeries. They were also interested in agricultural shows/festivals and farm tours/demonstrations.

- Features and amenities considered most important in selecting agritourism destinations to visit were a farm stand or market, scenery, facilities such as rest rooms and picnic tables, and food concessions.
- Asked about their motivations in visiting a Fulton County agritourism destination, respondents indicated that the most important were to support local farmers, to support the local economy, and to purchase fresh, on-farm products.

Products Purchased

- Items most frequently purchased by the respondents at farms, farmers' markets, and farm stands included fresh vegetables (97.5%), fresh fruit (85.8%), baked goods (85.8%), and dairy products (74.7%).

Issues and Opportunities Facing Agriculture

An open-ended question asked respondents to describe the major issues facing agriculture in Fulton County. The top issues identified were:

- **Solar Energy Facilities:** Concerns about the impact of solar arrays on agricultural land, with many respondents expressing that solar projects are taking over valuable farmland, and that solar development poses a threat to traditional farming.
- **Economic Pressures:** The profitability and economic viability of farming, including the challenges posed by inflation, the cost of running a farm, and competition from larger agricultural operations.
- **Generational Succession:** The lack of younger generation involvement in family-owned agricultural businesses, especially dairy farms, leading to vacant farms as older generations retire.
- **Government Support:** Insufficient government support, funding, and local advertising for agriculture, with calls for more state resources and better local support.
- **Workforce Shortages:** The lack of employees and the difficulty in finding labor to maintain and operate farms.
- **Climate Change:** Concerns about the impact of climate change on agriculture, with some respondents emphasizing the need for the region to be more self-sufficient and resilient in food production.
- **Local Market Support:** Not enough people buying locally grown food, leading to reduced demand and support for local farms.
- **Municipal Support and Development Pressure:** Lack of support from municipal leaders and pressure from urban development affecting agricultural land and operations.
- **Community Awareness and Education:** The need for increased awareness and education about local agriculture among residents, including knowledge of where food is produced and how farms operate.

- **Infrastructure and Services:** The need for better infrastructure and services to support agricultural activities and agritourism, such as restrooms, picnic areas, and improved roads.

Opportunities for strengthening the County’s agricultural sector as cited by survey participants included:

- **Support for Local Farms:** Increasing support for local farms through community initiatives and promoting the importance of buying locally grown food.
- **Agritourism Development:** Expanding agritourism activities such as farm stands, farmers markets, farm-to-table restaurants, educational farm tours, and nature walks to attract visitors and generate additional revenue.
- **Educational Programs:** Implementing educational activities and experiences related to agriculture for both children and adults, which can include school tours, workshops, and farm-based educational events.
- **Marketing and Advertising:** Enhancing local advertising to raise awareness about the availability and benefits of locally grown products and to promote agricultural events and activities.
- **Government and State Support:** Advocating for increased government and state support, including funding and resources, to help sustain and grow local farms.
- **Protecting Agricultural Land:** Ensuring the protection of agricultural land from development pressures, including limiting the spread of solar energy facilities on prime farmland.
- **Community Engagement:** Engaging the community through volunteer opportunities and events that connect residents with local farms and agricultural practices.
- **Farm Infrastructure:** Improving farm infrastructure, such as adding facilities for visitors (restrooms, picnic areas) and enhancing on-farm experiences (petting zoos, recreational activities).
- **Local Food Programs:** Developing programs that encourage the purchase of local agricultural products, such as farm-to-table initiatives and local food networks.
- **Agroforestry and Sustainable Practices:** Exploring agroforestry and sustainable agricultural practices to diversify and enhance farm productivity while maintaining environmental stewardship.

Additional Comments

- Respondents emphasized the need to support local farms, the importance of agricultural education, and concerns about the proliferation of solar energy facilities.
- Many participants said they valued the role of agriculture in maintaining community health and resilience against climate change.
- Overall, the public's support for agriculture in Fulton County is multifaceted, involving direct economic contributions, participation in agritourism activities, advocacy for farmland protection, and a strong interest in agricultural education and sustainability.

Farmer and Farmland Owner Survey

The survey collected responses from farmers and farmland owners in Fulton County to understand farming practices, challenges, and perspectives on agricultural issues and policies. The survey was divided into multiple sections covering farm operations, agricultural products and markets, future plans, and suggestions for improvement. Responses were received from 85 individuals.

Demographics

- About two-thirds of the respondents (64.7%) were farmers actively involved in agricultural production. The remainder were property owners that lease farmland to farmers.
- Respondents represented farms throughout Fulton County, with concentrations in Towns of Johnstown (27.1%), Mayfield (20.8%), Perth (16.7%), Broadalbin (14.6%) and Oppenheim (14.6%), with the remaining 6.2% in other communities.

Farm Operations

- Most farms (74.5%) are in Fulton County Agricultural District #1.
- The majority of respondents (73.1%) have been operating their farms for more than 20 years.
- The farms owned or operated by the survey participants range from three (3) to 600 acres, with an average size of 157 acres. About 20% of the farms are 100 acres or more.
- 38% of the respondents rent land from other property owners to support their farm operation, with an average of 140 acres.
- Activities that are part of farm operations included agritourism, such as farm tours, hayrides, and corn mazes (40.0%), grass-fed animal production (32.0%), “pick-your-own” operations (24.0%), and value-added processing (12.0%).

Agricultural Products

- The farmers grow or raise a diverse array of agricultural products, including hay (63.5%), beef cattle (30.8%), vegetables and sweet corn (25.0%), and grains and oilseeds, dairy products, and heifers and calves (23.1% each).
- Asked to identify their primary product, respondents most often listed dairy (24.5%), hay (16.3%), and cultivated Christmas trees (14.3%), but more than half of the survey participants did not respond to the question.
- Growing field crops (e.g., hay, corn, soybeans) is by far the most common agricultural activity that takes place on rented farmland, based on the survey responses.
- Approximately 12% of respondents indicated that they have made a major change in their farm’s primary product in the last five (5) to 10 years.

Markets

- 62% of respondents sell their agricultural products directly to consumers, primarily at the farm, but also at off-site farm stores, at farmers' markets both within and outside Fulton County, and through online marketplaces.
- About half distribute and sell their products through wholesale channels such as milk cooperatives.
- None of the respondents indicated that they sell their agricultural products to institutional buyers, such as schools and prisons.
- 18% are interested in expanding into new markets.
- Asked how they market their agricultural products to the public, respondents most often cited advertising using social media (59.5%), roadside signs (48.7%), and a website (27.0%). Nearly 30% indicated that they do not market or advertise their products, relying instead on word of mouth.

Economics

- For about 60% of the farms, gross sales revenues were less than \$50,000 in 2022.
- Income earned by the farm is primarily a secondary source of income for most households.

Future Plans

- Some farmers expressed interest in developing agritourism activities (26.8%), increasing their acreage and/or production (14.6%), renting or selling their land for solar development (12.2%), or diversifying the crops they grow or the animals they raise (9.8%). However, nearly 40% were uncertain of their future plans.
- About 43% of the respondents have a succession plan.
- The majority of property owners who lease land to farmers (72.7%) expect to continue renting their land for farming over the next five years.

Challenges

- The top challenges identified by the respondents were farm equipment and machinery repair costs, production costs relative to the price received for agricultural products, property taxes, farm equipment and machinery acquisition costs, and fewer people interested in farming as a career.
- Other major issues included transferring the farm to the next generation, invasive species, and feed costs.

Support for Agriculture

- Suggestions on how Fulton County can better support agriculture and local farms included reducing farmland taxes, providing low-interest loans or grants, expanding agricultural programs, and limiting solar farm development.

- Additional support for small and family farms, improving agritourism, and enhancing educational outreach about farming were also highlighted.

Other Comments

- Many respondents expressed concerns about the viability and future of small farms, the negative impact of solar energy facilities, and the need for better support and recognition of farmers.
- There was a strong sentiment towards preserving agricultural land and supporting the next generation of farmers.

Focus Groups

To further understand current conditions and explore options for addressing needs in Fulton County, four focus groups were held. The topics covered were Dairy/Livestock/Horses, Solar Development, Field Crops/Maple/Orchards, and Agritourism and Craft Beverages. The information learned from these focus groups were summarized and organized into strength, weakness, and opportunities as follows:

Summary of Strengths

1. Fulton County, NY offers several advantages related to land resources, including cheaper land compared to neighboring areas, lower real estate taxes, land remains available for farming.
2. Farm services are still available, with various support organizations and resources like USDA programs and Cornell initiatives nearby.
3. Agritourism is growing in popularity, supported by public interest and the Buy-Local movement, with potential for further expansion.
4. The area benefits from a tight-knit farming community, and the County's natural beauty.
5. Infrastructure is conducive to solar development, which some farmers feel is a benefit to help them keep their farms.
6. The region's climate, strong wholesale market for Christmas trees, family-friendly environment, and events like the Farm-2-Table Tour in partnership with Montgomery County contribute to its strengths and appeal.

Summary of Weaknesses/Challenges

1. Loss of services along State Routes 29 and 30.
2. Development encroachment and rising land costs, driven by competition for solar arrays and housing.
3. Lack of agricultural education, leading to a disconnect between people and farming.
4. Decline of dairy farms due to market loss and challenges with cooperatives like Agrimark.
5. High taxes, poor economics, and rising expenses affect profitability.
6. Perception issues regarding farm animal treatment and competition from dairy alternatives.

7. Lack of food processing infrastructure and markets for certain commodities.
8. Municipal politics favor residential development over agriculture.
9. Affordability issues for low-income consumers and underutilization of Farmer's Nutrition Program.
10. Climate change skepticism and concerns about its political agenda.
11. Loss of farmland to solar development, impacting agriculture and tourism.
12. Labor shortages and unfair competition from Amish/Mennonite communities.
13. Seasonal fluctuations in clientele and challenges for new farmers.
14. Long-term risks associated with leasing land and regulatory burdens.
15. Need for more winter activities and lodging options in Fulton County.

Summary of Opportunities, Programs, and Projects

1. Agricultural Improvements:
 - Need for more dairy processing plants, elimination of class pricing on milk, and inclusion of whole chocolate milk in schools.
 - Lack of Farm to School programs and funding opportunities for the dairy industry.
 - Suggestions for on-farm milk processing and attracting more seasonal farmworkers.
2. Education and Support:
 - Collaboration with educational institutions like SUNY Cobleskill for agricultural programs and fostering connections between ag graduates and existing farmers.
 - Exploration of conservation trusts and selling development rights to preserve farmland.
 - Increased support for agricultural education, including grants and awareness programs.
3. Solar Development Challenges:
 - Concerns over aesthetics, property values, and land use conflicts with solar development.
 - Suggestions for better screening, flexible zoning, and differentiated regulations for conventional solar and agrivoltaics.
 - Importance of communication between solar companies, landowners, and local authorities.
4. Economic Opportunities:
 - Diversification of agricultural products and promotion through festivals, markets, and joint advertising.
 - Support for meat processing infrastructure and expansion of agritourism activities.
 - Consideration of state-level support for rural tourism and infrastructure development.
5. State-Level Advocacy:
 - Calls for municipal control over solar development and lobbying for legislative changes.
 - Potential opportunities in small ruminant¹⁴ production, contingent upon processing infrastructure development.
 - Advocacy for state tourism promotion and infrastructure projects to boost local economies.
6. What Should Fulton County Do?
 - Support Ag Awareness Day at schools
 - Provide grant writing assistance for farms

¹⁴ Small ruminants are grazing mammals, such as sheep and goats.

- Promote available farmland
- Make agriculture a priority
- Help people understand the benefits of conservation easements
- Increase funding for CCE to support ag education – should be more than \$20,000 a year
- Address solar development

7. What New York State Should Do

- Where the new sewer line is going in, between Mayfield and Northville, develop a walking and biking trail along the road... have farm stands near the trail, gazebos, places to connect
- Get I Love NY to pay attention to us... the bigger counties get all the attention... we're a small county ("Has I Love NY even been to Fulton County?")
- Lobby the State Legislature to restore municipal control over solar arrays
- Sheep and goats could be an opportunity, but processing infrastructure is needed
- There is a market for small ruminants – high demand, low supply

Interviews

To further understand current conditions and explore options for addressing needs in Fulton County, 17 individual interviews with specific stakeholders were held. These individuals were identified as stakeholders by either the Agricultural and Farmland Protection Board or by County staff. Interviews included discussions with representatives from:

- Cornell Cooperative Extension of Fulton and Montgomery Counties – 4H Program
- Cornell Cooperative Extension Vegetable Specialist
- Fulton County Center for Regional Growth
- Fulton County Industrial Development Agency
- Fulton County Soil and Water Conservation District
- Fulton County Visitor's Bureau
- Fulton-Montgomery Chamber of Commerce
- Fulton-Montgomery Chamber of Commerce
- Hamilton-Fulton-Montgomery BOCES and PTECH
- Montgomery County Agricultural Development Office
- Selected local farmers
- Espuña
- H&M Equipment
- Veterans Holding Company

Summary of Key Points from Interviews

1. **Role of Agriculture:** Agriculture is recognized as one of the most significant sectors in Fulton County, contributing significantly to the economy and community identity. Agriculture not only contributes to the local economy but also supports related industries like food processing, tourism, and retail, highlighting its broader economic impact. Agriculture is a vital sector in Fulton County, encompassing various specialties like apple orchards, maple farms, and dairy.

It's an integral part of the community, providing not just food but also education about farming practices. Agriculture is a crucial sector in Fulton County, contributing to the economy and community identity. It encompasses various specialties like apple orchards, maple farms, and dairy operations.

2. **Challenges Facing Agriculture:** Challenges include climate change impacting crop yields, labor laws and shortages affecting farm labor, multigenerational farm succession issues, high cost of living and taxes, and competition from solar development for agricultural land. There are concerns about the loss of farmland to development, particularly for solar projects. Suggestions include incentivizing agriculture to retain land and implementing measures to preserve the county's rural character.
3. **Opportunities and Solutions:** Fulton County boasts a diverse agricultural landscape, including apple orchards, maple farms, dairy operations, and specialty crops like blueberries and vegetables. There are opportunities for agritourism, with initiatives like farm-to-table tours and craft beverage trails. Suggestions include promoting direct sales, diversification into specialty crops, and supporting new farmers through incentives and education. There's recognition of opportunities for agritourism, with initiatives like farm-to-table tours and craft beverage trails. Stakeholders emphasize the potential for promoting direct sales, diversifying into specialty crops, and supporting new farmers through incentives and education.
4. **Community Engagement:** Stakeholders emphasize the importance of community engagement and support for agriculture, There's a call for greater awareness and support for agriculture at both the county and state levels, with recommendations for improved marketing, collaboration between agriculture, economic development, and tourism sectors, and providing resources for education and mentorship in agricultural careers.
5. **Concerns about Development:** Concerns are raised about the loss of farmland to development, particularly for solar projects. Suggestions include incentivizing agriculture to keep land in farming, promoting direct sales and retail, and implementing measures to keep the county rural.
6. **Role of Organizations:** Organizations like the Chamber of Commerce, Fulton County Visitor's Bureau, and Cornell Cooperative Extension of Fulton and Montgomery Counties play essential roles in promoting agriculture, agritourism, and youth engagement in farming.
7. **Innovative Farming Practices:** Farmers are exploring innovative practices like high tunnels to extend the growing season, diversifying crops, and engaging in alternative farming methods to overcome challenges and seize opportunities.

Open Houses

As an additional public engagement opportunity, the County held three open houses where the public was invited to review maps, and contribute to understanding of Fulton County's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. These open houses were held in February and early March of 2024 in Mayfield, Johnstown, and Gloversville.

The following is a summary of input received from these efforts:

Issues Identified

1. Solar Development in Fulton County:
 - Waste of valuable space (specifically and most importantly farmland)
 - Solar arrays actively encroaching on farmland
 - Solar companies who come to Fulton County are not presenting all of the drawbacks of solar development and their effects
 - Worried about overreliance on solar
 - What happens to solar panels after their useful life is over?
2. Government/Local Population Disconnect:
 - County officials do not understand the difficulties of being a farmer.
 - County officials do not understand the importance of being a farmer and don't care. They don't value agriculture as much as the people of the county do.
 - Land that is seen as prime farmland is zoned and/or used under a use that doesn't go with farming; possibly seen as encroachment by outsiders.
3. Costs of Farming:
 - Input costs of farming (feed, fertilizer, fuel, etc.).
 - VERY worried about property taxes, mentioned in both post-its and with stickers heavily.
 - Making a living as a farmer overall and how to continue to live as a farmer. Profit margins are extremely slim in most cases.
 - Costs of maintenance and purchasing of different machines and other gizmos and gadgets.
 - Lack of veterinary care for larger animals (livestock).
4. Cultural Loss:
 - Lack of interest among younger people (e.g., Millennials, Gen Zs) to take over family farming operations from their parents or grandparents
 - "Traditional agriculture" including the dairy industry in Fulton County is in decline
5. Other Issues:
 - There is a worry about the encroachment of invasive species.
 - Locally grown ingredients for different things are difficult to come by.
 - Cornell Cooperative Extension is not giving enough support.
 - There are not enough local meat processing facilities! Having local meat processing facilities would reduce costs for local farmers and be a boon to the local farming economy.

List of Actions/Strategies

1. Educational Efforts:

- Youth education is the most-supported strategy out of all of the actions listed:
- Educational programs in schools would be a fantastic start (Future Farmers of America, 4-H, etc.); mentorships, internships, in-school programs.
- PTECH programs for agricultural education and career awareness
- More cooperation with organizations like Cornell Co-op Extension, Farm Bureau.
- Training for local property owners and farmers about best methods of protecting farmland.
- Creating educational materials about farming and rights-of-way on the road when it comes to farms.

2. Marketing/Tourism:

- Promotion of agri-tourism opportunities and events.
- Marketing programs of local crops and products from Fulton County to draw new farmers to the area.
- Possibly decide on a crop that Fulton County could become known for, at least regionally.
- Update the Farm2Table Brochure

3. Other Ideas:

- Create an agricultural roundtable so multiple different facets of governance (economy, agriculture, tourism, economic development) can all coordinate with each other.
- Development of a shared commercial kitchen where farmers can process their crops.
- More succession/transition planning.
- More invasive species control programs across the county.
- Establish right-to-farm laws, specific zoning for farms, etc.
- Notify farmers of grant opportunities they could apply for and apply for more state grants at the county level.
- Create siting, development, and operation guidelines for solar energy facilities that are going to operate on farmland.

Priority Issues Identified at Open Houses

The public was asked to rank a variety of known issues facing agriculture. They used stickers to identify what they considered to be priority/significant issues. The table below shows the results of this effort and is recorded as the average number of stickers per potential action/strategy.

Issues Facing Agriculture in Fulton County	Average Score
Farming Costs	6.28
Wrong Priorities	6.16
Solar issues	5.66

Cultural Issues	4.25
Supply/support difficulties	4
Environmental	4

Priority Actions & Strategies Identified at Open Houses

The public was asked to rank a variety of potential actions and strategies that could serve to enhance agriculture in the County. They used stickers to identify their priority actions. The table below shows the results of this effort and is recorded as the average number of stickers per potential action/strategy.

Potential Action or Strategy	Average Score
Youth Education	9
Production Expansion	6
Marketing/Tourism	4.66
Increased Planning	4.5
Education opportunities for farmers and the community	4.33
Shared Resources	4
Grant Opportunities	3.5
Environmental Regulations	3.5
Solar Regulations	3.33
Other	2

From the list of priorities, participants in the Fulton County open houses ranked educating young people on how to operate a farm and other educational programs for farmers the highest. There is also support for small and local meat processing operations within the county.

Appendix 6 – Methodology for Prioritization of Farmland

This section outlines Fulton County’s effort to define and locate priority farmlands that are key to long-term agricultural viability in the County. New York State-funded agricultural and farmland protection plans require that the County work to identify important farmlands. Not only is it a requirement, but it is critical information needed by landowners who elect to participate in New York’s Farmland Protection Implementation Grant (FPIG) program¹⁵.

Landowners, through FPIG, voluntarily place a conservation easement on their agricultural land/farmland to protect the land from future development. Through the FPIG application process, the application will need to show the land is identified in the County’s Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan (Ag Enhancement Plan) as being ‘important.’ Knowing where priority farmlands are located can also be important to Fulton County municipalities as they work on comprehensive plans, open space plans, municipal agricultural and farmland protection plans and other similar efforts.

How are important farmlands in Fulton County identified? Many factors are taken into consideration such as soils, farmland size, development pressure facing the farm, location, and other features. While soils are critical, other factors are also important, and the factors are chosen to be consistent with local conditions. For instance, the size of a farm, whether in a NYS Agricultural District or not, closeness to a water resource, or frontage along a highway are all criteria that contribute to defining important farmlands. This section describes the method used in Fulton County to identify, score and map important farmlands.

Fulton County Parcel Rating Methodology

To effectively identify and prioritize the thousands of acres of land potentially available for agricultural conservation in Fulton County, a Geographic Information System (GIS)-based parcel rating system was created using local criteria developed by the County and project consultants. The rating system first includes criteria that define “important farmland” in Fulton County and then gives points to each criterion depending on specific conditions on a specific farm (see Table 6a in the chapter on Current Agricultural Conditions for scoring details). Each farm in the County is evaluated this way and the farm-related criteria are scored. Fulton County values all farmland but recognizes that some farmlands have more important farmland criteria than others.

Identification and Prioritization

The farm priority scoring was based on approximately a dozen criteria as detailed below. For this analysis, a "farm" is either a single parcel or a grouping of parcels of contiguous common ownership.

¹⁵ <https://agriculture.ny.gov/land-and-water/farmland-protection-implementation-grants-program>

Contiguous was defined to be parcels that touched one another or were across a right-of-way from one another that are under common ownership.

Parcels that were included in the analysis met at least one of these criteria: coded in the tax assessment records as agricultural use or residential with agricultural use; currently receiving an agriculture or forest value assessment, regardless of coded use; or were determined to include agriculture based on reviewing recent imagery. Vacant and rural residential, abandoned agricultural land, and residential vacant land over 10 acres were also included in the analysis as these parcels could potentially support agriculture in the future.

Once the parcels were identified for analysis, they were merged into “farms” as previously defined and then they were assigned points based on the criteria.

Overall, parcel size, the amount of land available for farming, soils, the amount of water buffer available, and proximity to other conserved lands are criteria weighted more than others. Other important criteria include proximity to active farmland, to water and sewer within an area of increased development or proximity to a village or Census Designated Place (CDP)¹⁶, farms with agricultural or forest assessments, and proximity to high power electrical transmission lines.

These criteria used in the identification of important farmlands are explained as follows:

- Parcels that are used primarily for agriculture, identified in the data as active agriculture in the assessment data (or at least a portion of a farm made up of several parcels) or identified as vacant but receive an agricultural tax exemption and are larger in size, were given more points.
- Secondary agricultural use parcels were those that were identified as something other than agricultural use in the assessment data but were either receiving an agricultural assessment and/or were determined to have active farmland on the parcel. More points were assigned for larger parcels as the size of the parcel can impact farm viability and value.
- Farms that have a higher percentage of their land in active farming are given more points. More land available on a farm means it is more likely to stay in farming. Acres of active farmland is also a scoring criterion for state farmland protection funding.
- High-quality soils (Prime or Statewide Importance) are important to many viable, sustained farm operations. The percentage of high-quality soils on a farm is also a scoring criterion for state farmland protection funding.

¹⁶ The U.S. Census Bureau defines a Census Designated Place or CDP as a statistical geography representing a closely settled, unincorporated community that is locally recognized and identified by name.

- Protection of water resources is important for farm viability throughout the county. A 100-foot buffer layer was created for streams, surface waters and mapped wetlands developed by the United States Fish and Wildlife Service National Wetlands Inventory. The buffer area that each parcel encompasses was then calculated. Parcels that contain over 10 acres of water buffer area have the potential to have a significant positive impact on water quality depending on how those areas are managed.
- Farms that were adjacent to lands already conserved were given more points. Being adjacent to other lands that will remain undeveloped or farmed have a higher chance of remaining in agriculture and can create core areas of critical farmland. Similarly, parcels that were adjacent to active farmland were also given more points.
- When farms are adjacent to other farms, there is less fragmentation, fewer nuisance complaints, and higher chances the land will stay in farming. Parcels that have close proximity to other active farmland receive higher points than those that are farther apart from each other.
- A ½-mile buffer on each of the villages and CDPs in the county was created to evaluate potential development pressure. Farms that are close to villages and CDPs could be at risk for development as these population centers expand or residents and businesses may want to locate close to a village to take advantage of village amenities but avoid paying village taxes.
- Another development pressure factor is the amount of road frontage a parcel has along U.S., State or County roads; more frontage allows for easier subdivision potential. Also access to larger roads can be beneficial for business development. The total frontage of parcels (or combined farms) was calculated based on the length of the parcel line(s) along the road right-of-way.
- When a farm is close to existing water and sewer infrastructure, there is a higher chance the land would become more valuable for other types of development so the closer a farm is to such infrastructure, the more points it received. This places emphasis on identifying these lands as having more risk for conversion than lands not able to access water and sewer. Additionally, some farms may need more water resources if they have some food processing or other activities on the farm that need water. In that case, being close to public water sources is important to maintain that farm.
- Parcels that are receiving an agricultural value assessment show a commitment by the landowner to maintain farming on the parcel. Parcels that receive an agricultural value assessment receive additional points in this analysis. Similarly, farms that receive a 480-a

forest assessment also show a commitment to sustainable forestry, which is considered an agricultural use, and receive an additional point in the analysis.

- Another development pressure farms in Fulton County are facing is from large-scale solar development. Farms closer to high power transmission corridors are more at risk for solar development than farms that are farther away and thus receive additional points.

There are 1,658 parcels that have agricultural use per the analysis conducted for this Plan. For this analysis, several of those were merged into 226 “farms” as some farms have multiple parcels, resulting in 1,166 agricultural properties scored in the analysis. Combining the 2,732 parcels that could potentially support agricultural, a total of 3,898 properties were included in the analysis.

The average total score was 8.7 points, with a median score of 8 and a range of 0 to 33 points.

The scoring results were broken into tiers, using an approximate standard deviation curve which groups more farms in the middle categories and highlights the outliers (both positive and negative).

Standard Deviation distribution of the results:

Category	Score Range	Number of Parcels	Acreage of Parcels	Ag Field Acres	Forestry Acres
Highest Priority	23-33	74	12,710	7,329	1,122
Higher Priority	18-22	183	16,597	6,600	3,156
High Priority	12-17	782	37,779	9,777	8,212
Medium Priority	7-11	1328	49,595	2,242	14,255
Low Priority	1-6	1531	51,958	148	18,284

Since several scoring categories tend to favor larger parcels, and there is a trend for new farmers to prefer smaller farms, a supplemental round of scoring was completed for parcels that are less than 50 acres. The prioritization helps identify parcels that may be ideal for a smaller farm operation that may have been overlooked in the primary analysis. The scoring criteria is summarized in Table 6b.

There were 2,740 small properties analyzed and the average total score was 6.9 points, with a median score of 6 and a range of 1 to 23 points. The parcels analyzed covered nearly 56,000 acres, with 6,100 acres of farmland and 13,500 acres of forest land.

Appendix 7- GIS-Based Agricultural Land Use Data

GIS mapping and analysis of land use and parcel data in Fulton County offers additional information about the current status of agriculture in the County. The data presented below are correlated with the maps in Appendix 2.

To determine the amount of land in agricultural use within the county, we performed a GIS-based land classification analysis. The identification of active farmland was a multistep process. We first used Esri’s Deep Learning tools to identify “low vegetation” in the 2022 0.6-meter resolution USDA NAIP imagery for the county. The imagery was clipped to areas that included obvious agricultural activity to expedite the analysis time.

We also utilized the USDA Cropland 2022 data, in combination with parcel data and farmland soils to screen out “low vegetation” which was unlikely to be agricultural-related (lawns, golf courses, ball fields, etc.). We also removed all potential farmland that was under an acre as it was likely lawns, grass road buffers, or minimally productive agricultural land. We further refined the farmland layer by intersecting it with the county parcel layer and then removing “fields” less than an acre for properties coded as vacant, and less than three (3) acres for parcels with non-vacant uses (residential, commercial, industrial, etc.) that did not specifically include agriculture. Finally, we did some manual checking to modify farmland boundaries, add missing farmland, and delete areas that were clearly not farmland.

Using the derived active farmland layer, in combination with Fulton County parcel data, we were able to identify the majority of parcels in the county that have an agricultural use (see Table 7 below). “Primary” agricultural parcels are those that are classified by the local tax assessor as having an agricultural use (100 class codes in the assessment manual). “Secondary” agricultural parcels are those coded by the assessor as something other than an agricultural use or vacant, typically a residential use.

	Parcels	Acreage of Parcels	Farmland Acres	Protected Parcels
Primary Agricultural	167	7,465	2,879	0
Primary Agricultural with Assessment*	291	18,687	7,575	6
Secondary Agricultural**	186	12,394	3,463	1
Apparent Secondary Agricultural	541	18,363	7,764	2
Vacant with Agricultural Assessment	83	2,575	1,139	0
Vacant with Apparent Agriculture	390	7,481	3,017	0
<i>*Include 30 forestry parcels</i>				
<i>**Includes 44 forestry parcels</i>				