MONROE COUNTY, NEW YORK

Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan Update

July 2026

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Part 1. PLANNING PROCESS

1. Overview of Planning Process and Context

Monroe County's previous Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan was completed in 1999. Monroe County was awarded grant funding from the NYS Department of Agriculture and Markets NYS DAM) to assist with the cost of preparing an updated Plan. The Monroe County Planning Department issued a Request for Proposals in May 2023 and contracted with a consultant team led by LaBella Associates in January 2024.

A Steering Committee comprised of farmers and representatives of agencies and organizations that serve farmers met periodically during the planning process to identify issues and opportunities, guide the farmer and public engagement process, review draft documents, and to provide feedback and guidance to the consulting team.

The following people served on the Steering Committee:

- Phil Hurlbutt — Farmer, Town of Hamlin
- Bob King — MCC Agriculture & Life Sciences Institute
- Lorna Wright — Genesee Land Trust
- Kelly Emerick — Monroe County Soil & Water Conservation District
- David Woodward — Farmer, Penfield
- William Steimer — Farmer, Chili
- Jarmila Haseler — Cornell Cooperative Extension of Monroe County

Monroe County Department of Planning Staff provided guidance to the consulting team.

The Agricultural & Farmland Protection Plan complements Monroe County's Comprehensive Plan and Climate Action Plan.

2. Farmer, Stakeholder and Public Engagement Summary

Farmer and stakeholder engagement activities included:

- Interviews with representative farmers, agency representatives, and other stakeholders
- Farmer focus group meetings
- Farmer/landowner survey
- Project website
- Public informational meeting to present the draft Plan
- County Legislature public hearing

Stakeholder Interviews

One-on-one interviews, in-person or via telephone or video conference, were conducted with representatives from farms, community gardens, and agriculture-related agencies and organizations.

These interviews provided insight into challenges and opportunities for farms and related businesses in Monroe County. A summary of the findings from these interviews is in Appendix A.

Regional Farmer Focus Group Meetings

Two focus group meetings, one on the east side (Town of Pittsford) and one on the west side (Town of Ogden) of Monroe County were held during March 2024 to share information about the Plan update and to obtain input from farmers. In addition, one virtual meeting was held via Zoom. Attendees shared their thoughts and insights on the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT) to agriculture in Monroe County. Information gathered from these meetings was utilized to identify issues, needs, and opportunities to address in the updated Monroe County Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan and to identify potential initiatives to investigate further. The consultant team also participated in the Monroe County Farm Bureau's Annual Meeting in October 2024.

Copies of the presentation materials and summaries of participant comments are in Appendix A.

Farmer/ Landowner Survey

To encourage farmer and farmland owner participation in the Monroe County Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan, a survey was made available to farmers and farmland owners throughout Monroe County. To increase participation, steering committee members publicized the survey through newsletters and email lists. The survey was also available through the project website.

This survey campaign yielded a total of 33 responses. The results helped identify the most pressing issues and priorities for Monroe County farmers and farmland owners and helped in identifying the actions recommended in the Plan. A summary of the survey results can be found in Appendix A.

Project Website

A project website served to inform the public about the Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan Update, publicize the farmer/ landowner survey, post meeting notices, and collect comments on draft documents.

Public Informational Meeting

One in-person and one virtual Public Informational Meeting were held in November 2025 to present the draft Plan and encourage public comments.

Monroe County Legislature Public Hearing

The Monroe County Legislature held a public hearing on the draft Plan on July 14, 2026 and incorporated comments prior to adopting the updated Plan.

3. Plan Contents

The Plan is organized into the following sections:

Part 1. Plan Overview & Methodology

Part 2. Current Conditions and Trends

- Agricultural Land
- Agricultural Economy
- Environmental Protection & Climate Resiliency
- Public Understanding & Appreciation of Agriculture
- Urban Agriculture

Part 3. Goals, Opportunities & Challenges, and Recommended Actions.

Photo 1. Reed Farm aerial landscape. Credit: Adam Montoya

Part 2: Goals, Opportunities & Challenges, and Recommended Actions

The Monroe County Agricultural & Farmland Protection Plan Update identifies five broad goals to guide Monroe County and its partners in supporting continued agricultural production and farmland protection:

Goal #1: Retain high quality farmland for agricultural production.

Goal #2: Improve economic viability of farm operations.

Goal #3: Improve opportunities for agriculture-related economic development in Monroe County and the region.

Goal #4: Protect soil and water resources, enhance climate resiliency, and minimize greenhouse gas emissions from agricultural practices.

Goal #5: Increase understanding and appreciation of agriculture among the general public and local decision-makers.

Goal #6. Support commercial agricultural producers in urban and suburban areas.

The summary of opportunities and challenges for each goal follow from the analysis of current conditions and trends (Part 3) as well as input from farmers, agencies and the Steering Committee.

Recommended actions specify the steps Monroe County and its partners can take to achieve the goals of this Plan. For each action, the Plan identifies the entity or entities that would lead the task and partners that would also be involved.

The following acronyms represent names of lead and partner entities:

AFPB	Monroe County Agricultural & Farmland Protection Board
BOCES	Board of Cooperative Educational Services
CCE	Cornell Cooperative Extension
COMIDA	County of Monroe Industrial Development Agency
DES	Monroe County Department of Environmental Services
ESD	Empire State Development
GFL-RPC	Genesee Finger Lakes Regional Planning Council
GRE	Greater Rochester Enterprise
MCC	Monroe Community College
NYS DAM	New York State Department of Agriculture & Markets
NYS DOS	New York State Department of State
NYSERDA	New York State Energy Research & Development Authority
REDC	Regional Economic Development Council
SWCD	Soil & Water Conservation District
USDA	United States Department of Agriculture

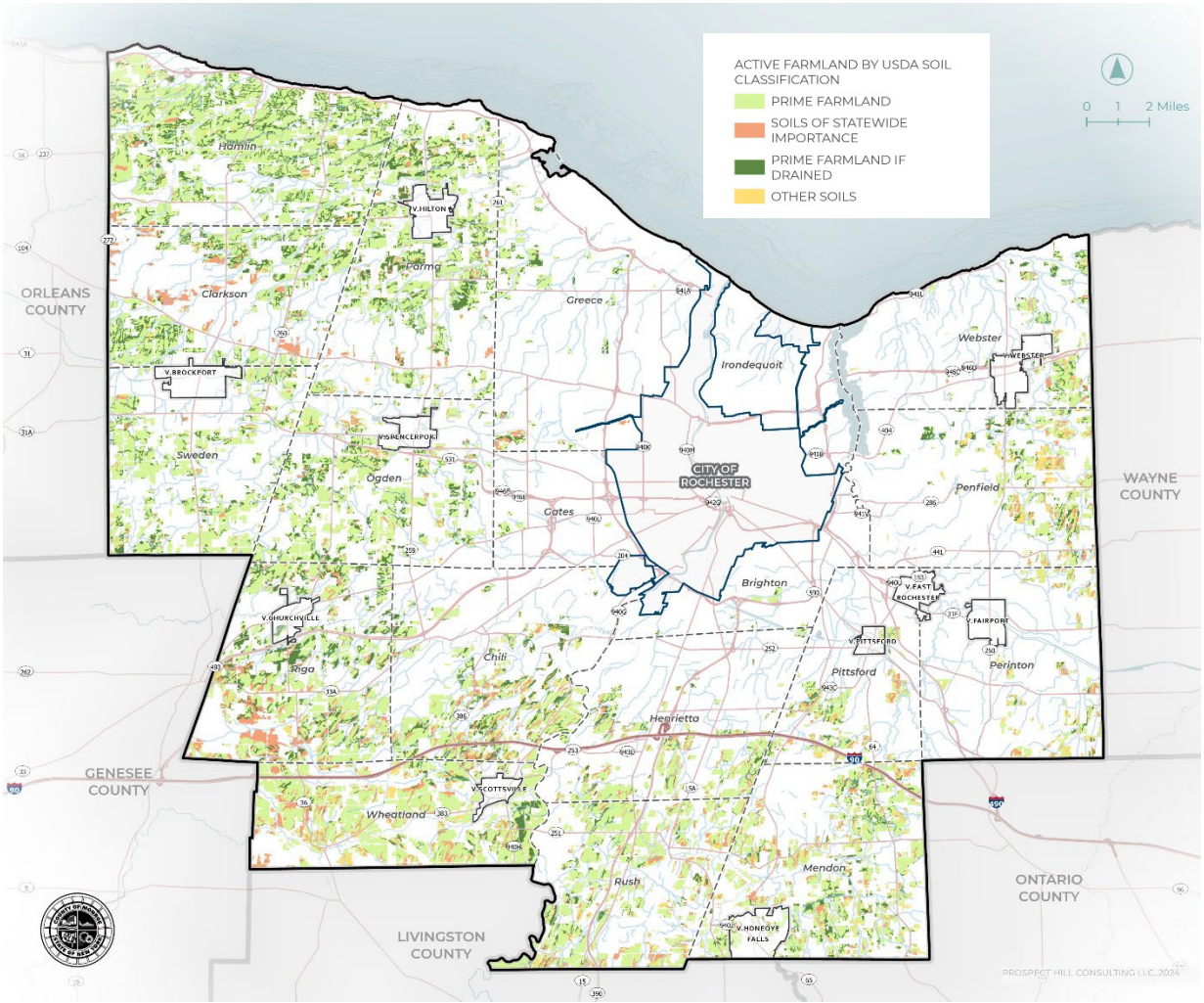
Photo 2 . Zarpentine Farms corn maze. Credit: Lori Coleman. Copyright Lori & Erin Photography, used with permission

Goal #1: Retain high quality farmland for agricultural production.

Why is this important?

Retaining high quality farmland for agricultural production is critical to maintaining a viable agricultural industry in Monroe County. Large areas of high-quality agricultural soils in Monroe County are currently being used and remain available for agricultural production. Approximately one-third of the land area of Monroe County is in agricultural use or open land that may be suitable for agriculture. The most recent U.S. Census of Agriculture (2022), approximately 93,901 acres of land were in farms, including 72,118 acres of farmland. Retention of these lands for agricultural use will help ensure the continued viability of agriculture in Monroe County. The figure below depicts active farmland in Monroe County by USDA soil classification. Development projects and other actions that could impact these lands need to be evaluated to minimize loss of viable farmland.

Figure 1. Farmland Suitable for Protection by USDA Agricultural Soil Classification



What are the challenges and opportunities?

Farmland throughout Monroe County is susceptible to conversion to non-agricultural uses. As documented in Part 2A, farmland is often suitable for development as it is generally level and free from environmental constraints. Continued demand for residential and other development as well as increasing demand for solar energy development are the main sources of pressure for farmland conversion.

Lands where public sewer service is available are suitable for more compact residential and other development. Managing the location of sewer infrastructure can direct needed development to suitable areas while maintaining the County's rural areas for continued agricultural use.

What tools can help Monroe County and its partners achieve this goal?

Monroe County and its partners can help to keep farmland in agricultural use by encouraging land use regulations that guide development away from farmland, promoting permanent conservation easements on farms, discouraging residential and solar development on high quality farmland, educating owners of rented farmland, and supporting programs that help farmers with succession planning.

Conservation Easements

Permanent conservation easements prevent future non-agricultural development on farmland through legal restrictions. By removing the development rights from a parcel, the land becomes more affordable for the next generation of farmers.

Farmland owners may voluntarily donate a conservation easement to a land trust or work with a municipality or land trust to obtain grants enable the farmer to sell the development rights to their farmland. Genesee Land Trust and Genesee Valley Conservancy are key partners with expertise and experience in working with landowners to permanently protect farmland.

Counties adjoining Monroe support efforts by land trusts to encourage long-term preservation of farmland and to work with farmers to prepare applications for NYS-funded Purchase of Development Rights (PDR) or federal USDA Agricultural Conservation Easement programs. Both Livingston and Genesee Counties budget for contractual services, administered by their Planning Departments, for land trust staff to organize educational workshops for farmers and to help farmers prepare applications for PDR funding or to consider donating a conservation easement to a land trust.

Municipal Zoning and Solar local laws

Municipalities can limit or discourage use of agricultural lands for solar development through local land use laws and regulations. For example, zoning or a solar local law may require applications to delineate both active farmland and the agricultural soil suitability of lands proposed for the project, and to limit the extent of high quality farmland that may be used for the solar project.

Local laws regulating solar development can also help ensure that projects that use farmland are carried out in a way that minimizes long-term impacts. For example, the local law can require adherence to NYS Department of Agriculture & Markets construction and decommissioning guidance,

such as ensuring that topsoil is preserved during construction to retain the viability of the land to be returned to agricultural use following decommissioning. In addition, municipalities can require that the developer retain a qualified Environmental Monitor on site during construction to ensure that mitigation practices are carried out properly.

Local laws may require solar developers to consider co-location of agricultural practices with solar facilities. Solar developers in New York have incorporated sheep grazing and pollinators into the design of solar energy facilities. Sheep grazing under solar panels reduces or eliminates the need for regular mowing and helps reduce costs for facility maintenance. Ensuring that farmers benefit economically from co-location with solar panels requires careful planning and design. The types of agriculture that can co-locate with solar facilities is different from the production of field crops or other traditional agricultural production that would occur without the solar facility.

Municipalities have the authority to regulate projects smaller than 25 MW through local laws. For projects larger than 25 MW, for which NYS ORES has siting approval authority, the local law remains an important tool as it expresses the Town's policy and is considered by ORES in NYS review of projects.

Outreach to Owners of Rented land

While most farmers intend to keep the land they own in agricultural production, farmland that is rented or leased to farmers, as well as farmland passed on to non-farming heirs of farmers, may be sold for other purposes.

Land that is rented or leased to farmers for agricultural use is more susceptible to conversion than lands owned by farmers. While farmers may sell land for development, they typically choose the least productive areas of the farm and maintain farming operations on the most productive areas. Owners of rented land may respond to offers from solar or other developers by selling the entire parcel rather than subdividing the parcel to retain a portion for continued agricultural production.

Owners of rented land may benefit from information about tax benefits and resources to assist with estate planning or options for land conservation. While many farmers work with owners of leased land to help the owners obtain agricultural use property tax exemptions, some owners of rented land may not be receiving these benefits. Ongoing communication with owners of rented land may encourage them to consider selling land to neighboring farmers or including land conservation in their estate planning.

Farm Succession Education

Farmland in the process of passing to the next generation is susceptible to conversion when there are multiple heirs or the heirs are not interested in continuing to farm the land. Education and outreach programs, such as those run by FarmNET, help farmers plan for farm transition and can help avoid sales of farmland for non-agricultural uses.

Recommended Actions

1. Provide education and technical assistance to municipalities to support the adoption and maintenance of farm-friendly land use regulations that require consideration of the impacts on agriculture from new development.

   Lead: Monroe County Planning

   Partners: Municipalities

2. Provide training and technical assistance, including model laws, to encourage municipalities to adopt local solar laws that limit the extent to which solar energy facilities use active farmland with high quality agricultural soils and/or that incentivize use of lands that are not suitable for agricultural production, and require mitigation such as reducing impacts to farmland during construction and decommissioning or including co-location of agriculture within the solar project.

   Lead: Monroe County Planning

   Partners: Municipalities; NYSERDA Model Law; NYS Ag & Markets (guidance)

3. As part of negotiations for Payments in Lieu of Taxes (PILOTs) for solar development projects, incorporate requirements for the facility to avoid siting projects on active farmland with high quality agricultural soils. If projects must use active farmland, require mitigation of impacts to farmland during construction and decommissioning.

   Lead: COMIDA

   Partners: Monroe County Planning

4. Work with utilities and advocate with regulators for policies and practices that limit the impact of new transmission lines and other electricity infrastructure on farmland and farm operations.

   Lead: Monroe County Planning

   Partners: Monroe County Legislature

5. Communicate potential impacts on agriculture when municipalities and other entities propose extensions of public sewer service into predominantly agricultural areas through County review of development projects, with education and training for local official, and by filing Notices of Intent to the NYS Dept. of Agriculture & Markets where projects receive State or Federal funding.

   Lead: Monroe County Planning

   Partners: Utilities; NYS DAM

6. Provide information and connect farmland owners to resources to encourage them to place land under permanent conservation easements.
    a. Provide letters of support and technical assistance to support grant applications.
    b. Contract with local land trusts to support additional outreach to farmers and the preparation of grant applications.
    c. Establish a fund for Monroe County to purchase development rights to farms.

    Lead: Monroe County AFPB (letters of support); Monroe County Planning (contracts with land trusts); Monroe County Legislature (funding)

    Partners: Genesee Land Trust

7. Provide information and connect farmland owners with resources for technical assistance to encourage them to develop succession plans to facilitate transfer of farmland to another farmer to continue its use in agricultural production.

    Lead: CCE Monroe County

    Partners: FarmNET

8. Facilitate transfer of farmland to farmers by maintaining an inventory of interested farmers. Advocate for creation of a "buy, protect, sell" program to be administered by a land trust.

    Lead: Monroe County Planning

    Partners: Genesee Land Trust; CCE Monroe; American Farmland Trust (Farmland for a New Generation New York)

Goal #2: Improve economic viability of farm operations.

Why is this important?

Farms in Monroe County generated more than $101 million in sales in 2022, according to the US Census of Agriculture. Crop farming generated 90% of all sales as shown in the table below.

Table 1. Market Value of Products Sold, 2022

Item	2022 Market Value (in dollars)	Percent of Total
Crops, including nursery and greenhouse crops	**$ 91,147,000**	**90%**
Grains, oilseeds, dry beans, and dry peas	**37,325,000**	**37%**
Corn	20,595,000	20%
Wheat	4,430,000	4%
Soybeans	11,070,000	11%
Vegetables, melons, potatoes, and sweet potatoes	**28,607,000**	**28%**
Fruits, tree nuts, and berries	**9,375,000**	**9%**
Fruits and tree nuts	7,786,000	8%
Berries	1,589,000	2%
Nursery, greenhouse, floriculture, and sod	**12,117,000**	**12%**
Cultivated Christmas Trees and short rotation woody crops	**930,000**	**1%**
Cultivated Christmas Trees	930,000	1%
Other crops and hay	**2,793,000**	**3%**
Livestock, poultry, and their products	**$ 9,935,000**	**10%**
Poultry and eggs	$ 157,000	0%
Cattle and calves	$ 963,000	1%
Milk from cows	$ 7,913,000	8%
Hogs and pigs	$ 38,000	<1%
Sheep, goats, wool, mohair, and milk	$ 140,000	<1%
Horses, ponies, mules, burros, and donkey	$ 506,000	<1%
Other animals and other animal products	$ 219,000	<1%
Total	**$ 101,082,000**	**100%**

Source: 2022 Census of Agriculture

When farms are economically viable, they are highly likely to continue operating and keep farmland in agricultural production. However, as described in Part 2.B, farming is a complex, challenging business and farmers need to navigate changes in market conditions, government regulations, and environmental conditions.

While many farms in Monroe County benefit from County, State and Federal government programs that provide technical and financial assistance, some farms may have difficulty accessing these programs or find that existing programs are not well-suited to their farm businesses. Future availability of government funding is uncertain. Government regulations, including State labor and environmental

regulations as well as local zoning regulations, can make farming more difficult. Assisting farmers, especially smaller farms, in accessing assistance helps to keep farms economically viable and maintain the agricultural economy of Monroe County.

Proximity of Monroe County farms to consumers in urban areas create opportunities for agritourism and direct-to-consumer sales. Incorporating agritourism and/or direct-to-consumer sales into farm operations can help farmers retain more of the market value of farm products.

What are the challenges and opportunities?

Promising market opportunities for Monroe County farms include agritourism enterprises and direct-to-consumer sales, as well as increasing sales to schools and other institutions.

Direct-to-Consumer Sales

Many farms in Monroe County sell directly to consumers and capture a larger share of the product's value. Many consumers are willing to pay more for farm products when they know where it comes from and want to support local farmers. Several farms manage Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) programs. The Rochester Public Market and many farmers markets throughout the County offer opportunities for direct sales to consumers. Several farms in Monroe County participate in New York State's NY Grown & Certified Program, which helps consumers find local farm products.

Challenges for farmers engaged in direct-to-consumer sales include the need to establish skills and devote hours to managing retail markets and customer service. Sources of technical assistance for farmers include CCE Monroe as well as resources through Cornell University Small Farms Program.

Operators of farmers markets help farmers through efficient operation of the market and by publicizing the market to bring customers.

Agritourism

Agritourism activities help some farms increase revenue. Challenges include:

- the need for farmers to establish and manage a separate business enterprise that requires a different skill set than producing crops.
- The need to manage local impacts such as traffic, parking, and noise. Municipal regulations can require safeguards to reduce impacts but may be overly restrictive.

Resources to support farmers include technical assistance and educational resources through CCE and Monroe County Community College as well as grant funding opportunities. CCE Monroe and MCC promote agritourism through web-based maps and periodic promotions. The Market New York Tourism Grant Program, administered by NYS Empire State Development, offers funding for regional tourism marketing and planning as well as capital projects. Guidance for municipal zoning regulations are suggested in Appendix C: Zoning Review Findings. Impacts of agritourism operations can be managed through reasonable zoning regulations and permitting and inspection procedures.

Value-added enterprises on farms

Incorporating on-farm processing, packing or packaging allows the farmer to retain a larger portion of the value of the end product. However, farmers face challenges in establishing on-farm value-added enterprises and in scaling up these businesses. Each additional business enterprise requires its own business plan as well as capital investment, staffing and record-keeping.

While value-added enterprises are considered part of farm operations protected by NYS Agricultural District Law, operations may need to comply with local zoning regulations. Municipalities can support farms that integrate value-added businesses through farm-friendly municipal zoning regulations.

Secondary businesses on farms

Secondary non-agricultural businesses on farms can help generate additional revenue to maintain the farm's economic viability. As non-agricultural businesses on farms are not considered "farm operations" in NYS Agricultural District Law, they are not protected from local regulation.

Some municipalities accommodate on-farm businesses through a special use permit, which requires certain conditions to be met. Other municipal zoning regulations prohibit such businesses because they do not allow more than one principal use on a lot or require businesses to be located in a commercial or industrial zoning district.

Farm Transition Planning

Without sound transition planning, farms may be sold for development when the farm owner retires or passes away. Transition planning may include estate planning and can also include provisions for another party to take over the farm.

Challenges for new, beginning and women farmers

New and beginning farmers face multiple challenges getting started, including access to land to purchase or lease, high cost of land, difficulty obtaining financing, and the need to develop business skills. People who did not grow up in a farming family also lack a built-in network of support and knowledge.

Women and immigrants face additional challenges as they do not fit the expected profile of a farmer and may not be part of an existing social network.

Farm Labor

Farms of all sizes face challenges in finding suitable workers. Recent changes in NYS regulations and minimum wage requirements exacerbate these challenges. Although New York State law allows farms to pay youth under age 16 lower rates, and minor children of the farm operator do not need to be paid, many farms face challenges in obtaining labor. Some small farms are not able to increase operations due to the cost of labor.

Existing resources to assist farmers include programs administered by Cornell Cooperative Extension, which offers periodic training on farm business issues, and NY FarmNet, which offers training programs

to farmers on business planning, workforce training and other aspects of managing a farm enterprise. These resources help farmers in addressing workforce challenges.

Diversification of Products

Some farms have had to adapt to changes in markets, such as the loss of regional vegetable processing capacity. For example, loss of cabbage and other vegetable processors in recent years required farms to consider other produce.

Farms that sell directly to consumers have introduced new products to increase direct-to-consumer sales. Farms have opportunities to meet niche markets with high value products such as heirloom or organic produce.

Climate change may lead to opportunities for farmers to grow crops that require longer growing seasons. Climate change is likely to exacerbate impacts of weeds, pests and diseases, which may result in farms selecting different crops.

Institutional Sales

Some farms may be able to sell directly to institutions; smaller farms could sell to institutions through aggregators that sell farm products to institutions.

Increasing opportunities may become available to local farmers as New York State incentivizes purchases of local farm products by institutions, including:

- Monroe County facilities, such as the Monroe County Jail, Monroe Community Hospital and Monroe Community College
- Food banks
- K-12 Schools
- Colleges and Universities
- NYS agencies

Challenges to increasing institutional purchases of local farm products include:

- Lack of aggregation, distribution, processing and packaging infrastructure to allow small farms to compete with large-scale providers of food to institutions
- Lack of capacity at local schools and institutions to prepare agricultural products for use in food service.

Recommended Actions

1. Continue to provide funding to organizations such as CCE Monroe and Monroe County SWCD that provide information and technical assistance to farm operations, including support for new and beginning farmers, business planning, crop diversification, and adapting to the impacts of climate change. Partner with Cornell University and CCE Wayne, Ontario and Wyoming Counties to leverage resources.

   Lead: Monroe County Legislature (funding allocation); CCE Monroe

   Partners: CCE Wayne, Ontario and Wyoming; Monroe County SWCD

2. Advocate for continued State and Federal funding for Cornell Cooperative Extension, SWCD, USDA and other programs that provide technical and financial assistance to farms.

   Lead: Monroe County Planning

   Partners: Farm Bureau; CCE Monroe; SWCD; NYS DAM; Cornell University; USDA

3. Promote agritourism and direct-to-consumer sales as a component of areawide tourism campaigns, through "buy local" campaigns, and guides to local produce, including improvements to online guides. Provide information and technical assistance to farmers to increase direct-to-consumer sales. Improve the local food guide website and expand outreach to farms with farm stands, u-pick or entertainment to be listed in the online guide.

   Lead: CCE Monroe; MCC

   Partners: NYS Empire State Development (tourism promotion); Visit Rochester; NYS DAM

4. Provide information about funding and sources of technical assistance to farms interested in incorporating on-farm processing and other value-added enterprises.

   Lead: CCE Monroe

   Partners: NYS DAM; USDA

5. Continue to provide land use education and training programs and provide information about sources of funding (such as NYS Department of State Smart Growth zoning grants) to encourage municipalities to revise zoning regulations to accommodate value-added and secondary businesses on farms.

   Lead: Monroe County Planning

   Partners: Municipalities; NYS Department of State (funding)

6. Support programs that assist farms with business planning and hiring procedures and that help to building and maintain a skilled agricultural workforce.

   Lead: Monroe County Planning

Partners: BOCES; CCE Monroe

7. Advocate for more favorable federal and State labor policies and regulations, including NYS minimum wage requirements and the federal H2-A program.

   Lead: Monroe County Planning

   Partners: Farm Bureau

8. Facilitate purchases of local farm products by Monroe County facilities. For example:
   - Identify and engage with supply chain support businesses (pick-up and delivery, storage, etc.) to facilitate order fulfillment and decrease the costs of entry for small and mid-sized farms.
   - Work with the Monroe County Jail, MCC and other institutions to adopt procurement policies that prioritize products from Monroe County or surrounding farms.
   - Adopt an official County policy and direct institutions to modify their contracts with food providers (e.g., Sysco; Broadliner; Headwater Food Hub as alternative to national supplier)

     Lead: Monroe County Legislature; Procurement managers at Monroe County Jail, MCC and other facilities

     Partners: Food providers; Aggregators

9. Connect schools and other institutions to information and sources of funding and technical assistance to expand purchases from local farms. Encourage schools and emergency feeding organizations to prioritize purchases from Monroe County farms.

   Lead: CCE Monroe; School Districts

   Partners: Schools, universities, health care and other institutions; Foodlink

Goal #3: Improve opportunities for agriculture-related economic development in Monroe County and the region.

Agriculture-related industries include processing, aggregation, distribution, packing, packaging, wholesale and retail operations, financial services and other businesses that support farms. Food manufacturing in Monroe County generated $3.2 billion in sales (3% of the County total) in 2022 and employed approximately 6,557 people, according to data compiled through an IMPLAN economic analysis. Operations range from large, multi-national companies to small and medium-sized local businesses engaged in value-added food processing.

Why is this important?

Farms in Monroe County benefit from access to processing, storage, distribution and markets. Monroe County industries include large facilities that are integrated into global markets as well as small-scale

businesses that support smaller producers. Continued access to markets and support businesses helps to ensure the economic viability of Monroe County farms.

What are the challenges and opportunities?

Processing

Food manufacturing is recognized as an important industrial cluster in Monroe County and the Genesee-Finger Lakes region. Greater Rochester Enterprise (GRE) and the Finger Lakes Regional Economic Development Council (REDC) promote food manufacturing as a key industrial sector.

While many food manufacturing businesses, such as Pepsi, use no local agricultural products, their presence as part of a regional industrial cluster in agriculture/ food processing represents significant investment in regional food manufacturing and helps maintain a supply of experienced workers. When multiple businesses of the same type are located in a region, workers have options for places to work.

Dairy processing facilities in Monroe County have provided nearby markets for local and regional dairy farms. The former Upstate Niagara Co-op in the City of Rochester served as a major milk processing facility, the plant has since closed. This closure reflects broader changes in the dairy industry, including consolidation, evolving processing technologies, and the facilities limited ability to expand or modernize within its existing location. The new Fairlife facility to be constructed in Webster is expected to significantly increase dairy processing capacity and provide an important new market outlet for regional dairy producers.

Large food manufacturing facilities other than dairy offer limited opportunities for local farms as they source inputs from a global supply chain. For example, Star in Churchville gets 30% of its wheat from Canadian producers. In addition, consolidation in food manufacturing industries has resulted in the loss of some local processing facilities. For example, a large cabbage processing facility and a green bean processing facility recently left the region, leaving farmers with no ready market for these crops. Farms that raised crops for processing at that facility needed to either find other markets or pivot to other crops.

Despite the challenges relating to consolidation and global supply chains, increasing processing capacity in Monroe County could benefit local farms as well as the broader agricultural economy. COMIDA administers incentives that could support processing facilities to site or expand in Monroe County.

Meat processing capacity is limited locally. Many farmers need to travel long distances to bring their animals to processing facilities. Small farms face particular challenges as they do not have the leverage to arrange timely processing.

Agricultural Support Businesses

Businesses that provide aggregation, distribution and services to farm operations are important parts of the regional agricultural economy. Monroe County and its partners can support these businesses, through financial incentives, infrastructure improvements, site selection assistance and letters of support for grant applications.

Recommended Actions

1. Work with County and regional economic development organizations to support existing and encourage new and expanded agriculture-related businesses, through financial incentives, infrastructure improvements, site selection assistance, letters of support for grant applications, and other means.

   Lead: COMIDA; Greater Rochester Enterprise (GRE); Regional Economic Development Council (REDC); Monroe County Planning

   Partners: Municipalities; farms and agriculture-related businesses; Market NY (funding)

2. Provide technical support to private initiatives, including cooperative ventures, which would support additional aggregation, distribution, or processing where relevant County skills and capabilities support project advancement, such as grant identification, letters of support for grant funding, GIS mapping, or site selection.

   Lead: Monroe County Planning; COMIDA

   Partners: CCE Monroe

3. Building on recent food system studies, support development of a regional (multi-county) food system study that would include an inventory of existing capacities and operators across the supply chain to identify gaps, potential partnerships, and opportunities for expansions that support overall aggregation and distribution for producers, processors, and purchasers.

   Lead: Genesee/ Finger Lakes Regional Planning Council; CCE Monroe

   Partners; Monroe County, Monroe County Economic Development (Grow Monroe), Foodlink, Headwater Food Hub, Western NY Produce, Inc. NYS DAM (funding)

Goal #4: Protect soil and water resources, enhance climate resiliency, and minimize greenhouse gas emissions from agricultural practices.

Why is this important?

Clean water is critical to agricultural production. While agriculture keeps land open, agricultural practices may lead to runoff of nutrients and chemicals into surface and groundwater. Best management practices such as cover crops and stream buffers can prevent and mitigate impacts of agricultural practices on water quality.

Proper management of stormwater is needed to maintain productivity of farm fields and avoid introduction of pathogens and other negative impacts on farm fields. Stormwater management programs through the Soil & Water Conservation District and local governments support implementation of best practices to better manage stormwater.

Farms, like all businesses, have a role to play in minimizing greenhouse gas emissions and adapting to climate change. Farms also have an opportunity to counter the impacts of climate change. Climate resilient farming practices such as manure management and cover crops can minimize emissions.

What are the challenges and opportunities?

Agricultural Best Management Practices (BMPs)

Agricultural practices may lead to runoff of nutrients or chemicals into streams and other waterways. To reduce or avoid these impacts, most farms in Monroe County use conservation practices that conserve soil and protect water quality, help to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and mitigate to impacts of climate change. Best Management Practices and "Climate Resilient Farming" measures on farms include stream buffers, cover crops, filter strips, nutrient management systems, fertilizer and pesticide storage improvements, and effective manure storage facilities.

Cost-sharing programs and education provided by Cornell Cooperative Extension (CCE), Soil & Water Conservation District (SWCD), and USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) are critical to supporting the implementation of these BMPs.

Monroe County Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) offers technical assistance and cost sharing to encourage farms to plan for and implement these practices. New York State Climate Resilient Farming and USDA NRCS grants offer cost sharing for farms to install best practices.

Sequestering carbon in soil and plants prevents its release as a greenhouse gas. However, the extent of carbon sequestration in soil, other than by planting trees or retaining forests, is difficult to quantify[1]. Soil management techniques such as no-till systems, planting cover crops, trees and perennial forages, and managing compost application will improve water retention and nutrient storage and reduce erosion potential.

Drainage

Farms rely on effective flow of stormwater in streams to prevent flooding of farm fields which can negatively impact crops. When dead trees or other debris in streams block flow, stormwater may back up onto farm fields and affect crops and soil health. New York State regulations make it difficult to clear debris from streams, as a NYS DEC permit is required to work within stream bed.

In addition, New York State regulations on wetlands have recently changed to require site-specific evaluation for potential wetlands. The changes in procedures and criteria for designating wetlands need to be communicated with municipalities and farmers. Farmers would benefit from assistance in navigating these regulations.

[1] A pilot project in the Hudson Valley region of New York aims to measure the extent of carbon sequestration resulting from various practices. The study will utilize NRCS COMET-Planner, an online calculator tool, to estimate the reductions in greenhouse gas emissions that will result from each practice. In addition to the potential benefit of carbon sequestration.

Development projects adjoining farms may alter natural drainage and impact farm fields. Compliance with municipal, and state stormwater management regulations and design standards during the review of development projects help to avoid these impacts.

Resources to support drainage improvements include:

- The Monroe County SWCD advises farmers and municipalities regarding stormwater management, including an extensive stormwater management training program for code officers, municipal officials, contractors, and developers
- Municipal or inter-municipal drainage districts to support improvements
- NYS stormwater management regulations for solar and other development.
- Monroe County's training for local government officials will include module on drainage management

Organic waste

Farms have an opportunity to advance New York State initiatives to reduce organic waste. On-farm practices include composting on-farm waste and potentially accepting organic waste from restaurants or institutions to be composted on the farm. New requirements for organic waste disposal may lead to opportunities for Monroe County farms.

Coordinating with emergency food providers to facilitate gleaning or donation of unsold produce can also reduce organic waste on farms.

Recommended Actions

1. Encourage farms to participate in Agricultural Environmental Management (AEM) programs and support continued funding for cost-sharing from NYS and for sufficient staffing at County SWCD. Connect farm operators with information about conservation and soil health benefits and sources of funding and technical assistance.

   Lead: Monroe County Planning

   Partners: SWCD

2. Maintain and expand funding for SWCD AEM programs, including dedicated staff person to work with farmers to plan and implement best management practices for soil health, climate resilience, energy efficiency, fuel and chemical containment structures, and other water quality and soil protection measures.

   Lead: Monroe County

   Partners: SWCD

3. Work with NYS DEC to shorten the time it takes to obtain permits to remove excess debris in streams and allow removal of silt that impedes flows, while maintaining benefits of debris such as filtering nutrients and chemicals and providing habitat for fish and aquatic insects.

   Lead: Monroe County Planning

   Partners: SWCD; Farm Bureau; NYS DEC

4. Encourage municipalities to work with landowners and neighboring municipalities to plan for stormwater management and create drainage districts to provide ongoing funding to manage drainage improvements.

   Lead: Monroe County Planning; Municipalities

   Partners: SWCD through the Stormwater Coalition of Monroe County

5. Provide information and assistance to municipalities to address stormwater management in the review of development proposals, including solar energy developments, including consideration of potential impacts on agricultural lands.

   Lead: Monroe County Planning

   Partners: Municipalities; NYSERDA (Model Law); NYS Ag & Markets (guidance)

6. Incorporate a module on drainage management in Monroe County's training program for local government officials and encourage members of planning boards and conservation boards to participate.

   Lead: Monroe County Planning

   Partners: Municipalities; Cornell Local Roads; SWCD

7. Connect farms with organizations and businesses engaged in reducing organic waste, such as gleaning programs to supply emergency food and/or opportunities for composting or other disposal/ reuse of organic waste,

   Lead: Monroe County Planning; CCE Monroe

   Partners: Municipalities; SWCD; Monroe County DES – Solid Waste & Recycling

Goal #5: Increase understanding and appreciation of agriculture among the general public and local decision-makers.

Why is this important?

Interest in and appreciation of agriculture among residents can help build public support for farms in local communities that may face conflicts with neighbors or need approvals from local boards. Although NYS Agricultural Districts Law protects farms from nuisance lawsuits relating to farm practices, conflicts with neighbors make farming more difficult. Increased awareness of farm practices and support for local agriculture may reduce neighbor complaints and increase support from local officials who may respond to neighbor complaints. In addition to producing food and other products, community gardens, school gardens and home gardening help residents feel connected to the land and better understand where food comes from.

What are the challenges and opportunities?

As a small minority of people who serve on local legislative and advisory boards in Monroe County municipalities are directly involved in farming, board members would benefit from education to increase understanding of farm practices, protections offered to farmers by NYS Agricultural Districts Law and the benefits of local agriculture to the regional economy. With greater appreciation and understanding, local decision makers would hopefully also be more able and willing to make policies that work for farms instead of against. As local officials change with every election and appointment, educational programs and events need to be presented repeatedly to reach newly appointed officials and to refresh the knowledge of continuing officials. Farm Bureau, Cornell Cooperative Extension, Soil & Water Conservation and other organizations periodically sponsor tours and other events to share information with local decision-makers and share the perspectives of local farmers about issues that affect their businesses.

Farms that sell directly to consumers benefit from increased public understanding of where their food comes from and what products are available locally. Many Monroe County farms that produce vegetables, fruits, herbs and flowers sell directly to customers via roadside stands, Community Supported Agriculture, or farmers markets. Many consumers appreciate fresh, local products and are willing to pay higher prices for these goods when they know that all the money goes directly to the farmer.

Many Monroe County farms offer hands-on farming experiences to consumers, such as picking strawberries or cutting their own Christmas trees. These types of experiences both generate additional revenue for farm operations and help to increase public understanding and appreciation of agriculture and local farms. To maximize benefits programs that promote local farm products, farmers must ensure that their business is listed in the promotional materials.

Recommended Actions

1. Continue to support programs that promote local farm products, agritourism and related businesses, including GrowMonroe, agri-tourism promotions, local harvest calendars, website listings and publicity for farmers markets, farm stands, CSAs, U-pick and agritourism operations.

   Lead: MCC; CCE Monroe

   Partners: NYS DAM; NYS ESD (Market NY grants, I Love New York tourism promotions)

2. Continue programs that help farmers integrate additional direct-to-consumer sales and agri-tourism initiatives into their farm operations.

   Lead: CCE Monroe

   Partners: Monroe County, NYS, Cornell University; NYS DAM

3. Work with Farm Bureau to organize farm tours for local decision-makers.

   Lead: Farm Bureau

   Partners: Monroe County, CCE Monroe; SWCD

4. In training programs for local planning boards and other officials, include education about NYS Agricultural District Law provisions that limit enforcement of local zoning provisions that unreasonably restrict farm practices.

   Lead: Monroe County Planning; GFL-RPC

   Partners: MCC; SWCD

5. Encourage schools to continue youth education and workforce development through programs such as NYS Ag in the Classroom, BOCES, and FFA.

   Lead: Monroe County Planning

   Partners: CCE Monroe; BOCES; School Districts; NYS DAM

Goal #6. Support commercial agricultural producers in urban and suburban areas as well as school, community and home gardens.

Why is this important?

Farming in urban and suburban areas can provide opportunities for small scale production or niche products, produce agricultural products that are close to potential markets, and potentially make use of underutilized land.

Community gardens, school gardens and home gardening provide food for residents and help participants better understand where food comes from.

What are the challenges and opportunities?

Farms in urban and suburban areas are close to markets and may offer access to land for people with limited resources or lack of transportation. Innovative technologies such as vertical farming and niche products such as microgreens or cannabis provide potential opportunities for indoor agriculture in urban areas.

Urban farms share many of the same challenges as small farms countywide, such as labor issues, finding suitable land, and need to access markets and support services. Neighbor relations can be challenging where farms are located near residences. Farms in urban areas may need to test and potentially treat or replace soils contaminated with lead or other substances and obtaining access to water at a reasonable rate.

Challenges to maintaining community gardens include the lack of long-term leases to vacant municipal-owned land that would enable them to plan and invest in soil and other improvements. Organizations such as Tap Root Collective provide education, tool sharing and other support to school and community gardens. Urban agriculture initiatives carried out by not-for-profit organizations such as FoodLink, Greentopia and Tap Root Collective include programs to engage residents and work with youth to help them develop work skills.

Recommended Actions

1. Provide information and technical assistance to urban growers, including support for soil testing and resources for innovative products that can be effectively produced in urban areas.

   Lead: CCE Monroe

   Partners: NYS DAM; USDA; SWCD

2. Provide information and training to municipalities to support land use regulations that reasonably accommodate farm operations in urban and suburban areas.

   Lead: Monroe County Planning

   Partners: CCE Monroe

3. Support school and community gardens in urban and suburban areas to produce food for residents, provide skills training for youth and other community members and increase public understanding and appreciation of agriculture.

   a. Encourage local governments, by offering training, educational programs and informational resources, to maintain land use regulations that allow community gardens as a permitted principal or accessory use and that include reasonable accommodations for on-site structures and related uses such as equipment storage.

      Lead: Monroe County Planning

      Partners: CCE Monroe

b. Encourage City and other local governments to maintain a process to make underutilized publicly owned land available for community gardens, preferably with agreements to use the land for periods of 3 or more years so that gardens can plan for future use and benefit to improvements in the soil.

   Lead: Monroe County Planning

   Partners: CCE Monroe

c. Encourage residents to participate in backyard or community gardening and continue to support school gardens as a means to learn about where food comes, increase appreciation of agriculture, develop skills and potentially find jobs in horticultural or other agriculture-related occupations.

   Lead: CCE

   Partners: Monroe County; non-profit organizations; School Districts

Photo 3. Apple blossoms, Parma

Part 3: Current Conditions and Trends

A. Agricultural Land

1. History of Farming in Monroe County

Before European settlers arrived, the area now known as Monroe County was inhabited by the Haudenosaunee (Iroquois) people, including the Seneca Nation. They are best known for growing crops like corn, beans, and squash — often referred to as the "Three Sisters" — as well as other crops, such as tobacco.

By the late 1700s, European and later American settlers began establishing farms along the Genesee River and other fertile lands in the area. The soils in Monroe County, particularly around the Genesee River valley, were very conducive to farming, making it a hub for agricultural development.

During the 1800s, Monroe County became a center of agricultural production in New York State. The county was especially well-suited for the production of grains (such as wheat and corn), dairy farming, and the cultivation of fruits, especially apples. The construction of the Erie Canal in the 1820s greatly facilitated the transport of farm goods to other parts of the state and beyond, creating new markets for local farmers. This led to the expansion of agriculture in Monroe County, including the production of grains to feed the many mills in “Flour City” Rochester. As development advanced westward and transportation routes allowed for shipping of agricultural goods from the west, Monroe County’s dominance in flour milling and agricultural production diminished. However, the nursery and seed industry flourished, leading to Rochester’s new nickname, the “Flower City.”

Technological advancements and improved transportation networks during the 20th century led to more efficient farming methods, diversification of farming and increased specialization. Beginning in the mid-20th century, urbanization led to significant reduction in farmland as land was sold for residential or commercial development or for speculation.

2. Agricultural Land Resources

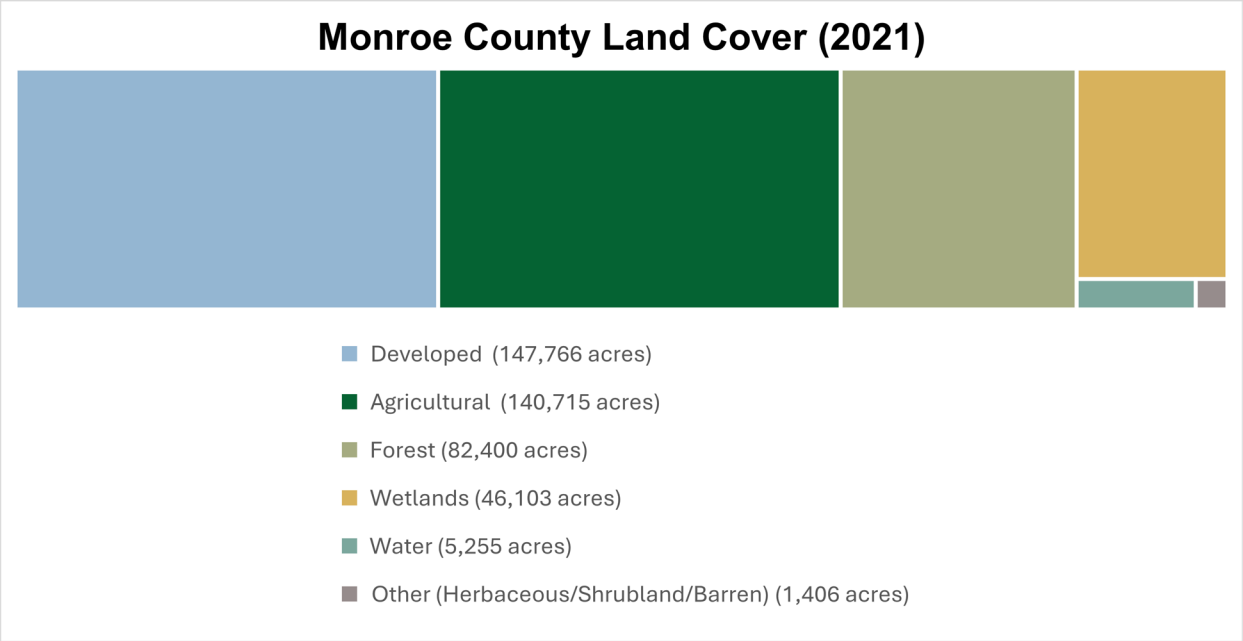
This section describes the existing agricultural land resources in Monroe County. Data sources include satellite imagery, USDA Soil Survey, US Census of Agriculture, and parcel data. Each data source offers a distinct perspective; all sources should be considered to understand the current extent and characteristics of farmland in Monroe County. Analysis of trends and conversion pressure follows in Section 2.A.3.

Land Cover

Based on data from the United States Geological Survey’s (USGS) National Land Cover Database (NLCD), approximately 140,715 acres of land in Monroe County – 33% of all land cover in the County – is considered agricultural land. These agricultural lands are most abundantly found in the County’s more rural towns and less so in the City of Rochester and its adjoining inner-ring suburbs (i.e., Brighton, Gates, Greece, and Irondequoit). The proportion of land in farmland is lower in Monroe County than in neighboring, more rural counties.

More than 82,400 acres (19.3%) of land in the County is forested, 46,103 acres (10.8%) are wetlands, and 5,255 acres (1.2%) is water when excluding portions of jurisdictional boundaries that include parts of Lake Ontario. Monroe County is a highly developed county with developed land covering 147,766 acres or 34.7% of land cover in the County; most of these developed lands are found in the City of Rochester and its inner-ring suburbs (See Map 2: Land Cover).

Chart 1. Land Cover (2021)



Agricultural Parcels

Approximately 1,579 parcels covering 83,870 acres of land in Monroe County are classified as agricultural in real property assessment records, as of 2024. (Additional parcels are in agricultural use but are classified as vacant or residential for assessment purposes.) Among the parcels that are agriculturally classified:

- 1,029 parcels that cover 51,524 acres are classified as “vacant farmland” - farmland that does not have a building on the lot.
- The 374 parcels classified as “field crops” cover 24,372 acres. An additional 344 acres in 9 parcels are truck crops.
- A total of 27 parcels classified as orchards, vineyards or fruit occupy 1,439 acres.
- The County’s 26 nursery parcels occupy 518 acres.

A total of 10 parcels with 1,004 acres are classified as “dairy farm.” The 48 “horse farm” parcels cover 1,963 acres, The 23 parcels used for cattle, sheep, bee products, poultry production, or other livestock cover a total of 1,057 acres.

Table 2. Agricultural Parcels by Assessor's Property Class Code (2024)

NYS Tax Parcel Code	Agricultural Classification	# of Parcels	Acres Covered
105	Vac farmland	1029	51,523.80
120	Field crops	374	24,371.90
117	Horse farm	48	1,962.70
129	Land rights	30	1,538.20
112	Dairy farm	10	1,004.20
151	Fruit crop	16	749.2
113	Cattle farm	13	635.2
150	Orchard crop	8	556.5
170	Nursery	26	518
140	Truck crops	9	344.5
110	Livestock	2	187.5
152	Vineyard	3	133.1
100	Agricultural	3	110.7
116	Other stock	4	92
114	Sheep farm	1	83.5
180	Special farm	1	50.7
111	Poultry farm	1	7.2
115	Bee products	1	1
	Total	**1579**	**83,869.9**

SOURCE: Real Property Tax Data, 2024[2]

[2] NOTE: Land use classification code categories are created by New York State Office of Real Property and are assigned to each individual parcel by local assessors.

Agricultural Soils

The agricultural productivity of soils in Monroe County was assessed utilizing both the USDA's Agricultural Soil Classification system (Map 3) and NYSDAM's Mineral Soil Group (MSG) Classification system (Map 4). Examining the soil suitability based on USDA agricultural suitability classifications for soils in New York State, approximately 220,398 acres – 52% of all land cover in Monroe County – is considered to have soils classified as "prime farmland". "Farmland of statewide importance" covers more than 44,480 acres (10%) of land, and soils classified as "prime farmland if drained" covers an additional 65,042 acres (15%) of land. The remaining 96,378 acres of land are not considered prime farmland and largely correlate with areas with developed land cover.

USDA Agricultural Suitability Classifications

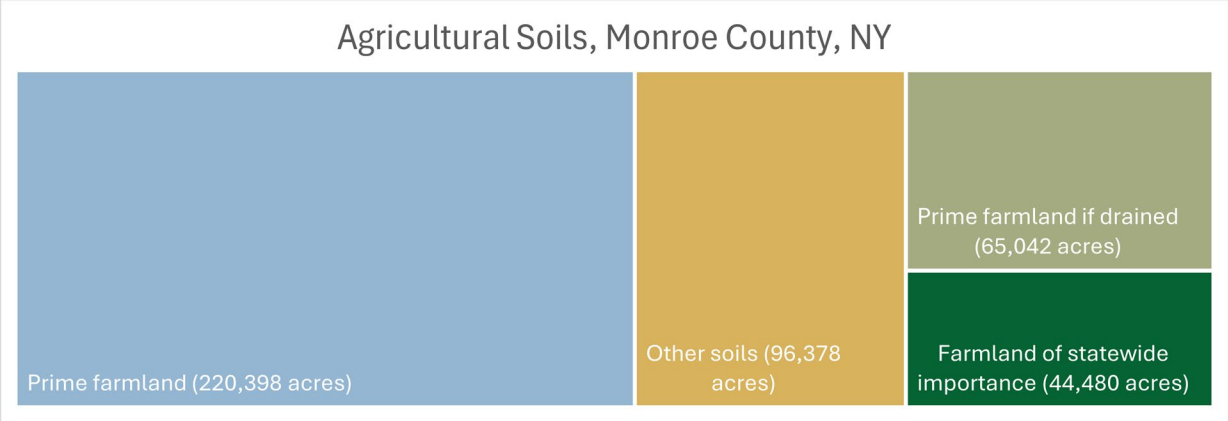
Prime Farmland: Prime soils have the best physical and chemical properties for producing food, feed, forage, fiber, and oilseed crops, with high productivity and sustainability when properly managed.

Prime Farmland if Drained: Soils that have the potential to be highly productive if they are artificially drained. Many areas in Monroe County with these types of soils have been improved with tile drainage and are as productive as "prime" soils.

Farmland of Statewide Importance: These lands are identified by New York State agencies as important for agricultural production state but do not meet the criteria for prime farmland. Generally, this land includes areas of soils that nearly meet the requirements for prime farmland and that economically produce high yields of crops when treated and managed according to acceptable farming methods. Some areas may produce as high a yield as prime farmland if conditions are favorable. Many of these soils are in the same series as prime soils but with steeper slopes or poorer drainage.

SOURCE: USDA

Chart 2. Agricultural Soils (USDA)



For use in property valuation for agricultural assessments and other applications by State agencies, NYS classifies the productivity of soil groups using their MSG Classification system. The MSG Classification system classifies mineral soils into 9 different soil groups, with groups 1-6 being subdivided further into groups A and B based on lime content in the soil. Soils in the MSG groups 1-4 are considered the most highly productive for agricultural use. Across Monroe County there are approximately 217,981 acres of land (51%) that have soils which are within the MSG groups 1-4. (See Map 4).

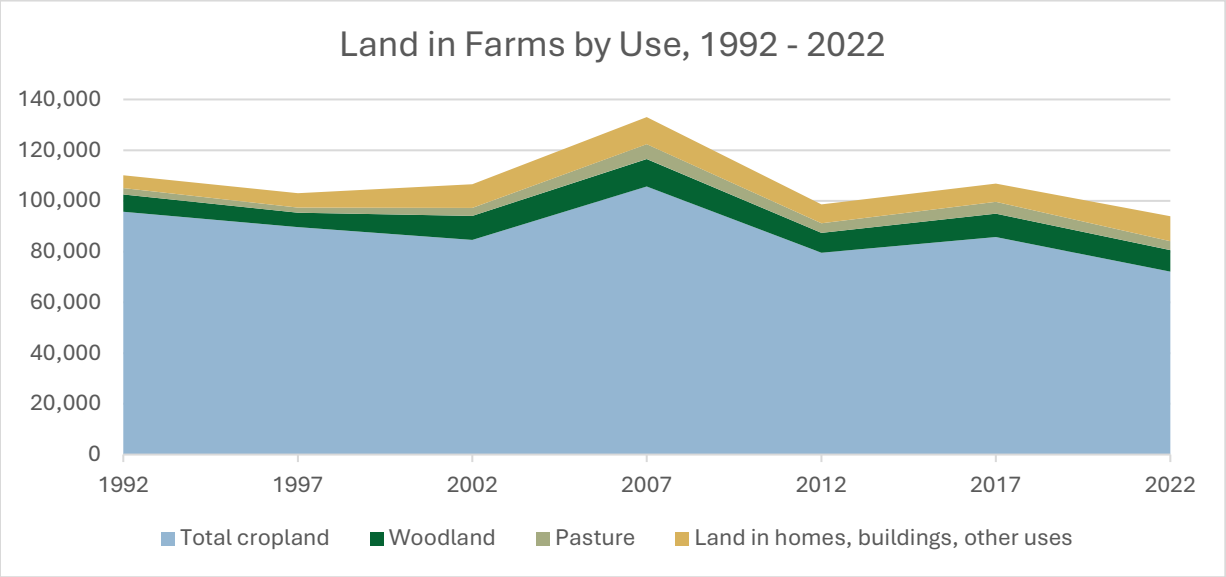
While there is considerable overlap between areas that are considered prime farmland according to USDA's Soil Classification system and soils that are a part of NYSDAM's MSG groups 1-4, there are differences as the two systems are designed for different purposes. New York State's MSG Classification system classifies soil by productivity for property tax valuation purposes, environmental review and solar policy. The USDA classifications are based on global standards and incorporate evaluation of the engineering uses of soil.

Land in Farms

Approximately 93,901 acres of land in Monroe County are in farms, according to the 2022 U.S. Census of Agriculture. Of this total, 72,118 acres were cropland, 8,502 acres were in woodland, 3,493 acres were pasture, and 9,788 acres were in homes, buildings and other uses.

The US Census of Agriculture reports an 15.9% decrease between 2017 and 2022 in the amount of cropland on farms, from 85,728 to 72,118 acres, and a 24.5% reduction in pastureland, from 4,629 to 3,493 acres. Land in homes, buildings and other uses includes land on the farm used for farmworker or owner housing, barns and facilities for on-farm use. As the Census of Agriculture data is based on surveys of farm operators, variations in response rates and accuracy of responses could account for some of the differences in data.

Chart 3. Land in Farms by Use, Monroe County, NY



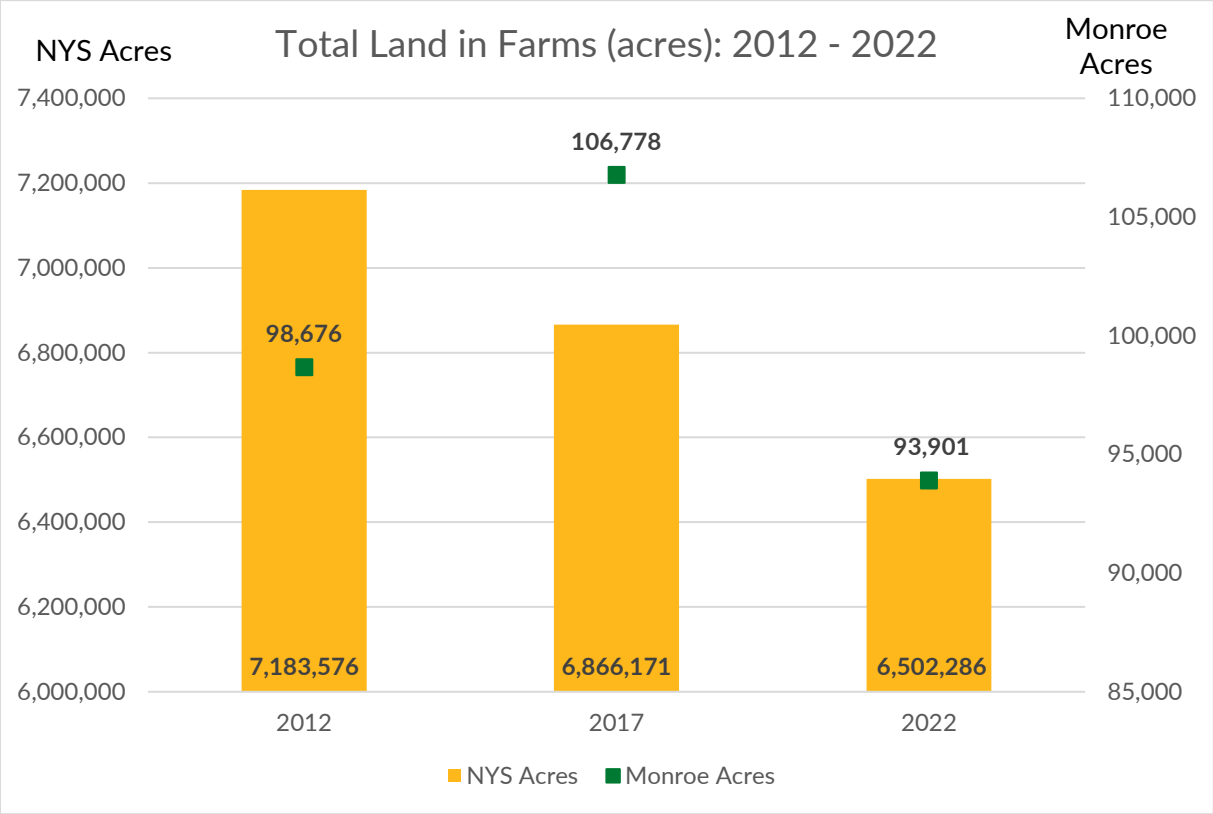
SOURCE: US Census of Agriculture

	1992	*1997*	*2002*	*2007*	*2012*	*2017*	*2022*
Total cropland	95,781	89,730	84,592	105,731	79,522	85,728	72,118
Woodland	6,757	5,601	9,486	10,758	7,915	9,226	8,502
Pasture	2,512	1,994	3,157	5,901	3,701	4,629	3,493
Land in homes, buildings, other uses	5,100	5,772	9,326	10,651	7,538	7,195	9,788
Total Land in Farms	**110,150**	**103,097**	**106,561**	**133,041**	**98,676**	**106,778**	**93,901**

SOURCE: US Census of Agriculture

Over the past 30 years, the amount of land in farms in Monroe County decreased by 15%, and the total acreage of cropland decreased 25%. As shown in the chart below, between 2012 and 2022, land in farms in Monroe County declined by 4.8% compared to a 9.5% decrease statewide during the same ten-year period.

Chart 4. Land in Farms, NYS and Monroe County, 2012 - 2022



SOURCE: Census of Agriculture

Types of Farms and Acres in Production

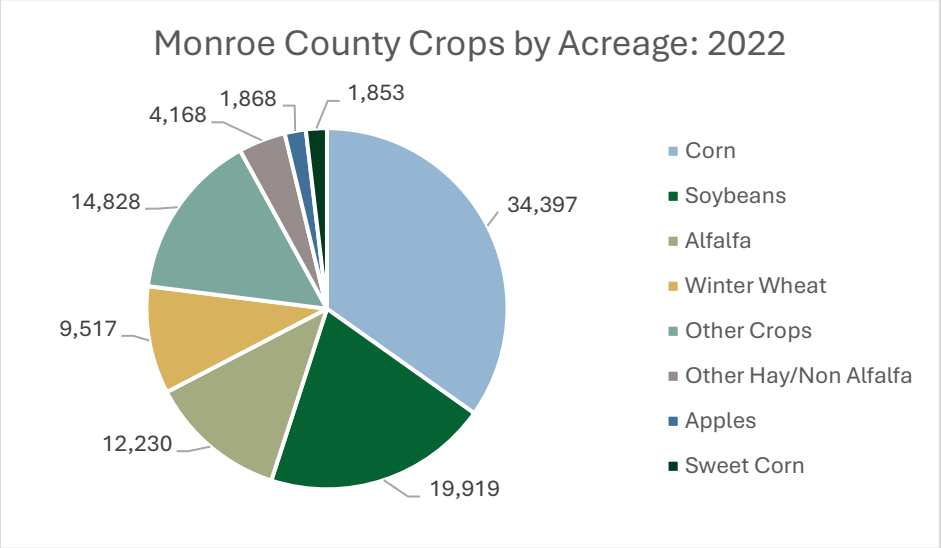
Nearly two-thirds of all farms in Monroe County produced crops. Among the 386 farms that harvested cropland in 2022, 129 farms harvested forage crops, including hay, haylage, grass silage, and greenchop, on 19,036 acres. Four crops – corn, soybeans, alfalfa, and winter wheat - accounted for almost 84% of the total acreage committed to crop production in 2022.

Data from USDA's National Agricultural Statistics Service and Agricultural Research Services CroplandCROS web app report that roughly 43 crop varieties are grown in Monroe County. Four crops – corn, soybeans, alfalfa, and winter wheat - accounted for almost 84% of the total acreage committed to crop production in 2022.

A total of 108 farms produced vegetables for sale on a total of 7,276 acres. The most prevalent vegetable crops grown in Monroe County were sweet corn (2,652 acres on 56 farms), beans (snap and pole) (1,336 acres on 33 farms) and squash (1,122 acres on 38 farms). Only 13 farms produced potatoes and 13 farms produced melons.

A total of 116 farms in Monroe County produced "grains, oilseeds, dry beans and dry peas." These included: 76 farms that produced corn for grain on 19,036 acres, generating sales of approximately $20,595,000; 65 farms that produced soybeans on 16,085 acres, generating sales of $11,070,000; and 53 farms that produced wheat for grain on 7,755 acres, generating $4,430,000 in sales.

Chart 5. Crops by Acreage, 2022



SOURCE: Data collected from the USDA's Cropland CropSpace, 2022

Approximately 74 farms sold nursery crops, sod, and other crops grown under glass or other protection. Approximately 955,880 sq. ft. (equivalent to approximately 21 acres) were under glass or other protection, and 35 acres were in the open. The market value of sales was approximately $12,117,000.

Approximately 49 farms in Monroe County had 1,050 acres in Christmas trees. Of these, 28 farms cut approximately 21,174 trees, generating approximately $930,000 in sales.

Table 3. Harvested Cropland - Selected Crops

	2022		2017		***Change 2017 - 2022***	
	farms	**acres**	**farms**	**acres**	**farms**	**acres**
Corn for grain	76	19,036	68	21,922	11.8%	-13.2%
Forage (land used for hay, haylage, grass silage, greenchop)	129	8,367	164	8,910	-21.3%	-6.1%
Soybeans for beans	65	16,085	70	14,878	-7.1%	8.1%
Wheat for grain	53	7,755	49	10,557	8.2%	-26.5%
Vegetables harvested for sale	108	7,276	117	7,739	-7.7%	-6.0%
Land in orchards	69	1,670	44	1,100	56.8%	51.8%
Land in berries	42	145	25	119	68.0%	21.8%
Harvested cropland - total	**386**	**63,733**	**397**	**69,903**	**-2.8%**	**-8.8%**

Size of farms

More than one-half (58%) of all farms in Monroe County (as defined by the US Census of Agriculture) work fewer than 50 acres. These small farms manage approximately 6% of the farmland in Monroe County.

Of the 93,901 acres of land in farms, 60% were managed by large farms. The 28 farms with 1,000 or more acres managed 60 percent of all acres in production.

Statewide, the distribution of farm sizes has trended towards consolidation and increasingly large farms. From 2017 to 2022, farms with 1,000 to 1,999 acres operated increased 17 percent, farms with 2,000 or more acres operated increased four percent, and all other farm sizes decreased in number and acreage.

Table 4. Monroe County Farm Size by Acres Operated, 2022

Farm Size by Acres Operated, Monroe County, 2022

Acreage Range	Number of Farms in Range	Percent of Total Farms	Acres in Range	Percent of Total Acres	Percent Change in Farms 2017 - 2022
1 - 9	78	15%	296	0.3%	-9%
10 - 49	219	43%	5,378	6%	4%
50 - 69	61	12%	3,533	4%	53%
70 - 99	43	8%	3,545	4%	-19%
100 - 139	25	5%	3,012	3%	-11%
140 - 179	9	2%	1,352	1.4%	-18%
180 - 219	6	1%	1,144	1.2%	-50%
220 - 259	4	1%	997	1.1%	-20%
260 - 499	22	4%	8,113	9%	-29%
500 - 999	16	3%	10,165	11%	-11%
1,000 - 1,999	19	4%	25,723	27%	-14%
2,000+	9	2%	30,643	33%	-10%
Total	511		93,901		-3%

Source: USDA Census of Agriculture

Agricultural Districts

Land enrolled in certified Agricultural Districts pursuant to the NYS Agricultural District program provides additional insight into the number of farms and land in farms. In 2024, a total of 139,890 acres – 33% of all land cover in the County were in one of the two certified Agricultural Districts in Monroe County as of 2024 (see Map 8). Since 1999, when a total of 133,888 acres were in certified Agricultural Districts, the acres of land within Agricultural Districts has increased by 7.2%.

Active Farmland by Soil Classification

Map 10 depicts areas in Monroe County that are currently farmed (based on satellite imagery and parcel data) by USDA agricultural soil classification (Prime Soils; Soils of Statewide Importance; Prime Soils if Drained; Other Soils). This map shows the locations of existing farmland throughout Monroe County and the agricultural soil classification of the areas that are actively farmed and other open areas that may be suitable for agriculture.

Preserved Land

Several farms in Monroe County are permanently preserved through conservation easements held by private land trusts, municipalities or the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). Map 8 depicts the locations of these farmlands.

3. Farmland Conversion

As farmland is generally flat, well-drained and free of environmental constraints, it is often desirable to be developed for non-agricultural purposes. Farmland in Monroe County is susceptible to conversion for residential and other development as well as increasingly for solar energy and electric transmission projects.

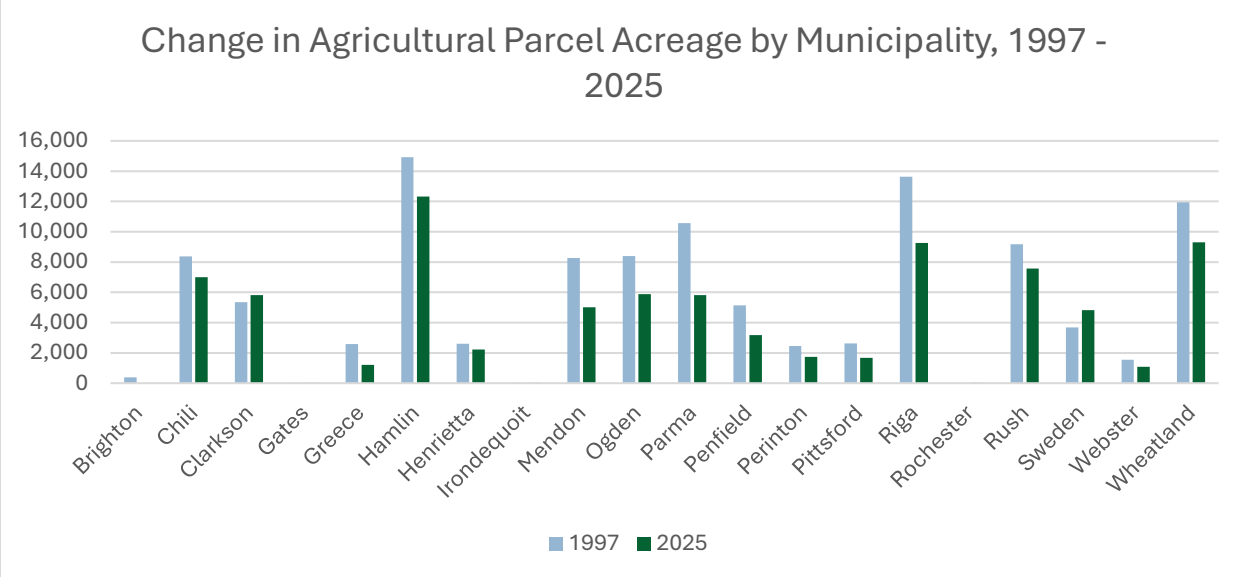
Changes in the agricultural parcels

Analysis of real property data offers a rough approximation of changes in the amount of farmland in Monroe County. The 1999 Plan reported that there were 1,864 parcels with an agricultural property class code in 1997, comprising a total of 111,653.5 acres. In 2025, there were 1,579 parcels comprising 83,869 acres. The total acreage of land in parcels with an agricultural property class code decreased by 24.9%. It is important to note that some parcels changed from a 100 Agricultural Classification to a 241 Residential with Agriculture classification. These parcels had a residence in 2025 but were also used in agricultural production.

Photo 4. De Meyer Family Farm - butternut squash, Parma. Credit: Genesee Land Trust

Table 5. Total Agriculture-Coded Parcels and Acres by Municipality, 1997-2025

	1997		2025		Change 1997 - 2025		
Municipality	**# parcels**	**# acres**	**# parcels**	**# acres**	**# parcels**	**# acres**	
Brighton	17	384.0	0	0.0	-17	-384.0	-100.0%
Chili	134	8,380.9	131	6,999.0	-3	-1,381.9	-16.5%
Clarkson	68	5,342.7	88	5,820.9	20	478.2	9.0%
Gates	5	29.0	1	11.4	-4	-17.6	-60.7%
Greece	74	2,591.4	42	1,215.1	-32	-1,376.3	-53.1%
Hamlin	207	14,925.1	211	12,313.3	4	-2,611.8	-17.5%
Henrietta	49	2,607.5	46	2,223.9	-3	-383.6	-14.7%
Irondequoit	2	7.6	4	18.1	2	10.5	138.2%
Mendon	144	8,257.7	96	5,011.7	-48	-3,246.0	-39.3%
Ogden	176	8,388.4	130	5,870.7	-46	-2,517.7	-30.0%
Parma	189	10,577.9	121	5,812.7	-68	-4,765.2	-45.0%
Penfield	117	5,134.9	79	3,165.6	-38	-1,969.3	-38.4%
Perinton	52	2,452.2	41	1,727.4	-11	-724.8	-29.6%
Pittsford	56	2,627.4	41	1,666.8	-15	-960.6	-36.6%
Riga	218	13,629.0	159	9,250.7	-59	-4,378.3	-32.1%
Rochester	0	0.0	2	0.2	2	0.2	
Rush	116	9,166.7	121	7,568.7	5	-1,598.0	-17.4%
Sweden	53	3,671.2	112	4,818.6	59	1,147.4	31.3%
Webster	30	1,537.9	24	1,081.2	-6	-456.7	-29.7%
Wheatland	157	11,942.1	130	9,293.2	-27	-2,648.9	-22.2%
Totals	**1864**	**111,653.5**	**1579**	**83,869.2**	**-285**	**-27,784.3**	**-24.9%**



SOURCE: Monroe County Agricultural & Farmland Protection Plan 1999 and 2025 Real Property Tax data

An analysis of how parcels classified as agricultural in 2015 were coded in 2025 shows that the total land area of parcels classified as agricultural decreased by approximately 7,716 acres during this 10-year period. Of these, approximately 2,346 acres (30%) were converted to single family dwellings and approximately 2,938 acres (38%) changed to a non-agricultural "Vacant" classification.

Vulnerability Analysis

Over the past several decades, residential development has been the primary driver of farmland conversion in Monroe County. Farmland has also been converted for commercial, solar, conservation and public uses.

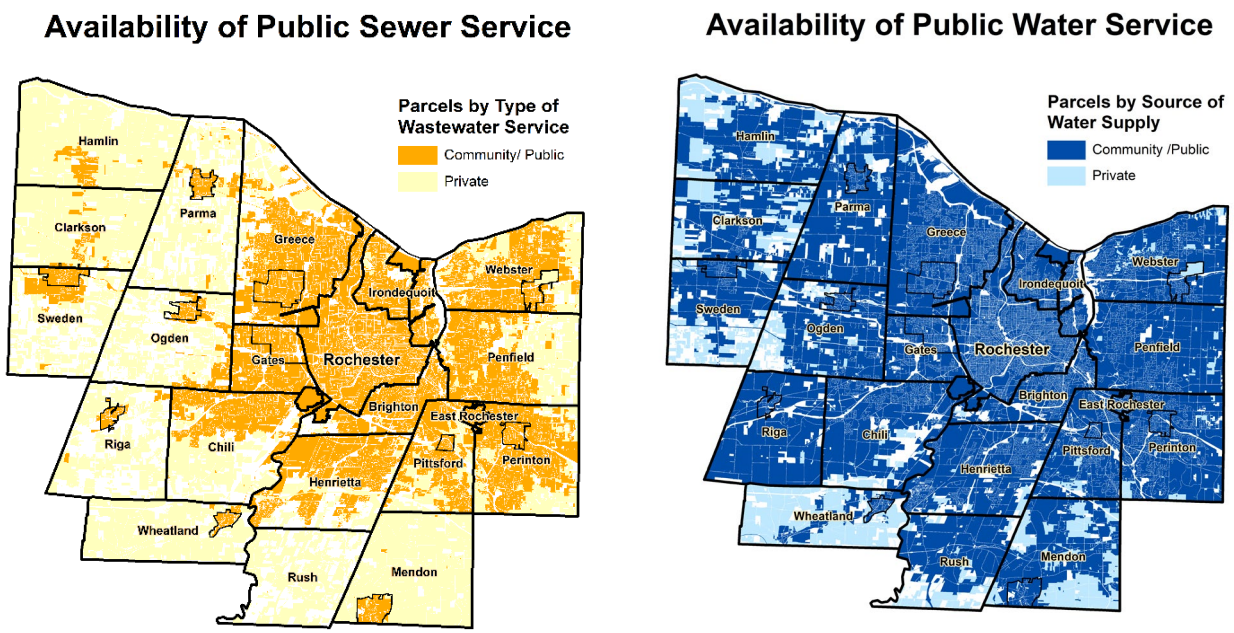
Vulnerability to Residential and Other Development Pressure

Conversion of farmland for residential development occurs both as scattered lot development and as larger-scale residential subdivisions. While larger developments may convert many acres at once, residential development on individual lots or subdivisions of 2-5 lots converts land a few acres at a time, adding up to significant loss over time.

As shown in the figure below, nearly all of Monroe County is currently served by public water systems. The availability of public water supply does not appear to have accelerated residential development in agricultural areas.

Extensions of sewer service into agricultural areas that are not already developed would likely accelerate conversion of farmland to other uses. Areas served by public sewers are highly suitable for the development of new housing and other development. The physical construction of sewer lines may also take farmland.

Figure 2. Availability of Public Sewer and Public Water Services. Source: Real Property Tax Parcel data



Factors Impacting Development Pressure

While it is impossible to predict exactly where and how farms may be sold or converted to non-agricultural uses, certain criteria help identify areas that may be more valuable for development and therefore more susceptible to conversion. Map 12: Agricultural Parcels by Vulnerability to Development shows the location of agricultural parcels that have one or more of the following characteristics:

- *Proximity to previously development land, based on satellite imagery as shown in Map 12*
- *Proximity to major highways (Interstates 490, 390 and 590 and NYS Route 104)*
- *Proximity to sewered areas*

Vulnerability to Solar Energy Development

Conversion of farmland to solar energy development is a continuing concern. As agricultural land is typically flat and not obstructed with buildings or constrained by wetlands or other natural features, it is well-suited for solar energy as well as for residential and other development. Solar energy developments in Monroe County have taken high quality farmland out of production and additional projects on farmland have been proposed.

Previous Solar Energy Development

Analysis of tax parcel data shows that between 2015 and 2024, eight parcels with 264 acres that were formerly classified as agricultural were converted for solar energy development.

According to NY-SUN data maintained by NYSERDA, a total of 2,263 solar projects with total generating capacity of 257 MW have been installed in Monroe County since 2000, including approximately 44 commercial projects with the capacity to generate 2 MW or more. Some of these larger facilities resulted in loss of agricultural lands. Figure 3 below shows the locations of these projects in relation to current farm parcels

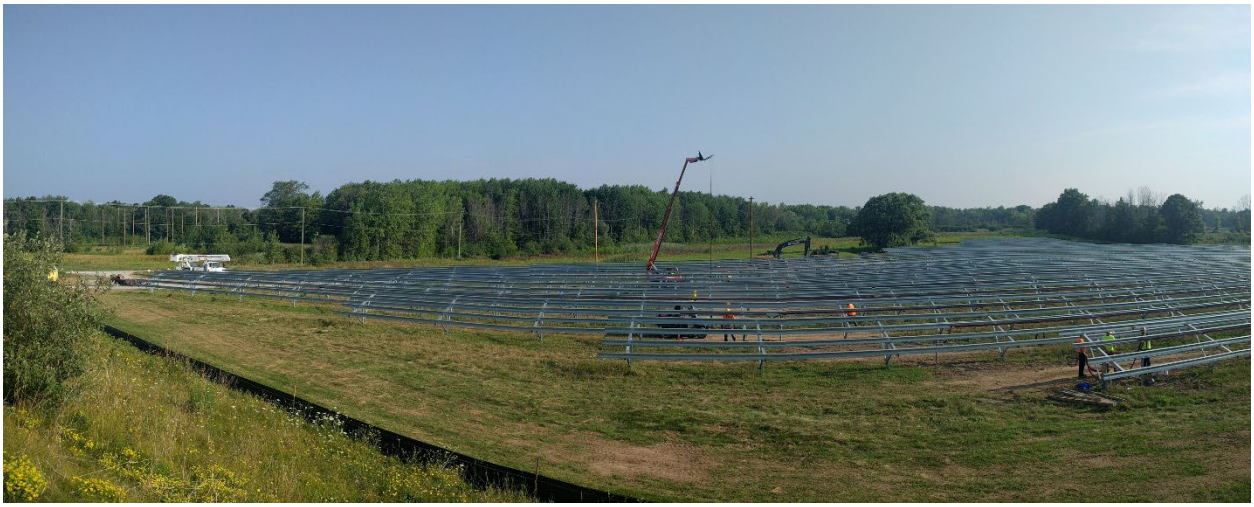
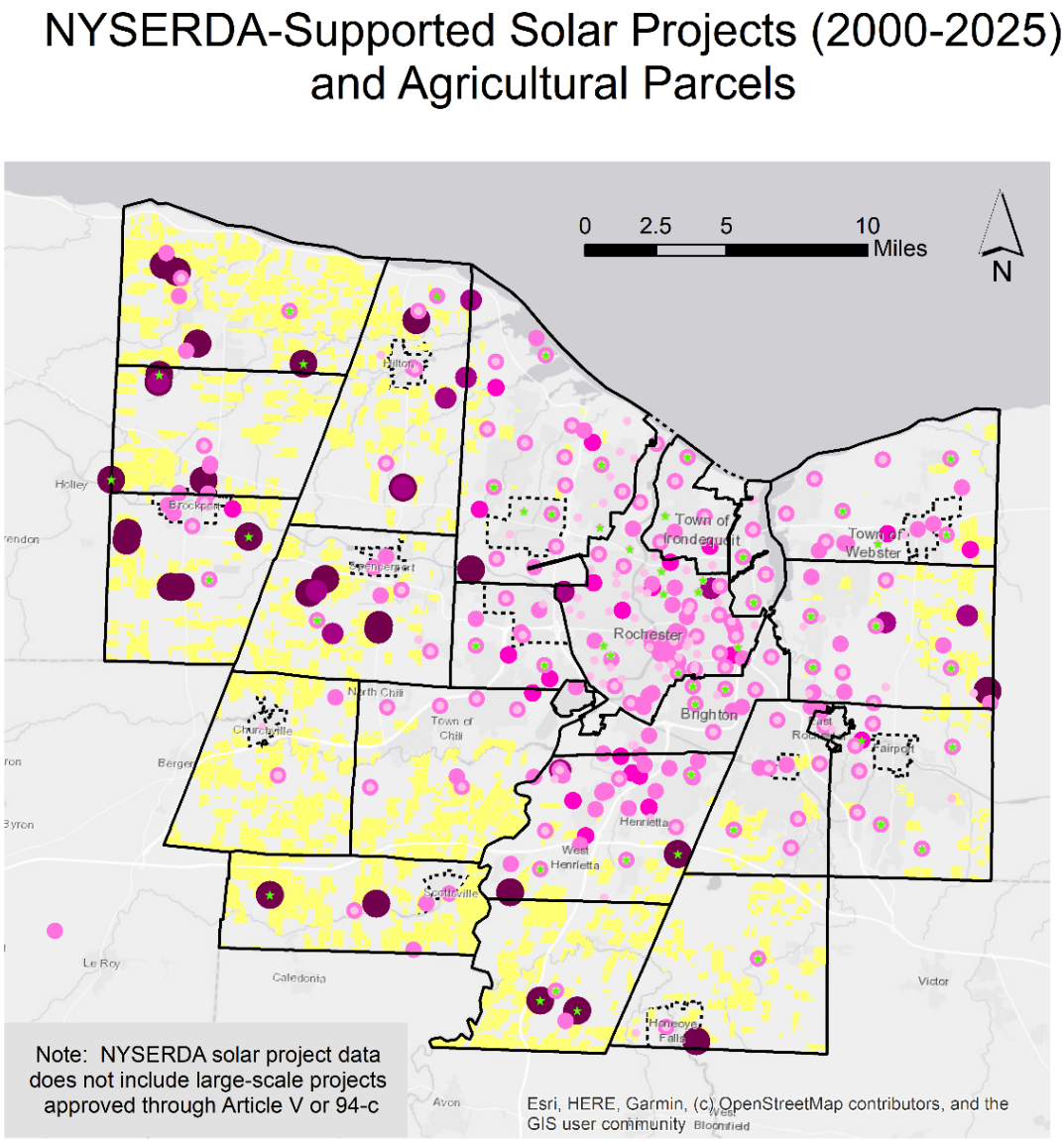


Photo 5. Solar facility under construction on Miller Road in Henrietta, 2018.

Figure 3. NYSERDA-Supported Solar Projects (2000-2025) and Agricultural Parcels (Source: NYSERDA; Real Property Tax data)



Potential for Future Solar Energy Development

Figure 4 below shows agricultural parcels in Monroe County that may be suitable for solar development. For the purpose of this map, areas generally suitable for solar include parcels five acres or larger, excluding the following features:

- Building Footprints
- Developed Land Cover
- Wetlands (NYSDEC and NWI)
- Flood Zones (A and AE)
- NYS Conservation Easement
- Waterbodies
- Roads with a 50ft buffer
- Railroads with a 50ft buffer
- Parks (NYS Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation (OPRHP))
- Protected Areas (per New York Protected Areas Database)
- Electric Transmission with a 25ft buffer
- Election Substation with a 25ft buffer
- Steep slopes

Areas near electrical transmission lines (less than one mile) are generally more attractive for solar energy development than those farther away. To illustrate the relative susceptibility to solar energy development, Figure 4 below shows farm parcels suitable for solar development by distance from transmission lines (less than ¼ mile, between ¼ and ½ mile, ½ to 1 mile, and greater than one mile.)

Solar developers may target farmland for both large-scale projects (>25 MW) that require permits through the NYS Office of Renewable Energy Siting (ORES) and smaller projects that Towns have jurisdiction to approve.

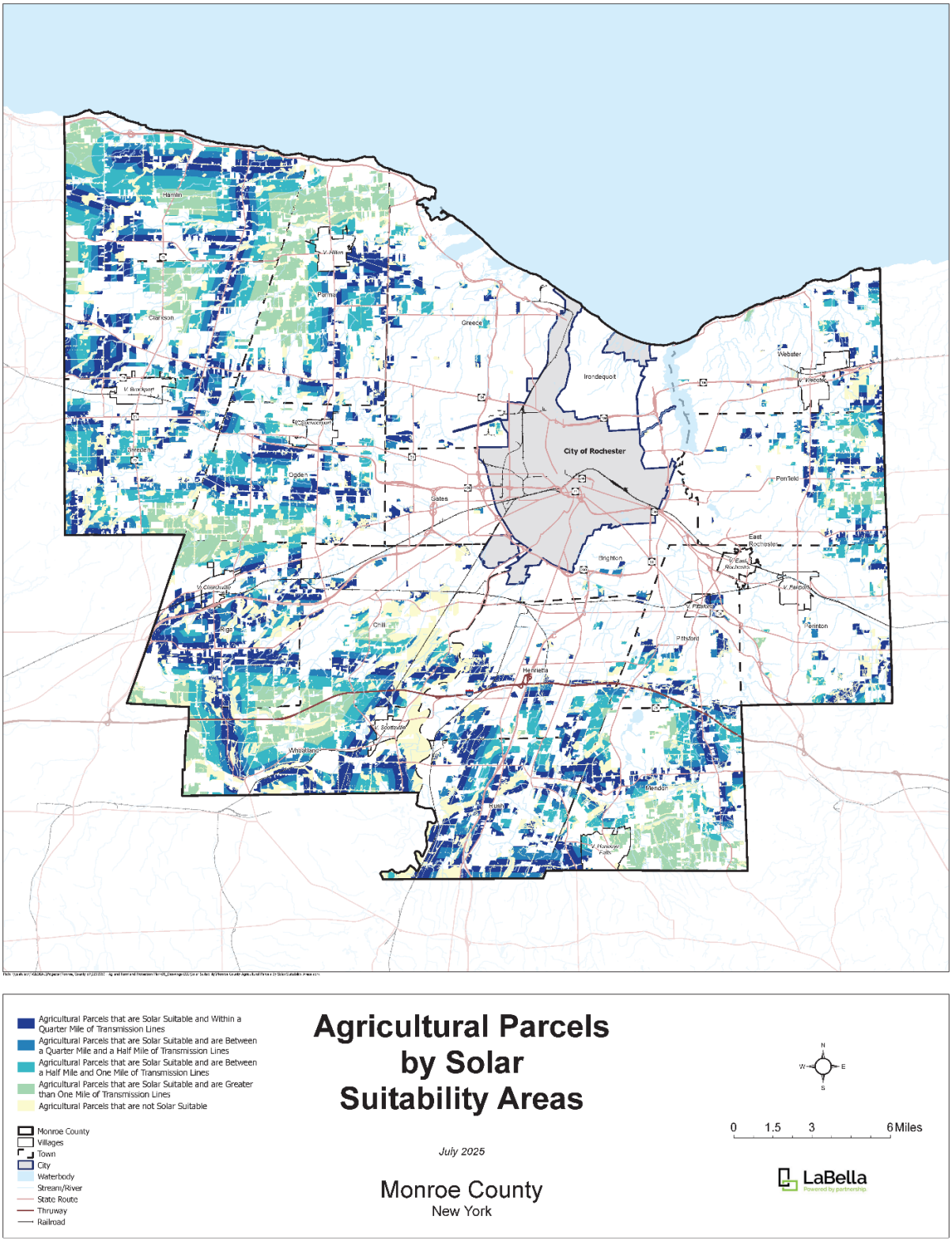
For example, ORES issued a siting permit for a large scale (95-C) project located partially in the Town of Rush in December 2022. This project is expected to have 180 MW of generating capacity, of which 8.4 MW is in Monroe County (Town of Rush). While the siting permit Includes provisions to minimize impacts on agricultural lands and incorporate sheep grazing, the land will no longer be available for the traditional types of farming that it was previously used for.

In addition, several smaller-scale (5 – 10 MW) solar development projects throughout Monroe County have been approved and additional projects are expected. Many of these projects take 10-20 acres of land and are likely to include projects constructed on farmland.

Monroe County is not currently involved in negotiating Payments in Lieu of Taxes (PILOT) agreements for solar projects but could potentially influence the design and approval of solar projects if the developer requests financial assistance from COMIDA through a Payment in Lieu of Taxes (PILOT) agreement.

Extensions of electric transmission lines and upgrades to other electric infrastructure, currently supported and incentivized by New York State, have the potential to use agricultural lands and block off access to farmland. While these infrastructure upgrades are needed and supported by New York State to improve the overall grid and support renewable energy development, construction of lines impacts agricultural lands through direct conversion and by reducing the efficiency and profitability of a farm operation when they cross farm fields.

Figure 4. Agricultural Parcels Potentially Suitable for Solar Development



4. Existing Plans & Programs – Farmland Protection

The following list of programs illustrates the type and range of programs, agencies and organizations involved in farmland protection. The list is not exhaustive, as programs change or are discontinued and new programs are introduced.

NYS Agricultural District Program

As of November 2025, there is one NYS-certified Agricultural District in Monroe County. Prior to the most recent renewal, there were two NYS-certified Agricultural Districts in Monroe County, the Eastern District and the Western District. The Eastern District covered land within the municipalities of Henrietta, Mendon, Penfield, Perinton, Pittsford, Rush, and Webster. The Western District covered land within the municipalities of Chili, Clarkson, Gates, Greece, Hamlin, Ogden, Parma, Riga, Sweden, and Wheatland.

In accordance with Sections 303-a of NYS Agriculture and Markets Law Article 25AA) NYS Agricultural District Law), Agricultural Districts must be renewed every eight years, As both the Eastern and Western Agricultural Districts were up for review in 2025, Monroe County consolidated the two districts into a single Agricultural District as part of the 2025 reviews.

While parcels can only be removed from a certified Agricultural Districts during the 8-year review periods, landowners may request to have their parcels added to a district yearly during the annual open enrollment period. In Monroe County, this period goes from March 1st to March 30th.

The Agricultural Districts program is intended to support the long-term economic viability of agricultural production through the following benefits:

1. **Agricultural Use Assessments**: Section 305.1 of NYS Agricultural Districts Law allows eligible farmland to be taxed based on its value for agricultural production, rather than at its fair market value. Landowners must apply annually to receive agricultural use assessments. The land must be used in a farm operation that meets the eligibility requirements specified in the definition of "Land used in agricultural production" in NYS Agricultural Districts Law Section 301.
2. **Protection from Unreasonable Local Regulations:** Local governments may not enforce laws, ordinances, rules, or regulations which would unreasonably restrict or regulate farm operations within an agricultural district unless it can be shown that public health or safety is threatened. (Agricultural Districts law Section 305-a)
3. **Discourages Private Nuisance Lawsuits:** the NYS Department of Agriculture & Markets will issue opinions and interpretations regarding what is considered a "sound agricultural practice". Such practices cannot be considered nuisances in private lawsuits.
4. **Limits Impacts from Public Projects:** State agencies, local governments, and public benefit corporations who intend to acquire more than one acre of land from any active farm within an agricultural district or more than 10 acres in total from a district must file a notice of intent with the Commissioner of Agriculture and the County agricultural and farmland protection board. (Agricultural Districts law Section 305.4)
5. **Limits Power of Special improvement Districts:** Limits the power of special improvement districts such as water or sewer districts to impose rates or fees for agricultural land that does

not directly benefit from the improvement, such as for a water line that passes along unimproved farm fields. (Agricultural Districts law Section 305.6)

NYS Purchase of Development Rights

The **NYS Farmland Protection Implementation Grant (FPIG) Program** administered by the New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets provides funding for the purchase of development rights (PDR) to farmland. While the most frequently funded activity through this program is the purchase of development rights on individual farms, FPIG may also award funding to enable other implementation activities, such as amendments to local laws affecting agriculture. (See NYS Department of Agriculture and Markets Grant Opportunities webpage for more information.)

Land Trusts

The Genesee Land Trust (GLT), based in Rochester, New York, and the Genesee Valley Conservancy, based in Geneseo, NY, holds several conservation easements on farmland in Monroe County. Land trusts work with municipalities and farmland owners to obtain grant funding to purchase development rights to farmland. GLT also provides information through workshops and individual consultation to farmers interested in permanent protection of their farmland.

USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)

The US Department of Agriculture Natural Resources Conservation Service (USDA NRCS) administers the Agricultural Conservation Easement Program which helps private landowners, land trusts, and local governments protect farmland through conservation easements. The Agricultural Conservation Easement Program provides up to 50% of the value of a conservation easement, or 75% if the land has special environmental characteristics. Funding was allocated in the 2018 Farm Bill with additional funding provided through the Inflation Reduction Act. Landowners, municipalities, and land trusts are eligible to apply.

Farmland for a New Generation

Farmland for a New Generation, a program established by the American Farmland Trust, connects landowners with farmland to sell with farmers seeking to purchase land. The program also connects farmers and farmland owners to resources to help with estate and transition planning.

Municipal Comprehensive Planning and Agricultural Preservation

The table shown below provides a snapshot of all municipalities in Monroe County, identifying the year each adopted or last updated its comprehensive plan alongside the date of its most recent agriculture and farmland protection plan. This information highlights where local planning efforts currently stand and identifies gaps or opportunities for municipalities that have not updated these documents in recent years. Comprehensive plans serve as a blueprint for long-range community development. When agricultural goals and farmland protection strategies are incorporated into these plans, or when municipalities adopt stand-alone agriculture and farmland protection plans, they create clear policy frameworks that support local agricultural viability and guide land use decisions.

Under New York State's Agriculture and Markets Law, municipalities are encouraged to develop agricultural and farmland protection plans to identify, protect, and support local agricultural resources. These plans typically include an analysis of land with agricultural value, the level of development pressure, and locally tailored strategies to maintain agricultural productivity and open space. The New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets provides several funding opportunities to assist municipalities and counties with both the development and implementation of agriculture and farmland protection plans. Planning grants are available to assist local governments prepare plans that identify farmland resources and recommend strategies. Implementation grants are also available to support actions consistent with locally adopted plans, while the Land Trust Grants Program provides funding to land trusts for activities that will assist municipalities with their agricultural and farmland protection efforts. More information on agricultural and farmland protection related grants can be found on New York State Agriculture and Markets' website.

These planning and funding mechanisms help ensure that agricultural lands are protected and remain productive. By aligning municipal comprehensive plans with agriculture and farmland protection efforts, local governments can strengthen their agricultural resource protection, encourage investment in farming infrastructure, support the long-term economic viability of agriculture, and improve eligibility for agriculture related grants.

Table 6. Municipal Comprehensive and Agricultural Plan Adoption Dates

Municipality	Comprehensive Plan	Agriculture & Farmland Protection Plan
TOWNS		
Brighton	2018	N/A
Chili	2022	2015
Clarkson	2022	N/A
East Rochester	2025	N/A
Gates	2022	N/A
Greece	2020	N/A
Hamlin	N/A	2025
Henrietta	2019	2018
Irondequoit	2024	N/A
Mendon	2023	N/A
Ogden	2024	2012
Parma	2024	2009
Penfield	2023	N/A
Perinton	2021	2012
Pittsford	2019	N/A
Riga	2017	N/A
Rochester (City)	2019	N/A
Rush	2023	2012
Sweden	2019	N/A
Webster	2008	N/A
Wheatland	2004	2015
VILLAGES		
Brockport	2019	N/A
Churchville	2017	N/A
East Rochester	2025	N/A
Fairport	2021	N/A
Hilton	1977	N/A
Honeoye Falls	2021	N/A
Pittsford	2019	N/A
Scottsville	2004	N/A
Spencerport	2012	N/A
Webster	2011	N/A

Plans Updated Within the Last 10 Years

Plans 10-20 Years Since Last Update

Plans 20 + Years Since Last Update or No Plan

Photo 6. Van Voorhis farm, Henrietta. Credit: Adam Montoya

Map 1. Aerial Basemap

AERIAL BASEMAP
MONROE COUNTY, NY
AGRICULTURAL & FARMLAND
PROTECTION PLAN

- MONROE COUNTY
- VILLAGE BOUNDARY
- TOWN BOUNDARY
- PARK
- WATERBODY
- STREAM / RIVER
- STATE ROUTE
- THRUWAY / LIMTED ACCESS HIGHWAY

MONROE COUNTY QUICK FACTS:

LAKE ONTARIO SHORELINE: ***39.8 MILES***

AREA: **426,298 ACRES** OR **666.01 MILES²**

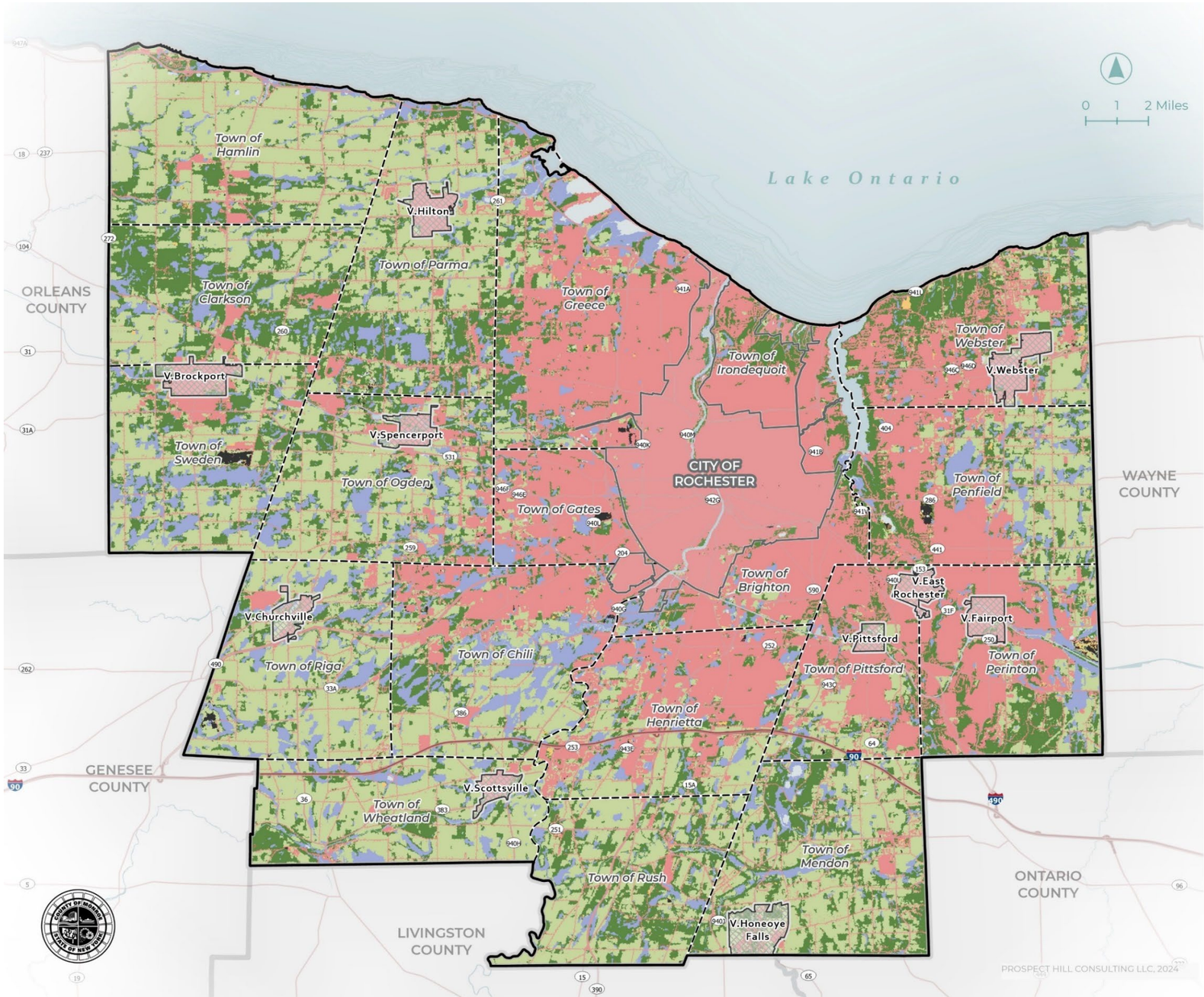
TOPOGRAPHY:
MIN. ELEVATION: **236 FT**
MAX. ELEVATION: **1,112 FT**

POPULATION:
2022 ESTIMATE: **752,035**
2021 ACTUAL: **744,344**

1% INCREASE

NYS ITS GEOSPATIAL SERVICES, WESTCHESTER COUNTY GIS ; MONROE COUNTY 2023; ESRI 2024; NYS OFFICE OF INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY SERVICES GEOSPATIAL DATA SERVICES 2024; USGS NATIONAL HYDROGRAPHY DATASET PLUS HIGH RESOLUTION 2020; U.S. GREAT LAKES RESTORATION INITIATIVE (GLRI) 2010; NATIONAL GEOPHYSICAL DATA CENTER - BATHYMETRY OF LAKE ONTARIO, 1999; U.S CENSUS BUREAU ACS 5-YEAR ESTIMATES 2018-2022

Map 2. Land Cover



LAND COVER
MONROE COUNTY, NY
AGRICULTURAL & FARMLAND PROTECTION PLAN

- BARREN
- AGRICULTURE
- DEVELOPED
- FOREST
- HERBACEOUS
- SHRUBLAND
- WATER
- WETLANDS

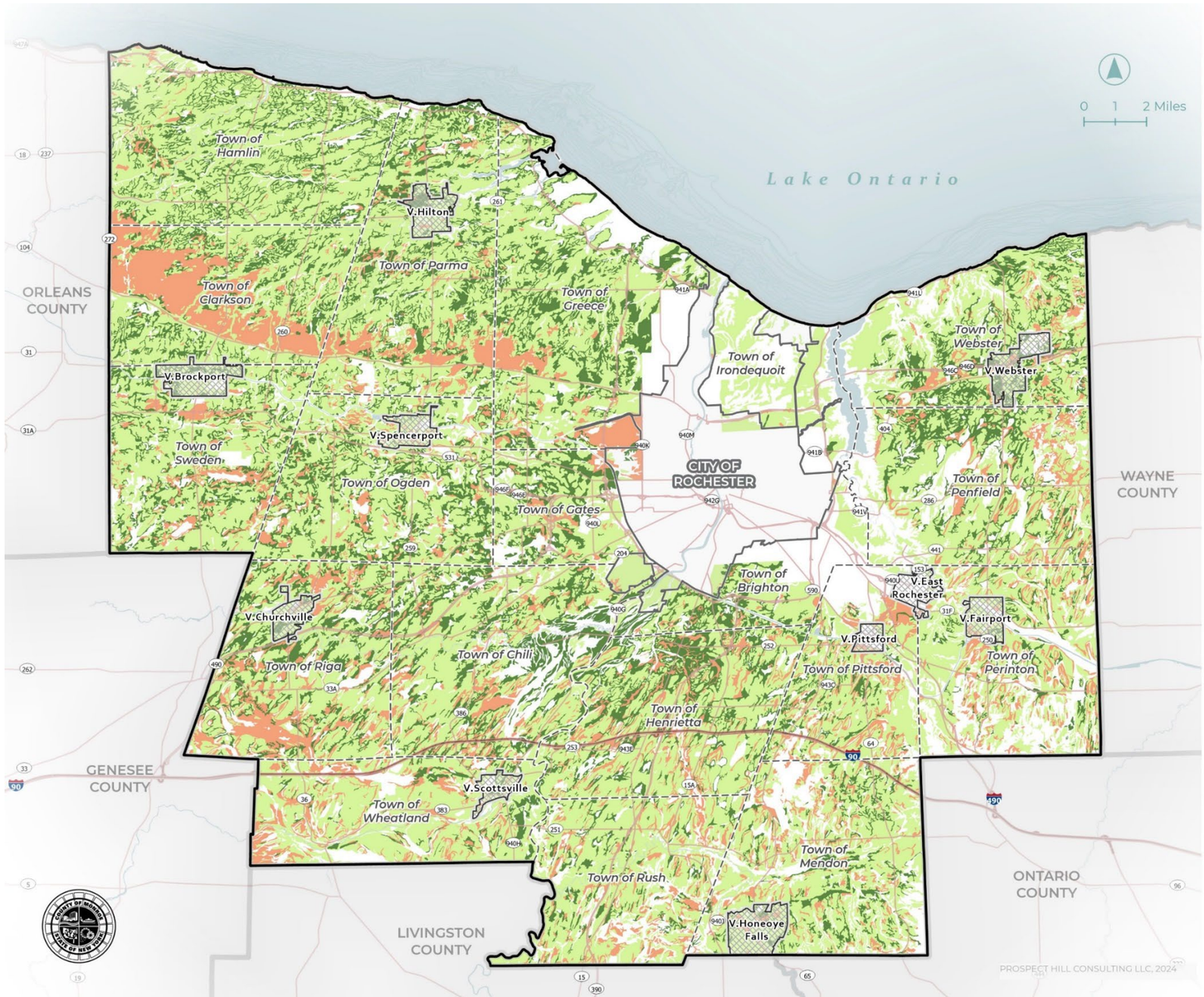
LAND COVER IN MONROE COUNTY (%)

BARREN	1,303 ACRES (**0.3%**)
SHRUBLAND	1,351 ACRES (**0.3%**)
HERBACEOUS	1,406 ACRES (**0.3%**)
WATER	5,255 ACRES (**1.2%**)
WETLANDS	46,103 ACRES (**10.8%**)
FORESTED	82,400 ACRES (**19.3%**)
AGRICULTURE	140,715 AC. (**33%**)
DEVELOPED	147,766 AC. (**34.7%**)

- MONROE COUNTY
- TOWN BOUNDARY
- VILLAGE BOUNDARY
- CITY BOUNDARY
- WATERBODY
- STREAM / RIVER
- STATE ROUTE
- THRUWAY / LIMTED ACCESS HIGHWAY

MONROE COUNTY 2023; ESRI 2024; NYS OFFICE OF INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY SERVICES GEOSPATIAL DATA SERVICES 2024; USGS NATIONAL HYDROGRAPHY DATASET PLUS HIGH RESOLUTION 2020; U.S. GREAT LAKES RESTORATION INITIATIVE (GLRI) 2010; NATIONAL GEOPHYSICAL DATA CENTER - BATHYMETRY OF LAKE ONTARIO, 1999; USGS 2023

Map 3. Agricultural Soil Suitability (USDA)



AGRICULTURAL SOIL SUITABILITY - PRIME FARMLANDS MONROE COUNTY, NY

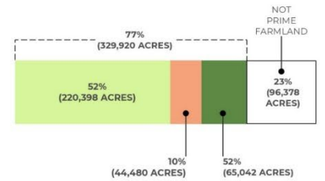
AGRICULTURAL & FARMLAND PROTECTION PLAN

AGRICULTURAL SOIL CLASSIFICATION (USDA)

- ALL AREAS ARE PRIME FARMLAND[1]
- FARMLAND OF STATEWIDE IMPORTANCE
- PRIME FARMLAND IF DRAINED[1]

[1] PRIME FARMLAND, AS DEFINED BY THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE (USDA), IS LAND THAT HAS THE BEST COMBINATION OF PHYSICAL AND CHEMICAL CHARACTERISTICS FOR PRODUCING FOOD, FEED, FORAGE, FIBER, AND OILSEED CROPS AND IS AVAILABLE FOR THESE USES. IT COULD BE CULTIVATED LAND, PASTURELAND, FORESTLAND, OR OTHER LAND, BUT IT IS NOT URBAN OR BUILT-UP LAND OR WATER AREAS. THE SOIL QUALITY, GROWING SEASON, AND MOISTURE SUPPLY ARE THOSE NEEDED FOR THE SOIL TO ECONOMICALLY PRODUCE SUSTAINED HIGH YIELDS OF CROPS WHEN PROPER MANAGEMENT, INCLUDING WATER MANAGEMENT, AND ACCEPTABLE FARMING METHODS ARE APPLIED. (USDA, 2015)

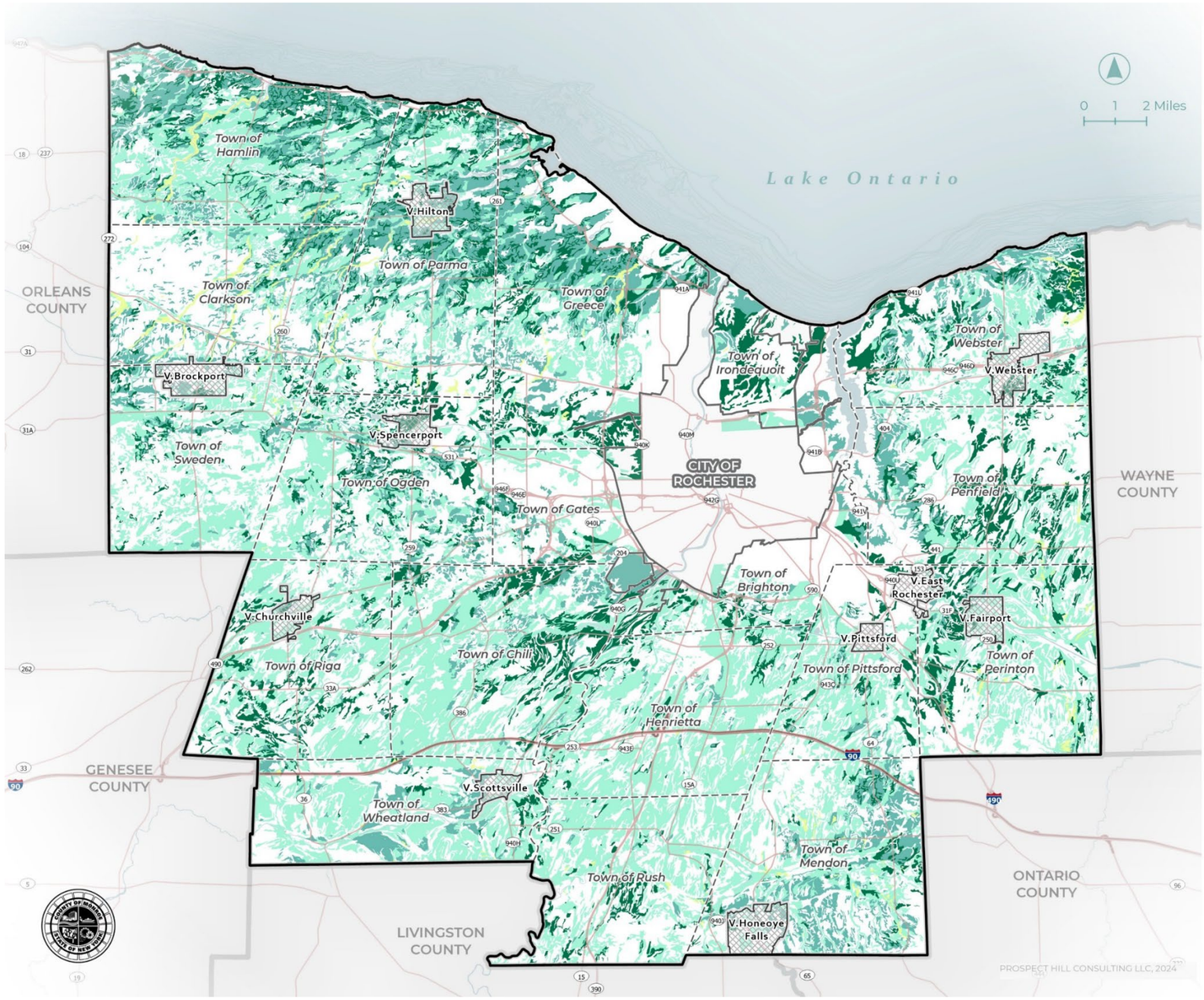
AG. SOIL SUITABILITY SUMMARY IN COUNTY



- MONROE COUNTY
- TOWN BOUNDARY
- VILLAGE BOUNDARY
- CITY BOUNDARY
- STATE ROUTE
- THRUWAY / LIMTED ACCESS HIGHWAY

MONROE COUNTY 2023; ESRI 2024; NYS OFFICE OF INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY SERVICES GEOSPATIAL DATA SERVICES 2024; USGS NATIONAL HYDROGRAPHY DATASET PLUS HIGH RESOLUTION 2020; U.S. GREAT LAKES RESTORATION INITIATIVE (GLRI) 2010; NATIONAL GEOPHYSICAL DATA CENTER - BATHYMETRY OF LAKE ONTARIO, 1999; U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE, NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE - SOIL SURVEY GEOGRAPHIC (SSURGO) DATABASE FOR MONROE COUNTY NY 2018; NYSERDA 2022 SOILS DATA FOR USE IN THE LARGE-SCALE RENEWABLES AND NY-SUN PROGRAMS 2023

Map 4. Agricultural Soil Suitability - Mineral Soil Groups



AGRICULTURAL SOIL SUITABILITY - MINERAL SOIL GROUPS MONROE COUNTY, NY

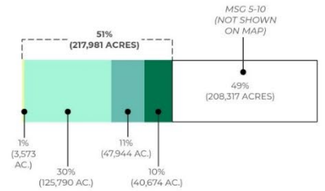
AGRICULTURAL & FARMLAND PROTECTION PLAN

MINERAL SOIL GROUPS[1] (MSG) 1 - 4

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4

[1] MSG 1-4 CLASSIFICATIONS ARE DEFINED AND USED BY THE NYS DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE AND MARKETS TO CLASSIFY THE STATE'S AGRICULTURAL LANDS BASED UPON SOIL PRODUCTIVITY AND CAPABILITY. EACH COUNTY IN NEW YORK STATE HAS A LISTING OF ALL SOIL TYPES PRESENT IN THE COUNTY ASSOCIATED WITH A SPECIFIC MINERAL SOIL GROUP, MSG 1 THROUGH 10. (NYSERDA, 2015)

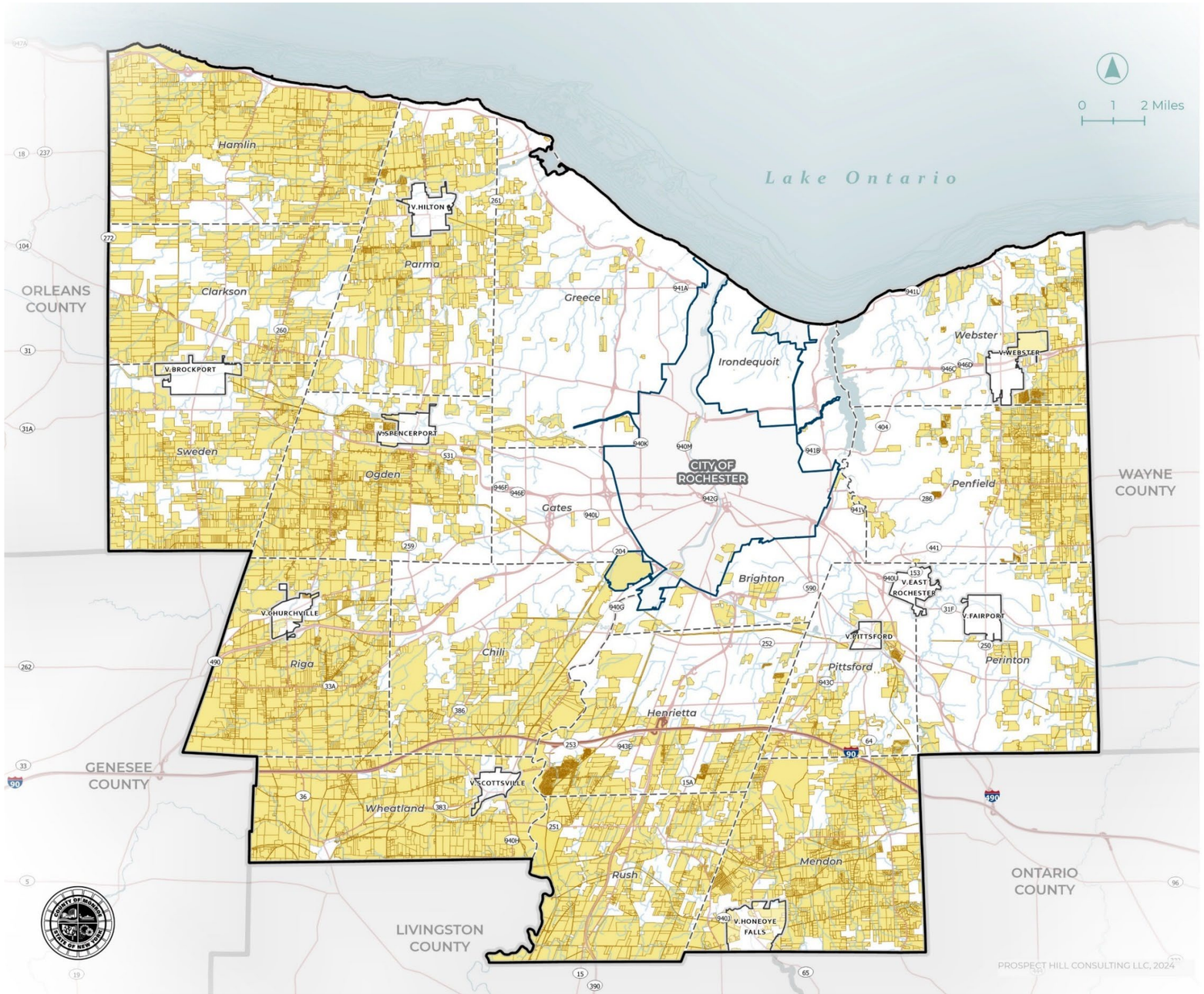
AG. SOIL SUITABILITY SUMMARY IN COUNTY



- MONROE COUNTY
- TOWN BOUNDARY
- VILLAGE BOUNDARY
- CITY BOUNDARY
- STATE ROUTE
- THRUWAY / LIMTED ACCESS HIGHWAY

MONROE COUNTY 2023; ESRI 2024; NYS OFFICE OF INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY SERVICES GEOSPATIAL DATA SERVICES 2024; USGS NATIONAL HYDROGRAPHY DATASET PLUS HIGH RESOLUTION 2020; U.S. GREAT LAKES RESTORATION INITIATIVE (GLRI) 2010; NATIONAL GEOPHYSICAL DATA CENTER - BATHYMETRY OF LAKE ONTARIO, 1999; U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE, NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE - SOIL SURVEY GEOGRAPHIC (SSURGO) DATABASE FOR MONROE COUNTY NY 2018; NYSERDA 2022 SOILS DATA FOR USE IN THE LARGE-SCALE RENEWABLES AND NY-SUN PROGRAMS 2023

Map 5. Agricultural Parcels



AGRICULTURAL PARCELS MONROE COUNTY, NY

AGRICULTURAL & FARMLAND PROTECTION PLAN

AGRICULTURAL PARCELS

ALL AGRICULTURAL PARCELS: 13,931

- PARCELS CODED AS AGRICULTURAL OR RESIDENTIAL WITH AG PROPERTY CLASSIFICATIONS: 1,771
- PARCELS WITHIN AGRICULTURAL DISTRICTS: 12,513
- PARCELS WITH 7-ACRES OR MORE OF CROPLAND/PASTURE LAND COVER (LULC): 3,504

MONROE COUNTY

TOWN BOUNDARY

VILLAGE BOUNDARY

CITY BOUNDARY

WATERBODY

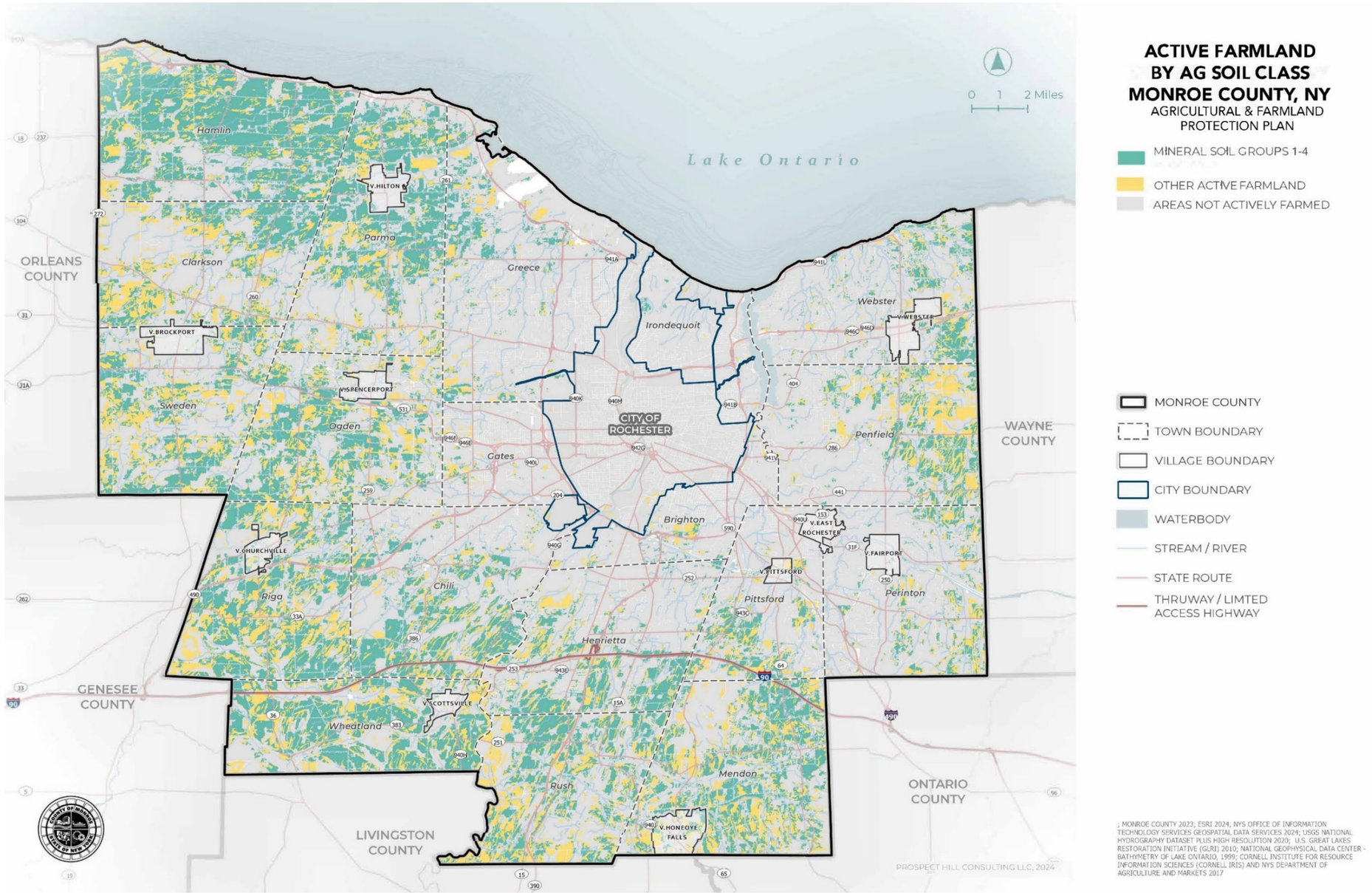
STREAM / RIVER

STATE ROUTE

THRUWAY / LIMTED ACCESS HIGHWAY

; MONROE COUNTY 2023; ESRI 2024; NYS OFFICE OF INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY SERVICES GEOSPATIAL DATA SERVICES 2024; USGS NATIONAL HYDROGRAPHY DATASET PLUS HIGH RESOLUTION 2020; U.S. GREAT LAKES RESTORATION INITIATIVE (GLRI) 2010; NATIONAL GEOPHYSICAL DATA CENTER - BATHYMETRY OF LAKE ONTARIO, 1999; CORNELL INSTITUTE FOR RESOURCE INFORMATION SCIENCES (CORNELL IRIS) AND NYS DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE AND MARKETS 2017

Map 6. Active Farmland by Mineral Soil Group Classification



ACTIVE FARMLAND BY AG SOIL CLASS MONROE COUNTY, NY

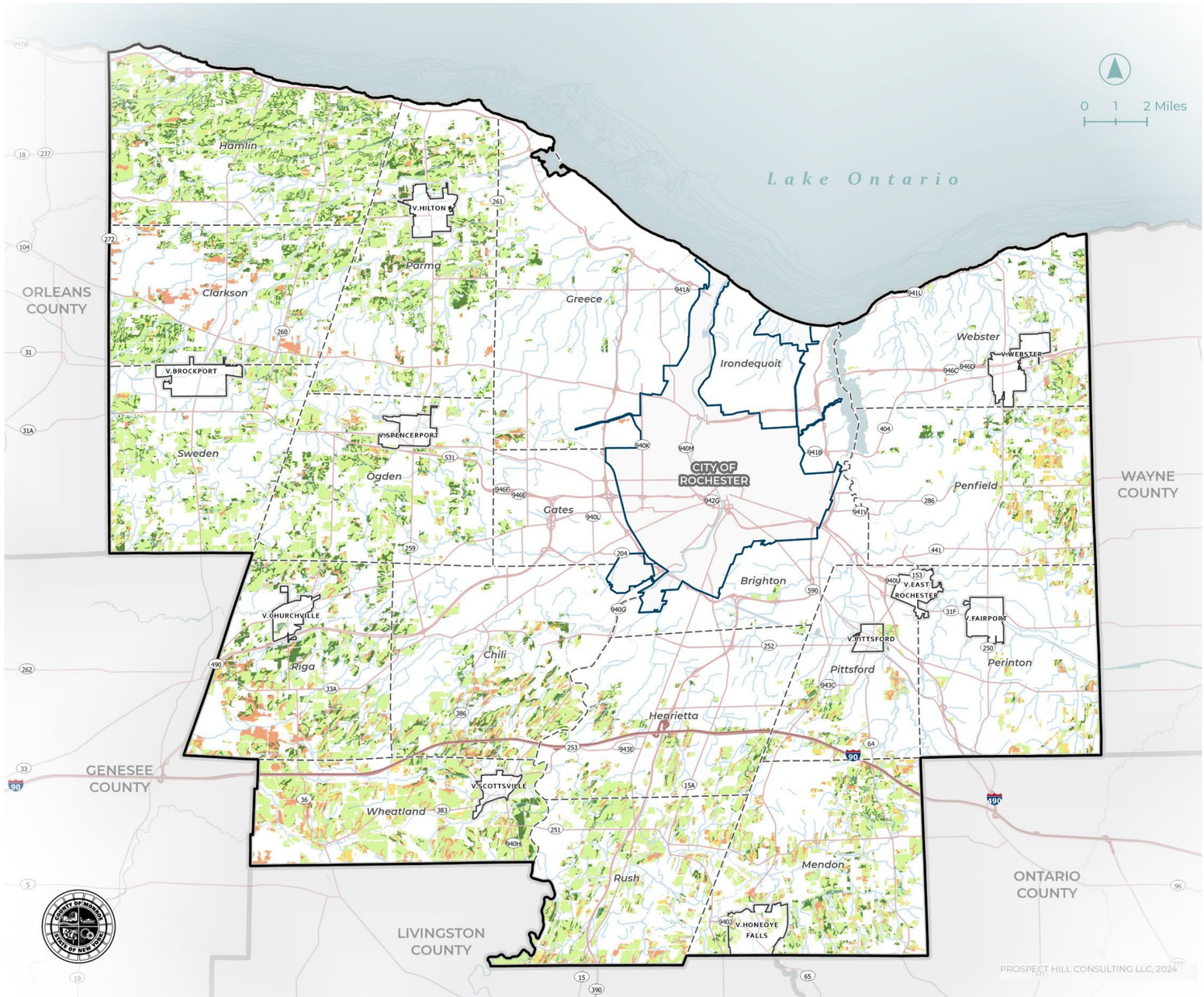
AGRICULTURAL & FARMLAND PROTECTION PLAN

- MINERAL SOIL GROUPS 1-4
- OTHER ACTIVE FARMLAND
- AREAS NOT ACTIVELY FARMED

- MONROE COUNTY
- TOWN BOUNDARY
- VILLAGE BOUNDARY
- CITY BOUNDARY
- WATERBODY
- STREAM / RIVER
- STATE ROUTE
- THRUWAY / LIMTED ACCESS HIGHWAY

; MONROE COUNTY 2023; ESRI 2024; NYS OFFICE OF INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY SERVICES GEOSPATIAL DATA SERVICES 2024; USGS NATIONAL HYDROGRAPHY DATASET PLUS HIGH RESOLUTION 2020; U.S. GREAT LAKES RESTORATION INITIATIVE (GLRI) 2010; NATIONAL GEOPHYSICAL DATA CENTER - BATHYMETRY OF LAKE ONTARIO, 1999; CORNELL INSTITUTE FOR RESOURCE INFORMATION SCIENCES (CORNELL IRIS) AND NYS DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE AND MARKETS 2017

Map 7. Active Farmland by USDA Soil Classification



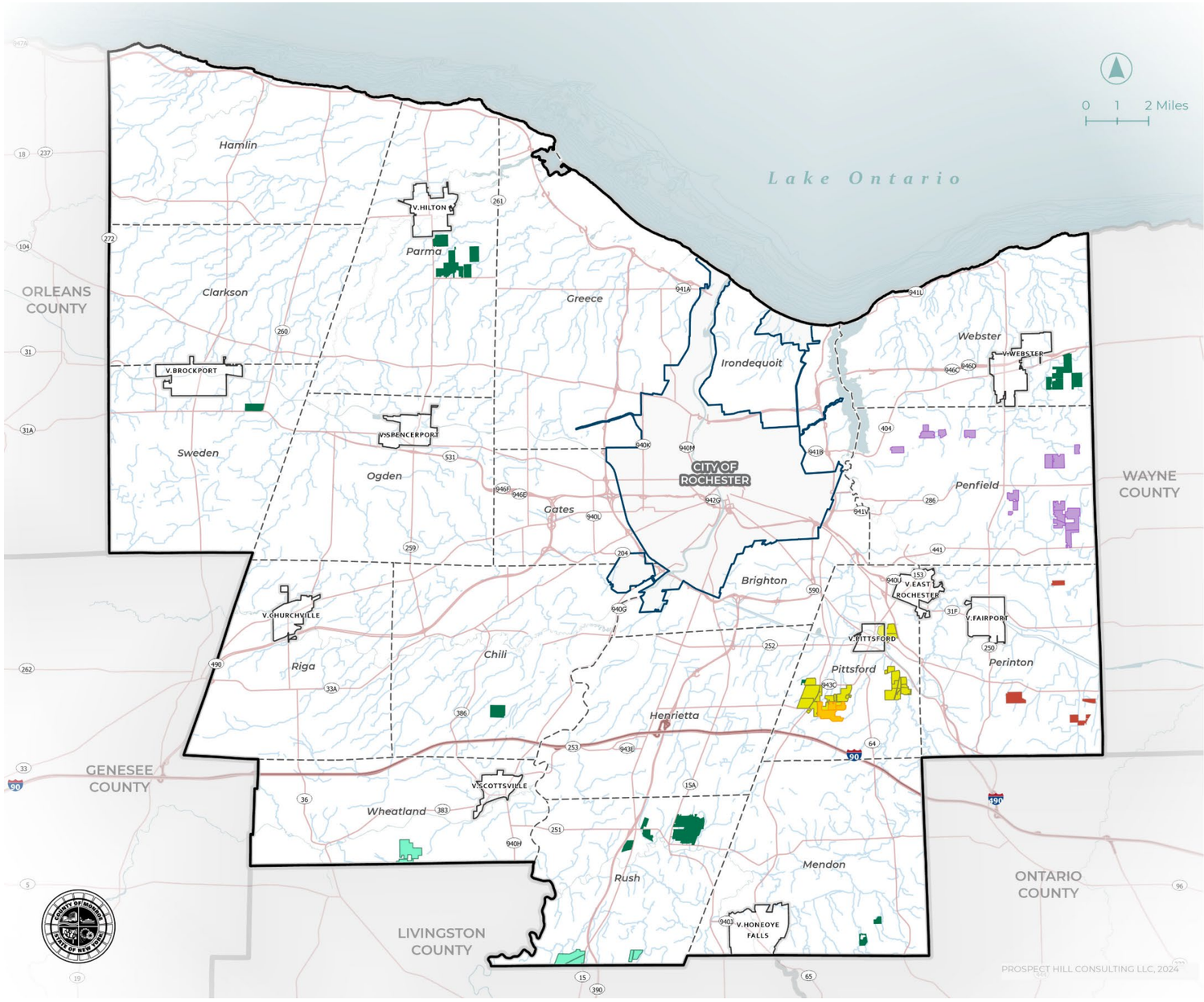
PRIORITY AREAS
MONROE COUNTY, NY
AGRICULTURAL & FARMLAND PROTECTION PLAN

ACTIVE FARMLAND BY USDA SOIL CLASSIFICATION
- PRIME FARMLAND
- SOILS OF STATEWIDE IMPORTANCE
- PRIME FARMLAND IF DRAINED
- OTHER SOILS

- MONROE COUNTY
- TOWN BOUNDARY
- VILLAGE BOUNDARY
- CITY BOUNDARY
- WATERBODY
- STREAM / RIVER
- STATE ROUTE
- THRUWAY / LIMTED ACCESS HIGHWAY

; MONROE COUNTY 2023; ESRI 2024; NYS OFFICE OF INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY SERVICES GEOSPATIAL DATA SERVICES 2024; USGS NATIONAL HYDROGRAPHY DATASET PLUS HIGH RESOLUTION 2020; U.S. GREAT LAKES RESTORATION INITIATIVE (GLRI) 2010; NATIONAL GEOPHYSICAL DATA CENTER - BATHYMETRY OF LAKE ONTARIO, 1999; CORNELL INSTITUTE FOR RESOURCE INFORMATION SCIENCES (CORNELL IRIS) AND NYS DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE AND MARKETS 2017

Map 8. Preserved Farmland



PRESERVED FARMLAND MONROE COUNTY, NY

AGRICULTURAL & FARMLAND PROTECTION PLAN

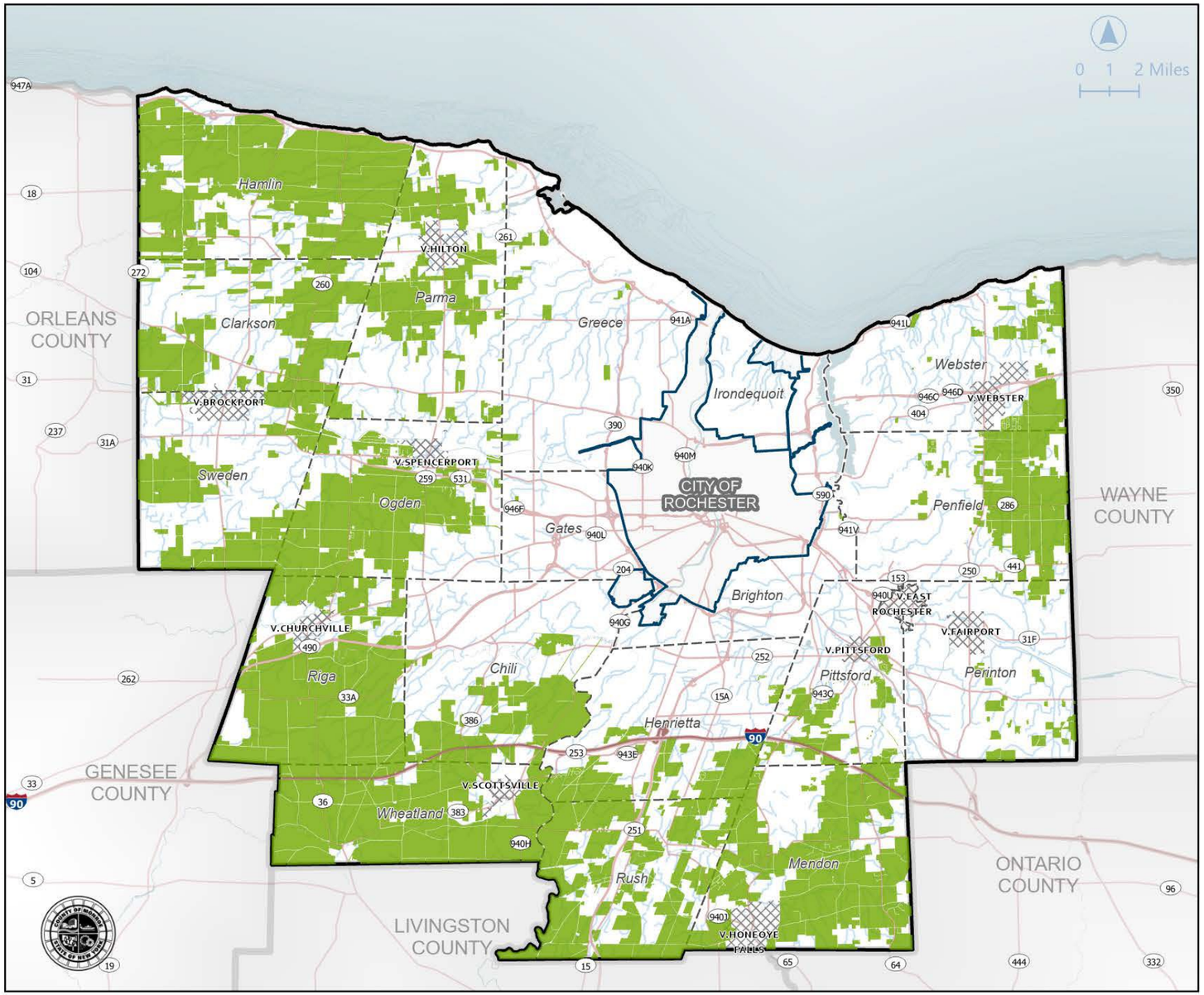
EASEMENT HOLDER

- GENESEE VALLEY LAND CONSERVANCY
- USDA NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE
- TOWN OF PENFIELD
- TOWN OF PITTSFORD
- TOWN OF PERINTON
- GENESEE LAND TRUST

- MONROE COUNTY
- TOWN BOUNDARY
- VILLAGE BOUNDARY
- CITY BOUNDARY
- WATERBODY
- STREAM / RIVER
- STATE ROUTE
- THRUWAY / LIMTED ACCESS HIGHWAY

MONROE COUNTY 2023; ESRI 2024; NYS OFFICE OF INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY SERVICES GEOSPATIAL DATA SERVICES 2024; USGS NATIONAL HYDROGRAPHY DATASET PLUS HIGH RESOLUTION 2020; U.S. GREAT LAKES RESTORATION INITIATIVE (GLRI) 2010; NATIONAL GEOPHYSICAL DATA CENTER - BATHYMETRY OF LAKE ONTARIO, 1999; GENESEE LAND TRUST 2024; NATIONAL CONSERVATION EASEMENT DATABASE (NCED) 2024

Map 9. Agricultural Districts



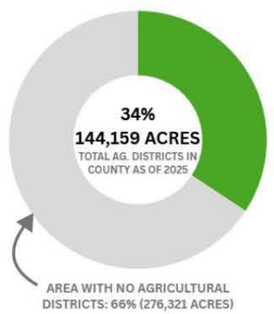
AGRICULTURAL DISTRICTS MONROE COUNTY, NY

AGRICULTURAL & FARMLAND PROTECTION PLAN

- MONROE COUNTY AGRICULTURAL DISTRICTS NO. 5 (CONSOLIDATED 2025)
- MONROE COUNTY
- TOWN BOUNDARY
- VILLAGE BOUNDARY
- CITY BOUNDARY
- WATERBODY
- STREAM / RIVER
- STATE ROUTE
- THRUWAY / LIMTED ACCESS HIGHWAY

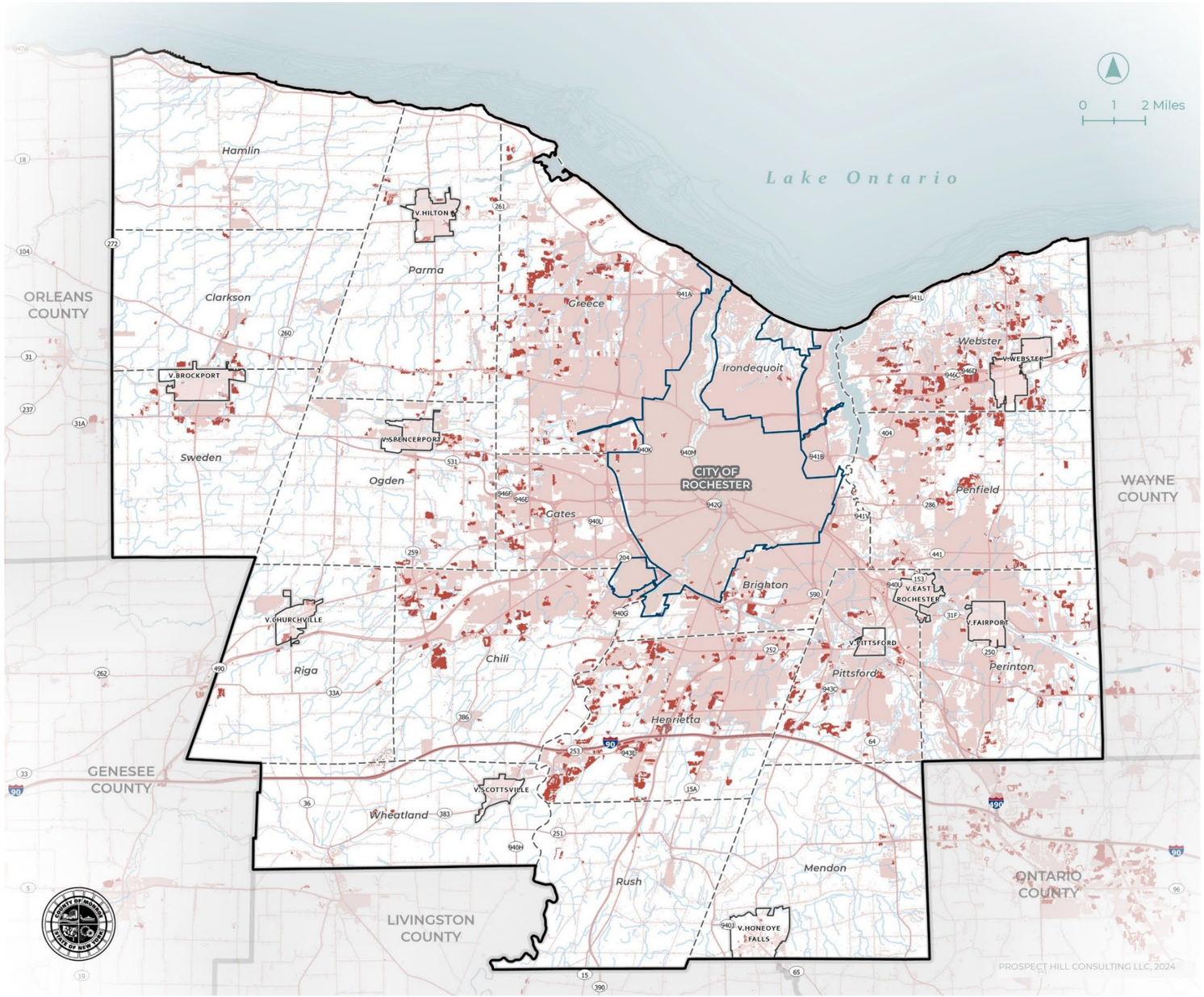
MUNICIPALITIES:
TOWNS OF BRIGHTON, CHILI, CLARKSON, GATES, GREECE, HAMLIN, HENRIETTA, MENDON, OGDEN, PARMA, PERINTON, PENFIELD, PITTSFORD, RIGA, RUSH, SWEDEN, WEBSTER, WHEATLAND
VILLAGES OF CHURCHVILLE, HILTON, HONEOYE FALLS, PITTSFORD, SPENCERPORT

AGRICULTURAL DISTRICTS IN COUNTY (%)



; MONROE COUNTY 2023, ESRI 2024; NYS OFFICE OF INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY SERVICES GEOSPATIAL DATA SERVICES 2024; USGS NATIONAL HYDROPGRAPHY DATASET PLUS HIGH RESOLUTION 2020; U.S. GREAT LAKES RESTORATION INITIATIVE (GLRI) 2010; NATIONAL GEOPHYSICAL DATA CENTER - BATHYMETRY OF LAKE ONTARIO, 1999; CORNELL INSTITUTE FOR RESOURCE INFORMATION SCIENCES (CORNELL IRIS) AND NYS DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE AN MARKETS 2017

Map 10. Changes in Developed Land Cover



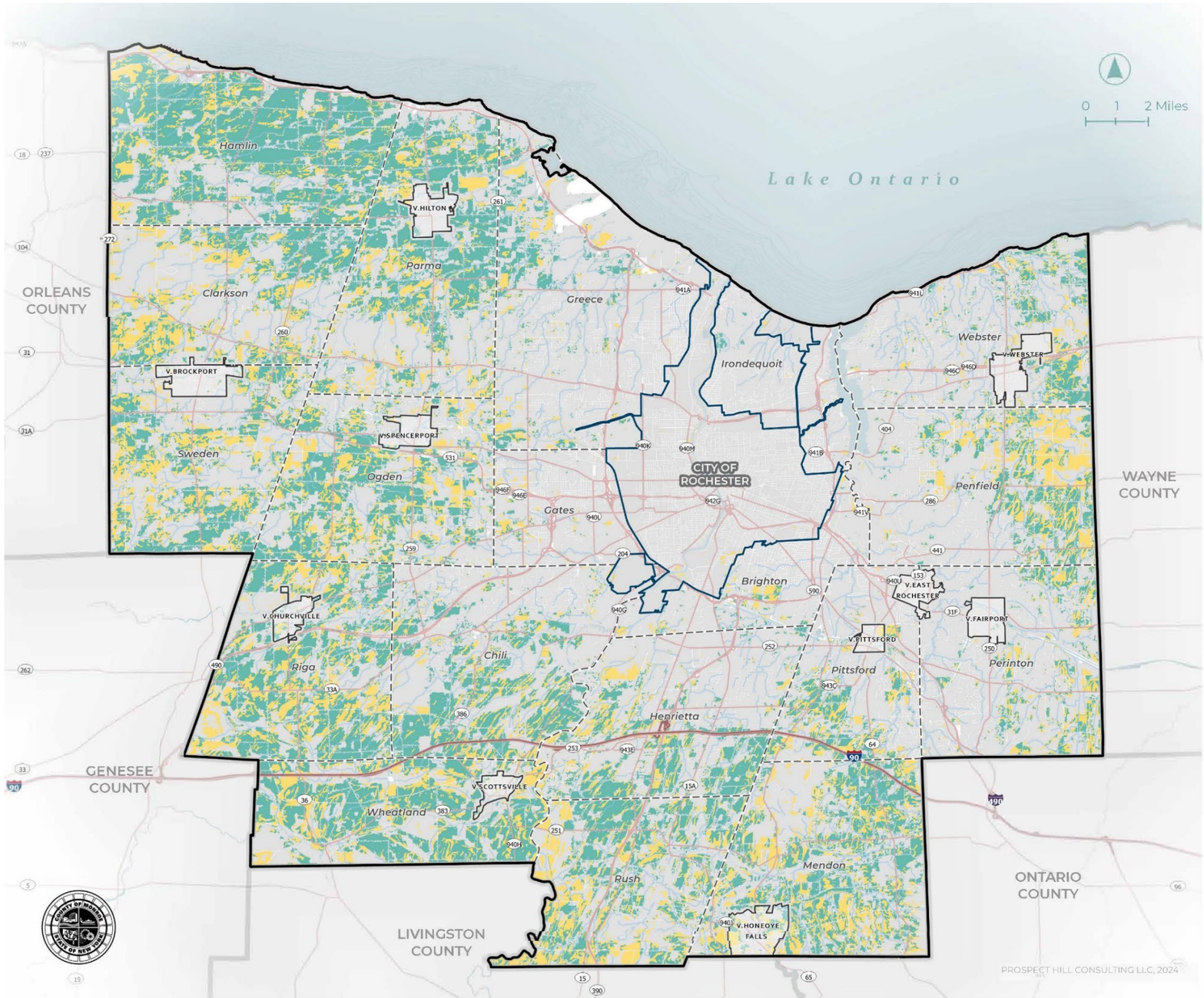
DEVELOPMENT LAND COVER CHANGE 2001-2021 MONROE COUNTY, NY

AGRICULTURAL & FARMLAND PROTECTION PLAN

- MONROE COUNTY
- 2001 DEVELOPED LAND COVER
- 2021 DEVELOPED LAND COVER
- TOWN BOUNDARY
- VILLAGE BOUNDARY
- CITY BOUNDARY
- WATERBODY
- STREAM / RIVER
- STATE ROUTE
- THRUWAY / LIMTED ACCESS HIGHWAY

; MONROE COUNTY 2023; ESRI 2024; NYS OFFICE OF INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY SERVICES GEOSPATIAL DATA SERVICES 2024; USGS NATIONAL HYDROGRAPHY DATASET PLUS HIGH RESOLUTION 2020; U.S. GREAT LAKES RESTORATION INITIATIVE (GLRI) 2010; NATIONAL GEOPHYSICAL DATA CENTER - BATHYMETRY OF LAKE ONTARIO, 1999; CORNELL INSTITUTE FOR RESOURCE INFORMATION SCIENCES (CORNELL IRIS) AND NYS DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE AND MARKETS 2017

Map 11. Active Farmland by Soil Classification



ACTIVE FARMLAND BY AG SOIL CLASS MONROE COUNTY, NY

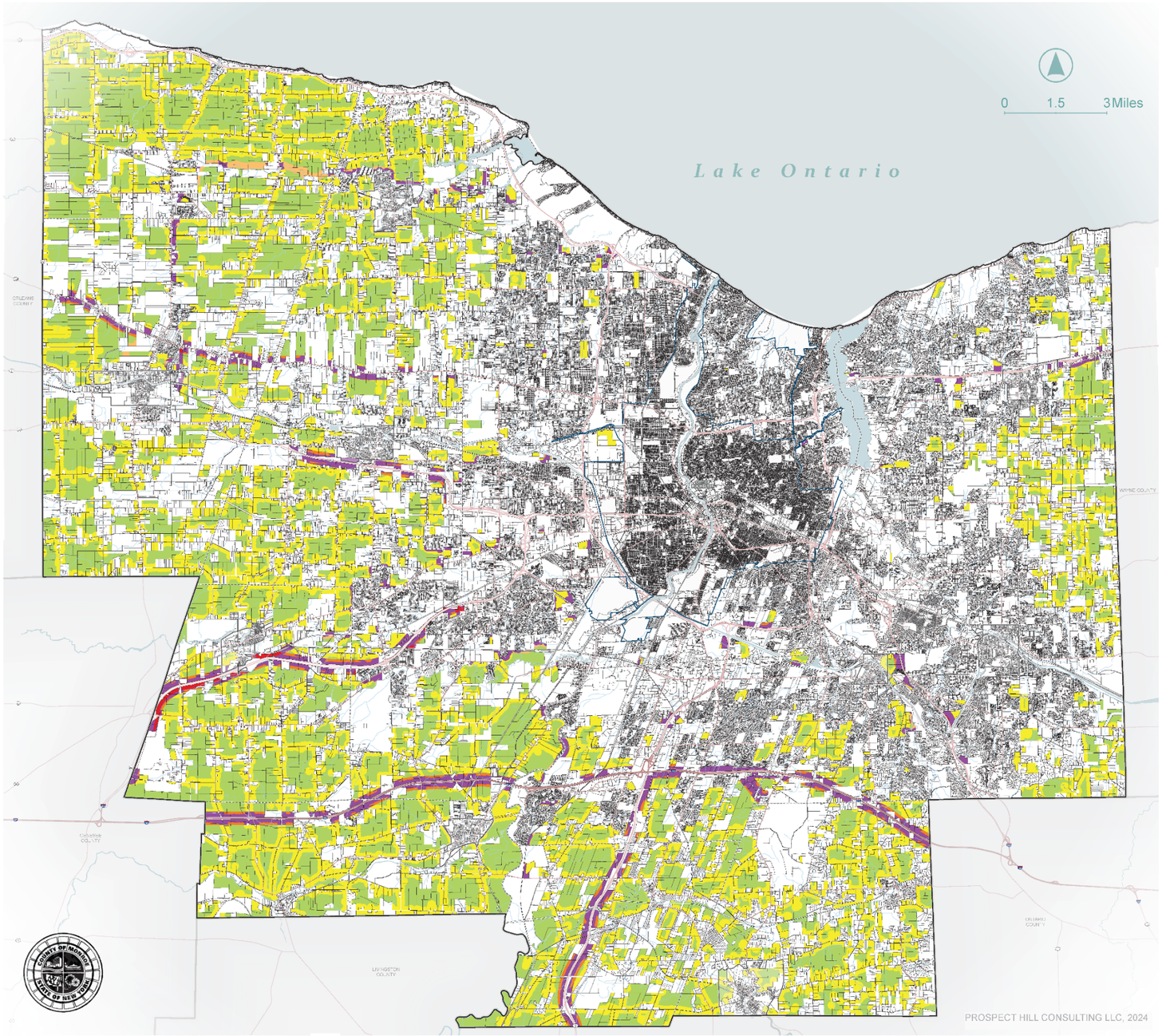
AGRICULTURAL & FARMLAND PROTECTION PLAN

- MINERAL SOIL GROUPS 1-4
- OTHER ACTIVE FARMLAND
- AREAS NOT ACTIVELY FARMED

- MONROE COUNTY
- TOWN BOUNDARY
- VILLAGE BOUNDARY
- CITY BOUNDARY
- WATERBODY
- STREAM / RIVER
- STATE ROUTE
- THRUWAY / LIMTED ACCESS HIGHWAY

; MONROE COUNTY 2023; ESRI 2024; NYS OFFICE OF INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY SERVICES GEOSPATIAL DATA SERVICES 2024; USGS NATIONAL HYDROGRAPHY DATASET PLUS HIGH RESOLUTION 2020; U.S. GREAT LAKES RESTORATION INITIATIVE (GLRI) 2010; NATIONAL GEOPHYSICAL DATA CENTER - BATHYMETRY OF LAKE ONTARIO, 1999; CORNELL INSTITUTE FOR RESOURCE INFORMATION SCIENCES (CORNELL IRIS) AND NYS DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE AND MARKETS 2017

Map 12. Agricultural Parcels by Vulnerability to Development



AGRICULTURAL PARCELS VULNERABLE TO DEVELOPMENT MONROE COUNTY, NY

AGRICULTURAL & FARMLAND PROTECTION PLAN

- Ag Parcels with None of the Vulnerability Components
- Ag Parcels within 500' of Previously Developed Land Cover
- Ag Parcels within 1000' of I-90, I-390, I-490, NYS Rt. 531 or NYS Rt. 104
- Ag Parcels within 500' of Parcels with Public Sewer Service
- Ag Parcels with all 3 Vulnerability Components
- Ag Parcels with 2 of the 3 Vulnerability Components

- MONROE COUNTY
- TOWN BOUNDARY
- VILLAGE BOUNDARY
- CITY BOUNDARY
- TAX PARCEL
- WATERBODY
- STREAM / RIVER
- STATE ROUTE
- THRUWAY / LIMTED ACCESS HIGHWAY

Vulnerability Components

- Proximity to previously development land (per NRCS land cover mapping)
- Proximity to major highways (I-490, I-390, I-590, NYS Rts. 531 and 104
- Proximity to sewered areas (per tax parcel data)

MONROE COUNTY 2023; ESRI 2024; NYS OFFICE OF INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY SERVICES GEOSPATIAL DATA SERVICES 2024; USGS NATIONAL HYDROGRAPHY DATASET PLUS HIGH RESOLUTION 2020; U.S. GREAT LAKES RESTORATION INITTATIVE (GLRI) 2010; NATIONAL GEOPHYSICAL DATA CENTER - BATHYMETRY OF LAKE ONTARIO, 1999; CORNELL INSTITUTE FOR RESOURCE INFORMATION SCIENCES (CORNELL IRIS) AND NYS DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE AND MARKETS 2017

B. Agricultural Economy

1. Introduction

This section examines the value and types of products produced on farmland as well as the economic contributions of related businesses such as services, distribution, wholesale and retail sales, and processing. The analysis relies on a variety of data sources, each of which contributes to an understanding of the significance of agriculture and related industries to Monroe County and the regional economy. See footnotes within the following sections for data source descriptions and limitations.

Data Sources

Sources of data include:

- U.S. Department of Agriculture Census of Agriculture
- U.S. Department of Commerce Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA)
- IMPLAN – a proprietary economic model that compiles data from a variety of sources to identify inputs and outputs related to specific industrial sectors
- Research and stakeholder interviews to describe the economic impact of farms and related businesses in Monroe County

BEA data also relies on surveys and secondary data to generate its annual reports. IMPLAN analysis of inputs and outputs is more accurate when conducted on a regional basis, rather than for a single county, as supply chains and markets extend beyond county boundaries.

Reports based on economic data compiled by IMPLAN, a proprietary economic impact analysis tool, offer details about specific components of the agricultural economy and how various sectors interact with one another. This data provides a more complete picture of how agricultural products move through primary and secondary market supply chains and, therefore, the total value generated through agricultural activities. However, only Monroe County industry data was included in the Plan's economic analysis, leaving substantial supply chain value and relationships outside of the scope of this plan, but nevertheless present in the regional, state, and national economy. Analysis of IMPLAN data is included in Appendix B.

2. Food System Overview

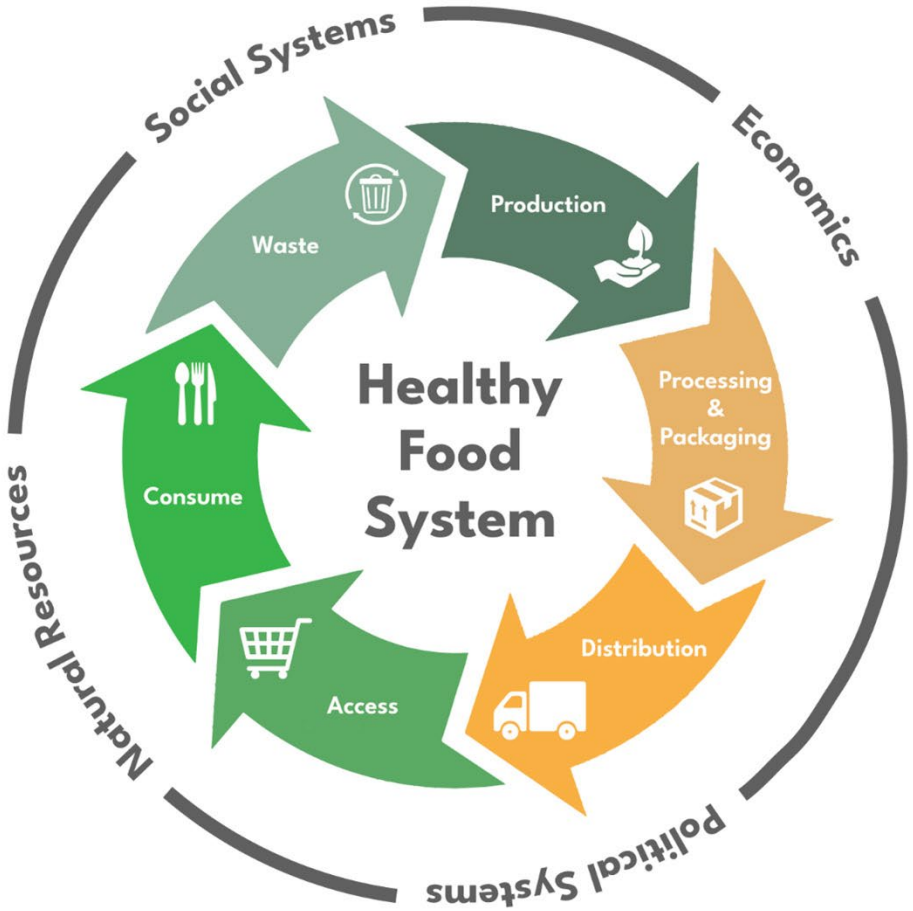
The "food system" is a broad term that encompasses all of the complex, interconnected activities that involve the production, processing, transportation, and consumption of food. Food systems exist in a wide range of scalesranging from the global food system to the national, regional, community, local, and household levels. Food systems include both the drivers and outcomes of these activities, as well as the influences of large-scale forces and actions taken by institutitions and governments. For example, the the local/regional scale of the food system of Monroe County is influenced and supported by the food systems of individual farms, nearby counties, New York State, the United States, and the

entire globe. As shown in the graphic below, the food system is a holistic way of viewing a myriad of environmental, commercial, governmental, sociocultural, and agricultural elements, which are sometimes perceived as acting indepently from each other, as an integrated web of activities.

Municipalities and government agencies can take steps to be supportive and proactive towards their local food systems, though they cannot control or influence every aspect of the food system at large.

While municipalities can undertake comprehensive food system plans, this Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan focuses primarily on agricultural production and the markets and inputs that directly relate to agricultural production and farmland protection.

Figure 5. Food System graphic



Source: https://foodsystems.wsu.edu/food

3. Sales of Agricultural Products

According to the 2022 US Census of Agriculture[3], 511 farms in Monroe County generated $101 million in total sales, an increase of 32% increase since 2017.

Monroe County ranks fifth in the production of vegetables, melons, potatoes, and sweet potatoes, eighth in nursery, greenhouse, floriculture, and sod, second in Christmas trees, and eleventh in grains, oilseeds, dry beans, and dry peas.

The 2022 Census of Agriculture ranked Monroe County 31st in the State in the total market value of products sold, Monroe County farms generated 1.3% of the Statewide total value of agricultural products sold in 2022.

Crops comprised 90% of the market value of products sold in Monroe County in 2022 led by "grains, oilseeds, dry beans, and dry peas" with $37,325,000 (37% of the total), and "vegetables, melons, potatoes, and sweet potatoes" with $28,607,000 (28%) The primary grains produced in 2022 were corn and soybeans, with sales valued at $20.6 million and $11.1 million, respectively, followed by wheat with $4.4 million. While the number of farms producing crops remained stable between 2017 and 2022, the value of sales from these farms increased by 37%.

Revenue from livestock products included $7.9 million from dairy farms. Cattle, horses, poultry and other animal products generated approximately $2 million in sales in 2022.

The Census of Agriculture reported that 139 farms in Monroe County produced livestock, poultry and their products in 2022, generating approximately $9,935,000 in sales. Approximately three dairies generated sales of approximately $7,913,000 from sales of milk from cows. The market value of milk produced from cows in Monroe County was 21% more than in 2017, when approximately 12 dairy farms generated $6,514,000 in sales.

Approximately 81 farms in Monroe County had poultry. Of these 59 farms sold poultry or eggs, with a total market value of approximately $157,000. Approximately 135 farms had horses, 34 raised beef cattle, 26 maintained sheep or lambs, and 23 had goats. Approximately 43 farms in Monroe County manage colonies of honeybees.

[3] Data from the U.S. Census of Agriculture, conducted every five years, relies on surveys of farmers and defines "farm" as any operation that generates at least $1,000 a year in sales. As the 5-year Census reports data from a single point in time, it does not account for volatility in prices received by farmers for commodities and may present an uncharacteristic peak or dip in market value.

Chart 6. Market Value of Products Sold, by Commodity or Commodity Group, 2012-2022

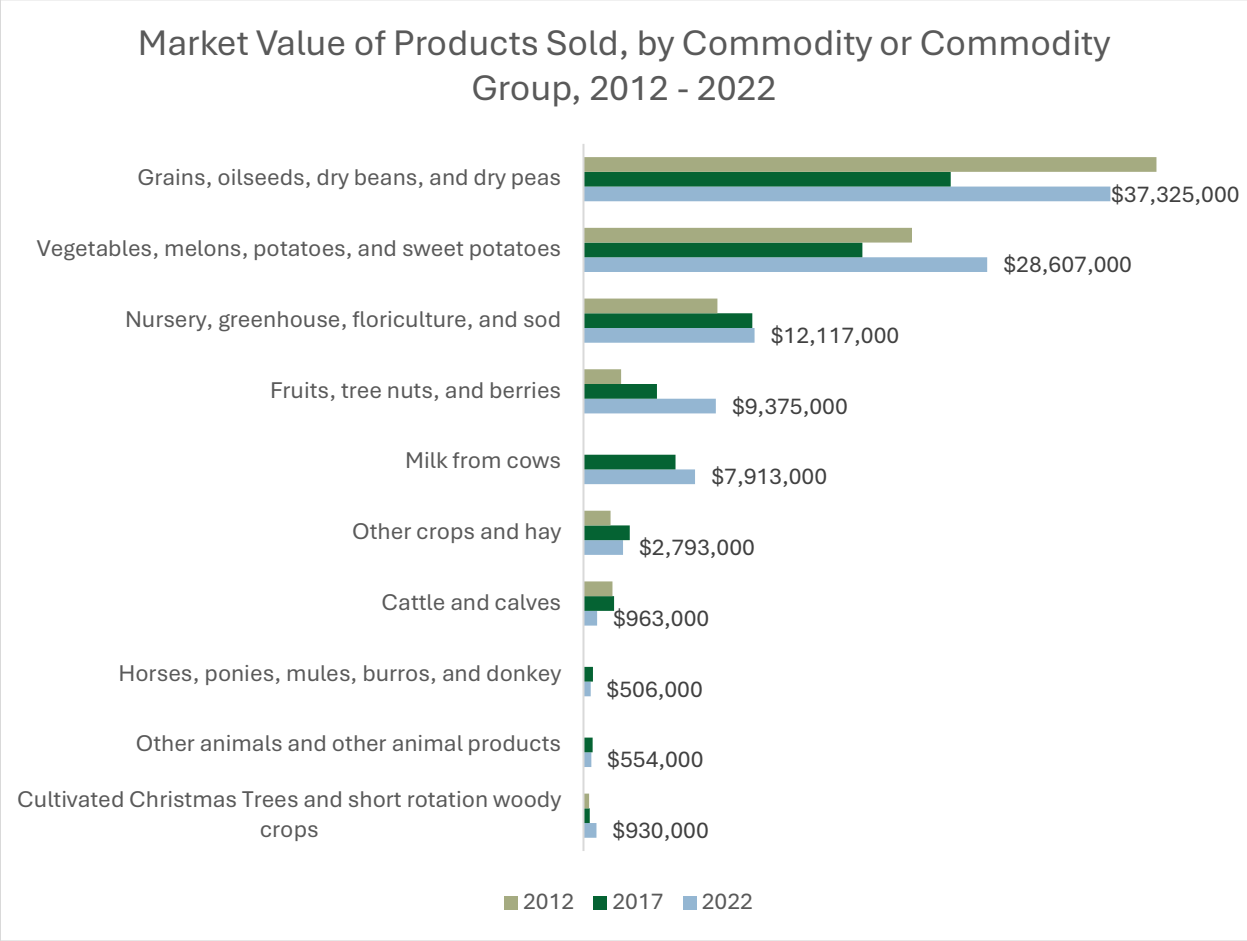


Photo 7. Chase Farm Aerial Landscape, Town of Rush. Credit: Adam Montoya

Table 7. Market Value of Products Sold, 2022

Item	2022 Market Value (in dollars)	Percent of Total
Crops, including nursery and greenhouse crops	**$ 91,147,000**	**90%**
Grains, oilseeds, dry beans, and dry peas	**37,325,000**	**37%**
Corn	20,595,000	20%
Wheat	4,430,000	4%
Soybeans	11,070,000	11%
Vegetables, melons, potatoes, and sweet potatoes	**28,607,000**	**28%**
Fruits, tree nuts, and berries	**9,375,000**	**9%**
Fruits and tree nuts	7,786,000	8%
Berries	1,589,000	2%
Nursery, greenhouse, floriculture, and sod	**12,117,000**	**12%**
Cultivated Christmas Trees and short rotation woody crops	**930,000**	**1%**
Cultivated Christmas Trees	930,000	1%
Other crops and hay	**2,793,000**	3%
Livestock, poultry, and their products	**$ 9,935,000**	**10%**
Poultry and eggs	$ 157,000	0%
Cattle and calves	$ 963,000	1%
Milk from cows	$ 7,913,000	8%
Hogs and pigs	$ 38,000	0%
Sheep, goats, wool, mohair, and milk	$ 140,000	0%
Horses, ponies, mules, burros, and donkey	$ 506,000	1%
Other animals and other animal products	$ 219,000	0%
Total	**$ 101,082,000**	**100%**

Source: 2022 Census of Agriculture

The per farm average of market value of products sold increased 36 percent from 2017 to $197,813 as compared to a Statewide average of $262,228, which was a 63 percent increase from 2017. The per farm average net cash farm income in Monroe County increased, as well, rising 35 percent to $57,713.

Sales by size of farm

A small number of large farms account for most of the economic output and land in production. The 38 farms that generated $500,000 or more in the market value of products accounted for 7% of Monroe County farms, but 85% of overall County product market value. The 268 farms with less than $10,000 in annual sales generated less than 1% of the total value of agricultural products sold.

Similarly, farms with 1,000 or more acres in production account for 6% of farms, but 60% of acres in production.

Table 8. Monroe County 2022 Value of Products by Range

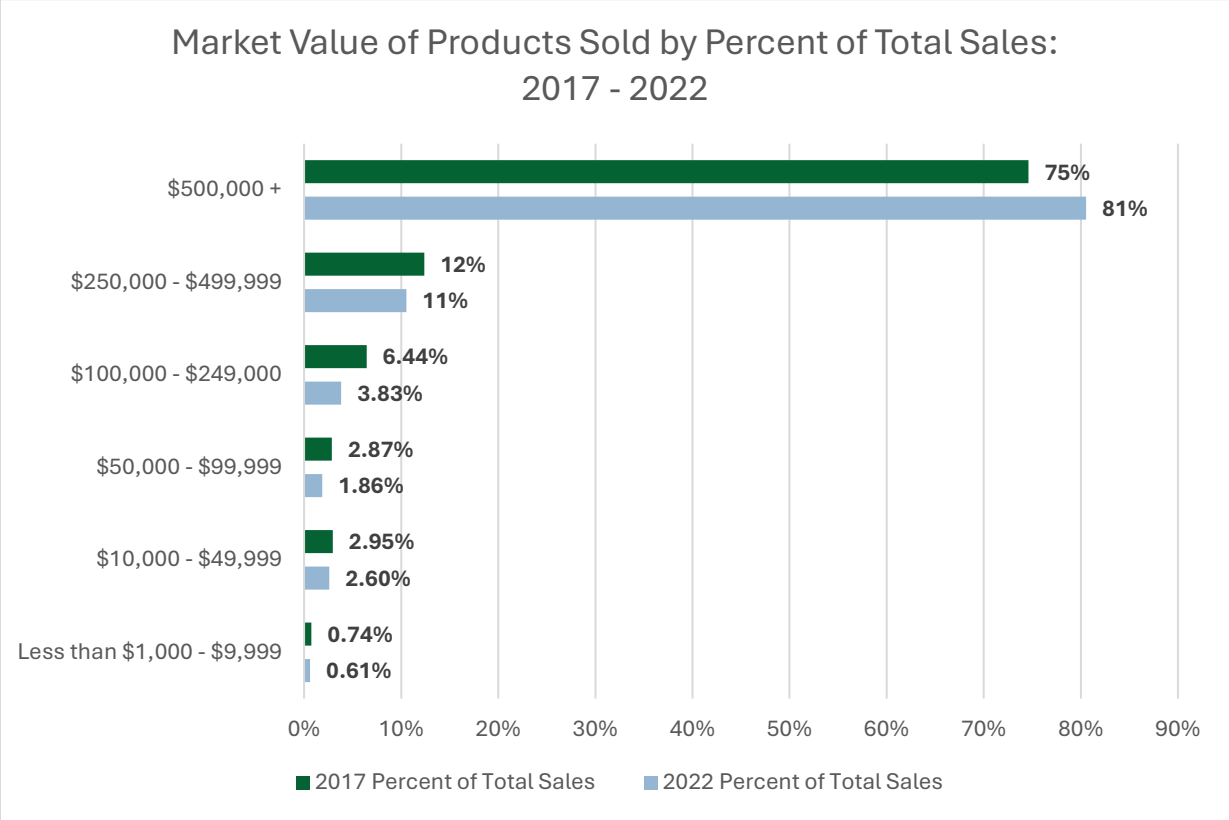
Monroe County 2022 Value of Products by Range

Annual Value of Products	Number of Farms in Value Range	Percent of Total County Farms	Value	Percent of Total County Value
Less than $1,000 - $9,999	268	51%	$621,000	0.61%
$10,000 - $49,999	136	26%	$2,624,000	2.60%
$50,000 - $99,999	26	5%	$1,882,000	1.86%
$100,000 - $249,000	26	5%	$3,869,000	3.83%
$250,000 - $499,999	29	6%	$10,664,000	11%
$500,000 +	38	7%	$81,422,000	81%
Total	523	100%	$101,082,000	100.00%

Source: USDA Census of Agriculture

The concentration of sales among the County's largest producers has increased since 2017, as shown in the chart below. Consolidation of large producers reflects a continuing national trend.

Chart 7. Market Value of Products by Range, 2017 - 2022



Source: USDA Census of Agriculture

4. Economic Impact of Agricultural Production

Data from the U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA) quantify the economic impact of farming and other industries with annual reports on farm income, employment and value of products sold.

With 1,256 people employed on farms in 2022, agriculture represented 0.25% of all Monroe County jobs.

In addition to directly providing jobs and earnings, agriculture complements other industries in Monroe County, including food manufacturing, agriculture related businesses, and forestry. When these related industries are considered, agriculture-related earnings comprise 4% of County earnings.

Farm Income and Expenses

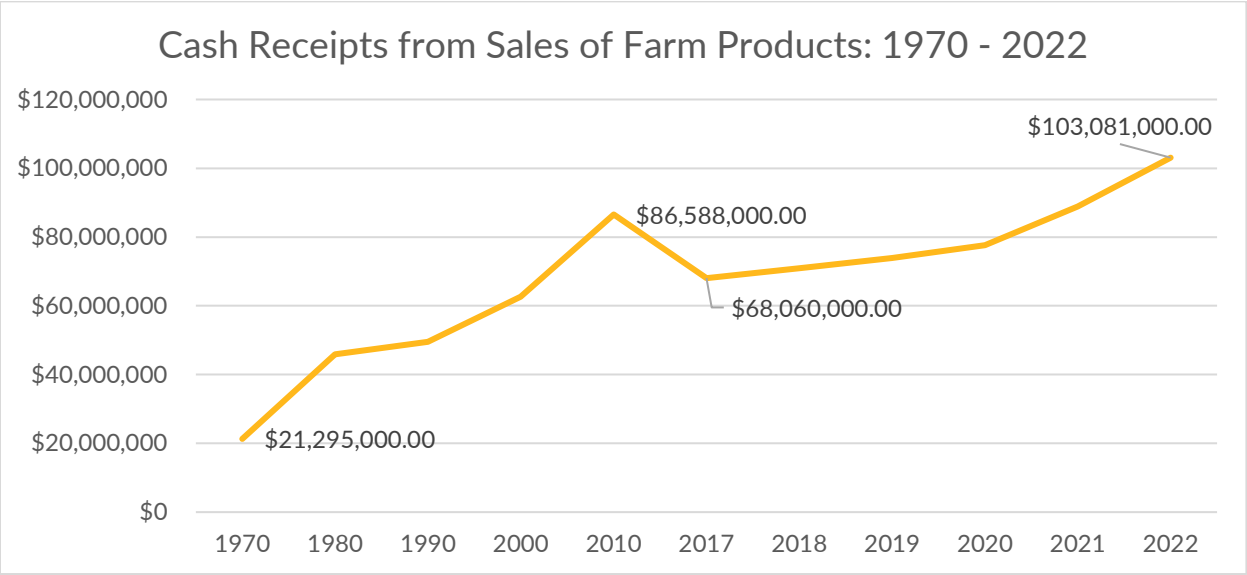
Farm sales have been increasing since 2015 but so have expenses. Farm sales have increased due to factors like higher crop prices and livestock values. However, farm expenses have also risen, particularly in areas like hired labor and feed, potentially offsetting some of the income gains. The overall impact on farm profitability depends on the specific details of each farm and the broader economic context.

Farm Income

Farm income from sales of agricultural products totaled $103,081,000 in 2022. Based on BEA data (which are reported in current dollars but not adjusted for inflation), the value of sales of farm products has steadily increased in Monroe County over the last fifty years. Since 2017, Monroe County farms increased sales each year and at an accelerated pace, gaining 4% from 2017 to 2018, 16% from 2021 to 2022, and a remarkable 51% from 2017 to 2022.

Photo 8. Chili farm. Credit: Steve Krenzer

Chart 8. Cash Receipts from Farm Marketings, 1970 - 2022

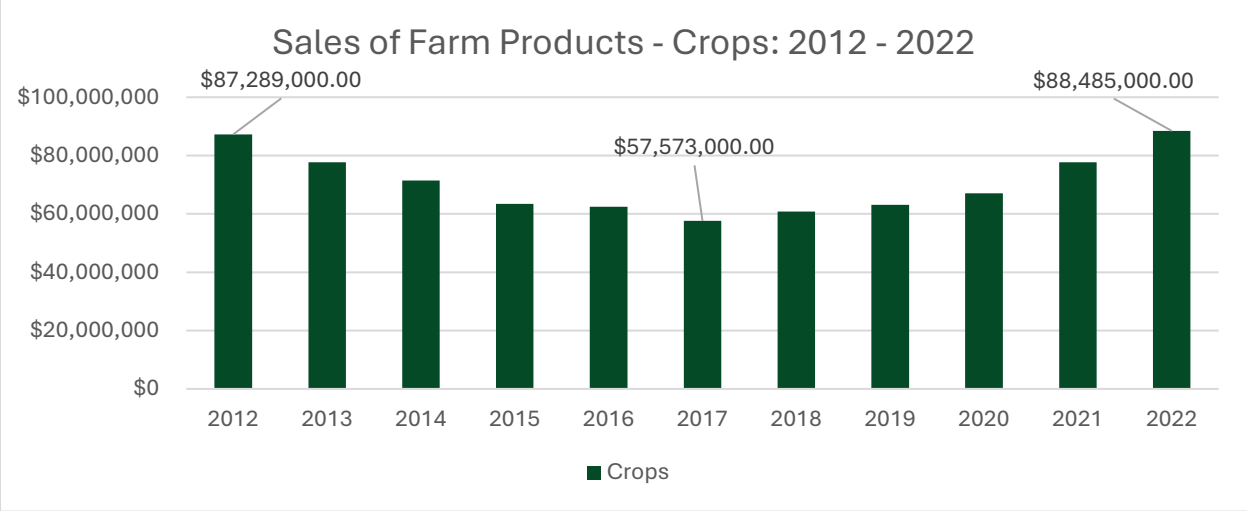


Source: U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis, Table CAINC45: Farm Income and Expenses

The BEA groups farm sales into two main categories– livestock and products (which includes milk and dairy products) and crops. Crops are the main driver of farm sales in Monroe County, accounting for 86% of all sales of farm products in 2022. Crop sales fell from $87 million (their second highest total) to a low of $57 million in 2017 before experiencing a steady, nearly $31 million recovery and expansion to $88,485,000 in 2022.

While livestock and products only accounted for 14% of farm sales in 2022, the industries enjoyed steady increases from a 2016 low of $9.8 million to $14,596,000 in 2022. Both categories reached 10-year highs in 2022 and both experienced substantial fluctuations over the 10-year period.

Chart 9. Cash Receipts from Farm Marketings - Crops, 2012 – 2022



Source: U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis, Table CAINC45: Farm Income and Expenses

Chart 10. Cash Receipts from Farm Marketings - Livestock and Products, 2012 - 2022

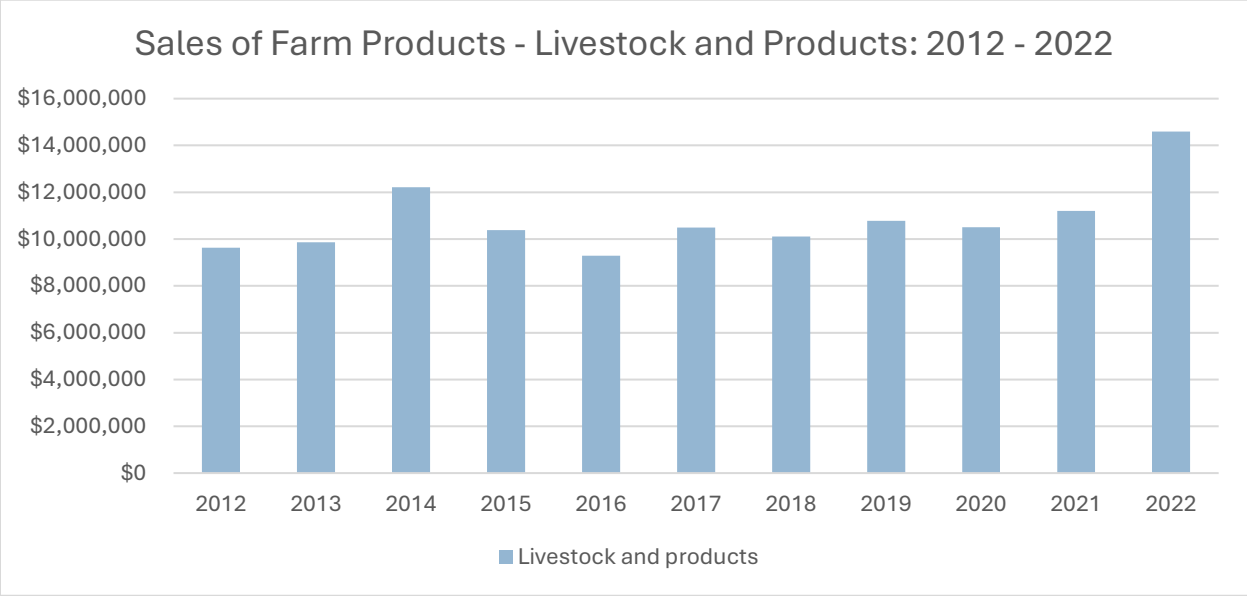
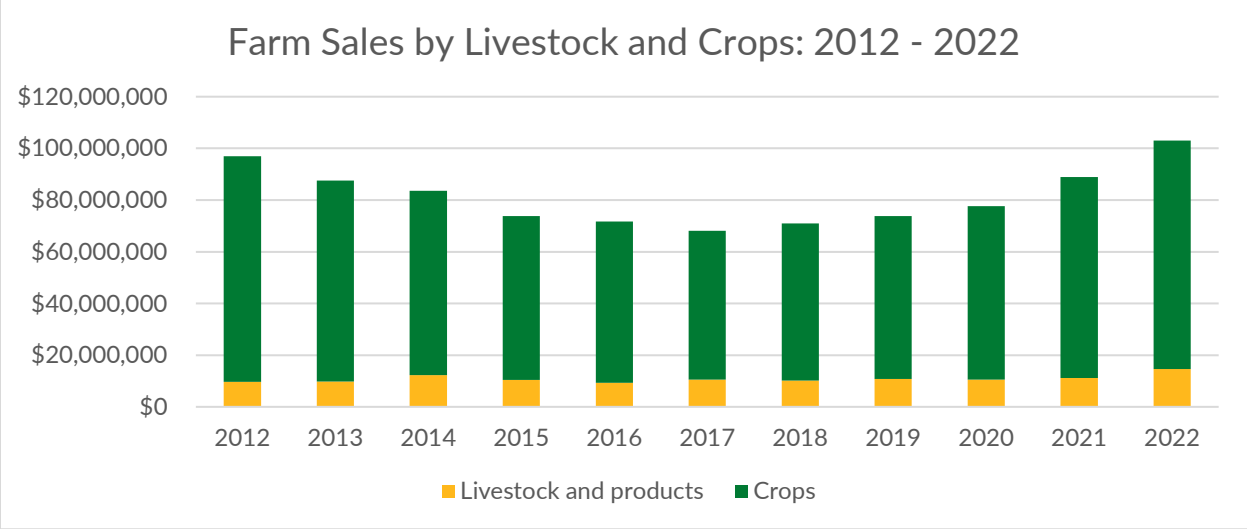


Chart 11. Farm Sales by Livestock and Crops: 2012 - 2022



Source: U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis, Table CAINC45: Farm Income and Expenses

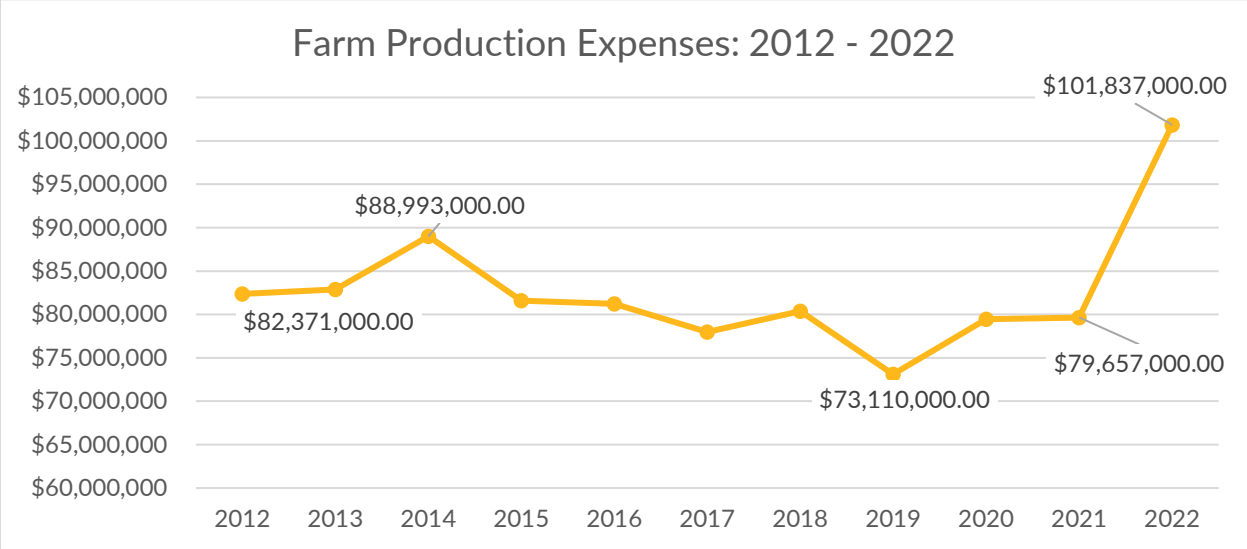
Based on BEA data, Monroe County's Real GDP in 2022, was $49 billion which ranked 8th in the state – behind Erie (7) and Westchester (6) and in front of Bronx (9) and Albany (10). At $99 million, farm sales comprised less than one percent of the County's total Real Gross Domestic Product and 0.06% of County earnings.

Production Expenses

Farm production expenses totaled nearly $102 million in 2022, an increase of 28% since 2021. Between 2012 and 2022, total expenses fluctuated while trending higher over the last decade. Since the 10-year

low in production expenses in 2019, expenses climbed nine percent from 2019 to 2020, stayed flat from 2020 to 2021, and then spiked 28% from 2021 to 2022, rising $22 million in a single year.

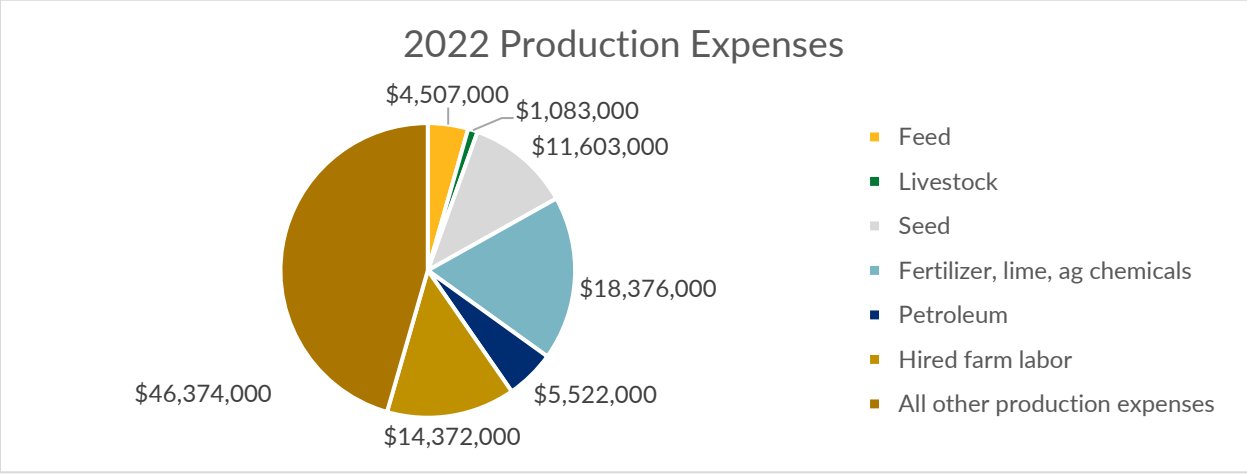
Chart 12. Production Expenses, 2012 - 2022



Source: U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis, Table CAINC45: Farm Income and Expenses

Production expenses include feed, livestock, seed, fertilizer, fuel, labor and all other production expenses. In 2022, the BEA category of "all other production expenses" represented almost half of Monroe County farm expenses. These expenses include repair and operation of machinery; depreciation, interest, rent, and taxes; and other miscellaneous expenses.

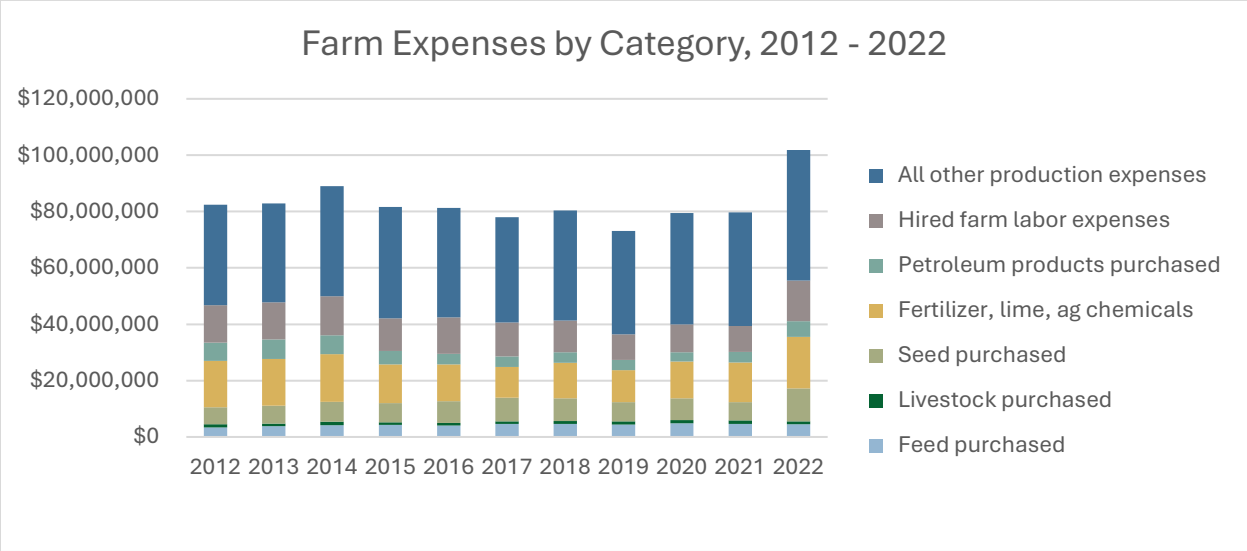
Chart 13. Production Expenses, 2022



Source: U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis, Table CAINC45: Farm Income and Expenses

Between 2012 and 2022, feed, seed, and all other production expenses were the largest contributors to overall expense increases. Several other categories also experienced significant spikes from 2021 to 2022, which resulted in a dramatic increase in overall expenses from 2021 to 2022. All other expenses rose $6 million, labor costs rose $5.2 million, and seeds rose by $5 million.

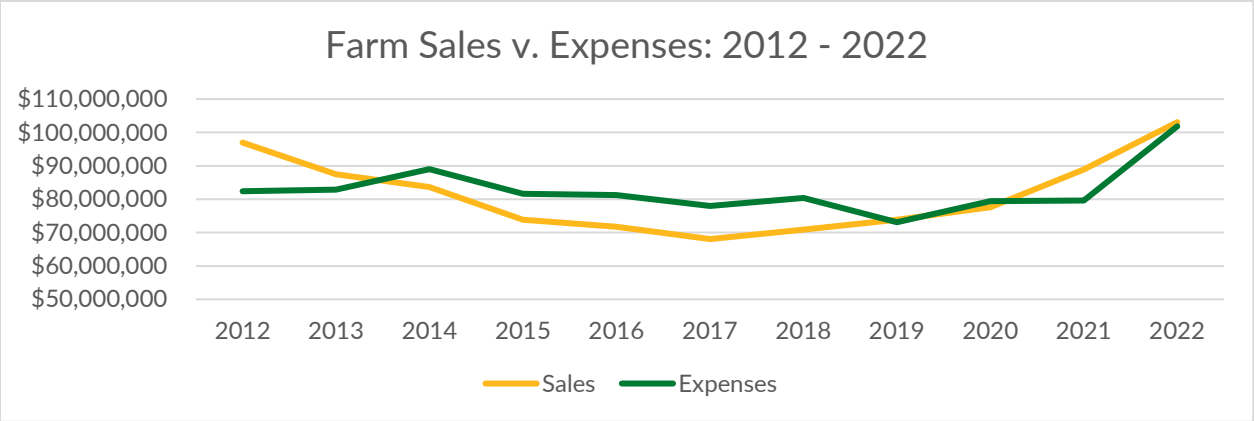
Chart 14. Production Expenses by Category, 2012 - 2022



Source: U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis, Table CAINC45: Farm Income and Expenses

When taken together, the gains in sales are almost entirely offset by the increase in expenses. While some farms may be able to raise prices as costs increase, many Monroe County farms have limited ability to set their prices, especially in commodity markets. In those markets, farms are price "takers" not price "makers" and this can result in production expenses exceeding sales price and revenues for extended periods of time. This is likely a major challenge for farms as they continue to seek efficiencies and economies of scale to reduce costs amidst the inflationary pressures they are facing.

Chart 15. Farm Sales versus Expenses, 2012 - 2022



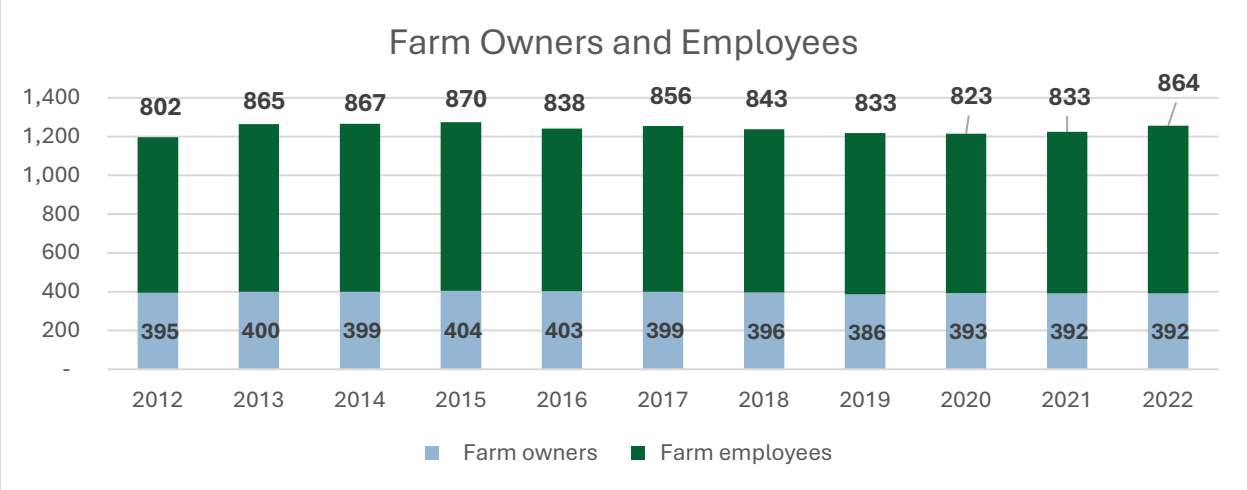
Source: U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis, Table CAINC45: Farm Income and Expenses

Farm Employment

According to 2022 data from the BEA, 1,256 people were employed on farms, including 392 farm proprietors and 864 employees. This represents 0.25% of the 495,556 people employed in Monroe County. For comparison, the top three industries by number of employees in Monroe County in 2022 were Health Care and Social Assistance (76,351 people, representing 15% of the total), Government and Government Enterprises (46,702 people, representing 9% of the total), and Retail Trade (44,732 people, representing 9% of the total).

Farm employment has remained relatively stable over the 10-year period between 2012 and 2022. The industry has added 59 jobs since 2012, a five percent increase. For comparison, the total number of jobs in Monroe County increased by 4.9% over the same period. Additionally, the percentage of farm jobs occupied by employees versus proprietors has remained stable over the 10-year period between 2012 and 2022 at roughly 70% employees and 30% proprietors.

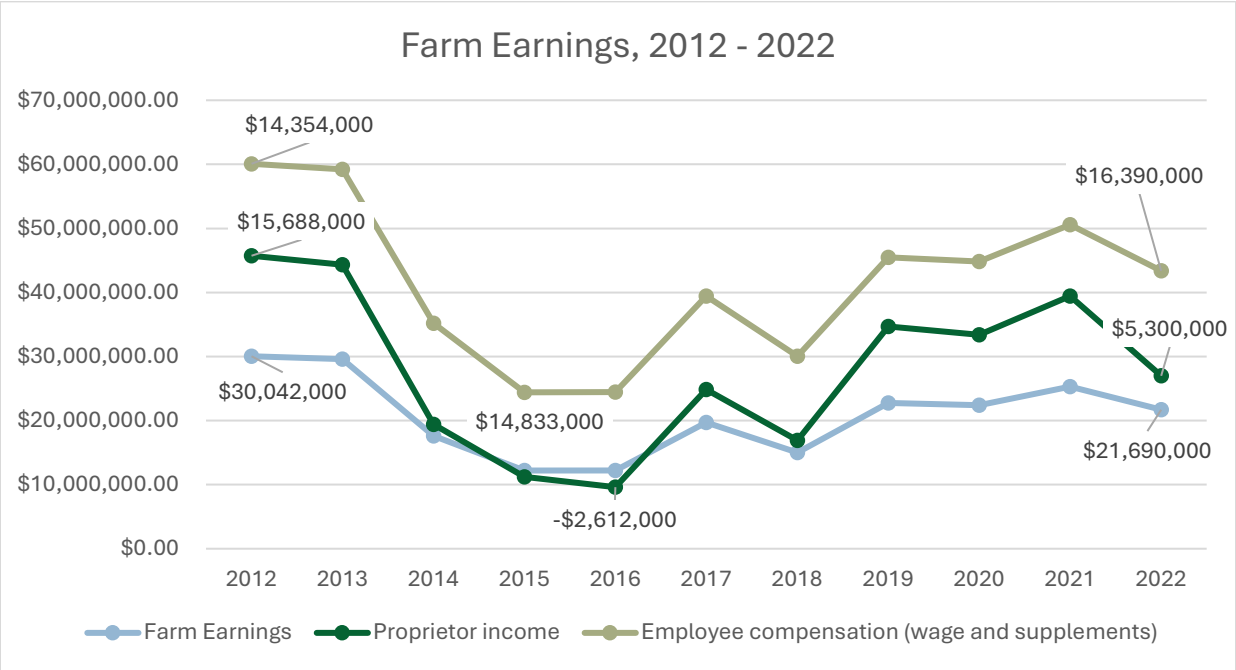
Chart 16. Farm Owner versus Farm Employee Jobs, 2012 - 2022



Source: U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis, Table CAEMP25N: Total Full-Time and Part-Time Employment by NAICS Industry

Farm earnings – the sum of wage and salary disbursements, supplements to wages and salaries, and proprietors' income – have been remarkably volatile over the 10-year period from 2012 – 2022. Total farm earnings peaked in 2012 at $30,042,000, decreased to a low of $12,221,000 in 2016, and then rose and fell over the next seven years, settling at $21,690,000 in 2022. Farm earnings increased almost $9.5 million from the 2015 low to 2022. However, earnings fell $3.5 million from 2021 to 2022 underscoring just how volatile earnings are in the current agricultural economy.

Chart 17. Farm earnings – Total , Proprietor, Employee – 2012 - 2022



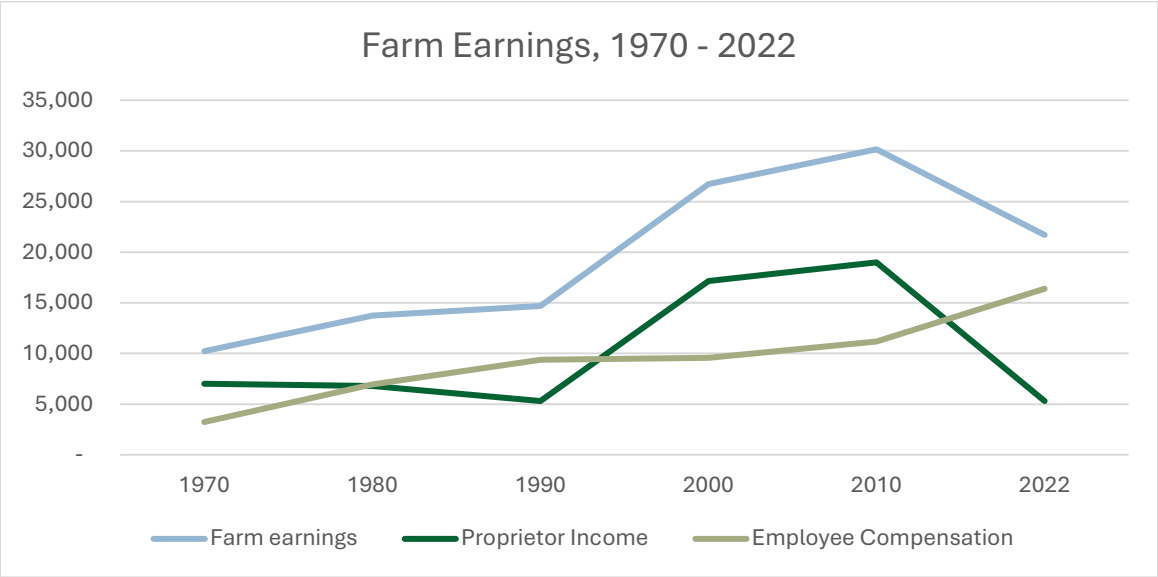
Source: U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis, Table CAINC45: Farm Earnings

Proprietor income is an especially volatile component of overall farm earnings. Monroe County proprietor's earnings ranged from a $2.6 million loss in 2016 to $15.7 million in earnings in 2012 – the 10-year high for earnings. The 10-year period is characterized by rapid shifts in earnings on a year-to-year basis. From the $2.6 million low in 2015, earnings rallied to $5.1 million in 2017 (a $7.7 million increase) and fell from $14.1 million in 2021 to $5.3 million in 2022 (an $8.8 million decrease).

Employee compensation, by comparison, is a more stable component of farm earnings. As shown in the chart below, labor costs increased sharply between 2010 and 2022.

The 2012 – 2022 period appears to be uniquely volatile when compared to earnings data from 1970 to 2022. Farm earnings, employee earnings, and even proprietor earnings, follow a relatively smooth upward trajectory from 1970 to around 2010. From 2010 to 2022, that trend ends abruptly and, as we saw in the chart above, the year-to-year volatility increases substantially.

Chart 18. Farm earnings – Total, Proprietor, Employee – 1970 - 2022



Source: U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis, Table CAINC45: Farm Earnings

5. Markets

Monroe County farms rely on various markets to sell their products, including:

- Direct-to-consumer sales
- Sales to retail or institutional purchasers
- Sales to processors
- Sales to food hubs
- Sales to wholesalers

Direct-to-consumer sales allow the farm to retain the full value of the end product. Farms that produce and sell "value added" products generate additional income through the by increasing the value of raw products. Value added enterprises require additional business planning, investment and staffing beyond what is required for the production of the crop, animal or animal product.

Sales to directly to retailers, food hubs or institutions eliminate the "middleman" but do not command as high a price as direct retail sales. Many farms, particularly in commodities such as grains and dairy, sell directly to processors or wholesalers. Such enterprises must deliver large quantities of consistent quality and require dedicated staffing and business planning.

The table below shows changes in farm revenue from these business activities.

Table 9. Monroe County Farm Business Activities, 2017 - 2022

Business Activity	2022 # Farms	2017 # Farms	2022 Value	2017 Value	Percent Change in Value
Value of food sold directly to consumers	91	101	$ 4,661,000	$ 4,156,000	12%
Value of food sold directly to retail markets, institutions, and food hubs for local or regionally branded products	26	21	$ 12,874,000	$ 7,515,000	71%
Value of processed or value-added agricultural products sold	34	38	$ 11,780,000	$ 6,233,000	89%
Total	**151**	**160**	**$29,315,000**	**$17,904,000**	**64%**

Source: USDA Census of Agriculture

Between 2017 and 2022, the value of value-added agricultural products sold increased 89% to 11.78 million.

Additional detail about markets for agricultural products follows in this section. An overview of institutional sales and emergency feeding and how they may offer opportunities for local farmers is presented in the following section (Part 2. B. 6).

Direct-to-Consumer Sales

Many farms in Monroe County sell directly to consumers, thereby retaining a larger portion of the end value of their products. While direct-to-consumer sales help farmers increase income, incorporating retail sales into the farm enterprise requires additional business planning, investment and staffing beyond what is required to produce the agricultural product.

Farms in Monroe County sell directly to consumers through farm stands, on-farm retail stores, internet sales and Community Supported Agriculture (CSAs). Between 2017 and 2022, the value of products sold directly to consumers by 12% to $4.661 million; the value of food sold directly to retail markets, institutions, and food hubs or for local or regionally branded products increased 71% to $12.874 million.

Community Supported Agriculture (CSA)

Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) are farming operations that receive funds from customers, typically through a subscription service where community members will pay a fee in exchange for a regular delivery of produce and/or other agricultural products.

Farmers Markets

As listed by CCE Monroe County, there are approximately 13 farmers markets which are typically open from May to October. Most markets operate seasonally, with some, including the Rochester Public Market and the Brighton Market, operating year-round.

The Rochester Public Market has been continuously open and operating since 1827. The Public Market has been at its current site at 280 North Union Street since 1905. Located in one of the most economically distressed neighborhoods in the City, MarketView Heights, the market not only provides opportunities for community members to purchase local produce and interact with their community, but the market also provides indoor spaces for other local entrepreneurs to market and sell their goods such as baked goods, coffee, flowers, dog treats, cooked foods, and much more.

Resources to support farmers markets include the Farmers Market Managers Professional Certification, offered by the Farmers Market Federation of New York which offers courses to help market managers build skills in marketing, communications, business planning and overall market management.

Farmers markets may participate in the Farmers' Market Nutrition Program, which is funded by USDA Food and Nutrition Service and associated with the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC) and seniors through the Commodity Supplemental Food Program (SCFP).The program provides coupons for low-income seniors and families enrolled in WIC or CSFP to purchase fresh, local fruits and vegetables. Participating markets in Monroe County include the Rochester Public Market, Westside Farmer's Market, South Wedge Farmers' Market, Greece Ridge Mall Farmers Market, Fairport Farmers' Market, Brighton Farmers Market and Brockport Farmers Market.

On-Farm Value-Added

Many farms in Monroe County operate on-farm value-added enterprises to expand their revenue and capture a larger share of the value of the end product. These include on-farm processing or packaging, manufacturing of beverages or food products, marketing of branded products, and preparation of ready to eat foods.

Photo 9. Zarpentine Farms. Credit: Lori Coleman. Copyright Lori & Erin Photography, used with permission

Raw agricultural products become "value added" when they have been modified or enhanced to have a higher market value and/or a longer shelf life. A value-added agricultural business may be defined as any activity an agricultural producer performs outside of traditional commodity production to receive a higher return per unit of commodity sold.

By creating new products from raw commodities, through packaging innovations, or by taking on distribution and storage, the farmer increases the value of the product sold and the farm business captures the increased value that would otherwise be paid to downstream businesses.

USDA Definition of a Value-Added Agricultural Product:

Any agricultural commodity or product that:

- *Has undergone a change in the physical state or form of the product, such as milling wheat into flour or making strawberries into jam.*
- *Is produced in a manner that enhances the value of the agricultural commodity or product, such as organically produced products.*
- *Is physically segregated in a manner that results in the enhancement of the value of that commodity or product, such as an identity preserved product.*
- *Is a source of farm- or ranch-based renewable energy, including E–85 fuel; or*
- *Is aggregated and marketed as a locally produced agricultural food product and, as a result of the change in physical state or the manner in which the agricultural commodity or product is produced and segregated, the customer base for the commodity or product is expanded*

Distinctive branding and certifications can also increase the value of an agricultural product that can be captured by the farmer. For example, consumers may be willing to pay more for pasture-fed animal products, certified organic or local foods.

Resources

Existing programs that support on-farm value-added enterprises include the Genesee-Finger Lakes Regional Planning Council's (G/FLRPC) Growing the Agricultural Industry Now! (GAIN) program, a revolving loan program that could provide up to $200,000 in low interest loans to help finance ag-related projects. The USDA Value-Added Producer Grant programs have offered funding for planning (such as conducting feasibility studies or developing business plans) and working capital for processing, marketing or inventory and salary expenses to value-added processing and other enterprises. However, future grant opportunities from the federal government or NYS agencies may not be available in the future.

Agritourism

Agritourism is another business activity farms engage in to build their brands, the connection to their customers, and their sales. Agritourism can also help to increase the public's knowledge and awareness of farming. Some examples of value-added agricultural products and agritourism in Monroe County include "U-Pick" for apples, strawberries and blueberries, vineyards, cider, festivals, and farm

stands. Many farms that offer agritourism activities are listed in CCE Monroe's on-line Local Food Guide, which is updated annually.

The specific agritourism activities a farm engages in vary bases on farmers preferences, proximity to population centers, crops or livestock and can include "u-pick" options, educational tours, farm stays, workshops, farm restaurants or "pop-up" dinners, and more. Agritourism operations and direct-to-consumer sales can help farmers capture a larger share of the value chain by selling directly to consumers or by drawing more consumers to them directly. Direct-to-consumer sales may mean roadside stands, farmers market or other programs where sellers get to connect directly with consumers.

The 2022 U.S. Census of Agriculture reported that 20 farms in Monroe County participated in agritourism and recreation services, generating $4,982,000 in total sales. This was up from $553,000 in 2017.

Monroe County Cornell Cooperative Extension's Local Food Guide provides a comprehensive listing and interactive maps of farm and food operators engaged in various forms of agritourism, portions of which are included below: **https://monroe.cce.cornell.edu/agriculture/local-food-guide**

NYS Agricultural District laws provide protection from unreasonable local regulation when the agri-tourism enterprise supports agricultural production on the farm. New York State Agricultural Districts Law (AGM Sec. 25-AA) defines "Agricultural tourism" as, "activities, including the production of maple sap and pure maple products made therefrom, conducted by a farmer on-farm for the enjoyment and/or education of the public, which primarily promote the sale, marketing, production, harvesting or use of the products of the farm and enhance the public's understanding and awareness of farming and farm life." Agritourism operations on farms within NYS-certified Agricultural Districts are generally protected against unreasonable local regulation provided the revenues from agritourism events does not exceed the annual sales of the farm's crops, livestock and livestock products.

Direct to Retailer

Some Monroe County farms sell directly to retailers. Typically, such sales require large volumes and consistent quality.

Wholesale Markets

Wholesale food distributors purchase products from farms for sale to restaurants, institutions, retail outlets and other markets.

Livestock and Produce Auctions

Produce and livestock auctions serve as a way for farmers to offload surplus goods and livestock without spending the time and energy on direct-to-consumer sales. Farmers can drop off their goods and livestock at the auction grounds and the auction house will handle selling and processing payment for the goods, taking a commission as payment for the service. Individuals and wholesalers alike purchase from auctions. Auctions often have the benefit of being able to sell very large quantities of produce at

once and in some cases can connect ethnic groups with culturally desirable livestock and produce. Farmers also use auctions to purchase feeder or replacement cattle.

The primary livestock auctions near Monroe County are Empire Livestock Marketing in Pavilion (Genesee County) and Canandaigua Stockyards (Ontario County).

The closest produce auction to Monroe County is Orleans Produce Market in Albion (Orleans County). Other auctions are in Genesee Valley Produce Auction in Freedom NY (Allegany County), Finger Lakes Produce Auction in Penn Yan (Yates County), Ontario Produce Auction in Stanley (Ontario County) and Seneca Produce Auction in Romulus (Seneca County).

Aggregation

Many farms in Monroe County sell their products directly to aggregators, which prepare and distribute the products to retailers, processors or other markets. Services provided by these businesses include purchasing, marketing, processing/packaging, transportation, and/or storage. These businesses develop relationships and enter contracts with markets, restaurants, and institutions to provide food in large quantities. These organizations also sign contracts with farmers to supply food in large quantities to fulfill procurement contracts. The exact degree to which produce is processed and packaged by the farmer or the aggregator would be a part of the contract. For instance, a farmer might wash and cut the produce, but the aggregator might pack it into the specific packaging the aggregator uses. Because aggregation and distribution is contract-based, this gives the farmer a certain peace of mind that there is a purchaser for what they produce.

Processing

Farmers may contract with processors or sell their products directly to processors. Livestock farmers may contract for meat processing and sell the resulting product directly to consumers, either as retail products or as “shares” of an animal. Vegetable farmers may sell products directly to food processing facilities.

Processing generally refers to actions such as packaging, washing, cutting/preparing, and sorting food, as well as value-adding processes, such as converting raw milk into yogurt, baking apples into pies, or packaging lettuce heads into salad mixes, for example. Meat processing refers to the entire process of livestock butchering, from transporting live animals to packaging saleable meats.

As detailed in the IMPLAN analysis section in Appendix B, food manufacturing is a significant industry in Monroe County, with a total output of $2.2 billion in 2022. Canned fruits and vegetables manufacturing is the largest industry sector with $504 million in sales (22% of the food manufacturing total), providing robust local infrastructure for the County’s substantial fruit and vegetable production.

Food Manufacturing is the County’s largest agricultural related industry and is well positioned for growth because of the County’s available workforce as well as the availability of freshwater resources, as evidenced by the recently announced Fairlife Coca-Cola plant which is projected to use one million gallons of water per day. Efforts to align production and workforce development to support manufacturing expansion can build markets for Monroe farm products and create manufacturing jobs.

Breweries, distilleries, and wineries collectively represent 31% of the food manufacturing total output and generated $714 million in sales. This not only provides a ready market to Monroe County producers but also offers opportunities for branding and agritourism, often associated with the social and experiential nature of the beverage industry.

Emerging Markets

Cannabis is an emerging market although potential growers have faced challenges in navigating licensing and other requirements. Cultivation of cannabis requires an Adult-Use Cultivator License (AUCC) from the NYS Department of Agriculture & Markets pursuant to the Conditional Cannabis Cultivation law enacted in 2022. There may be opportunities for local farmers to supply dispensaries as New York State requires these products to be grown within the state. Challenges remain as the market and regulatory landscape evolve.

Photo 10. Beef cattle in Parma

6. Farm to Institution Sales

Farm-to-institution sales connect local farms with institutions such as schools, hospitals, universities, correctional facilities, and senior living centers to provide locally produced food. Institutions may enter into direct purchasing agreements with farms, establish local food procurement policies, or institute educational initiatives to promote healthy eating and sustainable practices. Consistent demand from institutions can provide farmers with stable, high-volume markets beyond traditional retail or wholesale channels.

K-12 Schools

K-12 purchases are supported through the **NY 30% Initiative**, a New York State Farm-to-School program that incentivizes schools to purchase at least 30% of their food from New York producers and

processors. Schools that meet this threshold receive an increased state reimbursement—rising from $0.06 to $0.25 per meal—for their school lunch programs.

During the 2022-23 school year, none of the 18 school districts in Monroe County reached the 30% threshold. However, some Monroe County school districts may have purchased local farm products but may not have tracked or reported NYS food purchases due to limited administrative capacity.

Colleges and Universities

Colleges and universities are important markets for local and regional food producers. The extent to which these institutions prioritize local food sourcing varies based on their culture, values, and financial priorities. Student and faculty interest in healthy food, knowledge of food origins, connections to local communities, and carbon emission reduction goals motivate these institutions to engage with the local food supply chain.

Photo 11. Farm field, Parma

However, these motivations are often weaker or more complex than those of K-12 schools. While some college students are from the local community, many come from across the state or country, lacking specific ties to local growers. Additionally, college food services are not subsidized by public funds like K-12 schools, making profitability a more significant factor, especially with budget and enrollment pressures.

Colleges and universities typically have two main contracts for food service operations: a food service operator and a broadline food distributor. These institutions have varying degrees of leverage to negotiate goals beyond price and cost, such as carbon reduction and local sourcing. Goals may include adapting menus to include lower-impact foods and tracking the carbon footprint of food to demonstrate progress, as well as geographic and local preference bids.

Monroe County Higher Education: Local Food Procurement

In Monroe County, there are several colleges and universities, each with varying approaches to local food sourcing policies and practices:

1. **University of Rochester**: The University of Rochester emphasizes sustainability and local sourcing in its dining services. They have initiatives to incorporate locally grown produce and products into their dining halls when possible, supporting regional farms and suppliers.
2. **Rochester Institute of Technology (RIT)**: RIT has committed to sustainable practices in its dining services, including sourcing food locally whenever feasible. They participate in programs that support regional agriculture and aim to reduce their environmental footprint through responsible sourcing practices.
3. **Monroe Community College (MCC)**: MCC focuses on providing healthy and sustainable food options on campus. While specific local sourcing policies weren't detailed, they participate in initiatives promoting wellness and environmentally responsible dining choices.
4. **Nazareth College**: Nazareth College includes local and sustainable food options in its dining services, though specific policies weren't detailed publicly. They prioritize wellness and sustainable practices in campus dining.
5. **St. John Fisher College**: St. John Fisher College integrates sustainable and locally sourced food options into its dining program. They emphasize environmental stewardship and healthy eating choices for their campus community.
6. **SUNY Brockport:** SUNY Brockport sources local foods whenever possible, including organic greens from Bolton Farms in Hilton.

For State University of New York (SUNY) schools, Executive Order 32, signed by Governor Hochul in August 2023, could lead to increased purchasing of New York State and local food. This order mandates New York State agencies to source 30% of their food from New York farmers and producers within five years, boosting local agriculture and food system resilience. While the specifics of compliance tracking and enforcement are still unclear, the Order provides state institutions with more leverage in negotiations with food service contractors to source more local food.

Hospitals and Health Care Organizations

Hospitals and healthcare organizations have increasingly become significant sources of institutional purchasing. Like colleges and universities, their level of engagement can vary widely and must align with their overall business model's profitability. Hospitals typically contract with food service providers, often the same ones used by colleges and universities, which presents similar challenges in negotiating local procurement requirements.

At the primary care and health insurance levels, many operators are experimenting with "Food as Medicine" or food prescription models. Monroe County, NY, has several “food as medicine” initiatives integrating nutrition into healthcare. Trillium Health’s Food Pharmacy allows physicians to prescribe healthy foods, partnering with Headwater Food Hub and EquiCenter (educational partner) to provide fresh produce, cooking lessons, and nutrition education.

The Fruit and Vegetable Prescription (FVRx) Program, led by Cornell Cooperative Extension of Monroe County (CCE Monroe), operates across six Finger Lakes counties, including Monroe. The program partners with 30 healthcare providers and 70 clinics to offer vouchers redeemable at over 50 food retailers, including farmers' markets and grocery stores. In 2023, FVRx distributed over $300,000 in vouchers, benefiting nearly 2,000 participants.

In February 2025, Trillium Health opened a food pantry and learning kitchen to address food insecurity. The facility, in partnership with Headwater Food Hub and EquiCenter, offers fresh local fruits and vegetables “prescribed” to people with diabetes, high cholesterol or hypertension.

The Rochester Lifestyle Medicine Institute promotes whole-food, plant-based nutrition through education, while the University of Rochester Medical Center’s Nutrition in Medicine Research Center provides prepared meals for research participants and the public. These programs aim to improve health outcomes by increasing access to nutritious food and integrating it into medical care.

Currently, many of these programs are funded through grants, philanthropy, or marketing budgets. However, there are state and national efforts to integrate "Food as Medicine" more directly into the continuum of care. New York State’s Delivery System Reform Incentive Payment Program (DSRIP) created connections and provided funding for several partnerships aimed at improving health outcomes and reducing healthcare costs by providing healthy food to qualifying patients. New York is working towards rolling out a DSRIP 2.0 program, which would build on the successes of the first round and likely include additional funds for "Food as Medicine" programs.

Many healthcare organizations, especially primary care providers, are also experimenting with Section 1115 Demonstration Waivers to test approaches to delivering and financing Medicaid services, including nutrition and food-based interventions. In Monroe County, Jordan Health is leveraging this waiver to pilot a Fruit and Vegetable Prescription (FVRx) program in partnership with Foodlink. Eligible patients—adults diagnosed with Type 2 Diabetes who experience food insecurity—receive vouchers redeemable for fresh produce at participating retailers, helping integrate nutrition into healthcare to improve patient outcomes.

Emergency Feeding Programs

Emergency feeding agencies, including food banks and food pantries, could potentially play a critical role in the farm-to-institution landscape in New York State by creating consistent demand for locally grown and produced foods while addressing food insecurity. These agencies distribute fresh and shelf-stable foods to low-income and underserved populations. When they source products from local and New York State farmers, they help sustain agricultural producers while ensuring that nutritious food reaches those in need.

Several key programs support these efforts by providing funding specifically for the procurement of local and NYS products. The following describe programs existing in 2024. Future Federal funding for these programs is uncertain.

NY Food for NY Families Program

This USDA-funded NY Food for NY Families initiative provides grants to emergency feeding organizations to purchase and distribute New York State agricultural products. It emphasizes building long-term relationships between farmers and food banks, fostering a sustainable farm-to-institution model. The program supports local economies while improving food access for vulnerable populations.

Nourish NY

Nourish NY is a state-funded program that emerged during the COVID-19 pandemic to connect New York farmers with emergency feeding organizations. It reimburses food banks and pantries for purchasing surplus agricultural products directly from NYS farmers, reducing food waste and supporting the agricultural sector while supplying fresh, local food to families in need.

Hunger Prevention and Nutrition Assistance Program (HPNAP)

Administered by the NYS Department of Health, HPNAP provides funding to emergency feeding organizations to purchase nutritious food, including local and NYS products. It also supports operational costs like storage and transportation, enabling agencies to handle perishable and fresh foods effectively.

Through these programs, emergency feeding agencies not only address immediate food security needs but also contribute to the broader farm-to-institution ecosystem by integrating local agriculture into their supply chains, creating a win-win scenario for both producers and consumers in New York State.

Foodlink serves as the primary food bank for Monroe County and the broader Finger Lakes region, working to combat food insecurity and improve community health. Covering a 10-county service area—including Monroe, Allegany, Genesee, Livingston, Ontario, Orleans, Seneca, Wayne, Wyoming, and Yates counties—Foodlink distributes food to a network of 200 partner agencies including food pantries, shelters, and meal programs.

Food insecurity has risen significantly in the region, with rates increasing from 9.3% in 2021 to 12% in 2022, impacting more than 151,820 individuals. The demand for emergency food assistance has grown, particularly during the summer months when children lose access to school meals. In July and August

2024, Foodlink recorded 276,794 client visits, more than double the 135,336 visits during the same period in 2023.

Foodlink plays a key role in Monroe County's emergency food system, working with community partners to distribute nutritious food and support initiatives like the Fruit and Vegetable Prescription (FVRx) program. These efforts help address food insecurity while advancing broader health and equity goals within the county.

Foodlink: Supporting Local Agriculture While Fighting Food Insecurity

Foodlink actively supports local agriculture through various programs and purchasing policies that prioritize sourcing from Monroe County and New York State producers. A notable initiative is the **Nourish New York** program, through which Foodlink has purchased 3.6 million pounds of surplus food from New York farmers, including products like apples, lettuce, tomatoes, onions, and potatoes. These items are then distributed to families in need within the region.

In its state-of-the-art commercial kitchen, Foodlink processes local produce to add value and support regional agriculture. For example, local apples are washed, sliced, bagged, and distributed to schools across New York State, promoting the consumption of fresh, local produce among students.

Additionally, Foodlink's **Curbside Market** is a mobile market that links communities in Rochester and the surrounding area to fresh, affordable food, further supporting local producers by providing them with a platform to reach consumers directly.

These efforts demonstrate Foodlink's commitment to strengthening the local food system, supporting New York State farmers, and providing fresh, nutritious food to the communities it serves.

Other Governmental Organizations

State-managed and funded institutions, especially those that are governed and operated by Monroe County are a potential important institutional market for Monroe County farm and food products. The Monroe County Jail and Correctional Facility both serve over one million meals per year each. Establishing targets, not just for New York State food, but for Monroe County food through a geographic preference bid or other such measure could substantially increase procurement of food produced in Monroe County.

Additionally, the Monroe County Office for the Aging administers several meal programs, including the Lunch Club Program and Home Delivered Meals. The Lunch Club Program provides congregate meals at various senior center sites throughout the county, serving nutritious meals to older residents and visitors. The Home Delivered Meals program delivers meals to homebound individuals who are unable to prepare their own meals due to illness or disability. These programs collectively serve thousands of meals annually, contributing to the nutritional well-being of Monroe County's senior population.

While Executive Order 32 will provide additional incentives for procurement, without additional policies in place, distributors and food service providers need only source New York State food, not necessarily

Monroe County produce. Additionally, unless or until clear incentives or penalties for failing to meet Executive Order are put in place, adherence to Executive Order 32 will largely be voluntary.

The Good Food Bill (NYS S.6955/A.7264) would have built on the Good Food Purchasing Program by providing a comprehensive set of tools, technical support, and resources to support public institutions shifting to a values-based procurement model, perhaps at the same time as they are implementing Executive Order 32. These values include standards related to Local Economies, Animal Welfare, Environmental Sustainability, Nutrition, and Valued Workforce. The bill was vetoed in December 2024 by Governor Kathy Hochul. While supported by many agricultural organizations and farmers in NYS, it was opposed by the New York Farm Bureau, the state's largest farmer advocacy organization.

Photo 12. Credit: Farm Field, Chil. Credit: Steve Krenzer

7. Agricultural Support Services

Farms in Monroe County purchase supplies and services from numerous businesses located within and outside of Monroe County. These include suppliers of farm equipment, seed, fertilizer and other inputs as well as providers of services such as building contractors, equipment repair, veterinarians, accountants, nutrient management and other technical specialists.

As documented in the analysis of IMPLAN data in Appendix B, agriculture related businesses in Monroe County (other than retail food and beverage stores and wholesale grocery and related products businesses) generated approximately $106,000 in sales in 2022. Businesses located in Monroe County mix fertilizers and manufacture pesticides and other agricultural chemicals as well as farm equipment, and food product machinery. Many equipment dealers and farm service providers are located in adjacent counties. Other farm inputs involve technical and professional services such as accounting, legal and construction by businesses that serve other sectors in addition to agriculture.

Lenders and investment firms that serve farms in Monroe County include traditional lending organizations like the Farm Credit System, USDA Farm Service Agency, and commercial banks with agricultural lending divisions. Farm Credit East, a financial cooperative that serves farmers in eight northeastern States, offers loans for land, equipment and facilities as well as consulting services such as tax planning, appraisals, estate planning and grant writing. Services focused on assisting young and beginning farmers include Farm Start, which offers financial assistance, mentorship, and education.

Cornell Cooperative Regional Agricultural Programs

Cornell's regional agriculture specialists offer a variety of agriculture programs that provide specialized research-based education, technical assistance, and industry updates to enrolled farmers. Specialist Teams cover multi-county regions and deliver targeted support such as production management, pest and disease management advisory, field research results, and educational workshops tailored to each subsector of agriculture. Through enrollment, farmers receive information and programming from regional specialty teams. Teams that serve Monroe County are described below. More information can be found at Cornell Cooperative Extension's Regional Agriculture Programs webpage.

Northwest New York Dairy, Livestock & Field Crops Program

The NWNY Dairy, Livestock and Field Crops team provides services to farms specializing in dairy, livestock, and field crops such as hay, corn, wheat, or soybeans. The team is part of the Cornell College of Agriculture & Life Sciences' Pro-Dairy program outreach and supports producers through a variety of educational and technical assistance efforts. Their outreach ranges from individual farm management consultations and troubleshooting to hands-on training and educational programs designed to support farm productivity and sustainability.

Cornell Vegetable Program

The Cornell Vegetable Team collaborates with faculty and Extension Educators statewide to address issues affecting the commercial vegetable industry. The program provides educational resources and technical assistance to growers, processors, and agribusinesses. Key focus areas include food safety, crop variety evaluation, market development, pest management, and best management practices for vegetable production.

Lake Ontario Fruit Team

The Lake Ontario Fruit team provides educational programs and technical support to the commercial fruit industry across New York. The team focuses on helping New York fruit farms remain competitive and profitable in the global market. Their efforts include evaluating and promoting new technologies that improve efficiency while reducing financial, legal, labor, environmental, and health-related risks for growers.

Ornamental Horticulture

The CCE Commercial Horticulture Program provides research-based information and educational programming to support the horticulture industry within Monroe County. The program focuses on improving production efficiency, increasing yields, and reducing operational costs for horticulture businesses. Educational efforts also address marketing and retail strategies, as well as best practices for plant growth, pest management, and disease control.

8. Existing Plans, Programs & Regulations – Agricultural Economy

Agriculture and agriculture-related economic development are supported in the Finger Lakes Regional Economic Development Council's 2023 Strategic Plan as a key industry sector. Programs that help support farm businesses and the agricultural economy are administered by the Federal and State agencies, Monroe County, financial institutions and not-for-profit organizations.

County of Monroe Industrial Development Agency (COMIDA)

COMIDA is a governmental agency created in 1972 under Article 18A of the NYS General Municipal Law, with the purpose of attracting industry and creating job opportunities for Monroe County residents. It is governed by a Board of Directors appointed by the Monroe County Legislature. COMIDA supports business development through Payments in Lieu of Taxes (PILOT) agreements that reduce property and/or sales taxes for investments that create jobs.

Recent agriculture-related businesses that have received financial incentives from COMIDA include:

- Gascon Family Vineyards, Mendon
- Black Button Distilling, Rochester
- Empire Medicinals, dba Leep Foods (Controlled Environment Mushroom Farm), Henrietta
- Fairlife, dairy processing, Webster
- Farmer Jon's Popcorn, Rochester
- Northern Soy (SoyBoy), Chili

Cornell Cooperative Extension

Cornell Cooperative Extension offers educational resources and technical assistance to help farmers in all aspects of their operation. Three Regional Ag Teams offer specialized expertise to farmers: Lake Ontario Fruit Program Team; Northwest Dairy, Livestock and Field Crops Team, and Cornell Vegetable Program. Training and education programs include pesticide applicator training webinars on various topics. Resources from Cornell University include the Cornell Agricultural Workforce Development resources.

USDA Farm Service Agency

The **USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA)** administers loans and financial assistance, including disaster relief. The Rochester Service Center office is at 1200a Scottsville Road, Rochester.

The USDA **Value-Added Producer Grant (VAPG**) program, which was created under the 2018 Farm Bill, administers grants for farms to add value-added processes to farm business, to generate new products, create and expand marketing opportunities, and increase producer income. Funds can be received for both planning purposes and working capital. The VAPG is administered by the Office of Rural Development of the USDA.

NYS Ag & Markets

NYS Department of Agriculture (DAM) administers several grant programs to support farms and related businesses. The **Farmer's Market Resiliency Grant Program** offers grants of $10,000 to $50,000 for

"projects such as modernizing the delivery of products; repairing, replacing, or enhancing market infrastructure; and developing or scaling up marketing and outreach efforts."

The NYS Grown and Certified Label is a state program that assures consumers that their food was produced using a high standard by requiring producers to adopt food safety standards (Good Agricultural Practices) and enroll in an environmental management program. This voluntary program is one way to increase consumer and aggregator confidence in farm products. NYS DAM offers a GAP certification program, as well as reimbursement for up to $2,000 for the cost of the GAP audit.

Growing the Agriculture Industry Now (GAIN)

The Growing the Agriculture Industry Now (GAIN) program is a regional revolving loan program intended to support a variety of farming and agriculture-related economic development projects. Monroe County Economic Development administers the loan program for projects within Monroe County.

Priorities are projects that demonstrate one or more of the following:

- Job creation/ job retention
- Farm diversification including: value-added agriculture products; farm-based retail/wholesale (farm markets, wineries, distilleries)
- Investment in new technology including renewable energy projects production, harvesting and processing equipment
- Increase the amount of land in productive agricultural use
- Growth in net revenue for agricultural enterprises
- Leveraging other sources of funding
- Renewable energy application
- Projects that produce secondary economic development multipliers (e.g., other business expansions)

A recent project supported by this program helped a local farmer make capital investments to reduce energy expenses by supplying on farm energy generation.

Finger Lakes REDC Strategic Plan (2023)

The **Finger Lakes Regional Economic Development Council (FLREDC) Strategic Plan (2023)** outlines the region's approach to fostering sustainable and equitable economic development. The plan emphasizes four core focus areas: Industry Growth, Built Environment, Workforce Development, and Quality of Life. Key goals include promoting job growth, increasing regional wealth, driving private investment, and reducing poverty. The plan also highlights the importance of advancing equity and sustainability throughout the region's economic activities.

The FLREDC Strategic Plan (2023) provides a comprehensive framework for promoting agriculture and the food system in the Finger Lakes region, with specific initiatives that directly benefit Monroe County. These efforts aim to enhance the economic impact of agriculture, support sustainable practices, and foster innovation and collaboration across the sector.

The following components of the REDC Strategic Plan support agriculture in the 9-County region, which includes the City of Rochester and Monroe County as well as eight rural counties and the Finger Lakes Food System:

1. **Agriculture and Food Production Focus**
    - The strategic plan continues to prioritize agriculture and food production as a key industry sector. This focus includes initiatives to support agribusinesses, enhance food processing capabilities, and promote local food systems.
2. **Support for Agribusiness Startups**
    - The plan encourages innovation and entrepreneurship within the agricultural sector through programs like Grow-NY, which provides funding and mentorship to agribusiness startups.
3. **Collaboration with Educational Institutions**
    - Partnerships with institutions like Cornell AgriTech are emphasized to advance research, development, and commercialization in agriculture and food production.
4. **Sustainable Practices**
    - Emphasis on sustainable farming practices and the development of technologies to reduce environmental impacts and enhance the long-term viability of the agricultural sector.
5. **Marketing and Branding**
    - Initiatives to enhance the regional and national marketing of Finger Lakes agricultural products, leveraging the region's reputation for high-quality produce and agritourism attractions.

The following components of the REDC Strategic Plan specifically support Monroe County initiatives:

1. **Economic Impact and Job Creation:**
    - Significant investments in Monroe County include expansions by companies like Coca-Cola, which supports local food production through increased manufacturing and processing capabilities.
2. **Workforce Development:**
    - Monroe Community College's involvement in workforce development initiatives tailored to meet the needs of the agricultural sector and related industries.
3. **Innovation and Research:**
    - Monroe County benefits from the presence of research institutions and initiatives aimed at advancing agricultural technologies and practices.
4. **Sustainability Projects:**
    - Monroe County is involved in regional sustainability projects that promote environmentally friendly agricultural practices and clean energy technologies.
5. **Public-Private Partnerships:**
    - Collaborative efforts with local organizations and businesses in Monroe County to foster growth in the agricultural sector, enhance food processing infrastructure, and support agritourism.

Cornell AgriTech

The New York Center of Excellence for Food and Agriculture at Cornell AgriTech offers access to research and facilities to support food and agriculture businesses in developing and marketing new products.

Photo 13. De Meyer Family Farms. Credit: Genesee Land Trust

C. Environmental Protection & Climate Resiliency

Agriculture in Monroe County both depends on and impacts natural resources. This section presents an overview of the water resources and wildlife habitats as well as current and projected climate conditions as well as an overview of relevant plans, studies and regulations.

1. Water Resources

Watersheds

A watershed is an area of land from which all water drains into a particular stream, river, lake, or other waterbody. Surface topographic features (such as ridges, mountains, and hills) help to define the boundaries of these watersheds. In Monroe County, nearly all the water that falls on the land or is expelled drains into four main HUC-8 (8-digit USGS Hydrologic Unit Code) watersheds -- Oak Orchard-Twelvemile, Lower Genesee, Irondequoit-Ninemile, and Seneca -- that drain into Lake Ontario (see Map 13). Divided largely by the Genesee River through the middle of the county, water to the west of the Genesee River drains into the Oak Orchard-Twelvemile watershed; water to the east largely drains into the Irondequoit-Ninemile watershed; and water through the middle of the county drains into the Lower Genesee watershed. Ultimately all the water that drains into these three HUC-8 watersheds drain into Lake Ontario. A small portion of land along the County's eastern boundary drains into the Seneca watershed, which ultimately drains into Seneca Lake. Water within these 10 sub-watersheds carry water into 4 different drainage basins.

As seen in the table below, a significant portion of land within each of these watersheds are covered by farmland.

Table 10. Watershed Landcover in Monroe County

Watershed	Area Covered	% of Monroe County Land Cover	Farmland Cover	Forested Cover	Developed Cover
Irondequoit-Ninemile	125,553	30%	24,235 (19%)	25,055 (20%)	37,809 (30%)
Oak Orchard-Twelvemile	136,973	32%	52,473 (38%)	31,904 (23%)	21,371 (15%)
Lower Genesee	157,397	37%	61,323 (39%)	24,042 (15%)	32,280 (20%)
Seneca	4,133	1%	2,179 (53%)	804 (19%)	87 (2%)

Each of these watersheds is made up of several HUC-12 sub-watersheds, as shown in Map 13.

Waterbodies

Monroe County is home to an abundance of waterbodies, including Lake Ontario, the Genesee River, Erie Canal, Braddock and Irondequoit Bays, and numerous smaller tributaries, ponds, and wetlands. Lake Ontario is the largest of the County's waterbodies, providing approximately 32 miles of coastline along its northern border. The lake's shoreline provides a favorable climate for producers in Monroe County as seen by the significant amount of land in the northwest portion of the County being used for agricultural purposes.

Wetlands

Wetlands are regulated by both the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. Changes in the NYS regulations effective January 2025 establish guidelines for identifying wetlands subject to State permitting.

Wetlands provide ecosystem services that benefit farmland such as filtering and sequestering agricultural pollutant runoff, supporting pollinator populations, recharging well water sources, and protecting lands from flood damage.

Stormwater Management

Many farms in Monroe County have installed drainage tiles and other improvements on the farm to manage stormwater and maintain soil productivity. Stormwater drainage systems along roadways and other existing drainage infrastructure, including streams, ditches and other structures, also help to carry stormwater away from farm fields.

Photo 14. Ponding on no-till field, Parma

2. Habitats and Wildlife

Native Habitats and Species

Despite being one of New York's most populated counties, large portions of land within Monroe County remains undeveloped. Approximately 82,400 acres (19.3%) of Monroe County's land cover is classified as forested. Within that forested landcover there are several parcels of land dedicated specifically to the preservation of wildlife and natural habitats in the County. These protected lands include state parks and wildlife management areas; county parks and nature centers; and nature preserves managed by private not-for-profit organizations such as the Genesee Land Trust. These forested areas help to provide a diversity of habitats for wildlife; help support clean water sources; and provide opportunities for recreational activities. Ecosystem services that may benefit agriculture include nutrient cycling, pollinator support, seed dispersal, soil formation, pest and disease control, and climate regulation. Agriculturally, farmers can also utilize the benefits of forested areas located on their farms by generating income from timber harvesting or by employing agroforestry techniques such as silvopasturing.

Invasive and Pest Species

Invasive and pest species impact farms and the agricultural economy in Monroe County. Pest species such as the white-tailed deer and invasive species can significantly damage vegetable, fruit and ornamental crops. Monroe County is classified was classified in 2024 has having an infestation of spotted lanternfly, which feeds on maple, walnut and fruit trees, grapevines and hops and threatens apple and grape growers. Pest management techniques such as the construction of fences to prevent deer migration onto farmland and the application of insecticides to eradicate invasive insects can affect the surrounding natural environment. Climate change is expected to result in increases in weeds, insects and diseases that affect plants and reduce crop yields. [4]

According to the 2023 Monroe County Hazard Mitigation Plan, invasive species and infestation is a hazard that poses a significant threat to agriculture in Monroe County. It notes that the County has experienced infestations from Armyworm, Emerald ash borers, and Dutch elm disease. The USDA reports that infestation and invasive species caused $72,000 in losses to farms in Monroe County between 2015 and 2022. As the climate becomes warmer and more humid, the risk from serious infestation from fungal and other diseases and pests is expected to increase.

In 2012, a spring storm system brought adult armyworm moths to western New York (from the south). The early arrival of warm spring weather was blamed for the appearance of an unusually high number of armyworms. Ordinarily, they arrive later in the season when more of their natural predators are present. Monroe County was included in a USDA disaster declaration (S3411) for the armyworm outbreak.

[4] SOURCE: NYS Climate Impacts Assessment, https://nyaspubs.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/nyas.15192

Photo 15. Spotted Lanternfly. Source: U.S. Department of Agriculture

3. Climate

In 2014, The New York State Energy Research and Development Authority (NYSERDA) updated their *ClimAID, Responding to Climate Change in New York State, Technical Report* with new projections on the impact of climate change in New York State, including Monroe County. Concerning the agricultural sector, the report noted that farmers would be on the front lines of coping with climate change; however, there will also likely be new opportunities from climate change, such as longer growing seasons and new crop options. In 2024, the New York Academy of Sciences published an updated Climate Impacts Assessment which includes a section on Agriculture. The report noted that many of the issues highlighted in the previous study remain accurate. It summarizes the challenges facing agriculture as follows:

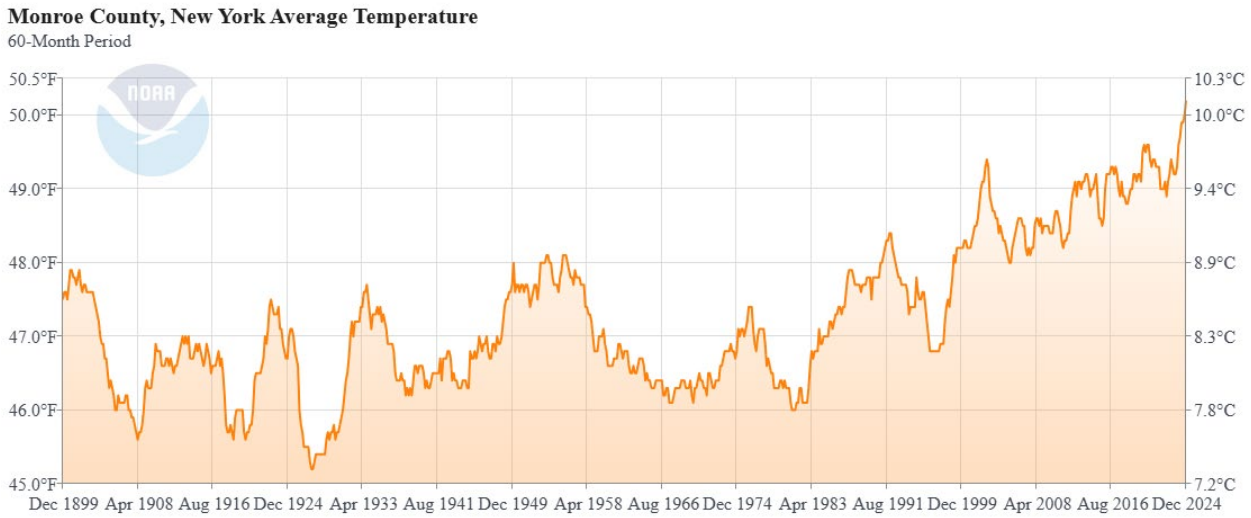
> "The primary climate-related challenges New York farmers face include too much or too little precipitation, extreme weather events, shifts in growing season length, increasing variability and uncertainty (including warmer spring temperatures followed by hard freezes), heat stress, and increasing pressure from pests (insects, mites, plant diseases, weeds, and wildlife), and changes in phenology" (the timing of biological events such as plant flowering and insect emergence).

Air Temperature

The average yearly temperature for Monroe County in 2024 was 50.5˚F, with an average summer high of 80˚F in July and an average winter low of 20˚F in January. According to the ClimAID report, the average annual air temperature in Monroe County is projected to increase by 3.7 to 7.3˚F by the 2050s and by as much as 13.8˚F by 2100. NYSERDA's report anticipates that each season will experience similar amounts of warming. Across New York State, the growing season is projected to lengthen by about a month, with summers becoming more intense and winters becoming milder. While these changes may lead to new opportunities in longer growing seasons and new crop types, these drastic changes will also strain current agricultural industries. For instance, hotter summers may lead to heat stresses on farm animals leading to a loss of production, the extension of breeding seasons for insect pests, and an increase in droughts which will damage the quality and yield of many crops. Additionally, winter

agricultural industries such as Christmas tree and maple syrup production will be affected as the health of these trees relies on consistent cold weather.

Chart 19. Average Temperatures, 60-Month Period



SOURCE: NOAA National Centers for Environmental information, Climate at a Glance: County Time Series, published January 2025, retrieved on January 16, 2025, from https://www.ncei.noaa.gov/access/monitoring/climate-at-a-glance/county/time-series

Precipitation

On average, Monroe County receives 34 inches of rainfall annually and 76 inches of snow per year. According to the 2014 ClimAID Report, the average precipitation rate in Monroe County is predicted to increase by 2-12% by 2050 and by as much as 24% by 2100. The most serious impact of increased precipitation on Monroe County's agriculture could come from damage to crops, erosion and the loss of productive topsoil. Increased erosion from precipitation could lead to the loss of productive farmland and the increase of pollutants such as phosphorous entering the counties' waterbodies. Furthermore, agricultural communities that reside along streams may face increased risks of flooding during extreme precipitation events, damaging crop yields and destroying important farming tools/infrastructure.

Severe Weather Events

As climate characteristics such as air temperature and precipitation are anticipated to increase, the rate of extreme weather events is also anticipated to increase. According to the 2023 Monroe County Hazard Mitigation Plan, drought is a hazard that poses a significant threat to agriculture in Monroe County. Monroe County has experienced several USDA-declared disasters over recent years, including droughts (2016), flooding (2022), excessive heat (2015), frost/ freeze (2015 and 2020) and severe storms (2019).

Increasingly severe periods of drought combined with higher temperatures will increase the risk of wildfire which would be a threat to agriculture in Monroe County. During 2024, a November brush fire in

Tompkins County burned approximately 10 acres and forest fires in the southeastern part of New York burned 2,100 acres[5].

In 2020, excessive heat caused losses of $98,000 to sweet corn, green pea and soybeans. In 2022, frost/ freeze caused $180 million in losses to apples and soybeans in Monroe County. Excessive moisture/ precipitation/ rain in 2015 and 2017 caused losses of more than $5 million. (Source: 2023 Monroe County Hazard Mitigation Plan, p. 5.4.4-9.) Future increases in severe weather events and daily temperatures will have serious repercussions for the agricultural success of farms in Monroe County as well as the health of its residents.

4. Relevant Plans, Studies & Programs

Monroe County SWCD/ AEM

The Monroe County Soil & Water District (SWCD) Agricultural Environmental Management (AEM) provides technical assistance and cost sharing to help farms plan and install conservation practices that help to protect water quality, maintain soil health and improve climate resiliency. The SWCD's 2021-2025 Strategic Plan prioritizes projects on farms located within watersheds where agricultural inputs are "Known" or "Suspected" to contribute to Impaired and stressed waterbodies. One of the priorities in SWCD's 2021-2025 Strategic Plan is the Salmon Creek subwatershed, which is within the Lake Ontario Shoreline – Rochester West watershed.

Genesee River Basin Nine Key Element Watershed Plan for Phosphorous and Sediment

The 2015 Genesee River Basin Nine Key Element Watershed Plan for Phosphorous and Sediment estimated that agricultural activities the amount contributed 311,912 lbs./yr. of phosphorus into the Genesee River Basin, comprising 42% of all phosphorus loading into the Basin. Farms that implement best management practices help to reduce the amount of phosphorous entering waterways that drain into the Genesee River.

Climate Resilient Farming Grants

The NYS Department of Agriculture & Markets (NYS AGM) administers the Climate Resilient Farming (CRF) program, which awards funds to County Soil & Water Conservation Districts (SWCD) on behalf of farmers to install projects that reduce greenhouse gas emissions, enhance on-farm adaptation and resiliency to heavy storm events, rainfall and drought. Eligible projects include agricultural waste storage cover and flare for methane reduction, on-farm water management, and soil health systems such as cover crops. In the most recent round of funding, a dairy farm in Monroe County received funds to install a riparian buffer and irrigation water management system to reduce nutrient and runoff from the farm fields.

[5] SOURCE: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2024_Northeastern_United_States_wildfires

Agricultural Non-point Source Abatement & Control Grants

The Monroe County Soil & Water Conservation District (SWCD) administers grant funding allocated by the NYS New York State Soil & Water Conservation Committee and the Department of Agriculture & Markets to improve water quality by reducing pollutants resulting from various types of land uses. Projects completed through this program include:

- Streambank stabilization and restoration of riparian buffers to reduce nutrient and sediment migration from farm pastures into waterbodies
- Cover cropping to reduce erosion and the transport of contaminated soils into waterways
- Fencing to keep farm animals away from streams

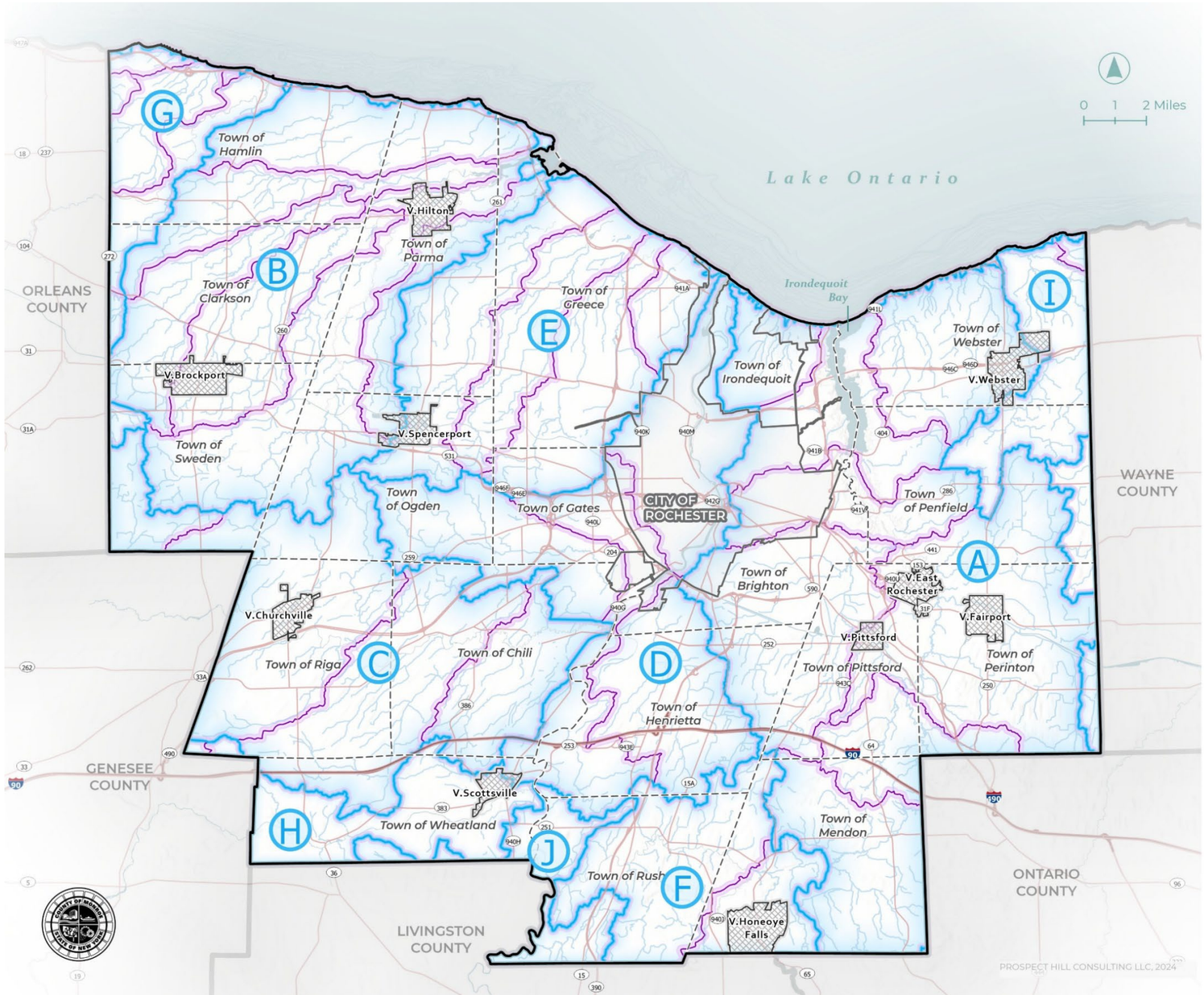
USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)

The USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) manages several programs that help farmers install and maintain conservation practices.

- The Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) provides yearly payments to farmers who remove environmentally sensitive land from production and plant environmentally beneficial species.
- The Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) provides technical and financial assistance to agricultural producers and forest landowners to plan and install conservation initiatives such as:
    - High Tunnel Systems (“hoop house”)
    - Transition to organic
    - Energy efficiency improvements

Photo 16. Pete Widener farm, Chili. Provided by William Steimer

Map 13. Streams, Watersheds & Sub-Watersheds



STREAMS, WATERSHEDS & SUB-WATERSHEDS MONROE COUNTY, NY

AGRICULTURAL & FARMLAND PROTECTION PLAN

- STREAM / RIVER
- WATERBODY
- WATERSHED BOUNDARY (HUC 10)
- SUB-WATERSHED BOUNDARY (HUC 12)

ID	WATERSHED NAME (HUC 10)	AREA (ACRES)
A	IRONDEQUOIT CREEK-FRONTAL LAKE ONTARIO	112,845
B	SALMON CREEK-FRONTAL LAKE ONTARIO	77,443
C	BLACK CREEK	56,500
D	GENESEE RIVER	55,923
E	BLACK CREEK-FRONTAL LAKE ONTARIO	45,159
F	HONEOYE CREEK	23,312
G	SANDY CREEK-FRONTAL LAKE ONTARIO	14,450
H	OATKA CREEK	13,785
I	FOURMILE CREEK-FRONTAL LAKE ONTARIO	12,605
J	BEARDS CREEK-GENESEE RIVER	7,988

- MONROE COUNTY
- TOWN BOUNDARY
- VILLAGE BOUNDARY
- CITY BOUNDARY
- STATE ROUTE
- THRUWAY / LIMTED ACCESS HIGHWAY

ESRI, CGIAR, USGS; MONROE COUNTY 2023; ESRI 2024; NYS OFFICE OF INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY SERVICES GEOSPATIAL DATA SERVICES 2024; USGS NATIONAL HYDROGRAPHY DATASET PLUS HIGH RESOLUTION 2020; U.S. GREAT LAKES RESTORATION INITIATIVE (GLRI) 2010; NATIONAL GEOPHYSICAL DATA CENTER - BATHYMETRY OF LAKE ONTARIO, 1999; CORNELL INSTITUTE FOR RESOURCE INFORMATION SCIENCES (CORNELL IRIS) AND NYS DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE AND MARKETS 2017

D. Public Understanding & Appreciation of Agriculture

Existing programs to educate the public and increase public understanding and appreciation of agriculture include promotion of local farm products, outreach and education for local officials, and youth education.

1. Promotion of Local Farm Products

Monroe Community College's Agriculture & Life Sciences Institute promotes local farm products through the "Grow Monroe" campaign. A website promotes the benefits of buying local products, provides a month-by-month guide to harvest times and availability of local produce. A video and radio spots help to promote local produce.

Cornell Cooperative Extension of Monroe County promotes local farm products by listing farmers markets, CSAs, farm stores and U-Pick operations on its website. The website also includes information about the benefits of buying local and a guide to seasonal harvests.

The New York State Farmers' Market Nutrition Programs (FMNP) promote local farmers by providing eligible consumers with coupons to purchase fresh fruits and vegetables at participating farmers' markets, farm stands and mobile markets. The program provides Farmers' Market Nutrition Program (FMNP) coupons to low-income seniors and to families eligible for the New York State Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC), as well as FreshConnect Checks for veterans, service members, and recipients of Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) recipients. Coupons can be used to purchase eligible food items at participating markets.

The Monroe County Fair was historically held at the fairgrounds in Henrietta, including the Dome Arena, and operated annually from 1947 to approximately 2013, after which it relocated to other venues. The fair featured agricultural exhibits, livestock competitions, food vendors, rides, live entertainment, and a variety of family activities. In 2020, the fair was canceled due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and subsequent efforts to re-establish the event have experienced mixed success. As a result, the fair has not consistently returned in its traditional form in recent years.

Re-establishing the Monroe County Fair would provide a valuable opportunity to strengthen and promote the county's agricultural connections by creating a dedicated venue for local famers and producers to showcase their products, educate the public on agricultural practices, and foster connections between producers and consumers. Additionally, the fair can contribute to the economic vitality of local farms by expanding market exposure, community involvement, and agricultural awareness.

2. Decision-maker Education

Staff at Monroe Community College's Agriculture & Life Sciences have worked with local government officials to address conflicts between farmers and municipalities relating to interpretation of local laws and compliance with protections for farm operations within certified Agricultural Districts. MCC staff

have also worked with assessors to help ensure consistent administration of agricultural use exemptions.

The Monroe County Farm Bureau organizes periodic farm tours and other events, such as the annual "Taste of Monroe County Legislative Reception", for local government decision-makers to help them understand issues of importance to local farmers. The Farm Bureau also works with local farmers to help them understand and comply with government regulations such as training in NY Department of Transportation regulations and safety guidance regarding slow-moving farm vehicles.

Cornell Cooperative Extension of Monroe County sponsors educational workshops on issues of importance to farmers as well as local decision-makers.

Monroe County Department of Planning occasionally organizes training programs for planning board members and other local government officials on various topics. Past sessions have addressed agriculture-related issues such as right-to-farm provisions of the NYS Agricultural District Law.

3. Youth and Adult Education

Programs that educate youth about where food comes from help to promote public understanding of agriculture and encourage youth to consider careers in agriculture. Programs range from "Ag in the Classroom" curriculum for school children starting in kindergarten to 4-H, and career training at community colleges.

New York Agriculture in the Classroom

New York Agriculture in the Classroom (NYAITC) is a partnership of Cornell University, the NYS Department of Agriculture and Markets, the NYS Education Department, Cornell Cooperative Extension, and the New York Farm Bureau. Established in 1985, the program works with schoolteachers, Cornell Cooperative Extension and other partners to increase agricultural literacy in New York State.

Cornell Cooperative Extension of Monroe County

CCE Monroe County administers several educational programs for youth and adults.

- The New York Agriculture in the Classroom program is a partnership of Cornell University, the NYS Department of Agriculture and Markets, the NYS Education Department, Cornell Cooperative Extension, and the New York Farm Bureau. It offers curriculum materials for schoolteachers and educator workshops to promote agricultural literacy, as well as the Grow-NY Youth Competition to encourage entrepreneurship in agriculture, technology and agriculture-related businesses.
- 4-H is a worldwide youth development program that encourages learning and civic engagement. Monroe County activities include several 4-H Clubs and resources for parents and youth. 4-H programs work with youth ages 5 to 19 in activities related to "Citizenship", "Healthy Lifestyles", and "Science, Education and Technology."
- CCE's Horticulture program offers an Agricultural Workforce Development program which includes a Landscape Technicians training program for individuals seeking employment in the field of horticulture. The "Gaining Relevant and Outstanding Work Skills (GROWS) program to

help residents of low-income neighborhoods in the City of Rochester develop work skills through employment at the CCE educational farm that would be transferable to other areas of employment.

FFA/ BOCES

Monroe 2-Orleans BOCES- Career and Technical Education Center has an FFA (formerly "Future Farmers of America") chapter. FFA chapters in middle and high schools promote school-based agricultural education and offers opportunities for youth in leadership development and community engagement.

Springdale Farm

Springdale Farm is a public demonstration farm owned by Monroe County and operated by Heritage Christian Services, a non-sectarian human services agency that supports children and adults with developmental disabilities. The farm has been in operation since 1830 and offers visitors unique demonstrations of modern agriculture. Amenities include a petting zoo, playground, pavilion, and walking trails. Springdale Farm is also home to approximately 60 dairy cows and features the region's first robotic milking system.

E. Urban Agriculture

1. Overview of existing urban agriculture

"Urban Agriculture," broadly defined, includes commercial for-profit and not-for-profit growers as well as school and community gardens and even backyard gardening. This Plan focuses on growers that produce agricultural products for commercial sale or institutional distribution while recognizing the significant benefits of community and school gardens and home gardens in providing access to food and increasing public understanding and appreciation of agriculture.

Commercial Growers

Commercial Agricultural Production is used to describe farming operations which are dedicated to producing agricultural products for revenue or distribution. These types of operations may be located in greenhouses or warehouses or on outdoor plots of land dedicated to the production of agricultural products to be sold for profit. Agricultural products produced within the City of Rochester include flowers, microgreens, mushrooms, and vegetables. Between 2016 and 2022, a facility in Eastman Business Park in the City of Rochester produced vegetables, and for a brief period cannabis for medical and adult use.

Rochester Microgreens

Rochester Microgreens produces herbs, flowers, lettuce, grasses and microgreens at a home-based indoor facility in the Maplewood neighborhood in the City of Rochester. The business sells directly to restaurants and other customers.

Leep Foods

Leep Foods produces organic mushrooms and blended products (such as chicken-and-mushroom sausage) at an indoor facility on Scottsville Road in Chili, NY. The company was awarded $250,000 in the 2020 Grow-NY competition and received COMIDA support.

Smugtown Mushrooms

Smugtown Mushrooms currently cultivates mushrooms as a home-based business and sells directly to consumers at farmers markets and online. The company previously utilized warehouse space in the City of Rochester.

Columbia Care (Cannabis)

Between 2016 and 2022, Columbia Care produced cannabis for medical use in 2016 at a 204,000 sq. ft indoor growing facility leased from Eastman Kodak at the Eastman Business Park in Rochester. This facility grew all the cannabis for the company's dispensaries throughout New York State. The company committed to a 7-year lease in exchange for financial incentives to support the start-up. When Columbia Care merged with Cresco Labs in 2022, it divested the Rochester facility.

Community & School Gardens

Community gardens are green spaces which contain individual plots or shared gardening spaces that can be utilized by community members to grow various plants and produce for personal consumption or to be utilized by the community as a local and sustainable source of healthy food options. Community gardens are generally publicly accessible but can be located on public or private land.

More than 50 community gardens in Monroe County produce vegetables, flowers and other products. These include community gardens associated with City of Rochester R-Centers, gardens maintained by FoodLink as part of its Emergency Food Pantry program, gardens owned and operated by various religious institutions, gardens run by community organizations, and gardens owned and operated by municipalities.

School gardens are typically located on school property and are often developed and used in coordination with the school's curriculum or as extracurricular clubs. These gardens typically focus more on the educational aspects of gardening in addition to food production.

Not-for-Profit Growers/ Educational/Workforce Training

Some urban agriculture sites in Monroe County are designed to educate the community about the importance of agriculture as well as teaching valuable skills which can in turn be used to further participants' careers. Examples of these types of urban agriculture include CCE, FoodLink and school gardens. To retain tax exempt status, not-for-profit organizations must ensure that their food and flower production serves the charitable or educational purposes of the organization.

Examples of not-for-profit organizations operating community gardens

Foodlink Community Farm

The Foodlink Community Farm consists of a commercial growing operation and a large community garden located on a 1.6-acre urban agriculture campus between the Edgerton and Lyell-Otis neighborhoods of northwest Rochester.

The Foodlink Community Farm produces an average of 2,000 pounds of produce annually to support Foodlink's Curbside Market, Community Kitchen and Nutrition Education programs. This commercial growing operation includes an orchard and apiary.

Photo 17. Foodlink Community Farm. Source: https://foodlinkny.org/program/foodlink-community-farm/

The community garden was founded in 2011 through the advocacy of immigrants working with Mary's Place who were seeking a space to grow traditional and medicinal foods. Many members of the Nepalese, Burmese, Somali and Bhutanese communities who participate were farmers in their home

countries. The community garden now provides space for 65 families to grow approximately 6,000 pounds of food for their households each year.

Foodlink also collaborates with schools and community organizations to help build teaching and community gardens.

Green Visions

The not-for-profit organization Greentopia installs and cultivates cut flowers as part of the Green Visions workforce development program. Program participants cultivate flowers and sell arrangements at the Rochester Public Market and Wegmans. Established in 2012, the program recruits young adults age 16-24 to plant and maintain flower gardens on vacant lots in the JOSANA neighborhood in the City of Rochester. Participants receive training and certifications as well as a stipend.

Photo 18. Green Visions (SOURCE: https://greenvisions.org/)

Cornell Cooperative Extension's South Lawn

In 2022, Cornell Cooperative Extension of Monroe County developed a market garden CCE facility at 2449 St. Paul Boulevard which is used in its GROWS (Growing Relevant and Outstanding Work Skills) workforce development program to assist at-risk young adults overcome barriers to employment, develop skills and learn about horticulture and agriculture.

CCE manages two workforce development programs: (1) the Landscape Technicians Training Program and (2) GROWS Program which provide individuals with the skills necessary to obtain a career in horticulture as well as general work skills that would be transferable to other areas of employment.

City of Rochester

Within the City of Rochester, there were approximately 80 food-growing gardens in 2024 (City Permit: 42; R-Center: 6; RCSD: 10; RPL: 2; Private Land:16; Other: 4) About half utilized city garden permits and 20% were on private land.

The City's Garden Permit Program allows individuals or community groups to apply for developing a community garden on a vacant city-lot on a one-year basis in accordance with guidelines set by the City. Applicants must re-apply every year. The City also offers a 5-year Garden Permit for organizations that have successfully completed three seasons of the garden permit program. The 5-year Garden Permit allows these organizations to establish programs and facilities on site that may be longer-term investments, enhancing productivity and programming and fulfilling more long-term planning visions for the space.

Suburban Community Gardens

Community gardens are located in many Towns and villages. Some larger gardens include those in Brighton, Perinton and Webster.

- As part of the **Town of Brighton's** Color Brighton Green Initiative, founded in 2008, the Town of Brighton, an inner-ring suburb of Rochester, established the Brighton Farmers Market and Community Garden. The Brighton Community Garden, which sits adjacent to their winter farmers' market location, offers 100 plots available to the community to grow their own local produce. Each year, some of the produce grown there is donated to the Brighton Food Cupboard. In addition to facilitating a community garden, the Town also hosts a summer and winter farmers' market. The farmers' market supports local producers by requiring vendors that participate to be within 100 miles of the Town.
- The Perinton Community Garden in Potter Park, Fairport, was established in 2011 on the site of a WWII Victory Garden. The garden has more than 100 raised plants used by members to grow vegetables, herbs and flowers as well as eight community beds, vertical gardens and a worm composting system.
- The Town of Penfield owns and manages the Penfield Community Victory Garden on a 3.3-acre site at 1748 Five Mile Line Road. Residents can rent plots to grow organic vegetables, flowers and herbs.

2. Organizations involved in Urban Agriculture

Several not-for-profit organizations provide coordination, education and technical assistance to residents and organizations involved in urban agriculture. The following list identifies several of these organizations.

FoodLink

Foodlink is a nonprofit dedicated to ending hunger and building healthier communities by addressing both the symptoms and roots causes of food insecurity.

- Owns and operates a 1.6-acre urban farm in the Edgerton and Lyell-Otis Neighborhood which consists of a large community garden and commercial growing operation.
- Food grown on the urban farm is utilized for their curbside market, community kitchen, and nutrition education programs.
- Collaborates with local schools and organizations to help them develop their own community gardens and urban agriculture programs.

Taproot Collective

The Taproot Collective is a nonprofit organization with the mission of designing and building holistic systems for healthy local food, and to provide educational opportunities for city youth and families.

Taproot Collective provides access to funding and organizing support to community gardens which aren't established nonprofits with a board overseeing operations. They also provide programming services to support institutions and community groups committed to food justice.

Taproot Collective owns and maintains the First Market Farm, a 4,500 sq ft lot which holds garden beds and a greenhouse, which the Collective use for educational and youth-employment programming. Located near the Rochester Public Market's north entrance, it was designed as a pilot "proof of concept" community garden and serves as the site for educational programming and training in growing food as well as nutrition and how to cook and store fresh produce.

During 2024, the organization supported 68 community or school gardens, distributed materials including seeds and seedlings, conducted 15 educational workshops and employed 32 youth and two adults.

490 Farmers

490 Farmers is an urban farming collective that maintains the Broadway Community Garden and Free Food Forest. The Broadway Community Garden has 40 garden plots which community members can apply to grow their own local fruits and vegetables. The Free Food Forest is open to the public who can help themselves to the fresh produce grown.

M.K. Gandhi Institute for Nonviolence

The **M.K. Gandhi Institute for Nonviolence** is a nonprofit organization that partners with other local organizations to promote nonviolence education, restorative practices, environmental sustainability, and racial justice.

The institute owns and operates a 24-bed community garden and greenhouse in the Plymouth-Exchange Neighborhood which is used to grow produce that is distributed to neighbors in the community and families at the nearby School #19. It also offers workshops teaching community members skills on growing their own vegetable garden and healthy cooking.

Grow Green Rochester

Grow Green Rochester is an urban agriculture program that serves as an outdoor classroom devoted to fostering S.T.E.M concepts with a focus on ending food desserts in Rochester.

Flower City Pickers

Flower City Pickers is a nonprofit organization that supports the local community by delivering free food from Rochester Public Market vendors that would otherwise be landfill bound.

3. Existing Plans, Programs & Regulations

Rochester Food System Plan

"The Rochester Community Food System Plan is a city-wide assessment and planning initiative intended to inform City policies, strategies, and activities to improve healthy food access and create a stronger food system in Rochester."

Findings from the initial research include:

- Rochester is located within an abundant agricultural region with real strength in vegetable and fruit production.
    - Monroe County has 3x the % of farms with Direct to Consumer sales compared to U.S counties as a whole
- Increasing numbers of food-growing gardens in Rochester
    - Rochester had 80 food-growing gardens in 2024 (City Permit: 42; R-Center: 6; RCSD: 10; RPL: 2; Private Land:16; Other: 4) About half utilized city garden permits and 20% were on private land
    - City's permit program has grown to around 80 active gardens since 2019 (includes non-food gardens)
- Rochester residents value access to community gardening but perceive barriers to land tenure and resources.
    - Focus group attendees cited community as the most common benefit of urban agriculture and gardening
    - Some residents find the City permitting process to be challenging to access
- Food is an important part of Rochester's economy - but entrepreneurs face challenges when attempting to scale their small businesses.
    - Rochester is home to over 12K food-related jobs - about 10% of all jobs
    - In manufacturing categories, Rochester overperforms (relative to US) in: Baked Goods, Beverages, Packaged Fruit & Veg, Food Packaging
- Rochester residents experience food insecurity at high levels with disproportionate impacts to specific demographic groups and neighborhoods.
    - 39,840 food insecure residents in the City of Rochester and 95,530 in Monroe County as a whole
    - Access to food retail is highly variable, with price and transportation cited as top barriers.
    - Benefit and incentive programs are widely utilized at food stores but there is room to increase participation among eligible populations.
- Rochester is home to uniquely innovative organizations and initiatives which can be further leveraged to strengthen the food system.
    - FOODLINK: Regional food bank with highly diversified and innovative programming
    - ROCHESTER PUBLIC MARKET: Unique partnership with Friends of the RPM; hugely successful SNAP redemption program ($1.1M in 2023)
    - HEADWATER FOOD HUB: Regional food hub building regional supply chains; innovative product lines
    - Additional key organizations include: The Commissary, Taproot Collective, Common Ground Health, Rochester Food Policy Council, network of ~90 food pantries, farmers' markets, etc.
    - Recent initiatives include: $3M in Innovative Food Model grants, Healthy ROC Grocer Program, SNAP Restaurant Meals Program (RMP).
- Information and data about Rochester's food system are fragmented, difficult to navigate, and incomplete.

- Recent investments set the stage for the City of Rochester to take a stronger role in addressing food system issues.
    - Recent investments include Healthy ROC Grocer, Innovative Food Model grants, and this planning process

Urban Agriculture Working Group

The Urban Agriculture Working Group formed in 2014 to bring together representatives of community gardens, not-for-profit organizations, universities, community associations and community members. An annual community garden conference provides ongoing education and opportunities for collaboration.

Cornell Cooperative Extension (CCE) of Monroe County

Monroe County Cornell Cooperative Extension (CCE) provides research-based information and educational programming to ensure the vitality of local agriculture and to promote the health and well-being of the community and natural environment. CCE is also a member of the Rochester Urban Agriculture Working Group which helps to cultivate leaders in Rochester's urban agriculture community by supporting urban agriculture policies and providing the necessary resources and educational opportunities.

CCE's Harvest NY Program

Harvest NY is a federally funded, state executed program that focuses on the local food and supply chain, urban agriculture, community gardens, emerging crops, and ag climate resiliency. Specialists in these areas, including two team members in the CCE Monroe office, help to increase profitability and sustainability by:

- Facilitating connections to research and resources of Cornell University and Cornell Cooperative Extension
- Assisting with workforce development and business expansion
- Responding to emerging opportunities with educational resources and technical assistance to farmers and businesses.

Monroe County Soil & Water Conservation District (SWCD)

In addition to its other programs relating to environmental protection, the Monroe County Soil & Water Conservation District (SWCD), in partnership with Cornell Cooperative Extension Harvest NY and EquiCenter, provided funding and technical assistance to help three community organizations establish or expand community gardens. Between 2020 and 2023, community gardens were established or restored at Living Word Temple of Restoration, Spiritus Chrisi/ The Neilsen House, and Rochester City School No. 42, and Asbury First United Methodist Church.

City of Rochester Comprehensive Plan

The Urban Agriculture + Community Garden component of the City of Rochester's Plan 2034 includes the following goals and recommended actions to support urban agriculture and community gardens.

- **Support urban agriculture as a valid reuse option for vacant land and vacant buildings.**
    - Recommended actions include: updating the City's zoning code to allow urban agriculture as a permitted use; market strategic sites for large-scale hydroponic or aquaponic operations; facilitate composting of organic waste that can be utilized in gardens; evaluate policies and funding sources to provide water to community gardens; and, support grants for community gardens and workforce development programs; convene a local Food Policy Council
- **Facilitate community gardening on City-owned vacant lots.**
    - Recommended actions include: creating a longer term (5-10 years) permit/ lease arrangement for community garden sponsors who have demonstrated sustainable gardening operations over the course of a full growing season and have support by the immediate neighborhood; facilitate meetings with gardeners and City staff to assess the permit process; accept proposals from gardeners for vacant lot redevelopment; and work with refugee service providers to use City-owned vacant land for community gardening and programming
- **Explore innovative urban agriculture initiatives.**
    - Recommended actions include: research feasibility of introducing edible landscaping in public areas; research feasibility of a hydroponic/ aquaponics operation as a potential employee-owned coop; and explore support for installation of high tunnels and other season-extending production aids on City-owned land, in partnership with USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service.

4. Resources for Funding and Technical Assistance

USDA Urban Agriculture & Innovative Production Grants

At the federal level, the USDA provides financial and technical assistance to urban and small-scale producers with growing, processing, and selling their agricultural products. The USDA's Urban Agriculture and Innovative Production Grant offers funding to initiate or expand urban agricultural efforts. Grant funding awarded through this program can be utilized for either planning or implementation activities. Planning activities include assessing community needs, researching best practices, or conducting business planning and feasibility studies related to urban agriculture. Eligible implementation activities include expanding operations, providing workforce training, implementing best practices, or supporting educational programs. In Monroe County, Foodlink was awarded over $94,000 in 2021 through this program to evaluate and redesign their commercial and community growing spaces to maximize community engagement, food production, and innovation.

Other Federal Programs

Other federal agencies and departments that can assist urban agriculture operations through financial and technical assistance include:

(1) the Farm Service Agency which can offer microloans tailored to small-scale farms,
(2) the Natural Resources Conservation Service which can offer financial assistance with implementing urban agriculture best practices,

(3) the Food Nutrition Service which can provide funding for farm to school programs, and
(4) the Agricultural research Service which provide funding to research innovative production techniques such as vertical farming.

USDA's Urban Agriculture Programs at a Glance lists current federal programs available to assist urban agriculture operations.

New York State Office of Community Gardens and Community Gardens Task Force

The Office of Community Gardens was created by the State to support New Yorkers who are dedicated to building greener and healthier cities. The program helps interested individuals and organizations with forming community gardens by leveraging resources across state agencies to assist with identifying vacant public land for the development of community gardens, and by coordinating between those interested parties and the state agencies.

Established through an update to the NYS Agriculture and Markets Law in 2021, the Community Gardens Task Force is a group of stakeholders tasked with studying, evaluating, and developing recommendations to the State which would support the development of community gardens. The taskforce meets biannually and is required to submit a report to the Governor and Legislature every five years. Currently one member of the taskforce is from Monroe County.

Urban Farms and Community Gardens Grant Program

Now in its second year of funding, New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets (NYSDAM) administers the Urban Farms and Community Gardens Grant Program which provides funding for the expansion or development of community gardens, school gardens, and urban farms. With $1,000,000 in available funding, NYSDAM offers minimum grant amounts of $20,000 with a 10% match for projects that are focused on improving food security in urban areas through food production, food safety, and food distribution.

Photo 19. Reed Farm, Chili. Credit: Gay Mills

Appendices

A. Summary of Public Engagement

B. IMPLAN Economic Data Analysis

C. Municipal Land Use Regulations Analysis