

MONROE COUNTY
**AGRICULTURAL
AND FARMLAND
PROTECTION PLAN**



Public Informational Meeting

November 12 and 13, 2025



ADAM J. BELLO
COUNTY EXECUTIVE

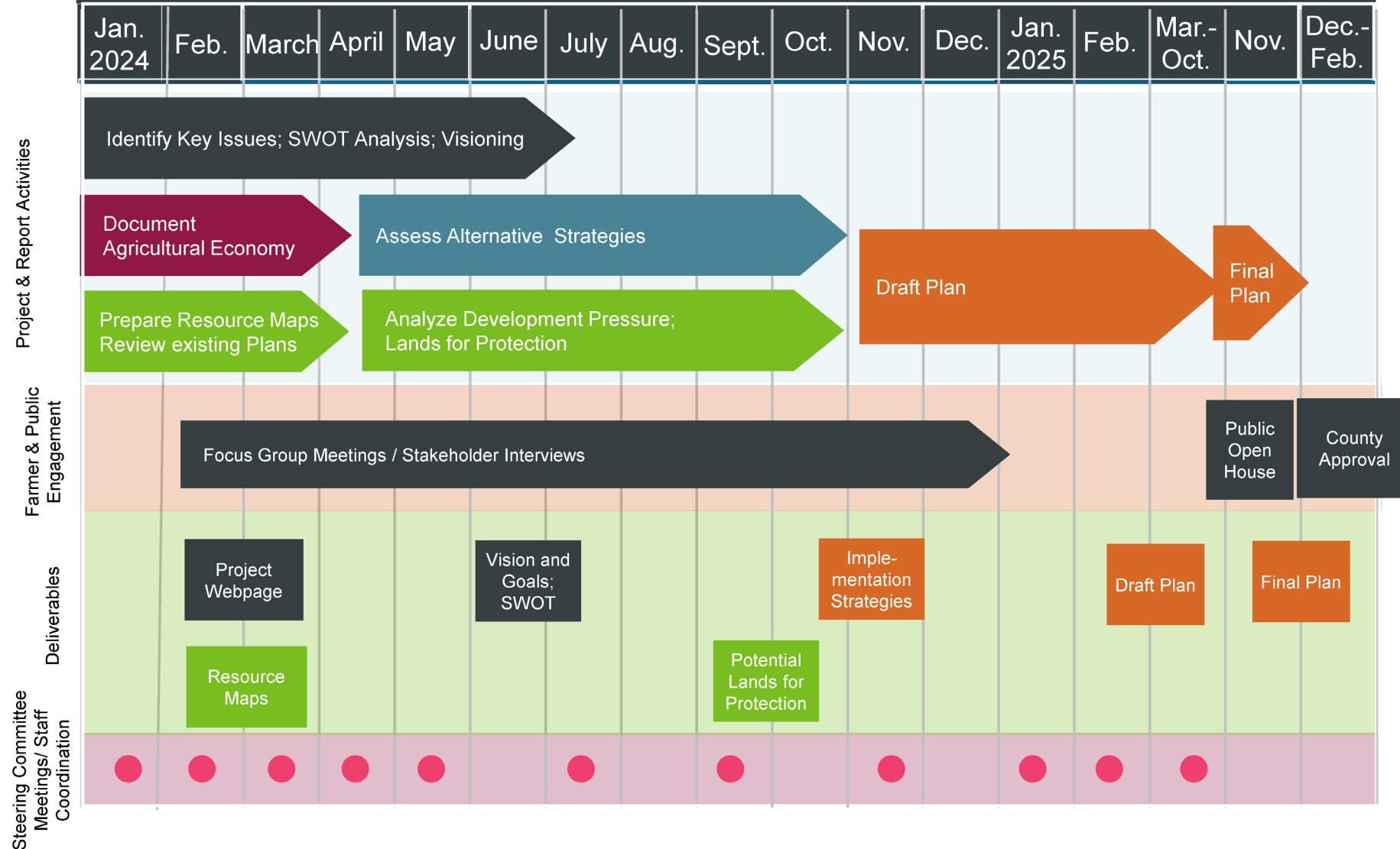
AGENDA

- **Planning Process**
- **Draft Plan**
 - **Goals**
 - **Recommended Actions**
- **Next Steps**



SCHEDULE

Monroe County Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan



Farmer & Stakeholder Engagement

- East and West side farmer/ public meetings (Spring 2024)
- Interviews with farmers, agency representatives, and other stakeholders
- Farmer/landowner survey
- Public survey
- Project website: www.MonroeCountyAgPlan.com
- Public informational meeting – November 12 and 13, 2025

Overall Goals

- Goal #1: Retain high quality farmland for agricultural production.***
- Goal #2: Improve the 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 agricultural producers in urban and suburban areas.***



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



Approximately 94,000 acres of land are in farms (per 2022 US Census of Agriculture), including 72,000 acres of cropland



High quality agricultural soils are a valuable resource for farming. Mapped based on USDA classifications (Prime, Prime if drained, Soils of Statewide importance, other) and NYS Mineral Soil Groups (1-4, other)

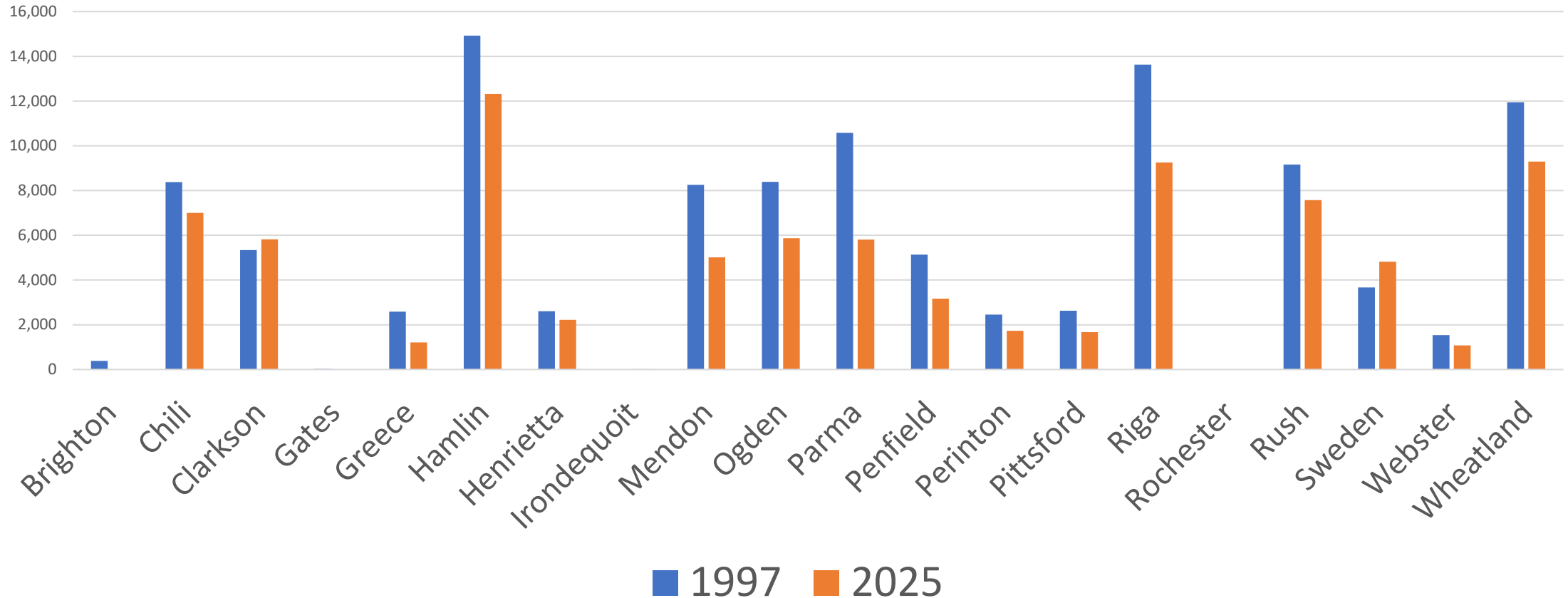


Approximately 140,000 acres are in certified Agricultural Districts



Preserved Farmland under permanent conservation easements held by land trusts, municipalities and the USDA NRCS

Change in Agricultural Parcel Acreage by Municipality 1997 - 2025



Approximately 27,800 fewer acres (25% reduction) in land in parcels with Agricultural property tax code (100s) between 1997 and 2025

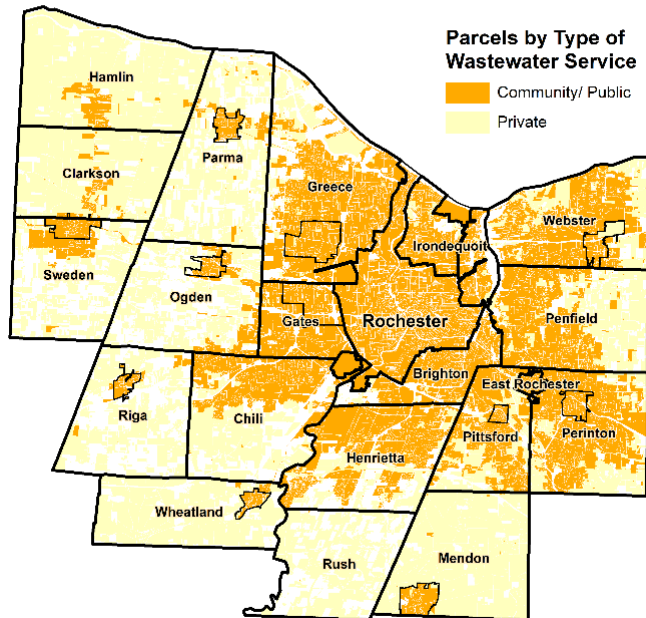
Farmland Conversion

- Farmland conversion to residential and other development
- Solar energy development

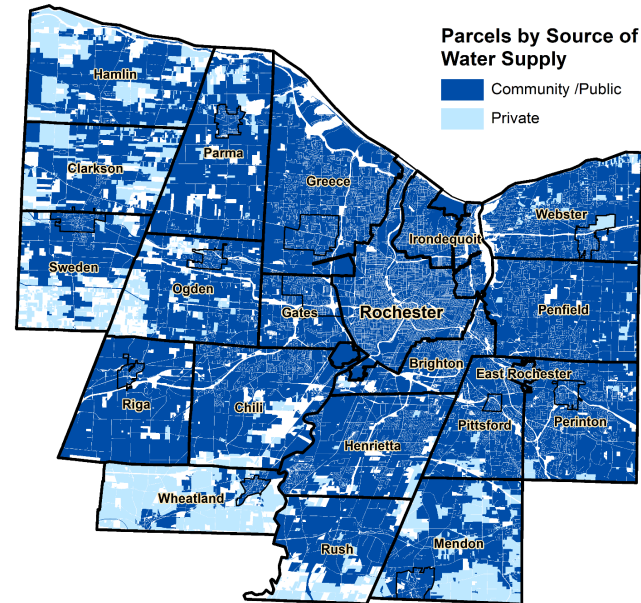


Conversion to Residential and other Development

Availability of Public Sewer Service

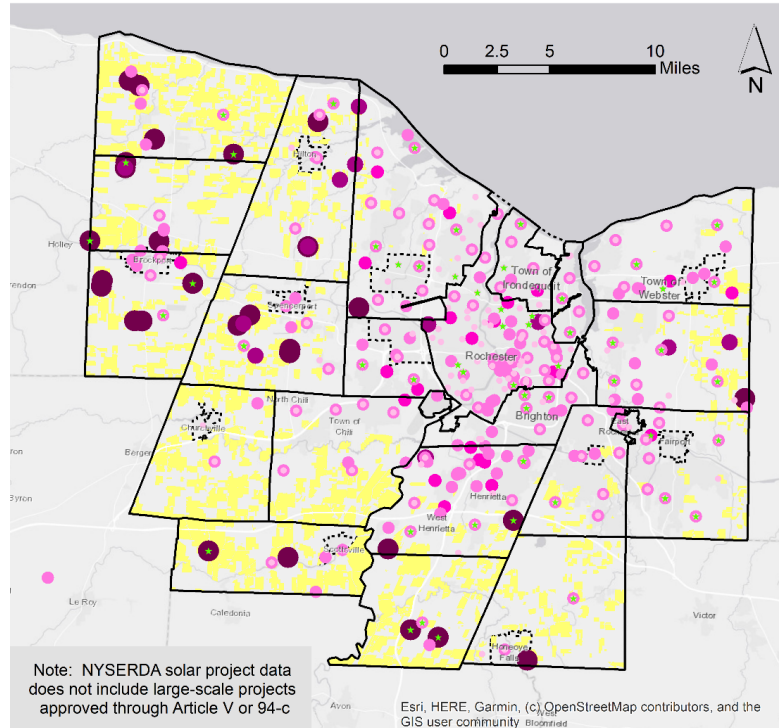


Availability of Public Water Service



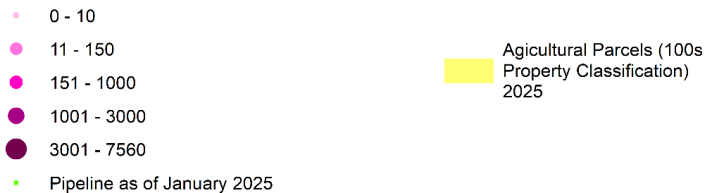
- Scattered residential development in rural and suburban areas
- Residential subdivisions
- Commercial or institutional development – especially near major highways and where public sewer service is available

NYSERDA-Supported Solar Projects (2000-2025) and Agricultural Parcels



Solar Projects Assisted by NYSERDA, 2000-2024

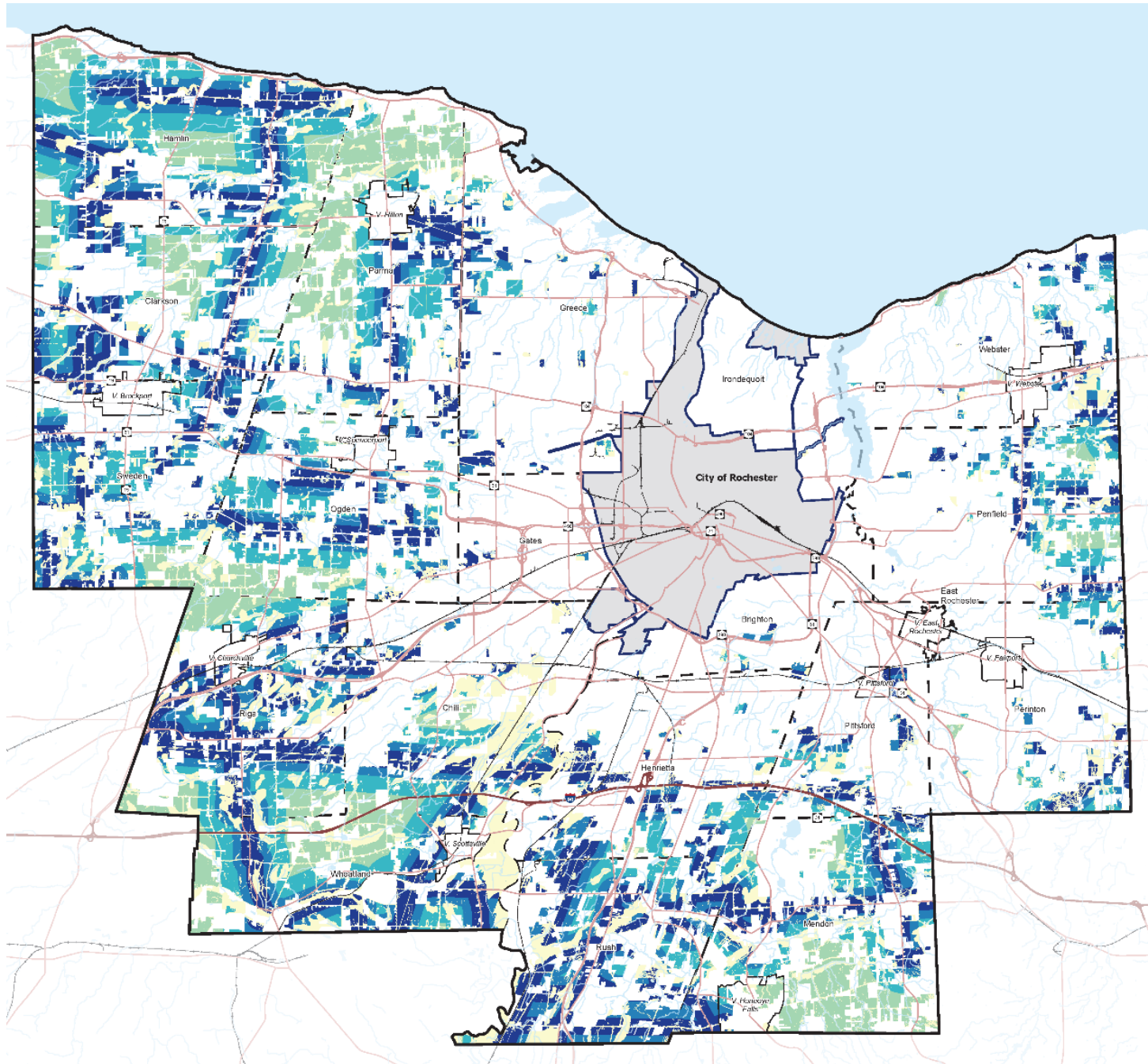
Generating Capacity (Nameplate kW)



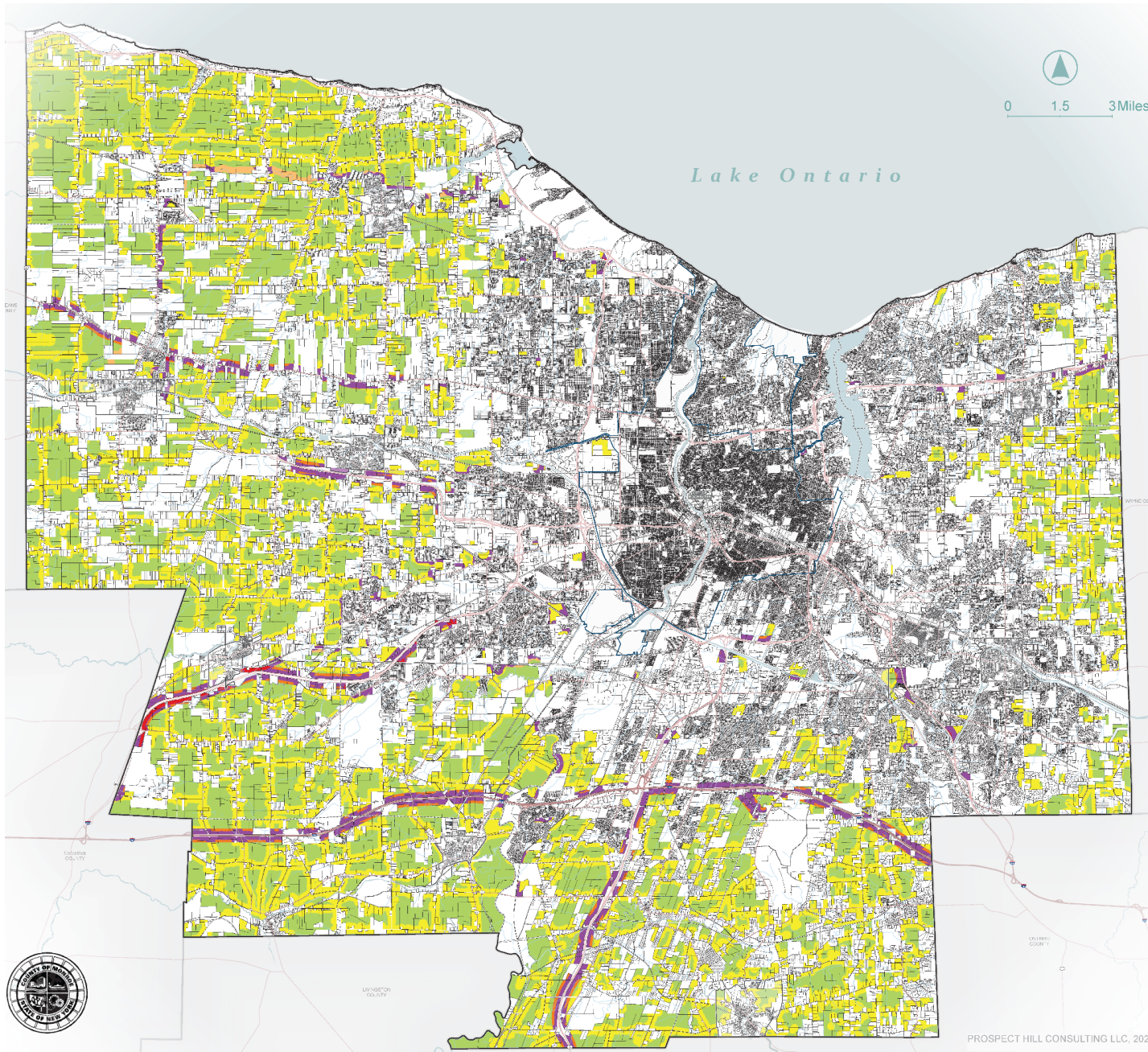
Solar Energy Development

- Farmland generally suitable for solar development as it is flat and free of natural constraints.
- Lands close to transmission lines are more attractive to solar developers.
- Previous solar development has converted farmland.
- Solar and wind development on farmland can provide income to help farms stay viable.

Agricultural Parcels by Solar Suitability



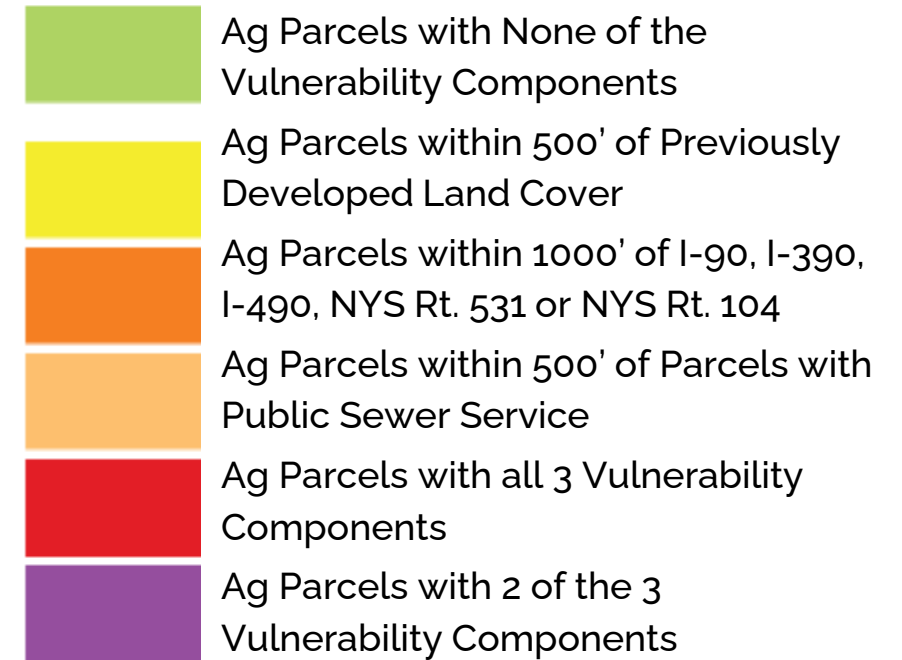
- Agricultural Parcels that are Solar Suitable and Within a Quarter Mile of Transmission Lines
- Agricultural Parcels that are Solar Suitable and are Between a Quarter Mile and a Half Mile of Transmission Lines
- Agricultural Parcels that are Solar Suitable and are Between a Half Mile and One Mile of Transmission Lines
- Agricultural Parcels that are Solar Suitable and are Greater than One Mile of Transmission Lines
- Agricultural Parcels that are not Solar Suitable



Agricultural Parcels Vulnerable to Development

Vulnerability Components

- Proximity to previously development land (per 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)



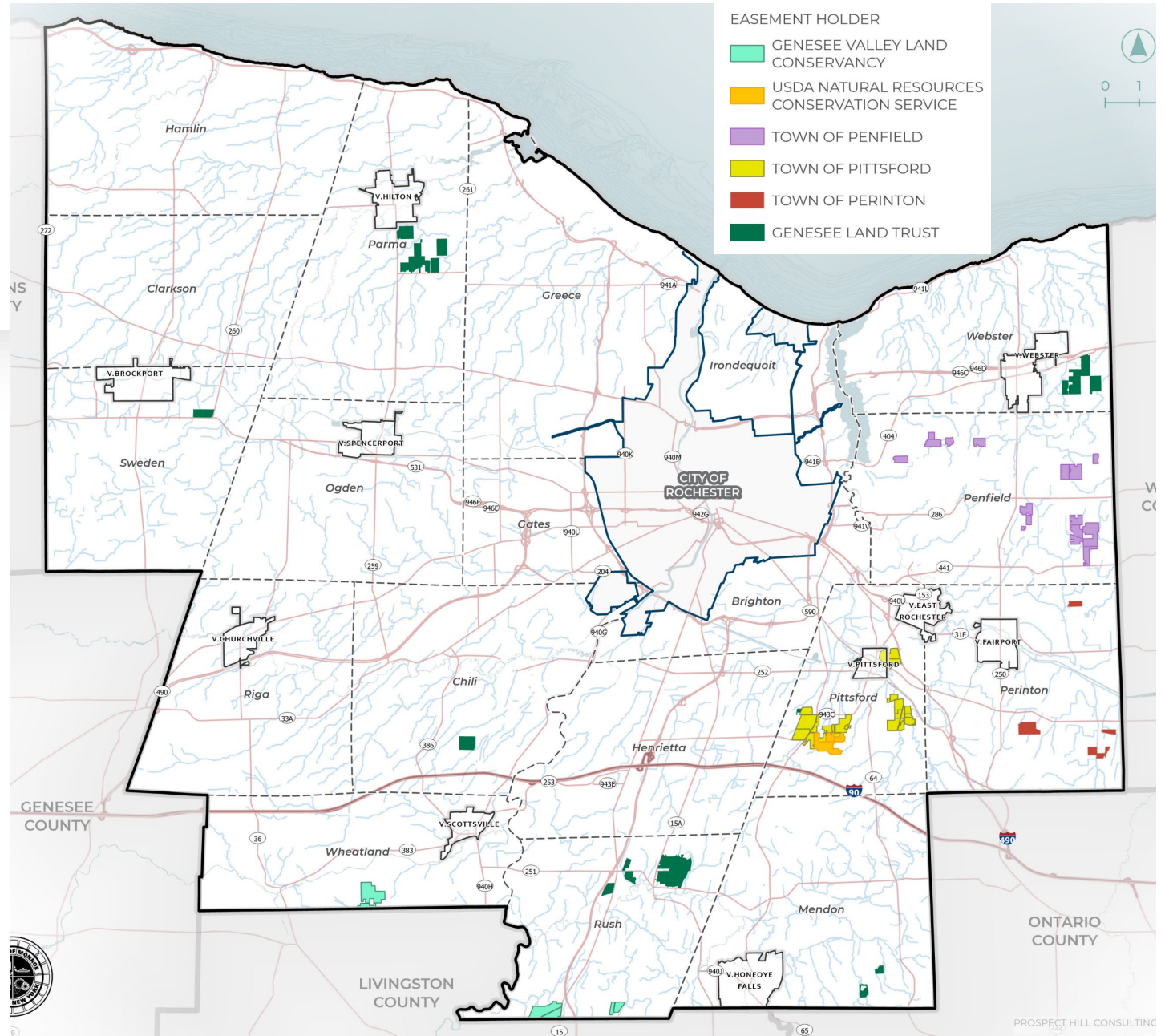
Preserved Farmland

Permanent easements held by
Land trusts:

- Genesee Land Trust
- Genesee Valley Land Conservancy

Municipalities

- Town of Pittsford
- Town of Perinton
- Town of Penfield
- USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)



Recommended Actions

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

1. Educate and assist municipalities with farm-friendly land use regulations.
2. Provide education and technical assistance to municipalities to encourage adoption of solar local laws that discourage use of high quality farmland and require mitigation of impacts to agriculture.
3. Adopt PILOT policies that incorporate requirements to avoid siting solar projects on farmland and include mitigation (COMIDA).
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.
5. Communicate potential impacts on agriculture when municipalities and other entities propose extensions of public sewer service into predominantly agricultural areas through County referrals and NOIs.

Recommended Actions

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

6. Provide information and connect farmland owners to resources to encourage them to place land under permanent conservation easements.
7. Connect farmland owners with resources to help develop succession plans to facilitate transfer of farmland to another farmer to continue its use in agricultural production.
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.

Goal #2: Improve the economic viability of farm operations.





Economic benefits and opportunities

- **Sales of agricultural products generated more than \$90 million in sales in 2022 (per US Census of Agriculture)**
 - 90% of value is from crops; 10% from animals
- **Production expenses continue to increase, resulting in lower earnings**
- **Direct sales to consumers, retailers, institutions or food hubs allow farmers to retain the full value of the end product**
- **Agritourism benefits from farms being located close to customers**
- **Value-added processing on farms increases farm revenue but requires additional business planning and operation**

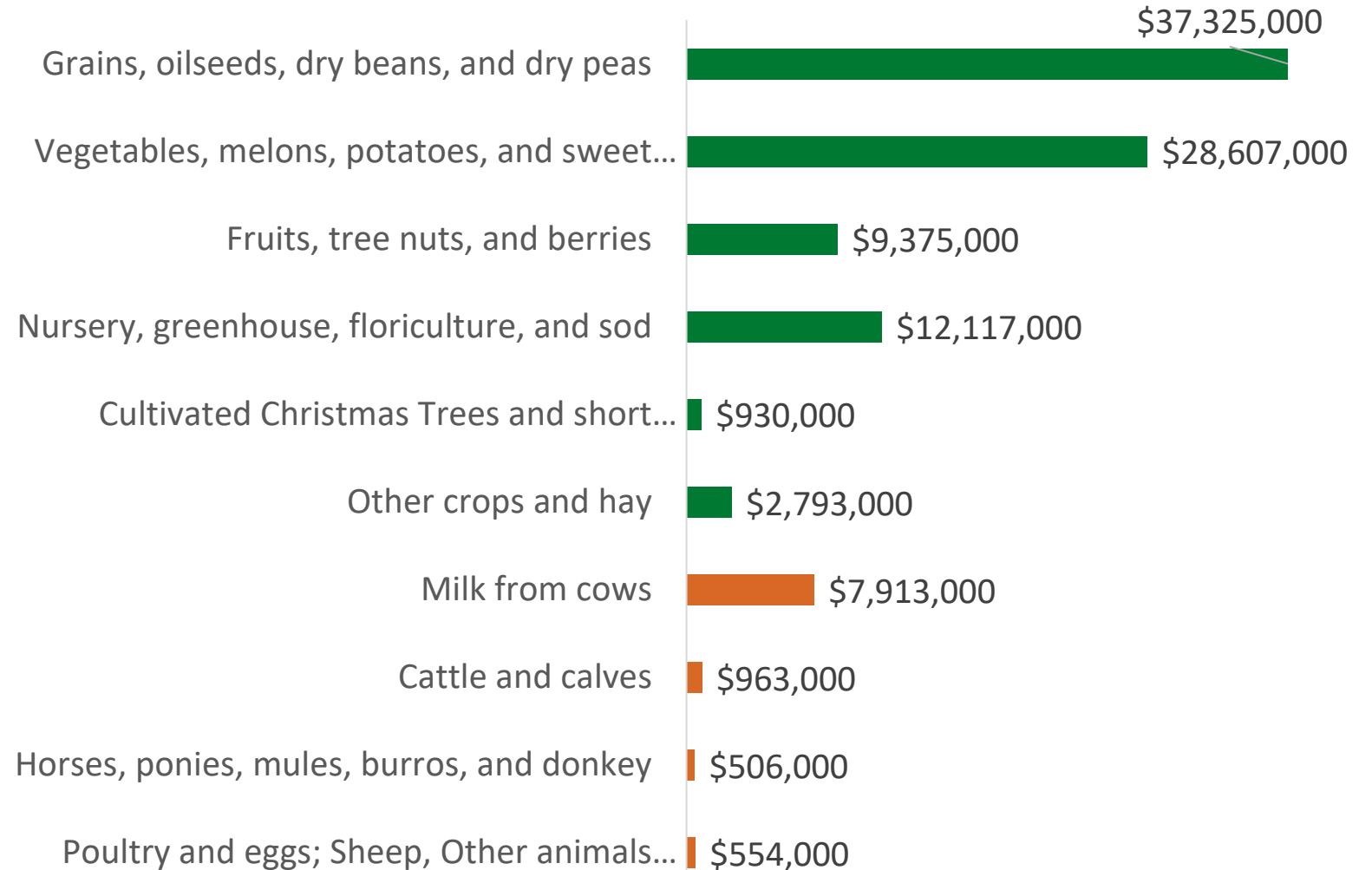
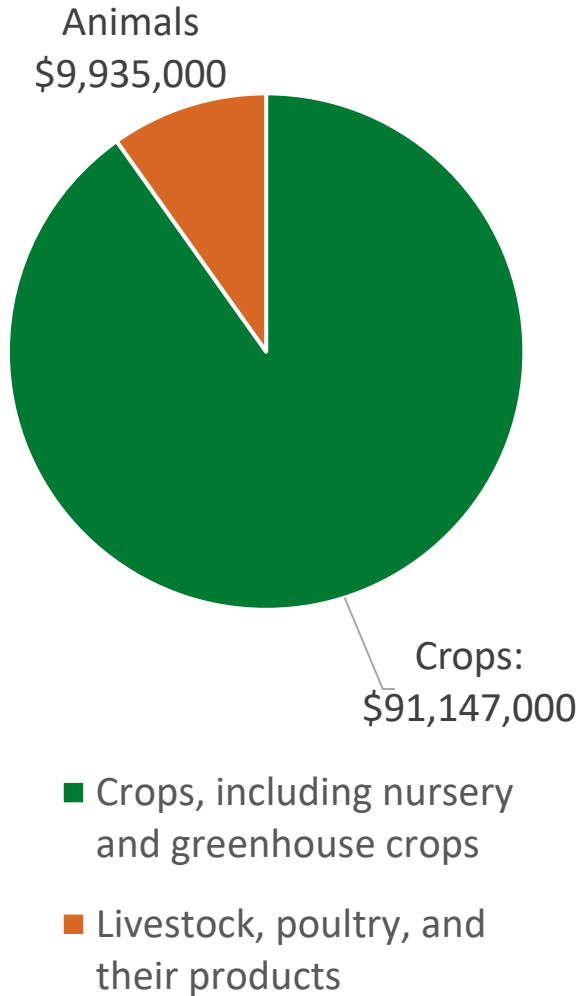


Challenges to improving the economic viability of farm operations.

- Costs and market conditions
- Difficult for new and beginning farmers to access land and capital
- Cost and availability of suitable labor
- Need for technical assistance
- Burdensome government regulations

Sales of agricultural products generated more than \$90 million in 2022

- 90% of value is from crops; 10% from animals

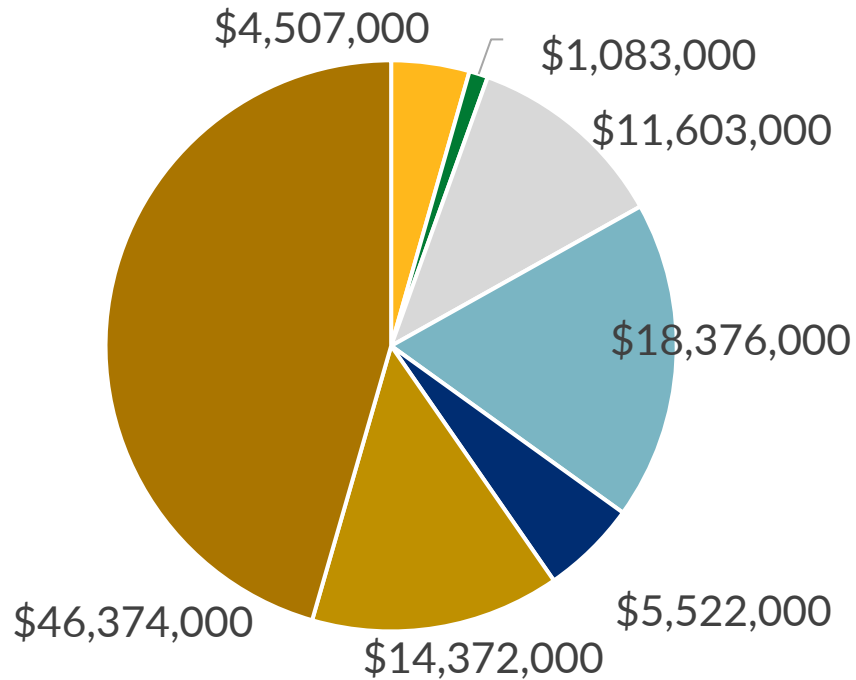


Source: 2022 Census of Agriculture

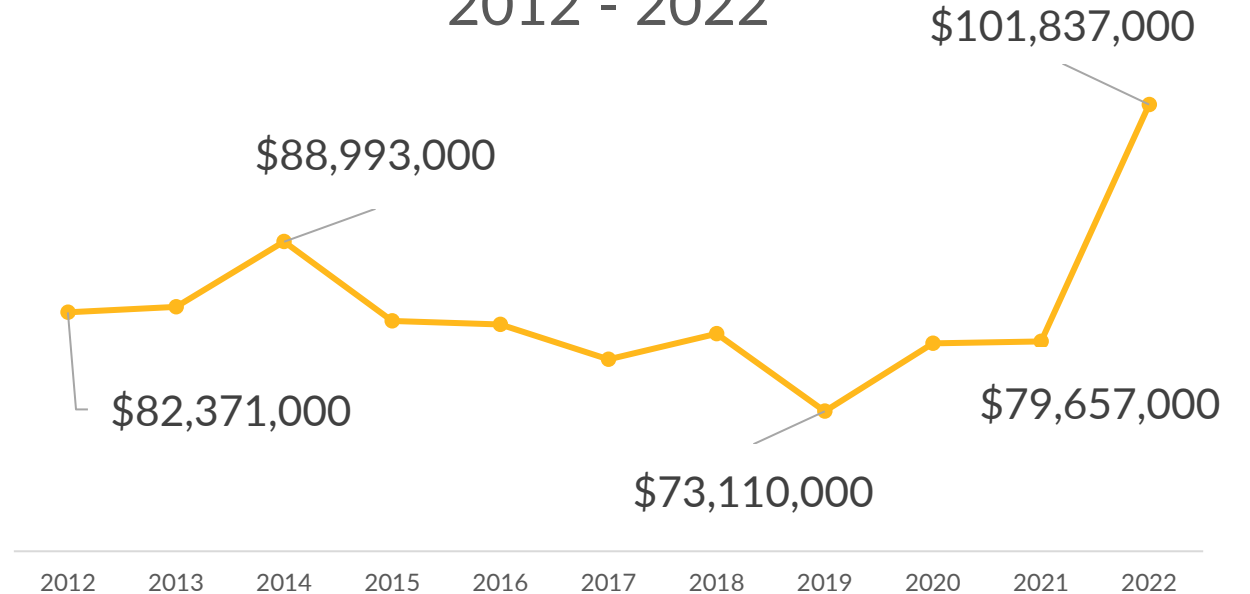
Production expenses continue to increase, resulting in lower earnings.

2022 Production Expenses

- Feed
- Livestock
- Seed
- Fertilizer, lime, ag chemicals
- Petroleum
- Hired farm labor
- All other production expenses



Farm Production Expenses:
2012 - 2022



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

Direct sales to consumers, retailers, institutions or food hubs allow farmers to retain more of the full value of the end product.



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

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.

Recommended Actions

Goal # 2: Improve the economic viability of farm operations.

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.
2. Advocate for continued State and Federal funding for Cornell Cooperative Extension, SWCD, USDA and other programs.
3. Promote agritourism and direct-to-consumer sales as a component of areawide tourism campaigns. Provide information and technical assistance to farmers to increase direct-to-consumer sales
4. Provide information about funding and sources of technical assistance to farms interested in incorporating on-farm processing and other value-added enterprises.
5. Encourage municipalities to revise zoning regulations to accommodate value-added and secondary businesses on farms.

Recommended Actions

Goal #2: Improve the economic viability of farm operations.

6. Support programs that assist farms with business planning and hiring procedures and that help to building and maintain a skilled agricultural workforce.
7. Advocate for more favorable federal and State labor policies and regulations, including NYS minimum wage requirements and the federal H2-A program.
8. Facilitate purchases of local farm products by Monroe County facilities.
9. Connect schools and other institutions to information and sources of funding and technical assistance to expand purchases from local farms.



*Goal #3:
Improve opportunities for
agriculture-related economic
development.*

- **Agriculture-related industries include:**
 - Processing
 - Aggregation & Distribution
 - Packing & packaging
 - Wholesale and retail operations
 - Financial services and other businesses that provided services to farms.
- **Food manufacturing: \$2.2 billion in 2022.**
 - Canned fruits and vegetables manufacturing with \$504 million in sales
 - Breweries, distilleries, and wineries generated \$714 million in sales.

Regional Food System



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

- Interconnected activities within the regional “food system” include production, processing, transportation, and consumption of food.
- Food production is a significant component but each of the other components are needed to ensure a healthy food system.

Opportunities and challenges relating to the overall agricultural economy

- Economic development agencies and programs can prioritize processing and other agricultural support businesses
- Encourage new aggregation and distribution companies which would help small farms to collectively market products to large purchasers
- Leverage institutional food procurement to create markets for Monroe County products
- Facilitate regional conversations and connections, recognizing that food systems ultimately extend beyond County lines.

Recommended Actions

Goal #3: Improve opportunities for agriculture-related economic development.

1. Work with County and regional economic development organizations to support agriculture-related businesses:
 - financial incentives
 - infrastructure improvements
 - site selection assistance
 - letters of support for grant applications
2. Provide technical support to private initiatives, including cooperative ventures, which would support additional aggregation, distribution, or processing
3. Building on recent food system studies, support development of a regional (multi-county) food system study

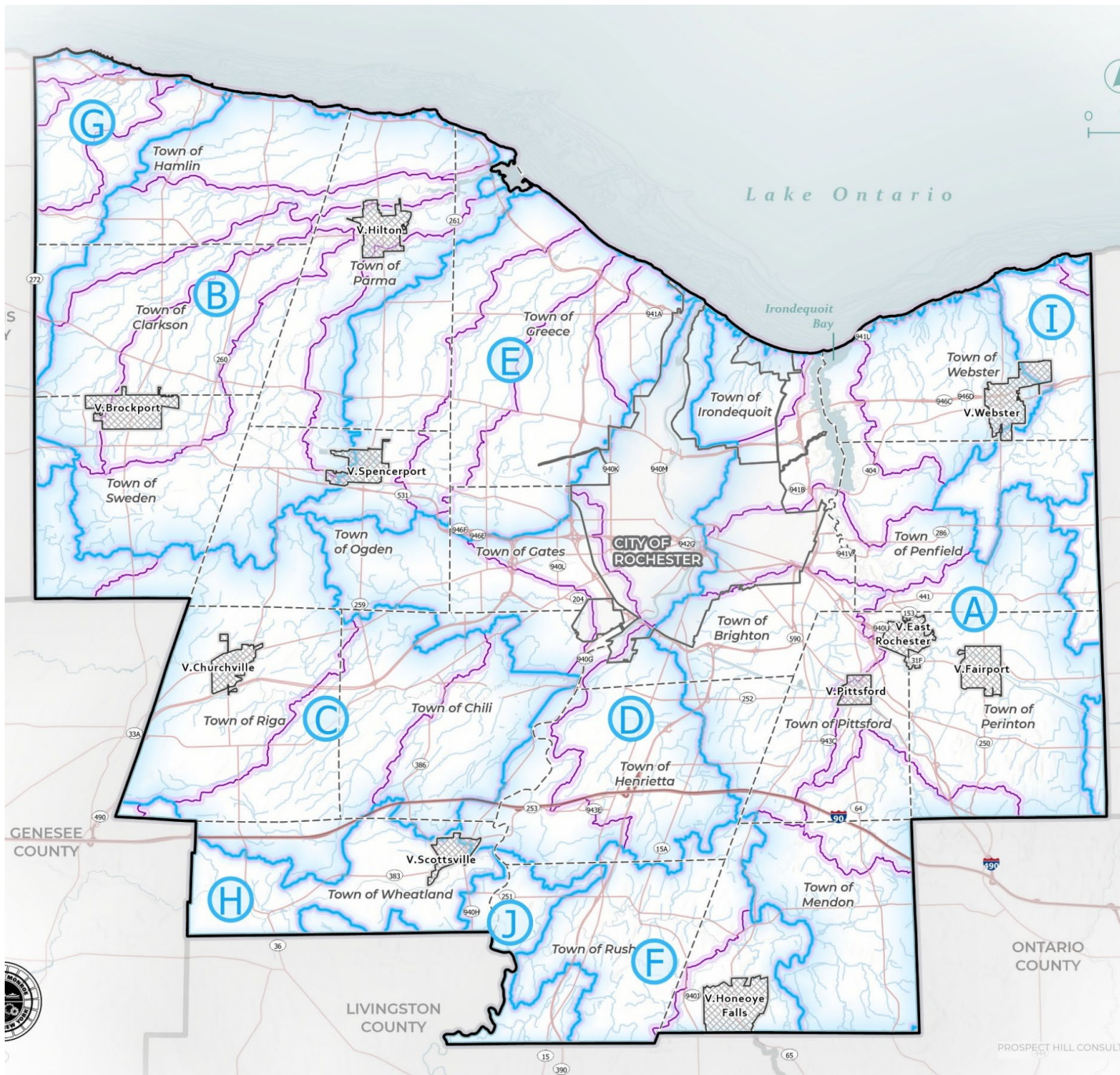


Goal #4:

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

- Best management practices can reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Climate resilient farming practices such as manure management and cover crops can reduce greenhouse gas emissions from farm operations.
- Farms will need to adapt to climate change through crop diversification and flood protection measures.
- Farms rely on effective flow of stormwater in streams to prevent flooding of farm fields which can negatively impact crops.

Watersheds and Waterbodies



- ▭ 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

Recommended Actions

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

1. Encourage farms to participate in Agricultural Environmental Management (AEM) programs.
2. Maintain and expand funding for SWCD AEM programs, including dedicated staffperson to work with farmers to plan and implement best management practices
3. Work with NYS DEC to shorten the time it takes to obtain permits to remove debris in streams and allow removal of silt that impedes flows.
4. Encourage municipalities to work with landowners and neighboring municipalities to plan for stormwater management.

Recommended Actions

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

5. Provide information and assistance to municipalities to address stormwater management in the review of development proposals.
6. Incorporate a module on drainage management in Monroe County's training program for local government officials
7. Connect farms with organizations and businesses engaged in reducing organic waste, such as / gleaning programs to supply - grants for emergency food and/or opportunities for composting or other disposal/ reuse of organic waste.



Goal #5.

Increase understanding and appreciation of agriculture among the general public and local decision-makers.

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- Understanding and appreciation of agriculture among residents can help build public support for farms.
 - Although NYS Agricultural Districts Law protects farms from nuisance lawsuits relating to farm practices, conflicts with neighbors make farming more difficult.
 - Municipal board members benefit from education to better understand farm practices and the benefits of local agriculture to the regional economy as well as the protections in NYS Agricultural Districts Law.

Recommended Actions

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

1. Continue to support programs that promote local farm products, agritourism and related businesses.
2. Continue programs that help farmers integrate additional direct-to-consumer sales and agri-tourism initiatives into their farm operations
3. Work with Farm Bureau to organize farm tours for local decision-makers.
4. In training programs for local planning boards and other officials, include education about NYS Agricultural District Law provisions regarding unreasonable restrictions on farm practices.

Recommended Actions

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

5. 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 to 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
 - b. Encourage City and other local governments to make underutilized public land available for community gardens.
 - c. Encourage residents to participate in backyard or community gardening
6. Encourage schools to continue youth education and workforce development through programs such as NYS Ag in the Classroom, BOCES, and FFA.

Goal #6.

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

- 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.
- 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. In addition, 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.

Recommended Actions

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

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

AGENDA

- **Planning Process**
- **Draft Plan**
 - Goals
 - Recommended Actions
- **Next Steps**



NEXT STEPS

- **Comments due by Friday, December 5**
 - Email to bjohnston@labellapc.com
- **Advisory Committee will finalize draft Plan by December 17**
- **Agricultural & Farmland Protection Board approves Plan and forwards to County Legislature for action**
- **County Legislature Public Hearing & Final Action**
- **Submittal to NYS Commissioner of Agriculture & Markets for approval**

Questions?

