



**GRASSROOTS
GARDENS WNY**









THE GGWNY MODEL

WE SEED 5 KEY INGREDIENTS

< People

Land

Materials



Insurance



Education



COMMUNITY GARDEN CONSIDERATIONS: WHO



WHAT KIND OF GARDEN?



permanently

PROTECTED



HOW?

**LAND ACCESS/ZONING
WATER ACCESS
INSURANCE
TOOLS
FENCES
FOOD DISTRIBUTION**





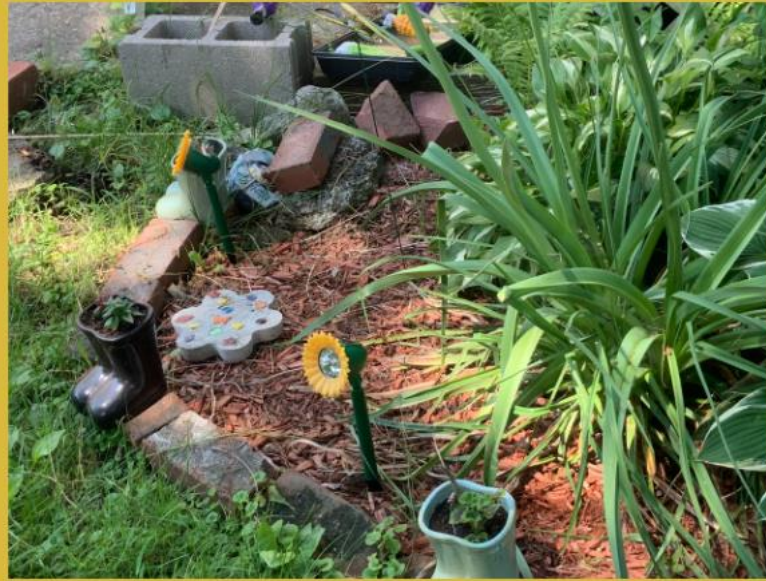
WHERE?



Added Programming



Youth Programming



Grief in the Gardens



Gardening for All



/grassrootsgardens



@GGWNY



@GGWNY

Please follow along on
social as we grow!



In the Garden:

Dec- 16-17 students- 9:30a-10:30a

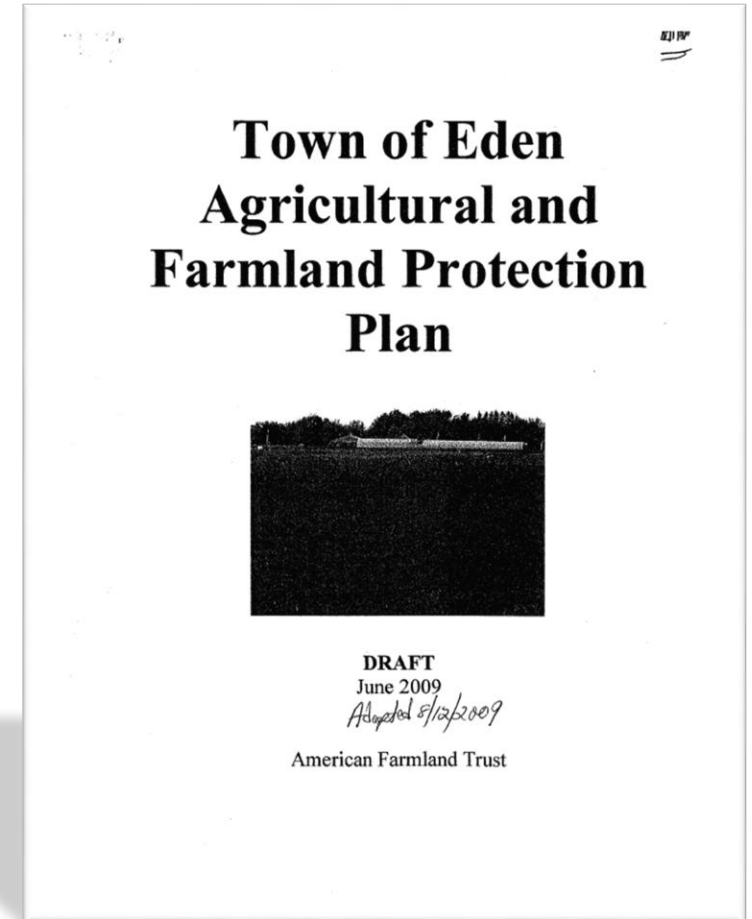
1. Turn in garden for winter (labor intensive) - animals in compost, pull down raking dirt
2. Turn compost in first bin into second bin
3. Empty veggie beds first- Harvest Veggies (except strawberries and raspberries)
4. Cut everything down- veggie beds/herb bed/annuals- and put in 1st compost bin
4. Rake topsoil into beds



Evolution of Ag Planning in Eden, NY

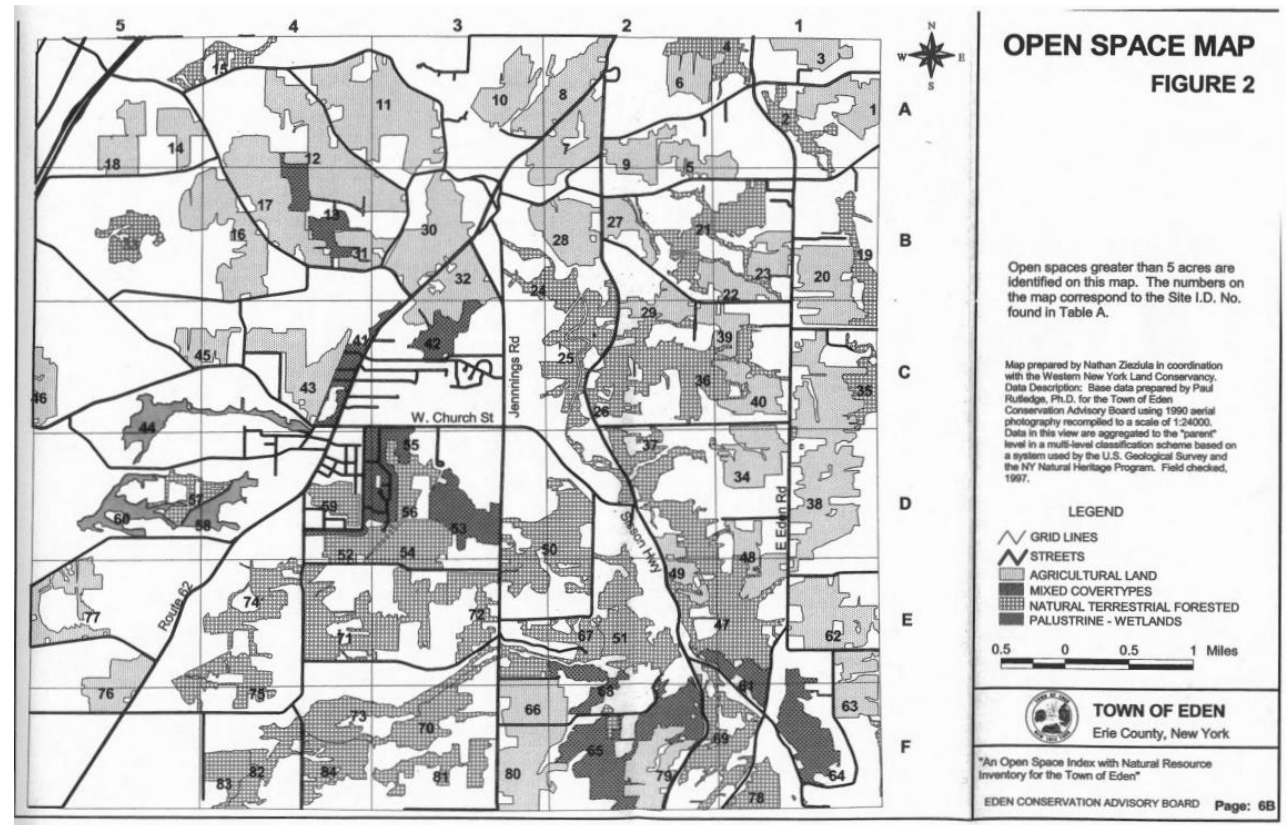
Where it started..

- 1998 (2009 updated) – Town of Eden one of first to develop a dedicated **Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan**
 - *Erie County one of first in the State to develop County-wide plan (1996)*
- Identified several recommendations and actions including:
 - ✓ Zoning regulations (increase lot sizes)
 - ✓ Agricultural land protection fund (purchase/transfer)
 - ✓ Conservation easement law
 - ✓ Cooperation with local and regional organizations
 - ✓ Marketing and education efforts for existing/new farmers



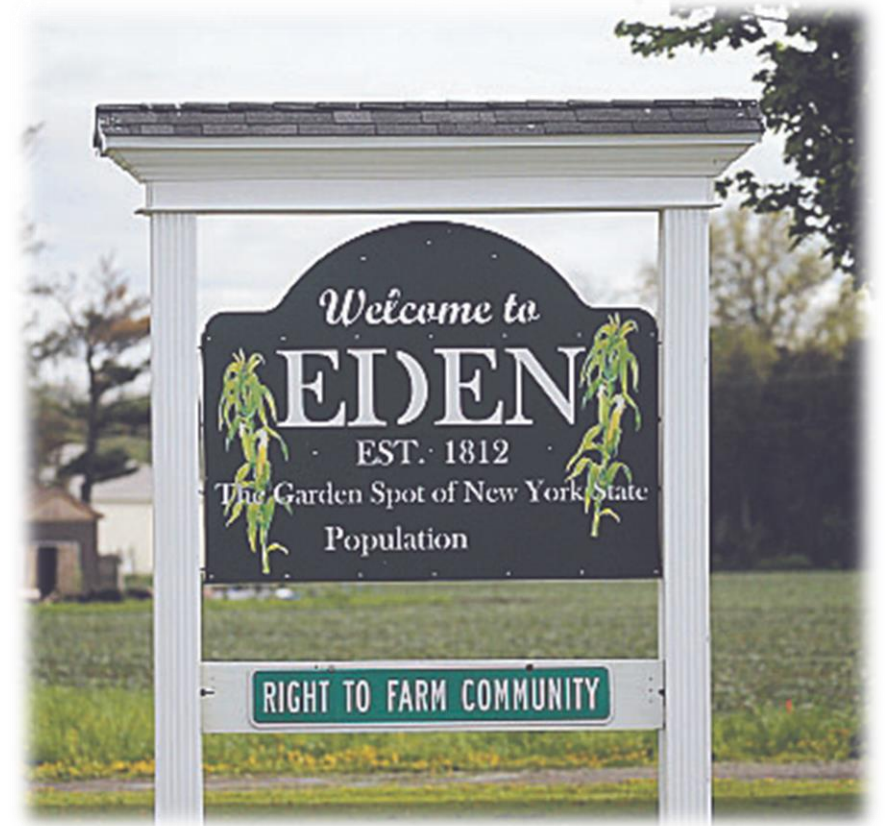
Continuing efforts...

- **Open Space Index (1999)**
 - ✓ Visual representation of open spaces in the Town
 - ✓ Agriculture (grey), mixed, forested, wetlands
 - ✓ Educational resource for land use decision making



Continuing efforts...

- **Town Comprehensive Plan (2000)**
 - ✓ Eight major goals with several revolving around agricultural and open space preservation
 - ✓ Focus on development in Eden Center
 - ✓ Amend regulations to reduce restrictions in Ag District
 - ✓ Revise subdivision regulations for clustering
 - ✓ More synergy between documents (Ag Plan, Natural Resources Inventory, etc.)
 - ✓ Adopt Right to Farm law (***done in 2001***)
 - ✓ PDR program
 - ✓ Consider conservation overlay(s)
 - ✓ Amend zoning to expand agriculture and related business pursuits



Continuing efforts...

- **Sowing the Seeds for Southtowns Agribusiness (2009)**
 - ✓ Towns of Brant, Eden, Evans, North Collins & Villages of Angola, Farnham, North Collins
 - ✓ Over 40 farms involved
 - ✓ Overview of current business, ag activities, etc. outside of "typical operations"
 - ✓ Opportunities and partnerships
 - ✓ Strategic action plan for agritourism development
 - ✓ Case studies (local and beyond) for what can be done to diversify and encourage successful agricultural ventures

Sowing the Seeds for Southtowns Agribusiness

An Assessment of Farms and a Plan for the Future

**March
2009**

A report submitted by
the University at Buffalo Regional Institute
to the Southtowns Community Enhancement Coalition



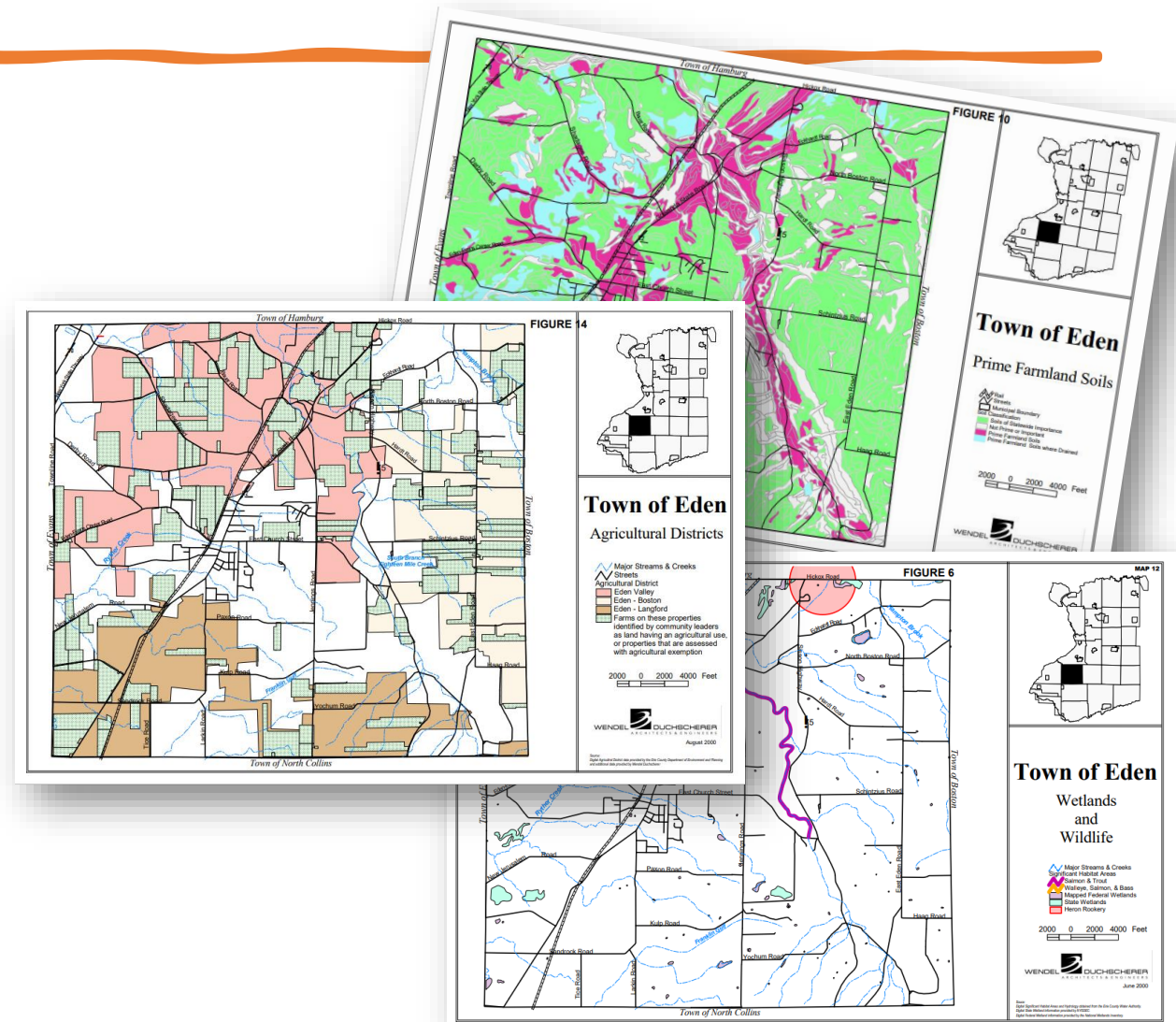
Southtowns Community Enhancement Coalition
Village of Angola Town of Brant Town of Eden Town of Evans
Village of Farnham Town of North Collins Village of North Collins

UB Regional Institute
University at Buffalo The State University of New York



Continuing efforts...

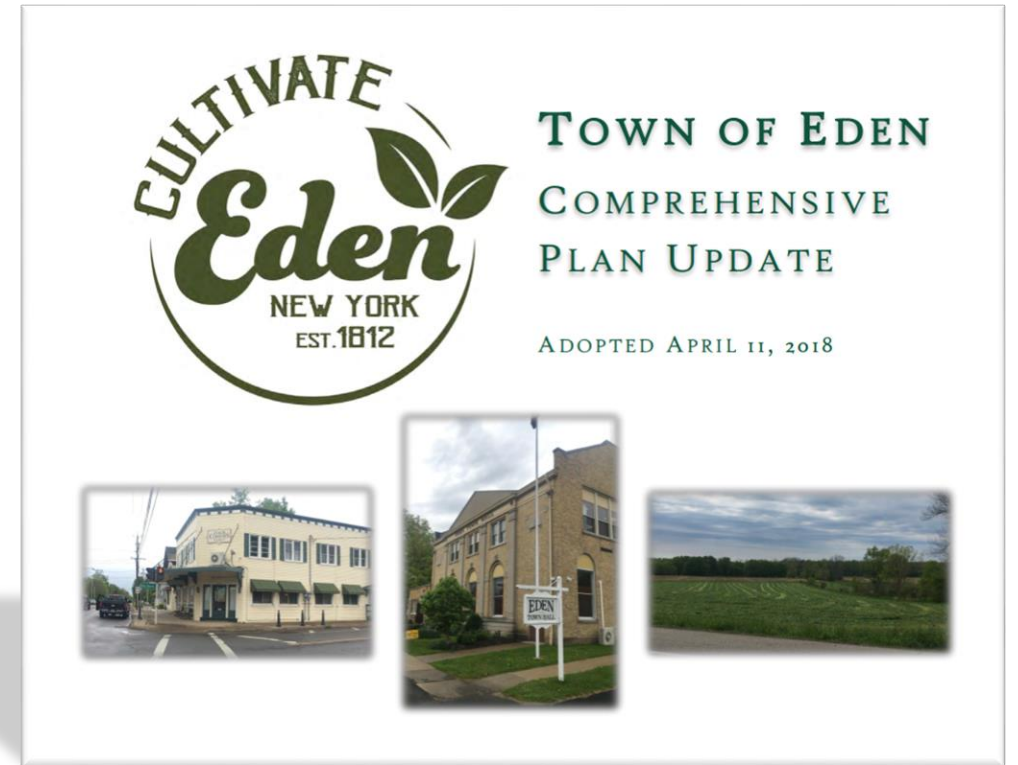
- **Natural Resources Inventory (2012)**
 - ✓ Update/expansion on Open Space Index (1999)
 - ✓ Provides more detailed assessment of natural resources in Eden
 - ✓ Soils, climate, land types, wildlife, etc.
 - ✓ Guidance document for future land use decision-making
 - ✓ Not ag-specific, but significant resource related elements to inform



Current work...

- **Comprehensive Plan Update (2018)**

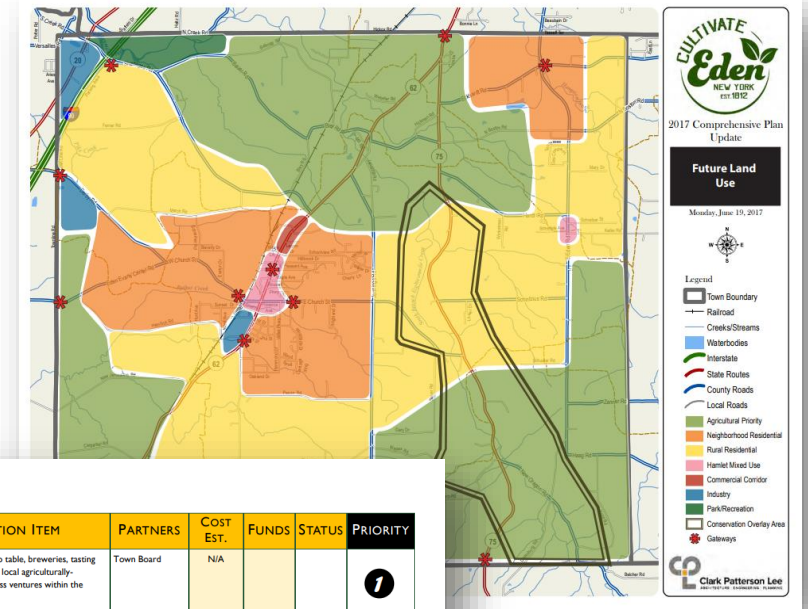
- ✓ Update to 2000 plan, addressing next 8-10 years and establish new vision and goals
- ✓ Continue to support agriculture and open space preservation
- ✓ Encourage higher-intensity development in the hamlet and create more Ag-friendly zoning



Current work...

- **Comprehensive Plan Update (2018)**

- ✓ Future land use map differentiates between rural residential and priority Ag lands
- ✓ Bridge recommendations of various past plans to be more proactive on sustaining Ag
- ✓ Combination of land use regulations, utility expansion limitations, alternative development options



CORE VALUE					ACTION ITEM	PARTNERS	COST EST.	FUNDS	STATUS	PRIORITY
Hamlet Visibly	Rural Character	Economic Diversity	Local Agriculture	Vibrant, Quality Community						
			X	X	Encourage farm to table, breweries, tasting rooms, and other local agriculturally-supportive business ventures within the hamlet.	Town Board	N/A			1
		X		X	Initiate a feasibility study to determine the current conditions of industrial areas in the Town, potential areas of expansion, constraints, and necessary improvements.	Town Board, outside consultant, Erie County IDA & Planning	\$30,000	ESD		1
	X		X		Review existing subdivision regulations, especially clustering, for residential development to ensure adequate flexibility for retaining access to and usability of valuable farmlands.	Town Board, Planning Board	N/A <i>(if done in-line with other regulation updates)</i>			1
X				X	Research and include provisions in the zoning code for accessory dwelling units and other similar options to provide aging-in-place and other housing opportunities.	Town Board, Planning Board, Erie County Planning	N/A <i>(if done in-line with other regulation updates)</i>			1
		X		X	Utilize the property revaluation process to verify and update existing property values in the Town based on current market conditions.	Town Board, Erie County, Town Assessor				2
X					Identify areas for municipal parking areas as businesses in Eden Center to provide opportunities for walking, window shopping, etc. and ease traffic on Main Street.	Town Board	N/A			2

Current work...

- **Eden Center Mixed Use Zoning (2019)**
 - ✓ Building on 2018 Comprehensive Plan, focuses on Eden Center
 - ✓ Encourage development in/around hamlet through more flexible development standards
 - ✓ Supports goal to preserve Ag and open space in outlying areas of the Town



Current work...

- **Zoning Updates (2021-2022)**
 - ✓ County-funded initiative to update zoning/planning, Ag-focused
 - ✓ Implement recommendations of 2018 Comprehensive Plan
 - ✓ Updates to zoning map including creation of dedicated Ag District
 - ✓ Expand opportunities for ag-supporting businesses and uses



Current work...

- **Zoning Updates (2021-2022)**
 - ✓ Revise cluster subdivision regulations > include more resource-based criteria
 - ✓ Focus development (i.e., districts) where utilities/infrastructure exists
 - ✓ Solar regulation updates to further protect active ag operations or key resources



Solar

- **Eden Solar, LLC (Sisson Highway)**
 - ✓ First solar farm (5 MW DC) proposed in Eden
 - ✓ Extensive site plan and SEQRA review
 - ✓ Leverage Comprehensive Plan, Ag Plan and other resources to further Ag protection
 - ✓ Use of a Host Community Agreement (HCA) to compensate loss of farmland
 - ✓ Funds to be used for open space and agricultural protection



The work continues...

- Town continues to explore funding avenues for farmland protection
- Cooperation with County and others on broader efforts
- Continue to fine tune zoning as the "foundation" for development and protection
- Proactively encourage clustering and other subdivision techniques rather than traditional land development



PLANNING FOR AGRICULTURE IN THE SUBURBS

AMHERST, NEW YORK

Roberta Rappoccio,
Associate Planner

Amherst Planning
Department



AMHERST

TOTAL POPULATION 125,799

**LARGE EMPLOYEMENT CENTER
DAYTIME POPULATION**

~190,000

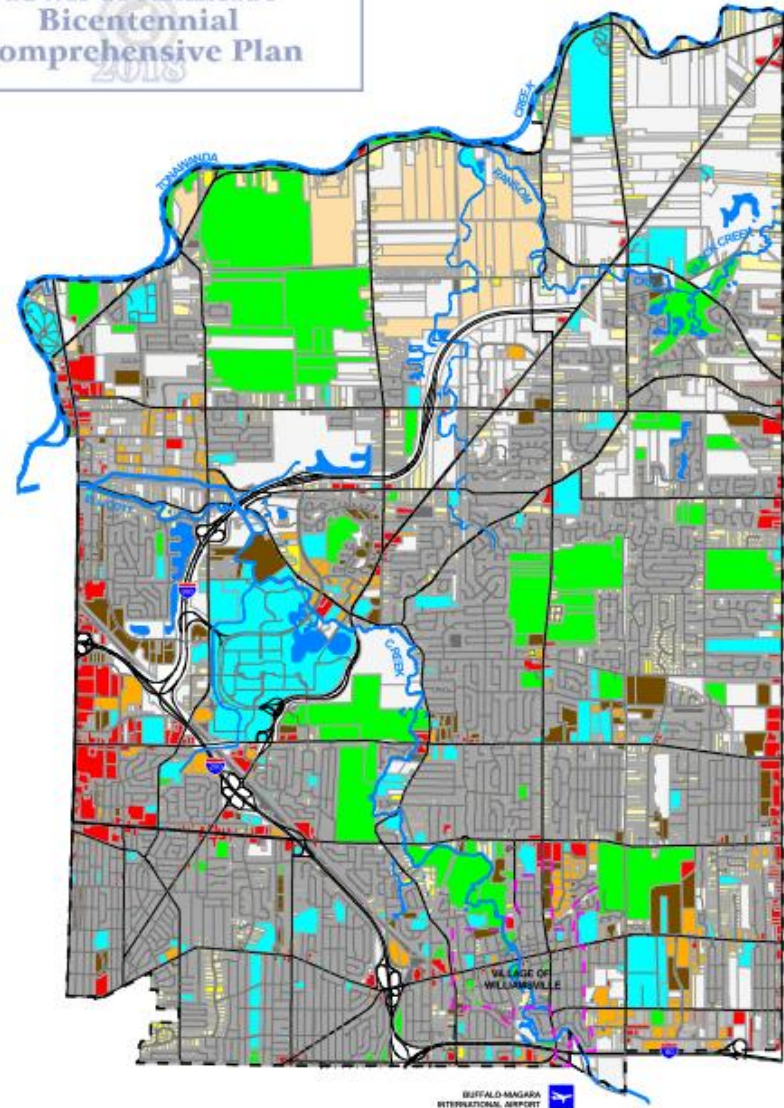
Large, First Ring suburb

Large University

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

- Existing Land Use Map
- Town recognized the agricultural uses in the north
- Policy driven planned rural development

Town of Amherst Bicentennial Comprehensive Plan 1788 2018



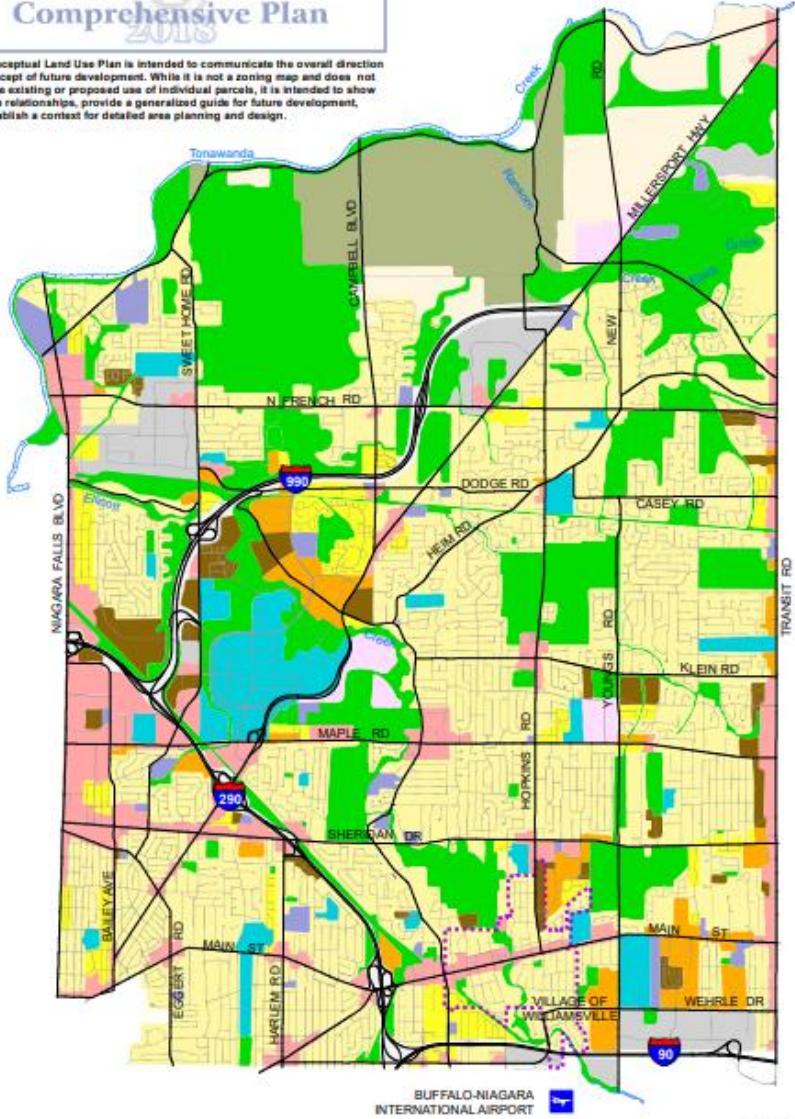
GENERALIZED EXISTING LAND USE

FIGURE 2

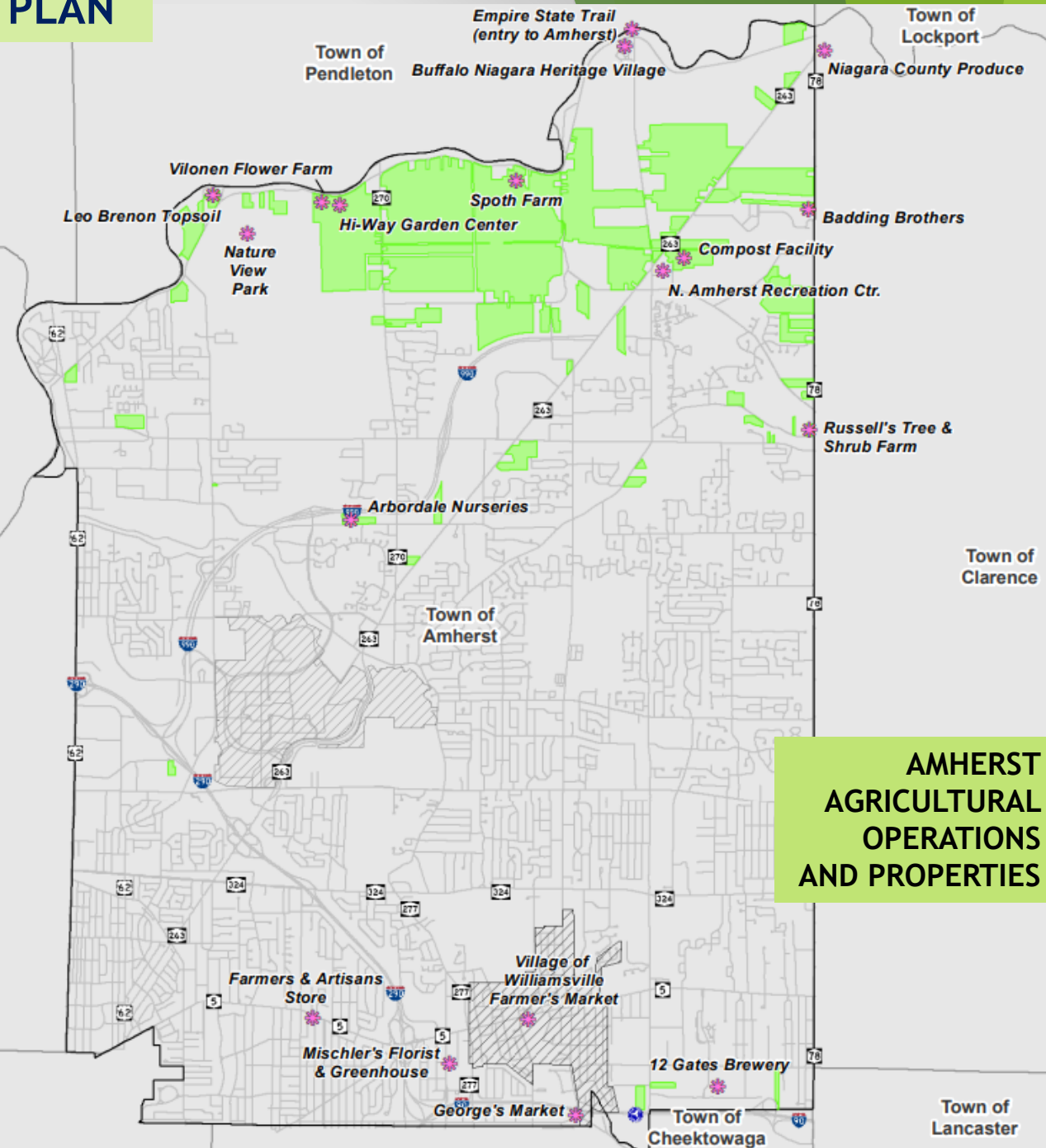


Town of Amherst Bicentennial Comprehensive Plan

The Conceptual Land Use Plan is intended to communicate the overall direction and concept of future development. While it is not a zoning map and does not show the existing or proposed use of individual parcels, it is intended to show land use relationships, provide a generalized guide for future development, and establish a context for detailed area planning and design.



COMPREHENSIVE PLAN



AMHERST AGRICULTURAL OPERATIONS AND PROPERTIES

Conceptual Land Use Plan

- Rural Residential
- Single Family Residential
- Mixed Residential
- Medium Residential
- Commercial / Mixed Use
- Special Use Center
- Commercial - Office
- Industrial - Office
- Community Facilities
- Educational Campus
- Recreation, Open Space & Greenways
- Agriculture
- Transportation
- Surface Water
- Village of Williamsville Boundary

FIGURE 6

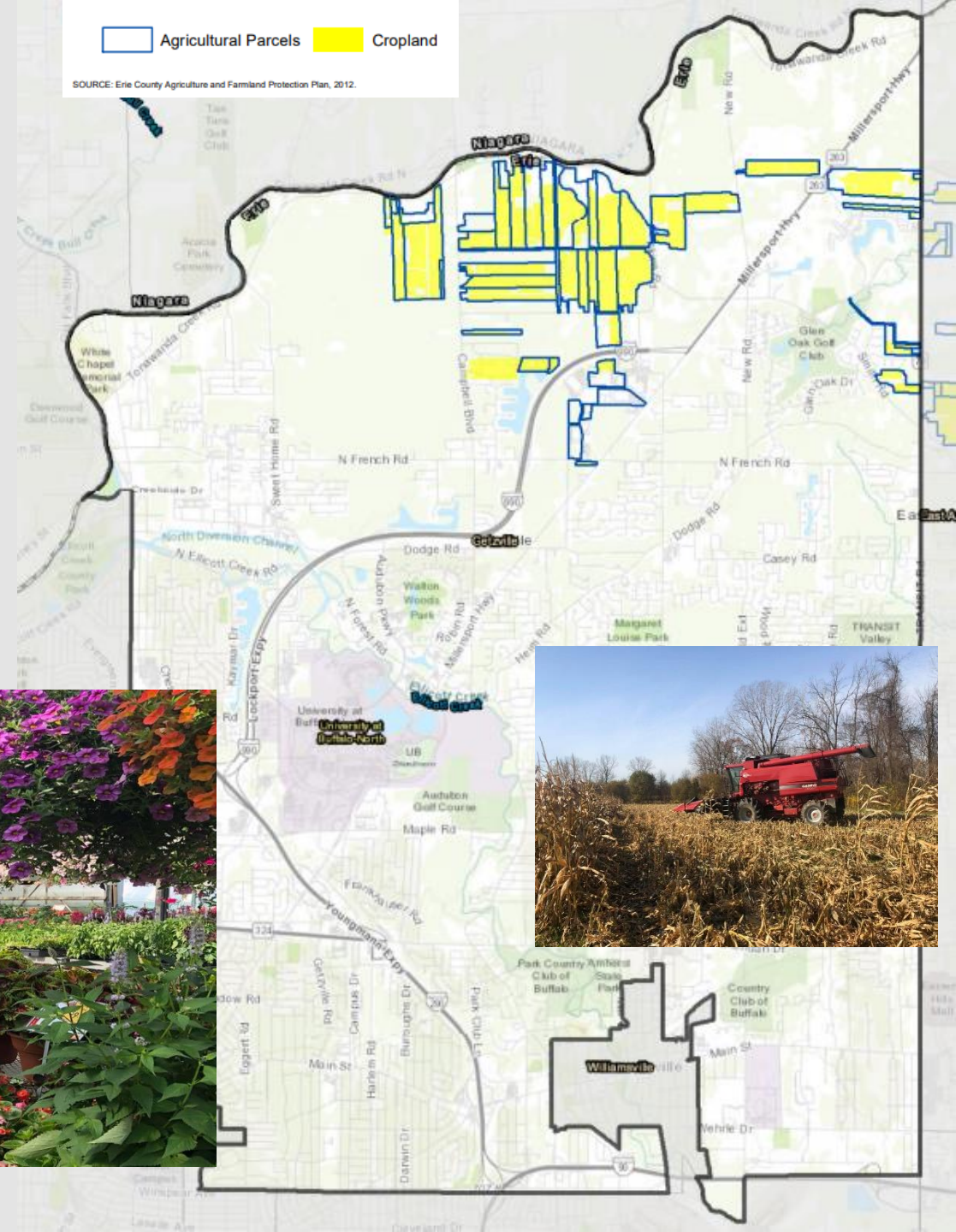
SOURCE NOTES:
Original Source Data Provided by the Town of Amherst Information Technology Department, URS Corporation and Wallace Roberts & Todd, LLC
Map Compiled by the Town of Amherst Planning Department
Date: December 2020

0 0.25 0.5 0.75 1 1.25
Miles

Amherst Agriculture

AG DISTRICT #17 -Focus of Agriculture Activity

- Consists of 105 properties
- Farm Operations account for 2,688 acres
- Farm Activity by Product: (2017)
 - 30% Field Crops
 - 25% Horticulture
 - 15% Grains
 - 15% Hay and Haylage
 - 15% Soybeans, Nuts, Orchards



Suburban Agriculture

DEFINITION

- The practice of cultivating, processing, and distributing food in or around urban areas
 - Animal Husbandry - Chickens
 - Aquaculture - Aquaponics
 - Beekeeping
 - Horticulture
 - Vegetable gardens
- As an alternative to Urban - avoids the costs and challenges of working on urban sites, while still providing a local version of foods that would normally travel thousands of miles



In parts of our region, residents have embraced suburban agriculture as a way to improve access to healthier and more sustainably produced food. Farming our street edges and verges, vacant land, parks, rooftops and backyards is a great way to encourage an appreciation of locally grown food and increase consumption of fresh produce.

Suburban Agriculture- TRENDING


IMPLICATIONS

- Growing one's own produce is enjoying a renaissance -local authorities are struggling to keep up with regulation
- Planning's role in allocating land uses - constrains suburban agriculture
- Permitting Commercial Agricultural Activities in suburban areas (e.g.) Farm Stands



2021 Amherst Farmland Protection and Agricultural Development Plan

- Awarded a 2021 Upstate New York APA Best Practice Award
 - Town of Amherst, Wendel, WWS Planning & Camoin Associates
- Two Main Components:
 - Farmland Protection
 - Agricultural Development
- Public Participation Process - During COVID
- Recommendations



Town of Amherst

Farmland Protection & Agricultural Development Plan

JUNE, 2021

Goal 1: Protect Agricultural Lands and Resources, as well as undeveloped lands with prime soils, that are critical to the long-term success, viability and resiliency of Agriculture in the Town

Recommendation	Action Type	Time Frame	Est. Cost	Participants & Partners
Conduct an analysis of Suburban Agriculture (S-A) zoning designations to evaluate how to appropriately address the issue of smaller farms and/or hobby farms	Regulation	Ongoing	\$	Amherst Town Board, Town Planning Department, Town Agricultural and Farming Advisory Committee and Planning Board, Erie County DEP
Update zoning to include provisions for small-scale (hobby) and non-commercial agricultural uses	Regulation	Near-Term	\$5	Amherst Town Board, Town Planning Department, Town Agricultural and Farming Advisory Committee and Planning Board, Erie County DEP
Review and update Section 99.2 of the Town Codes, Animals Law to address conflicts	Regulation	Near-Term	\$5	Amherst Town Board, Town Planning Department, Town Agricultural and Farming Advisory Committee and Planning Board, Erie County DEP
Review and update Definitions section of the Zoning Code, particularly relating to the definitions for farms and farm operations	Regulation	Near-Term	\$5	Amherst Town Board, Town Planning Department, Town Agricultural and Farming Advisory Committee and Planning Board, Erie County DEP
Adopt regulations for small farm stand operations on properties in the A-G and R-R districts, and review regulations for such uses in the A-G district	Regulation	Short-Term	\$5	Amherst Town Board, Town Planning Department, Town Agricultural and Farming Advisory Committee and Planning Board, Erie County DEP
Ensure that notice requirements in the NYS Agricultural District Law are followed (proper use of agricultural data statements) by including the Ag Data Form in current planning review procedures	Policy	Near-Term/Ongoing	\$	Amherst Town Clerk, Building Department, Planning Board (site plan review)
Implement feasible nonstructural measures to support local expansion of the ag products, prior expansion events				Amherst Town Board, Town

C. Analysis of Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats

The following analysis of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT) was prepared using the comments and other input gathered from discussions with farmers and other stakeholders, the Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan Advisory Committee, and the public, as well as the findings of the analysis of existing conditions and agricultural resources. This SWOT analysis identifies what the strengths and weaknesses are that affect farming and agriculture in the Town of Amherst (internal factors over which there is generally some measure of control), and the opportunities and threats that come from outside the community (external factors over which there is little or no control). This analysis is useful for identifying strategies to help the Town achieve its goals and objectives for the future.

Strengths

- Extent of productive farmland in North Amherst
- Good / productive farm soils
- Strong farm traditions and commitment
- Farmers (proactive, knowledgeable, adaptable)
- Increasing interest in hobby/small farming
- Increasing public support for farming
- Increasing interest coming from outside of the Town with starting a farm
- Diversification of agricultural activities and markets
- County and regional support programs
- Availability of support services in vicinity
- Recognition of the value of agricultural land
- Few farmer/neighbor conflicts
- Interest in utilizing alternative farming techniques and energy sources.
- Majority of agricultural lands located outside of the sewer district.
- Growing interest in markets for alternative and niche products.
- Buffalo Niagara Heritage Village
- Residents appreciate agricultural land and green space
- Residents engage regularly in outdoor activities
- Residents demand more yard and garden goods and services than are supplied within the Town.
- Growing interest in buying local produce
- Drainage/soil conditions can support the production of certain crops
- Amherst is emerging as a Regional (and local) leader in research in the use of CBD and Hemp for the medical industry
- Town has a commitment to purchasing conservation easements

Weaknesses

- Drainage/soil conditions may limit the production of certain crops
- Lack of drainage of certain lands can reduce the extent of productive farmland
- No Right-to-Farm Law
- Zoning / land use regulations need revisions
- Limited business management skills/training within farming community
- Regional entrepreneurial ecosystem tends to be more focused on technology and is less of a good fit for farm and related start-ups
- New farmers with limited experience
- Lack of understanding of where ag products can be sold inside and outside of the Town and region

TOWN OF AMHERST

TOWN OF AMHERST FARMLAND PROTECTION & AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN

ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS & RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FARMLAND PRESERVATION

55

2021 Amherst Farmland Protection and Agricultural Development Plan

GOALS of the Plan:

1. Protection of the existing agricultural lands in the Town within the established Agricultural District as well as undeveloped lands with prime soils
2. Identify additional acres of prime farmland within the Town suitable for permanent conservation through conservation easements
3. Promote economic innovation and sustainability in agricultural production
4. Establish a tourism initiative of natural resources and agricultural assets throughout the town

Plan Implementation

1) ZONING UPDATES

- Suburban Agriculture (SA) Zoning Analysis
- Bergmann Associates

2) NEW Conservation Easement Program

- Town, WNY Land Conservancy & Consultant

3) Agriculture Business Park - Economic Feasibility Study

- Camoin Associates

4) SOLAR Energy Development

- Revised Solar Regulations
- Solar as an AG use (and co-location)

5) Public Outreach

- Webpage



Agriculture in Amherst

Goals of the Amherst Farmland and Agricultural Protection Plan (Adopted 2021)

 **CONSERVE** key Areas of viable farmland, important soils and natural resources that are suitable for permanent protection through the use of Agricultural Conservation Easements

 **LEVERAGE** the Town's natural resources and agricultural assets to encourage support for agricultural activities, clean energy initiatives, and encourage ancillary means of income for farm operations and agricultural enterprises.

 **PROMOTE** economic innovation and sustainability in agricultural production including diversification of farming and agricultural practices, and the exploration of new markets

 **ENCOURAGE** the link between farms & food and farms & secondary income, to increase awareness, grown the industry and help ensure the long term sustainability of the farming activities in Amherst

Community Support for Agriculture and Conservation

Existing District Context

The Suburban Agricultural District is one of Amherst's 11 residential districts. The district is primarily concentrated in the northeast corner of the Town, but is also seemingly sporadically applied to smaller groupings of properties further south, such as along North Forest Road, Ellicott Creek Road, and several parcels north of Maple Street. The map below depicts the distribution of parcels zoned as SA.



Legend
■ Suburban Agricultural District

The purpose of the SA District, according to the Town's existing zoning code, is:
 "to provide areas for low-density, single-family detached residential development which would also accommodate farms, farm-related activities, and other non-intensive compatible uses."

Currently, the District is designated for 3% of, or 1,253 parcels in the Town, accounting for approximately 17% of the Town's land area, or 5,300 acres.

The permitted uses under the existing SA District are:

- Farms
- Stables (public or private)
- Single-family detached homes
- Minor Utilities
- Parks or Open Spaces
- Places of Worship
- Ground-mounted solar energy systems (Tier I & II)

Specially permitted uses include:

- Public utility service structures or facilities
- Telecommunication facilities
- Bed and breakfasts
- Ground-mounted solar energy systems (Tier III)



Amherst Agricultural District No. 17 Facts

Farmland operations account for 2,688 acres of land which is equivalent to twice the size of the University at Buffalo North Campus!

Amherst Agricultural District #17 consists of 192 properties and 14 fully operational farms

The Town's previous Conservation Easement Program was active from 1996 to 2007 and successfully purchased the development rights to 15 properties within the Agricultural District totaling 785.08 acres.

20 Acre Solar Farm

Hungry For More? Check Us Out on Online!



<https://www.amherst.ny.us/content/projects>

From Here?

Farming Advocacy to better accommodate farming conservation Easement Program Support Agriculture Organizations support cannabis and hemp production

Suburban Agriculture – Zoning

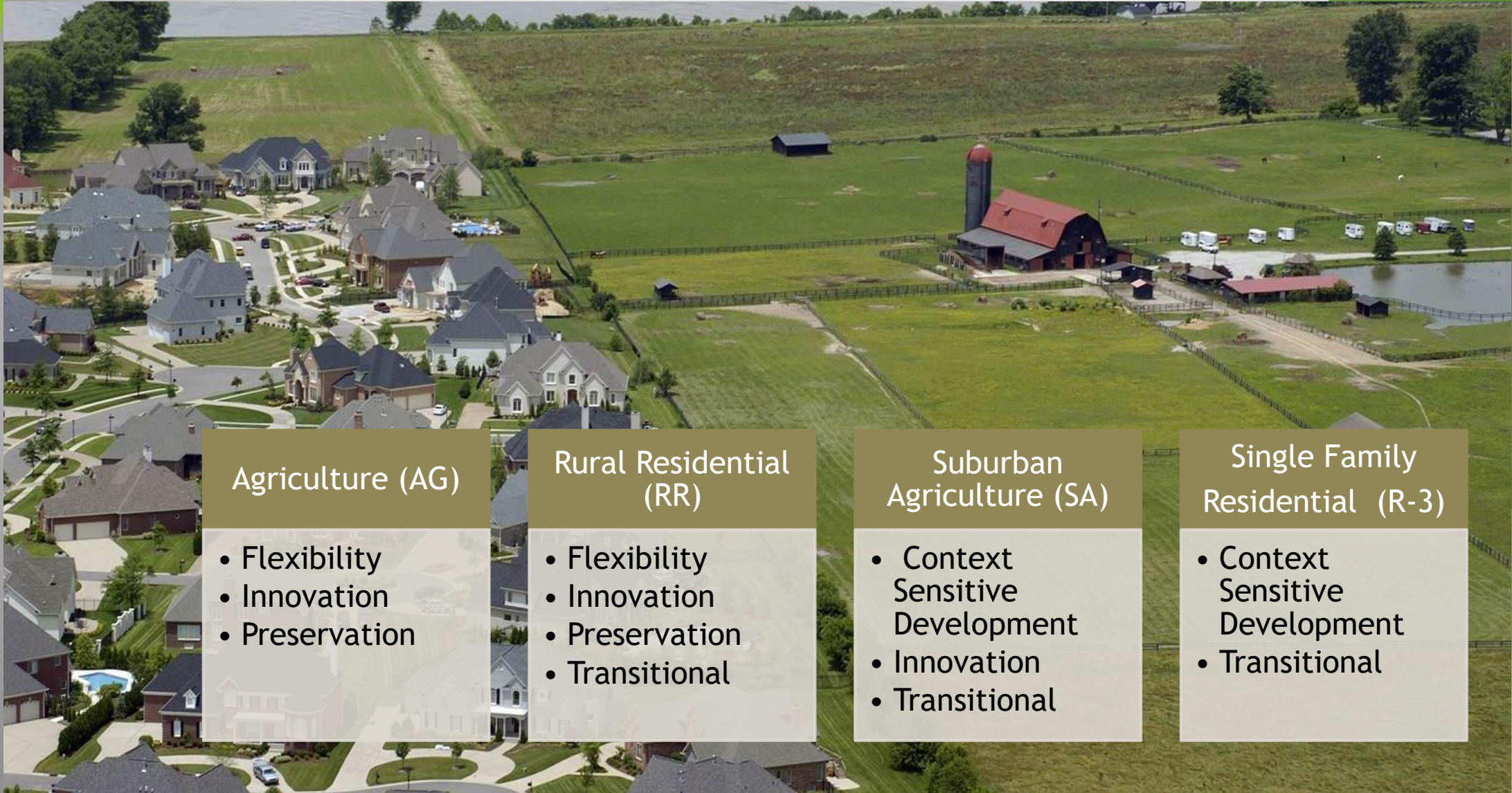
SUBURBAN AGRICULTURE (SA) Zoning

- Determine alternatives for the SA zoning classification to better suit the land uses that are existing and those that are coming with the post-COVID land rush
- Suburban Farming - AG and RR Zoning Amendments
- Zoning Analysis conducted by Bergmann Associates (underway)
- Comprehensive Plan and Zoning Amendments



PLANNING FOR AGRICULTURE IN THE SUBURBS

LAND USE POLICY - Context Sensitive Development - Flexibility - Innovation - Preservation - Transitional



Agriculture (AG)

- Flexibility
- Innovation
- Preservation

Rural Residential (RR)

- Flexibility
- Innovation
- Preservation
- Transitional

Suburban Agriculture (SA)

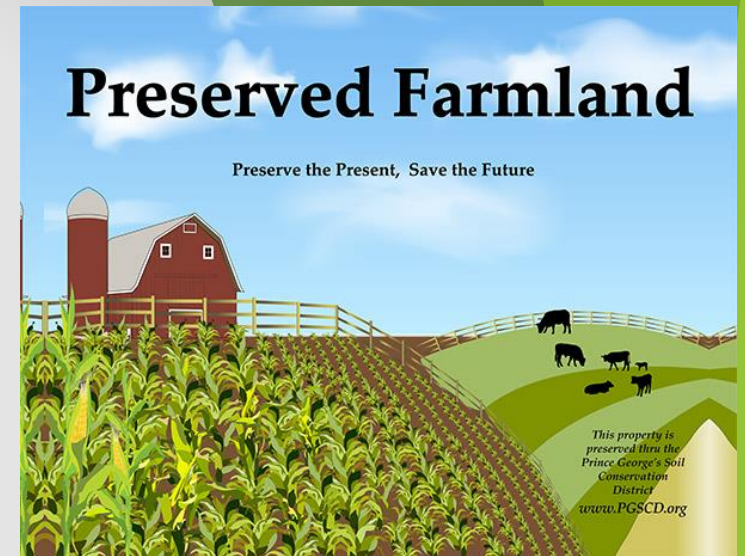
- Context Sensitive Development
- Innovation
- Transitional

Single Family Residential (R-3)

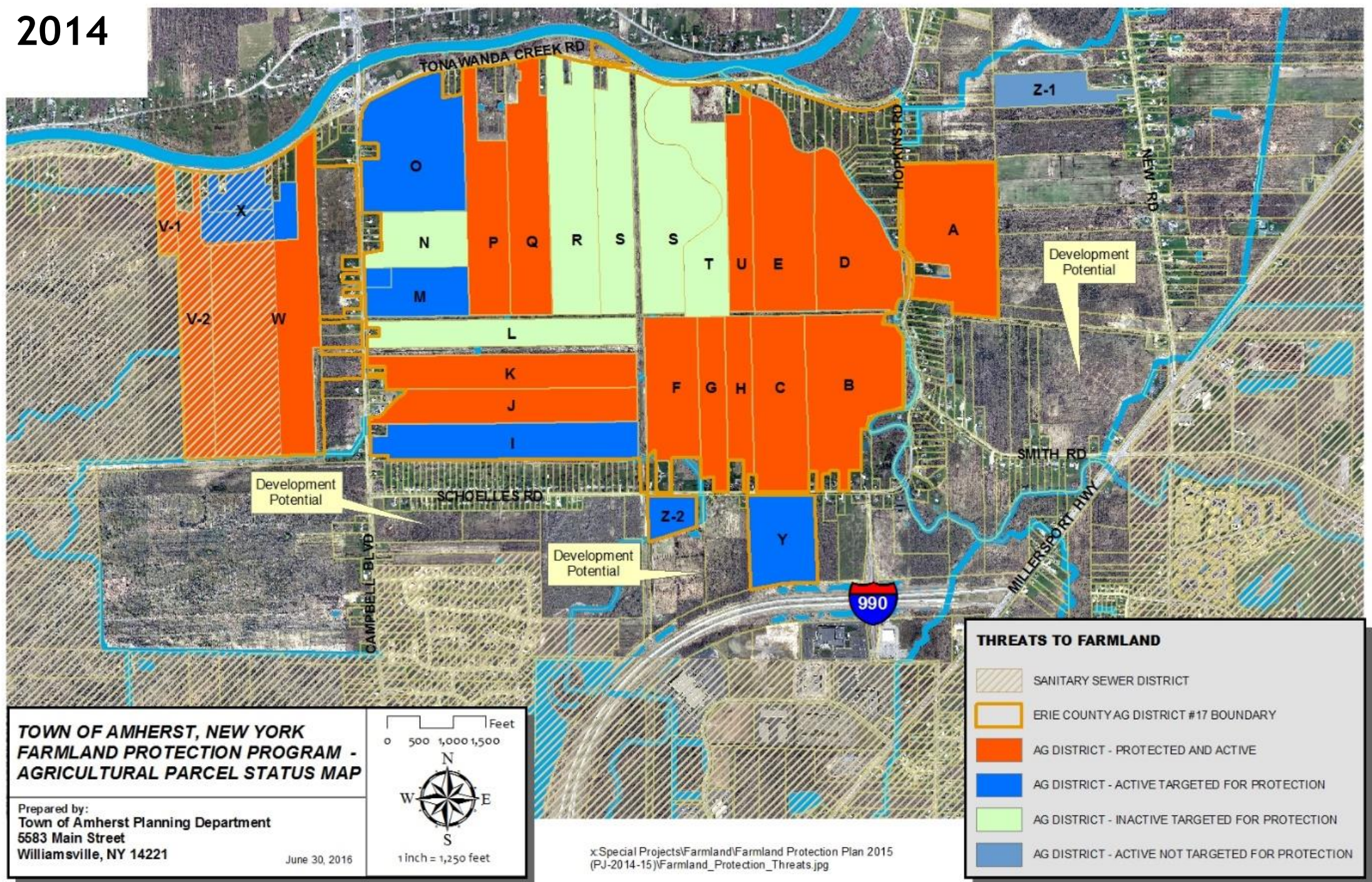
- Context Sensitive Development
- Transitional

Conservation Easements

- Previous Program - 1996 - 2007
 - 14 properties
 - 750 acres
- New Program - Targeted
 - Active Farmlands in Agricultural District
 - Inactive Farmlands in Agricultural District
- Collaboration:
 - WNY Land Conservancy
 - Fed/State Funding Sources
 - Outside Consultant



2014



FUTURE of Suburban Agriculture

Alternative Energy Installations
Co-located with Ag uses (Agrivoltaics)



Planning for Agriculture

RESOURCES:

Farmland Protection and Agricultural Development Plan, Town of Amherst, NY
https://www.amherst.ny.us/pdf/planning/farmland/211006_approved_plan.pdf

Planning for Agriculture in New York: A Toolkit for Towns and Counties; American Farmland Trust
<https://farmlandinfo.org/publications/planning-for-agriculture-in-new-york-a-toolkit-for-towns-and-counties/>

Solar @ Scale: A Local Government Guidebook for Improving Large-Scale Solar Development Outcomes
<https://icma.org/documents/solarscale-guidebook>