

ONONDAGA COUNTY

AGRICULTURE & FARMLAND PROTECTION PLAN

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Onondaga County Agriculture & Farmland Protection Plan is the culmination of over a year of research, review, and community discussion on the state of local agriculture and what actions can best support local farm operations and the agricultural land base. The Syracuse-Onondaga County Planning Agency (SOCPA) led the planning process and the Onondaga County Legislature's Agriculture & Farmland Protection Board (AFPB) provided oversight.

This plan is intended to guide County legislative policy relating to agricultural matters, as well as inform the work of the County's Agriculture & Farmland Protection Board and County's agricultural planning programs. It will also serve as a resource to the 35 municipalities in Onondaga County, each with their own unique relationship with agriculture, and to our important agricultural program partners, and of course, for the County's 600+ agricultural businesses.



WHAT IS AN AGRICULTURE AND FARMLAND PROTECTION PLAN?

An Agriculture and Farmland Protection Plan is a decision-making tool to help governments focus on the future of agriculture. It includes a report on the state of local agriculture, and a framework for protecting farmland and supporting the viability of agriculture within Onondaga County over the next generation.

*For the purposes of this plan, **agriculture** is defined to encompass a variety of activities on the land, including the production, preparation, and marketing of crops, livestock, and value-added products as a commercial enterprise and other activities defined in Article 25AA of the New York State Agriculture and Markets Law.*

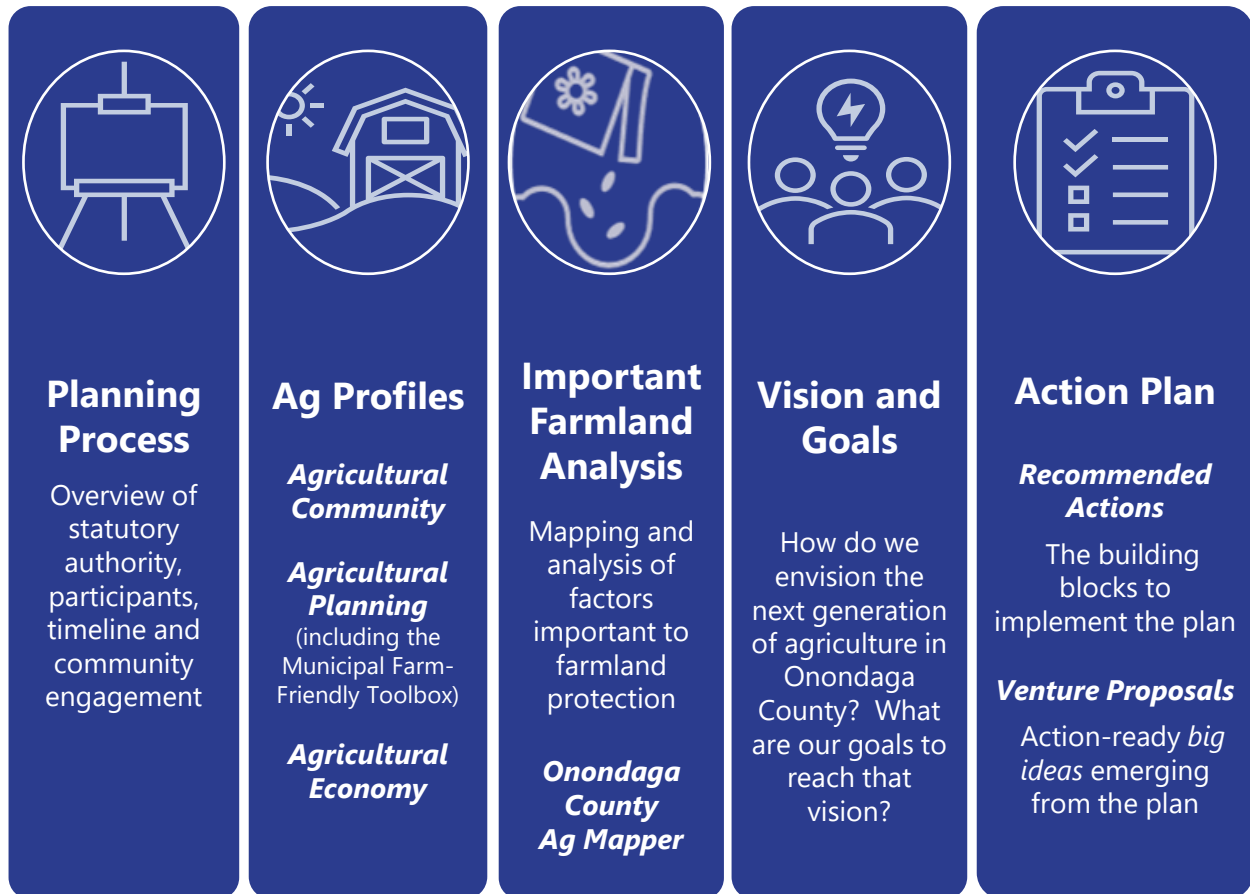
The New York State Department of Agriculture & Markets encourages and funds the creation of countywide and municipal plans, with certain key elements identified for inclusion (1 CRR-NY 390.3). While municipal plans focus primarily on zoning and land use tools to preserve farmland, County plans are intended to also focus on the economic vitality of the local agricultural industry.

Agriculture and farmland protection plans are intended to be flexible and representative of changing needs, conditions, and emerging trends facing agriculture. As a document, this plan will serve as documentation and affirmation of the character, values, and priorities for Onondaga County's agricultural community.

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This Agriculture and Farmland Protection Plan is a new document and update from the 1997 Agricultural & Farmland Protection Plan for Onondaga County. This plan details new dynamics in agriculture and includes an action-oriented and user-friendly approach. This diagram lays out the main components of the plan:



Of note, Onondaga County's Agriculture & Farmland Protection Plan includes certain elements unique to Onondaga County's planning process, including the *Municipal Farm-Friendly Toolbox*, the online *Onondaga County Ag Mapper* application, and the development of *Venture Proposals*. These elements are intended to provide added utility for users of the plan beyond analysis and goal setting, with practical tools for implementation by the County and its partners.

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UPDATING THE 1997 PLAN

Originally adopted in 1997, the first Onondaga County Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan promoted three goals for the local agricultural sector:

- 1. Enhance the viability of agriculture in Onondaga County.***
- 2. Protect farmland resources.***
- 3. Promote the economic and social importance of the agricultural industry in Onondaga County.***

Stemming from these goals, several recommendations were also defined for action at the County and municipal levels and are used as a baseline for the current plan update. The following provides a list of the 1997 Plan recommendations and significant subsequent actions that have been implemented since the adoption of the original Onondaga County Agricultural and Farmland Plan in 1997.

County support for farmland protection



Execution of over 30 state, federal and local projects to protect over 12,000 acres of farmland in Onondaga County.

Strong partnerships in County agencies, partners and the land trust community to execute projects, educate landowners and identify priority lands.

Local funding of agricultural land protection by the County and Town of Skaneateles.

Municipal support for farmland protection



Deployment of mapping data to aid in identifying and minimizing impacts to important farmland areas.

Enactment of local laws and zoning amendments to ensure ag viability, including solar energy regulations. Established agricultural advisory committees in multiple towns. LaFayette Ag & Farmland Protection Plan approval.

Exploration of local conservation easement and development rights transfer programs by multiple towns.

Reduce property taxes on farmland



Increased local adoption of full value land assessment policies.

Provided opportunities for farmer education on the development of estate plans and business plans to offset tax burdens.

Provided municipalities with education on fiscal impacts of land development patterns, including the cost of community service data for residential and agricultural/open spaces.

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Promote public awareness of agriculture



Establishment of the Onondaga County Agricultural Council to promote and preserve the County's agricultural economy, promote local food, and connections between urban and rural communities.

Onondaga Grown buy local campaign and marketing program established to recognize and market the availability and benefits of local food. Establishment of OnFarm Fest, which now attracts over 10,000 visitors yearly at local.

Expanded use of traditional and social media to publicize local farms. Agritourism business and entertainment venues growing on agricultural lands, exposing residents to the needs and benefits of local agriculture.

Promote the agricultural industry



Inclusion of agricultural economic development projects and enhancement of agricultural industry as a strategic area within Regional Economic Development Council (REDC) strategic plans.

Establishment of Onondaga County Agriculture Council to promote the local ag industry. Economic development efforts to attract and retain agricultural processing facilities.

Provide educational programs



Onondaga County SWCD provides support to urban gardens/farms with educational offerings, including the Brady Farm, Dr. King Elementary School, and the Syracuse Refugee Agriculture Program (SYRAPP), for soil sampling, analysis and interpretation of the laboratory results for raised bed gardens.

CCE Onondaga provides educational initiatives, including Ag-in-the-Classroom events such as Agriculture Literacy Week.

Provide technical support for agriculture



The Onondaga County SWCD secures grants annually for farms across Onondaga County and the Skaneateles Lake Watershed.

Grow NY Program established as a business competition and collaborative entity to grow and fund agricultural innovation.

NYS Center of Excellence for Food and Agriculture at Cornell (AgriTech), to catalyze ag business development.

Technical training programs through CCE Onondaga. Beginning Farmer Development Program, created in partnership with Refugee and Immigrant Self-Empowerment (RISE).

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IMPORTANCE OF AGRICULTURE TO ONONDAGA COUNTY



Agricultural lands are a prominent and proud feature in Onondaga County's landscape. While generally characterized as an urban County, home to Syracuse, the state's 5th largest city in New York State, and over 460,000 residents, Onondaga County is also fortunate to have been able to retain a rich agricultural presence.

Approximately 30% of the land use in the County is actively used for farming, and another 30% consists of related and nearby forested lands. The rolling hills, working and open lands, and emerging agritourism venues along our rural roads and highways across Onondaga County are community, and regional, assets and are key component of the quality of life to County residents both urban and rural. And with over 69% of all lands in Onondaga County classified as important farmland soils, Onondaga County possesses agricultural land qualities that are recognized nationally.

Agriculture is also a significant player in the economy of Onondaga County. The location of Onondaga County at the crossroads of New York enables local agriculture to reach markets both locally and beyond. With \$178 million in direct sales, the County's current 623 farming operations occur in nearly all reaches of the County. It is estimated that there is another \$178 million in indirect benefits (USDA Agricultural Marketing Service & Colorado State University, 2022), from farmer and farmworker earnings, purchases at feed and supply stores, and all the other ways that agricultural sales contribute indirectly to local economies.

In all, the economic impact of farming in Onondaga County totals over \$356 million in quantifiable benefits.

Farming is the primary occupation for half of the County's 1,068 farmers (USDA NASS Census of Agriculture, 2017a).

While data in the following chapters show a stable local agricultural economy, many changes are taking place within the industry, attributed in part to modernization and the evolution of agricultural practices, but also changes that reflect the pressures of agriculture, urban development, and competition for land.

As is occurring across the nation, nearly one-third (32.9%) of agricultural producers are 65 years or older, while only 5% of producers are "new farmers" age 18-35. Farm labor is also a longstanding issue, with shortages in the labor force and changes and challenges in regulation of non-resident labor.

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While new small farms are emerging, mid-size farms are in decline, and being absorbed by larger operations or sold for urban development. These dynamics relate to a decline in farm operations overall and more limited diversity of agricultural products, with a larger segment of Onondaga County agriculture now focused on the challenging and land intensive dairy industry. The pressures of urban residential development also continue and are met with new land development dynamics from commercial solar development, who are increasingly seeking to convert agricultural lands in Onondaga County to large-scale solar panel installations.

Onondaga County is committed to focusing on farmers and agriculture and supporting the value that it brings to its residents, economy, landscapes, and natural environment. There are many reasons to celebrate the efforts achieved since the completion of the original 1997 plan, including the protection of over 12,000 acres of important farmland from development, and representing a \$25 million investment in the local agricultural economy. However, there is much work ahead to protect farm operations and farmland here in Onondaga County.

NEEDS AND OPPORTUNITIES FACING AGRICULTURE IN ONONDAGA COUNTY

A critical component of the preparation of this plan has been outreach and discussion with the agricultural community, including the Agriculture & Farmland Protection Board, local farmers, farm business representatives and related support agencies in government and not-for-profit sectors.

The following is a synopsis of identified needs and opportunities facing the Onondaga County agricultural community, resulting from this outreach as well as research on current conditions and trends. Information is presented under five broad categories of interest, which naturally evolved throughout the planning process.

AGRICULTURAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Agriculture is an important contributor to the economy of Onondaga County, and the legacy of farming resources here in Onondaga County has provided a basis for a stable agricultural industry for generations. Unfortunately, agriculture can be very capital-intensive for individual operations and profit margins can be very tight, impacted by extreme weather patterns and statewide or national policies outside the control of farmers. Farming has been pushed to become highly efficient over the years.

Meanwhile, agriculture is facing changes to its operations, labor force, and markets. Mid-sized farms are decreasing in number throughout the county, with very large farms increasing in size through consolidation. The number of farm operators is decreasing, as operators age towards retirement and the next generation moves towards non-farming careers.

Markets are quickly evolving, with new crops emerging on the market and technology continues to innovate by leaps and bounds. Increasing value-added production opportunities can help existing local farmers offset ever-rising agricultural costs while potentially attracting new farmers to the workforce. Intentional and strategic economic development for agriculture to grow and thrive as a sector is a critical need in Onondaga County.

PROTECTION OF AGRICULTURAL LAND

Protection of farmland is essential to maintaining a viable agricultural economy, as well as enabling the scenic views that characterize Onondaga County. The County has a rich array of agricultural soils, with nearly 70% either federally or statewide important. Over the past 100 years, Onondaga County has lost a

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significant portion of its original agriculture that occurred on these soils due to development, although this loss has plateaued in recent years. Once development occurs in areas of farmed prime soil, it is very difficult, if not impossible, to restore the soil to its original state.

Fortunately, there are several programs that can pool resources to incentivize the protection of farmland and make it worthwhile to farmers that would otherwise be tempted to develop their land. The challenges lie in providing enough technical assistance and marketing to ensure that farmers know about these options. An additional emerging development pressure for farmland is commercial solar development. Several tools exist to help strike the right balance when it comes to enabling solar development and other forms of renewable energy to address climate change and provide farmers with additional revenues, while still protecting farmland and the food that it provides.

LINKING LOCAL AGRICULTURE TO THE COMMUNITY

A wonderful characteristic of Onondaga County's agriculture is its centralized location and easy access to local markets, which makes it relatively easy for non-farmers to connect with farmers. People are seeking out these experiences more than ever, with increased interest in agritourism experiences whether it's, picking fruits or vegetables at one of the many fine U-Pick operations across the County, attending On Farm Fest, or enjoying a craft beer, meal, or concert at farm-based venue. Additionally, urban agriculture and community gardening have gained in popularity over the past couple of decades, helping to bridge the gap between the County's established farming community and the traditionally non-farming community.

More work is needed, however, to better link the general public's awareness and understanding of local agriculture, as well as attract new community members to local agriculture. In recent years the Onondaga Grown campaign has been launched to promote and celebrate the importance of local agriculture, as well as link local producers to local consumers.

Farmers' markets have increased in popularity, along with local farm-to-table restaurants and other food-related enterprises that work to re-localize the food system. Continued effort on this topic has the potential to improve public health by providing food access to are several "food deserts" throughout Onondaga County, where residents do not have easy access to fresh, locally grown produce. It also can enhance the quality of life for all residents participating in local agriculture-related experiences.

LABOR AND THE NEXT GENERATION OF FARMING

When it comes to labor, agriculture both in Onondaga County and across New York State is facing some significant challenges. The agricultural workforce is already in short supply due to an aging farmer population and a shortage of young farmers or new and beginning farmers. This labor shortage will likely be exacerbated by the recent statewide requirement to phase into a 40-hour workweek for farmworkers beginning in January 2024. This recent change has caused concerns from farm operators about balancing the increasing labor costs with the slim profit margins of farms, all while attracting and retaining a quality workforce here in New York.

Continued demand for low food prices, technology requirements, and the consequential rising costs of agriculture are attributed to the lack of local labor, low wages for farmworkers, and difficult conditions for farmers and farmworkers. Opportunities lie within regional workforce development in warehouse distribution, drone technology, and other tech industries that may attract new tech-oriented workers to the agricultural sector. Additionally, there are many ways to support and incentivize new and beginning farmers, as well as aging farmers, to ensure that the next generation of farmers have the resources they need.

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AGRICULTURE AND THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

Onondaga County is gifted with plentiful water and productive soils, and for that reason, the County has a robust history of farming. Farmers are the biggest stewards of natural resources in Onondaga County. Despite this intrinsic connection between agriculture and natural resources, more resources and support are needed to equip farmers to balance agriculture with the natural environment.

Many incentive-based tools exist to help farmers protect water quality, increase climate resiliency, or address pollinator collapse and invasive species. Protecting flood plains and wetlands can provide supplemental income/benefits to farmers as well as provide community value (e.g., recharging soils, habitat, water quality).

Finally, because of the amount of land that agricultural operators work with, they have a unique role in helping to capture carbon and implement renewable energy options, whether it is no-till farming, solar energy production, or capturing methane for heating and electricity. The challenge lies in how to do so without placing added burdens on farmers and keeping farmland in production.

VISION FOR AGRICULTURE IN ONONDAGA COUNTY

The Vision Statement, at the heart of the 2022 Agriculture and Farmland Protection Plan, is an articulation of the community's hopes for the future of agriculture and farmland in Onondaga County over the next 20 years. It informs the Agriculture and Farmland Protection Plan and ultimately is a basis for decision-making related to agriculture throughout the County.

The Vision Statement as articulated below by the Agriculture & Farmland Protection Board, results from the contribution of a wide array of community stakeholders, participants engaged through outreach events and surveys, and discussions with focus groups and Onondaga County farmers and residents.

Agriculture in Onondaga County has seen significant changes over the years. Through it all, local agriculture remains a critical part of its economy, food system, and landscape. The County is gifted with highly productive agricultural soils, a legacy of farming operations and know-how, and an environment that supports a highly diverse array of agriculture and opportunities to engage with the local food system. This plan honors the strengths of Onondaga County's agriculture and reflects these strengths in a vision for the future of agriculture throughout the County:

Onondaga County is a dynamic agricultural community of vibrant, resilient, and experienced farm operators and farm-related entrepreneurs who are the stewards of local viable farmland and the food system.

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GOALS AND STRATEGIES

Achieving the community's vision requires the development of planning goals, strategies, and tangible actions supported and embraced by public officials and the community. Achieving these goals will require commitment and collaboration between a variety of stakeholders across the County.

The following is a summary of the 5 primary goals and related strategies which were formulated through the planning process to inspire action and implementation of the vision for agriculture in Onondaga County. For a limited number of actions marked as ***Venture Proposals**, more detailed preliminary analysis has been prepared as a way to further brainstorm and shape proposals for quick, coordinated action by stakeholder partners. See the Venture Proposals chapter following the Implementation Matrix.



Enhance agriculture-related economic development activities and collaboration to capitalize on emerging markets, technologies, and incentives.

Action 1: Create a dedicated Economic Development Specialist for Agriculture to spearhead and coordinate agriculture related partnerships and initiatives. ***Venture Proposal**

Action 2: Explore the feasibility for developing an agricultural business park and/or food hub. ***Venture Proposal**

Action 3: Develop a re-packing facility to provide cold storage, freezing, packaging, and distribution to institutions. ***Venture Proposal**

Action 4: Host periodic trainings to educate existing and prospective producers about resource management (e.g., implementation of BMPs), certifications, value-added production, and market development.

Action 5: Improve broadband in rural communities to support high-tech ag machinery and communication.

Action 6: Train and equip local support agencies to offer agricultural unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) or drone services to their constituents.

Action 7: Facilitate the development and operation a commercial kitchen to provide operations the ability to create value-added products.

Action 8: Explore the feasibility of developing a USDA certified meat processing facility compared with utilizing regional meat processing facilities.

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Strategically protect agricultural lands throughout Onondaga County to sustain and improve its vibrant agricultural operations.

Action 1: Improve capacity and increase funding within the local land trust community to partner on conservation easement project or develop new avenues to execute farmland protection easement programs.

Action 2: Work with municipal boards and staff to understand the land use tools available to incorporate best practices in siting, construction, and monitoring of larger scale commercial solar developments to minimize impacts on farmland resources and agricultural communities.

Action 3: Follow and engage in statewide efforts to update utility-scale solar energy siting regulations, to ensure that local communities farmland protection goals and objectives are considered in site location and mitigation assessment.

Action 4: Utilize the **Onondaga County Ag Mapper** tool developed herein for identification of priority lands for farmland protection, including conservation easement programs, corridor protection, and local planning and zoning.

Action 5: Enable and facilitate Smart Growth development practices which encourage growth in existing built communities and compact subdivision designs, which ultimately serves to preserve agricultural lands, open spaces, and rural road frontages.

Action 6: Conduct an agritourism corridor study along NYS Routes 20 and 80.

Action 7: Promote and maintain the **Farm- Friendly Toolbox for Municipalities** as a continuing resource for local support for agricultural communities.

Action 8: Work with municipal boards and staff to update and revise their comprehensive plans and land use regulations to better support agricultural uses and accommodate new agritourism related activities

Action 9: Encourage towns to create their own agricultural protection plan that works in coordination with the Onondaga County Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan.

Action 10: Explore the feasibility of establishing a local farmland protection fund for purchasing conservation easements.

Action 11: Provide training for municipal tax assessors to conduct more accurate assessment of lands and buildings in agricultural use.

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Promote the importance of local agriculture and food systems throughout Onondaga County.

Action 1: Develop an agriculturally oriented year-round community greenhouse to host agritourism events/ educational programming. ***Venture Proposal**

Action 2: Increase County support for agriculture-related promotional events and marketing, particularly for agritourism (e.g., startup assistance, social media help, siting, and logistics). *** Venture Proposal**

Action 3: Promote public awareness of local agriculture through the Onondaga Agricultural Council and its Onondaga Grown Buy Local Campaign.

Action 4: Continue to grow OnFarm Fest programming to serve as a well-known opportunity to educate residents of Onondaga County's agriculture.

Action 5: Continue to support the CNY Regional Market and local farmer's markets, CSA programs and other similar opportunities for direct sales of farm products to consumers throughout Onondaga County.



Support the next generation of farmers and agricultural entrepreneurs in Onondaga County.

Action 1: Develop and expand upon a New Farmer Program(s) that provides land, landowner connections, management training and other resources to serve the next generation of farmers or newly arrived immigrants familiar with farming.

Action 2: Develop a farm specialty labor pool by creating a program of trainings for high-tech agriculture (or link to existing programs).

Action 3: Provide training for agri-service, land use planning professionals, and the farming community to support succession planning and direct farmers to appropriate stress-related support services.

Action 4: Increase programming and partnerships with agriculture-related higher education programs.

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Continue to enhance the relationship between agriculture and the natural environment.

Action 1: Develop a strategy to decrease overall waste in the agricultural sector, for example renewable natural gas projects for dairy manure and promoting paper/plastic recycling and reuse working with OCRRA.

* **Venture Proposal**

Action 2: Increase funding, and flexibility thereof, available to evaluate causal pathways for water quality issues and assist farmers in implementing strategic water quality management practices.

Action 3: Increase technical assistance related to climate resiliency (e.g., flooding and drought), stormwater management, and other environmental management issues, like runoff nutrients, farmyard management, silage nutrient management, fertilizer application calibration, hazard mitigation, etc.

Action 4: Increase funding for marketing and technical assistance to increase farmer participation in programs that protect soil health.

Action 5: Encourage, plan for, and fund stream corridor buffering, wetland and floodplain restoration/enhancement, and bank stabilization efforts.

Action 6: Conduct viewshed analyses to preserve the most scenic and valued agricultural and open space vistas in our rural communities.

ANALYSIS OF IMPORTANT FARMLAND

Farmland is at the core of the agricultural community and farming industry, and one of the most threatened components of the industry as well. As such, mapping-based identification of the County's most important farmland was identified as a priority activity for the updated Agriculture & Farmland Protection Plan. Mapping of farmland resources can provide utility in a variety of ways including:

- Scoring and prioritization of projects being considered for endorsement by the AFPB and/or municipalities for state and federal grant programs, such as the NYS Farmland Protection Implementation Grants (FPIG) program.
- Integration of mapping analysis into County and municipal comprehensive plans and/or land use plans, to aid in identifying areas prescribed for future development and supportive infrastructure, or alternately, identification of lands to be protected from encroachment of urban development.
- Use of individual or aggregate data layers to understand land dynamics affecting a particular area or piece of land being proposed for development. Data layers in this analysis are often considered during zoning (zone changes, site plan review, special permits, etc.) and subdivision reviews, in order to assess impacts to land and resources and compatibility with neighboring uses.
- Increased availability and ease of use of data by the general public to understand various land conditions and factors affecting agriculture, to increase understanding of the local ag community, aid in personal decision making and inform residents when projects are being proposed.

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To identify the County's most beneficial farmlands and areas of interest related to farmland protection efforts and programs, a GIS-based mapping analysis was conducted that considers data within each of the following four focus areas: **Soil Value, Agricultural Vibrancy, Natural Resources, and Land Development.**

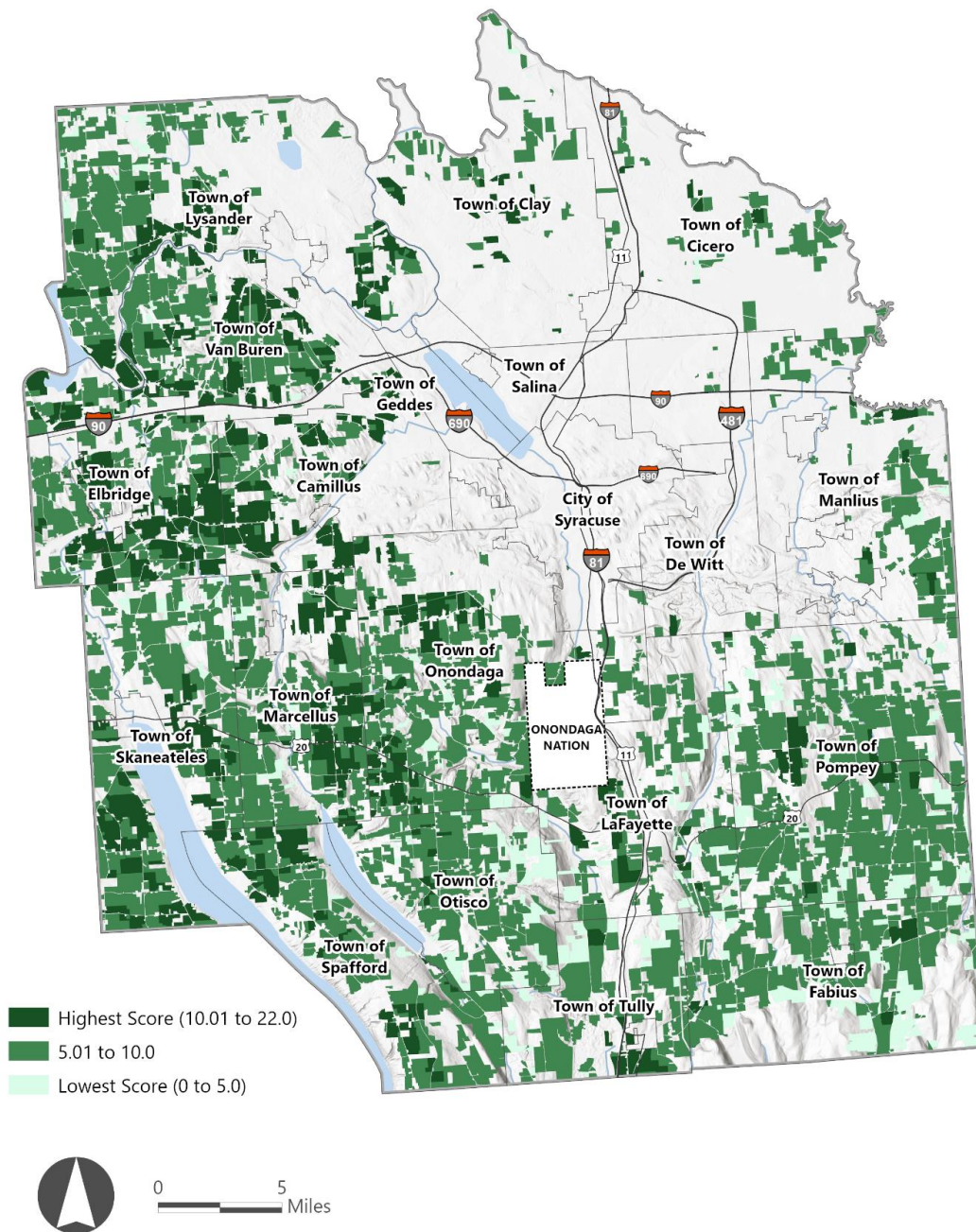
For each focus area, individual datasets were weighted and aggregated into a Focus Area map showing the relative values for all agricultural lands in that category. Each of these analyses have also been combined to result in an overall scoring of important farmland throughout Onondaga County.

As shown in the following Map 1. Aggregate Map of Priority Agricultural Lands, there are clusters or areas of the agricultural community that stand out as highly important agricultural lands. Some are primarily based on inherent land qualities while others stand out based on high ranking in multiple categories.

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Map 1. Aggregate Map of Priority Agricultural Lands



The county is also presenting this data in the form of an online **Onondaga County Ag Mapper** application, accessed through the agriculture.ongov.net website, to encourage users to explore and learn about the various data layers and visualize these inputs on a specific area or parcel.

Of note, identification of priority farmland is not a simple task, and the planning team acknowledges the inherent complexities and limitations on available data in this type of data analysis. Despite these

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limitations, the Agriculture & Farmland Protection Plan team is confident that the display of data layers and analysis of available data is a benefit to the planning process and to our communities.

The Syracuse-Onondaga County Planning Agency, with the Agriculture & Farmland Protection Board, will continue to enhance the data and analysis of this mapping as new data and methods become available. Data is to be used as planning-level data and subject to refinement and/or corrections.

MUNICIPAL FARM-FRIENDLY TOOLBOX

In New York State, land use is controlled primarily at a local municipal level, and thus, towns/villages/cities have a critical role in effective protection of agricultural lands. Through partnerships with local farmers, municipal governments can work to plan for the long-term viability of their agricultural sectors and create local land use regulations that are up to date, farm-friendly, and meet the needs of the greater community. As a resource to municipalities to keep pace with the evolving needs of the agricultural community, the planning team created what has been deemed a ***Farm-Friendly Toolbox***, as part of the Plan development.

The process began with a survey of municipal representatives regarding their interests, needs and challenges in supporting and regulating agricultural uses. The team then solicited the volunteer participation by a small number of municipalities – our thanks to the Towns of Onondaga, Manlius, Cicero and LaFayette - to open their local plans and regulations and undertake an interview, to understand what elements might best fill a “toolbox”.

In addition to individual guidance in the form of a memo provided back to municipalities, the team developed the Toolbox guidance. There are several tools available to assist communities that desire to protect the agricultural land resources and enhance the long-term viability of agriculture. Tools are organized into *planning level tools* (e.g., comprehensive plans, open space plans, and economic development plans), *regulatory tools* (e.g., Right-to-Farm laws, zoning regulations, farm friendly solar ordinances, and subdivision and other land use tools), and *farmland preservation tools* (e.g., purchase of development rights and lease of development rights).

The Toolbox can be found in the *Appendices* and is posted on the County’s agriculture.ongov.net website, and includes a recorded webinar held for municipal representatives as part of the project.

Well-crafted regulatory tools protect the health and welfare of the community and provide for efficient allocation of land and other municipal resources while providing the flexibility needed to prosper economically in an evolving global economy. Municipalities are encouraged to use this toolbox to self-assess the ways and the degree to which their own local land use tools support farmland.

LOOKING FORWARD

The following chapters outline the planning process, community engagement, profiles the agricultural community, identifies the needs and challenges facing agriculture today, and presents a vision and framework for advancing and supporting the agricultural community to the extent practicable over the course of the next generation.

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The plan includes data and tools for use by the farming community, municipal and agency partners and sets the stage for continued planning, partnerships and leadership by the Agriculture & Farmland Protection Board, Onondaga County government, and numerous agricultural community partners.

The Agriculture & Farmland Protection Board thanks those involved and encourages exploration of the following Onondaga County Agriculture & Farmland Protection Plan. Additional resources can also be found and will continue to be posted at agriculture.ongov.net.

