



# **Washington County Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan**

A Strategic Plan to Enhance the Economic Success of Agriculture in the County



Agriculture and ag-related businesses are a driving force critical to Washington County's economy and quality of life



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Executive Summary

Why a County Plan devoted to Agriculture?

Washington County, located in the upper Hudson River Valley, has a rich and proud history of farming. Agriculture has shaped our landscapes, our communities and our way of life. The significant role that agriculture plays in the County is as vital today as it ever was. However, there must be a concerted effort to maintain and enhance this critical economic driver if we are to ensure a continuation of a healthy and vibrant agricultural industry.

Twenty years ago, Washington County adopted its first Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan. While many of the strategies in that original plan have been achieved or are still in progress, this updated 2017 Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan (“Plan”) builds on those strategies with a focus on current opportunities and challenges in farming. The purpose of this updated Plan is to provide a clear pathway to celebrate and support an industry that is the foundation of our agrarian communities in Washington County.

The Benefits of our Agricultural Economy

Agriculture is a critical mainstay of the County’s economy. This is not readily apparent to many people since this industry is spread out across our country’s landscape and not consolidated into a huge factory or office complex. However, the economic benefits of agriculture are significant with almost 189,400 acres of farmland on 851 farms, directly employing nearly 1,300 people and producing more than \$139.1 million in agricultural sales annually (2012 USDA Ag Census). The payroll for these 1,300 people totaled about \$16 million, much of which is spent in this County. This places the County in the top 10 agricultural counties in New York State for multiple commodities. Washington County also has more farms, more farmland, and the largest market value in agricultural sales of any county in the Capital Region or Hudson Valley.

That \$139.1 million in direct agricultural sales is only part of the story. In addition, farmers purchase supplies and services from many other local businesses, and the income earned by employees of those businesses generates successive rounds of spending. In 2012, Washington County farms purchased \$115.5 million worth of services and products, mostly within Washington County.

According to a recent statewide study by Cornell University economist Dr. Todd M. Schmit, for every additional dollar generated in on-farm agricultural output, an additional 45 cents is generated in non-agricultural industry sectors such as wholesale trade, agricultural support services and animal food manufacturing. The number of people employed directly in agricultural production does not include all of the people who work in tourism, banks and companies



that provide services to Washington County agriculture. *That brings the total economic impact of agriculture in Washington County to well over \$200 million.* It is also the case that the critical mass of farms in Washington County has made the County an important source of supplies, services, feed, etc. for farms across the region and beyond in Vermont, Massachusetts and Connecticut.

It is difficult to imagine another industry that could generate the same amount of annual revenue in Washington County in the near future. Hence the importance of supporting this vital industry in our communities. Indeed, any substantial damage to this economic sector, whether arising from development or other causes, could have a devastating effect on the County’s economy.

While agriculture is currently strong in our county, like an industry, it is vulnerable to external forces. For example, piecemeal development could have a devastating effect on this economic driver. We have seen agriculture disappear in a matter of a few years in numerous places south of Washington County. It is important to remain vigilant in supporting agriculture if we are to continue to reap these economic benefits while also maintaining our quality of life. *It is also important to note that farmland is good for the local tax base.* Why is this? As the old adage goes, “cows don’t go to school.” Multiple fiscal impact studies done throughout New York State show that farmland actually produces a net tax profit for towns and schools because *farmland pays more in taxes than it receives back in public services.* This is true even when the land is assessed at its current, agricultural use. The findings of 15 fiscal impact studies in New York showed that farmland costs towns only \$.29 for every \$1.00 paid in taxes, while residential land costs towns \$1.27 for every \$1.00 paid in taxes.<sup>1</sup> *In short, agriculture keeps local property taxes lower than if the land were developed for most residential types of development. Interestingly, people are largely unaware of this key fact about local taxes.*

Beyond economics, farming is a way of life in Washington County. Almost all of the farms in Washington County are family owned, whether directly or through partnerships or family corporations. Some of the ancillary benefits of our agricultural and forestry economy include:

- Generating entrepreneurial and creative opportunities that pave the way towards more economic growth, such as milk processing, specialty cheesemaking and craft beverage tours;
- Maintaining diverse and scenic landscapes, providing clean air, clean water, wildlife habitats, and mitigating the effects of severe weather;
- Preserving the lifestyle of our rural communities;
- Minimizing costs of providing public services such as roads, schools and public safety infrastructure;
- Putting focus on, and helping to preserve, our unique history and regional architecture;
- Providing recreational opportunities and scenic landscapes that appeal to residents and tourists alike; and
- Facilitating access to local, healthy foods.

Agricultural communities promote a unique and valued lifestyle. Many people visit or live in Washington County specifically for this way of life. *It is worth noting that almost all respondents to a survey of the general public felt that agriculture has a “very important” role in Washington County, especially in terms of fresh local food, landscape/rural character, quality of life, the local and regional economy and the environment. Loss of agriculture would profoundly impact this lifestyle now and in the future.*

The Challenges facing our Agricultural Economy

Our county farmers face significant issues right now that threaten the economic foundation of our County, including gaining access to farmland, employing labor, educating the public, adapting to climate change, understanding the impacts of solar development on farmlands, addressing the lack of internet/broadband and cellular coverage, adhering to existing and new regulations, dealing with low milk prices for dairy farmers, and helping aging farmers retire while transitioning farms to the next generation.



<sup>1</sup> David Haight, Laura Ten Eyck and Sanaz Arjomand. *Cultivate New York, An Agenda to Protect Farmland for Growing Food and the Economy*, Saratoga Springs, NY: American Farmland Trust, 2016, pg.11.





The agricultural community is cognizant of not wanting to burden taxpayers. Throughout the development of this Plan, we have aggressively sought solutions that will not unduly burden taxpayers. In most cases, it is anticipated that costs can be defrayed by third parties through grants, volunteerism and private donations.

The Opportunities for our Agricultural Economy

Notwithstanding these challenges, the future for agriculture in Washington County remains bright given the County’s unique combination of good soils, water, affordable land, vast institutional local knowledge, ready access to road and highway transportation routes, and one of the largest infrastructures for agriculture in the Northeast. The combination of river valleys and mountain tops with north, south, east and west facing slopes is somewhat unique for farming in New York State. There is usually a crop that can be matched to a site and this gives Washington County the potential for a balanced agricultural economy.

Our robust local agricultural infrastructure includes farm equipment distributors, fertilizer companies, feed companies, veterinarians and other agri-service providers. Farms in Vermont, Massachusetts, Connecticut and New York State depend on the infrastructure in Washington County. Meanwhile, new opportunities for agriculture, including craft beverages, agritourism and the local food movement constitute potentially huge markets. There are 60 million hungry mouths to feed within 5 hours of Washington County. It is estimated that there is an unmet demand for locally grown food and beverages in New York State that is nearly \$7 billion in size.

In terms of creating new job training and career opportunities, there are many ways to enhance ag-related education in local schools and through SUNY Adirondack. Farmers need assistance with agricultural economic development initiatives, promotion and marketing, technical training, and help to ensure that local regulations are farm-friendly. The ultimate purpose of this Plan is to provide a roadmap for future projects, programs and policies that will benefit the agricultural economy in Washington County.

This Plan builds on the 1996 plan. *The Plan is not regulatory in nature. Rather, it emphasizes economic development, long-range planning, incentives and collaboration.* The Plan offers a series of short and long-term actions to solidify and grow the agricultural economy in Washington County. These recommended strategies and actions are intended to be implemented by the farm community itself, agricultural service agencies, as well as by town, county and New York State governments.

This Plan, developed over two years, was led by a steering committee comprised of farmers, ag-related agencies and businesses, county representatives and consultants (the “Steering Committee”). It reflects input from over 700 respondents obtained through workshops, focus groups, surveys and interviews.



Vision Statement and Goals for the Future of Agriculture

The vision of this Plan is to enhance the economic success of agriculture in Washington County and preserve the land on which its built. The following vision statement and goals were developed based on the input received by the Steering Committee

Vision Statement:

*Agriculture and ag-related businesses are a driving force and critical to Washington County’s economy and quality of life. Washington County communities and residents understand and embrace the vital role agriculture plays in the County and are committed to protecting the land base for farming. Our farms are diverse, thriving and financially successful. We promote and take advantage of emerging local and distant markets, cutting edge technologies and practices, renewable energy and cost efficiencies and new opportunities to retain and expand agricultural commodities that are produced in the County. A skilled labor force supports our farm businesses. Farmers continue to be excellent stewards of the land and value sustainable agricultural practices.*

*Because of these conditions, agriculture attracts both the next generation of farmers and entrepreneurs as well as a supportive community that work together to ensure a long-term and vibrant future for farming in Washington County.*



Top 6 Goals:

- 1. **Enhance the viability, diversity and sustainability of agriculture**, focusing on both niche and traditional farms, value-added processing, agri-tourism, packaging, product aggregation and distribution operations.
- 2. **Promote recognition, awareness, and support** of the critical roles agriculture plays in the County with the non-farm community.
- 3. Support and improve farm-support agencies and organizations, agri-infrastructure, funding and educational opportunities to **retain and grow agricultural enterprises**.
- 4. **Protect the land base** for farming and promote environmental sustainability of farms.
- 5. **Increase markets** for, and visibility of, local and regional food and agricultural products.
- 6. Increase the number of, and **support for, the next generation of farmers and agricultural entrepreneurs** operating in Washington County



# KEY STRATEGIES

Once the mission and goals were established for this Plan, the next step was to address “how to get there from here”. Nine strategies were formulated based on data analysis, public input and committee discussion. Each of the nine strategies were designed to help achieve one of the six identified goals. Implementation of the strategies will be accomplished by executing specific actions attached to each strategy.

Twelve of the 43 action steps outlined in the Plan are considered Priority Actions and should be among the first implemented. The strategies and Priority Actions are summarized below. Please refer to Section 4 of the Plan (page 23) for details on the Recommended Strategies and Section 5 (page 33) for the Priority Action Plan.

## Strategy #1: Create an Effective Organizational Structure for Agricultural Economic Success

### Priority Actions:

- ▶ Build capacity, collaboration and cooperation by having the Washington County Board of Supervisors establish an oversight committee to superintend the implementation of this Plan. It is recommended that the Washington County Agricultural and Farmland Protection Board (“AFPB”) be charged with this task.
  - ◆ The AFPB should create and formalize an 8 to 12 member volunteer working group (“Working Group”) tasked to ensure the implementation strategies and action steps identified in this Plan. Suggested members of this Working Group are listed in Section 4.
- ▶ The AFPB in partnership with the County and Working Group should aggressively seek third party funding to support actions and goals specifically identified in this Plan. It includes funding to hire a ‘boots on the ground’ coordinator to implement the actions in this Plan.
- ▶ The AFPB and Working Group should host a semi-annual roundtable meeting, inviting a diversity of agricultural stakeholders in the County and region to provide feedback on Plan priorities, project status, emerging trends and emerging challenges.

## Strategy #2: Create a Long-term, Systematic Approach to Agricultural Economic Development in Washington County

### Priority Actions:

- ▶ Establish a “food value chain initiative” through the efforts of the Working Group and Coordinator to transform the traditional competitive seller/buyer relationships into more collaborative relationships and implement a variety of programs to enhance farm retention and expansion to grow the agricultural economy in Washington County.
- ▶ Improve opportunities for farms to access capital for investment.

## Strategy #3: Collect and Analyze Data, Promote New Opportunities

*This strategy consists a number of action items detailed in Section 4, many of which will be implemented as part of other strategies.*

## Strategy #4: Improve Broadband and Internet Access and Cellular Coverage throughout Washington County

### Priority Action:

- ▶ Expand access to technology to better serve agriculture.

## Strategy #5: Increase Access to, and Training of, Skilled Labor for Agricultural and Forestry Operations

### Priority Action:

- ▶ Partner with SUNY Adirondack to develop the Center for Agriculture and Food Education as proposed in a 2016 feasibility study.
- ▶ Educate high school and college students working with BOCES, school districts and SUNY Adirondack to expand opportunities and education for farmers.

## Strategy #6: Create a Comprehensive Marketing Strategy that Promotes both Farm Products and Farming in the County

### Priority Actions:

- ▶ In collaboration with partner organizations, seek grants or other sources of funding to hire a marketing expert to create a comprehensive marketing strategy to implement and fund initiatives.
- ▶ Enhance support to expand county ag-tourism programs and opportunities.

## Strategy #7: Cultivate the Next Generation of Farmers

### Priority Action:

*This strategy consists of a number of action items detailed in Section 4, some of which will be implemented as part of other strategies and some of which are ongoing, including building on the work of CCE and the Hudson Valley Farmlink Network to expand opportunities for next generation farmers.*

## Strategy #8: Conserve Farmland

### Priority Actions:

- ▶ Increase the acreage of conserved farmland to ensure their future use for farming through the use of purchased or donated conservation easements.
- ▶ Provide land use planning assistance to towns and tools to help local land use plans and regulations be more farm friendly.

## Strategy #9: Advocate for Lowering the Tax Burden on Farmers

*This strategy consists of several action items for ongoing implementation.*

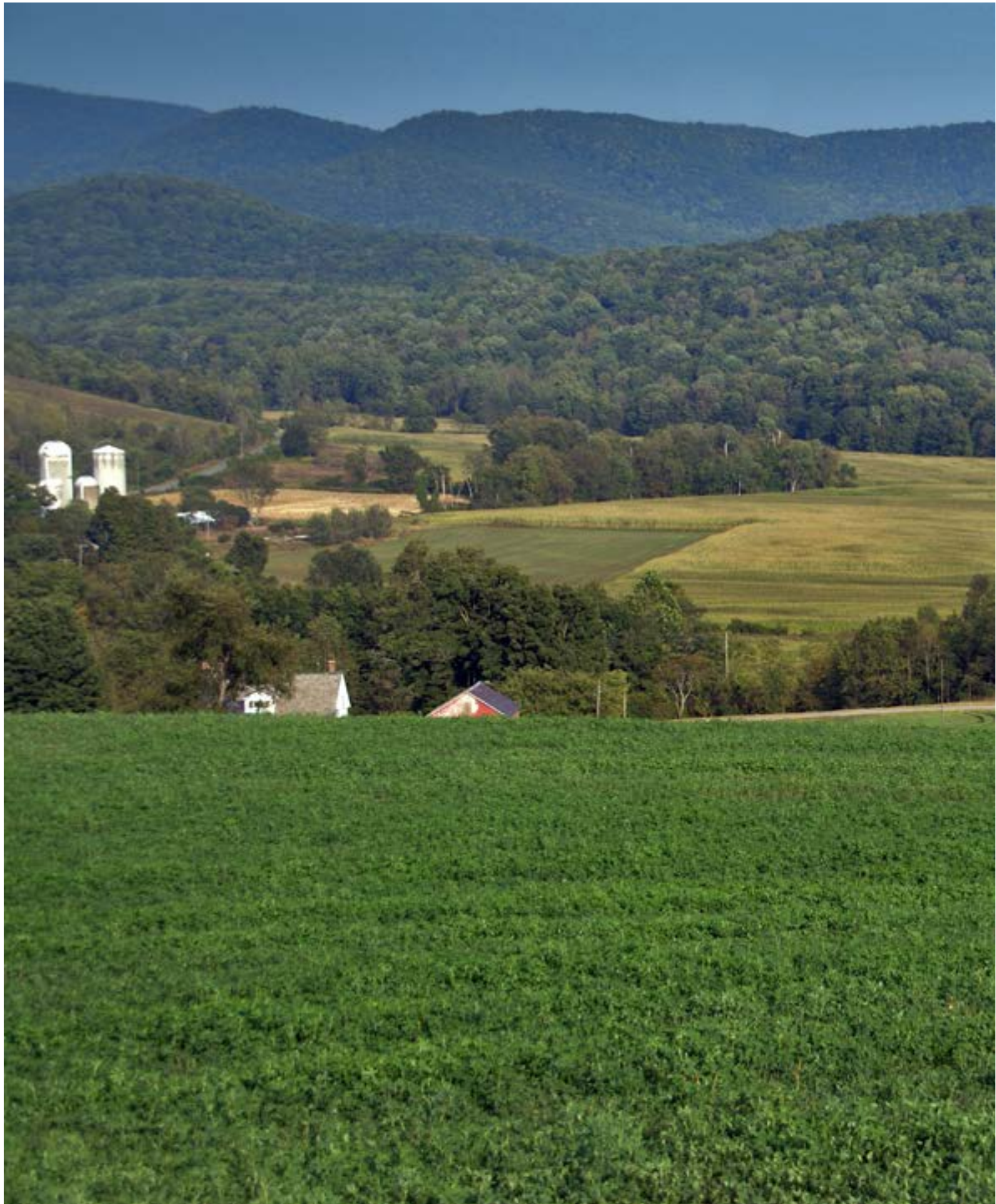


### Conclusion:

Today the public and farm communities in Washington County are just as interested in farming, forestry, and farmland protection as they were when agricultural districts were first formed in the 1970s. This Plan is itself evidence of Washington County’s commitment to ensure the critical economic, social and environmental role that agriculture plays in our County.

These actions will, when implemented, increase the viability of agriculture as a key economic contributor in the County. In doing so, we will also enhance our communities, improve our quality of life, celebrate the abundance of Washington County’s natural resources and ensure that this legacy is passed down to future generations.





# Section 1: Background

## 1.1 The 1996 Plan.

Washington County has a long and successful history of providing support to agriculture. This updated Plan builds on efforts begun in the 1970s with the enactment of the New York State Agricultural Districts law. Washington County landowners have been active participants in New York’s farmland protection activities since that early time when one of the first two agricultural districts in the State was established in the Town of Greenwich.

By the mid-1980’s 29 agricultural districts had been formed in the County, encompassing most of the farms and important farmland. The County established the Washington County Agricultural and Farmland Protection Board and in the early 1990s, Washington County was one of the first counties in the state to receive a grant to develop an agricultural and farmland protection plan.

That plan, adopted in 1996, detailed the current state of agriculture at that time, established goals for the future, and outlined strategies to address the needs of the agricultural industry. It emphasized economic development, long-range planning needs and incentives to be used to meet those goals. Recommended strategies were intended to be implemented by the farm community itself, as well as by town, county and state government, agricultural service agencies and the public.

The County defines agriculture broadly and includes the diversity of farms found here – small and large, traditional, organic as well as niche farms and forestry.







**Key accomplishments derived from specific recommendations in the 1996 Plan include:**

- The Washington County Purchase of Development Rights (“PDR”) program was established in 1997. One of the recommendations of the 1996 Plan was to conduct a feasibility study to determine the suitability of a PDR program for Washington County. The Planning Department conducted the study in 1996 and the program was established in 1997.
- The County and ASA entered in to an agreement in 1997 for ASA to operate the PDR program on behalf of the County. To date, a total of \$7 million has been awarded within Washington County to protect 4,900 acres of farmland on 21 farms. This included \$4.9 million from the State, \$1.1 million from the federal program and \$1 million in private funding. (Of this amount, the County was awarded a total of \$4.1 million in state funding to protect 3,202 acres on 15 farms.)
- A shared agricultural economic development position was created at Cornell Cooperative Extension (“CCE”) in partnership with Saratoga County to encourage, promote and facilitate agricultural business operations in both counties. The Washington County portion of this position was funded for several years with assistance from the Washington County Farm Bureau.
- Beginning in 2011, the Hudson Valley Agribusiness Development Corporation (“HVADC”) was retained to work with farm businesses to provide technical assistance and obtain funding to increase business opportunities. HVADC, working in coordination with local partners, provided individual assistance to new and expanding businesses and developed successful funding of new capital for expansion plans.
- Funding or support for agricultural business expansion continues through the Washington County Local Development Corporation (“LDC”). The County Microenterprise program has provided business and loan assistance to a number of start-up agricultural enterprises.
- Farm transfer and start up assistance is provided by CCE, Farm Credit East, HVADC and the Hudson Valley FarmLink Network through ASA. Farm match services that help farmers access land through a database, farm tours and one-on-one assistance are also offered by the Hudson Valley Farmlink Network.
- Four towns in Washington County have since adopted farmland protection plans including Granville, Hartford, Salem and White Creek.
- Informal agricultural educational opportunities such as the Ag Literacy Week continue and many agricultural agencies and commodity groups are involved with or promoting educational opportunities to the general public related to agriculture.

**1.2 How was this Updated Plan Developed?**

The planning process for this Plan began after funding was secured from the New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets in 2015. The County contracted with ASA, which enlisted the further assistance of a planning consultant. Next, over the course of almost two years, a steering committee comprised of farmers, ag-related agencies and businesses, county representatives and consultants (the “Steering Committee”) held meetings, gathered data and solicited feedback from the farming community.

The Steering Committee’s work to develop this Plan was organized around answering three basic questions:

1. What are the current conditions of agriculture in the County?
2. What are the issues, opportunities and direction the County and the farm community want agriculture to take in the future?
3. What actions are needed to take advantage of opportunities to promote the agricultural industry?

More than 700 responses were received in the development of this Plan through public workshops, focus groups, surveys and interviews. Specifically, the Steering Committee received input from the following:

- An online survey of the general public in which 404 people participated (see pages 84-85 for responses to survey);
- A written questionnaire for farmers in which 44 participated (see pages 86-91 for the responses);
- An agricultural business focus group meeting attended by 20 representatives of businesses and service agencies (see pages 92-93 for the notes summarizing their input);
- Two workshops for farmers which approximately 80 people attended (see pages 94-95 for summary notes);
- Interviews of 39 farmers and other stakeholders representing a variety of farms and agricultural businesses (see pages 99-102 for their responses);
- An economic development questionnaire to which six responses were submitted including a White Paper prepared by HVADC (see pages 95-96);
- A focus group with County Supervisors at a Washington County Agriculture, Planning, Tourism and Community Development Committee (see page 96 for notes); and
- A follow-up farmer survey to prioritize draft actions to which 103 farmers responded (see pages 97-98 for farmer’s input on prioritization).

Appendix B, pages 84 to 102, summarizes the public input on which this Plan is based.

This input was especially compelling and forms the foundation on which the Plan’s recommendations are built. Based on this feedback, the Steering Committee developed a vision statement, goals and strategies, and with the help of a follow-up survey of farmers, prioritized the actions in the Plan.

After the draft Plan was completed, the Steering Committee held a public presentation on the plan, then recommended it to the County Agricultural and Farmland Protection Board. Subsequently, the draft Plan was adopted by the County Board of Supervisors at its June 2017 meeting. The Final Plan received approval from the Commissioner of the NYS Department of Agriculture and Markets in November 2017.







### 1.3 What do we do with the Updated Plan?

The Plan is meant to provide guidance for the agricultural sector and a toolbox of ideas and actions that can be implemented over time. The goal is to improve agricultural opportunities in Washington County, conserve important farmlands and maintain the vitality of our critical agricultural economy and way of life. The Plan also provides:

- Guidance to the County, towns and partners on priority projects needed to support agriculture;
- A framework for the County, towns, partners and interested landowners to promote farming and agri-tourism in the County;
- Guidance on obtaining funding to implement actions recommended in the Plan; and
- A timetable for the County to implement recommendations.

It is up to all of us to work together to implement this Plan. With your help, we can achieve our vision and goals, and ensure a bright and prosperous future for our agricultural community and rural way of life.

## Section 2. Agriculture in the County



This section of the Plan summarizes the major conditions and trends which affect agriculture in Washington County. Unless otherwise noted, the farm statistics used in this Plan are from the 2002, 2007, and 2012 U.S. Censuses of Agriculture. The Census of Agriculture is taken every five years to provide a general overview of agricultural trends in the County. See Appendix A (pages 41-83) for more details.

### 2.1 The Agricultural Economy

- In 2012 there were 851 farms in Washington County that produced more than \$139.1 million in agricultural sales<sup>2</sup>.
- The County is #5 in NYS for crop and hay production, #6 for horses and ponies, #7 for milk production, #8 for the number of cattle and calves, #9 in the value of agricultural sales, and #10 in the number of hogs and pigs.
- Washington County has the largest number of farms (851) and the largest market value of agricultural sales

**The agricultural industry has a large economic multiplier and a greater economic impact on the local economy than most other industries. According to a recent statewide study by Cornell University economist Dr. Todd M. Schmit, for every additional dollar generated in on-farm agricultural output, an additional 45 cents is generated in non-agricultural industry sectors such as wholesale trade, agricultural support services and animal food manufacturing. The total economic impact of agriculture in Washington County is well over \$200 million.**



compared to all other Capital Region and Hudson Valley counties. Washington County also has the largest number of farmland acres (189,391 acres) in the Capital Region and Hudson Valley.

- 277 farms had hired workers in 2012. They employed 1,296 people and had an annual total payroll of \$16,143,000, much of which is spent in this County.
- The average estimated market value of land and buildings per farm is \$539,925 and per acre is \$2,428.
- The average per farm net cash income was \$39,826 (\$41,419 adjusted to 2015 dollars).
- The average market value of agricultural products sold per farm in 2012 was \$163,510. Of that, \$112,213 was in livestock and livestock products, and \$26,934 was in crops.
- Based on the 2014 real property assessment roll, there were 2,335 farm parcels claiming an agricultural assessment worth \$125,061,237, and 163 parcels receiving an agricultural building exemption.
- 21% of farms have sales over \$100,000. These farms produce the majority of agricultural sales in the County.
- There are a large number of farms with a very small amount of sales. About 62% of farms have sales less than \$25,000 and 28% of farms have sales less than \$2,500.
- The average per farm expense for agricultural production in the County is \$135,734. Of that, the largest expense is for feed, followed by hired farm labor and then repairs/supplies. Property taxes make up about 4% of the average farm expense.
- The average market value of products sold has increased dramatically over time and in 2012 was about \$160,000 per farm compared to about \$130,000 in 2007.
- Washington County farmers constitute one of the largest groups of purchasers of agricultural supplies and services in New York State. Local farms purchased over \$116 million in inputs annually, the majority of which is purchased locally.



## 2.2 About our Farms

- There are 105,697 acres of highly productive soils in the County. A total of 24,389 acres are prime soils, 6,001 acres are “prime soils if drained” and 75,307 acres are soils of statewide importance .
- Washington County ranks #7 in the State for dairy production. About 164 dairy farms in the County contributed \$93,364,000 in market sales in 2012. That is 67% of all agricultural sales in the County.
- At least 30 different agricultural products are grown in Washington County.

- 55% of farms have livestock on them; 17% are dairy farms.
- In addition to the traditional crop, beef and dairy farms, Washington County has a diversity of organic, niche, and direct sale operations including 14 certified organic farms with eight additional farms transitioning to organic, 47 farms producing maple syrup, 27 Christmas Tree farms, eight farms harvesting biomass for use in renewable energy, 77 with direct sales, 86 with value-added products, 12 Community Supported Agriculture (“CSA”) operations, and 40 having on-farm packing facilities.
- There are currently five major ag-tourism opportunities, including the Adirondack Craft Beverage, Cheese, Fiber, and Maple tours, as well as the Washington County Fair.
- The average size of a farm in the County is 203 acres.
- There are nine NYS certified Agricultural Districts in the County.
- A total of 12,769 acres of farmland have been conserved by land trusts.

- Fourteen towns have right to farm laws.
- The largest age group of farmers is 45 to 54 years, but 56% of farmers are over the age of 55.
- Most farmers have been on their farms for more than 10 years and that figure has not changed between 2007 and 2012.
- About 1/3 of farmland is owned, 1/3 is rented, and 1/3 is on a farm with operators having part-ownership. (Part owners operated land they owned as well as land they rented from others.)
- Most farms are family or individually owned farms. There are slightly more partnerships and family corporations in 2012 than there were in 2007. About 106 farms are partnerships and 55 are family corporations.
- Washington County has a large number and diversity of agricultural services and businesses – far more than most other counties. Consequently, Washington County agri-services and businesses serve farms from around the region and across state boundaries, including in Vermont, Massachusetts and Connecticut. These services and businesses include farm supply, tractor, equipment and feed dealers, fertilizer suppliers, livestock veterinarians, financial services and government/public sector entities such as Cornell Cooperative Extension. Additional businesses in the County also critical to our farmers’ success and our economy include artificial insemination services, livestock auctions, fiber processing, livestock hauling, hoof trimming, meat processing and lumber yards/saw mills.

## 2.3 Changes in Farm Types and Numbers

- The number of farms and land in farms in Washington County has decreased over the years, but has been more stable since 2002. Farmland acres have decreased to less than two-thirds of what they were in 1920. Between 1950 and 2012, the number of farms decreased at a rapid rate, from about 2,500 to about 850.
- The number of very large farms is relatively small, but has remained mostly stable over the years. The number of very small farms (<nine acres) has increased from 28 in 1987 to 72 in 2012. The number of small farms (10 to 49 acres) has also increased from 89 to 103 farms. Moderately sized farms (180 to 499, and 500 to 999 acres) have decreased over the past two decades.
- Cropland acres have decreased from 149,946 acres in 1969 to 101,904 acres in 2012 – a 32% decrease.
- There has been an increasing population and an increased number of housing units over time in the County. Between 2000 and 2014, the population in Washington County has increased about 4%. During that same time, the number of housing units has increased 7.5%. The disparity between population increase and housing increase is a common pattern seen in many Upstate NY areas where the housing units outpace the actual population increase. This is a common feature that indicates rural sprawl.

Washington County is growing via a diffuse and low density development pattern. The highest population growth areas are in the towns of Kingsbury and Fort Edward. The highest housing growth areas are in the towns of Kingsbury, Hebron, Hampton and Granville. When farmland is converted to residential uses it results, for the most part, in rising costs to provide education and other public services to those residents (*See Cost of Community Services in Appendix A, page 81*).

*A full description of agricultural resources, trends, maps, and additional details can be found in Appendix A.*







# Section 3. Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats

## 3.1 Identification of Issues

Understanding key issues facing agriculture in Washington County was the first step taken in developing this Plan. That understanding came from listening to the farm community, agricultural businesses, farm support agencies and the general public. It also came from studying mapped information, ag-economic data, and ag-census data for Washington County. The chart below organizes the findings into four categories: agriculture’s strengths and weaknesses as well as new opportunities and threats (also referred to by the acronym “SWOT”).<sup>2</sup>

This SWOT is important because the mission of this Plan is to help Washington County maintain features that are positive and that make agriculture strong. At the same time, the Plan addresses weaknesses, identifies ways to take advantage of new opportunities and helps prevent threats to agriculture from taking hold. The vision, goals, and actions proposed in this Plan are designed to address these major themes.

A summary of the critical findings from the SWOT are outlined below:

### STRENGTHS

- What is being done well?
  - What unique resources does agriculture in the County have?
  - What are our strengths?
- Community support
  - Strong history of family farming
  - Growing diversity of agricultural operations
  - The growth of the “buy local” food trend (Nationally, the number of farmers’ markets increased by 350% in 2014, according to the United State Department of Agriculture)
  - Soil, water, climate, and the natural resources supportive of agriculture
  - Cost of land is lower compared to other places
  - Development pressures lower compared to other places
  - Agriculture plays important role in County’s landscape, quality of life, recreation and economy
  - Robust agricultural services and support businesses still exist
  - County in good location relative to Capital Region, NYC and other large population centers totaling 60 million people within five hours
  - Critical blocks of farmland still exist
  - 25 year record of success in conserving 12,769 acres of farmland
  - Strong agricultural economy as evidenced by growth in market sales
  - Direct sale operations (the number of farms selling directly to individuals) saw a 150% increase (110 to 165) during the ten year period from 2002 to 2012)

<sup>2</sup> Actual responses to the surveys and outreach efforts can be found in Appendix B, pages 84-102



<b>WEAKNESSES</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What could be improved?</li> <li>• Where are there fewer resources than others?</li> <li>• What are our weaknesses?</li> </ul>	<b>OPPORTUNITIES</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What opportunities are available to us?</li> <li>• What trends can be taken advantage of?</li> <li>• How can we turn our strengths into opportunities?</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Lack of education and awareness of public about farming</li> <li>▪ Lack of funding for CCE and agricultural support organizations</li> <li>▪ Lack of recognition of agriculture as a viable career</li> <li>▪ Lack of well-developed agri-tourism and related support businesses</li> <li>▪ Hard to find, train, keep labor</li> <li>▪ High costs of production or low profitability – especially high taxes, insurance and labor costs</li> <li>▪ Lack of access to low cost capital – upfront investment to farm is very high</li> <li>▪ Low milk prices, volatility in the milk market</li> <li>▪ Limited diversification of farms</li> <li>▪ Lack of food processing facilities</li> <li>▪ Lack of support for forestry/timber industry</li> <li>▪ Development that destroys farmland</li> <li>▪ Competition among farmers for farmland – drives up price of farmland – a major issue for producers</li> <li>▪ Solar development of farmlands</li> <li>▪ Climate change</li> <li>▪ Regulations and restrictions, especially CAFO and OSHA</li> <li>▪ Barriers to entry for new farmers</li> <li>▪ Lack of cellular and broadband coverage</li> <li>▪ Lack of food hub and adequate distribution/aggregation</li> <li>▪ Lack of markets and access to markets</li> <li>▪ Lack of effective marketing, branding</li> <li>▪ Aging farmers and lack of transition planning</li> <li>▪ Farmer and non-farmer conflicts</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Branding programs</li> <li>▪ Centralized/coordinated marketing of county agriculture</li> <li>▪ Additional USDA meat processing facilities</li> <li>▪ More value-added farms and processing</li> <li>▪ Centralized aggregation and distribution for produce</li> <li>▪ Enhanced agricultural education in schools</li> <li>▪ Agricultural education for general public</li> <li>▪ Internship and mentoring for the 17 to 22-year-old group, first time farmers – work with SUNY Adirondack, business training</li> <li>▪ Cooperative buying and selling programs</li> <li>▪ Labor access and training – clearinghouse</li> <li>▪ First time farmer programs for training, capital programs, loans, etc.</li> <li>▪ Promote new crops such as hemp, hops</li> <li>▪ Promote ag-tourism</li> <li>▪ Advocate for policy and regulatory changes</li> <li>▪ Fund additional farmland protection efforts</li> <li>▪ Consider use of money to incentivize all farms, not just a few land purchases for PDR</li> <li>▪ Training for farmers to adopt new technologies</li> <li>▪ Climate change programs to help farmers adapt</li> <li>▪ Take advantage of rail for increased transportation (especially for grain)</li> <li>▪ Start an implementation committee to coordinate efforts</li> <li>▪ Use state-owned land for farming</li> <li>▪ Social networking programs for farmers</li> <li>▪ More funding for CCE</li> <li>▪ Training for Planning Boards on value of agriculture and farmland</li> <li>▪ Programs that lower production costs</li> <li>▪ Promote use of agricultural assessment programs and work with County to keep taxes as low as possible</li> </ul>
<b>THREATS</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What threats can harm agriculture in the County?</li> <li>• What threats do our weaknesses expose us to?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Loss of farmland due to development</li> <li>▪ Climate change (see Appendix D, pp 108-110 for information on climate change)</li> <li>▪ Lack of awareness about farm operations and importance of agriculture and farmland</li> <li>▪ Farmer/non-farmer conflicts</li> <li>▪ Lack of a new generation of people interested in farming</li> <li>▪ Farmers not being able to absorb costs of new regulations</li> <li>▪ High production costs coupled with low profitability</li> <li>▪ Lack of adequate support and training services for farmers</li> <li>▪ Inability to reach new and emerging markets</li> </ul>

### 3.2 Issues and Opportunities by Farm Commodity

Local information and data from the Hudson Valley Food Hubs Initiative was used to identify specific strengths, weaknesses and opportunities of different commodities.<sup>3</sup> It can be used to help fine tune future programs and projects related to dairy, meat and livestock, grain, fruits and vegetables. This information is summarized below.

#### DAIRY COMMODITY

##### Strengths

- ▶ There is a strong and growing demand for value-added and source-identified dairy products such as yogurt and cheese.
- ▶ Dairy is one of the most sought after products (fluid milk, cream, artisanal cheeses).
- ▶ There appears to be an ample market for dairy products in the region (including NYC).
- ▶ Specialty dairy farms often are also small processing sites.
- ▶ The specialty dairy sector has a variety of distribution means including farmers markets, farm stores and the wholesale market (will truck the product themselves or rely on distributors).
- ▶ There are large markets in both the Hudson Valley, New York City and other large population centers for local, value-added, source-identified products including yogurt and cheese.
- ▶ There is a strong regional knowledge base for dairy production.

##### Weaknesses

- Consumption of fluid milk has decreased for both children and adults.
- Accessing markets can be complicated for dairy farmers in terms of price, volume, product type, etc.
- The conventional dairy sector is less involved in marketing and the product is not source-identified.
- The dairy industry has been weakened by low milk prices and international competition.
- High cost of land makes it difficult for many dairy farms to secure sufficient acreage to support high needs.

##### Opportunities

- ★ Specialty dairy processors (there are eight in Washington County).
- ★ Specialty producers might be able to better capitalize on demand for value-added products.
- ★ Specialty dairy farms, but these will require large initial investments to begin and expand their production.

#### MEAT AND LIVESTOCK COMMODITY

##### Strengths

- ▶ In Washington County, there are three USDA slaughterhouses that process meat: Champlain Beef Company, Locust Grove Farm and Eagle Bridge Custom MEat and Smokehouse.
- ▶ Alternative production of livestock and beef. For example, the Adirondack Grazers Cooperative is a group of beef producers from small to mid scale, family farms in New York and Vermont that raise grass-fed beef. The Cooperative works to maximize member revenue by developing sales in wholesale and specialty markets not easily available to individual farmers.

<sup>3</sup> The Hudson Valley Food Hubs Initiative is a project that was started in 2012 by the Hudson Valley Pattern for Progress, a not-for-profit organization concerned with the Hudson Valley food system and its neighboring communities in the state of New York.



Weaknesses

- There is a lack of processing capacity in the region, which creates seasonal bottlenecks. The region lacks adequate capacity for slaughter, leading to issues with quality of post-slaughter cutting/butchering/packing.
- There are differing perspectives on the taste and texture of pastured livestock.

Opportunities

- ★ There’s a growing consumer demand for alternative/specialty meat production (natural, organic, grass-fed, pastured, antibiotic free, hormone-free, etc.) compared to conventional meats.
- ★ There are many distributors that want to source more from the Hudson Valley region but have difficulty doing so because there is little wholesale distribution of local meat.



GRAIN AND OTHER CROPS COMMODITY

Strengths

- ▶ Growing market for local grain by buyers including livestock farmers, bakers, brewers and distillers.
- ▶ There is considerable acreage of conventional corn grown for animal feed (silage and grain corn), mostly for dairy production.
- ▶ There are grain varieties grown for human consumption (baking, cooking and beverage production).
- ▶ There are opportunities for crops such as hops and hemp.

Weaknesses

- There is a small volume of locally grown grain, other than conventional feed corn.
- Lack of volume is accompanied by a lack of local technical knowledge.
- The grain processing sector is also small, so it will require investment in infrastructure in order to see growth of local grain production.
- Lack of local knowledge about growing and processing these crops. Regulations on hemp restricted to certified growers.
- Lack of oversight of “locally grown” craft beverage ingredients such as hops, barley, etc.

Opportunities

- ★ There is a demand for alternative corn grain and appears to be a niche market developing for local grain products for both human consumption and animal feed.
- ★ Greenmarket in NYC recently instituted a rule requiring bakers selling at farmers markets to utilize at least 15% local ingredients in their products!
- ★ More advantage can be taken of micro-breweries and distilleries that are required to source ingredients primarily from New York State farms pursuant to the 2007 NY Farm Distillery Law.
- ★ Further analysis on grain production is required to better understand the demand for local and/or alternative grains.
- ★ Hemp is a crop that has many opportunities and markets.

FRUIT AND BERRY COMMODITY

Strengths

- ▶ There are both fresh markets and local processing markets for fruit and fruit products.
- ▶ There are many resources available to orchard growers including CCE, Cornell Hudson Valley Laboratory, NYS Apple Growers Association.
- ▶ Glynwood in Cold Spring, NY helps to promote regional food including regional craft cider through the Cider Project.

Weaknesses

- While there is some capacity and infrastructure for fruit processing for beverage, overall infrastructure for fruit processing is limited.
- The localized value chain lacks packing, storage and processing, and marketing services to wholesale channels.
- Climate pressures make fruit growing risky.

Opportunities

- ★ Hard cider and micro-distilling can both utilize local fruit and there is a growing hard cider and distilling industry.
- ★ Direct market sales and the increasing demand for fresh fruit.
- ★ Value-added products (cider, hard cider, spirits) and growing demand for processed fruit (especially non-citrus and fresh cut).

VEGETABLE COMMODITY

Strengths

- ▶ The demand for local fresh vegetables is high.

Weaknesses

- Concerns about how the smaller growers/processors compete price wise with the larger-scale commodity producers.
- Larger distributors (Sysco, US Foods) have more trouble distributing smaller volume, local, fresh produce.
- Growers are concerned that they cannot sell all that is grown. Further, as new vegetable growers enter the market, the market share is decreased.
- Most of the vegetable farmers in the county are direct marketers in large part because they operate on a small scale. Wholesale markets like Sysco, etc. are not very attractive alternatives.
- Vegetable processing facilities are limited.
- Extreme weather events can threaten productivity and resilience of vegetable farms.
- Very few farms are certified for food and safety.

Opportunities

- ★ Mid-sized and small farms tend to transport their produce themselves.
- ★ Smaller distributors can be more flexible with purchasing patterns and incorporate source-identifying info into their marketing.
- ★ Foster and increase relationships and networks among vegetable growers, particularly smaller vegetable growers.
- ★ New York State is investing in a wholesale food hub in New York City.
- ★ Farm-to-Institution.







### 3.3 What Does the SWOT Tell Us?

The SWOT analysis identified topics critical to the future of agriculture: its positive features, weak links and opportunities. The Steering Committee used these findings to create a vision statement, a set of goals and the recommended strategies and actions that make up this Plan.

The **Vision Statement** and **Goals** were listed in the Executive Summary on page 5.

It became apparent from the SWOT analysis that there were six major themes to organize around in developing its strategies. These included:

- Agricultural Economic Development (efforts that encourage, facilitate, protect and promote agricultural business operations and resources in the County)
- Education and Awareness
- Agricultural Infrastructure
- Farmland Protection
- Marketing and Promotion
- Cultivating the Next Generation of Farmers

Further, the SWOT helped identify several gaps that need to be addressed in order to fully attain the County’s vision and goals for agriculture. These gaps include:


- Funding and staff to carry out needed programs;
- Grant writing at both the government and individual farmer level;
- Certified consultants and others with knowledge to help farmers with business and marketing advice;
- Technical assistance capacity to meet ongoing and emerging market needs;
- Broadband and cellular coverage;
- Lack of agricultural education in schools and for the larger public audience;
- Mechanisms to bring intern and mentorship programs to high school and college students in Washington County; and
- Certification for food and safety.

## Section 4: Recommended Strategies

The Plan identifies nine specific strategies to help Washington County reach its agricultural vision and goals, each requiring several action steps to be implemented. Twelve of the action steps outlined in the Plan are considered Priority Actions and should be among the first implemented. Priority Actions are highlighted below with an icon and are included in the Priority Action Plan in Section 5 that identifies specific steps and tasks that can be taken to implement them.


*The following strategies and actions are recommended.*

### Strategy # 1. Create an Effective Organizational Structure for Agricultural Economic Success.


 **Priority Action:** The first and most important action is to build capacity and collaboration as well as develop an organizational structure to coordinate and support the implementation of the actions in this Plan. One of Washington County’s strengths is that many of the components to support and promote agriculture are already in place. However, there is a great need for building capacity and coordination to fully address the needs of agriculture in the County.

It is recommended that the Washington County Board of Supervisors establish an oversight committee to superintend the implementation of this Plan and that they charge the Washington County AFPB with this task. The AFPB should create and formalize an 8 to 12 member volunteer Working Group tasked with ensuring implementation of projects and strategies identified in this Plan. Suggested members of this Working Group include representatives from the Washington County Local Development Corporation (“LDC”), Cornell Cooperative Extension (“CCE”), Agricultural and Farmland Protection Board, Economic Development and Planning, Soil and Water Conservation District, Farm Credit East, SUNY Adirondack, Farm Bureau, Agricultural Stewardship Association (“ASA”), Hudson Valley Agribusiness Development Corporation (“HVADC”), National Young Farmers Coalition, USDA Farm Service Agency and Natural Resources Conservation Service, as well as agriculture and forestry businesses.

The AFPB should oversee the Working Group. The Working Group should meet regularly to implement Priority Actions and establish a general timeline for task assignments and reporting expectations. The AFPB should conduct an annual review to update the Plan for relevance.

 **Priority Action:** It is recommended that the AFPB and the Working Group, in partnership with the County, should aggressively seek third party funding to support key elements of this Plan. This includes funding to hire a “boots on the ground” coordinator (“Coordinator”) to implement the Plan as directed by the Working Group. Depending on the funding source, this position could report to an existing agriculture agency such as CCE, ASA, HVADC, or directly to the County or other relevant agency. This Coordinator will be critical to the success of the program by providing coordination, efficiency, networking, technical support and communication. The County should partner with the New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets to find funding to support this position.

It is important to align the strategies and goals of this Plan to goals of the Capital Region Regional Economic Development Council as described below on page 32.

 **Priority Action:** A diversity of agricultural stakeholders in the County and region should be invited to semi-annual round table meetings hosted by the AFPB and the Working Group to provide feedback on Plan priorities, status of programs, emerging trends and new challenges. This is a critical in order for the Working Group to be responsive to needs in the agricultural community. Throughout the planning process, the farm community repeatedly identified the need for more communication, connection and community building among farmers, farm families and communities.

**Action:** The County Board of Supervisors should require those agencies to which it provides funding (e.g. Cornell Cooperative Extension, Washington County Soil and Water District, Hudson Valley Agribusiness Development



Corporation, etc.) include in their annual report the programs they conducted that address the needs and opportunities addressed in this Plan.

**Action:** Encourage New York State to fund regional agricultural economic development specialists to support local initiatives and coordinate efforts within regions and among neighboring regions.

Strategy # 2: Create a Long-term, Systematic Approach to Agricultural Economic Development in Washington County.

**Priority Action:** The Working Group and Coordinator should organize their efforts around a “Food Value Chain Initiative” theme and implement a variety of programs to enhance farm retention and expansion initiatives that support current and new farmers to grow agriculture in Washington County.

A food value chain is a strategy intended to transform the traditional competitive seller/buyer relationships into a collaborative approach. “Transparency, working together and providing fair returns to all partners under shared environmental or social values are hallmarks of food value chains. This business arrangement appeals to a growing number of today’s consumers who want to know the story behind their food and want to support businesses with a social consciousness. Responding to the needs of these customers through strategic collaboration creates greater efficiency and profitability among food producers and distributors. It also translates to customer satisfaction.”<sup>4</sup> The goal is to link all those along the food chain to be more efficient and profitable. This strategy relies on cooperative partnerships and creating business relationships. A key component of this strategy is a Coordinator who can drive the effort.



4 From the USDA website <https://www.ams.usda.gov/services/local-regional/food-value-chain>

This approach involves working with individual farms through a consistent, multi-year effort to promote strong production, financial and market conditions. The program should foster an ‘agriculture entrepreneur-friendly’ environment to motivate expansion of existing farm businesses and attract new ones. There are several programs to research as models for a Washington County initiative including programs in Jefferson County, the Southern Tier East Agricultural Enhancement Program, the Community Involved in Sustaining Agriculture (CISA) Program in Massachusetts and the Vermont Farm and Forest Viability Program.

This entails linking supply chains more effectively, creating cooperative partnerships, building long term supply relationships among farmers, processors, and buyers, connecting key stakeholders and providing technical assistance. Other important pieces of this program include policy advocacy, prospecting agricultural resources and making business to business connections.

Overall, this program should include:

- An early and ongoing method to detect and identify problems that could cause a farm to cease operation.
- Identifying opportunities to help farms remain in business, expand, or start up.
- Building strong individual relationships with farmers.



Figure 1: Illustration of a food value chain from USDA (Creating Shared Value to Enhance Marketing Success).

- Building a team support system using existing County, regional and State agencies, and organizations to address needs with an emphasis on:
  - Providing technical training and support, including business management planning;
  - Providing data, technical advice, and support to help farmers take advantage of emerging markets for Washington County products; and
  - Providing assistance to fund new farms, diversification or expansion through equipment, crop or infrastructure upgrades.

**Priority Action:** Improve access to new capital for farmers. Work closely with Farm Credit East and other ag-friendly lenders to support the capital needs of farmers in Washington County. This would include enhancing agriculture’s role in the Washington County Local Development Corporation (“LDC”) and other economic development programming to increase the ability to address the capital needs of Washington County farmers.

The LDC and other economic development agencies could:

- Seek additional capital resources to provide loan funds and support of other agricultural development programs;
- Promote a revolving loan and micro-loan fund;
- Tie financing to technical services offered through various organizations such as participation in the HVADC



“Incubator Without Walls’ program, where appropriate.

- Provide specific incentives for young and new farmers;
- Create a grant writing program or obtain grant funds to initiate a small re-grant program to help farmers fund their expansion plans; and

If ag-related initiatives are funded regionally, work closely to ensure it benefits Washington County farmers.

**Action:** Continue financial support and consider increasing support to existing ag-related agencies and organizations (Cornell Cooperative Extension, Soil and Water Conservation District, Natural Resource Conservation Service, Farm Service Agency, Agricultural Stewardship Association, Hudson Valley Agribusiness Development Corporation, Washington County Local Development Corporation, and SUNY Adirondack) so that they can participate fully in this effort. Seek additional funding for Cornell Cooperative Extension so that they can play a larger role in coordinating priority programs.

These agencies can provide vital technical assistance on the following topics, which were identified by County farmers:

- Residue avoidance and CAFO planning, including manure management;
- Business planning for transitioning to organic, niche or other farming operations;
- Technical training in new crops and niches (See Strategy 3 below);
- Meeting environmental regulations; and
- Addressing climate change.



### Strategy # 3: Collect and Analyze Data, Promote New Opportunities.

**Action:** Create and maintain a list of all farms and farmers in Washington County. This is important to ensure that future outreach includes all farmers. It is recommended that ASA take responsibility for this task.

**Action:** Meet the growing demand for alternative meat and livestock products by working with other Hudson River Valley and neighboring counties and states (e.g. Vermont) to increase meat and protein processing capacity and efficiency.

**Action:** Consider creating a shared use facility for cold storage, freezer and flash freeze equipment.

**Action:** Cost share or find other ways to support farmers with on-farm investments oriented to high tunnels, wash stations, fencing, and other assistance needed to meet Food Safety Modernization Act (“FSMA”) Certification and other food safety requirements.

**Action:** Work with neighboring counties to explore the feasibility of a regional food hub to promote the aggregation, distribution and transportation of local agricultural products. (See Appendix D, pages 105-108 for more information on food hubs.)

**Action:** Promote small grain growing and processing in Washington County. In order to take advantage of this emerging market, address the lack of local expertise in this area, enhance the small grain processing infrastructure, develop a grain distribution infrastructure, and take advantage of microbreweries, distilleries and growers that want to, or are required to, use NY grown grains in their products.

**Action:** Bring dairy stakeholders together to determine the interest in, and economic potential for, specialty, pasture-based and organic dairy processing for value-added products from Washington County dairy farms.


**Action:** Bring fiber growers together to determine the interest in and economic potential for expanding commercial dyeing, weaving and knitting infrastructure.

**Action:** Seek funds to hire expertise to prepare a feasibility study for a shared methane digester to be placed in an area with a concentration of dairy farms.

**Action:** Encourage sustainable forestry and forest products as a growing and important agricultural crop in Washington County.

**Action:** Provide support and technical training for niche and alternate crop farms including, but not limited to vineyards, honey, hops and hemp. Promote the cool/cold climate viticulture wines made from the grapes grown between the Upper Hudson River and the Taconic Mountains in Washington County. Further, support the Upper Hudson American Viticulture Area (“UHAVA”) and work with the Upper Hudson Wine Trail Association (“UHWTA”) to promote the increase in the quality, profitability and consumer awareness of northern hardy hybrid wine grapes grown in Washington County.

### Strategy # 4: Improve Broadband Internet Access and Cellular Coverage throughout Washington County.

 **Priority Action:** Large areas in Washington County are underserved – or not served at all – in terms of internet access and cell coverage infrastructure. (See map in Appendix A, page 83.) This Plan establishes the critical role of broadband and cellular services to sustaining and expanding agriculture in Washington County. As with all businesses, broadband and cellular services are critical for the agricultural economy for purchases, marketing, training and a myriad of other needs. All segments of the farm community should strongly support the County’s effort to ensure that as the NY State Broadband Program is developed and implemented, all of our rural and agricultural areas have access to broadband and cellular coverage as promised.



Strategy # 5: Increase Access to, and Training of, Skilled Labor for Agricultural and Forestry Operations.



**Priority Action:** Partner with SUNY Adirondack to develop the Center for Agriculture and Food Education as proposed in a 2016 feasibility study. This center could serve as a hub of information, education, and community networking related to food, agriculture, and culinary arts, hospitality, tourism, culinary medicine. Recommended programing/services for the center includes: Online Resource and Networking Center, Degree and Certificate programs, Workforce Development, Contract Training, Continuing Education and Community Education. Workforce development, training, and community education programs are all important to enhance agricultural enterprises.

**Action:** In addition to SUNY Adirondack, work with other educational institutions or agencies as potential partners to provide education, resource and training. Components that could be considered include:

- An internship and mentorship program for both high school and college students;
- Forestry-related training;
- Agribusiness entrepreneurship training;
- Workforce skill enhancement, including sawmills;
- Food system and food chain value enhancement training;
- Certification training to meet food safety standards;
- Access to Farm-to-institution and Farm-to-School training;
- Creation of a clearinghouse to align workforce and farm job opportunities in the County; and
- Distance learning programs for farmers, farm workers and forestry-related workers as well as farm-related certification programs that will assist in diversification, business management and marketing.



**Priority Action:** Educate local young people about agricultural-related career opportunities by determining educational program needs and working with educational partners such as SUNY Adirondack, BOCES and school districts to coordinate and deliver these programs. Promote and support agricultural and forestry education in the schools, increase participation in Future Farmers of America programs, and offer internship and mentoring opportunities.



Strategy # 6: Create a Comprehensive Marketing Strategy that Promotes Both Farm Products and Farming in the County.



**Priority Action:** The Working Group with assistance from the County, should seek grants or other sources of funding to hire a marketing expert to create and implement a comprehensive marketing strategy to implement and fund initiatives to:

- Broaden the general publics understanding of farming to build a greater appreciation for the role of agriculture in the County and to improve the image of the agricultural sector;
- Broaden students’ understanding, and improve the image, of the agricultural sector as a viable career choice. This should include instruction on GMOs, manure storage, labor issues and the economic and quality of life role agriculture plays in the County;
- Create tools to promote and “brand” Washington County products using a variety of media (social media, TV, etc);
- Identify partnerships to promote cooperative marketing or centralized marketing;
- Raise awareness among both farmers and consumers of existing branding programs and New York farm certification programs;
- Identify ways farmers can more effectively collaborate with the Taste of New York program;
- Help farmers with media training to increase effective interaction with the public; and
- Provide templates for newsletters and social media postings that farmers can use to educate the public.



**Priority Action:** Enhance support for County ag-tourism programs such as expanding the opportunities afforded by the Washington County Fair as well as the existing cheese, fiber, maple and craft beverage initiatives in Washington County. Also, explore new ag-tourism possibilities.

**Action:** Hold a forum among farmers/retail outlets/restaurants/food services to discuss consumer issues and identify ways to create stronger relationships to benefit all.

**Action:** Support farm-to-institution programs and certification training. This should include institutions such as schools, hospitals, nursing homes, the county jail and other similar institutions.

**Action:** Hold periodic farm tours for all elected officials and representatives serving Washington County.



Strategy # 7: Cultivate the Next Generation of Farmers.

**Action:** Market the County to new farmers and ag-businesses (consider using the “Come Farm With Us” program from Jefferson County as a model).

**Action:** Ensure that business training and planning as well as start-up funding options and support for the next generation of farmers are topics addressed in CCE, SWCD and other County ag-related support programs for farmers.

**Action:** Work with Farm Credit East, USDA Farm Service Agency and other ag-friendly lenders as well as the Washington County LDC to offer long-term, no or low interest loans for young and new farmers.

**Action:** Seek funding to ensure that transition and estate planning becomes a priority program for Cornell Cooperative Extension and the Working Group.

**Action:** Work wih Hudson Valley Farmlink Network, FarmNet, National Young Farmers Coalition and veteran’s organizations to attract beginning farmers (including women, immigrants and veterans) to farm and establish farm operations in Washington County.





### Strategy # 8: Conserve Farmland.



**Priority Action:** Increase the acreage of conserved farmland and ensure its future use for farming through use of purchased or donated conservation easements. In order to accomplish this, Washington County should consider the following actions:

- Develop additional mechanisms to fund farmland protection initiatives;
- Continue to partner with the Agricultural Stewardship Association on farmland conservation with willing landowners;
- Encourage New York State to allow farmers to rent appropriate underutilized state lands at affordable rates;
- Advocate for continued funding as well as changes to state and federal farmland protection programs that better address local farming characteristics and needs; and
- Support Pre-Emptive Right to Purchase agreements (options to purchase at agricultural value) with willing landowners to keep conserved farmland affordable and in production.



**Priority Action:** Provide land use planning assistance to towns by:

- Creating a library of farm friendly zoning, site plan and subdivision regulations to be used by towns. Based on the Farm-friendly Audit, the following topics are those that should be addressed in these efforts (See Appendix C, page 103 for more information):
  - ♦ Use of Agricultural Data Statements and Disclosure Notices;
  - ♦ Allowing for multiple farm-related businesses on a parcel such as growing, processing and sales;
  - ♦ Use of innovative siting and layout techniques such as conservation subdivision and residential clusters;
  - ♦ Allowing for farm worker housing;
  - ♦ Updating agricultural-related terms to be included in subdivision, site plan and zoning laws; and
  - ♦ Updating subdivision, site plan and zoning laws to acknowledge the important role of agriculture as a land use, and to ensure that the laws do not place unreasonable restrictions on farm operations.
- Providing model solar siting laws for commercial solar arrays and other renewable energy installations that do not adversely affect productive farmland for agricultural use;
- Providing specialized training to Code Enforcement Officers and Planning Boards related to agricultural issues to ensure appropriate enforcement of enacted laws; and
- Creating education and awareness initiatives to enhance education about creative land use planning and how it can promote and protect agriculture.

**Action:** Encourage the County to adopt a county-wide Right to Farm law and/or encourage towns to adopt Right to Farm laws, if they do not have them or if they need to be updated.

**Action:** Use the maps and information in this Plan to guide farmland protection efforts to identified priority farmland (see Appendix A, pages 67-68).

### Strategy #9: Advocate for Lowering the Tax Burden on Farmers.

**Action:** Work with New York State to lower the eligibility criteria for receiving agricultural assessments.

**Action:** Maintain diligence at state, county and town levels to set budgets to minimize tax burdens on farmers.

**Action:** Encourage towns to institute smart growth policies so new sewer and water infrastructure is not expanded into areas having critical concentrations of farmland.

**Action:** Continue to educate assessors, local municipalities, farmers and farmland/woodland owners on the various farm-related tax benefit programs. These include:

- Farm Property School Tax Credit;
- New York State Investment Credit;
- Real Property Tax Credit;
- New York State School Tax Relief (“STAR”);
- New Farm Buildings 10-Year Property Tax Exemption;
- Reconstruction or Rehabilitation of Historic Barns (if school districts and towns/villages have adopted local laws to permit the exemption);
- New Orchards and Vineyards Exemption;
- Complete Exemptions on Certain Structures (silos, grain storage, bulk tanks, manure facilities, temporary greenhouses);
- Agricultural Value Assessment on Farmland;
- Agricultural Value Assessment on Woodlots over 50 acres;
- Conservation Easement Property Tax Credit; and
- Forestry Assessment 480A.

**Action:** Encourage New York State to increase the penalty for developing land that has been receiving agricultural or forestry assessments. The current penalty is too small to discourage land conversion to non-agricultural/forestry uses.

**Action:** Encourage New York State to change the real property policy that extends the time agricultural land must be vacant before its use classification for assessment purposes changes.

**Action:** Encourage communication between school districts and local planning efforts about the impact of local land use policies on schools and school taxes. On average, residential uses represent a net tax loss for communities because they pay less in taxes than they receive in services, primarily due to school tax. Agricultural uses, on the other hand, are a “net” tax winner as they pay more in taxes than they receive in services. Put simply, cows don’t go to school, but people do. By directing development to non-agricultural land, communities can maintain the positive tax flow from the farming community.

**Action:** Advocate for New York State to analyze and restructure property taxes.

**Action:** Encourage New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets to hold license and permit fees for farmers in check or find alternative ways to fund them.





## 4.1 Washington County Strategies and the Capital Region Regional Economic Development Council

It is important to align elements of this Plan with the Capital Region Economic Development Council’s Strategic Plan and Capital Region Agriculture, Food and Tourism (CRAFT) Business Hub Initiative. This initiative is envisioned as a loan fund accompanied by technical and business assistance. Doing this will strengthen opportunities to gain support for recommendations that could be funded by New York State, notably through its consolidated funding application (CFA). Grant funds awarded through the CFA process can provide substantial funding for implementation of certain strategies outlined in this Plan.

This Plan is consistent with the Capital Region Economic Development Council Strategic Plan strategy “Celebrate and Optimize our Surroundings” (page 17-18). This strategy seeks to

- Increase collaboration among farmers (food suppliers), distributors, wholesalers, retailers, restaurants, and the region’s high tech supply chain expertise to create a more efficient distribution network and identify new markets outside the region that could be accessed by utilizing technology (Page 17);
- Leverage the necessary investment in infrastructure, marketing, aggregation, and brand development to see a significant increase in the value of ‘local’ food transitions (page 17).
- Link the importance of working landscapes to the tourism sector of the region and raise the awareness of the role agriculture plays in supporting the regions high quality of life (page 45); and
- Foster support of existing and new programs that protect and conserve use of arable land for agriculture and food production (page 45).

*This Plan is also consistent with the Capital Region Upstate Revitalization Initiative and the CRAFT Initiative.*



## Section 5: Priority Action Plan

There are two types of tasks that are needed to make this Plan a reality:

1. Implement steps that expand the capacity of and collaboration among farmers, processors, buyers, agricultural support agencies and government entities; and
2. Implement specific Priority Actions and programs that create value.

The strategies and actions detailed in Section 4 of this Plan provide the full set of recommended ‘tools’ to enhance agriculture in Washington County. The table below offers additional details on those Priority Actions that form the foundation for other, more targeted projects. Not all of the recommended actions from Section 4 are Priority Actions. It is anticipated that when the County has made progress towards the implementation of the Priority Actions outlined below, then work can begin on others over time.

***Potential costs for implementing the actions in this Plan are identified as low, moderate, or high. In most cases, it is anticipated that costs can be defrayed by third parties through grants, volunteerism and private donations. Low cost actions require minimum or no expenditures of tax money to accomplish. Moderate costs are those ranging from \$15,000 to \$35,000 and high costs are those that are estimated to be more than \$35,000.***





**STRATEGY #1:**  
**Create an Effective Organizational Structure for Agricultural Economic Success**

PRIORITY ACTION: Create a Working Group	Target Date	Lead Person or Organization	Other Partners	Potential Cost & Funding
Task Washington County AFPB with oversight of the implementation of this Plan	Sept 2017	County Board of Supervisors	Washington County Local Development Corporation, Cornell Cooperative Extension, Agricultural and Farmland Protection Board, Washington County Economic Development/Planning, Soil and Water Conservation District, Farm Credit East, SUNY Adirondack, Farm Bureau, Agricultural Stewardship Association, Hudson Valley Agribusiness Development Corporation, USDA Farm Service Agency, Natural Resources Conservation Service, and ag/forestry businesses.	Low
Create Working Group and draft scope of work and expectation for results for Working Group	Oct 2017	Washington County AFPB		
Working Group to create annual work plan for project implementation	Oct 2017	Working Group		
Assign Working Group members to specific tasks to be accomplished in the annual workplan	Nov 2017	Working Group		
Working group to report on progress to Board of Supervisors	Quarterly	Working Group		
PRIORITY ACTION: Aggressively work to secure new funding sources to support needed programs	Target Date	Lead Person or Organization	Other Partners	Potential Cost & Funding
Write Consolidated Funding Application to fund project to provide finance and incentives for farm business planning, farm transition planning, environmental planning, entrepreneurial training, and promotion of new products and markets.	June and July 2017	Washington County LDC, Working Group with assistance from County Planning	May need assistance from a grant writer, HVADC	Low to Moderate
Research and seek funding to enable the Working group to hire a "Coordinator".	July to Dec 2017	Working Group with assist from County Planning	May need assistance from a grant writer, HVADC	Low to Moderate



**STRATEGY #1: (Cont'd):**  
**Create an Effective Organizational Structure for Agricultural Economic Success**

PRIORITY ACTION: Semi-annual Roundtables	Target Date	Lead Person or Organization	Other Partners	Potential Cost & Funding
Create and maintain a list of all farms and farmers in the county for future invitations and surveys	October 2017	Working Group /ASA	Washington County Local Development Corporation, Cornell Cooperative Extension, Agricultural and Farmland Protection Board, Washington County Economic Development/Planning, Soil and Water Conservation District, Farm Credit East, SUNY Adirondack, Farm Bureau, Hudson Valley Agribusiness Development Corporation, National Young Farmers CoalitionUSDA Farm Service Agency, Natural Resources Conservation Service, and ag/forestry businesses	Low
Organize and implement twice per year roundtable meetings with Working Group, farmers and Ag-businesses	Semi-annually	Working Group and AFPB		Low







**STRATEGY #2:**  
**Create a long-term, systematic approach to Agricultural Economic Development in Washington County**

<b>PRIORITY ACTION:</b> Create a Food Value Chain Initiative	Target Date	Lead Person or Organization	Other Partners	Potential Cost & Funding
Identify appropriate agency to 'house' and coordinate the Food Value Chain Initiative	Sept - Nov 2017	Working Group	County Board of Supervisors	Low
Research successful models	2018	Coordinator	Working Group members	Part of grant funded program
Initiate and implement programs and projects	2018-2022	Coordinator	Working Group members	Part of grant funded program
Identify new farming opportunities and provide technical, educational and marketing assistance through the Food Value Chain Initiative	2018-2022	Coordinator	CCE, SWCD, ASA, Farm Credit East	Moderate to High; Part of grant funded program



**STRATEGY #2: (Cont'd)**  
**Create a long-term, systematic approach to Agricultural Economic Development in Washington County**

<b>PRIORITY ACTION:</b> Improve opportunities for new capital for farms	Target Date	Lead Person or Organization	Other Partners	Potential Cost & Funding
Work with Farm Credit East and other ag-friendly lenders to support capital needs of farmers	2018-2022	Working Group/ County Econ. Dev.	Farm Credit East, lenders	Low
Enhance Washington County Local Development Corporation and other economic development programming to increase ability to address increased capital needs of farmers	2018-2020	Working Group/ County Econ. Dev.	Washington County Board of Supervisors, Washington County LDC	Moderate
Create a grant writing program or obtain funding to initiate a small re-grant program to help farmers fund their businesses retention and expansion plans	2019-2020	Working Group/ Washington County LDC	Farm Credit East, CCE, Washington County Economic Development	Moderate

**STRATEGY #3: NO PRIORITY ACTIONS** see page 27 for list of actions for this strategy

**STRATEGY #4:**  
**Improve internet access and cellular coverage throughout Washington County**

<b>PRIORITY ACTION:</b> All rural and agricultural areas have access to coverage	Target Date	Lead Person or Organization	Other Partners	Potential Cost & Funding
County to ensure New NYS Broadband Programs provide full service to Washington County	2018	County Board of Supervisors	Farmers, Agricultural Businesses, Farm Bureau	Unknown at this time



**STRATEGY #5:**  
**Increase access to, and training of, skilled labor for agricultural and forestry operations**

PRIORITY ACTION: Partner with SUNY Adirondack to develop the Center for Agriculture and Food Education program	Target Date	Lead Person or Organization	Other Partners	Potential Cost & Funding
Initiate the development of the SUNY Adirondack Center for Agriculture and Food Education program	2018	SUNY ADK	Working Group, Education partners	High Unknown at this time
Start internship and mentoring programs for high school and college students	2019	SUNY ADK	Working Group, Education partners	Moderate Unknown at this time
PRIORITY ACTION: Work with school districts, including BOCES	Target Date	Lead Person or Organization	Other Partners	Potential Cost & Funding
Increase participation in FFA programs	Ongoing	Washington County CCE	Working Group, local schools	Moderate
Start or expand internship and mentoring opportunities	Ongoing	Washington County CCE	Working Group, local schools, farms, agricultural-related businesses	Low



**STRATEGY # 6:**  
**Create a comprehensive marketing strategy that promotes both farm products and farming in the County**

PRIORITY ACTION: Seek grants or other sources of funding to hire a marketing expert and implement marketing strategy	Target Date	Lead Person or Organization	Other Partners	Potential Cost & Funding
Seek grant funding to develop a comprehensive marketing plan for agriculture in Washington County	July 2019 CFA	Working Group/ County Econ. Dev.	TBD	Low to Moderate
Seek grant funding for a 3-year initiative to implement the comprehensive marketing plan to reach the general public, farmers, and agricultural business audiences. The marketing program should include a marketing specialist who would work closely with the Working Group and the Coordinator.	July 2020 CFA	Working Group/ County Econ. Dev.	Coordinator	Low to Moderate
Implement marketing initiatives as outlined in this Plan and the marketing plan.	2020 -2023	Working Group	TBD	Moderate to High
PRIORITY ACTION: Enhance support to expand county ag-tourism opportunities	Target Date	Lead Person or Organization	Other Partners	Potential Cost & Funding
Work with partners to determine actions for implementation	Ongoing	Working Group/ County Econ. Dev.	Agri-tourism Businesses, Chamber of Commerce, Towns	Low



STRATEGY # 7: NO PRIORITY ACTIONS see page 29 for list of actions for this strategy



STRATEGY # 8: Conserve farmland				
PRIORITY ACTION: Increase the acreage of con- served farmlands and ensure their future use for farming	Target Date	Lead Person or Organization	Other Partners	Potential Cost & Funding
Continue to partner with ASA on farmland conserva- tion projects	Ongoing	ASA	County Board of Supervisors, Towns, AFPB, Farm Bureau	High, part of grant funded program
Research additional mech- anisms to fund farmland protection initiatives	Ongoing	ASA	County Board of Supervisors, Towns,	Low
PRIORITY ACTION: Provide land use planning assistance to towns	Target Date	Lead Person or Organization	Other Partners	Potential Cost & Funding
Create a library of farm friendly land use regulatory tools and models to be used by municipalities;	2019	County Planning	New York Planning Federation, municipalities, American Farmland Trust, NYS Dept. of Agriculture and Markets	Moderate
Create training opportunities for municipal CEOs, Planning Boards, Zoning Boards of Appeals, Town Boards on ag-related topics	Ongoing	County Planning	CCE, NY Planning Federation	Low

STRATEGY # 9: NO PRIORITY ACTIONS see page 31 for list of actions for this strategy

Appendix A: Profile and Inventory of  
Agriculture  
History of Farming in Washington County



Washington County’s economy has been based on agricultural activity since the first settlers arrived from other parts of New England and Europe. The production of flax, potatoes and wool played an important role in the County's early agricultural development. Farming was initially centered around sheep. By 1845, there were more than 250,000 sheep in Washington County and, as a result, most of the hillsides had been cleared for grazing. By 1870, Washington County shifted to potato production and had become one of the major potato producers in the country and reached a record level of flax production. Flax, wool and other goods were sold in Troy, then a developing factory town.

Washington County agriculture transitioned in the early 20th century to a predominantly dairy farming economy. Initially milk was sold in the New York/Boston/Montreal milkshed, but refrigeration problems later caused most milk to be sold to local cheese factories. Technological improvements in refrigeration and transportation in the 1920's shifted the focus to fluid milk, which continues today. The number of farms and farm acreage in the county reached a peak in the 1920's when there were 3,334 farms in the county covering 81% of the land base. In 1920 nearly 300,000 acres, or 56% of the land base, was improved farmland. The average farm contained 130 acres, of which 105 were improved.

A rapid decline in farmland occurred between 1959 and 1969 (Figure 2), when nearly 83,700 acres of farmland was converted to other uses. Between 1969 and 1987, the loss of farmland to other uses seemed to have stabilized compared to the precipitous decline of previous years. During this 18-year period, 26,500 acres were converted from agriculture to other uses.

Between 1987 and 1992, however, the rate of conversion accelerated as approximately 35,000 acres of farmland were converted to other uses. By 1992, there were approximately 206,000 acres of farmland in Washington County with 129,000 acres of tillable cropland.

Since the late 1990’s, the amount of land farmed has been more stable as shown in Figures 2 and 3. According to the 2012 US Agricultural Census, there is about 190,000 acres of farmland in the County.

In 1950, farmland was the dominant land use in the County with about 71% of the entire landmass being farmed. By 2012, about 35% of the County’s land was farmed (189,391 acres). Of the total farmland, about 54% is considered harvested cropland (about 93,000 acres) (Figure 3). In less than 100 years the amount of harvested cropland in the County decreased from 300,000 acres in 1920 to 93,000 acres in 2012, less than two-thirds of what is was in 1920.





Table 1 shows the distribution of farmed parcels and farm acreage throughout the County. Overall, there was 216,928 acres in the County that were identified by local tax assessors as farmland or that received agricultural assessments. While agriculture takes place throughout the County, it is less prevalent in the most northern towns in the County. Easton, Cambridge, Fort Edward, Hartford, Argyle, Salem, and White Creek have the most acres, parcels or percent of their total land base in agriculture. Easton has the most farming activity with 307 parcels on 28,174 acres (69% of the Town).

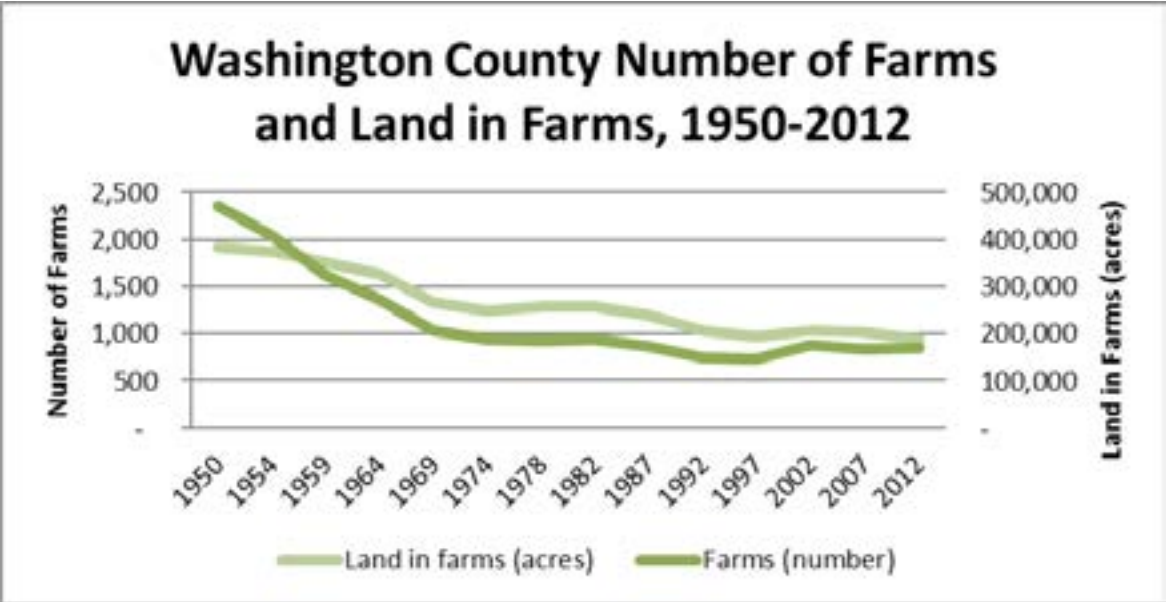


Figure 2: Number of farms and land in farms 1950 to 2012

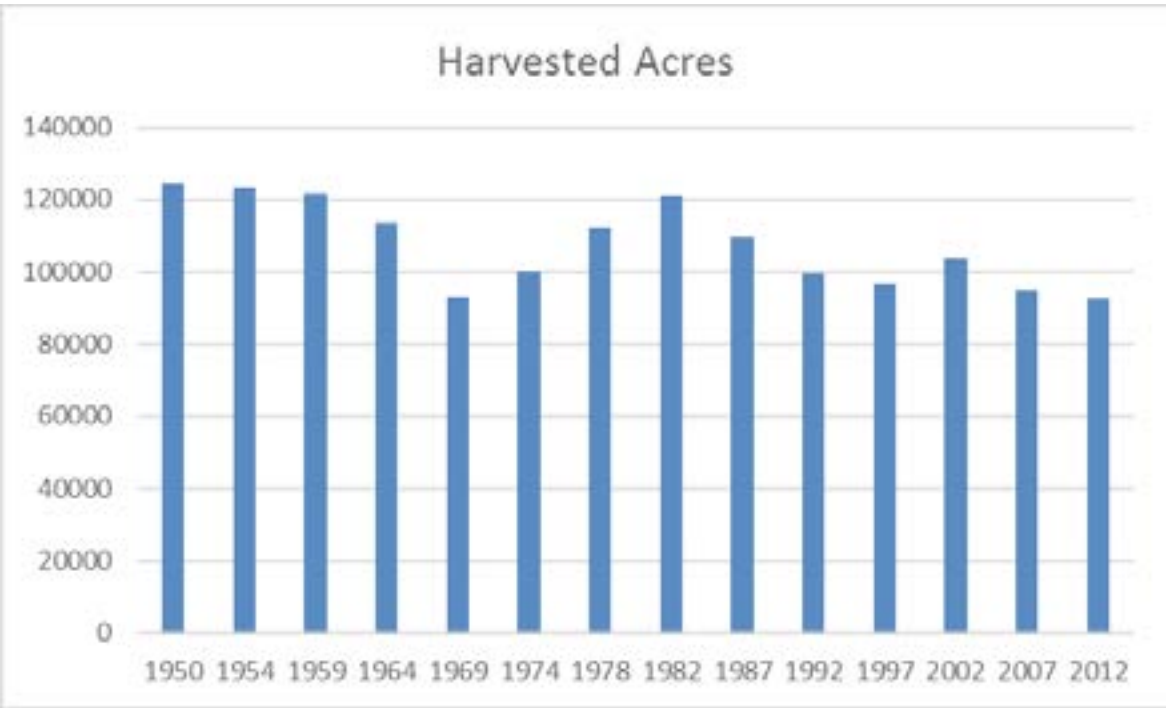


Figure 3: Harvested Cropland Acres 1950 to 2012

Farm Parcels and Acreage by Town			
Town	Number of Farmed Parcels (100 & 241 Class Codes)	Farmed Acres (100 Class & 241 Properties and Parcels with Agricultural Assessment)	Percent of Town in Farmland
Argyle	237	17,759	48%
Cambridge	226	14,126	60%
Dresden	18	16,23	5%
Easton	307	28,175	70%
Fort Ann	121	11,497	16%
Fort Edward	140	9,815	56%
Granville	180	14,536	40%
Greenwich	198	14,529	51%
Hampton	30	3,831	26%
Hartford	156	15,869	57%
Hebron	189	14,991	42%
Jackson	180	11,703	47%
Kingsbury	166	12,615	49%
Putnam	21	2,604	11%
Salem	189	16,238	48%
White Creek	205	13,778	46%
Whitehall	106	13,240	35%
County Total		216,929	40%

Table 1 – Farm Parcels and Acreage by Town



Washington County has significantly more farmland than all other Hudson Valley and Capital Region counties (Figure 4).

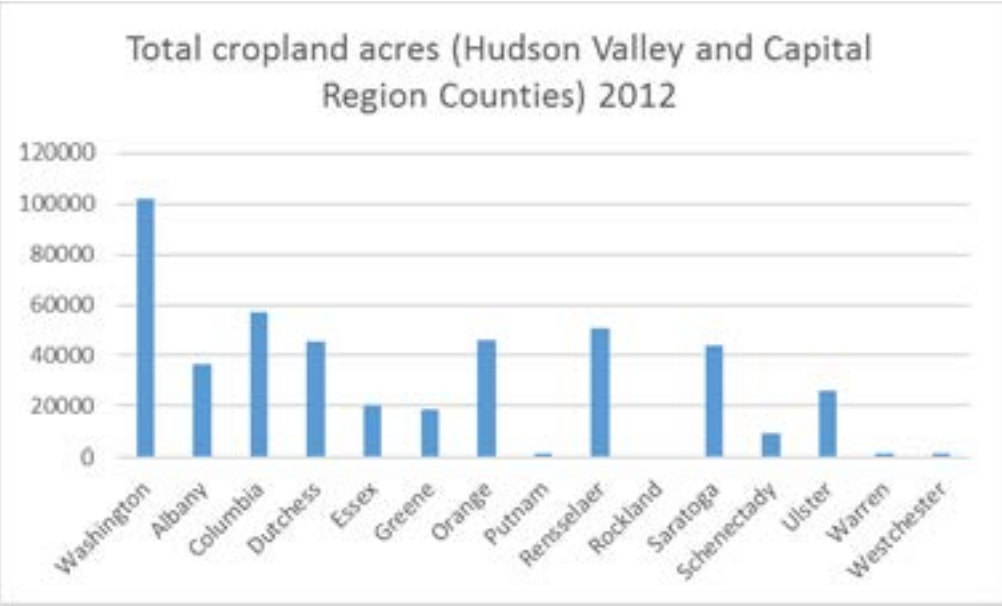


Figure 4: Farmland Acres by County in the Hudson Valley and Capital Region

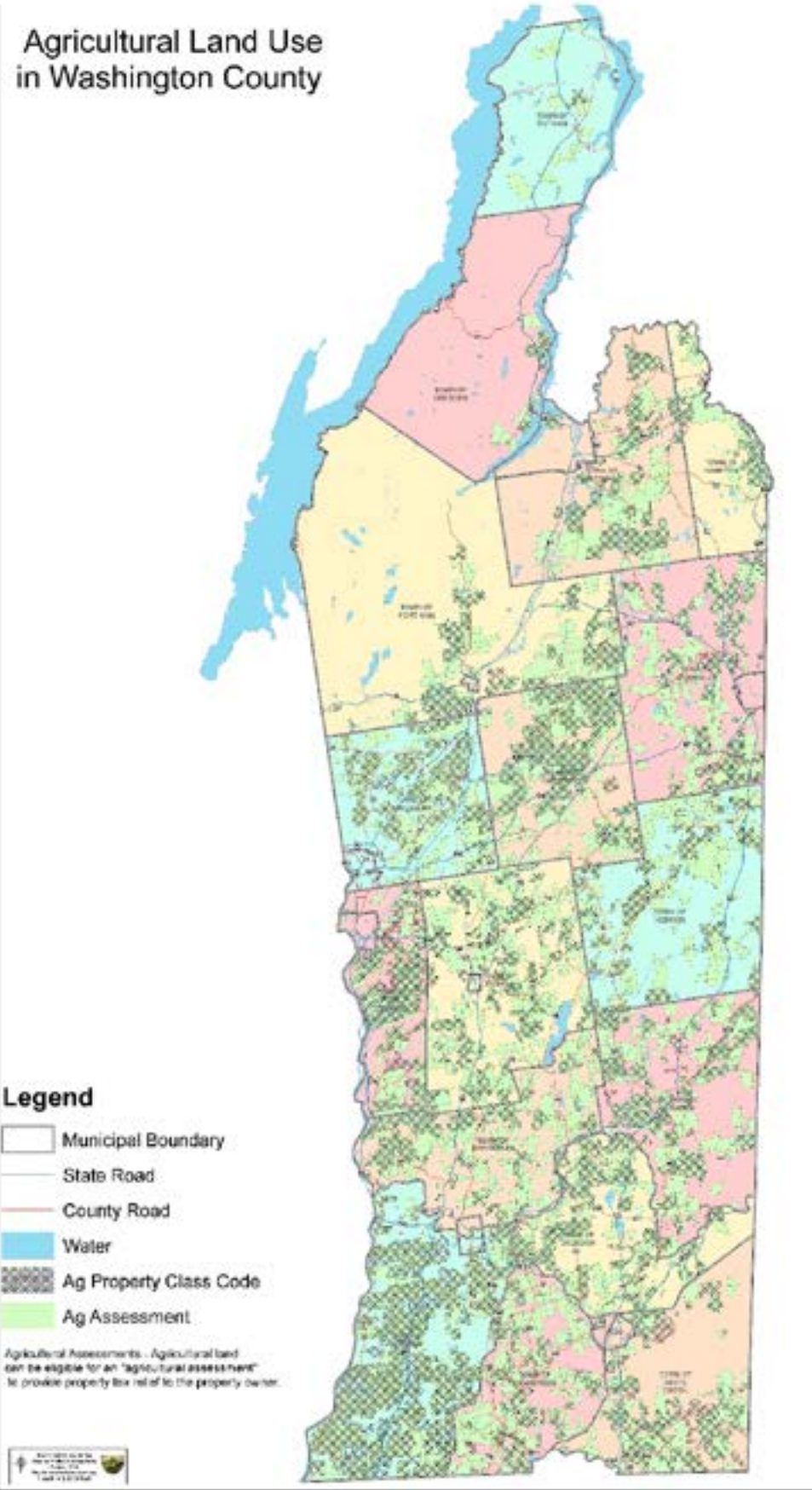


Figure 5: Map of Lands Identified as Farmland and Lands Receiving Agricultural Assessment (Note this map reflects information received from the various town assessors and the Washington County Real Property Office and approximates active agricultural uses.)



Profile of Farm Sizes and Types

There is great diversity in the types of farming activities taking place within Washington County. This diversity is recognized by the farm community as one of the strengths of agriculture in the County. The following lists the range of farm activities here:

- Alpacas
  - Beef
  - Biomass Production
  - Christmas Trees
  - Craft Beverages
  - Dairy
  - Ducks and Geese
  - Field Crops (Hay, Corn)
  - Forestry
  - Fowl (Guinea, Peacock, Pheasant, Pigeon, Quail)
- Fruit
  - Goats
  - Grains, Small Grains
  - Hogs
  - Honey Bees
  - Hops
  - Horses (and Harness Horses and Riding)
  - Llamas
  - Maple syrup
  - Mules/donkeys
- Nursery, Greenhouse and Horticulture
  - Orchards
  - Poultry and Eggs
  - Rabbits
  - Sheep/Fiber
  - Veal Calves
  - Vegetables

Farms are of all sizes, with a mix of larger commercial dairy farms, part-time farms, organic farms and farms with direct sales, value-added and on-farm packing.

In support of all these agricultural operations, numerous agri-businesses and agencies are also mainstays of the Washington County farm community and economy. These include:

- Agri-businesses including veterinarians, feed and fertilizer dealers, machinery and supply dealers
  - Battenkill Creamery
  - Battenkill Fibers
  - Battenkill Kitchen
  - Custom crops, meat processing, livestock auction
  - Cornell Cooperative Extension Washington County
  - Washington County Farm Bureau
  - Farm Credit East
  - Hudson Valley Agricultural Development Corporation
  - Hudson Valley Farmlink Network
- Greater Adirondack Resource Conservation & Development Council (RC&D)
  - USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service
  - SUNY Adirondack
  - Agricultural Stewardship Association
  - Washington County Industrial Development Agency
  - Washington County Local Development Corporation
  - Washington County Microenterprise Program
  - Washington County Soil and Water Conservation District

Agri-tourism is another important aspect of farming in Washington County. Many farms have agri-tourism as their primary activity, while others invite visitors as part of a larger operation. In addition to the agri-tourism farm operations, several other opportunities add an important dimension to farm profitability, public awareness and education, and the general economy and include the following. These are also supported by marketing materials such as the Adirondack Harvest Guide.

- Adirondack Craft Beverage Trail
  - Cheese Tour
  - Fiber Tour
- Maple Tour
  - Washington County Fair
  - Christmas in the Country

Farms in Washington County produce a wide variety of products and crops (Figure 6). Approximately 27% produce hay and grain crops. These top crop items also included forage crops such as haylage, grass silage, and greenchop. Other crops grown in the county include grain, vegetables, melons, fruit and tree nuts, and greenhouse/nursery/floriculture crops. By far, corn and hay crops are the dominant crop grown. Washington County ranks #11 in the State for apples.

About 55% of all farms are livestock operations. Approximately 17% of farms are dairy operations. According to data from the Northeast Milk Marketing Area, there were 164 dairy producers supplying about 28 to 30 million pounds of milk from Washington County, monthly. Another significant agricultural operation in the County is beef cattle (12% of farms). Sheep, goats, poultry and hogs are other animal operations and make up about 10% of all farms.

The top livestock inventory are cattle and calves. Washington County was ranked #8 in the State for inventory and #9 for value of sales. The County ranks high in New York State for sales in other commodities: #5 for other crops and hay, #7 in milk from cows, #10 in hogs and pigs, and #6 in horses and ponies. Other farms not reflected in Figure 6 include cut Christmas trees and horses.

The 2012 Agricultural Census in Washington County includes the following inventory:

- Alpacas – 17 farms
- Llamas – 7 farms
- Rabbits – 9 farms
- Horses – 229 farms
- Mules/Donkeys – 32 farms
- Ducks – 23 farms
- Geese – 16 farms
- Guinea Fowl – 20 farms
- Peacocks – 2 farms
- Pheasant – 2 farms
- Pigeons – 2 farms
- Quail – 2 farms
- Chickens – 12 farms
- Bees 31 farms



Other farming activities (from the 2012 Agricultural Census) in the County were:

- 14 certified organic farms with 8 additional transitioning to organic
- 47 farms producing maple syrup
- 27 Christmas Tree farms
- 8 farms harvested biomass for use in renewable energy
- 77 had direct sales
- 86 had value-added products
- 12 were Community-Supported Agriculture farms
- 40 had on-farm packing facilities





There were about 10% fewer farms and farmland acres (Table 2) in 2012 compared with 2002. There are fewer farms and farmland acres in corn and forage crops. There are more grain and vegetable farmers, but the acreage in those crops decreased slightly. The number of orchards and land in orchards increased. While overall the number of farms with cattle and calves and dairy have decreased, the number of farms with beef has increased. The largest change is a 41% decrease in the number of farms with corn for silage and a 28% loss of vegetable acreage. Overall, most of the changes were in the 10% to 15% range.

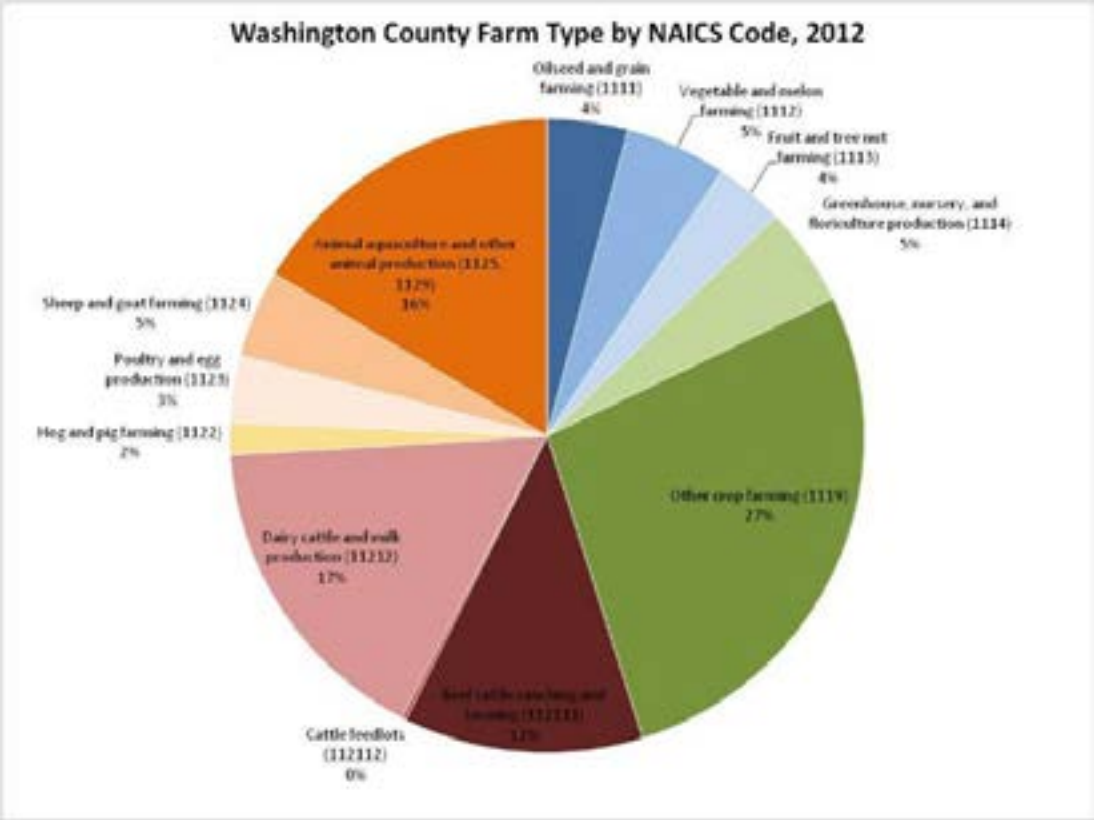


Figure 6: Farm Types in Washington County

Change in Number of Acres or Animals in Washington County			
	2002	2012	Change
Farms with harvested cropland	709	636	-10%
Farmland acres	103,753	92,965	-10%
# farms with corn for grain	60	66	10%
Acres in corn for grain	7,365	6,332	-14%
# farms with corn for silage	239	142	-41%
Acres in corn for silage	25,243	21,673	-14%
# farms with forage crops	584	504	-14%
Acres in forage crops	73,013	61,776	-15%
# farms with vegetables for sale	63	67	6%
Acres in vegetable	1,100	789	-28%
# farms with orchards	39	45	15%
Acres in orchard	435	633	46%
# farms with cattle and calves	430	364	-15%
# farms with beef	137	169	23%
# farms with dairy	226	164	-27%

Table 2: Changes in Commodities 2002 to 2012



Inventory of Animals by Number of Farms

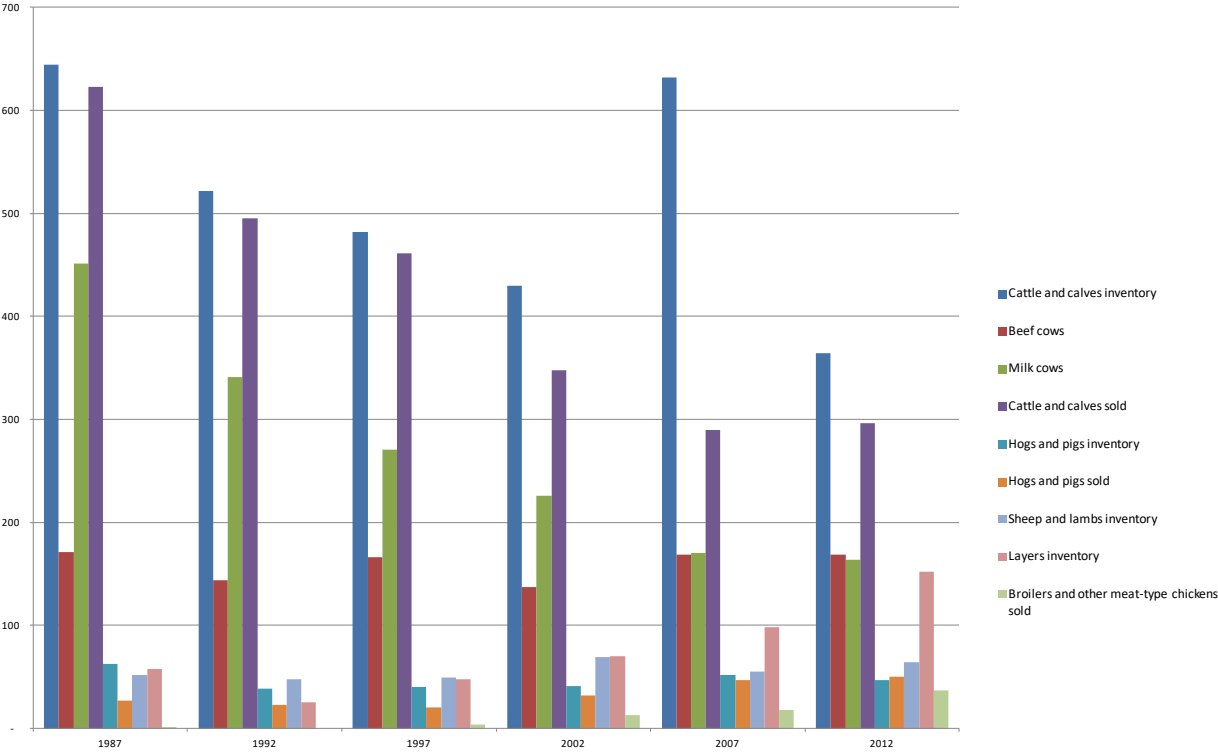


Figure 7: Inventory of Animals, Washington County 1987 to 2012



## Changes in Farms and Farm Acreage

As with farm acreage, the number of farms in Washington County has also declined over the years. Washington County had almost 2,500 farms in 1950 (Figure 2). There has been a steady decrease in the number of farms since then. In 1964, there was a total of 1,369 farms, which decreased to 932 farms by 1978, and 745 farms by 1992. During the last Agricultural Census, there was a slight rebound with a total of 851 farms in the County.

Farms and Farm Acreage in Washington County, 2002 - 2012				
	2002	2007	2012	% change, 2002-2012
Number of farms	887	843	851	-4.1
Total acreage in farms (acres)	206,148	202,877	189,391	-8.1
% of land area in agricultural production	37.9%	37.3%	34.8%	-8.2
Cropland (acres)	130,695	112,016	101,904	-22.0
Harvested cropland (acres)	103,753	95,018	92,965	-10.4
Source: Census of Agriculture, 2002, 2007, and 2012.				

Table 3: Farms and Acreage 2002 - 2012

Still, Washington County has the most farms of any Hudson Valley county (Figure 8). The 851 farms in 2012 is significantly more than the other Hudson Valley counties.

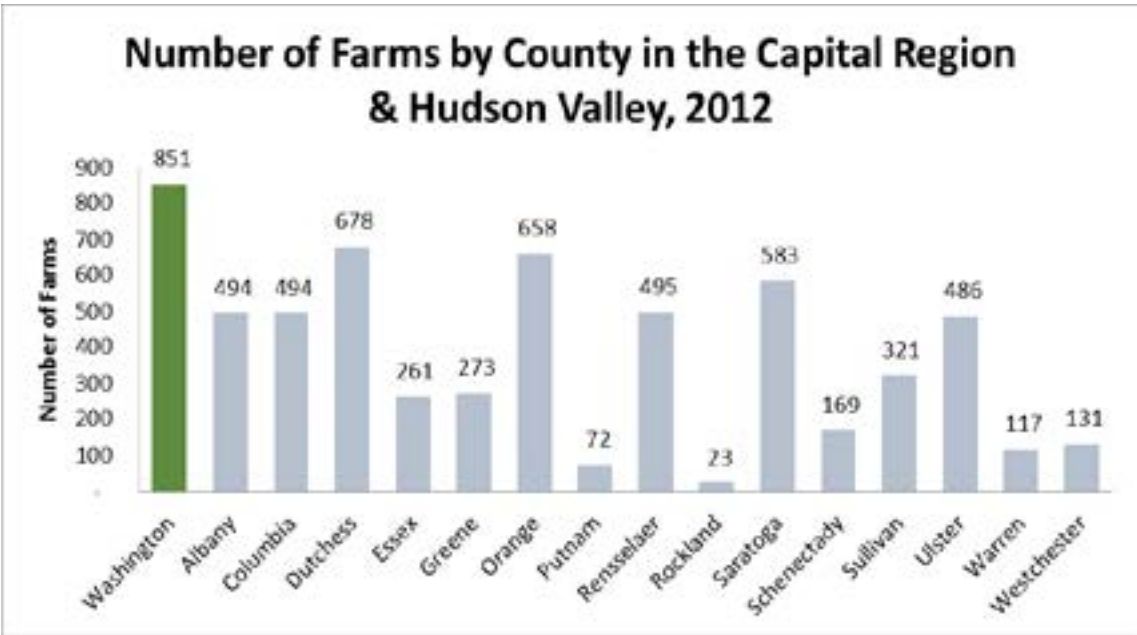


Figure 8: Number of Farms by County in the Hudson Valley

The average size of farms in Washington County has varied over the years between 275 acres (during the 1980's) and 160 acres. In 2012, the average size was 203 acres (Figure 9).

The decline in farm numbers and acreage in Washington County reflects nationwide trends. Over the years as people left farming for industrialized urban centers, most of the less productive land reverted to natural growth while more productive land remained in agriculture. Many of the remaining farms grew in size and productivity increased as new technology and methods were introduced so that fewer farms today are producing the same amount of product.

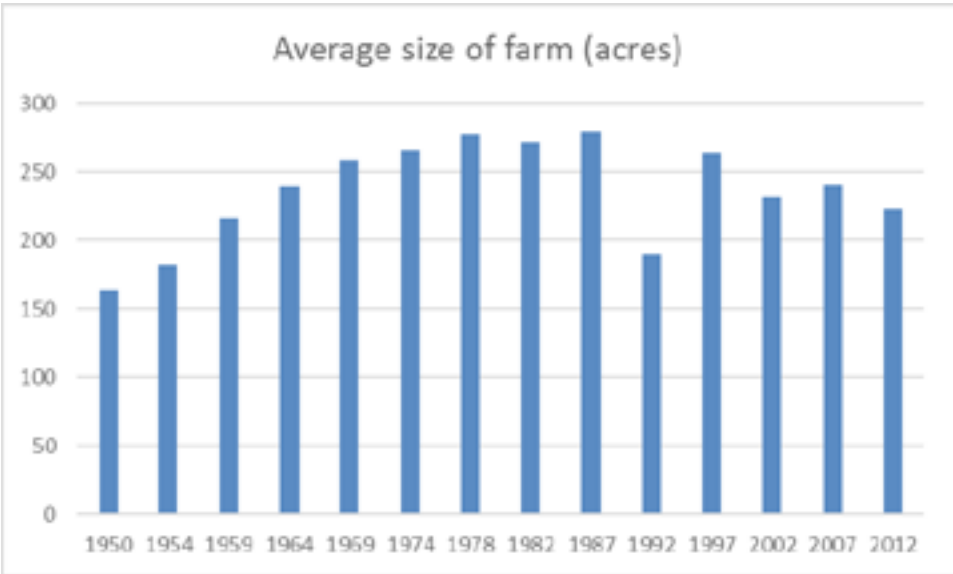


Figure 9: Average size of farms (acres)

There is much diversity in the sizes of farms in Washington County (Figure 10). The number of very large farms (1000 acres or more) compared to all other farms has been small, but mostly stable over the years. The number of small to small-midsize farms are increasing, and the number of moderately sized farms have been decreasing. The trend towards an increased number of smaller farms is similar to what is occurring throughout New York State.

The number of very small farms (<9 acres) has increased from 28 in 1987 to 72 in 2012

The number of farms 10 to 49 acres has also increased dramatically from 89 to 103 farms.

Moderately sized farms (180 to 499, and 500 to 999 acres) have decreased over these years.

More variation is seen in farms sized 50 to 179 acres, but these small to moderate sized farms have also increased in the past decade.

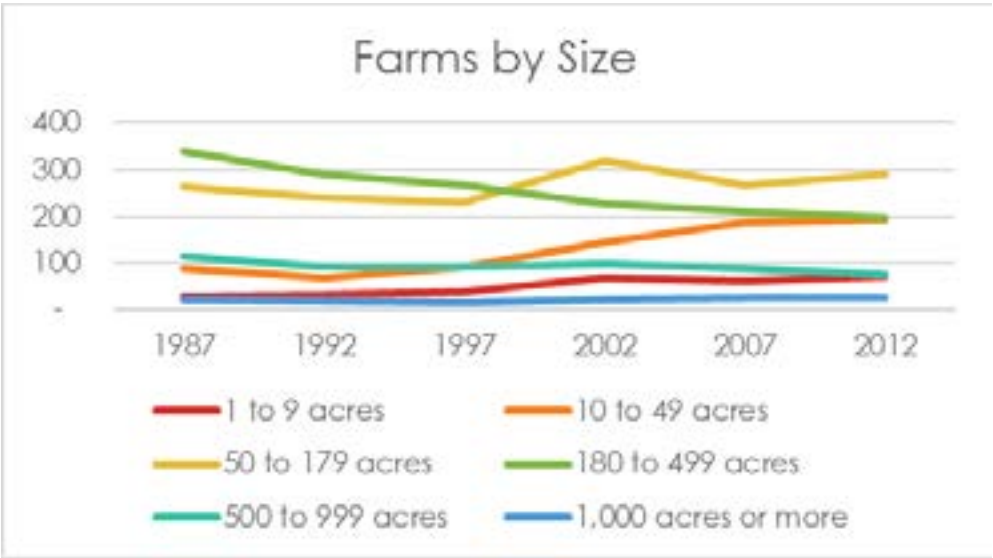


Figure 10: Farms by Size 1987 to 2012



Washington County’s Agricultural Economy

Farm Sales

In 2012 there were 850 farms in Washington County that produced more than \$139.1 million in agricultural sales. About 62% of farms can be categorized as having less than \$25,000 in sales (Figure 11). 28% of farms are “small” having sales less than \$2,500. However, 21% have sales over \$100,000.

The average market value of products sold has increased dramatically over time and in 2012 was about \$160,000 per farm compared to about \$130,000 in 2007.

Other important numbers that characterize Washington County include:

\$539,925 – Average estimated market value of land and buildings per farm.

\$2,428 – Average estimated market value of land and buildings per acre.

\$39,826 – Average per farm net cash income (\$41,419 adjusted to 2015 dollars)

\$139,147,000 – Total market value of all agricultural products sold

\$163,510 – Average market value of agricultural products sold per farm (of that, \$112,213 in livestock and products, and \$26,934 for crops), among others.

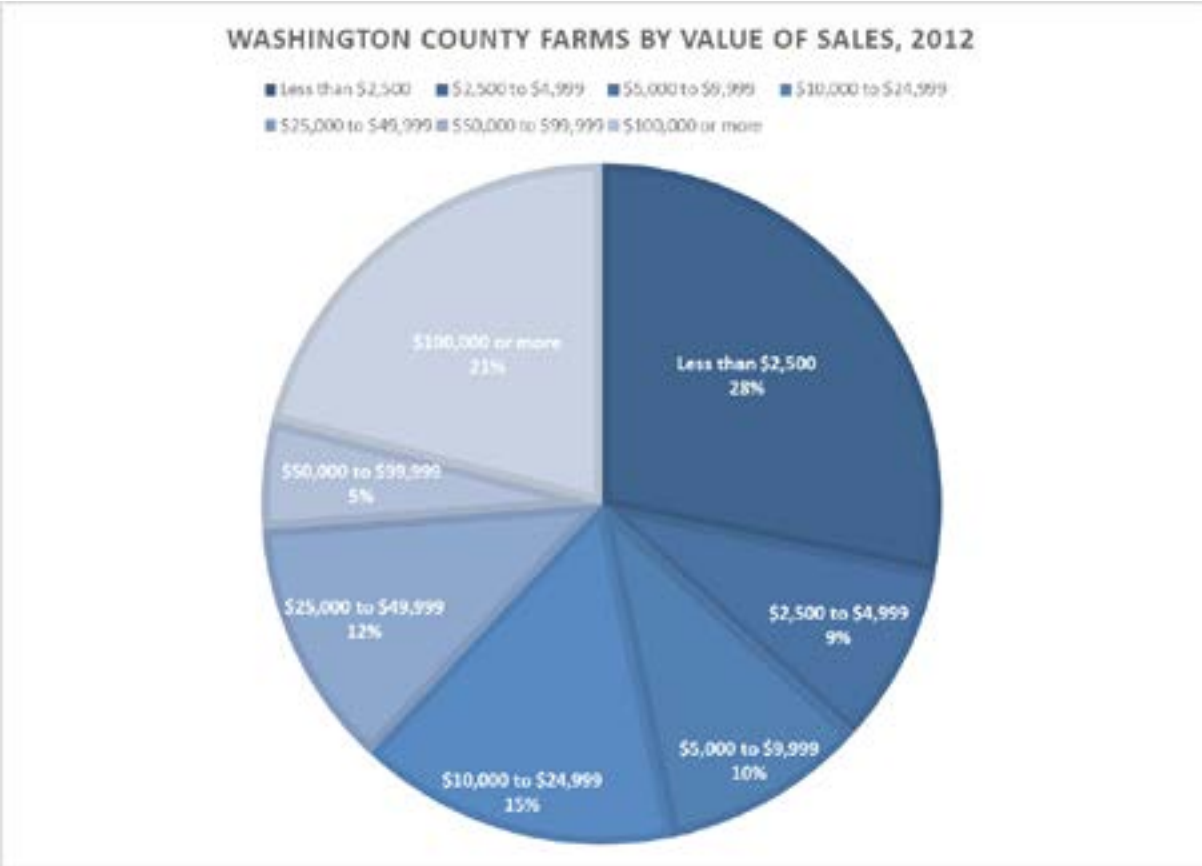


Figure 11: Value of Sales, 2012

Source: U.S. Census of Agriculture, 2007 and 2012. Categories for which no data is available are not shown.

Value of Sales of Agricultural Products in Washington County				
	2007		2012	
	Sales (1,000s)	County Rank	Sales (1,000s)	County Rank
Grains, oilseeds, dry beans/peas	2,770	26	8,582	28
Other crops and hay	3,606	14	12,166	5
Cattle and calves	11,207	9	14,868	9
Milk and other dairy products	85,630	9	93,364	7
Vegetables/melons/potatoes	3,900	20	3,002	28
Fruits, tree nuts, berries	1,282	26	1,405	23
Nursery, greenhouse	1,683	31	1,695	31
Cut Christmas Trees, Woody Crops	103	29	83	25
Poultry and eggs		20	430	19
Horses, ponies, mules, donkeys	617	19	2,441	6
Sheep, goats, wool, mohair	350	6	251	24
Hogs and pigs	508	8	616	10
Other animal/animal products	337		244	

Table 4: Agricultural Product Sales

Source: U.S. Census of Agriculture, 2002, 2007 and 2012.

Direct Sales of Agricultural Products in Washington County				
	2002	2007	2012	Change, 2002-2012
# of farms selling products directly to individuals	110	120	165	55 farm increase
Value of products sold directly to individuals (\$1000s)	1,830	2,766	3,242	1,412 value increase

Table 5: Direct Sales of Agricultural Products



Farm Production Expenses

The average per farm expense for agricultural production in the County is \$135,734. Of that, the largest expense is feed, followed by hired farm labor and repairs/supplies. Property taxes make up about 4% of the farm expense. (See Figure 14.)

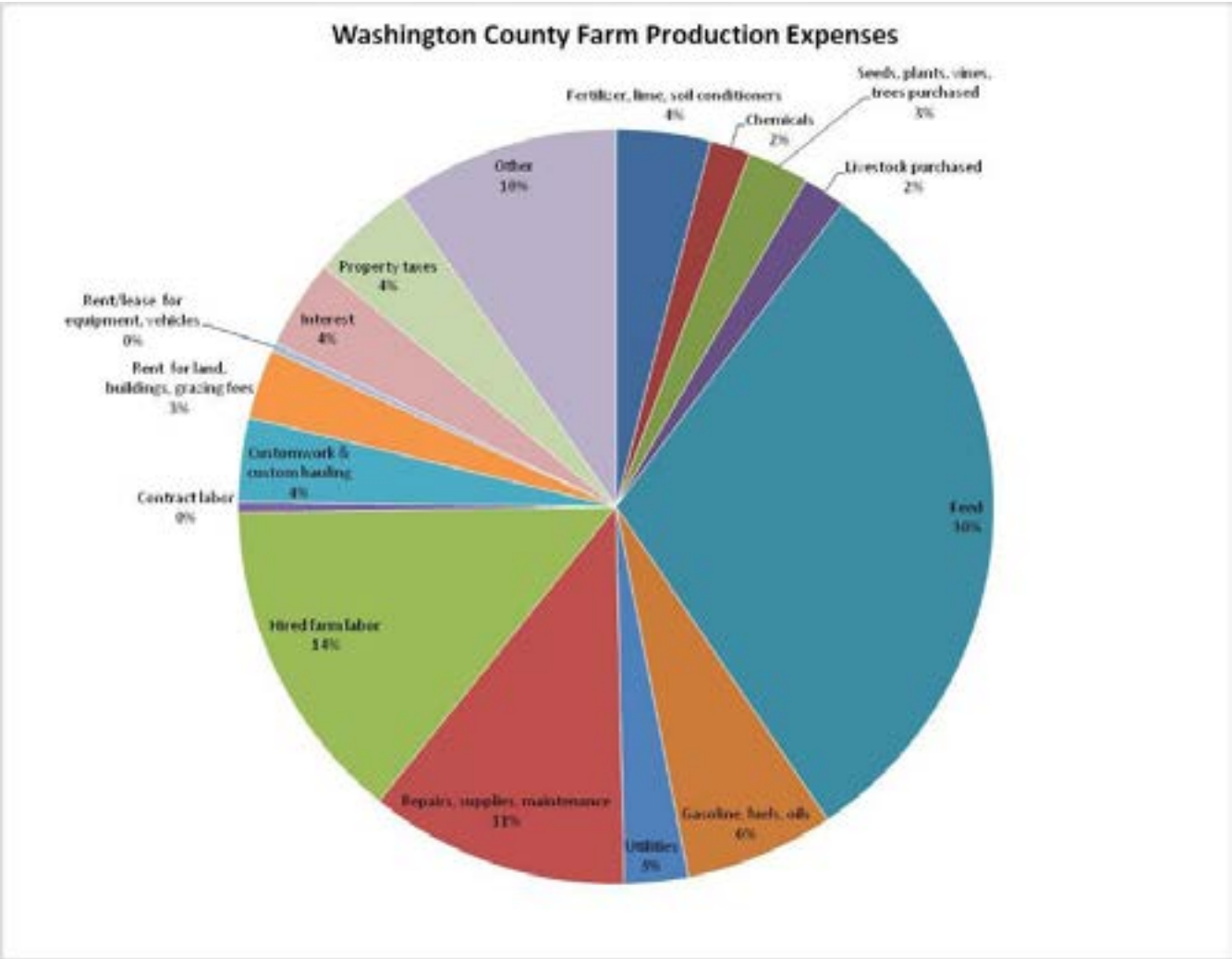


Figure 14: Farm Production Expenses, 2012

Farm Operators

There are relatively few young principal farm operators in the County. While almost a third (30%) are between 45 to 54 years old, the vast majority (55%) of principal farm operators are over the age of 55 (Figure 15). Washington County has about the same pattern of farmers’ age as the State, but has slightly fewer young farmers than the rest of the state.

Most farms are family or individually owned farms. There are slightly more partnerships and family corporations in 2012 than there were in 2007. About 106 farms are partnerships and 55 are family corporations.

277 farms had hired workers (in 2012). They employed 1,296 full and part-time people and had an annual total payroll of \$16,134,000.

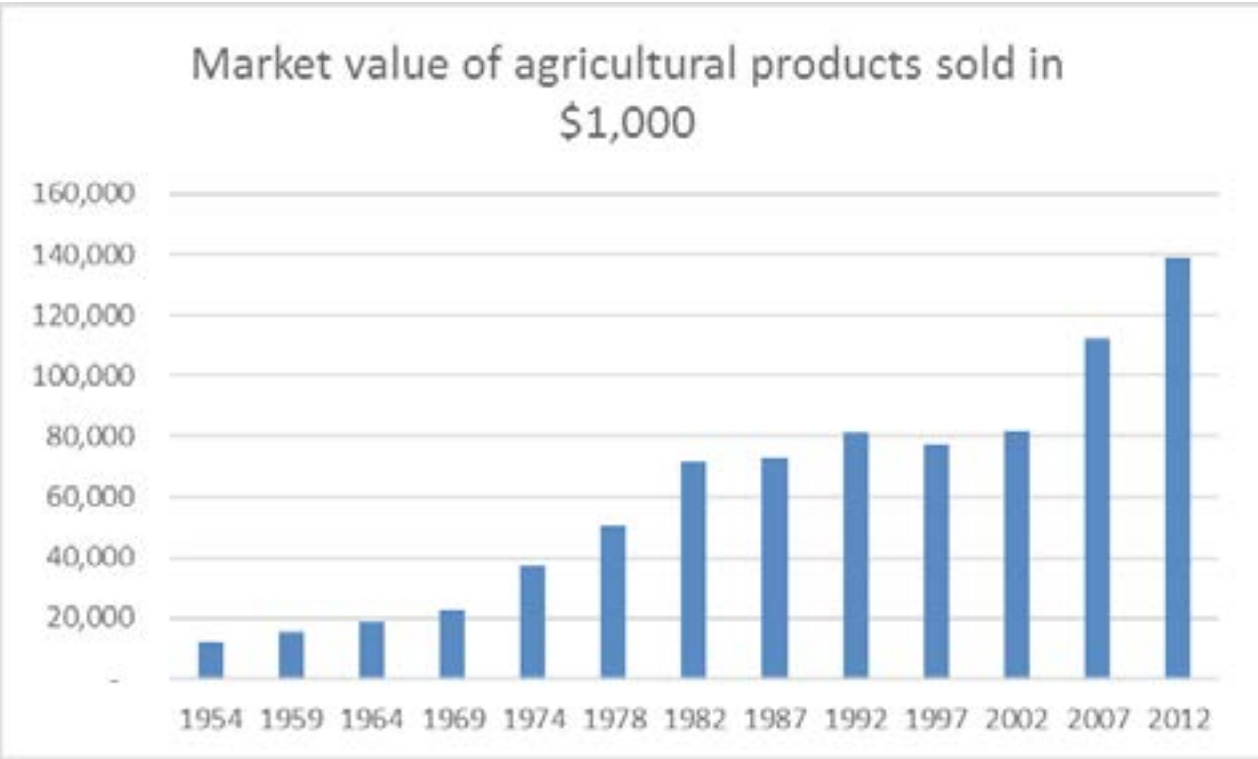


Figure 12: Market Value of Products Sold in Washington County 1959 to 2012

Washington County has the highest market value of agricultural sales of any county in the Hudson Valley (Figure 13).

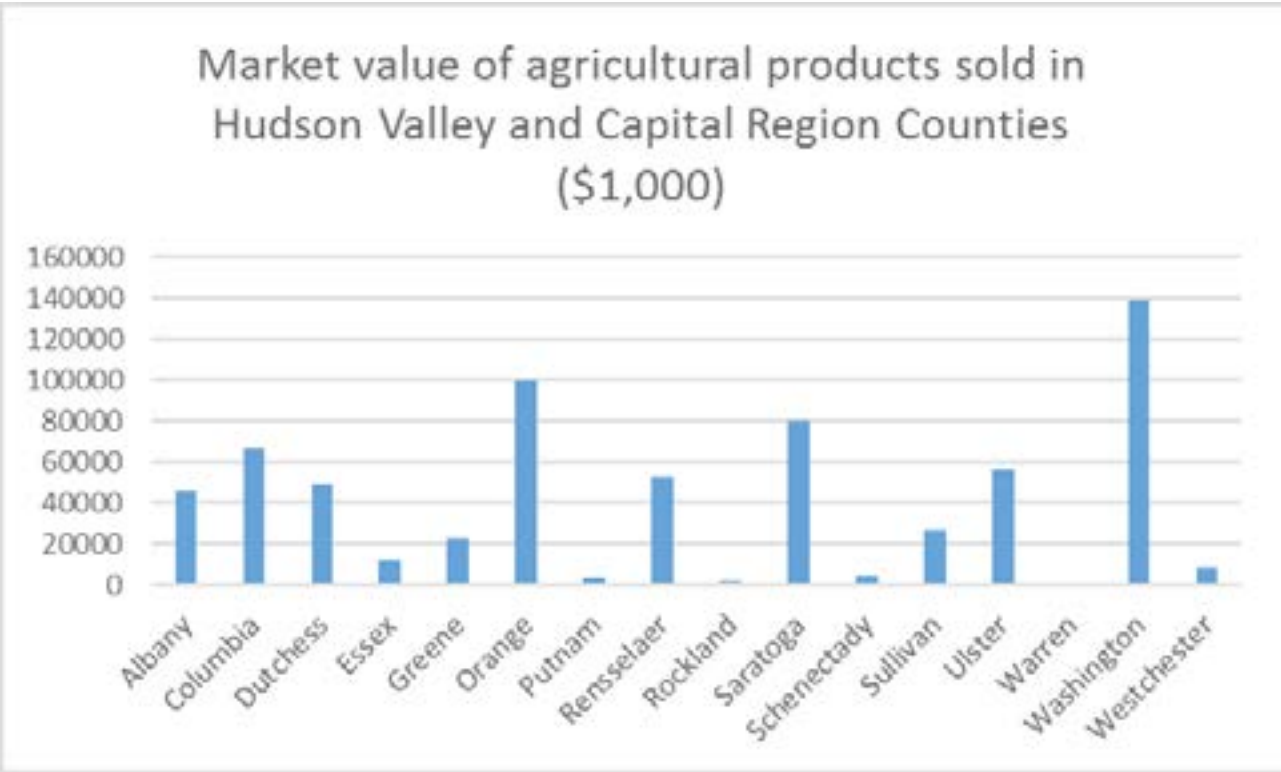


Figure 13: Comparison of Value of Agricultural Sales in Hudson Valley Counties.



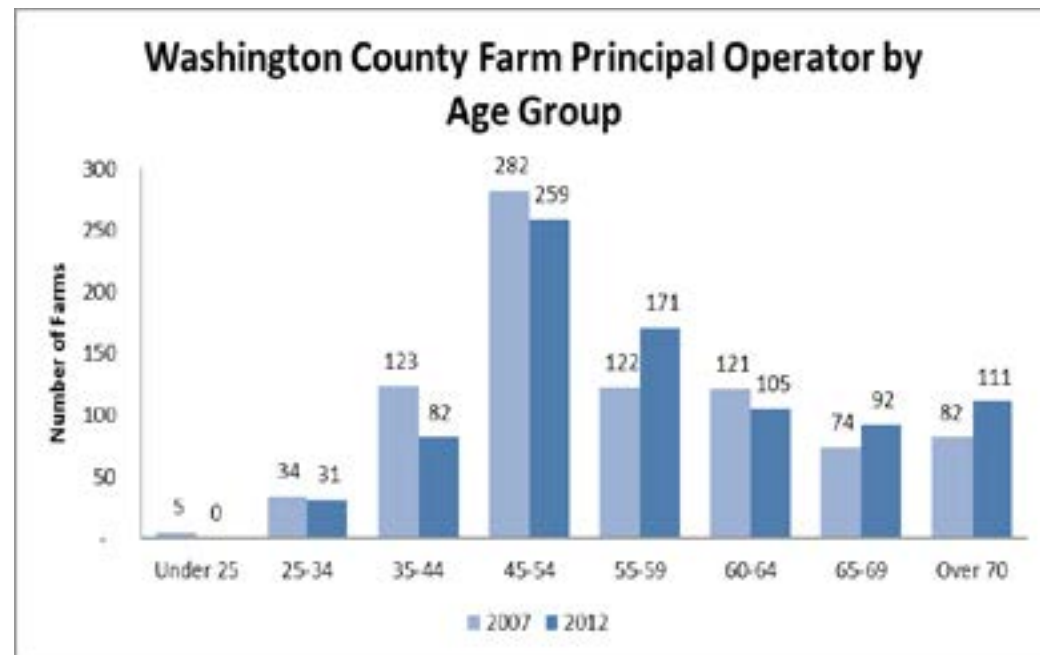


Figure 15: Age of Farmers in Washington County

Most farmers have been on their farm for more than 10 years and that has not changed between 2007 and 2012. Census data does not show many new farmers entering the County.

About 1/3 of farmland is owned, 1/3 is rented, and 1/3 is on a farm operation with part-ownership. The Census considers both rental land and land where the farmer has partial ownership in the land as “part-ownership”. There is a very small portion of land that is full tenancy (Figure 16).

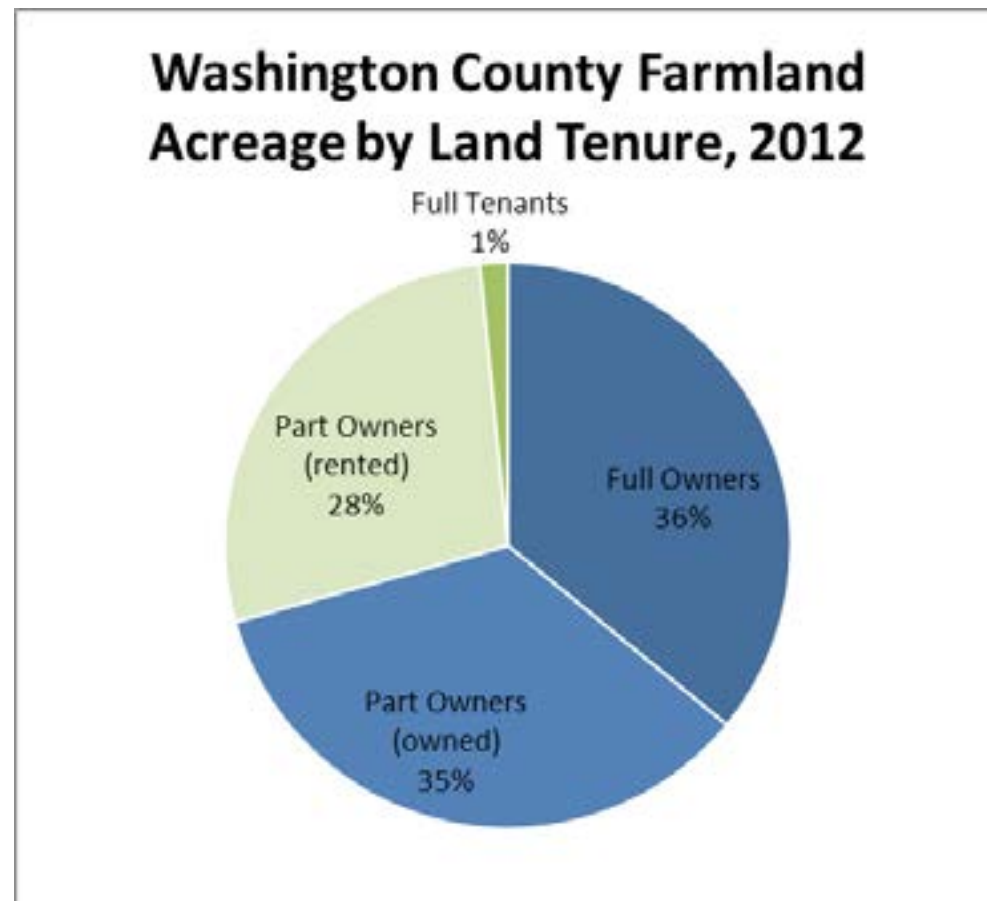


Figure 16: Land Tenure of Farms

## Farm Labor

According to the 2012 Census of Agriculture, 277 farms or about 28% of all farms in Washington County, had hired labor in addition to their principal operators (Figure 17). Data are for total hired farm workers, including paid family members, by number of days worked. These farms accounted for 1,296 employees with \$16.134 million in annual payroll.

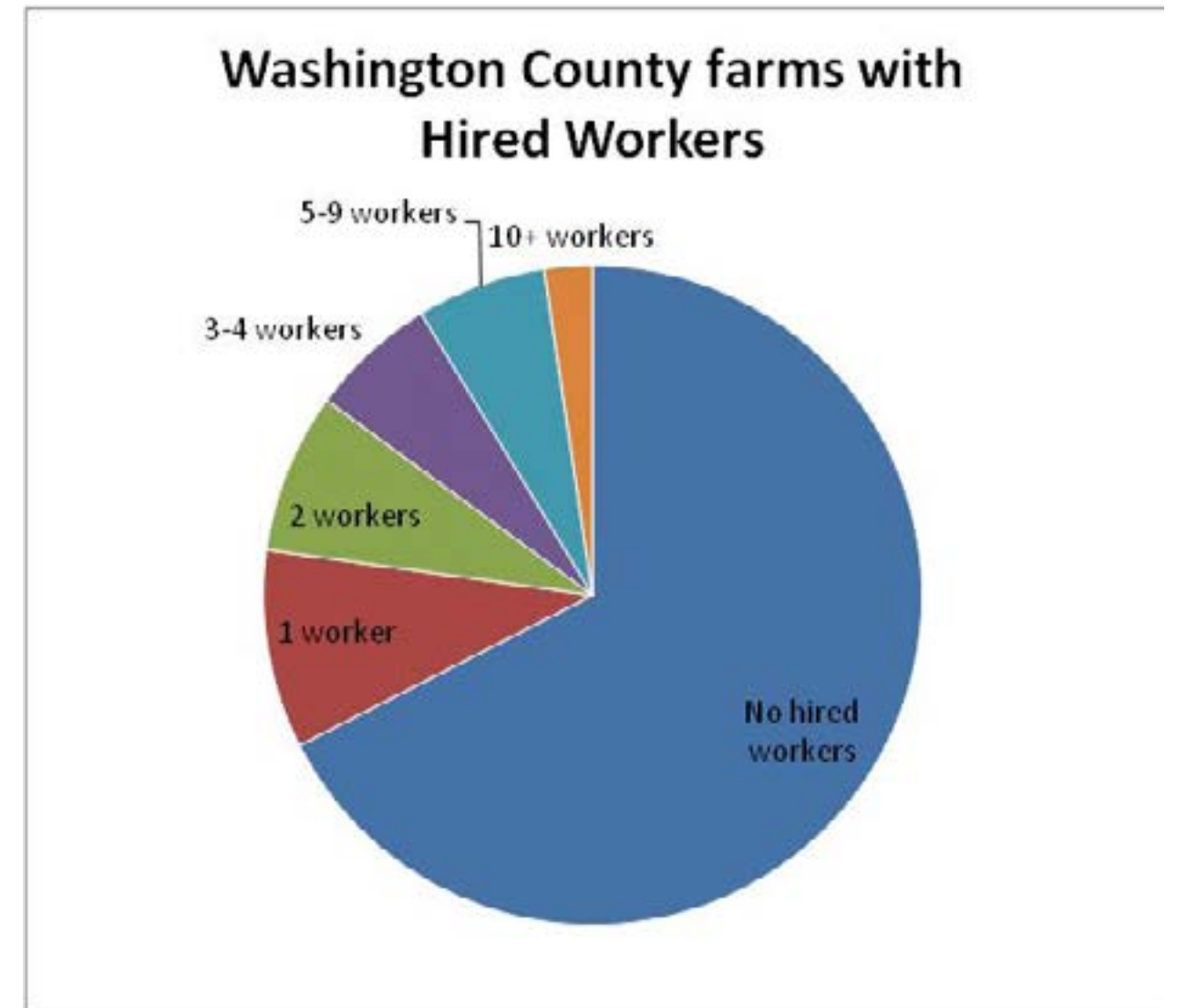


Figure 17: Farm Labor, 2012 from US Census of Agriculture

## Agriculture-Related Industry

Farming in Washington County is supported by a large and diverse agribusiness base that includes milk haulers, feed and seed dealers, hoof trimmers, farm equipment dealerships, agricultural lenders, and veterinarians. Farms in other counties located in the region and beyond rely on Washington County agricultural services and businesses.



Agricultural Districts

The purpose of the New York State Agricultural District Program is to protect current and future farmland from nonagricultural development. This is a voluntary program to help reduce competition for limited land resources and help prevent local laws which would inhibit farming and raise farm taxes. Predominantly viable agricultural land is eligible to be included in the Agricultural District Program.

A total of 29 districts had been formed by the mid-1980's, which have since been consolidated into nine agricultural districts in Washington County. There is a total of 289,990 acres included in the agricultural districts. Of that, 171,646 acres (59%) are classified as farms or receive an agricultural assessment.

The following table describes these districts in more detail.

Acreage in Washington County Agricultural Districts		
Agricultural District	Total Acres in District	Acres in Farmland
Agricultural District 24	11299	8361
Consolidated Agricultural District 1	39132	22625
Consolidated Agricultural District 2	4221.5	1198
Consolidated Agricultural District 3	55535	40795
Consolidated Agricultural District 4	23198	15939
Consolidated Agricultural District 5	28234	15983
Consolidated Agricultural District 6	42714	23880
Consolidated Agricultural District 7	48267	30681
Consolidated Agricultural District 8	37389	20546

Table 6: Agricultural Districts

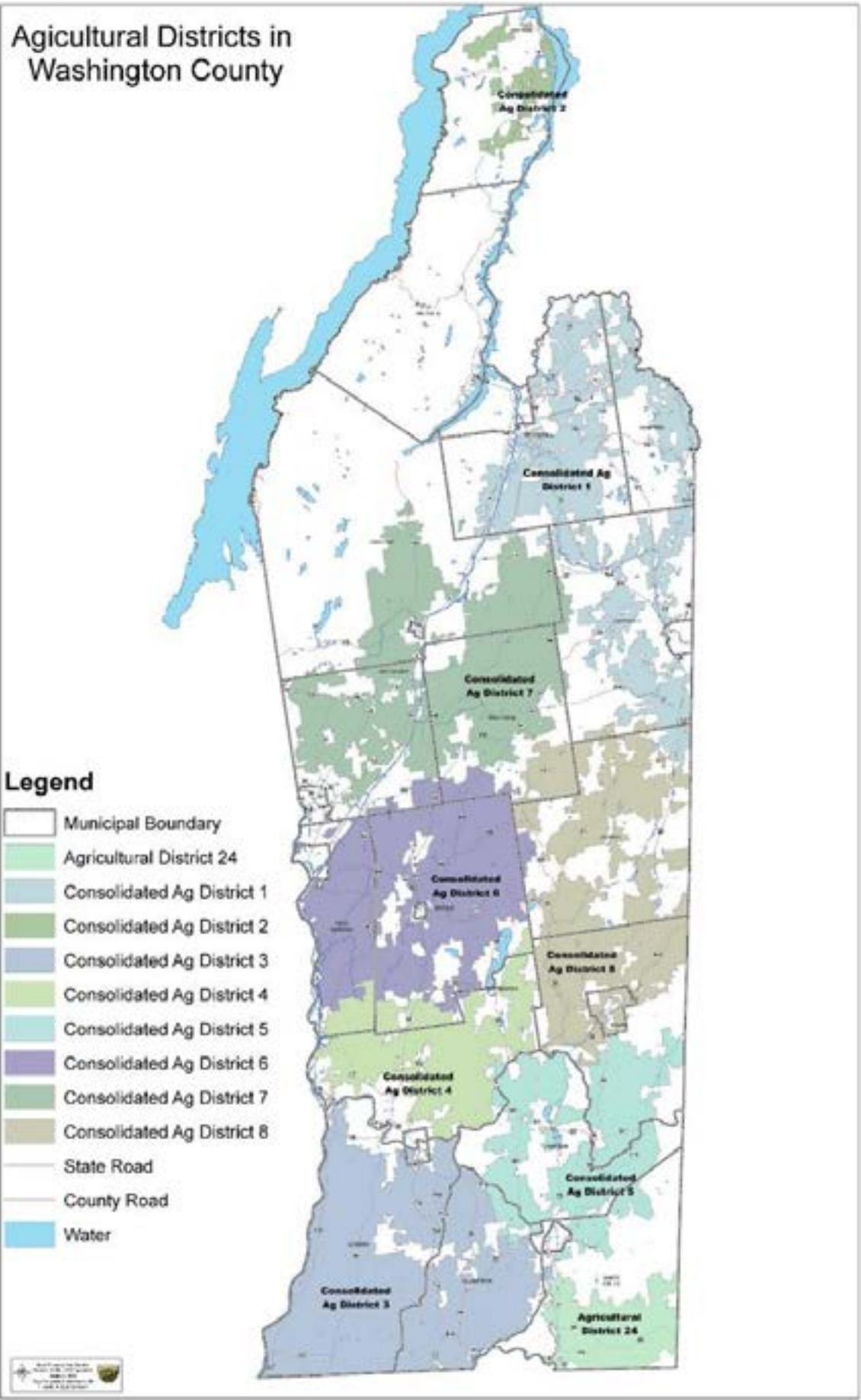


Figure 18: Map of Agricultural Districts in Washington County



Agricultural Assessments in Washington County

Farmers and farmland owners can take advantage of reduced tax assessments through the New York Agricultural Assessment Program. Generally, farmland that receives a reduced assessment must be actively farmed and show a commitment on the part of the farmer and/or landowner to continue farming. The Agricultural Land Use Map shows all those parcels in the County that participate and receive an agricultural assessment.

Based on the 2015 assessment roll (Table 7):

- 2,335 - # of farm parcels claiming an agricultural assessment (in 2015 that figure was 2,410)
- \$125,061,237 - total value of the agricultural assessments
- 163 parcels receiving an agricultural building exemption
- \$11,126,462 - total equalized assessment amount

Agricultural Land Value Assessment Program Participation Rates by Town (2015)		
Town	Number of parcels enrolled in Agricultural Assessment program	Percent of parcels enrolled in Agricultural Assessment program
Argyle	262	48.00%
Cambridge	213	60.36%
Dresden	18	4.59%
Easton	205	69.72%
Fort Ann	117	16.19%
Fort Edward	121	55.91%
Granville	176	40.42%
Greenwich	190	51.36%
Hampton	28	26.42%
Hartford	154	57.03%
Hebron	180	41.61%
Jackson	162	47.28%
Kingsbury	155	49.25%
Putnam	18	11.44%
Salem	173	48.39%
White Creek	150	45.77%
Whitehall	88	35.32%
County Total	2,335	40.05%

Table 7: Agricultural Land Value Assessments

Natural Resource Characteristics

Fundamentally, agriculture is a natural resource based land use/industry. The County is blessed with favorable conditions for growing crops for dairy and livestock production. However, climate, soils and drainage conditions also allow for a variety of other crops to be grown such as fruits and vegetables.

Soil types vary from clay to gravel and sands, to silts and loams, with high lime to low lime. The combination of river valleys and mountain tops with north, south, east and west facing slopes is somewhat unique for farming in New York State. There is usually a crop that can be matched to a site and this gives Washington County the potential for a balanced agricultural economy.

Furthermore, water recharge systems and wildlife habitat have improved since the early part of the century. This is a direct result of the reforestation of the upland that was cleared in the 1800's and used as sheep pasturage. Such land is now a salient feature of the landscape and provides opportunities for various productive uses.

The County is drained by both the Hudson River and Lake Champlain. Natural rainfall is sufficient for most crops and irrigation isn't usually necessary. Streams are abundant and most farms have adequate water supplies. Water provides opportunities for diverse farming techniques and crops.

Washington County's diverse soils and topography provide opportunities for many types of farm commodities. New York State delineates exceptional farmland as prime farmlands and soils of statewide importance. Figure 11 illustrates farmland which are prime, unique and of statewide importance.

Soils<sup>5</sup>

Washington County is made up of three physiographic regions: the Adirondack Mountain area in the northwest, the Taconic Upland in the eastern half and the Hudson-Champlain Lowland. The soils in the Adirondack Mountain area are shallow and medium-textured, formed by glacial till over bedrock on uplands. The parent material is mostly syenite and granite. Soils in the Taconic Upland were also formed by glacial till on uplands, but they are deeper and have a fragipan. The parent material is mostly shale, slate, and sandstone. The soils in the Hudson-Champlain Lowland were formed from river and lake sediments. They are deep soils that range from medium-textured to fine clays. Several streams and rivers run through Washington County, along which there are productive gravels and alluvial silt loams.

The Battenkill River and the Mettawee River are two notable rivers along which lie very productive river bottom soils. There are almost 7,000 acres of muck soils in the county, but they have not been developed for agricultural production.

Successful agriculture depends on quality soils. High quality soils require less fertilizer and nutrients for growing crops. Farms with higher quality agricultural soils typically have lower costs and higher production rates. Prime Farmland Soils and Soils of Statewide Importance are defined by the USDA and New York State. These are considered the most productive soils for farming.

Prime Farmland

Prime farmland is best suited to the production of row, forage and fiber crops. Due to inherent natural characteristics such as level topography, good drainage, adequate moisture supply, favorable soil depth and favorable soil texture, this land consistently produces the greatest yield of food and fiber with the least fertilizer, labor and energy requirements.

Prime soils tend to be resistant to erosion and run off; thus, they support intensive cultivation with minimal adverse environmental impacts. The conversion of prime farmland to non-farm development increases pressure to farm less productive, ecologically fragile lands. These lands tend to degrade rapidly, erode easily and contribute excessively to water quality problems.

Prime farmland in Washington County is shown on Figure 19. There are a total of 27,540 acres of prime farmland in Washington Country.

Farmland of Statewide Importance

In addition to prime farmland, farmland of statewide importance (see Figure 19) is of particular importance for the production of food, feed, fiber, forage and oilseed crops. Generally, these farmlands include those that produce fair to good yields of crops when treated and managed according to modern farming methods. If conditions are favorable, some may produce yields as high as those of prime farmland. Farmland of statewide importance makes up the majority of Washington County's exceptional farmland. The map of soils shows the close association between those towns with quality farmland soils and where agriculture is the prevalent land use in the towns.

<sup>5</sup> Excerpted from Rao, R., A. Gabriel, Q.M. Ketterings, and H. Krol (2007). Washington Soil Sample Survey (2002-2006). CSS Extension Bulletin E07-23. 33 pages



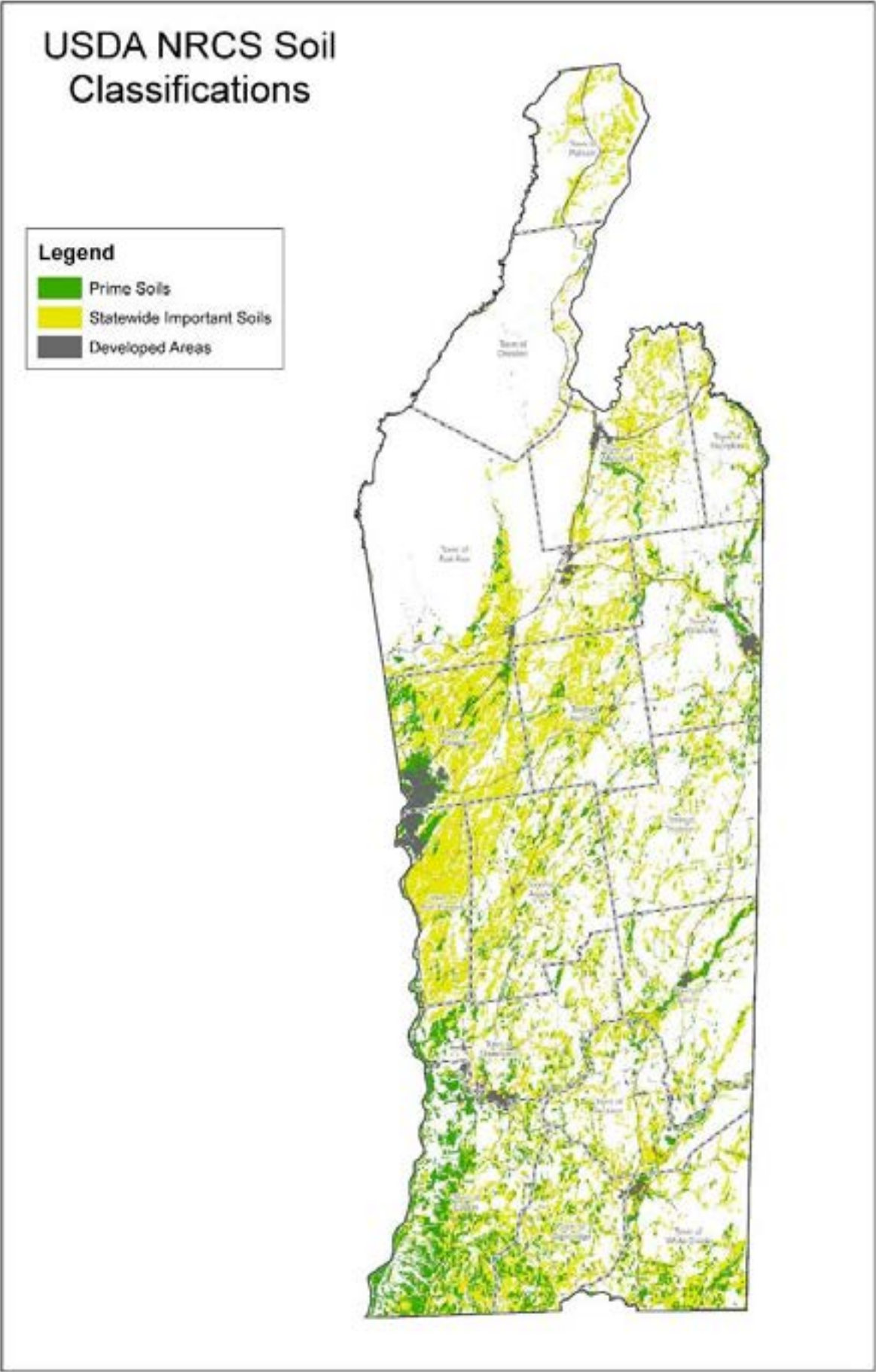


Figure 19: Map of Important Farmland Soils in Washington County

Conserved Lands

The “Conserved Land” Map shows the lands in Washington County that are permanently protected through use of conservation easements, or ownership for public use. There are 59,303 acres preserved by organizations, land trusts and government agencies. Lands protected through use of conservation easements can be found throughout the County, but are concentrated in the southern half, especially in the towns of Salem, Jackson, White Creek, Greenwich and Easton. Lands preserved through New York State ownership or by other organizations are concentrated in Dresden, Putnam, Fort Ann, Whitehall and White Creek.

Eight different organizations work to conserve lands in Washington County (Table 8 and Figure 20). Of these New York State and the Agricultural Stewardship Association (ASA) hold the largest acreage. By 2016 ASA had conserved 83 farms and 11,893 acres of land in Washington County with an additional 5,095 acres protected on 28 farms in Rensselaer County.

Conserved Lands in Washington County		
Organization	Acres of Land	Description
The Nature Conservancy	2,491	Owned
Agricultural Stewardship Association	11,893	Conservation Easements
NYS Agencies	38,339	Owned and Conservation Easements
Lake George Land Conservancy	1,763	Owned and Conservation Easements
Battenkill Conservancy	17	Owned
Friends of the Important Bird Area	14	Owned
Open Space Institute	3,333	Owned and Conservation Easements
The Conservation Fund	1,453	Owned
Total Conserved Lands (2016)	59,303	

Table 8: Conservation and Public Access Lands





7 Note that the ASA Plan included both Washington and Rensselaer counties. The maps shown here covers just Washington County.



Farmland Plan Steering Committee determined that the methodology, criteria and resulting maps from the ASA study are the same ones desired for the purposes of this plan. Thus, the ASA results are presented and summarized below. See Figure 21 for map showing farmland ranking criteria and

### Priority Areas

These areas (See Figure 22) contain significant amounts of high quality farmland and productive soils that are conducive to a long-term agricultural business environment. Priority areas also include current concentrations of conserved farmland and other important anchor farms. In Washington County, these priority areas are:

1. Hudson River Corridor (along Route 40) (some of this priority area extends into Rensselaer County)
2. White Creek Valley (along Route 153)
3. Batten Kill (along Route 313)
4. Hoosic River Watershed (some of this priority area extends into Rensselaer County)

### Special Areas

These areas (See Figure 23) contain productive farms and woodlands, areas of scenic, environmental or historical significance and farms that define our unique community character. Special Areas are of secondary priority after Priority Areas. In Washington County, these Special Areas are:

- A. Kingsbury – Fort Ann Flats
- B. Champlain Canal Corridor
- C. Granville/Hebron
- D. Black Creek Valley (along Routes 30 and 31)
- E. Historic Route 22 Corridor
- F. Greenwich-Cambridge Corridor (along Route 372)

### Independent Project Sites

The ASA study also discusses independent project sites that are important to protect. These are individual or contiguous properties that otherwise meet the criteria for Priority or Special Areas contained in ASA's Farmland Conservation Plan or other criteria identified within this Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan, but fall outside of the identified Priority Areas and Special Areas. These properties are important to protect by reason of

location, farm viability, or specific development threats. This category also includes properties for which the owners are willing to donate their development rights and/or properties for which private funding is available.

Washington County desires to support all farmland protection projects if it meets the state criteria, or criteria contained in the plan. Thus, independent projects that are not included in the Priority or Special Areas identified above will also be considered for farmland conservation programs.

Other criteria of importance to identification of important farmlands in Washington County include whether the parcel is included in a New York State certified Agricultural District and whether the local municipality has identified the parcels as important farmland within their local agricultural and farmland protection plans.

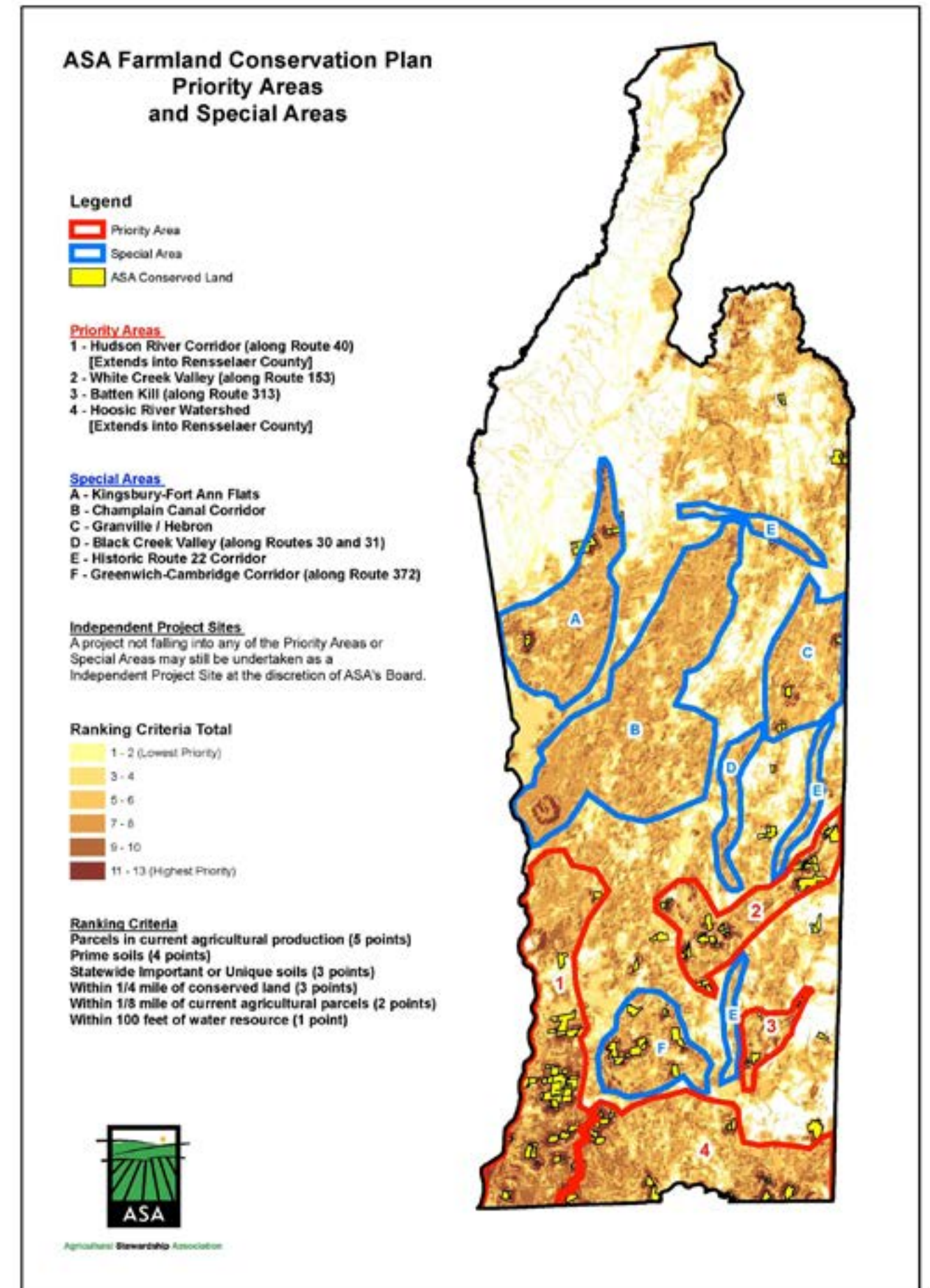


Figure 21 Map of Farmland Ranking Criteria:



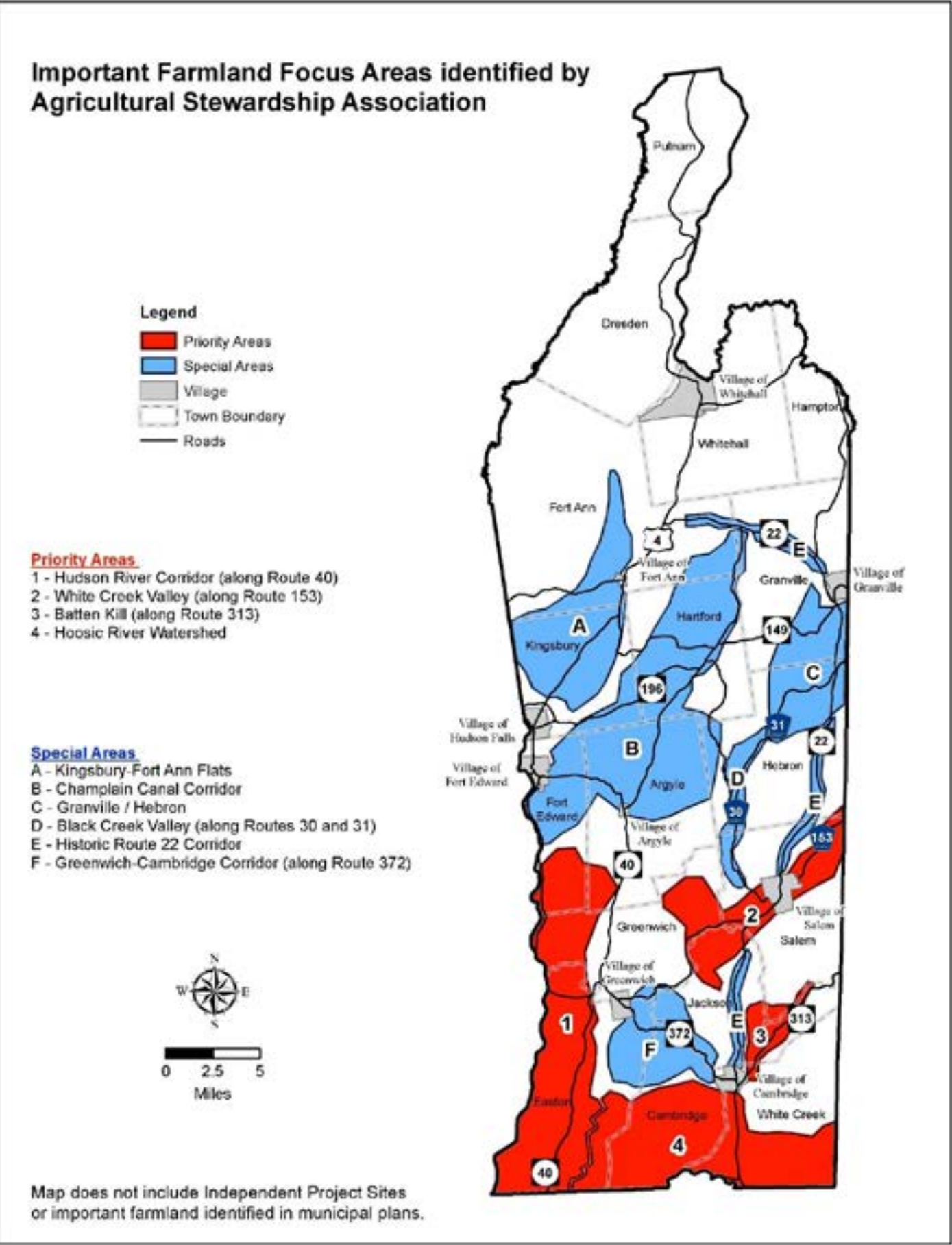


Figure 22: Priority and Special Areas map from ASA's Farmland Conservation Plan.

## Local Plans and Regulations

A comprehensive plan is the foundation for local land use regulation and is important because it also establishes the policies, vision, and strategies desired by a community. Land use regulations, including zoning, flow from the plan to meet those community objectives.

Both can affect agriculture in many ways. Zoning can create opportunities or place barriers to farming practices. One of the goals of the Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan is to identify barriers to agricultural viability including those related to land use regulations and make recommendations concerning farm friendly zoning.

Certain regulations can place challenges and barriers towards establishing or expanding a farm operation. Zoning laws sometimes regulate where farms can operate and at what intensity farmland could be developed for other, non-farm uses. Zoning identifies whether a farm use is permitted as of right, needs no further planning board review, or if it requires a more involved review process such as a site plan or special use permit approval. Some zoning laws go beyond these requirements and regulate setbacks, or height. Others establish minimum acres required in order to be considered a farm or regulate the number of animals a farmer could have.

In some areas, choices made by local communities in their zoning can affect land values, make farm expansion or start-ups difficult, cause fragmentation of viable farmland and hasten conversion to other uses. When local laws restrict agriculture, a sense of impermanence for farming can develop which in turn, can foster disinvestment in farm operations and ultimately lead to sale of the land for development. This effect, coupled with non-farm growth pressures such as residential and commercial development, can make selling land for non-farm development appealing. As such, it is an important aspect of agriculture and farmland protection to understand the regulatory climate in the County.

### Smart Growth Assessment Project in Washington County

In 2014, the Town of Fort Edward partnered with the Glens Falls Hospital Health Promotion Center (HPC) to undertake a Smart Growth Assessment Project. This project, which also included the town of Lake George, examined the town of Fort Edward's land use regulations, with specific reference to the town's position and capacity for undertaking smart growth practices. The HPC is the regional contractor of the NYS Department of Health

Creating Healthy Places to Live, Work and Play Program, as well as several related programs.

The project included an audit of the town's land use regulations using a Smart Growth America audit tool, as well as a series of recommendations to improve smart growth practices and build healthier communities. Once the report was completed, the town of Fort Edward elected not to utilize additional funding (available to further findings of the report). Instead, Washington County engaged the use of the funding to conduct an assessment of all town land use regulations as a supporting component to the county's Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan.

The results of this review are translated into specific recommendations about changes that can be made locally to improve the farm-friendliness of plans and zoning laws. These recommendations are also informed by guidance offered by the New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets through their "Guidelines of Review of Local Zoning and Planning Laws" and "Local Laws and Agricultural Districts: Guidance for Local Governments and Farmers."

Table 9 identifies what planning and land use tools are used, by Town. Since the Smart Growth Assessment was completed, the Town of Greenwich has since adopted zoning. Towns of Granville, White Creek and Hartford have locally approved agriculture plans. The Town of White Creek is in the process of updating its subdivision and site plan laws.





The Smart Growth Assessment included review of the local plans and land use laws identified below (Table 10). Appendix C details the specific audit questions that were evaluated for each law reviewed.

Town	Comprehensive Plan	Zoning	Subdivision Law	Site Plan Law
Argyle	Yes	No	Yes	No
Cambridge	In Process	No	Yes	No
Dresden	No	APA	APA	No
Easton	Yes	No	Yes	In Process
Fort Ann	In Process	APA	Yes	Yes
Fort Edward	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Granville	No	No	Yes	No
Greenwich	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Hampton	No	No	Yes	Yes
Hartford	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Hebron	No	No	Yes	In Process
Jackson	Yes	No	Yes	No
Kingsbury	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Putnam	No	APA	Yes	Yes
Salem	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
White Creek	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Whitehall	Yes	No	Yes	Yes

Table 9: Comprehensive Plans and Land Use Laws in Washington County Towns.

Argyle	Subdivision Regulations – w/ amendments through 5/2/13
Cambridge	Subdivision Regulations – July 15, 1991.
Fort Ann	Site Plan Review, LL #3, 1990. Subdivision Regulations “Effective July 10, 1999.” (definitions: 5/90)
Fort Edward	Site Plan Review Subdivision Regulations Zoning
Granville	Subdivision Regulations
Greenwich	Site Plan Review “Approved January 2, 2001” Subdivision Regulations “10-15-2007” paper copy same as online Zoning “2013 Update” online
Hampton	Site Plan Review Subdivision Regulations “Local Law No. 2 of 1991”
Hartford	Site Plan Review – Amendment to LL #3, 2000 “Adopted as of 6/12/03 No State Filing”
Hebron	Site Plan Review “December 16, 2002 – Final Revision A” Subdivision Regulations
Jackson	Subdivision Regulations “Jan 30, 1990”
Kingsbury	Zoning Subdivision Regulations
Putnam	Site Plan Review, LL #3, 2003. Subdivision Regulations “Adopted June 29, 1971”
Salem	Site Plan Review, 10/13/99 w/ amendments through LL #4, 2007. Subdivision Regulations
White Creek	Site Plan Review, LL #1, 1997. Subdivision Regulations, LL #1, 1993.
Whitehall	Site Plan Review. LL #7, 1990 Subdivision Regulations, LL #6, 1990.

Table 10: Local Plans and Laws Reviewed in Smart Growth Audit



Summary of the Zoning and Land Use Law Review

The audit resulted in the identification of several prominent and interrelated characteristics. Municipal land use planning, practice and education related to agriculture is deficient in many locations in New York State.

Seven of 17 towns have adopted zoning laws. While many of the towns in Washington County have comprehensive or other plans that identify the importance of agriculture, the land use regulations of the county’s towns, in large part, are not as well equipped as they could be in guiding farmland protection or meeting the challenges of growth effectively. While site plan review and subdivision laws are more common, most do not address agriculture adequately.

The criteria included in the audit (See Appendix D) are those that characterize farm-friendly regulations and policies. A summary of observations includes:

1. With a few exceptions, most of the land use regulatory policies adopted in Washington County do not include those farm-friendly practices. Of the 27 laws reviewed, less than 30% of them could be characterized as being farm-friendly. Most were silent in their treatment of agricultural uses, or in establishing development policies that help non-farm uses co-exist with agricultural operations.
2. Most of the regulations reviewed have language that is generic and that do not help articulate the review process, the role of the reviewing board in protecting and promoting agriculture when development takes place, or provide rural development-oriented guidelines or rules. For example, none of the laws either encourage or require use of buffers between farm and non-farm uses. Five establish some level of design standards that serve to direct new building to locations on the parcel that would still allow for agriculture to take place.
3. Some farm-friendly criteria are centered on the use of zoning or other land use regulations to encourage agriculture. This can be accomplished by allowing for agricultural uses as a permitted use (no planning board review), allowing for multiple uses on a farm provided they are related to the farm operation, or minimizing use of special use permits or site plan review for certain agricultural operations. Only a handful of local laws

address these. Agriculture can also be addressed by ensuring that new non-farm uses do not adversely impact farms. This can be accomplished through application submittals that provide information on where and what type of farming might be nearby, use of the agricultural data statement, or inclusion of an agricultural disclosure notice. Only three laws require the agricultural data statement, and only one includes an agricultural disclosure notice. Both these requirements are addressed in the NYS Agriculture and Markets Law (Article 25-AA §305- a.(a)).

4. Most of the laws do not plan for use of innovative development patterns such as conservation subdivision or clustering (five do address that). Further, most do not address farm worker housing, use of accessory buildings for farm uses, use of wind mills and solar facilities on farms, or processing. One law allows for farm processing.
5. Several inconsistencies between local procedures and state statutes were found, most notably differences in time frames (e.g. 45 vs. 62 days).
6. There were numerous instances where an official map was mentioned in local laws. And even though the qualifier “if such exists” was often included, it comes across as something of a robotic reference if the community does not have an official map. But rather than just removing such mentions, the purpose of the tool as well as viable alternatives to achieving the purpose should be closely examined.
7. In more than a few laws, provisions exist for the planning board or planning board chairman to make “a jurisdictional determination” as to whether or not the regulations apply in certain situations, e.g. when it is unclear. This job should belong to the individual charged with administration of the local law (usually the code enforcement officer or the zoning enforcement officer). Practically speaking, it’s a conflict for a board charged with applying a local law to the review of development applications to also have the role of deciding whether or not that law applies to a given situation. From a legal standpoint, such practices can increase the likelihood of a challenge to local laws that contain these provisions, despite supersession clauses that also may be included. In

another example, an appeal of a planning board decision may be taken to the town board, instead of the Article 78 proceeding cited in the statutes.

8. Another curious feature of some local laws is the “exempt subdivision,” meaning that local review procedures are waived in part or wholesale. Such a term and the associated practice may be considered contradictory, given the statutory definition of a subdivision and the considerations for sound planning at the local level. As one example, if a division of land occurs and is exempt from local regulation, what assurances are there for inclusion of infrastructure on the lot, e.g. water, sewer, or access – typical elements of local regulations – if there is no review to ensure these items are in place?
9. Two instances were noted in which the planning board was authorized to adopt new regulations. This is a legislative action and falls under the authority of the town board, not the planning board.
10. The question of when an application is complete can be confusing, and local regulations often do not clarify the matter. Fortunately, Town Law § 276. 5. (c) determines completeness for SEQR purposes. This standard can be incorporated into local regulations with positive effect, and § 276 can be referenced in local regulations, as it integrates SEQR and subdivision procedures.

The audit reveals an opportunity for communities in Washington County to enhance local programs to provide greater recognition and protection of agriculture when new development arises. In addition to the opportunities for improving regulations, including integration of agricultural components, purpose statements and design standards, the choice of replacing some local laws in their entirety cannot be discounted. And beyond assessing the adequacy of land use tools in preserving farmland and facing the challenges of growth, a host of other technical or “housekeeping” reasons could help catalyze amendment of existing tools.



Right to Farm Laws in Washington County

Washington County currently has not yet adopted a county-level right-to-farm law. It was a recommended strategy in the 1996 Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan.

Fourteen towns in Washington County have a local right-to-farm law or a section within their land use regulations that address the right to farm, and include:

Argyle - 2016	Salem - 1991
Fort Edward - 1992	Easton - 1992
Granville - 2015	Cambridge - 1991
Hartford - 1993	Fort Ann - 2007
Kingsbury - 1992	Hampton - 1997
Greenwich - 2007	Jackson - 1994
White Creek - 1992	Putnam - 1992



Farmland Conversion Pressure

Farmland can be lost when it is converted to urban uses, abandoned, or converted to protected, but non-farmed open spaces. This loss has been a concern in Washington County for years. The 1996 Plan reported a loss of 18,500 acres of tillable cropland between 1987 and 1992. While the loss of farmland has slowed over the most recent decade, other pressures on farmland use are present.

A significant issue in Washington County involves concerns about increasing land prices and competition for farmland. That competition is both between farmers for farmland and with others for conversion to residential or commercial use. Farmers, especially dairy farmers, are increasingly concerned about the availability of land to expand operations and manage manure. Competition for land between both farmers and non-farmers and increasing land costs are other concerns.

- ★ Conversion pressure on farmland can be measured in several direct and indirect ways:
- ★ Population Change – Where and how much is taking place?
- ★ Housing Changes – Where and how much additional housing is being built?
- ★ Infrastructure (Water, Sewer, Roads) Changes – Where is infrastructure located in relation to population and housing growth and farmland?
- ★ Critical Mass of Farmland – where is the critical mass of priority farmland in Washington County and are these areas under conversion pressure?

Population				
Town	2000 Census	2010 Census	2014 Estimate	% Change 2000 to 2010
Argyle	3,688	3,782	3,758	3
Cambridge	2,152	2,021	1,974	-6
Dresden	677	652	545	-4
Easton	2,259	2,336	2,375	3
Fort Ann	6,417	6,190	6,175	-4
Fort Edward	5,892	6,371	6,275	8
Granville	6,456	6,669	6,604	3
Greenwich	4,896	4,942	4,929	1
Hampton	871	938	969	8
Hartford	2,279	2,269	2,337	-0.4
Hebron	1,773	1,853	1,713	5
Jackson	1,718	1,800	1,799	5
Kingsbury	11,171	12,671	12,696	13
Putnam	645	609	698	-6
Salem	2,702	2,715	2,708	0.5
White Creek	3,411	3,356	3,342	-2
Whitehall	4,035	4,042	4,013	0.2
County	61,042	63,216	62,910	4

Population changes

Between 2000 and 2010, the County’s population increased by almost 2200 and was 63,216 people in 2010. That reflects a 4% increase. The US Census has estimated a slightly lower population of 62,910 people in 2014. Growth has historically been low, but steady. Lack of sewer and water infrastructure remains a limiting factor for intensive development.

The low density residential development pattern here has other implications for agriculture: it can increase conflicts between new rural residents and agricultural operations, fragment access to farm fields, degrade the environment, increase property values, and increase taxes. It also will likely increase demands for upgrades in services to rural areas.

Table 11 shows population changes town by town. Six towns lost population. Cambridge and Putnam lost more than other towns by percentage (about 6%). Eleven towns gained population – ranging from less than 1% increase (Salem) to 13.4% (Kingsbury). Kingsbury had the highest percent increase in population between 2000 and 2010 followed by the Town of Fort Edward (8%) and Hampton (7.7%). Most of the other towns saw moderate growth rates of 2% to 5%. The highest levels of growth occurred in towns surrounding Fort Edward.

Table 11: Population Trends

Housing Changes

County-wide, there was a 7.5% increase in the number of housing units in Washington County between 2000 and 2010 (Table 12 and Figures 23 and 24). By 2010, there were 28,793 housing units in the County. In that decade, housing growth outpaced population growth (3.56% population increase compared to 7.5% housing unit increase). All but one town (Dresden) had increases in the number of housing units, even in those towns that lost population. The highest growth in the number of housing units was in Kingsbury (763 units in 10 years – a 15.8% increase). Putnam also had a higher percent increase in units (10.3%) but that represents only 63 new units. Most of the towns had housing increases ranging from 3% to 9%.

In all towns but two, housing growth outpaced population growth. Dresden lost both population and housing units and Fort Edward saw population growth that was more than housing unit growth. In all other places, housing growth was higher, and in some cases, much higher than population growth.

A mismatch between housing growth and population growth is a common pattern seen throughout upstate New York. When this occurs, it often indicates some level of rural sprawl. In many cases, the difference can be attributed to construction of second homes.

Unlike population growth which was more concentrated in areas near Fort Edward, the larger housing increases can be seen throughout the County.

Infrastructure

Figures 25 and 26 show locations of water and sewer infrastructure in the County. That infrastructure is concentrated in and near the villages.

Second Homes in Washington County

There are approximately 2,766 dwellings, or about 1% of all dwellings in the County that are considered second homes by Washington County. Fort Ann has the highest number of second homes (467), followed by the Jackson (321) as shown below.

Fort Ann	467
Jackson	321
Putnam	315
Argyle	292
Dresden	266
Hebron	195
Salem	151
Greenwich	133
Granville	114
Hampton	108
White Creek	89
Whitehall	64
Kingsbury	62
Easton	60
Cambridge	50
Hartford	43
Fort Edward	36
2,766	



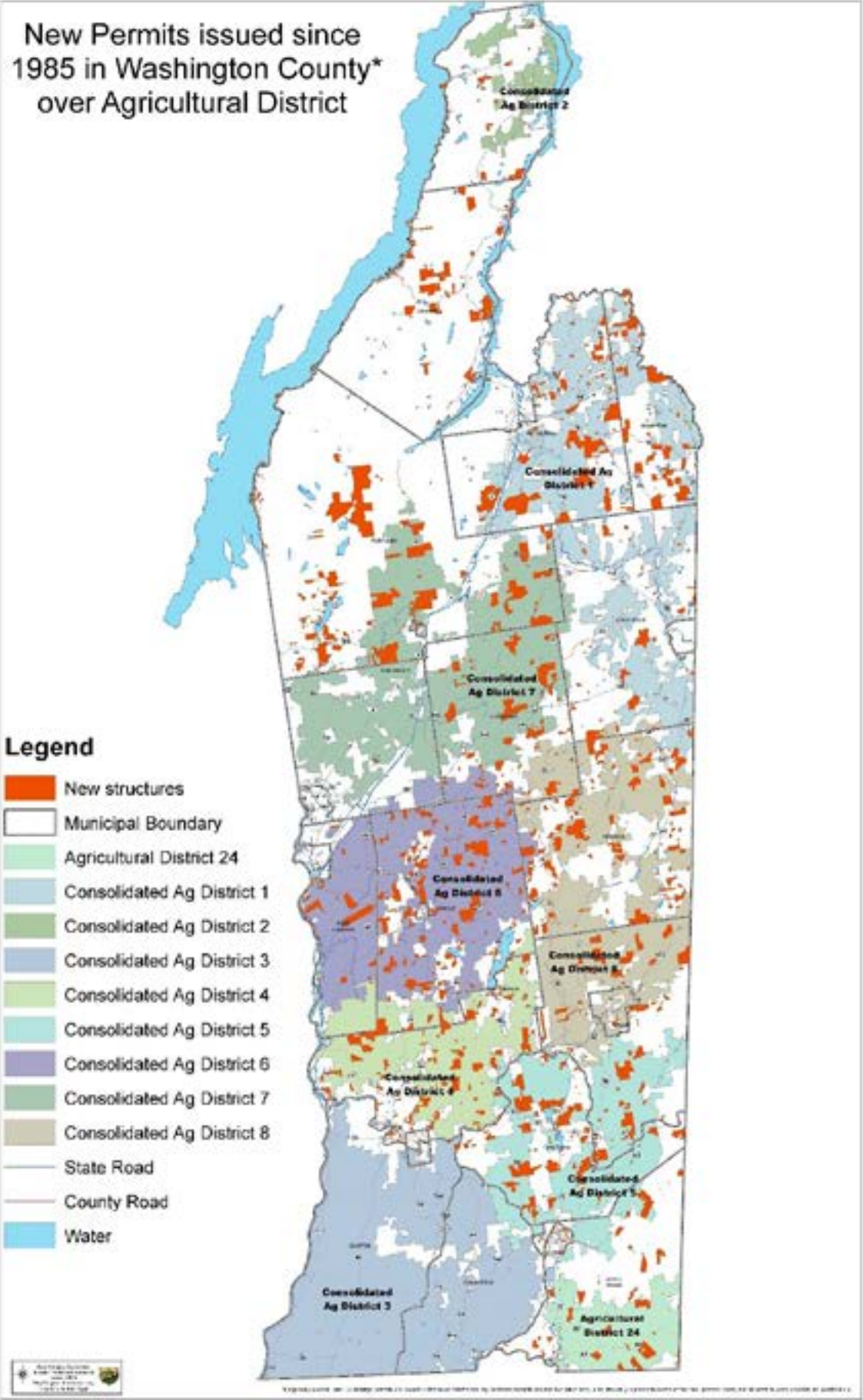


Figure 23: New Building Permits Issued with respect to location of NYS Agricultural Districts

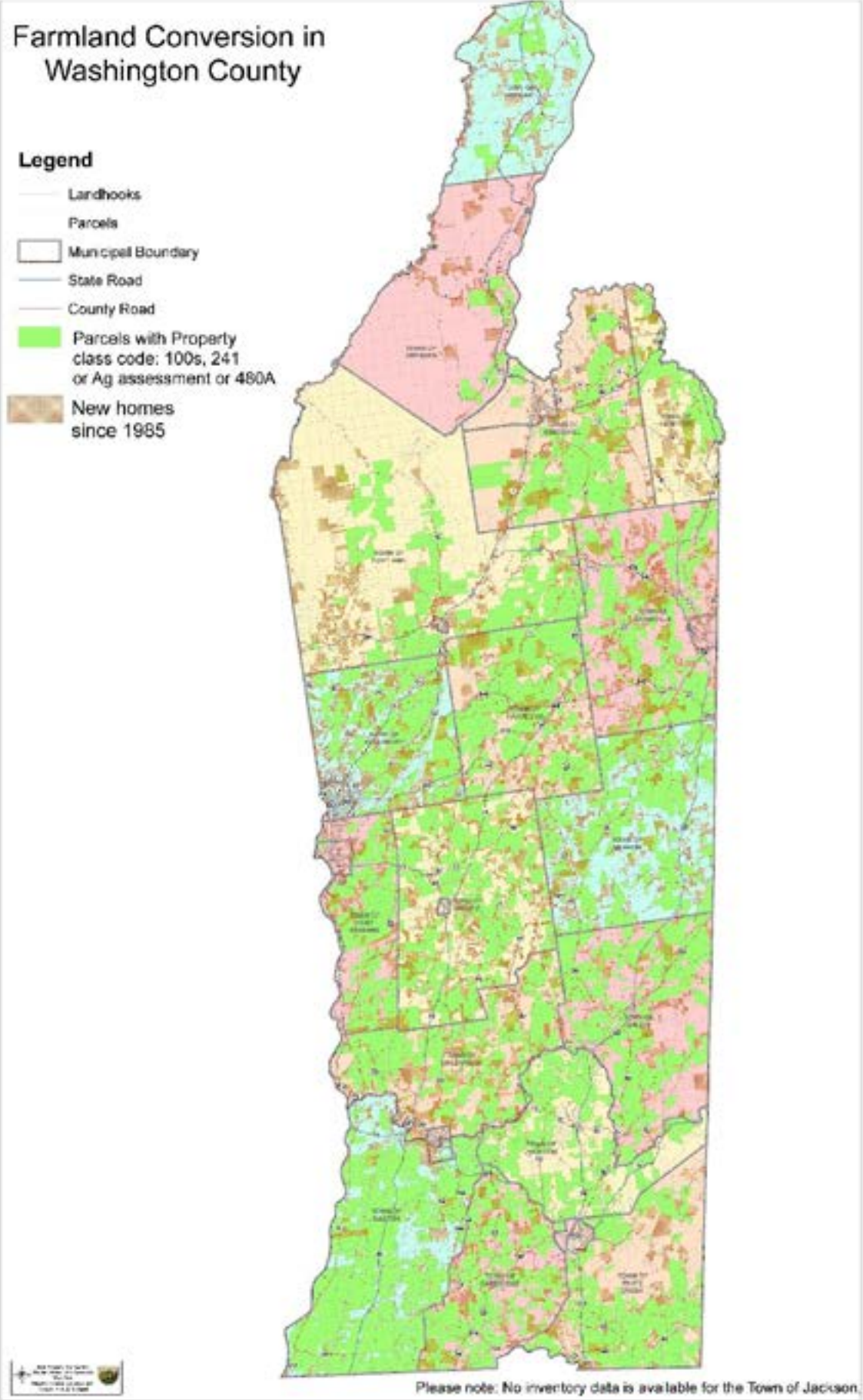


Figure 24: New Homes Built Since 1985



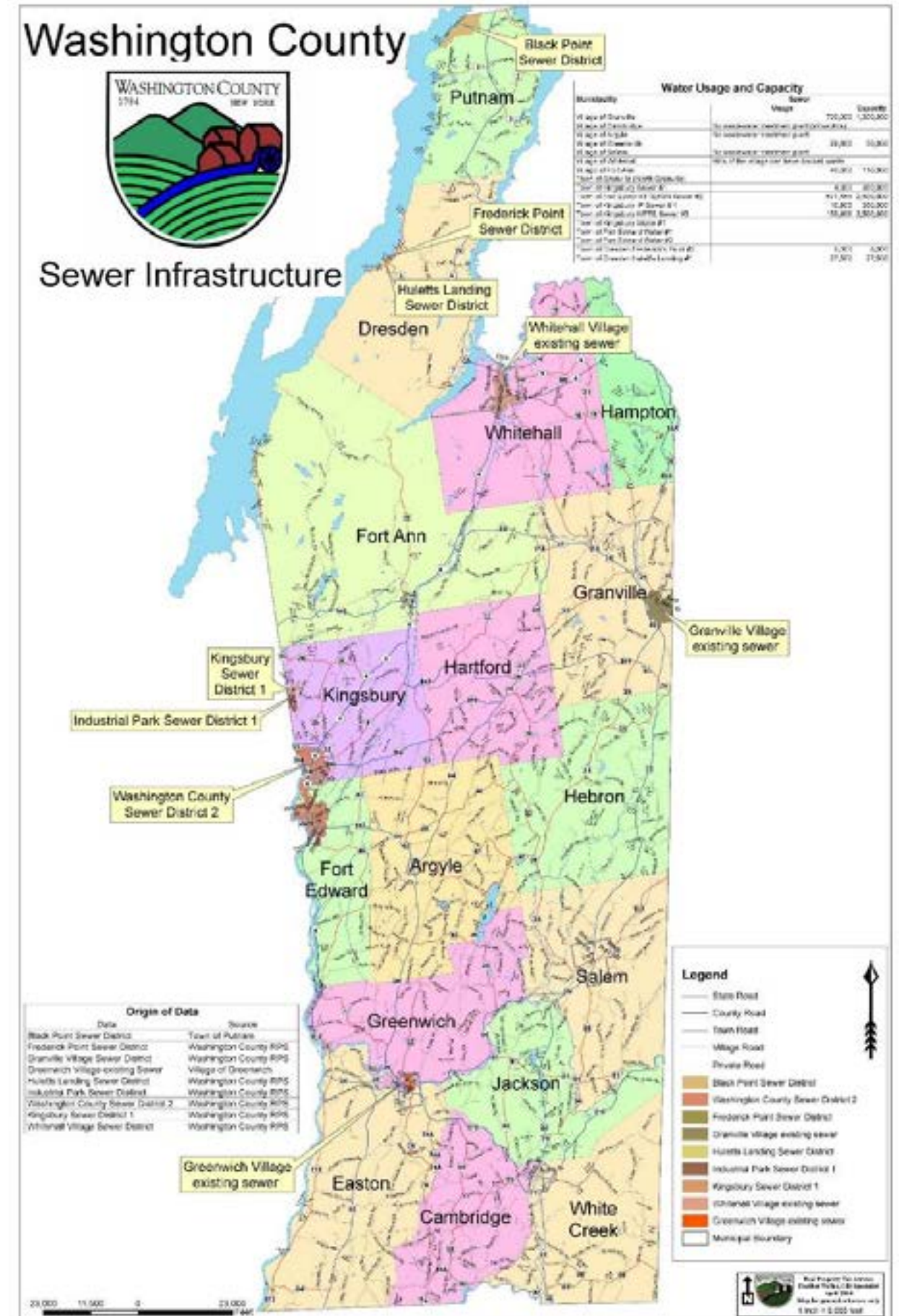


Figure 25: Map of Water District Locations

Figure 26: Map of Sewer Infrastructure in County



Housing Trends				
Town	2000 Census	2010 Census	2014 Estimate	% Change 2000 to 2010
Argyle	1,796	1,879	1,903	4.6
Cambridge	868	895	945	3.1
Dresden	630	615	615	-2.4
Easton	953	1,022	1,045	7.2
Fort Ann	1,957	2,077	1,981	6.1
Fort Edward	2,487	2,608	2,793	4.8
Granville	2,635	2,858	2,831	8.4
Greenwich	2,101	2,247	2,289	6.9
Hampton	435	473	499	8.7
Hartford	885	929	934	4.9
Hebron	906	992	1,019	9.5
Jackson	1,077	1,162	1,180	7.9
Kingsbury	4,823	5,586	5,473	15.8
Putnam	611	674	735	10.3
Salem	1,285	1,356	1,328	5.5
White Creek	1,466	1,501	1,505	2.3
Whitehall	1,877	1,919	1,881	2.2
County	26,792	28,793	28,956	7.4

Table 12: Housing Trends

Town	Population % change	Housing % Change
Argyle	2.5	4.6
Cambridge	-6.1	3.1
Dresden	-3.7	-2.4
Easton	3.4	7.2
Fort Ann	-3.5	6.1
Fort Edward	8.1	4.9
Granville	3.3	8.5
Greenwich	0.9	6.9
Hampton	7.7	8.7
Hartford	-0.4	5.0
Hebron	4.5	9.5
Jackson	4.8	7.9
Kingsbury	13.4	15.8
Putnam	-5.6	10.3
Salem	0.5	5.5
White Creek	-1.6	2.4
Whitehall	0.2	2.2
County	3.6	7.5

Table 13: Comparison of Housing and Population Growth

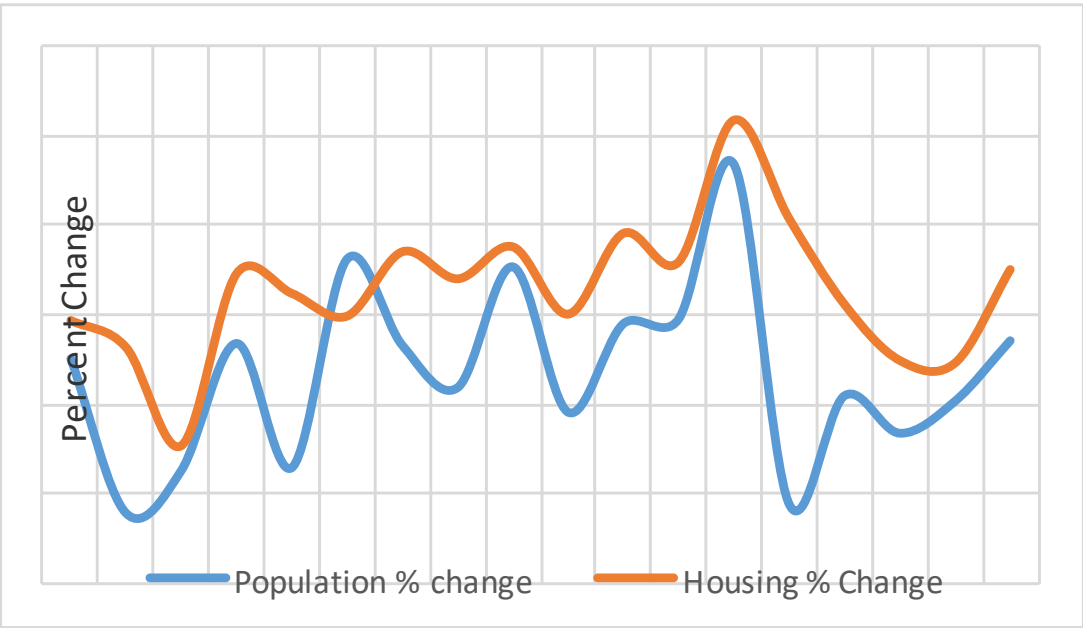


Figure 27: Comparison of Population and Housing Changes

### Cost of Community Service Studies

Communities often evaluate the impact of growth on local municipal budgets. Many municipalities believe that residential development benefits the fiscal health of the community and that it will lower property taxes. Others view farmland as a land use that should be developed to a higher and best use as residences or commercial property. However, a variety of fiscal impact studies done throughout New York State have shown that residential development is a net fiscal loss and that maintaining land in farming is fiscally beneficial.

A Cost of Community Service Study (COCS) is a form of fiscal impact analysis that helps communities measure the contribution of agricultural lands to the local tax base. Farmlands may generate less tax revenue compared to residential, commercial, or industrial properties, but they also require little infrastructure or public services.<sup>8</sup> Multiple studies done throughout the State show farmlands actually generate more public revenue than they receive back in public services. COCS not only show that there is a high cost of residential development, but that agricultural land uses offer fiscal benefits similar for commercial and industrial land uses <sup>9</sup>. “In nearly every community studied, farmland has generated a fiscal surplus to help offset the shortfall created by residential demand for public services. This is true even when the land is assessed at its current, agricultural use.” In the American Farmland Trust study, the median cost per dollar of revenue raised to provide public services is \$0.29 for farmland and open lands and \$1.27 for residential land uses.

In 1996, the relationship between cost of providing services and farmland was explored in a cost of community service study for the Towns of Greenwich and Hartford . Those two towns were chosen as they represented a town with significant growth (Greenwich) and one that had not experienced such growth (Hartford). The results of that study are very similar to those conducted elsewhere in New York and the United States. In Greenwich, residential land required \$1.40 in services (including school) for every dollar of revenue it generated. In

comparison, every dollar generated by agricultural land cost \$0.16 to provide services. Similarly, in Hartford <sup>10</sup>, residential land required \$1.39 in services (including school) for every dollar of revenue it generated and for every dollar of agricultural land, it costs \$0.12 to service.

In both towns, the results were nearly identical despite different rates of growth – further evidence that new residential development does not have a meaningful positive effect on the tax base when it occurs at the expense of farmland. Other more recent studies have borne out this same conclusion.

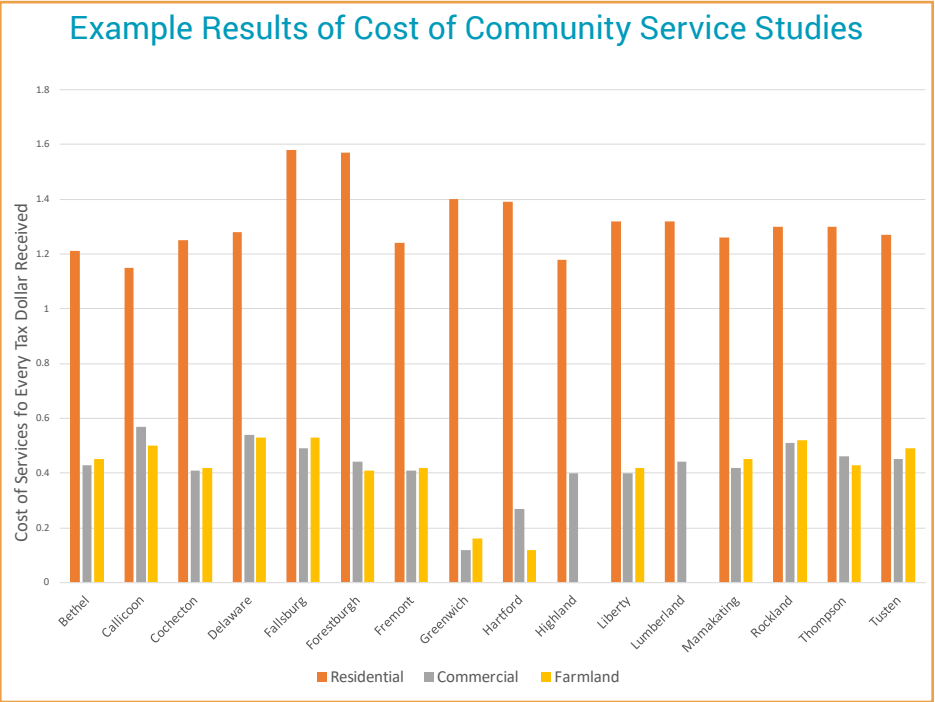
The following chart (Figure 28) illustrates some of the other COCS studies done in the Hudson Valley of New York State, including Greenwich and Hartford. While the exact dollar figures change from location to location, these studies both within New York State as well as other locations in the United States show a great amount of consistency in the general results: agricultural land uses are important to the fiscal health of a community and have a far more important role in keeping taxes low compared to residential land uses.

<sup>8</sup> Adapted from the American Farmland Trust, Farmland Information Center Fact Sheet on Cost of Community Service Studies, August 2010.

<sup>9</sup> American Farmland Trust, Farmland Information Center Fact Sheet on Cost of Community Service Studies, August 2010.

<sup>10</sup> Source: Washington County Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan, Supporting Studies, May 1996

Figure 28: Cost of Community Service Study Results from Studies





## Growth Patterns and Farming

Washington County has experienced slow to moderate yet steady increases in population and housing over the years. There is conversion pressure as shown by rising population and housing levels in most locations in Washington County. Currently, locations served with water and sewer infrastructure are concentrated near villages and hamlets. That affords opportunities to concentrate future growth in those locations and not spread out into farm areas. Kingsbury and Fort Edward have experienced the highest growth rates. Good planning to prevent infrastructure-caused sprawl will be important to maintain the farming areas in those communities. Overall, with populations and the numbers of houses rising in all towns, conversion pressure along with a keen demand by farmers for more land to farm will likely influence farmland costs and availability in the future. Ongoing scattered, large lot, rural development raises potential for conflicts, increased property values, higher taxes, and more pressure for divergent land uses that will likely negatively affect agriculture long-term.



## Agriculture and Broadband/Telecommunications

Farmers, agri-businesses and farm support agencies have all expressed their concern about lack of broadband infrastructure in the County. Lack of broadband services has been identified as a significant weakness that affects farms and ag-businesses. The County conducted a broadband survey recently and specifically examined whether lack of or inadequate broadband service was affecting the ability of farms to sell products or serve their customers. It found that 314 respondents indicated that they were using or would use broadband services for agricultural businesses. Of those, 131 said that lack of or inadequate broadband service was impacting their ability to sell products or serve their customers. Figure 29, below shows the number of agricultural businesses by Town affected by a lack of service. Figure 30 illustrates the areas within the County that have or do not have coverage for broadband

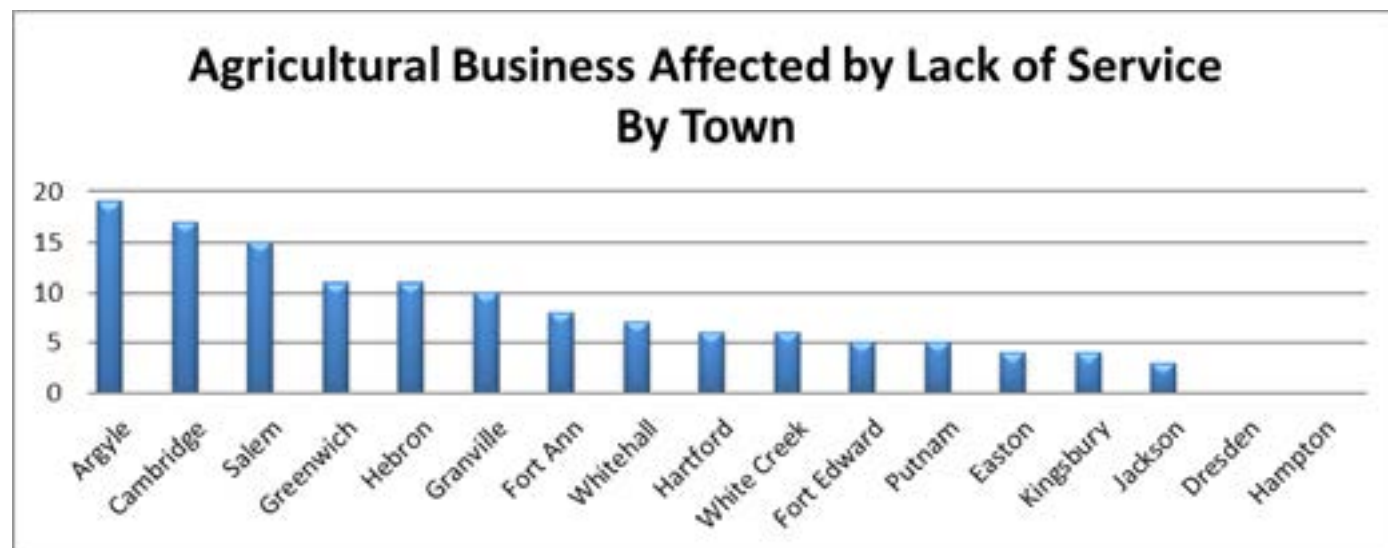


Figure 29: Agricultural Businesses Affected by Lack of Broadband Services by Town, from the County Broadband Study

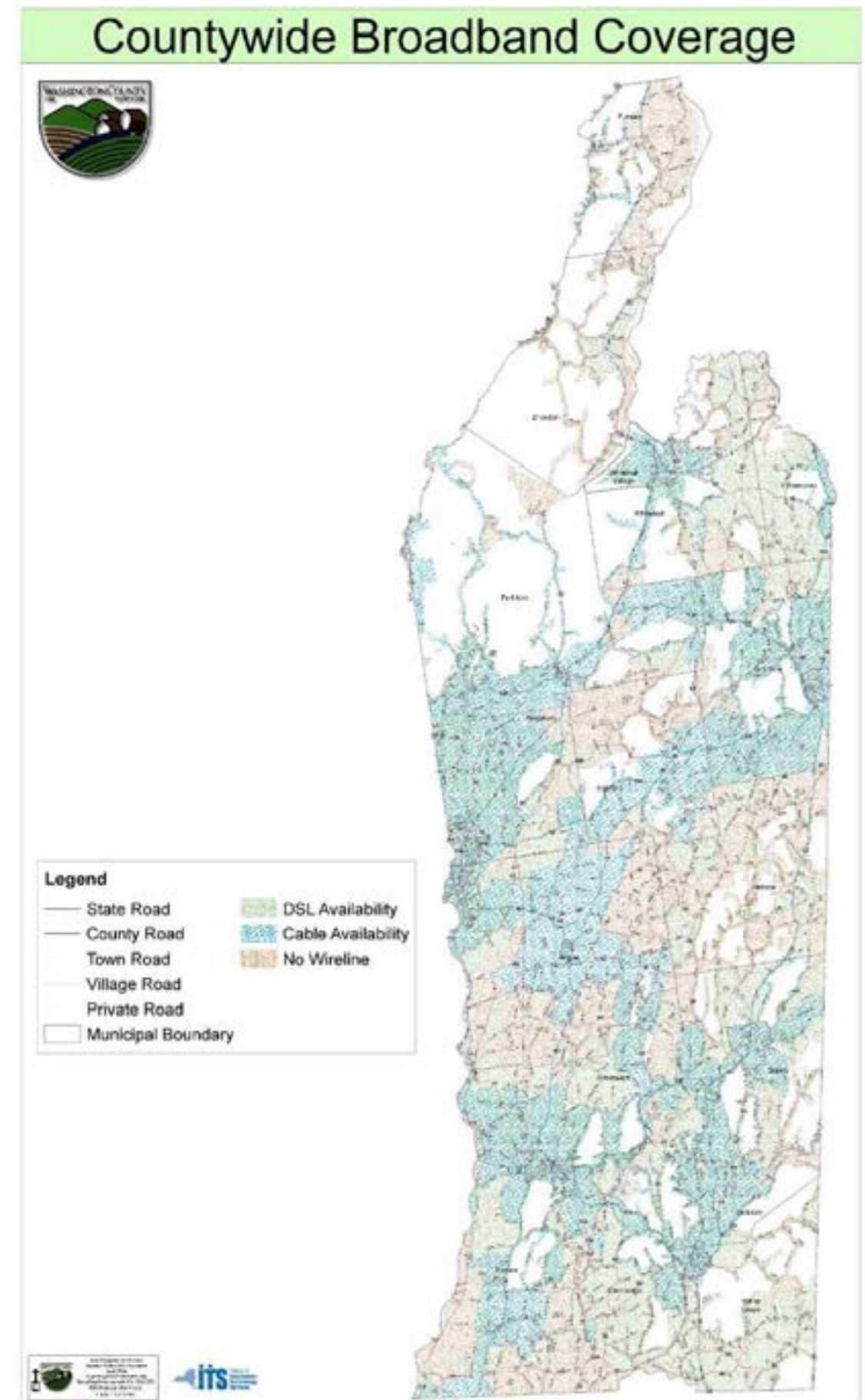


Figure 30: Broadband Coverage in Washington County showing DSL and County Availability and Areas Without Wireline Coverage.



# Appendix B: Public Input Results

## 1. Online survey of the general public

This survey was designed to gauge the knowledge about and interest in agriculture among the general public. A total of 404 people participated in the survey. Of those, about 38% work at a farm or ag-business, or have a family member that does. 61% of the participants live in rural/countryside areas of the County while 39% live in a hamlet or village. Survey participants came from all areas of the County but Greenwich, Kingsbury and Cambridge had more residents who participated than other areas.

A summary of the results is:

- The survey showed that almost all of the participants felt agriculture has a ‘very important’ role in Washington County, especially for landscape/rural character, fresh local food, quality of life, the local and regional economy, and the environment. About 58% also said that agriculture’s role in recreation was ‘very important’.
- There is a very strong positive perception about agriculture in the County. Overall, 78% said they had a positive perception, while 82% of those who have a personal or family connection to a farm had positive perceptions about agriculture.
- Most people were ‘somewhat knowledgeable’ about the role agriculture plays in the County. More people were ‘very knowledgeable’ about the types of produce grown in the County. People were least knowledgeable about the impact of farms on the local tax base compared to residential and commercial development. That pattern was true regardless of whether the participant had a personal connection to a farm, or where they lived. This points out the need to help the general public better understand the fiscal role agriculture plays.
- The products that are bought locally are (in order of most common to least common)
  - ◆ Fruits and cider
  - ◆ Vegetables
  - ◆ Milk and dairy products
  - ◆ Maple products
  - ◆ Seasonal items (pumpkins)
  - ◆ Eggs/poultry
  - ◆ Nursery plants/flowers
  - ◆ Honey
  - ◆ Christmas trees
  - ◆ Meats
- Local foods and agricultural products were bought primarily at farm stands, farm stores and farmers markets. About 63% said they buy local foods at the supermarket and 55% direct from a farmer. Less than 6% were involved with Community-Supported Agriculture (CSA) operations. About 33% buy local products from co-ops. Most people buy those local products a few times a month or weekly.
- Local foods that were desired and that if available, would be supported included flour/grains, chicken/turkey, a wider variety of vegetables and fruits, mushrooms, raw milk, fish, and hemp-based products.
- When asked about why they might visit a farm, over half said they do so to purchase food. Other frequent answers were to hike and visit farm animals. About 12% to 15% also visit farms for other recreational uses including snowmobiling, hunting, and use of recreational vehicles (ATV’s for example).
- The top event that people participate in is the Washington County Fair (95%). About half visit the maple weekend, 42% the Cheese Tour, 36% the Fiber Tour, and 14% the craft beverage trail.
- When asked their level of concern over loss of farmland, 58% said they were ‘very concerned’, while 35% said ‘somewhat concerned’. Many additional comments were offered to this question and most revolve around the need to not lose any more farmland and the importance of keeping the County where farming remains a principal land use.



- The survey asked participants to identify what actions might be important for the County to undertake to address issues facing farms. Over 70% of all participants indicated that ALL the actions listed in the survey were ‘very important’. Limiting non-farm development had slightly less support, but it was still a top answer for 63% of the surveyed public. These actions include:
  - ◆ Assist with obtaining grants for farmland protection (80% Very Important)
  - ◆ Assist with grants for promoting agriculture (74%)
  - ◆ Facilitate first-time farmer financing programs (72%)
  - ◆ Limit non-farm development in productive agricultural areas (64%)
  - ◆ Provide incentives for farmland to be protected, including tax incentives (73%)
  - ◆ Organize activities to promote locally grown farm and forest products (78%)
  - ◆ Encourage development consistent with protection of farmland (77%)
  - ◆ Invest in facilities and infrastructure needed by farmers to process, transport and market their products (71%)
- People offered a lot of ideas to keep farming viable. The top ideas were to lower taxes, increase ag-education in schools, use local foods in schools and other

institutions, offer more local food processing, develop food hubs, get more local foods in grocery stores, have better farmers markets, limit building on farmland, and marketing/promotion. People felt the major issues facing agriculture (in order of importance) are:

- ◆ It is too expensive to farm
- ◆ There is a lack of new or young farmers
- ◆ Conversion of land to non-farm uses threatens agriculture
- ◆ Misconceptions about agriculture by the general public
- Conflicts between farmers and non-farmers, and lack of consumers were NOT perceived as large issues.
- 57% feel that schools are NOT adequately educating and connecting children to local farms and food systems.





2. Agricultural Producers Written Survey

The Steering Committee sent Washington County farmers a brief questionnaire in December 2015 asking for their input on local farming issues, possible solutions to those issues, as well as asking them to identify farming trends and opportunities. 44 farmers submitted written responses.

Participant	Major issues in WC	Major issues on farm	Most important issues	Opportunities	Things to be done now	Is there support for agricultural in WC?	Additional comments
1	Taxes on inflated land values	Internet is expensive, School Taxes are high, rental land not available, I work in addition to farming to pay house hold bills.	Preserve agricultural land. Limit development.	concerned new farmers get help, grants, hoop houses, etc. and are shifting the role of food production to a NYC based market when we need local FARMS -REAL FOOD for local PEOPLE.	Relief from taxes for REAL FARMS. Not "designer farms" - or properties bought by NYC Restaurants to grow food for their own restaurant.	Yes - good network of suppliers, services, farm families who work together. Unfortunately, NYS Budgets and The Farm Bill have failed local agriculture.	ASA is a wonderful asset. They help REAL FARMS to keep land in ag.
2	Climate Change, Negative aspects of pesticides & herbicides	Transition of farm to next generation, insufficient land base & tree and shrub planting for windblock and erosion control	Farm Transition	Continuations of environmental protection, solar energy, organic, local sustainable practices.	Collaborative project for Marketing Washington County farm Products	Very good support for agricultural in all areas except with road and traffic safety especially on RT 22 & 4	Farmers input for the Plan is essential  If a grant is obtained spend it on something useful like a marketing campaign for our county's ag, not on a study. WC is not a healthy agricultural county!
3	Restrictive income potential with Farming	Rising costs of taxes, climate change	All of the above	Middle sized farms getting squeezed out by big farms	Cooperative marketing hub	Not supportive	
4	Stable milk prices, & no taxes for farmers	Low Milk Prices, high labor cost, and need more land	Low Milk Prices, high labor cost, and need more land	Robots labor	Get rid of all milk co-ops, hire an AGRICULTURAL lawyer to fight for better milk prices	Local schools need AGRICULTURAL classes, town and neighbors are good, county and state could do better	Dairy's need help to reassess their business so they can make a living

Participant	Major issues in WC	Major issues on farm	Most important issues	Opportunities	Things to be done now	Is there support for agricultural in WC?	Additional comments
5	Price dictation by NAFTA	Low Milk Prices	The NAFTA issue	Small farms specialty crop	Establish and oversee a lobby group to work on state and national to improve income for farmers	Not much support from the town but the county is supportive	farms are fighting for land/to grow, larger dairy herds
6	Keeping land in Ag	Farm transition for people who want to keep land in AG		more small operations, organic, sustainable.	CCE needs to offer more farm support	Yes - good network of suppliers, services, farm families who work together. Unfortunately, NYS Budgets and The Farm Bill have failed local agriculture.	ASA should conserve more small farms  Gov't back off regulations on Raw Milk and farmers markets, also some sort of supportive agricultural center.
7	Input prices are high, land grab from large farms	soil health, fuel cost, labor, ups and downs of the market.	Income & Taxes	Small farms for veg & small livestock ops	Buy Local, buyer & Seller Co-ops	Supportive all around but taxes are too high	less government involvement, need more money to stay on the farm
8	Land Tax, high electricity cost, labor, insurance	property taxes are huge	Beef Sales	land prices, income, beef market ups and downs	milk and beef prices are low	Some support	
9	Need a better market place for local beef	change of the 480 a program and timber prices	the 480 a program	the demand from all taxing units to increase taxes and fees.	pass legislation that protects all forms of Ag	Not as supportive as it once was	
10	DECs proposal to change the 480 a program	upkeep, labor, high cost of production, low sales, degradation to land integrity	it's all a vicious circle	Co-operatives, and locavore trends	Keep land & Air Clean, get more kids involved in AG	it's fading out	FFA
11	High costs of feed & equipment						



Participant	Major issues in WC	Major issues on farm	Most important issues	Opportunities	Things to be done now	Is there support for agricultural in WC?	Additional comments
12	Global issues that swing markets and effect market price	Working capital and competitive market price	Working Capital	Interest in local products	consumer awareness, and farms sharing practices	there is support but no understanding for the need to plan. Schools need to provide good AGRICULTURAL education.	
13	Ageing farmers can't retire, young people not taking over farms.	the next generation moving away for better paying jobs.		Organic farming, micro-brewery, drone technology	Hartford high school could turn in to an agricultural school		
14	Land access, skilled laborers, food safety regulations, climate change	Farm transition planning, access to new markets, soil health, runoff from non-organic farmers.	Keep land in farming and finding a way to make it a sustainable financially & environmentally.	year round markets, demand for more local products	FOOD HUB	Yes - good network of suppliers, services, farm families who work together. Unfortunately, NYS Budgets and The Farm Bill have failed local agriculture.	Broadband internet for all
15	Low commodity prices, High property taxes, NYS regulations	Low commodity prices, High property taxes, NYS regulations	Property taxes	Niche marketing, buying local food	Tax relief	There is mediocre support	Greenwich Central school is very supportive
16	No good marketing for NY Milk	few farms left in Fort Edward; many small field not utilized		Only huge dairy farms are surviving		there is support but the state needs to step in and market NY goods	farming incentives, and encourage beef and veggie farms
17	Taxes and no funding for land improvement			too many dairy farms in the area		I feel support on all levels	Raise sales tax to 1% to eliminate property taxes on landowners
18	Taxes, Regulations	Labor and \$ hardships				Yes	

Participant	Major issues in WC	Major issues on farm	Most important issues	Opportunities	Things to be done now	Is there support for agricultural in WC?	Additional comments
19	Work Force, need AGRICULTURAL programs in schools, tax burden	Access to information and funding	Funding and taxes	Hops, barley, agri-tourism	hops and barley trials	Its not Anti-Agricultural	glad to see cooperation between SLCD, CCE, WCED, FCE and farm reps
20	Taxes, prices of fuel, and fertilizer	Taxes, can't afford to lime or fertilize	Taxes	marijuana	Lower Taxes	No support in schools or town; lucky to have Amish	Lower taxes
21	Economy, infrastructure (connect 87 to VT)	Government and infrastructure	Need to update Infrastructure for marketing	Urban Development		Support from neighbors but not by the town gov't, county or in schools.	Elect a new president.
22	Low product prices - Horrendous property taxes	Low product prices - Horrendous property taxes	Low product prices - Horrendous property taxes	Follow the example of Quebec where farms are prosperous and well maintained	None	Property taxes should be abolished and there should be a gasoline tax like in Europe.	
23	Nobody wants to work on a farm	land not suitable for cattle	Too old to work on a farm	Alpacas and Llamas	Get people interested in raising their own food	Not much support from the town but the county is supportive	bring back a more self-sufficient culture
24	Milk market needs an update	Milk prices are low	renting land form non farmers is hard	Lower taxes, give grants to dairy farmers	Hard to work with non-farming land owners	No support all around	there needs to be more contact with farmers to find out what's going on
25	Youth involvement in Agricultural & a stable beef and milk price	younger generation are not interested in working hard for little money on farms	Stable milk & Beef prices	support of smaller agricultural operations		Support from the state but not the county	Loss of farms is staggering in Putnam
26	Taxes, farmland being developed, poor relations with Non Farmers	Taxes, farmland being developed, poor relations with Non Farmers	Non farmer demands on farm appearance and business practices	Bad relations with non-farmers	regulate non farmers to keep them from hurting working farms in this county	Town is supportive but not the county	farmers should get first consideration in laws
27	High taxes	High taxes	taxes	people leaving because of taxes	None		



Participant	Major issues in WC	Major issues on farm	Most important issues	Opportunities	Things to be done now	Is there support for agricultural in WC?	Additional comments
28	Down-staters moving in	Traffic	People need to slow down on the rural roads	Farmers markets			
29	Low price of milk	Labor, and the cost of equipment and processing	Labor	Negative income trends	Merge small farms in to one to get economy of scale	Yes	
30	Uncertainty of milk prices, development pressure, not enough \$ for PDR, lack of diversity	Low income, high taxes	not enough \$ for PDR	Buy local and direct marketing, too many big dairy farms taking over land	Fund conservation to small farms		contact more big foundations for funds to protect agricultural lands
31	operating farms have diminished over the years, development pressure	Holding on to rented lands	development pressure	local food movement	Show more pride in farming, con-serve more farms		Kingsbury needs right to farm signs
32	Road size, electrical needs, internet and cell service, water, infrastructure	Services are hard to get	Road size, electrical needs, internet and cell service, water, infrastructure	Buy Local, agricultural tours, more natural practices, direct sales	NY taxes are too high more alternative energy options, protect water		more education on economics of the Agricultural community, schools need agricultural education
33	Environmental, Taxes	Taxes	Taxes & Environmental	Public Misunderstanding of Agriculture	Education to the public on agriculture		Worried about environmental regulations
34	Taxes & Cost of doing business	Law Suit		Agri-business has been affected by big box stores	Hire grant writers for small farms	Full Support	
35	Infrastructure, internet, cell service, taxes, development	Infrastructure & Internet	Infrastructure & Internet	Buy local	funding to help villages and hamlets establish viable farm markets		in a law suit with the local school
36		Drainage of fields		More natural beef & farm to table outlets	Hebron needs more support		national trend of people concerned about food lags in much of county
							More PDR for Agricultural Lands

Participant	Major issues in WC	Major issues on farm	Most important issues	Opportunities	Things to be done now	Is there support for agricultural in WC?	Additional comments
37	Land Tax	Land Tax	Land Tax	Farming operations depends on non-farming income	Can't make a living farming	Support by neighbors, Town, and County	There is not money in Agri-Tourism
38	financial, and environmental	taxes	taxes are too high	dairy farms needing more land, and non-dairy farms are good for the county	tax break, and land conservation	Support all Around	happy about tax break for agricultural exemption
39	High costs of feed & equipment- low milk prices	none I do not farm for \$	Farmers can't make a living	lack of interest in farming	incentives for farm workers	Mostly oblivious to Agriculture the local schools should have Agricultural training	
40	Conserve farmland, labor, helping farms survive though good management and fair pricing	Bringing in the next generation of farmers	help farmers by teaching them good management	increased awareness from the public about local food, direct marketing, more niche markets	continuation of public programs about Ag	Great assistance from the county & CCE & Soil and Water and Vo-Ag program & FFA	more promotion of agriculture, agri-tourism, job opportunities in Ag-businesses
41	There are no small family farms	high prices				Support all around	
42	high taxes, hard to make a living	promotion of farm goods	taxes	hobby farming	promote meat goats	need more FFA	it's hard to attend workshops during the day
43	loss of public support for large dairy farms and their practices	no problems			more un-biased public programs on the environmental effects of farming	plenty of support	
44	sustainability, costs	costs, sustainability, aging infrastructure, encroachment, finding ways to diversify	changes in demographics	agri-tourism, other community activity involvement	yes, but not sure about county	questions in relation to horse business	



### 3. Agri-Business Focus Group Meeting

On February 2, a focus group was held to discuss agriculture from the perspective of agri-businesses and service organizations in Washington County. Approximately 20 representatives attended this meeting. The following notes summarize the discussion of that meeting.

#### Changes/Trends

- Prime agricultural land is becoming expensive
  - Wholesale markets are hard to enter/ retail markets are saturated
  - Barrier to entry – cost of capital, regulatory demands, CAFP and GAP regs, bookkeeping demands
  - Hard to compete as a small farmer – can't make money due to costs
  - Competition for land (especially for dairy – CAFO regulations) with each other, with rural sprawl – drives up price - farmers going further from operation to get land
  - Labor – need good educated source – hard to get; some people not educated with different facets of business
  - Cost of production – particularly in NY, not competitive nationally and globally
  - School taxes, not consolidating governments
  - Taxes and unfunded mandates – need subsidies to agricultural districts
  - Economy of scale – need good productive land; businesses have to get bigger and hard to get good productive land. Beginning farmer is impossible to find land
  - Migration of youth outside of county – clients are older and not having youth come into business; question whether there will be a next generation customer base
  - Many dapple in smaller farm operations – fair has grown as a result. This in turn does help some ag-businesses. Fair plays an important educational role.
  - Have open plan but don't have agricultural infrastructure support for other businesses to come in (i.e. yogurt plant and beef processing)
  - Side hills great for sheep, goats, etc. Diverse land base is good. These are also good introductions to farming. There is some advantages.
  - Labor – can't find or can't trust. To find qualified work force is challenging. Farmers can't get good on-farm help.
  - Shear investment in capital needed to farm. Top this with environmental regulations that does nothing for profitability. Shear cost of farming will cause mid-size farm to go away
- (200-500 cow dairy)
- Solar array farms and its impact on rental land for farmers – loss of agricultural land. Compete with renters who can get more money renting to solar companies
  - Education – residue avoidance plans - CAFO plans- need money to assist farmers with implementing regulations
  - Animal welfare – need for transparency
  - Need funding to implement OSHA
  - All land being farmed – not seeing big housing developments, land is big issues. It's good that land is being farmed but intense land competition. Funding issue – wetland and conservation protection compliance – have to follow these plans for all land you own and rent. Some farmers can't be in compliance and can't get their loans – land competition drives these issues.
  - Availability of credit is limited (NBT, FSA or Farm Credit East)
  - Farm transitions
  - Climate change – stabilize loss to crops - improve yield of soils
  - Need to educate non-farmers – value of agriculture and value of land
  - Need mechanism to help people get value out if they retire or need money
  - Question – What impact has plan had over the last 20 years? How have land use and demographics changed? Why are people selling land or buying land? Figure out why non-farmers buy land.
  - ASA important role with easements – farmers have used that money to reinvest in their farm - all been very helpful.
  - Student enrollment is down in schools
  - Non-farmers rent land out of county, helpful investors
  - Land cost here cheaper than elsewhere
  - CAFO regs stranglehold on dairy industry. Agricultural industry going thru what industry went thru in 1970s with environmental regulations
  - Small farmers piecemeal land from full time/larger farm operations
  - Land owners who rent can put restrictions on renting farmer - i.e dictate what crops can be planted - can be an issue
  - Public concerned about manure spreading – needs education on agronomics and production - especially related to manure management
  - Farmers need to be a good neighbor, proactive and communicate with neighbors on farm practices – example is Dutch Hollow Farm in Schodack
  - Farmers need things that have to be engineered – can't

always get grants or funding to do it

- CAFO is here to stay – as added expense. Costs of doing business is higher. Farms looking at satellite storage for manure. NIMBY for manure management issues.
- Climate change – water quality issues
- Contamination of water by agricultural sources
- Minimum wage issue
- Access to cellular and digital communication – huge barrier – difficult to do job, sell house, etc.
- Access to markets – saturated in immediate vicinity – farmer not ready for direct or wholesale markets. Adirondack Grazers is a model. Will need to be addressed.
- Plain/Amish community moving in (15 or more families) – need to pay more attention
- Horse industry often not considered part of agriculture – they need to be brought in and treated as part of agricultural fabric
- Technology – movement to solid manure – watch out for this and other technologies that come down
- Local food trend – fuel smaller farms and retail markets - beef, organic
- Public – wants truth about what is needed to farm- wants to be more informed – can be positive – direct sales is good



#### Ideas

- Agri-tourism - foodies looking into going to farms for food experience – can take advantage of this and a huge asset
- County is very connected to New York City and markets there is important. Need aggregation to decrease cost to get produce to NYC
- People want to come to Washington County, eat, and see farm and willing to pay price
- How do we keep quaint with real ag?
- Adirondack Grazers – 60 farms in NY and VT. You have to be economically viable. Transportation too costly, labor costly so most expensive beef around. Model is to find customers willing to take sustainable supply of grass fed beef in exchange for paying more. Model – here for long run and if you want sustainable supply they have to pay more. They do aggregation. Got to work as a business without grants or handouts. Based on one customer. Doesn't see it work expect for organic. Could aggregate other commodities. Build in

last of each component in supply chain.

- Food hub/aggregation needed here
- Need modern telecommunications
- Jessica Ziehm – need more education of non-farming, of farmers, business planning and production information
- Need template for newsletter to educate public
- Tractor dealerships serve role as educator
- USDA promoting microenterprises (hobby farms) - microloans
- Workforce – Adirondack College campus geared toward agricultural important to address
- Need skilled 2 years herdsmanhip, practical training, need more technical training – guidance course or trade school. Need a tech school
- Business planning for start-up/young farmers
- Re: internet expansion how likely that agricultural businesses look at building our own fiber optic system (in middle of road). And this means increased taxes. Is this important enough for people to pay more taxes?
- Empower/incentivize placement of towers
- How does message of plan get to where it benefits?
- How do we do better job communicating?
- How did old plan benefit us?
- Can we prioritize taking care of Route 22 – physical road, maintenance is bad – it affects farm and agri-business
- Tie ASA program to good stewardship and profitability and where there is a future generation. Add these as farmland protection criteria
- Use term easements to spread money around more
- Consolidate schools, consolidate municipalities, lack of this costs us
- Hemp – hops, alcohol/beverage diversification – move into these types of farms – for crop/tourism. Can it become more valuable?
- Diversify – need a diverse set of enterprises
- Land swapping
- Rail – need improvement (Battenkill) – keeps trucks off road – concern has data to help if needed \$700,000 to decrease costs for use of rail – need rail infrastructure
- Fort Edward site has rail after dredging is over that Cargill might use – huge opportunity. Great site (Barge dock, huge rail yard, flat storage) – could increase grain
- Part of Ogdensburg is model. Central local, consolidation, aggregation, transport, efficiency
- Dredging is almost over – use facilities at Fort Ann for agricultural product distribution



## 4. Two Workshops for Farmers

Two workshops were held specifically to hear from the farm community in February, 2016. These were held in Easton and in Hartford and were attended by approximately 80 farmers in total. The workshop’s goal was to identify what farmers felt were the strengths, weaknesses and opportunities facing agriculture in Washington County. In addition, learning the strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities, farmers were also asked to choose specific features felt to be a priority. A compilation of the two workshop results are summarized below. The highlighted colors indicate how those features were prioritized by the participants.

### Key

Red=Highest ranked strengths (3 or more priority stickers)

Green=Moderate ranked strengths (2 priority stickers)

Blue=Lower ranked strengths (1 priority sticker)

No Color= Identified by farmers, but not prioritized

### Strengths (in order prioritized by farmers):

- Diversity of agriculture – of crops, of markets, of sizes of farms, of types of farms
- Strong community that is built upon and supportive of agriculture, strong history of agriculture in County
- Strong support among community at all levels – neighbor, town, county
- Agricultural infrastructure and agricultural businesses that support farms still intact and strong
- Soil, water, climate, natural resources support agriculture
- ASA
- Small, family farms
- Washington County Fair
- Agriculture’s role in the County’s look, aesthetic appeal, beauty
- Positive attitudes about farming here
- Cornell Cooperative Extension
- Hunting, fishing and recreational lands provided by agriculture
- Location of County in relation to markets
- Ag’s role in quality of life
- Location in the Capital District
- Cost of land
- Family history of farming
- FFA/4-H programs
- Farmers work together and have good communication
- Access to capital resources

- Farm has significant role in the economy of the area
- Skilled and hardworking farmers
- Lack of development compared to other areas nearby
- Farm and ag-tours

### Weaknesses/Challenges

- Lack of education of public about farming
- Lack of internet and broadband
- Bureaucracy and over-regulation/restrictions
- Development
- Taxes and unfunded mandates
- Lack of access to low cost capital
- Competition of land among farmers and with non-farmers
- Labor costs are high
- Animal rights activists
- Difficulties for first time and new farmers for land access and capital
- Difficulties finding labor
- Lack of ways to market effectively downstate
- Public perception that food is expensive
- Shrinking profits and high costs of farming
- Aging farmers
- Need to get all farmland protected in County
- Lack of food hub and aggregation
- Lack of school budget for agricultural education
- Lack of transition and succession planning
- Farmer and non-farmer conflicts
- Lack of funding for CCE
- Lack of control over dairy prices
- Lack of USDA slaughterhouse
- Lack of understanding by non-farmers and by farmland owners who rent land to farmers
- Need more markets to grow
- Poor attitudes by non-farmers leads to conflicts
- Limited value-added
- A variety of other challenges were identified – many of which were related to the above and include
  - ◆ Lack of education of youth about agriculture as a positive career
  - ◆ Land issues (land grab, land assessments, lacking land to expand, marginal lands not fully utilized)
  - ◆ Lack of understanding of agriculture and farming practices
  - ◆ Lack of political clout of Washington County hurts advocacy
  - ◆ Problems are beyond farmer, town or County to

control

### Opportunities

- 68 ideas were generated by farmers. There is some overlap between ideas, but the Committee will need to look fully at the list for details. However, the ideas can be organized around several central needs and themes. Marketing, aggregation/food hub, education, telecommunication improvements, and funding were the general top programs identified. Generally, farmers supported the following efforts (in order of their priority):
- Marketing and promotion including enhanced marketing/PR for County products, a coordinated system for marketing, develop a regional brand, cooperative marketing, and centralized marketing.
- Additional food processing including USDA facilities, value-added, and efforts into funding additional processing facilities needed in the County. Related to this is the desire to see more aggregation, distribution and transportation programs to help efficiently bring together, package and distribute county produce (food hubs, for example).
- Education with a variety of audiences. There is need to enhance agricultural education in the schools, with non-farmers, general and institutional consumers, and with the general public. This includes collaboration, internships, mentoring, and coordinated efforts.
- Cooperative buying and other methods to help reduce input costs for production.
- Infrastructure improvements mainly centered on improving broadband and internet.
- Programs to increase access to and training of labor. This is related to the broader educational needs in the county but ideas also included ideas such as a labor pool clearinghouse. Related to this was prioritization of first time farmer programs such as internships, mentoring, and capital programs.
- Promote new commodities and emerging markets with training and technical help.
- Advocate for policy and regulatory changes, especially related to labor and environmental regulations.
- Protect additional farmland and develop mechanisms to fund more programs that protect farmland.
- Help farmers use and adopt new technologies. This is related to decreasing costs, enhancing farming as a career, and helping farmers be more efficient.
- Help farmers address climate change and protection of water

## 5. Economic Development Questionnaire

A survey of those involved in economic development activities in Washington County were asked to fill out a survey related to agricultural economic development. Five representatives submitted responses, which are summarized below.

**How would you describe the connection to and relationship between agriculture and economic development in Washington County? Do economic development programs in the County consider agriculture as a component or part of their goals? Is there a recognition of the economic role agriculture plays? Could this relationship be improved? How?**

The answers provided related to how important agriculture is to the economy. People noted that there was not widespread understanding of the relationship between the economy and agriculture. The importance of farmland to snowmobiling was pointed out. There is a need to engage the community more with projects that highlight our agriculture, building more support.

**How important is it to increase opportunities in Washington County to expand agritourism?** One person felt that the best thing the County can do for farmers is to ‘get out of our way’ but there is an opportunity for the county to promote itself as a whole and our assets. Others felt that agri-tourism is very important because it promotes rural lifestyles here and supports local businesses. There was support for it if agri-tourism included snowmobiling. Another thought was that it is essential to expand our agricultural history and use assets here to increase economic development and tourism.

**What opportunities exist in Washington County for the development of value-added products, using foods that are locally grown or raised? Do you feel that programs like Farm to Table would work to enhance general economic development, tourism, and agriculture? Why? What issues or barriers prevent businesses such as restaurants, grocery stores, and wholesalers from buying, serving, or distributing local farm products? Do you see a role to have this addressed by the County in some manner?**

One response was that a farm to table program is important, but is it the role of government to be involved with it? Barriers here are related to access to good land. The county should support more soils based conservation efforts and not allow solar power plants, and developments on prime farmland, including the small plots. Another identified barrier is demographics- not enough people here to support local producers so they have to travel out



of the area for farmers markets. A farm to table project would be PR for the County. There is more interest now in local food and a farm to table project is a great way to accomplish this. The county could benefit from this and use it to enhance the economy and provide opportunities for people to experience agriculture in different formats.

Would you support programs and facilities designed to help farmers diversify their operation and take advantage of new opportunities (i.e. hops or other beverage-related crops, cheese, yogurt, maple products, farmstore, etc.)?

Yes, there was widespread support for this, although one responder questioned the appropriate role of government in such programs.

To what extent does, or should, agricultural economic development and agritourism efforts in Washington County be connected with those in adjacent counties, or in the Capital Region or North Country/Adirondack region?

Connections, collaboration, co-promotion, all needs to be more connected with neighboring entitties. One caution was that we are different than other areas in the fact that agriculture plays such an important role here. his is a fact that should be used to benefit agricultural ED and agri-tourism.

Our public survey results show an appreciation for open space that is working land (farms and forest) that can be utilized for recreational opportunities. What are your thoughts on how this may enhance agricultural economic development in the county?

Yes, all agreed it is important, and that it can be used to our benefit. If farmland feels less like posted property and more like a shared asset we will all band together to protect it. As our community grows stronger, our economy (including quality of life not just financial) will become more resilient. There is a growing interest in learning more about farming, whether through workshops, touring a working farm, attending a sheep-herding demonstration, or learning how to make wine. Tourists appreciate the “experiential” aspect of these types of offerings. Need an approach to private landowners to agree to easements or leases on linear segments of properties for use as recreation. Or look at easements for trails on land that is up for tax sale. Year round recreation is needed, not just in winter when the land is not being used.

Any other issues or opportunities related to agricultural economic development and agritourism that you want us to know about?

The most important issue would be to organize and

unite all the players to develop agricultural themes and programs that can be promoted as tourism – and then unite all those themes and programs through a strong leader in tourism development for the county. There needs to be more effort to work with farmers about providing easements for year round use.

6. Focus Group with County Supervisors

Todd Erling facilitated a focus group on January 21, 2016 to discuss agriculture in the County with several town Supervisors. The following summarize that discussion. January 21, 2016

Notes

- Productive county – a strength
- We have water
- 15 year tax exempt for solar arrays – not taxable as improvement on land
- How do you make sure you allow for other growth besides agricultural business?
- Implementing committee – Ulster County – some Agricultural and Farmland Protection Board members and some legislators and a few individuals to oversee implementation of plan
- How do you know what the next big thing/fad is in agriculture?
- How do you define agriculture?
- Agricultural navigator (Duchess County)
- Public perception of agricultural – educational problem
- Farm succession
- Challenge – couple rarely can farm together – one needs outside job- can’t risk whole family in same business
- Farm need to diversify – how?
- Would like to see county plans – i.e. Columbia County – give to supervisors
- Public relations with community – more important
- Ensure we have more markets
- Conversation about what you grow and how you grow it – pressure moving up from the south
- Changes at Cornell Cooperative Extension – moving back to just agricultural education focus
- Hemp potential in county

7. Farmers Survey to Prioritize Draft Actions

It was important that the farm community offer input as to what they feel are priority actions for the County to undertake to support and promote agriculture in the County. Their input was solicited through a survey conducted in August and early September, 2016. The survey questions and responses are shown below. There were 103 surveys returned.

Proposed Action for Plan	High Priority	Low Priority	Unsure, More Info Needed
1. Create a long-term working group and organizational structure to implement this plan and the goals/actions listed below.	64	15	17
2. Explore the feasibility of hiring a professional coordinator for that working group.	21	33	36
3. Hold periodic round table meetings with farmers and that working group to provide feedback on Plan priorities, status of programs, emerging trends and new challenges.	81	9	7
4. Develop an Ag Business Retention and Expansion program to promote expansion of existing farms and attract new ones via business management planning, technical training, data on emerging markets, funding assistance for new or expanded farms	60	26	16
5. Create a grant writing effort to help farmers fund their business retention and expansion plans.	63	24	14
6. Enhance support to existing ag-related agencies and organizations <sup>1</sup> (see list below for examples) so that they can participate fully in this effort.	65	20	11
7. Work closely with Farm Credit East and other ag-friendly lenders to support the capital needs of farmers.	73	20	11
8. Make agriculture an important part of the Washington County Local Development Corporation's (LDC) direction through additional capital resources, revolving loan or microloans, incentives for young and new farmers, etc.	78	13	8
9. Work with other Hudson River Valley counties to increase meat and protein processing capacity.	56	32	11
10. Create a shared use facility for cold storage, freezer and flash freeze equipment.	39	37	23
11. Cost share or find other ways to support farmers with on-farm investments oriented to high tunnels, wash stations, fencing, and other assistance to meet Food Safety Modernization Act Certification and other food safety requirements.	46	36	12
12. Explore the feasibility of a food hub to promote the aggregation, distribution and transportation of local agricultural products.	58	26	15
13. Promote small grain growing and processing in Washington County.	46	37	13



Proposed Action for Plan	High Priority	Low Priority	Unsure, More Info Needed
14. Bring dairy stakeholders together to determine the interest in and economic potential for specialty dairy processing for value-added products.	53	32	16
15. Bring fiber growers together to determine the interest in and economic potential for expanding commercial dyeing, weaving and knitting infrastructure.	31	55	13
16. Undertake feasibility study for emerging markets such as beef, small grains, hemp, etc.	47	39	13
17. Explore a shared methane digester to be placed in an area with a concentration of dairy farms.	33	50	20
18. Work with SUNY Adirondack to develop an ag-workforce enhancement program.	67	20	9
19. Create and implement a comprehensive marketing strategy to attract new farmers, consumers, and ag-business.	60	24	11
20. Work with retail outlets/restaurants/food services to promote local produce.	74	21	3
21. Support farm to institution programs.	35	21	17
22. Enhance support to county ag-tourism programs to promote expansion of existing, and establishment of new opportunities including the Washington County Fair as well as the cheese, fiber, maple, craft beverage and others.	57	37	9
23. Hold periodic farm tours for all elected officials and representatives in the County.	59	34	6
24. Find new ways to promote and support agricultural and forestry education in the schools.	74	18	6
25. Offer internship and mentoring opportunities.	65	23	7
26. Offer business and management training, planning, and start-up funding options for the next generation of farmers.	72	17	8
27. Seek funding for implementation of transition and estate planning programs.	50	30	16
28. Increase the acreage of conserved farmlands and ensure their future use for farming through use of purchased or donated conservation easements.	72	20	7
29. Encourage the County and/or Towns to adopt a Right To Farm law.	78	12	6
30. Provide land use planning assistance to towns and create education initiatives to improve farm-friendliness and promote ag.	78	11	9

8. Ag-Producers Interviews

In order to understand agricultural producers and their needs and concerns, and to ensure that this Plan had input from all sectors of the agricultural industry in Washington County, a series of interviews were conducted different farm producers in addition to the workshops, surveys, and other efforts detailed in this section of the Plan. Ten farmers were included in this survey.

A summary of their thoughts related to the issues, challenges, and opportunities in Washington County are offered below. Almost all the farms interviewed had succession plans, and plans to remain farming in 10 years. Many were planning expansions. There was general consensus that the County is very supportive of agriculture, and many farm neighbors were too. But support at the town level was not universal.

Major Issues in County	Major Issues On Farm	Most Important Issue	Is Farmland Availability an Issue	Trends	Action to Be Done Now?	Ideas	Services Needed	Training Needed	Additional Comments
Land	Land		Yes	Consolidation of farms is good	Lower taxes	Promotion of CCE, expand CCE	More from CCE, update town comp plans, address solar	Technology to access resources needed like broadband	More funding for agricultural land conservation, more education in classrooms on ag, talk with local schools
In County	Deer damage, workman's comp	Workman's comp	Yes	Partnerships with different types of farming	Marketing partnerships		Help finding employees		
Labor	Labor, finding adequate services	Labor	No	Amish moving in, more energy defending farm now		Need a closer machinery dealer	None		
Markets, access to large enough volume of customers	Increase customer base	Access to customers	No		Improved transportation to and access large urban markets				Need more technical help for horticulture producers
Public removed from knowing about their food,	General public visiting, i feel exposed, labor	Not knowing resources available to me		Public being too far removed from food production			Where is manure storage headed? Not a lot of info on that for small farms	Farm transfer	Sunday on the farm program



Major Issues in County	Major Issues On Farm	Most Important Issue	Is Farmland Availability an Issue	Trends	Action to Be Done Now?	Ideas	Services Needed	Training Needed	Additional Comments
Labor, tourism and more traffic, milk price volatility, lack of public funds for environmental improvements	Labor, price volatility, regulatory compliance	Labor	Lack of farmland limits growth	More retail, GPS, manure management	Food hub, more ag communication with non-farm public	Watershed priority	Translator services for farm workers	Communication	Small farm/large farm tour exchange, tell farm stories
Milk price volatility, lack of farmland for expansion, labor	CAFO requirements		Yes	Consumer interest in local food	Help with manure storage and management	No	Make use of consulting services when needed		
					Need more marketing		Do a county wide tour		
Competition for productive land, farms getting too big,	Lack of support services for organic farms, transportation and trucking challenges`	Competition for productive land	Yes	Niche marketing such as cheese or horse hay, sees livestock grazing as an opportunity	Youth involvement and education	Limited organic dairy support			
				County leaders need to understand how uniquely positioned agriculture in County is. Think long term and coexist with industry that has to have space to survive	Change how tax assessments are done		Internet access, health service consultant	Our business association does adequate training	Get people to see benefit of agricultural districts, road infrastructure issues with farm equipment
Labor, suitable land, global issues	Labor, suitable land	Labor	Yes	Climate change, public becoming aware of local benefits of food	Strong land planning, education about land planning	More meat processing, help finding labor	More money for cce		Help small farm business practices to help be more profitable
High taxes, lack of meat processing facility, workman's compensation	Not able to conserve whole farm, cost of building infrastructure	Lack of ability to conserve small farms	No						
Tourism, too many people coming in will spur development									

9. Agri-Business Interviews

In order to understand agricultural businesses and their needs and concerns, a series of interviews were conducted with 14 different businesses in the County. These included representatives from Cooperative Extension, welding, farmers market, farm supply, meat processing, fiber, veterinarian, farm equipment, and sawmill. Many of the same issues that have been brought up by farmers and other aspects of the agricultural industry in Washington County were reiterated in these interviews. The National Young Farmers Coalition interview was also included in the following table. Most of the businesses interviewed have been in business for decades. The National Young Farmers Coalition interview was also included in the following table. Most of the businesses interviewed have been in business for decades. Most draw their customers from both within and for long distances beyond Washington County but have significant portions of their base supported from within the County. All planned to either stay the same or work to expand their businesses over the next five years. A summary of their thoughts related to the issues, challenges, and opportunities in Washington County are offered below:

Greatest Issues?	Challenges?	Is there More to be done?	Concern about Loss of Farmlands?	What is needed to be done to improve agriculture?	Trends in Washington County?	Other Comments
Financial Stability, low milk prices, gov't restrictions, taxes	changing trends in retail, online, labor  need to deal with humane environments for animals  no one around to learn from	protect farmland, tax relief, more funding to preserve farmland  CCE does great job, excellent framework set up in WC, Ag well represented in gov't  No shortage of timber	loss of customers  Yes	training in schools for the next generation, more 4-H, Market WC   less woodlot owners understand lumber industry, not using woodlands for profit	local and USA made products, non-GMO, organic, natural products	marketing our resources
no networking, no peer mentoring, no training						
developing markets for products, transportation to city	workman's comp, outlets for trim, bones, etc, no protected bottom prices,	need more \$ to support small meat processors to expand capacity and infrastructure	support businesses for local meat production, delivery, add value to trim and left overs	make sure there are farms going to grow meat instead of just dairy and crops, more focus on all agriculture and not just dairy	more farms producing pork	See Southern Tier West with the renewal of local livestock and processing industries
profitability, poor soils, isolation, loss of farming culture		make unused state owned lands available to farmers, more easements, ag-tourism, Agricultural Economic Development	Very concerned	More social interaction, coordinated effort to get product to market, brand for WC	loss of mid-size dairy, bad development on farmland,	more young people getting involved is positive sign



Greatest Issues?	Challenges?	Is there More to be done?	Concern about Loss of Farmlands?	What is needed to be done to improve agriculture?	Trends in Washington County?	Other Comments
labor, access to markets and distribution of product	building limits business with high rent and repairs needed	doing a good job now for her, not doing enough for farmers, no allocation of money to maple syrup industry for marketing	moderately concerned	more land protection, more marketing and distribution of county products, increase funding for CCE, brand for WC		
lack of land, new development, people not understanding farming	lack of knowledge	limit development	doesn't really affect me	good prices, lower taxes	all large farms, no small ones	need to stabilize milk prices
taxes, workmans comp, connecting to markets,	workmans comp, dealing with trim and hides	commodity pricing doesn't work	huge	marketing infrastructure, tax breaks	loss of horse farms, fear of failure, people buying land and not allowing farming on it	focus on developing rural pride and local economies
volatile dairy market, new development of houses	pulling customers to rural area, no access to fast internet	stabilize dairy prices	loss of farms means fewer customers	more infrastructure for moving and selling agricultural products	consolidation of farms, more younger farmers, diversification of farms	
profitability, scale, low prices, high taxes	profitability, marketing	more money to farmland protection	subsidize young farmers, help with education and finding farms,	yes, need to bring in new farmers	dairy farm consolidation, more interest in buying local	
influx of people that do not like way we do things	low price of milk	too many regulations	yes a lot	lower taxes	more robotic milking	
land for farms	regulations, prohibitive infrastructure to operate	more agri-tourism, more time with farmers, more media attention	huge	more agri-tourism support, food hub to bring food to NYC	new homesteaders	

## Appendix C: Farm Friendly Assessment – Land Use Law Audit Questions

Farm-Friendly Criteria		Number of Site Plan, Subdivision or Zoning Laws Using Ag-Friendly Practice Wholly or Partly (out of 27 laws reviewed)
Does the regulation's purpose statement include a discussion of agriculture, or promoting or preserving agriculture specifically?	7	
Does zoning allow agriculture as a permitted use by right in any district?	3	
Zoning does not prohibit agriculture in any district other than hamlet centers or commercial areas?	3	
Zoning does require special use permits for agriculture or ag-related uses in any district?	2	
No higher density or commercial growth are allowed in core farm areas or where a NYS Ag District exists?	1	
Does the zoning establish a local agricultural zoning district, ag overlay district, or special use district for agriculture?	3	
Does the zoning allow farms to have more than one business or offer flexibility to accommodate the needs of agricultural businesses?	3	
Are buffer zones between farmland and residential uses required for new construction or subdivision?	0	
Are innovative development patterns that preserve farmland encouraged, allowed, or mandated (conservation subdivision, clustering, TDR)?	5	
Are off-site or on-site signs allowed to attract and direct people to farm stands?	3	
Are farm stands, farm retail markets, agri-tourist businesses, breweries, etc. allowed?	3	
Are farm processing facilities such as community kitchens, slaughterhouse, etc. allowed?	1	
Are farm stands limited to selling just products from that one farm?	1	
Farm stands do not need a site plan review or special use permit.	8	
Does zoning allow for accessory uses such as greenhouses, barns, garages, equipment storage etc. permitted as of right?	2	
Do application requirements include asking for submittal of information or maps about farming that might be taking place on or near the project parcel? Whether it is in an ag district? What farming activities take place on or near the site? Whether prime farmland soils are present?	4	



Farm-Friendly Criteria

Number of Site Plan, Subdivision or Zoning Laws Using Ag-Friendly Practice Wholly or Partly (out of 27 laws reviewed)

Do standards exist that require the PB or ZBA to evaluate impacts of a project on agriculture?	1
Do any design standards exist to direct building envelopes to areas on a parcel that would still allow farming to occur on remaining open spaces?	5
Does the regulation define agriculture, agricultural structure, farm worker housing, agri-tourism, agri-business?	12
Are farm-related definitions broad and flexible and not confined to a certain number of acres or income earned?	9
Are non-traditional or retail based farm businesses allowed in a district or ag zoned district. For example, can a farmer set up a brewery on site and sell products onsite?	2
Is an agricultural data statement as per AML 25-aa required as part of an application for site plan, subdivision, special use or other zoning?	3
Does the community require placement of an ag disclosure statement on plans or plats when development takes place in a NY certified ag district?	1
No ag-related uses required to get a special use permit or go through site plan review?	6
Does the regulation define and allow for farm worker housing? Are mobile homes allowed as farm worker housing?	1
Are silos and other farm structures exempt from height requirements?	2
Are personal wind mills and solar panels allowed for farms? With permits or permitted as of right?	1
Zoning does not regulate farms by acreage or number of animals	3



Appendix D. Agricultural Opportunity Research Highlights

During the summer of 2016, a college intern worked with ASA to provide more in-depth research on topics of importance to Washington County agriculture. The work included review of research, guides, examples, and data; and a series of interviews to learn more about:

- Washington County Capacity for Food Processing
- Local Food Venues
- Adaptation to Climate Change
- Food Hubs

Finally, a summary report was developed highlighting important characteristics of agricultural crops and their potential in Washington County.

This research was important in the development of this Plan’s recommendations. Summaries of this research are included in this Appendix.

Summary #1: Food Hubs

**What food hub studies are out there?** These three resources are particularly useful: [Regional Food Hub Resource Guide](#), [Findings of the 2015 National Food Hub Survey](#) and the [Hudson Valley Food Hubs Initiative](#).

**Overview:** Food hubs can serve as vectors for economic growth as well as social and environmental change. By helping farms move their product by assisting with aggregation, distribution, marketing and transportation, food hubs are proving to be particularly important for small and mid-sized farms. These farms often face barriers to entering wholesale markets due to lack of product volume, transportation, accessing buyers and markets, etc. Many large wholesale buyers are price sensitive, meaning they may want to purchase locally but cannot afford to for several reasons including higher prices of local/specialty food products and the inconvenience of having to source from multiple farms to meet volume requirements. Therefore, food hubs help fill this gap in the food supply chain for small and mid-sized farms by aggregating and distributing these demanded goods.

While each food hub is different, common components across all hubs include aggregation, distribution and marketing of local products. [National Good Food Network](#) (out of the [Wallace Center](#)) defines a food hub as:

*“A regional food hub is a business or organization that actively manages the aggregation, distribution,*

*and marketing of source-identified products primarily from local and regional producers for the purpose of strengthening producer capacity and their access to wholesale, retail, and institutional markets.”*

**Conclusions and key findings from the food hub studies:** There were six key findings from the 2015 National Food Hub Survey report:

1. Food hub suppliers and customers are almost entirely regional
2. Food hubs are good for small and medium agricultural operations
3. Food hubs strive to increase community food access and improve health outcomes
4. Food hubs are addressing challenges that include compliance with the Food Safety and Modernization Act (FSMA)
5. Food hubs turn to communities of practice and networks for information
6. Food hubs are concerned about maintaining product supply and keeping up with business growth

Another cross-cutting theme is the importance of marketing products as high value and source-identified, maintaining the connection to the farm that produced each product. Particularly relevant to agriculture in Washington County is the strong and growing demand (in the Hudson Valley and New York City) for added-value and source-identified specialty dairy products such as yogurt and cheese. There is also a growing consumer demand for specialty/alternative (natural, organic, grass-fed, pastured, antibiotic free, hormone-free, etc.) to conventional meat and livestock products.

**What goes into a food hub feasibility study?** The Hudson Valley Food Hubs Initiative is a very helpful and informative feasibility study. When assessing the need of food hubs for supporting and strengthening sustainable agriculture and the regional food chain, is strongly emphasized the importance of understanding the market demand, available resources and existing food distribution landscape. Most importantly, a new food hub should focus on already established relationships, distribution routes and existing infrastructure rather than essentially recreating the wheel. A study should largely involve interviews with farmers, processors, distributors, wholesale buyers, as well as potential



partners for programs such as technical assistance, new farmer training/networking, marketing assistance and farm infrastructure.

**How to determine if a food hub is needed?** Cornell’s “Assessing the Need for a Food Hub” resource had a list of questions that food hub organizers should ask farmers/producers when determining whether a food hub is really needed.

1. Are producers genuinely interested in selling to a food hub that will purchase product at wholesale prices?
2. Are producers in the area growing products marketable through a new food hub?
3. Are producers willing to provide product that meets food safety standards required by the food hub?
4. Are producers willing to obligate product based on a pre-season commitment or growing plan?
5. Are producers willing to pack to industry standards?
6. Do producers have the resources, i.e. land, labor, capital, and experience to expand production to be sold through a food hub?

Additionally, the Hudson Valley Food Hubs Initiative researchers sought to answer these three specific questions:

Are food hubs necessary to support and strengthen sustainable agriculture and a regional food value chain in the Hudson Valley?

Which food hub features could most benefit Hudson Valley farms and communities?

Who are the potential partners for food hub development in the Hudson Valley?

**Different types of food hubs:** There are four different food hub business structures - private enterprise, not-for-profit, cooperative and public. There are also three different food hub business models - farm to business/institution, farm to consumer, and hybrid. Farm to business/institution sells to wholesale market buyers including grocery stores, restaurants, healthcare and educational food service providers, and other distributors. Farm to consumer (“direct to consumer”) hubs sell to Community supported agriculture (CSA) programs, buying clubs, mobile units, retail online and brick-and-mortar stores or home delivery. The hybrid model is a combination of wholesale and consumer sales.

**Find examples of success stories and challenges and identify community demographics where they have been successful.**

There are a lot of successful food hubs in New York State including the Headwater Food Hub, Capital

Roots, Regional Access, the Corbin Hill Food Project and Field Goods. While none of them are located in (or very close to) Washington County, some do source from Washington County producers. Here is a list of successful food hubs from the Healthy Food Access Portal:

- **Corbin Hill Food Project** based out of Schoharie and delivers to New York City, NY: Offers weekly farm shares and focuses on meeting the needs of the community’s low income residents through offering flexible, affordable and culturally diverse options.
- **Common Market** in Philadelphia, PA: connects farmers to over 150 public and private schools, colleges and universities, hospitals, workplaces, grocery stores, nonprofits, and faith institutions in the Delaware Valley. One key to it’s growth is Common Market’s commitment to equity.
- **Intervale Food Hub** in Burlington, VT: works with over 20 farmers and runs a year-round CSA utilizing goods from multiple farms.
- **New North Florida Cooperative Association., Inc.** in Marianna, FL: A hub that aggregates, processes and distributes fresh, chopped vegetables from mostly African American, small-scale grocers. The coop has a processing facility and serves nearby school districts.
- **Farm Fresh Rhode Island** in Pawtucket, Rhode Island: Has a Market Mobile Program that sources from 50 local farms/producers and distributors to customers including a CSA, restaurants, grocers, caterers, schools and hospitals in RI and MA.
- **ALBA Organics** in Watsonville, CA: Supports sales, marketing and training needs of beginning farmers.

## Summary #2: Capacity for Food Processing Facilities

**Identify where, what and at what capacity existing food processing facilities and food hubs in the county and region are.** The “Farms and Processing Facilities in the Hudson Valley” document contains maps and names of fruit, vegetable, dairy and livestock farms and processing facilities in the entire Hudson Valley (as of 2011).

- **Meat processors:** The Cornell Small Farms Program has a NY State Slaughterhouses database, designed to help livestock farmers find slaughterhouses and/or processing facilities. Hank Bignell is updating the list of USDA-approved processing facilities/slaughterhouses in Washington County and Rensselaer County, which currently includes Ruts Ridge, Locust Grove Farm Smokehouse and Country Store, Eagle Bridge Custom Meat and Smokehouse, Garden of Spices

and Stratton’s Custom Meats. Overall, the producers agreed that there are seasonal bottlenecks at the processing facilities. However, they do not think that building new slaughterhouses would help. Rather, these facilities need to figure out how to better manage the busy times and the less busy times of the year. A farmer suggested that processing facilities create a double shift at night during the busiest times of year.

- **Produce Processors:** CCE Harvest New York has maps of both “Food Processing Industry Clusters” and “Supply Chain Assets”, which contain useful information regarding New York’s major food processors for each agricultural sector.
- **Food Hubs:** A list of food hubs was also compiled in the general area from USDA Food Hub Directory - the National Good Food Network also has a database. This is the USDA’s list of food hubs within 100 miles of Greenwich, NY (zip code 12834) and Fort Edward, NY (zip code 12828), and \* denotes within 50 miles:
  - ♦ \*Rutland Area Farm and Food Link - Farm Fresh Connects (Rutland, VT)
  - ♦ \*Berkshire Organics Market and Delivery (Dalton, MA)
  - ♦ Corbin Hill Food Project (Schoharie, NY)
  - ♦ Western MA Food Processing Center (Greenfield, MA)
  - ♦ Field Goods (Athens, NY)
  - ♦ Mad River Food Hub (Waitsfield, VT)
  - ♦ Massachusetts Local Food Cooperative (Gardner, MA)
  - ♦ Delaware Bounty (Delhi, NY)
  - ♦ Farmers To You (Barre, VT)
  - ♦ Lucky Dog Local Food Hub (Hamden, NY)
  - ♦ Hub on the Hill (Essex, NY)

**Is there a need for more processing facilities in the county and/or region?** Interviewees were asked about their opinion on Washington County’s processing capacity. There is a bottleneck due to the seasonality of livestock production, leading to jam-ups at certain times of the year. However, that might not indicate a need for simply more processors. It will be better to keep existing plants in operation. They wonder if there is a way to develop a system where processing plants can do something else in their down time/the off season. Producers face different challenges depending on their type of livestock. For example, goat farmers may have challenges finding near-by processing facilities that are USDA compliant. Processing facilities may only have slots for goats for

half a day each week (if at all), leading to competition among those farmers for those available slots. Please read the *Slaughterhouse Feasibility Study Executive Summary and Recommendations* (2005) by the Pride of Vermont.

**Is there a need for more value-added processing?** Some have not been able to source locally-produced dehydrated fruits and vegetables. One farmer said that he wants to expand to increase his value-added processing capacity but is not sure how. He is thinking about the idea of getting access to a kitchen to start making products from his pigs such as leaf lard and pie dough (rather than outsourcing to The Farm Bridge). Value added meat products are good, but it’s very hard to get products into the large stores because they are very controlled by companies like Hormel.

**Is there a need for a food hub?** Nobody expressed a desire for a food hub. Some recommended thinking broader than just Washington County and the idea of promoting brands versus individual farms. A food hub is not the solution to increasing sales for Washington County farmers. Rather, the County should focus on developing support for robust value chain coordination, by focusing on human capital (people and relationships) rather than physical infrastructure (coolers, warehouses, etc.). Three common concerns about a food hub in Washington County are seasonality, volume and demand. The ADK Grazers is their own type of food hub, focusing on helping farmers make living wages by helping farmers keep more of the money when selling wholesale.

Additionally, the Hudson Valley Food Hubs Initiative examines the regional food value chain and potential development of different crops. Please refer to the “Potential Development for Washington County Crops” document for a discussion on the demand, need and challenges for the future development of the dairy, meat/livestock, vegetable, fruit and grain sectors in the Hudson Valley. What resources could be helpful to them?

- Delivery chain assistance for delivery in NYC and Long Island, technical assistance for their website
- Handling equipment for hauling (perhaps sharing among members), end-product marketing
- Poultry processing now that Ben Shaw moved, figuring out the seasonal bottleneck at slaughterhouses, large scale value-added dairy, financing assistance for smaller, non-conventional farms, including bridge financing for project expenses that will be reimbursed with grant funding.
- Marketing NYS beef, getting products into institutions because they cannot compete with the prices offered



by the huge food distributors like SYSCO

- A new, state-of-the-art slaughtering, processing and packaging facility
- Cold storage/freezer space assistance (like the mini grant program)
- Value-chain facilitators/coordinators.
- What are challenges the interviewees face?
- Slaughtering and processing is too expensive, it's hard to find good staff, labor and equipment sharing is difficult
- Handling equipment for hauling is too expensive for each farm to purchase
- Financing
- Inability to compete with the prices offered by the huge food distributors like SYSCO
- Cold storage/freezer space
- Who will be willing to take on the risk of starting a new food hub?
- The main challenge is capital (money to expand), transportation (getting the farm products to the food hub in Athens).
- Having to travel to farther processing plants at certain times of the year
- Processing for organic meat, superior packaging

**Who is selling in NYC?** Several farms sell directly at the NYC Green Market as well as to CSA customers, restaurants and retail stores in the city. These include Battenkill Creamery, Argyle Cheese Farmer, Flying Pigs Farm, Lewis Waite Farm, Adirondack Grazers Cooperative (through Fresh Direct), Field Goods, and Kilcoyne Farms. Simply Grazin' sells a lot of product to Whole Foods and Fresh Direct.

**Is there a need for meat lockers in Washington County?** It's hard to tell whether meat lockers like the ones up in Ithaca that are part of the Meat Locker Project will do well in Washington County, largely due to the differences in population size, income, etc.

**What are our local food venues?** Local farms sell to a variety of venues, including grocery stores such as Hannaford and Price Chopper, restaurants and area farmers' markets. There were eight main farmers markets that we looked at to better understand where Washington County producers are selling their products in the region. Out of the 118 agricultural vendors at these markets, approximately 44 are from Washington County. See below for a more specific breakdown of the farmers at each market (these figures do not include vendors from

Washington County selling only value-added products such as Pucker's Pickles). Additionally, the Farmers Market Federation of NY has a searchable database of NYS markets. Washington County farmers participate in the Saratoga, Schenectady, Glens Falls, Cambridge Valley, Greenwich, and Troy Farmers markets.

### Summary #3: Adapting to Climate Change

**What changes can farmers make to address climate change?** The National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition (NSAC) released the policy position paper *Agriculture & Climate Change: Impacts and Opportunities at the Farm Level* in 2009. This paper focuses on greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, which are commonly linked to rapid changes in climate throughout the world. Current signs of climate change include high incidences of flooding, intense and more extreme rainfall, heat stress, frost risk and more intense weed and pest pressures. Climate change can also affect livestock production by lowering the quality of feed and causing water shortages. These changes in climate are more generally referred to as "extreme weather" and "climate variability".

This NSAC report addresses the role that agriculture plays in the emission of GHGs (primarily methane and nitrous oxide) and provides suggestions for changes in agricultural systems and practices. The most relevant sections to Washington County are highlighted in yellow. Livestock production methods linked to reduced GHG emissions include

- For grass-based systems:
  - ◆ Access to high quality pasture (compared to mature grass)
  - ◆ Grazing on legume-grass pastures (compared to grass-only pastures)
  - ◆ Intensively managed rotational grazing
- For grain-based systems:
  - ◆ Changes in grain-to-forage ratio
  - ◆ Grinding and pelleting of feed
  - ◆ Reducing protein content
  - ◆ Addition of fats
  - ◆ Use of enzymes
  - ◆ Proper feed storage and handling practices
  - ◆ Feed high in omega-3s (alfalfa, flax, grasses, etc.), see the Stonyfield Greener Cow pilot program
- In general:
  - ◆ For waste management, compost systems rather

than manure slurry or manure stockpiles

- ◆ Reducing over-application of waste on land

There are several useful websites and online resources to assist farmers interested in addressing climate change on the farm level including:

- **The Hudson Valley Farm Hub - ["Climate Smart Farming"](#)**
  - ◆ They define climate smart farming as both working to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and adapting to the changing climate through resilient farming practices. They suggest several ways and efforts to address climate change including:
    - ◆ [Cover crops](#) as green manure to build carbon in soils to store CO<sub>2</sub>, protect and improve the soil, helps absorb and retain moisture. Cover crops include brome grass, Timothy grass, alfalfa, peas, clover, sunflowers, sunn hemp, triticale, radish, vetch, buckwheat and mustard.
    - ◆ [No-till farming practices](#) significantly fewer tractor trips, reduce fuel consumption, reduce need for pesticides and fertilizer
    - ◆ [The Farm Hub's Small Grains project](#) aims to recapture seed biodiversity and grow grains that are better suited to the Hudson Valley's region and climate.
    - ◆ [Promoting farmland ecology](#) to enhance interactions between the farmland and surroundings. An example is planting riparian buffers to stabilize soil (especially on land that is prone to flooding) as well as improve water quality of the watershed.
    - ◆ Crop diversification to mitigate the risk of crop failure
- **Cornell Institute for Climate Change and Agriculture (CICCA) - ["Strengthening Agriculture in the Face of Climate Change"](#)**
  - ◆ "The Cornell Institute for Climate Change and Agriculture (CICCA) serves as a focal point to facilitate research, education, and outreach to help farmers in the Northeast become more resilient to extreme weather and climate variability and reduce their impact on climate change, through increased use of renewable energy and adoption of best management practices."
  - ◆ Key findings from ["Understanding the Views and Actions of U.S. Farmers Towards Climate Change"](#), a CICCA Research and Policy Brief from March 2016 (copied from the report):

1. Many U.S. farmers have noticed changes in weather patterns and an increase in extreme weather, yet remain skeptical about climate change and the long-term risks it poses.
2. Studies show that although levels of climate change belief varies among farmers in different regions, and the majority of farmers believe that climate change is happening, fewer farmers believe that climate change is human-caused than those who believe that climate change is occurring.
3. Farmers generally more widely accept adaptation than mitigation measures. Factors such as affirmative belief in climate change and personal experience with local extreme weather are related to increased likelihood to support and/or adopt adaptation practices.
4. Farmer likelihood of supporting mitigation practices seems to be related to factors such as belief in human causation of climate change, concern for negative impacts of climate change, and the presence of economic incentives.

#### [Cornell's Climate Smart Farming](#)

- **[Resources and Best Management Practices:](#)** This website contains links to websites and resources for the various agricultural sectors (including a [Dairy, Poultry and Livestock section](#)) as well as adaptation strategies and mitigation strategies.

The recommended *adaptation strategies* include:

1. Conservation Tillage
2. High-Residue Cover Crops
3. Irrigation
4. Multiple Adaptation Strategies
5. Soil Health

The recommended *mitigation strategies* include:

1. Greenhouse Gas Accounting
  2. Multiple Mitigation Strategies
  3. Nitrogen Management
  4. Renewable Energy
- ◆ [Dairy Management Extension](#) member: **Dr. Kimberley Morrill**, regional dairy specialist, focuses on calf management, record management, on-farm outreach programs and helping New York dairies improve their capacity to manage the risks associated with climate change. Email: kmm434@cornell.edu | Phone: (315) 379-9192.



- The USDA has established [regional climate hubs](#) for mitigation to climate change and risk adaptation through the delivery of information (technical support, assessments, forecasts, and outreach and education) to farmers, ranchers and forest landowners. You can search for resources pertaining to a specific region and/or type of land (cropland, forestland, pasture/hayland, and livestock).
  - ◆ The [USDA Northeast Climate Hub](#) is relevant to Washington County and includes Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Connecticut, New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Maryland, Delaware, West Virginia and D.C.
- [Animal Agriculture in a Changing Climate](#) is a USDA project through the Livestock and Poultry Environmental Learning Center with a lot of [resources](#) for livestock farmers adapting to climate change. Their [“Planning Guide for Adapting to a Changing Climate”](#) looks particularly helpful. This table from the guide provides an overview of some risk management options.

Table 3. Examples of impacts and risk management options.

Impact Example	Low Cost	Long Term + More Expensive
Intensive rainfall damages cropland and pasture because of additional soil loss	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Alternative pastures in rotation</li><li>• Alternative crops or plants</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Install terraces</li></ul>
Dry weather reducing forage in pastures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Reduce animal density</li><li>• Secure additional feed</li><li>• Cover crops, drought tolerant forages with longer roots for grazing purposes</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Add more pasture land</li><li>• Application of organic material (i.e., compost) to increase soil water holding capacity</li></ul>
Pest and weed pressures in field	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• More intensive scouting</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Change crop rotation</li><li>• Crop/forage diversification</li></ul>
Manure storage overtopping with variable timing and intensity of rainfall	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Maintain higher freeboard by pumping more frequently</li><li>• Find emergency option for pumping manure</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Add more manure storage</li></ul>
Hot weather impacting animals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Feed for hot weather</li><li>• Install more fan capacity</li><li>• Install sprinkling system</li><li>• Reduce time in holding pen (dairy)</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Add evaporative cooling system</li><li>• Invest in new cooling technologies</li></ul>
Farm is landlocked during flood events	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Increase feed supply on hand</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Add storage capacity for product (milk or eggs)</li><li>• Repair/upgrade farm access</li></ul>

\*Options listed in this table are extremely limited. There are many other options available.

# Appendix E. Farmland Conservation and Agricultural Development Resources for Washington County

Various agencies and organizations provide support to farms in Washington County. Below is a list of some of these agencies and the services they provide:

- Agricultural Stewardship Association - <http://www.agstewardship.org>  
Works with landowners to conserve farmland in Washington and Rensselaer counties through the purchase and donation of development rights; stewards the land that has been conserved; offers outreach and educational programs for the community.
- Cornell Cooperative Extension - Washington County - <http://www.washingtoncce.org>  
Outreach and education in agriculture and natural resource management; provides numerous educational programs for farmers and landowners.
- Farm Credit East - <http://www.farmcrediteast.com>  
Provides financial products, services and management support for agricultural business. “The # 1 financial services cooperative for the agricultural industry” in the northeastern U.S.
- Hudson Valley Agribusiness Development Corporation - <http://www.hvadc.org>  
Expertise and resources for agriculture-related businesses in the Hudson Valley, from analysis and start-up assistance for new ventures to market expansion and improved distribution networks for existing agricultural businesses.
- Hudson Valley Farmlink Network - <http://hudsonvalleyfarmlandfinder.org/>  
A partnership of 15 organizations, coordinated by American Farmland Trust, offering the Hudson Valley Farmland Finder website, training and networking events, and one-on-one assistance to connect farmers looking for land with landowners.
- Washington County Agricultural & Farmland Protection Board  
Reviews agricultural districts and notice of intent filings; makes recommendations about the effect of proposed actions involving public funds and public acquisition of farmland in agricultural districts; develops and approves county agricultural and farmland protection plans.

- Washington County Division of Planning & Economic Development - <http://co.washington.ny.us>
- Washington County Soil & Water Conservation District - <http://washingtoncountyswcd.org>  
Coordinates the funding, regulatory permits, and site supervision for local environmental projects; an active participant in New York State Agricultural Environmental Management, a voluntary program for farmers to address water quality concerns on their operations through coordinated technical and financial assistance.
- Washington County Farm Bureau - [http://www.nyfb.org/about\\_nyfb](http://www.nyfb.org/about_nyfb)
- A private, volunteer member organization for the purpose of solving economic and public policy issues challenging the agricultural industry.
- NYS Department of Agriculture and Markets - <http://www.agriculture.ny.gov>  
Division of Agricultural Development aims to strengthen the viability and consumer awareness of New York’s food and agricultural industry; includes activities and services in market development, business development and support.
- Specialty Crop Block Grant Program: Funding to enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops, defined as “fruits, vegetables, tree nuts, dried fruits, horticulture, and nursery crops (including floriculture).”
- Organic Farming Development/Assistance: Guidance in locating resources on organic agriculture and organically produced foods.
- Farmland Protection Implementation Grants Program - Funding to purchase development rights on farmland and develop municipal agricultural and farmland protection plans.
- New York State Energy Research and Development Authority (NYSERDA) - <http://www.nyserda.org>  
Offers objective information and analysis, innovative programs, technical expertise, and funding to help New Yorkers increase energy efficiency, save money, use renewable energy, and reduce reliance on fossil fuels.



- Programs and funding opportunities for the agricultural sector - <http://www.nyserda.ny.gov/Energy-Efficiency-and-Renewable-Programs/Commercial-and-Industrial/Sectors/Agriculture.aspx>
- USDA Agricultural Marketing Service - <http://www.ams.usda.gov>  
Administers programs that facilitate the efficient, fair marketing of U.S. agricultural products, including food, fiber, and specialty crops; provides the agricultural sector with tools and services that help create marketing opportunities.
- USDA Farm Service Agency - <http://www.fsa.usda.gov/FSA>
- Farm Loan Programs: Direct loans and loan guarantees to help family farmers start, purchase, or expand their farming operation; includes Farm Ownership Loans, Farm Operating Loans and Microloans, Emergency Farm Loans, Land Contract Guarantees, Loans for Beginning Farmers, etc.
- Biomass Crop Assistance Program: Financial assistance to owners and operators of agricultural and non-industrial private forest land who wish to establish, produce, and deliver biomass feedstocks.
- USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service - <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov>
  - ◆ Agricultural Management Assistance: helps agricultural producers use conservation to manage risk and solve natural resource issues through natural resources conservation.
  - ◆ Conservation Stewardship Program: helps agricultural producers maintain and improve their existing conservation systems and adopt additional conservation activities to address priority resources concerns.
  - ◆ Environmental Quality Incentives Program: provides financial and technical assistance to agricultural producers to address natural resource concerns and deliver environmental benefits such as improved water and air quality, conserved ground and surface water, reduced soil erosion and sedimentation or improved or created wildlife habitat.
  - ◆ Agricultural Conservation Easement Program: provides financial and technical assistance to help conserve agricultural lands and wetlands and their related benefits.
- USDA New Farmers Website - <http://www.usda.gov/wps/portal/usda/newfarmers?navid=getting-started>
- USDA Rural Development, New York Office - <http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/NYHome.html>
- Value-Added Producer Grants: provides agricultural producers with matching funds for value-added ventures that will increase the return on their agricultural commodities; can be used for planning (e.g., feasibility studies, business plans) and/or working capital.
  - ◆ Rural Energy for America (REAP): grants and guaranteed loans to help agricultural producers purchase and install renewable energy systems and make energy efficiency improvements.
  - ◆ Farm Labor Housing Program: Direct loans and grants for new construction or substantial rehabilitation of safe, affordable rental housing for farm workers.

### Other Resources for Farmers

- Agricultural Marketing Resource Center - <http://www.agmrc.org>  
Addresses marketing and business planning for U.S. agricultural producers.
- American Farmland Trust, New York Office - <http://newyork.farmland.org>
- Betterbee - <http://www.betterbee.com>
- Cornell Farm to School Program - <http://farmtoschool.cce.cornell.edu> Cornell Small Farms Program - <http://smallfarms.cornell.edu>
- Dirt Capital Partners - [www.dirtpartners.com](http://www.dirtpartners.com)  
Invests in farmland in partnership with sustainable farmers throughout the northeastern U.S., promoting land access and security for farmers while keeping farmland in productive use. Most of their land investment partnerships result from a farmer contacting Dirt Capital to purchase their leased parcel or relocate to a larger and/or more secure farm.
- Empire State Forestry Products Association - [www.esfpa.org](http://www.esfpa.org)
- Equity Trust - [www.equitytrust.org](http://www.equitytrust.org)  
A small, national non-profit organization that promotes alternative ownership structures for farms, to benefit farmers who need affordable farmland and communities that want a secure source of locally grown food and a way to preserve their environmental heritage
- Farm Aid Resource Network - <http://ideas.farmaid.org>

Connects farmers to services, tools, opportunities, and resources.

- Farmer Resource Network - [http://www.farmaid.org/site/c.q1l51hNVJsE/b.4375765/k.71EA/Farmer\\_Resource\\_Network.htm](http://www.farmaid.org/site/c.q1l51hNVJsE/b.4375765/k.71EA/Farmer_Resource_Network.htm)
- Farmers Market Federation of New York - <http://www.nyfarmersmarket.com>
- Farmer Veteran Coalition - <http://www.farmvetco.org>
- Glynwood Center - Hudson Valley Farm Business Incubator - <http://www.glynwood.org/incubator>  
Provides the tools and resources aspiring agricultural entrepreneurs need to develop and manage viable farm enterprises; offers access to land, housing, shared equipment and infrastructure, farm and business mentoring, technical classes, peer learning opportunities, and working capital.
- Hudson Valley Farm Hub - <http://www.localeconomiesproject.org/initiatives/farm-hub>
- Iroquois Valley Farms, LLC - <http://iroquoisvalleyfarms.com>  
Makes impact investments in local and organic agriculture by purchasing farmland that is leased through long term tenancies to farmers that are independently operating their own family farm business.
- National Farm to School Network - <http://www.farmtoschool.org>
- National Good Agricultural Practices Program (Cornell University) - <http://www.gaps.cornell.edu>
- National Sustainable Agriculture Information Service - <http://attra.ncat.org/index.php>
- Sustainable Farming Internships - <http://attra.ncat.org/attra-pub/internships>
- National Young Farmers Coalition - <http://www.youngfarmers.org>
- New England Small Farm Institute - <http://www.smallfarm.org>  
Promotes small farm development by providing information and training for aspiring, beginning and transitioning farmers.
- New York Ag Connection - <http://www.newyorkagconnection.com>
- New York Farm Bureau - <http://www.nyfb.org>
- New York Farmnet - <http://www.nyfarmnet.org>
- New York Farm Viability Institute - <http://www.nyfvi.org>

- New York Forest Owners Association - [www.nyfoa.org](http://www.nyfoa.org)
- New York Maple Producers Association - [www.nysmaple.com](http://www.nysmaple.com)
- New York Sustainable Agriculture Working Group - <http://www.ny-sawg.org>
- Northeast Beginning Farmers Project (Cornell University) - <http://nebeginningfarmers.org>
- Northeast Center for Food Entrepreneurship (through Cornell University) - <http://necfe.foodscience.cals.cornell.edu>
- Northeast Organic Farming Association - <http://www.nofa.org/index.php>
- Beginning Farmer, Apprentice, and Mentorship Programs - <http://www.nofany.org/bfam>
- Northeast Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education - <http://www.nesare.org>
- Offers grants for funding relevant agricultural research projects.
- Rodale Institute Your Two Cents Fund - <http://rodaleinstitute.org/assets/TwoCentsRFP-20Acres+.pdf> Offers grants of up to \$5,000 to farmers who are transitioning to certified organic production or have recently obtained organic certification.





## Appendix F. SUNY Adirondack KK&P Study

### The following is the Executive Summary from the April 2006 SUNY Adirondack Washington County Food and Agriculture Education study.

The following is the Executive Summary from the April 2006 SUNY Adirondack Washington County Food and Agriculture Education study.

“SUNY Adirondack is a community college in Queensbury, New York, with a satellite campus in Wilton, New York. SUNY Adirondack has been looking to increase its presence in Washington County, New York, one of the counties served by the school (Washington, Warren, and Saratoga counties). Karen Karp & Partners (KK&P), a New York City based food and agriculture consultancy, was retained in 2016 to build off a study completed in 2015 that explored the feasibility of a satellite campus in Washington County. The KK&P team was charged with focusing on educational opportunities in Washington County related to food and agriculture. KK&P reviewed employment data, conducted interviews with agriculture, food, and education stakeholders, and applied knowledge of the region and trends in agriculture to propose the **SUNY Adirondack Center for Agriculture and Food Education**. The Center will build on existing programs and courses at SUNY Adirondack by adding components that serve the needs of Washington County residents working in agriculture, the county’s burgeoning tourism and agritourism industries and the public health needs of the county. The Center will have both an online presence as well as physical presences in Washington County as courses and initiatives require, with the goal of having a

permanent shared space in the southern part of the county

In addition to hosting an online hub that gathers educational resources, discussion forums and an event calendar, among other information, the Center for Agriculture and Food Education will offer programming and courses for a variety of audiences: degree and certificate courses, workforce development, contract training, continuing education, and community education. Many of these new offerings can be hosted in Washington County. Courses and programming will fit into three broad subject areas: 1) agriculture; 2) culinary arts, hospitality, and tourism; and 3) culinary medicine. The agriculture programming will focus on supporting SUNY Adirondack’s agriculture management associate’s degree and incorporating agriculture technology courses into the school’s computer science and information technology degrees. The Center will also offer workforce development, contract training, and community education programs. The culinary arts, hospitality, and tourism prong of the Center will offer farm to table electives for degree seeking students. It will also offer several certificates, including culinary medicine and commercial cooking, food safety and hazard analysis and critical control points (HACCP) contract training. Continuing education programs such as farm-to-table courses for chefs and institutions, community education courses such as farmers’ market cooking classes and culinary nutrition courses will also be offered. Finally, the culinary medicine prong of the Center will offer culinary medicine electives for nursing students, continuing education for nurses, dietitians, nutritionists, and chefs; and community culinary medicine courses. A complete outline of course offerings and programming can be found in this report.

The SUNY Adirondack Center for Agriculture and Food Education will meet diverse educational needs related to food and agriculture in Washington County and SUNY Adirondack’s broader service area. The Center will serve as a hub of information, education, community networking, and tourism related to food, agriculture, and culinary medicine. The Center will broaden SUNY Adirondack’s presence in Washington County while also strengthening the school’s food, agriculture and health related academic offerings and community programming to meet the current and projected



## Appendix G. White Paper prepared by Hudson Valley AgriBusiness Development Corporation

### Five Recommendations to Guide Future Agriculture Development in Washington County

#### April 2016

HVADC has partnered with the Washington County Planning Department and the Agricultural Stewardship Association for the past three years to support the growth and viability of Washington County’s agricultural sector. As the only regional economic development office focused specifically on food and agriculture, HVADC works to ensure that strategic plans and public policies benefit and support the growth of food and agricultural industries. HVADC has worked to promote Washington County as an attractive, viable region for agriculture through a creative program of individualized technical assistance and regional economic development initiatives. Through our Incubator Without Walls program, HVADC offers a unique range of services tailored to meet the needs of each individual farm and business. Examples of these services include: comprehensive business planning, strategic planning for growth and development, financial analysis and projections, marketing and promotion, project planning, food safety planning, value-added infrastructure development, grant writing, farm transfers and more.

HVADC has worked closely with Washington County administrators to ensure better access to services for resident farmers and producers. HVADC would like to build upon this existing partnership to ensure that all Washington County agricultural businesses are receiving the assistance they need to scale their businesses and remain viable.

There is a significant demand for industry development services and technical assistance by farms and agriculture-related businesses within the Hudson Valley and Capital Region. This demand for services parallels a growing national interest in supporting local food and farm industries. Increased awareness of local food by area residents and neighboring metropolitan populations has demonstrated a significant need for comprehensive



agricultural development throughout the region as well as support for related industries. HVADC is interested in working collaboratively with Washington County stakeholders to bridge this gap by providing increased individualized services to local farming communities and developing an extensive network of businesses that support local farms.

Agriculture involves many businesses beyond farms such as manufacturing, transportation, technology, and clean energy. Identifying and targeting this network of inter-dependent businesses is critical to the growth of the agricultural industry and Washington county should work to fully integrate agriculture into all aspects of their economic development strategy.

Based on our extensive experience working with Washington County’s agricultural sector, as well as other Hudson Valley and Capital Region counties, HVADC has compiled a set of recommendations to help guide future agricultural development initiatives in Washington County. This document seeks to recommend programs, assistance, and support to enhance the viability of agriculture in Washington County that could be collaboratively developed and supported between HVADC and other county offices and organizations.



## Initiative 1: Partner with regional and specialized entities (such as the LDC) to underwrite grant writing efforts and help Washington County agricultural businesses secure financing

While there exists many organizations, stakeholders, and entities seeking to address the numerous issues facing farm businesses in today's economic climate (both at a regional and national level), local agricultural industries often lack the same kind of holistic and targeted support afforded to other economic sectors. One role that county governments can play is to coordinate and fund projects that benefit local industries. As mentioned previously, agriculture is deeply intertwined with various other sectors including manufacturing, transportation, and technology. Washington County can assume a leadership role in enhancing these services through coordinated economic development strategies and target agriculture-related industries.

We recommend for Washington County to explore opportunities to engage in fee-for-service relationships with HVADC and other technical assistance providers to provide grant-writing services to constituent businesses. Building upon HVADC's existing relationship with Washington County, there exists room for HVADC to further serve Washington County businesses by targeting specific rounds of funding to encourage cluster development such as the Rural Business Development Grant program and the Consolidated Funding Application process. HVADC recommends that Washington County share the burden of grant-writing costs with pre-positioned agriculture businesses looking to expand. HVADC has experienced significant success with cluster development using similar economic development strategies in Sullivan County.

**RECOMMENDATION:** Explore development of cost-share and/or fee-for-service grant-writing contracts between Washington County and HVADC and other specialized service providers.

**BEST PRACTICE EXAMPLE:** Sullivan County fee-for-service grant-writing partnership

HVADC entered into a contractual relationship with the Sullivan County Funding Corporation (SCFC) to provide grant-writing assistance for three craft beverage businesses that would support the development of a craft beverage cluster in the county. The applicants were responsible for 50 percent of the cost of services while

the SCFC covered the remaining 50 percent so as not to place a significant financial burden upon either party. HVADC assisted the three businesses (two distilleries and a brewery) with applications to the Rural Business Development Grant Program requesting funding to increase production capacity through the purchase of new or upgraded equipment. All three businesses were awarded funding totaling \$401,192. This strategy helped the applicants to secure essential funding that will expand capacity, scale up production, and enable an increase in purchases from local farms.

## Initiative 2: Increase coordination and collaboration between regional and county entities working towards common goal

Support for agricultural development initiatives requires active collaboration between stakeholders and resources. Although there are a number of helpful and dynamic resources available to farmers in the Hudson Valley and Capital Regions, navigating these resources can be a difficult and time consuming process, especially for farmers. In a comprehensive study on Washington County Food and Agriculture Programming, KarenKarp&Partners identified specific areas of need for county stakeholders to address through expanded educational offerings. One such area is the need for a centralized source of information for existing and prospective farmers and other food industry entrepreneurs. It was recommended that this be fulfilled through an online listing of educational offerings in the region with links to sector specific resources and other relevant information.

A centralized tool to help farmers navigate these resources would be a useful strategy to support farms and agribusinesses that may be looking for assistance. For example, through an online "decision tree," members of the agricultural community would be steered through a series of questions to help identify the type of services needed by the individual. Users would then be referred to an appropriate service provider to find answers to their questions. This kind of tool would serve as an initial step towards connecting regional farmers to individualized assistance and would support and complement the efforts of existing service providers and other regional stakeholders.

HVADC recommends the development of this tool to better market services available both regionally and within Washington County. It will be easier for farmers to access different types of assistance and service

providers will have the ability to reach a wider and more targeted audience. HVADC is interested in working with Washington County to develop this tool and potentially host the online platform.

**RECOMMENDATION:** Identify the resources available in Washington County and partner with HVADC in the development of a regional decision tree to connect service providers with potential clients.

### **BEST PRACTICE EXAMPLE: USDA New Farmer Program Discovery Tool**

The Discovery Tool is an online resource that guides new farmers and related professionals towards various informational channels. The tool is strategically placed directly on the homepage and leads users through a series of individualized questions in order to identify appropriate resources for their interest or need. Based on the user's answers, the USDA provides an extensive list of service providers, educators and industry experts that will help them take the next step in establishing their farm or agricultural business.

## Initiative 3: Farmer participation in regional marketing initiatives to boost farm sales and agritourism

Strong marketing strategies are critical to increasing farm sales however, many farmers often lack the time, energy and resources to effectively promote their products to consumers and other buyers. Despite this deficit, the Hudson Valley and Capital Region are experiencing a dramatic increase in demand for local food from area residents, metropolitan markets, and institutional buyers. Buyers of all kinds are increasingly looking for additional varieties and quantities of locally produced food to meet this demand and serve their markets.

Related to this is the opportunity to build upon the existing reputation of the Hudson Valley and surrounding area as a destination for "foodies." With a vibrant tourism industry already in place, HVADC recommends that Washington County farmers adhere to a cohesive marketing strategy that promotes regional agriculture to both tourists and potential buyers.

In the curriculum map developed by KarenKarp&Partners for the Washington County study, the development of a Farmer-Chef-Connect platform was recommended to serve as an "online forum for chefs and farmers to build relationships and create new market opportunities." Similar initiatives already exist throughout the region that are adaptive to the changing needs of farmers and their local communities as well as variable market conditions.

Washington County has the unique opportunity to respond to the recommendations put forth by this study by capitalizing on these existing programs.

There are many examples of regional marketing programs already in place that are working to promote local food and farms and to connect different kinds of buyers (chefs, distributors, institutions, etc) with local farms. Some regional examples include Adirondack Harvest, Harvest Connection, and Hudson Valley Bounty. These programs are not designed to compete with one another, rather to supplement existing efforts and to cross-promote local farms to a wider and more diverse audience.

**RECOMMENDATION:** Raise awareness and encourage farmer participation in these regional marketing programs to foster cross-promotional efforts. Establish partnership between SUNY Adirondack and HVADC/Hudson Valley Bounty for Adirondack Harvest guide.

**BEST PRACTICE EXAMPLE:** Hudson Valley Bounty Hudson Valley Bounty (HVB) is a project of HVADC designed to promote local farm and food businesses and support networking connections between local agricultural producers and culinary businesses, retailers and other buyers. HVADC is working to make significant updates to the current online platform that will provide a more comprehensive and navigable platform and more effectively promote Hudson Valley and Capital Region farms and food businesses. The HVB website receives thousands of visits every month from consumers and buyers throughout the tristate area looking for information on local food offerings. HVADC fields inquiries ranging from major distribution companies looking to expand local sourcing to families interested in U-Pick opportunities and farm-to-table dining. Listing with HVB grants businesses unbridled access to a wide range of potential buyers. HVADC staff shares stories and pictures of local producers on HVB social media channels to help drive traffic to member businesses. Businesses who list with HVB have access to a large network of dynamic followers (foodies, retailers, businesses, wholesalers, etc) and the opportunity to be featured in HVB/HVADC newsletters and blog postings.





## Initiative 4: Support for Washington County Local Development Corporation and Dedicated Regional Loan Fund

Farmers in the Capital Region face many barriers to profitability including tough competition, high overhead costs and a short Northeast growing season. A dedicated source of capital for rural entrepreneurs who may not have access to the funding needed for expansion would help to alleviate some of these issues. Additionally, tying together opportunities for financing with technical assistance services further encourages the growth and expansion of agriculture in the county. Washington County is already rich in services to address some of the above challenges but may require additional support to sustain a dedicated assistance program.

The Washington County Local Development Corporation (LDC) is one such program that already has the foundation to implement a revolving loan fund to a specific clientele of food and beverage entrepreneurs. HVADC recommends seeking additional financial support for the Washington County LDC to operate and expand their microenterprise services to Washington County agricultural businesses. We also recommend tying funding eligibility to participation in HVADC's Incubator Without Walls program—a requisite that positions participants for ultimate success. Additionally, HVADC recommends that Washington County work in conjunction with a potential CRAFT (Capital Region Agriculture Food Tourism) initiative aimed to further assist regional farms and food producers. Potential



exists for the Washington County LDC to match or refer projects to this program ensuring maximum benefit for Washington County businesses.

**RECOMMENDATION:** Secure long-term funding for the Washington County LDC, partner with HVADC to provide targeted technical assistance, and support regional loan fund initiative in the Capital Region.

**BEST PRACTICE EXAMPLE:** Columbia Economic Development Corporation's Microbusiness Program

The Columbia Economic Development Corporation (CEDC) helps small business owners in three ways: they provide MicroLoans of up to \$50,000 for eligible loan applicants, they produce a MicroBusiness Seminar Series on the basics of running a business and they provide one-on-one technical assistance. Preference for loans is given to applicants who have successfully completed the MicroBusiness Seminar Series and ten hours of technical assistance is available to all MicroBusiness graduates at no charge. CEDC works with business consultants who have expertise in accounting, marketing, computer systems, employee management and other areas of concern to small business owners. The consultants act as mentors to the entrepreneur, providing individualized technical assistance in one or more of these areas. The Microbusiness Program is funded in part through a Cooperative Agreement with the U.S. Small Business Administration.

## Initiative 5: Collaborate with educational partners and stakeholders to develop comprehensive agriculture and local food system package of curriculum and support services.

HVADC has supported Washington County Planning staff in their efforts to expand the agricultural offerings of SUNY Adirondack. In 2014, HVADC assisted with the development of a NYS Consolidated Funding Application to study the opportunity to expand SUNY Adirondack's Sustainable Agricultural degree program. SUNY was awarded \$65,000 to develop a strategic plan for the creation of a Regional Education Center to house non-credit and credit programming, courses, and services to support agriculture, health care, and trade industries in Washington County. HVADC has recommended consultants, reviewed materials, and provided feedback as the project has progressed. Based on these experiences, HVADC is interested in a collaborative effort to offer

support services to participants/graduates of SUNY's new program offerings.

In the Washington County Study on Food and Agriculture Programming, KarenKarp&Partners identified a need for collaboration between those already providing education to farmers. There are a number of existing agricultural educators that serve Washington County and the greater regions. Some examples include HVADC, Cornell Cooperative Extension, SUNY Adirondack, Future Farmers of America (FFA), and BOCES. By opening the channels of communication between these stakeholders and working collaboratively to develop a complementary suite of services, HVADC envisions a county-wide effort to lead prospective students and food system workers/entrepreneurs on a path to success. HVADC supports the development of SUNY Adirondack's agriculture/culinary/health-focused curriculum as outlined in the study.

HVADC is interested in pursuing a partnership with SUNY Adirondack to offer our dedicated services and continuing educational opportunities to participants that will supplement SUNY's curriculum and help graduates achieve their agricultural goals. In addition to this partnership, HVADC recommends increased collaboration between SUNY Adirondack, HVADC, Cornell Cooperative Extension and other agricultural educators to more effectively coordinate future agricultural programming in Washington County. KarenKarp&Partners also found that continuing

education programs in collaboration with Cornell Cooperative Extension and other local groups are viewed positively and can be offered in Washington County.

**RECOMMENDATION:** Collaboration between educational partners, HVADC and other related services providers to develop supplementary support services and continuing education opportunities for SUNY Adirondack's new curriculum.

**BEST PRACTICE EXAMPLE:** The Center for Agricultural Development & Entrepreneurship (CADE) and SUNY Cobleskill's collaborative Farm and Food Business Incubator was awarded \$125,000 annually for three years through a 2015 NYS Consolidated Funding Application award. SUNY Cobleskill is working collaboratively with CADE, Cornell Cooperative Extension of Otsego and Schoharie Counties, Hartwick College, and SUNY Oneonta to develop the Incubator which is intended to provide farm business support, educational workshops, and processing opportunities to a variety of farm businesses. Additionally, the participants will have the opportunity to utilize SUNY Cobleskill's facilities (creamery, commercial kitchen, livestock and poultry processing, slaughterhouse) to develop value-added products and increase their profitability. The program aims to assist agricultural entrepreneurs in accessing sophisticated supply chains. The Incubator is being developed to align with SUNY Cobleskill's new Food Systems and Technology program.





# AGRICULTURE IS OUR CULTURE

ARGYLE

CAMBRIDGE

DRESDEN

EASTON

FORT ANN

FORT EDWARD

GRANVILLE

GREENWICH

HAMPTON

HARTFORD

HEBRON

JACKSON

KINGSBURY

PUTNAM

SALEM

WHITE CREEK

WHITEHALL



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