

Planning for the Future of Farmland

Genesee/Finger Lakes Regional Planning Council
Fall 2022 Local Government Workshop

November 3, 2022

Linda Garrett, NY/NJ
Regional Director, AFT

- Who is AFT?
- Threats to Farmland in New York
- Planning for Farmland in New York



American Farmland Trust

- Nonprofit Organization founded in 1980
Committed to Saving America's Farmland
 - Protecting Farmland From Development
 - Promoting Sound Farming Practices
 - Keeping Farmers on the Land
- Work From Kitchen Table to Congress

AFT in New York

Farmland for a New Generation New
York (FNG-NY)

Farm to Institution NYS (FINYS)

Ag Stewardship

Women for the Land

Smart Solar

Farmland for a New Generation New York



[New York Farmland Finder](#) & Regional
Navigator Network



Non-Operating Landowner (NOLs) Project –
[Hudson Valley Pilot](#), expanding to NYS



Growing the Landscape for Urban Agriculture
in Oneida County, NY



Technical assistance to farmers, farmland
owners and service providers



NY Farm to School Institute



Farm to Institution



Local Food Buyer Learning Center & Success Stories



Farmer Readiness Scan & Farm to School Producer Trainings



Website: [FINYS | Farm to Institution New York State](https://www.farmtoinstitutionnys.org/)

Farm to Institution NYS

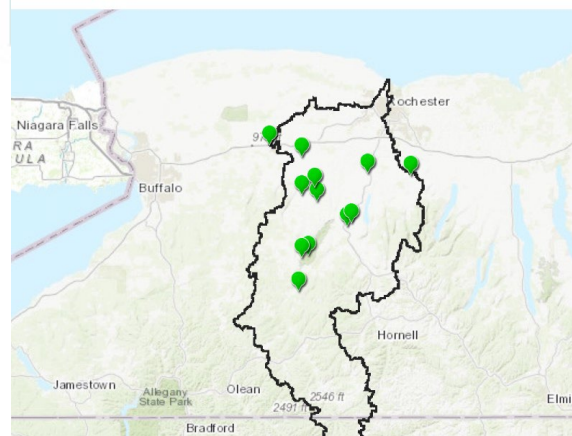


Ag Stewardship & Women For the Land (WFL)



Genesee River Demonstration Farm Network - Genesee River Demonstration Farms Network - American Farmland Trust

- Highlights the impacts of practical and innovative conservation practices on farm viability, water quality, and other natural resources, demonstrated on real working farms
- Tell the story through on-farm research, case studies, field days and workshops, farmer-to-farmer meetings, videos, webinars, presentations
- 12 farms – new grant adds 4 more women owned (total of 7 woman owned or lead)



WFL - Women for the Land - American Farmland Trust

- Incorporates the Learning Circle technique
- Learn about conservation practices, succession planning, and farm business management and build community.

Smart Solar



**Smart Solar Siting on Farmland:
Achieving Climate Goals While Strengthening the
Future for Farming in New York**



Samantha Levy, Climate Policy Manager

Mikaela Ruiz-Ramón, New York Policy Coordinator

Ethan Winter, Northeast Solar Specialist

February 2022


American Farmland Trust
SAVING THE LAND THAT SUSTAINS US



AFT National Smart Solar Principles

- Principle 1: Prioritize Solar Siting on Buildings and Land Not Well Suited for Farming
- Principle 2: Safeguard the Ability for Land to Be Used for Agriculture
- Principle 3: Grow Agrivoltaics for Agricultural Production & Solar Energy
- Principle 4: Promote Equity and Farm Viability


American Farmland Trust



Threats to Farmland in New York



Drivers of Agricultural Land Conversion

Poorly Planned Development

Weakening Farm Viability

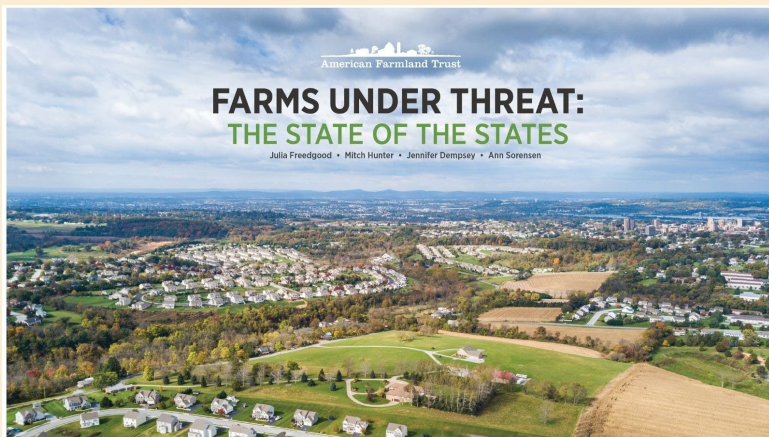
Aging Farmers &
Land Transfer

Climate Change

Renewable Energy

What issues are your
communities facing?

Farms Under Threat Reports



A deep analysis of every state's policies for protecting farmland and ranchland, promoting agricultural viability, and helping transfer land to the next generation of farmers and ranchers.

Farms Under Threat: The State of the States (2020)

- looked at agricultural land that was developed or converted to uses that threaten farming between 2001 and 2016.
- Between 2001 and 2016 alone, 253,507 acres of New York's irreplaceable agricultural land were lost or fragmented, ranking New York within the top 20 most threatened states for farmland conversion despite its current farmland protection programs.
- Captured new class of land use: low density residential (LDR)

RELATIVE CONVERSION THREAT

HIGH

New York scored among the top states for the conversion of agricultural land to urban and highly developed (UHD) and low-density residential (LDR) uses.

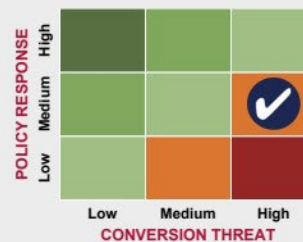
RELATIVE POLICY RESPONSE

MEDIUM

New York scored in the middle of all states for policies and programs that address the threat of conversion.

HOW IS THIS STATE DOING?

New York is in an orange box because its conversion threat is higher than its policy response, relative to other states. Learn more at www.farmland.org/farmsunderthreat



Farms Under Threat Reports

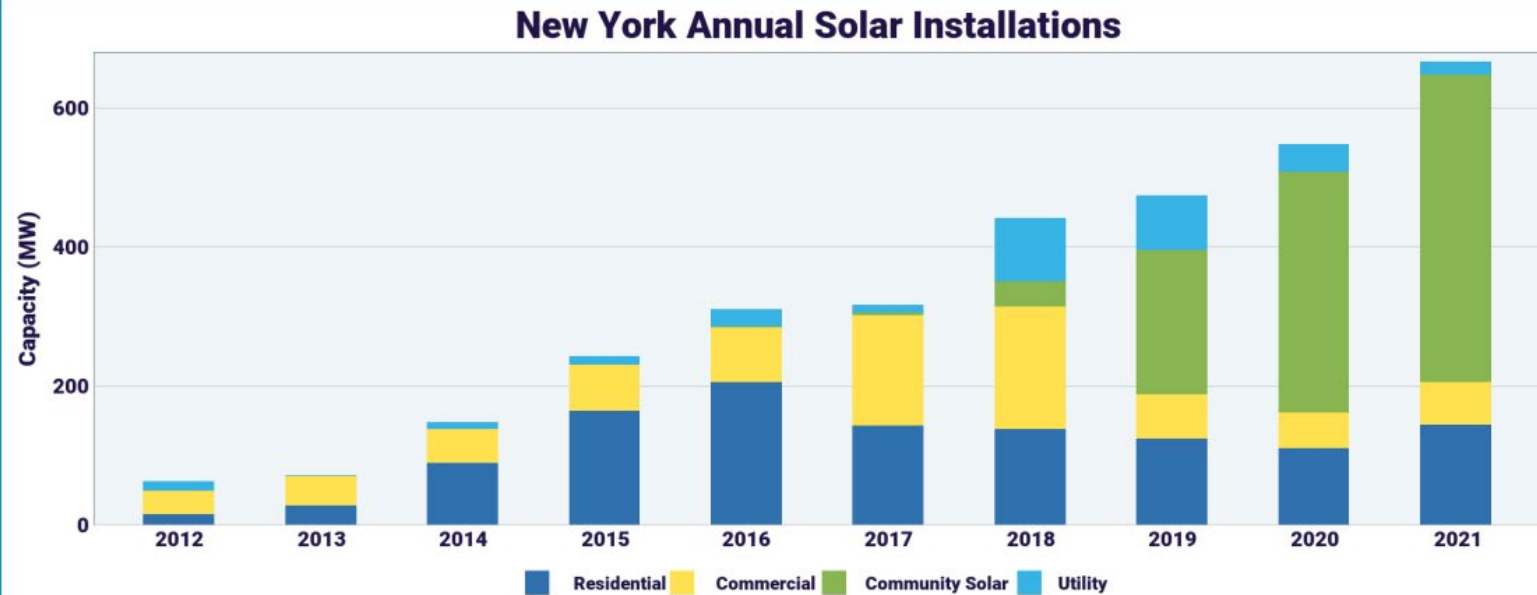


Does not take into consideration loss to solar development

Farms Under Threat 2040: Choosing and Abundant Future (2022)

- Mapped three Scenarios of development between 2016 and 2040
 1. Business as usual: Development follows recent patterns. 452,000 acres projected to be converted
 2. Runaway Sprawl: Development becomes even less efficient. Low-density housing sweeps across the countryside, displacing farmers. 642,200 acres projected to be converted.
 3. Better Built Cities: Policymakers and land-use planners promote compact development and reduce sprawl. 247,000 acres projected to be converted

NY Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act (CLCPA): 4 GW → 60 GW solar capacity by 2040



Learn more at www.seia.org/states

September 8, 2022

NY Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act (CLCPA): 70% RE by 2030; Zero-Emissions Grid by 2040

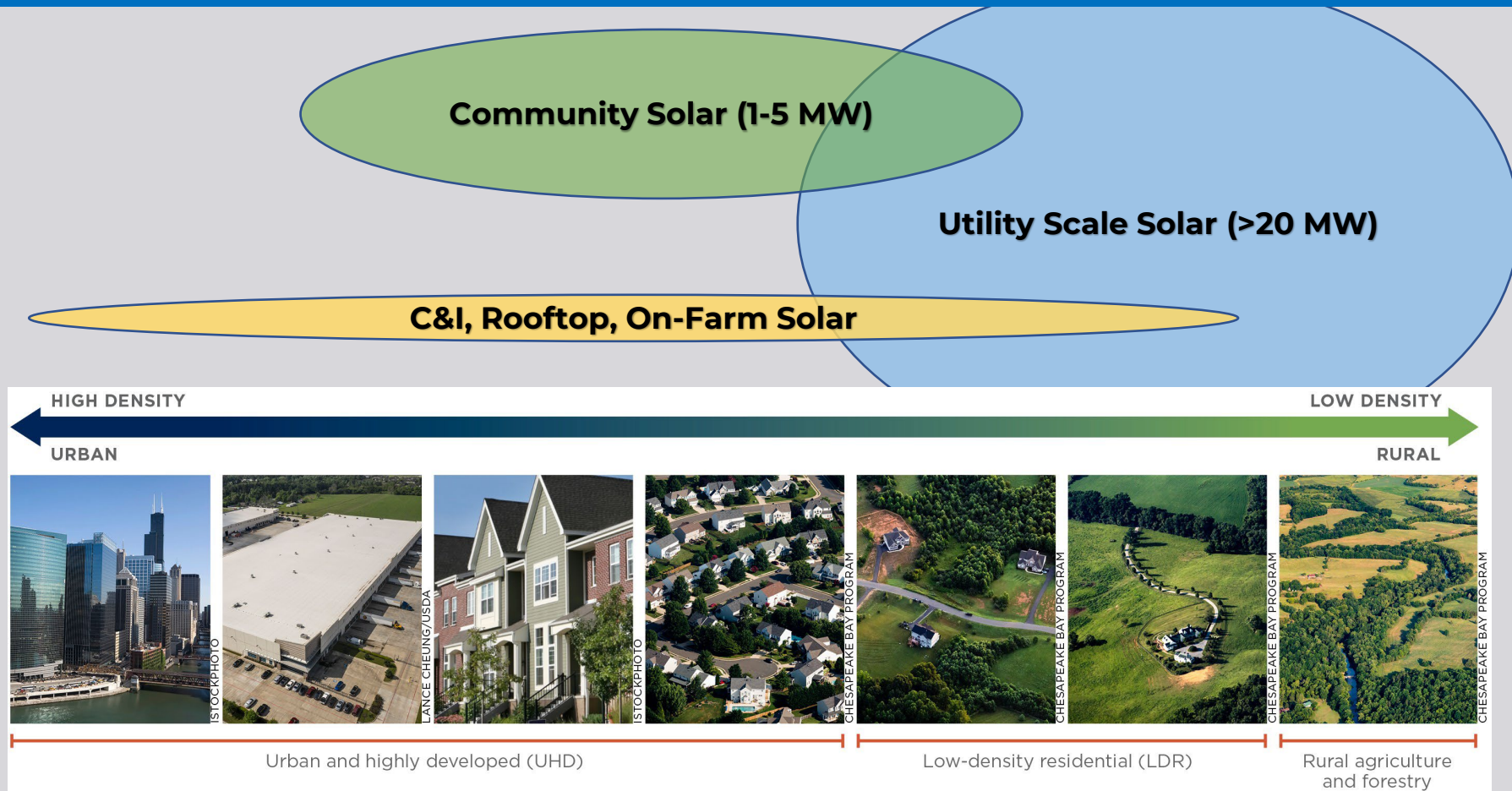


Figure 2. Urban and highly developed (UHD), low-density residential (LDR), and rural land uses exist on a continuum from high-density urban areas to low-density rural areas. The UHD category encompasses dense urban cores, suburbs, and highly developed areas like warehouses. UHD transitions into LDR in residential areas where house lots exceed 1-2 acres. The LDR category also encompasses very large-lot residential areas, which might appear rural at first glance but are primarily used for housing, not for production agriculture.

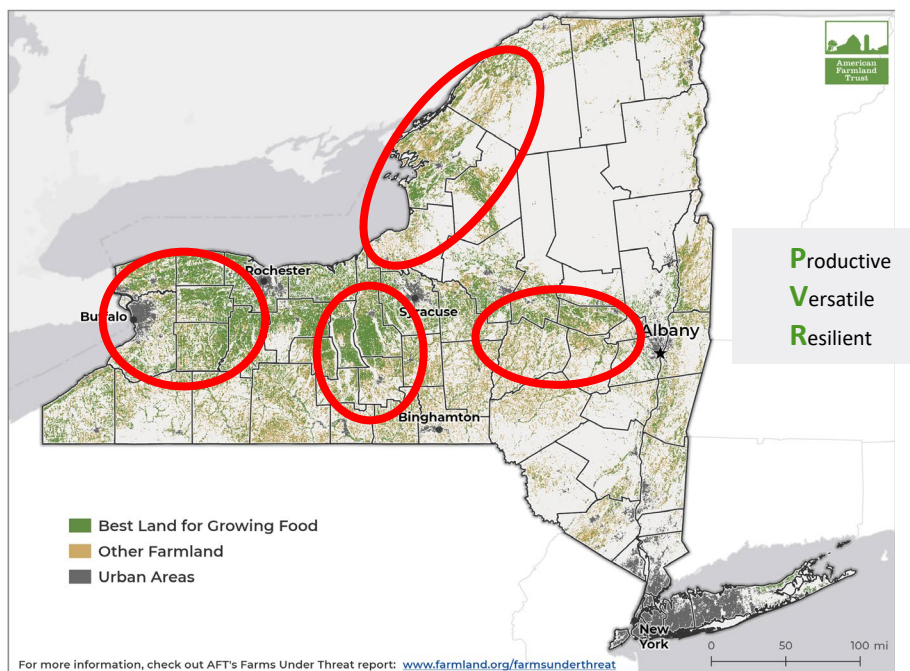
New York Large Scale Solar Pipeline (NY ISO Interconnection Queue) (As of Aug 2021)



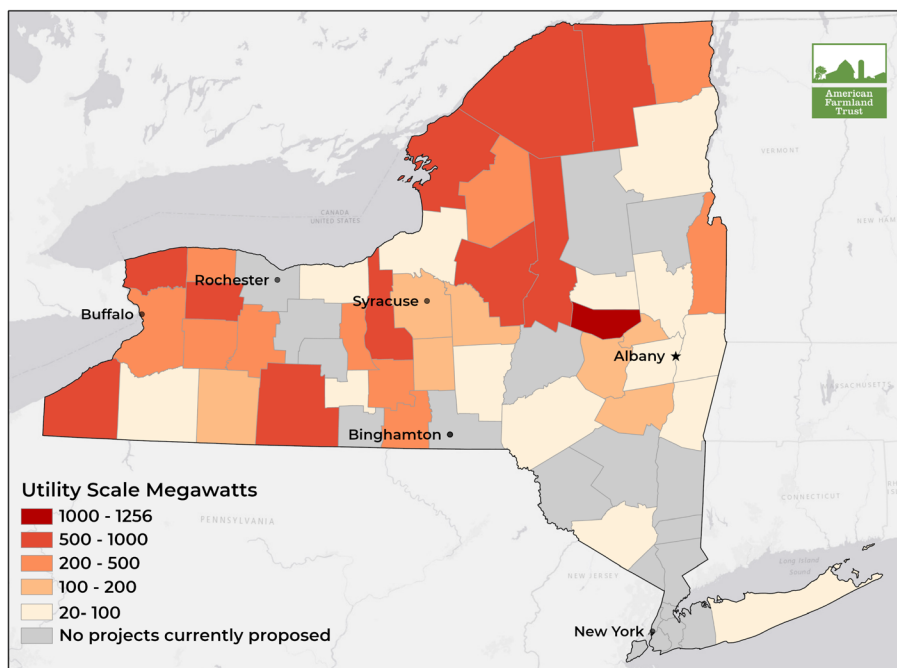
REDC Region	Total Proposed MW	Share of Total Proposed LSR Solar
North Country	3,136	22%
Mohawk Valley	3,170	22%
Finger Lakes	2,435	17%
Western NY	1,972	14%
Southern Tier	1,357	9%
Central NY	1,201	8%
Capital Region	840	6%
Mid Hudson	140	1%
Long Island	59	----
Total	14,310	

Solar Development in Farm Communities

New York's Farmland



Proposed Large Scale Solar Development, August 2021



Data Source: New York Independent System Operator, Inc. (NYISO) Interconnection Queue

Data Access Date: August 10, 2021

Planning for Farmland in NY

Benefits of Agriculture



Photo Credit Dietrich Gehring

- Economic: provide jobs and support local economy
- Fiscal: require fewer community services, help maintain lower property taxes
- Health/Nutrition: fresh local foods
- Scenic: rural character and scenic landscapes
- Tourism: scenic working farms attract tourist
- Environmental: well-managed farms help protect water quality and natural resources
- Cultural: connect us to our community heritage & historic places
- Recreation: some provide access for hunting, fishing and other outdoor recreational activities

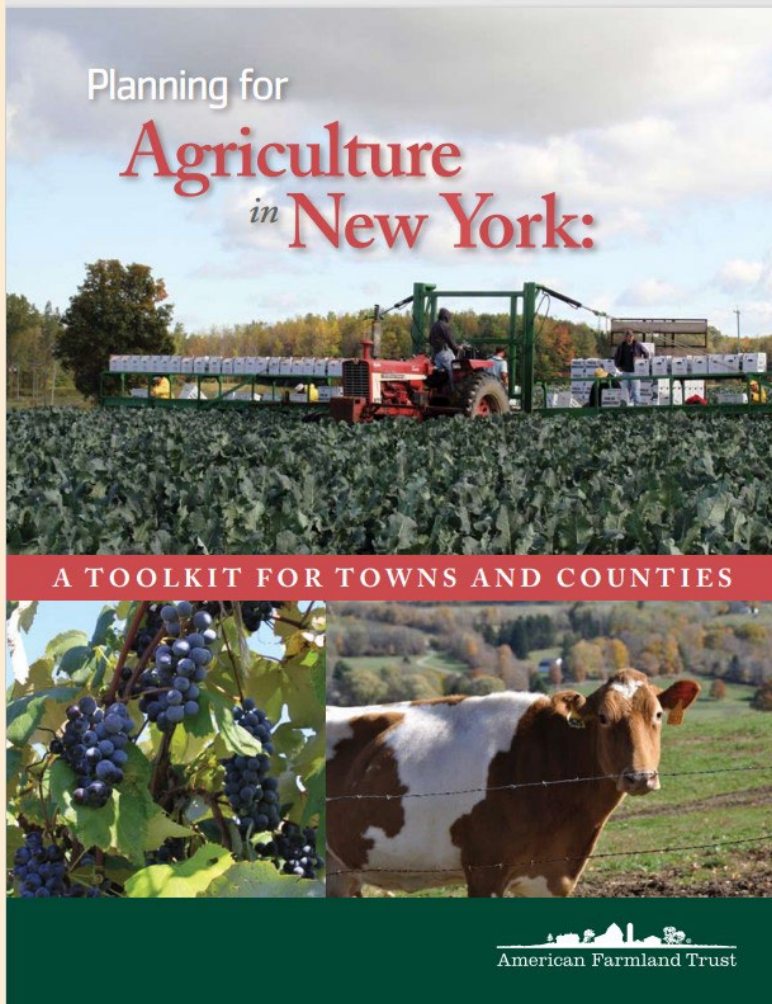
How Farm Friendly is your Community?



- Complete the checklist for County or Town

Share out where everyone is?

AFT Toolkit for NY Communities



- helps communities engage farmers and rural landowners in local planning efforts
- assess current town policies and their effectiveness
- understand the range of tools available to help New York towns and counties support local farms

Farmland Information Center
Farmlandinfo.org

What is Planning for Agriculture? (P4A)

- Proactive
- Agriculture is Economic Development and Land Use Priority
- Not Just Planning for Open Space!



P4A Fundamental Principles

1. Demonstrate an understanding of agriculture
2. Create a supportive business environment for farms
3. Support appropriate property tax policies for farm land and buildings
4. Develop strategies to protect best farmland
5. Reduce the impact of new development on farms



Local Tools for Planning for Agriculture

1. Agricultural Districts and Right-to-Farm Laws
2. Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plans
3. Comprehensive Plans
4. Zoning
5. Subdivision Ordinances
6. Local Property Tax Reduction Programs



Local Tools for Planning for Agriculture

7. Purchase of Development Rights
8. Transfer of Development Rights
9. Agricultural Economic Development
10. Infrastructure Planning
11. Food and Health Policies
12. Educating the Public about Agriculture

What have you done to support Ag?

Share what is going on in your community

Something you are proud of

Something creative/innovative

Agricultural & Farmland Protection Plans

Town and County Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plans

RFA 0263 - Municipal Agriculture and Farmland Protection Planning Grants

- Municipalities are eligible for grants up to \$25,000 or 75% of the cost

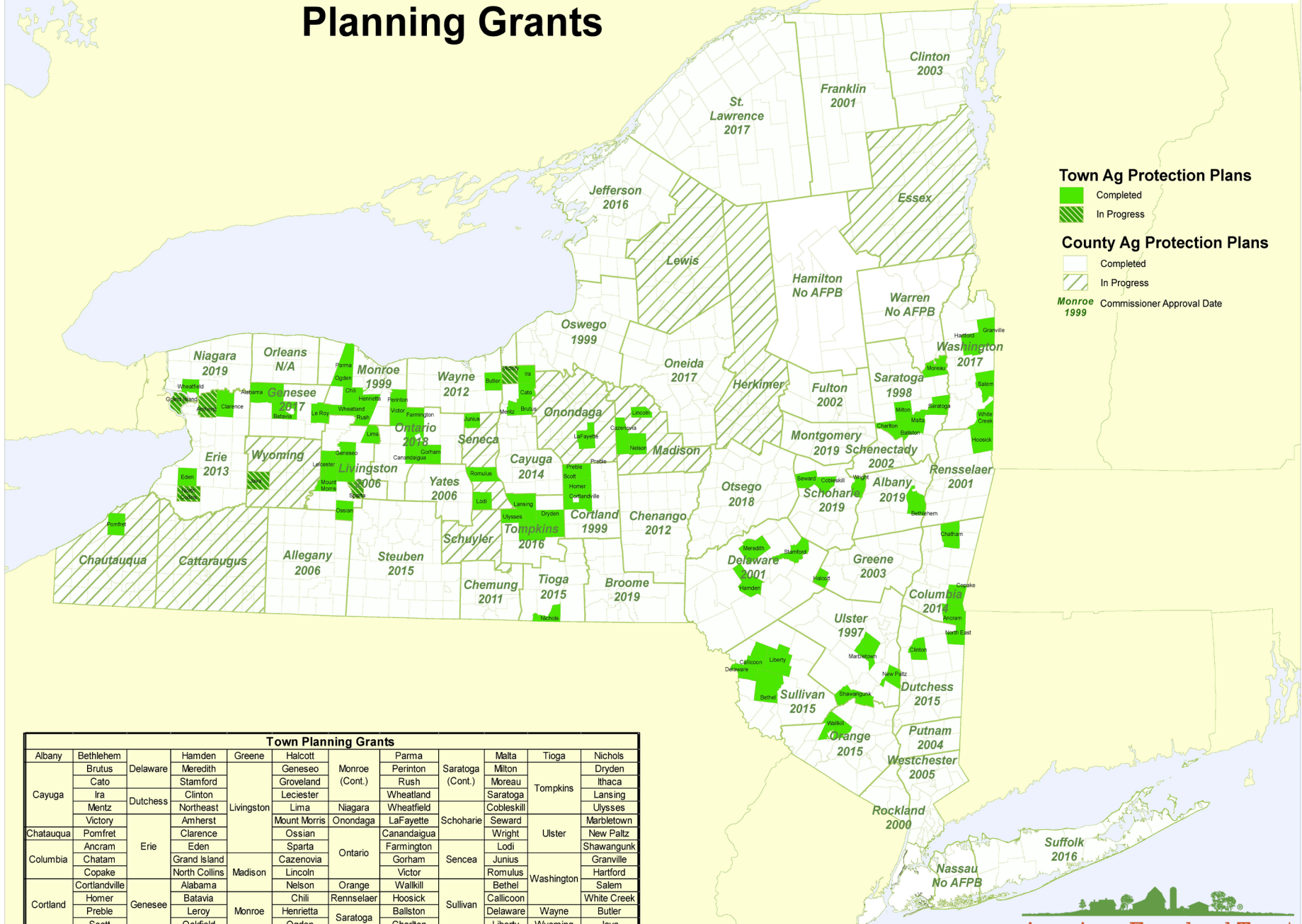
RFA 0262 - County Agriculture and Farmland Protection Planning Grants

- Counties are eligible for grants up to \$50,000 or 50% of the cost
- Administered by Dept of Agriculture and Markets

Agricultural and Farmland Protection Planning Grants



Agriculture and Markets



Town Planning Grants

Albany	Bethlehem	Delaware	Hamden	Greene	Halcott	Monroe	Parma	Saratoga	Malta	Tioga	Nichols
	Brutus		Meredith		Genesee	Monroe (Cont.)	Perinton	(Cont.)	Milton		Dryden
	Cato		Stamford		Groveland		Rush		Moreau		Ithaca
	Ira		Clinton		Leciester		Wheatland		Saratoga		Lansing
	Mentz		Northeast		Lima	Niagara	Wheatfield		Cobleskill		Ulysses
	Victory		Amherst		Mount Morris	Onondaga	LaFayette		Seward		Marbletown
Chatauqua	Pomfret		Clarence		Ossian		Canandaigua		Wright	Ulster	New Paltz
	Anchram		Eden		Sparta		Farmington		Lodi		Shawangunk
Columbia	Chatam		Grand Island		Cazenovia		Gorham		Junius		Granville
	Copake		North Collins		Lincoln		Victor		Romulus		Hartford
	Cortlandville		Alabama		Nelson		Orange		Bethel		Salem
	Homer		Batavia		Chili	Rensselaer	Hoosick		Callicoon		White Creek
Cortland	Preble		Leroy		Henrietta		Saratoga		Delaware		Butler
	Scott		Coldfield		Orleans				Ulster		

NYS Farmland Protection Program



- Grants to protect farmland
- Land trusts, counties, municipalities, and Soil & Water Conservation Districts
- Purchase the development rights resulting in a conservation easement
- Land is available for farming – does not necessarily mean it will be farmed
- To date protected about 100,000 acres of farmland

NYS Department of State

Smart Growth and Downtown Revitalization Grants

Smart Growth Planning and Zoning Program

- Funded annually through the Environmental Protection Fund; \$3 million in FY22-23

Downtown Revitalization Initiative (DRI) – *(app closed Sept)*

- to accelerate revitalization of downtowns in all ten regions of the State so that they serve as centers of activity and catalysts for increased local investment.
- \$100 million for DRI Round 6 to be invested in 10 new communities. \$10 million will be awarded to one community or a partnership of two to three smaller communities with a single unified vision in each of the State's ten REDC regions

NY Forward Program *(app closed Sept)*

- supports a more equitable downtown recovery for New York's smaller and rural communities, with a focus on hamlets, villages, and neighborhood-scale municipal centers
- \$100 million for the first round of NY Forward. Each of the State's ten REDCs will have the option of nominating two communities for \$4.5 million NY Forward awards or three communities one of which will receive \$4.5 million and two that will be awarded \$2.25 million.



AFT Smart SolarSM Principles

1. Prioritize Solar Siting on Buildings and Land Not Well Suited for Farming

Emphasize solar energy development on rooftops, carports, irrigation ditches, brownfields or other land not well suited for agriculture to help **minimize the impacts of solar energy** on our nation's best agricultural land and farm businesses.

2. Safeguard the Ability for Land to Be Used for Agriculture

If solar energy is developed on farmland or ranchland, policies and practices should **protect soil health**, especially during construction and decommissioning, to ensure opportunities for farming in the future.


3. Grow Agrivoltaics for Agricultural Production & Solar Energy

Agriculture and solar energy can coexist if appropriate planning is undertaken. Agrivoltaics projects sustain agricultural production underneath solar panels and/or between rows of solar panels throughout the life of the project.

4. Promote Equity and Farm Viability

Farmers and underserved communities should benefit from solar energy development. There must be **inclusive stakeholder engagement** to ensure projects strengthen farm viability and reflect farmer interests, including underserved producers that face barriers to accessing land and other resources.

1. Prioritize Solar Siting on Buildings and Land Not Well Suited for Farming

- 
- Incentivize siting on rooftops, brownfields, landfills, and other disturbed lands first
 - Direct new transmission development and upgrades to more marginal agricultural areas
 - Developers should work with farmers and communities to support farm and agricultural viability
 - Continue to advance energy efficiency measures and storage

2. Safeguard the Ability for Land to Be Used for Agriculture

- Ensure Best Practices (ex. NYSDAM Construction and Mitigation Guidelines) are strictly followed when siting solar on farmland
- Conduct Baseline Soil Health Testing before Project Construction
- Support Research to Contribute to Best Practices for Construction and Decommissioning
- Ensure Decommissioning Bonds fully cover the costs of removing solar from farmland and returning the land to its Baseline

**Following BMPs to
Protect Soil Health
when Siting on
Farmland**

3. Grow Agrivoltaics for Agricultural Production & Solar Energy

Supporting Dual Use and Co-Utilization

1. Fund research on innovative agrivoltaic projects for proof of concept
2. Design and incorporate market mechanisms to incentivize agrivoltaic projects and drive developer innovation ([Pending proof of concept](#))
3. Collect and aggregate information from projects coupling agricultural activities with solar energy generation in a central location

4. Promote Equity and Farm Viability

1. Consider not only individual farm viability, but farm community viability
2. Developers should work with farmers and landowners to minimize farmer-renter displacement
3. Ensure that low income and underserved communities have the same access to solar benefits and projects



What is AFT doing to help protect NY's agricultural resources?

- Advocate for state programs like Farmland Protection and Farmland for a New Generation
- Advocate for state and local policies that support farmers
- Conduct research on best practices for methods to improve water quality and soil health; quantifiable conservation outcomes; explore market mechanisms that could compensate farmers for adopting advanced conservation practices.
- Ensure farmers are part of the solution to combating climate change (an acre of farmland in New York produces 66 times fewer greenhouse gases than an acre of developed land).
- Reduce barriers for schools and other institutions seeking to buy more New York grown food as a means to strengthen the farm economy, get nutrient-rich and locally sourced products to communities, and keeps farmers on the land

Questions?



Saving the Land that Sustains Us



American Farmland Trust

www.farmland.org