



Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan Update

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

September 2025

Erie County, NY

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PLANNING PROCESS

The 2025 Erie County Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan updates the previous Plan which was completed in 2012. Grant funding from the NYS Department of Agriculture and Markets (NYSAGM) assisted with the cost of preparing the updated Plan. The Erie County Department of Environment and Planning (DEP) issued a Request for Proposals in August 2023 and contracted with a consultant team led by LaBella Associates in January 2024. The Erie County Agricultural and Farmland Protection Board (AFPB) served as the steering committee for the planning process.

Plan Contents

The Plan is organized into the following sections:

- Farmland Resources
- Farm Viability
- Integrated Agricultural Economy
- Water Resources, Climate Resiliency and Environmental Protection
- Public Appreciation of Agriculture
- Urban Agriculture

These sections of the Plan are interconnected and many components could fall under multiple one organizational categories. These overlaps reflect the complex and interrelated nature of the subject matter.

This Plan addresses several topics that were not included, either in full or in part, in the previous plan, including an overview of urban agriculture, recognizing the establishment of commercial farming operations as well as increasing participation in community, school and not-for-profit operations. The Plan also addresses challenges relating to a changing climate as well as opportunities for adaptation and resiliency measures. The Plan also describes initiatives undertaken by Erie County to support the agricultural industry, including development of an agribusiness park at the former Eden-Angola airport site in the Town of Evans.

The Plan also addresses issues that have become more significant since the 2012 Plan, including increased consolidation in both production agriculture and agricultural processing and how this impacts small and medium-sized farm operations.



Farmer and Stakeholder Engagement

Farmer and stakeholder engagement activities included:

- Interviews with farmers, agency representatives, and other stakeholders
- Focus group meetings held throughout the County targeted to farmers
- Farmer/landowner survey
- Public survey
- Project website
- Public informational meeting to present the draft Plan
- County Legislature public hearing

FARMLAND RESOURCES

Land in Farms

Based on 2023 satellite land cover data, approximately 168,336 acres in Erie County (25% of the County's land area) are farmland, pastureland, or other open land that may be suitable for farming. Another 235,310 acres (27%) are forested, and 183,110 acres (27%) are developed. (See [Map #1](#))

Based on 2023 parcel property classifications assigned by local assessors for tax assessment purposes, 2,155 parcels comprising approximately 104,170 acres of land are in agricultural use.

The USDA Census of Agriculture reports an 8.4% decrease in the amount of cropland on farms between 2017 and 2022, from 96,445 acres in 2017 to 88,353 acres in 2022, and a 16.8% reduction in pastureland, from 7,642 to 6,360 acres.

Agricultural Soils

Countywide, 47% of soils are either prime farmland or farmland of statewide importance, based on USDA classifications. Of land that is actively farmed or other open land that may be suitable for farming, 46% is either prime farmland or farmland of statewide importance.

Preserved Land

Approximately 3,000 acres of farmland in Erie County are preserved through permanent conservation easements or acquisition by a municipality.

Agricultural Districts

New York State Agriculture and Markets law authorizes counties to establish Agricultural Districts for the purpose of promoting agriculture. Erie County currently has four consolidated Agricultural Districts comprising approximately 265,661 acres.



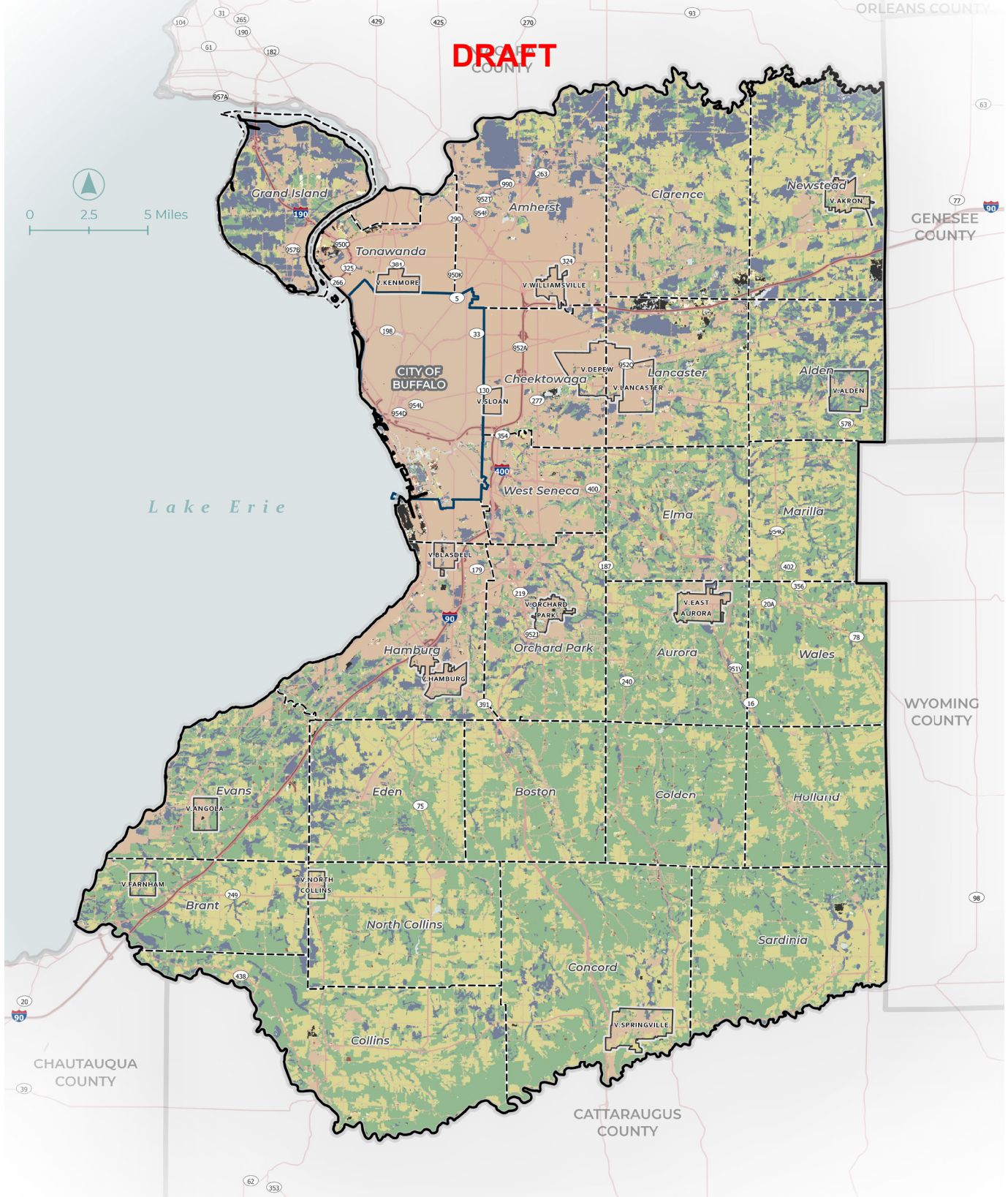
Development Pressure

As shown in [Map #2](#), developed land cover has extended outward from Buffalo's inner ring suburbs into more rural areas over the past 20 years. Residential development represents a majority of the farmland that has been converted to a non-farm use during this time period. In recent years, farmland has been developed for commercial solar energy projects and proposed large-scale solar projects have the potential to remove thousands of additional acres of farmland from production.

Parcel Rating Maps

Map #3: Agricultural Parcels by Soils Rating depicts each parcel with active farmland or land that may be suitable for farming based on the extent and quality of the agricultural soils within each Agricultural Parcel. The rating is based on: 1) the number of acres of cropland or pasture within each parcel and, 2) the percent of active farmland with soils that are classified as Prime, Prime if Drained, and Soils of Statewide Significance based on the USDA Soil Survey.

Map #4: Clustering of Cropland Acreage depicts the proximity of agricultural parcels with high agricultural soils values.

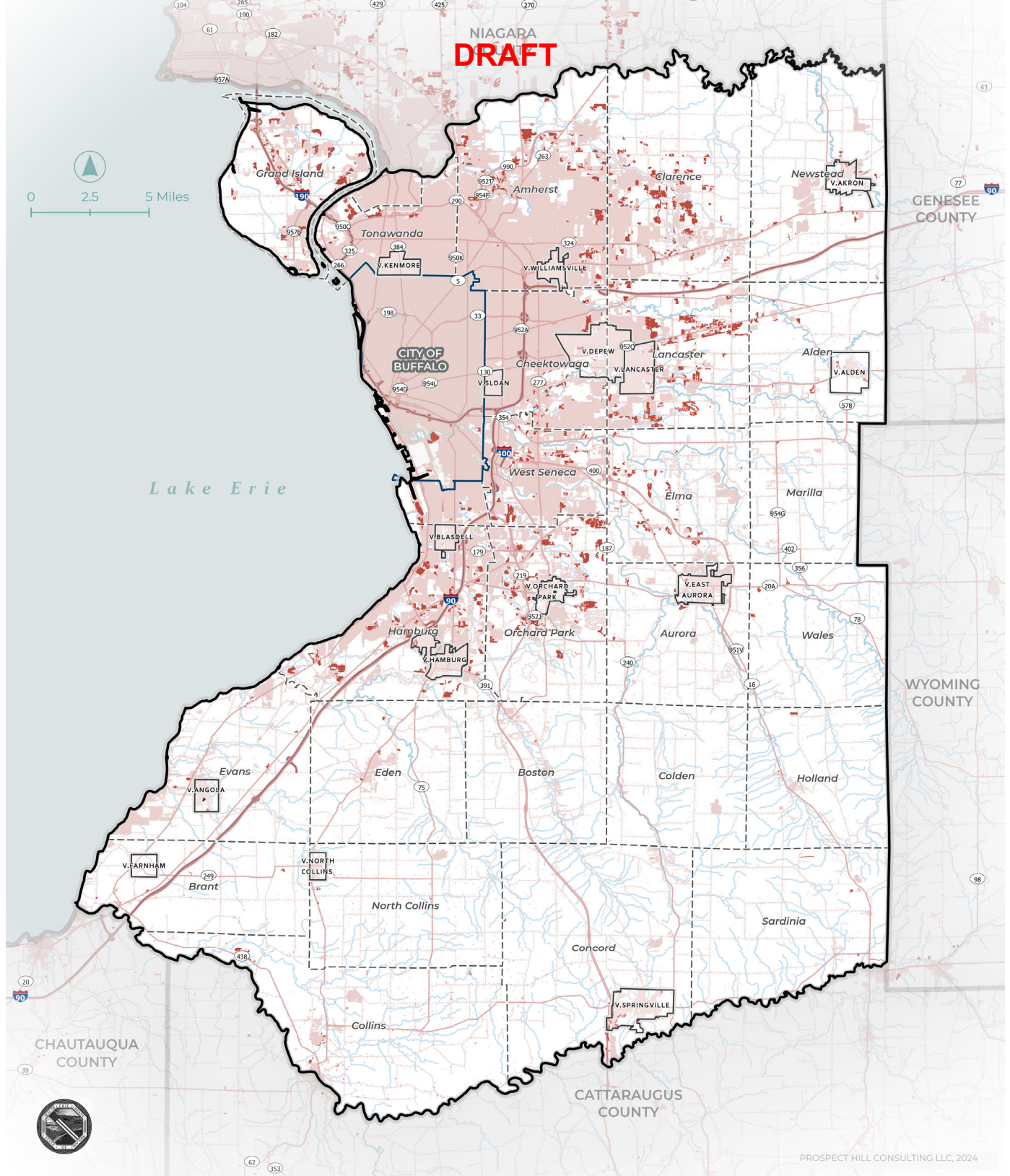


LAND COVER
ERIE COUNTY, NY
 AGRICULTURAL & FARMLAND PROTECTION PLAN

MAP 1

- | | |
|--|---|
| ERIE COUNTY | BARREN |
| VILLAGE BOUNDARY | DEVELOPED |
| CITY BOUNDARY | FOREST |
| TOWN BOUNDARY | HERBACEOUS |
| STATE ROUTE | PLANTED/CULTIVATED |
| THRUWAY / LIMITED ACCESS HIGHWAY | SHRUBLAND |
| | WATER |
| | WETLANDS |

Erie County 2023; Esri 2024; U.S. Geological Survey – NLCD 2021 Land Cover (CONUS) 2023; NYS Office of Information Technology Services Geospatial Data Services 2024; USGS National Hydrography Dataset Plus High Resolution 2020.



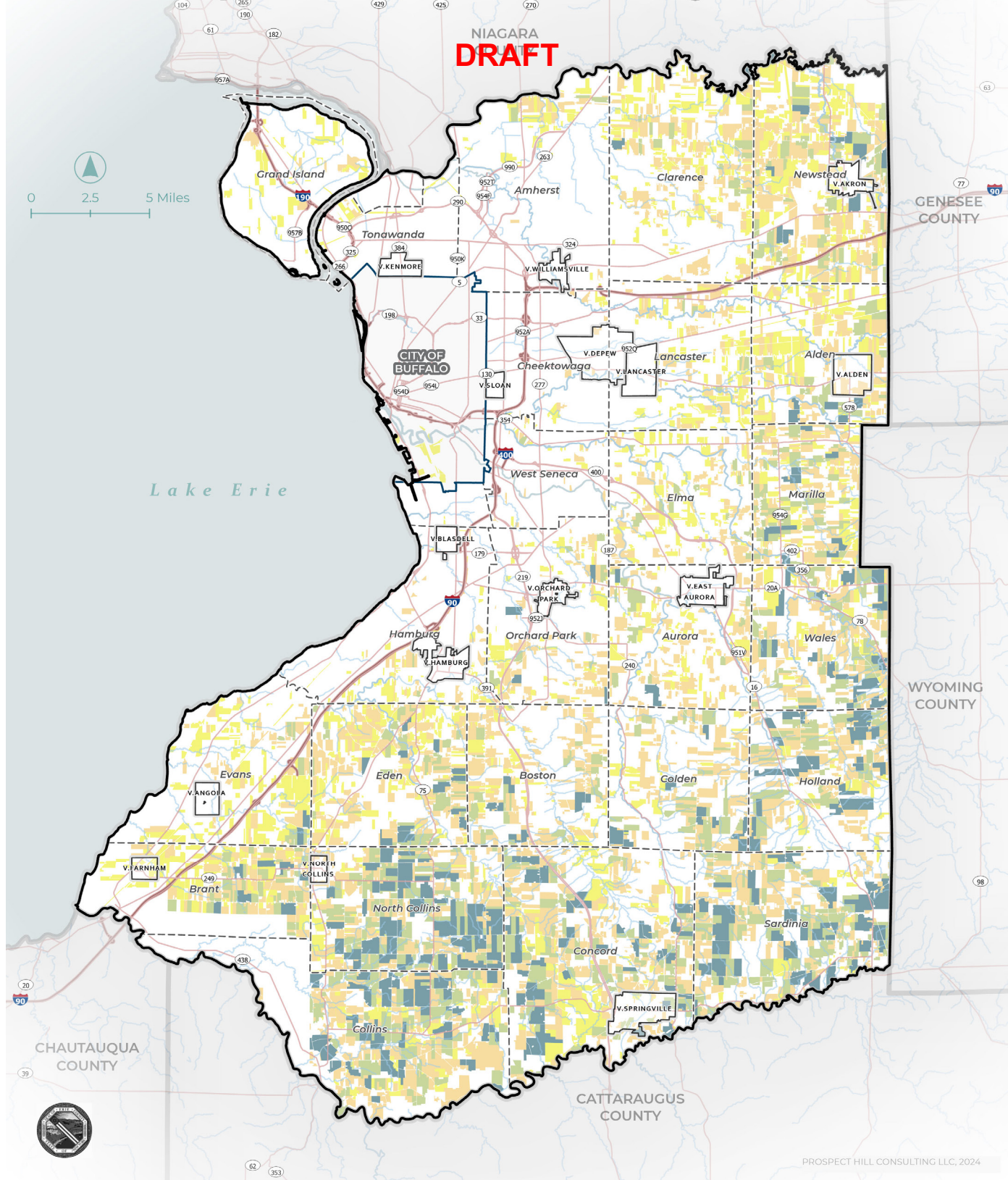
**DEVELOPMENT LAND
COVER CHANGE
2001-2021
ERIE COUNTY, NY
AGRICULTURAL & FARMLAND
PROTECTION PLAN**

MAP 2

- ERIE COUNTY
- VILLAGE BOUNDARY
- CITY BOUNDARY
- TOWN BOUNDARY
- COUNTIES_SHORELINE
- STATE ROUTE
- THRUWAY / LIMITED ACCESS HIGHWAY

- 2001 DEVELOPED LAND COVER
- 2021 DEVELOPED LAND COVER INCREASE

Erie County Department of Environment and Planning (DEP) Office of Agriculture 2024; Esri 2024; NYS Office of Information Technology Services Geospatial Data Services 2024; USGS National Hydrography Dataset Plus High Resolution 2020; WNYLC 2024; NCED 2024



AGRICULTURAL PARCELS BY AGRICULTURAL RESOURCE RATING ERIE COUNTY, NY AGRICULTURAL & FARMLAND PROTECTION PLAN

MAP 3

Erie County Department of Environment and Planning (DEP) Office of Agriculture 2024; Esri 2024; NYS Office of Information Technology Services Geospatial Data Services 2024; USGS National Hydrography Dataset Plus High Resolution 2020; WNYLC 2024; NCED 2024; United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) New York Cropland Data Layer 2001 and 2023;

AGRICULTURAL PARCEL RESOURCE RATING¹

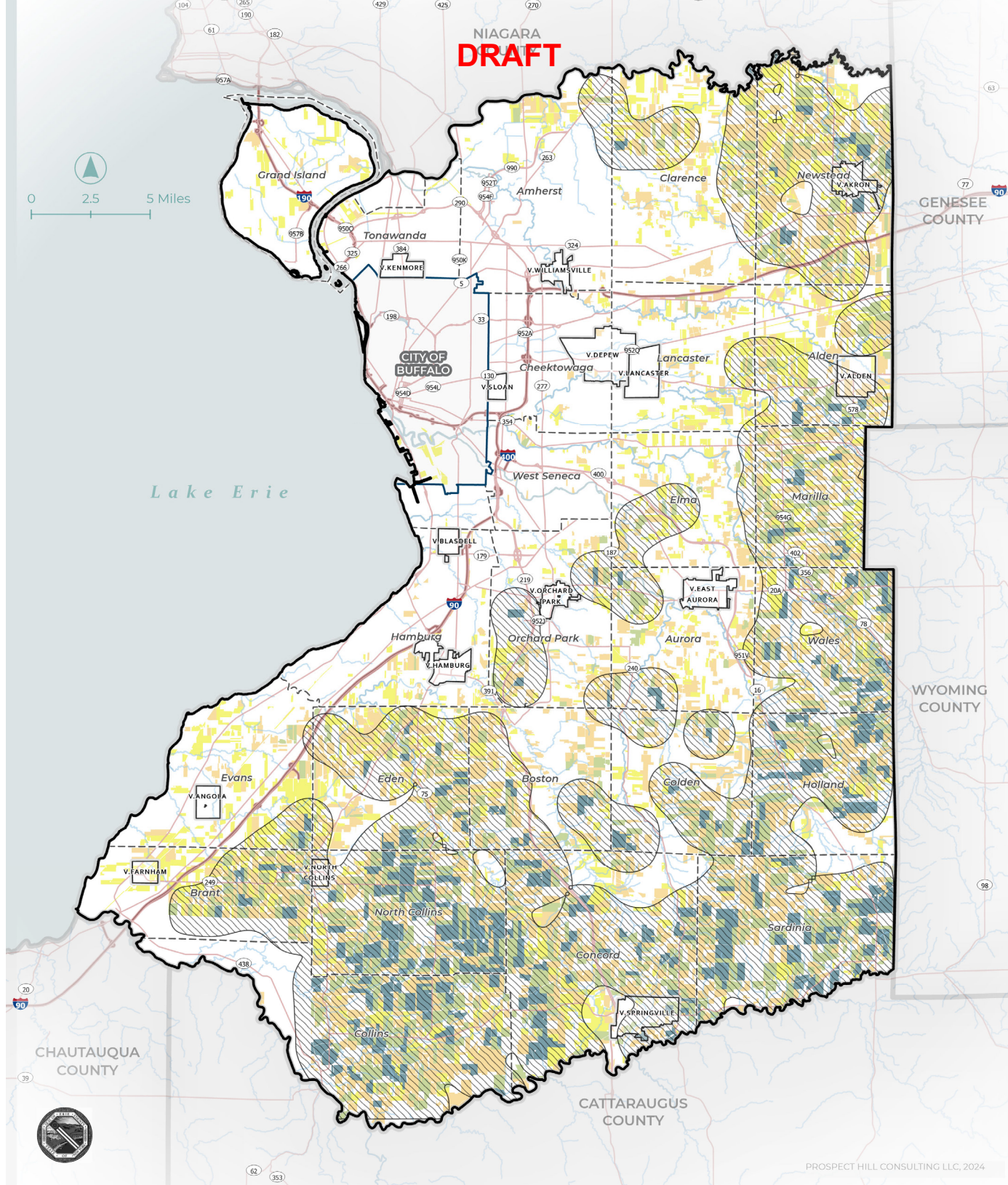
1- 25
26 - 50
51 - 75
76 - 100

¹ AGRICULTURAL SOILS RATING SCORE
EACH PARCEL'S SCORE (0-100) REFLECTS THE EXTENT
AND QUALITY OF ACTIVE FARMLAND, BASED ON A
TWO-PART SYSTEM:

ACTIVE FARMLAND ACREAGE (MAX 60 POINTS)
POINTS ARE ASSIGNED BASED ON THE NUMBER OF
ACRES IN ACTIVE CROPLAND OR PASTURE USE:
≥100 ACRES: 60 PTS
50-99 ACRES: 40 PTS
20-49 ACRES: 20 PTS
5-19 ACRES: 10 PTS

SOIL QUALITY OF ACTIVE FARMLAND (MAX 40 POINTS)
POINTS ARE BASED ON THE PERCENT OF ACTIVE
FARMLAND COMPOSED OF PRIME FARMLAND OR
FARMLAND OF STATEWIDE IMPORTANCE:
≥75%: 40 PTS
50-74%: 25 PTS
25-49%: 10 PTS

THE FINAL RATING HELPS PRIORITIZE PARCELS THAT
COMBINE LARGE AREAS OF ACTIVE USE WITH HIGH-
QUALITY SOILS.



AREAS WITH CLUSTERS OF HIGH AGRICULTURAL SOIL VALUES

ERIE COUNTY, NY

AGRICULTURAL & FARMLAND PROTECTION PLAN

MAP 4

- ERIE COUNTY
- CITY BOUNDARY
- VILLAGE BOUNDARY
- TOWN BOUNDARY
- STATE ROUTE
- THRUWAY / LIMITED ACCESS HIGHWAY
- STREAM / RIVER
- WATERBODY

AGRICULTURAL PARCEL RESOURCE RATING

- 1 - 25
- 26 - 50
- 51 - 75
- 76 - 100

HIGH DENSITY AGRICULTURAL SOILS (≥ 63 RATING SCORE)

THIS AREA HIGHLIGHTS CLUSTERS OF PARCELS WITH HIGH AGRICULTURAL VALUE, WHERE SOIL RATING SCORES OF 63 OR MORE ARE CONCENTRATED.

Erie County Department of Environment and Planning (DEP) Office of Agriculture 2024; Esri 2024; NYS Office of Information Technology Services Geospatial Data Services 2024; USGS National Hydrography Dataset Plus High Resolution 2020; WNYLC 2024; NCED 2024; United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) New York Cropland Data Layer 2001 and 2023

USE OF MAPS FOR PLANNING

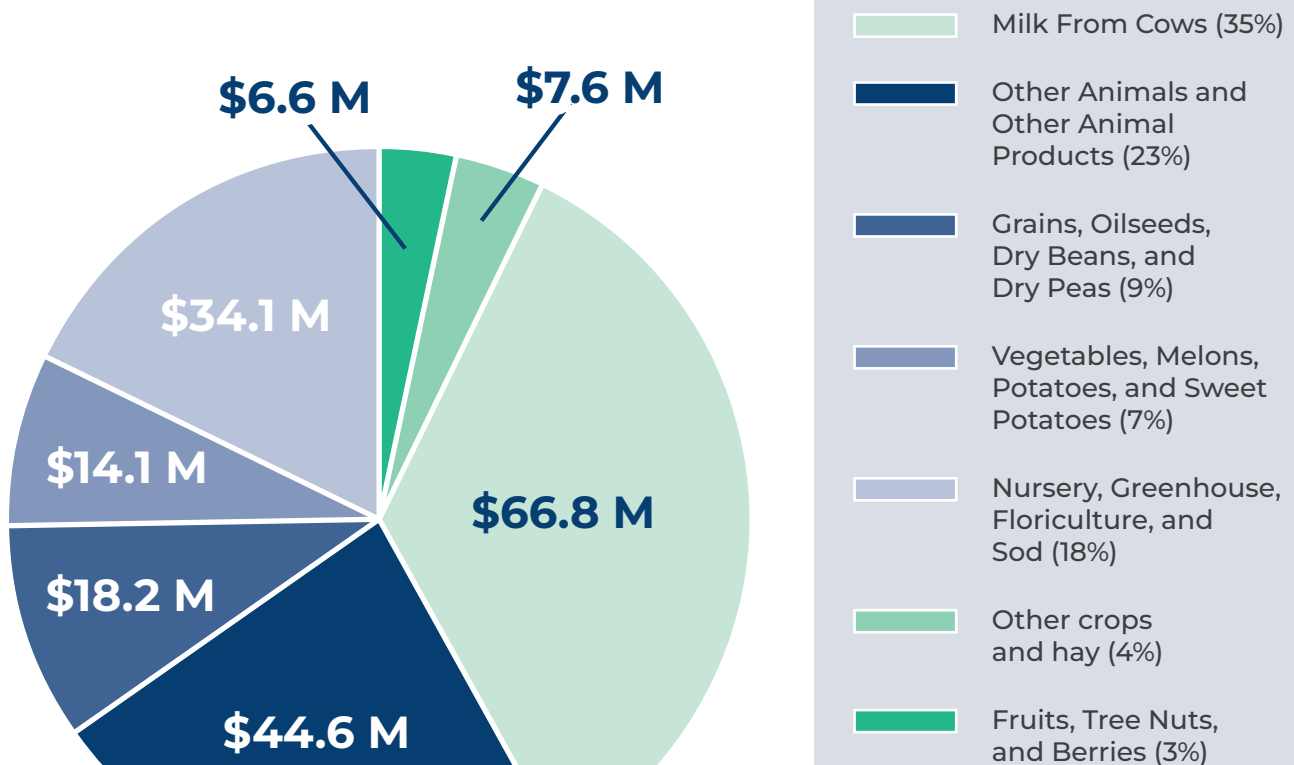
Each map and associated data on agricultural resources describes specific aspects of Erie County's agricultural land resources. No single map is designed to be used independently for agricultural planning; referring to a number of the maps will yield the best analysis and decisions. Erie County will incorporate the data from these maps into its online GIS for use by municipal boards.

Farm Viability

Types of Farms

According to the USDA Census of Agriculture, 918 farms in Erie County in 2022 produced goods valued at approximately \$192 million. The major farm products are "milk from cows" with \$66.803 million, "nursery, greenhouse, floriculture and sod" with \$34.107 million in sales, "grains, oilseeds, dry beans, dry peas" (primarily corn and soybeans) with \$18.221 million, and "vegetables, melons, potatoes, sweet potatoes" with \$14.078 million.

Farm Products by Value of Sales, 2022



The top crops by number of acres are forage (hay/haylage), corn for grain, soybeans, corn for silage/greenchop, and vegetables.

Source: 2022 USDA Census of Agriculture

Size of Farm

More than half of Erie County's 918 farms, as reported by the USDA Census of Agriculture, were smaller than 50 acres and 18.5% were smaller than 10 acres. A total of 27 farms had 1,000 or more acres, with seven farms operating 2,000 or more acres. These large farms represent 3% of all farms in Erie County but work 39% of all the land in farms.

Land Ownership

In 2022, approximately 68% of all the land in farms, a total of 96,144 acres, is owned by the farm operator, according to USDA Census of Agriculture. The remaining 44,474 acres of land in farms is rented.

Farm Income and Expenses

Based on data collected from the U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA), sales of farm products in 2022 were valued at \$187 million in 2022. From 2012 to 2022, total farm expenses increased 36% from \$123 million to \$167 million.

Farm Labor

According to the 2022 Census of Agriculture, the 237 farms in Erie County with hired labor employed 1,799 workers with a total payroll of over \$37 million. According to 2022 data from the BEA, 1,613 jobs in Erie County were farm jobs, representing 0.27% of the total number of jobs in Erie County.

Markets

Markets for agricultural products from Erie County farms include processors, distributors, wholesalers, retailers, and direct to consumer sales. Direct-to-consumer sales and sales to institutions are growing markets for Erie County farmers. Value-added enterprises on farms help farmers to expand their revenue and capture a larger share of the value of the end product.

Opportunities and challenges relating to the economic viability of farms in Erie County include:

- Opportunities for value-added enterprises on farms
- Opportunities for farmers to sell directly to consumers and institutions
- Costs and benefits associated with agritourism enterprises
- Need for farm succession planning
- Challenges faced by new and beginning farmers to access land and capital
- Revisions to local zoning and changes in code enforcement
- Labor and workforce development
- Crop diversification and reaching new or niche markets



Integrated Agricultural Economy

Agriculture-related industries include processing, aggregation, distribution, packing, packaging, wholesale and retail operations, financial services and other businesses that support farms. Food manufacturing in Erie County generated \$3.2 billion in sales (3% of the County total) in 2022 and employed approximately 6,557 people, according to data compiled through an IMPLAN economic analysis. Operations range from large, multi-national companies to small and medium-sized local businesses engaged in value-added food processing.



Opportunities and challenges relating to the overall agricultural economy include:

- Supporting local sourcing by processing facilities in Erie County could benefit local farms.
- Supporting and developing meat processing in Erie County could increase processing capacity for farmers and reduce bottlenecks.
- Aggregation and distribution companies rely on large quantities of food that cannot be produced by small farms; conversely, small farms cannot scale up without access to large purchasers.
- Targeted capacity building investments for farms engaged in wholesaling and off-farm retail sales can increase volume and profit margins; technical assistance, training, and targeted operational investments can support small and mid-sized farms growth into wholesale and off-farm retail markets.
- The County can leverage its internal institutional food procurement to create markets for Erie County products.
- The County can leverage its relationships and its clout to facilitate regional conversations and connections, recognizing that food systems ultimately extend beyond County lines.
- The County can direct resources and activities within Workforce Buffalo and the Workforce Development Board to expand farm and food business workforce development programming and to align programming with other workforce development partners.

WATER RESOURCES, ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AND CLIMATE RESILIENCY

Watersheds

Most of Erie County is within the Buffalo River/Eighteenmile Creek watershed, which drains into Lake Erie. The Buffalo River watershed includes land in the sub-watersheds of Amherst, Cazenovia Creek, Buffalo Creek, Smoke Creek and Rush Creek, Cayuga Creek, Two Mile Creek, Big Sister Creek, and Little Sister Creek.

Stormwater Management

Many farms in Erie County have installed drainage tiles and other improvements to manage stormwater and maintain soil productivity. Stormwater drainage systems along roadways and other existing drainage infrastructure, including streams, ditches and other structures, are needed to effectively carry stormwater away from farm fields.

Approximately 147,766 acres (35%) of land cover in Erie County is classified as forested. These forested areas provide habitats for wildlife; supply timber and other raw materials; help support clean water sources; and provide opportunities for recreational activities. Farmers can benefit from woodlands on their farms by selling timber or by employing agroforestry techniques.



Climate Resiliency

As climate conditions evolve—with rising air temperatures, shifting precipitation patterns, and more frequent extreme weather events—communities must prepare for increasing environmental volatility. In recent years, the County has faced numerous climate-related hazards, including droughts, extreme heat, flooding, and severe winter storms.

Opportunities and challenges relating to climate resiliency include:

- Robust maintenance of off-farm stormwater infrastructure (e.g., ditches) is essential to mitigating flood risks. By managing runoff effectively, these systems protect farm fields from excessive water damage, preserve crop viability, and reduce soil erosion.
- Best practices in agriculture such as cover cropping, reduced tillage, and nutrient management, are already being embraced by farmers across the County. These practices aid in sustaining soil health, enhancing water quality, and help ensure the long-term productivity of farmland while safeguarding local ecosystems. While some farmers have embraced these agricultural best practices, there is still opportunity to advocate for more widespread use.
- Adopting climate-resilient farming methods through adaptive strategies, such as crop diversification, drought-resistant crops, and carbon-smart practices, enables farms to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and build resilience against climate impacts. While some farmers in the County have begun implementing these practices, there remains significant opportunity for broader adoption.
- Embracing renewable energy, such as solar energy systems, offers the County an opportunity to reduce carbon emissions and support sustainable development. It is essential to balance the competing demands for productive farmland with the expansion of renewable energy. Responsible solar siting, that is locating solar developments on marginal or non-agricultural lands, can help protect valuable farmland while advancing clean energy goals.

Public Appreciation of Agriculture

As a majority of Erie County residents live in urban or suburban areas, few have the opportunity to see or visit farms. Many people have little knowledge of where their food comes from. Few elected leaders and other decision makers are farmers or are from farming families. The lack of understanding of agriculture may lead to restrictive local regulation of farming practices.

Current programs to increase public understanding and appreciation of agriculture include:

- Youth education programs such as New York Ag in the Classroom, 4-H, and FFA.
- Promotion of local farm products and agritourism, including the Erie Grown brand, Eat Local WNY, Taste NY, and Find Fresh Erie. The FPC of Buffalo and Erie County's (FPC) "Erie County Farm to Families" project, funded through a \$1 million grant from AGM, distributed local produce, eggs, and milk to families who reside in areas with low food access.
- Information and training for local decision makers, including training programs through Cornell Local Roads, and continuing education programs for municipal assessors planning and zoning board members.

The NYS Agricultural Districts Law ([AGM Article 25-AA, §308](#)) includes "right to farm" protections for farm operations located within Agricultural Districts or that receive an agricultural use exemption. [Section 305-A](#) states that municipal comprehensive plans and zoning regulations "shall not unreasonably restrict or regulate farm operations within agricultural districts in contravention of the purposes of this article unless it can be shown that the public health or safety is threatened." Upon request from a municipality or an affected farm operator, NYSAGM will issue an opinion as to whether the local regulation is unreasonably restrictive to farm operations that meets certain thresholds.



The [Erie County Right to Farm Law](#) recognizes the importance of agriculture in Erie County, declares that reasonable agricultural practices shall not violate public policy of Erie County, and requires a disclosure notice in contracts for sale of residential property stating that farm operations may cause odors, noise, dust or other impacts and that farms have the right to undertake such practices.

Opportunities and challenges relating to public understanding and appreciation of agriculture include:

- Increasing public understanding of where food comes from, and the contributions of local agriculture to the regional food system, help local farms market products to the public.
- Increased understanding of farm practices among local government officials can help reduce neighbor complaints about farm practices and support farm-friendly local government regulation.



Urban Agriculture

This Plan distinguishes commercial urban agriculture operations from school and community gardens and not-for-profit growers whose primary mission is to address social, environmental, or educational goals rather than generate profit. Commercial urban agricultural operations in Erie County include market gardens and producers of mushrooms and microgreens.

Businesses and organizations that provide inputs, services, and infrastructure that support urban farming operations include BFLO Worm Works and Farmer Pirates Compost, which both provide compost and composting services to growers in Erie County.

Organizations Active in Erie County Urban Agriculture

The following organizations to support urban agriculture in Erie County:

- Buffalo Go Green/Urban Fruits and Veggies
- Grassroots Gardens WNY (GGWNY)
- Journey's End Refugee Services
- Cornell Cooperative Extension of Erie County
- Buffalo Food Equity Network
- The Food Systems Planning and Healthy Communities Lab - "The UB Food Lab"

Opportunities and Challenges

Opportunities and challenges relating to urban agriculture include:

- Numerous organizations in Erie County and the City of Buffalo support urban agriculture and provide a strong foundation for growth and collaboration.
- Greenhouses and other types of indoor agricultural production may be a suitable reuse for vacant parcels and abandoned buildings in the City of Buffalo and other urbanized communities and a means to support year-round urban agriculture.
- Municipal zoning restrictions limit opportunities for farmers to gain revenue from direct-to-consumer sales.
- Municipal zoning regulations that restrict animal or poultry limit opportunities for small-scale agriculture as well as home-based food production in urban, village and suburban settings.
- Some farms face challenges in accessing public water supplies and other municipal services for use in their operations. For some farms, the high cost of water is a significant barrier.
- High property taxes present a challenge for urban growers.
- Reducing existing barriers to entry for aspiring urban farmers is essential to expanding the local urban agriculture sector. Providing accessible resources, training, and support could help foster new opportunities and grow the workforce in this field.
- Community gardens often rely on access to publicly-owned land. Short-term use agreements limit the extent to which community gardens can invest in soil and other improvements.
- Backyard farming and gardening offers urban residents an accessible introduction to farming while improving access to food in areas that lack adequate access. Soil testing is needed to avoid contamination in crops grown for human consumption.

SUMMARY OF GOALS, POLICIES AND RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

Topic 1: Farmland Resources <i>Goal 1: Keep high quality farmland in agricultural production.</i>				
Policy	Actions	Lead	Partner(s)	Timeframe
Support municipalities, land trusts and farmland owners in efforts to place more land under private easements or preserve farms through Purchase of Development Rights.	Provide information to municipalities and farmland owners about protection programs and encourage them to confer with the Western New York Land Conservancy.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - WNYLC - DEP 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Municipalities - NYS AGM 	Medium
Encourage farmland owners to include their land in Agricultural Districts.	Provide information to municipalities and farmland owners about the Agricultural District program, including opportunities to add parcels during the annual open enrollment period	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - DEP - CCE Erie - SWCD - Farmers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - WNYLC - Municipalities - Assessors - Erie County RPTS 	Ongoing
Encourage participation in Agricultural Assessments to those who are eligible, including those who have been traditionally excluded from the program but who may qualify.	Provide ongoing education to local assessors about agricultural assessments.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - SWCD 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - RPTS 	Ongoing
	Provide information to farmland owners about the agricultural assessments and the process for applying.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - SWCD - DEP - Local Assessors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - RPTS 	Ongoing

SUMMARY OF GOALS, POLICIES AND RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

Topic 1: Farmland Resources <i>Goal 1: Keep high quality farmland in agricultural production.</i>				
Policy	Actions	Lead	Partner(s)	Timeframe
Advocate for responsible siting of large-scale solar facilities that avoids development on farmland.	Work with the NYS Legislature and agencies to develop and implement policies to minimize the impact of solar development on agricultural lands.	- DEP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Erie County Farm Bureau - AFPB - FPC - Municipalities 	Medium
Adopt County policies and support municipalities with the development of laws or regulations that would limit the impacts of solar energy development on agriculture.	Connect municipalities with model laws and other resources to assist in preparing and adopting provisions in local solar and other local laws and land use regulations that would limit the impact of solar and other energy projects on agricultural resources.	- DEP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - NYSDERDA - NYS AGM - Municipalities 	Immediate
	Establish a County PILOT policy that incentivizes solar development on brownfields and other sites that do not use active farmland. For example, offer higher host community benefit fees for developments that avoid farmland or require the creation of a mitigation fund to help preserve farmland.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - DEP - ECIDA 	- WNYLC	Immediate
Advocate for mitigation when solar energy development occurs on high-quality farmland.	Provide information and guidance to local governments during review of solar energy development projects to help ensure that mitigation is incorporated into the project to minimize impacts on agricultural lands.	- DEP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - NYSDERDA - NYS AGM - Municipalities 	Ongoing
Assist municipalities in preparing Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plans, Comprehensive Plans, and zoning updates that support farmland preservation and agriculture.	Continue to allocate funds for the municipal grant program administered to support the preparation of local Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plans, Comprehensive Plans, and zoning updates that support farmland preservation and agriculture.	- DEP	- Municipalities	Ongoing

SUMMARY OF GOALS, POLICIES AND RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

Topic 2: Farmland Viability <i>Goal 1: Maintain and enhance the economic viability of Erie County farms.</i>				
Policy	Actions	Lead	Partner(s)	Timeframe
Continue to promote local farm products and agritourism operations on farms.	Expand the Erie Grown and the Erie Grown Passport programs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - DEP - CCE Erie 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - NYS AGM 	Ongoing
	Continue to promote local agricultural products and on-farm attractions through the Erie Grown Passport, Taste NY, and I Love New York tourism promotions and other programs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - DEP - VBN 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - CCE Erie 	Ongoing
Encourage and assist farmers to incorporate direct-to-consumer sales and other value-added enterprises into their farm operations.	Provide information to farm operators on grant funding and sources of technical assistance to help them add processing packing or obtain certifications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - CCE Erie via Taste NY 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - NYS AGM - Farm Credit East - USDA 	Medium
	Consider adding CSAs to list of providers for Erie County wellness benefits.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Erie County 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - N/A 	Medium
Support local governments in maintaining and revising farm-friendly land use regulations.	Continue to provide funding for municipalities to update zoning regulations through the Erie County Municipal Planning Grant Program.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - DEP 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Municipalities 	Ongoing
	Work with municipalities to revise local zoning laws to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Eliminate provisions in zoning and other land use regulations that unreasonably restrict standard farm practices (See local zoning evaluations in Appendix C); - Accommodate roadside stands, on-farm markets, agritourism, and other value-added enterprises on farms, including agritourism. Ensure that permitting procedures and review criteria are not unreasonably restrictive, and; - Accommodate secondary businesses on farms subject to appropriate safeguards. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - DEP 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Municipalities 	Ongoing
	Work with local code enforcement officers to interpret building code regulations to avoid unreasonable restrictions on farm operations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - DEP 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Municipalities - NYS AGM - CCE Erie 	Ongoing
Encourage and support farm transition and succession planning.	Encourage continued support for FarmNET, Farmland for a New Generation Regional Navigators, and other programs that help farmers with succession/transition planning.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - CCE Erie 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - AFT - FarmNET - WNYLC 	Ongoing

SUMMARY OF GOALS, POLICIES AND RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

Topic 2: Farmland Viability <i>Goal 1: Maintain and enhance the economic viability of Erie County farms.</i>				
Policy	Actions	Lead	Partner(s)	Timeframe
Support programs to help farmers manage stress.	Provide information to farmers and their families about resources to help identify and manage stress.	- FarmNET	- CCE Erie - NYS Office of Mental Health	Ongoing
Reduce barriers for new and beginning farmers.	Provide information about existing programs and funding, including AFT's Farmland for a New Generation Regional Navigator program.	- CCE Erie	- AFT - WNYLC	Ongoing
Advocate for State and Federal policies to improve access to qualified and affordable farm labor.	Work with Erie County Farm Bureau to advocate for programs that help farms obtain suitable workers and for changes in State and Federal farm labor regulations that would benefit farms in Erie County.	- Erie County Farm Bureau	- FPC - NYFB - state and federal legislators	Medium
Prepare Erie County youth for careers in agriculture and food systems.	Encourage and support programs such as FFA, BOCES, and 4-H for youth to increase awareness and develop skills that would be useful in farm jobs.	- CCE Erie - BOCES - School Districts	- FPC - NYS AGM	Ongoing
	Encourage Erie Community College and other institutions to include opportunities for agricultural careers, including internships and partnerships with other schools.	- DEP	- ECC - Erie County Farm Bureau - CCE Erie	Medium
Encourage internships or apprenticeships on farms and agriculture-related businesses.	Facilitate connections between farmers and agricultural education institutions to network and provide information for those interested in establishing internships or apprenticeships on farms and agriculture-related businesses.	- DEP	- USDA (grants) - CCE Erie - NYS AGM	Ongoing
Encourage farms to consider diversifying crops in response to changing markets and climate.	Provide information to farmers about sources of funding and technical assistance to introduce new products.	- CCE Erie	- USDA (grants) - NYS AGM - SWCD	Ongoing
Support workforce development, apprenticeships, training, youth education	Continue to support organizations conducting workforce development and education in the agriculture sector and related fields, focusing on the need for locally based agriculture workers and future farmers in the county.	- BOCES	- WIB - Colleges and Universities - School Districts - CCE Erie	Ongoing

SUMMARY OF GOALS, POLICIES AND RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

Topic 2: Farmland Viability <i>Goal 1: Maintain and enhance the economic viability of Erie County farms.</i>				
Policy	Actions	Lead	Partner(s)	Timeframe
Remove unreasonable land use restrictions on farming and related businesses in urban, suburban and rural municipalities.	Provide information and technical assistance to municipalities to remove unreasonable restrictions identified in the zoning evaluations.	- DEP	- Municipalities - NYS AGM	Ongoing
Connect small and mid-sized farms interested in institutional and wholesale markets to training and technical assistance to support their successful entry into these markets.	Provide information to farms about training programs, resources, and partners that could help them market to institutions.	- DEP - CCE Erie	- NYS AGM (funding)	Ongoing
	Facilitate connections and training opportunities with training providers such as CCE Harvest NY.	- DEP - CCE Erie	- NYS AGM (funding)	Medium
Support efforts to inform farm operations about sources of funding for capital investments, marketing and other needs and encourage farms to prepare in advance for opportunities.	Provide information about potential grant opportunities and encourage farms to prepare project concepts in advance for potential grant opportunities so that farms are competitive when relevant funding opportunities arise.	- DEP	- CCE Erie - Farm Credit East/ lenders	Immediate
	To the greatest extent possible, adapt existing economic development funding resources to support farm investment needs, e.g. Microenterprise funds, USDA Rural Development Revolving Loan Funds, etc.	- ECIDA	- USDA Rural Development - DEP	Long-Term

SUMMARY OF GOALS, POLICIES AND RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

Topic 3: Integrated Agricultural Economy <i>Goal 1: Support agricultural economic development countywide.</i>				
Policy	Actions	Lead	Partner(s)	Timeframe
Continue to promote agritourism, CSAs, and farm retail shops in Erie County.	Continue to administer and expand the Erie Grown, Taste NY, and Find Fresh Erie marketing efforts through Visit Buffalo Niagara, and other programs that publicize and promote sales of local farm products.	- DEP	- CCE Erie - VBN	Ongoing
Continue to develop the Erie County Agribusiness Park in partnership with the Erie County IDA. When the Agribusiness Park is operational, support its mission.	Support near-term, Phase I site development with funding and technical assistance.	- DEP - ECIDA	- Town of Evans	Immediate
	Further clarify and define the highest probability and highest impact activities the Agribusiness Park can support in the near-term given the anticipated state of infrastructure and site development. Once identified, develop requests for proposals and market to operators that can perform activities.	- DEP - ECIDA	- CCE Erie - Invest Buffalo Niagara - Empire State Development	Immediate
Support additional aggregation, distribution, and processing, including cooperative ventures.	Facilitate an inventory of existing capacities and operators across the supply chain to identify gaps, potential partnerships, and opportunities for expansions that support overall aggregation and distribution for producers, processors, and purchasers.	- DEP	- CCE Erie - FFWNY - ECIDA - FeedMore WNY - Eden Valley Growers - University at Buffalo - Regional Counties and Stakeholders	Medium
	Support initiatives with GIS mapping, grant identification and other project support where relevant County skills and capabilities support project advancement.	- DEP	- Erie County	Ongoing
	When appropriate, provide letters of support for new aggregators/distributors seeking grant funds.	- AFPB - FPC	- DEP	Ongoing

SUMMARY OF GOALS, POLICIES AND RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

Topic 3: Integrated Agricultural Economy <i>Goal 1: Support agricultural economic development countywide.</i>				
Policy	Actions	Lead	Partner(s)	Timeframe
Leverage County food procurement to feature Erie County products to the greatest extent possible.	Develop a geographic preference bid and procurement process friendly to small and medium-sized farms for County managed food services associated with Erie County Holding Center and Correctional Facility and Meals on Wheels.	- Erie County	- Purchasing - CCE Erie - NYS AGM	Medium
	Identify supply chain supports (pick-up and delivery, storage, etc.) that the County can engage to facilitate order fulfillment and decrease the costs of entry for small and mid-sized farms.	- Erie County	- ECIDA - FeedMore WNY - Produce Peddlers - FreshFix	Medium
Support marketing initiatives for local farm products	Further develop and expand Erie Grown label by increasing prominence at farmers markets, local events, etc.	- DEP	- CCE Erie - Erie County Farm Bureau - SWCD - TasteNY	Immediate

SUMMARY OF GOALS, POLICIES AND RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

Topic 3: Integrated Agricultural Economy <i>Goal 1: Support agricultural economic development countywide.</i>				
Policy	Actions	Lead	Partner(s)	Timeframe
Support policies which increase purchases of local farm products by schools and institutions.	Develop and distribute educational materials to school districts, County departments, and other institutions outlining opportunities, incentives, and benefits for purchasing local food. Include information about programs such as Farm to School, USDA's Local Food for Schools Cooperative Agreement Program, and New York's 30% Initiative.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - CCE Erie - FPC 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - NYS AGM - DEP 	Immediate
	Organize workshops or webinars for procurement officers, school nutrition staff, and the County Bureau of Purchasing to explain how to source local products, navigate procurement guidelines, and connect with local farmers.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - DEP 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - CCE Erie - NYS AGM 	Immediate
	Leverage Erie Grown to improve connections between local farmers and institutions. This could include an online directory or matchmaking event and could focus on identifying farmers who meet institutional needs, such as scale, delivery capabilities, or certifications.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - DEP 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - CCE Erie - FPC 	Immediate
	Implement a local food procurement policy for County-run institutions, such as correctional facilities, hospitals, or senior meal programs, to demonstrate feasibility and set a precedent for other institutions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Erie County 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - DEP 	Medium
	Advocate for streamlined procurement processes or additional funding at the state level to support schools and institutions in purchasing local food. This can be done through resolutions or direct advocacy by County leadership.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - FPC 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - DEP - Erie County Farm Bureau - CCE - Erie County 	Ongoing
	Provide technical assistance to both farmers and institutions on topics like production scaling, food safety compliance, and menu planning with local products.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - CCE Erie 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - DEP - NOFA-NY 	Immediate

SUMMARY OF GOALS, POLICIES AND RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

Topic 3: Integrated Agricultural Economy <i>Goal 1: Support agricultural economic development countywide.</i>				
Policy	Actions	Lead	Partner(s)	Timeframe
Leverage workforce development programs and partners to maximize farm and food business workforce quality.	Leverage FeedMore Western NY's new facility as a farm and food service workforce development incubator: The new facility will also offer classroom and training spaces for workforce development programs, such as the Readyng Individuals for Success and Employment (RISE) program, which can help train individuals in agricultural and food-related careers.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - FeedMore - WNY Workforce Center 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Erie County - BOCES - CCE Erie - K-12 schools and colleges 	Medium
	Develop internship or apprenticeship programs for jobs that support farm and food business operations including but not limited to: meat processing, ag-tech, truck drivers, etc.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - BOCES - ECC - WNY Workforce Center 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - CCE - K-12 schools and Colleges 	Medium

SUMMARY OF GOALS, POLICIES AND RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

Topic 4: Water Resources, Environmental Protection, and Climate Resiliency

Goal 1: Protect water and environmental quality and ensure climate resilience.

Policy	Actions	Lead	Partner(s)	Timeframe
Support drainage policies and practices that benefit farm operations.	Encourage municipalities to periodically inspect and clean roadside ditches.	- EC DPW	- DEP - Municipalities - Cornell Local Roads Program	Ongoing
	Encourage municipalities to undertake drainage studies and create drainage districts as needed to coordinate the construction and maintenance of drainage facilities.	- SWCD	- Municipalities - SWCD - NYS DEC - DEP	Immediate
	Provide information and technical assistance to farmers to obtain drainage easements from neighboring properties to ensure the ability to maintain drainageways downstream from farm fields.	- SWCD	- Municipalities - NYS DEC	Immediate
Support programs that provide funding and technical assistance to farms to install best management practices for water quality, environmental protection, and climate resiliency.	Advocate for continued funding for NYS grants, including Agricultural Environmental Management and Climate Resilient Farming and USDA NRCS and Farm Bill programs, that provide technical assistance and cost sharing for farms to install best management practices.	- SWCD	- NYS AGM - USDA	Ongoing
	Establish a permanent fund to assist farms and agribusinesses impacted by damage from severe storms	- Erie County Legislature	- SWCD	Medium
Reduce negative impacts of recent changes to NYS wetlands regulations on farms.	Advocate for reasonable protections and administration of NYS wetlands regulations that do not place excessive burdens on farm practices.	- NYFB - Erie County Legislature	- SWCD	Ongoing
Eliminate the risk of fire and harm to animals from unregulated sky lanterns and mylar balloons.	Enforce the recent ban on untethered use of sky lanterns in Erie County.	- Erie County Legislature	- AFPB	Immediate
	Educate the public to discourage the release of mylar balloons to reduce risk of harm to farm animals and damage to equipment.	- Erie County Legislature	- AFPB	Immediate

SUMMARY OF GOALS, POLICIES AND RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

Topic 5: Public Appreciation of Agriculture

Goal 1: Increase public appreciation of farming and support for agriculture and related businesses among local decision-makers.

Policy	Actions	Lead	Partner(s)	Timeframe
Continue to provide information and training to local officials and decision-makers regarding farm practices and benefits of agriculture.	Continue training sessions and farm tours for local officials.	- DEP	- CCE Erie - Municipalities	Ongoing
Promote local agriculture and agritourism.	Promote farmers markets through the Erie Grown label, farmer's market online map, and Passport program.	- DEP - FPC - CCE Erie - Visit Buffalo Niagara	- Municipalities	Ongoing
	Have a presence at Erie County Fair and other agriculture-related events such as festivals and conferences.	- DEP - FPC	- Erie County Agricultural Society	Ongoing
Encourage youth education through Agriculture in the Classroom curriculum, 4-H, and FFA.	Continue operation of NYS Ag in the Classroom and CCE youth education programs and demonstrate successes and impacts yearly.	- CCE Erie - FPC	- Erie County Agricultural Society - Erie County Legislature	Ongoing
	Support school districts engaged in or interested in FFA programs with information and technical assistance.	- CCE Erie - DEP - FPC	- Erie County Farm Bureau	Ongoing
Maintain support for Erie County CCE, SWCD, and Office of Agriculture.	Advocate for continued funding for CCE Erie, SWCD and Office of Agriculture in the yearly County budget.	- DEP	- Erie County Legislature - Erie County Farm Bureau	Ongoing

SUMMARY OF GOALS, POLICIES AND RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

Topic 6: Urban Agriculture

Goal 1: Expand opportunities for urban agriculture, including commercial growers, community and school gardens, and home gardening.

Policy	Actions	Lead	Partner(s)	Timeframe
Engage in an ongoing discussion with the City of Buffalo to support urban agriculture.	Share information with and maintain communications with City of Buffalo staff and officials regarding policies and programs that affect urban agriculture in the City, including obtaining agricultural assessment for commercial growers, making land available for community and school gardens either permanently or with 5-year leases with an extended notice of termination, and supporting safe home gardening.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - DEP - CCE Erie - FPC 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - City of Buffalo staff and officials 	Immediate
Include organizations that represent urban agriculture interests in policies and decisions relating to agriculture and land use	Continue to have a farmer representing urban agriculture on the AFPB.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - AFPB 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Erie County Legislature - DEP 	Ongoing
	Continue to involve urban growers and advocates in the FPC.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - FPC 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - DEP 	Ongoing
Encourage municipalities to expand opportunities for farming in villages, suburban towns and cities, including enacting reasonable zoning provisions to allow for on-site sales and building construction by right, facilitating access to public water supplies, and administering agricultural assessments.	Provide information and technical assistance to municipalities to assist with zoning changes to better accommodate urban agriculture, including reasonable provisions for raising chickens and potentially other animals, and accommodating on-site sales, processing and other related enterprises.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - DEP - FPC 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Municipalities 	Ongoing
	Encourage municipalities to adopt and implement reasonable water access policies that facilitate water hookups at reasonable rates to support agricultural production and related enterprises.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - DEP - FPC 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Municipalities 	Immediate
	Provide information and technical assistance to local assessors and urban growers to facilitate agricultural assessments through the NYS Agricultural Districts Law to apply for eligible farm parcels.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - SWCD - DEP - FPC 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Municipalities - RPTS - Local Assessors 	Ongoing

SUMMARY OF GOALS, POLICIES AND RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

Topic 6: Urban Agriculture <i>Goal 1: Expand opportunities for urban agriculture, including commercial growers, community and school gardens, and home gardening.</i>				
Policy	Actions	Lead	Partner(s)	Timeframe
Maintain and increase support for community gardens and home gardening in urban areas.	Encourage urban and suburban municipalities to make publicly owned land available to community gardens for 5-year leases with an extended notice of termination or permanently.	- FPC	- Municipalities	Long-Term
	Provide information about sources of assistance in obtaining garden beds and soil.	- FPC	- GGWNY - CCE Erie - SWCD - Buffalo Freedom Gardens	Ongoing
	Share information on safe growing in urban soils and make soil testing kits more readily available.	- Erie County	- GGWNY - CCE Erie - SWCD - FPC	Ongoing
Support the next generation of aspiring urban growers by developing a clearinghouse of information regarding support services and technical assistance.	Coordinate with other organizations to host workshops on the topics of starting an urban agriculture business or ancillary business.	- FPC	- Erie County Office of Health Equity - CCE Erie - GGWNY - Other agencies/ organizations - DEP	Medium
	Support the inclusion of urban agriculture relevant information in traditional agricultural education mediums.	- CCE Erie - FPC	- DEP - AFPB	Ongoing
	Investigate the feasibility of assisting urban growers with procuring equipment necessary for their operations, such as retired fire hoses from municipal Fire Departments.	- FPC	- Municipalities - Tool Library	Medium

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