

TOWN OF WALES AGRICULTURAL & FARMLAND PROTECTION PLAN



DRAFT

August 2023

TOWN OF WALES AGRICULTURAL AND FARMLAND PROTECTION PLAN

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INTRODUCTION

Background and Purpose

The Town of Wales initiated preparation of an Agricultural & Farmland Protection Plan in 2022. As noted in the Request for Proposals issued in June 2022, the Town desired a plan that “addresses Wales agricultural sector in a way that supports conservation of natural resources and promotes economic innovation and sustainability.” The Town recognized that a plan would help to maintain the rural character of the Town as it faces development pressure from residential sprawl, commercial development and solar energy projects. The Town also recognized the rising average age of farmers and the need to “promote programs and policies that conserve the land base for agricultural use, encourage a farm friendly business environment, and promote the economic viability of farming within the Town.” A grant from the Erie County Department of Environment & Planning provided some of the funding to prepare this Plan.

FARMER & PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Advisory Committee

The Town of Wales established an Advisory Committee to guide the preparation of the Town of Wales Agricultural & Farmland Protection Plan. The following Town residents and County officials served on the Advisory Committee:

Farming Community

- Jeff Simons, Dairy farmer
- Jeramiah Thorpe, CSA vegetable/cash crops farmer
- Ken Brown, Xmas Trees/ maple syrup (also a Conservation Advisory Board Member)

Town of Wales

- Jeff Gawronski (Town Board)
- Rickey Veniditti (Town Board)
- Richard Munn (Planning Board)
- Britt Donnelly (Planning Board)
- Daniel Driver (Planning Board)
- Gerald Klinck (Planning Board)
- Mark Gietler (Zoning Board)

Representatives of Agencies & Organizations

- Mark Gaston, Erie County Soil and Water Conservation District (also a Planning Board Member)
- Rachel Chrostowski, WNY Land Conservancy
- Tim German, Erie County, Department of Environment and Planning
- Diane Held, Cornell Cooperative Extension of Erie County (limited availability)
- John Whitney, Cornell Cooperative Extension (limited availability)

Mindy Eaton, Town Clerk, assisted with mailings and coordination.

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The Advisory Committee met five times during the planning process:

- August 10, 2022
- September 7, 2022
- November 9, 2022
- March 13, 2023
- ____, 2023

At the September 7 meeting, members of the Advisory Committee identified the following Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats relating to farmland and agriculture in the Town.

SWOT Analysis Results –Advisory Committee, September 7, 2022

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Town Government Support for agriculture• Good soils (certain areas)• Few Roads (Large areas of contiguous land)• Good roads – Transportation Access• Location – Convenient to large markets (benefits CSAs, Christmas tree growers, vegetable farmers; good location for retail)• Enough water – rain and surface water• Good drainage (mostly)• No public water (discourages growth, limits housing development)• Diversity – vegetables, field crops, beef, Christmas trees, horses• Resources to support farmers (e.g., SWCD)• Bottom land not buildable but is excellent farmland	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Lack of local support business/ need to travel to other towns for services and supplies (small concern) – Alexander, Springville, Arcade, Batavia Java, Strykersville• Need for help – new farmers• Cost of land – Challenging to new/expanding farms• High costs
Threats	Opportunities
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Development along Rt 78• Land sold for housing lots – 3 acre minimum (e.g., 250 width- 474 deep)• Owners of land reluctant to rent to farmers– not knowledgeable; worried about liability• Pressure to develop Ag land – Renewable Energy• Aging farmers/transition	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Boutique products/ businesses – wine, beer, herbs, CSA markets in East Aurora, Cheektowaga• Diversify – e.g, proposed ancient grains farm• CCE – regional resources for technical assistance• PDR – takes value of development rights out of land so it's permanently available for agriculture and affordable to farmers• Limit development along road frontage (beyond ex. 250')• Educate realtors/potential buyers about opportunities to rent land for agricultural use.• Promote benefit of Ag assessment

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Stakeholder and Landowner/Operator Interviews

The consultants conducted one-on-one interviews with several farmers and agency representatives to identify issues and opportunities from a variety of perspectives. Representatives from the following organizations and agencies were interviewed:

- John Whitney, Cornell Cooperative Extension (CCE)
- Erie County Soil & Water Conservation District (SWCD)
- Western New York Land Conservancy

Public Meetings

Two public meetings were held to inform and encourage input from farmers and residents in the Town. All farmland owners in the Town received a notice in the mail inviting them to participate.

The first public meeting was organized as a Farmer Forum and was held on December 7, 2022 at the Wales Fire Hall.. Western New York Land Conservancy presented about farmland protection through purchase of development rights. Erie County Soil & Water Conservation District (SWCD) presented information about the Agricultural Environmental Management program. Erie County Department of Planning & Environment presented on the Erie County Agricultural District program. Cornell Cooperative Extension presented on transition planning for farms and other technical assistance and resources available to farmers and landowners.

At the December 7, Farmer Forum, LaBella Associates facilitated an exercise to identify Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) relating to agriculture and farmland in the Town. The following table summarizes the results of the discussion.

SWOT Analysis Results – Town of Wales Farmer Forum, December 7, 2022

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Agricultural Districts• Right to Farm provisions• Organic farming• Open land• Supportive Town Board and other local boards• Waterways• Community support for farming• Prime soils• Active farms• Location – close to markets• Inexpensive land – for farmers	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Suburban encroachment• Inexpensive land – attractive for non-farm development• Taxes• Traffic – interferes with farm equipment• Need to travel out of town for supplies/ equipment• Fuel and other operating costs
Threats	Opportunities
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Consolidation of agricultural operations, including dairy, hay, etc.• Invasive species• Young people not interested in farming/ barriers to entry• “Outside interests who think they know better”	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Niche products• Agricultural tourism (cabins, B& B, etc.)• Farm operations will rent available high quality land

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• Solar development	
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The second public informational meeting was held on _____ at the Wales Town Hall. The consulting team presented an overview of the draft Plan with a focus on the analysis of issues and opportunities and the recommended strategies.

Farmer/ Landowner Survey

A survey was distributed to all farmland owners in the Town of Wales. The mailing list was prepared by identifying owners of real property that is classified as farmland by the assessor or that appeared to be open land suitable for agricultural use based on aerial photos. A total of 136 surveys were mailed to owners of farmland and other open land in the Town.

Of the 59 survey respondents, 12 were full-time farmers, 8 were part-time farmers, and 22 were landowners who rent land to farmers. A full report of the survey results is in Appendix A.

Erie County Agricultural & Farmland Protection Board

The Erie County Agricultural & Farmland Protection Board reviewed and discussed the draft Plan and recommended approval at its meeting on June 29, 2023.

Town Board Public Hearing

Town Board conducted a Public Hearing on the draft Plan on _____.

COMMUNITY PROFILE

Location

The Town of Wales is in the eastern part of Erie County, approximately 30 miles southeast of downtown Buffalo. It is bordered on the west by the Town of Aurora, on the north by the Town of Marilla, on the south by the Town of Holland, and on the east by the Town of Sheldon in Wyoming County. (See Map 1. Regional Setting.)

NYS Route 20A (Big Tree Road) runs east-west through the northern part of the Town. NYS Route 78 splits off Route 20A and runs southeasterly through the hamlet of Wales Hollow and into Wyoming County. Route 16 traverses the southwest corner of the Town.

Land Cover and Land Use

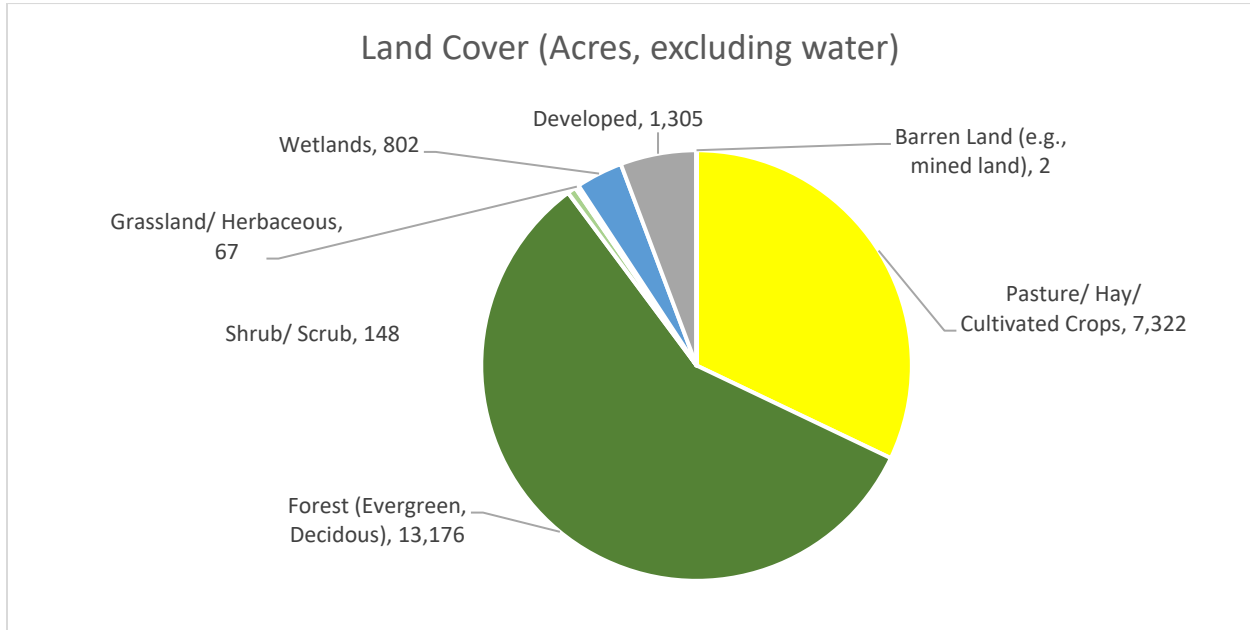
Most of the Town's land area is agricultural and residential. Large parcels preserved as public open space include Erie County's Hunters Creek Park (759 acres), Kenneoglenn (130 acres) and Mossy Point Preserve (216 acres.) A few businesses and civic uses (Town Hall, Highway Department and Fire Hall) are located in Wales Center hamlet. Businesses are located in Wales Center near the Town Hall, in the Route 20A/Strykersville Road/Two Rod Road area (fuel, restaurant, small plaza), and along Route 20A (mini-storage, a former auction center and a small auto body shop).

Approximately 7,322 acres (32.1%) of the Town's land cover (excluding water) is in pasture, hay or cultivated crops. More than half (57.7%) of the Town's land is wooded.

Table 1: Land Cover

Town of Wales (2019 NLCD)	Acres	% of Total
Pasture/ Hay/ Cultivated Crops	7,322	31.4%
Forest (Evergreen, Deciduous)	13,176	56.5%
Shrub/ Scrub	148	0.6%
Grassland/ Herbaceous	67	0.3%
Wetlands	802	3.5%
Developed, including lawns	1,305	5.7%
Barren Land (e.g., bedrock, mined land)	2	0.01%
	23,338	100.0%

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SOURCE: 2019 National Land Cover Database (NCLD)

Approximately 13,176 acres of woodlands comprise 57.7% of the Town's land area. (See Map 2. Land Cover Map.) Some of these woodlands are used to produce forestry products, either in conjunction with or independent of agricultural operations.

Based on satellite land cover data, there are approximately 802 acres of wetlands in the Town. Wetlands are vital to many species of plants and wildlife and are essential in managing stormwater.

Approximately 101 acres of wetlands regulated by New York State are located in the Town. Map : 9: Streams, Wetlands & Floodzones depicts the locations of State-designated wetlands and areas identified through the National Wetlands Inventory that may contain wetlands subject to federal regulation. Delineation of wetlands in the field would be needed to determine whether the land is a wetland.

Population and Development Trends

The population of the Town of Wales increased gradually since 1980 but has remained stable over the past decade. According to the most recent census data (2021 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates), 3,014 people reside in the Town of Wales.

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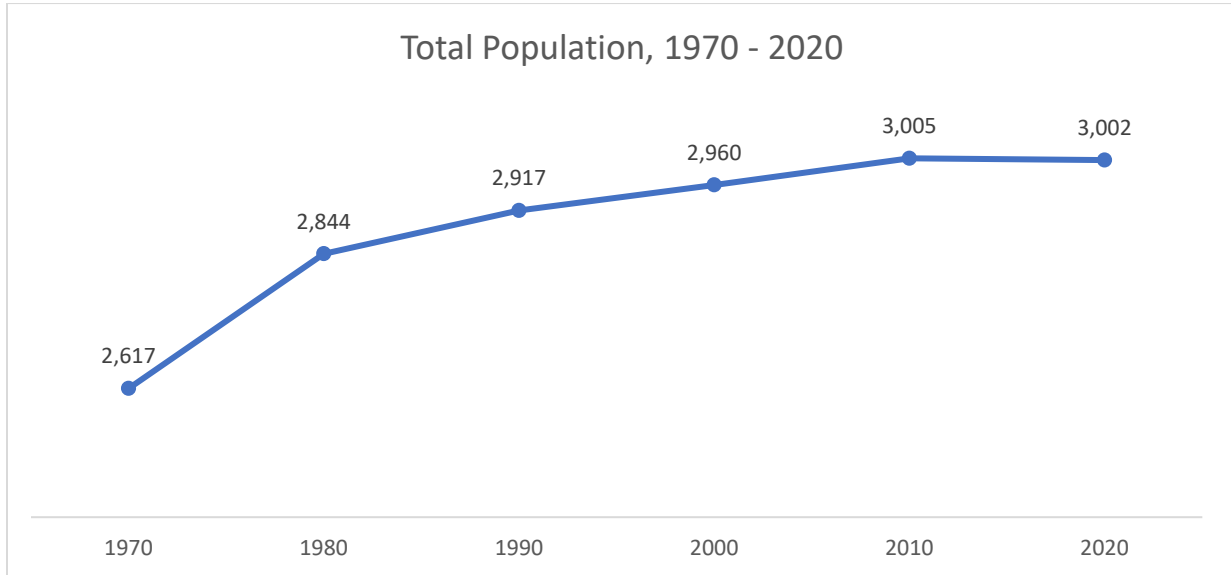


Figure 1: Population Trends, 1970 - 2021

Based on 2020 Census data, there are approximately 1,343 housing units in the Town, of which approximately 1,082 (80.5%) are single family structures, 154 (11.5%) are manufactured homes and 107 (8.0%) are housing units in structures with two or more units. A total of 996 are owner-occupied, 183 are renter-occupied, and 24 are vacant or seasonally occupied.

Residences are clustered around the historic hamlets of South Wales and Wales Center and along roadways throughout the Town. Residential development is sparse and mostly on large (>5 acres) lots. Map 5: Year Housing Built illustrates the pattern of development over the decades.

Between 2011 and 2020, approximately 32 new homes were constructed in the Town. Demand for new residential development pressure is primarily for single-family homes on sites scattered throughout the Town. Many of the newer residential development is on large lots; of the 32 new homes built between 2011 and 2020, only 4 were on lots smaller than 3 acres and 18 were on lots of 10 acres or larger. Recent market trends such as increased interest in rural living and the ability to work remotely may lead to additional residential development in the Town.

Employment and Commuting

Approximately 366 people work at establishments located in the Town of Wales. Of the 1,588 employed residents, 96% commute out of the Town for work. Based on Census data, the number of Town residents employed in agriculture, forestry and mining declined from 77 (5% of all workers) in 2010 to 36 (2% of all workers) in 2020.

Utilities/Public Services

Water and Sewer

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There is no public sewer or water service in the Town. Residents and businesses rely on private wells and on-site wastewater disposal systems.

Broadband and Cable

Spectrum offers cable TV and high-speed internet service to most areas of the Town. Other services available in portions of the Town include Verizon (DSL) and Starlink, ViaSat and HughesNet (Satellite.) First Light Fiber service may be available in some areas. Based on data published in the [NYS Public Service Commission Broadband Map](#), there are several clusters of addresses in Wales that are “Unserviced” with broadband internet.

Figure 2: NYS PSC Broadband Map excerpt

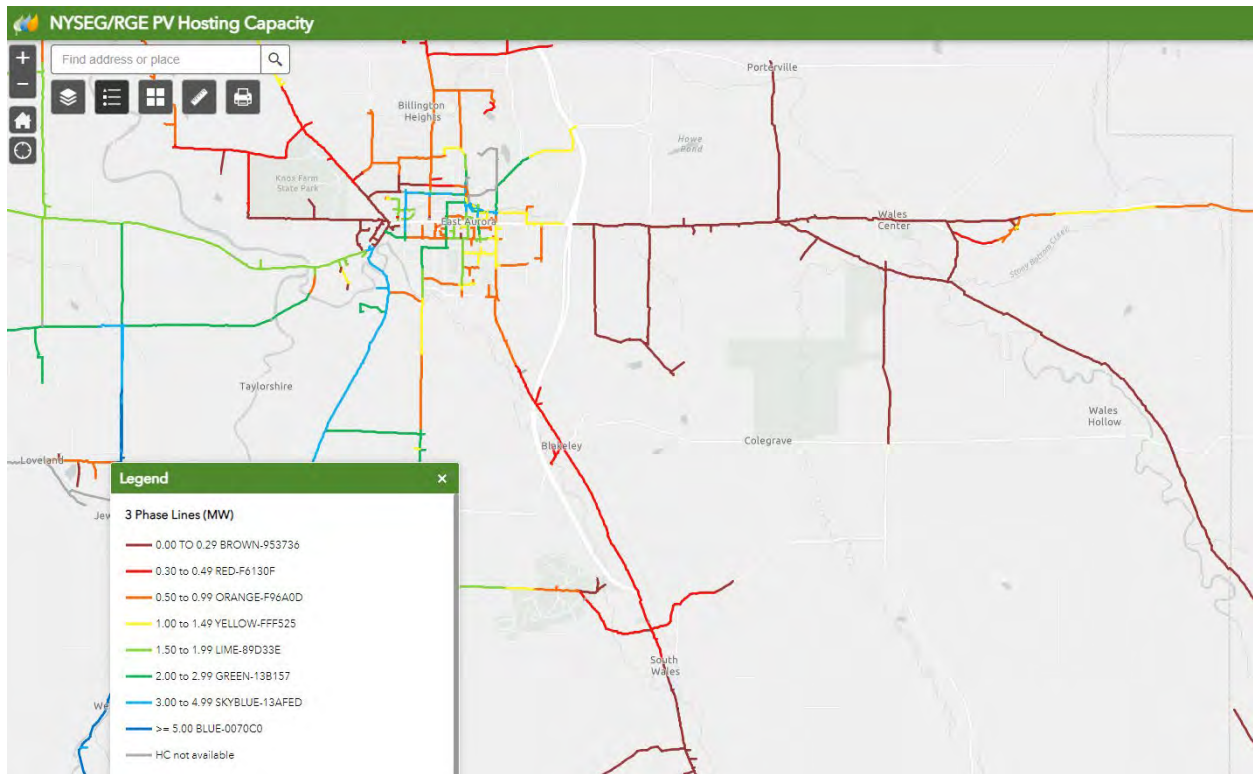


Electricity

NYSEG provides electric service throughout the Town. Electric distribution lines include both overhead and underground wires. According to the [NYSEG/ RGE PV Hosting Capacity map](#), many areas of Town lack 3-phase power, which is needed to support certain types of electric equipment and machinery. In addition, no areas in the Town, except for a segment of Route 20A east of Wales Center, can currently support solar or other distributed generation facilities with a capacity of 1 MW or more.

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Figure 3: NYSEG PV Hosting Capacity Map excerpt



Community Services

Most of the Town is within the Iroquois School District. The southern portion is part of the Holland School District. A few parcels on the eastern border of the Town are in the Attica School District.

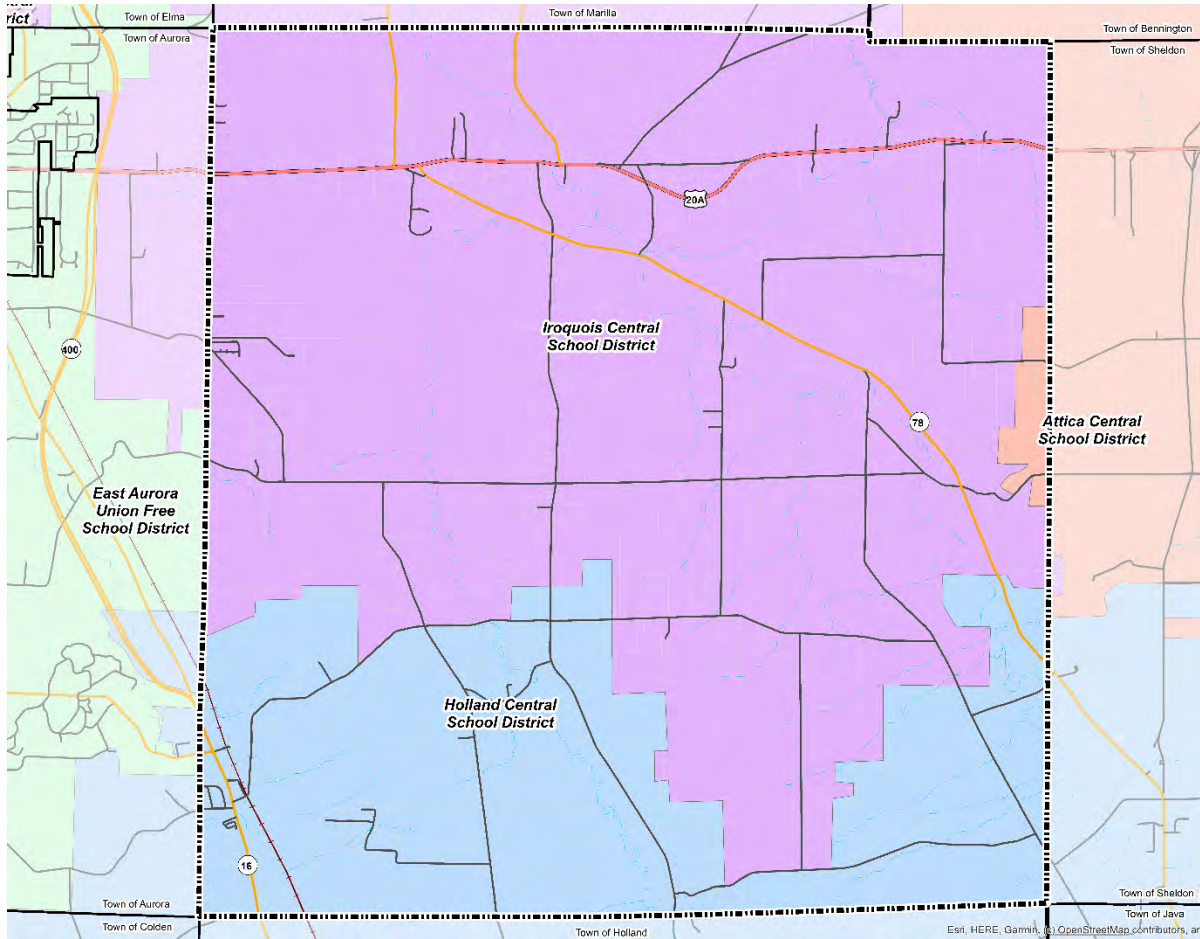
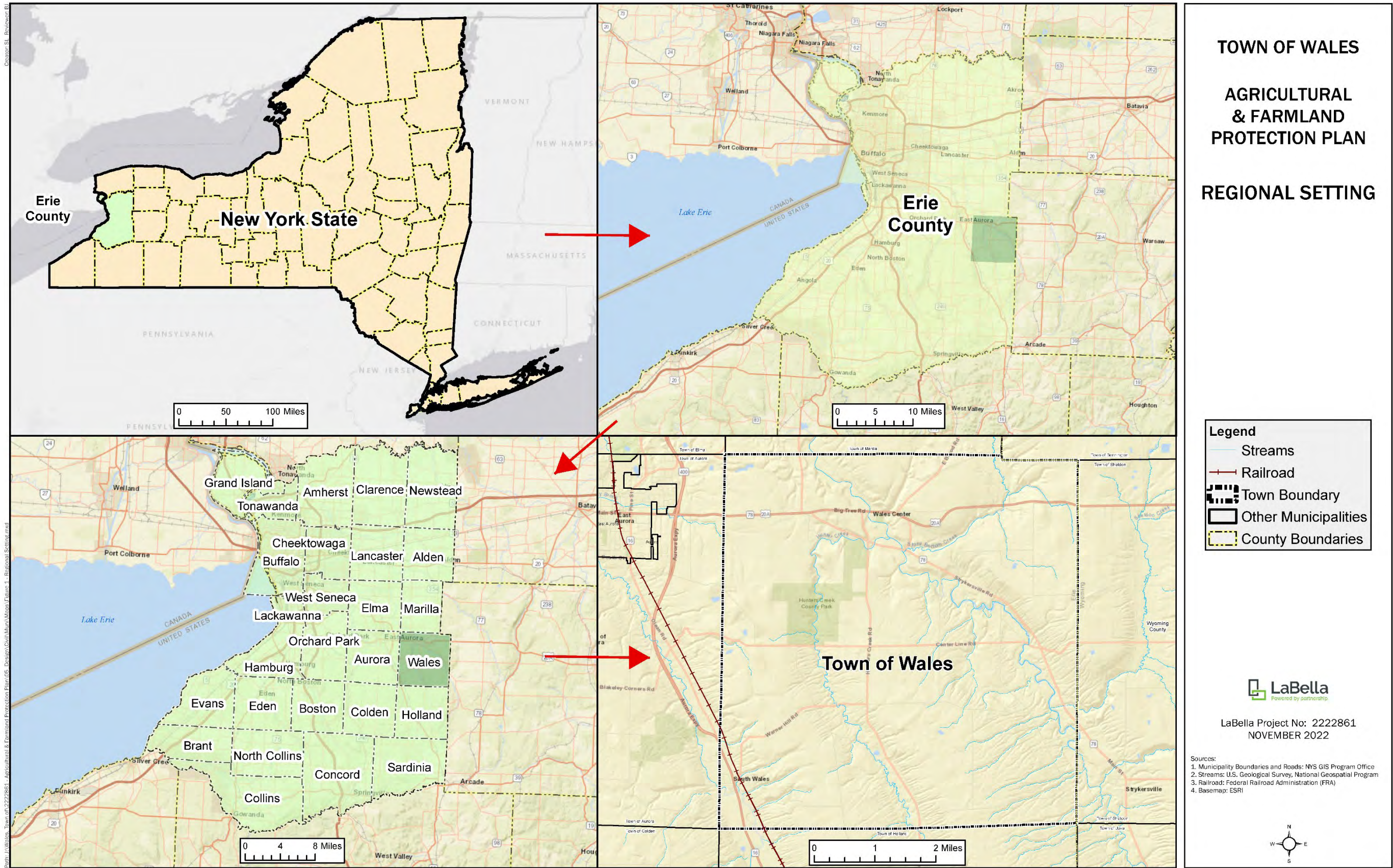


Figure 4. School Districts

The Wales Center Volunteer Fire Company serves most of the Town. The South Wales Volunteer Fire Company serves the hamlet of South Wales and the Town of Aurora.

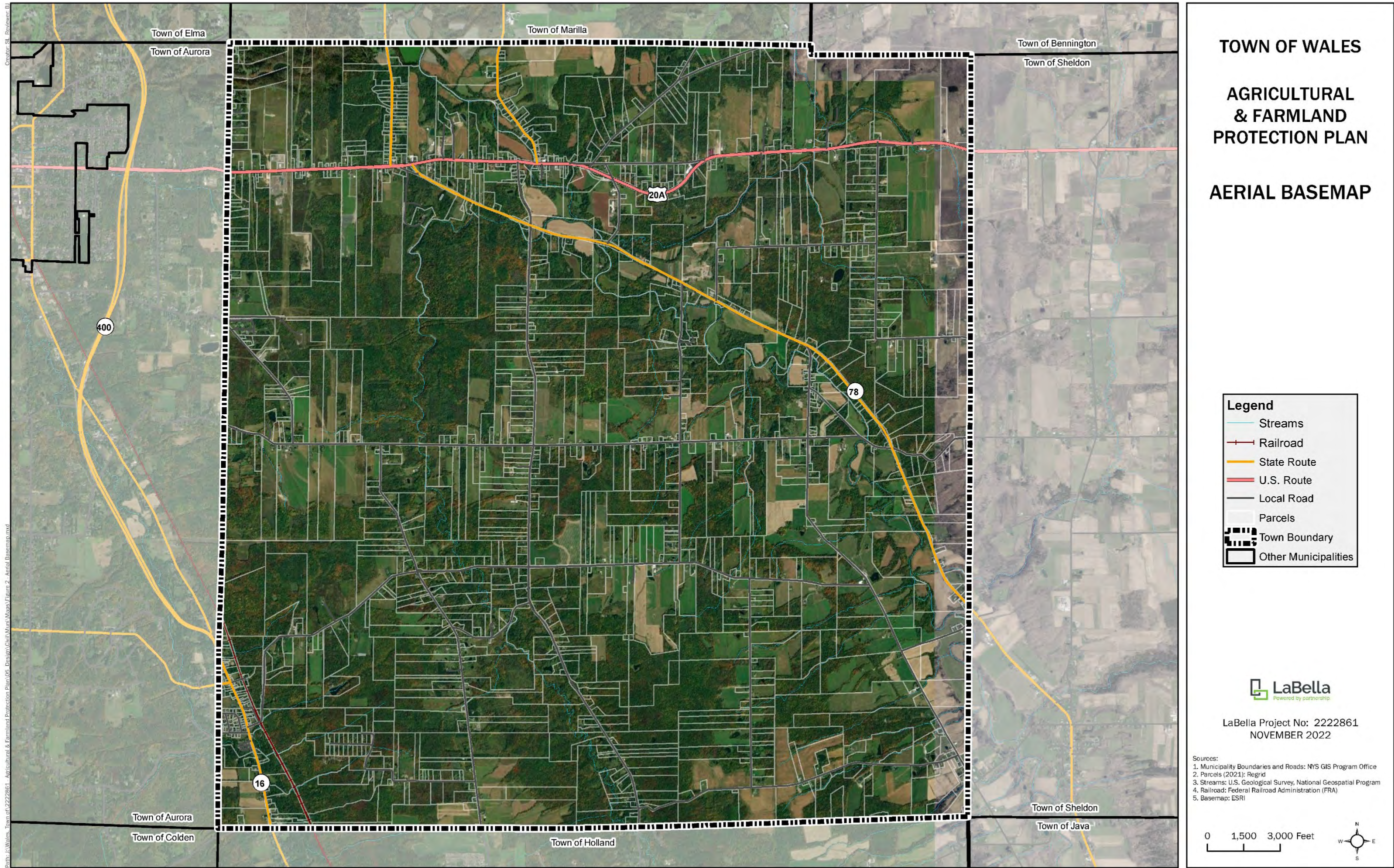
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Map 1. Regional Setting



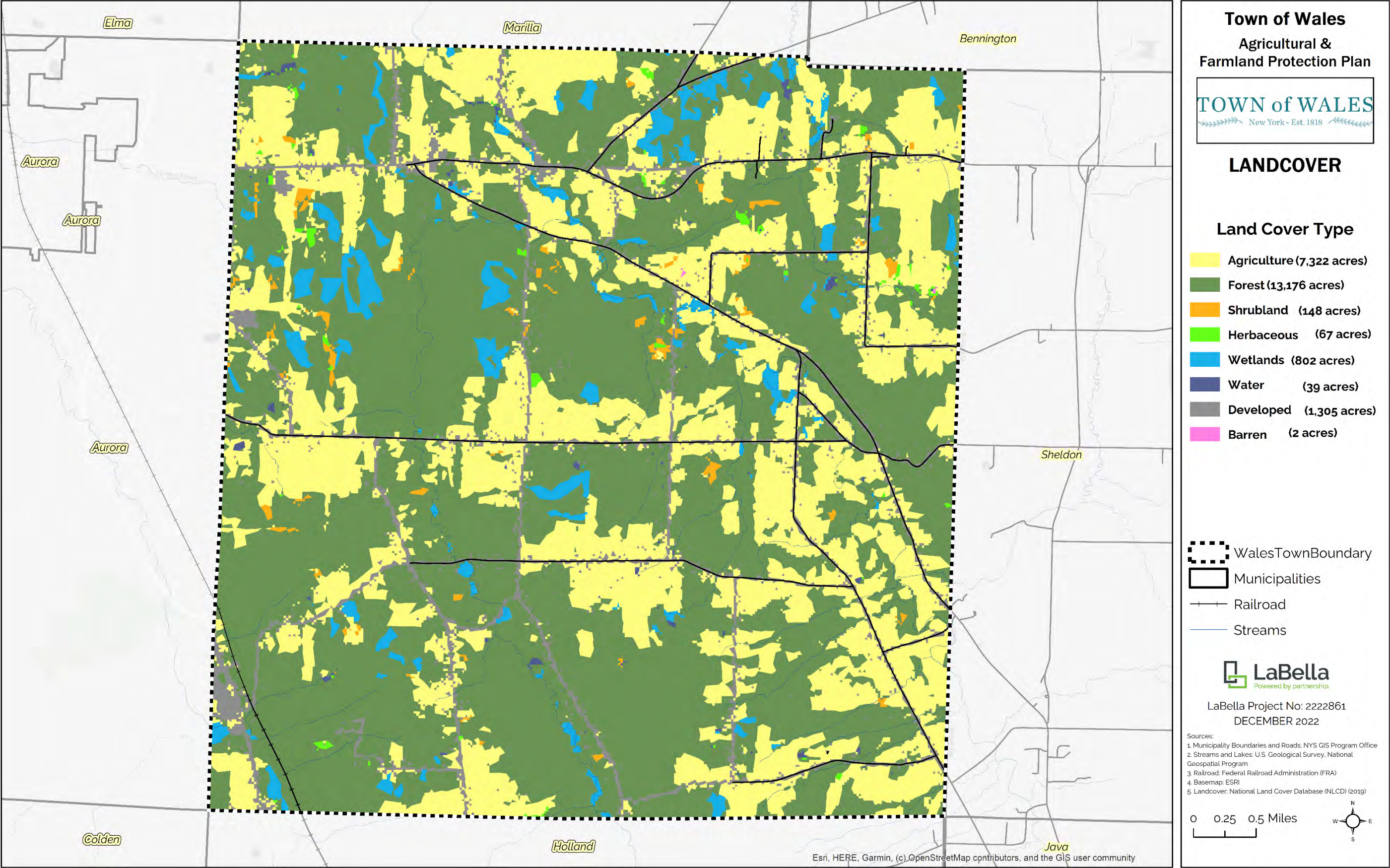
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Map 2. Aerial Basemap



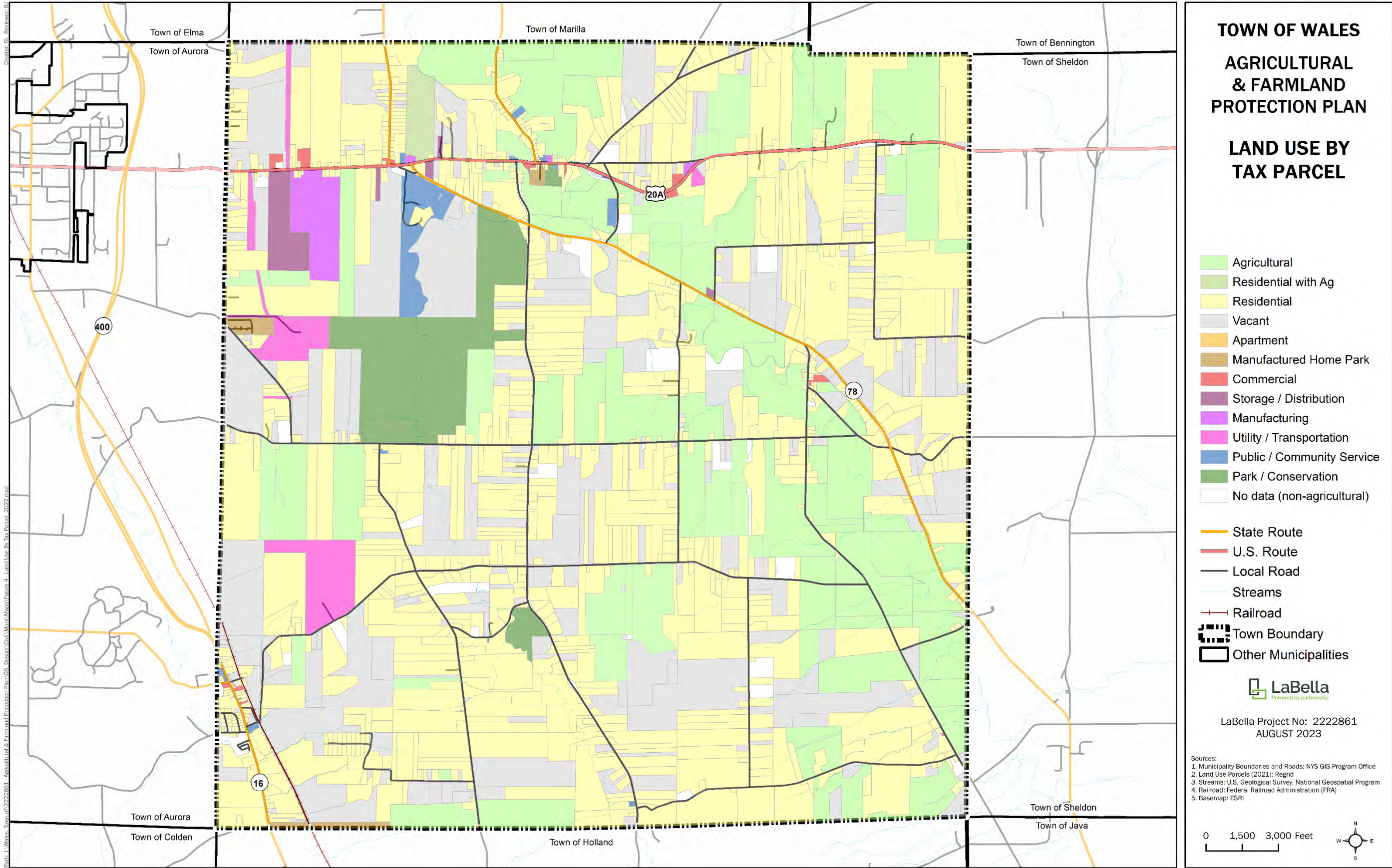
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Map 3. Land Cover



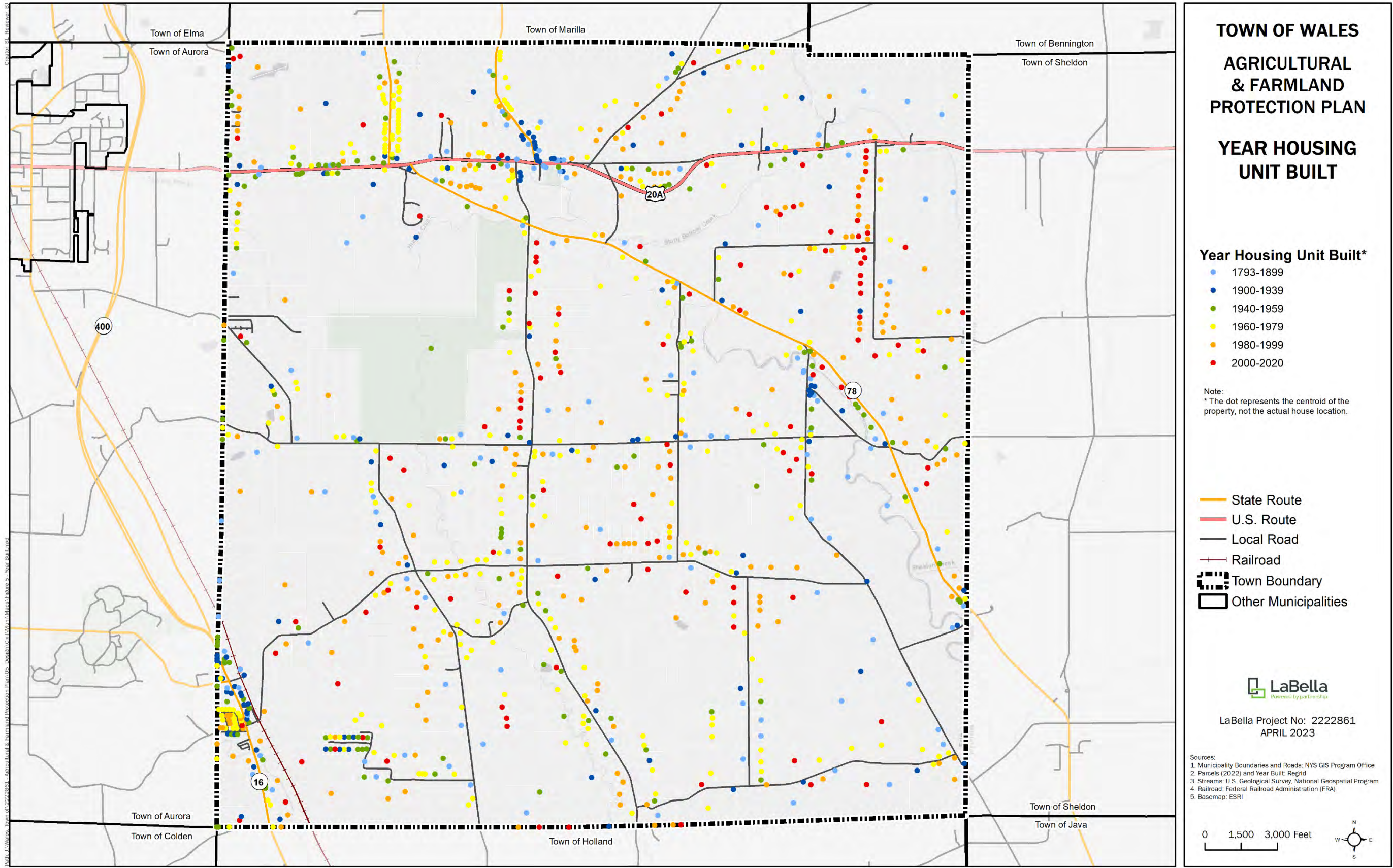
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Map 4. Land Use by Tax Parcel



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Map 5. Year Housing Unit Built



AGRICULTURAL RESOURCES

Agricultural Parcels

Approximately 248 parcels in the Town of Wales, comprising a total of approximately 11,609 acres, are used for agricultural production. Agricultural parcels comprise approximately 16.5% of all parcels in the Town and 48% of the Town's land area.

Farm Operations

Farmland in the Town of Wales is used to support dairy operations, both large and small, and to produce cash crops, vegetables and livestock.

Some of the farmland used for agricultural production is owned by non-farming landowners and leased or rented to farmers.

Several farms sell farm products such as vegetables, fruit, herbs, flowers and honey directly to the public. The following farms are listed in Erie County's "[Erie Grown](#)" website:

- [Thorpes Organic Family Farm](#) (fruits, vegetables, grains, beef, pork, baked goods, eggs). A farm store is on-site. Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) shares are available for fruit, vegetables, herbs and flowers.) U-pick available seasonally for strawberries and blueberries.
- Field of Dreams, Vermont Hill Road (U-cut Christmas trees)
- Hopeful Chicken Farm, Big Tree Road (eggs)
- Lost Highway Apiary (honey and beeswax)
- [Alpine Made](#) (goat milk infused soap and skin care, goat yoga) A farm market is on site.

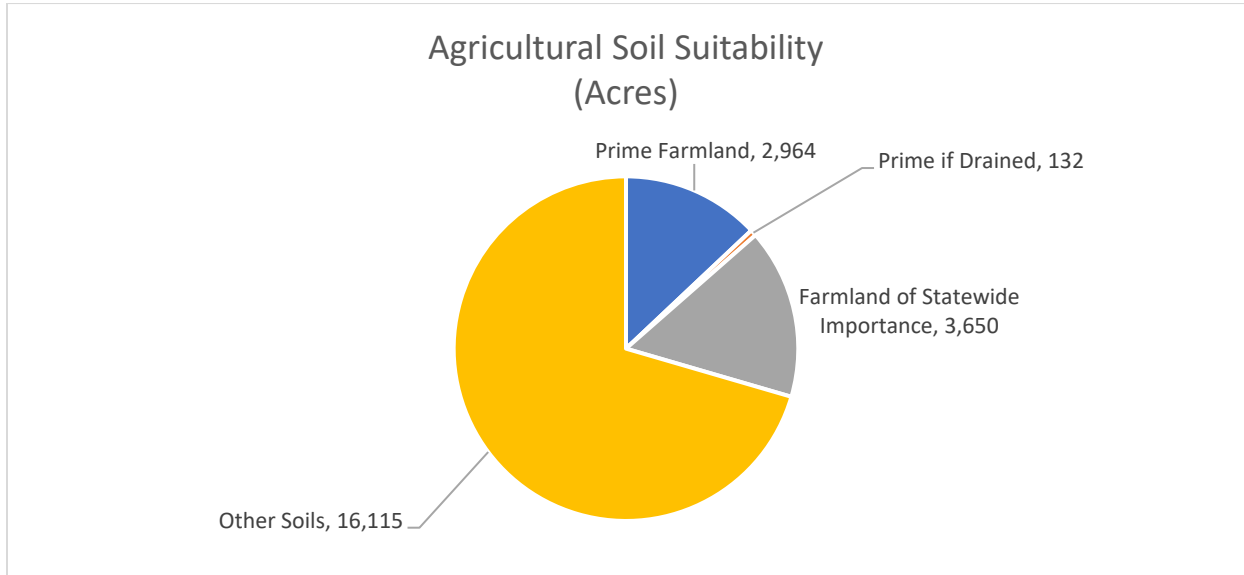
Agricultural Soils

Approximately 30% of the Town's land area consists of high-quality agricultural soils (those classified as "Prime" or "Farmland of Statewide Importance" or "Prime if Drained" in the USDA Soil Survey.) (See Map 6: Agricultural Soil Suitability.) Nearly 3,000 acres, representing 13% of the Town's land area, consist of Prime soils. These soils are generally located in the valleys or bottom lands. Soils classified as "farmland of Statewide importance" are suitable for agricultural production but may require additional management to control erosion or drainage to obtain the same yields as prime soils. Soils classified as "prime if drained" can be as productive as prime soils if draining improvements are installed.

Table 2: Agricultural Soils

USDA Soil Classification	Acres	% of Total
Prime farmland	2,964	13.0%
Farmland of statewide importance	132	0.6%
Prime farmland if drained	3,650	16.0%
Other Soils	16,115	70.5%
Total:	22,861	100.0%

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USDA Soil Definitions

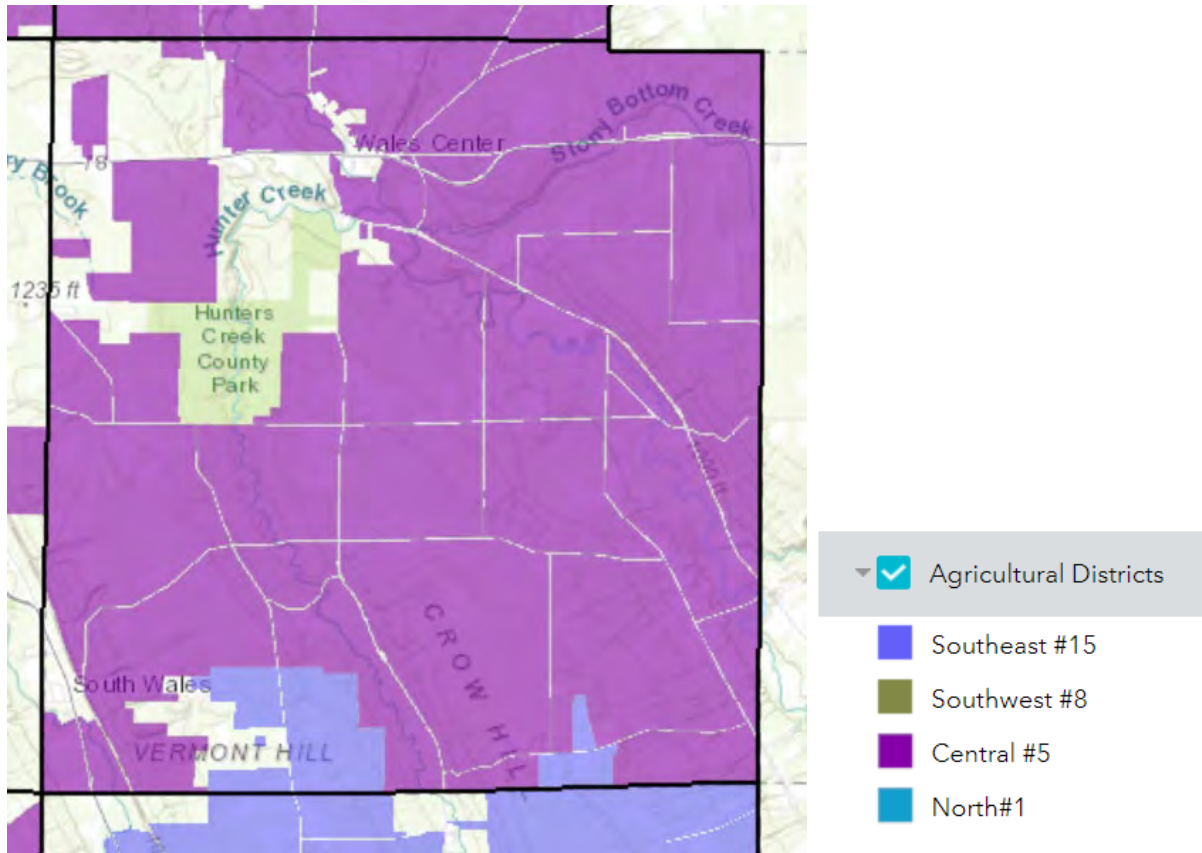
<u>Prime farmland soils:</u>	Land that has the best combination of physical and chemical characteristics for agricultural production with minimal input to produce the best yields of viable agriculture. Characterized as having high lime concentrations, high nutrient supply capacity, well drained, generally flat, and a large depth before reaching bedrock.
<u>Soils of Statewide importance</u>	Land that is deemed suitable for agricultural production with appropriately applied management practices. This includes lands that have nearly prime soils or produce economically high yields of crops.
<u>Prime farmland if drained</u>	Land that is considered the best combination of physical and chemical characteristics for agricultural production; however, the land must be treated first to remove excess water.

Mineral Soil Groups are another way to classify soil suitability for agriculture. Mineral soil groups are used for the purposes of agricultural use assessments as well as for New York State solar siting evaluation. Map 7 depicts soils in Mineral Soil Groups 1 – 4, which are most highly suited for agriculture.

Agricultural Districts

Most of the Town's land area is within Erie County Consolidated Central Agricultural District #5 (Central) with several parcels in the southern part of the Town in Consolidated Southeast Agricultural District #15). (See Map __: Agricultural Districts.) The Erie County Department of Environment & Planning administers the Agricultural District Program; New York State Department of Agriculture & Markets is responsible for all interpretations and enforcement related to the program.

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Erie County reviews its Agricultural Districts every eight years. Consolidated Central Agricultural District No. 5 was last reviewed in 2021 and will be reviewed again in 2029. Consolidated Southeast Agricultural District No. 15 was last reviewed in 2017 and will be reviewed again in 2025.

During Erie County's Annual 30-day Open Enrollment Period each September, landowners may request to add parcels to an Agricultural District. As part of the 8-year review, Erie County may add or remove parcels.

(Additional information about the Agricultural District Program is in the Relevant Plans, Programs & Regulations section.)

Agricultural Value Assessments

Most of the farmland in the Town of Wales is assessed based on its agricultural value as provided for by the NYS Agricultural Districts Law. Landowners must apply annually to their Town Assessor to receive the agricultural assessment.

To qualify, the parcel must be used as part of a farm operation that meets one of the following criteria:

- At least seven acres of land that produces a minimum of \$10,000 annually (or less than seven acres that has at least \$50,000 annually), on average, during the preceding two years from the sale of crops, livestock, or livestock products

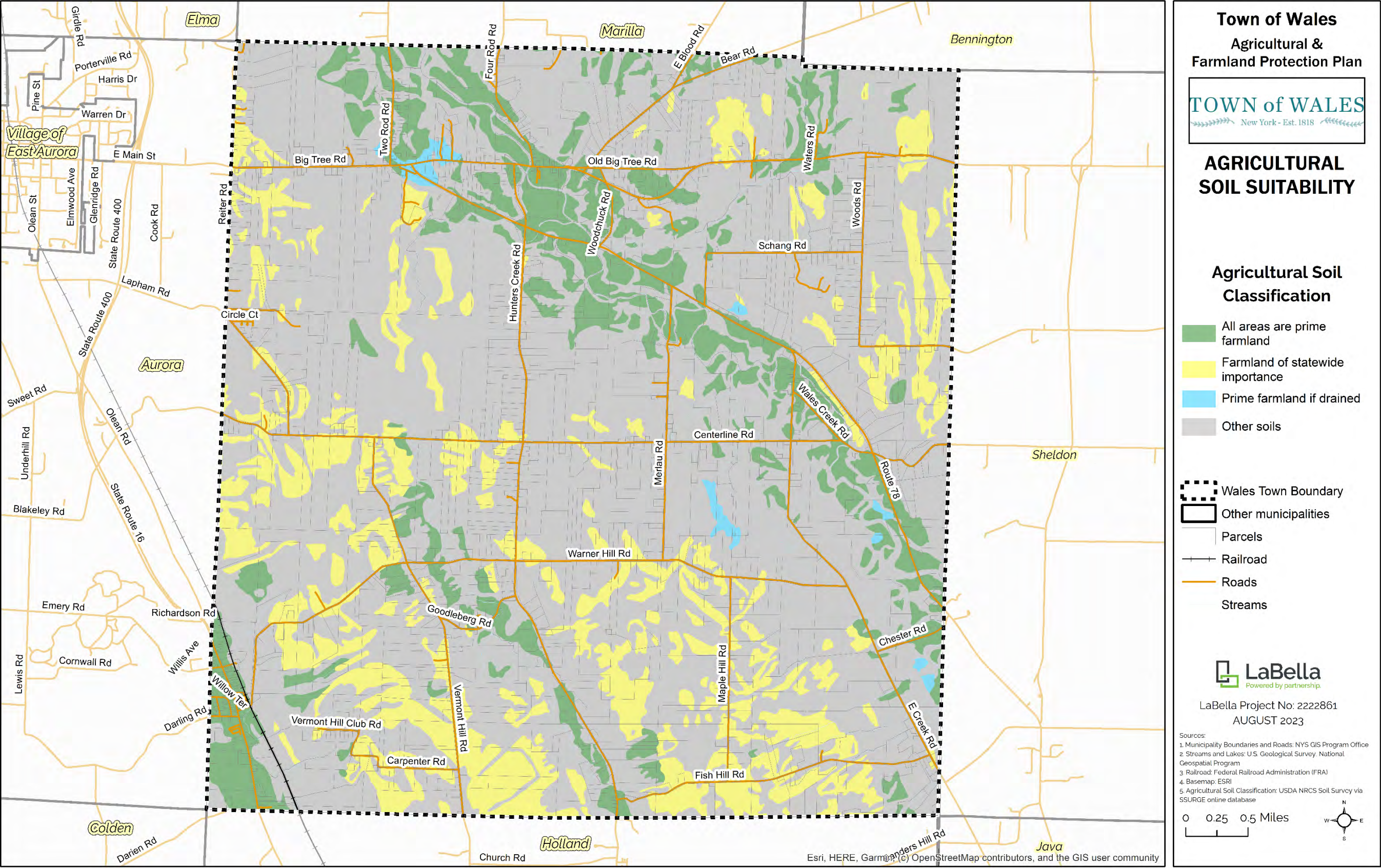
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- A start-up farm operation in the first year of operation that meets the acreage and sales thresholds. A start-up commercial horse boarding operation may also qualify based on annual boarding fees of \$10,000 or more in its first or second year.

Rented land is eligible for the agricultural value assessment if it satisfies the minimum acreage and sales threshold on its own or is used as part of a larger farm that a larger farm operation has a lease agreement with the owner of five years or more.

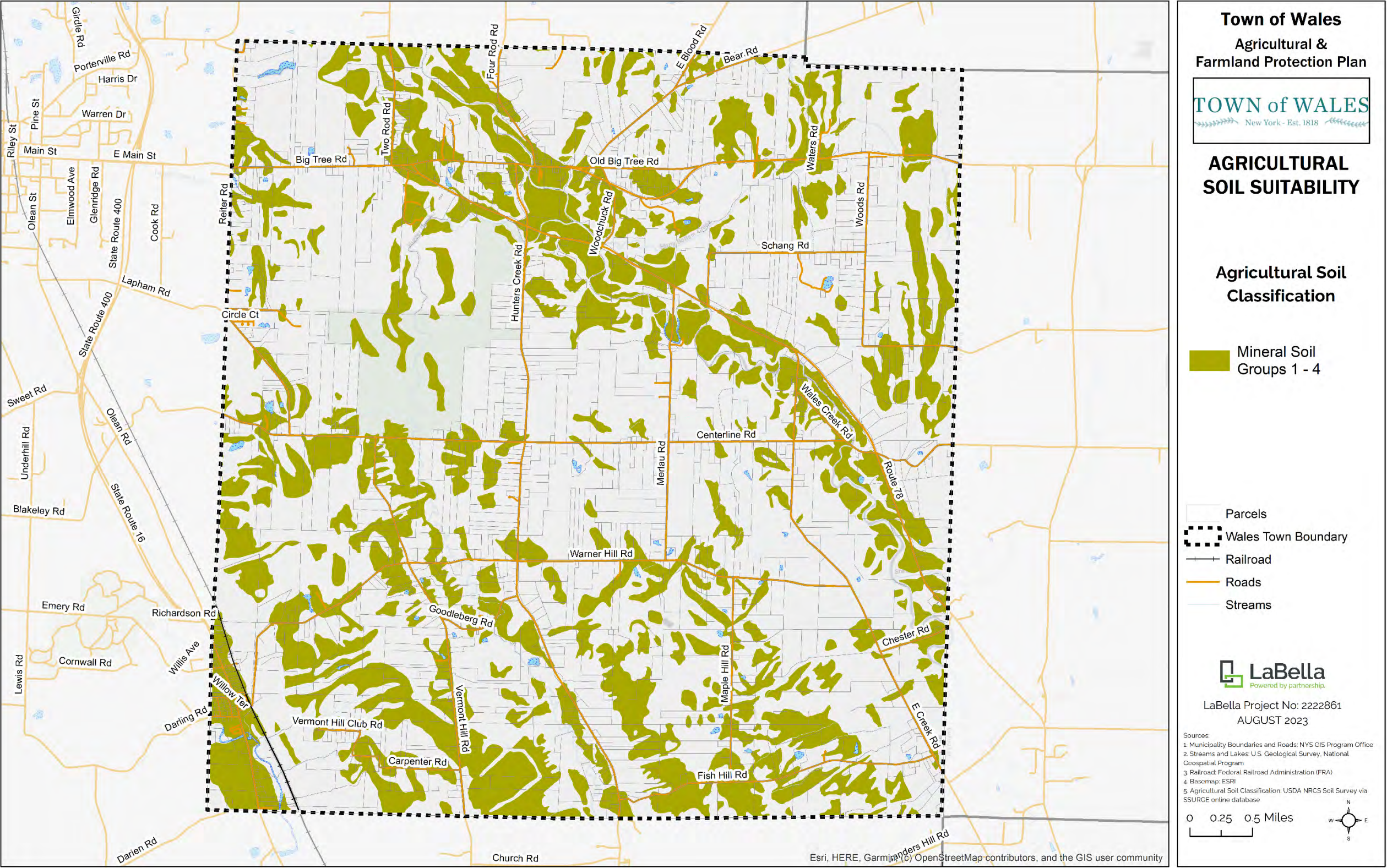
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Map 6. Agricultural Soil Suitability



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Map 7. Agricultural Soil Suitability - Mineral Soil Groups 1 - 4



FARMLAND SUITABLE FOR PROTECTION

The Town of Wales has identified all of the actively farmed land in the Town as suitable for long-term protection, with the Prime, Prime if Drained, and Soils of Statewide Importance as the highest priority lands. Map 8: Farmland Suitable for Protection shows all of the active pasture and cropland in the Town, as well as open land that may be suitable for farming, by its agricultural soils classification. The areas depicted in this map are suitable for long-term protection.

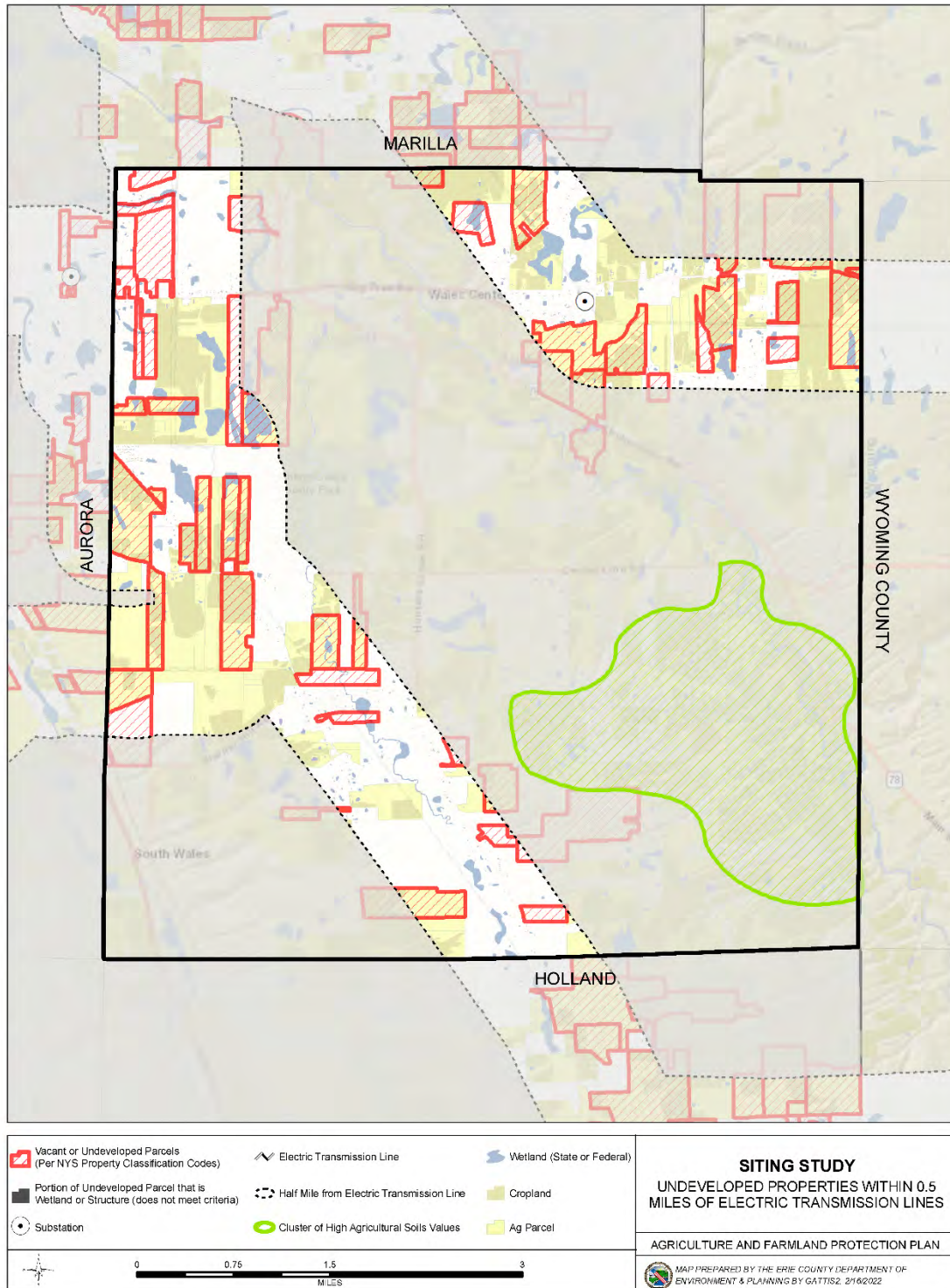
To guide landowners and conservation organizations in identifying parcels with significant farmland resources, each parcel with cropland was assigned a rating based on the extent and quality of active farmland and agricultural soils. The Agricultural Soils Rating Map depicts the rating of each agricultural parcel in the Town of Wales based on the number of acres of cropland within each parcel, broken down by the number of acres of soils classified as prime, prime if drained, soils of statewide significance and other soils.

Here is the formula:

$$\begin{aligned} &\text{Ag Soils Rating} \\ &= \\ &([\# \text{ acres "prime farmland"}] \times 4) \\ &+ \\ &([\# \text{ acres "soils of statewide importance"}] \times 2) \\ &+ \\ &([\# \text{ acres "prime if drained"}] \times 1.5) \\ &+ \\ &([\# \text{ acres "other soils"}] \times 1) \end{aligned}$$

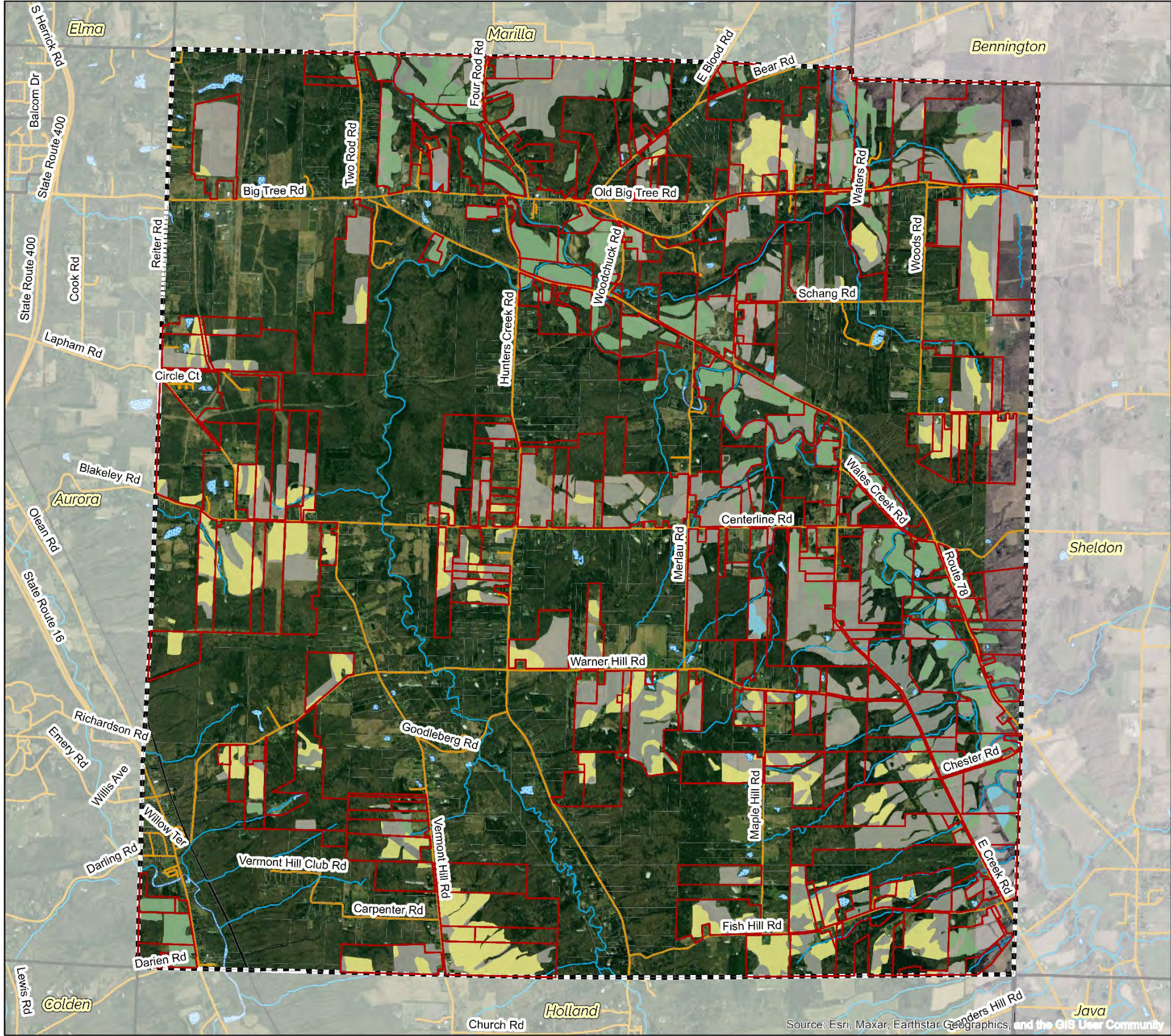
The highest rated parcels are large parcels with a significant amount of prime soils in use for agricultural production. Appendix __ provides a list of farm parcels with agricultural rating, as well as descriptions of the four highest rated parcels. The Town will prioritize for long-term conservation those farm parcels that are located within ½ mile from electric transmission lines, as these are most vulnerable to solar development. (See Figure __.)

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Map 8. Farmland Suitable for Protection



Agricultural &
Farmland Protection Plan



Farmland Suitable for Protection

- All areas are prime farmland
- Farmland of statewide importance
- Prime farmland if drained
- Other Soils

- Agricultural Parcels
- Other Parcels
- Wales Town Boundary
- Other Municipalities
- Streams
- Railroad
- Roads
- Waterbodies



LaBella Project No: 2222861
FEBRUARY 2023

- Sources:
1. Municipality Boundaries and Roads: NYS GIS Program Office
 2. Streams and Lakes: U.S. Geological Survey: National Geospatial Program
 3. Railroad: Federal Railroad Administration (FRA)
 4. Basemap: ESRI



0 0.275 0.55 Miles

NATURAL RESOURCES

Topography and Geology

Topography

Surface elevations throughout the Town of Wales vary from a low of approximately 846 ft (258 m) to an elevation high of 1,538 ft (469 m) above sea level. The town's highest elevations are found in the southernmost region and extend northward into the center of the town. These high elevations correspond with Vermont and Crow Hill which are extensions of the Allegheny Plateau and the greater Appalachian Mountains. The town's lowest elevations are located along the northern end as the land descends to meet the Buffalo Creek which cuts through the town heading north.

Geology

The Town of Wales is primarily underlain by shale, a sedimentary rock type, with small pockets of sandstone which come from the West Falls, Java, and the Canadaway bedrock groups. Bedrock characteristics can strongly influence above and belowground water and pollutant movement.

The surficial geology of the town is largely composed of till and lacustrine silt and clay. Till is a heterogeneous mixture of debris of great diversity, varying from rocks and boulders to clay which were deposited by glaciers. Lacustrine silt and clay are found along the Town's streambeds and originate from the region's glacial lakes. These types of surficial geology are generally calcareous which can be advantageous to high crop productivity when paired with adequate watering and nutrient supplementation. In addition, surficial deposits of clay and gravel have economic value when mined for use in roads and other construction.

Water Resources

Waterbodies

The primary waterbodies in the Town of Wales are Buffalo Creek, the East Branch of Cazenovia Creek, Hunters Creek, and Stony Bottom Creek. Buffalo Creek and Stony Bottom Creek pass through the northeast portion of the town, Hunters Creek traverses vertically through the center of the town, and Cazenovia Creek cuts through the southwest corner of the town.

Table __ lists the Water Quality Classification assigned by the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation and the impairment status of these waterbodies.

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Table 3: Waterbodies

Waterway	Creek Distance through Town (mi)	Water Quality Class	Best Uses (Use Assessment)	Source of Pollutants	Suspected Pollutants
Buffalo Creek	11.25	A (tributaries are Class C)	Drinking water supply (Impaired); Primary & Secondary Contact Recreation, Fishing and wildlife propagation (Stressed)	Streambank erosion and Agriculture	Dissolved Oxygen, Total Dissolved Solids, Phenolic Compounds, and Iron
Cazenovia Creek East Branch	0.12	B	Primary & Secondary Contact Recreation, Fishing, and wildlife propagation (Impaired)	Storm and urban runoff	Aluminum, pH
Hunters Creek	10.4	B	Primary & Secondary Contact Recreation, Fishing, and wildlife propagation (Impaired)	N/A	Dissolved Oxygen Total Dissolved Solids, Iron, and Phenolic Compounds
Stony Bottom Creek	4.4	C	fishing, conditional secondary contact recreation, and wildlife propagation	N/A	N/A

SOURCE: [DECInfo Locator](#), Priority Waterbody List, Waterbody Segment Assessment Factsheets based on 2021 CALM

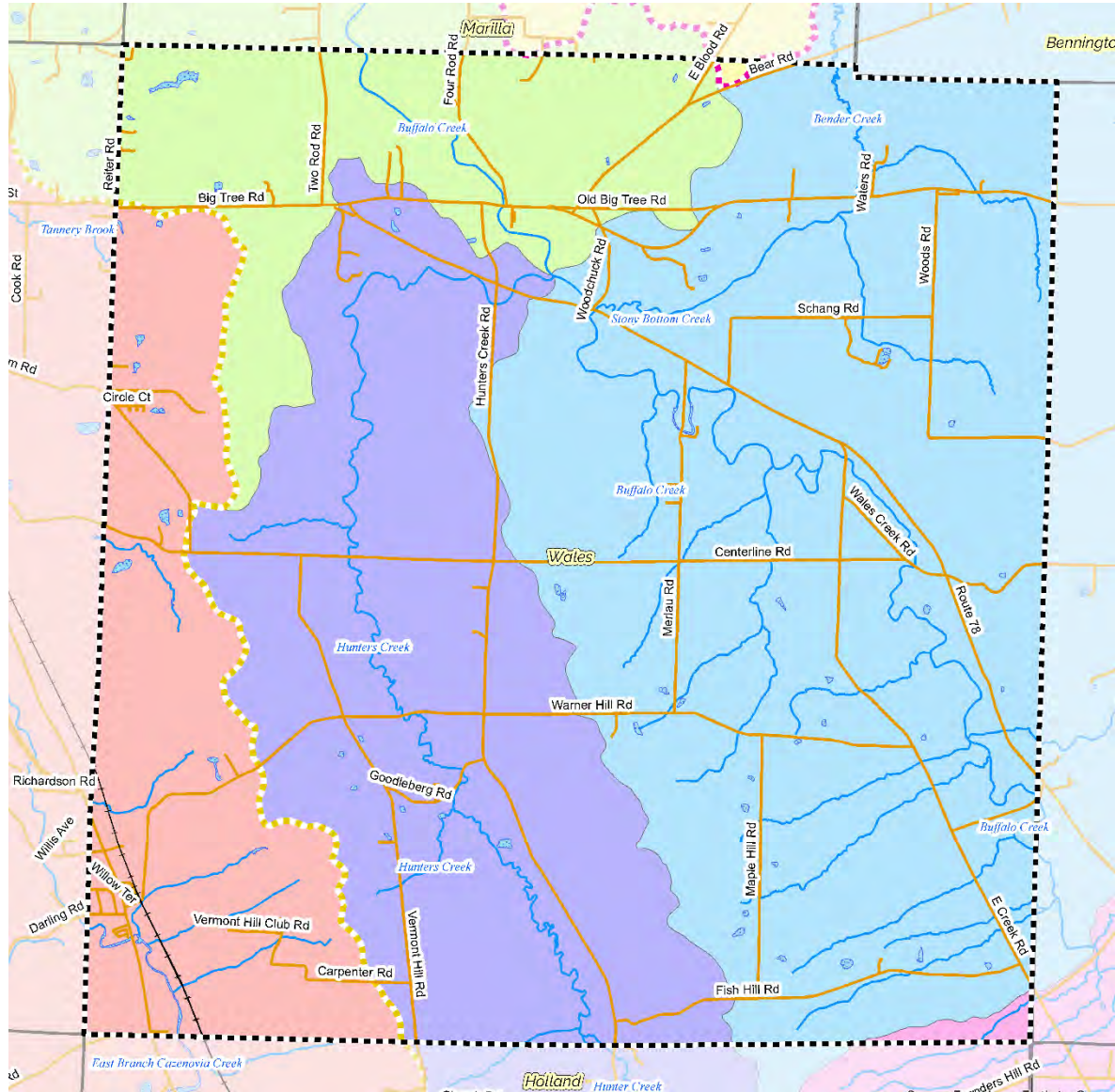
Watersheds

Surface water within the Town of Wales flows toward Lake Erie. All of the Town is within Buffalo Creek-Eighteen Mile Creek watershed, which is part of the larger Niagara River/Lake Erie Watershed. Surface water within two sub-watersheds, the Buffalo Creek and the Buffalo River Watersheds, flow into the Buffalo River-Eighteen Mile Creek Watershed before ultimately draining into Lake Erie.





Figure 5. Aerial photograph of the Niagara River/Lake Erie Watershed

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HUC-10 Watersheds

-  Buffalo River - Buffalo Creek Divide
-  Cayuga Creek

HUC-12 Watersheds

-  East Branch Cazenovia Creek
-  Hunter Creek
-  Pond Brook-Buffero Creek
-  Little Buffero Creek
-  Sheldon Creek-Buffero Creek
-  Upper Cayuga Creek
-  Beaver Meadow Creek-Buffero Creek

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The Buffalo Creek Watershed encompasses approximately 19,000 acres or 85% of land within the Town of Wales. The HUC-12 watersheds Pond Brook-Buffero Creek, Hunter Creek, Sheldon-Buffero Creek, and Beaver Meadow-Buffero Creek sub-watersheds all drain into this watershed.

Approximately 3,000 acres of the East Branch Cazenovia Creek sub-watershed, or 15% of land within the Town of Wales along its western border, drain into the Buffero River Watershed. In total, the watershed covers 105,392 acres of land across 13 municipalities. 22% of the landcover within the watershed is considered agricultural, 22% is considered developed, and 48% is forested. The landcover within this watershed is highly variable given that The headwaters of the Buffero River watershed originate at Cazenovia Creek in the Towns of Sardinia and Concord. The river empties into Lake Erie after passing through a highly developed and industrial corridor through the City of Buffero.

A small part (approximately 18.5 acres) of the Town of Wales along its northern border is within the Cayuga Creek watershed.

Wetlands

Six New York State regulated wetlands and 11 federally mapped wetlands are in the Town of Wales. State regulated wetlands protected by the NYS Freshwater Wetlands Act of 1975 include all wetlands larger than 12.4 acres or of significant local importance. In total, these NYS regulated wetlands comprise of approximately 140 acres of land in the town.

Wetlands provide ecosystem services that benefit farmland such as filtering and sequestering agricultural pollutant runoff, supporting pollinator populations, recharging well water sources, and protecting lands from flood damage.

Floodplains

Floodplains are areas of low-lying land, typically found adjacent to bodies of water, that become inundated during times of high-water flow. Floodplains offer several ecosystem services such as regulating flood risk/damage, recharging groundwater capacity, regulating sediment and nutrient levels, and maintaining wildlife habitats. Floodplains in the town are found along Buffero Creek as well as portions of Hunters Creek and Cazenovia Creek.

Groundwater & Aquifers

Groundwater is a primary source of water that feeds rivers and streams while aquifers are defined as areas with significant amounts of groundwater saturation. All of the Town's farms, residences and businesses receives their drinking water from on-site groundwater wells. There are 177 registered wells in Wales with the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation. These wells are found primarily in the northern half of the town and have an average depth of 75 ft.

Habitats and Wildlife

Natural Habitats and Protected Areas

Approximately 14,000 acres (61%) of the Town's land cover is classified as forested. These forested areas help to provide a diversity of habitats for wildlife, thus reducing interactions due human encroachment; ensure a perpetual supply of timber and other raw materials; help support clean water sources; and provide opportunities for recreational activities. Additionally, forested areas provide ecosystem services such as nutrient cycling, pollinator support, seed dispersal, soil

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formation, pest and disease control, and climate regulation that support crop production. Farmers can also utilize the benefits of wooded lots directly on their farms by either retaining trees on their farmland after clearing a forest or by employing agroforestry techniques such as alley cropping trees and shrubs between crop rows.

Within that forested landcover there are three parcels of land specifically dedicated to preserving wildlife in Wales, Hunter's Creek County Park, Mossy Point Preserve and the Kenneglenn Nature Preserve. Hunter's Creek Park is managed by the Erie County Park Department while the Mossy Point and Kenneglenn Preserves are managed by the Western New York Land Conservancy.

Invasive and Pest Species

Invasive and pest species represent a significant threat to farms in the Town of Wales. Pest species such as the white-tailed deer and invasive species like the spotted lantern fly and the spotted winged drosophila can significantly damage vegetable, fruit and ornamental crops. Other invasive species recently observed in Wales include the Emerald Ash Borer, Spongy Moth, Japanese Knotweed, Giant Hogweed, Lesser Celandine, Asian Honeysuckle and Garlic Mustard. (For more information, see [Imapinvasives](#).)

Climate

In 2014, the New York State Energy Research and Development Authority (NYSERDA) updated their [ClimAID, Responding to Climate Change in New York State, Technical Report](#) with new projections on the impact of climate change in New York State. Projections for the agricultural sector noted that farmers will be on the front lines of coping with climate change. However, there will also likely be new opportunities from climate change such as longer growing seasons and new crop options.

Air Temperature

The average yearly temperature for the Town of Wales is 45.5° F with a summer average high of 76° F and a winter average low of 17° F. According to the ClimAID report, the average annual air temperature in Wales is projected to increase by 4.3-6.3° F by the year 2050 and by as much as 11.7° F by 2100. NYSERDA's report anticipates that each season will experience similar amounts of warming. For agriculture in Wales, this means that the growing season could lengthen by over a month, however, this also means summers will become more intense and winters will be milder.

While these changes may lead to new opportunities in longer growing seasons and new crop types, these changes will also lead to strains on current agricultural industries. For instance, hotter summers may lead to heat stresses on dairy cows and other farm animals, the extension of breeding seasons for insect pests, and an increased likelihood of droughts which will damage the quality and yield of crops. Furthermore, rising air temperatures can be a human health concern as warmer temperatures can exacerbate asthma, allergies, and other respiratory issues.

Precipitation

On average, Wales receives 3.5 inches of rainfall per month which equates to an average of 42.3 inches of rainfall per year. According to the 2014 ClimAID Report, the average rate of precipitation in Wales is predicted to increase by 4-10% by 2050 and by as much as 19% in 2100.

The most serious impact of increased precipitation to agriculture in Wales could come in the form of erosion and the loss of productive topsoil. According to the 2004 Wales Regional Comprehensive

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Plan, there are areas along Buffalo Creek that have been identified as low and high priority for streambank repair due to erosion. Increased erosion from precipitation could lead to the loss of productive farmland as well as the increase of pollutants such as phosphorous entering the town's waterbodies. In addition, farmland along Buffalo and Hunters Creek may face increased risks of flooding during extreme precipitation events which may damage crops, buildings or infrastructure.

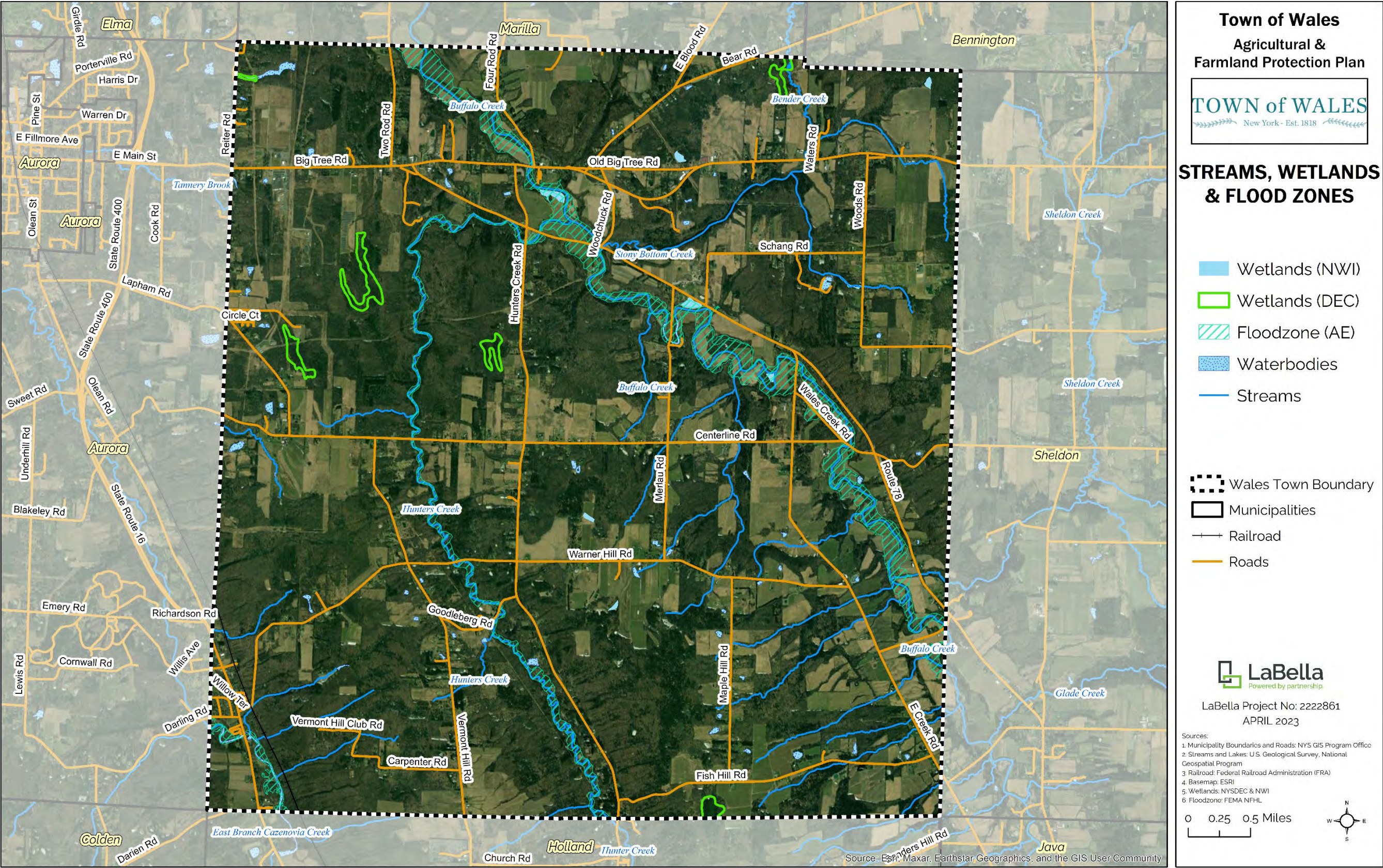
Severe Weather Events

As air temperature and precipitation are anticipated to increase, the rate of extreme weather events is also anticipated to increase. According to the 2021 [Erie County Hazard Mitigation Plan](#) Update, Wales has experienced several hazard events over recent years, including flash floods, high winds, and blizzards. Between 2019 and 2020, Erie County lost over \$2.1 million in crops from droughts and severe storms. This increase in severe weather events and daily temperatures will have serious repercussions for the agricultural success of farms Wales as well as the health of its residents.

Days over 90F			Days under 32F	
Decade	# Of Days		Decade	# Of Days
2020's	14-17		2020's	103-111
2050's	22-34		2050's	84-96
2080's	27-57		2080's	68-88

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Map 9. Streams, Wetlands & Flood Zones



RELEVANT PLANS, PROGRAMS & REGULATIONS

NYS Agricultural District Program

The Agricultural District program and NYS Agricultural District Law support the long-term economic viability of farming through the following benefits:

- Agricultural use assessment allows eligible farmland to be taxed based on its value for agricultural production rather than at its fair market value. Landowners must apply annually to receive agricultural use assessments. The land must be used in a farm operation that generates the required minimum gross income to be eligible.
- Local governments may not enforce laws, ordinances, rules, or regulations that would unreasonably restrict or regulate farm operations within an agricultural district unless it can be shown that public health or safety is threatened.
- To discourage private nuisance lawsuits, the NYS Department of Agriculture & Markets will issue opinions and interpretations regarding what is considered a “sound agricultural practice.”
- To limit the impact of projects that receive public funding or require an eminent domain, State agencies, local governments, and public benefit corporations that intend to acquire more than one acre of land from any active farm within an agricultural district or more than 10 acres in total from a district must file a notice of intent with the Commissioner of Agriculture and the County agricultural and farmland protection board.
- Assessments for special improvement districts are limited to dwellings and farm structures directly benefiting from the services.

Agricultural Environmental Management (AEM)

The Erie County Soil & Water Conservation District administers the Agricultural Environmental Management program, which works with farmers to maintain farming as a profitable and environmentally sound enterprise. Cost shares are available through state-funded grants. Participation is voluntary and begins with completing the Tier I Survey. Once the initial phase is completed, Tier II involves an in-depth survey and site visit. Implementing and evaluating Best Management Practices (BMPs) occur during Tiers III and IV.

Examples of BMPs include:

- Stormwater diversion from barnyards
- Livestock water source development
- Fuel storage and spill containment
- Pesticide storage and mixing areas
- Silage leachate management
- Milkhouse waste management
- Buffer strips and vegetative filter strips
- Manure management systems

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Participating farmers maintain control over the improvements and benefit from the expert assistance of SWCD staff.

Evaluation of Town Zoning Regulations Farm Friendliness

The Town of Wales Zoning Code establishes regulations for uses of land within mapped zoning districts. Map __: Zoning depicts zoning district boundaries.

The zoning law defines agricultural uses as follows:

AGRICULTURE — A use customarily defined as farming, dairying, pasturage, agriculture, horticulture, viticulture, animal and poultry husbandry, and the sale of such products by one engaged in agriculture.

FARM — A parcel or parcels in an R-Residential or A-Agricultural District devoted to farming as a primary use.

FARM BUILDING OR USE — Any use of land or buildings customarily a part of farm or agricultural pursuits, including the housing of farm animals, except fur-bearing animals, the repair of equipment used on the premises and the sale of farm products where such is clearly incidental to the overall use of the premises as a farm.

The definition of “Agriculture” is broad enough to include all types of agriculture present in the Town.

Most of the Town’s agricultural land is within the A-Agricultural District. However, some farmland is in the R Residential and B Business districts.

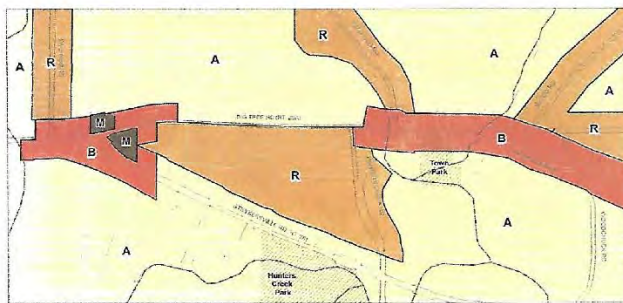
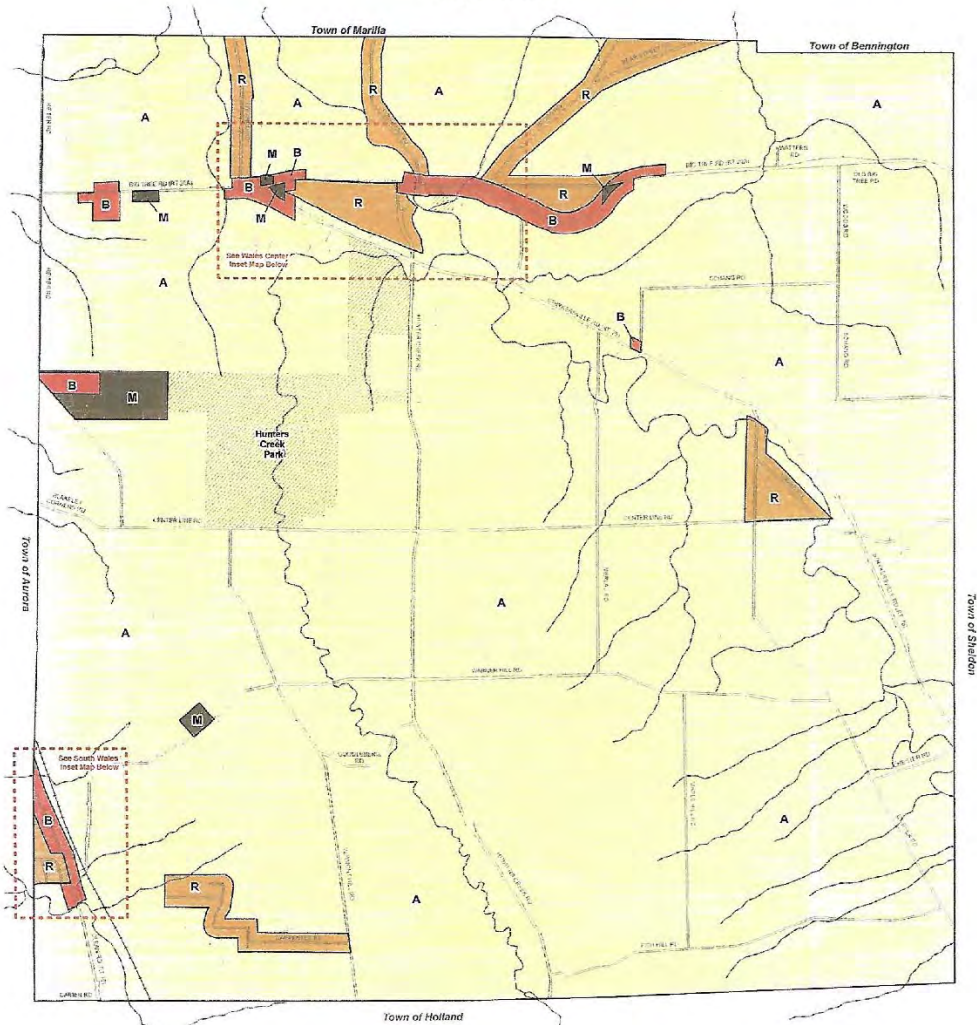
Permitted uses in the A-Agricultural District include, “Farms and gardening. Farms, truck gardens, dairies, nurseries or greenhouses, farm structures and all other customary incidental agricultural occupations are permissible. Farms may consist of one or more parcels of owned or rented land, which parcels may or may not be contiguous with each other.”

The following provisions of the Town of Wales zoning law may be unreasonable as applied to farm operations within NYS-certified Agricultural Districts.

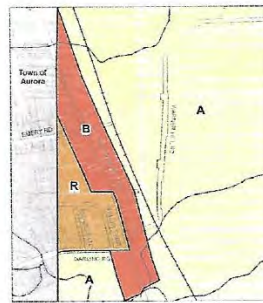
- 1) In the R Residential and B Business districts, “farm animal operations and housing” are not permitted as either a principal or an accessory use.
- 2) “Farm animal operations and housing on less than 10 acres” require a special use permit in the R and A districts. This may be found unreasonable if the farm meets the threshold for protection under NYS Agricultural Districts Law.
- 3) In the A-Agricultural District, “Roadside stands” are permitted as an accessory use for “products produced on the same premises.” This may be found unreasonable for farm operations that sell products at roadside stands that were produced on parts of the farm at some distance from the location of the roadside stand (not on the “same premises.”)
- 4) Animal housing and manure storage is not allowed within 100 feet of a property line or 250 feet of any residence. For farms under 10 acres, a special permit from the Town Board is required for animal housing and storage of manure. These provisions may be found to be unreasonably restrictive as applied to farms that meet the threshold for Agricultural District protections in a particular instance.

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Town of Wales Zoning Map August 2020



Hamlet of Wales Center
0 500 1,000 1,500 2,000
Feet



Hamlet of South Wales
0 500 1,000 1,500 2,000
Feet



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- 5) In Sec. 200-32, “soap manufacture” is listed as a prohibited use. A farm in the Town of Wales manufactures soap from the milk produced by goats on the premises and sells the products on the farm. If the soaps are predominantly composed of ingredients produced on the farm, the manufacturing would be considered part of the farm operation and protected by NYS Agricultural Districts Law.

Some value-added enterprises or secondary businesses would not be permitted under the Town’s zoning under the definition of “agriculture” and may not be protected through NYS Agricultural Districts Law. For example, businesses that manufacture products using ingredients that are only partially produced on the farm, or businesses such as equipment repair that are not strictly farming, can benefit the economic viability of a farm operation. A special permit process could be used to allow additional value-added or secondary businesses on farms in locations where they would not impact neighboring residences or community character.

Local Regulations

Town of Wales Conservation Board

The Town of Wales Conservation Board advises the Town Board regarding development proposals and other projects.

Flood Damage Prevention Local Law

The Town of Wales Flood Hazard Protection Local Law was most recently updated in 2019. The purpose of this local law is to regulate development within the floodplain to protect natural floodplains and stream channels while simultaneously minimizing flood damage to property and protecting human health. Under this law, the development of any structure in the special flood hazard area (100-year floodplain) as mapped by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) requires the issuance of a floodplain development permit. To obtain this permit, the developer must incorporate development standards that minimize flood hazards in accordance with federal standards established by FEMA. Additionally, by maintaining this local law residents of Wales who live in the floodplain can obtain flood insurance through the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) run by FEMA.

State and Federal Regulations

New York State and Federal Wetland Regulations

The NYS Freshwater Wetlands Act, enacted in 1975, protects all freshwater wetlands in the state of 12.4 acres or greater, adjacent land within 100 feet, and smaller wetlands of significant local importance. With some exemptions, any activity that may result in a negative impact to a wetland and their buffer zone must obtain a permit from the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC). The permit requirements are more stringent for Class I and II wetlands, which provide better ecological benefits and value as wildlife habitat than Class III and IV wetlands.

In accordance with Section 404 of the U.S. Clean Water Act of 1972, any activity within a wetland requires a permit from the U.S. Army Corp of Engineers. Federally regulated wetlands are mapped by

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the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service. However, field investigations are necessary to verify their extent and type of wetlands.

NYS Environmental Conservation Law – Waterbody Protection

In accordance with the NYS Environmental Conservation Law, the NYSDEC manages the Protection of Waters Regulatory Program to protect waterbodies from harmful impacts. All NYS rivers, streams, and ponds are classified for varying degrees of protection based on its existing or expected best usage – from drinking water source (AA or A) to waters supporting fishing (C). Waterbodies classified as AA, A, B, C(T), or C(TS) – T or TS for trout presence – are protected. Major waterbodies in Wales varying in classification from A-C.

State Environmental Quality Review Act (SEQRA)

The State Environmental Quality Review Act (SEQRA) establishes a process to systematically consider environmental impacts from actions that are directly undertaken, funded, or approved by local, regional, or state agencies. Whenever the Town Board, Planning Board, or Zoning Board seeks to conduct an action (approval, funding, or direct action), an environmental review must first be conducted to identify all potential adverse impacts to the environment. Environmental considerations include impacts to land, geologic features, surface water, groundwater, flooding, air, plants and animals, agricultural resources, aesthetic resources, historic and archeological resources, open space, critical environmental areas, transportation, energy, noise, odor, light, human health, and consistency with community character. If an action is determined to cause significant adverse effects to the environment, the board must weigh the impacts against the benefit of the project and may either deny or significantly alter the project to mitigate the adverse effects.

Plans and Studies

Town of Wales Source Water Protection Plan (2020)

In partnership with the New York Rural Water Association, the Town of Wales developed a Source Water Protection Plan in 2020 to identify ways to protect the quality and quantity of drinking water in Wales. This report inventoried and mapped drinking water resources, identified potential threats to drinking water resources, and outlined strategies for protecting and enhancing water resources.

As part of this report, a survey was sent to all households in Wales. In total, one-third of households in the town responded. From this survey, it was determined that the greatest issue residents face with their private wells includes water hardness, bad odors, staining, and not getting enough water. Respondents who have wells in the town's valleys reported having the highest quality and quantity of water. Respondents who indicated that their well did not provide enough water were mostly located on the ridges of the town's valleys.

While the report did not identify specific contributors to the contamination of groundwater in the town, it did identify high risk land uses and non-point sources. High risk land uses to groundwater in the town include an auto body shop, a car dealership, two manufacturing facilities, and the town's highway garage and salt shed. Possible non-point sources of groundwater contamination included (1) nitrogen, phosphorus, pesticides, etc. from agricultural lands and residential areas; (2) sediment from construction, crop lands, forestry activities (silviculture), and stream bank erosion; (3) pathogens and nutrients from improperly managed livestock and/or pet wastes, poorly maintained,

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faulty, or densely located septic systems; and (4) oil, grease, toxic chemicals, and salts from roads and other paved areas.

The report identified several strategies that could be implemented by the town and various partners to ensure the preservation of high quality and quantity groundwater for the town. These strategies included promoting public education programs, implementing a well testing program with the NYSDOH, conducting agricultural outreach, plugging abandoned/orphaned gas wells, and requiring a well suitability report from the DEC before issuing building permits for new homes.

Regional Comprehensive Plan - Towns of Aurora, Elma, Holland, and Wales and the Village of East Aurora (2004)

In 2004, the Towns of Aurora, Elma, Holland, and Wales as well as the Village of East Aurora jointly prepared, and each adopted, a regional comprehensive plan. This plan was funded by Erie County as part of a larger program of encouraging communities to work cooperatively to identify opportunities and resolve concerns. The plan addressed land use regulation, demographic and socioeconomic conditions, economic development, transportation, utilities, and natural resources.

Goals relating to agriculture and natural resources in the Town of Wales include:

- minimize the loss of prime farmland soils to development
- protect water resources that recharge potable water sources
- preserve scenic views in the town
- discourage clear cutting of trees for development.

Plan recommendations at the regional level included:

- Adopt best management practices for the use of fertilizers and pesticides, road salt use and application, and the disposal of hazardous materials
- Utilize prominent creeks for connected trail systems, connecting natural resources (i.e., parks and wildlife areas), and to provide corridors for wildlife movement
- Adopt local wetland regulations to protect state and federal wetlands
- Adopt environmental conservation overlay districts to reduce development along stream corridors and important wildlife areas

Specific recommendations for the Town of Wales included:

- Consider establishing a purchase of agricultural conservation easements program (PACE) for preserving important farmland in the Town
- Conduct an inventory of important open space lands in the Town. This would be followed up by the identification and prioritization of certain lands for preservation, and the subsequent identification of appropriate methods and programs to achieve this goal.
- Identify and provide public access sites along Cazenovia Creek for fishing
- Consider acting with the other communities in designating important stream corridors as Critical Environmental Areas (CEAs).

Resilient New York Flood Mitigation Initiative – Buffalo Creek, NY (2020)

In 2018, NYS launched the Resilient NY Initiative to undertake advanced modeling techniques and field assessments of 48 NYS flood-prone streams to identify priority projects and actions to reduce community flood and ice jam risks, while improving habitats. The area of study for this report was the

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Buffalo Creek which flows in a general west/northwest direction. The headwaters are in the Town of Sardinia, the creek then flows through the Towns of Holland, Java, Sheldon, *Wales*, Marilla, Elma, and West Seneca until it reaches the confluence of Cayuga Creek. Of the tributaries that form the Buffalo River watershed, Buffalo Creek has the largest drainage area, with the other two major tributaries being Cayuga and Cazenovia Creeks. Additionally, of note for the Town of Wales, the largest tributary of Buffalo Creek is Hunters Creek which flows vertically through the town.

Flooding along Buffalo Creek generally occurs in the late winter and early spring due to rapid snowmelt and spring rains. The situation is compounded by restrictive bridges, which cause ice jams along the stream channel, and continued development in the floodplain, exposing greater numbers of assets to potential flood damages. Based on the models and data analyzed for this report, it was identified that flooding occurs primarily in downstream portions of Buffalo Creek, mainly in the Towns of West Seneca and Elma. The Town of West Seneca has experienced the largest impacts from flooding along Buffalo Creek, with Gardenville and Lexington Green neighborhoods experiencing repetitive losses due to flood damages from ice jams along the creek. The report concluded by offering some 7 alternative mitigation strategies for a portion of the Buffalo Creek that flows through West Seneca. While the mitigation strategies do not directly impact flooding issues in Wales, these strategies if implemented would help to reduce the overall water surface elevations of the creek and this reducing instances of flooding throughout the entirety of it.

Regional Niagara River Lake Erie Watershed Management Plan - Phase 2 (2019)

In 2019, Erie County published phase 2 of the Regional Niagara River Lake Erie Watershed Management Plan. This plan inventoried characteristics of the watershed, population and development trends, water quality, and ecological conditions. Additionally, the plan assessed local laws and practices affecting the watershed, analyzed previously completed watershed projects, devised goals and recommendations to further improve the watershed, and laid out the strategy for phase 3 of the plan. The Buffalo River-Lake Erie Watershed covers nearly the entirety of WNY and is made up of 18 smaller sub-watersheds that cover land across 116 municipalities.

Based on the inventory and analysis for this plan, the waterways that traverse through Wales (Buffalo Creek and its tributaries) were identified as having some of the highest water quality grades throughout the watershed as its main waterbody and tributaries were given a grade of either A or B. In addition, the ecological conditions of the Buffalo Creek were some of the highest across all watersheds. Strategies to further improve the water quality and ecological conditions throughout the Buffalo Creek watershed included devising a watershed/floodplain/agricultural multi-municipal plan with the communities of Elma, Marilla, West Seneca, and Wales. Moreover, strategies also called for the implementation of better conservation practices in locally and county owned parks such as Hunters Creek County Park. Due to the overall strong health of the Buffalo Creek watershed, the plan ranked this watershed as the fifth least watershed to be prioritized for preservation and protection. This prioritization ranking was based off the following factors: percent of impervious cover, percent of forest cover, number of industrial uses, amount of protected land, stream density, number of road waterway crossings, and number of remediation sites. Despite the low prioritization ranking, phase 3 of the plan does intend to develop a Buffalo Creek Watershed Implementation Plan. This implementation plan will outline how to continue preserving and protecting the watershed with detailed management actions, outlined benchmarks, and funding sources.

Resources & Partners

Technical Assistance for Private Easements

The Western New York Land Conservancy works with willing landowners and local governments to conserve active agricultural land in Erie County and elsewhere in western New York. WNYLC manages conservation easements and works with landowners to obtain State and Federal grant funding to purchase development rights. Its staff can meet with landowners to explain how conservation easements work. More information and contacts are available on the organization's [website](#).

Agri-Tourism Guide and Technical Assistance

Erie County publishes an annual guide to farm markets, farm stands, and direct sales. It promotes agri-tourism through its [Erie Grown](#) website.

In addition, CCE staff and resources through Cornell and affiliated organizations are available to assist farmers with business planning and marketing.

Farm-to-School Program

New York State's [Farm-to-School program](#) encourages school districts and other educational institutions to purchase local farm products and to increase understanding of agriculture among school children. Information is available for food service directors, farmers, processors, teachers, parents, and community members.

FFA (formerly Future Farmers of America)

The National FFA Organization (formerly "Future Farmers of America") (FFA) is a youth organization promotes and supports agricultural education and leadership development among young people. Founded in 1928, the organization was originally called the Future Farmers of America but changed its name to the National FFA Organization in 1988 to reflect the growing diversity of agriculture and to recognize the importance of other agricultural careers beyond farming.

Over the years, the FFA program has evolved and adapted to meet the changing needs of agriculture and society. Today, the FFA program is focused on developing the skills and knowledge needed for a wide range of agricultural careers, including farming, ranching, agribusiness, and biotechnology.

The Attica Central School District, which encompasses a small part of the Town of Wales, has a student chapter. Student chapters in Erie County are located at Springfield Griffith Institute are managed through the Erie 2-Chautauqua-Cattaraugus BOCES Wallace D. Ormsby Educational Center in East Aurora, at PS 305 McKinley Vocational High School in Buffalo, and at Springville Griffith Institute High School in Springville.

Beer, Wine, Cider, and Spirits

Enacted in 2012, NYS Farm Brewery Law offers a special license to breweries that use hops and other ingredients grown in New York State. To receive a Farm Brewery license, 20% of hops and 20% of other ingredients used in the beer must be grown in the State. These percentages rise to 60% in 2019 and 90% in 2024. The farm brewery license allows brewers to serve beer and cider by the

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glass and sell products at retail stores and farmers' markets. Similar laws govern the production of wine, cider, and spirits.

The law is intended to stimulate agricultural production and economic development. Beer producers seek to partner with farmers in NYS to produce sufficient hops, malting barley, and other ingredients to meet the license requirements.

VISION, STRATEGIES & RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

Vision Statement

The Town of Wales vision for agriculture and farmland is as follows:

The Town of Wales will retain high quality farmland for continued agricultural use, support the economic viability of farming and related businesses, and promote best management practices on farms that help protect environmental quality.

Strategies and Recommended Actions

The Town will advance the following strategies and carry out the recommended actions in partnership with NYS Department of Agriculture & Markets, Erie County Department of Environment and Planning, Erie County Soil & Water Conservation District, Cornell Cooperative Extension of Erie County, and other agencies and organizations.

An Agricultural Advisory Committee (AAC) appointed by the Town Board will guide the implementation of the strategies and recommended actions.

Strategy 1. Increase revenue on farms from direct-to-consumer sales and other value-added enterprises.

Recommended Actions:

- a. Modify Town zoning to remove unreasonable restrictions to on-farm sales and other business enterprises that add value to farm products and/or attract customers to the farm, while maintaining protections to residents' quality of life.

Responsible Entity	Town Board
Partners	AAC; Erie County Department of Environment & Planning
Timeframe	Short-term (1-2 years)

- b. Connect farmers to organizations and sources of funding and technical assistance to help with marketing and business planning for agri-tourism and other value-added enterprises.

Responsible Entity	Erie County Department of Environment & Planning
Partners	AAC; Cornell Cooperative Extension of Erie County; Erie County Soil & Water Conservation District;
Timeframe	Immediate and Ongoing

- c. Encourage local school districts and farmers to participate in NYS Farm-to-School program.

Responsible Entity	Local School Districts; AAC
Partners	USDA Rural Development; National Grid; Cornell Cooperative Extension; NYS Department of Agriculture & Markets
Timeframe	Short-term (1-2 years) and Ongoing

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Discussion

Value-added operations on farms help farmers capture a larger share of the value chain by modifying the product to increase its value, create new products from raw commodities or by incorporating experiences. By incorporating downstream value chain components to the farm product, such as storage, packing, distribution, marketing and sales, farmers can generate additional revenue than they could through the sale of the product alone.

Opportunities for direct-to-consumer sales include on-farm retail stands or markets, community supported agriculture (CSA), internet sales and “freezer trade” whereby farmers sell livestock for meat to consumers and coordinate the harvest and processing. Certifications such as organic, promotions to certain niche markets and publicizing “locally grown” products add value to farm products when consumers are willing to pay extra for products with these characteristics.

Farmers can increase revenue by manufacturing new products are manufactured from the crops, livestock or livestock products produced on the farm. Examples of value-added products that may be manufactured as part of a farm operation include wine, cider, and cheese. Incorporating experiences such as U-pick, farm stays or entertainment attracts customers to the farm to purchase produces and helps farmers increase revenue.

Incorporating value-added enterprise into a farm operation requires a different mindset for farmers and a separate business plan and. While traditional farming focuses on producing raw commodities, value-added products must appeal to the end user and meet consumer demands for quality, variety and packaging. A sound business plan and feasibility analysis is needed to ensure that the cost to produce the value-added product is not higher than the amount consumers are willing to pay. Challenges in setting up a value-added enterprise relate to product development, financing, staffing, facilities, regulatory compliance, capacity and marketing.

Resources

The [Erie Grown](#) program publicizes farms that are open to the public and encourages Erie County residents to purchase local farm products. The program is sponsored by Cornell Cooperative Extension of Erie County, Erie County Soil & Water Conservation District, Taste NY and Erie County Farm Bureau. Cornell Cooperative Extension is a clearinghouse for resources to assist farmers interested in establishing agritourism operations.

The Harvest New York program focuses on The [Agricultural Marketing Resource Center](#) offers information and technical assistance.

The [USDA Value-Added Producer Grant](#) (VAPG) program offers funding for planning/ feasibility analyses or implementation of a value-added enterprise. The program has been funded through the U.S. Farm Bill, which is do for renewal in 2023.

Strategy 2. Increase on-farm renewable energy and improve energy efficiency to reduce energy costs

Recommended Action

- a. Connect farmers and farmland owners with sources of information and technical assistance and encourage installation of energy efficiency improvements and development of renewable energy for onsite use.

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Responsible Entity	AAC
Partners	USDA Rural Development; National Grid; Cornell Cooperative Extension of Erie County
Timeframe	Immediate and Ongoing

Discussion

Increasing energy efficiency and generating energy on-site for use in farm operations can reduce operating costs for farmers. Current government and utility incentive programs reduce the up-front cost and pay-back period.

Resources

USDA [Rural Energy for America Program](#) offers guaranteed loans and grants to agricultural producers and rural small businesses.

The New York State Energy Research & Development Authority (NYSERDA) offers free [energy audits](#) for farms to identify ways the farm can reduce energy usage and cost as well as 50% cost share through the Flex Tech program for feasibility assessments and other technical investigations.

Strategy 3. Ensure that renewable energy facilities on farms avoid impacts to high quality farmland.

Recommended Actions

- a. Revise the Town's local solar law to limit siting of facilities on prime agricultural soils as classified in the USDA Soil Survey (or soils in Mineral Soil Groups 1-4 as classified by New York State) and avoids disturbing agricultural drainage systems or access to fields.

Responsible Entity	Town Board
Partners	AAC; Erie County Department of Environment & Planning; NYSERDA (Model Solar Local Law)
Timeframe	Short-term (1-2 years)

Discussion

A local solar law is the most effective way to manage the siting and installation of solar facilities to avoid or minimize impacts on high quality farmland. Even for large-scale solar projects under the jurisdiction of the NYS Office of Renewable Energy Siting (ORES), the provisions of the local law will be reviewed and followed by ORES if they are not deemed unreasonably restrictive.

Resources

NYSERDA [Model Solar Local Law](#) offers a comprehensive framework for understanding the components of a local law that addresses solar energy development. The Erie County [Climate Action Plan](#) will include policies relating to renewable energy development.

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Strategy 4. Preserve high quality farmland for continued agricultural use.

Recommended Action

- a. Encourage farmers to work with the Western New York Land Conservancy to apply for New York State or Federal Grants to purchase development rights or to place permanent conservation easements on farm parcels.

Responsible Entity	AAC
Partners	Farmers; Landowners; Western New York Land Conservancy; NYS Department of Agriculture & Markets
Timeframe	Medium – Long Term

Discussion

Permanent conservation easements, through donation to a land trust or through a public Purchase of Development Rights program, prevent non-farm development allow farmland to be sold at its value for farming rather than for its value for development.

Resources

[Western New York Land Conservancy](#) staff will meet with farmers and farmland owners to discuss options for placing land under conservation easement or obtaining funds to purchase development rights.

New York State Department of Agriculture & Markets administers a [grant program](#) to purchase development rights to farmland.

Strategy 5. Increase public understanding and appreciation of agriculture

Recommended Actions

- a. Organize periodic farm tours and other events, in cooperation with other governments and organizations, to celebrate agriculture and encourage residents to visit farms.

Responsible Entity	Town Board/ Conservation Board
Partners	Farm Bureau; Cornell Cooperative Extension
Timeframe	Medium – Long Term

- b. Maintain the Town's Right to Farm Law.

Responsible Entity	Town Board
Partners	Town Planning Board
Timeframe	Medium – Long Term

- c. Provide information to residents about protections to farmers through the NYS Agricultural District Law.

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Responsible Entity	Town Clerk
Partners	Farm Bureau; Cornell Cooperative Extension; NYS Dept. of Agriculture & Markets
Timeframe	Ongoing

Discussion

Although Wales is predominantly rural, occasionally, neighbors will complain about noise and odors from farms. In addition, some residents are concerned about the potential for farm stormwater to contaminate streams with nutrients or pesticides.

Agriculture education is an opportunity. In addition, with careers in agriculture increasingly identified as requiring a strong technological focus, farming is becoming a career choice for an increasing number of high schoolers. Therefore, investment in agriculture programs in the school districts serving the Town, beyond the offerings at BOCES, is seen as an opportunity that should be pursued.

The NYS Agricultural District Law protects farm operations within certified NYS Agricultural Districts from nuisance suits. It requires purchasers of land within Agricultural Districts to be notified of potential noise and odors associated with agricultural practices. However, the notifications are provided once the sale is finalized; potential farm neighbors often need more understanding before they move in about the realities of living in an agricultural community.

Farm tours or other educational activities would help improve understanding among non-farming neighbors about standard farm practices as well as how farms protect water quality and natural resources with conservation practices on farms.

Resources

The Town of Wales adopted a “Right to Farm” law in 2007, establishing a Town policy supporting agriculture and limiting the circumstances under which farming would be deemed a public or private nuisance.

Erie County’s [Right to Farm Law](#) states the County’s policy in support of agriculture and requires property sales to include a disclosure notice that states Erie County’s policy in support of agriculture.

Strategy 6. Ensure that the Town’s zoning regulations are “farm friendly”

Recommended Actions

- a. Adopt the following revisions to zoning regulations:
 - Expand the definition of “Agriculture” to include on-farm sales and other value-added enterprises
 - Add farming to the list of permitted uses in the B and R districts when the farm is part of a farm operation within a NYS-certified Agricultural District
 - Revise roadside stand requirements to allow sales of “products produced by the farm” rather than “on the same premises” as the farm operation may include several parcels and the products may be grown or produced on a parcel in a different location

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- In order to accommodate the on-farm production of goat milk soap, remove “soap manufacture” from the list of prohibited uses or add clarification to exclude on-farm manufacturing of products from ingredients produced on the farm
- b. Consider allowing additional value-added and secondary businesses on farms with a special use permit. The permit would be required for businesses that would not be considered part of the farm operation and protected through NYS Agricultural Districts Law, such as businesses that manufacture products using ingredients that are only partially produced on the farm, or for businesses such as equipment repair that are not strictly farming.

Responsible Entity	Town Board
Partners	Planning Board; Farm Bureau; Erie County Dept. of Environment & Planning
Timeframe	Ongoing

Discussion

The Town’s zoning regulations accommodate agriculture and have few provisions that may be unreasonably restrictive to farm operations. However, certain revisions would clarify that farming is permitted and would accommodate additional business uses to enhance the economic viability of farm operations.

Resources

[NYS Agricultural District Law](#) limits the local government’s ability to enforce provisions that are found to be unreasonably restrictive to farm operations within certified NYS Agricultural Districts that meet certain thresholds in NYS Agricultural Districts Law.

Restrictions on agricultural operations in local laws are consistent with NYS Agricultural Districts Law if they are necessary to protect health and safety. For example, setbacks of waste disposal facilities from public walls and water bodies are considered reasonable; setbacks from property lines may not be appropriate. In addition, the Town may regulate those operations that are small or otherwise do not meet the threshold for protection in NYS law.

Agricultural operations protected by NYS Agricultural Districts Law include traditional crop and animal farming, riding stables, and horse boarding operations that meet specified thresholds in the law. Zoning restrictions should consist of an exception for those operations that meet the threshold for protection in NYS Agriculture & Markets Law.

Strategy 7. Encourage Farmers to utilize available business assistance resources

Recommended Action

- a. Make information available to farmers and farmland owners about sources of technical assistance and other resources.

Responsible Entity	Town Board
Partners	Planning Board; Farm Bureau; Erie County Dept. of Environment & Planning; NYS Department of Agriculture & Markets
Timeframe	Ongoing

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Discussion

Farmers, and in particular young and beginning farmers, need technical assistance with business planning, tax planning and finding sources of grant and loan funding.

Resources

- [Farm Service Agency](#) offers technical assistance and about grant and loan programs
- [Cornell Cooperative Extension of Erie County](#) offers educational programs as well as science-based research and technical assistance from specialists
- Farm Credit East offers services to their financing customers.
- The [WNY BelnBusiness website](#) includes resources for agricultural businesses

Strategy 8. Encourage owners of farmland to continue to rent or lease their land for agricultural production.

Recommended Action

- b. Provide information to farmland owners about agricultural use assessments.

Responsible Entity	Town Assessor; Ag Advisory Board
Partners	Erie County SWCD; Erie County Dept. of Environment & Planning; farmers
Timeframe	Ongoing

Discussion

Some farmland owners who rent land to farmers may not be aware of the potential for lower property taxes through agricultural use assessment.

Resources

- Town of Wales Assessor has the required forms for landowners to complete to apply annually for agricultural use exemption
- Erie County Soil & Water Conservation District completes the required Soil Group Worksheets for landowners and can provide information about the agricultural use assessment

Strategy 9. Encourage careers in farming.

Recommended Action

- c. Encourage Holland and Iroquois School Districts to establish student FFA chapters. Identify a teacher at each high school to lead and champion a chapter.

Responsible Entity	Ag Advisory Committee
Partners	Holland and Iroquois Central School Districts;
Timeframe	Short-term

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Discussion

As many farmers approach retirement age, new and young farmers are needed to manage farm operations in Wales. In addition farms need reliable workers. FFA chapters also introduce students to farming and a variety of technologies as well as teach leadership skills.

Resources

- [National FFA](#)
- [NY Agricultural Education](#).

Strategy 10. Encourage farms to install best management practices to protect and improve water quality, soil health, climate resilience and ecosystem services.

Recommended Actions

- d. Support and publicize whole farm planning services and cost share programs available through Erie County Soil & Water Conservation District.

Responsible Entity	Ag Advisory Committee
Partners	Erie County SWCD; Farm Bureau; Erie County Dept. of Environment & Planning
Timeframe	Ongoing

- e. Provide information to farmers about cost share programs and technical assistance available through the Erie County SWCD.

Responsible Entity	Ag Advisory Committee
Partners	Erie County SWCD; Farm Bureau; Erie County Dept. of Environment & Planning
Timeframe	Ongoing

Discussion

Sustainable farming requires practices that protect water quality and soil health. While agricultural practices have the potential to affect water quality and ecosystem services, farmers can avoid environmental contamination and protect resources by installing best management practices that accomplish the following objectives:

- Protect groundwater and surface water from contamination from nutrients and chemicals used on farms
- Retain or restore a buffer of natural vegetation along stream corridors to maintain water quality and a healthy aquatic ecosystem.
- Maintain woodlands
- Reduce greenhouse gas emissions from manure storage and by planting cover crops
- Manage pests and invasive species in a manner that minimizes impacts on natural environment.

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Resources

- [Water Quality Improvement Grants](#)
- [Erie County Soil & Water Conservation District](#) (SWCD)