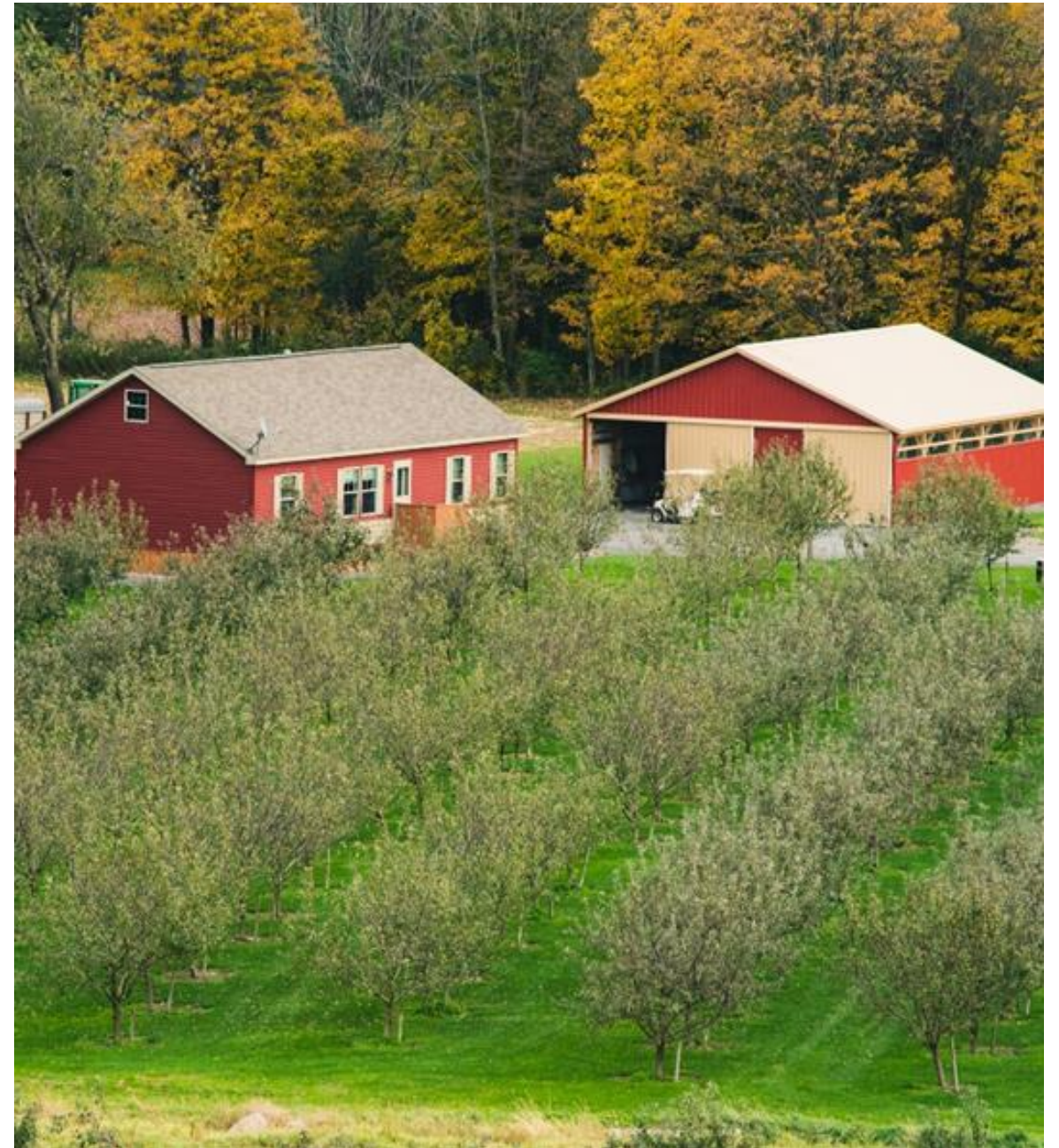


CDRPC

2024 Planning & Zoning Workshop

October 18, 2024

Hot Topics Facing Rural and Small Communities



Engineering
Architecture
Landscape Architecture
and Land Surveying, P.C.

Meet the Presenters



Nan Stolzenburg, FAICP
Land Use & Environmental Specialist
Community Planning & Environmental
Associates



Jaclyn Hakes, AICP
Associate/ Director of Planning
MJ Team

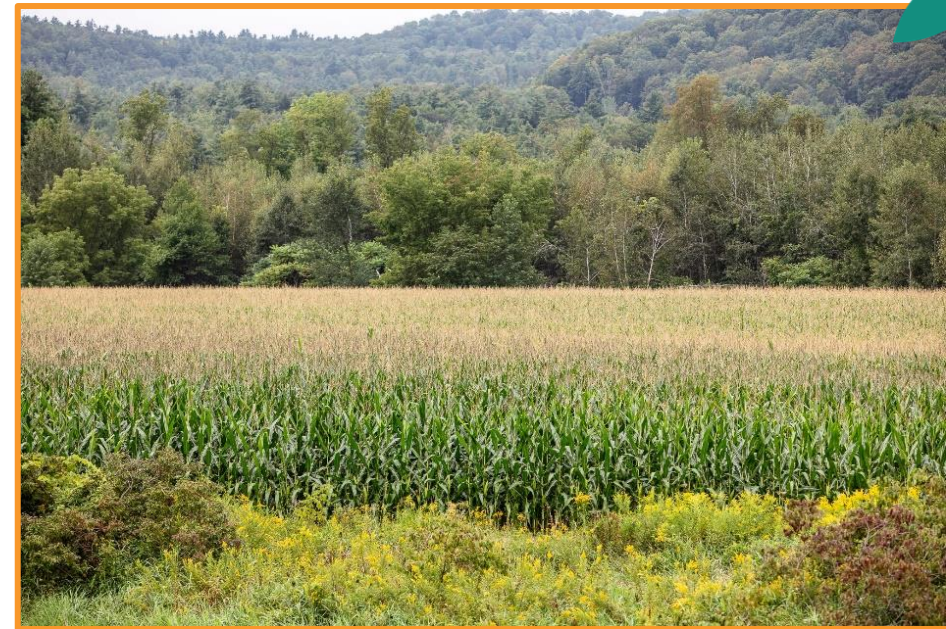


**Engineering
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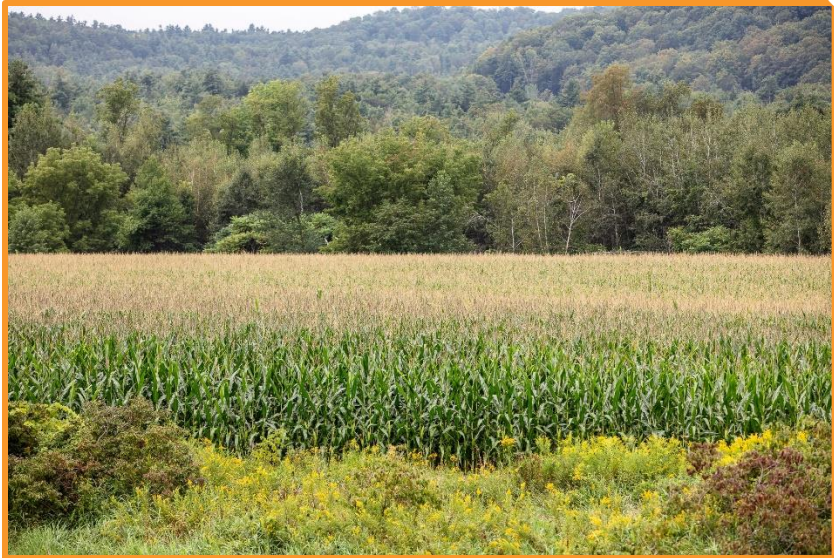
SESSION OVERVIEW



1. Hot Topics Facing Rural and Small Communities
2. Solar Development
3. The Changing Face of Agriculture
4. The Changing Face of Housing
5. Summary of Tools to Address Hot Topics
6. Q & A



HOT TOPICS FACING RURAL & SMALL COMMUNITIES



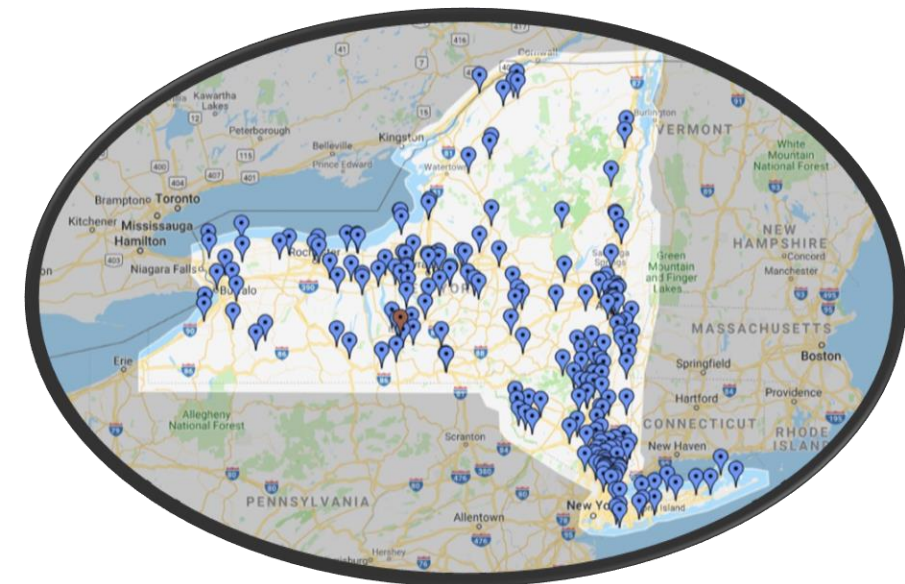


Solar Development

SOLAR DEVELOPMENT



- Local regulation vs State regulation
 - **< 20 MW – Regulated by municipality**
 - **20 – 25 MW – Regulated by municipality unless applicant elects to be under State Section 94-C regulations**
 - **> 25 MW – Regulated by NYS under Section 94-C**
- Benefits of solar
 - Renewable energy/clean energy
 - Rental can keep farms going
 - Energy independence
 - Address climate change
- Challenges and common land use issues
 - Aesthetic/community character
 - Loss of agricultural lands/active farmland
 - Loss of forests/habitats/habitat fragmentation
 - Other environmental impacts

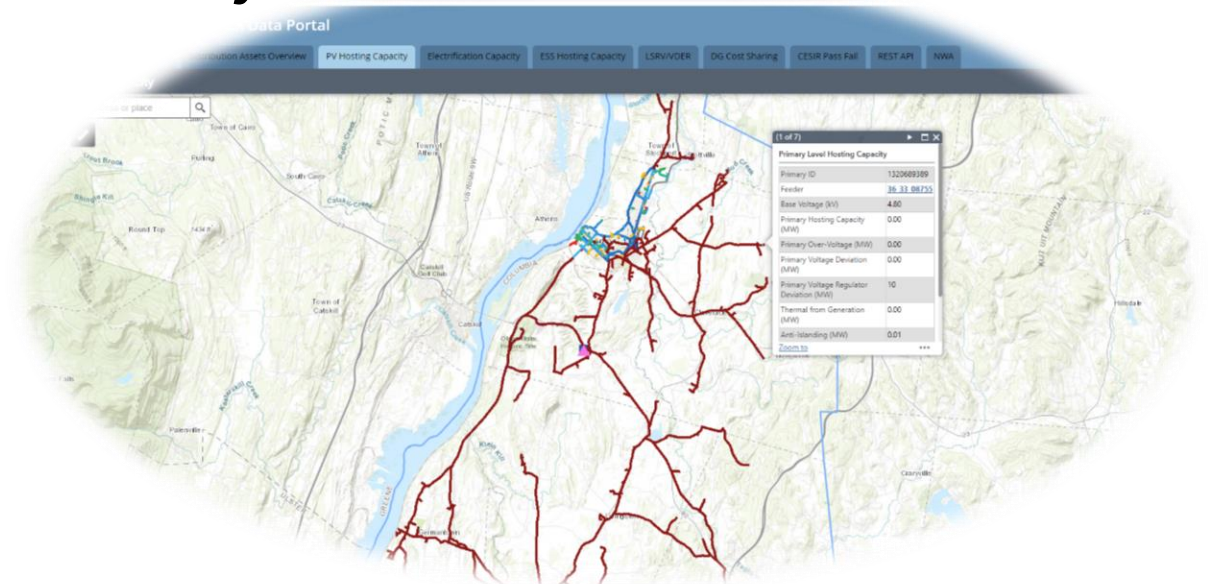


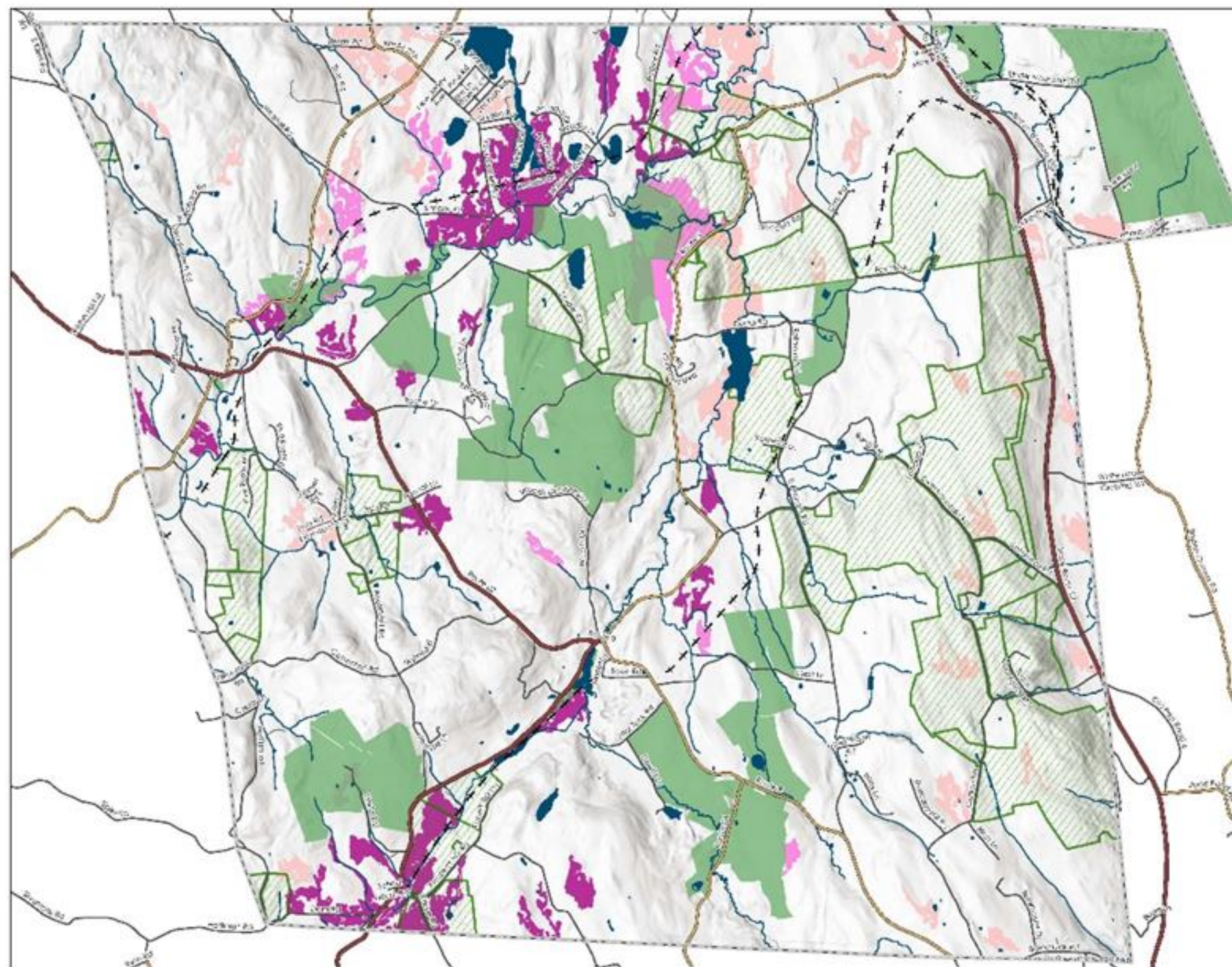
BACKGROUND



Planning for Solar Development

- Does your Comprehensive Plan Address Solar?
 - What policies are in place to address solar?
- Have you Conducted a Solar Capacity Analysis in your town?
- Have you looked at the Hosting Capacity Maps for your area?
- Have you done a scenic evaluation/viewshed analysis?





Town of Ancram Columbia County, NY

Large Solar Suitability Analysis (2 MW / 10+ acres)

- Water and Streams
- Streams
- State Route
- County Road
- Town Road
- Private Road
- Railroads (abandoned)
- Parks and Conservation Land
- CLC Holdings and Easements

Topography Suitable for Larger (2 MW+) Solar

Distance from 3-Phase Lines

- Within 1/4-mile
- 1/4 to 1/2-mile
- >1/2-mile

Topographic Suitability
Less than 10% slope
Aspect angle between 150 and 210 degrees or
"Flat" = slopes < 1% considered

Within 1/4-mile of 3-phase line is most desirable
(financially)
Between 1/4 to 1/2-mile of 3-phase line is still
feasible
Greater than 1/2-mile from 3-phase line likely cost
prohibitive

Map Date:
9-13-2020



0 0.25 0.5 1 Miles



Don Johnston, AICP - www.planningbetterplaces.com
152 Sheldonsburg Road, Rome, NY 12423
Rick Lehrer-Durbin, Update GIS - www.apnmapgis.com

TOOLS TO ADDRESS



- Overlay District or Floating District
- Site Plan Review/Special Use Permit
- Use Dimensional and Siting Standards to address
- Standards for noise, glare, aesthetic studies and performance
- Moratoria
- Decommissioning Plans
- Battery Storage
- Agrivoltaics (co-location)

Does Your Planning Board Ask for....



- Noise Study
- Glare Study
- Cultural and Historic Resource Studies
- Wildlife and Plant Inventory of Property
- Photosimulations/Viewsheds
- Stormwater Pollution Protection Plans
- Wetland Disturbance Information
- Landscaping Plan/Screening
- Use/require NYS Agriculture and Markets Guidance for Solar of Farms



CHANGING FACE OF AGRICULTURE

BACKGROUND



Loss of dairy farms

Declining ag profitability and increasing expenses

More small farms with small incomes

Reliance on more rental of land by remaining farmers

Aging of farmers/Loss of next generation of farmers

Development pressure (subdivision, housing)

Solar Development (a Challenge and Opportunity)

Changing weather patterns

More direct to consumer sales/Agritourism/Hobby/Personal growing including niche farms, craft breweries, special events

BACKGROUND



What can this mean for rural communities?

- Loss or change of sense of community and changing community character
- In some places - decreased # full-time residents
- Loss of fire and emergency volunteers
- Increased low-density development (rural sprawl)
- Increased intensity of use (agritourism uses)
- More short-term rentals
- Vacant farmland changes habitats (meadows to old field successional habitats)
- Loss of local food systems
- Increased cost of land
- More conflicts with neighbors
- Consolidation of farmland into larger farms
- More hobby growing

BACKGROUND



What does this mean for rural communities?

But it can also mean...

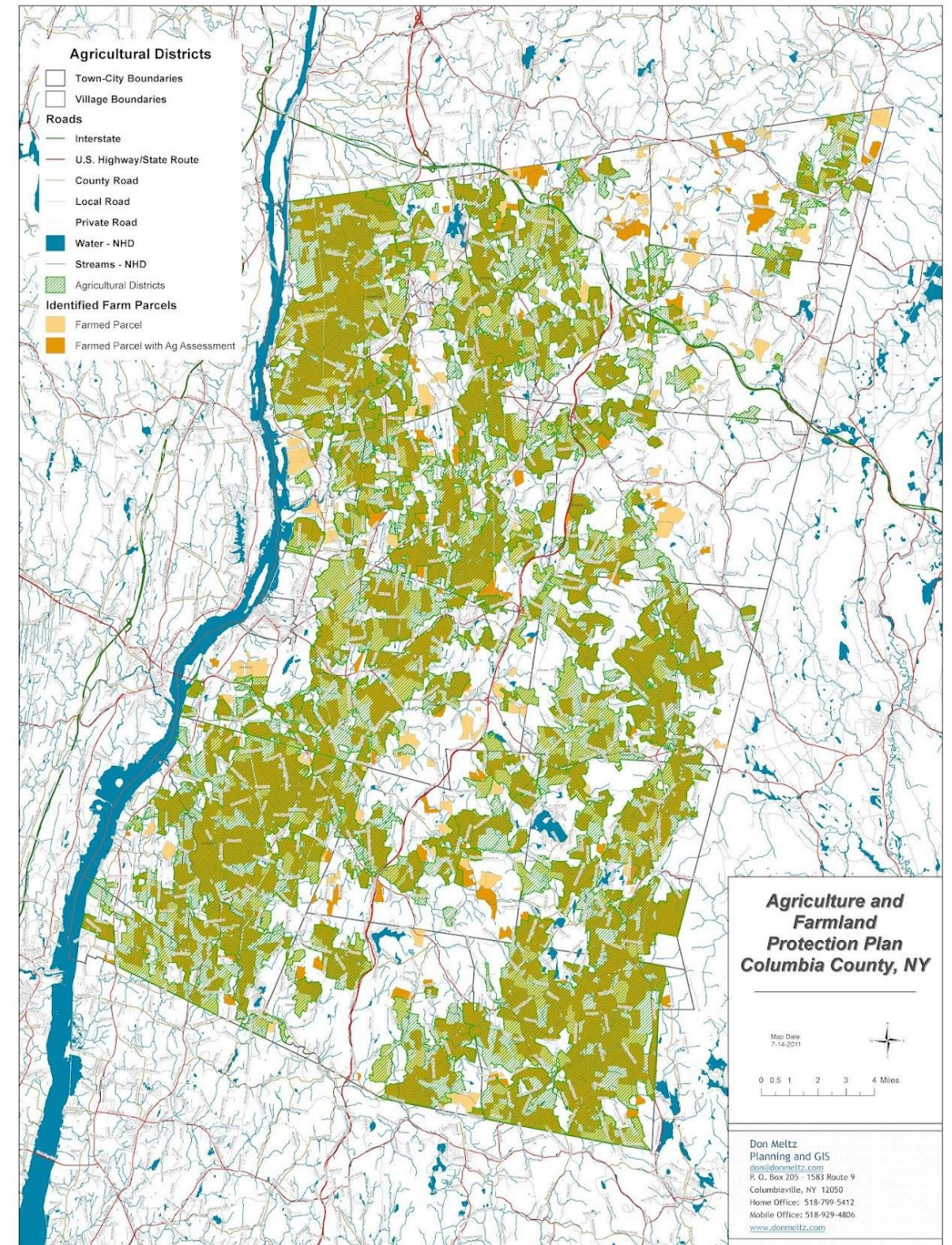
- New, younger people getting involved on small farms
- More diversification – specialty/alternative niche farms
- More direct on-farm sales, farmers markets, farm stands, etc.
- More agritourism (craft beverages, farm to table, etc.) that supports other local businesses like restaurants, hotels, etc.

BACKGROUND



Know Your NYS Agricultural Districts (NYS AML 25-aa)

- NY Certified Agricultural Districts
VS
- Agricultural Tax Assessments
VS
- Local agricultural zoning districts
- Why these are important?



BACKGROUND



Other Laws to Pay Attention to

- Right to Farm Law
- NYS Safety in Agritourism Act
- NYS/County Health Department Rules

- Liability
- Trespassing
- Animal Welfare
- Food Safety
- ADA Compliance

Required for
Agritourism
Operations –
relevant to site
plan reviews



TOOLS



- Update comprehensive plan with section on agriculture and farmland.
- Use GIS analysis showing agricultural soils, farmed parcels, NYS Ag Districts, agricultural land uses as well as tools such as solar capacity or build out analysis to identify farms at risk for conversion.
- Set vision and goals – define role of agriculture in community; define agriculture; discuss agritourism and small farms.
- Specific recommended strategies that address issues.



TOOLS TO ADDRESS



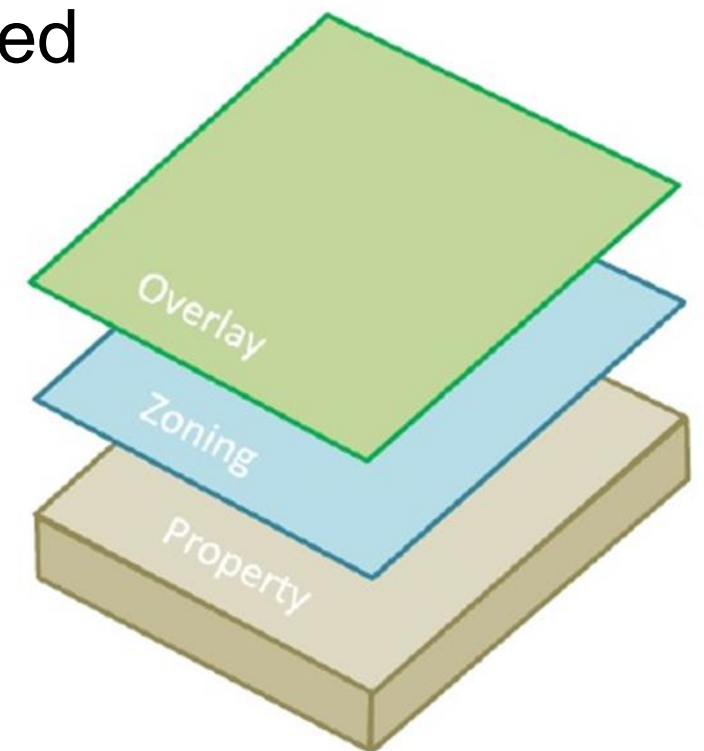
- Conduct Farm Friendly Audit – identify challenges, barriers, weaknesses, omissions
- Update Zoning and Subdivision Regulations
 - Use Table
 - Dimensions
 - District Standards
 - Definitions
 - Purpose Statements
 - Use of Ag Disclosure Notice/Ag Data Statement
- Effectively Use SEQR – Review impacts on agriculture



TOOLS TO ADDRESS



- Incorporate Conservation Subdivision
- Establish Overlay Districts: (Farmland Soil, Ag Use, Environmental, etc.)
- Use Rural Siting Guidelines
- Require Ag Buffers for New Development
- Use Average Lot Sizes/Density Instead Of Minimum Lot Size
- Expand definitions of farms, farm operations, farm-related businesses, etc.
- Use Incentive Zoning
- Address personal farms/hobby farms differently



TOOLS TO ADDRESS



- Increasingly more common as suburbanization/sprawl advance
- Address personal farms/hobby farms differently
- Not defined or treated the same in NYS AML 25-aa
- Can create different issues:
 - Pollution from inadequate facilities
 - Noise/conflicts with neighbors
 - Is it farming or homesteading?
- Does Comprehensive Plan address this use?
- Does zoning define it?
- Are there reasonable regulations to help avoid adverse impacts such as size of lot, number of animals, animal welfare, manure management, etc.





Changing Face of Housing

BACKGROUND



Needs and Trends Related to Housing...

- Housing supply/quality
- Affordability
- Changing demographics
 - Aging population looking to age in place
 - Young professionals
 - Young families
 - Changing face of 'family'
- Rental availability / Short Term Rental impacts
- New York State focus on housing (Pro-Housing Community Program)



BACKGROUND



Needs and Trends Related to Housing...

- New listings not keeping pace with demand
- Increasing housing values affecting affordability

First half of 2023 compared to second half 2023 in **Rensselaer County**:

- Median home values increased \$250,583 to \$275,250 or nearly 10%
- New listings increased approximately 5%
- Closed sales increased just over 22%

BACKGROUND



Challenges for rural communities?

- Balancing growth and housing demands with...
 - Protection of open space
 - Support for working agriculture
 - Changing community character
- Availability of infrastructure
 - Roads, streets
 - Water
 - Sewer
- Regulatory barriers
 - Zoning: definitions, restrictions, allowance of manufactured housing
- Community and societal perception about certain housing types

BACKGROUND



What does this mean for rural communities?

- Change how we think about housing and housing options
 - Not a single option solution
- Understand what fits best in your community
 - Location
 - Scale
 - Design/Aesthetics
- Evaluate your local regulations
 - Are the housing options that best fit your community allowed?

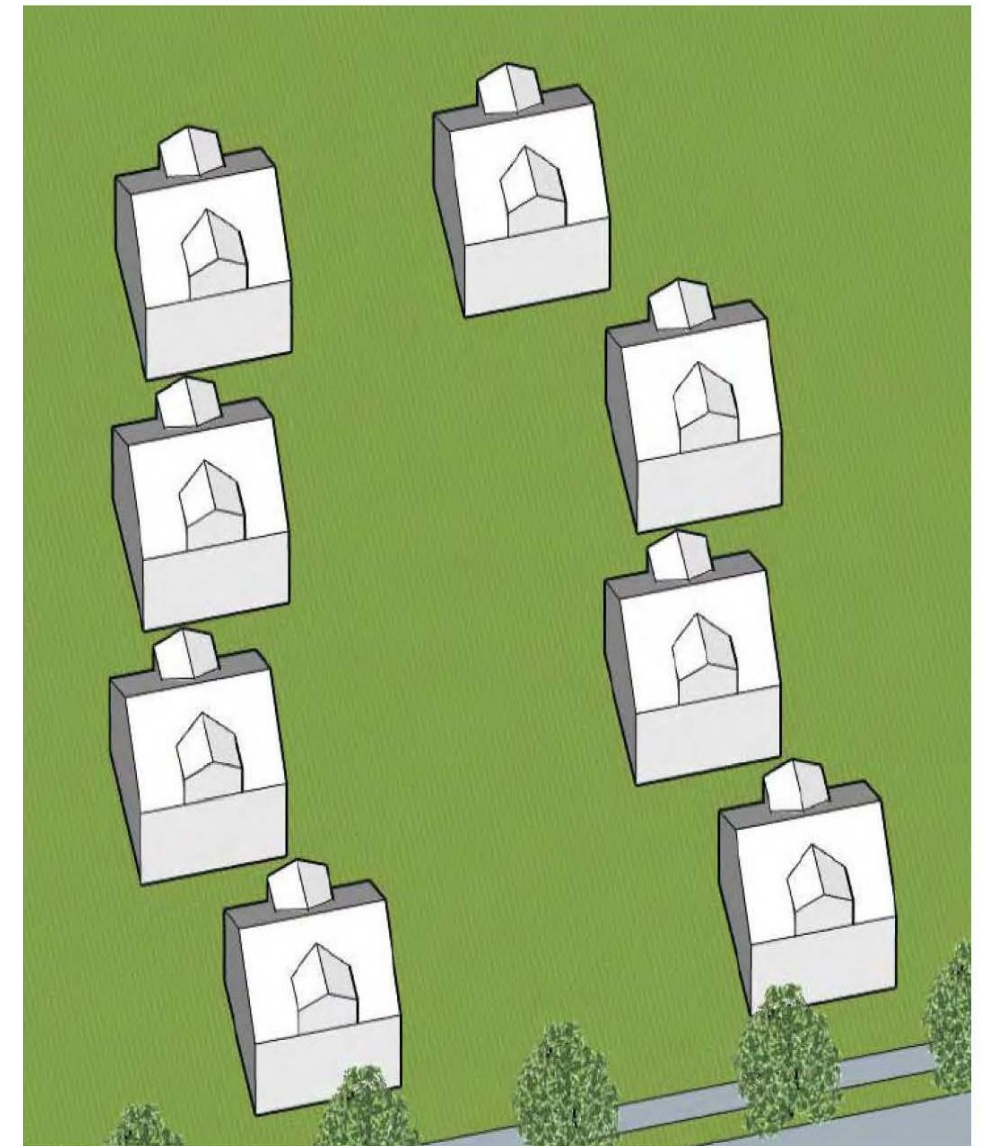


Image Source:

<https://www.washingtoncountyor.gov/lut/documents/cluster-and-cottage-housing/download?inline>

BACKGROUND



Potential Housing Options: Beyond the Traditional Single-Family Home

- Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs)
 - Smaller independent dwelling unit (detached, attached, internal)
- 2-family homes
- 3-4 unit structures
- Cottage homes
- Tiny Homes
- Modular or Manufactured Housing



Image Source: American Planning Association, www.planning.org

BACKGROUND



Potential Housing Options – 2-family Example



BACKGROUND



Potential Housing Options – 3-4 Unit Example



Image Source: familyhomeplans.com

BACKGROUND



Potential Housing Options – Cottage Home Example

- Cottage homes are generally small, detached homes with size limits
- Can be integrated with other housing types



BACKGROUND



Potential Housing Options – Tiny Home Example



Image Source: [cypress-tumbleweed](#)



BACKGROUND



Potential Housing Options – Modular/Manufactured Home Example



Image Source: championhomes.com

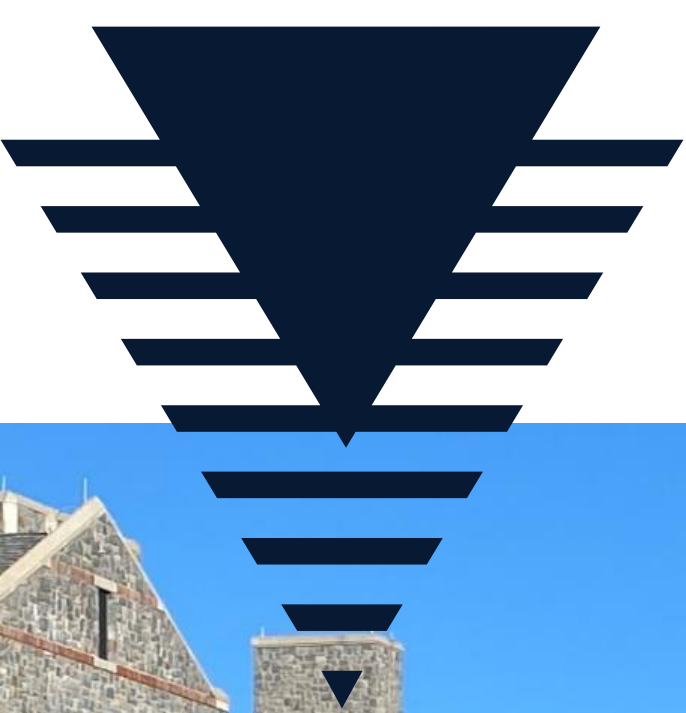


TOOLS TO ADDRESS



- Update Comprehensive Plan with section on housing needs and options
 - Include public input
 - Establish vision, goals and recommendations for housing
- Conduct Housing Audit – identify challenges, barriers, weaknesses, omissions
- Update Zoning and Subdivision Regulations
 - Use Table
 - Dimensions
 - District Standards
 - Definitions
 - Incentive Zoning
- Consider Design and Siting Guidelines





SUMMARY OF TOOLS

SUMMARY OF KEY TOOLS



- ***What Does Your Community Want?***
 - Update the Comprehensive Plan to reflect your community vision and goals for agriculture and housing
- ***What Does Your Community Allow?***
 - Conduct a zoning and code audit (farm-friendly audit, housing audit)
- ***How Do you Achieve What Your Community Wants?***
 - Establish land use regulations that support the community intent





Q & A

