Digging into Farmland

Strategies for municipal and regional farmland planning

Friday, October 9, 2026 at SNEAPA Conference

MDAR
MASSACHUSETTS DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURAL RESOURCES

frcog

CENTRAL MASSACHUSETTS
Regional Planning Commission

SRPEDD
Southeastern Regional Planning & Economic Development District

Agenda and Today's Goals

Today's Goals

- Understand importance of farms and farmland in local, regional, and statewide planning initiatives
- Explore complexities of planning for farmland and gain awareness of resources, tools and strategies
- Understand the importance of partnerships, collaboration, and coordination in protecting farmland, and the unique role planners can play within the wider network.
- Explore some useful resources and examples

Agenda

- **Why farms and farmland are important**
- **Planning at a statewide level**
  - Massachusetts Farmland Action Plan 2023 – 2050
- **Planning at a regional and municipal level**
  - New "Planning for Farmland in Massachusetts" resource
  - CMRPC's Planning and Support for Agriculture
  - Pilot to create template for municipal farmland protection plans
  - Building municipal capacity to protect farmland
- **Other resources and upcoming opportunities**
- **Questions and answers**

Presenters

These are just a few planners who are actively working right now on farmland planning in Massachusetts.

Our presentation shares our personal experiences and expertise as well as those shared with us by colleagues and partners.



Trish Settles, AICP

Deputy Executive Director

Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission (CMRPC)



Katharine Otto, AICP

Farmland Action Plan Coordinator

Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources (MDAR)



Karen Pettinelli

Principal Natural Resource Planner

Southeastern Regional Planning and Economic Development District (SRPEDD)



Tamsin Flanders

Senior Land Use & Natural Resources Planner

Franklin Regional Council of Governments (FRCOG)

Why farms and farmland are important

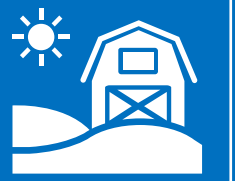
Katharine Otto

Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources (MDAR)

Farming in Massachusetts today

According to the 2022 Census of Agriculture, Massachusetts has:

7,083 farms on 464,451 acres



of farmland (about 9% of MA land) with land and buildings worth

$6.4 billion

13,896 producers* and 14,032 hired farm workers with a payroll of $204 million



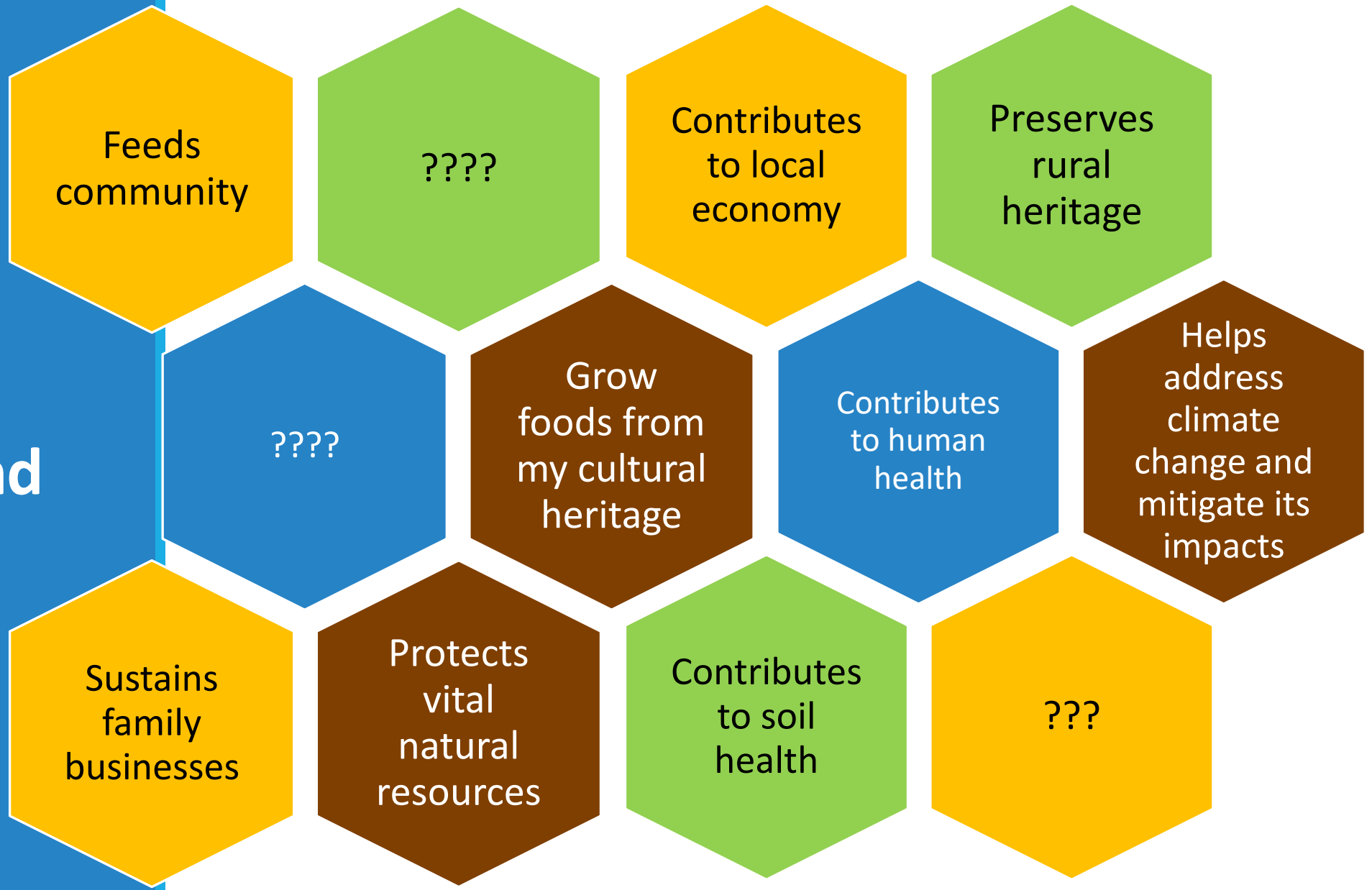
$607 million of agricultural products sold



* A “producer” is a person who is involved in making decisions for the farm operation

Source: Census of Agriculture 2022 and earlier. Tables 1,2, 4, 5 and 52.
www.nass.usda.gov/Publications/AgCensus/2022/Full_Report/Volume_1,_Chapter_1_State_Level/Massachusetts/

Many reasons why people value farms and farmland

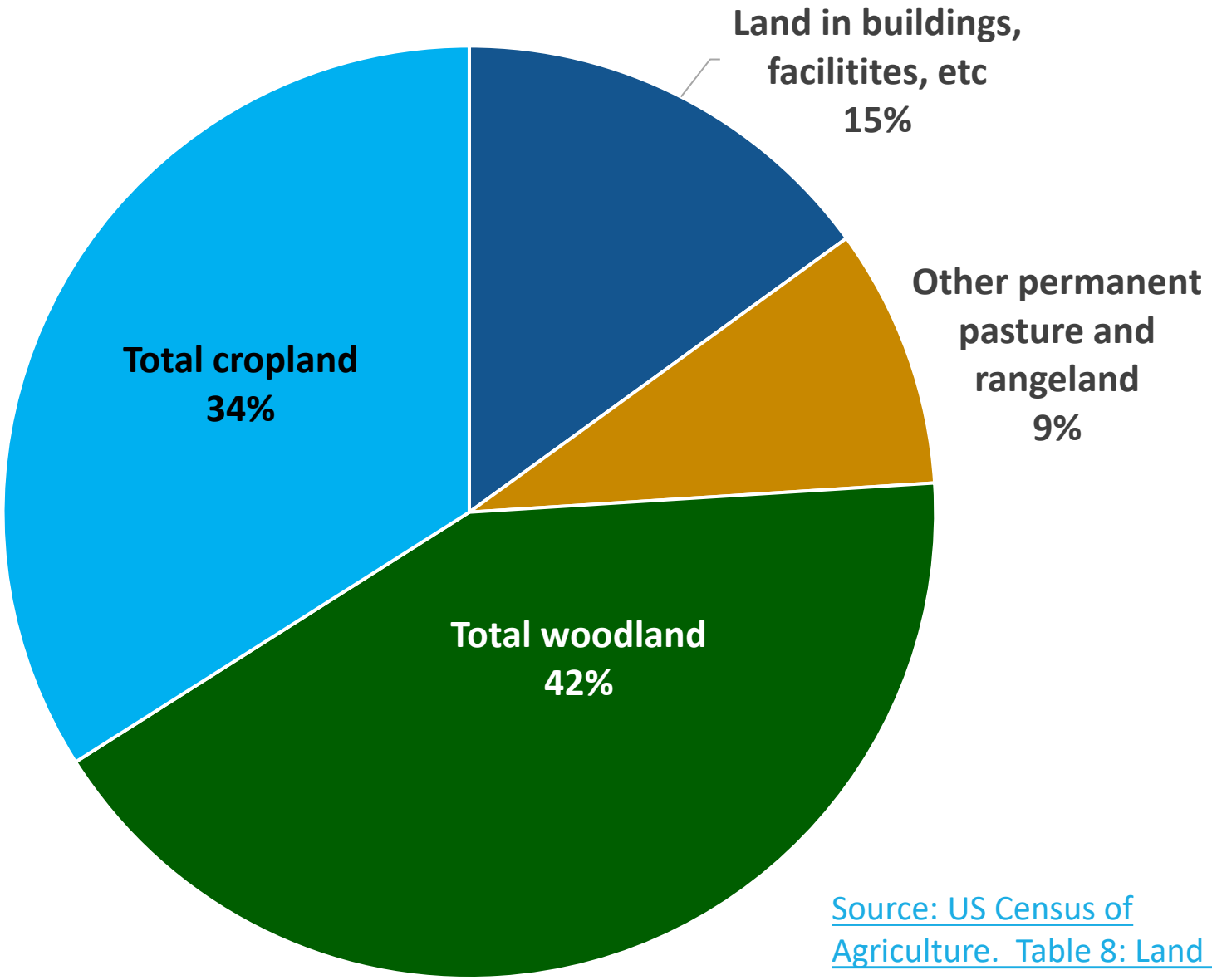


Defining farmland

Farmland is more than just cropland.

It is important to recognize the diversity of what farmers do on their land to sustain their farming operation.

Land uses on farms in Massachusetts in 2022



Source: US Census of Agriculture. Table 8: Land 2022 and 2017. Massachusetts

Benefits of local agriculture



Economic

- Generates revenue
- Provides employment
- Contributes to local economy
- Attracts tourists and visitors



Environmental

- Provides carbon sequestration
- Retains biodiversity
- Provides flood mitigation
- Reduces carbon footprint of transporting food
- Improves soil quality



Food security

- Improves access fresh and healthy food
- Creates a more resilient and secure food source



Scenic and social

- Contributes to scenic vistas
- Provide possible passive recreational opportunities
- Opportunities for community activities

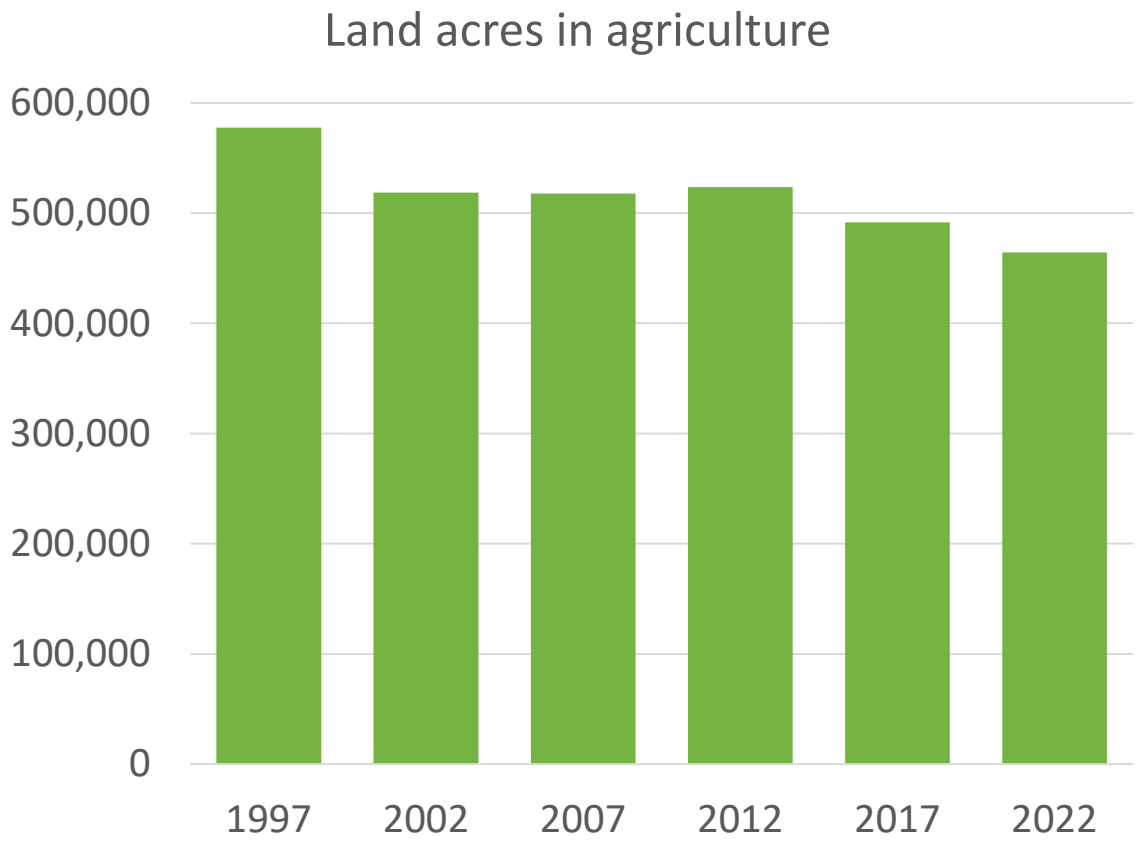
Massachusetts is losing agricultural land fast!

Between 1997 and 2022
Massachusetts lost 113,000 acres

- 3.7 times the size of the land area of Boston
- 1.8 times the size of Martha's Vineyard

Per day that means a loss of

- 12.4 acres
- About 9.4 football fields
- About 28-32 ice rinks



Source: Census of Agriculture 2022 and earlier. Table 1
www.nass.usda.gov/Publications/AgCensus/2022/Full_Report/Volume_1,_Chapter_1_State_Level/Massachusetts/

Farms Under Threat

American Farmland Trust's "Farms Under Threat 2040" Report, between 2016 and 2040 Massachusetts, without additional investment and policy changes, is projected to lose

1200
farms lost

50,000 – 89,000
acres of farmland lost (that's about 1.6 – 2.9 times the size of Boston's land area!)

with a loss of
$91 million
in farm output

and approximately
4,900
jobs lost

Sources: American Farmland Trust "Farms Under Threat 2040. Choosing an Abundant Future" https://farmlandinfo.org/publications/farms-under-threat-2040/ and American Farmland Trust "Farms Under Threat. 2040 Future Scenarios. Massachusetts." https://storage.googleapis.com/csp-fut2040.appspot.com/state-reports/FUT2040_MA.pdf

Key takeaways

We know that planners, municipalities and regional planning agencies are juggling many competing priorities for scarce resources.

Our goal is to share enough to help farmland be considered alongside other priorities with an informed understanding of its complexities and nuances.

1) Farmland is not the same as open space and other land uses

2) Farmland is more than the land

It is also the operation on the land – one which needs to stay fiscally viable and at some point will change hands

3) Commercial farming is not easy

Farmers are juggling many challenges as they grow food and produce other items at a scale that is economically viable and meets the needs of the local and non-local population.

4) There is no one-size-fits-all for planning for farmland

Because farmland and farming includes any different types of products, scales, operation types

Planning at a statewide level

Massachusetts Farmland Action Plan (MFAP) 2023 - 2050

Katharine Otto

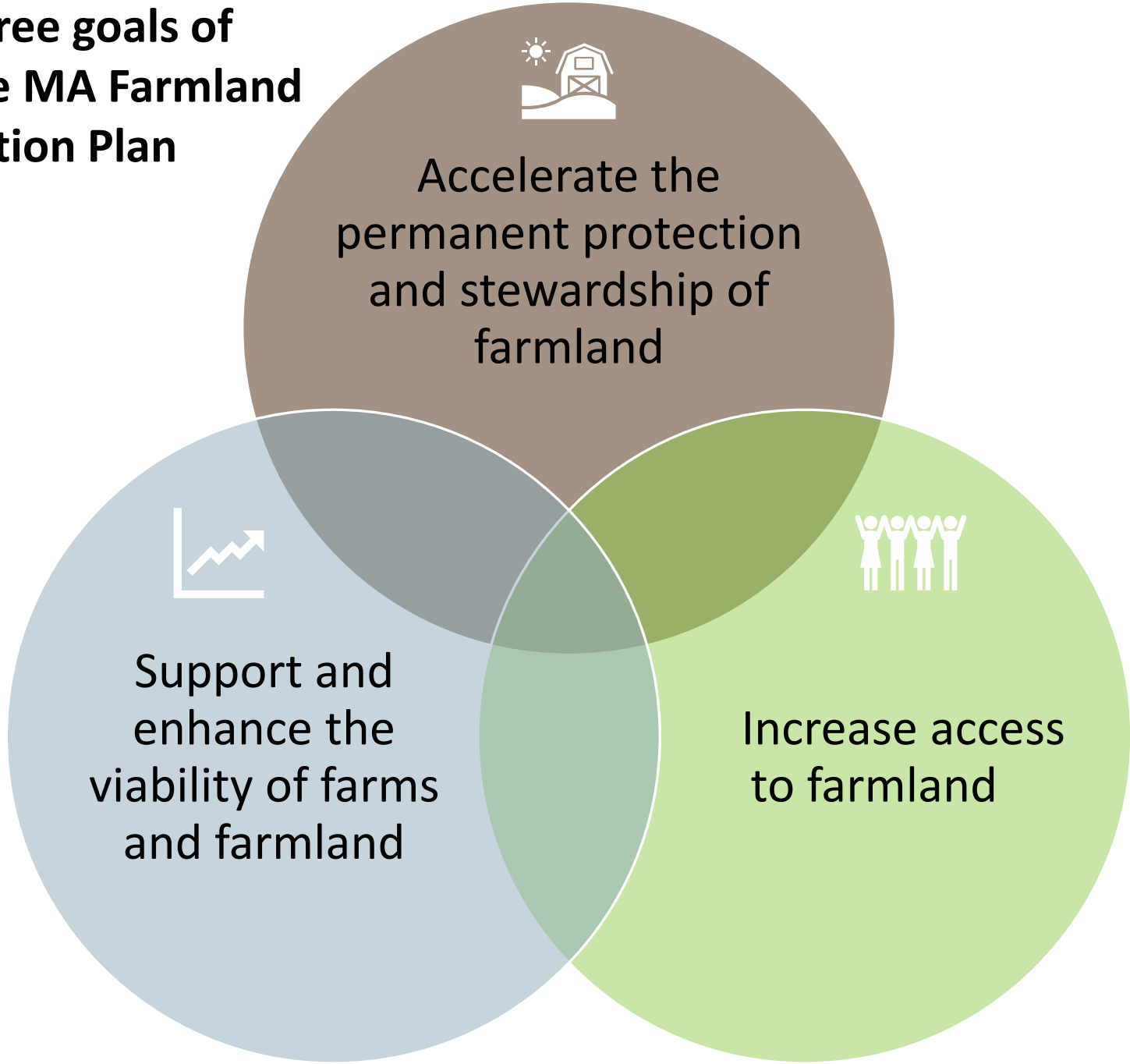
Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources (MDAR)

Massachusetts Farmland Action Plan

Created in response to this rapid loss of farmland and farms

- Long range strategic initiative
- Implementation by partners across the state, not just for state government
- www.mass.gov/farmland-action-plan

Three goals of the MA Farmland Action Plan



Important features for implementation

Building partnerships and collaboration

- Reducing silos and building shared understanding
- Farmland Partnership Program (FPP)

Evolving approach

- Look to the future while learning from the past and other programs
- Implementation Matrix - rooted in the Plan, but adjusts as needed

Engagement

- Drop-In Sessions
- Events and meetings focus on specific tasks
- Webpage resources

Reporting

- MFAP Newsletter
- MFAP Annual Progress Report
- FPP Bi-Annual Progress Reports

Sign up for the newsletter at www.mass.gov/farmland-action-plan

New Farmland Partnership Program

Grant program to help implement the Farmland Action Plan at the local, regional or statewide level.

The goal of the Program is to **build networks of Partners who work together collaboratively and in coordination** to protect farmland, enhance farm viability, and ensure access to farmland.

Learn more at www.mass.gov/info-details/farmland-partnership-program

You'll be hearing about some of the projects funded through this program in this session

Key characteristics of the program

- Rooted in partnership and collaboration
- Fostering systems change
- Grounded in implementing tasks of the Farmland Action Plan
- Building capacity of partner organizations and staff
- Filling gaps between other funding programs and initiatives

Planning at a Regional and Municipal level

Planning for Farmland in Massachusetts

An Overview at a Municipal and Regional Level

Katharine Otto

www.mass.gov/info-details/ag-resources-for-municipalities

About the document

This document is intended to

- supplement the Open Space and Recreation Planners Workbook
- provide information relevant to the wider realm of planning for farmland
- support the implementation of the 2023 MA Farmland Action Plan

How to use the document

- Quick introduction to key tools and terminology
- Highlight some key issues with variety of perspectives and ways forward
- Hub to link to other resources

Section 1 - Agriculture in Massachusetts

A brief overview of some useful context related to agriculture in Massachusetts

Section 2 – Tools to support farming and protect farmland

Including some definitions of terms used later in this resource

Section 3 – Understanding farmland and agriculture in your community

In addition to what is already on the municipality's radar when planning

Section 4 – Things to keep in mind when developing strategies to protect farmland

In addition to what is shared in the OSRP Workbook

Section 2 – Tools to support farming and protect farmland

Municipal decisions, permitting, regulations and actions can have notable impacts on farm businesses and farmland, and they can vary significantly between municipalities and boards over time.

Farms of various sizes produce a wide range of agricultural products and services.

The diversity of the agricultural sector highlights the need for a range of equally diverse policies and actions to support farmers and the agricultural economy.

Tools covered in the document

1) Municipal Master Plan and other planning documents
2) Chapter 61A Rights of First Refusal (ROFR)
3) The Community Preservation Act (CPA)
4) Agricultural Commissions (AgCom) and other municipal committees
5) Right to Farm Bylaw
6) Zoning Bylaws
7) Farmland protection options (APR, Private APR, CR, and Agricultural Covenants)
8) Municipally owned farmland
9) Buy-Protect-Sell

Tool 4 – Agricultural Commissions (AgCom) and other municipal committees

An AgCom

- is a municipal committee of resident volunteers
- is an important tool to give farmers a voice in the community
- can be an advocate for farmers and agricultural businesses.

It is important to involve farmers, including your AgCom if you have one, in the development of planning documents and processes that involve farmland, including OSRPs.

Resources

MDAR provides funding to Conservation Works, LLC to support their work around Agricultural Commissions (AgComs) and municipalities interested in establishing an AgCom.

Learn more on the MDAR AgCom webpage.

Tool 7 – Farmland protection options

When protecting farmland there are several protection options available in Massachusetts and it is important to consider

- the needs of the landowner and farmer
- the needs of the community
- the protection type that balances those needs
- available funding sources

Municipalities can get involved in protecting farmland in a variety of ways, including

- purchasing the land outright
- contributing funds for purchase of a restriction
- holding or co-holding a restriction

Did you know?

Protecting farmland is not the same as conserving other land

- Key difference is the ongoing relationship between the entity holding the easement/ restriction and the landowner/farmer.
- A choice has been made that the entity/community values not only the **open agricultural land** but also values keeping the **land in active production as a working farm**, and wants the land to remain a part of the economic fiber of the community.
- The landowner/farmer in this way has a partner and is supported by the community for the community.

Section 4 – Things to keep in mind when developing strategies to protect farmland

Many topics covered in document

- Municipal roles
- Agricultural soils
- Farm businesses integral to farmland
- Farmers, landowners and messaging
- Leasing and licensing farmland
- Underutilized farmland
- Land use trade-offs, adjacent and co-located land uses
- Public access to farmland

Topics (continued)

- Transfer and succession
- Agritourism
- Farming in the urban environment
- Farmland as part of the food system
- Ongoing assistance for farmers

Some lessons learned as a land use planner working with farms and farmland

Adjacent land uses

Not all land uses are compatible, but through policy and investments planners can be intentional about making decisions for the future vision of how things fit together across the entire community and in the wider region.

Public access to farmland is case dependent

Many farmers don't own the land they farm

Many farmers in Massachusetts operate on land they do not own. This includes

- Leases
- Licenses
- Informal agreements

Much of our farmlands will be changing hands soon

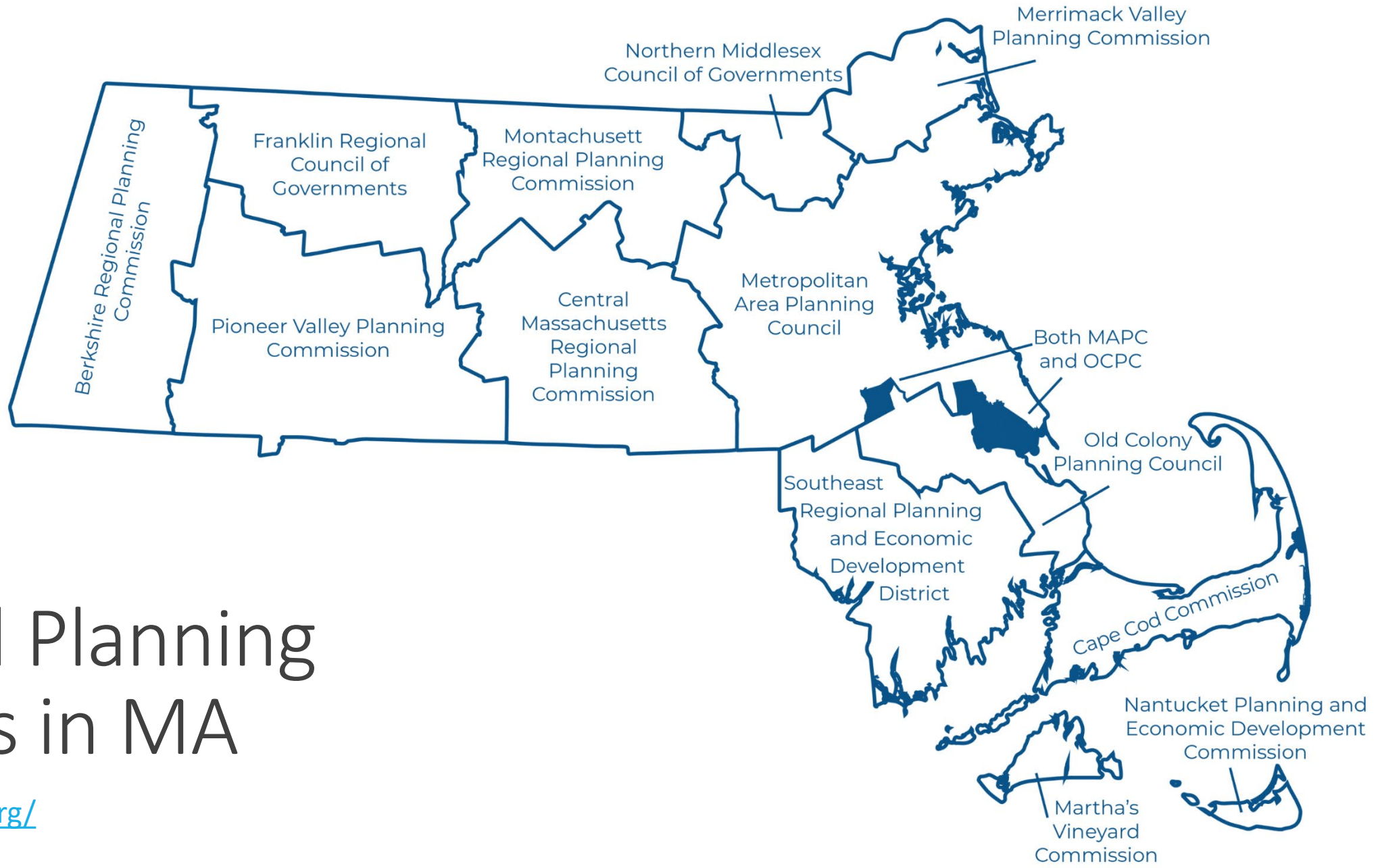
40% of MA producers were 65 or older in 2022 and most have not identified what will happen to the farm when they pass away or are no longer able to manage the operation. (Source: US Census of Agriculture 2022 and earlier. Table 52)

How municipalities and regional planners have been involved with farmland planning to date

CMRPC's Planning and Support for Agriculture

Trish Settles, Deputy Director of Regional Collaboration and Community Plannng.

Regional Planning Agencies in MA

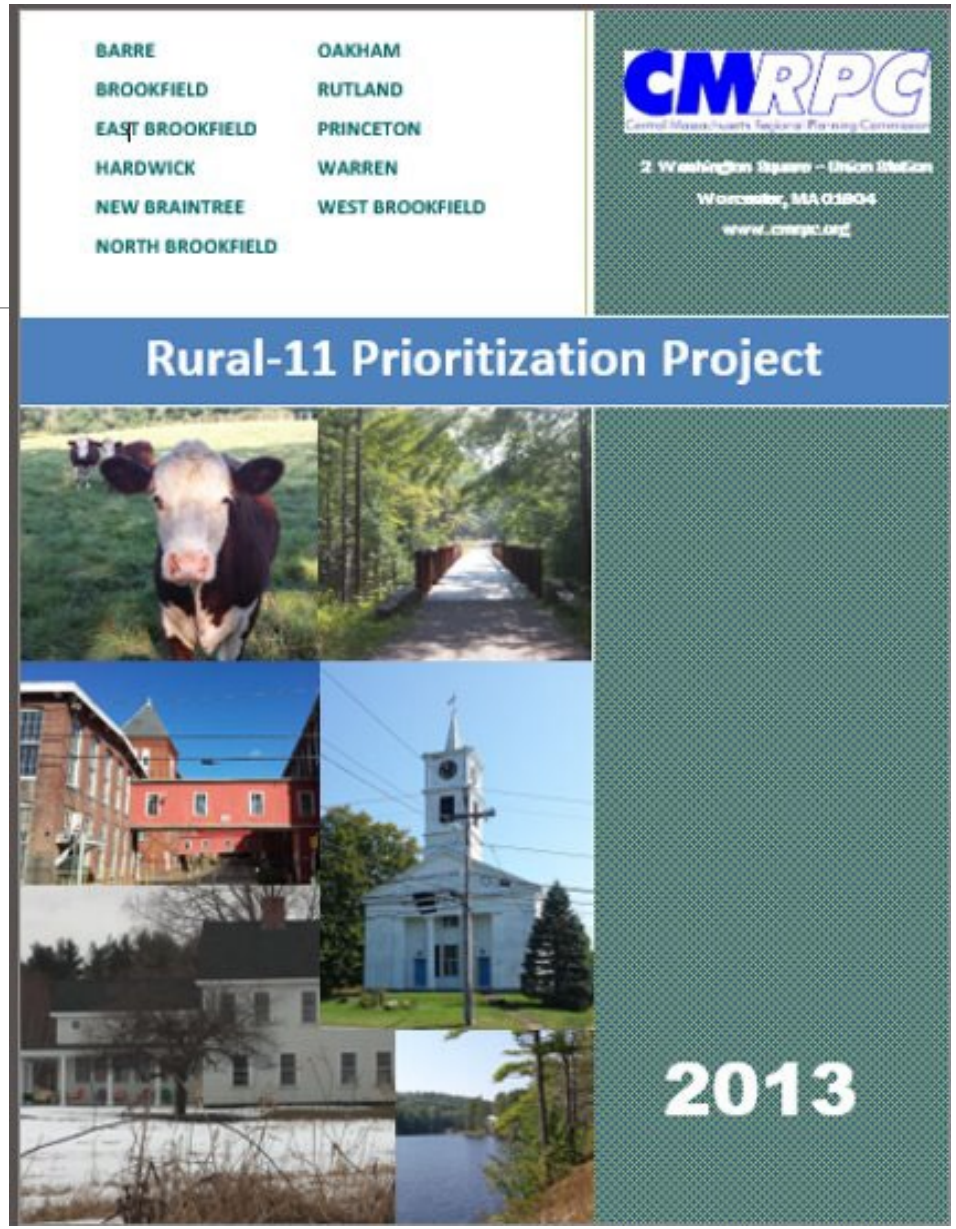


https://massmarpa.org/

Rural-11

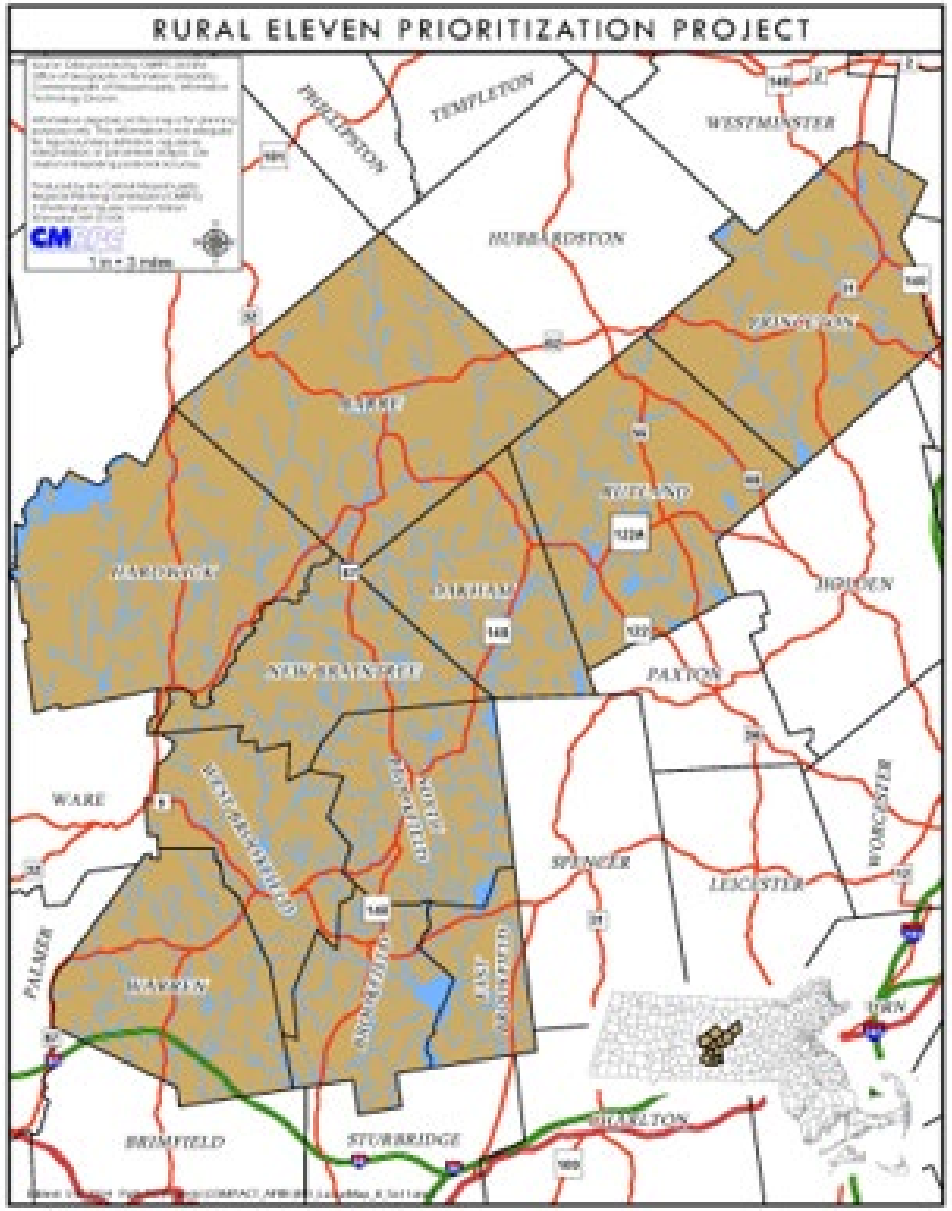
What began as an effort to prioritize development and preservations areas, became an identification of many ways that regional planning can support local farming.

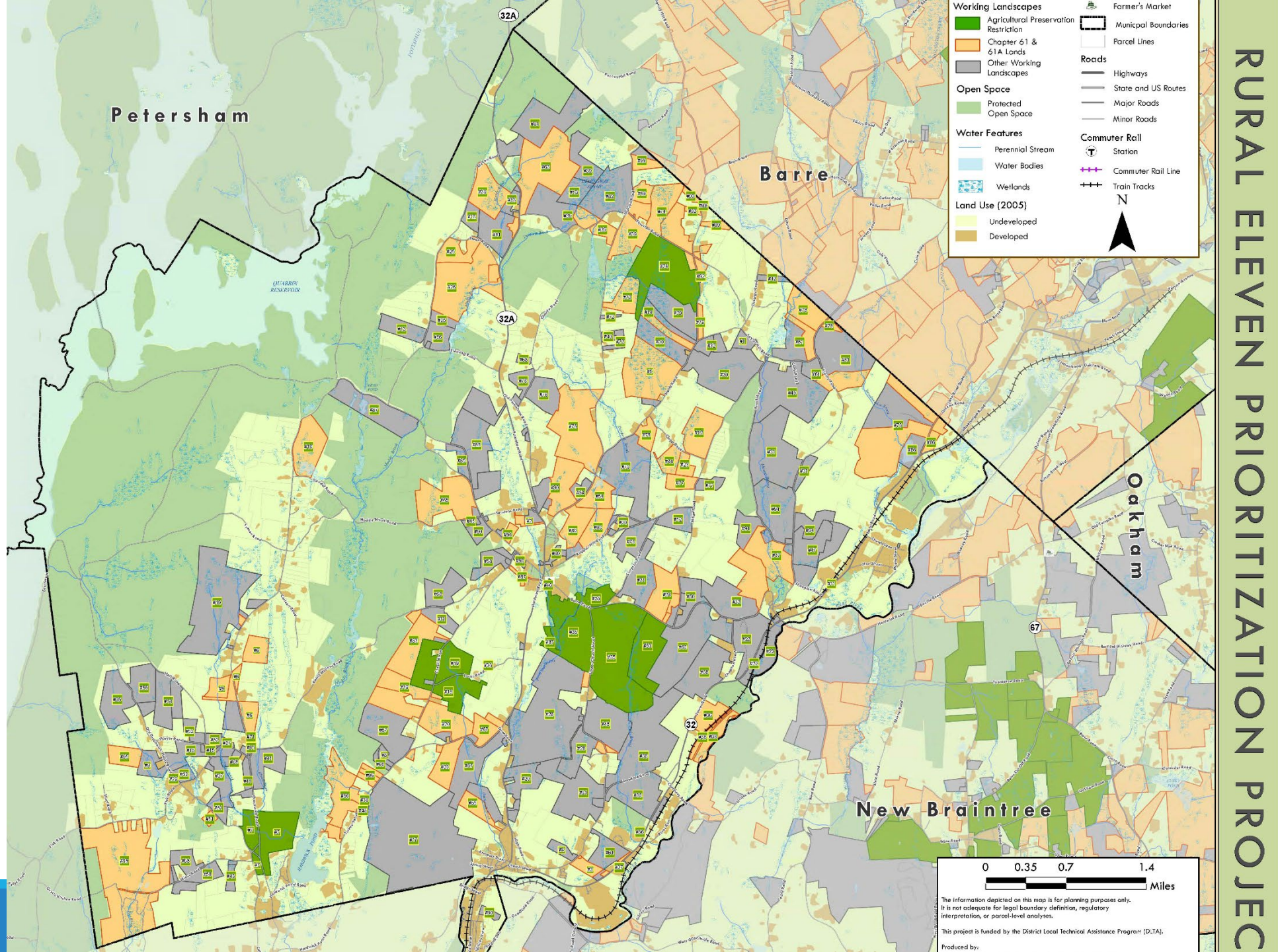
Barre, Brookfield, East Brookfield, Hardwick, New Braintree, North Brookfield, Oakham, Princeton, Rutland, Warren, and West Brookfield.



The process

1. The Goal
   - Establish community based priorities and strategies
   - Find common themes that could be supported by regional approaches, and provide a basis for public investments.
2. Met with local Planning Boards and Select Boards in our 11 most Rural Communities.
   - Priority Areas for Development
   - Priority Areas for Preservation, and
   - Priorities for Significant Infrastructure Investments.
3. An exhaustive effort to map working landscapes in 11 communities.





RURAL ELEVEN PRIORITIZATION PROJEC

Some key findings and strategies from Rural –11 Study

Collectively, farmland and working farms constitute an important component of the regional and statewide economy. Of the almost 700 working landscapes identified as part of this study, a closer look should be taken to prioritize and assess local and regional significance.

1. Identify and seek implementation of best practices and programs for protection and support of agricultural landscapes and the rural agricultural economy
2. Initiate Subregional Agricultural Committee
3. Partner with other RPAs regarding the Agricultural Economy



Rural-11 Themes - Part 1

Marketing was a prevalent theme. The need for new agri-tourism maps along farm corridors improving the customer's navigation of working landscape destinations;

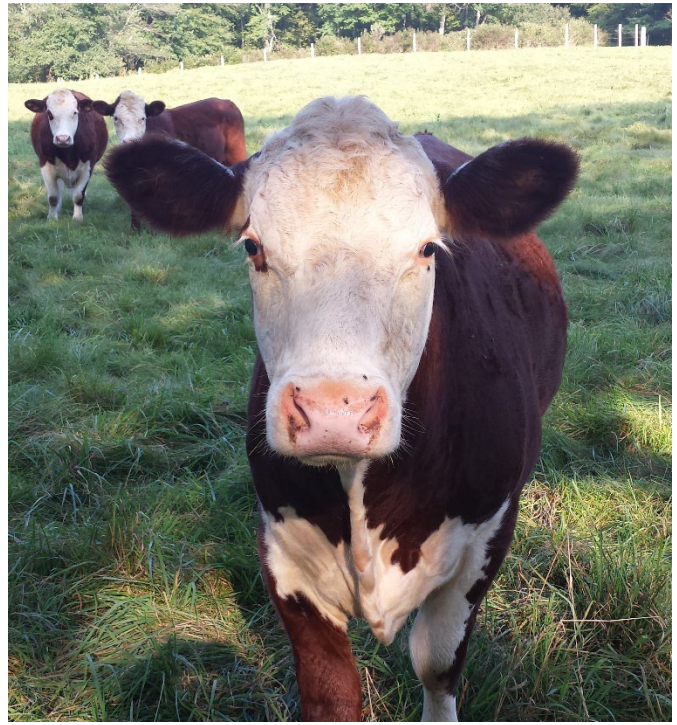
New zoning by-laws to protect farms and the farmers;

Increased regional collaboration on-line and off;

Regulatory reform could allow farmers to earn income in more diverse ways and with less needless barriers and hurdles;

Increased cooperative distribution and marketing efforts for farmers, but not necessarily done by farmers;

Economic development such as increased manufacturing plants, kilns, factories, as well as other small business developments would create end users and markets that demand the region’s agricultural products.



Rural-11 Themes - Part 2

Improved infrastructure, including water quality, electricity capacity, reinforced bridges, and repaved roads;

Wider information technology coverage through cell phone towers and broad-band internet;

A survey to determine the remaining unknown needs of farmers and their supporting businesses;

Agricultural education to train future generations of farmers; and

Increased incentives for farm preservation or "farm tenure."



Regional Planning Successes

Highlighting the number of farms and the lack of marketing opportunities paved the way for the creation of

Central Mass Grown

that has filled the Buy-Local hole that existed in Central Mass.



Municipal Planning Successes

From 2019 to 2022, CMRPC, with funding from District Local Technical Assistance worked with the Rutland Agricultural Commission.

1. Cataloging of agricultural and open space parcels in 2020,

2. Development of community outreach and networking events to connect landowners and farmers with the Agricultural Commission in 2021.

3. Development of a rubric to assess parcels on their priority relative to open space and agricultural preservation goals. This tool was intended to provide the Town of Rutland with a reference point for assessing the potential acquisition of private property for preservation or municipal purposes if it comes on the market.



Support Viability, Preservation, and Access

- Explored and promoted creation of Food Hub including Local Farm Product Aggregation, and Farm to School Efforts.
- Engaging in efforts to bring Agricultural Education opportunities into Central Massachusetts
- Prominently incorporate agriculture economic development in our Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy. (CEDS)
- Assess Worcester properties for agriculture suitability.
- Incorporation into our Comprehensive Climate Action Plan to promote resilient farming.
- Foster Partnerships and support local boards



Pilot to create template for municipal farmland protection plans

Tamsin Flanders

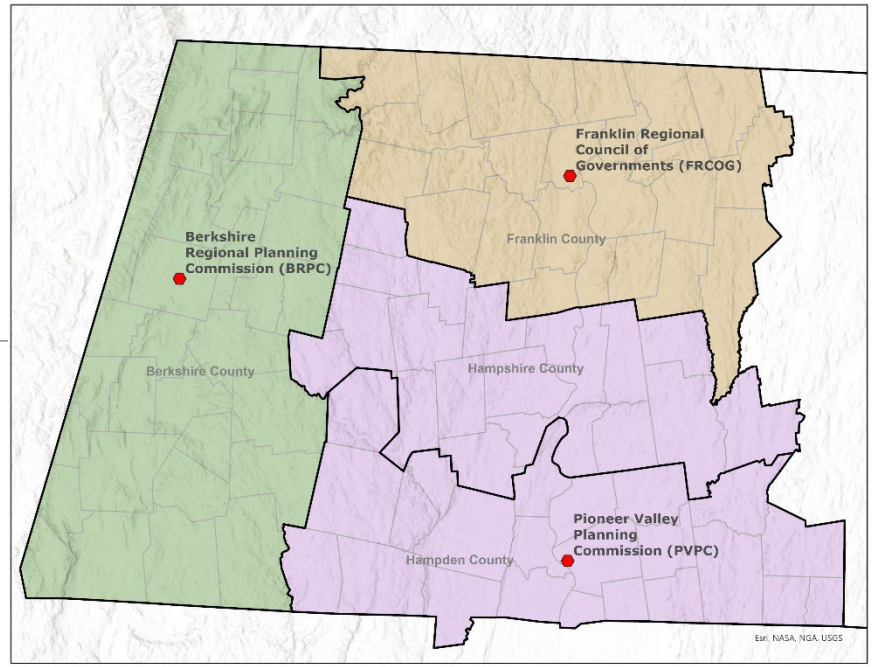
Franklin Regional Council of Governments

Need for Municipal Farmland Planning

- Farmland is a long-term public resource that should be stewarded by the community
- Municipalities have opportunities to take a bigger role in balancing types of development and protecting farmland
- No known examples of municipal farmland protection plans in Massachusetts or New England



FPP Project & Partners



- 2 pilot towns in each RPA service area
- **1-year planning process, including:**
  - 5 advisory committee meetings,
  - 1 focus group with Historically Underserved Farmers,
  - 1 public forum
- **Variable community types:**
  - Range of Agricultural Commission characteristics
  - Range in level of farmland protection
  - Alignment with Comprehensive Planning, Open Space and Recreation Planning
- **Deliverables - templates & lessons learned from**
  1. Plan Document
  2. Maps
  3. Prioritization Exercise

Municipal Farmland Planning Benefits

- **Orient Community to Farms & Farmland Protection**
- **Educate & Empower Municipal Partners**
  - Better equip municipalities to act on and assist with farmland protection and stewardship
  - Better equip municipalities to support farm and farmland access and viability
  - Give Ag Coms the opportunity to collect data they're interested in
- **Integrate Municipal Planning Efforts**
  - Center farmers in planning
  - Integrate farmland planning into other municipal planning processes (OSRPs, comprehensive plans, etc.)
- **Support Conservation Efforts**
  - Boost eligibility for ACEP-ALE (federal funding for farmland)
  - Provide more community context and parcel information to local land trusts
  - Prioritize areas for conservation

The Plan: Existing Conditions & Analysis

- **Purpose and Need for Farmland Protection Planning**
- **Community Goals**
- **Regional Context**: County- and region-wide data on farms, farmland, agricultural markets, and supporting businesses
- **Community Context**: Local data on demographics, housing, land use policy, development trends, economy, and land trusts
- **Farms & Farmland Inventory and Analysis**: Farms and farmer statistics, active and inactive farmland, protection status
- **Farmland Environmental Analysis**: Agricultural soils, flood hazard and areas prone to flooding, environmental restrictions, development pressure

The Plan: Findings & Recommendations

- **Farmland Prioritization Exercise**
- **Local Farmland Protection Findings**
- **Opportunities for Municipalities to Support Local Farmland Protection**
  - Municipal Roles & Powers
  - Permanent Farmland Protection Tools
  - Temporary Farmland Protection Tools
  - Funding Sources
- **Municipal Strategies for Farmland Protection, Viability, and Access**
- **Recommendations and Implementation Strategies**

Building municipal capacity to protect farmland

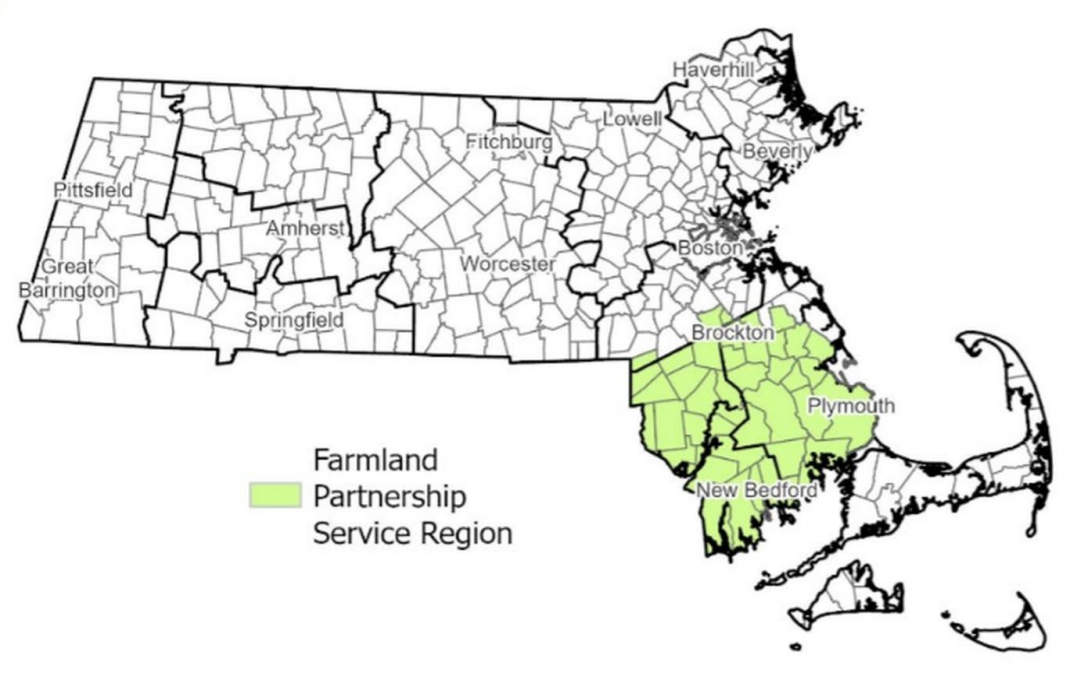
Karen Pettinelli, SRPEDD

https://srpedd.org/farmland-protection-initiative/

Southeastern Massachusetts Farmland Protection Initiative

A partnership between two regional planning agencies and a land trust.

The Southeastern MA Farmland Protection Initiative is a partnership between SRPEDD, OCPC and Wildlands Trust to support municipalities in protecting Chapter 61A farmland in southeastern Massachusetts.



SRPEDD
Southeastern Regional Planning & Economic Development District

OCPC
Old Colony Planning Council

Wildlands Trust
Regional land trust

Chapter 61A: MA state ‘current use’ law that serves as a temporary farmland protection mechanism

Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 61A (M.G.L. c. 61A)/ ‘Current Use’ Law:

- A voluntary tax reduction program for landowners that meet Chapter 61 requirements.
- Land is taxed at the current use value (instead of development value) to encourage the preservation of farms, forests, and other open space.
- This results in a large tax reduction (often 75% or more) for landowners while land is enrolled in the program.

Tradeoff: Landowner receives a property tax benefit while the municipality (and soon possibly the state) gets the **Right of First Refusal (ROFR)** when there is a sale change in use.

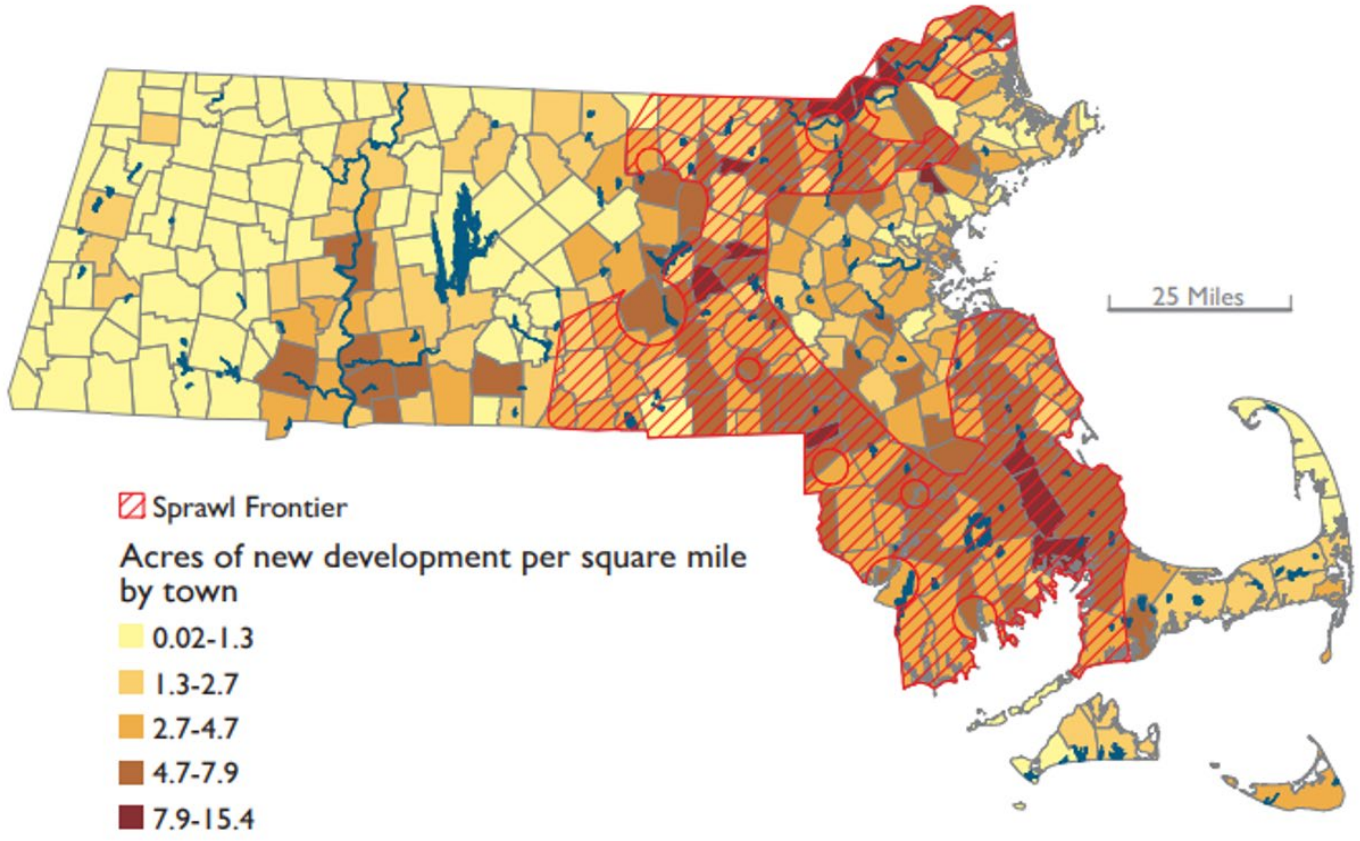
- **ROFR:** The option to purchase the property by matching a legitimate offer before it is sold off.

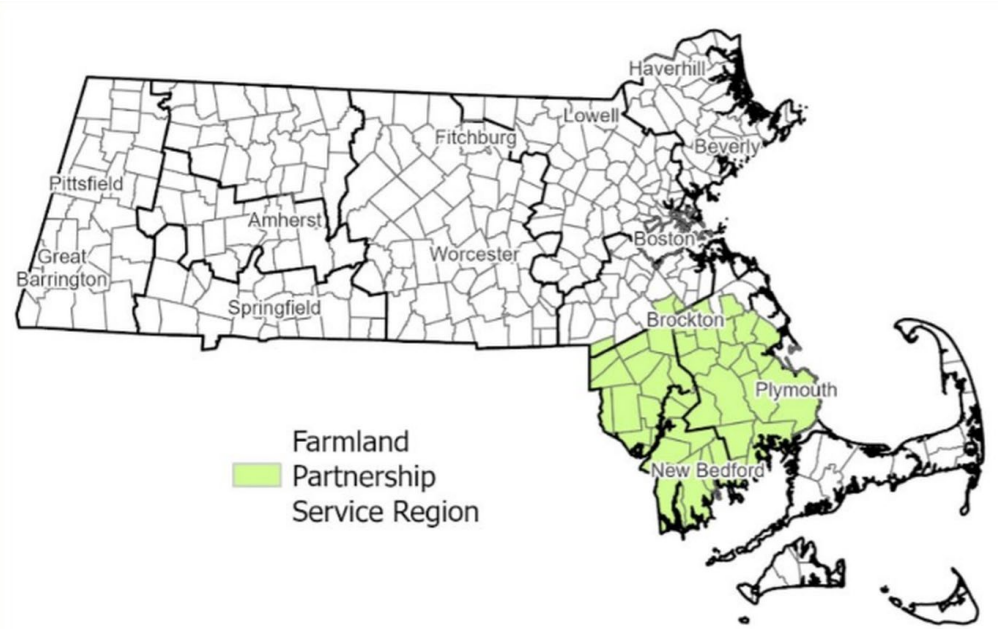
Chapter 61A: Reduces the tax burden on agricultural landowners, allowing the land to stay in agriculture longer by reducing financial pressure of land ownership.



'Sprawl curtain' impacting Southeast MA....

Recent development trends in MA, 2005 - 2013:





Combined project service region

Source: Losing Ground – Planning for Resilience, Mass Audubon, June 2014

Moving from temporary to permanent protection...

Project Goal:

To collectively move the needle on the permanent protection of Chapter 61A lands in SE MA by increasing the capacity of municipalities to respond quickly to Right of First Refusal opportunities.

Increase permanent protection of farmland in SE MA.



What we offer municipalities to support farmland protection

1. Training

Webinars and workshops on Chapter 61A and municipal Right of First Refusal (ROFR) opportunities to protect farmland

2. Written procedures

Help draft guidelines for responding to Chapter 61A land sale notices

3. Planning and zoning tools

Education on tools that reduce farmland loss

4. Funding

Help municipalities establish Agricultural Preservation Funds and other funding sources/avenues for farmland protection

Municipal webinar series

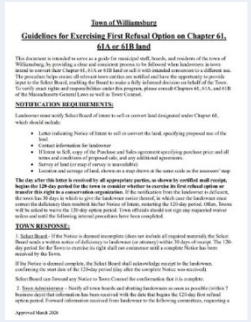
- **Webinar 1:** Farmland Protection Tools for Municipalities (June 2026)
- **Webinar 2:** 'Saving the Farm: Municipalities' Right of First Refusal During Chapter 61A Transfer - with expert Dennis Murphy (October 14, 2 – 3:30 pm, 2026)
- **Webinar 3**: The Value of Land Protection - Cost-benefit analysis - explain land conservation tax outcomes. (May/June 2027)
- **Webinar 4:** Local Champions/Local Successes - Success stories/challenges within our region (October 2027)

Register for Webinar 2, Oct 14th:

Sign up for our project mailing list to receive updates:

Municipal technical assistance and educational opportunities

Planning and zoning tools that can assist farmland protection



Town of Williamsburg

Guidelines for Exercising First Refusal Option on Chapter 61, 61A or 61B land

This document is intended to serve as a guide for municipal staff, boards, and residents of the town of Williamsburg, by providing a clear and consistent process to be followed when landowners in town intend to convert their Chapter 61, 61A or 61B land or sell it with intended conversion to a different use. The procedure helps ensure all relevant town entities are notified and have the opportunity to provide input to the Select Board, enabling the Board to make a fully informed decision on behalf of the Town. To notify you of rights and responsibilities under this program, please consult Chapters 61, 61A, and 61B of the Massachusetts General Laws as well as Town Counsel.

NOTIFICATION REQUIREMENTS:

Landowner must notify Select Board of intent to sell or convert land designated under Chapter 61, which should include:

- Letter indicating Notice of Intent to sell or convert the land, specifying proposed use of the land
- Contact information for landowner
- Copy of Purchase and Sale, Lease and Sales agreement specifying purchase price and all terms and conditions of proposed sale, and any additional agreements.
- Survey of land (or map if survey is unavailable)
- Location and acreage of land, shown on a map drawn at the same scale as the assessors' map

The day after this letter is received by all appropriate parties, as shown by certified mail receipt, begins the 120-day period for the town to consider whether to exercise its first refusal option or transfer this right to a conservation organization. If the notification from the landowner is deficient, the town has 30 days in which to give the landowner notice thereof, in which case the landowner must correct the deficiency then resubmit his/her Notice of Intent, restarting the 120-day period. Often, Towns will be asked to waive the 120-day option period. Town officials should not sign any requested waiver unless and until the following internal procedures have been completed.

TOWN RESPONSE:

1. Select Board - If the Notice is deemed incomplete (does not include all required materials, the Select Board sends a written notice of deficiency to landowner (or attorney) within 30 days of receipt. The 120-day period for the Town to exercise its right shall not commence until a complete Notice has been received by the Town.

If the Notice is deemed complete, the Select Board shall acknowledge receipt to the landowner, confirming the start date of the 120-day period (day after the complete Notice was received).

Select Board can forward any Notice to Town Counsel the confirmation that it is complete.

2. Town Administrator – Notify all town boards and abutting landowners as soon as possible (within 7 business days) that information has been received with the date that begins the 120-day first refusal option period. Forward information received from landowner to the following committees, requesting a

Approved March 2020

1. Technical assistance in responding to a purchase and sale, and exercising the ROFR.



2. Education on Conservation subdivision bylaws and agricultural inclusion



3. Technical assistance + education on using Community Preservation Act funds for agricultural protection

Technical assistance sessions: Municipal exercising of ROFR

In-person TA sessions – February – March 2027

The project team and Chapter 61A expert Dennis Murphy will hold in-person TA sessions for municipal leaders to assist in developing guidelines and protocols for Chapter 61A responsiveness.

Municipality guidelines for how to respond in the situation of a Right of First Refusal (ROFR)

Benefits:
- Written guidelines can assist in effective and speedy response to a purchase & sale notice when a municipality wants to protect farmland - through acquisition or assignment of ROFR to a land trust.
- This process of developing guidelines brings members of different boards and committees together to discuss their priorities and outline a roadmap that sustains the community's long-term vision.

Project technical assistance offerings: Project partners will assist municipalities in developing clear, actionable protocols to respond quickly to purchase and sale (P&S) notifications and Right of First Refusal opportunities to respond quickly to a Right of First Refusal opportunity for Chapter 61A lands.

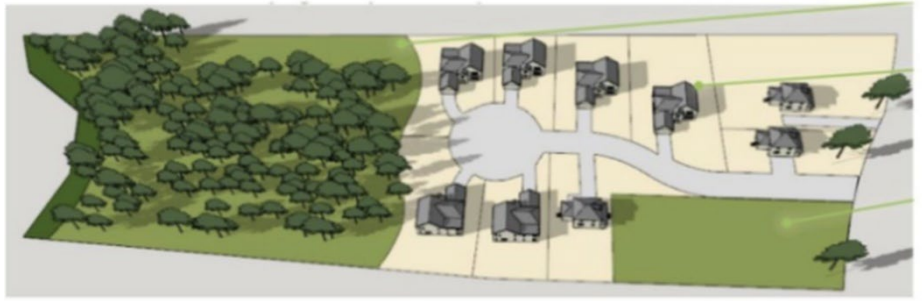
Protecting farmland through conservation subdivisions

- **Conservation subdivision**: Same number of homes as a conventional subdivision, on smaller lots
- A minimum share of the land becomes permanently protected open space
- **The protected open space can be working farmland**
- Check your bylaw: Is agriculture an allowed use of the open space?

Conventional subdivision, 9 units



Conservation subdivision, 9 units



Drawings: Town of Lynnfield, MA

Funding a fast response: CPA and the Agricultural Preservation Fund

Community Preservation Act (CPA)

- MA communities participating charge a local property tax surcharge of 1% to 3%.
- The state provides matching funds to what the municipality generates
- Farmland is a priority under the CPA open space category
- Every appropriation needs a town meeting or city council vote, often too slow for a ROFR

Agricultural Preservation Fund (APF)

- Set up under M.G.L. c. 40, § 8L(h) for the Agricultural Commission
- Funded ahead of time, including with CPA money; unspent funds roll over
- Ready for a ROFR without a new town meeting vote

Upcoming offerings and how to stay connected

NEXT Webinar: Wednesday, October 14, 2–3 pm

- ‘Saving the Farm: Municipalities’ Right of First Refusal’ with expert Dennis Murphy

Technical assistance sessions: January–February

- Municipal P&S response (exercising the ROFR): Cater to the unique municipal structure of the session recipient.

Educational Sessions:

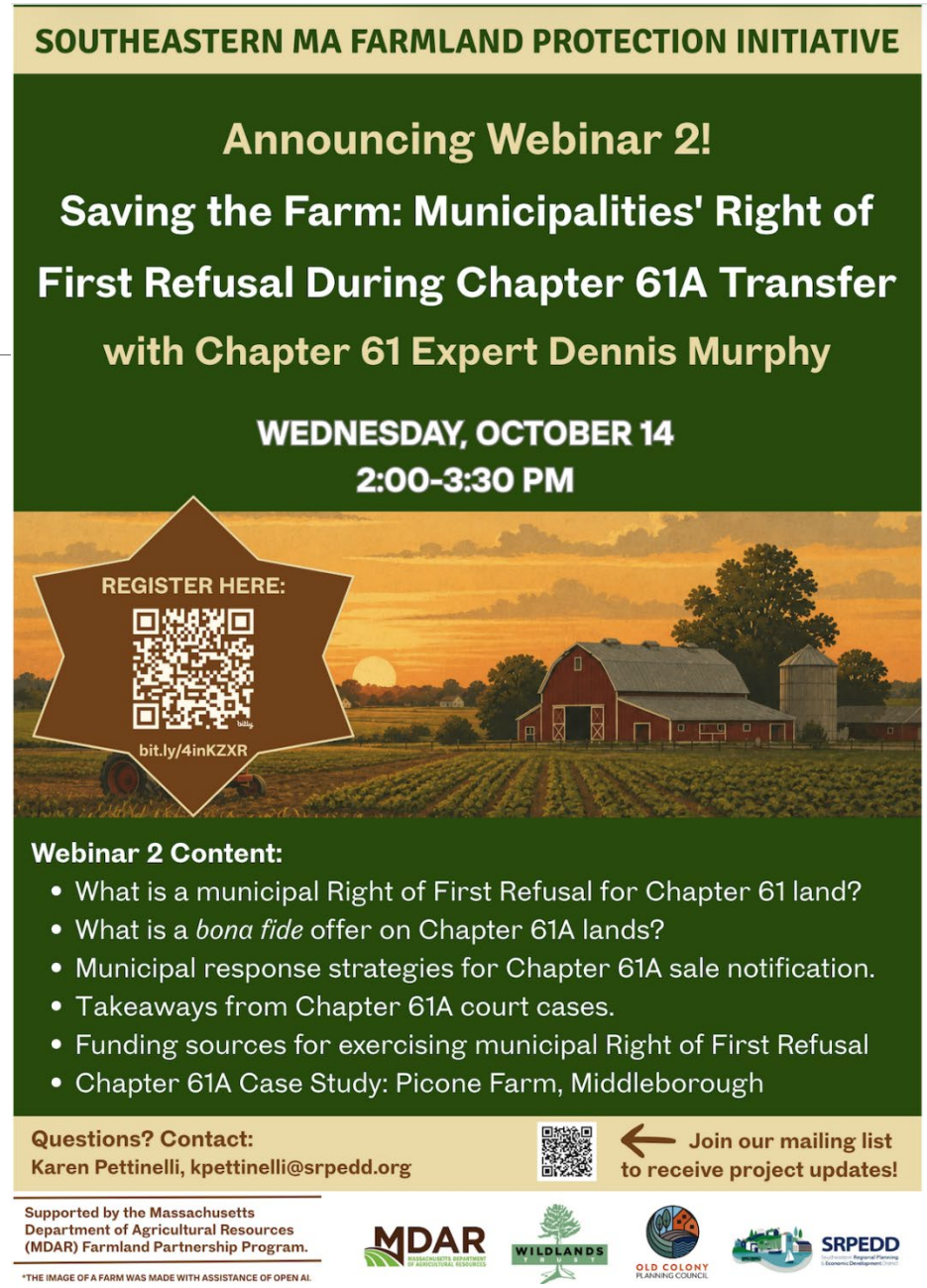
- Conservation Subdivisions Zoning bylaws for Agricultural Preservation and Farmworker Housing Workshops
- CPC Committee Meeting Presentations on Agricultural Protection Funds

Project website:

https://srpedd.org/farmland-protection-initiative/

Sign up for our project mailing list:

Scan for the project website:



Other resources and upcoming opportunities

Other new resources and upcoming webinars

Announcements will be shared in the MFAP newsletter and other locations as relevant.

Municipal Role when protecting farmland as APR

- Released Aug 2026
- APR Resources for Municipalities webpage

Saving the Farm: Municipalities' Right of First Refusal During Chapter 61A Transfer - 10/15 Webinar

- Hosted by Wildlands Trust as part of their Farmland Partnership Project
- More information and sign up on SRPEDD project webpage

Agricultural Commission technical assistance

- Hosted by Conservation Works as part of an MDAR contract
- Roundtables restart on 10/14
- More information and sign up on MDAR AgCom webpage

Another farmland planning webinar – Date to be announced

- Hosted by MDAR and several RPAs
- More information to come

Additional Farmland Partnership Program projects

Work is ongoing with some resources already published and additional ones due to be completed by the end of 2027.

The following is a highlight of some of the projects with oriented towards municipalities

In today's presentation

- Municipal Farmland Protection Plan template created and piloted
- Education on planning and zoning that reduces farmland loss
- Resources on how municipalities can respond to Right of First Refusal (ROFR)
- Municipal training on Chapter 61A

Other projects

- Education for municipalities developing and implementing a farmland licensing program
- Education on how to use Community Preservation Act (CPA) funds for protecting farmland
- And several others!

For updates on opportunities, sign up for the MFAP newsletter.

Questions & Answers

Facilitated by Trish Settles

Question and answers with contact information and websites

Trish Settles, AICP – tsettles@cmrpc.org

- https://cmrpc.org/resource-library/

Katharine Otto, AICP – Katharine.s.otto@mass.gov

- www.mass.gov/farmland-action-plan
- www.mass.gov/info-details/ag-resources-for-municipalities
- Newsletter - https://mailchi.mp/mass.gov/farmland-action-plan-updates

Tamsin Flanders – tflanders@frcog.org

- www.mass.gov/info-details/farmland-protection-projects#municipal-farmland-protection-plans

Karen Pettinelli – kpettinelli@srpedd.org

- https://srpedd.org/about-srpedd/what-we-do/
- https://srpedd.org/farmland-protection-initiative/

Register for Webinar 2, 10/14/2026, 2-3:30pm:

Sign up for SE MA Farmland Protection Initiative mailing list to receive updates: