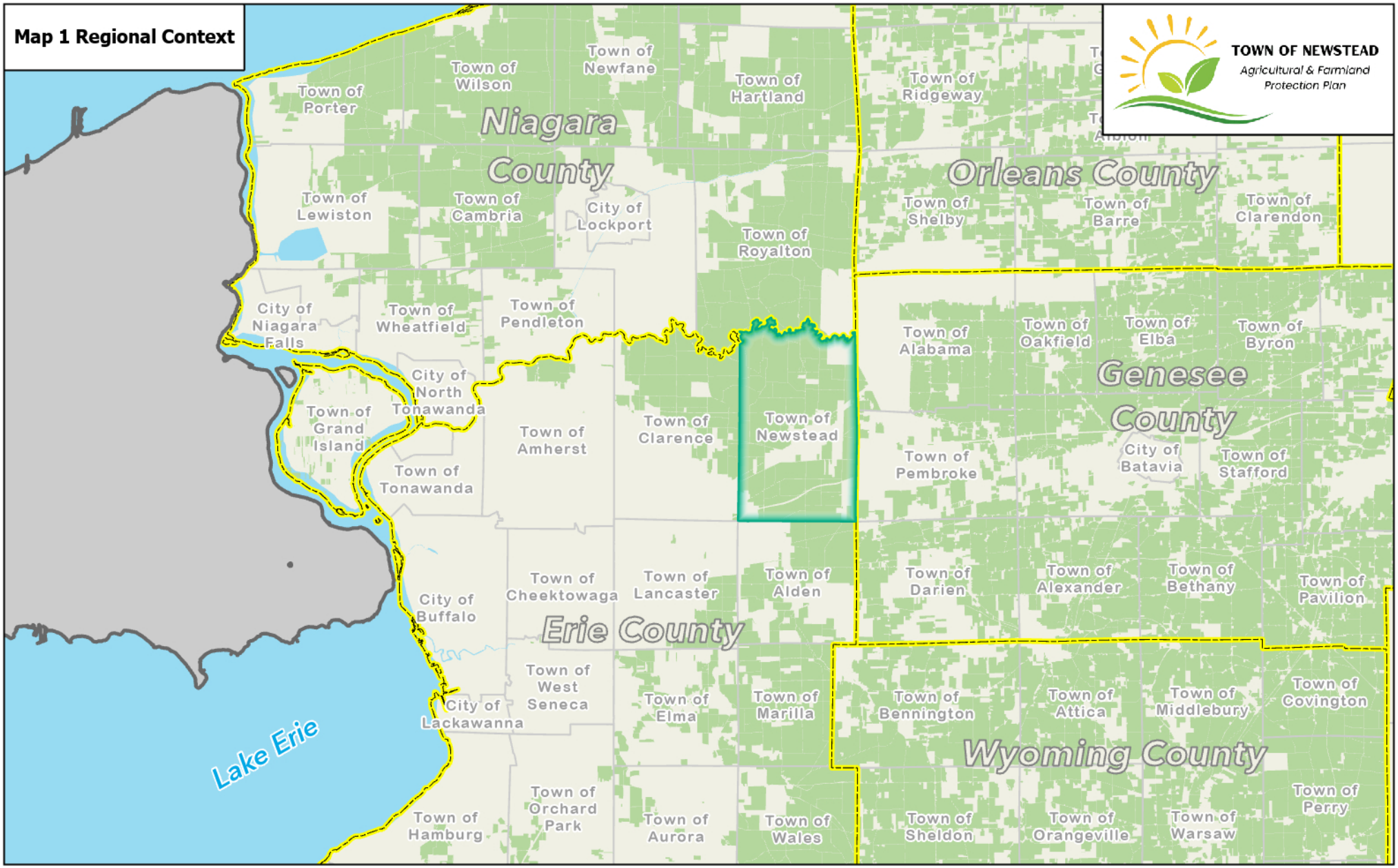
Appendix A

Maps

Map 1: Regional Context

Newstead is a town in the northeastern corner of Erie County with an area of land of 50.8 square miles or 32,512 acres, bound by the town of Clarence to the west, the town of Alden to the south, Genesee County to the east, and the town of Royalton to the north. Due to the state's vast number of towns, they are either categorized as towns of the first class (increasingly suburban communities with a population above 10,000) or towns of the second class (rural with a population below 10,000). Newstead sits in the second category, classifying it as a small, rural community.


Map 1 Regional Context
TOWN OF NEWSTEAD
Agricultural & Farmland Protection Plan
Niagara County
Orleans County
Genesee County
Erie County
Wyoming County
Lake Erie
Town of Porter
Town of Wilson
Town of Newfane
Town of Hartland
Town of Ridgeway
Town of Lewiston
Town of Cambria
City of Lockport
Town of Royalton
Town of Shelby
Town of Barre
Town of Clarendon
City of Niagara Falls
Town of Wheatfield
Town of Pendleton
Town of Alabama
Town of Oakfield
Town of Elba
Town of Byron
City of North Tonawanda
Town of Grand Island
Town of Amherst
Town of Clarence
Town of Newstead
Town of Pembroke
City of Batavia
Town of Stafford
Town of Tonawanda
Town of Cheektowaga
Town of Lancaster
Town of Alden
Town of Darien
Town of Alexander
Town of Bethany
Town of Pavilion
City of Buffalo
Town of West Seneca
City of Lackawanna
Town of Elma
Town of Marilla
Town of Bennington
Town of Attica
Town of Middlebury
Town of Covington
Town of Orchard Park
Town of Hamburg
Town of Aurora
Town of Wales
Town of Sheldon
Town of Orangeville
Town of Warsaw
Town of Perry
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Town of Newstead Boundary
Municipal Boundaries
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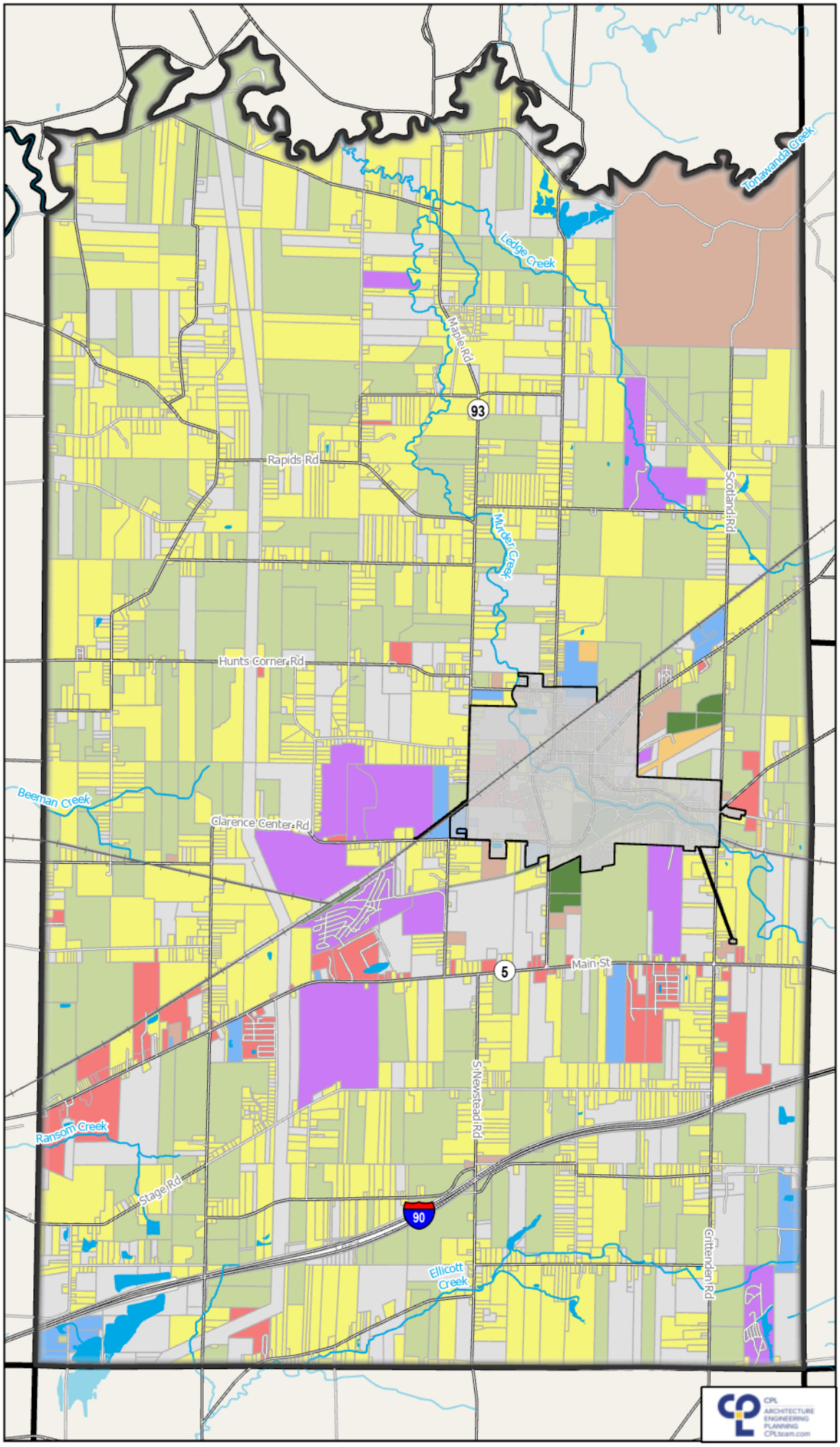
Map 2: Land Use

Map 2 highlights the general land use classification as determined by the Town assessor based on their primary use and utilize the NYS Real Property Service system. This map represents a snapshot of uses at one point in the year – lands that may be used for timber harvesting or are in a fallow state following several years of tilling may be shown as residential or vacant, which may not reflect the longer-term land use. In addition, some of the residentially-classified lands may an agricultural component as a secondary use as in the case of large acreage, rented lands.

The existing land use in Newstead suggests that Newstead is predominantly residential (5.5%) and agriculture (2.8%). Residential lots vary in size, with larger lots generally located on the outskirts of town and smaller lots located in and around the Village of Akron and along Route 5. These residential lots are mainly comprised of single-family dwellings, with two-family dwellings representing the second most common dwelling type. Surrounding the Village are agricultural lots, which are primarily large in size. Newstead's agricultural lots are largely made up of productive, vacant agricultural land, meaning parcels with the conditions and abilities to support agricultural use such as active farming.

Vacant land (1.8%) also accounts for a large portion of Newstead, primarily located in the northwest and southeast corners of town. Recreation & Entertainment (mainly consists of public golf courses) and community services (religious facilities) the next largest land use (0.4%). Commercial uses (mainly apartments) make up 0.3% of the total land area, and industrial uses make up 0.1%. Lastly, Wild, forested, conservation lands & public parks and public service uses together account for 0.1% of total land use. The wild, forested, conservation lands & public parks consist mostly of town or village public parks and recreation areas.

Land Use	Acreage	Total %
Residential	1,773.9	5.5%
Agricultural	921.3	2.8%
Vacant Land	574.8	1.8%
Recreation & Entertainment	136.1	0.4%
Community Services	128.8	0.4%
Commercial	92.1	0.3%
Industrial	43.7	0.1%
Wild, forested, conservation lands & public parks	28.8	0.08%
Public Services	6.5	0.02%



TOWN OF NEWSTEAD
Agricultural & Farmland Protection Plan

Map 2 Land Use

Legend

- Town of Newstead Boundary
- Village of Akron
- Tax Parcels
- Creeks/Streams
- Waterbodies
- State/County Roads
- Local Roads
- Railroad
- Residential
- Agricultural
- Vacant Land
- Commercial
- Recreation & Entertainment
- Community Services
- Industrial
- Public Services
- Wild, forested, conservation lands and public parks

**Land use as defined by primary use per local assessor using the NYS Real Property Service classification system. Based on latest assessment year. Data does not reflect local taxation levels, rates, etc. only general use of land based on time assessment review is undertaken.*

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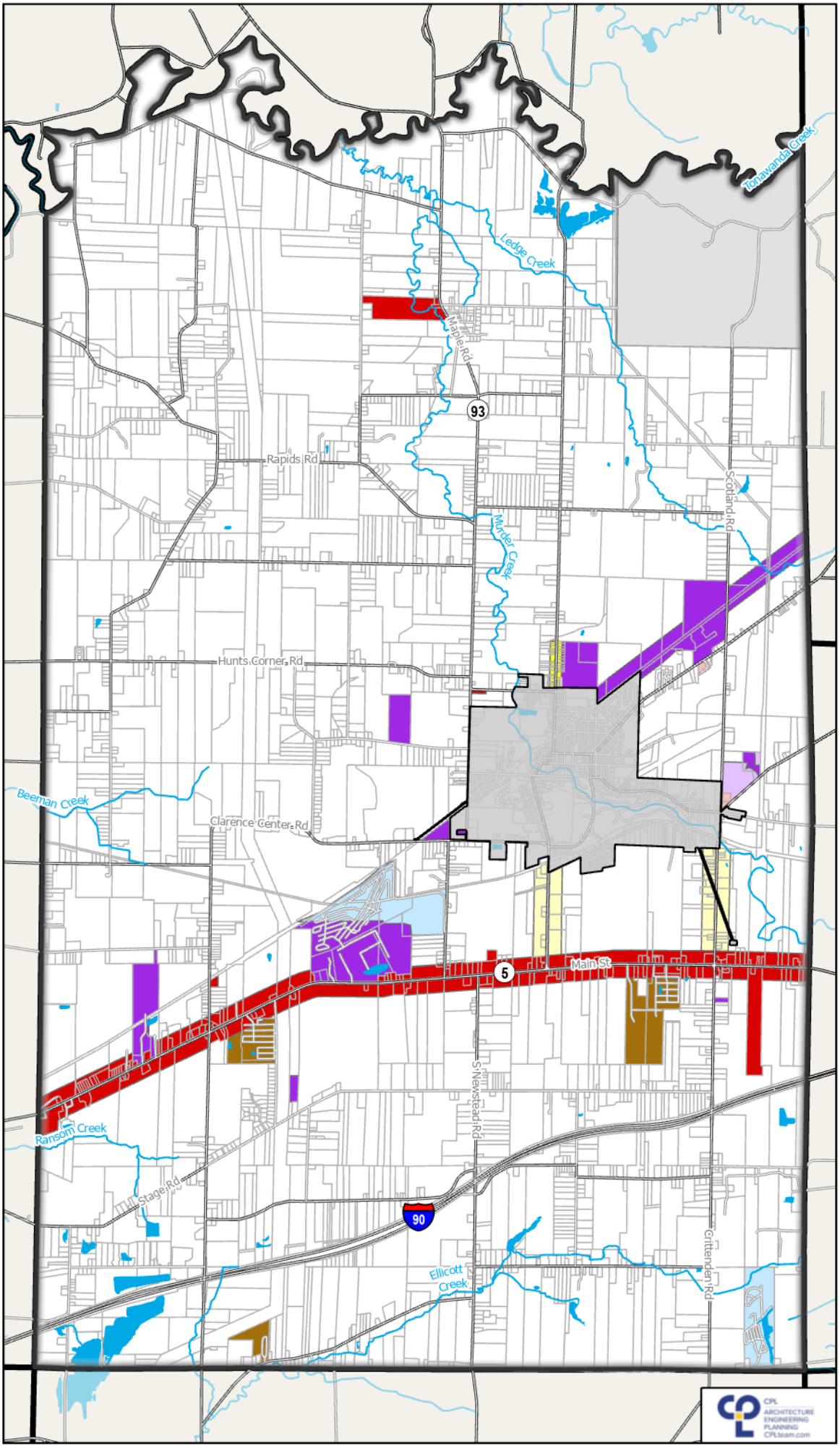
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MAP 3: ZONING

There are ten (10) zoning districts within the Town of Newstead with the largest reflecting the existing land use of the community – **Rural Agricultural (RA)**. The other remaining districts are found along the State Route 5/Main Street corridor, the rail line or adjacent to the Village of Akron, in a typical development of most WNY rural communities. The **Commercial (C2)** corridor extends the full breath of Route 5 and approximately 500 feet deep from the centerline of the road to the north and south. A singular **C2** district exists on the northern portion of the Town off of State Route 93/Maple Road though no development is formally found there. In addition to commercial along the Route 5 corridor are several **Manufactured Home Park (MHP)** districts (Golden Pork Estates and Quarry Hill Estates) and **Industrial (I2)** districts, with the latter consisting of an expansive auto auction by the hamlet of Akron Junction. The remaining **I2** districts are along the former rail line with a much smaller **I1 Industrial** district just east of the Village.

Residential districts are limited to portions of Cedar Street, Buell Street, and Crittenden Streets immediately adjacent to the Village – **Residential (R1)** and **Residential (R2)**. Other Districts within the Town consist of two small **Restricted Commercial (RC)** zones and the larger **Recreational Vehicle and Campground Park (RVP)** zone north of the auto auction, the Leisurewood Recreational Community.



TOWN OF NEWSTEAD
Agricultural & Farmland Protection Plan

Map 3 Zoning

Legend

- Town of Newstead Boundary
- Village of Akron
- Newstead Parcels
- State/County Roads
- Local Roads
- Creeks/Streams
- Waterbodies
- C2 - Commercial
- I1 - Industrial
- I2 - Industrial
- MHP Manufactured Home Park
- R1 - Residential
- R2 - Residential
- RC - Restricted Commercial
- RA Rural Agricultural
- RVP Recreational Vehicle and Campgroup Park
- R3 - Residential

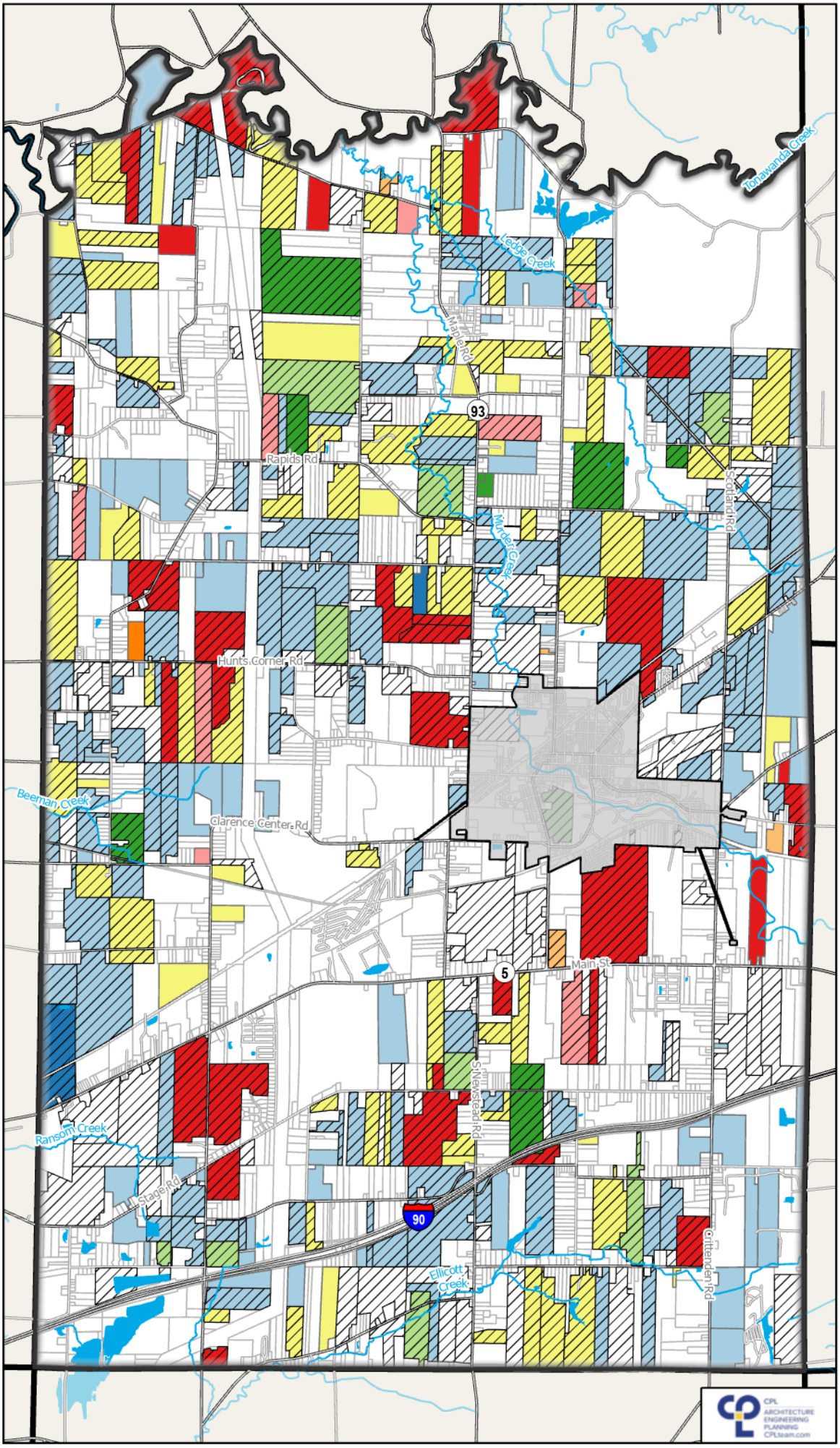
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Map 4: Agricultural Land Uses

Building on the existing land use map (Map #2), a further breakdown of the land classification codes yields a more detailed snapshot of the various farm types in Newstead. These include productive agricultural lands (open fields that may contain no improved structures), active operations, rural residential with rented/leased fields, and forested lands. When coupled with the County-adopted agricultural districts, a more robust picture of the extent of farming operations in Newstead is observed.



TOWN OF NEWSTEAD
Agricultural & Farmland Protection Plan

Map 4 Agricultural Land Uses

Legend

- Town of Newstead Boundary
- Village of Akron
- Newstead Parcels
- State/County Roads
- Local Roads
- Creeks/Streams
- Waterbodies
- Newstead Parcels Ag Exemption

Type of Agricultural Operation

- Agricultural vacant land (productive)
- Poultry and poultry products
- Dairy and related products
- Cattle, hogs, other livestock
- Horse farms
- Field crops
- Nursery and greenhouse
- Specialty farms
- Fish, game and wildlife preserves
- Residential with Rented Ag land

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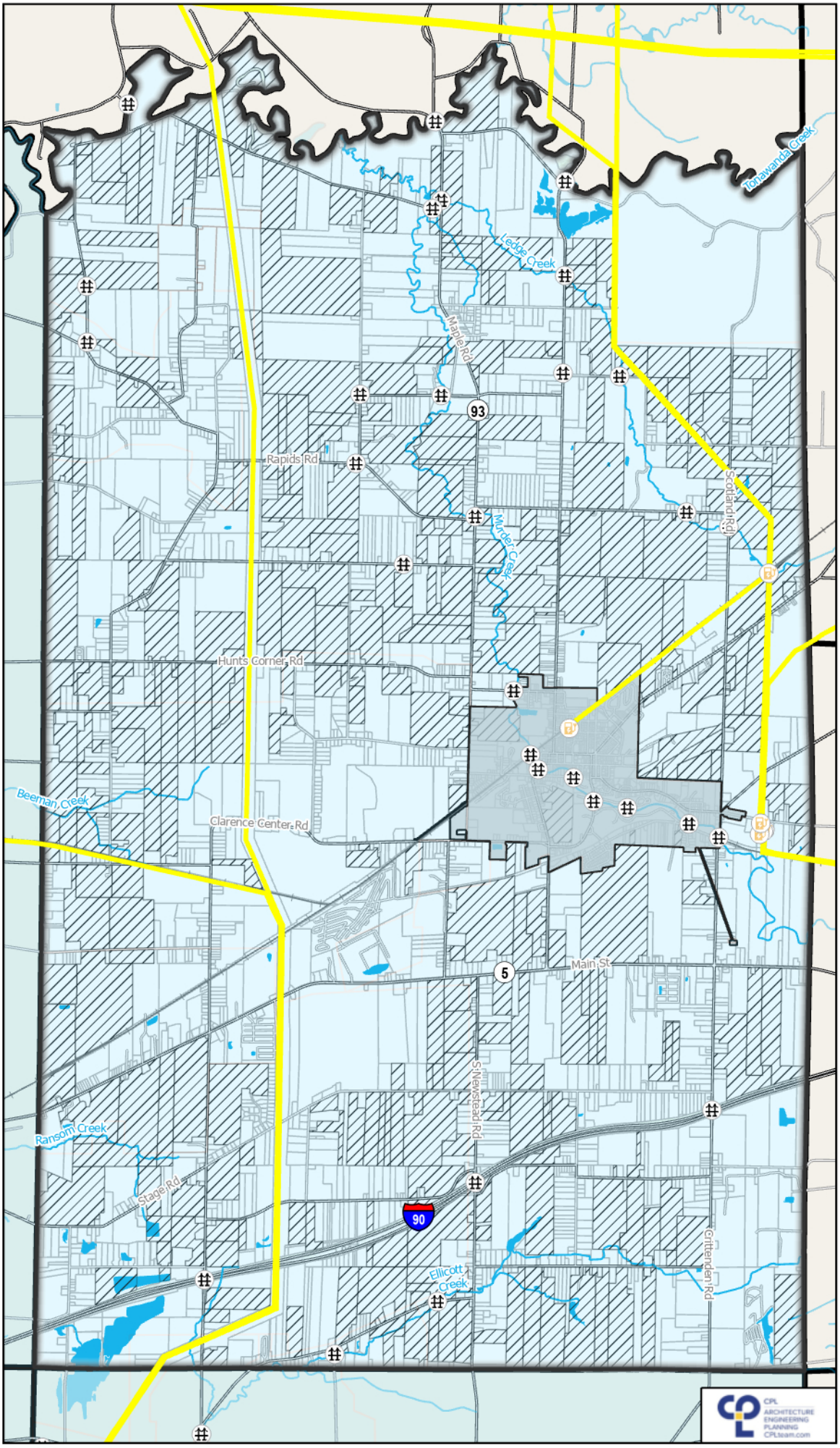
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Map 5: Infrastructure

The entirety of the Town is within the Erie County Water Authority (ECWA) water district, though public water lines may not fully extend out to all corners – the map merely shows the servicing area and many outlying properties still rely on private water wells and septic systems.

The limited nature of these districts, especially where both water and sewer are located, provides additional agricultural protection as it limits conversion to residential uses and the density that typically comes with these public services. The extent of public water, though, is beneficial for farmers for irrigation and processing purposes, thereby contributing to agricultural business expansion.

It should also be noted that high voltage electric corridors run along the eastern and western portions of the Town, predominantly in a north-south manner, and fed by lines in adjacent Niagara County. Local three phase feeder lines provide power to customers in Newstead via the Knapp Road substation, divided into a northern and southern section with single phase lines running along most local roads. An excerpt of the current National Grid system map (following page) highlights the extent of these three-phase (thicker line) and single-phase (not shown) that exist. In terms of agriculture, this is important for future solar development potential as these projects tend to locate where large tracts of land are available and transmission lines are in close proximity. Both of these factors exist in Newstead, so the Town should be aware of and plan for the protection of farmlands being converted to larger-scale solar fields.



TOWN OF NEWSTEAD
Agricultural & Farmland Protection Plan

Map 5
Public Infrastructure

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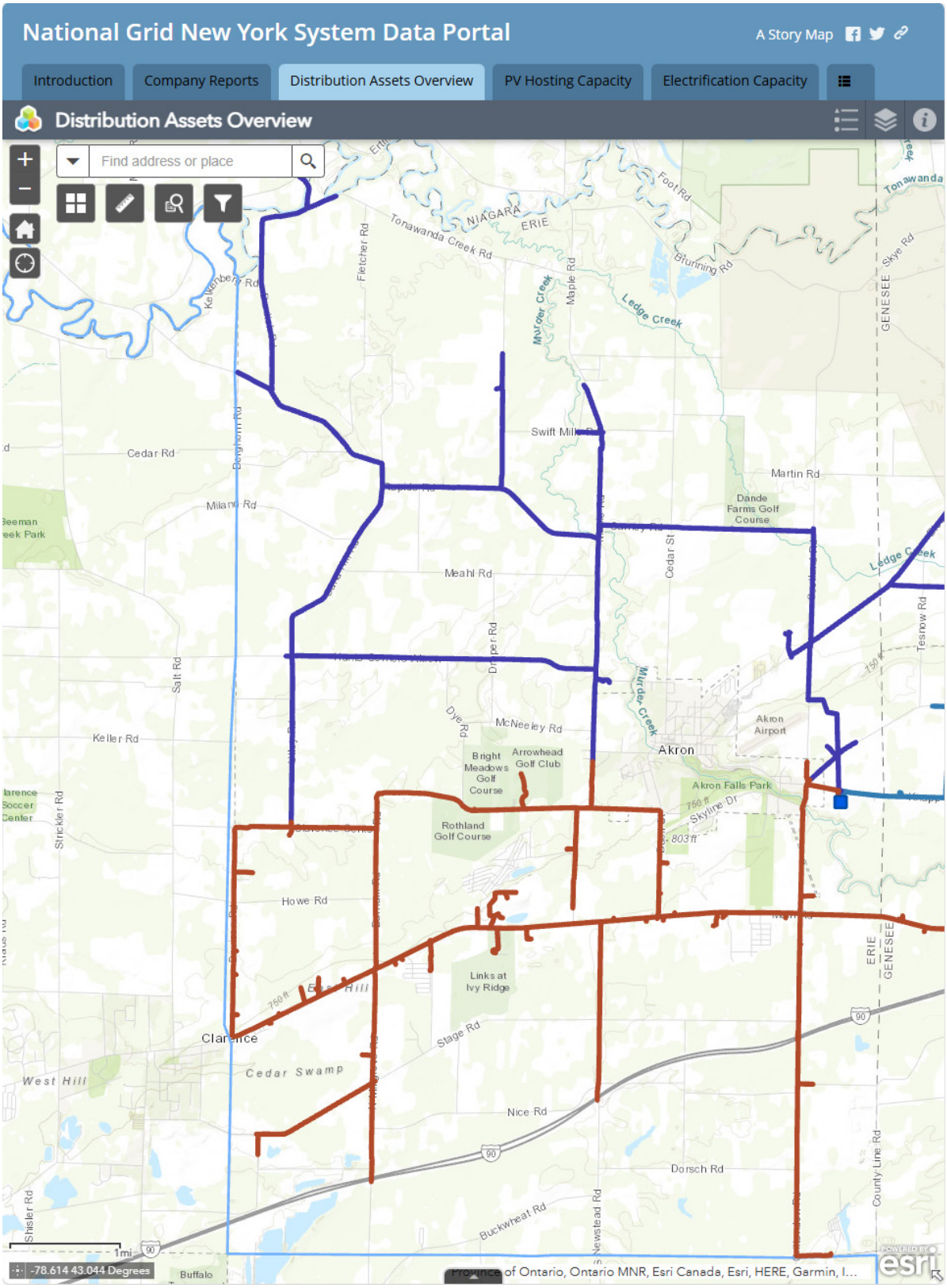
- Town of Newstead Boundary
- Village of Akron
- Newstead Parcels
- State/County Roads
- Local Roads
- Railroad
- Waterbodies
- Creeks/Streams
- Electric Substation
- Bridges
- High Voltage Power Lines
- ECWA Water Districts
- Newstead Parcels Ag Exemption

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Additional details on the electric system are available on National Grid's website: **https://systemdataportal.national grid.com/NY/**

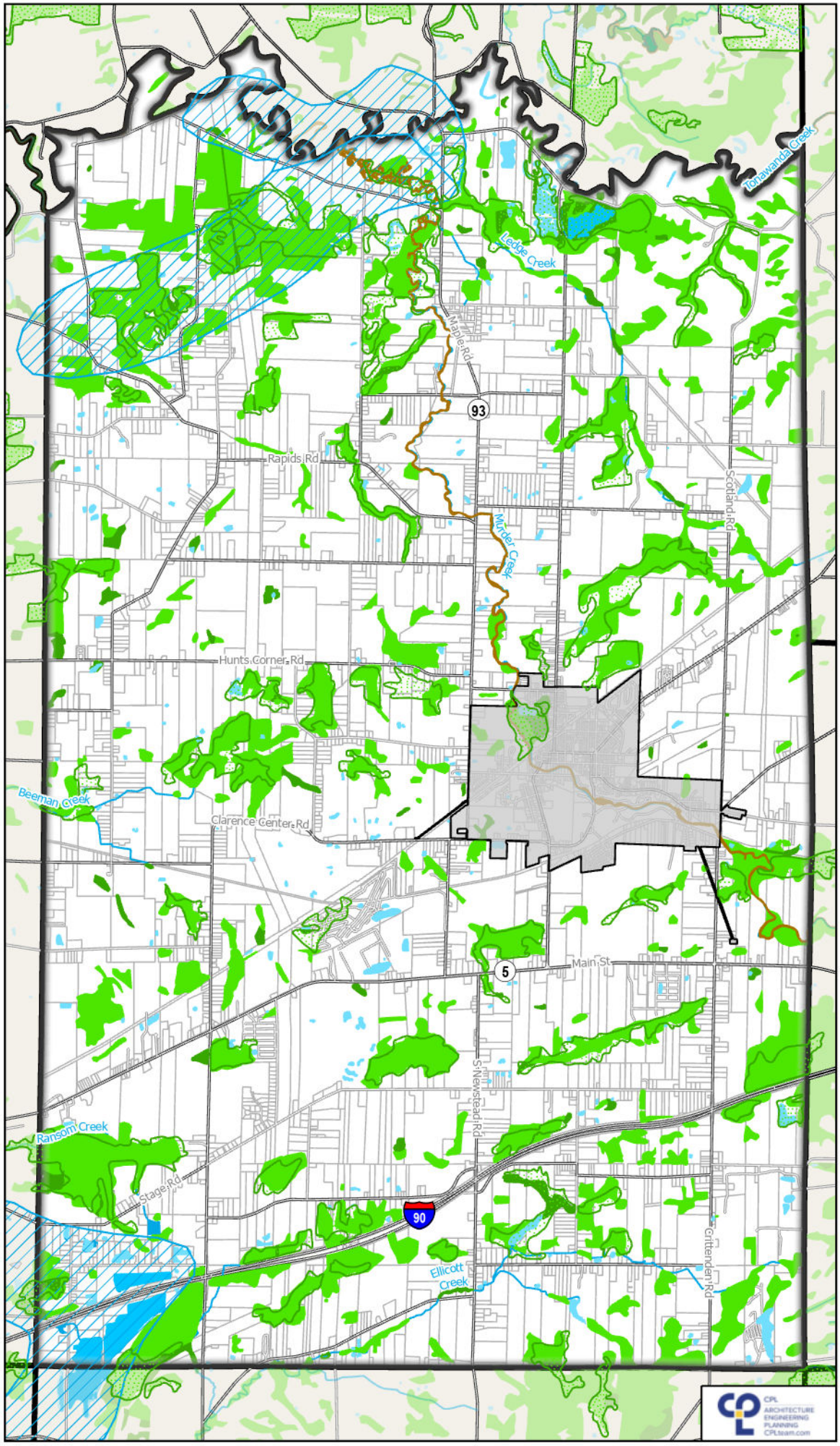


Map 6: Water Features

The Town of Newstead has several creeks that traverse the community mainly consisting of Murder Creek (north-south flow) in the northern portion and Ellicott Creek (east-west flow) to the south; several smaller creeks have headwaters within the Town. There are few open bodies of water (e.g., ponds) that exist and are primarily made up of various wetlands, both NYS DEC and US Army Corps of Engineer-regulated. These are widely dispersed across Newstead with no single area making up a greater density, often clustered in low-lying areas, but contributing to the overall water-rich environment.

While creating a potential conflict with farming, as wetlands are regulated and cannot be disturbed, they also serve as a valuable in their ability to absorb stormwater as well as filter runoff and groundwater. Maintaining these features and any buffer areas surrounding them will help to control excess water and maintain good water quality.

Groundwater resources are also an important feature, with aquifer zones highlighted by hatched blue areas, particularly in the northern and southwestern portions of the town.



TOWN OF NEWSTEAD
Agricultural & Farmland Protection Plan

Map 6 Water Features

Legend

- Town of Newstead Boundary
- Village of Akron
- State/County Roads
- Local Roads
- Tax Parcels
- Waterbodies
- Creeks/Streams
- NYSDEC Wetlands*
- Aquifers
- Freshwater Emergent Wetland
- Freshwater Forested/ Shrub Wetland
- Freshwater Pond
- Lake
- Riverine

** Wetlands are informational based on mapping and current NYS DEC regulations, subject to change.*

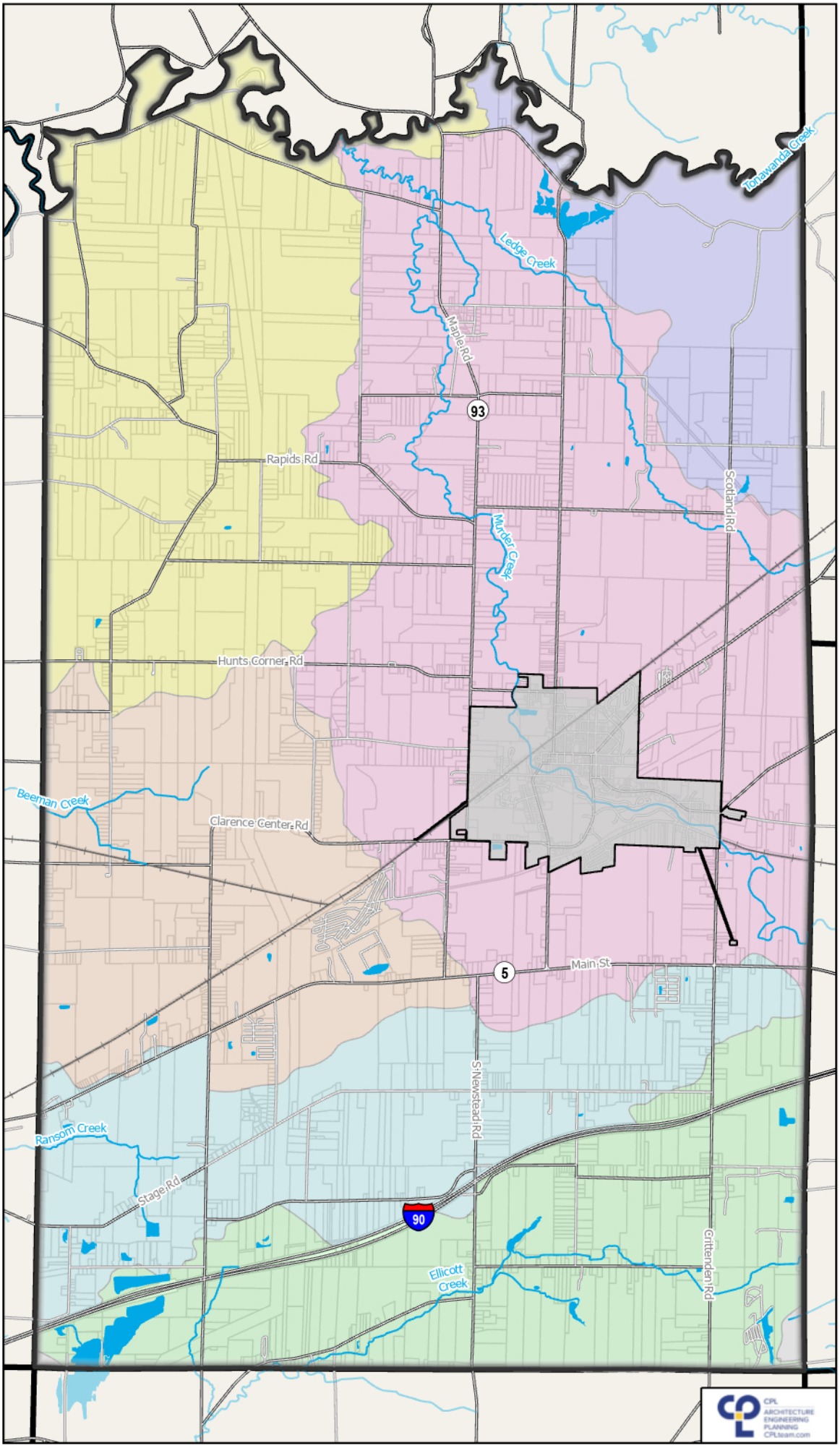
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Map 7: Watersheds

The USGS (United States Geologic Survey) categorizes watersheds into several subcategories (from largest to smallest) – regions, subregions, basin, subbasins, watersheds, and sub watersheds. The Town of Newstead is divided up into four watersheds including Middle Tonawanda Creek and Murder Creek to the north and Ellicott Creek and Lower Tonawanda Creek to the south. Drilling down further into the categories, seven individual *sub watersheds* are found within the Town, with the largest consisting of Lower Murder Creek followed by Ellicott Creek (hamlet of Peters Corners), Tonawanda Creek (Saint Stephens Church), Beeman Creek, headwaters Ransom Creek, and Black Creek-Tonawanda Creek which flows into Genesee County. Understanding the watersheds that make up the Town, the waterbodies that they flow in to, and the land uses that are within them provides a better understanding of water quality and potential sources for stormwater runoff.



TOWN OF NEWSTEAD
Agricultural & Farmland Protection Plan

Map 7
Watersheds

Legend

- Town of Newstead Boundary
- Tax Parcels
- Village of Akron
- Railroad
- State/County Roads
- Local Roads
- Waterbodies
- Creeks/Streams
- Beeman Creek
- Black Creek-Tonawanda Creek
- Hamlet of Peters Corners-Ellicott Creek
- Headwaters Ransom Creek
- Lower Murder Creek
- Saint Stephens Church-Tonawanda Creek

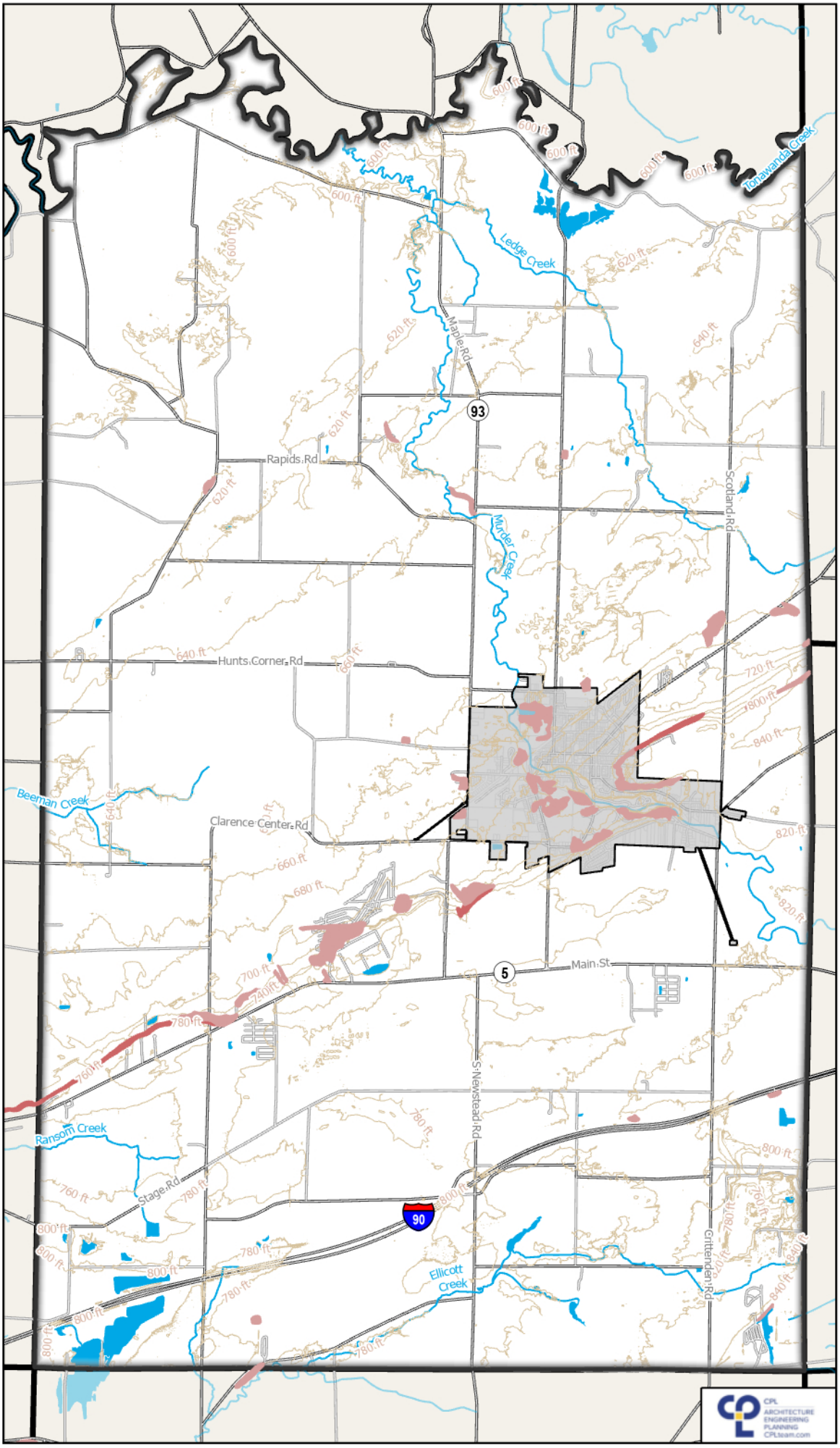
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Map 8: Topography

Newstead's overall topography is well suited for agricultural operations given that its land is relatively flat with gently rolling terrain, typical of the Lake Ontario Plain/Erie-Ontario lowland region. What few areas of steep slopes are found within the middle section of the Town. There is roughly a 300-foot elevation difference within the Town with an average elevation of around 699 feet above sea level. Generally, the composition of Newstead's land is highly suitable for agriculture due to its broad, open, and relatively level landforms.



TOWN OF NEWSTEAD
Agricultural & Farmland Protection Plan

Map 8
Topography

Legend

- Town of Newstead Boundary
- Village of Akron
- State/County Roads
- Local Roads
- Waterbodies
- Creeks/Streams
- Slope 10-25%
- Slope 25-50%
- Contours (20ft)

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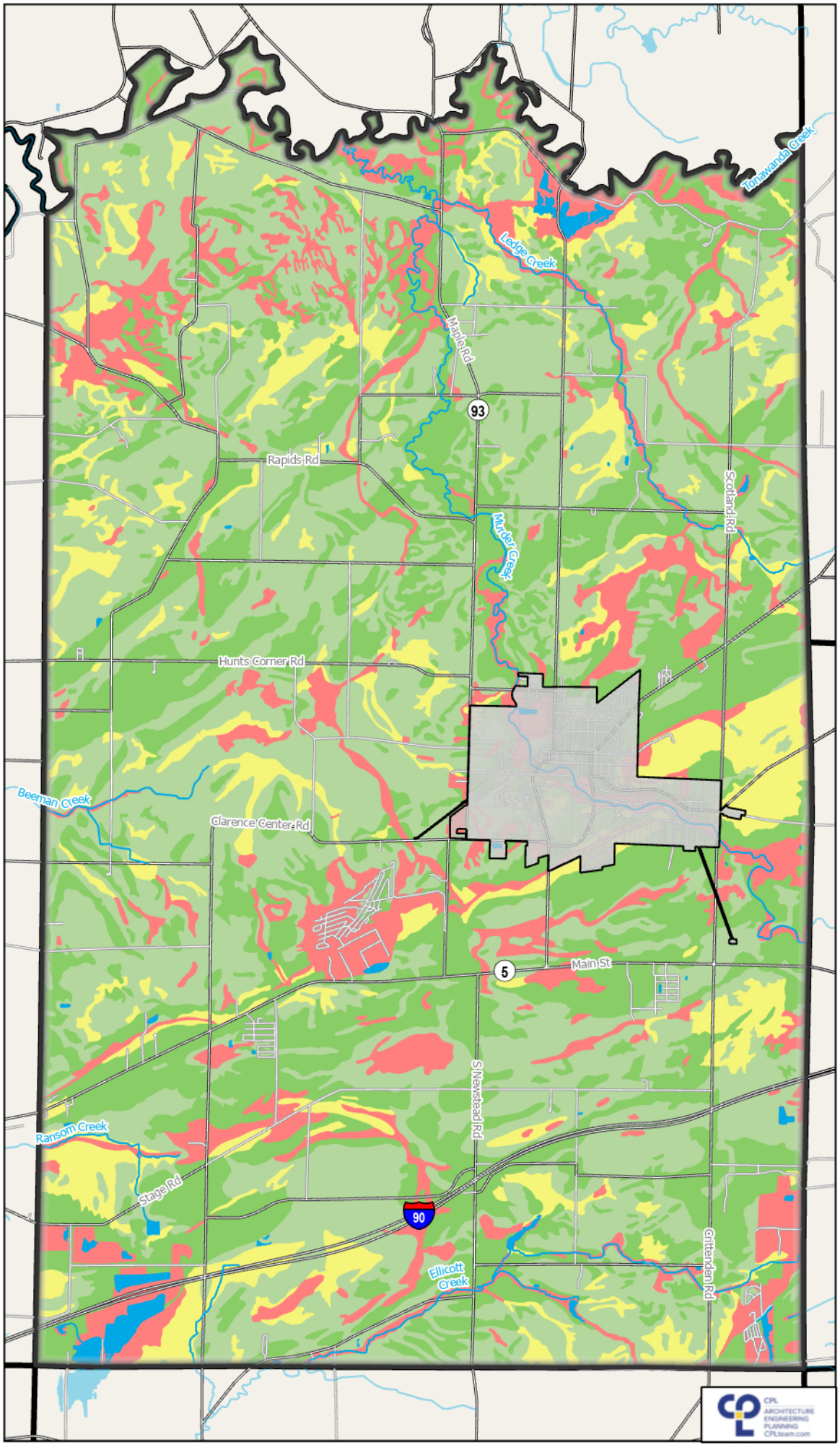
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Map 9: Farmland Soil Types

Map 10: Highly Productive Agricultural Soils

Prime farmland, as defined by the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), consists of "*land that has the best combination of physical and chemical characteristics for producing food, feed, forage, fiber, and oilseed crops and is also available for these uses. It has the soil quality, growing season, and moisture supply needed to produce economically sustained high yields of crops when treated and managed according to acceptable farming methods, including water management. In general, prime farmlands have an adequate and dependable water supply from precipitation or irrigation, a favorable temperature and growing season, acceptable acidity or alkalinity, acceptable salt, and sodium content, and few or no rocks. They are permeable to water and air. Prime farmlands are not excessively erodible or saturated with water for a long period of time, and they either do not flood frequently or are protected from flooding.*"

These soils are found throughout the Town, but when looking at the subcategories of "prime when drained" and "farmland of Statewide importance," the fertility of the soils in Town becomes much more prominent, covering almost all lands. The NYS DAM further classifies soils in Mineral Soils Group 1-4 as the State's most productive farm soils, which are highlighted on Map 8B. These soils are particularly important when it comes to applying for and receiving tax exemptions on agricultural lands and receive the greatest base assessment value (resulting in increased tax benefit for the property owner). These soils are also the first to be reviewed when it comes to agricultural conversion of land (e.g., solar and residential) in terms of negative impacts to agricultural resources, subject to higher levels of critique.



TOWN OF NEWSTEAD
Agricultural & Farmland Protection Plan

Map 9
Farmland Soil Types

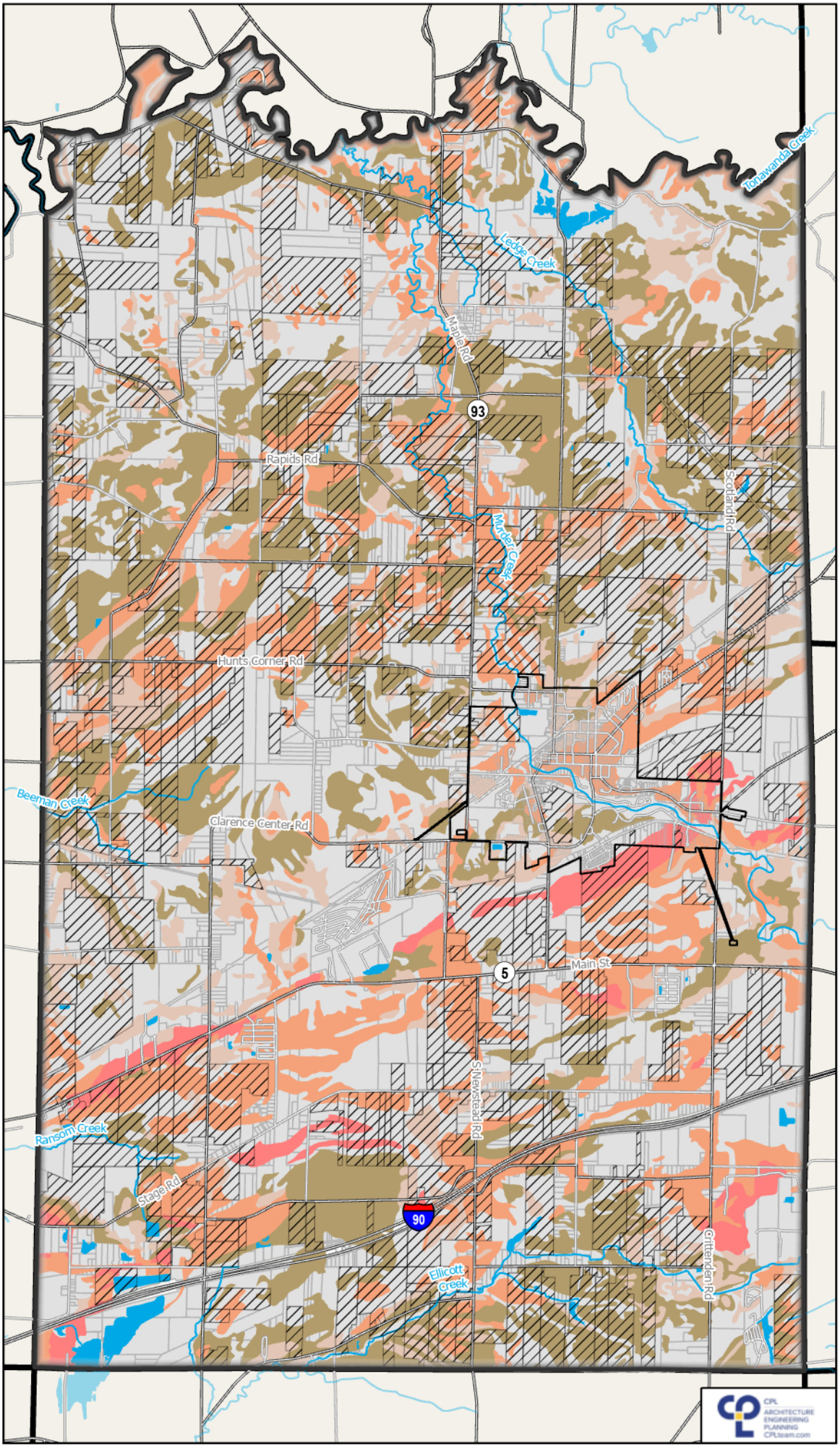
Legend

- Town of Newstead Boundary
- Village of Akron
- Tax Parcels
- Creeks/Streams
- Waterbodies
- State/County Roads
- Local Roads
- All areas are prime farmland
- Farmland of statewide importance
- Not prime farmland
- Prime farmland if drained

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TOWN OF NEWSTEAD
Agricultural & Farmland Protection Plan

Map 10
Highly Productive Agricultural Soils

Legend

- Town of Newstead Boundary
- Newstead Parcels
- Newstead Parcels Ag Exemption
- Creeks/Streams
- Waterbodies
- State/County Roads
- Local Roads

Default Mineral Soil Group

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4

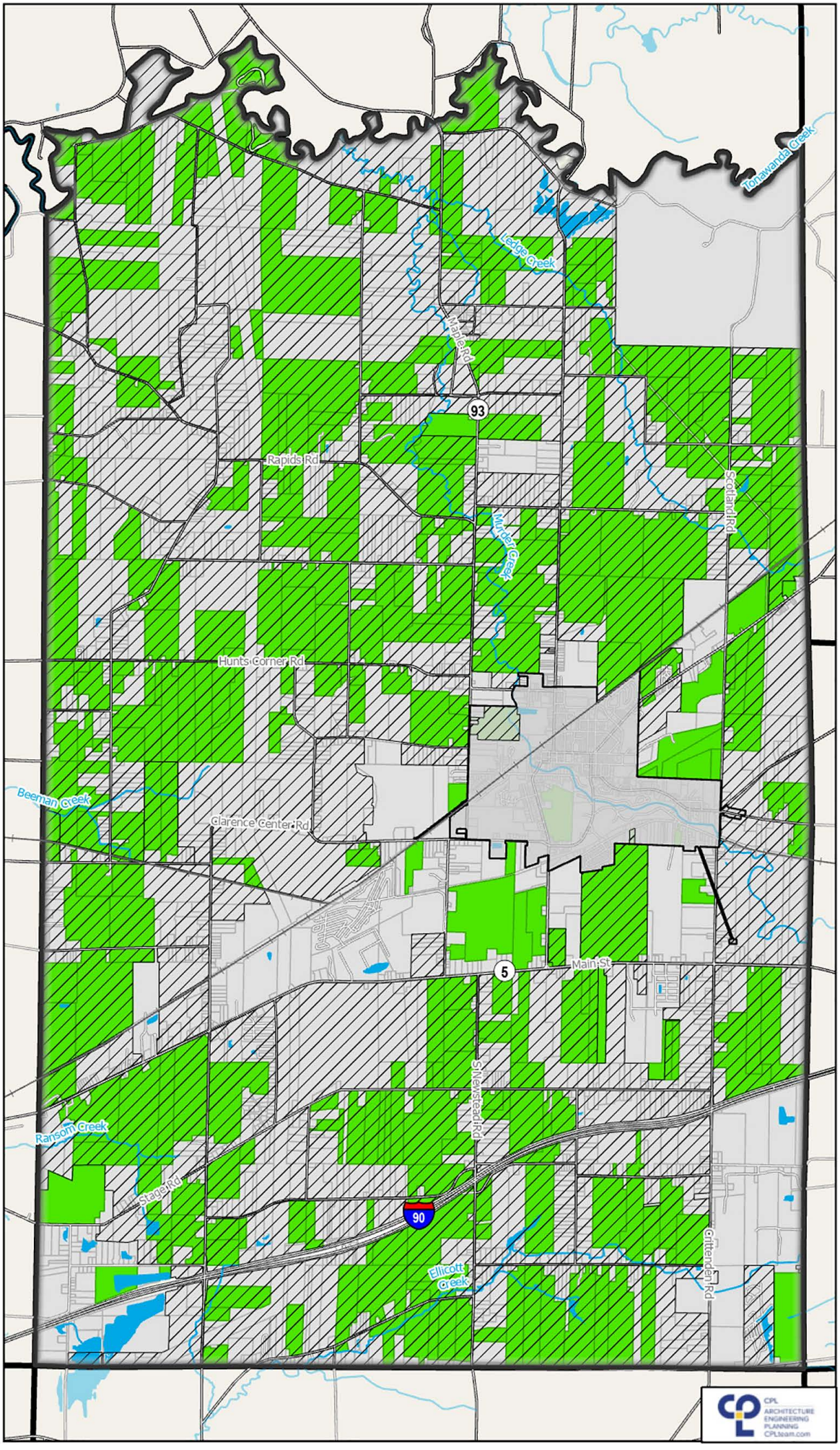
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Map 11: Agricultural Districts

State-certified, County-adopted agricultural districts, not to be confused with zoning districts of the same name, are areas that are "afforded benefits and protections to promote the continuation of farming and the preservation of agricultural land." Landowners must apply for this designation and provide proof of active farming operations on the land. These districts help to maintain agricultural viability of the land, but do not restrict development necessarily. New York State Agricultural Districts Law mandates that governmental agencies must avoid or minimize potential adverse impacts to farming operations when undertaking or acting upon any project within an Agricultural District that involves the acquisition of land or the use of public funds for construction purposes.

Mirroring the agricultural lands and productive soils from previous maps, most of the Town of Newstead is within an agricultural district - **Erie County Agricultural District North #1**. This consolidated district encompasses the communities of Akron, Alden, Amherst, Clarence, Grand Island, Lancaster, and Newstead.



TOWN OF NEWSTEAD
Agricultural & Farmland Protection Plan

Map 11
Agricultural Districts

Legend

- Town of Newstead Boundary
- Village of Akron
- Tax Parcels
- Creeks/Streams
- Waterbodies
- State/County Roads
- Local Roads
- Railroad
- Agricultural Districts
- Newstead Parcels With Agricultural Exemption

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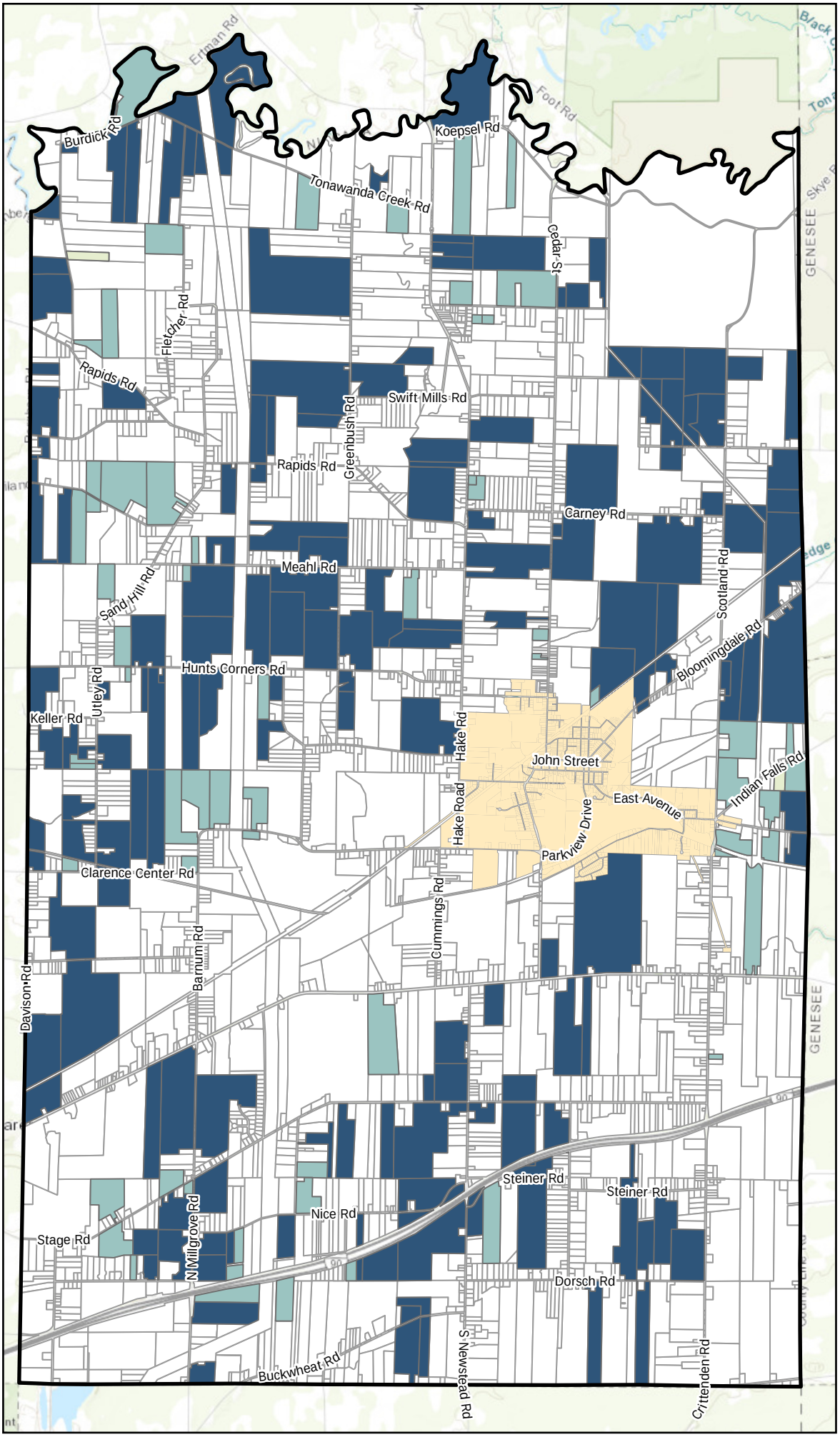
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Map 12: Vision Map/Farmland Protection Priority Areas

A rating system was developed as part of this plan to assist the Town and local farmers in determining where these "higher value" lands are found, since it is an important goal to preserve those lands that have the highest chance of being agriculturally productive long into the future. Using the criteria below, the parcels were rated using a GIS-based mapping application.

Rating Category	Criteria	Rating Points
Property Size	More than 200 acres	10
	151-200 acres	8
	101-150 acres	6
	51-100 acres	4
	Up to 50 acres	2
Property Class	Property Class codes 100-100 (agricultural), 321 (abandoned agricultural lands), 240 (rural residential with acreage), & 241 (rural residential also used in agricultural production)	10
Soils	Prime, Prime if Drained or Statewide & Mineral Soil Group 1-4	10
	Prime, Prime if Drained or Statewide only	6
	Mineral Soil Group 1-4 only	4
Farm Incentive	Agricultural exemption received **and** within County Agricultural District	10
	Agricultural exemption received **or** within County Agricultural District	5

The resulting map on the following page highlights the lands within the Town that are considered to have a "higher value" based on the above criteria, based on current (2025) parcel data and resource information. This should be viewed as a steppingstone to further analysis as needed and on a case-by-case basis for future farmland protection/preservation.



TOWN OF NEWSTEAD
Agricultural & Farmland Protection Plan

Map 12
Vision Map / Farmland Protection Areas

Legend

Agricultural Rating

- 0 - 25
- 25 - 30
- 30 - 40

Rating Category	Criteria	Rating Points
Property Size	More than 200 acres	10
	151-200 acres	8
	101-150 acres	6
	51-100 acres	4
	Up to 50 acres	2
Property Class	Property Class codes 100-100 (agricultural), 321 (abandoned agricultural lands), 240 (rural residential with acreage), & 241 (rural residential also used in agricultural production)	10
Soils	Prime, Prime if Drained or Statewide and Mineral Soil Groups 1-4	10
	Prime, Prime if Drained or Statewide only	6
	Mineral Soil Groups 1-4 only	4
Farm Incentive	Agricultural exemption received **and** located within a County Agricultural District	10
	Agricultural exemption received **or** located within a County Agricultural District	5

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Appendix B

Survey Results

Background

In 2025, the Town of Newstead set forth establishing an ***Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan*** (Ag Plan) with funding from Erie County Department of Environment and Planning. The purpose of the Ag Plan is to comprehensively address current concerns of the agricultural community, while proactively investigating new opportunities. It was vital that this plan be a community-led effort, and for that reason, a steering committee was established, consisting of community leaders and residents. In efforts to include more input from the local farming community, a survey was conducted in late 2025.

About the Survey

The survey was developed to gain insight from not only farmer with active operations (buildings, equipment, land, crops, animals, etc.), but also landowners that rent land out to farmers in the area. The latter group, while not directly involved in farming, are a crucial element in providing additional land for crops. While this is a benefit to both entities, it also represents some risk to farmers as they do not control the rented/leased lands and these valuable resources that contribute to their overall operations could be removed at little notice. Involving landowners in this outreach effort not only provides their input, but also provides a level of information/education into their role within the agricultural community.

Using data from the Town assessor, the survey was sent to those that registered for the *Agricultural Tax Credit*, either land or building(s). As this credit requires annual application and verification, based on specific criteria, it provides the best view of those actively engaged in farming activities in Newstead. Approximately 330 residents were identified and sent surveys directly. This survey was made up of 40 questions, though sections applied only to farmers or landowners, that included questions on history of the farm, the current conditions of farming, and future outlooks, among others.

In the end 41 surveys were returned. The survey responses tell a story of a community that has a strong cultural heritage in agriculture, who wishes to assure that this culture is remains intact, while also looking towards future endeavors that strengthen the community and culture. There are concerns about development and solar farms, new policies, and the lack of resources in town. But most respondents found that the town has average to above-average "farm friendly" zoning and regulations, and that over 2/3 assured that they intended to remain in business at least for the next 10-30 years.

Overall, the survey provided crucial information for the planning process. Not only does it provide the perspective of the farmers in Newstead when it comes to policy and planning, it provides opportunities for barriers that farmers face to be addressed within the planning process.

Findings

Quick Takeaways

- Preservation & policy: Strong support for agricultural land protection, conservation easements, and purchase of development rights or greenspace programs

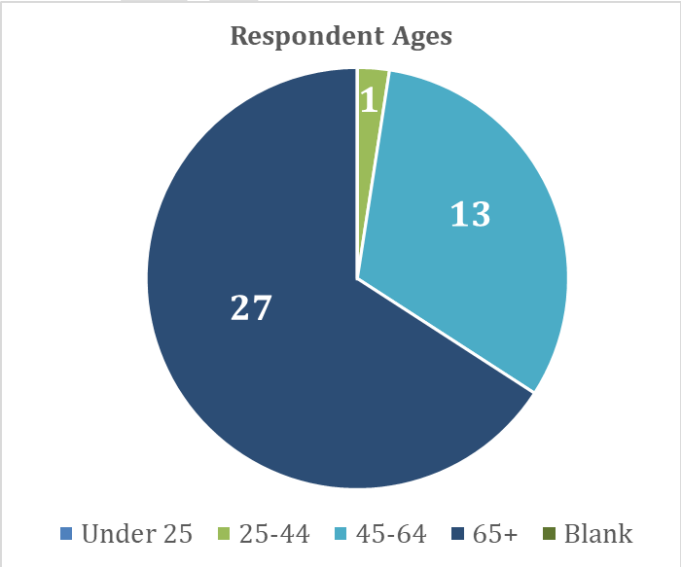
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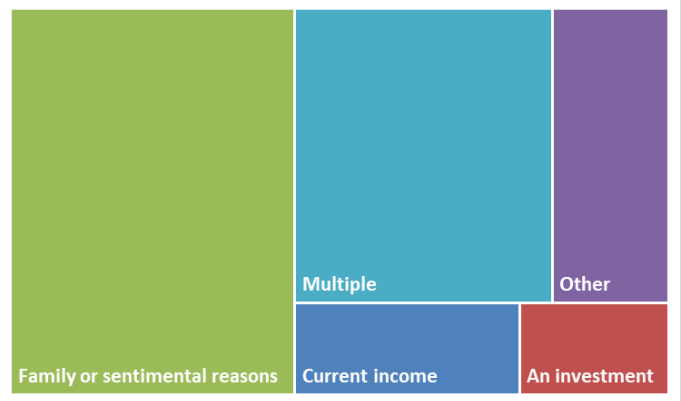
- Tax pressure: Property tax relief is a top ask - seen across several question including Q18 (Town actions to strengthen farming), Q31 (Foster agriculture) and open ended questions.
- Development threats: Residential subdivision and solar farms are the most cited threats; some also point to utility expansion.
- Operational constraints: Supplies, equipment, market access, and State/zoning regulations commonly flagged; aging farmers and succession gaps are widespread.
- Community support: Perceived moderate to low public understanding, suggesting room for education/outreach (schools, extension, marketing).

Demographics

Majority of the farms have been active for up to 50 years with a few more than 100, reflecting that multi-generational operations remain prevalent in Newstead. Most farmers were in the 45 and above category While the age of businesses is distributed, the type of farms found in Town are less so.

The survey showed that most farmers were involved in several different operations, highlighting the diversification that is typical with most modern farms. This is done for both a means of income security as well as responding to the changing market. The most frequently noted activities include grains, straw/hay, horticulture, apiary, and animal feed. It should be noted that only about half of the respondents answered this question, so the full picture of agricultural operations in Town is incomplete.





Most farmers in Newstead are generational and are involved in the industry due to past familial ties or for other sentimental reasons. Other reasons include environmental benefits, but few rely on it solely for their primary income.

Operations and Economics

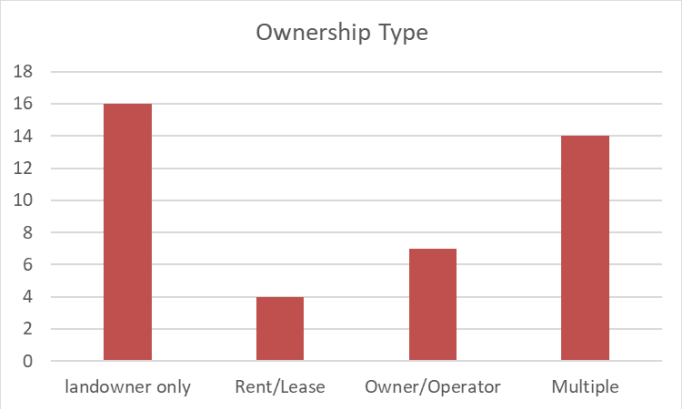
Of those who replied, the majority were solely landowners, while almost an equal amount identified as owner/operator and landowner.

There are a variety of different incentives that are available to farmers, with most farmers involved in the agricultural land or building tax exemption, farmers' school property tax credit, and the County agricultural district.

Though most respondents did not answer the question of how their business operations run, those that did indicated that sold to larger businesses and coops (2), had direct sales to the

public (1), or took part in multiple practices. None took advantage of CSA/membership or shares or Agritourism as a current business practice. This provides insight into current gaps and opportunities in under-utilized markets, such as in agritourism, which comes up often in other outreach discussions.

Most farmers indicated that they take part in multiple farming activities, reinforcing the common practice of diversification that is needed in modern farms to be sustainable.



Current state of Agrictulture in Newstead

The survey asked a series of questions pertaining to the current state of agriculture in Newstead to address what is working, where there are gaps, and what barriers the community may face. One question asked the surveyed to rate the "farm friendliness" of Newstead's zoning and land use policies, scaled from 1-5. The Town faired decently, with a median score of 3.1, for those that answered. Little follow up insight was provided but included issues with home occupations, parcel size restrictions, application paperwork, and land development concerns (subdivisions, solar farms). This reflects other questions inquiring about current threats which were mainly centered on residential development (large and small) followed by solar farms and public utility expansion. Conversly, those who noted what Newstead was "doing right" with respect to agriculture indicate the acknowledgement of "Right to Farm" and continue to maintain the town as an agricultural area in policy and regulations.

Future of Agriculture in Newstead

Generally, the overall confidence in Newstead's agricultural future remains positive, despite some noted concerns and some grievences expressed. In fact the majority of respondents see themselves as part of Newstead's agricultural community for at least one generation (10-30 years) if not more.

While the current agricultural community expressed positive outlooks, there are several concerns that have been expressed. More than half surveyed believe there are threats to agricultural farmland by non-agricultural development pressures. Of these pressures, concerns surrounding solar and residential conversion remain at the forefront of respondents' minds, as the most prevelent threat to their livelihoods.

Ample opportunities exist for the agricultural community, though, and there is a strong desire to preserve longstanding family farmland, much of it held for generations and deeply tied to local heritage. Many landowners wish to continue renting their acreage to responsible local farmers who care for the land, but they note a shrinking pool of active farmers. This highlights an opportunity to strengthen support systems that help both new and existing farmers succeed while keeping farmland productive and well-maintained.

A recurring theme is the need to maintain and expand agricultural tax exemptions. These programs are seen as essential to keeping multigenerational farms viable, protecting open space, and preventing residential development pressures that can create conflicts with farming activities. Lower farmland tax rates, increased credits, and targeted tax incentives for family farming could further reduce barriers to continued farm operation. Given the fact that few take advanatge of the depth of financial incentives that are available, as noted in the survey, this represents a potential educational element that could benefit local farmers.

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The community also sees strong opportunity in conservation-focused initiatives. Programs such as conservation easements, development rights purchases, land grants, and public acquisition of green space are viewed as key tools to prevent farmland loss, curb urban sprawl, and discourage large-scale commercial solar developments on prime agricultural land. The counter to this is that many of these initiatives require financial backing unless lands are freely donated to trusts or other land conservation groups.

There is also some support for expanding agricultural development and innovation, including silvopasture, alternative energy projects that complement (not convert) farming, and experimenting with new crop types. Opportunities also exist to partner more closely with cooperative extension offices and other agencies to offer education, technical assistance, and support for farmers looking to diversify. Economic development ideas include promoting local agricultural businesses, providing creative business support, supporting ag-related startups, and increasing marketing for local products. Finally, many see value in encouraging a new generation of farmers through school-based agricultural career programs, helping rebuild the local farming workforce and ensuring continuity of land stewardship.

DRAFT

Quick Takeaways (cross-question synthesis)

- **Preservation & policy: Strong support for ag land protection, conservation easements, and buy-the-development-rights/green-space programs.**
- **Tax pressure: Property tax relief is a top, repeated ask—seen across Q18/Q31 comments and barrier narratives.**
- **Development threats: Residential subdivision and solar farms are the most cited threats; some also point to utility expansion.**
- **Operational constraints: Supplies, equipment, market access, and state/zoning regs commonly flagged; aging farmers and succession gaps are widespread.**
- **Community support: Perceived moderate to low public understanding, suggesting room for education/outreach (schools, Extension, marketing).**

Q1. Role in agriculture in Newstead

- Common roles: Landowner-only; Rent/Lease land to farmers; Owner/Operator (active farmers).
- Examples:
    - "Landowner only" checked on multiple forms.
    - "Rent/Lease" and "Owner/Operator" often both appear on farmer responses.
    - One respondent added: "rent land out to farmer."

Q2. Age range

- Seen ranges: Most marks fall in 45–64 or 65+. Few under 25.

Q3. Live in Newstead full-time?

- Majority: "Yes" is the dominant mark.

Q4. If "No," residency noted

- Alternatives marked: Elsewhere in Erie County; elsewhere in Western NY; occasional "Outside of New York." (Sparse overall.)

Landowner Questions

Q5. Acres rented/leased to a farmer

- Range observed: From Under 10 up to 500+. Several large holdings mark 500+; many small parcels mark Under 10 or 10–49.

Q6. Rental agreement type

- Both types present: “Verbal” is common; “Written” appears less frequently but is present.

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- Long horizons: Frequent marks at 20 years; others select 11–15 or 16–20 years. Some “5 years or less” and “not sure.”

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- Consistent priorities:
    - “Will be a good steward of the land”—often highest importance (4–5).
    - Local tenant and personally known—commonly rated important.
    - Family member varies; less critical than stewardship/locality for many.

Q9. Land in conservation program/easement?

- Mostly “No,” with some “Yes.”

Q10. Acres in conservation (if Yes)

- Reported ranges: Under 10 to 150–499; mix of small and moderate easements.

Q11. Considered an ag conservation easement (if No to Q9)?

- Responses split between “Considered” and “Need more information.” Some “Not considered.”

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- Mixed: Many “Yes,” several “No,” and some “Unsure/Don’t know.”

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- Top reasons:
    - Current income and Investment.
    - Family/sentimental (heritage).

    - Other notes: “To Slow Development,” “Tax exemption and keep property maintained,” “Restore land to native habitat.”

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- Frequent answer: None sold/NA.
- Instances: Sale to another farmer or for a house noted on a few forms.

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- Pasture/Woodland vary by parcel; some note 41–80% pasture.

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- Overwhelmingly “Highly important.”

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- Majority “Yes,” with some “Not sure/No.”

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- Commonly selected actions:
    - Reduce local property taxes.
    - Develop stronger land use policies that protect agriculture.
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    - Work toward conservation easement program also appears frequently.
- Other write-ins:
    - “Reduce size requirement for ag exemption when adjacent to farmed land.”
    - “More support for local businesses.”

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Q19. Is agriculture your household’s primary income (≥51%)?

- Mixed responses: Many No; several Yes.

Q20. Types of farming

- Frequently marked: Grains, Straw/Hay, Flowers/Horticulture, Apiary/Beekeeping, and some Poultry/Beef/Dairy feed.
- Other (write-ins): “Farm–Herbal/Native plant infused skincare,” “Horse boarding.”

Q21. How long has the farm existed?

- Range: From 1–5 years to More than 100 years; many mark 5–20 or 20–50 years.

Q22. Support services used & locations

- Common services: Seeds, equipment, repairs, financial/banking, feed, veterinary—locations cited include Akron, Lockport, Royalton, Middleport.

ALL COMMENTS (Q22):

- seeds, plants, financial, equipment, more resources
- equipment repair - lockport, vehicle repair - akron, seeds - middleport, veterinatrian - royalton, banking - akron, legal - arkron, feed - lockport, hay - akron
- no support
- equipment
- seed, fertilizer, equipment, repairs, fuel
- repair financial
- seeds - western NY, equipment-us and canada, repair - local to western NY, financial - farm credit east
- land is leased

Q23. Changes in operations (past 5–10 years)

- Themes:
    - Shift from beef/hogs to grain & hay/straw due to family changes (death/aging).
    - Rent less land than before.
    - Some no changes.

ALL COMMENTS (Q23):

- No
- from leaf cattle & hogs to grain & hay/straw due to the death of my dad and cannot farm as we did together

- rental of land to raise grain intake
- yes, we don't rent as much land as prior
- more modern to keep up with demands
- sold the milking herd to family for health reasons, boarding, raising hay corn soybeans wheat and oats
- land is leased

Q24. Sales channels

- Most common: Direct to public; Sell to larger businesses/coops; CSA/memberships; some Agritourism.
- Other: Loyalty programs, events, education, Horse boarding, rent to farmers

Q25. Tax credits/programs utilized

- Frequently noted:
    - Enrolled in County Agricultural District (not zoning).
    - Agricultural Assessment property tax reduction.
    - Farmers' School Property Tax Credit; Agricultural Building(s) Tax Credit.
    - Solar energy systems equipment credit appears on some forms.

Q26. Are farms threatened by non-ag development?

- Majority "Yes."

Q27. Most prevalent threats (check-all)

- Top concerns:
    - Larger residential (5+ lots) and Small residential (<5 lots).
    - Solar farms.
    - Public utility expansion (water/sewer) noted by several.

Q28. Are Town zoning/land development regulations "friendly" to farming? (1–5)

- Not all answered
- Average score 3.08

Q29. If 1–2, issues with zoning/regulations

- Reported issues: Difficulty adding buildings (paperwork), subdivisions, solar farms, commercial home based business, 5-acre parcel restriction

Q30. If 4–5, what has the Town “done right”?

- Positive notes:
    - Right to Farm acknowledged.
    - “Kept Newstead an agricultural area” and informs residents “right to farm zone.”

Q31. What could the Town do to foster agriculture?

- Suggestions:
    - Lower farmland taxes / better tax rates
    - Tax incentives to encourage family farming
    - Conservation easement/green space programs; buy development rights; land grants.
    - Support/advertising for local businesses; creative business support.
    - Encourage Ag as career programs at school
    - Funding assistance/grants for startups
    - Limit solar farms
    - Limit subdivisions/residential expansion into farmland

Q32. Other ag opportunities to sustain/expand operations

- Ideas mentioned:
    - Work with coop extension/farm bureau to provide education and support for new opportunities
    - Silvopasture
    - Alternative energy
    - New crop types
    - Marketing
    - Business showcase

    - Increased tax credits
    - Purchase of green space for protection

Q33. Public understanding/support for agriculture

- Range: Moderate is common; some Low/Very Low; a few High/Very High.

Q34. Biggest barriers to future in farming (check-all)

- Frequently selected barriers:
    - Land prices; Development pressure (residential/solar).
    - Availability of supplies/support; Equipment availability; State regulations; Zoning/land use regulations.
    - Lack of available land and Loss of local hay appear.
    - Aging/"Getting OLD" noted by several as a personal barrier.

Q35. How long do you see your farm/business lasting?

- Mixed horizons: Several 10–30 years and 30–50 years; some 5–10 years; a few "Till I die" or aspirational 50+ years.

Q36. Succession plan in place?

- Mixed: Many No; some Yes. Several comments tie succession difficulty to taxes and development pressure.

Notable Written Comments (representative excerpts)

Tax & affordability:

- "Without me being able to get agriculture exemption on my farmland by renting it to a farmer, I would not be able to afford the taxes… It is a lot better to have open farmland than development with all the problems it brings." (Ed Berghaus)
- "Need Better TAX Rates. We can barely Survive."

Town programs & land protection:

- "The Town should establish a program to purchase green space, and another to buy development rights."

- “Facilitate ‘land grants’ to farmers for the development rights. This will give cash to farmers + preserve the land.”

Solar & residential development:

- “LIMIT SOLAR FARM; LIMIT SUBDIVISIONS.”
- “NO LARGE SCALE COMMERCIAL SOLAR FARMS on vacant property please.”
- “Stop urban sprawl, I live where I do because of the way it was when I got here.”

Right to Farm & community understanding:

- “Kept Newstead an agricultural area… ‘Newstead is a right to farm zone.’”
- “Act on these reports and do something—don’t just file them.”

Workforce/aging & operations:

- “Getting OLD” / “too old” as barriers.
- “Loss of local hay” noted as a supply constraint.

Education & youth:

- “Encourage agricultural programs as career programs at Akron H.S.… scholarships for students and grant money for struggling farmers/start-ups.”

ALL COMMENTS:

- What farm land I own has seen in my family for over 100 years. If I can have it worked by some local farmers than that’s what I will keep doing.
- Agricultural tax exemptions help keep multigenerational family farms viable, protect open farmland, and reduce pressure for residential development that can create conflicts with farming and increase demands on local services
- Act on these report and do something don't just file them
- I rent land to farmers who pay fair rent and care for the land, there is limited usable farmland and few active farmers in Newstead, and land is increasingly being worked by people who only crop farm rather than steward it long term
- Supports any policy that promotes ag & ag development
- Please continue ag property tax reductions to encourage focal farming because we need more local farm products
- Lower taxes on farm land
- No large scale commercial solar farms on vacant property, stop urban sprawl
- Property tax reductions, conservation easement program information

- Town needs to do a better job of having major subdivision developers follow the requirements for subdivisions

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Prepared with analysis assistance from Microsoft CoPilot.

Town of Newstead – Agricultural & Farmland Protection Plan Survey

The Town of Newstead is in the process of developing an Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan, which is a long-range planning document exclusively for the agricultural community to encourage, promote, and grow the industry. This may come in the form of regulatory updates, changes to local policies, community education, information and resources to new/retiring farmers, etc. *You were identified as receiving an agricultural tax exemption for buildings and/or land; therefore, a stakeholder in the farming community.*

This survey contains general questions as well as ones geared toward **farmers** or **landowners who do not farm** (you are still a key part in the farming community by providing land to local farmers.) Please answer the questions that pertain to your situation. There is space on PAGE 7 for any additional or general comments as well.

Your input is vital in helping the Town of Newstead understand the needs, challenges, and opportunities facing agriculture in our community.

Once completed, please mail or drop off at Town Hall. You can also fill this out digitally using the link below or QR code at right (use camera).

https://tinyurl.com/NewsteadAg (project website)

GENERAL question

1. What is your role in agriculture in Newstead? (Check all that apply)

☐ Landowner only
☐ Rent/Lease
☐ Owner/Operator
☐ Other (please specify): _____

2. What is your age range?

☐ Under 25 ☐ 25–44 ☐ 45–64 ☐ 65+

3. Do you live in Newstead full-time?

☐ Yes
☐ No

4. IF NO to #4, please note residency below…

☐ Elsewhere in Erie County
☐ Elsewhere in Western New York
☐ Outside of New York

LANDOWNER questions

5. How many acres of land do you rent or lease to a farmer?

☐ Under 10 ☐ 10–49 ☐ 50–149 ☐ 150–499 ☐ 500+

6. Is your rental agreement written or verbal?

☐ Written ☐ Verbal

7. How long do you expect to continue renting/leasing farmland?

☐ 5 years or less ☐ 6-10 years ☐ 11-15 years ☐ 16-20 years ☐ 20 years

8. How important is it to you that your tenant…(1 = Strongly Disagree, 5 = Strongly Agree)

a)	Is a family member (blood or marriage)	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5
b)	Is someone you know personally	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5
c)	Is someone local	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5
d)	Will be a good steward of the land	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5

9. Is any land you own in a conservation program or subject to a conservation easement (i.e., protected from future development)?

☐ Yes ☐ No

10. If yes, how many acres?

☐ Under 10 ☐ 10–49 ☐ 50–149 ☐ 150–499 ☐ 500+

11. IF NO to #9, have you considered an agricultural conservation easement?

☐ Considered
☐ Not considered
☐ Need more information

12. Is your land currently enrolled in a State Agricultural District (District #1/North)?

☐ Yes ☐ No

13. What is your primary reason for owning/renting farmland?

☐ Current income
☐ An investment
☐ Family or sentimental reasons
☐ Other (Please specify):_____

14. If you've sold any land in the past 10 years, how was it sold?

☐ For development of any kind
☐ To another farmer
☐ To a non-farmer, but being rented/leased for farming
☐ Forestry
☐ Other (Please specify):_____

15. How would you describe, in percentages, the majority of land that you rent/lease?

a) Tillable (suitable for crops)
☐ 0-20% ☐ 21-40% ☐ 41-80% ☐ 81-100%
b) Woodland (suitable for timber, sap, etc.)
☐ 0-20% ☐ 21-40% ☐ 41-80% ☐ 81-100%
c) Pasture (suitable for grazing)
☐ 0-20% ☐ 21-40% ☐ 41-80% ☐ 81-100%
d) Other (Please specify):_____
☐ 0-20% ☐ 21-40% ☐ 41-80% ☐ 81-100%

16. How important is it to you that your land remains in agricultural use?

☐ Highly important
☐ Somewhat important
☐ Not important

17. Do you think farmland loss is a problem in Newstead?

☐ Yes ☐ No

18. What actions do you think the Town of Newstead could take to help strengthen farming? (Check all that apply)

☐ Reduce local property taxes
☐ Advocate on behalf of farmers
☐ Help promote locally grown products
☐ Expand/improve public infrastructure for farmers
☐ Promote "non-traditional" agricultural economic development
☐ Develop stronger land use policies that protect agriculture
☐ Support & promote programs for young/beginner farmers
☐ Promote educational/informational resources or programs
☐ Work towards building a conservation easement program
☐ Nothing
☐ Other (Please specify):_____

FARMER questions

19. Is agriculture your household's primary source of income (i.e., 51% or more of gross income)?

☐ Yes ☐ No

20. What types of farming do you participate in? (Check all that apply)

☐ Equine
☐ Dairy
☐ Poultry (eggs and meat)
☐ Beef cattle/pigs/other meat
☐ Aquaculture
☐ Apiary/Beekeeping
☐ Co-op farming (CSAs)
☐ Straw/Hay
☐ Vineyards
☐ Fruits/Vegetables
☐ Oil seeds (non-dairy feed)
☐ Grains (non-dairy feed)
☐ Dairy feed/fodder
☐ Flowers/Horticulture
☐ Greenhouse
☐ Maple syrup/Sugarbush
☐ Silviculture/Tree farm/Forestry
☐ Other (please specify): _____

21. How long has your farm operation existed? (Check one)

☐ 1–5 years
☐ 5–20 years
☐ 20–50 years
☐ 50–100 years
☐ More than 100 years

22. What support services do you utilize as part of your farming operations and where are they located? (Seeds, equipment, repair, financial, etc.)

23. Have you changed your farming operation in the past 5–10 years? To what and why?

24. Do you engage in any of the following? (Check all that apply)

☐ Direct sales to the public
☐ Sell to larger businesses/cooperatives
☐ CSA/membership/shares
☐ Agritourism
☐ Other _____

25. Do you utilize any of the following tax credits or programs? (Check all that apply)

☐ Enrolled in County Agricultural District (not zoning)
☐ Agricultural Building(s) Tax Credit
☐ Farmers' School Property Tax Credit
☐ Agricultural Assessment property tax reduction
☐ Farm workforce retention credit
☐ Farm donations to food pantries credit
☐ Investment Tax Credit
☐ Credit for rehabilitation expenses for historic barns
☐ Alcoholic beverage production credit
☐ Historic homeownership rehabilitation credit
☐ Conservation easement credit
☐ Solar energy systems equipment credit
☐ Other (please specify)_____

26. Do you feel that existing open land and farms in Newstead are threatened by non-agricultural development?

☐ Yes ☐ No

27. If yes to #26, what do you think is the most prevalent threat? (Check all that apply)

☐ Small residential (under 5 lots)
☐ Larger residential (5 or more lots)
☐ Commercial
☐ Industrial
☐ Solar farms
☐ Public utility expansion (water/sewer)
☐ Other (please specify)_____

28. Would you consider the Town's zoning and land development regulations 'friendly' towards farming? (1 = Strongly Disagree, 5 = Strongly Agree)

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

29. If you answered 1 or 2 above, what aspects of the zoning/regulations have you had issues with?

30. If you answered 4 or 5 above, what do you think the Town has "done right"?

31. What do you think the Town could do to help foster continued and expanded agriculture in Newstead?

32. What other agricultural opportunities might be worth exploring to sustain or expand current operations in Newstead?

33. How would you rate public understanding and support for agriculture in Newstead?

☐ Very Low ☐ Low ☐ Moderate ☐ High ☐ Very High

34. What is the biggest barrier to your future in farming in Newstead? (Check all that apply)

☐ Lack of available land
☐ Land prices
☐ Soil fertility
☐ Local labor
☐ Equipment availability
☐ Availability of supplies/support
☐ Zoning/land use regulations
☐ Neighbor complaints
☐ Development pressure (residential, solar, etc.)
☐ Lack of market opportunities
☐ Lack of transition plan
☐ State Regulations
☐ Other (please specify)_____

35. From this point forward, how long do you see your farm/business lasting? (Check all that apply)

☐ 1–5 years
☐ 5–10 years
☐ 10–30 years
☐ 30–50 years
☐ 50 or more years

36. Do you have a succession plan in place for your farm/business to ensure your land/operation stays agriculturally productive?

☐ Yes ☐ No

GENERAL question

Thank you for taking time to complete this survey!

We welcome any additional comments you may have. Please use the space below to share your thoughts, whether it's ideas for preserving or promoting agriculture, concerns about farmland in Newstead, or anything else you'd like us to consider.

Please aim to return this to Town Hall within two weeks on receiving the survey or November 17th at the latest!

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ALL COMMENTS (Q22):

- seeds, plants, financial, equipment, more resources
- equipment repair - lockport, vehicle repair - akron, seeds - middleport, veterinatrian - royalton, banking - akron, legal - arkron, feed - lockport, hay - akron
- no support
- equipment
- seed, fertilizer, equipment, repairs, fuel
- repair financial
- seeds - western NY, equipment-us and canada, repair - local to western NY, financial - farm credit east
- land is leased

Q23. Changes in operations (past 5–10 years)

- Themes:
    - Shift from beef/hogs to grain & hay/straw due to family changes (death/aging).
    - Rent less land than before.
    - Some no changes.

ALL COMMENTS (Q23):

- No
- from leaf cattle & hogs to grain & hay/straw due to the death of my dad and cannot farm as we did together

- rental of land to raise grain intake
- yes, we don't rent as much land as prior
- more modern to keep up with demands
- sold the milking herd to family for health reasons, boarding, raising hay corn soybeans wheat and oats
- land is leased

Q24. Sales channels

- Most common: Direct to public; Sell to larger businesses/coops; CSA/memberships; some Agritourism.
- Other: Loyalty programs, events, education, Horse boarding, rent to farmers

Q25. Tax credits/programs utilized

- Frequently noted:
    - Enrolled in County Agricultural District (not zoning).
    - Agricultural Assessment property tax reduction.
    - Farmers' School Property Tax Credit; Agricultural Building(s) Tax Credit.
    - Solar energy systems equipment credit appears on some forms.

Q26. Are farms threatened by non-ag development?

- Majority "Yes."

Q27. Most prevalent threats (check-all)

- Top concerns:
    - Larger residential (5+ lots) and Small residential (<5 lots).
    - Solar farms.
    - Public utility expansion (water/sewer) noted by several.

Q28. Are Town zoning/land development regulations "friendly" to farming? (1–5)

- Not all answered
- Average score 3.08

Q29. If 1–2, issues with zoning/regulations

- Reported issues: Difficulty adding buildings (paperwork), subdivisions, solar farms, commercial home based business, 5-acre parcel restriction

Q30. If 4–5, what has the Town “done right”?

- Positive notes:
    - Right to Farm acknowledged.
    - “Kept Newstead an agricultural area” and informs residents “right to farm zone.”

Q31. What could the Town do to foster agriculture?

- Suggestions:
    - Lower farmland taxes / better tax rates
    - Tax incentives to encourage family farming
    - Conservation easement/green space programs; buy development rights; land grants.
    - Support/advertising for local businesses; creative business support.
    - Encourage Ag as career programs at school
    - Funding assistance/grants for startups
    - Limit solar farms
    - Limit subdivisions/residential expansion into farmland

Q32. Other ag opportunities to sustain/expand operations

- Ideas mentioned:
    - Work with coop extension/farm bureau to provide education and support for new opportunities
    - Silvopasture
    - Alternative energy
    - New crop types
    - Marketing
    - Business showcase

    - Increased tax credits
    - Purchase of green space for protection

Q33. Public understanding/support for agriculture

- Range: Moderate is common; some Low/Very Low; a few High/Very High.

Q34. Biggest barriers to future in farming (check-all)

- Frequently selected barriers:
    - Land prices; Development pressure (residential/solar).
    - Availability of supplies/support; Equipment availability; State regulations; Zoning/land use regulations.
    - Lack of available land and Loss of local hay appear.
    - Aging/"Getting OLD" noted by several as a personal barrier.

Q35. How long do you see your farm/business lasting?

- Mixed horizons: Several 10–30 years and 30–50 years; some 5–10 years; a few "Till I die" or aspirational 50+ years.

Q36. Succession plan in place?

- Mixed: Many No; some Yes. Several comments tie succession difficulty to taxes and development pressure.

Notable Written Comments (representative excerpts)

Tax & affordability:

- "Without me being able to get agriculture exemption on my farmland by renting it to a farmer, I would not be able to afford the taxes… It is a lot better to have open farmland than development with all the problems it brings." (Ed Berghaus)
- "Need Better TAX Rates. We can barely Survive."

Town programs & land protection:

- "The Town should establish a program to purchase green space, and another to buy development rights."

- “Facilitate ‘land grants’ to farmers for the development rights. This will give cash to farmers + preserve the land.”

Solar & residential development:

- “LIMIT SOLAR FARM; LIMIT SUBDIVISIONS.”
- “NO LARGE SCALE COMMERCIAL SOLAR FARMS on vacant property please.”
- “Stop urban sprawl, I live where I do because of the way it was when I got here.”

Right to Farm & community understanding:

- “Kept Newstead an agricultural area… ‘Newstead is a right to farm zone.’”
- “Act on these reports and do something—don’t just file them.”

Workforce/aging & operations:

- “Getting OLD” / “too old” as barriers.
- “Loss of local hay” noted as a supply constraint.

Education & youth:

- “Encourage agricultural programs as career programs at Akron H.S.… scholarships for students and grant money for struggling farmers/start-ups.”

ALL COMMENTS:

- What farm land I own has seen in my family for over 100 years. If I can have it worked by some local farmers than that’s what I will keep doing.
- Agricultural tax exemptions help keep multigenerational family farms viable, protect open farmland, and reduce pressure for residential development that can create conflicts with farming and increase demands on local services
- Act on these report and do something don't just file them
- I rent land to farmers who pay fair rent and care for the land, there is limited usable farmland and few active farmers in Newstead, and land is increasingly being worked by people who only crop farm rather than steward it long term
- Supports any policy that promotes ag & ag development
- Please continue ag property tax reductions to encourage focal farming because we need more local farm products
- Lower taxes on farm land
- No large scale commercial solar farms on vacant property, stop urban sprawl
- Property tax reductions, conservation easement program information

- Town needs to do a better job of having major subdivision developers follow the requirements for subdivisions

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Prepared with analysis assistance from Microsoft CoPilot.

Town of Newstead – Agricultural & Farmland Protection Plan Survey

The Town of Newstead is in the process of developing an Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan, which is a long-range planning document exclusively for the agricultural community to encourage, promote, and grow the industry. This may come in the form of regulatory updates, changes to local policies, community education, information and resources to new/retiring farmers, etc. *You were identified as receiving an agricultural tax exemption for buildings and/or land; therefore, a stakeholder in the farming community.*

This survey contains general questions as well as ones geared toward **farmers** or **landowners who do not farm** (you are still a key part in the farming community by providing land to local farmers.) Please answer the questions that pertain to your situation. There is space on PAGE 7 for any additional or general comments as well.

Your input is vital in helping the Town of Newstead understand the needs, challenges, and opportunities facing agriculture in our community.

Once completed, please mail or drop off at Town Hall. You can also fill this out digitally using the link below or QR code at right (use camera).

https://tinyurl.com/NewsteadAg (project website)

GENERAL question

1. What is your role in agriculture in Newstead? (Check all that apply)

☐ Landowner only
☐ Rent/Lease
☐ Owner/Operator
☐ Other (please specify): _____

2. What is your age range?

☐ Under 25 ☐ 25–44 ☐ 45–64 ☐ 65+

3. Do you live in Newstead full-time?

☐ Yes
☐ No

4. IF NO to #4, please note residency below…

☐ Elsewhere in Erie County
☐ Elsewhere in Western New York
☐ Outside of New York

LANDOWNER questions

5. How many acres of land do you rent or lease to a farmer?

☐ Under 10 ☐ 10–49 ☐ 50–149 ☐ 150–499 ☐ 500+

6. Is your rental agreement written or verbal?

☐ Written ☐ Verbal

7. How long do you expect to continue renting/leasing farmland?

☐ 5 years or less ☐ 6-10 years ☐ 11-15 years ☐ 16-20 years ☐ 20 years

8. How important is it to you that your tenant…(1 = Strongly Disagree, 5 = Strongly Agree)

a)	Is a family member (blood or marriage)	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5
b)	Is someone you know personally	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5
c)	Is someone local	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5
d)	Will be a good steward of the land	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5

9. Is any land you own in a conservation program or subject to a conservation easement (i.e., protected from future development)?

☐ Yes ☐ No

10. If yes, how many acres?

☐ Under 10 ☐ 10–49 ☐ 50–149 ☐ 150–499 ☐ 500+

11. IF NO to #9, have you considered an agricultural conservation easement?

☐ Considered
☐ Not considered
☐ Need more information

12. Is your land currently enrolled in a State Agricultural District (District #1/North)?

☐ Yes ☐ No

13. What is your primary reason for owning/renting farmland?

☐ Current income
☐ An investment
☐ Family or sentimental reasons
☐ Other (Please specify):_____

14. If you've sold any land in the past 10 years, how was it sold?

☐ For development of any kind
☐ To another farmer
☐ To a non-farmer, but being rented/leased for farming
☐ Forestry
☐ Other (Please specify):_____

15. How would you describe, in percentages, the majority of land that you rent/lease?

a) Tillable (suitable for crops)
☐ 0-20% ☐ 21-40% ☐ 41-80% ☐ 81-100%
b) Woodland (suitable for timber, sap, etc.)
☐ 0-20% ☐ 21-40% ☐ 41-80% ☐ 81-100%
c) Pasture (suitable for grazing)
☐ 0-20% ☐ 21-40% ☐ 41-80% ☐ 81-100%
d) Other (Please specify):_____
☐ 0-20% ☐ 21-40% ☐ 41-80% ☐ 81-100%

16. How important is it to you that your land remains in agricultural use?

☐ Highly important
☐ Somewhat important
☐ Not important

17. Do you think farmland loss is a problem in Newstead?

☐ Yes ☐ No

18. What actions do you think the Town of Newstead could take to help strengthen farming? (Check all that apply)

☐ Reduce local property taxes
☐ Advocate on behalf of farmers
☐ Help promote locally grown products
☐ Expand/improve public infrastructure for farmers
☐ Promote "non-traditional" agricultural economic development
☐ Develop stronger land use policies that protect agriculture
☐ Support & promote programs for young/beginner farmers
☐ Promote educational/informational resources or programs
☐ Work towards building a conservation easement program
☐ Nothing
☐ Other (Please specify):_____

FARMER questions

19. Is agriculture your household's primary source of income (i.e., 51% or more of gross income)?

☐ Yes ☐ No

20. What types of farming do you participate in? (Check all that apply)

☐ Equine
☐ Dairy
☐ Poultry (eggs and meat)
☐ Beef cattle/pigs/other meat
☐ Aquaculture
☐ Apiary/Beekeeping
☐ Co-op farming (CSAs)
☐ Straw/Hay
☐ Vineyards
☐ Fruits/Vegetables
☐ Oil seeds (non-dairy feed)
☐ Grains (non-dairy feed)
☐ Dairy feed/fodder
☐ Flowers/Horticulture
☐ Greenhouse
☐ Maple syrup/Sugarbush
☐ Silviculture/Tree farm/Forestry
☐ Other (please specify): _____

21. How long has your farm operation existed? (Check one)

☐ 1–5 years
☐ 5–20 years
☐ 20–50 years
☐ 50–100 years
☐ More than 100 years

22. What support services do you utilize as part of your farming operations and where are they located? (Seeds, equipment, repair, financial, etc.)

23. Have you changed your farming operation in the past 5–10 years? To what and why?

24. Do you engage in any of the following? (Check all that apply)

☐ Direct sales to the public
☐ Sell to larger businesses/cooperatives
☐ CSA/membership/shares
☐ Agritourism
☐ Other _____

25. Do you utilize any of the following tax credits or programs? (Check all that apply)

☐ Enrolled in County Agricultural District (not zoning)
☐ Agricultural Building(s) Tax Credit
☐ Farmers' School Property Tax Credit
☐ Agricultural Assessment property tax reduction
☐ Farm workforce retention credit
☐ Farm donations to food pantries credit
☐ Investment Tax Credit
☐ Credit for rehabilitation expenses for historic barns
☐ Alcoholic beverage production credit
☐ Historic homeownership rehabilitation credit
☐ Conservation easement credit
☐ Solar energy systems equipment credit
☐ Other (please specify)_____

26. Do you feel that existing open land and farms in Newstead are threatened by non-agricultural development?

☐ Yes ☐ No

27. If yes to #26, what do you think is the most prevalent threat? (Check all that apply)

☐ Small residential (under 5 lots)
☐ Larger residential (5 or more lots)
☐ Commercial
☐ Industrial
☐ Solar farms
☐ Public utility expansion (water/sewer)
☐ Other (please specify)_____

28. Would you consider the Town's zoning and land development regulations 'friendly' towards farming? (1 = Strongly Disagree, 5 = Strongly Agree)

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

29. If you answered 1 or 2 above, what aspects of the zoning/regulations have you had issues with?

30. If you answered 4 or 5 above, what do you think the Town has "done right"?

31. What do you think the Town could do to help foster continued and expanded agriculture in Newstead?

32. What other agricultural opportunities might be worth exploring to sustain or expand current operations in Newstead?

33. How would you rate public understanding and support for agriculture in Newstead?

☐ Very Low ☐ Low ☐ Moderate ☐ High ☐ Very High

34. What is the biggest barrier to your future in farming in Newstead? (Check all that apply)

☐ Lack of available land
☐ Land prices
☐ Soil fertility
☐ Local labor
☐ Equipment availability
☐ Availability of supplies/support
☐ Zoning/land use regulations
☐ Neighbor complaints
☐ Development pressure (residential, solar, etc.)
☐ Lack of market opportunities
☐ Lack of transition plan
☐ State Regulations
☐ Other (please specify)_____

35. From this point forward, how long do you see your farm/business lasting? (Check all that apply)

☐ 1–5 years
☐ 5–10 years
☐ 10–30 years
☐ 30–50 years
☐ 50 or more years

36. Do you have a succession plan in place for your farm/business to ensure your land/operation stays agriculturally productive?

☐ Yes ☐ No

GENERAL question

Thank you for taking time to complete this survey!

We welcome any additional comments you may have. Please use the space below to share your thoughts, whether it's ideas for preserving or promoting agriculture, concerns about farmland in Newstead, or anything else you'd like us to consider.

Please aim to return this to Town Hall within two weeks on receiving the survey or November 17th at the latest!

18. TOWN OF NEWSTEAD

The Town of Newstead zoning regulations are codified as § 450 of the Town Code.

Most of the Town, except for commercial corridors along major roads and land adjacent to the Village of Akron. is zoned Rural-Agricultural (R-A). Most of the town's farm operations and land within County-certified Agricultural Districts are within the R-A zoning district, although some farms and land in certified Agricultural Districts may be located in other zoning districts.

Figure 26. Town of Newstead Zoning Map

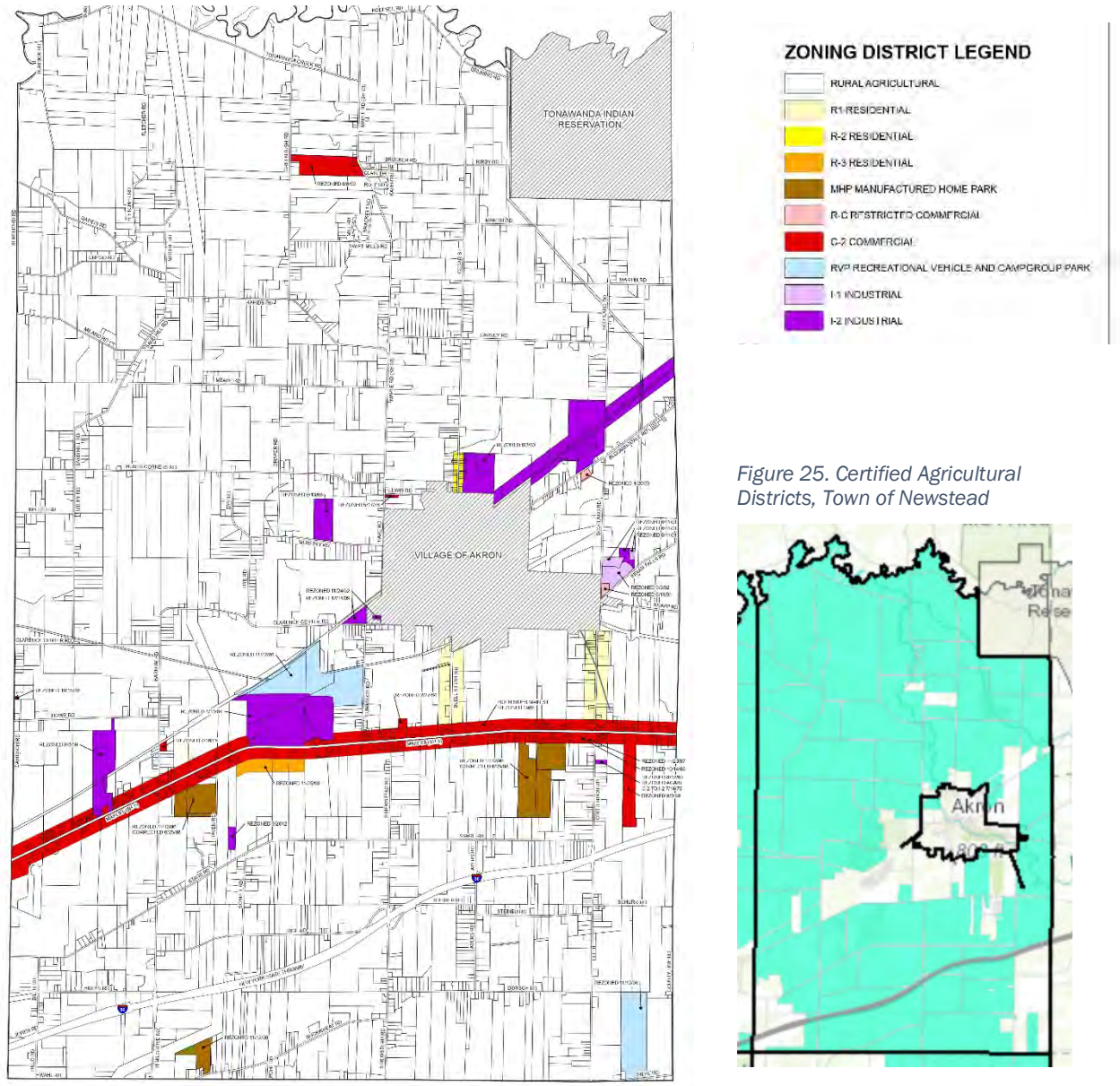


Figure 25. Certified Agricultural Districts, Town of Newstead

1. Do local land use regulations unreasonably restrict standard farm practices?

a) Agriculture should be permitted "as of right" in all areas of the Town where it occurs.

The list of permitted uses in the R-A District includes the following agricultural uses:

- General agricultural land uses, buildings and activities , such as the growing of field, truck and tree crops, dairying, livestock raising, poultry farming, fur farming and hog raising, subject to the following:
    - With the exception of general pasture, buildings, structures and fences enclosing any pen, corral, track or other such enclosure within which livestock are kept may not be located any closer than 100 feet to any existing neighboring dwelling.
    - Minimum land area for one animal unit (as defined in the New York State Agricultural and Markets Law, with one animal unit equal to 1,000 pounds) on parcels under 10 acres shall be two acres in addition to one acre reserved for the dwelling. Each additional animal unit above the initial animal unit on the minimum two-acre parcel (three acres if there is a dwelling on the parcel) shall require one additional acre of land. This particular limitation on animal units does not apply to parcels of 10 acres or greater.
    - All manure or other odor- or dust-producing substances that are not disposed of in an agriculturally accepted manner must be removed from the premises on a regular basis
- Nurseries and greenhouses
- Riding academies and stables
- Pole barns or other enclosed storage structures, for use as storage or in connection with an agricultural operation, but not for commercial nonagricultural businesses, are permitted provided the following provisions are met:
    - Minimum lot size and setback requirements:
        - Minimum lot size is three acres;
        - Minimum 150-foot setback from the edge of the right-of-way, and adherence to all other setback requirements for a permitted principal structure

Permitted accessory uses include, "Barns and other farm buildings."

b) The definition of farming should be broad enough to include all types of farming.

The Town's Zoning regulations define the following agricultural and agriculture-related terms:

- AGRIBUSINESS - Business that provides products and services directly to consumers and where a majority of the goods sold are grown or produced on-premises.
- AGRITOURISM BUSINESS - Agribusiness that conducts activities by and for the enjoyment or education of the public, which primarily promotes the sale, marketing, production, harvesting or use of the products of the farm to enhance the public's understanding and awareness of farming and farm life.

- FARM - A parcel or parcels of land aggregating 10 acres or more in size, on which an owner or tenant carries on agricultural or dairying pursuits or the raising of livestock or poultry or the keeping of bees.
- STABLE - A building or part of building used to house horses or cattle.

While the definition of "farm" is broad, the zoning district regulations do not use the term "farm." The term "agricultural land uses" is not defined but it is sufficiently descriptive in the zoning district regulations for the R-A district.

c) *Zoning requirements for agricultural uses should be based on public health and safety*

In the R-A District, setback and lot size requirements are applied to structures and buildings used to house livestock.

> §400-13.B.(1)(g) lists "Raising of livestock and poultry on lots of not less than five acres" as a permitted use, provided that:
>
> - All such animals shall be housed in a structure to ensure safety and protection from the elements;
> - Housing structures (barns, pens, runways, etc.) shall be a minimum of 100 feet from any lot line;
> - Fencing and other enclosures utilized for corralling shall keep the livestock and poultry a minimum of 15 feet from any lot line; and
> - Any manure or other odor- or dust-producing substance shall be stored a minimum of 100 feet from any lot line.

The R-A District also requires that manure and all other odor- and -dust-producing substances be disposed of in an "agriculturally accepted manner" and removed from the premises on a regular basis.

Minimum lot size and setback requirements are outlined for other storage structures and buildings related to agriculture but not intended to house livestock. For farm operations in Agricultural Districts, these setback requirements should be enforced only to ensure separation between manure storage or animal housing and private wells or water bodies. There is also a zone requirement that states manure and all other odor-/dust-producing substances be disposed of in an "agriculturally accepted manner" and removed from the premises on a regular basis.

For parcels that are part of Farm Operations protected by AML, setbacks from lot lines may not be appropriate if they do not directly relate to health and safety.

d) *A special use permit should not be required for agricultural uses or farm practices.*

A special use permit is required for "forest farming." "agribusiness", and "agritourism business".

e) *Site plan review criteria for agricultural facilities should be limited to those that protect public health and safety.*

Site plan review does not appear to apply to agricultural uses, except for those agriculture-related businesses that require a special use permit.

2. Do land use regulations accommodate agriculture-related and other business on farms?

In the A-R zoning district, "Seasonal roadside stands for the sale of farm products produced on the premise" is listed as a permitted accessory use. As roadside stands may sell products grown on fields that may be part of the farm operation but located elsewhere, the requirement that products must be "grown on the premise" may be unreasonable as applied to farm operations within certified Agricultural Districts. In addition, guidance prepared by the NYS Department of Agriculture and Markets states that farm stands should be able to sell some products not grown by the farm.

- ***Recommendation:*** *Revise the accommodation for roadside stands to state that products sold must be primarily produced by the farm that manages the roadside stand, rather than limiting it to products produced "on the premise."*

"Agribusiness" (defined as "Business that provides products and services directly to consumers and where a majority of the goods sold are grown or produced on-premises" and "agritourism business" (defined as "Agribusiness that conducts activities by and for the enjoyment or education of the public, which primarily promotes the sale, marketing, production, harvesting or use of the products of the farm to enhance the public's understanding and awareness of farming and farm life") are permitted with a special use permit in the R-A zoning district. While no specific criteria exist for the evaluation of these uses, the general requirements for a special use permit require detailing proposed hours of operation and, on a site plan, parking areas, lighting, and distances from parking to neighboring properties. The requirement for a special permit may be unreasonable for some farm operations located within a NYS-certified Agricultural District, as the definition of "agribusiness" and "agritourism" are quite broad and would include a small farm stand or any enterprise that brings customers to the farm.

- ***Recommendation:*** *Allow some agribusinesses and agritourism businesses to be permitted as an accessory use to a farm. Establish a threshold for requiring a special use permit, such as expected number of visitors, size of proposed building, or other suitable metric.*

3. Do land use regulations accommodate non-agricultural secondary business on farms?

Secondary businesses may be permitted as a home occupation but are not specifically permitted on farms.

4. Do land use regulations include considerations of agricultural impacts as part of development review?

Review of impacts to agricultural lands and operations does not appear to be a requirement for site plan approval. However, Section 305-a of Agriculture & Markets Law requires submittal of an Agricultural Data Statement if the project occurs on property within a certified Agricultural District containing a farm operation or within 500 feet of a farm operation located within a certified Agricultural District.

- ***Recommendation:*** *Incorporate the requirement for submitting an Agricultural Data Statement into the sections that specify procedures applying for Site Plan Review, Special Use Permit, Use Variance and Subdivision approval.*

5. How well do land use regulations direct development away from high quality farmland?

The Town's Zoning Regulations permits residences, schools, and places of worship as-of-right in the same zoning districts that permit agriculture. There are also several uses that may be permitted subject to special use permit approval including fire stations, golf courses, and hospitals.

6. Do subdivision regulations include provisions to minimize impacts on farm operations?

Farm operations are not explicitly mentioned in the subdivision regulations. However, Section 305-a of Agriculture & Markets Law requires submittal of an Agricultural Data Statement if the project occurs on property within a certified Agricultural District containing a farm operation or within 500 feet of a farm operation located within a certified Agricultural District.

Appendix C

"Farm-Friendly" Code Review

APPENDIX D

AGRICULTURAL RESOURCES & REFERENCES

Agricultural Resource Agencies....1
Educational Institutions....3
Financial Resources....3
Farm Operation Resources....6
Land Conservation Resources....8
Climate Resiliency Resources....9
New/Beginning Farmer Resources....10
Infrastructure Resources....11

Agricultural Resource Agencies

- Agricultural Marketing Services (AMS)
  - AMS administers programs that create domestic and international marketing opportunities for U.S. producers of food, fiber, and specialty crops. AMS also provides the agriculture industry with valuable services to ensure the quality and availability of wholesome food for consumers across the country and around the world.
  - **www.ams.usda.gov/services/local-regional/food-sector/urban-agriculture**
- American Farmland Trust, New York State Office Farmland Information Center Western New York Office
  - (518) 581-0078/ (800) 370-4879/ (716) 652-0100
  - **www.farmland.org/newyork** & **www.farmlandinfo.org**
- Erie County Cornell Cooperative Extension (CCE)
  - CCE offers a wealth of information and educational programs to Erie County residents on farming in the region, such as beginner farmer resources, field crop resources, growing hemp, and malting barley; agriculture and food systems, and nutrition; 4-H Youth Development; invasive species; and consumer horticulture, among many other things.
  - **https://erie.cce.cornell.edu/**
  - **https://smallfarms.cornell.edu**

- Erie County Department of Environment & Planning
  - 716-858-8390
  - **https://www3.erie.gov/environment/**
- Erie County Soil and Water Conservation District
  - The Erie County Soil and Water Conservation District (ECSWCD) is a resource management agency that was established by law to carry out programs for the conservation, use and development of soil, water, and related resources.
  - (716) 652-8480
  - **https://ecswcd.org/**
- Erie County Farm Bureau
  - 716-474-6585
  - **https://nyfb.org/about/county-farm-bureau/erie-county**
- New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets (NYS DAM)
  - The primary intent of the New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets is to provide State-level regulation and protection of farms within State-certified, County-adopted Agricultural Districts. Local right-to-farm laws are typically derived from and relate to the State's section 305 regulations.
  - **http://agriculture.ny.gov**
- USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA)
  - FSA provides assistance and support to farmers through five key mission areas: programs, loans, commodity operations, management, and State operations. The predominant programs and services revolve around commodity protection and conservation, the latter through the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP). FSA programs are funded through the Federal Farm Bill and subject to reauthorization every five years or so. Each State has its own office and individual contacts within each County.
  - **www.fsa.usda.gov**
- Northeast Organic Farming Association of New York (NOFA-NY)
  - Since 1983, NOFA-NY has been serving the organic and sustainable food and farming community. A year later, we became the first organic certifier in New York State. With the arrival of National Organic Standards in 2002, NOFA-NY established separate certification and education functions and offices, while maintaining a cohesive strategy to support the organic farming community. Today,

we are New York State's leading organization providing effective programs and services that promote sustainable, local, organic food and farming.

- **https://nofany.org/about-us/contact/**

Educational Institutions

- Akron Central School District
- Clarence Central School District
- Erie Community College - **https://www.ecc.edu/index.html**
- New York educational institutions outside the area/region with specific agricultural programs:
  - Cornell College of Agriculture and Life Science - Ithaca
  - SUNY Cobleskill - Cobleskill
  - Alfred State College - Alfred
  - SUNY Morrisville - Morrisville
  - SUNY Delhi - Delhi
  - Farmingdale State College - Farmingdale
  - Finger Lakes Community College – Canandaigua
  - SUNY Ulster – Stone Ridge
  - SUNY Niagara – Sanborn
  - Jefferson Community College – Watertown
  - Tompkins Cortland Community College – Dryden
- New York State Farm to Institution - **https://finys.org/**

Financial Resources

NY Farm Net

Affiliated with Cornell University and coordinated with Cornell Cooperative Extension, is a commonly used resource that offers no cost and confidential consulting services to any farm located in New York State. They offer financial analysis, business planning, retirement and estate planning, business transfers, family farming skills, and personal well-being support. FarmNet services are available to all farms in New York State, large and small, with a diversity of commodities including dairy, crops, livestock, maple, fruit, vegetables, honey, nursery stock, and more. This organization also serves agribusiness professionals, such as nutritionists, veterinarians, truck drivers, custom operators, etc., who work directly with farmers through family or personal consulting. FarmNet has no political or financial agenda so farmers can feel comfortable using this service. They help farmers with any personal and financial issues and have a network of professional consultants available who work one-on-one with farmers and farm families to help resolve problems and concerns. **https://nyfarmnet.org**

Tax Relief Programs

In New York State, the general definition of a farmer is someone who "cultivate, operate, or manage a farm for gain or profit, even though the operation may not produce a profit every year. You may also be a farmer if you are also engaged in the business of farming if you rent your farm property to another person."

New York State offers different credits and exemptions to farmers to assist with the preservation, conservation, and overall wellbeing of the businesses. A comprehensive list can be found at **https://www.tax.ny.gov/help/taxpayer-education/tax-basics-farmers.htm**. These tax credits include:

- Farmers School Tax Credit
- Farm Workforce Retention Credit
- Farm Donations to Food Pantries Credit
- Investment Tax Credit
- Farm Employer Overtime Credit
- Credit for Rehabilitation Expenses for Historic Barns
- Alcoholic Beverage Production Credit
- Historic Homeownership Rehabilitation Credit
- Conservation Easement Credit
- Solar Energy Systems Equipment Credit
- New York State Tax Exemptions
- Agricultural Use Assessment *
- Farm Building Exemption *
- Historic Barn Exemption *
- Sales Tax Exemptions for Farmers & Commercial Horse Boarding Operators *
- New York State Tax Modification
- Forest Land Exemption

*Additional information on assessments and exemptions are available on the NYS Tax website (**https://www.tax.ny.gov/research/property/assess/valuation/agindex.htm** or search on the site for "*agricultural assessment information*") including decision charts for determining assessments and the various types of available. For example, Section 483-a of the Real Property Tax Law (RPTL) provides total tax exemption (municipal, school, special districts, etc.) for certain farm buildings while Section 483-b provides exemptions for historic barns that are reconstructed or rehabilitated.

Farmers are encouraged to consult with financial and tax advisors to make themselves aware of other tax benefits that could be taken advantage of. Farm Credit East has additional information

on the *New York Farmers and Refundable Investment Tax Credit* that was part of the 2023 State budget. This credit is for capital expenditures under certain criteria and is in place until 2027. **https://www.farmcrediteast.com/en/resources/todays-harvest-Blog/230530NewYorkFarmersRefundableInvestmentTaxCredit**

Grant and Loan Programs

Grant and loan programs vary and are dependent on Federal and State legislative bills. As such, the opportunities noted below are some pertinent and more established resources. It is recommended that farmers consult with a grant writer, financial advisor or others familiar with agricultural funding for research on the latest financial opportunities that exist.

- GROW New York – A business competition that offers Agricultural Research and Development Grants, Farmland Viability Grants and Pride of New York marketing assistance.
- New York Farm Viability Institute Grants - funding for farm-based projects, including applied research and education.
- Northeast Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SARE) - grants funding assistance for innovative approaches and projects that advance good land stewardship, improve farm profitability, and strengthen rural communities.
- Good Agricultural Practices and Good Handling Practices Certification Program – Farmer and Partnership Grants, and assistance for farmers/produce suppliers with the certification of their operations to meet voluntary standards.
- Farm to School - facilitates connections between New York State farmers and food service managers in educational facilities across the state.
- USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA) - Direct and guaranteed loans to beginner and family farmers and ranchers who are unable to obtain financing from commercial credit sources, and Emergency Farm Loans to help producers recover from certain production and operational losses.
- USDA Rural Development (RD) Grants and Loans – Various financial options including Farm Labor Housing Loans and Grants and Value-Added Producer Grants.
- USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) - The Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP) can help private landowners, land trusts, and state or local governments, to protect agricultural land with conservation easements. Funding from this grant may contribute up to 50% of the fair market value of the agricultural land easement. Additional funding is needed to cover transaction and stewardship costs.

- Small Business MicroLoans - The Small Business Administration offers several financial assistance programs.
- Climate Resilient Farming Program – This program is offered by the Soil and Water Conservation Service to help farmers reduce the impacts of agriculture on climate change (mitigation) and to increase the resiliency of farms in New York State in the face of a changing climate (adaptation).
- New York Beginning Farmer Loan Program - Low-cost financial assistance for the purchase of agricultural property and equipment to help start a farming business or to facilitate inter-generational transfer of a farm business.
- NYS DAM Farmland Protection Implementation Grant Program (FPIG) - The FPIG provides funding to counties, municipalities, soil and water conservation districts, and land trusts to implement farmland protection activities consistent with local agricultural and farmland protection plans. Specific funding avenues can vary from year to year.
- NYS Nonpoint Source Pollution Abatement and Control Grant Program - This grant program was established by New York State in 1994 to assist farmers in preventing water pollution from agricultural activities by providing technical assistance and financial incentives.

Farm Operation Resources

Estate and Transition Planning

For many farm families, passing the farm on to the next generation can be a major challenge. The transferring of a farm involves more than just passing on land. A will is an important part of an estate plan, but a will alone cannot guarantee a secure future for a farm family's land and business. Estate planning is needed to address inheritance tax and settlement issues that may arise because land is not a liquid asset.

Estate planning can accommodate the needs of all family members, even those who leave the farm operation. A good estate plan can accomplish at least four goals:

1. Transfer ownership and management of the agricultural operation, land, and other assets.
2. Avoid unnecessary income, gifts, and estate taxes.
3. Ensure financial security and peace of mind for all generations, and
4. Develop the next generation's management capacity.

American Farmland Trust (AFT) has published "*Your Land Is Your Legacy: A Guide to Planning for the Future of Your Farm*," which is a useful tool for farmland ownership transition. AFT also

coordinates the "Farmland for a New Generation New York" program. This program helps farmers seeking land and landowners who want to keep their land in farming. Their website – **https://nyfarmlandfinder.org**, offers links for finding a farm, finding a farmer, local and statewide events and other resources that offer direction and assistance to farmers at any stage in their career.

USDA NRCS Agricultural Management Assistance

The USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service oversees the Agricultural Management Assistance (AMA) program, which provides Farm Bill funding to 16 states (including New York) where participation in the Federal Crop Insurance Program has typically been low. The AMA program offers cost-share assistance to agricultural producers to address issues such as water management, water quality and erosion control, and to manage financial risk through crop diversification or transition to organic farming. Program priorities may vary from year to year. The AMA program funds up to 75 percent of the cost for producers to install and maintain eligible conservation practices.

AMA assistance helps agricultural producers manage financial risk through diversification, marketing, or natural resource conservation practices. The NRCS works with farmers to develop an AMA plan of operations for the construction of water management structures to improve water quality, plant trees for windbreaks or to mitigate risk through crop diversification or resources conservation practices (e.g., integrated pest management, erosion control or transition to organic farming). The local USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (affiliated with the Erie County Soil and Water Conservation District) and the NYS Department of Agriculture and Markets can be contacted for more information on this program.

Agricultural Environmental Management (AEM)

AEM is a voluntary State program offered to help improve management of local farmland, water supply and environmental conditions. This flagship program is run by the Erie County Soil and Water Conservation District and offers technical, educational, and financial resources. This assistance provides response to essential environmental needs, while providing farms and communities with cost effective improvements. AEM is implemented to achieve the best sustainable farming practices for each individual farm and increase profitability, while improving the condition of the surrounding environment.

Ag Energy NY

The Cornell Cooperative Extension ***Ag Energy*** program offers a resource guide on agricultural practices to improve energy efficiency and productivity. Improving farm energy efficiency can reduce costs and improve reliability on farms, especially as sources of energy become more costly and limited. Energy efficiency measures can have both economic and environmental benefits. Energy efficiency is the difference between actual energy used versus how much energy is needed

to achieve the same results. A more energy efficient farm can produce more than a less efficient farm using the same amount of energy. Using less energy for the same level of production can make the transition to renewable energy easier. Additionally, many efficiency measures will improve the performance of equipment used on farms. The website offers information on key energy efficiency concepts, access to relevant resources, and connects farmers with free energy assessments and expert assistance to improve energy savings and productivity **https://agenergyny.org**.

Land Conservation Resources

Western New York Land Conservancy – The Western New York Land Conservancy (WNYLC) is a private, not-for-profit organization that works to permanently conserve land for future generations. The WNYLC helps landowners voluntarily protect properties, such as forests, meadows, wetlands, or working agricultural lands. They hold conservation easements that permanently limit uses of land in order to protect it. The WNYLC works with towns, counties, other agencies, and not-for-profit organizations to protect land, either by helping them become the new landowner or by helping them hold a conservation easement on the land. They also help communities plan for conservation through open space mapping and planning. Founded in 1991, WNYLC serves eight counties in western New York and is a valuable resource for land conservation in the region. **https://www.wnylc.org**

Purchase of Development Rights (PDR)/Conservation Easements

PDR programs essentially pay landowners to extinguish their rights to develop their land. Landowners retain other ownership rights to the property. The property remains on the tax rolls, although its taxable value is adjusted based on these remaining rights. Through a PDR program, a conservation easement is placed on the property that is being protected. Conservation easements are permanent agreements that are tied to the land and apply to all future owners. These binding agreements provide certain government agencies and/or qualified private, nonprofit organizations the right to prevent non-farm development or activities that could interfere with the existing or future agricultural use on the property.

The goal of agricultural conservation easements is to protect land to help support the business of farming, conserve productive soils for future generations of farmers and preserve open space. Land that is subject to an agricultural conservation easement can still be farmed or used for forestry, recreation, and other uses compatible with agricultural activities, subject to the specific provisions included in the language of the easement for that property. Since agriculture is constantly evolving, agricultural conservation easements typically provide opportunities for farmers to construct new farm buildings and farm worker housing, or to change commodities and crops that are grown or farm practices on the land. PDR is popular with many landowners in part because the payment may be financially competitive with development offers. It also helps keep agricultural land affordable for farmers.

It is important to note that because participation in a PDR program is voluntary, some owners of significant properties may choose not to participate. Furthermore, the conservation easement must be monitored and enforced in perpetuity, which would be handled by the entity holding the easement. Also, due to the complex nature of these projects, it may be necessary to engage with land trusts who are experts in PDR to successfully bring a project to completion. Working with a land trust, such as the Western New York Land Conservancy, many of these issues can be more easily navigated. The Land Conservancy is an important resource for property owners who are considering a conservation easement or for communities looking to establish larger programs for land conservation.

Climate Resiliency Resources

USDA "Adaptation Resources for Agriculture: Responding to Climate Variability and Change in the Midwest and Northeast" - **http://www.climatehubs.usda.gov/hubs/northeast/topic/adaptation-resources-agriculture-responding-climate-variability-and-change**

Alternative Farming Systems

The USDA established the Alternative Farming Systems Center (AFSIC) to focus on sustainable and organic agriculture (**www.nal.usda.gov/afsic**). This Center provides information related to sustainable and alternative agricultural systems, crops and livestock. The Center specializes in library services, locating, accessing, organizing, and distributing information on various topics, including:

- Sustainable and regenerative crops (vegetables, fruits, nuts, grains, legumes, viticulture, specialty crops) and livestock (grazing and pasture management, aquaculture, beekeeping, organics, specialty livestock) farming systems and diversification;
- Production practices (sustainable, organic, biodynamic, permaculture, hydroponics, aquaponics, certification, and marketing);
- Small farm guidance and management (beginner, women, and minority farmer issues; business planning, farm conservation and transitioning, funding);
- Marketing practices and local food systems (direct marketing, added value, farm to institutions, community supported agriculture, cooperatives/food hubs, agritourism, farm markets, farm certification);
- Natural resource management (pests, soils, water, and whole farm systems);
- Renewable energy options for farms (wind, solar, bioenergy, geothermal, hydropower, energy policy, funding);

- Local food and community (community gardens, urban agriculture, local food systems, food security); and education and research

USDA Environmental Quality Incentive Program

The Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) is another program offered by the NRCS under the Farm Bill that provides technical and financial assistance to farmers to address natural resource concerns and deliver environmental benefits, such as improved water quality, water conservation, and reduced soil erosion https://www.nrcs.usda.gov. Through the EQIP, the NRCS offers one-on-one help and financial assistance to plan and implement structural and management improvements (conservation practices). EQIP funding may also establish conservation practices, such as nutrient management, integrated pest management, forest management, manure management and wildlife habitat management.

NYS DAM Climate Resilient Farming

The goal of Climate Resilient Farming is to reduce the impact of agriculture on climate change (mitigation) and to increase resiliency of farms and their ability to adapt to change. The New York State program for Climate Resilient Farming (CRF) is administered by the State's Soil and Water Conservation Committee, in coordination with the NYSAGM. The CRF program provides cost share grant assistance to farmers to increase farm resiliency. While climate change trends present challenges, there are also solutions that can be implemented to mitigate adverse impacts. **https://agriculture.ny.gov/soil-and-water/climate-resilient-farming**

New/Beginning Farmer Resources

Farm Answers (online database)

There are several other sources of guidance and information where farmers and others interested in agriculture and farming can learn more. Farm Answers (**https://farmanswers.org**) is sponsored by the University of Minnesota Center for Farm Financial Management and the USDA National Institute of Food and Agriculture. This website provides materials and toolboxes on several things, including direct marketing and local foods, organic farming, farm financial management, farmland access, business planning, farm transition planning, urban farming, food safety and commodity marketing. The urban farming toolbox offers useful information for new farmers and small operators in suburban and urban areas. The toolbox is designed to help anyone who wants to be a farmer in their own neighborhood.

New Farmers

The US Department of Agriculture (USDA) provides information for farmers and others interested in farming activities. Their New Farmers website (**https://newfarmers.usda.gov**) has links for new farmers, women in farming, young farmers and veterans. It also provides information for farmers looking for land and those who wish to keep their land in farming. The USDA National

Institute of Food and Agriculture (**https://nifa.usda.gov**) also offers extensive information on all aspects of food and food science, nutrition, natural resources and the environment, animals and plants, and farming and ranching. This last topic provides information on organic farming, small and family farming and sustainable agriculture.

National Young Farmers Coalition

The National Young Farmers Coalition (**www.youngfarmers.org**) is an advocacy network of young farmers fighting for the future of agriculture. They have chapters around the country, including New York State (the closest chapter is in Ithaca, NY). This organization is focused on changing policy, building networks, supporting sustainable farm practices, and providing business services to young, independent, and prosperous farmers to enable them to succeed.

Beginning Farmers

This organization hosts a website (**www.beginningfarmers.org**) that provides a wealth of information onstarting a farm, types of farming, farm resources and farm jobs and internships. It includes links to workshops and other learning opportunities, funding, business planning, "*AG Daily*" agricultural news and more.

Farmland for a New Generation New York

Farmland for a New Generation New York is a program coordinated by American Farmland Trust, in partnership with the state of New York, agricultural organizations, land trusts, and others, that helps farmers seeking land and landowners wanting to keep their land in farming. The program offers a statewide Resource Center and is supported by a network of Regional Navigators, partner organizations with dedicated staff who can provide information and personal assistance to farmers and landowners across New York.
https://farmland.org/project/farmland-for-a-new-generation-new-york/

Affording Our Land: A Financial Literacy Guidebook for Young Farmers (and All Farmers)

https://greenhorns.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/Greenhorns_Affording_OurLand_Guidebook.pdf

Infrastructure Resources

National Grid – Electricity Systems

National Grid provides an interactive database of their electric network that also includes capacity for photovoltaic (PV) systems as well as Energy Storage Systems, i.e. battery storage. This is a useful tool to supplement mapping provided in this plan and provide the Town with additional awareness of areas that could be under greater pressure for conversion to these types of non-agricultural uses. With this information, combined with the mapping of the priority agricultural areas and any other community-developed planning documents, the Town can

update their zoning regulations to balance these two competing land uses. **https://systemdataportal.nationalgrid.com/NY/**

Public Water – Lateral Restrictions

An important provision of the Agricultural Districts Law is the mandate it places on state agencies, local governments, and public benefit corporations to avoid or minimize adverse impacts to farm operations within an agricultural district, for actions that involve either the acquisition of farmland or the advance of public funds for certain construction activities. NYS Dept. of Agriculture and Markets (NYS AGM) provides various guidance documents for municipalities as part of design, construction, monitoring, or mitigation for lands within County Agricultural Districts. One such measure that can be put into place ahead of these is *lateral restrictions* that restrict hookups for non-farm structures to new and existing water and sewer lines that extend through an agricultural district. Should the Town decide to pursue this, model regulations are available on the AGM website **https://agriculture.ny.gov/land-and-water/notice-intent-requirement**