### Smart Growth Self-Assessment for Rural Communities

### *Section VI: Support Productive Agriculture for a Variety of Markets*

### *This tool is part of the Smart Growth Self-Assessment for Rural Communities, developed by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. EPA suggests that communities using this tool complete Section I: “Revitalize Village and Town Centers,” before filling out other sections. For more information and the tool’s other sections, see* *<https://www.epa.gov/smartgrowth/smart-growth-self-assessment-rural-communities>.*

Preserving working agricultural lands supports the rural economy and can also help direct growth away from far-flung lands and back towards already-developed areas. Communities have found success through agritourism programs and developing new markets for local produce, such as local or regional farmers markets. Supporting small-scale agriculture and gardening in neighborhoods is also important for improving quality of life and providing access to fresh fruits and vegetables, especially in more rural areas where larger grocery stores are often only accessible via car.

| Goal: Support Productive Agriculture for a Variety of Markets | Adopted? | Add or Improve? | Context [[1]](#footnote-1) |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| *Preserving Agricultural Lands and Open Space* |  |  |  |
| Do zoning regulations and plans identify and preserve agricultural lands and uses?  |  |  |  |
| Strategy 1: Zoning includes an agricultural district with established permitted uses.[[2]](#footnote-2),[[3]](#footnote-3),[[4]](#footnote-4) *[Enter optional notes in gray boxes for all strategies]* |[ ] [ ]  2,3 |
| Strategy 2: Zoning defines “agriculture,” “agricultural land,” “farm,” “farm building,” “farm dwelling,” “livestock,” “crops,” and other important terms.[[5]](#footnote-5)  |[ ] [ ]  1,2,3 |
| Strategy 3: Zoning does not limit the size of the parcel on which agricultural uses are allowed, thereby enabling smaller scale production of vegetables, fruits, and other products close to local markets where they may be consumed.[[6]](#footnote-6)  |[ ] [ ]  1,2,3 |
| Strategy 4: Zoning allows small-scale farming of crops in developed areas.[[7]](#footnote-7),[[8]](#footnote-8),[[9]](#footnote-9)  |[ ] [ ]  1,2,3 |
| Strategy 5: Define and allow uses that support the regional food system in land use plans and development regulations.[[10]](#footnote-10)  |[ ] [ ]  1,2,3 |
| Strategy 6: Agricultural district zoning establishes minimum lot size large enough to avoid fragmentation of farming areas.[[11]](#footnote-11)  |[ ] [ ]  2,3 |
| Strategy 7: Agricultural district zoning establishes a maximum number of dwelling units permitted on each lot.[[12]](#footnote-12)  |[ ] [ ]  2,3 |
| Strategy 8: Protect existing farms from nuisance complaints through tools such as a “Right to Farm” ordinance.[[13]](#footnote-13),[[14]](#footnote-14)  |[ ] [ ]  2,3 |
| Strategy 9: New developments are assessed impact fees that are used to preserve open space and productive agricultural lands.[[15]](#footnote-15)  |[ ] [ ]  1,2,3 |
| ***Supporting Agritourism*** |  |  |  |
| **Do codes and policies promote agritourism?** |  |  |  |
| Strategy 10: Ordinance defines “agritourism” and encourages standards for an agritourism enterprise related to parking, signs, food and beverage sales, hours of operation, and other considerations.[[16]](#footnote-16)  |[ ] [ ]  1,2,3 |
| Strategy 11: Codes and policies allow roadside farm stands to sell produce directly to consumers.[[17]](#footnote-17)  |[ ] [ ]  1,2,3 |
| Strategy 12: Zoning allows farmers markets as a primary or secondary use.[[18]](#footnote-18)  |[ ] [ ]  1,2 |
| *Supporting Agriculture Through Comprehensive Plans and Local Government Policies* |  |  |  |
| Are systems in place to support informed decisions on agricultural preservation?  |  |  |  |
| Strategy 13: Establish a board or commission to address agricultural issues in the community.[[19]](#footnote-19)  |[ ] [ ]  1,2,3 |
| Strategy 14: Parcel-level information about agricultural land use is available in a GIS database.[[20]](#footnote-20)  |[ ] [ ]  2,3 |
| Are there financial incentives for preserving agricultural lands? |  |  |  |
| Strategy 15: Tax agricultural land at current use value, rather than at its highest value on the real estate market, to help agriculture remain economically viable.[[21]](#footnote-21)  |[ ] [ ]  2,3 |
| Strategy 16: Use purchase of development rights to protect farmland.[[22]](#footnote-22),[[23]](#footnote-23)  |[ ] [ ]  1,2,3 |
| **Are there marketing strategies or policies to support local agriculture?** |  |  |  |
| Strategy 17: A marketing strategy or plan for local farming identifies potential markets and addresses potential gaps in production or processing (for example, lack of cool storage, transportation, or processing facilities).[[24]](#footnote-24)  |[ ] [ ]  1,2,3 |
| Strategy 18: The local government has established programs to promote consumption of locally grown food.[[25]](#footnote-25)  |[ ] [ ]  1,2,3 |
| *Supporting Agriculture Through Programs and Services* |  |  |  |
| Are there programs that support local produce and agritourism? |  |  |  |
| Strategy 19: Establish an agricultural district program.[[26]](#footnote-26)  |[ ] [ ]  1,2,3 |
| Strategy 20: Establish a food policy council for the county or region.[[27]](#footnote-27)  |[ ] [ ]  1,2,3 |
| Strategy 21: Agricultural tourism is supported through marketing, facilities development, and local education.[[28]](#footnote-28),[[29]](#footnote-29)  |[ ] [ ]  1,2,3 |
| Strategy 22: The local government targets local purchasing of agricultural products (for example, school lunches).[[30]](#footnote-30),[[31]](#footnote-31)  |[ ] [ ]  1,2,3 |
| Strategy 23: A farmers market sells locally grown food.[[32]](#footnote-32)  |[ ] [ ]  1,2,3 |
| Strategy 24: The community’s products are marketed in nearby metropolitan areas.[[33]](#footnote-33),[[34]](#footnote-34)  |[ ] [ ]  1,2,3 |
| Strategy 25: A local food hub connects local producers with retail outlets and local institutional buyers, such as school districts, universities, and hospitals. [[35]](#footnote-35)  |[ ] [ ]  1,2,3 |
| Strategy 26: Market local farms, farm stands, and products through a website, maps, brochures, and other educational materials.[[36]](#footnote-36)  |[ ] [ ]  1,2,3 |
| Strategy 27: Encourage and support community gardening and farming by making public land in cities, towns, and villages available to local groups.[[37]](#footnote-37)  |[ ] [ ]  1,2,3 |

1. Self-assessment and recommendations apply to one or more of the following scales: 1 – large town/small city (population of approximately 10,000 or greater); 2 - village/small town (population typically under 10,000); 3 – rural (very low density places, working lands, and natural areas outside of towns, villages, and cities). [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Lancaster County Planning Commission. Agricultural and Rural Lands Planning Program (<http://www.lancastercountyplanning.org/137/Agricultural-Rural-Lands-Planning-Progra>). [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. New Hampshire Agricultural Incentive Zoning (<http://www.nh.gov/oep/resource-library/agriculture/index.htm>). [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Plainfield, Illinois Zoning Ordinance, Chapter 9, Article VIII, is an example (<http://www.plainfield-il.org/pages/municipalcode.php>). [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. North Hampton, New Hampshire Agricultural Zoning Ordinance (<http://www.northhampton-nh.gov/Public_documents/NorthHamptonNH_PZDept/article5>). [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Urban Farming and the Michigan Right to Farm Act (<http://www.bsmlawpc.com/_blog/Municipal_Law_Grand_Rapids_Michigan/post/Urban_Farming_and_the_Michigan_Right_to_Farm_Act/>). [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. The purpose of this strategy is to enable small-scale farming or community gardening on vacant property in small cities and towns. Often, local ordinances prohibit these uses.. The local government can require that at least one other viable use is allowed by right if it wants to ensure that agricultural uses do not preclude future development. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. North Carolina Cooperative Extension. Urban Agriculture – Policy (<http://localfood.ces.ncsu.edu/localfood-urban-ag-policy/>). [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. National League of Cities. Sustainable Cities Institute. Promoting Urban Agriculture through Zoning. (<http://www.sustainablecitiesinstitute.org/topics/food-systems/urban-agriculture/promoting-urban-agriculture-through-zoning>). [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Uses include cold storage, processing and aggregation facilities, value-added processing, farmers’ markets, and composting operations, among others. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. Plainfield, Illinois Zoning Ordinance, Chapter 9, Article VIII, is an example (<http://www.plainfield-il.org/pages/municipalcode.php>). [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. Farmland Information Center. Right to Farm Laws (<http://www.farmlandinfo.org/right-farm-laws>). [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. Seneca, New York Right to Farm Law (<http://www.townofseneca.com/town-laws.html>). [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. Cheyenne, Wyoming allows developers to meet open space requirements by dedicating land to a public entity. Article 4.2 of the city’s Unified Development Code approved in 2012 details these rules (<http://www.cheyennecity.org/index.aspx?nid=1824>). [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. Franklin County, North Carolina Agritourism Zoning Ordinances (<http://www.farmlandinfo.org/franklin-county-nc-agritourism-zoning-ordinances>). [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. New York Model Zoning Law for Roadside Stands and Farm Markets (<http://www.farmlandinfo.org/new-york-model-local-zoning-law-roadside-stands-and-farm-markets>). [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. Michigan Healthy Communities. Establishing Land Use Protections for Farmers’ Markets (<http://mihealthtools.org/mihc/FarmersMarkets.asp>). [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. Town of Dartmouth, Massachusetts Agricultural Commission - Smart Growth Smart Energy Toolkit: Agricultural Preservation Case Study (<http://www.mass.gov/envir/smart_growth_toolkit/pages/CS-ag-dartmouth.html>). [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. North Dakota Digital Parcel File Standards for Agricultural Property Assessment (<http://www.nd.gov/gis/resources/standards/docs/11-13-2007-version-1.1--nd-digital-parcel-file-standard.doc>). [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. Okanogan County, Washington Current Use/Open Space Agriculture (<http://www.okanogancounty.org/Assessor/designat.htm>). [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. Farmland Information Center. Purchase of Agricultural Conservation Easements (<http://www.farmlandinfo.org/purchase-agricultural-conservation-easements>). [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. Peninsula Township, Michigan Purchase of Development Rights Ordinance (<http://www.peninsulatownship.com/ordinances.html>). [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. Pierce County, Washington Agriculture Strategic Plan Summary Report (<http://www.co.pierce.wa.us/index.aspx?NID=3257>). [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. Center for Environmental Farming Systems. The North Carolina 10% Campaign is a strategy for building a sustainable local food economy (<http://www.cefs.ncsu.edu/whatwedo/foodsystems/10percent.html>). [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. Agricultural district laws provide incentives to farmers who enroll their land in special areas where commercial farming is encouraged and protected. Incentives typically include property tax relief and protection from private nuisance lawsuits, among other things. For more information, visit the Farmland Information Center’s page on the topic: <http://www.farmlandinfo.org/agricultural-district-programs>. [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
27. The Johns Hopkins School of Public Health Food Policy Council Directory (<http://www.jhsph.edu/research/centers-and-institutes/johns-hopkins-center-for-a-livable-future/projects/FPN/directory/index.html>). [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
28. Michigan State University Extension. The Role of Agri-Tourism in Rural Communities (<http://productcenter.msu.edu/news_events/nvac_presentations_2012>). [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
29. Oklahoma’s Growing Adventure agritourism program (<http://www.oklahomaagritourism.com/>). [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
30. National Farm to School Network. Getting Started with Farm to School (<http://www.farmtoschool.org/resources-main/getting-started-with-farm-to-school?A=SearchResult&SearchID=524728&ObjectID=4647144&ObjectType=35>). [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
31. The Sustainable Food Purchasing Policy Project helps institutional and commercial food buyers develop purchasing policies that support social and environmental responsibility in agriculture and the food industry (<http://www.sustainablefoodpolicy.org/>). [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
32. USDA Agricultural Marketing Service. How to Start a Farmers Market (<http://www.ams.usda.gov/AMSv1.0/getfile?dDocName=STELDEV3022129>). [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
33. Penn State Extension. Farm and Food Business Marketing Strategies (<http://extension.psu.edu/business/farm/marketing>). [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
34. Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade, and Consumer Protection. Wisconsin Local Food Marketing Guide (<http://www.wistatedocuments.org/cdm/ref/collection/p267601coll4/id/3152>). [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
35. USDA Agricultural Marketing Service. Food Hubs: Building Stronger Infrastructure for Small and Mid-Size Producers (<http://www.ams.usda.gov/AMSv1.0/foodhubs>). [↑](#footnote-ref-35)
36. The Loudoun County, Virginia Department of Economic Development maintains the Loudoun Farms website, which provides information about local farmers markets, farm stands, producers, and wineries ([http://www.loudounfarms.org](http://www.loudounfarms.org/)). [↑](#footnote-ref-36)
37. Williamson, West Virginia has provided public land for a community garden through its Sustainable Williamson program (<http://cityofwilliamson.org/Projects.html>). [↑](#footnote-ref-37)