



Buncombe County Farmland Protection Plan Update

Presented by

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Why do a Plan?

- Recommended by NCDA&CS
- Allows for lower match requirements from State grant funds
- Documents rates of loss and sets baselines
- Identifies land under greatest threat of development
- Facilitates serious discussion about planning for the future
- Allows for local leaders to set priorities and goals for farmland preservation and aligns with 2025 Strategic Plan



Why do we need a plan?

- S&W Farmland Preservation program is considered #1 in the state and needs continued support and direction
- Long waiting list of farm owners interested in conservation easements
- A prioritized goals of the 2025 strategic plan focuses on protection of farmland



Components of the Plan

- Review of Existing Data
- Identification of rates of farmland loss
- Survey of Buncombe County landowners
- Interviews with representative farmland owners
- Identifies prime soils and other important soils
- Establishes criteria for prioritizing land for preservation
- Makes recommendations for local policies and programs that support farmland preservation



Key Findings



- Buncombe County has a robust set of tools for protecting farmland
 - Partnerships with local government agencies, land trusts, state and federal agencies, nonprofits, and private landowners
 - Proactive county policies on farmland preservation
- Land in farms remained fairly constant from 2007 to 2017
 - likely due to proactive policies and the multi-agency collaboration.



Key Findings (continued)

- Development pressures vary from moderate in more remote areas to extreme near major transportation corridors and the city of Asheville.
- Areas that continue to have strong agricultural characteristics include:
 - North - Leicester, Sandy Mush, Barnardsville, and Alexander
 - South- Fairview and Cane Creek in the south
 - West- Hominy Valley
 - East - land along the Swannanoa River



Why do we want Ag in Buncombe?

- Local food for Asheville's food scene
- View shed for Asheville's tourism industry
- Agritourism
- Food Resilience
- Clean Air, Clean Water, Wildlife
- Ag saves the county money (ex. Cost of Community Services Study)
- Ag makes the county money (ex. Easement Grant funds, Agritourism)



Ag Saves the County Money

Cost of Community Services Study

- Explores financial impact of land type of a municipality's budget
- Residential developments contribute less in revenue than they require in government expenditures
- Agricultural, and open space lands contribute more in revenue than they requires in expenditures.

Farmland saves the county money and brings money into the county



Funding brought into Buncombe since 2005

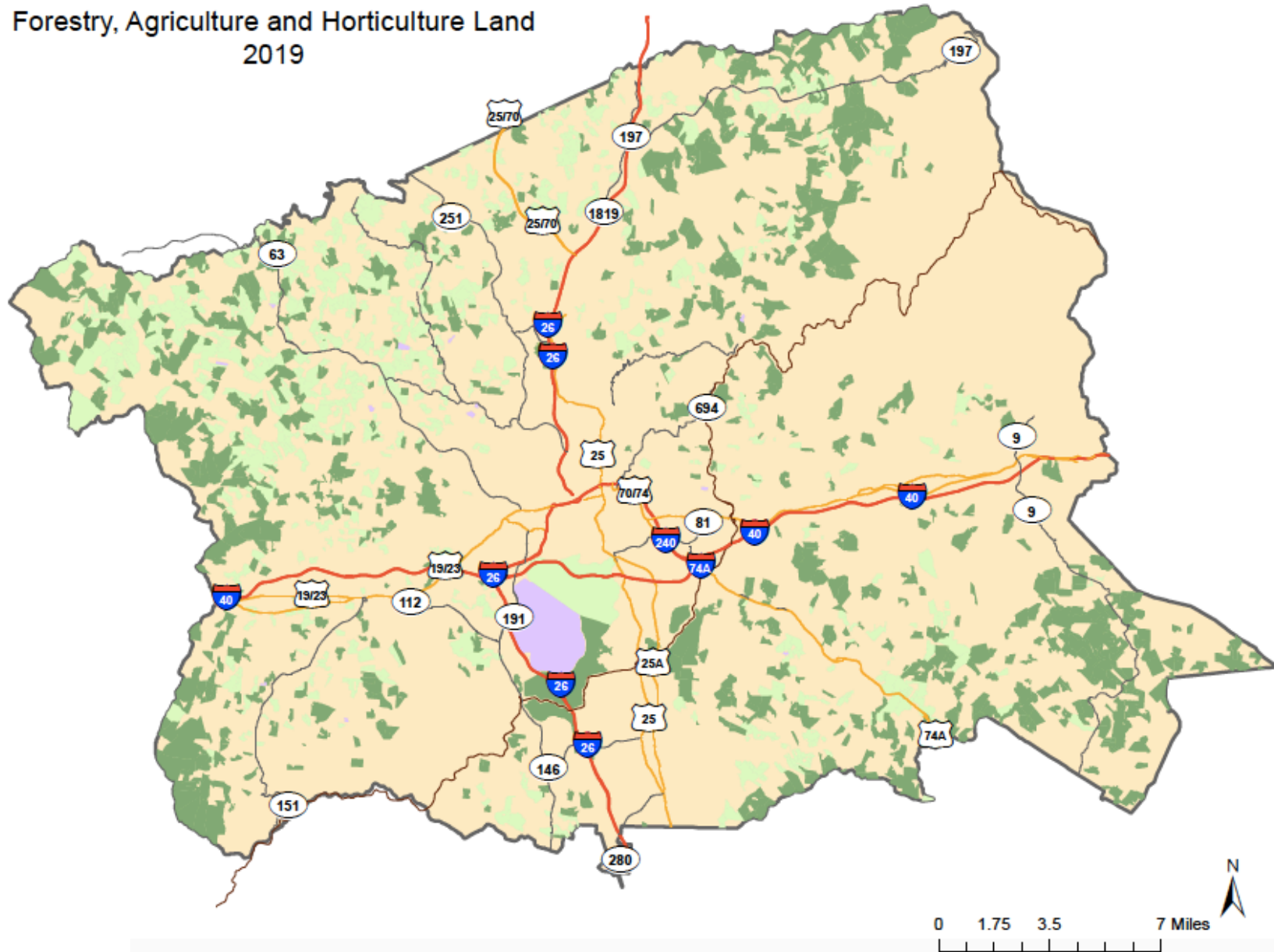
Conservation Easement Funding Leveraged with Buncombe County Funds

Total Funding	Total
Total Buncombe County Contributions	\$ 7,762,464.88
Total Cash Leveraged By Buncombe	\$ 14,057,555.62
Total Landowner Charitable Gift Leveraged By Buncombe	\$ 33,151,210.00
Total Amount Leveraged by Buncombe *	\$ 47,208,765.62
Total Acres Protected in Buncombe County	8,129.22 Acres

*Leveraged Funds include Grant Funding, Private Donations and Landowner Charitable Donations by Buncombe Soil and Water and Local Land Trusts since 2005 when county started funding easement projects



Forestry, Agriculture and Horticulture Land 2019

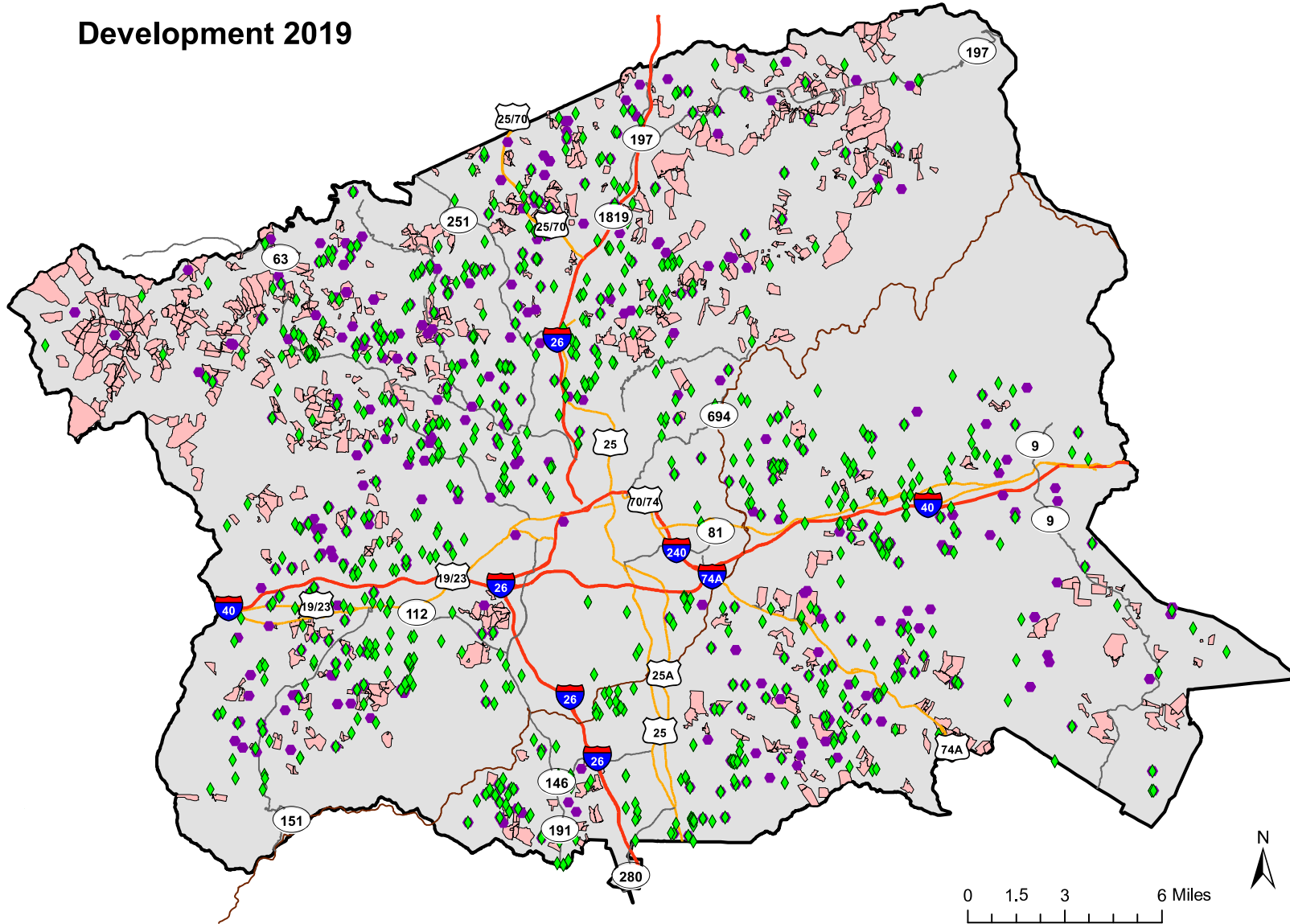





Acreage

Horticulture	3,217
Forestry	57,096
Agriculture	34,511



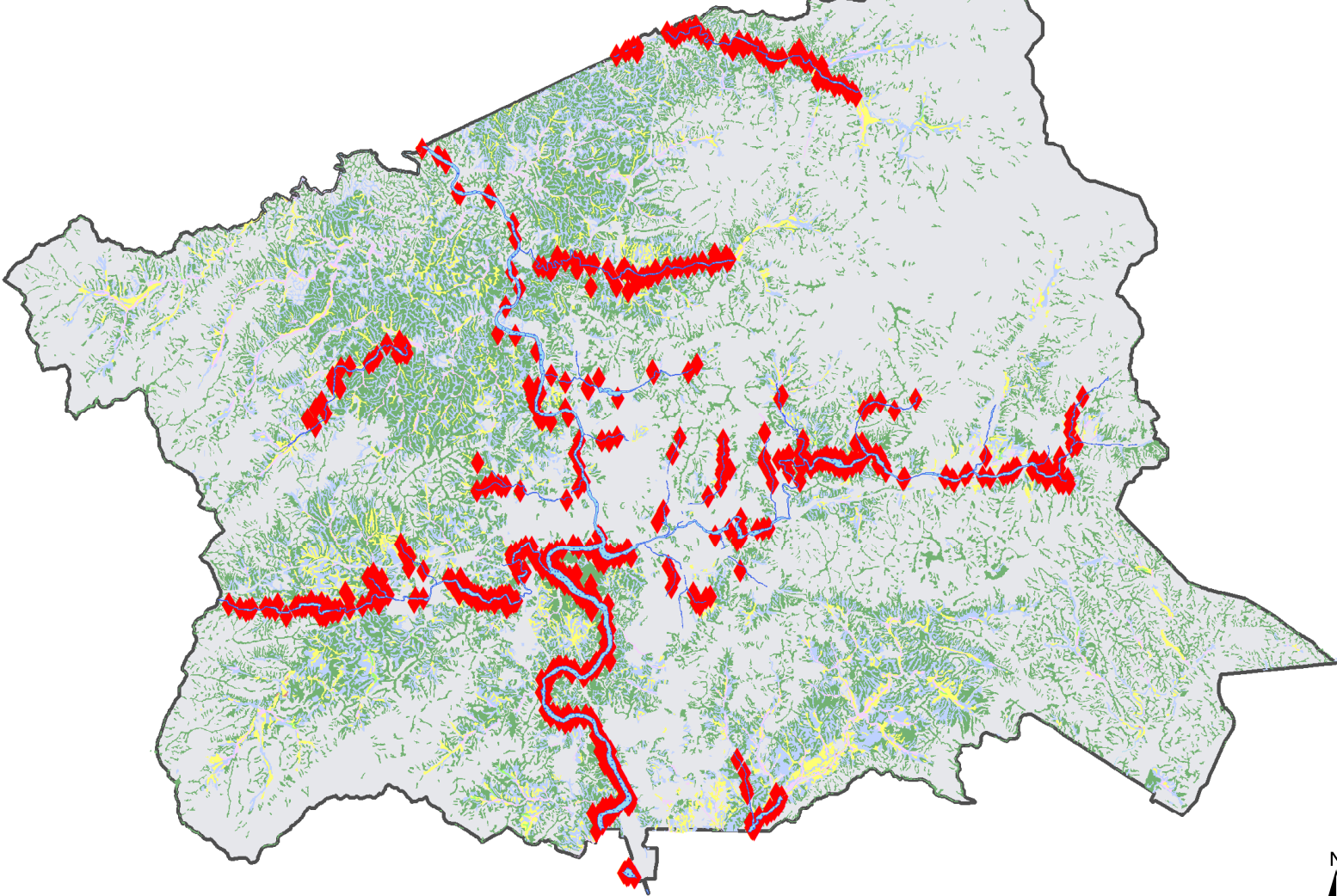
Development 2019



-  New construction Permits
-  Well and Septic Permits
-  Property in VAD & EVAD



Prime Soils with Floodway



- Rivers and Lakes
- Prime Soils in Floodway
- LocalImportance
- StatewideImportance
- PrimeFarmland
- PrimeIfDrained
- PrimeIfIrrigated
- PrimeIfDrainedandProtected
- County Boundary



Key Challenges

- Recognize seemingly competing interests between
 1. Desire to preserve open space
 2. Desire to have more affordable housing meeting population growth demands.
- How we navigate these two interests will determine what kind of community we have in Buncombe County
- Limited by county funding and by only 1 staff support for farmland preservation



Recommendations

- **Continue to support** farmland protection through existing policies including present-use value taxation, voluntary agricultural districts, and enhanced voluntary agricultural districts.
- **Continue to support** Long Range and Comprehensive Planning for County
- **Promote and implement outreach and education** on land taxation, estate planning, farm-transition planning, conservation easements, and development planning.
- **Continue promotion of best management practices** for conservation of land and natural resources.



Recommendations (continued)



- **Continue county-level funding** to support transaction costs for purchase of farmland conservation easements. Potential examples of future funding:
 - Increasing county budget for farmland preservation program
 - Collecting PUV deferred fees, storm-water fees, using fees for additional projects
 - More staff support for the program
- **Lower NCDA ADFP Match requirement** for conservation easements funding by Adopting the Farmland Protection Plan



Recommendations (continued)

- Work aggressively to **leverage county funding** for conservation easements and other projects in partnership with state, federal, and private resources.
- **Design and implement educational outreach programs** to educate and inform visitors, new residents, and residents living in urban areas of the importance of farmland to the region's culture, identity, and quality of life.
- **Support marketing and production training** and facilitate greater diversity in ag enterprises.
- **Strengthen support** for agricultural economic development.



Guide for the Future

- The Plan provides a foundation for the 2025 Strategic Plan
 - Environmental Stewardship Focus Area
 - Preserve Farmland and Environmentally sensitive tracts Goal
- The Farmland Protection Plan can be used to help designate prime agricultural regions and the needs of the Ag community for **the FY22 Comprehensive Plan**

