



TOWN OF AMHERST AGRICULTURE AND OPEN SPACE INVENTORY AND PRIORITIZATION

February 21, 2024

Prepared By:
Town of Amherst Planning Department
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Department of Environment and Planning

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I. INTRODUCTION

The Amherst Bicentennial Comprehensive Plan recommends ensuring the long-term viability of agriculture and farming operations in northern Amherst as a key to maintaining diverse neighborhoods, including those with rural character. An effective means to conserve farmland is by acquiring development rights through conservation easements. The Plan further states that lands adjacent to farmland where the long-term viability of agriculture may be threatened are also important to protecting and maintaining the rural character and viability of farms in north Amherst.

Following the completion of the Town's Farmland Protection & Agricultural Development Plan, adopted in June 2021, the Town turned its efforts towards the implementation of priority recommendations included in the Plan. Goal #2 of the Plan is to "Protect key areas of viable farmland, parcels with important soils and natural resources within the Town that are suitable for permanent protection through the use of Agricultural [and/or Open Space] Conservation Easements." The first two recommendations under this goal are to: 1. update a map of parcels to target for protection with conservation easements, and 2. continue to work with the WNY Land Conservancy to acquire development rights on key parcels identified for protection. The initial Agriculture Conservation Easement program, completed in 2016, focused on large, actively farmed parcels that would be permanently preserved through the purchase of development rights. A total of 16 parcels totaling 785 acres were protected through this program. Despite its success, significant properties were not able to be secured due to limited funding, while owners of others chose not to participate in the program at that time. This resulted in a fractured farmland district vulnerable to potential suburban development pressure. Remaining farmland parcels were "targeted" (and mapped) for future protection in anticipation of a new conservation easement program once additional funding was available.

A conservation easement is a covenant on land that deems it farmland or open space in perpetuity. The owner maintains ownership of the property and its use as farmland or open space with any exceptions spelled out in an agreement. In the previous program, the Town partnered with the Western New York Land Conservancy for the purchase of the land and its maintenance and management. A new conservation easement program requires funding from both state and federal grants, typically through the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), as well as commitment by the Town with funding designated in the Town's Capital Improvement Program (CIP) to acquire land for conservation. Once funding is secured, communication with landowners can begin to obtain commitments for a conservation easement program. A list of parcels is needed to guide land acquisition. This list is established through an assessment of parcels in a target area. Once the parcels are identified a price can be negotiated with the landowner with the Town/agency and a conservation easement drafted and executed. The use of the term "acquisition" in the report generally refers to acquisition of property or property rights through a variety of means such as a conservation or agricultural easement, owner donation to the Town or a conservancy, purchase, or a combination of means.

To identify target properties, the Town Planning Department, along with an Open Space Committee working with Fisher Associates, completed an Agriculture and Open Space Inventory and Prioritization study to serve as a formal assessment and analysis of existing agricultural lands and undeveloped open space parcels located in north Amherst. The purpose of the study was to create a map and prioritized list of all undeveloped agricultural and open space properties that could potentially be included in a new conservation easement program that fulfill the goals of a connected open space and agricultural district within Amherst. The inventory identified undeveloped parcels that could be candidates for protection,

including those owned by local, county or state agencies. Public ownership alone may not be enough to protect the parcels from development pressure and it was determined that these parcels should be included in the inventory.

The study area was comprised of properties north of the Peanut Line/Right-Of-Way. The inventory and analysis conducted by Fisher Associates assessed 733 undeveloped parcels in the study area. The analysis featured two sets of criteria: those for agricultural significance and those for open space significance. Each parcel was evaluated based on associated sets of criteria. Based on the scoring, 14 parcels of agricultural importance were identified that should be considered for inclusion in a new agricultural conservation easement program (Tier 1). In addition, six parcels scored above 80 points for open space significance, for a total of 20 parcels to be targeted for a new conservation easement program. Map Figure 1 illustrates the location of the 20 parcels for preservation. The majority of these parcels are within or adjacent to the Erie County Agricultural District #1 comprised of parcels with existing conservation easements. The six open space parcels are scattered throughout the study area. All six parcels are privately owned, larger than 20 acres each, and contain large New York State Department of Environment and Conservation (NYSDEC) Previously Mapped Wetlands. If easements were secured for all 20 parcels, over 685 additional acres of land will be protected.

The following is a description of potential Federal, State and Local funding sources that would be used to acquire the individual properties.

Federal

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) is the main source of funding for agriculture. The National Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) under the USDA offers funding through the Agriculture Conservation Easement Program (ACEP).

State

The New York State Office of Agriculture and Markets has been funding farmland protection for decades. The grants are now in Round 19 of funding. As with the previous program, the Town will need to work with the New York State Office of Agriculture and Markets to secure funding for conservation easements and open space acquisition.

Local

The Western New York Land Conservancy (WNYLC) is the local land trust and the agency the Town worked with in its original conservation easement program completed in 2016. The WNYLC offers services ranging from land management and monitoring to land assessments and drafting agreements. It is anticipated that the Town would once again work with the WNYLC on a future conservation program.

The Town will likely be required to commit funds to an open space and agricultural conservation easement program, likely within its Capital Improvement Program. A portion of the recreation and open space fees the Town collects, as well as solar development fees, could potentially be earmarked for acquisition purposes.

Priority Preservation Program

The following analysis contains recommendations to inform next steps. The potential for acquiring properties (Tier 1 parcels) adjacent to existing farmland should be the priority for the new round of conservation easements. By including these adjacent parcels for conservation, the Town could avoid the

need for additional expansion of the sewer district as well as strengthening the Agricultural District #1 and preservation of surrounding open lands.

In addition to the properties adjacent to farmland, other non-active, previously farmed land and open space parcels nearby, for example parcels along Schoelles Road that scored high, should be considered next for conservation easements. Some of these parcels have environmental constraints, and their acquisition would further expand the buffer between the active farmland and nearby suburban residential development that can be inconsistent with farming practices. This analysis should be used as a tool for informing planning and zoning policies and guide preservation of agricultural and open space lands.

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Erie County, New York

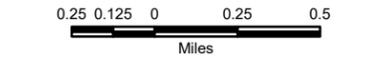
Amherst Open Space Inventory and Prioritization Plan

Map 1 Parcels for Preservation

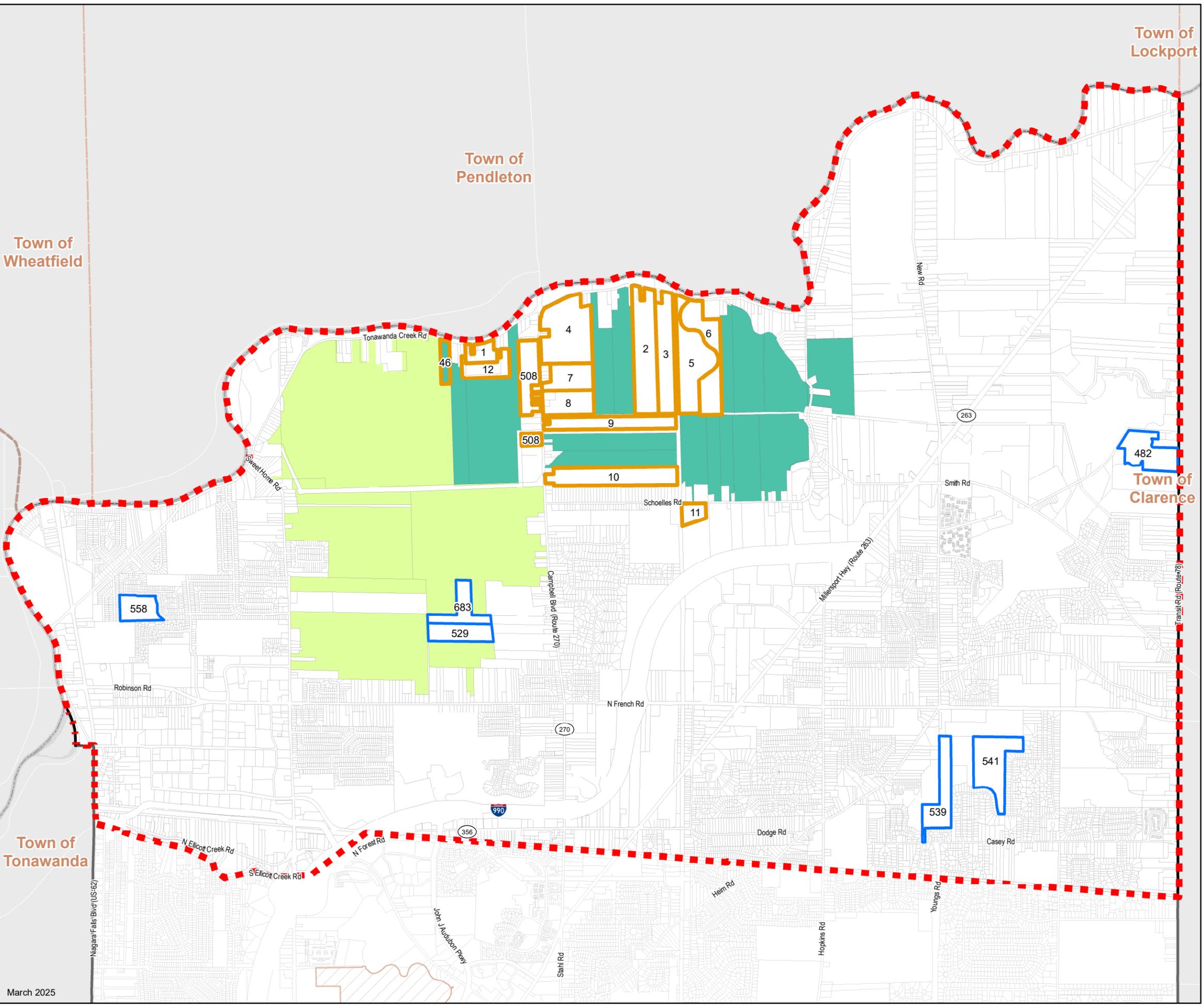
Legend

-  Agricultural Prioritization Study Area
-  County Boundary
-  Town of Amherst
-  Village Boundary
-  University at Buffalo
-  Existing Conservation Easement
-  Existing Agricultural Conservation Easement
-  Agriculture Parcels for Acquisition (60-100 points)
-  Open Space Parcels for Acquisition (80-100 points)
- 558** Parcel Number (Identification from Inventory)

Sources:
 Town of Amherst Geospatial Data, Planning Department.
 Town of Amherst Agriculture and Open Space Inventory and Prioritization Plan. October 2024. Fisher Associates.
 Town of Amherst Open Space Parcels Criteria Excel Spreadsheet. Planning Department and Open Space Committee. February 2025.
 Town of Amherst. 2021. Town of Amherst Farmland Protection & Agricultural Development Plan. (Prepared by Wendel, WWS Planning, Camoin Associates). Amherst, NY. Accessed September 2021. https://www.amherst.ny.us/pdf/planning/farmland/211006_approved_plan.pdf



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II. SITE SCORING METHODOLOGY

The following outlines the site scoring methodology used to identify and prioritize agriculture and open space parcels as illustrated on Map Figure 2.

1. Step One: Study Area Parcel Selection

Step One identified the “Study Area Parcels” for purposes of the open space inventory, analysis and prioritization. This includes parcels designated “Agricultural Targets for Protection” in the Town of Amherst Agricultural Protection Plan and parcels designated as undeveloped land both greater and less than 10 acres. Map 1 includes all the parcels that were scored, including Town-owned Park and Recreation parcels and Community Centers, Erie County-owned properties, and New York State-owned properties (including local school district properties).

2. Step Two: Site Screening

Step Two originally eliminated parcels from scoring because they had already been prioritized (targeted) for protection in the previous conservation easement program. However, the team chose to include them in the scoring exercise after all in order to create a complete record of all agricultural parcels not already containing a conservation easement.

Parcels that are included in the “Agricultural Land Targeted for Protection” in the Town of Amherst Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan are automatically earmarked for acquisition.

3. Step Three: Site Scoring

Step Three applies agricultural and open space site scoring criteria to all parcels. Properties were scored for Agricultural Site acquisition based on the site scoring criteria in Table 1. Parcels were scored for Open Space Site acquisition based on the site scoring criteria listed in Table 2. Criteria were assigned a point value indicating their relative importance in prioritizing a parcel for protection. A maximum score of 100 points was established for each evaluation criterion. The criteria and corresponding evaluation score are summarized in the Tables 1 and 2.

4. Step Four: Site Categorization

Step Four establishes a general recommendation for priority of actions.

Tier 1. Parcels for Preservation (60-100 points)

Parcels in the Preservation Tier are the priority for the Town of Amherst. These are parcels that are designated for future agricultural use, preserved open space, or recreational space. Acquisition of these parcels will depend on several factors including: availability of funding through budgets and grants; willingness to participate by land owners; and community support for a program.

Tier 2. Regulatory Controls / Protection (40-59 points)

Parcels that are included in the Regulatory Control/Protection Tier are parcels that meet several of the criteria, but not enough to be immediately prioritized for acquisition. The Town many consider using regulatory controls to protect these parcels, these may include zoning provisions, site plan approval requirements, cluster development or planned unit development (PUD), recreation land dedication or recreation fees during development, transfer of development rights, conservation easements, designation as a NYS Critical Environmental Area, or tax incentives.¹

Tier 3. Parcels of Interest (20-39 points)

Properties in the Parcels of Interest Tier do not score high enough to warrant acquisition or specific regulatory controls/protections by the Town, but should be considered for future open space protection after the Town has taken action on the parcels in the Preservation and Regulatory Controls/Protections tiers.

In future the Town may use these tiers as a guide for consideration of land donations, e.g. whether or not the Town should accept the land. For instance, if the property is falls into one of these tiers, then it has some conservation value to the Town and should be more strongly considered for acceptance.

¹ Adapted from the New York State Department of State "Local Open Space Planning Guide" (published 2004, reprinted 2023), available online at: <https://dos.ny.gov/system/files/documents/2023/01/local-open-space-planning-guide.pdf>

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Erie County, New York

Amherst Open Space Inventory and Prioritization Plan

Map 2 Study Area Parcels

Legend

-  Agricultural Prioritization Study Area
-  County Boundary
-  Town of Amherst
-  Agricultural Targeted For Protection *
-  Undeveloped Land Less than 10 acres
-  Undeveloped Land Greater than 10 acres
-  Town Owned Parks/ Rec Space
-  Town Owned Rec/Community Center
-  Erie County Owned Parcel
-  New York State Owned Parcel (includes Local School District Properties)

Notes:
* Town of Amherst adopted Farmland Protection Plan

Source:
Town of Amherst Geospatial Data. Planning Department.

Town of Amherst Agriculture and Open Space Inventory and Prioritization Plan. October 2024. Fisher Associates.

Town of Amherst. 2021. Town of Amherst Farmland Protection & Agricultural Development Plan. (Prepared by Wendel, WWS Planning, Camoin Associates).



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Town of Wheatfield

Town of Pendleton

Town of Lockport

Town of Clarence

Town of Tonawanda

TABLE 1. SITE SCORING CRITERIA - AGRICULTURE

Agricultural Criteria	Maximum Points
Parcel Size Greater than 50 acres (20 points) Between 20-49 acres (15 points) Between 5-19 acres (10 points)	20
Presence of Agricultural Soils 50% or more Prime or Statewide Important Soils (20 points) Less than 50% Prime or Statewide Important soils (10 points) Presence of soils that are prime if drained (5 points)	20
Proximity to Protected Farmland Directly adjacent (20 points) Within 500 feet (10 points)	20
Active Agricultural 50% or more actively farmed (10 points) Less than 50% actively farmed (5 points)	10
NYS Certified Agricultural District Designation Within the district (10 points) Within 500 feet (5 points)	10
Parcel is receiving Agricultural Tax Assessment	5
Comprehensive Plan designated land for agricultural use	5
Within 200 feet of a watercourse	5
Outside the Sanitary Sewer District	5
<i>Total Points</i>	<i>100</i>

TABLE 2. SITE SCORING CRITERIA – OPEN SPACE

Open Space Criteria	Maximum Points
Presence of Wetlands Designated State Wetlands (20 points) NWI Wetlands (10 points)	20
Parcel Size 20 acres or greater (15 points) Less than 20 acres (10 points)	15
Proximity to Undeveloped State, County or Town-Designated Open Space, including Parks, Trails, Wildlife Management Areas, and Campgrounds Directly adjacent (15 points) Within 500 feet (10 points)	15
Proximity to natural stream buffers and/or floodways Adjacent to a natural stream buffer Adjacent to a floodway	10
Presence of Stream or water body	10
Proximity to permanently conserved lands Adjacent to lands with Agricultural Conservation Easement Adjacent to permanently conserved lands (e.g. Nature View Park)	10
Located within 500 feet of a Rare or Significant Natural Area (based on the NYSDEC Environmental Resource Mapper)	5
Comprehensive Plan designation for Open Space	5
Property zoned Recreation Conservation (RC)	5
Presence of Hydric Soils	5
<i>Total Points</i>	<i>100</i>

III. EVALUATION CRITERIA

The following maps (Maps 3-11) illustrate the presence and location of the various evaluation criteria applied to scoring using the most recent available geospatial data. Each parcel was scored on the presence of the stated criteria within each parcel.

Map 3: Natural Resources

Location of State designated significant natural community

Map 4: Existing Hydrology

Location of creeks, lakes, ponds, ditches, floodway, National Wetlands Inventory, NYSDEC Previously mapped wetlands (based on 2024 mapping)

Map 5: Designated Open Space

Town owned recreation or park land, Town owned conservation land and open space

Map 6: Parcels Containing Conservation Easements

Location of existing lands under conservation easements

Map 7: Erie County Agricultural District #1

Location of Erie County designated agricultural districts (Amherst's active agricultural land is entirely located in District #1)

Map 8: Erie County Soils

Location of prime soils and soils of state significance (USDA)

Map 9: Amherst Sanitary Sewer District

Location of Amherst's Consolidated Sanitary Sewer District, and location within current non-sewered areas and where future sanitary sewer service may be permitted

Map 10: Amherst LWRP Waterfront Revitalization Area (WRA) Boundary

Location of the Local Waterfront Revitalization Program waterfront revitalization area boundary (2024)

Map 11: Comprehensive Plan, Figure 6 Future Land Use

Bicentennial Comprehensive Plan that illustrates the lands designated for agriculture and open space parcels in north Amherst.

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Erie County, New York

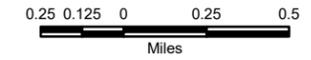
Amherst Open Space Inventory and Prioritization Plan

Map 3 Existing Natural Resources

Legend

-  Agricultural Prioritization Study Area
-  County Boundary
-  Town of Amherst
-  Silver Maple-Ash Swamp
-  Silver Maple-Ash Swamp 500-foot Buffer

Sources:
Town of Amherst Geospatial Data. Planning Department.
Town of Amherst Agriculture and Open Space Inventory and Prioritization Plan. October 2024. Fisher Associates.
NYSDEC Significant Natural Community (Silver Maple-Ash Swamp Community) dataset represent element occurrences of significant natural communities (ecological communities), as recorded in the New York Natural Heritage Program's Biodiversity Database (Biotics). For more information visit the website: (<https://data.gis.ny.gov/datasets/nysdec::natural-heritage-communities>)



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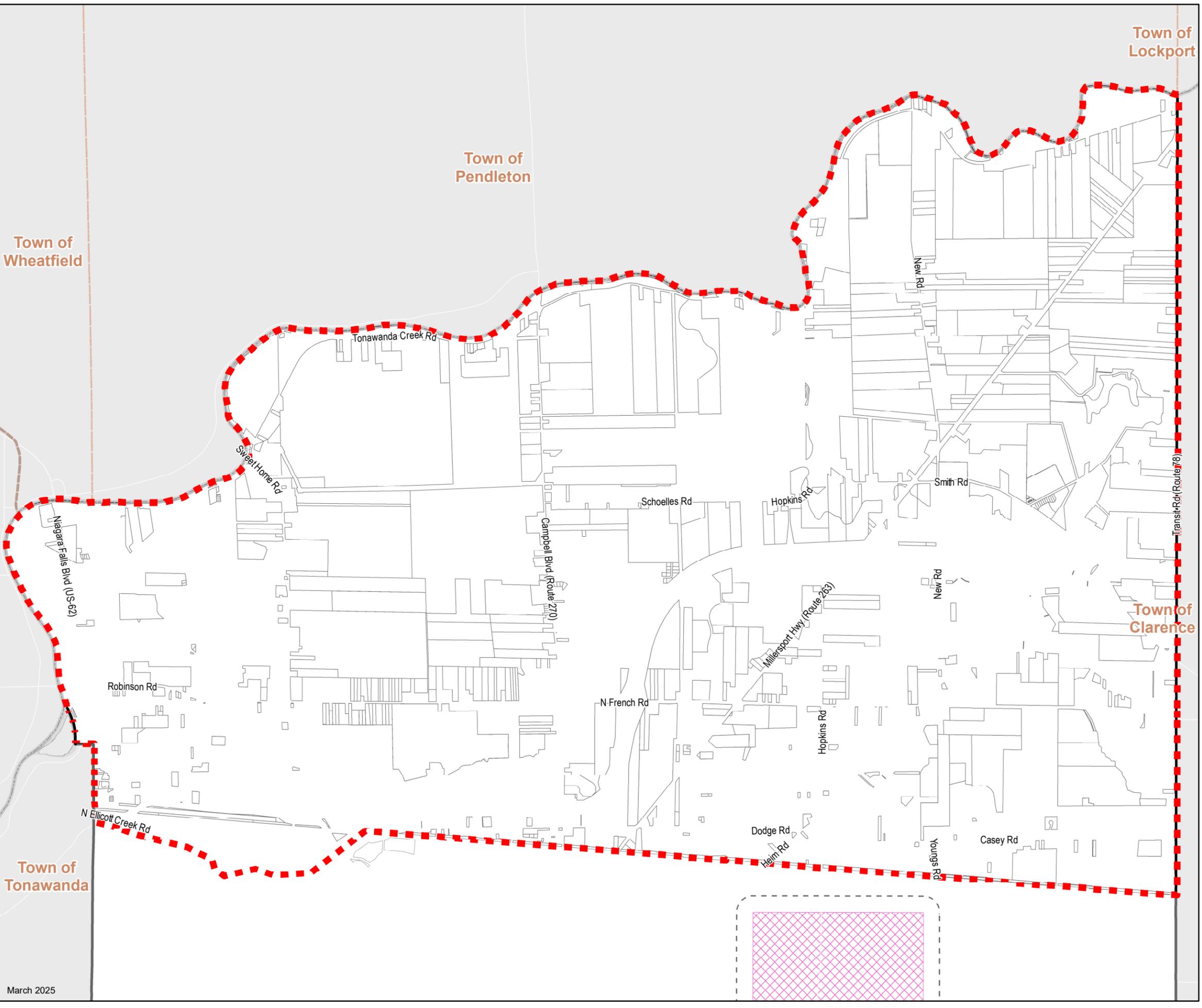
Town of Wheatfield

Town of Lockport

Town of Pendleton

Town of Clarence

Town of Tonawanda



Note: The map reflects the available NYSDEC data per the NYS 6NYCRR Part 664 wetland regulation revisions enacted on January 1, 2025.

Town of Lockport

Town of Pendleton

Town of Wheatfield

TOWN OF AMHERST

Erie County, New York

Amherst Open Space Inventory and Prioritization Plan

Map 4 Existing Hydrology

Legend

-  Agricultural Prioritization Study Area
-  Open Space Inventory Parcel
-  Ditch
-  Hydrography (Creeks, Lakes, Ponds)
-  FEMA Floodway (2019)
-  Federal Mapped Wetlands (NWI)
-  NYSDEC Previously Mapped Wetlands (2025)
-  NYSDEC Informational Wetland Mapping (2025)

Sources:
The floodplain data is derived from the 2019 FEMA Flood Insurance Rate Maps (FIRM). Accessed: July 3, 2019

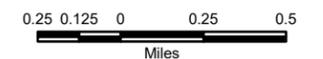
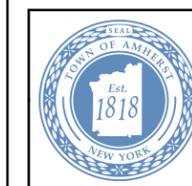
Informational Freshwater Wetland (NYS)
Publisher: New York State Department of Environmental Conservation
Published: December 20, 2024, Data Updated: December 23, 2024
Website: <https://data.gis.ny.gov/datasets/nysdec:informational-freshwater-wetland-mapping/about>

Previously Mapped NYS Freshwater Wetlands
Data: Wetlands mapped prior to January 1, 2025
Publisher: New York State Department of Environmental Conservation
Published: December 30, 2024, Data Updated: December 30, 2024
Website: <https://data.gis.ny.gov/datasets/nysdec:previously-mapped-freshwater-wetlands/about>

NWI Wetlands (Federal)
Publisher: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service National Wetlands Inventory Surface Waters and Wetlands
Accessed: 1/2/2025
Website: <https://fwsprimary.wim.usgs.gov/wetlands/apps/wetlands-mapper/>

Town of Amherst Geospatial Data, Planning Department.

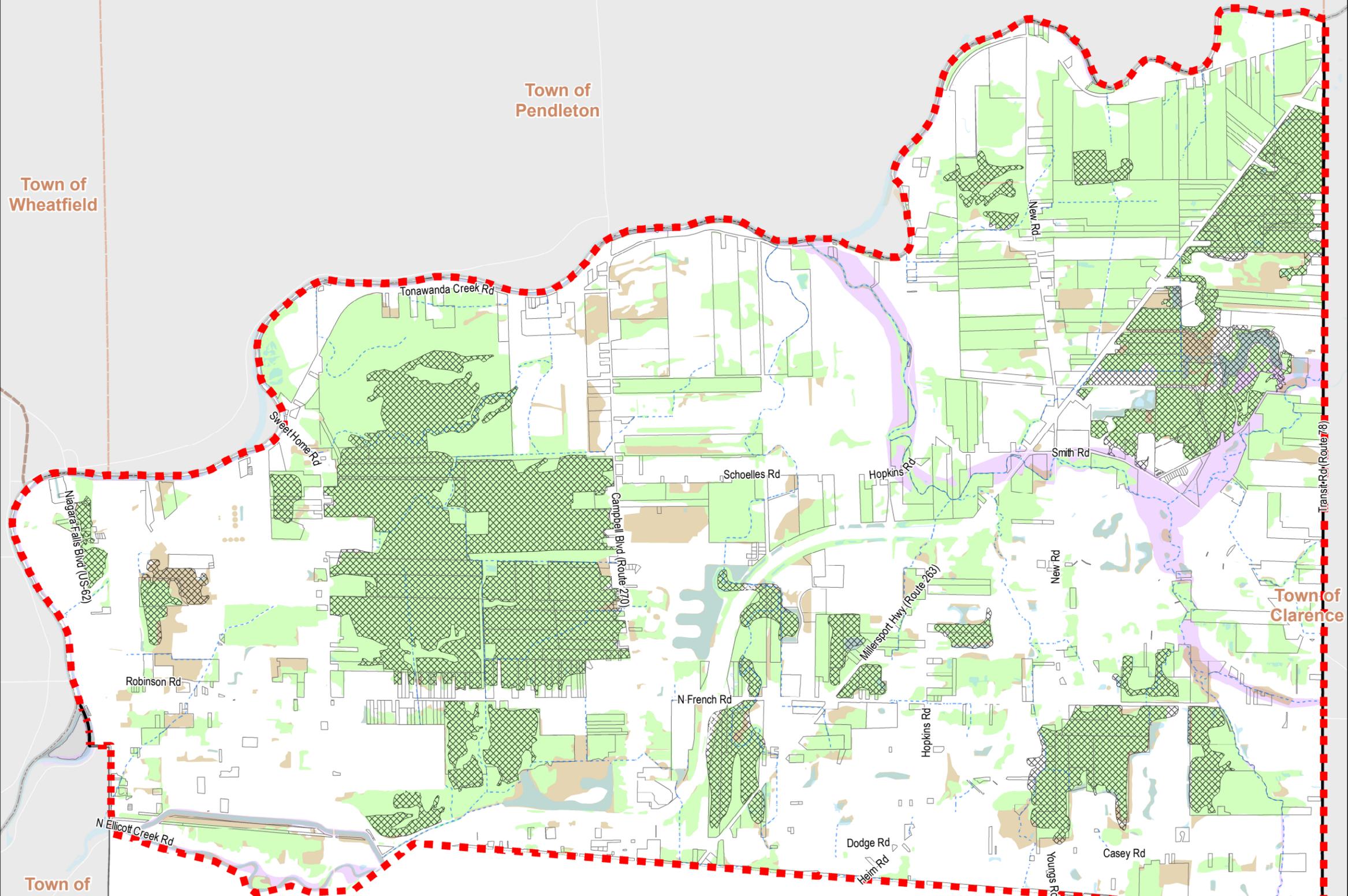
Town of Amherst Agriculture and Open Space Inventory and Prioritization Plan. October 2024. Fisher Associates.



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Town of Tonawanda

Town of Clarence



TOWN OF AMHERST

Erie County, New York

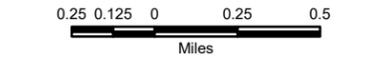
Amherst Open Space Inventory and Prioritization Plan

Map 5 Town Designated Open Space

Legend

-  Agricultural Prioritization Study Area
-  Open Space Inventory Parcel
-  County Boundary
-  Town of Amherst
-  Town Owned Recreation / Park Land
-  Town Owned Conservation Land / Open Space

Source:
Town of Amherst Geospatial Data. Planning Department.
Town of Amherst Agriculture and Open Space Inventory and Prioritization Plan. October 2024. Fisher Associates.



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Town of Wheatfield

Town of Lockport

Town of Pendleton

Town of Clarence

Town of Tonawanda



TOWN OF AMHERST

Erie County, New York

Amherst Open Space Inventory and Prioritization Plan

Map 6 Parcels Containing Conservation Easements

Legend

-  Agricultural Prioritization Study Area
-  Open Space Inventory Parcel
-  County Boundary
-  Town of Amherst
-  Existing Conservation Easement

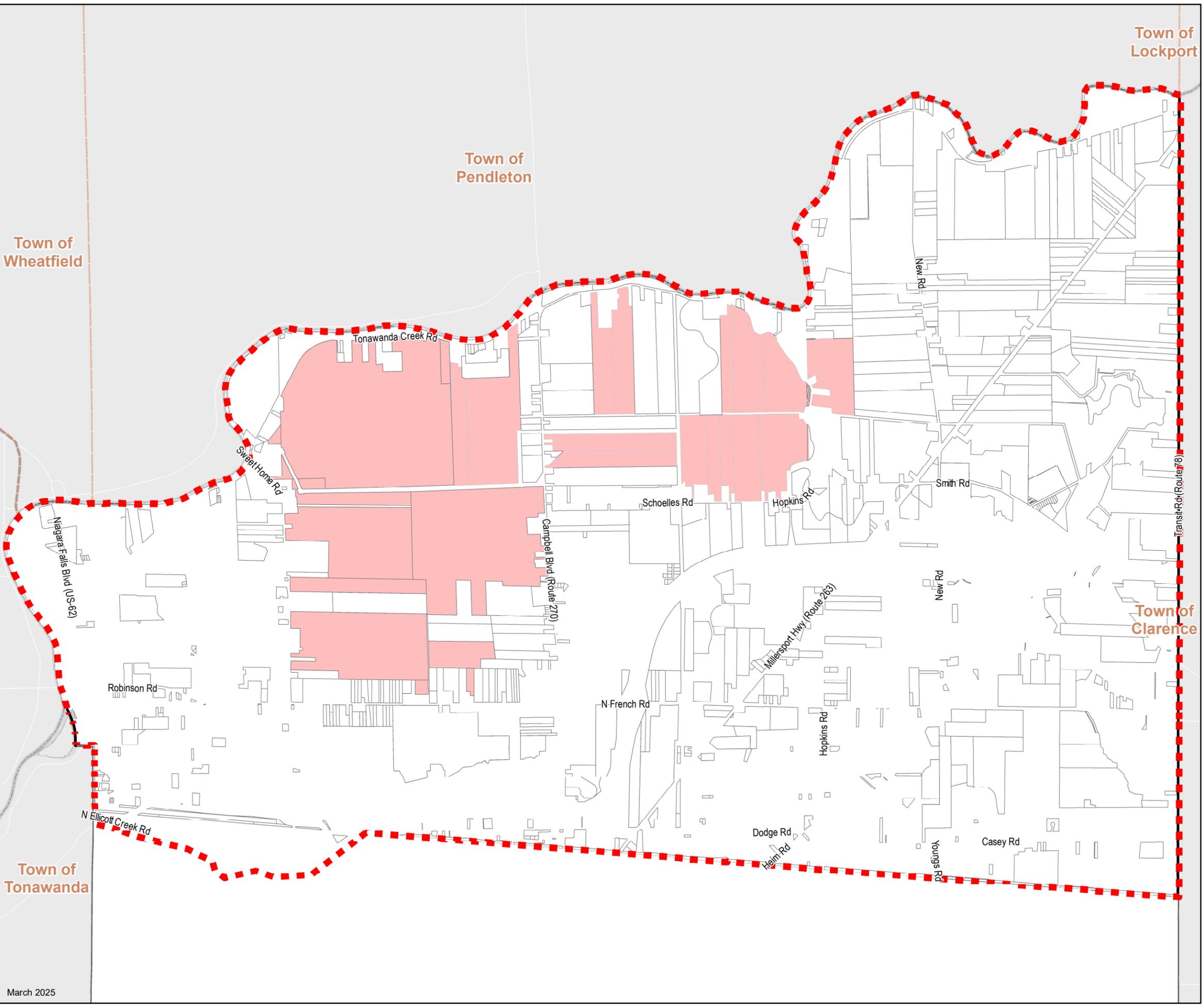
Source:
This dataset derives from the Western New York Land Conservancy (WNYLC) data received April 2021.

Town of Amherst Geospatial Data. Planning Department.

Town of Amherst Agriculture and Open Space Inventory and Prioritization Plan. October 2024. Fisher Associates.



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TOWN OF AMHERST

Erie County, New York

Amherst Open Space Inventory and Prioritization Plan

Map 7 Erie County Agricultural District #1

Legend

-  Agricultural Prioritization Study Area
-  Open Space Inventory Parcel
-  County Boundary
-  Town of Amherst
-  Erie County Agricultural District #1

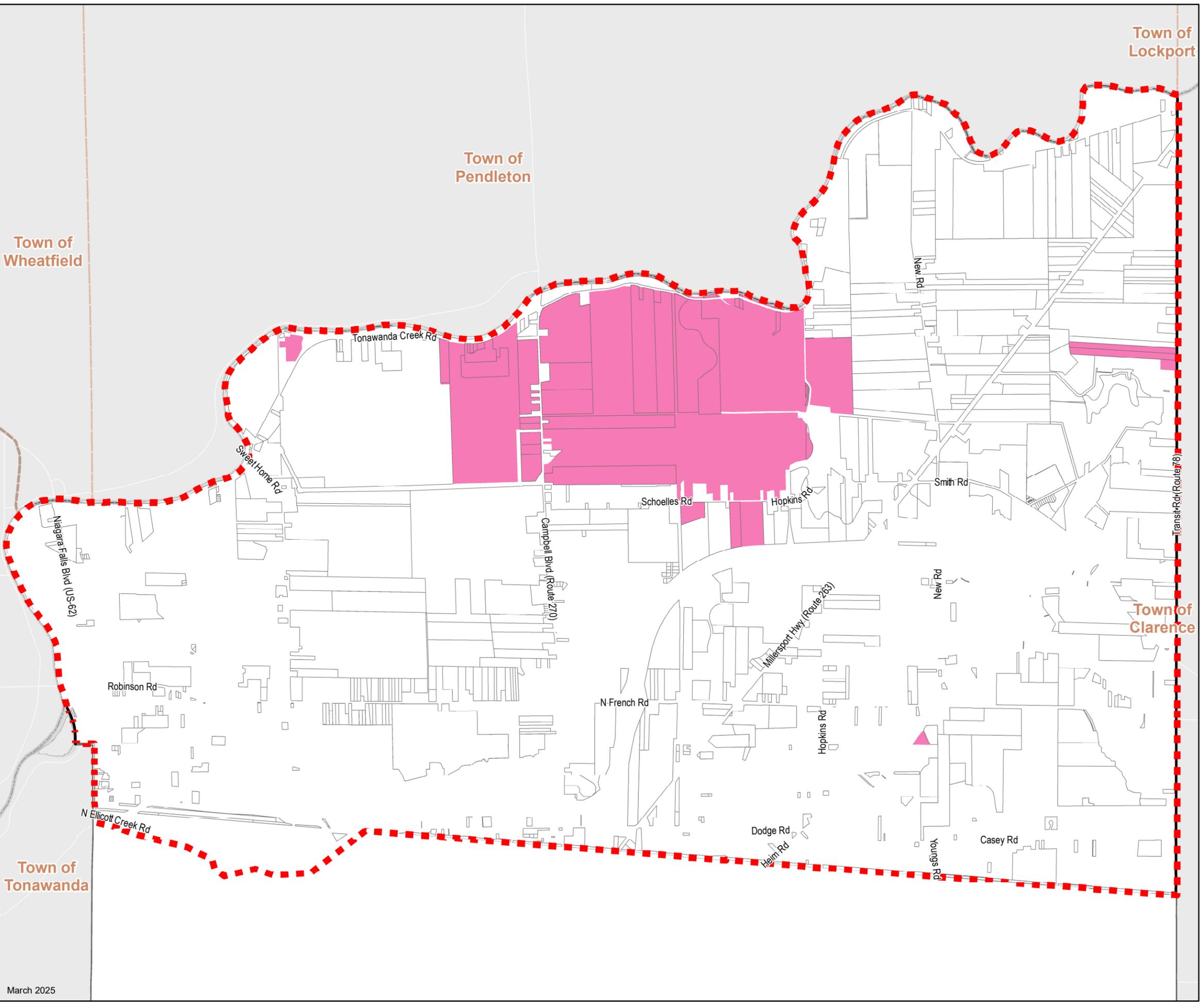
Source:
The agricultural district derives from Erie County Agricultural Districts map dated August 18, 2023.

Town of Amherst Geospatial Data. Planning Department.

Town of Amherst Agriculture and Open Space Inventory and Prioritization Plan. October 2024. Fisher Associates.



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TOWN OF AMHERST

Erie County, New York

Amherst Open Space Inventory and Prioritization Plan

Map 8 Erie County Soils

Legend

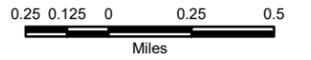
-  Agricultural Prioritization Study Area
-  Open Space Inventory Parcel
-  County Boundary
-  Town of Amherst
-  Prime Soils or Soils of Statewide Significance

Note:
The Erie County soil classified as Prime (Where Drained) is not included in this map.

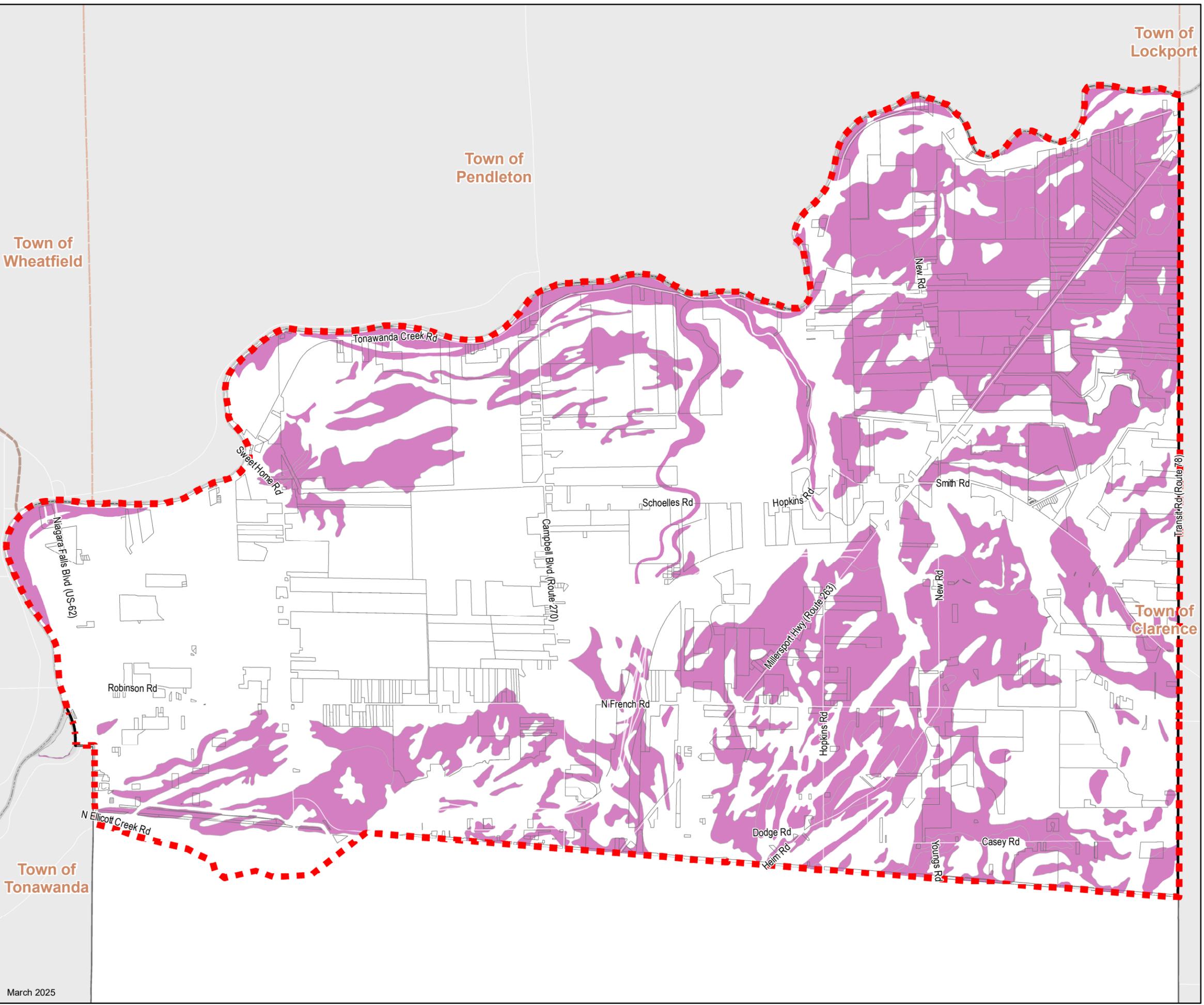
Source:
Soils (SSURGO) US Department of Agriculture (USDA) Natural Resources.
Accessed August 2020.

Town of Amherst Geospatial Data. Planning Department.

Town of Amherst Agriculture and Open Space Inventory and Prioritization Plan.
October 2024. Fisher Associates.



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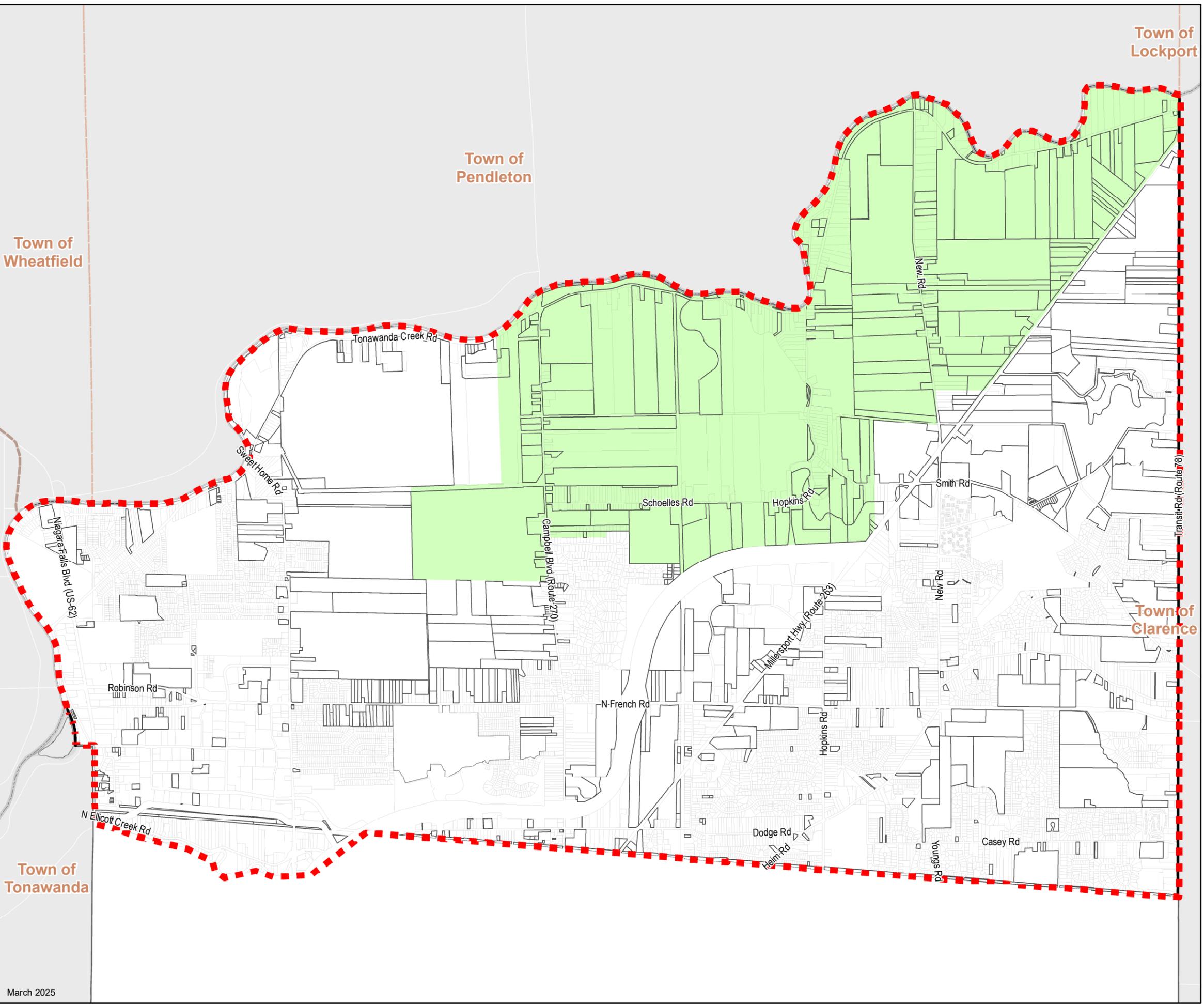
Town of Wheatfield

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Town of Lockport

Town of Clarence

Town of Tonawanda



TOWN OF AMHERST

Erie County, New York

Amherst Open Space Inventory and Prioritization Plan

Map 9 Sanitary Sewer Consideration

- Legend**
- Agricultural Prioritization Study Area
 - Open Space Inventory Parcel
 - County Boundary
 - Town of Amherst
 - Non-Sewered Areas Only

Source:
 Town of Amherst Geospatial Data. Planning Department and Engineering Department

Town of Amherst Agriculture and Open Space Inventory and Prioritization Plan. October 2024. Fisher Associates.

Town of Amherst. Town of Amherst Bicentennial Comprehensive Plan (2020) Figure #11. (Prepared by Wallace Roberts & Todd, LLC with URS Corporation Economics Research Associates).



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TOWN OF AMHERST

Erie County, New York

Amherst Open Space Inventory and Prioritization Plan

Map 10 Amherst LWRP Waterfront Revitalization Area Boundary (WRA)

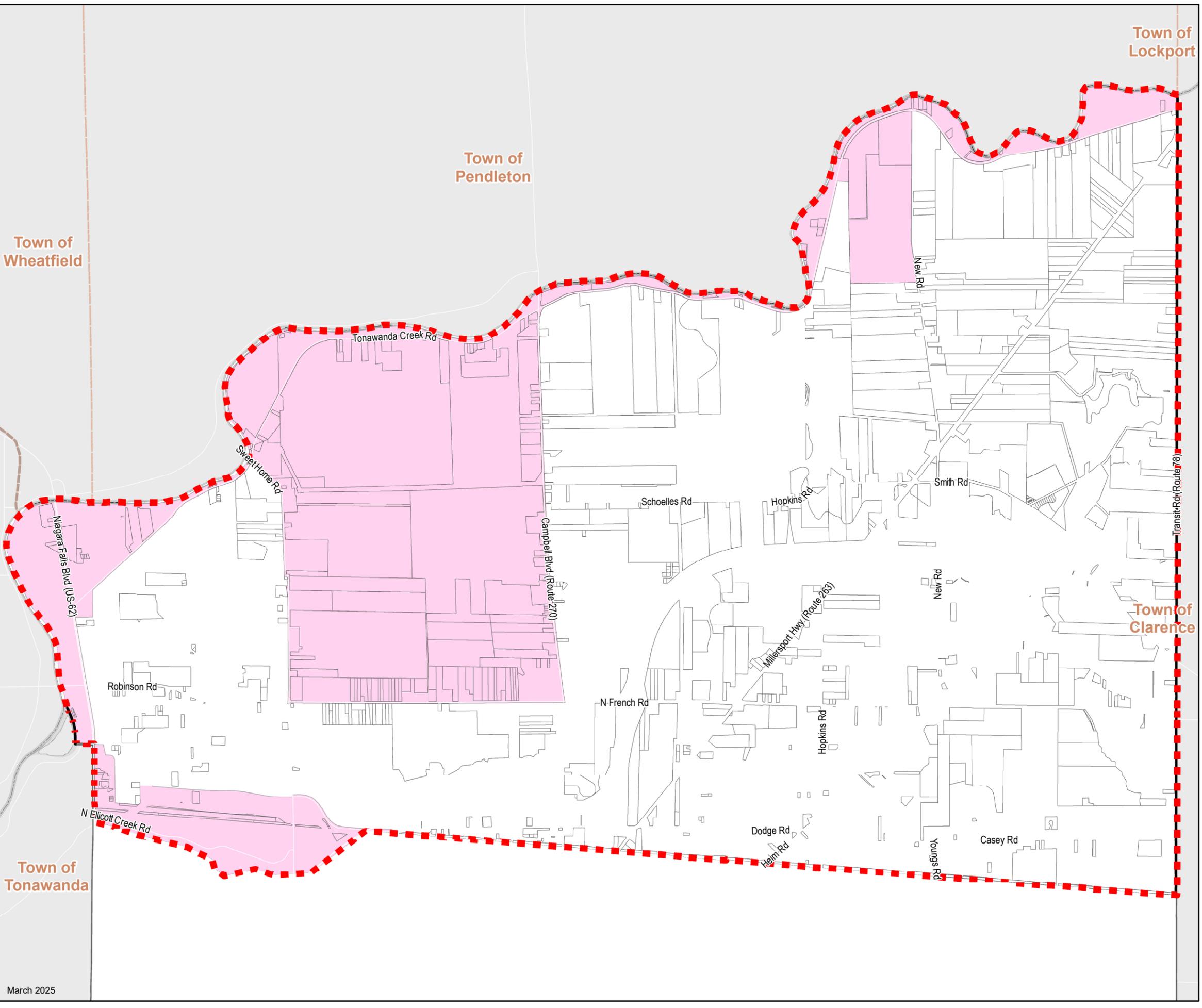
Legend

-  Agricultural Prioritization Study Area
-  Open Space Inventory Parcel
-  County Boundary
-  Town of Amherst
-  Town of Amherst Waterfront Revitalization Boundary

Sources:
 The Town of Amherst Local Waterfront Revitalization Program (LWRP) adopted by NYS on November 8, 2023. (Currently submitted for an Amendment, 2024)

Town of Amherst Geospatial Data. Planning Department.

Town of Amherst Agriculture and Open Space Inventory and Prioritization Plan. October 2024. Fisher Associates.



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Erie County, New York

Amherst Open Space Inventory and Prioritization Plan

Map 11 Comprehensive Plan Figure 6 & Open Space Parcels

Legend

-  Open Space Study Area
 -  Town of Amherst
 -  Study Parcels
- #### Comprehensive Plan
- ##### Figure 6 - Land Use
-  Agriculture
 -  Commercial - Office
 -  Commercial / Mixed Use
 -  Community Facilities
 -  Educational Campus
 -  Industrial-Office
 -  Medium Residential
 -  Mixed Residential
 -  Recreation and Open Space
 -  Rural Residential
 -  Single Family Residential
 -  Special Use Center
 -  Transportation

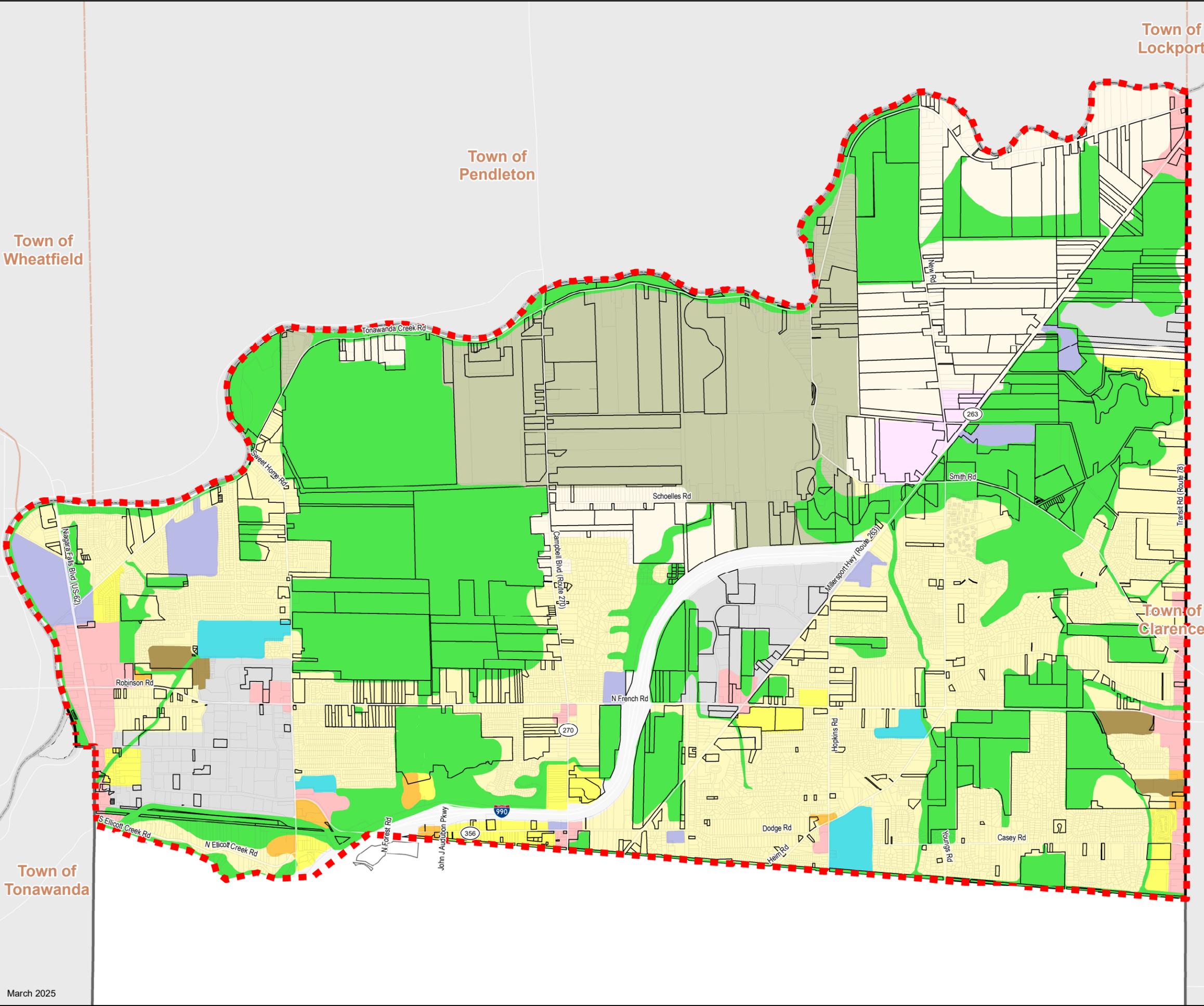
Source: Town of Amherst Geospatial Data. Planning Department.

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Town of Amherst. Town of Amherst Bicentennial Comprehensive Plan Figure #6. (Prepared by Wallace Roberts & Todd, LLC with URS Corporation Economics Research Associates).



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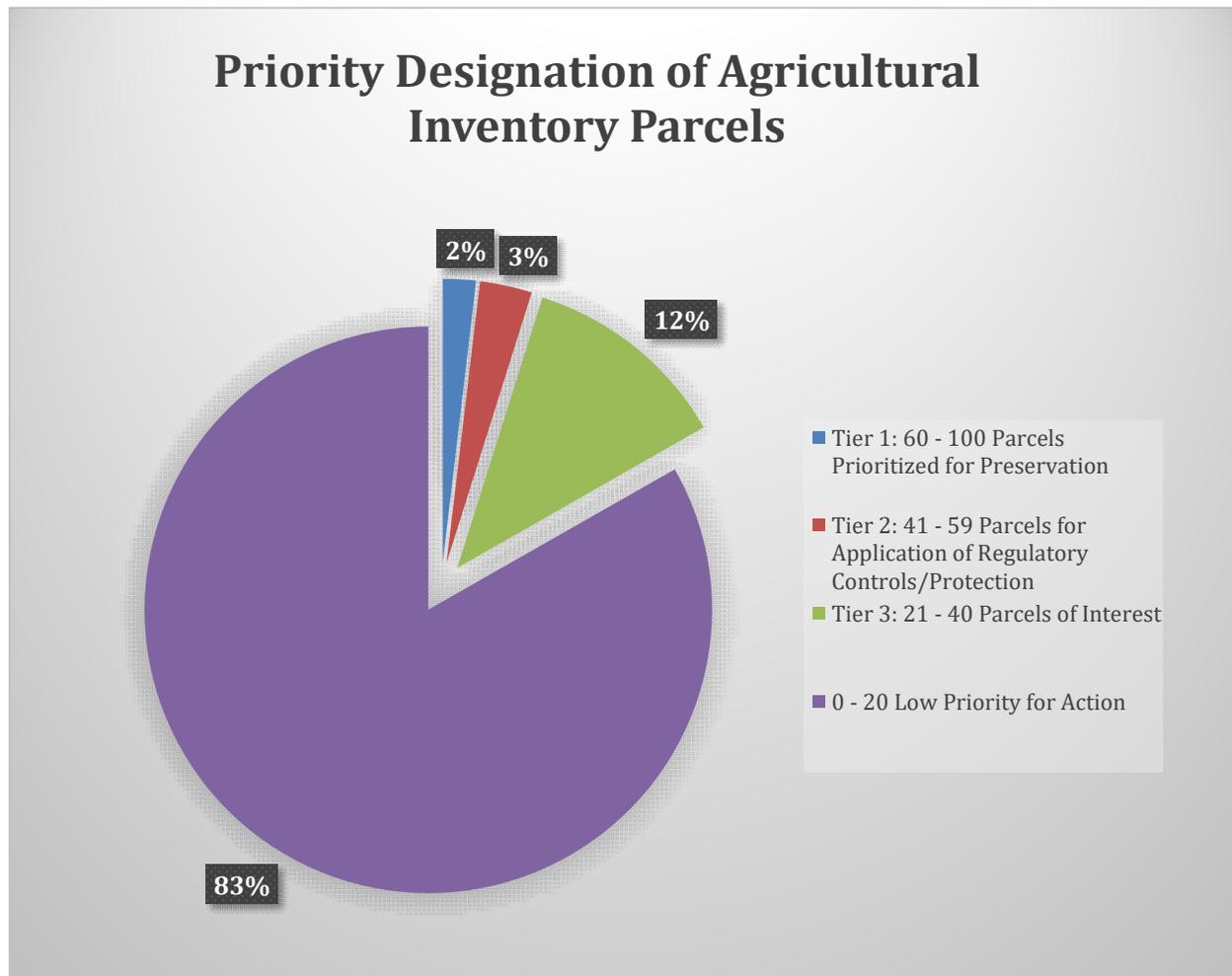
IV. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Maps 12 and 13 illustrate the results of the site scoring. The maps illustrate the assigned parcel ID and score category for each parcel evaluated in the inventory. The tables that accompany these maps summarize the individual scoring for each parcel for each criteria on each map.

AGRICULTURAL PRIORITIZATION MAP

Map 12 illustrates the prioritization score of parcels in the inventory using agricultural site scoring criteria. Not surprisingly the parcels adjacent to or included in the existing agricultural district scored the highest and were categorized for “Preservation.” These parcels (14 in total) should be the focus of a conservation easement program described in the Farmland Protection and Agricultural Development Plan.

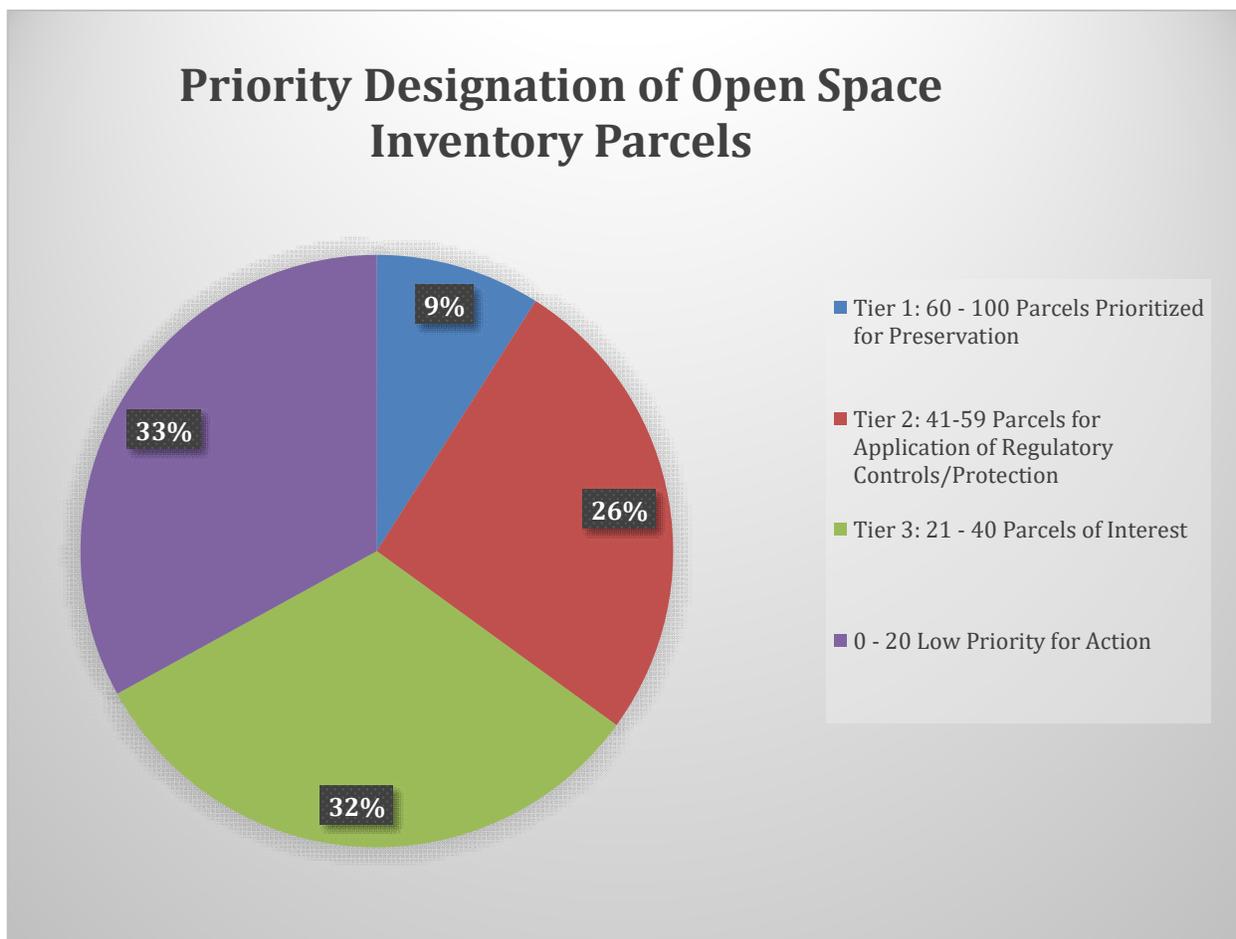
Overall, the majority of parcels scored as “Parcels of Interest” (615 parcels or 83% of total parcels) using the agricultural criteria. These parcels are typically smaller, individual parcels with some form of environmental constraint but no recent agricultural history, and both within and outside of the sewer district. A recent study of the Town’s Suburban Agriculture (SA) Zoning District in north Amherst included outcomes that support many of these parcels for future regulatory control.



OPEN SPACE PRIORITIZATION MAP

Map 13 illustrates the prioritization of parcels in the inventory using open space site scoring criteria. Parcels that scored highest and categorized for “Preservation” (a total of 66 parcels or 9% of the total number of parcels), were within Erie County Agricultural District #1 or adjacent to already preserved agriculture and open space, and/or located near bodies of water (e.g. streams). Since 66 parcels is a large number of parcels, it was decided to further refine the category to those parcels that scored 80 or higher. Six properties scored 80 or higher and are included with the 14 agricultural parcels to make up the 20 prioritized parcels for preservation (See Map 1).

The majority of parcels were categorized for “Regulatory Controls/Protection” and located within or adjacent to mapped federal or state designated wetlands (as of 2025). The State of New York revised their wetlands regulations in 2024 (NYCRR Part 644), including the definition of what is considered a wetland. A new definition will go into effect in 2028, and will also include a new category: wetlands of “unusual importance.” These are smaller than 12.4 acres and may include vernal pools.



V. CONCLUSION

The primary objective of this analysis is to support the Town's pursuit of agricultural goals and objectives and open space preservation that benefits the rural character of the town and natural environment. The results identify and prioritize properties for acquisition and designation through agricultural and conservation easements. Those easements can be secured through a variety of means including direct purchase, purchase of development rights, or donation. The results of the analysis support the Town's ability to assess and prioritize areas for protection and acquisition in a strategic manner.

The analysis identified 14 properties that scored 60 or more points based on the agricultural criteria and an additional 6 parcels that scored 80 or more points based on the open space criteria (see scoring table). The highest scoring parcels were considered for acquisition. These properties may also be adjacent to others that did not score as highly, however when considered along with adjacent parcels form clusters of land that comprise a targeted area for preservation and protection. For example, parcels along the north side of Schoelles Road score 60 or above, while parcels along the south side of Schoelles score 50 or above, when combined these parcels form a contiguous and cohesive area that can support agriculture and rural land practices and could be targeted for acquisition (see Map 12). Some parcels received a score over 60 based on the open space criteria and when combined with the agricultural parcels can benefit both the natural environment and preserve rural character within the Town.

In addition to identifying parcels for acquisition, the Town should use this study as a tool for future conservation planning efforts. The study should inform development policy in north Amherst including appropriate land use and zoning guidance for parcels that can protect and encourage agriculture and preserve environmentally valuable areas.

TOWN OF AMHERST

Erie County, New York

Amherst Open Space Inventory and Prioritization Plan

Map 12 Agricultural Prioritization

Legend

- Agricultural Prioritization Study Area
- County Boundary
- Town of Amherst
- Village Boundary
- University at Buffalo
- Existing Conservation Easement
- Existing Agricultural Conservation Easement

Agricultural Prioritization Scoring

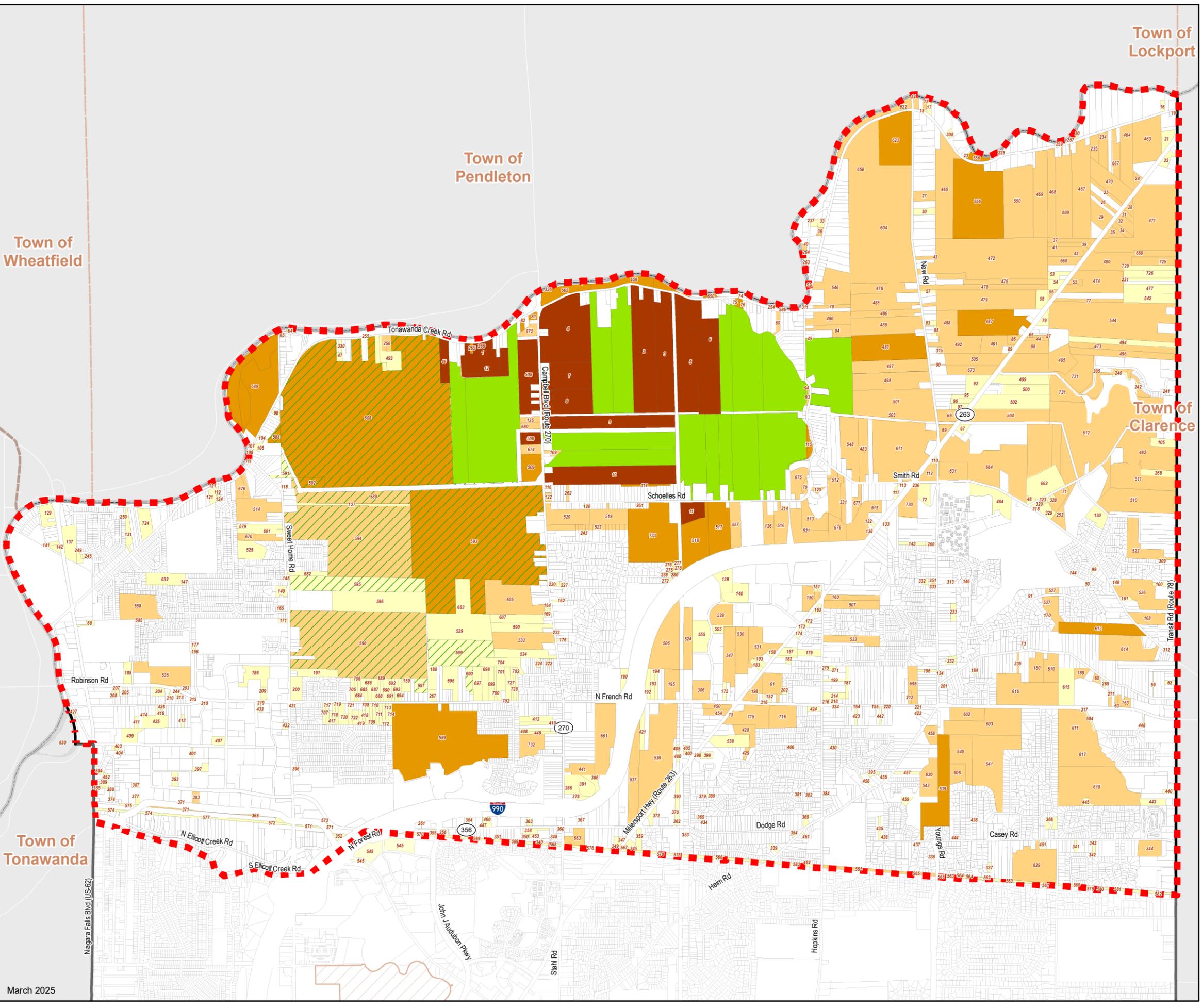
- Tier 1: Acquisition (Score 60-100)
- Tier 2: Regulatory Controls/Protection (Score 41-59)
- Tier 3: Parcels of Interest (Score 21-40)
- Parcels Not Prioritized for Protection (Score 0-20)

Sources:
Town of Amherst Geospatial Data, Planning Department.

Town of Amherst Agriculture and Open Space Inventory and Prioritization Plan.
October 2024. Fisher Associates.



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TOWN OF AMHERST

Erie County, New York

Amherst Open Space Inventory and Prioritization Plan

Map 13 Open Space Prioritization

Legend

- Open Space Study Area
- County Boundary
- Town of Amherst
- Village Boundary
- University at Buffalo
- Existing Conservation Easement
- Existing Agricultural Conservation Easement

Open Space Prioritization Scoring

- Tier 1: Parcels (Score 80-100)
- Tier 1: Acquisition (Score 60-100)
- Tier 2: Regulatory Controls/Protection (Score 41-59)
- Tier 3: Parcels of Interest (Score 21-40)
- Parcels not Prioritized for Protection (Score 0-20)

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