



Preserving Farmland, Strengthening Communities: Sullivan County's Farmland Protection Initiative

Why Is Sullivan County Investing in the Future of Its Farmland?

Sullivan County, in partnership with Cornell Cooperative Extension Sullivan County and the Orange County Land Trust, is launching a new initiative to protect local farmland, support farmers, and strengthen the rural economy. This project will help ensure future generations benefit from fresh, local food, open spaces, and thriving agricultural businesses.

Farms are the backbone of Sullivan County's economy and a vital part of its heritage. Preserving farmland protects our food supply, scenic landscapes, family farms, and local jobs. By leveraging state and federal resources, this initiative will help shield farmland from development pressures and keep it productive for years to come.

How Can Farmers and Communities Benefit from This Farmland Protection Initiative?

This initiative provides direct benefits to farmers, local governments, and the wider community. Farmers will receive guidance on how to potentially secure agricultural conservation easements, while permanently preserving their land for agriculture. Workshops and one-on-one support will help farmers and municipalities learn how to potentially access grant funding from programs, like the NYS Farmland Protection Implementation Grant (FPIG) and the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Agricultural Conservation Easement Program.

www.sullivancce.org/farmlandpreservation

What Steps Are We Taking to Secure the Future of Farming in Sullivan County?

This program will use technical assistance and workshops to equip farm families, municipal leaders, and communities with tools to support farmland preservation and agricultural viability. Estate planning resources will help farm families transfer land to the next generation and plan for long-term success. Town officials will receive training on farm-friendly policies, zoning, and conservation strategies. Municipalities will also have access to expert guidance for creating tailored farmland protection plans. As part of its preservation strategy, the county is exploring participation in the Hudson Valley Community Preservation Act (CPA), which could offer long-term funding for conservation. Public outreach will engage residents and stakeholders in supporting these efforts.

We invite farmers, community members, and local leaders to join us in this important effort. Together, we can preserve our farmland and build a sustainable future for Sullivan County!

For More Information on the Farmland Preservation Program contact the OCLT:

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If you're a farmer interested in protecting your land, visit our website here:



**Cornell Cooperative Extension
Sullivan County**



Joining the Hudson Valley Community Preservation Act (CPA)

What is the Hudson Valley Community Preservation Act (CPA) of 2007?

The Hudson Valley Community Preservation Act (CPA) is a powerful tool that allows designated communities to establish Community Preservation Funds (CPF). These funds are supported through a real estate transfer tax, enabling communities to preserve open space, farmland, historic places, and community character.

Ulster County successfully joined the Act in 2019 through a Home Rule request, demonstrating a clear pathway for other counties like Sullivan County to follow.

How does it work?

Create a Community Preservation Project Plan

- Identify how community character will be preserved.
- Analyze land use alternatives.
- List and prioritize parcels necessary to achieve goals.

Hold a Public Hearing

- Hold a public hearing on the Community Preservation Project Plan (CPPP) and proposed local law.

Hold a Referendum

- Community voters must approve the enactment of a local law establishing the real estate transfer tax.

If Approved:

- County Clerk collects the tax and remits funds to the town monthly.
- Funds are dedicated solely to implementing the CPPP.



Key points:



No Cost to the County
Funded entirely through real estate transfer tax.



Local Control
Municipalities decide through referendum.



Proven Benefits
Preserved open spaces, stable property values, attractive community character.

How Can Sullivan County Join?

- Sullivan County Legislature must pass a Home Rule Resolution to amend the 2007 Act.
- Senator Oberacker and Assemblywoman Paula Kay must introduce and champion the bill.
- Governor signs the bill, officially including Sullivan County.



Success Stories

Communities that have successfully implemented CPFs include:

- Five East End Towns, Long Island:
- Town of Warwick, Orange County:
- Town of Red Hook, Dutchess County
- Towns of New Paltz, Gardiner
- Marbletown, Ulster County

These communities have enhanced preservation efforts, maintained desirable home values, and balanced growth with conservation.



Scan to learn more about CFP's in other communities:

New Paltz



Marbletown



Gardiner



Why should Sullivan County Act?

- Protect Farmland and Natural Resources
- Strengthen Community Identity
- Balance Development with Preservation
- Enhance Quality of Life for Future Generations



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Farmland Protection in Sullivan County



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Community Preservation

HOW TO PROTECT AND PRESERVE CRITICAL
LANDS IN YOUR COUNTY & ITS TOWNS



Options for Community Preservation

- General Taxation
- Bonding
- Home Rule Legislation for your Town
- Federal, State, County, Land Trust (all only offer partial funding)
- Hudson Valley Community Preservation Act Inclusion By the County



General Taxation or Bonding

Your Town Boards can raise taxes as part of their budgets to acquire easements. The Town of Montgomery (Orange Co.) did this early in 2000.

Bonding is also a method which generally is subject to a permissive referendum, however if the Town Board wants the residents to decide, especially if it is a large bond, they can always place the decision on the ballot.

Warwick (Orange Co.) got voter approval in 1998 to borrow \$9.5 million for farmland preservation.



Home Rule Legislation (for those not in the HVCPA)

Submit a home rule request to your Senator and Assemblyperson with accompanying board resolution

Stay attentive to how it is or isn't moving through legislative committees.

Work with your State reps to get it to the floor and then to the governor, hope she signs it. Need support of your representatives

If the Governor signed, develop a Community Preservation Plan and place before their voters in a referendum. Best to do this at the November general election.

Hudson Valley Community Preservation Act

Enacted in 2006, amended in 2019

The County submits a home rule request to be included. Follows same process as you would do individually. **Why do this?** Once your County is included, any municipality in that county automatically has the right to prepare a Community Preservation Plan and place the issue to impose a Real Estate Transfer Tax **on the ballot for a vote by your residents.**

Ulster County was included in 2020 and since then three Towns & the City of Kingston have implemented it with another working towards a referendum this in 2026.

Having your County included in the HVCPA lets the Municipality focus on developing a thoughtful Community Preservation Plan and an effective campaign to pass a referendum

Issues for a successful Community Preservation Campaign

Opposition by Realtors who consider it an unnecessary burden diminishing their inventory

Prevents new home buyers from acquiring homes- In Warwick, Red Hook **this has not been the case**, the cost as with other closing costs fold into the mortgage and the value is maintained in the home

It's a tax and legislators say they hate raising taxes— **you are not imposing it**, you are asking your municipalities' voters to vote on it, the essence of democracy

It hurts home values — **just not true**, in Warwick home values are consistently above the median sale price in Orange County, the preserved lands are a selling point used by realtors. Buyers value a community that has a great quality of life and preserves it for its residents

Why is it important to be included in the Community Preservation Act?

Having a dedicated source of funding makes a Town more likely to be successful in leveraging State and Federal grant funding. For Instance the NYS DAM or Federal NRCS grant rounds will provide 87.5%, 75% and 50% respectively to awardees.

- **Example: Latest NYS FPIG awarded a total of \$3,357,430 in state funds to 5 of 7 farms submitted by the Dutchess Land Conservancy who partnered with the Dutchess County funded “Partnership for Manageable Growth” program.**

There is an initiative in the Hudson Valley between developers and land trusts to create more affordable housing in conjunction with farmland preservation. Having a RETT in your town allows you to be creative by acquiring an easement of farmland while allowing a portion to be developed with affordable housing for your community.

Having a Community Preservation Plan and RETT ensures your community grows while respecting its environment, open space and working landscapes



Don't Take My Word For It See the results!

Warwick has had a CPF since 2006 and the results are impressive:

- 5000 acres of 40 active farms preserved, **all still farming & paying taxes**
- \$18 million raised to date, leveraged to gain another \$18 million from grants
- Preserved a historic site, the only public access site to a 9 mile bi-state lake, 2 public parks in two Villages, 100 acre watershed protection area and a former summer camp for public enjoyment.
- Real Estate prices **not hurt** by having a RETT contrary to naysayers:
 - 2008 - \$370,000 vs \$189,920
 - 2023 - \$450,000 vs \$247,840

Next Steps

- The Sullivan County Legislature would **pass a Home Rule Resolution** requesting inclusion to the Hudson Valley Preservation Act that would initiate a Bill in the 2026 NYS legislative session
- Sullivan County's State Senator P. Oberacker and Assembly members P. Kay & B. Maher would need to sponsor and champion the bill in the 2026 session.
- Political support will be needed to ensure the Governor signs the bill once passed by the Legislature
- **No monetary cost to the County** and **no mandate to your municipalities** to pursue enacting a RETT in their jurisdictions- the decisions are left to local government and the voters of that jurisdiction.

Communities with Community Preservation Funds

- Five Towns on East End of Long Island- Suffolk County
- Town of Warwick – Orange County
- Town of Red Hook – Dutchess County
- Town of Chatham – Columbia County
- Town of New Paltz – Ulster county
- Town of Gardiner – Ulster County
- Town of Marbletown – Ulster County
- City of Kingston – Ulster County
- Westchester & Putnam County are in the HVCPA and several Towns are preparing for referendums

Questions?

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