To: Region 2 Planning Commissioners
        Municipal and County Planning Commissioners in the Region 2 Area
        Economic Development Organizations (EDOs) & Other Interested Parties

From: Grant E. Bauman, R2PC Principal Planner

Date: July 31, 2020

Subject: **Region 2 Area | Agriculture and Other Land Uses/Cover**

A goal and associated strategy and action (i.e., Goal #2, Strategy C, Action #3) of the 2017-2021 edition of the *Region 2 Planning Commission Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS)* is the identification and mapping of cultural and recreational resources, which includes agriculture. The American Farmland Trust (AFT) and Conservation Science Partners recently created various geodatabases regarding land use —with a special focus on agricultural land from 2001-2016— within the 48 conterminous U.S. as part of their *Farms Under Threat* project (2020). R2PC staff utilized TIFF (Tagged Image File Format) images of those geodatabases provided by the AFT to create the following maps depicting the Region 2 Area.

Major Land Uses and Land Cover

The major land uses comprising the Region 2 Area in 2016 included croplands and pasturelands, forestlands and woodlands, and urban and highly developed uses. Low-density residential neighborhoods are also located in the midst of farmland and wooded areas.

Legend
Major Land Uses/Cover
Cropland and Pastureland
Forestland and Woodland
Urban and Higly Developed
Areas of Interest
Low-Density Residential
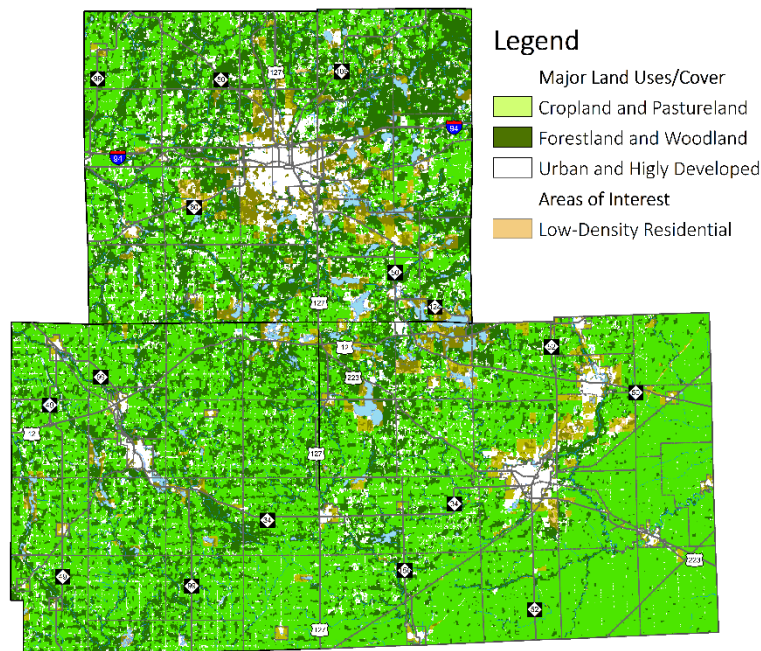
Quality of Agricultural Land

Much of Region 2 Area's agricultural land in 2016 was determined to be nationally significant or among the best in Michigan and best suited for the long-term production of food and other crops. The AFT made those assessments by assigning minimum productivity, versatility, and resiliency (PVR) values to agricultural areas. Land with PVR values above a minimum threshold are nationally significant and land with PVR values above the state's median are among Michigan's best.
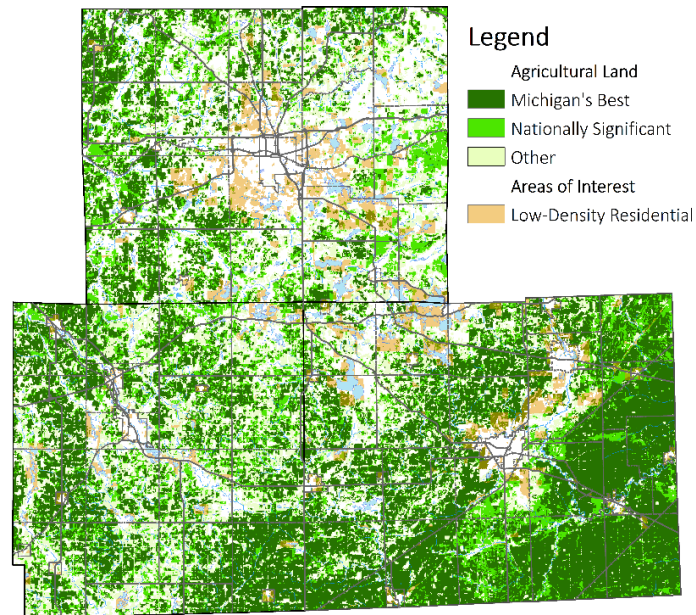
Conversion of Agricultural Land

According to the AFT, the "conversion of agricultural land to more-developed uses jeopardizes food security and ecosystem integrity". The AFT also determined that "agricultural land in [Michigan's low-density residential areas] in 2001 was 11 times more likely to be converted to [urban and highly developed uses] by 2016, compared to other agricultural land" (see the attached AFT report) and identified their locations in the Region 2 Area.
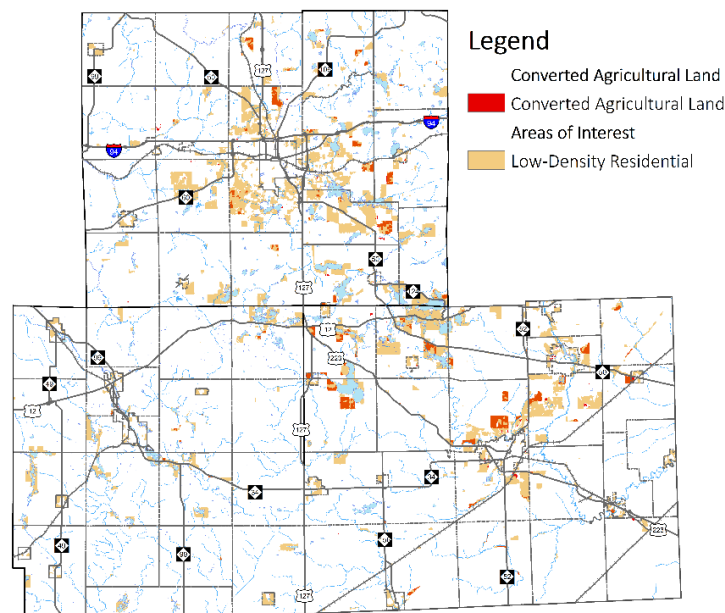
Michigan

Farms Under Threat: The State of the States mapped agricultural land conversion and evaluated state policy responses. The spatial analysis identified the extent, diversity, and quality of each state's agricultural land—and where this land has been converted to both urban and highly developed (UHD) and low-density residential (LDR) land uses.

AGRICULTURAL LAND CONVERSION 2001-2016
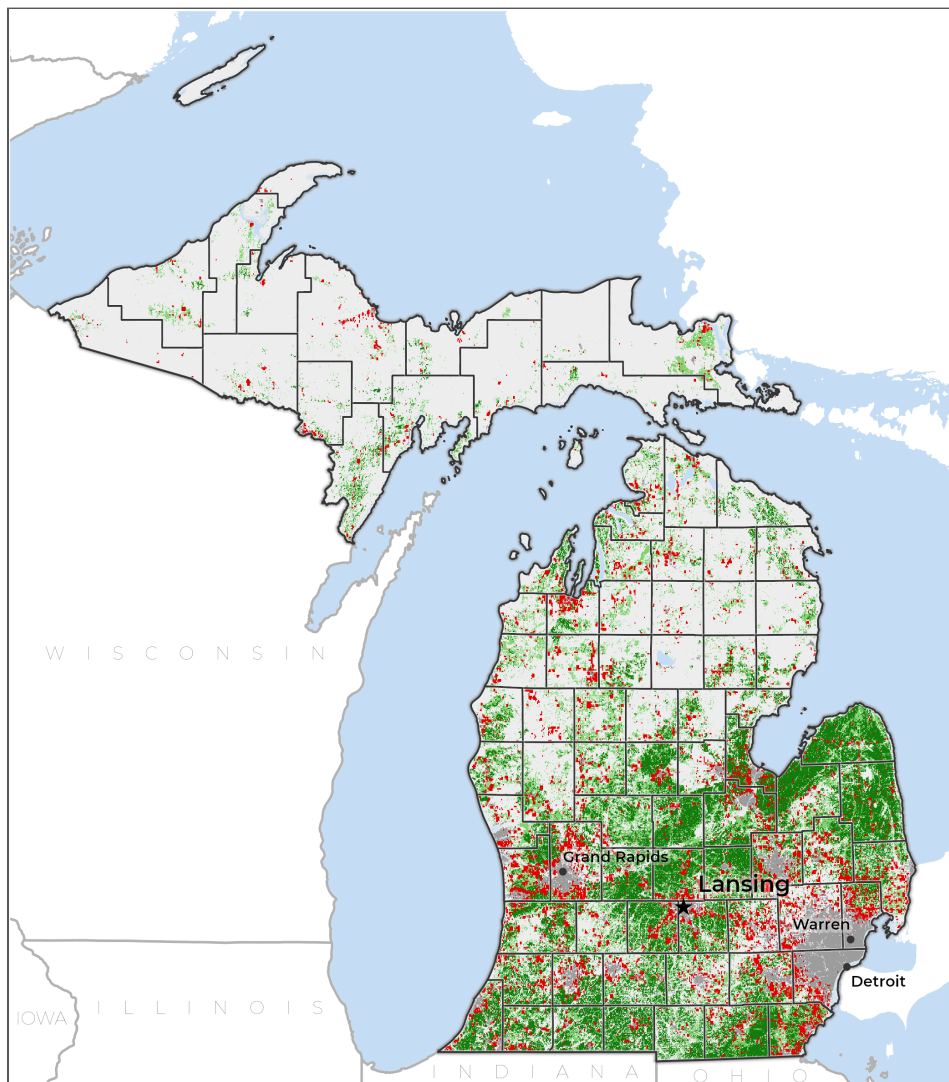
Conversion of non-federal farmland to UHD and LDR land uses from 2001-2016. The threat to working farms and ranches is pervasive, often claiming the most productive, versatile, and resilient lands.
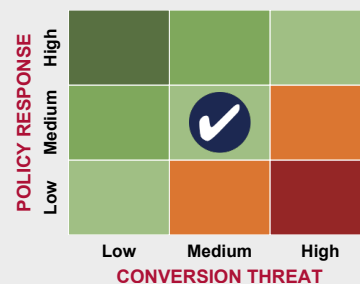
RELATIVE CONVERSION THREAT

MEDIUM

Michigan scored in the middle of all states for the conversion of agricultural land to urban and highly developed (UHD) and low-density residential (LDR) uses.

RELATIVE POLICY RESPONSE

MEDIUM

Michigan scored in the middle of all states for policies and programs that protect agricultural land from development, promote farm viability, and facilitate the transfer of agricultural land.

HOW IS THIS STATE DOING?

POLICY RESPONSE: High / Medium / Low
CONVERSION THREAT: Low / Medium / High

Michigan is in a green box because its policy response is aligned with its conversion threat, relative to other states. Learn more at www.farmland.org/farmsunderthreat

Legend:

■ (red) Conversion of agricultural land to UHD and LDR land uses

Farmland* that is:
■ (dark green) Above state median PVR**
■ (light green) Below state median PVR

■ (dark gray) Urban areas
■ (light gray) Federal, forest, and other lands

*Farmland is composed of cropland, pastureland, and woodland associated with farms.

** Our productivity, versatility, and resiliency (PVR) index helps identify high-quality agricultural land (see page 2).

American Farmland Trust

DEVELOPMENT THREATENS MICHIGAN'S AGRICULTURAL LAND

From 2001-2016, 240,100 acres of agricultural land were developed or compromised.

Michigan's farmland and ranchland was converted to:

- **Urban and highly developed (UHD)** land use, including commercial, industrial, and moderate-to-high-density residential areas.
- **Low-density residential (LDR)** land use, where scattered large lot development fragments the agricultural land base and limits production, marketing, and management options for the working farms and ranches that remain.

LDR PAVES THE WAY FOR FURTHER DEVELOPMENT

Agricultural land in LDR areas in 2001 was

11 TIMES MORE LIKELY

to be converted to UHD by 2016, compared to other agricultural land.

44,600 acres

19%
of conversion was to UHD

195,500 acres

81%
of conversion was to LDR

CONVERSION AFFECTED ALL TYPES OF AGRICULTURAL LAND

CROPLAND:	**125,200 acres**
PASTURELAND:	**73,600 acres**
WOODLAND:	**41,200 acres**

MICHIGAN'S BEST AGRICULTURAL LAND IS UNDER THREAT

We used our unique **PVR index**, which quantifies the productivity, versatility, and resiliency of agricultural land, to identify:

1. **Michigan's best land**, which has PVR values above the state median, and
2. **Nationally Significant land**, which is the country's best land for long-term production of food and other crops. **66%** of Michigan's agricultural land, or **7,785,900 acres**, falls in this category.*

Protecting high-PVR land is critical for the long-term sustainability of agriculture, yet from 2001-2016:

▶ **84,700 acres**
of Michigan's best land were converted to UHD and LDR uses.

▶ **124,200 acres**
of Michigan's Nationally Significant land were converted.

*These two categories overlap and the same land may be included in both.

What's at stake?

▶ **11,740,400 acres of agricultural land remain**[1]

CROPLAND:	**7,894,200 acres**
PASTURELAND:	**2,138,300 acres**
WOODLAND:	**1,707,900 acres**

▶ **$8.2 billion earned from cash receipts in 2017**[2]

- **$326.5 million from local food**[3]
- **$2.7 billion from agricultural exports**[4]

▶ **240,100 acres were converted—enough land to generate $168 million in annual revenue**[2]

▶ **Michigan's top 3 agricultural products:**[2]

- **Milk and Dairy** $1.8 billion
- **Corn** $1.3 billion
- **Soybeans** $998.6 million

▶ **80,400 producers and 97,100 farm laborers on 47,600 farms**[2]

▶ **4 times as many producers over 65 as under 35 years old**[2]

1. *Farms Under Threat 2016*
2. *National Agricultural Statistics Service 2017*
3. *Sold directly to consumer and intermediate outlets, NASS 2017*
4. *Economic Research Service 2017*

FARMS UNDER THREAT

Farms Under Threat is American Farmland Trust's multi-year initiative to document the status of and threats to U.S. farmland and ranchland and to identify policy solutions to ensure the protection and conservation of America's diverse agricultural landscape. For more information about AFT, visit www.farmland.org. If you have any questions about the analysis methods or would like access to data, please contact AFT's Farmland Information Center: www.farmlandinfo.org or (800) 370-4879.

Explore our interactive maps at www.farmland.org/farmsunderthreat