

## Agricultural Districts

The purpose of agricultural districting is to encourage the continued use of farmland for agricultural production. The program is based on a combination of landowner incentives and protections, all of which are designed to forestall the conversion of farmland to non-agricultural uses. Included in these benefits are preferential real property tax treatment (agricultural assessment and special benefit assessment), and protections against overly restrictive local laws, government funded acquisition or construction projects, and private nuisance suits involving agricultural practices.

Rensselaer County [has 6 agricultural districts](#) that are located in every town in the county. Each district must undergo an 8 year review where the viability of the district is examined. Properties may be taken out during the review period only and may be added in during this period as well as during the district open season which has been designated by the Rensselaer County Legislature for each September. During the beginning of the review period, a public information meeting is held for landowners, farmers and interested individuals. A notice of this meeting as well as a survey is mailed by the Rensselaer County Legislature previous to these meetings.

Agricultural districts provide the following protections to farmers and farmland uses:

- Protection from state takings by requiring agencies to look at agricultural uses during the SEQR process
- Protection from local nuisance laws and onerous zoning laws which prohibit normal agricultural practices
- Requirement that farmers be notified if certain land use actions occur within 500 feet of their operation
- Requirement that property buyers in agricultural district are provided with information that they are purchasing property within an agricultural district and that certain smell, sounds and activities can be expected.
- Taxable value of land used in agriculture may be reduced to its agricultural value rather than residential value.

[County-wide map](#)